

MuseumsForward

Living context: Sm'algıax language integration at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture

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Abstract

As Indigenous Peoples are increasingly becoming involved with museums and heritage preservation efforts, new strategies and practices that center Indigenous perspectives are being embraced by museum practitioners. The integration of Indigenous museum practices presents an opportunity for museum practitioners to build upon relationships with Indigenous communities and increase access to museum collections. The purpose of this study was to understand museum practitioners' perspectives on the use of Indigenous language integration as a strategy for Indigenizing collections management practices in museums. Using a case study design with multiple data sources, data were collected through facilitated interviews with collections management practitioners at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington. Results of this study point to the potential outcomes of integrating Indigenous languages including countering colonial suppression, increasing a sense of Indigeneity, enhancing collections accessibility, and making overall social change. Implications suggest that Indigenous language integration in museums is a holistic undertaking which requires an institutional awareness of historical practice and a fuller understanding of Indigenous communities' cultural heritage preservation needs and efforts.

Keywords

collections management; Indigenous museology; representation; Indigenous language; Tsimshian

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Introduction

Museums have a complex and multi-layered history of colonization in North America. Born out of sixteenth century European desires to collect and exhibit the wonders and curiosities of the world, modern museums have maintained a sense of authority, objectivity, and neutrality over Indigenous cultural heritage and people (Onicul, 2017). Beginning in the 1870s, major North American museums began collecting Indigenous cultural material to overcome the supposed extinction of Indigenous Peoples and their cultural traditions. Today, we can reflect on the historical motivations of many modern museums which were to maintain authority and power over the Indigenous knowledge of North America.

The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA is actively working to address such harmful practices by integrating Indigenous languages into their collections management system referred to as ARGUS. This article describes results from a case study of the Burke Museum's language integration project, designed to better understand museum practitioners' perspectives on the use of Indigenous language integration as a strategy for Indigenizing collections management practices in museums.

Historical museum practice

During the mass salvaging era of Western museums, cultural materials were documented in rapid, haphazard methods for enhancing collections records and archives. Westernized museum practices such as taxonomic categorization of collections have left Indigenous heritage largely decontextualized from original Indigenous cultural contexts and perspectives (Onicul, 2017). Historically speaking, Western museum practices were built on the foundations of ownership and power, keeping the knowledge within collections safely preserved. However, Western museum practices have also contributed to the on-going harm of Indigenous Peoples and the misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures, values, and ways of life by having a maintained authority and power over collections. Western museum practices have damaged relationships between Indigenous communities and museums, which has limited Indigenous Peoples' access to their cultural heritage (Hodges, 2018). Overall, historical Western museum practices continue

to objectify, dehumanize, and separate Indigenous Peoples from their heritage. The cultural knowledge that museums have acquired remains largely inaccessible and withheld from communities who seek to enhance cultural revitalization efforts (Magani & Guttorn, 2017). Today, museums have a social and political influence over how Indigenous Peoples are viewed and are currently being contested by Indigenous Peoples seeking to reclaim their culture (Onicul, 2017).

Indigenizing museum practice

Due to historical museum practices, Indigenous cultures and identities are closely bound to museum collections and displays of “otherness”. Museums have defined what it means to be Indigenous through archival records and exhibitions that reinforce evolutionary notions of social progress (Harrison, Byrne & Clarke, 2013). Since the 1960s, Indigenous-led activism has forged new developments in museum practice and has pushed historical boundaries to meet the needs of Indigenous Peoples (Schorh & Hakiwai, 2013). As McCarthy (2011) states, museums need to reframe their position in heritage preservation to recognize Indigenous knowledge as rightfully belonging to Indigenous communities. Indigenization, defined by Gazette (2019), is change led by Indigenous Peoples with the goal of bringing Indigenous ways of knowing to institutions, like museums. Indigenization in museums aims to empower and emancipate Indigenous communities from harmful museum practices and colonial legacies withholding their heritage (Gazette, 2019).

In relation to Indigenization, Stanley (2007) introduces a critical concept known as ‘cross-cultural heritage management,’ defined as a framework for museum practice that emphasizes social and cultural dimensions of curation and centers social structures and relationships in heritage preservation. Simply put, museum practices that integrate Indigenous cultural traditions allow for on-going dialogue between museums and Indigenous communities (Schorch & Hakiwai, 2013). Indigenization is adjacent to ‘Indigenous museum practice,’ a term defined as a “practice originating from and necessitating negotiated relationships with Indigenous communities and recognition of Indigenous authority” (Horwood, 2019). When Indigenous practices are integrated into museums, the opportunity to form an awareness of institutional legacies is possible. An inherent aspect of transforming museum practice is tension, which can be liberating for institutions and Indigenous communities (Krmptich & Peers, 2013). This tension is designed to create space to address historical wrongdoings and what

Schorch and Hakiwai (2013) define as “reflexive museum practices” which frame Indigenous practices as a practical functioning of museums.

Indigenous language integration

At the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington, (The Burke Museum of ‘The Burke’) previous integration of language and cultural meaning has resulted in adding meaningful context to collections (Winslow, 2018). The Burke is actively in the process of integrating Indigenous languages into the collections management database known as ARGUS. For this study, language integration is centered specifically on the Sm’algyax language of the Tsimshian (Ts’msyen) People. The Tsimshian Nation is located on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia and Southern Southeast Alaska. As of 2016, there were roughly 2,695 fluent speakers of the Sm’algyax language, the language of the Tsimshian Peoples (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2016). Indigenous language integration and privileging Indigenous language within museums is becoming an increasingly legitimate Indigenous museum practice with the potential to increase cultural relevance, connectivity, and legitimacy for Indigenous communities working toward language revitalization (Hodges, 2018).

Austin and Sallabank (2011) state that language documentation and revitalization projects require an increased amount of collaboration, communication, and understanding. When considering Indigenous museum practices, it is pertinent for Indigenous communities to re-remember cultural knowledge and connect to their heritage (Krpmotich & Peers, 2013). Museums can help facilitate the process of re-remembering cultural knowledge and develop practices that consider how practitioners, researchers, and other museum staff should behave in relation to museum collections. Phillips (2017) states that harm can be caused when various systems of knowledge management are not respected by scholars and in this case, museum practitioners. In a similar vein, Spence (2018) claims that language revitalization efforts, such as language integration, can present meaningful opportunities to celebrate culture and resist suppression. Overall, there is opportunity for museums to align their practice with an awareness of cultural knowledge and how Indigenous communities must have the opportunity to develop their own terms of collections care and practice (Magani & Guttorn, 2017).

Privileging Indigenous languages in museums is one way for Indigenous communities to contextualize their own cultural heritage within

collections records. Cooper (2011) states that Indigenous language integration can allow museum staff to see the importance Indigenous Peoples place on the use of objects versus other focuses such as methods of manufacturing or what raw materials were used. In terms of representational imbalances in museums, it is important to identify and represent people as they choose to be recognized in their own languages and cultural frameworks (Fortney, 2020).

Study purpose

The purpose of the study described here was to understand museum practitioners' perspectives on the use of Indigenous language as a strategy for Indigenizing collections management practices in museums. The Burke Museum's Sm'algyax language integration project served as a case study for investigating developing museum practice and a window to understanding the next steps toward integrating cultural information into collections management databases. The study was guided by the following research question: What do museum practitioners see as the benefit of language integration for the museum and for Indigenous communities?

Methodology

This study used a case study design with multiple data sources (Yin, 2014). Data were collected through facilitated interviews with collections management professionals at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington, and through my own reflective journals, as someone who worked on integrating Sm'algyax language terms.

Sampling

A case study approach was favored to understand individual and organizational phenomena, and analyze organizational processes (Yin, 2014). The Burke Museum was selected as the case based on active, on-going language integration projects involving Indigenous North American languages, the Burke's preexisting relationships with Indigenous communities across the Pacific Northwest region, and the size of Indigenous museum collections.

The Burke Museum is a mid-size, natural history museum with the fifth largest collection of Northwest Coast cultural material in the United States, with over ten-thousand objects in the collection (Contemporary

Culture Database, Burke Museum, 2021). Respondents were selected based on previous involvement with a collections database language integration project and experience with collections management practice. Three staff members from the Burke Museum participated in the study, as well as one curator who has worked independently with the Burke. The positions of the staff were primarily collections management related including a collections manager, collections outreach coordinator, and curator. In addition, a reflexive journal was utilized as a data set where I documented observations and perspectives during my experience of associating Sm'alg̱ax language terms with Tsimshian cultural material at the Burke. The journaling served as a method for analyzing the interview data by comparing my own experiences with language integration with previous integration projects at the Burke Museum.

Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (See 'Appendix' for interview guide). A total of four interviews were conducted remotely over video-call on Zoom or by phone. Each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. Interview questions were designed to better understand the staff's broad perspectives of language integration as an Indigenizing practice. In addition to the interviews, a reflexive journal was written throughout the process of integrating terms, including documenting conversations with Rebecca Andrews, a collections manager at the Burke, and throughout the process of associating terms with cultural material at the Burke Museum.

Data analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then analyzed to understand similarities, common challenges, and the overall process to integrate Indigenous languages into collections management databases at the Burke. Themes from the interviews were identified through emergent thematic coding. The reflexive journaling provided first-hand perspectives on the experience of integrating Sm'alg̱ax language terms with Tsimshian materials at the Burke.

Results

The results of this study are organized into four broad categories including a) countering of colonial suppression, b) a sense of Indigeneity, c) collections accessibility, and d) social change.

a) Countering of colonial suppression

Considering the historical circumstances between Indigenous Peoples and museums, countering colonial museum practice is adjacent to countering overall colonial suppression (or the active silencing of Indigenous perspectives and decision-making power). Within the act of countering colonial suppression, participants alluded to several core themes including reconnection to culture, acknowledgement of Indigenous languages, and fuller representation for Indigenous Peoples. Firstly, respondents suggested that Indigenous language integration can lead to opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to reconnect with their cultures, especially those who have been distanced from their communities. Justin McCarthy, collections outreach coordinator at the Burke Museum, stated:

“For Natives who did not grow up with the language and grew up away from their Native communities, it gives as a chance to reconnect with the aspect of our heritage and helps to sort of give us a place to learn from.”

In addition to a place to learn and reconnect, McCarthy stated that the museum space itself becomes a space where Native communities can discuss their identities, the significance of cultural materials, and how cultural material should be perceived by the museum-going public. Miles Miller, independent curator, stated that, aside from the non-Native public, Native people themselves “get a better sense of ownership of the object” while increasing a sense of comfortability within museums and collections spaces. Combining intangible and tangible aspects of cultural heritage is what Dr. Sven Haakanson said provides a “living example” to museum collections. Haakanson stated, “To bring in our words, our stories...the stories of what these collections mean and the power they have, through the voice of that, through our language.”

By acknowledging Indigenous languages and associating museum collections with Indigenous language terms, the perspective of Indigenous Peoples becomes valued over lacking and inaccurate descriptions of Indigenous heritage. For Haakanson, integration efforts are about restoring power to Indigenous voices against historical attempts to erase Indigenous narratives, systemically and intentionally.

“It’s by acknowledging our languages. It acknowledges us as people. And then, from there, thinking about the power of spoken word and the power that it allows us to have, is so important. Because our voices have been silent for so long and systemically and systematically suppressed. And, even at a point, erased from our memory.”

In summary of countering colonial suppression, fuller representation for Indigenous Peoples is a primary goal for integration efforts. Rebecca Andrews, collections manager for North and South American collections at the Burke Museum, states that language and other cultural information should be what the communities want to share. Andrews stated that “...language helps support the view that isn’t the Museum speaking for communities, but it’s the communities voice.” Andrews further explained that by increasing Indigenous voices, museum practices can shift toward being inclusionary, empowering for Indigenous Peoples, and serve as an opening for an effective communication process between museums and Indigenous communities. Fuller representation in museums can also benefit the public who view collections. Haakanson stated that by putting language first (meaning the practice of describing cultural material with Indigenous terms prior to an English term), it can change a visitor’s view of who Indigenous people are:

“When they (visitors) leave, they do not just see oh, look at these primitive savages! They see, oh, what is their language? What are the words? What do they sound like? Who are the people? It asks them to ask our people a more powerful question about who the people were.”

b) Sense of Indigeneity

All respondents alluded to the notion that language integration can strengthen Indigenous People’s connection to cultural heritage. In reflection of my work with the Sm’algyax terms, I worked closely with the collections manager to establish a process for integrating language and associating terms with appropriate collections. For myself, integrating terms has been tremendously helpful in learning new Sm’algyax terms and understanding Tsimshian cultural material. My identity as an Indigenous person has been strengthened because of this project with the Burke Museum collections.

Several of the respondents mentioned similar results including an increase in meaning for museum collections and the revival of Indigenous cultural knowledge. Miles Miller hoped that increased meaning will result in a sense of pride for Indigenous communities visiting the museum:

“If somebody comes into the museum and sees it (language) written and if they know the language enough themselves to be able to pronounce it in written form, then they might be able to recognize that ‘hey, this is a dialect from my people.’ It might just give them a little more sense of pride.”

Justin McCarthy provided an overview of how integration can lead to a stronger sense of Indigeneity for people visiting museums and collections:

“By doing these language projects and community centered exhibits, it gives us Native people sort of a space to claim for home. And it gives us the stage and a place too where we could say you know; this is ours and this is our knowledge, and we are claiming it. Because at the end of the day, while many communities still have these objects, and they were still in the community. A lot of museums are never going to give up or repatriate their collections. So how do we deal with that aspect of it?”

McCarthy raised an important discussion regarding museum collection spaces. In his experience, when community members have access to collections and can discuss cultural information, Indigenous knowledge is promoted and preserved for communities. McCarthy stated that museums can play an essential part of rediscovering knowledge and the wisdom of ancestors, a sentiment which was recognized intergenerationally within McCarthy’s work with Yupik communities. In summary of both increasing meaning for collections and reviving cultural knowledge, access to museum collections plays a critical role in a language integration project.

c) Collections’ accessibility

As previously mentioned, access to collections allows for cultural knowledge to be preserved both within the museum setting and for Indigenous communities. Collection accessibility can be defined,

through the interviews, as having physical and or virtual access to museum collections. Having access to collection allows for an opportunity for museum staff to be readily available to Indigenous communities, such as collections managers, coordinators, or curators that are available to engage in dialogue. Throughout my work with the Burke, Rebecca Andrews and I have had multiple conversations about how a language integration project might look on a fuller scale. During our interview, Rebecca Andrews stated,

“What we want to do is listen to community, have community come in, consult with collections, consult with artworks, get their views, their needs, hear their needs like we have been. But they are difficult conversations. So, sometimes people do not want to offer information, other times people are very forthcoming. Other times people say this is not information you are not allowed to know, and our answer is we respect that. So, it is all the above that we are hoping communities can share with us. It only benefits all of us.”

Early on, the Burke Museum has prioritized Indigenous language integration, especially by curators who work with various Indigenous communities. Curators at the Burke were committed to changing narratives of collections and associated them with their original, Indigenous names. A guiding question for Haakanson is tied to ethics and the courage necessary to carry out this work, even when faced with adversity. He asked,

“What is the right thing? What is the right thing to do? I fundamentally think about this. We have been understanding about other cultures. And think about the respect with trying to not only help the community gain access to these stories, but how the stories can be shared on their (the community’s) terms and in their voices. So, in that essence, just starting like that, and not being afraid to do it.”

When actively working with communities, Miles Miller suggested that museum staff also need to be patient when starting language integration work:

“Be patient because of the different Indian people, especially the elders, they may not have some of the understanding of what a museum would want. So,

patient with the various Indian people that they (the museum) choose and try to select the Indian people who are fluent speakers. I found that to be important when I was putting all of my information together.”

To initialize any cultural knowledge integration work, Justin McCarthy relayed advice on what he found useful when integrating Yupik language terms as part of his work as collections outreach coordinator at the Burke:

“Always get the community involved. And even if you are just working with one person, get them onboard. The community will see what you are doing and hopefully galvanize behind it and build on it. Make friends with one or two people. And check in on them. And keep in touch with them. It doesn’t always have to be where you’re taking knowledge, but you’re building this relationship.”

For the scope of this study, I was not involved with community members or language learners, though, my prior experience of respecting cultural protocol and my own journey of learning the Sm’algyax language served as a reference point in acknowledging cultural sensitivities, the linguistic variation of Sm’algyax, and the needs of language learners. I focused on publicly accessible collections records previously posted on the Museum website and non-ceremonial materials. Several accessions and collections were listed as Gitksan and Nisga’a, which are culturally related to Tsimshian people and linguistically to the Sm’algyax language but are considered distinct cultures and languages which were not included in this study. My main references were three Sm’algyax dictionaries, two from British Columbia and one written in Alaska, utilizing both different spelling systems in Canada and the United States. Miles Miller went through a similar process of utilizing a Yakama community language dictionary. Miller encourages other Indigenous people who are integrating terms to utilize their community’s resources and information. McCarthy describes language resources as a “knowledgebase:”

“This is our knowledgebase, and this is what we want to share within the community. I hope that it helps these large language organization projects. And I would hope that maybe we (the Burke) could start partnering with language programs and emergent schools to do days

where we just hold museum visits or virtual museum visits.”

In summary of collection accessibility, Haakanson raised the pressing issue of how to fund language integration efforts. At the Burke Museum, funds for language projects are limited. To increase accessibility to collections and integrate cultural knowledge, funding is a necessary element of reciprocity:

“We (the Museum) are really at a point where to not only pay the elders, but to pay the next generation of learners. Because our system has done a good job of systematically erasing a language from our living world. And that is another conservation that has unfortunately had. You have heard on the news, as hard as it is to say that. But do not soften the blow. Do not soften the reality. Because the closer we speak to the truth, the more we can act on changing it and the outcome.”

The outcome Haakanson mentioned is the primary goal of integration work. He goes on to say that the goal of these projects is to show museum practitioners and the public how important languages are to Indigenous communities. To change collections work and museums in general, there must be a shift in how practitioners interact with communities and collections.

d) Social change

Lastly and most critically, social change is both a necessary component and potential outcome of language integration in museums. In relation to collections management, Western practices are limited in the ability to integrate ‘external’ cultural knowledge. For example, the Argus database at the Burke is currently incapable of integrating special characters which many Indigenous languages utilize in written form, such as Sm’algyax. Rebecca Andrews stated that language integration is a way to truly convey cultural meaning from Indigenous perspectives, especially when Indigenous languages do not translate well from English:

“It’s the very essence of a living culture. When you can sing to it, and you can talk to it, and call to it, and some people might say it is the soul in the artwork or it is the ancestor in the artwork. The connection is there when

the community addresses the artwork. And that is just the most beautiful part of my job.”

A change in museum practices can also lead to greater comfortability with museum settings for Indigenous Peoples. Miller said,

“It (language integration) makes me feel more comfortable, it also gives me a sense that the objects are more comfortable. You will always hear this, that objects have the soul as well. Once we make something, they have feelings. I am sure that they’re happy to be identified by what we call them instead of what the white man would use.”

Each participant provided their personal aspirations of how language integration could impact museums and communities. Haakanson stated,

“We need to change the narrative with ourselves. We need to change the narrative of how important it is not only to support, but also find ways we can start practicing language learning in our daily lives. We are starting to help achieve that narrative...It is important to put language first. Because it then embodies the knowledge into the cultural pieces that you share and shows respect back to the people where that piece comes from. It also shows that museums are starting to have and change the narrative of how they share other people’s histories.”

Lastly, in relation to changing the narrative and initiating efforts to change museum practice, humility is key when it comes to moving forward. Haakanson concluded that his work at the Burke has required him to start the integration process knowing that they may “not get it right.” As I reflected on the process of integrating Sm’algyax language terms into the Burke database, I recognize that our work has only just initialized the process of acknowledging the Sm’algyax language at the Burke Museum. This process has resulted in moving closer to a more fine-tuned process of integrating accurate cultural knowledge into collections management practice.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand museum practitioner’s perspectives on the use of Indigenous language as a

strategy for Indigenizing collections management practices in museums. Colonialism has led to social and professional practices that maintain inequities in power and authority over museum collections, which Krmpotich and Peers (2011) describe have been historically informed by sets of beliefs about Indigenous Peoples and institutional standardized practice. Phillips (2017) draws attention to how Indigenous communities have had to consult with museums out of necessity due to museums' having a "traditional state" of authority over Indigenous collections (p. 185). To Phillips, shifting, or changing, museum practice requires two moral developments to be integrated within museums. These include acknowledging how historical practice has objectified cultural material and framing museum practice as a human rights issue.

The Burke Museum has acted on Phillips' moral developments in numerous ways including a greater curatorial responsibility, defined by the School of Advanced Research (SAR) (2013) in Santa Fe as a model for understanding the social networks of cultural material, such as museum collections. In this sense, curatorial responsibility can be viewed as the generation of "new conceptions of care and curation" that genuinely respect and show concern for communities and their collections (SAR, p. 6). Curatorial responsibility calls for museum practice and practitioners' to actively reflect on the impacts of their practices, especially practices that move beyond recognition of Indigenous agency and toward viewing collections as social assemblages which are grounded in non-human social networks (SAR, p.4). In the 1960s, Indigenous-led activism called upon museums and their staffs to recognize the autonomy, self- definition, respect, dignity, human rights, and protection of religious freedom, and as Karen Cooper states "cultural continuation" of Indigenous Peoples.

From an international context, McCarthy (2011) states that changing collections management practice can be as simple as recognizing the contemporary importance of collections and cultural material for Indigenous communities. The Museum of New Zealand Te Tongarewa has integrated Māori knowledge into most collections' practices, such as physical care and how practitioners consider collections living ancestors. At the Te Tongarewa, collections managers take on the roles of guardians in the eyes of Indigenous community members. Additionally, the Māori language is now an integral part of not only collections records at the Museum but for numerous museum departments. Within the exhibitions department, McCarthy states that museums need to break away from limited exhibitionary practices which restrict Maori cultural heritage is displayed. Language integration

then can be seen as part of greater efforts in museums to uplift contemporary and present-day perspectives of Indigenous Peoples, which McCarthy says is a practice museums are reluctant to integrate. For McCarthy, the goal is for museums to refine practice across the board. In North America, a change in practice is essential for moving beyond simple recognition of Indigenous agency. As Cooper (2008) documented during her time working with the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Connecticut, community members view museums as more than material. "There is more to being Native and understanding Native people than an artifact. It is what is in your heart, the way you were raised. It is what you are about." (Cooper, p. 162). In this regard, how can collections management practices and other museum professions help facilitate and be held accountable to increase connection to language and ultimately Indigenous knowledgebases?

Horwood (2019) says that is vital for collections management practitioners to recognize how collections fit into social practices of Indigenous communities. In her thesis on community-based archives, Hodges (2018) states is critical for generations of learners and speakers to have access to language information and physical collections. She states that physical access to collections and their information comes down to a need for contextualizing cultural heritage. An important consideration within a database such as ARGUS, is how collections practitioners might present Indigenous language terms in ways that communities and language learners find useful. Spence (2018) discusses that interpretation is a key element of collections accessibility. Spence asks how language in collections records can be used for pedagogical purposes and how integrating language resources (such as dictionaries) can be useful for people learning the language. Krmpotich and Peers (2014) also note that attention is needed on cataloging, intellectual categorizations, and taxonomies of Indigenous material culture to begin affecting change in a museum. They state that museum catalogs (or databases) should not use Western classification if museums want to be relevant and responsive to Indigenous communities. Phillips states that as more Indigenous communities engage with museums, the ability for collections to stimulate memory and knowledge suppressed by assimilation and colonization becomes even more apparent.

Today, museum practice is shifting toward a more critical awareness of cultural materials and the knowledge collections represents to communities. Increasing accessibility to collections and integrating knowledge releases power to communities and allows for a new voice

of authority in museums (Horwood, 2019). Indigenous Peoples are seeing museum practice established on their own terms allowing for collections work to fuel cultural revival efforts (Magani and Guttorn, 2018). For practice centered around Indigenous language integration, Hodges states that the main role for museums will be to utilize archival and historical resources to assist in overall language revitalization. For Indigenous communities, Hodges states that productive language learning and ideologies around language use can result from working with museums. She states that language in museums can lead to social change, empower language movements, and revitalize culture in general. Austin and Sallabank (2014) outline key considerations when integrating language terms, including how to negotiate what terms are published, understanding historical contexts of language (i.e., how the language has changed over time) and understanding the purpose of documenting language. For language integration, practices must be reflexive of histories, collaborative in nature, and critically aware that the process is not straightforward.

Austin and Sallabank point to similar considerations such as the need for further developments in language work so projects like the Burke's can offer more opportunities for Indigenous communities to connect with heritage. They state that community members should be able to approach cultural material in museums and feel informed, empowered, and their contributions richer. Winslow (2018) describes the Burke as having strong relations to Indigenous communities throughout the region, which has allowed practitioners to shift their practices including collections storage, research visits, and establish an institutional understanding of respective cultural knowledge and sensitivities. Stanley (2007) calls this cross-'cultural heritage management', defined as a framework for museological practice that emphasizes social and cultural dimensions of curation and heritage preservation. Museum practices which merge multiple types of display, interpretation, and documentation all highlight how cross-cultural heritage management can lead to mutual understanding and power sharing in museums (Phillips, 2011).

Lastly, a major discussion of language integration as an Indigenizing practice has solely to do with cultural vitality, which Alivizatou (2011) defines cultural heritage as a process of constant change, open to external influences. Language integration can be viewed similarly in that the practice itself should be responsive to contemporary realities and social movements of Indigenous Peoples. By considering the historical circumstances between museums and Indigenous Peoples, language integration can be seen as an opportunity to address

historical museum practices and shift toward practices that celebrate cultural meaning, preservation, and the everchanging aspects of Indigenous identity.

Limitations

This case study research was done with staff members that are currently or have been employed at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture at the University of Washington. It is possible that the findings of this study are limited geographically and culturally to the Pacific Northwest region, due to the collections staff working with collections from Washington State and Alaska. Secondly, this study was concerned with North American Indigenous languages and could possibly be limited when considering the broader research of general language and cultural knowledge integration in museums.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic limited in-person, direct access to physical collections, the ARGUS database, hard-copy object records, and general on-site project development for this study. In-person procedures regarding this study may have included archival research of object records and access to the ARGUS collections database and research library. In summary, the Burke Museum was selected to analyze an active, on-going language integration project that has been implemented previously by collections staff and Indigenous communities.

Implications

This study offers several potential applications for museum practitioners who work with collections and Indigenous communities. Based on the results and discussion of this research, Indigenous language integration can be viewed as an undertaking which requires institutional reflection and awareness of practice, the need for funding and greater development, and a fuller understanding of Indigenous communities and current cultural heritage preservation efforts. For museum practitioners, the implications also serve as applications to museum practice especially when integrating cultural information into collections records, databases, and overall considering how museums care for cultural material.

Moving forward, Indigenous language integration as an Indigenizing practice has the potential to connect practitioners and Indigenous communities with cultural knowledge on various levels. In discussion with Rebecca Andrews, collections manager of North and South

American cultures, language integration has the potential to be conducted on a larger scale that involves community members, language speakers, learners, and other museum practitioners. However, it is critical to consider the potential challenges of implementing such projects, especially those that involve the integration of deeper cultural meaning to collections, or cultural material. For example, partnerships with tribal organizations and language learning programs could help to enhance and provide additional funding to language learning projects, especially if there is an intergenerational interest to work with museum collections and language.

Lastly, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture provides a unique case study example of language integration being utilized as a museum practice in that the Burke has maintained strong relationships with Northwest Coast Indigenous communities. Additionally, cultural meaning has been slowly integrated over time within Contemporary Culture collections, facilitated by curators, collections staff, and communities. For Rebecca Andrews and myself, the next steps of this project will be to fully integrate the terms into the Argus museum database and collections records. The Sm'alg̱yaᵗ terms will be associated with appropriate cultural material and then permanently attached to the material record in ARGUS.

As an emerging Indigenous museum professional, I hope that this project will serve as the beginning to an on-going, standard language integration practice at the Burke Museum and be an opportunity for further collaboration with Sm'alg̱yaᵗ language learners, Tsimshian communities, and all other Northwest Coast nations. The Sm'alg̱yaᵗ language integration project has given me the opportunity to work on developing museum practices that truly reflect Indigenous perspectives and acknowledge the living context provided by our ancestors, or as we would say, in the translation of Sm'alg̱yaᵗ, (sm =, alg̱yaᵗ), the 'real' language.

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