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Listening to the Native Voice: Museums as a Medium in Correcting Native American Stereotypes

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When walking in the fields by his home, Henry David Thoreau would look for arrowheads to bring him closer to the life of the "red man." On a visit to a friend, Thoreau was shown a piece of pottery that had a bird's head carved in the handle. Thoreau was so moved by this example of ornamentation for the sake of beauty that he wrote in his journal, "It is affecting as a work of art by a people who have left so few traces of themselves, a step beyond the common arrowhead." He then begins to imagine the actual artist, writing, "he ha[d] begun to leave behind him war and even hunting, -- to redeem himself from the savage state." And in a thoughtful musing he writes, "Enough of this would have saved him from extermination."[1]

Native Americans have been, and in many cases still are, thought of as a people with a static and even dead culture. Henry David Thoreau's journal entries amply illustrate this point. The result of this thinking is that Native Americans have been forever immortalized as an exotic "other," a relic of the past. The causes of this misinformed idea lie in the sources that have been written about Native Americans, from both the historian's and anthropologist's perspective. Much of the history of Native Americans has been told from a biased perspective. The primary problem is that Native American history is considered to be peripheral material to the story of America's settlement. Traditional written history viewed Native Americans as a hindrance to westward expansion, and regarded the solution to this "Indian Problem" as either assimilation or annihilation. Unfortunately, this is where the history ends. According to most history books, the story of the Native Americans ends after colonialization. Anthropologists also contributed to the problem by writing sources that were based on the idea that their studies of Native peoples and

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[1]Arthur G. Volkman, ed., *Excerpts from Works of Henry David Thoreau* (Wilmington, DE: The Archaeological Society of Delaware, 1943), 9-10.

objects were necessary to preserve a record of the Native American's existence and way of life because soon it would no longer exist. Together, historians and anthropologists left biased sources of information for current scholars, and more importantly perpetuated the idea that Native culture was both dying and "other."

Museums have been a powerful medium through which the general public is shown what current historians and anthropologists term historical "truth." Museums of the past reflected the idea that Native Americans were a people with a static culture; therefore, the people who visited museums believed it. Today many museums continue to perpetuate this idea in their exhibits, with serious consequences for American culture. In popular culture these images come to life for most Americans by simply describing the stereotypical image that has come to depict the Native American -- the 1800s Plains Indian with a large feather headdress and war paint. The Native American has not been allowed to evolve from this image.

Unfortunately, Native Americans, after realizing that this image sells, began to perpetuate this image themselves. Native American novelist Sherman Alexie illustrates this point when he says, "We have failed at self-representation because we have not accurately represented ourselves. We have given members of the dominant culture what they want."[2] This is what is most harmful about these stereotypes. Not only is the dominant culture being denied true history, but Native Americans are relegated to the past. This results in Native Americans forgetting their culture and simply being ashamed to be Native American. As a woman giving a lecture at a conference I attended concerning the identity of Native Americans poignantly stated,

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[2]Ben Winton, "Where There's Smoke . . . ," *Native Peoples* 11.4 (Summer 1998): 58.

"You are not a true Indian unless at one time you wished you weren't."[3]

There has been an effort in the last twenty years to correct these harmful stereotypes and ideologies in the disciplines of history, anthropology, and museum studies. It is now the role and responsibility of museums to embrace these new ways of thinking about culture in order to offer more accurate representations of Native American culture. Museums have the power to influence how people think about certain issues. With this power comes responsibility. Museums owe it to both the general public and Native Americans to tell a more complete story. As I will show in my case study of Southwestern pottery at Illinois Wesleyan University, it is both possible and imperative to make changes to Native American exhibits to show that Native culture does not simply end after the closing of the frontier. To fully understand the changes that must be made in the exhibit at Illinois Wesleyan and exhibits in all museums, one must first understand the causes of the stereotype that Native culture is static, which lie in the ideologies of history, anthropology, and museums of the past.

The History

> This was not the vanquished and vanishing American. Here was a living voice, and a competent voice, asking the white man to justify his works. This was not what one read in the books. -- D'Arcy McNickle[4]

The history of Native Americans in the disciplines of history and anthropology

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[3]From a conference held at the Newberry Library in Chicago called *Crossing Borders: American Indians and Encounters with Diversity*. D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History Autumn Conference and Celebration. September 18 &19, 1998.

[4]D'Arcy McNickle, *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1949), 1.

contributes to how they have been historically portrayed in museums. What people *did* read in the books was that Native culture was dying, or dead. Because history, anthropology, and museums all intertwine, this misinformed assessment has become prevalent in each, making it that much more difficult to correct. Each institution heavily depended on sources that were written from an ethnocentric Euro-American perspective, which did not understand Native American culture and therefore made it peripheral. Because sources were from this perspective, later sources were tainted by this thinking. Revisionist thought in each discipline, however, is attempting to examine events and findings that have been studied, and apply new thought and research in order to make them more accurate.

In attempting to find an identity for Native Americans within history, whether the histories are about the closing of the frontier or federal policy towards Native Americans, most texts have been written from a bias perspective. The common trend that runs throughout these histories is that the Native Americans are always described in European terms, or in response to these terms. As Calvin Martin states, "for him [the historian], the Indian was an incompletely developed Western European or American, as the case may be, and on this faulty premise he built a seriously flawed literature."[5] Unfortunately, the main problem with most history of the Native American is that it refuses to show that Native American history is a continuing story. Although most history ignores the Native American, viewing this as peripheral material, the vast majority of history that *does* address the Native American is early American history.

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[5]Calvin Martin. "Ethnohistory: A Better Way to Write Indian History," in *Major Problems in American Indian History*, eds. Albert L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 24.

The histories of the Native American within the story of the "beginning" of America paint two pictures of the Native American: the noble savage and the dangerous savage. The first is the noble savage, the identity of an untamed American frontier. This image of the Native American is not threatening. For the colonial Americans the image of the Native American was a way to identify themselves as different from England, a new young nation. The Native American was seen as "other," as something they have never encountered before, as America was to England. Consequently, most drawings depicting America during colonial times show America as a young Native American woman.[6] This romantic image of the Native American changed quickly once they realized that Native Americans were not readily willing to give up their land. What followed, therefore, was a new image of the Native American as an obstacle to westward expansion, a savage that needed to be removed, either by assimilation or annihilation. This image depicts the Native American as dangerous, thereby giving Euro-Americans an excuse to take Native land by force.

In many history texts written around the turn of the twentieth century, the image that the author chose depended upon the motive in writing the book. The romanticized image of the Native American was used by authors who wanted to show how white society was the only savior for the plight of the Native American. The most famous of these texts is *A Century of Dishonor* written by Helen Jackson in 1888.[7] For Jackson, who is described in the preface by H.B. Whipple as a woman whose "heart has pleaded so eloquently for the poor Red men," the

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[6]Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 29.

[7]Helen Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings With Some of the Indian Tribes* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1888).

Native American was a victim of the government's policy of westward expansion.[8] Like a mother for a child, she sees it as her responsibility to help Native Americans as they are too weak to help themselves. "The great difficulty with the Indian problem," Jackson writes," is not with the Indian, but with the Government and the people of the United States. . . . [W]e have suffered these people to remain as savages."[9] Her solution, of course, is to civilize these poor victims and place them within mainstream American society because, "until the power of Christian civilization shall make them consciously one with us, they will not cease to vex us."[10] Although Jackson acknowledges that there is an "Indian problem," she uses the romantic view of the Native American to justify doing what she believes is best for them.

Another example of this is a text called *The Indians of Today* written in 1926 by Flora Warren Seymour.[11] The motivation behind the writing of this book is similar. She believes that the Native Americans are in danger of becoming forgotten aspects of American life. Her book is an attempt to show Americans that the Native Americans, like an endangered species, are worth saving. After giving historical background on many of the main tribes in America, she attempts to prove that Native Americans are indeed capable of assimilation. She cites an example of a woman whose name is Mrs. Frank Johnson, "a name that has never come from either Indian or

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[8]Ibid., v.

[9]Ibid., 1.

[10]Ibid., 2.

[11]Flora Warren Seymour, *The Indians of Today* (Chicago: Benj. H. Sanborn & Co., 1926).

Spanish country," something of which she should be proud.[12] Her section about the Cherokee[13] ends with her statement that if the Navajo are considered the largest tribe, it is only because the Cherokee are "no longer a tribe, and no longer need to be thought of as needing help from the Government."[14] She praises the Cherokee and upholds them as an example for all Indians to follow, and thus proves to American society that the Native American is capable of assimilation.

The histories in these examples use the romantic image of the Native American to solve the Indian problem through assimilation. I have no doubt that these authors had the best intentions, and while it is unfair to judge these texts by today's standards, it is important to note that many modern history texts rely on this same romanticized image of the Native American. The romanticized image of Native Americans relegates them to the past because this is the image that is pleasing not only to colonists, but society today. Any deviation from this image is not acceptable, and was not acceptable to society in the 1800s because Native Americans did not retain this pleasing image when their land was threatened.

The savage picture of the Native American was used when the motivation behind writing the text was to dehumanize Native Americans. The motive behind dehumanizing Native Americans, of course, was to justify taking Native American land. An example of this type of

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[12]Ibid., 132.

[13]The section on the Cherokee is called "One of the Five Civilized Tribes." The Cherokee, because their way of life was familiar to Europeans, were considered to be the most civilized. They lived in houses similar to those that Europeans would recognize, they farmed the land, they had a recognizable government, and of course, they had a written language.

[14]Ibid., 95.

text is a book entitled *Indian Atrocities!*, written in 1846.[15] As one clearly discerns from the full title, this text is meant to be a guide to how real savages behave. In the text there are numerous stories depicting how cruel Native Americans are by nature: "[T]hey [Native Americans] acted according to their light and education."[16] The author attempts to give an explanation based on the idea that Native Americans are too simple-minded and wild to know better. In one of the stories, Native Americans run into the house, kill the parents, and proceed to boil the children in large pots, much like one would see in a Bugs Bunny cartoon.[17] There are further examples of how these savages enjoy torturing for pleasure, killing and torturing women, and all out massacre.[18] After reading this text, it would not be hard to find motivation to exterminate a people who are so savage, and, additionally, hinder westward expansion.

Most histories of America, however, have viewed the Native American as an unimportant part of American history after the closing of the frontier. Many of us can look back to grade school and remember talking about Indians and the First Thanksgiving, but after that the history of the Native American becomes non-existent. I went to grade school in Oklahoma and we learned about the Sooners and how there was a race to grab the land, but it was much later when I

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[15]*Indian Atrocities!: Affecting and Thrilling Anecdotes respecting the Hardships of our Brave and Venerable Forefathers, in their bloody and heart-rendering skirmishes and contests with the ferocious savages: containing numerous engravings, illustrating the most general traits of Indian character, their customs, and deeds of cruelty, with interesting accounts of the captivity, sufferings and heroic conduct of many who have fallen into their hands*, (Boston: S.C. Fuller, 1846).

[16]Ibid., v.

[17]Ibid., 6.

[18]Ibid., 9-10, 17, and 24, respectively.

learned from my father that this land had been given to Native Americans as part of the federal government's removal policy.[19] The history of the Native American was and is told only in terms of westward expansion. It is viewed as a story of Christian versus savage, good versus evil: "Modern historians . . . still fall back on the view that American history is essentially a story of civilization overcoming primitivism."[20] This is important for three reasons, the first is that once the frontier was closed, Native Americans no longer had any significance. There was no longer any reason to include them in the history of America because that hurdle had been jumped. This, therefore, relegates Native Americans to the past; they become a forgotten part of history. The next reason is that defining Native Americans as primitive combines with the previous reason in showing that Native culture is not growing and changing. Instead of acknowledging that Native culture is ever-changing, it is more common to believe that Native Americans are the same today as they were in 1880. The third reason is that by placing civilization against primitivism, Native Americans only become significant when accompanied by Europeans. As Hoxie states, "Indian history is significant only when it intersects with the history of European settlement."[21] Europeans become the standard by which Native Americans are measured. Unsurprisingly,

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[19]The removal to which I am referring is the governmental policy under President Andrew Jackson under which Native Americans were forced from their homes to reservations. A more common reference is the Trail of Tears in which Native Americans from the Southeast were moved to Oklahoma. It is referred to as the Trail of Tears because about one-fourth of the Native Americans moved died along the way.

[20]Frederick Hoxie, "The Problems of Indian History," in *Major Problems in American Indian History*, eds. Albert L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 37.

[21]Ibid.

Native Americans will constantly be placed lower in the hierarchy by those who invented the hierarchy.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Native American and sympathetic authors began to write in order to correct some of the wrongs that history had dealt them. This began a trend of historical writing that began to be called revisionist history. Unfortunately, many of the early examples of this history were angry responses to the history that had already been written: "historians of the American Indian have thus far been much more successful at bashing . . . stereotypes than in erecting a replacement."[22] Fergus M. Bordewich calls revisionist history a history "of deep, unredeemed tragedy" and "equally as mythic" as the history they are trying to replace.[23] This response was inevitable because for so long, the Native American was referred to as the "Vanishing American," and it became natural to think of them as they once were. However, as Vine Deloria Jr. states, Native Americans "must be connected with world history."[24] He calls on everyone to "rework and restate" history in order to correct many of the harmful stereotypes that have come to dominate our society regarding Native Americans.[25] In this way, history can be used to create a deeper understanding of the Native American. Once this revisionist history is applied to the representation of Native Americans in history and museums, the reversal of stereotypes will begin.

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[22]Ibid., 35.

[23]Fergus M. Bordewich, *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 18.

[24]Vine Deloria Jr., "Indians, Archaeologists, and the Future," *American Antiquity* 57.4 (1992):597.

[25]Ibid., 598.

Anthropology and history are fields that go hand in hand, and unfortunately, the view that Native culture is static was also shared by anthropologists. Anthropologists in the late 1800s wanted to study a pure and untouched Native culture. Once they saw that Native Americans were beginning to incorporate aspects of Euro-American culture into their own, the anthropologists believed that this was a sign that Native culture was dying. Anthropologists then saw it as their responsibility to document every aspect of this "dying" culture. As Vine Deloria Jr.'s book, *Custer Died For Your Sins,* accounts many Native Americans began to find this behavior offensive. Deloria was the first scholarly Native American author who waged an all out battle with anthropologists. His book called into question all of the techniques used by anthropologists. The relationship between anthropologist and Native Americans has since been a strained one. As in the field of history, much revision needs to be done in the field of anthropology to create a useful relationship with the Native American.

One of the earliest events to mark the work done by anthropologists concerning Native Americans was the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.[26] The motivation behind doing such anthropological work for the Columbian Exposition was to show how far American society had come. The superior white society was represented by the visitor, and the primitive was represented by the Native American as well as other ethnic people from all over the world. Along with other anthropologists of the time, well-known anthropologist Franz Boas did studies to show the effects of the mixing of races. For his work with the Columbian

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[26]The World's Columbian Exposition was a huge event for Chicago. The purpose of this fair was to display the best of today's culture and predict what was ahead in the future. The section of the fair that displayed ethnic peoples was meant to contrast the primitive past with the civilized future.

Exposition, he "discovered" that in half-breed faces, "Indian influence predominated." This was proven because of the wide face, and a wide face was a "more primitive characteristic of mankind."[27] The Native American features represented what was primitive about mankind, and therefore inferior. Also, as Frank Cushing wrote in a Bureau of American Ethnology[28] Office Work Report, there was an exhibit held in the Smithsonian's division of the U.S. government building during the Columbian Exposition in which they displayed Pueblo pottery.[29] The exhibit was entitled "Primitive Pottery Making," and featured two Zuni women making pottery in front of the visitors. Placing these women literally on display had the same effect as the study that Boas did, which was to show how advanced mainstream American society was compared to the methods used by these "primitive" Indian women.

The Native American, however, did not stay as "primitive" as anthropologists of the time hoped. The introduction of the railroad in 1880 to more remote places in the United States increased exposure of whites to Native Americans, but vice versa as well. With this exposure came change. Native Americans began to alter their methods in many aspects of their lives. They began to use commercial dyes to weave their rugs, and mainstream American culture even had influence over their designs. One example of a Navajo rug has a portion of a railroad sign that the weaver saw and a depiction of a train. As the description of the rug explains,

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[27]George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 171-173.

[28]The Bureau of American Ethnology was an office under the Smithsonian Institution

[29]Frank Cushing, "BAE Office Work Report, 1893," MS.6.BAE.3.8, Archives, Something Library, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles.

> Supplied with prespun yarns of many colors, Navajo weavers of the 1880s tried practically everything their looms could accommodate. One trend was to reproduce American graphic materials, such as package labels and signs, as well as more complicated images like the trains and trading post on this rug.[30]

Furthermore, when the Hudson Bay Company came to the Northwest coast, Native Americans began to make button blankets using the company's material because it was in such great supply.[31] The railroad also influenced the economy as Native Americans were now able to sell their pottery and rugs to tourists. In these changes the anthropologist saw the death of Native culture. There was a rush to collect as much information as possible in the short time they had left: "anthropologists up to the early years of the twentieth century believed along with everyone else that the Indians would vanish as a definable population. Some field workers were almost ruthless in their quest for information lest it be lost with the death of the elderly, informed people."[32] At this point the anthropologists were more concerned for their own scholarly interests than they were with the problems Native Americans were facing.

The publication of Vine Deloria Jr.'s book in 1969, *Custer Died For Your Sins*, became the Native American response to the ideology held by anthropologists.[33] His message was simple: "Compilation of useless knowledge 'for knowledge's sake' should be utterly rejected by

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[30]Richard Conn, *Native American Art in the Denver Art Museum* (Mount Vernon, NY: Denver Art Museum, 1979), 179.

[31]Danyelle Means, interviewed by author, Bloomington, IL., 29 March 1999.

[32]Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "American Indians and Museums: A Love-Hate Relationship," *The Old Northwest* 2.3 (1972): 239.

[33]Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1988). This book was originally published in 1969, and chapters one and four, four being the chapter concerning anthropologists, were first published in *Playboy*.

the Indian people. We should not be objects of observation for those who do nothing to help us."[34] His chapter addressing anthropology, sarcastically named "Anthropologists and Other Friends," was a biting wake-up call to the field of anthropology. Anthropologists had been very good about doing one thing, which was to show how different Native Americans were from the rest of society. As far as any useful study, Deloria is very clear about the harmful results of this ideology: "The massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today."[35] He argues that it is impossible for anyone to relate to the image of Native Americans painted by anthropologists. Anthropologists contributed to the idea that Native culture was static, and therefore relegated Native Americans to the past where no one would be able to relate to them as a culture.

Many anthropologists recall how they felt when they first read Deloria's book. Many were in college at the time that his book was published, so his ideas influenced how they learned anthropology. Now anthropology is making a concerted effort to change its methods.[36] An example of this is in the anthropologist Barbara Babcock. Her books and essays on Pueblo pottery are examples of how a Native artist can be portrayed in a contemporary light. One example of Babcock's work with artists is her portrayal of Helen Cordero, who made Pueblo

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[34]Ibid., 94.

[35]Ibid., 81.

[36]See *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr. and the Critique of Anthropology*, edited by Thomas Biolsi and Larry J. Zimmerman.

Storytellers until her death in 1994.[37] Refusing to relegate this pottery method to the past, Babcock shows how Cordero is "making tradition her own." Babcock shows how it is possible to combine tradition and change. Cordero is portrayed as a modern, changing artist who is able to incorporate tradition in her work. Babcock uses quotations from the artists to make them more real, to make them more than an anthropological object. Scholars like Babcock are changing the face of anthropology into a field that is not based on an "us" and "them" mentality. Native Americans and anthropologists are working together to determine the best way to use anthropological methods.

Museums were the means by which historians and anthropologists showed current views and ideologies. Therefore, as historians and anthropologists were perpetuating the ideology that Native culture was static and dying, this was the message that museums were giving to their visitors. This preservationist approach that was taken by historians and anthropologists was also shared by collectors for museums. Historically, and sadly even currently, museums have made Native Americans encounter a paradox concerning their development as a culture and as artists. "This process," as Edwin L. Wade points out, "has been replete with paradox -- the preservation of 'traditional' aesthetic culture straining against the forces of community development and individual cultural creativity."[38] The policy of museums in the late 1800s and early 1900s was to

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[37]Barbara A. Babcock, *The Pueblo Storyteller: Development of a Figurative Ceramic Tradition*, (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1986). See also Babcock's article "Modeled Selves: Helen Cordero's 'Little People.'" published in 1986. Pueblo storytellers are clay figures of storytellers. Cordero's are characterized by figures of little children climbing all over the larger storyteller figure.

[38]Edwin L. Wade, "The Ethnic Art Market in the American Southwest: 1880 - 1980," *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stocking Jr.

preserve this tradition, to preserve a culture that was untouched by white culture. This is absurd as it is virtually impossible to find a pure culture. In fact, the phrase "pure culture" is a misnomer as change is an essential part of any living culture. Regardless, the New Deal in the 1930s and 1940s enhanced the ideology that Native culture should be "pure" and started federal policy towards Native American cultures that called for the protection of Native American culture and artifacts. Museums joined historians and anthropologists and took the paternalistic view that they knew what was best for Native Americans and their culture.

Because of its exotic location and climate, the southwestern United States was the focus for much of the collecting and tourism around the turn of the century. It became a place where tourists were encouraged to view an exotic culture without having to leave the country. Inevitably, with the arrival of the railroad, many tribes in the Southwest began to be influenced by this new arrival. An example of this was in the production of water jars for the tourists. As the water jars were too bulky to be taken on the train, they were replaced by smaller, more decorative pieces.[39] This, of course, put anthropologists and collectors both in a fury. Their worst nightmares were coming true; Native American culture was not remaining pure and untouched. The fear was that they were too late, that the culture was already dying. They did not understand that Native culture *was* alive, that to understand how Native culture had grown and changed was as important as understanding how they were before European influence. So like anthropologists, collectors for museums made a frenzied rush to collect artifacts before it

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(Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985), 168.

[39]Ibid., 169.

was too late.

Thomas V. Keam became one of the most prominent suppliers for museums in the Southwest. Because there was this worry that Native Americans would forget how to make pottery in the "traditional" way, Keam encouraged Hopi artists to use prehistoric designs and shapes. He also commissioned a number of people to make replicas of the pottery so that it would be suitable for exhibition. It was his belief that the modern artists were not capable of making the pottery as well as their ancestors. Keam believed that they were "culturally degenerate and incapable of the sophistication of their forebears."[40] It is fascinating to note that with any European culture, the evolution and change of an art form shows sophistication, but in the case of Native Americans, change was seen as inferior to what was done previously and further proof of their imminent extinction. Also interesting is the contradiction between white America's desire to "civilize" Native Americans and the lack of "sophistication" when Native Americans began to change their art in response to white America's desires. Native Americans were caught between two expectations, and fulfilling one meant that they were insufficient in another.

A method that museums used to maintain pure art was creating competitions in which participants were judged by their use of traditional methods. One such example was the Museum of Northern Arizona whose criteria for participating in their contests were very strict. They would automatically reject any blankets that used aniline dyes or baskets made with a deep shape. Although the use of these dyes was much quicker, and the shape of the baskets more

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[40]Ibid., 172.

appealing to tourists, the Museum of Northern Arizona was "adamant about disallowing nontraditional shapes and techniques."[41] These contests refused to allow Native cultures to evolve by forcing them to adopt traditional methods without any outside influence. Ironically, this behavior, intended to save the culture, was in fact repressing it.

An even more disturbing example from the Museum of Northern Arizona is found in the manipulation of silver jewelry making of the Hopi. According to historian Edwin Wade, members of the museum staff felt that they had the right to decide what was best for the Hopi, and that included defining what was to be their form of jewelry-making:

> The director's wife and members of the museum staff decided that the traditional silver jewelry made by the Hopi was too similar to that of the Navajo and Zuni -- which was not surprising, considering that the Hopi had only learned the craft from the Zuni at the close of the nineteenth century and the Zuni had, in turn, learned it from the Navajo. But the museum felt it was time for the Hopi to have their own distinctive style, even if that meant displacing what they had come to think of as their traditional form of jewelry.[42]

This, obviously, was a much different ideology from that of the preservationist, but nonetheless derived from it. The museum, in its infinite wisdom, believed that it knew what was best for Native Americans. It was a short step from encouraging Native artists to use prehistoric designs and shapes to telling Native artists what their "traditional" methods should be. This paternalistic attitude caused museums to forget that their function is to display Native culture--Native culture as it is, not how they would have it be.

Later, in the 1930s, the perservationism of New Deal policy influenced a man by the

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[41]Ibid., 181.

[42]Ibid., 182-183.

name of René d'Harnoncourt. What made him different, however, was that he recognized it was important to preserve past Native culture, but he also saw it was important to show contemporary Native culture as well. He developed museum exhibits of Native American art, but in a way that did not relegate Native American culture and art to the past. In his notes for a speech to the Indian Defense Association in San Francisco in 1938 he said, "The American Indian is alive today and will live tomorrow."[43] D'Harnoncourt proved his devotion to this ideology in his exhibits and in his speeches. He believed that Native American art was not only influenced by Euro-Americans, but that mainstream American art would have much to learn from Native American art.[44] In this way, the preservationist idea was a positive influence as it was a means by which Native American art could grow and flourish, and also influence the growth of mainstream American art.

In d'Harnoncourt's exhibits, he believed that it was possible to use the romantic sensibilities that most Americans had about Native Americans. For an exhibit for the New York Fair of 1936, d'Harnoncourt explained that "the emotion appeal . . . of their primitive background should not be entirely disregarded in any display of Indian arts, as it adds considerably to the public's interest in the subject."[45] The difference in d'Harnoncourt's thinking and that of the Museum of Northern Arizona is that he took this appeal for the primitive and

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[43]W. Jackson Rushing, "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern: Rene d'Harnoncourt and 'Indian Art of the United States,'" *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting*, ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 198.

[44]Ibid., 198.

[45]Ibid., 199.

viewed it as a starting point in the education of mainstream America. He did not see this appeal as a motive for forcing Native Americans to stop the natural process of change; instead he saw it as his duty to display this change. His exhibits would start out with the displays of ancient Native American art, but his ultimate goal was a presentation of contemporary Native American art. Often, he would have artists themselves giving demonstrations in the exhibit. This idea is much different than the exhibit at the Columbian Exposition because these artists were not intended to represent the "primitive." By using the artists themselves in the exhibit, d'Harnoncourt showed how Native art was still a dynamic tradition.

The ideas that d'Harnoncourt brought to the field of museum studies concerning Native Americans is something that many museums today need to re-consider. It is easy for museums to take a passive role when it comes to the display of Native American artifacts, but the fact remains that passivity is not the role of the museum. Museums have considerable influence, and this influence can be either positive or negative. It is possible for museums to break away from the ideology that Native culture is something to be saved or preserved. Native Americans are not dying, and Native culture will change. While anthropologists and museum collectors have made valuable contributions in preserving aspects of Native American culture, it is important to view these findings as what they are -- one part of the history and culture of Native Americans. After European arrival in America, there is over 500 years of history, change, and influence that cannot be ignored. It is completely unnatural to expect Native American culture to remain unchanged in that time. Museums must accept the responsibility they have in making a more accurate presentation of Native American culture.

The Problem of Stereotypes

> The American public feels more comfortable with the mythical Indians of stereotype-land who were always THERE. These Indians are fierce, they wear feathers and grunt. Most of us don't fit this idealized figure since we grunt only when overeating, which is seldom. --Vine Deloria Jr.[46]

Historians, anthropologists, and museums all contribute to popular conceptions about Native Americans, and the ideology that Native American culture is static is one that has dominated popular culture. The image of the "Hollywood Indian" is prevalent in any representation of Native American culture. This image of the 1800s Plains Indian, complete with feathers and war paint, has come to define what it is to be Indian. Unfortunately, this image has come to define how some Native Americans, without the advantage of knowing their heritage, view a true Indian as well. With this conception of Native Americans comes a threat of losing ethnic identity. Perhaps even more harmful than the perpetuation of stereotypes in popular culture is the stereotyping of Native Americans in museum exhibits. Museums are supposed to be where the general public and Native Americans can go to learn, so the harm that can be done when the sources of historically accurate information perpetuate misconceptions is drastic. The static image of the Native American from history still continues today in film, the general culture, and more importantly, museum exhibits.

In film, the two images of the Native American that we saw in history texts, not coincidently, are present. The first image of Native Americans is the romanticized one depicting Native Americans as "children of nature." The second image is that of the "bloodthirsty savage,"

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[46]Deloria, *Custer*, 2.

who is an "enemy of the white man's progress of westward expansion."[47] Films are meant to give the public what they want, and it seems, as Fergus Bordewich points out, the public "still sees Indians mainly through the mythic veil of mingled racism and romance."[48] Therefore, films produced for the public still heavily rely on this stereotypical image of the Native American. In the past, the Westerns, such as those with John Wayne, depicted Native Americans in one stereotypical way -- the "Hollywood Indian." While this is perhaps not surprising to anyone who has seen John Wayne westerns, what is surprising is that this image still dominates the screen.

Many Americans have seen the Kevin Costner movie *Dances With Wolves*, and believe that it accurately represents Native Americans.[49] While the movie made headlines by hiring actual Native Americans instead of people just painted to look like them, the movie still relies on romantic, un-changing images of Native Americans to appeal to the general public. In this movie we have all of the ingredients that will satisfy the public's desire for "real" Indians. The setting, of course, is among tepees in the Plains section of the United States. Along with the setting, the Native Americans in the film wear all of the markers of being a true Indian -- the feathers, the war paint, and the women in buckskin dresses. There are two images among the men, one of which is the fierce warrior, and the other the wise chief. Finally, to completely satisfy the public, Kevin Costner's love interest is a white woman who was taken in by the tribe. This way, the audience is not expected to believe that Kevin Costner would fall in love with a

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[47]Michael Hilger, *The American Indian in Film* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 1.

[48]Bordewich, 11.

[49]*Dances With Wolves*, Orion Films, 1990.

Native American woman.

Dances With Wolves's popularity, and the lack of attention given to movies that depict Native Americans as they are presently, such as *Smoke Signals*[50] and *Pow Wow Highway,*[51] prove how the public demands this stereotypical portrayal relegating Native Americans to the past. As Michael Dorris states in his article "Indians on the Shelf," many non-Indians are disappointed by a true portrayal of Native American culture because their "standards of ethnic validity are based on Pocohontas, Squanto, or Tonto." He goes on to explain that, "In a certain sense, for five hundred years Indian people have been measured and have competed against a fantasy over which they have had no control. They are compared to beings who never really *were*, yet the stereotype is taken for truth."[52] Movies are an essential ingredient of popular culture, and because of this, the images that they portray of Native Americans are seen as real. However, while some viewers might have the sense not to believe everything they see, museums are more of a problem.

Museums elicit a trust because they represent knowledge. When museums give the public the same image of Native Americans as movies do, the stereotype is given more credibility. Large public museums typically display Native Americans as representatives of primitive life, and as such, only allow Native American culture to remain in the past. Because this idea of Native Americans as a static culture has been perpetuated in the scholarly disciplines

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[50]*Smoke Signals*, Miramax Films, 1998.

[51]*Pow Wow Highway*, Anchor Bay, 1989.

[52]Michael Dorris, "Indians on the Shelf," *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford UP, 1987), 100.

of history and anthropology and because the public expects this stereotypical image of Native Americans, public museums have continued to perpetuate the problem in their exhibits. After examining the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Field Museum in Chicago, it is clear that these ideas still abound even in present-day exhibits.

Although the Milwaukee Public Museum has made considerable effort in working with Native Americans in its exhibits, as will be explained later, the museum still harbors some disturbing exhibits.[53] In the section that tells the history of Milwaukee, the portrayal of Native Americans reflects the idea that Native Americans are peripheral parts of history and represent a primitive aspect of mankind. In describing the land before Europeans came to settle it, the sign reads that Milwaukee was "hardly more than a loose assemblage of Indian families with less than a half a dozen French Canadian traders and their mixed-blood families." What this implies is that without civilization Milwaukee would have been nothing more than Native Americans and Europeans who had accepted their way of life. The purpose in that sentence is for the visitor to feel relief that Juneau came and established a proper, civilized city. Again, it is an example of the dispute of the civilized versus the primitive.

The proof of their savage way of life is found in the life-size diorama that accompanies the sign. As is the case in so many museums, it seems the Milwaukee Public Museum cannot resist showing the Native American family in what is considered a shocking manner. The husband has no shirt on, the wife is wearing a dress that outlines her nipples, and the little boy is completely naked. Try to imagine an exhibit that displays whites in this manner, and it would be

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[53]Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee WI, visited on 6 March 1999. All quotations are taken from exhibit signs on this date.

close to impossible. Museums have a choice in how they display Native Americans. While it is the case that to go unclothed was acceptable, it was equally acceptable to wear clothes. The exhibit plays to the romantic images of the savages who are too uncivilized to be ashamed of their nakedness. One has to question why the museum chose to display the aspect that the public would find most shocking. One has to further question the motives behind making such an effort to show the woman's nipples through her buckskin dress because, as my mother noted, "that just doesn't happen." The exhibit perpetuates the stereotype that Native Americans represent a primitive aspect of humankind, that relies on shock value to generate interest.

The Field Museum in Chicago[54] has similar problems as the exhibit at the Milwaukee Public Museum, but on a much larger scale. The problem of relegating Native American culture to the past is prevalent in its exhibits, as well as a need for shock value in displaying Native American culture. The problem of relegating Native Americans to the past is seen in the main exhibit hall displaying North American Indian tribes. Every display tries to depict Native American dress, pottery, art, and weapons before European presence in America. On a sign describing warfare, it says that the use of guns occurred "only after extensive contact with white men." It is misdirected for any study of Native American culture to only include the time before European colonization, as most Native American tribes were heavily influenced by European culture, be it with guns, Venetian glass beads, wool, or any of the other trade items, not to

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[54]Chicago Field Museum, Chicago, IL, visited 27 February 1999. All quotations taken from exhibit signs on this date.

mention designs in their art and methods of farming and building homes.[55] By ignoring over 500 years of contact, the exhibits follow the idea in anthropology's history that Native American culture is only worth studying as a "pure culture" and only valid without the influence of outside cultures. Not only is it ridiculous to try to make Native American (or *any* culture) pure, it is also harmful as it does not allow Native Americans to evolve and change.

An example of using shock value to elicit interest is found in the exhibit depicting human ritual sacrifice. The exhibit is a diorama with a woman tied to a rack, with a crowd watching, and a man about to shoot an arrow at her. The sign explains that this is a Pawnee Morningstar ritual, and that it is more common to use corn, meat, birds, pipes, and arrows than a human. The sign goes on to say that there was only one band, the Skiri that practiced human sacrifice, and that it was banned in 1838. So the question that arises after reading that sign is why portray such a rare aspect of Pawnee, not to mention Native American culture? This question did not go unasked, however. There was also another sign that said that there was a visitor who thought the diorama was "racist, sexist, and too violent for a family museum." It went on to say that they asked museum patrons what they thought and members of the Pawnee tribe for their opinion. After doing further research, I found that the response of the museum patrons varied from being upset that the museum would want to deny them history to complete agreement with the complaint. The response of the Pawnee was that this was a part of their history, and while they are not proud of it, they do not want to deny that it happened. The changes the museum ended up

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[55]Of course, European cultures and what has come to be known as mainstream American culture today has been influenced by Native American culture and language. For example, the introduction of corn, hunting methods, warfare methods, and place names, and also the influence of Native American designs in art such as quilting and jewelry making.

making were minuscule, but they are telling because it draws attention to how the exhibit was *before* they changed it; they made the woman in the display older, they made the position of the woman less sexual, and they changed the faces of the people in the crowd from sneering to more somber faces appropriate for a religious ceremony.

The points raised by the questioning museum visitor, Ann Throckmorton, are very interesting and make many good points. In her letter she states six reasons why the exhibit should be removed. In her third point, she likens the exhibit to one that would display American snuff movies as representative of American culture: "We can only hope that future historians will not elect to display a snuff film as representative of twentieth century American culture. Why have we chosen among all the cultural artifacts of the Pawnee a snuff film image to represent that culture?"[56] It is an interesting point because she directly attacks this need that museums have to shock the visitor by making Native American culture seem more primitive. After acknowledging how rare it is, it becomes even more clear that there are ulterior motives behind the display.

It was the concern of museum visitors that by removing the display, the museum would be denying the visitor accurate history. However, when the motives behind creating the display are so harmful, it becomes more important to examine why it exists in the first place. It is not an accurate portrayal of Pawnee culture to display this one, rare aspect. This leads to Throckmorton's sixth point in her letter: "This exhibit appears to be yet another example of the majority's many, many efforts to scapegoat and dehumanize Native Americans and other

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[56]Ann Throckmorton to Chicago Field Museum, 9 March 1986, Webber Resource Center, Chicago Field Museum, Chicago. Her comparison to a snuff film is very intentional. A snuff film is defined as a movie that depicts the killing of a woman at the moment she reaches orgasm. Throckmorton wants to make the connection between death and sexuality very clear.

minorities, particularly people of color, in order to justify atrocities the majority has inflicted upon minorities."[57] Her point is well taken because the Field Museum portrays Native Americans in two ways that allow them to be disregarded by the public. By portraying them as relics of the past by only displaying pre-Columbian culture, and by portraying them as primitive savages as in the Morningstar exhibit, they allow and enable behavior that ignores the problems that Native Americans face on the reservations and off. It is easier to ignore a people who are uncivilized, and who are not even a "problem" anymore.

Perhaps even more disturbing than outside sources such as films and museums perpetuating a stereotypical image of Native Americans is Native Americans portraying themselves in this way. Since American society has been bombarded with these images of the Native American for hundreds of years, Native Americans have fallen victim to this in two ways. First, Native Americans, in the years following the removal, were under a program designed by Richard H. Pratt to "kill the Indian and save the man." As Andrew Gulliford explains, "In the process of assimilation Indian children lost their long hair, their native language skills, and respect for their own cultures."[58] The result was that parents, to spare their children the pain, did not teach their children the language or traditions. It takes a conscious effort by the individual to study her own culture. Combined with popular culture, many Native Americans have an ethnic identity problem; the only images that they see of a "real" Indian are those produced by

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[57]Ibid.

[58]Andrew Gulliford, "Restoring the Sacred Hoop: Native Americans and Museums in Recent Publications of the Smithsonian Institution," *The Public Historian* 18.3 (Summer 1996): 44.

historians, anthropologists, museums, and popular culture. So, as Vine Deloria Jr. states, "Not even Indians can relate to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the 'real' Indian. Indian people begin to feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian."[59] This quotation is aimed at anthropologists, but the same idea applies to all of the groups previously mentioned. It seems that everyone has been allowed to define the Native American except for the Native American.[60]

The result is a need for Native Americans to find an identity, and the inevitable result is that the identity they find is the one with which mainstream America feels most comfortable. This struggle to find a Native American identity is played out in the movie *Smoke Signals*. The movie tells the story of two young Native American men, Thomas and Victor, who must travel to Arizona together, and in the process they learn more about what it is to be Native American. Previously, Thomas tells the story of how he went to Spokane Falls and sat there for hours, "waiting for a vision." This sets up the scene on the bus in which Victor attempts to show Thomas how to be a real Indian:

> Why can't you have a normal conversation? You're always trying to sound like some damn medicine man or something. I mean, how many times have you seen *Dances With Wolves*? 100? 200? Oh geez, you have seen it that many times haven't you? Don't you even know how to be a real Indian?

Victor then proceeds to show Thomas how a real Indian acts:

> **Victor:** First of all, quit grinning like an idiot. Indians ain't supposed to smile like that. Get stoic! No, like this. You gotta look mean or people won't respect you.

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[59]Deloria, *Custer*, 82.

[60]I do not want my point here to be misunderstood. While non-Native scholarship is important in studying Native American culture, Native scholarship is necessary.

> White people will run all over you if you don't look mean. You gotta look like you just came back from killing a buffalo.
> **Thomas:** But our tribe never hunted buffalo, we were fisherman.
> **Victor:** What?! You want to look like you just came back from catching a fish? This ain't *Dances With Salmon* you know.

Although screenwriter Sherman Alexie adds humor to the scene, the scene is funny because most Native Americans can relate to that need to find something Indian to be proud of, something Indian to relate to, because for so long Native Americans were told that what they were was not "real." The irony is that even though Victor tries to show Thomas how to be a real Indian, he is relying on stereotypes (being stoic) as much as Thomas is by relying on images from *Dances With Wolves*. The ultimate irony, however, is that both of them *are* acting like real Indians, but do not even know it. Ultimately, ethnic identity comes down to personal belief. However an Indian acts is the definition of a real Indian.

Despite the realities of ethnic identity, the very pressing economic reality is that Native Americans feel that they must portray the stereotypical image themselves. For example, in Cherokee, North Carolina, a phenomenon has occurred called "chiefing." Since the 1950s, Cherokee has become a tourist haven, and this is how the reservation makes its money. Along with the sale of cheap brightly colored headdresses and plastic tomahawks, there are men lined up and down the main strip wearing traditional Plains headdresses standing in front of tepees. They allow themselves to be photographed for a tip. The reality is that they can make a pretty good living doing this because they are playing to what the public wants. The running joke is that a man standing in traditional Cherokee dress would hardly get a second look because he is not a "real" Indian.

The result of the perpetuation of this image, by both Native and non-Native sources, is

that everyone is denied the truth. Those who visit museums and receive an inaccurate description of Native Americans do not realize that what they are seeing is not an accurate portrayal. Native Americans who perpetuate this stereotype do not know enough to have pride in their own culture, and combined with the fact that this image sells, find themselves identifying with this image. These reasons are the motivation that Native Americans and museums have for making an accurate portrayal of Native American culture. Museums must take the lead in reversing the stereotypes that have prevailed for so long, and in utilizing recent scholarship that has been appearing that comes not only from the non-Native perspective, but incorporates the Native one as well. Museums have the responsibility of giving the public, and the people represented, more than a one-sided story.

The Answer in the Native Voice

> The museum makes our people the cultural interpreters for our people. Tribes are no longer the objects of information but the translators of information. . . . It [the museum] is doing so much to bring back what we've almost lost.
> -- Delia Carlyle, Ak-Chin tribal council chair[61]

The solution is that museums must display Native American culture as ever-changing and ever-evolving. This ideology is most often found in smaller tribal museums, but can be found in larger museums. The ideology of a tribal museum lends itself to a more positive portrayal of Native Americans. Because they are on reservations, and usually only deal with that particular

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[61]Nancy J. Fuller, "The Museum as a Vehicle for Community Empowerment: The Ak-Chin Indian Community Ecomuseum Project," *Museums and Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 340.

tribe or region, it is easier for them to tell a more complete story, as opposed to larger museums that attempt to cover all the cultures of the world. However, there are museum exhibits in larger museums that apply more innovative ideology in their exhibitions. For example, although the Milwaukee Public Museum has an outdated section, they have incorporated a newer, more sensitive section. Also, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian has been a leader in motivating both small and large museums to update their exhibitions. For museums of all sizes, repatriation is an issue that any museum that has a Native American collection must face. Repatriation is an issue that forces all museums to think about the Native American perspective.[62] However, as repatriation has resulted in strained relationships between Native Americans and museums, museums must make these changes on their own, without governmental policies to force them. The following examples illustrate how museums have incorporated the Native American perspective and have listened to the Native voice.

The tribal museum has an advantage in that it is Native Americans themselves who are telling their own story. The main problem, according to Danyelle Means, former exhibitions director at the National Museum of the American Indian, is that large museums "do not hear the Native voice."[63] What this means is that all too often, large museums simply do not tell any part of the story from the perspective of the Native American. This can begin to be solved, Means

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[62]Repatriation was originally implemented as federal policy to protect Native American grave sites. As a part of the legislation, any institution that is in possession of Native American human remains must return them to the tribe from which they came. This policy also incorporates sacred objects such as kachinas, masks, and medicine bags. This is where the conflict between museum and Native Americans comes to light: Native Americans want these objects returned and museums do not want to lose their displays.

[63]Means, interview by the author.

believes, by simply adding the Native voice in quotations, poems, or songs. The tribal museum, however, from its position on the reservation, gives Native Americans the opportunity to tell their own story. The disadvantage facing tribal museums, as Duane King director of the Southwest Museum noted, is the lack of money. According to King, however, the advantages of being able to see actual work done and the sense of accomplishment far outweigh the problem of funding.[64] The tribal museum's opportunity to benefit Native Americans and the population in general is twofold. First, by showing Native American culture as alive, it dispels many of the stereotypes previously discussed in this paper because the majority of the stereotypes surrounding Native Americans stem from the idea that Native culture is static. The other reason is that the museums are a means by which Native Americans can build community and cultural pride. Through a positive representation of Native American people we can begin to see a reversal in the perpetuation of stereotypes.

The Museum of the Cherokee Indian's[65] exhibit of the Trail of Tears is an example of evoking the visitor's emotions without having to rely on crude, sexually appealing images. While the Milwaukee exhibit at the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Morningstar exhibit at the Chicago Field Museum use sexuality to evoke a response from the visitor, the Trail of Tears exhibit is powerful because it makes the experience come to life for the visitor. There are many examples in the history of Native Americans that do not require manipulation to evoke interest. The Museum of the Cherokee Indian devoted much space to the exhibit, with a full wall

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[64]Duane King, interview by author, 25 October 1998.

[65]Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Cherokee, North Carolina, visited June 1998.

depicting a winter scene from the Trail of Tears. While the huge painting surrounds the visitor within the scene, a voice of an army officer is heard. He is reading his journal entries in which he describes the death and suffering that occurred along the way. After exiting that exhibit, one has a fuller idea of what that experience was like for the thousands who suffered through it.

The idea that Native culture is static, as observed in the Chicago Field Museum, is one that is also commonly held in museum exhibition. In contrast, the Museum of the Cherokee Indian promotes the idea that Native American history can be told as a story from prehistoric times to the present. The museum uses the idea of the story belt as a theme throughout the museum. It begins with the telling of the creation story and ends with exhibits displaying current issues on the Cherokee reservation, such as the current chief Joyce Dugan carrying on the tradition of strong women in the tribe and an exhibit displaying contemporary baskets. It does not ignore the history that occurs in between. The idea of a museum's layout is an important one as a response to the popular ideology that Native American history ends after the closing of the frontier. By leading the visitor from prehistory to the present, the museum calls attention to the fact that Native Americans have a living, changing culture.

This theme is seen in other tribal museums and is shown by James Clifford's comparative study of four Northwest Coast Museums. He says that in a certain way, "they are not museums at all: they are continuations of indigenous traditions of storytelling, collection, and display."[66] Native American history and art can be displayed as a story, because it has a logical progression.

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[66]James Clifford, "Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections," *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 215.

Like any other culture, Native Americans have a continuing story. It is up to museums to show people that this story is valid. Unlike museums of the past which told Native American artists that their art is not "traditional" enough, tribal museums are now showing that the traditions continue and change. In a description of the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, Clifford describes an exhibit as a "portrayal of noncatastrophic cultural contact" in which a statue of a Christian priest made in the late 1800s is displayed as a response in the artistic tradition to outside influence.[67] These tribal museums not only bring validity to a Native culture that is influenced by outside sources, but also shows how it is important to acknowledge the new. A perfect example of this is seen in the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. After the visitor completes their tour of the museum, they encounter an art gallery that displays the work of Native American artists. The most impressive aspect of this gallery is that the majority of the art displayed is not "traditional" Native American art. As was explained to me, one could not tell by looking at the art that the artist was Native American.[68] The Heard Museum provided an exhibition space for contemporary artists without limiting them to "traditional" art. This gallery celebrates the fact that Native culture is vibrant and changing.

The structure and placement of the artifacts is also very important in showing the dynamics of Native culture. In the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, new totem poles that were constructed in recent years can be seen from the inside where there are display of old poles. As Clifford notes, "The proximity of these new works to the old artifacts

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[67]Ibid., 216.

[68]Buck Condill, visitor of the Heard Museum on 13 March 1999, interview by author, 13 April 1999, Bloomington, IL.

gathered behind the wall of glass makes very clear the museum's most important message: tribal works are part of an ongoing, dynamic tradition."[69] Museums have the power to bring that message to the public, and these tribal museums are doing just that.

The other incredible power that museums have is to build community and cultural pride. The Ak-Chin Him Dak[70] is an excellent example. This is an ecomuseum that was built in the Ak-Chin Indian Community. An ecomuseum is designed to incorporate the society around which it is built; it encourages the community in which it is built to become an active part of its design and its maintenance. An ecomuseum, according to Nancy Fuller, "extends the mission of a museum to include responsibility for human dignity." She goes on to say, "an ecomuseum recognizes the importance of culture in the development of self-identity."[71] This is an excellent mission for not only ecomuseums, but tribal and public museums as well. As stated by the 1974 International Council of Museums, a museum "should be an institution in the service of society and its development."[72] The Ak-Chin museum is a testament to how this ideology can affect a Native American community that was losing its cultural pride.

The Ak-Chin ecomuseum provided that community with a means to better understand their own culture, and in that understanding came pride. A pride not only for the past, but for the present and future as well. This museum is an important example because it shows how the two issues of combating the stereotype of a static culture and building cultural pride go hand in hand.

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[69]Ibid., 220.

[70]The name Ak-Chin Him Dak means "our way of life."

[71]Fuller, 328.

[72]Ibid., 329.

The ecomuseum, according to Wendy Aviles, a member of the tribe, "is intended to be a place of exchange between generations, each teaching and learning from one another's special perspectives. Our culture, ever evolving, will continue to be rich and international, crossing borders geographically and through time."[73] What Aviles understands is how important it is for everyone to understand that Native culture is not static. Through this project, the people involved have found a renewed pride in a culture that they had been told was dead. Now these people want to learn the language and the traditions and make them their own.

The fact that the members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community run the museum is the important aspect of the museum's success. With the introduction of the museum, the community found a renewed interest in their cultural past and cultural future, but they also found a means of empowerment. Not only did they find out about themselves, but now they have the power to display this to the rest of the world. An ecomuseum technician, Elaine Boehm, relates this idea by stating, "It'll be something for the whole community to be proud of because it'll be community people running it. We don't have to hire people from the outside. . . . Plus, as Native Americans, we understand how we want to present [ourselves]."[74] With this example of the Ak-Chin Him Dak, one can see how the power shifts from Europeans telling the history of Native Americans since the arrival of Columbus to the responsibility being given to the people themselves.

This idea of Native Americans representing themselves has been part of the motivation

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[73]Ibid., 344.

[74]Ibid., 345.

behind the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Although this museum is on a much larger scale than the previous examples of tribal museums, it utilizes many of the same ideologies of tribal museums, such as showing the culture as non-static, and involving Native Americans in telling their own story. In the foreword of *All Roads Are Good*, a book published by the Smithsonian in conjunction with the National Museum of the American Indian, Richard West, the museum director, compares the book's purpose with that of the museum: to "bring the essential voices of native peoples themselves to the interpretation of our cultures and the things we have made." He asserts that Native Americans must now add their voice to the history that has already been written.[75] Danyelle Means confirms this mission when she says that the National Museum of the American Indian "strives to keep the indigenous voice the primary voice."[76] The National Museum of the American Indian has been an example for museums to follow in this new ideology concerning the portrayal of Native Americans.

One of the ways in which the National Museum of the American Indian achieves this goal is not only in the way the exhibits are formed in the first place, but in how the museum is maintained. The museum expands its role by having a cultural interpreter go through the exhibit with the visitors. The interpreter is usually a young Native American person who explains the exhibits even further, answers any questions, and draws on personal experience. This is crucial in keeping the culture alive. Not only does the museum give the visitor a Native American perspective, but it also allows the visitor to actually hear a Native voice. The visitor can leave

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[75]Richard West, foreword of *All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 9.

[76]Means, interview by the author.

with a deeper understanding of what some of the artifacts mean to Native Americans today and can see how the culture has changed, but has still kept aspects of tradition. By adding this human element to the exhibit, objects come alive for the visitor and not "behind glass, not static."[77]

While it is important to hear the Native voice, as in the examples of the Ak-Chin ecomuseum and the National Museum of the American Indian, not every museum exhibit must be told only from the perspective of the Native American. As in the case of larger public museums, the voice of the white explorers is the primary voice. This is one perspective of the story. The Native voice must be added to make the story more complete. Not only is adding the Native American voice important in terms of scholarship, it creates cultural pride and respect.

Another important issue is redefining what is authentic. The National Museum of the American Indian, by displaying aspects of Native American culture that one would not think of as Native American, also dispels stereotypes about what *is* Native. Like the examples in the tribal museums, the National Museum of the American Indian displays objects that show obvious influence of outside cultures. The quilting display is an excellent example. Few people know that Native American women have a fairly long tradition of quilting. Most people associate quilting with pioneer women, or the Amish, but not Native American women. And not only is quilting in itself problematic for some, but most of the women who quilt today use sewing machines. This is definitely not a traditional method, but it does not make it any less Native. By exhibiting this aspect of Native American life, the National Museum of the American Indian

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[77]Ibid.

overturns many ideas of what is "really Indian." As in the example of the gallery in the Heard Museum, it shows that *any* aspect of Native American life is "really Indian" and valid.

A museum does not have to be dedicated to Native American culture to apply these same ideas and be sensitive to the issues surrounding the exhibition of Native American culture. The Milwaukee Public Museum, in a separate exhibit called "A Tribute To Survival," is an example of how Native Americans and museums can work together to create a positive exhibition. The exhibit is valuable because it uses aspects of the old exhibit and adds newer elements to it to make it tell a more complete story. The exhibit's main focal point is a life-size turning diorama of a Wisconsin pow wow. All of the people portrayed in this pow wow are not faceless mannequins, but are modeled after real people. There are aspects to this diorama, like glasses on their faces and folding chairs, that make it obvious that it is a representation of present day Native American life. The exhibition of Native American culture does not end in the 1800s, but continues until the present.

Furthermore, the explanation of Native American life throughout the exhibit has a Native American presence. There are quotations throughout the exhibit that offer Native American perspectives of everything from what is considered "Indian country" today to how a Native American viewed the situation of Native Americans during the removals. There are also videos that address controversial issues in Wisconsin, like spear fishing. The video provides the Native American perspective on this issue and explains why it is so hotly debated. It is important for museums to cause people to think and to question, and exhibits that talk about boarding schools, disease, and the question of governmental policy towards Native Americans will get people to think about these issues, and more importantly, think about these issues from the perspective of

the Native American as well as that of the mainstream population. All museums can and should incorporate the idea that Native culture is not static, that, to the contrary, Native culture is alive and vibrant.

A Case Study -- The John Wesley Powell Collection

> [They] have found that Native voice, have found something whispering to them to tell them this is a worthy project, this is something that belongs to us yet doesn't belong to us. --Danyelle Means[78]

The John Wesley Powell Collection in Sheean Library on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University is a perfect case study in the application of the museum ideology discussed as a positive exhibition of Native American culture. The collection, as it stands, is nothing more than a display of pottery and baskets. After applying some of the theories that the positive museum examples use, the collection can become an accurate representation of Native American culture and a source of pride for both the students, faculty, and visitors, Native and non-Native.

The John Wesley Powell Collection, as referenced by the name, was given to the university by John Wesley Powell when he was the head of the Bureau of American Ethnology through the Smithsonian. He was a professor of anthropology at Illinois Wesleyan University for a time, and gave the collection to the university as part of the Smithsonian's ideology of knowledge through application. Powell was a part of the aforementioned anthropological movement of the late 1800s in which anthropologists were desperately trying to collect as many aspects of Native culture and life before it vanished. Therefore, the expeditions that Powell took

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[78]Danyelle Means, former exhibit developer for the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. Interview by Kathryn Funk, 10 March 1999, Bloomington, IL.

to the Southwest were an attempt to preserve a dying culture.

The collection has been in the university's possession for many years, and has unfortunately blended into the background. Most students (including myself at one time) do not even know that we have this collection. It is displayed in Sheean Library in four tall glass cases, and in front of each piece is a card that gives no more information that what was provided on the artifacts' original tags. There are also various photos included in the exhibit. One is of Powell, and the others are left to the imagination as to their possible significance. It is not an exaggeration to say that this is the extent of the display of these priceless Southwestern artifacts.

The task before me was to make this an exhibit that would be accurate, informative, and interesting. What I discovered was that in making the exhibit more accurate and informative, the interesting aspect followed naturally. The most encouraging and positive aspect about the John Wesley Powell project is that it will continue for many months, and even years after I have graduated. I have divided the project into three phases: The first phase is immediate, the second phase is the next year (or years) leading up to the movement of the collection into the new library, and the third phase will take place after the collection has been moved into the new library.

The first phase of the study consists of the goals that I hope to accomplish before the end of the Spring 1999 semester. The immediate goals of the project, although very necessary, are not very romantic. This includes measuring each piece and creating a descriptive catalog for the collection. Even though the collection was given to Illinois Wesleyan over one hundred years ago, there is still not a catalog of the collection. A catalog will provide those working with the collection with a variety of possibilities. First and foremost, the catalog will be a written

documentation of every piece in the collection. This is extremely important for security reasons, and in simply having a means of knowing which piece goes with what information. The catalog will also provide scholarly information to anyone viewing the collection or studying the collection, and will be a medium through which we can share the collection with people outside of the university, either through the hard copy, or over the Internet.

The first step was actually documenting all the information we could find about every piece. With the help of two assistants from the anthropology department, Shelley Manning and Andrea Wyant, I measured and wrote a description for each piece in the collection. We then assigned a catalog number to each piece that shows, numerically, what type of pottery it is, which tribe it is from, and which number it is within the collection. In determining a numbering system, we left the option open for the university to add new collections to the exhibit. We are now in the process of photographing each piece in the collection. We are also planning on adding sections within the catalog that will provide information that we have discovered about Southwestern pottery in general, and a focus on the pieces in the John Wesley Powell collection. Most of this information will also be in the actual exhibit. With this information, the catalog also provides information for new, more accurate cards.

The change of the exhibition within the first phase will be significant. Although the changes are going to require very little money, the differences will be immense. I am planning on primarily changing the focus of the exhibit. Presently, the exhibit focuses on Powell and his expeditions down the Colorado River.[79] There are pictures of Powell and students who

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[79]John Wesley Powell was innovative as he was one of the first professors to take his students on actual field work. This becomes especially significant as he did this while he was a

accompanied him on these expeditions. However, the collection that was given to us by Powell was in fact collected by James Stevenson, who worked for Powell and the American Bureau of Ethnology. So the pictures that are in the exhibit are only confusing to the average viewer as they most likely have no idea of the significance of the pictures. By simply explaining that the collection was given to the university by Powell, but collected by Stevenson, the viewer will have a better understanding of how the collection came into our hands. The pictures that are currently in the exhibit can be utilized in a separate section that describes Powell's role at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The major change in the focus of the exhibition, however, will be from those who collected the pottery to those who made the pottery. The role of the anthropologist, while significant, should not be the primary focus of the exhibit. What tends to be forgotten about the collection is that the pieces were made by real people, most likely women. This is an art form, and as such, it would be ridiculous to overlook the artist. By adding photographs of women making pottery similar to the pieces in our collection and adding quotations from some artists, their role in the exhibit will come alive, and the actual exhibit will become something more interesting to view than simply looking at rows of pottery. The use of these quotations from contemporary artists will show that Native Americans did not stop making pottery after 1880; the tradition has continued and changed. By showing this, we will also be showing the evolving nature of Native culture itself.

In addition, there will also be smaller sections within the exhibit that will give a fuller

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professor at Illinois Wesleyan University. The present result of this is, of course, the May Term travel courses.

description of certain parts of the collection. For example, we have information about ladles. We can move all of the ladles into one section and have a written description of how they were used, how they were designed, and describe any variances between tribes. This can work for many sections of the collection including water jars, canteens, and of course the kachina. One of the most important aspects of this project is to achieve the most accuracy possible. The kachina is a perfect example. Presently, the card beside this artifact says, "Idol." As has been noted by many observers who came and told me while we were working, this is an offensive label. To describe a sacred object as an "idol" is demeaning to the Hopi and to their religion. By simply changing one word in the exhibit from "Idol" to "Kachina," I will be making a significant change. It is these changes that will make this exhibit more informative and in turn more beneficial for both observers and Native Americans.

The second phase of the project will continue along these same lines. As there are already definite plans to move the collection, we do not want to use extensive funds to change an exhibition that will be moved anyway. The plans for the second phase are to continue to gather as much information as possible and keep improving the exhibit. As is always the case, those working on the second phase will discover new and better ways of display that will make the collection that much more interesting.

The second and third phases will occur after I have graduated. Fortunately, Andrea Wyant, who was mentioned earlier, is a junior this year and has enthusiastically agreed to continue the project next year. Wyant, Manning, and I had the opportunity this past year to fly to the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, California to collect information about the John Wesley Powell collection. This trend can only continue as there are a multitude of sources across the

country that would provide even more information about the collection.

The third phase will occur after the collection is moved to the new library. I have already discussed new aspects of the exhibition of the collection with Sue Stroyan, university librarian.[80] The plans for the new library place the collection in the center of the building. After going through the main entrance, one would come upon a circle of cases that one would have to pass to get anywhere in the library. The cases themselves are going to be sensitive to issues such as temperature and lighting. Also, the cases will have a closed back so that the pieces are not simply lost as they are presently with the cases that have glass on both sides. Also, the explanatory cards accompanying the pottery will be of a higher quality than those we have at Sheean Library currently.

Faculty and administration at Illinois Wesleyan University have been extremely excited about this project and have begun to work to ensure its continuance. For example, Jo Porter, a university administrator, has written a grant proposal to the Library of Congress intended to digitalize the collection. This would be amazing as the collection would be accessible to people all over the world. The theories and methods of exhibition that the university uses to display these artifacts would reach a much wider audience. Another example of how the collection will elicit more good for the university is that Chuck Springwood of the anthropology department has shown interest in designing a course that would use the collection.

The John Wesley Powell Collection and the example that it has set is an example for all

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[80]Sue Stroyan has been key in making this project work. Her commitment to the collection and this project will ensure that it will continue indefinitely. Stroyan provided funding to travel to the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, and plans are already starting to visit the National Archives in Washington D.C.

museums to follow. If it is possible for a small university to make such a significant contribution to the scholarship of Native American culture, imagine the possibilities of larger museums across the nation. Not only is it possible for all institutions holding Native American artifacts to create a more accurate portrayal of Native American culture, it is their responsibility. Only by museums incorporating new scholarship and theory that has begun in the disciplines of history, anthropology, and museum studies, can we begin to see a reversal of the idea that Native cultures are static. Once the Native American perspective is allowed to be heard, America will finally see Native Americans as true Indians and a significant part of America.

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