American Indian cultural centers of the Northwest Region: an anthropological look at cultural representation

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American Indian cultural centers of the Northwest Region:
An anthropological look at cultural representation

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

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has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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Chapter One. Introduction

American Indian museums and cultural centers use various ways to represent the lifestyles and beliefs of individual societies. The decision on what types of artifacts are shown to the American mainstream public and which items are held back is one of the strategies for determining how others view a particular tribe or nation’s cultures. These are matters of representation. Just as important, if not more so, is what is told and not told to these outsiders.

My thesis centers on these questions of representation. How do both tribally and non-tribally run museums/cultural centers determine which artifacts to display and how much is told about each item? The answers to these questions help determine how each museum/cultural center represents Native American history and culture to the mainstream public and to those within the community represented.

Many things sacred in the indigenous world are simply not shared with outside viewers or even certain individuals within the Native community (Powell 1998:47). Sacred artifacts are believed to contain powerful forces that may hurt those who do not know how to handle these powers with the proper respect and authority (Powell 1998:47). These items are usually kept in a separate part of the storage area of the museum/cultural center, under lock and key and surrounded by other appropriate religious materials, such as “white sage and cedar” (Powell 1998:43). They are closely monitored for humidity and temperature control, and religious leaders may visit from time to time to pray over the objects or hold rituals.
Architecture and design are utilized to give meaning to both the exterior and interior of these museums/cultural centers (Slusarenko, personal communique to author, October 3, 2002). The siting of the building and the materials used for construction are important elements of the design and final structure of these institutions (Krinsky 1996:3). Use of cardinal directions, circles, signs and symbols can vary significantly in the architecture of these complexes according to the tribal nation involved in their design (Krinsky 1996:55). Every nation is unique, therefore, what is important to include in each center will probably be different from one museum to the next.

American Indian museums/cultural centers are giving indigenous people the chance to display their history, culture and traditions not only to a largely uninformed mainstream American public, but also to themselves (Biddle 1977:42). These centers are becoming increasingly popular vehicles for Native Americans to educate the public and their own communities about these important societal constructs (Biddle 1977:42).

American Indian museums/cultural centers take some of the power away from traditional mainstream museums attempting to exhibit Native lifeways, and gives it back to those to whom it belongs: the actual owners of these cultural worldviews and artifacts (Hanson 1980:48). These institutions are an effective way to give voice to a people whose identity seemed to be disappearing within the confines of a Western worldview of history and hegemony (Clifford 1991:244).

This thesis will employ the terms of “museum” and “cultural center” in the general passages. During my research, I found that some tribes reacted very strongly against the use of the label “museum,” as that denoted a place where history and people are frozen in time. Other tribal nations did not have a problem with this terminology, and labeled their centers
as "museums." When this thesis is focused on a particular museum/cultural center, the term appropriate to that institution will be maintained.

I left Ames to head out West on Monday, May 20th, 2002, and continued my research through the first week of July during the same year. I worked with six museums/cultural centers operated by either tribal nations or state and national parks of Plateau Indians of the Northwest Region, visiting Idaho, Oregon and Washington. I chose this area because there has not been a lot of work done in this region, and because it is a part of the United States that I did not know well. Places were chosen primarily from the recommendations of one center to another. I spent approximately one week at each of these museums/cultural centers, with each one giving me a slightly different view of cultural representation. There were, however, more similarities between these six centers than there were differences.

The first place I visited was the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute located outside of Pendleton, Oregon. This large, modern complex was situated in a flatland area with the rolling Blue Mountains in the background. The center opened in 1998, and included a gift shop, meeting halls, and a restaurant within the institute. Sited on tribal land, there was also a hotel, casino, golf course and campground nearby.

The Nez Perce National Historical Park located outside of Spalding, Idaho, was next on my agenda. I was there during the first week of June. This is a small, federally run museum that is situated next to an old cemetery and a swiftly running river that winds its way beneath some towering hills. Although the museum itself is not large, the facility does offer a medium-sized library in the basement, and activities in which the public can participate.
The second week of June was spent at the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center just outside of Toppenish, Washington. This was a large complex that was composed of separate entities that housed a theater, restaurant, and a meeting hall. The central building contained the cultural center, along with a library and a large gift shop. The complex was sited right next to a campground that was tribally run, complete with a couple of tepees to lodge in, while the tribal casino and new events center was located a couple of blocks away. I was lucky enough to be on hand to volunteer at the Treaty Days Commemoration.

My visit to the Coeur d’Alene’s Old Mission at State Park, in Cataldo, Idaho, was shorter than I had planned. This site is not tribally run, and although the State Park Service is in control of the museum and the surrounding land, some input is gathered from tribal members. This arrangement is currently changing as new policies are being arranged to give the Coeur d’ Alene more power over this facility. This will be addressed in further detail in the methodology section.

Since my primary consultants were unavailable on the first two days of the week, I took the extra time to visit the new Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture in Spokane, Washington. The expansive Native American exhibit here is presented in partnership with four local tribal nations, making it a truly coordinated effort between the tribes and the institution. A strong emphasis is placed on the living culture of these four tribal nations, along with ongoing and in-depth communication between all of the entities involved.

The Museum at Warm Springs in Warm Springs, Oregon, was the last site on my agenda. I was there during the final week of June. The museum was located quite a distance from the nearest town with lodging, except for the resort that was tribally run and
located about ten miles away in a sparse, rocky geographic region. A campground did brisk business a couple of miles below the resort with both modern and more primitive facilities.

The museum is known for its architectural styling, both in the exterior and the interior of the building. It had both a temporary and a permanent exhibit hall. The temporary exhibit when I was there focused on art from members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and the gift shop showcased arts and crafts produced by many artists of the local community. There was a restaurant and a couple of small shops across the highway from the museum, and a gas station up the road, but otherwise the museum was placed in a woodsy area that seemed far from the outside world, although many people lived on the reservation only blocks behind the center.

I will be looking at three central themes within chapter two, the literature review of this thesis. The first theme includes a look at the National Museum of the American Indian and the Plains Indian Museum, along with tribally run museums and cultural centers in general. I also focus on concepts of sacredness, which is instrumental in deciding which artifacts are exhibited and how much information is disseminated to the public and the tribal community.

Theme two contains theories and concepts of representation as they relate to American Indian museums/cultural centers and the artifacts that are exhibited in them. This relies a great deal on the ideology of sacredness, which varies between each tribal nation. Another aspect the thesis will look at is the fact that in the museums/cultural centers that I researched, the exhibits and educational materials were not only available for the mainstream American viewer, but were primarily intended for those residing within the tribal community. Euro-American museums will be looked at briefly.
Finally, the third theme concludes with reflections on how the site location, architectural design, and materials used in these museums/cultural centers are planned in a conscientious fashion to portray a particular representation that the tribal members and leaders of these institutions are trying to project. Again, this pertains not only to the general public, but also to members within the tribal nations' own community.

Once finished with chapter two, the literature review, I will then proceed with chapter three and a discussion of my methodology practices, which outlines my procedures at each of the six centers. Chapter four contains a presentation of my research findings from the six Northwest Region's museums/cultural centers I researched.

In chapter five, I conclude that museums/cultural centers that are either tribally run or have direct and significant communication with the American Indian tribes they exhibit are able to represent indigenous cultures most effectively and accurately. The types of artifacts to display and the knowledge that is disseminated to outside viewers and members from within the tribal community have a large impact on how indigenous history, culture, and tradition are represented. The six centers I researched are more alike than different, with sacredness dictating which artifacts are exhibited. A main goal for all of these institutions is education, especially within their own communities.
Chapter Two. Literature Review

Considered anthropologically,

The museum is first of all a social arena, not a repository of objects. A museum is an institution in which social relationships are oriented in terms of a collection of objects, which are made meaningful by those relationships – though these objects are often understood by museum Natives to be meaningful independently of those social relationships. [Handler 1996:33]

Aldona Jonaitis argues that, “Native people throughout the United States and Canada object strenuously today to such ‘museumification’ of their history, and want institutions to show their present conditions as well as their pasts” (Jonaitis 1996:76).

A quote from Lloyd Kiva New, a Cherokee and President Emeritus of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, taken from a review in Museum Anthropology of the exhibit Pathways of Tradition: Indian Insights into Indian Worlds located at the National Museum of the American Indian notes:

Typical museum exhibits about American Indians tend to emphasize the scientific facts of the Indian past. Such factually oriented shows, devoid of art, fail to convey the feelings and emotional aspects of peoples, tribes...forgetting that human behavior is often conditioned more by how one feels about a given situation than by what he knows about it. [Jonaitis 1996:76]

In the past decade there has been a growing awareness that the museum has become an institution that is increasingly contested (Arieff 1995:77). Along with this goes the fact that its practices are also under scrutiny, especially by those of an indigenous heritage. These attitudes have been shaped by various social influences, such as feminism, the civil rights movement, postmodern theory, and the increasing commodification of cultural production (Arieff 1995:77). “What is the role of the museum in contemporary society?
What is exhibited and what excluded? Who is to interpret the material and to what end?” (Arieff 1995:77). A good example of a museum that is dedicated to working with the American Indians they represent is the National Museum of the American Indian.

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), located in New York’s lower Manhattan, was established by an act of Congress in 1989, and is the newest component of the Smithsonian Institution (Jonaitis 1996:76). It builds upon the collections of the Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation, although it is a “complete institutional transformation” (Jonaitis 1996:76). What makes it unique is that “NMAI was created *for* Native people, and charged, as part of its mission, to recognize and affirm to Native communities and the non-Native public the historical and contemporary culture and cultural achievements of the Natives of the Western Hemisphere” (Jonaitis 1996:76).

W. Richard West, Jr. (1999), in his article “Research and Scholarship at the National Museum of the American Indian: The New Inclusiveness” argues that there are three principles that guide NMAI in their definition of ‘research’ and ‘scholarship.’ The first is the museum’s “explicit recognition of the time continuum and contemporary existence of the indigenous cultures of our Hemisphere” (West 1999:5). This reiterates the fact that Native peoples are still here in a “culturally definable form” (West 1999:5). These are not communities living in a static world, and they have been influenced not only by non-Native forces, but also by the processes of adaptation (West 1999:5).

The second principle that West defines is “the pivotal role of NMAI in affirming and supporting this cultural continuity. In a critical sense, this institution is as much an institution of living culture as it is a ‘museum’ in the conventional meaning of the term” (West 1999:6). He feels that this was reflected when the U.S. Congress mandated that
Indians must comprise a majority of outside members on the Board of Trustees, and that the museum “make available curatorial and other learning opportunities for Indians…” (West 1999:6).

The third principle “concerns scholarship, and whose voices are heard in determining cultural ‘truth’ as it relates to the cultural experiences and history of the Native peoples of the Americas?” (West 1999:6). West claims that NMAI is a cultural institution that demands multiple perspectives be examined in the scholarship arena regarding Native peoples and their culture. More “emphatically, those multiple perspectives must include the voices of Native peoples themselves” (West 1999:6).

James Clifford (1988) writes in the introduction to his book, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, a passage that seems to define the above points in a particularly salient manner:

> Throughout the world indigenous populations have had to reckon with the forces of ‘progress’...the results have been both destructive and inventive. Many traditions, languages, cosmologies, and values are lost, some literally murdered; but much has simultaneously been invented and revived in complex, oppositional contexts. If the victims of progress and empire are weak, they are seldom passive. It used to be assumed, for example, that Christianity in...colonial Massachusetts would lead to the extinction of indigenous cultures rather than to their transformation. Something more ambiguous and historically complex has occurred, requiring that we perceive both the end of certain orders of diversity and the creation or translations of others. [Clifford 1988:16]

Jonaitis (1996) writes that James Clifford (1988) has certainly influenced modern thought on the ways in which museums/cultural centers mold and help create visitors’ experiences. American mainstream museums have certainly been guilty in the past, and in
the present, of impressing the public with ideas about the represented cultures that are not consistent with the self-definitions of the living members of these cultures.

This is especially true for those museums/cultural centers that have not updated their indigenous displays within the last ten to fifteen years, usually due to budget constraints. These exhibits will "typically characterize nineteenth century traditions as representative of the 'authentic' Indian, whose admirable culture was wiped out by the forces of progress and change" (Jonaitis 1996:79). Mainstream Western museums tend to focus on American Indians as a static part of America's past, instead of the growing, living community that they represent today.

Shepard Krech III, (1993), in his article "Museums, Voices and Representations," writes that:

It was only a matter of time before arguments over the appropriation, possession, and control of history through artifacts caught them up. In today's scholarship, these arguments find forcible expression in the new historicism, the fundamentally perspectival and relativist postmodern critique of historical objectivism, and in the more public arena, in the postcolonial fragmentation of authority, and it seems impossible to engage in museum criticism today without acknowledging this central critique. [Krech III 1993:3]

Despite this dismal history, indigenous peoples have begun to reclaim their cultural history and property:

American Indian nations represent living cultures with strong ties to their traditional past. Contemporary efforts to protect tribal rights to cultural property are closely related to the emerging movement among Indian nations to define their sovereignty according to their own concepts and traditions. Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination encompasses the powerful normative concept of cultural integrity, and is centrally linked to their efforts to protect both tangible and intangible aspects of their cultural heritage. [Tsosie 1995:5]
In Albuquerque, New Mexico, Rebecca Hernandez has begun coordinating the Museum Studies Program at the University of New Mexico. In an article from *Indian Country Today*, Hernandez (2001:B2) argues, “Sensitizing museum practitioners and the public to the proper care and preservation of cultural objects has a global reach. A curriculum committee will form this summer to plan for an undergraduate minor and graduate certificate programs as well as non-degree courses to be provided on-site for employees at various tribal museums and cultural centers through the state.”

Education on the issues of care and preservation techniques for cultural artifacts would be very beneficial to the exhibiting of Indian and other cultures. The program at the University of New Mexico began in the spring of 2001. Hernandez (2001:B2) is also quoted as asserting that:

> [t]he same issues affect all tribal cultures and indigenous arts of the world...The question is how do we do this with sensitivity and with a level of savvy that has been missing...When you address the museum itself, it makes culture and identity easier to talk about. Art is a great communicator, so we can keep coming back to the objects. [Hernandez 2001:B2]

In an article (2001:B1) from *News From Indian Country* the topic is protecting indigenous traditions while still promoting tourism. “The advent of increasing numbers of tribal casinos and resorts has stimulated the emergence of another tourist attraction, that of the tribal cultural center” (Westerly 2001:B1). Indigenous communities are finding out that these centers can become a source of conflict and pride in their customs and history, especially when the economic factors become an issue (Westerly 2001:B1). “Protecting traditions, beliefs and sacred sites are among the main issues Native nations are discussing when considering tourism as a means of economic development” (Westerly 2001:B1).
In another issue of *News From Indian Country*, the subject is the Plains Indian Museum, and the emphasis is on ‘the truth’. Jim Kent writes that the “goal is for the public to hear Native voices” (Kent 1999:12B). The article articulates how the Buffalo Bill Historical Center is trying to change those images of Cody’s misrepresentation of American Indians with the recently renovated Plains Indian Museum. Emma Hanson, curator and a member of the Pawnee tribe, was quoted as having said, “[t]he entire collection has been reinterpreted, allowing the Native peoples to speak in their own voices, for the first time, about the stories related to the collections within the museum” (Kent 1999:12B).

The primary message being communicated from the Plains Museum is one of education. With its “approximately 5,600 objects and over 24,000 feet of exhibition space, a major goal for the museum will be in representing the truth behind living American Indian cultures and their histories” (Kent 1999:12B). For hundreds of years, the American and international public has only been presented with inaccurate information as their primary means of learning about Native culture. Emma Hanson was further quoted as saying that “the project represents an unprecedented involvement of Native Americans in developing a major museum exhibition” (Kent 1999:12B).

One of the major concerns, with both American mainstream museums/cultural centers and those that are tribally run, is the question of what to do with the objects acquired by the institution that are considered sacred (Hall 1998:38). In most American Indian museums/cultural centers, there are many artifacts that are deemed too sacred to display either to the general public or to certain members of the indigenous community. It is “believed that without someone who knows what he is doing, it is extremely dangerous to use or display a ceremonial object” (Hall 1998:38).
Interviews with staff from the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center, and The Museum at Warm Springs supported this ideology. As Marjorie Waheneka, Exhibit and Collections Manager at Tamástslikt said, “elders are the backbone” of the center and have the final say over what objects are exhibited and how much is told about them (Waheneka interview, May 28, 2002). The elders also approved the final storyboard at Tamástslikt before it was displayed.

Marilyn Malatare, Curator and Museum Director at Yakama, spoke of the “Elders Advisory Board.” If an artifact is deemed to be of a “questionable nature by a couple of the elders, staff will consider if out of line, and ask the board how to make the object appropriate” (Malatare 2002). If elders or spiritual leaders deem certain religious objects to be appropriate for public display, there may be little information given about an artifact that goes beyond the elemental facts of the materials.

**Sacredness**

Central to traditional Indian religious beliefs is the knowledge that the sacred is present in all creations of this world (Powell 1998:42). This knowledge is the basis of most tribal theologies, and is the basic tenet from which indigenous peoples live their lives. A pervading sense of spirituality and the supernatural origin of both the world and humanity have begun to influence some Western religious thoughts and beliefs (Powell 1998:42).

What is sacred material to Native Americans? Father Peter J. Powell, although not a Native American, has “spent his entire priestly ministry among Native American people,”

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1 See Appendix for interviews and interviewees. ‘Native American’ indicates American Indian ethnicity, but of another tribe. ‘Tribal’ denotes members of the tribal community maintaining the museum/cultural center.
both in Chicago and the reservations of the Plains and Woodlands people (Powell 1998:42). He has worked with the elders of a "number of tribes," and considers the holy men and women of these tribes to have opened up his "whole being to things sacred" (Powell 1998:42). George Horse Capture, a prominent Indian leader, asked Powell to present a paper on sacred materials during a conference in 1998.

Father Peter J. Powell (1998) defines sacred material in the following way:

those visible materials through which the Creator and the Sacred Powers—by whatever names They are known—pour supernatural blessing, power, and new life into human lives. Sacred Materials recall that these Holy Ones, who are Themselves Spirits, reveal Themselves in forms that human beings know and understand: animals, birds, other living creatures, plants, rocks, natural forces, and sometimes a mysterious man or woman. [Powell 1998:42]

Sacred materials are the visual reminders that the world was created by the sacred, which continues throughout time, and that it is the responsibility of human beings to exist in harmony with the spiritual world (Powell 1998:42).

Artifacts within a museum/cultural center which may be deemed sacred include items such as "feathers, skins, wood, stone, white sage, cedar— to name only a few— [which] carry a portion of the life, the power and the blessing of those Holy Ones who dwell in the Spirit World into the lives of men and women living in the visible world" (Powell 1998:43). Each tribe has its own lifeways that encompass a holiness and wisdom that is special. "The holy traditions of each tribe reveal a special relationship to the Creator unique to that tribe alone" (Powell 1998:43).

Museums, cultural centers and their personnel have certain spiritual and ethical obligations when working with holy artifacts (Mibach and Green 1998:58). The most important of these is that the greatest respect and care be given to these sacred objects, such
as sacred bundles, that are in the care of these institutions (Powell 1998:43). The advice of elders should be sought in the proper care taking and handling of these items, including rituals involving prayer, smoking, and the burning of sweet grass or sage to honor these artifacts (Powell 1998:43).

Sacred bundles are not for public display, and the museums that keep them should set aside a special, private place where the bundles can “dwell in respect and quiet” (Kirk 2002). Natalie Kirk, Curator of The Museum at Warm Springs and a member of the community, says that “sacred bundles, as part of their sacred care, should rest upon beds of white sage, and cedar, sweet grass or other incense should be burned in their presence periodically” (Kirk 2002).

Sacred items, as stated previously, are usually kept in storage rooms, away from activity and the curiosity of visitors (Biddle 1977:39). Articles may include pipes, animal effigies, and anything that was once possessed by a person that is now deceased (Powell 1998:42). The care of these items has been a point of contention between most mainstream museum’s anthropological viewpoints and those of tribal peoples.

Exhibitions within museums/cultural centers should give emphasis to the sacred beliefs and ethos of American Indian tribal cultures, as the primary responsibility of the institution is to portray the truth in an accurate fashion (Powell 1998:48). With the advent of more tribally run museums/cultural centers and Native control over their own cultural artifacts within these settings, there is a chance to get an insider’s representation from indigenous peoples themselves.

Clyde M. Hall (1998), in his article, “Problems with the Exhibition of Sacred Objects,” writes about difficulties that can occur when an outside group tries to display holy
artifacts without contacting Native peoples for guidance. He explores issues with the David T. Vernon Collection, which is housed at The Colter Bay Visitor Center in Grand Teton National Park. This collection contains around 1,500 objects from various tribes, with about half of these items considered to be of a sacred nature (Hall 1998:36).

Because the supporters of this exhibit did not consider the fact that Native American religions are usually highly animistic, they did not realize that to most indigenous people, all things, both animate and non-animate, are imbued with spiritual powers (Hall 1998:36).

Songs, proper rituals, and movements are used with the purpose of manipulating these powers of nature and the universe to create an effect needed to protect an individual from harm and to gain additional power and benefits for the individual, group or the entire tribe. All of these items assured the cycle of life and continued existence of the tribe or individual. [Hall 1998:36].

The Indian people who attended the opening of the museum were greatly dismayed at the display of religious and sacred items to the public (Hall 1998:37). The following quote underscores the need for American Indians possessing and exhibiting their own cultural materials in the proper and respectful manner:

This is because the power emanating from them might cause harm by improper display or handling. What was seen by those at the museum opening was the display of bundles and other sacred objects with their coverings and wrappings removed. In essence, the contents were profanely displayed with no regard to the proper ceremony or respect. [Hall 1998:38]

Most conservators of Western museums within the United States are well aware of their ethical responsibilities, since the simplest and most mundane daily chores, such as cleaning and conservation work may irreversibly change the nature of the object being worked upon (Mibach and Green 1998:58). The American Code of Ethics guidelines set the precedent for the handling and care of sacred objects. "Conservators," it dictates, must be
“governed by unswerving respect for the aesthetic, historic and physical integrity of the object” (Mibach and Green 1998:58).

The conservator is given a more specific directive when it comes to the problem of reversibility of an item (Mibach and Green 1998:59). The American Code of Ethics asserts:

That the conservator should avoid the use of materials, which may become so intractable that their future removal could endanger the physical safety of the object. He also should avoid the use of techniques the results in which cannot be undone if that should become desirable. [Mibach and Green 1998:59]

The article also emphasizes the importance of using members of the Indian community to ascertain solutions that comply with the ethical values of respect and that do not violate the professional obligations of the museum.

Religion and its associated ideology of sacredness play the largest role in determining what artifacts are chosen for display in tribally run museums/cultural centers. The decisions vary according to each tribal nation, and will normally include a panel of elders that are consulted for the placement of questionable items, such as the ones in place at TCI, the Yakama Nation, and Warm Springs. Understanding some basic tenets of Native American theology is helpful in understanding these practices.

Anthropological approaches to the study of religion and other areas “must include two interconnected features” (Bowen 2002:6). The first, of course, is the “practice of fieldwork, preferably performed over a period of a year or more. It is during this time that relationships are developed and mutual trust is built” (Bowen 2002:6). Good anthropological studies are based on long-term relationships with the people residing in the community. These friendships, in turn, help to interpret the social life of the society from an insider’s view.
The second feature in anthropological methodology is the “initial study of the community through the local perspective” (Bowen 2002:6). For instance, in the study of a society’s religious traditions, the focus would not only be on the religious practices within the society, but would also extend to those domains that are connected to religion as well, such as gender roles and political systems (Bowen 2002:6). Culture should not be studied as separate parts of a larger whole, but as a web of interconnectivity where all areas of life eventually touch and influence each other.

As Walter R. Echo-Hawk writes in the foreword of Encyclopedia of Native American Religions, religion is “a basic attribute of humanity that is cherished by mankind in all ages, races, and cultures” (Echo-Hawk 2000:v). This includes America’s five hundred Indian tribes and two million Native peoples. Columbus made a major error in his judgment when he declared upon his arrival to the New World that Indians should be “easily converted to Christianity because they had no religion” (Echo-Hawk 2000:v). American Indians, on the contrary, share religious traditions that are rich with spirituality, beliefs, and practices.

The value systems of tribal societies are determined not by any written doctrine, but by the expectations of the community. The primary question to be asked is: What is good? There are two primary answers to this query (Kidman 2001:18). At the individual level, the concept of good is seen as a long life, health and happiness (Kidman 2001:18). This is achieved by remaining in proper relationships with other people, all beings in the physical world, and the spirits.

“The ideal of harmony entails fulfilling one’s responsibility to the community” (Kidman 2001:18). Spirituality is a way of gaining access to power that can then be used for the betterment of the community. As Kidman (2001:18) writes in her book, Native
American Theology, “appropriate behavior is the basis for ethical behavior.” Native American theology is ultimately rooted in a holistic sense of Native cultures. Time, space, land, kinship, community and deity are forever linked in the indigenous world (Kidman 2001:19). Sacred knowledge belongs not only to the individual, but also to the community and is a shared matter (Kidman 2001:19).

Items of national interest that have shown up in the news recently include the actions of the state legislatures when they pass laws making it a felony to desecrate Indian burial grounds, when the federal government passes legislation requiring federal officials to respect the religious freedom of Native peoples, and when museums return sacred items or skeletal remains to the tribes to which they rightfully belong (Echo-Hawk 2000:vi). Despite all of the media attention these incidents garner, and the books and articles that are out for the mainstream American’s use, the people of North America still remain largely ignorant about Native religions.

Not only does this apply to the general populace, but to the powerful policy makers of the United States (Echo-Hawk 2000:vi). A lack of knowledge and familiarity of these affairs commonly have harmful effects, as is displayed in the history of American Indian religious freedom. Military confrontations, government bans and forced assimilation has been major issues in the past and continues on into the present (Echo-Hawk 2000:vii).

On November 16, 1990, President George Bush signed into law the Native American Graves and Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (US Congress 1990 PL 101-601). This act is designed to help protect Indian gravesites from looting and requires the repatriation to tribes of culturally identifiable remains, funerary objects, sacred artifacts, and items of cultural patrimony taken from federal or tribal lands if certain legal criteria are met.
This act gives tribal nations a new set of legal procedures to use in reclaiming artifacts of religious or ceremonial significance from museums with federal backing. The "majority of Indian tribes and the American Association of Museums, along with the Society for American Archaeology supported this legislation" (Hirschfelder and Molin 2000:199).

Currently, Native American religious freedom continues to be a major human-rights concern to Indian nations. Worship can be closely monitored by governmental watchdogs, and is committed to the discretion of government administrators without meaningful judicial review (Echo-Hawk 2000:vi). Federal agencies regulate the access to sacred sites and the use of religious sacraments and objects. Some tribes also have to contend with contemptuous right-wing groups that make the practice of ancient religious traditions a difficult and painstaking process (Echo-Hawk 2000:vii). Other tribes fight against the exploitation of their sacred objects as art or museum pieces by non-Natives.

A major point is that religion fuses worldview and ethos together to create a set of meaningful social values that the community accepts as their own (Geertz 1973:131). These social values are to be taught and lived at home and within the personal relationships within the community. Sacred objects and the nature of American Indian religious lifeways are not to be displayed for outsiders to misinterpret.

Most museums and cultural centers of indigenous peoples assume that the typical Western viewer will only see superstition and not the in-depth nature of Indian sacredness, which permeates all of their ways of living and relating to the world around them (Geertz 1973:132). Decisions based on spirituality are responsible for creating the image and representation of cultures that are shown to non-Natives and Natives alike. When tribally
run museums/cultural centers are given the opportunity to exhibit their own cultural artifacts, histories and traditions, they have the chance to represent their cultures from their own perspective.

**Museums/Cultural Centers and Theories of Representation**

I argue that tribal members that share a history with and are part of cultural traditions and lifeways are the ones who best understand the worldview connected to these objects. Tribal nations are assuming the right and the power to take back their cultural identity from Western mainstream museums and interpret them in the manner appropriate to their beliefs (Biddle 1977:35). When this is not feasible, it has become more popular to consult with Native populations as much as possible in exhibitions and the representation of their own cultural goods within museums that are not tribally run.

In dealing with Native Americans, Michaels writes about how Euro-Americans identified with indigenous peoples (Michaels 1992:668). At the turn of the twentieth century, most Westerners identified with the Indians as a refusal of their own American identity (Michaels 1992:668). By the 1920s, however, this had changed to become a relationship of the “acceptance of an American identity” (Michaels 1992:668). What emerged from the twenties was an ideology of racial pluralism, and the feeling that “one preferred one’s own race not because it was better than the others, but simply because it was one’s own” (Michaels 1992:669).

This ties in to how one represents one’s own culture, and the concept that this involves the “representation of your culture not as the things you love to do but as the things you love to do because they are your culture...your cultural practices are yours even if you
do not practice them, and that cultural practices are attractive to you insofar as they are yours” (Michaels 1992:671). Michaels uses the Navajo Indians as an example of this ideology. The Navajos see their own behavior in doing “Navajo things” as a means of representing their culture, but these activities have no meaning unless you are actually Navajo (Michaels 1992:673). Only culture functions as justification of our social values, for it contains actions and behavior, not just a description of them (Michaels 1992:673).

James Clifford (1988) argues that culture “does not tolerate radical breaks in historical continuity, thus the only two available narratives about cultures imagine them either dying or surviving, and their narratives cannot account for the discovery of new ways to be different,” (Clifford 1988:338). Some anthropologists are backing away from the concept of culture because of its “bias toward wholeness, continuity and growth” (Clifford 1988:338).

In regards to his work with the Mashpee Indians and the problem of the legal determination of Indian identity, Clifford finds that the participation of Native Americans in traditional indigenous practices was intermittent, attributing to the ideology that Native culture was no longer active or alive (Clifford 1988:339). Culture, as defined by Clifford, is seen as the ongoing practice of these traditions. Therefore, culture as identified through the American Indians has been “continually invented and reinvented” (Clifford 1988:339). Social structures can reproduce themselves through the reinvention of culture, and “their wholeness is as much a matter of reinvention and encounter as it is of continuity and survival,” (Clifford 1988:341).

Clifford asserts that traditions that are remembered from the past cannot be considered ‘lost’ (Clifford 1988:342). In the case of the Mashpee Indians and others, he
“rejects culture as a mark of identity because culture tolerates no discontinuities” (Clifford 1988:342). The “inheritance of ethnicity is either reinvented or reinterpreted, not simply passed on from one generation to the next through socialization practices” (Clifford 1988:342). Clifford (1988:342) sees ethnicity as something that is “dynamic, stemming not from the individual psyche itself but from outside of an individual’s conscious control, and yet still incorporates an essence of self-identity.”

The experiences of Native Americans are confined by these concepts of “continuous traditions and the unified self. I argue that identity, considered ethnographically, must always be mixed, relational, and inventive” (Clifford 1988:10). Self-identity is a complex cultural issue, involving both the differentiating aspects of culture while still retaining a cultural collective identity, which is often a disrupted inventive process (Clifford 1988:10). Identity is “conjectural, not essential,” and an essence of difference cannot be said to be located only in the continuity of a culture or tradition.

I concur with Clifford’s argument that culture is indeed an important aspect of an individual’s ethnicity, and that both culture and identity can be forms of the ongoing process of invention and re-invention. The staff members of the museums/cultural centers that I worked with were proud of their continuing traditions and heritage, and gained an important sense of dignity and self-worth from the exhibition of their artifacts and history to outside viewers and members from within their own communities. When culture is so closely bound to ethnicity, the language, religions, lifeways, songs and other aspects of culture will certainly leave an indelible imprint among those within the associated community.

Every museum or cultural center tends to draw from the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make them (Karp and Lavine 1991:2). Numerous people
oversee these exhibits, and decisions are made to emphasize some aspects while
downplaying others, to highlight some truths while minimizing others (Karp and Lavine
1991:2). American Indian museums/cultural centers are becoming more common as groups,
especially those of minority status, attempt to establish and maintain a sense of community
and to assert their social, political, and economic rights in the larger world (Karp and Lavine
1991:2).

As more indigenous museums/cultural centers emerge, Native American groups
challenge established Western museums that attempt to portray their cultures, and demand
more power in asserting rights over what is displayed of their particular lifeways within
these institutions. Many Indian nations have asked mainstream museums for the return of
their cultural items so that they may exhibit these artifacts within their own cultural centers,
where they can control the information and interpretation of these objects.

I am unaware of a struggle between the tribally run museums I worked with and
mainstream museums over the repatriation of artifacts. However, J.A. Hanson (1980:50),
writes that Zuni and Zia Pueblos have requested sacred objects be returned to them by
Western mainstream museums. “At this time, no one is certain if the law applies to all
museums receiving federal funds or to federal museums only, or even if the law is retrospect
in intent. Thus far, Native Americans have moved with a dignified deliberateness and
cautious when dealing with legal issues” (Hanson 1980:50).

The central question that is asked of this situation, then, is one of representation.
The lens through which a culture is displayed and perceived are very important elements of
how a culture sees itself and how others interpret that same culture (Karp and Lavine
1991:2). “Decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgments of power
and authority and can, indeed, resolve themselves into claims about what a nation is or ought to be as well as how citizens should relate to one another” (Karp and Lavine 1991:2).

A museum or cultural center can display objects in many different ways. The manner of installation, the “subtle messages implicated through design, arrangement, and assemblage, can either aid or impede our appreciation and understanding of the visual, cultural, social and political interest of the objects and stories exhibited in museums” (Karp 1991:14). I hypothesize that this is indeed true, and that American Indian history and cultural lifeways are best interpreted by the members of the cultural community being exhibited. Historically, “museums have been known to be important tools in the education of national identities and their cultures” (Fox 1989:10).

Richard Fox (1989) argues that, “culture is not a heavy weight of tradition, a set of configurations, a basic personality constellation that coerces and compels individuals. Culture is a set of understandings and a consciousness under active construction by which individuals interpret the world around them.” Fox writes that cultural production is a “continual activity coincident with ongoing social life itself” (Fox 1989:10). National culture is both “flexible and fluid, and the outcome of the continuing practice of cultural production” (Fox 1989:10).

Fox goes on to assert that it is difficult to distinguish between nationalisms, racial identity, and ethnicity because there are no clear borders defining each concept (Fox 1989:3). These ideologies tend to overlap, and are ‘fuzzy’ categories due to their associations to social life: “from how people conceive of themselves or are conceived by others, and how people live out and live with these conceptions” (Fox 1989:3).
Fox argues that anthropologists tend to cover up ‘fuzziness’ and that they perceive culture with a sense of false rigidity (Fox 1989:3). Cultural production does not fit into neat categories of racial, ethnic or nationalist. These concepts are malleable and can assimilate with each other, making the boundaries flexible and open (Fox 1989:3).

Those in charge of the exhibits within a museum/cultural center are not always in agreement of what items are to be displayed, in which manner they are to be represented, or who will be the determining voice in controlling that representation (Karp 1991:15). This can lead to major power struggles, since “the fight is over nothing less than the identity of the culture itself. When cultural ‘others’ are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not” (Fox 1989:15).

Svetlana Alpers (1991), in her article “A Way of Seeing,” argues that “the representation of culture in a museum is a bit troubling: Museums turn cultural materials into art objects. The products of other cultures are made into something that we can look at. It is to ourselves, then, that we are representing things in museums.” How the viewer interprets artifacts is largely influenced by how the museum has chosen to represent those objects. This includes the manner of display, amount and kind of information disseminated, and the experiences and cultural lens that the visitor incorporates into their own worldview (Alpers 1991:32).

American Indian museums/cultural centers offer both the expected and unexpected. The culmination of a certain distance from those artifacts that are foreign to us combined with a sense of common humanity is a part of the representative process for the audience (Alpers 1991:32). It is the articulation of culture through display techniques and
interpretation perceived through our own cultural lens that contributes to our ultimate understanding of what is represented (Alpers 1991:32).

As a viewer of museum/cultural center exhibits, the visitor inevitably sees the objects within the displays through his own cultural lens. Some artifacts will be more interesting than others due to this perception. Most items, however, will appeal to the visitor’s interest in both the purpose and function of the objects he sees (Alpers 1991:33). Not only value judgments but also analytical categories are shaped through cultural determination (Alpers 1991:33). The curator selects an item for display not only as something worth viewing, but also as a statement about the culture it is representing.

There is a complex relationship between visitors from another culture contemplating a Native American exhibit. As Michael Baxandall (1991) argues:

Three cultural terms are involved. First, there are the ideas, values and purposes of the culture from which the object comes. Second, there are the ideas, values and certainly, purposes of the arrangers of the exhibition. These are likely to be laden with theory and otherwise contaminated by a concept of culture that the viewer does not necessarily possess or share. Third, there is the viewer himself, with all his own cultural baggage of unsystematic ideas, values and yet again, highly specific purposes. [Baxandall 1991:34]

Exhibition can be seen as a field in which three different roles or agents interact. There is the maker of the object displayed, the exhibitors of these objects, and the viewers (Baxandall 1991:34). All three roles are active and interactive within the museum. The artist or craftsperson responsible for the artifacts has an innate understanding of their culture that is reflected within their work (Baxandall 1991:35). The exhibitor controls what is displayed as a representation of that particular culture. In essence, they are “the ones responsible for not only educating an audience, but also validating a theory – a theory of
The viewer, a product of his own culture, and whose perception of what is being represented is colored by the very fact that he is a cultural being, plays the last role (Baxandall 1991:37).

The viewer, an active participant in the exhibition, must work against the incompatibility of one's own cultural and that of another's culture concept that is normally very separate from his own (Baxandall 1991:37). In doing so, the viewer will likely come against the ideology of cultural difference, which is such a central tenet of anthropology. Baxandall (1991:37) argues that, "exhibitors cannot represent cultures." The exhibition can be seen as a social occasion for the visitor, and the activity it produces is ultimately one between the maker and his audience (Baxandall 1991:41). It is up to the viewer to determine the cultural perception he makes within his own mind after leaving the museum.

In the article "Museum Practices," Steven D. Lavine (1991) asserts that, "The concept of voice needs to be considered within a museum's exhibits as a powerful force of representation," (Lavine 1991:155). He notes that Patrick Houlihan, writing as a museum practitioner dedicated to the exhibition of Native American culture, argues that there are "lessons to be learned by observing the practice of insiders in a particular culture," and insists that "feeling and impression be an integral part of exhibitions" (Lavine 1991:155). He adds that "there is an almost universal humanism across cultures." For Houlihan, another important component is that of having the viewer confront the unexpected, essentially being "shocked" into awareness that his or her own indigenous knowledge is inadequate (Houlihan 1991:206).

Clifford, on the other hand, writes of the Native American museums/cultural centers that speak for a local community and history (Clifford 1991:225). In Lavine's overview of
Clifford’s article, “Four Northwest Coast Museums,” he notes that one of Clifford’s main points is:

This specificity of local voices forces a change in the perceptions of the viewer: what is heard is a voice that the non-Indian, nonlocal viewer may well find unintelligible, except for the implicit claim made by its very existence that ‘we are here and our story is not yours.’
[Lavine 1991:157]

The Tomaquag Indian Memorial Museum is located in Exeter, Rhode Island. The museum holds approximately “11,000 Native American artifacts including splint ash baskets and fine beadwork” (Biddle 1977:35). This museum is an example of just one of an increasing number of American Indian museums and cultural centers that are being run by Native Americans.

The continuing “emergence of these indigenous centers seems to indicate that Indian culture has survived” (Biddle 1977:36). Because of the forced assimilation of Indians with twentieth-century America, “their own culture is experiencing the most serious threat so far to its continuation into the next century. Something must be done to insure that it lives for future generations, and museums and cultural centers are emerging in every part of the country to assume that role” (Biddle 1977:37).

Most of these centers employ an “all-Indian staff” or a desire to maintain one eventually (Biddle 1977:37). In some instances, the tribes help high school students go on to college so that they can become educated in museology or other museum-related jobs (Minthorn 2002). The students are expected to return and fill a position within the museum/cultural center staff once they are finished. The obvious theory here is that a person from a cultural community will best fit the requirements for managing a well-run tribal museum that reflects its own culture appropriately.
The main objective of most of these indigenous centers is that of education (Biddle 1977:38). This is brought about through libraries, media centers, and job skill instruction, which have also helped bring back traditional craft activities such as basket making and weaving. These items can then be sold at the tribal museum’s gift shop or at special events such as powwows that are open to the public. Education is intended primarily for the tribal community running the museum, and involves the history and tradition of their own people (Biddle 1977:38). The center will usually have as a secondary purpose the entertainment, education and economic resources of the outside visitor.

“It is not possible to say how many Indian-run museums and cultural centers there are, nor is it possible to create a typical profile for these centers” (Biddle 1977:38). Tribally run museums are often built as accessories to restaurants, casinos, and resorts to help attract tourist dollars. What is usually missing from Native American museums/cultural centers is anything explicitly connected to the tribe’s sacred life and religious practices (Biddle 1977:39). This is something that is taught at home, and is seen as the basic tenet of all Indian life. A tenet, however, that is not seen to be appropriate to the eyes of outsiders.

While the anthropological version of the first appearance of indigenous people begins with the theory of the Bering Strait migration, the Native American version is quite different, centering on the individual creation stories of tribal nations that are considered sacred (Biddle 1977:39). Thus, not only in American mainstream museums but also in tribally run cultural centers viewers are not allowed access to a large part of tribal lifeways and the corresponding worldview, that of the sacred and spiritual life of Native Americans.

I concur with Clifford Geertz’ argument that:

A people’s ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life,
its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their worldview is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. [Geertz 1973:127]

Geertz goes on to state that religious beliefs and ritual both confront and confirm each other, and that the “demonstration of a meaningful relation between the values a people holds and the general order of existence within which it finds itself is an essential element in all religions” (Geertz 1973:127).

Geertz also writes of sacred symbols, such as a cross, a medicine bundle, or a feathered effigy. Meanings are inherently a part of these symbols, which can be used in rituals or spoken about in stories and myths (Geertz 1973:127). Native Americans who relate to religious symbols get a sense of “what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it” (Geertz 1973:127). As Geertz (1973) asserts, “the real power behind the symbol is through its ability to order life experience.”

Geertz (1973) maintains that what people “fear and admire most are captured within their worldview, which is made meaningful by their religious beliefs which in turn articulate the quality of their lives.” The power behind a religion in upholding social and community values is contingent on the “ability of its symbols to formulate a world in which those values, as well as the forces opposing their realization, are fundamental ingredients” (Geertz 1973:131).
Euro-American Museums

In *Reading National Geographic*, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins argue, “most important is the fact that those understandings or strategies for describing human differences have helped create and reproduce social hierarchies,” and that “representations are never irrelevant, never unconnected to the world of actual social relations” (Lutz 1993:3). Viewing the non-Western world incorporates the cultural and historical, along with a political intent (Lutz 1993:3). These are differentiated not only by the manner in which they are perceived, but also by the methodology involved in what is represented to us. As in the “lens of anthropology, the primary focus is on cultural difference” (Lutz 1993:3).

Virginia Dominguez (1986), in her article “The Marketing of Heritage,” writes about the collecting of ethnological artifacts by Euro-American museums:

But herein lie three of the paradoxes of ethnological collecting – that in intending to depict other cultures it is seeking to complete a depiction of our own, that it rests on a strong historical consciousness but concentrates its work on peoples perceived to be without history and that it continually depicts ‘man’ as subject – objectifier, creator, producer – but transforms him into an object and vehicle of knowledge. [Dominguez 1986:548]

Dominguez addresses the dichotomy between “traditional” and “modern” societies and how we, as Westerners, tend to perceive them. “Tradition” is seen to be something that is tied closely with history, and is handed down from one generation to the next (Dominguez 1986:549). “’Traditional’ societies, though presumably a historical, are seen as linked with their pasts, and ‘modern’ societies, though presumably historical, are experienced as ungrounded” (Dominguez 1986:549). Dominguez (1986:549) argues that, “the whole distinction between traditional and modern conveys contradictory messages – as if
traditional societies were being congratulated and simultaneously demoted because they have what modern societies see themselves as lacking.”

Dominguez (1986:550) articulates her view that “the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period in which Western Europeans and North Americans were into inventing traditions.” This occurs most frequently when there are rapid changes within a society that either collapses or eradicates social constructs for which the historical traditions had been designed, which gives rise to new ones that may not fit as well, or when older traditions prove to be no longer flexible or appropriate and become eliminated (Dominguez 1986:550). American Indian traditions are certainly among those belonging to societies that went through rapid change and forced assimilation.

Dominguez (1986:554) concludes that in mainstream museums “the value of these ethnological collections – and perhaps ethnological collections in general – lies not in their being representatives of the Other, but rather that they can fruitfully be read as referential indices of the Self.” Artifacts may be gathered from other societies, including Native Americans, but the items chosen for display, how they are collected and the manner in which they are interpreted and represented to the viewer is all exhibited from an outsider’s worldview (Dominguez 1986:554).

James Clifford (1988) illuminates some points about the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), in New York City as a center for exhibiting Native American artifacts. At this institution, the display of American Indian objects as art means “excluding the original cultural context” (Clifford 1988:200). Visitors are informed at the entrance that the context of these items falls under the responsibility of the anthropologists, and that cultural history is not necessary to appreciate the aesthetic value and analysis of art (Clifford 1988:200). Since
the advent of modernism and the practice of cultural anthropology, “many Native artifacts have been collected and exhibited by either art or anthropological museums” (Clifford 1988:200). These two arenas have both fought against and for each other in the battle over who has the right to conceptualize and represent these indigenous objects.

Anthropological insight tends to center on existing ideologies of “tribal” identity, while both the art and anthropological settings “assume a primitive world in need of preservation, redemption, and representation” (Clifford 1988:200). Clifford (1988:201) argues that while “both domains seek the right to exhibit tribal cultures, the inventiveness of these cultures are subdued in the process of either building authentic traditional displays in the anthropological museum, or asserting the aesthetic, intrinsic values in the worldview of the art museum.”

At present, it seems likely that tribal nations will continue to battle over their rights to the indigenous goods that are still being exhibited by many Euro-American museums. American Indians argue that the people and culture to whom these artifacts belong should determine the objects and messages that are chosen for representation, the manner in which artifacts are displayed and exhibited, and the information shared about them to both the viewer and the members of the community (Clifford 1988:201). It is ultimately up to the viewer with his own cultural lens to interpret and incorporate the representations to which he can identify.

The artifacts chosen for display and the manner in which they are exhibited are not the only ways to show representation. Representation is also frequently present in the siting and architecture of the museums/cultural centers that exhibit American Indian material goods. This is especially prevalent in tribally run centers, where much thought is given to
the placement of the center, the material used, and the signs and symbols incorporated into the museum/cultural center's design.

**Representation Through Architecture**

The architecture of museums/cultural centers can play an important role in the continuation of representation to the outside viewer and the tribal community member. In this section, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center are briefly considered. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of the architectural issues of siting and design for tribally run museums/cultural centers.

On the Jones and Jones website, the design consultants for architecture and site development for NMAI on the Mall in Washington, D.C., assert that not only will this building have a language of its own, but it will also show the visitor a unique sense of rhythm (Jones and Jones website 2002). The approach to the institution will be a “natural curvilinear landscape, leading the visitor to the main entrance” and the top of the dome will “allow direct sunlight to enter, creating a space filled with natural light” (Jones and Jones website 2002).

The museum itself is the final product of many years of interaction between NMAI and Native American communities. Tribal members have been involved throughout the project from the conception to the present designing the exhibits to reflect Native design and representation. NMAI had a large task before it – creating “exhibitions that speak for hundreds of Native American tribes – in a way that is comprehensible to a largely non-Native audience” (Klein 2000:1).
The prominence and location of the museum ensures that many visitors will walk through the doors, giving NMAI an incredible amount of power in influencing attitudes towards the “1.2 million Indians enrolled in this country’s 565 federally recognized tribes” (Klein 2000:2). This museum has sometimes been on the “cutting edge of museums regarding issues of interpretation and display, especially in communicating culture, identity, material culture, and history” (Paxson, personal communiqué, November, 2002).

An example of a local, successful indigenous museum is the elaborate $193-million Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center near Mystic, Connecticut (Klein 2000:3). This center is tribally run, and the core exhibition “extols the Mashantucket Pequot’s for their business acumen and philanthropy while ignoring racial divisions and political infighting on the reservation” (Klein 2000:3). Although sometimes criticized as being “Disney-like,” the Pequot museum is very creative and includes film, computers, and theatrical dioramas.

A tribal member on the museum’s staff remarked that the museum is “like a huge family album, on the grandest scale imaginable” (Erikson 1999:46). This center helps visitors to comprehend tribal museums as important sites for establishing Native American humanity and their historical presence through time. In Patricia Erikson’s (1999:46) exhibition review titled “The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center,” Erikson writes that the exhibitions encourage outsiders to “humanize popular notions of Native peoples in general, and Pequot people in particular.” Dioramas help “present to museum visitors the continuity of Pequot traditions” (Erikson 1999:47).

One of the main goals of this museum, writes Erikson, is to present a “multivocal Pequot history” (Erikson 1999:47). As Executive Director Theresa Bell has written, “in
addressing what we perceive to be the distortions of past historical accounts, we don’t presume to present the final word. Typically we will be presenting several different interpretations in our exhibits” (Bell 1997:2-3). Despite these intentions, some feel that the exhibitions end up representing the Pequot’s and other tribal nations as how the “authentic” Indian should be (Erikson 1999:51). The Mashantucket Pequot Museum and other tribal museums demonstrate a significant factor in the emergence of a contemporary Native identity: the steadily increasing ownership of and direction of museums by Native communities.

Keith Basso (1996:34) argues in his book, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, that “knowledge of places is therefore closely linked to knowledge of the self.” Within the Native worldview, the true sense of self is intertwined with a sense of the past, the places and their associated stories (Basso 1996:34). One does not function successfully without the others. To quote N. Scott Momaday, “From the time the Indian first set foot upon this continent, he centered his life on the natural world. He is deeply invested in the earth...the sense of place is paramount. Only in reference to the earth can he persist in his identity” (Momaday 1994:1).

No matter how good a non-Native architect is, it can be difficult to interpret a Native person’s way of valuing and working with the local landscape. In Basso’s (1996:72) words: “one must acknowledge that local understandings of external realities are fashioned from local cultural materials, and that, knowing little or nothing of the latter, one’s ability to make appropriate sense of ‘what is’ and ‘what occurs’ in another’s environment is bound to be deficient.” Only members of the tribal community are equipped to take on the task of working with a non-Native architectural firm to help bridge this gap.
When some American Indians speak with one another about places, it can be associated with a commonly shared worldview. In discussing features of the landscape, they are able to communicate to others discrete messages about face-to-face relationships within the community and how they are being maintained (Basso 1996:75). Basso writes that, “men and women identify with and form strong bonds with the land, but more importantly, they learn the art of thinking ‘with’ the landscape. They are then able to incorporate this art into the narratives they tell, which affects the entire local community” (Basso 1996:75). As one Apache elder puts it, “geographical landscapes are never vacant” (Basso 1996:75).

American Indian museums/cultural centers may be built on or near sacred sites, but one thing is evident: the location of these institutions is a matter of great importance to the tribal nations that run them (McLuhan 1993:376). This is one of the first major decisions that must be made, in cooperation with the architects and consultants, determining how a particular tribal nation’s museum will be seen, felt, and interpreted by outsiders (McLuhan 1993:377). This not only concerns the effect it will have on visitors, but is reflected to a greater extent within the tribal community itself.

The master plan for TCI presented by the architectural firm of David Slusarenko, Hussain Mirza, and Karen Hennings (SMH Partnership 1991:47), deals with the siting of this center, which must consider what is important to the tribal members who want to represent their cultures accurately, while it also presents a mood and perception that visitors will hopefully pick up when they stop at the institute. The siting must take into consideration the natural resources that the tribe values, the general geographical lay of the land, and include the accessibility of the museum to the tourist (SMH Partnership 1991:47).
The siting of the museum/cultural center, the display of artifacts, the ways in which a tribal nation chooses to represent itself to its own community and others are all issues of identity. As Joseph Juhasz (1992) notes:

Human identity shows recognition of membership in the species. Social identity shows recognition of pertinent categories into which the species can be sorted. An individual identity has to do with the recognition of the same person despite multiple memberships in many categories. The principle function of identities for human beings, then, is to provide for constancy amid change and for persistence among transformation. [Juhasz 1992:290]

James A. Hanson (1980:45) writes in his article “The Reappearing Vanishing American” that, “there are approximately 125 museums and cultural centers in the United States and Canada that are owned and operated by Native American tribes and urban groups.” Lynn Paxson notes (personal communiqué to author, November, 2002), that Native peoples have become more cognizant of the value of their cultures after historical events such as the “civil rights movement and identity politics made it more acceptable to assert their nationhood and sovereignty.” Also involved were years of efforts by the federal government to eradicate indigenous traditions and lifeways (Tsosie 1995:5). Many indigenous groups are attempting to preserve their heritage for their own people, while also educating the mainstream public about their histories and worldviews.

Many Native groups initially saw the development of museums/cultural centers as an “economic development strategy” (Paxson, personal communiqué to author, November, 2002), generating income from ticket sales, gift shop purchases, restaurant revenue and rental of meeting halls and other tourist activities (Hanson 1980:45). Too often, many of these centers have not been able to be self-supporting, let alone profitable.
Native American museums/cultural centers face the same problems as mainstream museums. They have no tax base for operating money, and very few of them can rely on community members for financial backing (Hanson 1980:45). Hanson writes that, “Tribal economic resources vary tremendously among the reservations, but generally are inadequate to meet the people’s basic social needs” (Hanson 1980:45). Another issue is the political structure of a majority of the reservations, which can often hinder efforts at long-range planning and is “instrumental in the cause of frequent turnovers in tribal government which then carries over into changes in personnel within the museum’s infrastructure” (Hanson 1980:45).

The good news is that a fair number of tribal museums/cultural centers have succeeded in working around the financial difficulties and are working on developing their resources (Hanson 1980:46). Some have created independent nonprofit corporations to lessen political complications, and others have included members of the non-Native community in their advisory boards (Hanson 1980:46). “A vital contribution Native American museums make to their communities is the fostering of group pride, intercultural understanding and positive self-image” (Hanson 1980:47). They preserve both artifacts and language, and many of them are connected to tribal libraries and resource centers, so that the majority of cultural activities may be practiced within the confines of the normally “small, isolated communities of the reservation communities” (Hanson 1980:47).

As Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (1964:11) writes in her article, “Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America,” “A people without architecture transmits little of its culture,” and that “indigenous buildings speak the vernacular of the people.” Once people achieve a balance within their natural environment, a feeling of control over the physical and
spiritual forces is simultaneously taking place. “With this control starts the actual history of architecture as being predominately a selection of means and meanings in deliberately planned environments,” (Moholy-Nagy 1964:19).

Architectural tradition varies tremendously from one culture to the next. American Indian museums and cultural centers “demonstrate a significant factor in the emergence of a new Native ethnography: the increasing ownership of and direction of museums by Native communities” (Erikson 1999:52). Native Americans in particular have a close connection with the land and the natural elements that surround them. David Slusarenko (personal communiqué to author, October 3, 2002), points out that these are important factors in the planning, design, and implementation of building these museums/cultural centers so they represent what is crucial to each tribe’s beliefs.

David Slusarenko claims (personal communiqué to author, October 3, 2002), that while there are more Native architectural firms than in the recent past, “many tribal museums/cultural centers must still rely on non-Native architects for siting, design, and materials used in constructing these centers.” When most building materials are not of Native tradition, the process becomes even more difficult. It is critical that the consultants and architects meet frequently and listen patiently to members of the tribal community to understand the needs and importance of particular symbols, traditions, and lifeways that a tribal nation finds important to incorporate into their museum’s design (Slusarenko, personal communiqué to author, October 3, 2002). Only with a great deal of ongoing communication can these cultural barriers be laid aside and a truly representational siting, building, and exhibition hall be created from these two distinct worlds (SMH Partnership 1991:14).
Chapter Three. Methodology

The research methods I utilized during my research with the six American Indian museums/cultural centers were observation, participant observation, and unstructured interviewing of museum personnel. Although I had a list of questions to work from, the ones I focused on concerned what artifacts were held back from the viewer and why, and the amount of information that was dispersed. Other questions grew out of the informal interviews. My key consultants had already been identified at each center before leaving for my journey. The majority of my analysis has been done in a qualitative manner through participant observation, since this is the best way to gather information that is both “scientific and yet humanistic” (Bernard 2002:332).

During my research, I kept track of my field notes and personal journal by using a different notebook for each type of entry. The field notes that I wrote from each day at a center went into a colored folder at the end of the week, which was appropriate to a specific museum/cultural center. I also kept consent forms, other informational materials, and business cards in these folders. A smaller notepad was laid out on the desk and held my jottings of things to remember to do and to ask. This system alleviated a lot of stress since I always knew where to find certain information quickly.

My procedure for note taking worked itself out after I began research at my second museum/cultural center, after perusing my notes from my first site, the Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, and trying to order them satisfactorily. I always arrived to view the building and the exhibitions a day or two before I was to meet with my consultant. I wrote all of my perceptions of the exterior and location first.
Next, I went into the center and wrote my impressions of the general interior, including the lobby and entryway. I then visited the gift shop or restaurant if there were any, writing up my first impressions of these areas. Finally, I went through the exhibit, taking notes about each display and putting a star by anything that stood out to me or affected me in some way. During this visit, I maintained my anonymity.

Before I interviewed anyone at the museums/cultural centers, I asked them to read and sign a modified informed consent form. The document included a confidentiality clause that restricted access to information gathered during my research and guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity to all voluntary participants. Interviewees were given the option of using a pseudonym, their first name, or their first and last name. Almost everyone I interviewed agreed that it was fine if both first and last names were used, except when dealing with sensitive issues, and then I was to use only a first name. There were two individuals who asked that only their first names be used in any circumstance.

The other option I gave each museum/cultural center was the opportunity to read and approve the sections of the thesis that dealt with their centers before finalization of the thesis occurred. Members at one of my research sites requested the chance for a preview of the data collected from their center, the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute in Pendleton, Oregon. I have recently received a couple of corrections back from this center, and made the appropriate revisions. The other museums/cultural centers declined this option.

During my research, I was at each museum/cultural center six to eight days in a row, and was able to have the opportunity to help work on exhibit designs and implementation at some, getting the chance to interact informally with some of the staff members in the process. Through my consultants with the museums/cultural centers involved, I had already
set up a timeline for a summer visitation schedule that would be the most convenient for each museum. I was also involved in volunteering at some special weekend events, such as the Yakama Treaty Days Commemoration, which included a salmon bake and parade at the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center in Toppenish, Washington.

I chose these approaches because they were the best way to get "the most information in a limited amount of time" (Bernard 2002:333). By getting involved and working with the other staff members, I hoped to provide some assistance, but I also felt it would make me feel more a part of the processes within the museum/cultural center. I maintain that the staff felt more comfortable sharing with me during my research and interviews since I was a continual on-site presence during my short stay at each facility.

At the end of my time at each center, I wrote a thank-you note to be posted for all of the staff. During my interviews, I gave out Iowa State University pens, pencils, and key chains. These seemed to be much appreciated. I also left an honorarium at each center that went toward maintaining the exhibitions, and I took some of my key consultants out to lunch. I became a member of the Warm Springs Museum, and now receive their newsletter containing articles about upcoming museum events.

**Tamástslikt Cultural Institute**

My first stop was at the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute (TCI), outside of Pendleton, Oregon. I spent Saturday, May 25, 2002, finding the site and touring its facilities. The following Monday, I met with the archival coordinator, Malissa Minthorn, who was my primary consultant for the week to come.
I conducted seven interviews during my stay here, not counting Malissa Minthorn. These included: Marjorie Waheneke, Exhibit and Collections Manager; Randy Melton, Registrar; Jess Nowland, Interpreter; Susan Sheoships, Education Manager; Calvin Shillal, Photo Historian, and Joan Deroko, Gift Shop Manager. Waheneke and Sheoships agreed to a taped interview; the others declined this option. Minthorn (2002) said that recording “takes part of the essence of a person, and leaves that part on this side after death.”

I arrived at TCI around opening time each morning, spent my days interviewing, observing, and getting tours of the facility, and ate lunch at the cafeteria every day. I also was able to observe a large group of visitors that came through on a tour as they visited the exhibits, ate lunch, and watched some traditional dancers. During this period I was also able to help in arranging a photography display of one of the tribal member’s large collection of photos. I also helped out in the gift shop, opening boxes and putting Pendleton blankets away. I left this site on the following Friday, which gave me one full week here, not including my exploratory Saturday.

Nez Perce National Historical Park

My next stop was at the Nez Perce National Historical Park, located in Spalding, Idaho. The National Park Service operates this small museum, with some input from the nearby Nez Perce community. My main contact here was Bob Chenoweth, curator of the museum, and I spent a couple of hours conversing with and interviewing him.

During my week here (Monday, June 3 - Friday, June 7, 2002), I primarily observed, since there were no exhibits being changed or updated at the time of my stay. Along with the curator of the museum, I also interviewed Linda Pazano, Museum Technician; Robert,
Archivist; Diane Mallicken, Park Ranger/Cultural Interpreter; Kevin Peters, Park Ranger/Interpreter and artist; and Rowena, a museum technician.

The majority of the staff is of Native origin, although not all of them were from the Nez Perce community. After I had taken a couple of the staff members out to lunch one day as a thank-you, Rowena and I drove out to view Buffalo Eddy, which is located along a nearby river. Close to the banks were wonderful examples of petroglyphs, which the park service is working to protect and maintain. For every picture I took, I left a pinch of tobacco and a silent prayer of gratitude.

Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center

On June 7, 2002, I arrived at the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center, located outside of Toppenish, Washington. This was a Friday afternoon, and I had arrived early to get directions for the next day’s Treaty Days Commemoration parade and salmon bake. I had volunteered to help out in whatever way I could, and ended up taking a lot of pictures of the event. I also helped the artists who were displaying some of their work inside the museum, and served cake after the salmon bake to the couple of hundred people who attended the affair.

The following Monday, June 10, I was at the museum when they opened, and spent some time looking over the large gift shop collection. I then went into the museum to take a tour and to meet with my main consultants, Marilyn Skahan-Malatare “Wala hushta,” the curator/program manager, and Pamela Fabela, the administrative assistant. I did a joint interview with both women, which was not recorded. I also interviewed Sheryl Antelope, the acting director of the complex, who was also in charge of ordering for the gift shop, and
Vivian, an admissions/tour guide and cultural teacher who had been with the center for two years.

At the Yakama Nation Cultural Center, I was able once again to participate in some of the exhibition processes. I helped with the inventorying of a new photography exhibit, and was also able to work with another staff member in setting up a display in which women who had served in the military were being honored. I enjoyed this portion of the work immensely. On Friday, June 14, I took my leave from the Yakama Nation.

Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture

On a dark, stormy Monday, June 17, 2002, I arrived at the Old Mission State Park, in Cataldo, Idaho. My primary contact had scheduled some vacation time, and my secondary consultant had been called away to an off-site meeting for a couple of days. I used my time to travel over to Spokane, Washington, to check out the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC). I toured the museum that day, and was able to get an interview scheduled with Lynn Pankonin, Curator of the American Indian Collection, for the following day.

The Native American exhibits displayed at MAC are the result of a coordinated effort between the institution and four tribal nations in the region. These include the Spokane tribe located in Washington, the Coeur d'Alene in Idaho, the Kalispell of Washington, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville reservation, also located in Washington. MAC became the steward of the collection of the Museum of Native American Cultures (MONAC) in 1992, and the exhibit opened to the general public in December of 2001.
**Old Mission State Park**

Wednesday, June 19, I met with Bill Scudder and we had an informal interview. Scudder, Park Manager of Old Mission State Park (OMSP) told me that the Coeur d’Alene had not been working with the small museum at this site very much in the past years, but that would hopefully be changing soon. The exhibits rarely alternated, although with recent changes being made in the federal government the Coeur d’Alene tribe will have access to more control over the state park. Scudder said that the park service maintained a good relationship with the tribe, and that there had just been another twenty-five year lease signed. The Department of the Interior has held the deed in trust until now, but it is in the process of being given to the Coeur d’Alene (Scudder 2002). The name of the center will be changing with the signing of this agreement to “Coeur d’Alene’s Old Mission State Park” (Scudder 2002).

I toured the exhibits, watched the video and spoke with one of the staff on duty at the museum about the gift shop, which did not include any Coeur d’Alene goods, but there was no work or further interviewing possible at that time. Thursday, June 20, 2002, was my last day at the Old Mission.

**The Museum at Warm Springs**

The Museum at Warm Springs (MWS), located in Warm Springs, Oregon, is an architectural work of art that sits behind a wooded area right off of U.S. Highway 26. I spent Saturday, June 22, 2002, touring the facilities and taking photos of the building and surrounding areas. The museum resembles a village encampment, and incorporated water, slate and metal building materials in its design. The interior is also visually striking. I also
drove out to the casino and resort complex, which is located approximately ten miles of twisting, turning downhill curves away. I had lunch at the resort.

On Monday, June 24, 2002, I met with my main consultant, Natalie Kirk, the curator of the museum. She took me on a detailed tour of the museum and administrative offices. I spent time in storage and archives, and ate with Natalie at an eatery run by a tribal member that was located across the road. Next door was a shop that was also run by a Warm Springs woman that sold beautiful quilts and pillows.

I interviewed both Natalie and the gift shop manager, Debra Stacona, who has worked in the shop for three years. Natalie has worked at the museum for three years, with her first year of employ in the gift shop. She now produces wonderful basketry of all sizes, both for exhibition and for sale in the gift shop. The last person I interviewed was an older gentleman, George Aguilar, who is a tribal member and a writer. He concentrated on telling me oral histories through the giving of Indian names, and has written a book that is directed at preserving traditional heritage for his grandchildren that is to be published soon. On Friday, June 28, 2002, I took my leave from my last site.

**Summary**

Overall, my research strategies of observation, participant observation, and informal interviewing worked well for me. One surprise was that only two individuals agreed to be recorded during interviews. This was not an issue, since I acquired a lot of solid, usable data from my notes. I would liked to have been able to participate in more activities, but some of the centers were not working on changes within the exhibits during the time period I was able to stay.
I was fortunate enough to attend two powwows, volunteer at a Treaty Days Commemoration, attend a health fair at the newly opened Yakama Events Center, and to visit all of the associated casinos, resorts, campgrounds and towns that were associated with the museums/cultural centers. I was also able to participate in some display changes and exhibit updates at some of the sites. These other activities helped me understand the centers in a fuller, more encompassing manner.
Chapter Four. Presentation of Findings

James Clifford (1991:225), in his article “Four Northwest Coast Museums,” writes that the “majority museums articulate cosmopolitan culture, science, art, and humanism – often with a national slant.” This is in direct contrast to tribal museums/cultural centers, which “express local culture, oppositional politics, kinship, ethnicity, and tradition,” (Clifford 1991:225). While the majority museum concentrates on attaining a lot of quality artifacts that are rare and special finds, one indigenous staff member of a tribal museum/cultural center gave an opinion quite clearly, “[t]hey’ve got a lot of stuff there, but they don’t know much about it” (Clifford 1991:225).

Tribal nations have different agendas for their museums, notes Clifford (1991:225), and these include:

(1) Its stance to some degree is oppositional, with exhibits reflecting excluded experiences, colonial pasts, and current struggles; (2) the art/culture distinction is often irrelevant, or positively subverted; (3) the notion of a unified or linear history (whether of the nation, of humanity, or of art) is challenged by local, community histories; and (4) the collections do not aspire to be included in the patrimony (of the nation, great art, etc.), but to be inscribed within different traditions and practices, free of national, cosmopolitan patrimonies. [Clifford 1991:225]

The main focus of my research at these six museums and cultural centers of the Northwest Region was one of representation. Specifically, I looked at what artifacts were presented for public display, how much information was given about each object, and the reasons behind these decisions. In every circumstance, notions of sacredness dictated policies, and the elders possessed the power over any issue that couldn’t be settled by the museum staff. There were many more similarities between the museums than there were differences, as will be shown in my analysis of these centers in the proceeding section.
Tamástslikt Cultural Institute

The name Tamástslikt comes from the Umatilla dialect. Malissa Minthorn, my primary consultant at the institute, told me that when translated, it means “to turn around, turn over, to interpret” and reflects the purpose of the Interpretive Center – for the tribes to portray their histories through their eyes (Minthorn 2002). TCI opened in August of 1998. It is not a tribal organization, but a branch of it – economic development. The artifacts here are donated, acquired through other museums, historical societies, or tribal donations. There is no acquisition budget. A primary goal is to focus on “living culture” rather than the notion that Native nations are “extinct” (Minthorn 2002).

The building of this center fulfills two goals for the tribes and enables them to tell their story and become the “interpreter” of their past for themselves, their children, and their visitors. The primary goal of the museum is to protect and share their history, culture and traditions. A secondary goal is one of economic development. In 2001, there were approximately 24,848 visitors to the interpretive center, 35,961 people used the facility’s gift shop, restaurant or meeting rooms, and 969 tribal members utilized the facility (Minthorn 2002).

The institute has the support of various organizations, including private individuals, and federal, state and local governments (SMH Partnership 1991:7). In 1988, the Governor’s Oregon Trail Advisory Council recommended the construction of four interpretive centers to be built along the Oregon Trail (SMH Partnership 1991:7). In 1990, TCI was determined “the first priority in construction” (SMH Partnership 1991:7). The museum is accessed from I-84, Oregon Highways 11 and 33, and U.S. Highway 30 (SMH Partnership 1991:1). It is situated on 640 acres of reservation land approximately five miles
from the city of Pendleton (Minthorn 2002). The site offers views of the foothills of the Blue Mountains and the large, flat Plateau Region.

The first thing a visitor notices while turning onto the drive on their way to visit TCI is the hotel and casino maintained by the tribes. A little further down are a campground to the right, and a golf course to the left. After passing the golf course, the road narrows, splits, and the speed limit drops. This is meant to be a relaxation technique acquainting the tourist to the vista surrounding them, and helping them to transition to the suitable frame of mind for the institute (Slusarenko, personal communique to author, October 3, 2002). Another half mile or so down the road the center finally comes fully into view.

The building design is intentionally oriented on an imaginary axis that aligns with the headwaters of the Umatilla River that is central to the tribe’s culture (Slusarenko, personal communique to author, October 3, 2002). “The museum plan configuration and organization responds to museum functional needs, but also takes advantage of the available land with three ‘wings’ that reach in different directions,” (Slusarenko, personal communiqué to author, October 3, 2002). The connection between the water and the land was extremely important to the tribe in creating an overall representation for the museum site (SMH Partnership 1991:1).

The circular-shaped permanent exhibit was designed so that visitors circulate in a counter-clockwise direction reminiscent of tribal dances and dominates the exhibition wing (Minthorn 2002). Space is arranged to invoke certain moods and emotions in the visitor, which helps provide a clearer message represented by each display. Bright, open areas that illuminate the times of good and plenty lead into a section that is closed and winding to emulate the dark days, making the viewer’s experience a more sensory one (Minthorn 2002).
The exhibit begins with the story of creation for the three tribes, told by Coyote in a
darkened tepee replica. The exhibitions are divided into four central areas: We Were, The
Oregon Trail, We Are, and We Will Be (Minthorn 2002).

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation run TCI, and while it
has an exhibit on the Oregon Trail, the primary purpose of this center is to portray the
history of the three tribes that make up the confederation. These include the Umatilla,
Cayuse, and the Walla Walla. About 80% of the staff is Native (Minthorn 2002), and some
of the interpreters were back to work during their summer off from college when I arrived in
late May. The ones I spoke with had plans to finish college so they could return to help run
the institute.

Malissa Minthorn, Archival Coordinator, spent a lot of time speaking with me and
setting up interviews with other staff members. She also took me for an in-depth tour of the
exhibit hall, pointing out variations in lighting, passageways, circular areas and other
meaningful uses of materials and space that a viewer might not consciously notice at first,
but added to the overall effect of the representation of the displays.

I met Minthorn on Monday, May 27, 2002, which was my first official day at the
institute. She described her role at the center as a “jack of all trades” (Minthorn 2002). Her
primary roles are to work with the library and manage the archives, although she seemed to
be a part of almost every aspect of the center.

Minthorn (2002) explained that TCI has some policies on what they will and will not
exhibit and the amount of information they are willing to present both to outside viewers and
themselves. While not institutional or written standards, these guidelines are viewed as
being “common sense” in nature. If there are questions to resolve, the staff looks to the elders for a final decision.

Later, I interviewed Marjorie Waheneka, a member of the Cayuse tribe, who is the exhibit and collections manager. Marjorie is known as a “traditional” woman, whose husband is a religious leader. She has eighteen years of experience with the National Park Service with Native interpretive sites, and has worked here many years. Waheneka told me about working on the seasonal round display, and that they had to consider how to show their Indian foods. The elders did not want freshly dug roots or the medicines shown, or the locations of where you could find the roots. The decision was made to just show the dried forms. These plants were deemed sacred, and this knowledge was to be shared only within their cultural community.

Waheneka (2002) spoke of the “fine line” they have to walk, since the elders had told them what to do and not do from the beginning of the project. “The elders,” she stated, “were the backbone.” The elders point out what is missing or what should or should not be represented and in which manner. As Waheneka (2002) said “it’s not always negative or critical, but they go through, and there’s a real sense of pride in this building.”

The center had human remains dropped off once, which they do not handle, and the appropriate authorities were called. Waheneka stated that she did not think any of the donations had been turned away yet, and that it had been the non-Indians who had been the most generous. These regional farmers had artifacts that had been given to them from Indian friends many years ago, and came forward to donate these objects to the institute.

“Most everything accepted is shown” (Waheneka 2002).
My next interview was with Susan Sheoships, Education Manager, who is a tribal member and also acts as a liaison with the elders. She has been employed at this facility since 1999. Sheoships gives tours aimed at a primarily fourth grade audience. When asked about sacredness and what is and is not displayed, she spoke of a worship song that was played in the religious exhibit in the long house replica. The elders were not too happy about this, but it is still playing.

Sheoships (2002) commented that when someone dies, “you don’t speak their name or show their photograph for a year, and just because of the economics of creating exhibits, audio and visual exhibits, Tamástslikt hasn’t been able to follow that traditional guideline.” Following the same thought process, she emphasized that, “there are some compromises we’ve had to make, just to be able to operate” (Sheoships 2002).

Sheoships (2002) also added that they try to answer sensitive questions in a general way, and not get into specifics. This is especially true in dealing with queries of a religious nature. “I rely on the grounding I’ve had from the elders,” she states, and since “people know nothing about us, they’re satisfied with a little information” (Sheoships 2002).

Other items proscribed from exhibits include certain objects of a sexual nature, and the censoring of the main storyteller, who was giving out a little too much information for a typical non-Native fourth grade class to handle. Stories that do not sound offensive in a Native American language may sound rude or upsetting in the English language. Sheoships added that there is nothing shown about how their kinship naming system used to work. It used to be a very specific system so that children knew exactly who their relatives were. Now, “it’s been highly glossed over” (Sheoships 2002).
Other interviews with interpreters from visitor services focused on the fact that these guides are more likely to tell stories about the objects than information about the items themselves. Training is in place for new guides that will help control what is being told to outside viewers. Randy Melton, Registrar and Team Leader for Visitor Services went through the center with tribal elders and members for input on his tours (Melton 2002). He is Native American, although from a tribe in Oklahoma. Melton (2002) also noted that artifacts not allowed in the exhibit were the basic tenets of religious culture, sacred root digging, and language. The elders try to protect these areas.

Jess Nowland (2002), a tribal member who has been an interpreter at the center for three years, says he stays with “historical facts from oral histories told to him by elders and other tribal members.” He speaks of anything sacred being excluded from the exhibits. This includes root gathering, hunting, fishing, religion, and some recreation. These are not separate entities, but from “all one realm” (Nowland 2002). Nowland also notes that interpreters should be individualistic, but not share personal stories of themselves or others, especially those that contain mysterious experiences.

Nowland (2002) says that one cannot explain sacred things or experiences. While there is proof out there, it is not worth trying to go into on a tour. It is not an “admission price concept” (Nowland 2002). Certain concepts, traditions and ideas are difficult to translate into English, and lose their Native meanings. He believes that the foundation of lifeways and the institute are the faith in the elders and oral traditions and beliefs. “Spirituality is the most important,” Nowland (2002) concluded.

Briefly, gift shop guidelines dictate that salmon, roots, or books on Native healing may not be sold here (Deroko 2002). The gift shop manager, Joan Deroko, affirmed that
there are no eagle, owl, hawk (birds of prey), songbird feathers, or carrion eater feathers for sale, either. Calvin Shillal (2002), Photo Historian, does not use any photographs that deal with sacred ideologies. "Washat," or "Seven Drum" religions, which is practiced by some of the tribal nation's residents on a family or community basis, are also not shared with the outside community.

**Nez Perce National Historical Park**

Bob Chenoweth, Curator, spoke of the National Park Service's mission: "To protect and preserve unimpaired for future generations" (Chenoweth 2002). His primary job is to identify, manage, and interpret the resources of the park. The preservation of Nez Perce culture and maintaining positive interactions with their neighbors (both Native and non), was one of the goals when the 1965 site was set aside (Chenoweth 2002). In 1979, a visitor's center was started, which was not originally intended to be a museum.

In 1981, a team from a firm named Harper's Valley, out of Virginia, set up the museum. The development, storyline, and interpretation of the artifacts were entirely done by this company. As Chenoweth recalls (2002), "there was good paperwork and accountability, but not what the story was." The interpretive team from Harper's Valley decided what the story would be and what artifacts to include, some of which were not even from the area. There was little, if any, consulting done with the Nez Perce tribe.

As previously mentioned, the Nez Perce National Historical Park, located in Cataldo, Idaho, opened in 1981, and is run by the National Park Service. Situated off U.S. Highway 955, the associated museum is a rather small building made of light-colored wood and a light gray roof. There is signage to the right by the entryway announcing the name of the
center in the middle, with the National Park Service logo in the upper left-hand corner, and two crossed feathers dominating the upper right.

The long sidewalk is composed of rocks and pebbles, and there is a triangular patch of grass in front of the center with a rock border. While the building really doesn’t catch the eye, the surrounding scenery does. The Clearwater River runs adjacent to the museum, with sloping hillsides rising up on either side of the park. Located in Clearwater Valley, the parking lot of the museum is situated right next to a small, historical cemetery.

Upon entering the museum, there is a visitor’s log and pamphlets containing information on the Nez Perce and local attractions. There is a service desk in the middle of this room, with park rangers stationed behind it that fill the role of cultural interpreter to the visitors. There is a very small gift shop and an activities center for children and demonstrations in this same area. There is also a display with a dugout canoe centered along one wall.

An auditorium is situated to the right that is entered almost as soon as the entryway doors are passed. The film shown is well done and provides a twenty-five minute history of the Nez Perce. The walls of the theater are lined with Nez Perce photos and a presentation of this tribe is arranged on a table at the back. Emerging from the dark, I was once again in the main room and facing a seasonal round. After viewing this and briefly looking over a copy of the Treaty of 1855, I went into the main museum, which was to my left.

The exhibition hall itself contained several wooden framed glass cases and a model of a sweat lodge. Artifacts are arranged inside the glass on gray metal posts or shelving for display. The storyboards give some basic background information, but many of the tags by the objects simply held the nature of the item on exhibit. Artifacts used in the museum are
either property of the Nez Perce, from the Idaho State Historical Society, or from Washington State University and are marked by color-coding. The park service has 149,584 total items at this facility, with 384 currently on exhibit (Rowena 2002).

My main consultant here was Bob Chenoweth, but he was out on my first full day at the park, which was Monday, June 6, 2002. Instead, I spoke with Linda Pazano, Museum Technician. Pazano is Native American with soft dark hair curling into a pageboy around her friendly face. She is soft spoken, with dark eyes and a warm and personable nature. Pazano has worked here for ten years, sharing part of a lower level office with Bob. Chenoweth, whom I interviewed the following day, is non-Native and has a great deal of enthusiasm for the museum and for Nez Perce culture.

The star of the museum collection is the Mylie Lawyer collection (Pazano 2002). This encompasses five generations of goods, which is currently held on a five-year loan. Lawyer, who is approximately ninety years old, wanted to keep her family’s belongings intact, and didn’t want them separated after she passed away (Pazano 2002). She never married, and after she does pass on, her 282 artifacts will likely stay here.

There are not many artifacts on display from the tribe, and like the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, there are more items donated from the non-Native community (Pazano 2002). Most objects displayed here are on loan. Pazano (2002) stated that quite a few Nez Perce members come in to do research in the library located in the basement, and some request to look in the storage facility. The first priority of the center is to have tribal members visit (Pazano 2002). Sometimes tribal members will hold events in the auditorium, hosting outside speakers. The park service also tries to recruit American Indians for internships.
Things that are not displayed or discussed were taken down over the last five years, according to Pazano (2002). These include sacred items such as animal effigies, medicinal plants and foods, religious objects, and certain textile materials. Chenoweth (2002) also noted that artifacts connected to warfare, personal medicine, personal quests, and burial goods are also not exhibited.

Robert, the archivist for the museum, said that the Cultural Resource Division of the Nez Perce tribe has requested that any archival material cannot be viewed until the family has been notified and given their approval (2002). He also spoke of the fear of some of the tribal members that some information stored in the library would be disseminated to just anybody. Another fear is one of loss of control. Robert (2002) says that he works with the tribe to help establish and maintain trust. Some of the community members feel that personal documents are a source of power for a particular person, and they do not want to give this away.

The exhibit does not contain information on the Dawes Act, the reservation system, and nothing from the contemporary field. There is nothing on kinship systems, or men and women’s issues, although there is a focus on lifeways. There are no Coyote stories or legends, even though they are an important part of oral traditions in this region. An important display that is exhibited is the Spalding/Allen collection (Pazano 2002). The majority of the main exhibit has been up since 1981. The temporary exhibits usually change every two to five years.

Diane Mallicken (2002), a tribal member and a park ranger cultural interpreter for the past eleven years, discussed tours of the main exhibit. She stated that there are topics that are not spoken of, or are spoken of only in a certain manner. Traditional women root
diggers come in to discuss roots, with a limited amount of information dispersed. The primary ideology here is that every place has its own gifts, so appreciate what is around you (Mallicken 2002). There are also legality issues in that roots cannot be sold, and people can only dig for them on their own property.

Mallicken (2002) included the fact that salmon is “only spoken of in its rightful place.” Sacred and religious objects are not shown or talked about, as is true in many indigenous museums. There are some things on display that other centers refused to exhibit. These items included unassembled pipes used for everyday purposes, and a sweat lodge. Mallicken (2002) also said that decisions on what to exhibit are made by the elders, the tribal council, and the Longhouse Society, which is a religious-based group of people from within the community. These policies are reviewed every ten years.

Kevin Peters, Park Ranger/Interpreter and resident artist, has been with the museum for seventeen years. He stated that, “interpreters shouldn’t judge, they should let the visitors make up their own opinions” (Peters 2002). Peters (2002), gives tours on an as-needed basis, and says, “[s]ometimes I have to give myself my own tour, revisit my childhood.” He feels that his job is to interpret, not to share personal opinions or to put values on things.

Rowena, a museum technician that has worked here for one year, takes care of the artifacts in storage, and works with preservation and database entry. A woman of around forty years of age, she has no problem speaking her mind. She maintains that she is “working here to help bridge the gap between cultures” (Rowena 2002).

Personally, Rowena doesn’t agree with everything that is currently exhibited in the museum upstairs. She would like to see the photos taken down in the exhibit hall, and have
the wolf talisman hanging in the museum put into storage. Rowena (2002) argues that items that “bear the inner self” should not be displayed.

Beadwork and weaving classes are offered, but mainly to the Nez Perce community. Items in the gift shop are not numerous, due to the problems of selling Native work. Non-Native crafts, which are labeled as such, were a mainstay in the gift shop but this upset the Nez Perce community, so these items were pulled (Pazano 2002).

Things have now changed. Instead of the old, accurate motto, “Harper’s Valley, giving the parks their exhibits,” (Chenoweth 2002), planning has been updated so that nothing has to be done by Harper’s Valley for the next twenty years (Chenoweth 2002). The primary feature of the display cases is one of security, which means that it is difficult to open one of the cases up to change the exhibit. Temporary exhibits could actually be in place for up to twenty or more years (Chenoweth 2002).

Currently, plans are underway for some changes. There is a real need for an accurate storyline with appropriate artifacts done by someone who understands the material culture of the Nez Perce. Consultation with the tribal members has been growing, and the inclusion of Native community members on staff has also helped in the interpretive realm. Including members of the Nez Perce tribe in demonstrations will also help strengthen the bonds between the National Park Service and the indigenous community they represent.
The Yakama Nation Cultural Center is located on the outskirts of Toppenish, Washington. The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation erected their center and associated buildings between 1977 and 1979, but planning started as early as the late 1960s when the tribe received a wealth of artifacts and literary materials from film actor and consultant Nach Tum Strongheart (Krinsky 1996:85). The center was opened to the public in the summer of 1980 (Skahan-Malatare and Fabela 2002).

The building that houses the cultural center includes the gift shop and library/media center, while the restaurant, theater, and a meeting hall are encompassed within other structures on the same property. There is also an outdoor activity center where celebrations can be held. As visitors enter the center, the doors open onto a large gift shop with the exhibition hall to the right and the media center with computers and a large library selection to the left. Large windows enclose the central area, which lets in natural light and creates a feeling of openness. There are doors leading out the back entrance, and concrete paths that lead to the other components of the complex. Directly to the side of the central campus is a campground, while a couple of blocks away is the tribal casino and recently completed events center.

Krinsky writes in her book, Contemporary Native American Architecture, that the “most prominent structure within the tribal building complex is a 76-foot high winterlodge used for meetings and ceremonies for up to 550 people. A direct axis runs from its east side to Mount Adams, a revered natural landmark” (Krinsky 1996:85). The winter lodge is made of durable and natural materials, including stone and a wood-shingle roof with a zigzag design in an orangish-red and yellow encircling the top. There are parquet floors, large light
fixtures and walls panels that are more modern than traditional, but the primarily "elongated polygonal plan and tapering roof are similar to indigenous models" (Krinsky 1996:85).

The Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center is located on ancestral grounds of the 1,371,918 square acre reservation (Krinsky 1996:85). The 12,000 square foot exhibition hall is the result of hard work, thought, and effort on the part of both the Yakama people and their governing councils (Krinsky 1996:85). The exhibits shown in the museum are representative of the variety of practices of the people.

Visitors travel around the large exhibition hall in a counter-clockwise direction. There is a printed guide to the cultural center that visitors may take with them to help navigate the exhibits, which also gives basic facts about the Yakama Nation, their form of government, and means of economic sustenance. The center utilizes dioramas with appropriate nature sounds, stories, or music; pictures; display cases of beadwork, jewelry, and basketry; and an elevated area where there are several realistic depictions of a sweathouse, an earthlodge, a tule mat winterlodge, and a tepee.

Other exhibits denote the history of the fourteen Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation, which include the Palouse, Klinquit, and Klickitat, among others. At this time, there are approximately 10,000 Yakama Nation members. Another exhibit, a large diorama, displays the importance of salmon fishing to the Nation, along with displays on rock art and Mt. Adams, both of which are considered sacred, and are found in the beginning of the exhibit.

My primary consultants here were Marilyn Skahan-Malatare "Wala hushta," the curator and program manager of the cultural center, and Pamela Fabela, the administrative assistant. Both women share the same office. Skahan-Malatare has short, dark hair and
while seeming to move at a normal pace, could be found everywhere at once. She has been with the center for nine years, and her job duties include coordinating events and exhibits, working with public programming, advertising, tracking visitors, and maintaining forms, flyers and invitations to special events.

Fabela sports short, wavy hair and maintains a well-modulated voice. These two women run the majority of the cultural center, and are extremely busy with many various tasks. Fabela’s main chores consist of working with the museum collection, negotiating with state and federal level committees, identifying major museum projects and special events, and overseeing artifact loans and the cultural center’s staff.

My first interview was of a joint nature with Skahan-Malatare and Fabela at a small conference table in the second room of their office. Both women are from the tribal community, and there was Indian drum and flute music emanating softly from a boom box in the corner of the room. The small staff is comprised mainly of members of the Yakama community, the women said, and included four full-time and one part-time employee (Skahan-Malatare and Fabela 2002). The center is under the finance department, but each component of the complex, such as the gift shop, restaurant, and theater were considered a different entity.

The winterlodge replica, mentioned previously, is the focal point of the complex and is part of the Yakama Nation’s spiritual culture. It is not exploited, and is only available for tribal members’ use (Skahan-Malatare and Fabela 2002). Within the cultural center, there are approximately 20,000 artifacts within the collection, and most of these items are from their own collection. Some community members get upset when items are displayed that are
not from the Yakama Indian Nation. Several of the objects on exhibition lack dates, but if
the center had the dates, they would use them (Skahan-Malatare and Fabela 2002).

Both Skahan-Malatare and Fabela (2002) came up with a list of artifacts that are
never on exhibit in their center. These include: (1) human remains or funerary items, (2)
certain photos stored in archives, (3) eagle feathers which are considered sacred, (4) detailed
information about digging roots, also of a sacred nature, and (5) sacred berries and roots are
shown in photographs, while digging tools and mannequins using them are shown in a
related diorama. Pipes are not considered sacred here, and sweathouses are viewed as both
sacred rituals and for everyday use. In the exhibit, the sweathouse model is not shown fully
assembled. It is built just enough to show the structure.

My next interview was with Sheryl Antelope, Acting Director of the Yakama Nation
Cultural Heritage Center. Her position entails supervising the managers of each of the
entities within the complex, and working with all of the staff on decision-making and
planning. She is also in charge of ordering gift shop supplies. Antelope, a tall woman, wore
her dark hair with traces of silver long. She is especially proud that the children of the
community are learning the tribal language, traditions, and songs.

When queried about what is not shown or discussed within the center, Antelope
(2002) identified sacred items and grave goods as the most important elements that must be
kept from the public viewer. She feels that the location of roots and other foods used for
medicinal purposes are also not for exhibition purposes. Antelope also mentioned (2002)
that visitors that attend the nearby longhouse for religious services are not allowed to make
any recordings, jot notes, or take any photographs.
Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture

Upon my arrival at the Old Mission State Park, I learned that my main consultant was scheduled to be away for that week. I was to meet with Bill Scudder, Park Manager, instead. He was also out on that Monday, and scheduled to return on the following Wednesday. During this time period I took the opportunity to visit the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC) in Spokane, Washington, which is a product of a partnership between the museum and four tribal nations from the area. The public opening for this exhibit was December, 2001 (Pankonin 2002).

MAC’s exterior landscape included large boulders and hunks of rock situated around slate walkways. The entrance to the museum has an open, airy space with lots of windows, which are slanted upwards at sharp angles. Light-colored wooden beams support this glass ceiling. The café at the end of the room has track lighting, while the tables, chairs and accessories have a very geometric look. A flight of stairs and a sloping ramp leads to the American Indian exhibit, which is located at the bottom of three stairs leading off from the ramp.

On Monday, June 15, I toured the large Native American exhibit in MAC. One difference between this museum and some of the other museums/cultural centers was that there was more attention paid to traditional language. Many signs displayed both the Salish and English languages. There is a continually changing projection against one white wall that declares, “we are still here, we will always be here.” One of the signs within the exhibit pronounced:

All objects within the American Indian collection of the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture are considered living, breathing entities. As extensions of their makers they are also
extensions of the makers’ tribes. Elders work closely with the museum’s staff to care for and interpret these objects.

[MAC signage 2002]

Ninety-eight percent of the approximately 26,000 artifacts on display come from the museum’s collection. Although MAC works primarily with four tribes in the Northwest region, other tribes included are from the Arctic, Athapascan, Great Basin, Plains, and the Northwest Coast.

On Tuesday, June 16, I was able to speak with Lynn Pankonin, Curator of the American Indian Collection for the past twenty years. While not a Native American, Pankonin works hard on being a presence to the Indian communities she works with, and has been accepted gradually at powwows, naming ceremonies, and funerals. She feels that the primary goal in acceptance is one of respect.

Pankonin (2002) emphasized the importance of communication between the four tribes and the museum. She noted the motto of the partnership as “[t]he Indian people have always been here, are still here, and will always be here” (Pankonin 2002). Elders and tribal leaders are in the “American Indian Cultural Council,” and everything to be included in the exhibit must be approved through this committee, especially new projects (Pankonin 2002). This consortium usually meets monthly, but there is weekly contact between Pankonin and the council.

Items that are not shown include camas flowers, petroglyphs/rock art, sacred sites, religion, sweat lodges, and NAGPRA information. Pankonin sometimes fields phone calls with requests that she must turn down. Calls come in asking to “tour a reservation” (Pankonin 2002). These are not honored. Others call in asking for “Indian names” so that they can name their pet something unique (Pankonin 2002).
Artifacts in sacred storage include some human remains from the Coulee Dam time period, along with grave goods (Pankonin 2002). Some have been repatriated, but all of the tribes have at least been notified. A couple of sacred bundles have also been repatriated back to tribes. Pankonin (2002) realizes that some of these items will never be reclaimed.

**Old Mission State Park**

On Wednesday, June 17th, I met with Bill Scudder, Park Manager, in the offices next to the Cataldo Mission. Scudder has been with the park service for twenty-six years. Scudder explained that out of four full-time and four seasonal employees, none are Native. He spoke of a good working relationship with the tribe, noting that another twenty-five year lease had just been obtained from the Nation. When this agreement was signed, the name of the park changed to “Coeur d’Alene’s Old Mission State Park,” giving the tribe more power over their land. This will be official once the Department of the Interior transfers the deed to the Coeur d’Alene (Scudder 2002).

Scudder (2002) said that the small museum located within the park will soon be titled “Sacred Encounters” and a grant request from The Association for Sacred Encounters, Inc., says that the center will “tell the story of the invasion of the Coeur d’Alene tribal lands by white settlers – missionaries, miners, farmers, and soldiers – resulting in the displacement of the Indians and the near loss of a culture” (Scudder 2000:1). The exhibit is a conglomeration of a discovery of maps, drawings, and artifacts from the 1840s and 1850s, and the “assembly or more than 200 objects from fifty museum, archival, and private collections in the United States, Canada, and Belgium (Scudder 2000:1). Scudder writes (2000:1) that the majority of these rare objects had “never before been seen by the public.”
The traveling exhibit materials were eventually purchased by the Coeur d’Alene, although many of the items that were “borrowed or on loan were returned until that time when the exhibit could be resurrected” (Scudder 2000:1). The “Sacred Encounters” artifacts are currently in storage, waiting for a permanent location. However, the Idaho Parks and Recreation has designated Old Mission State Park near Cataldo, Idaho, as the new home of the exhibit (Scudder 2000:1). The museum is free of charge to visitors, and the state park sees education as its ultimate goal, incorporating history, geography, culture, and diversity into its main message.

A key priority of the “Sacred Encounters” exhibit will be to “preserve key historical and cultural artifacts” for the “long-term benefits of public viewing” (Scudder 2000:2). Another goal is to “promote cultural preservation” (Scudder 2000:2). A third is to “provide educational opportunities,” while the fourth goal listed is to “impart an economic development opportunity for the Silver Valley economy” (Scudder 2000:3).

As Bill Scudder, Board Chair for The Association for Sacred Encounters, Inc., writes, “[t]he Coeur d’Alene tribe gave advice freely and extensively when the exhibition was formed in the early 1990s. Their support will continue as “Sacred Encounters” is placed at Old Mission State Park as evidenced by the fact that a Tribal Council Member and artifact preservationist sits on the board” (Scudder 2000:4). Scudder (2000) also notes that, The exhibit will fulfill the critical need for preservation of Indian artifacts and Native American cultures. Students will study Native American culture, hear Coeur d’Alene speech, look at the world through Indian eyes, and grow to appreciate the positive benefits of diversity. [Scudder 2000:4]
The museum currently contains a small auditorium that shows an approximately fifteen-minute video about the Coeur d’Alene and the Cataldo Mission. Positioned around the auditorium are portraits of key figures of the tribe and the mission. There is also a historical diorama showing the Coeur d’Alene attending mass within the mission, which is located near the museum. The Cataldo Mission has always been considered a sacred site to the Coeur d’Alene. They call it “skoot-loty,” or “the mountains around us, the river below us, the tribe itself” (Scudder 2002). There is a seasonal round, pipestone pipes, and flesching tools on display.

Outside the main exhibit is a kinship photo board with both Coeur d’Alene and English spellings. There is a horse and beadwork accessory display, some baskets and a cornhusk bag, beaded bags of an abstract floral or geometric design, and other beadwork. Shell jewelry is also shown. Wall panels showcase information on “The Reservation” and “Coming Home.” The small gift shop is also located here, with silver jewelry, posters, books, t-shirts and hats, none of which is made by the Coeur d’Alene.

Scudder (2002) said that the displays in the museum are currently static, and had last been changed about three to four years ago. There was good communication between the tribe and the park when the museum was initially set up, but not as much since then. Scudder (2002) mentioned that they were given artifacts by the Coeur d’Alene to put on display, but these items are not discussed. He said that he looked forward to the implementation of the “Sacred Encounters” exhibit, and that it “felt like they were just getting started” (Scudder 2002). I was unable to access any information about what is not put on display, and attempts to reach a tribal member involved with the project and museum were unsuccessful.
The Museum at Warm Springs

Along a fairly isolated stretch of scenic U.S. Highway 26 in central Oregon, situated in a valley behind a small cove of trees and bushes, is The Museum at Warm Springs. Elements incorporated into the design of this center are a lodge, a tepee, and a travois on a 1,000 square mile reservation that is home to the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, which include the Wasco, Warm Springs and Northern Paiute tribal nations (Krinsky 1996:85). All three of these tribes have differing traditions. Natalie Kirk, my consultant at this site, told me that there are “approximately 3,400 Native members,” most of whom live in the community of Warm Springs (Kirk 2002).

The Museum at Warm Springs was conceived of and created by The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to serve as a living legacy to their cultures (The Museum at Warm Springs website: 2002). Now nationally acclaimed for its striking architecture and outstanding exhibitions, the museum’s permanent collection of artifacts, historic photographs, narratives, graphics and murals created a comprehensive experience of tribal history (The Museum at Warm Springs website: 2002). Interactive multimedia displays include a Wasco wedding, a song chamber, and a traditional Hoop Dance (The Museum at Warm Springs web site: 2002). The exhibition gallery is changed on a regular basis, reflecting current aspects of Native American life within the community (Kirk 2002).

The Confederated Tribes wanted something unique that reflected the natural environment but requested that the buildings not look too “Indian.” Carol Krinsky (1996), writes that an ideology of unity was considered relevant. The museum complex is supposed to appear similar to a streamside encampment, which is helped along by the rooflines of the buildings (Krinsky 1996:85). A “paraphrased tule-mat longhouse of the river-dwelling
Wasco tribe houses the administration wing; a modified tepee of the hunter-gatherer Warm Springs people covers the temporary-exhibitions gallery; and an evocation of the Paiute travois rises above the permanent exhibits. Enclosing these three main areas is a curved wall of basalt, the stone of the nearby valley rim,” (Krinsky 1996:86).

The entrance path from the parking lot is concrete, but leads visitors along a trickling stream with rocks and Native plants lining the way. The water seems to emanate from under the museum, turning into the green slate floor inside the entrance. The signage over the front doors read “Twanat,” which means, “to follow in the way of our ancestors” (Kirk 2002). Large stone doors open onto a fifty-foot long lobby, where five large fir columns are reminiscent of the local woods (Krinsky 1996:86). The ceiling is blue, the upper part of the walls a dark green. Below that is amber, denoting the majority of the landscape in this section of Oregon (Kirk 2002). The gift shop is located next to the admission register within the lobby.

The “entrance door pulls and metal forms outside the lobby can be interpreted as feather bustles or sacred eagle feathers,” (Krinsky 1996:88). An important traditional architectural aspect is the replica of tule mats, a wickiup, and a plank house that reside within the museum. The Museum at Warm Springs was opened and dedicated in 1993, consists of 25,000 square feet and is a $7.6 million facility (The Museum at Warm Springs website: 2002). It houses the single largest collection of Indian artifacts under one roof, and adds to the local economy by increasing tourist revenue within the region (The Museum at Warm Springs website: 2002).

This museum is heavily involved with the community, incorporating their art and crafts into temporary exhibits. All twelve of the full-time employees are tribal members. A
lot of local basketry and other items can also be found in the gift shop located within the
main lobby. When I was there, the "Ninth Annual Warm Springs Tribal Member Art
Exhibit" was on display in the changing exhibits gallery, which included a wide assortment
of paintings, drawings, sculpture, basketry and beadwork.

During the month of June, there was also "Living Traditions: Traditional
Demonstrations" being held in the museum lobby from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on certain
days. These demonstrations included "Traditional Women's Regalia," "Wasco Regalia,"
and "Traditional Men's Regalia." There was also a sculpting demonstration planned by the
tribal archaeologist. Not only is there a lot of participation from the tribe, many of the
museum's artifacts also come from tribal members. Other objects are purchased through the
Confederated Tribes with their $50,000 a year acquisition budget, managed by three elders
on the Accession Committee.

As mentioned previously, I worked closely with Natalie Kirk, the curator of the
museum. Kirk is Native American but not of Warm Springs heritage, not overly traditional,
and has glossy black hair and a serious demeanor when it comes to the responsibilities of
overseeing the collection of six to seven thousand artifacts. Kirk is resolute in her
determination to categorize and make sure that all of the museum's objects are stored
properly. She has worked at the museum for three years, and lives within the Warm Springs
community with her husband and children. There are approximately 5,000 tribal members.
I spent the majority of my time with Kirk in the museum, but we also had lunch across the
street and took a drive through Warm Springs to see other important tribal facilities and the
sights.
When asked about artifacts that are not shown within The Museum at Warm Springs, Kirk brought up something that I had not heard before. She mentioned that artifacts that have something "unknown" about them are not displayed until they are "known" (Kirk 2002). "Things can’t be made with love and care by someone and be ‘unknown’" (Kirk 2002). A religious blessing of the museum, artifacts and staff occurred while I was at the center. Prayers were made for “objects who are lonely for their owners” (Kirk 2002). This is done whenever new artifacts come in, or at least once a year.

I also spoke with George Aguilar, a member of the Confederated Tribes who is currently writing a book for his grandchildren and other youngsters to help preserve their heritage. Aguilar spoke of the taboo on name-giving and using names of the deceased for at least five years after death. Aguilar (2002) said that it takes five years for the deceased to journey to the spirit world. After that time, the individual’s name may again be spoken and used for name-giving purposes. He also spoke of the Chinookan War Dance, which is now considered sacrilegious to perform in public.

The “slave killer” is not to be shown in public due to its brutal nature, but is kept in storage at the museum (Aguilar 2002). This object looked like a baseball bat, and spiritual assassins could be bought off to kill another person using this weapon. Aguilar (2002) said that these hired assassins were considered both physical and spiritual. Slave killers were also believed to be the cause of infanticide, and all death was blamed on these spirits until the 1880s and 1890s.

In speaking with Natalie Kirk, a long list of things that are not to be displayed or talked about were mentioned. Kirk (2002) said that “twati,” a good or bad magic performer, is not told about or displayed. Areas where roots could be dug are not divulged, and no
burial information, grave goods, or processes of any sacred ceremonies are on exhibit (Kirk 2002). Only replicas of photos are shown, and the sweat lodge is viewed as being of a spiritual, mental, and physical nature that is only for Native Americans (Kirk 2002). There is one picture of a sweat lodge in the museum, but it is shown only partially built.

Others things not displayed or talked about included directions for making objects such as baskets, sweat lodges, beadwork, fishing nets, or clothing (Kirk 2002). The Washat religion is not to be found, nor is any mention of long houses. Sacred bundles are not displayed. Eagle feathers and animal skins are shown, but there is no explanation on the processes of obtaining an eagle feather from the federal government (Kirk 2002). Items in storage that belong to a person who has died may not be exhibited for one year. Kirk (2002) said that there is also no information given on memorials of deceased persons.

Also not on display are the locations of natural dyes obtained from berries, leaves and red rocks for hemp and cornhusk bags (Kirk 2002). There is an exhibit on boarding schools, but there are no specifics given of the treatment of the children and the effects on the people involved. Some traditional stories, especially those that might be frightening for children, are also not shared.

Debra Stacona, manager of the gift shop for the last three years, spoke of items the gift shop will not carry. Stacona (2002) said that preference is given to local artists, and that all work is bought upfront. Clothing is one exception, however, as that comes from Pendleton and other manufacturers. Stacona also mentioned that she “follows guidelines from the mission statement,” so she only buys “Native American themed items to educate about Native Americans” (Stacona 2002). Natalie Kirk, my consultant, contributed some of
her baskets to sell in the gift shop. A small sign posted by her work quoted Kirk as saying, "Making baskets is part of my daily life, like breathing."

Objects the gift shop will not take include "jewelry and art that can’t be proven to be Native American made, artifacts from family and friends, eagle feathers, and Native American-like objects, especially from non-Natives" (Stacona 2002). Some Southwestern jewelry and some pottery are bought, but they are more the exception than the rule. Eighty percent of the pottery comes from this region (Stacona 2002). Work must come from the actual artist that produced it, and as much of the inventory as possible is made by the local community.

Some of the artifacts that are exhibited here but not at some of the other museums include items of a medicinal purpose, such as medicine bowls, pestles and pouches with information about their uses. Medicine rocks and medicinal powders are also displayed, and information is out for public dissemination on how these items were used. A cougar skin with its head, and a mink headdress is also shown. There is also an exhibit on "Songs of Our People," which shows and plays Native songs and drumming, including a Washat prayer song. The Warm Springs Museum’s mission statement and the museum’s main emphasis is “to preserve and educate about the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs” (Kirk 2002).
Chapter Five. Analysis and Conclusion

Analysis

As James Clifford (1991:242) writes in his article "Four Northwest Coast Museums," the "emergence of tribal museums and cultural centers makes possible an effective repatriation and circulation of objects long considered to be unambiguously 'property' by metropolitan collectors and curators." More important is the fact that Native Americans have not diminished or disappeared, like they are prone to be exhibited in mainstream Western museums. Clifford writes:

It has become widely apparent in the dominant culture that many Native American populations whose cultures were officially declared moribund, who were 'converted' to Christianity, whose cultural traditions were 'salvaged' in textual collections such as that of Boas and Hint, whose 'authentic' artifacts were massively collected a century ago, have not disappeared...these tribal groups continue to resist, reckon with, adapt to, and ignore the claim of the dominant culture. [Clifford 1991:248].

Native American museums/cultural centers "have other unique strengths. Most of them deal with a cohesive, well-defined cultural entity with a strong artistic tradition and an intriguing history" (Hanson 1980:47). In the article, "The Reappearing Vanishing American," Hanson (1980:47) notes that, "[t]he museum is the tribe's opportunity to interpret their art and history – for themselves as well as for outsiders – with a more sensitive and understanding approach....the museum helps alleviate the 'zoo' complex many Indians develop from the parade of people who come to see the reservation."

"Oversimplification, misinterpretation, incorrect identification, unsympathetic and unnecessary sensationalism" (Hanson 1980:48), are some of the complaints American Indians have voiced concerning mainstream American museums that interpret their cultures.
A good example of this is the Nez Perce Historical Park, where the outside firm of Harper's Valley came in, took the artifacts, constructed their own storyboard with no consultation with the Nez Perce, and then arrived back at the site to put it all together. That was twenty years ago, however, and there are plans for a new and accurate storyboard in the future.

Four of the six museums and cultural centers have the education of their tribal communities as their most important goal. This includes an accurate representation of tribal cultures and histories, and at the Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center and the Nez Perce Historical Park, also includes access to a library and media center. The Museum at Warm Springs and TCI also identify education of their tribal community as a top priority, but did not did have a library or media center on site.

The Old Mission State Park is working towards a better relationship with the Coeur d'Alene, and hopefully will incorporate tribal members into more of its decision-making processes. Currently, a member of the Coeur d'Alene tribe is working with The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, but only peripherally with the Old Mission. MAC, while working together in a partnership with the four tribal nations they represent, has more of an emphasis on education to the American mainstream public, focusing on an accurate representation of tribal cultures and histories. An important differentiating feature with MAC is the emphasis they place on exhibiting the Salish language in relation to the English language.

It is of utmost importance that American Indian cultures and traditions are represented as ones that have been here since time immemorial, are currently here, and will continue to be around forever. Most of these facilities work at maintaining a Native staff, and nearly all of them consult with elders to determine what is to be exhibited,
communicated, or held back from the outside viewer. The exception is the Old Mission State Park. Most of the museums/cultural centers also had a high degree of Native tribal community involvement, with the exception once again of the Old Mission State Park and to some extent the Nez Perce Historical Park, both of which are hopeful that these conditions will change with new guidelines and exhibits.

All of the artifacts that are kept back from exhibition have to do with sacredness, with the exception of some editing of Native tales that are thought to be too frightening for mainstream American children. This was true in all six of the museums/cultural centers. Items that are considered sacred are kept in storage areas with highly restricted access. Some of these objects are not shared simply because the nature of their telling would not have the same meaning in the English language as it does in indigenous languages. Religion and religious artifacts are not shared, but not only because they are sacred. There are also cultural differences that would make it difficult for an outsider to understand, and religious practices are normally a private community or family matter.

The six centers are more similar than different when it comes to what is deemed not appropriate to exhibit. None of the centers display sacred objects such as medicine bundles, areas and procedures in which to obtain sacred roots and berries, certain religious artifacts, or any grave goods. While beadwork and other traditional crafts are exhibited, there is no information on how to make these items. Nor is there any information on how to build a sweat lodge. All but one of the museums/cultural centers depict sweat lodges as only partially constructed, while The Museum at Warm Springs only displays a picture of one in a partially constructed state. MWS believes that sweat lodges are for mental, spiritual, and physical cleansing, and are for Native American use only.
Animal effigies, burial goods, and memorial information are other items that are kept from the general public. At MWS, only representations of photographs are displayed. Jess Nowland, an interpreter from TCI, claimed that sacred items included “root gathering, hunting, fishing, religion, and recreation. These cannot be separated, they are all from one realm” (Nowland 2002). Eagle feathers are not treated in the same manner at all six sites. Only one of the institutions, The Museum at Warm Springs, has eagle feathers on display, although not all of the sites agree that they are sacred. TCI, Yakama and MAC are three of the centers that believe eagle feathers are still sacred and do not use them in displays.

TCI and the Yakama Nation exhibited rock art, while the others did not. Traditional stories and songs are shared at most museums/cultural centers, although they are censored for content and those that could be interpreted in a questionable manner to outsiders are deemed unacceptable. Pipes in varying stages of completeness are shown, but the amount of information given about these items varied from center to center. Most museums/cultural centers did not exhibit war paraphernalia, but showcased members of the tribe who have served their country in one of the U.S. military branches. In essence, while many institutions had the same general guidelines, every tribal community is different in dealing with their museums/cultural centers, worldviews, and representations they attempt to present to outside viewers and members of their own society.

All six of the museums/cultural centers are also in agreement that ‘less is more’ when it comes to the dispersal of information on certain exhibits, such as root digging, burial practices, and religion. To the mainstream viewer, interpretation at the surface level is deemed appropriate and wise. This is especially true of the Coyote stories told in a shadowy teepee replica at TCI, which are edited appropriately to fit into a Euro-American worldview.
An interesting aspect of my research revealed that in tribally run museums/cultural centers, the directors, curators and top staff are primarily made up of women. At the Nez Perce Historical Park, run by the National Park Service, and at The Old Mission State Park, men are the directors and curators. At MAC, the curator is a woman, although this museum is not tribally run. It did, however, work very closely with members of the tribal nations it represented.

Conclusion

Problems may arise when outside viewers do not understand that “the religion[s] of Native American people is animistic; that is, all natural things, both animate and inanimate, are believed to be embodied with spiritual powers” (Hall 1998:37). Certain items are not shown due to protective measures, since “songs, proper rituals, and movements are used with the purpose of manipulating these powers of nature and the universe to create an effect needed to protect an individual from harm and to gain additional power and benefits for the individual, group, or the entire tribe” (Hall 1998:38). Bundles and other sacred items are not shown because they “assure the cycle of life and continued existence of the tribe or individual” (Hall 1998:38).

In matters pertaining to representation, Ivan Karp’s article, “Culture and Representation,” makes some salient points when he argues, “what is at stake in struggles for control over objects and the modes of exhibiting them, finally, is the articulation of identity. When cultural ‘others’ are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and ‘other’” (Karp 1991:15).
Karp (1991:14) argues that the messages “implicated through design, arrangement, and assemblage can either aid or impede our appreciation and understanding of the visual, cultural, social and political interest of the objects and stories exhibited in museums.” I hypothesize that this is indeed true, since those who have lived with and are continuing to live with them often best understand material culture and traditions. Native Americans that I have spoken with feel strongly that they should be the ones to exhibit Native traditions, artifacts, history, and politics in the manner that they feel best represents their cultures.

Richard Fox, in his book *Nationalist Ideologies and the Production of National Culture* writes, “[c]ulture is a set of understandings and a consciousness under active construction by which individuals interpret the world around them” (Fox 1989:10). This speaks to the ideology that no matter how a culture is represented, a great deal depends on the viewer and the cultural lens that they are using when interpreting the data that is exhibited around them. An outside viewer brings along perceptions and/or stereotypes that they have gathered from their own culture. While some of this data may be incorrect, it still exerts a substantial influence on what messages the outsider incorporates and takes home with him.

Architecturally, many Native Americans work to make sure that the siting of their museums/cultural centers have meaning, especially for their own tribal community. Some buildings are located on sacred ground, others on tribal land, and still others, usually those that are not tribally run, are located in federal and state parks. The tribally run museums and cultural centers that I visited have all tried to incorporate traditional Native materials into their exterior and interior design, along with using concepts such as sacred symbols such as the circle, feathers, and cardinal directions (Slusarenko, personal communiqué to author,
October 3, 2002). For example, the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute is built on an imaginary axis that runs through the Blue Mountains and the headwaters of the Umatilla River, since water is of primary importance to these tribes (Slusarenko, personal communiqué to author, October 3, 2002). The Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center is built on a direct axis to sacred Mt. Adams.

Most of the exhibits within the museums/cultural centers I researched have visitors walk in a counterclockwise direction, which is in reference to the way participants move in traditional dances. There is a lot of glass used, for both scenic and functional reasons. Public areas and the exhibits themselves utilize glass to help diminish the barriers between the center and the outside vistas. Slate, wood, and other natural products are also utilized for both practical and traditional reasons. At some museums/cultural centers, the exhibitions are constructed in such a way as to maximize the impression that viewers receive when traveling through them. Dark periods of history are dimly lit and narrow, while better times are showcased with bright lighting and open spaces (Minthorn 2002). Meaning and representation is extrapolated through the processes of siting, the use of Native materials, and architectural design.

As J.A. Hanson (1980:47) argues, “[a] vital contribution Native American museums make to their communities is the fostering of group pride, intercultural understanding and positive self-image. These museums serve an important psychological need and provide stability and security.” Another benefit, notes Hanson (1980:47), is that “[t]hey also preserve specific cultural elements, such as artifacts and even language, which might otherwise be lost. The museums are often connected with the tribal library and archives, so
they have become the focal point of many cultural activities,” along with providing educational tools within the tribal communities.

Although the cultural centers and museums I worked with are run by different entities, the reasons behind excluding particular objects, songs, stories and information are all basically the same. They all have to do with the sacredness of the artifacts. All of the cultural centers/museums depend on elders to have the final say in what is and is not acceptable to display to the outside viewer and to tribal members themselves. Lastly, the principal goals of each museum/cultural center are those of education and accurate cultural representation. Most of these centers work hard to involve the community, and the result is a shared effort of all of the participants, creating a bond within the tribal society and possibly, with some of the outsiders as well.
Appendix

Interviews and Interviewees

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute:

Name: Malissa Minthorn
Position: Archival Coordinator
Date: May 27 – May 31, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

Name: Marjorie Waheneaka
Position: Exhibit and Collections Manager
Date: May 28, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

Name: Randy Melton
Position: Registrar/Visitor Service Team Leader
Date: May 28, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

Name: Jess Nowland
Position: Interpreter/Visitor Services
Date: May 28, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: Native American

Name: Calvin Shillal
Position: Photo Historian
Date: May 28, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: Native American

Name: Susan Sheoships
Position: Education Manager
Date: May 29, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

Name: Joan Deroko
Position: Gift Shop Manager
Date: May 29, 2002
Expressed Ethnicity: non-Native
Nez Perce National Historical Park:

Name: Linda Pazano  
Position: Museum Tech  
Date: June 3, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Native American

Name: Bob Chenoweth  
Position: Curator  
Date: June 4, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: non-Native

Name: Robert  
Position: Archivist  
Date: June 5, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: non-Native

Name: Diane Mallicken  
Position: Park Ranger/Cultural Interpreter  
Date: June 6, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Native American

Name: Rowena  
Position: Museum Tech  
Date: June 7, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Ho-Chunk

Name: Kevin Peters  
Position: Park Ranger/Cultural Interpreter  
Date: June 7, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Native American

Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center:

Name: Marilyn Skahan-Malatare "Wala hushta"  
Position: Curator/Program Manager  
Date: June 11, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member
Name: Pamela Fabela  
Position: Administrative Assistant  
Date: June 11, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

Name: Sheryl Antelope  
Position: Acting Director of complex/gift shop ordering  
Date: June 12, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

**Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture:**

Name: Lynn Pankonin  
Position: Curator of the American Indian Collection  
Date: June 19, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: non-Native

**Old Mission State Park:**

Name: Bill Scudder  
Position: Park Manager  
Date: June 20, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: non-Native

**The Museum at Warm Springs:**

Name: Natalie Kirk  
Position: Curator  
Date: June 24 - 27, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Native American

Name: George Aguilar  
Position: Writer (not employed by museum)  
Date: June 25, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member

Name: Debra Stacona  
Position: Gift Shop Manager  
Date: June 27, 2002  
Expressed Ethnicity: Tribal member
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