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Decolonizing Museums: Toward a Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

This review examines the discourses and practices that have produced a lively literature on museum decolonization created by scholars of museum practices and curators. We consider the trajectory of decolonization efforts in museums, focusing especially on the care of Native North American heritage, with comparison to similar trajectories internationally. We begin with a discussion of decolonizing moments in theory and practice, with particular attention to 1990s critique of ethnographic museums and developments after the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Following this discussion is a review of works on concerns regarding Native American representation and public displays, involvement in collections care, and the varied collaborations that are changing museum practices. The final section foregrounds the fluorescence of tribal museums and their contributions to the decolonization and indigenization of museums, as well as emerging paradigm shifts in both the anthropology of museums and anthropology in museums.

INTRODUCTION

The 2021 presidential address (Gupta & Stoolman 2022) at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting provoked a months-long debate about anthropology's founders. Gupta asked the assembly to imagine what anthropology might have become as a discipline if it had been decolonizing from its earliest moments, that is, if it had paid attention to the massive dispossessions and violence experienced by colonized peoples across the globe and included analysis of these processes in its explanatory frameworks. Led by Herb Lewis, a chorus of anthropologists mounted a critique of Gupta's lecture on the American Anthropological Association's Communities platform and defended the founders for all the valuable knowledge they had contributed to the peoples with whom they worked. Anthropologists, Lewis and his cohort claimed, were in fact the antithesis of colonial in their mindset and efforts. What struck us as curious about this debate was the absence of any mention of museums either as part of the colonizing project or as valuable holders of cultural knowledge. Despite the fact that scholars of museum practices and curators have created a lively literature on museum decolonization, they appear to remain out of sight for academic anthropology. Nevertheless, discourses and practices addressing decolonization have prevailed among museum staff and scholars, accompanied by significant changes in practices in recent decades. In this review, we consider the trajectory of decolonization efforts in museums, focusing especially on the case of Native North American heritage, with comparison to similar trajectories internationally. The treatment of Native North Americans is important because of the juridical relationship between Native American Nations and the United States government through treaties and legislation. This government-to-government history places a special obligation on museums to remedy colonial harm caused by the disrespect of Native American sovereignty. Another reason for this focus is that Native North Americans are perhaps the most represented and misrepresented people in anthropology and natural history museums.

We begin with a review of decolonizing moments in theory and practice. We reference prior work inspired by the critique of ethnographic museums that took hold in the 1990s, but the intention of the review is to focus on developments after the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). We review work in both representations in public displays and also collections care. Throughout, we foreground the important contributions of Native American scholars. The second section of the review discusses the varied forms of collaboration that are surfacing and changing in museum practice, including decentering curatorial authority. The final section of the review foregrounds the fluorescence of tribal museums and how they are contributing to decolonization and indigenization (Krmpotich 2020, Phillips 2011). The processes reviewed here are considered as the emergence of a paradigm shift in both the anthropology of museums and anthropology in museums.

DECOLONIZING MOMENTS

Overview

Anthropologists have been writing about their efforts to both acknowledge and remedy the colonial roots of the discipline since at least the 1970s (Bookman & Morgen 1988, Hymes 1972, Jones 1970, Mullings 1997, Rosaldo & Lamphere 1974). Reflexive turns are not new, but they have come in fits and starts as the "unsettling" erupts, dies down, or is co-opted and institutional constraints reassert themselves. Change has been incremental and clearly insufficient, as new generations of anthropologists are once again raising questions about the discipline's ongoing complicity in colonial practices of patriarchy, white supremacy, and the marginalization of diverse voices (Jobson 2020, Schuller 2021). Although episodic, however, theorizing of decolonization has advanced and

a solid body of literature has taken hold, much of it in the writings of scholars of color, who have fought to be included in the canon (Bolles et al. 2022, Harrison 2011, Medicine 1999).

Discussions of museums as sites for decolonization have advanced on a trajectory parallel to that of the broader academy. Research and writing on this topic have progressed from initial recognition of the complicity of museums in colonialism to discussions of how to remedy the harm and the potential for transformation for the future of museums. At each stage, complexities and entanglements have been raised by scholars of museums and by museum professionals.

During the course of this effort, there has been a range of characterizations of the concept of decolonization. Some scholars are pessimistic that decolonization can ever be accomplished (Boast 2011, Lonetree 2012, Simpson 2011), while others provide more optimistic perspectives that center on the potential for museums as spaces of civic dialogue and the increasing willingness of museums to accelerate collaboration with source communities (Brown & Peers 2003, Clifford 1997, Janes 2009, Karp et al. 1992, Phillips 2011). Between these poles, there are numerous descriptions of what the process has looked like and where it seems to be heading (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, Knell 2004, Macdonald 2011, Ravesloot 1989). A major theme of these writings has taken off from Clifford's borrowing, theorizing, and reworking of Pratt's (1991) conceptualization of museums as "contact zones." Clifford (1997) famously wrote about the experiences of Tlingit elders at the Portland Art Museum and the divergent perspectives about the purpose of the visit and the hoped-for outcomes. The museum as a contact zone quickly became a trope to explore the entanglements of knowledge production and the role of museums in either upholding or dismantling colonial legacies. Subsequent writings have delved into the impact of these reflections and critical museology on museum practice. In general, museums are moving forward in adopting new practices and innovations that embark on decolonization processes. As Kreps (2020) points out, decolonizing by more concertedly collaborating with Indigenous communities is now considered a "cornerstone" by museum staff (see also Archambault 2011, Duggan 2011, Hays-Gilpin & Lomatewa 2013, Schott & Quinones 2021, Wali 2015, Wali et al. 2012).

There has been no uniformity, however, to these practices, and each museum has a unique pathway and pace of change. Early interventions by both Native American anthropologists and Native Americans working with anthropologists played important roles in providing critical context for collections. As Bruchac (2018) documents, however, their efforts were not credited and their knowledge was appropriated by the anthropologists or used—as a by-product of curatorial authority—as the ethnological foundations upon which the empirical nature of exhibits was built. Bruchac has demonstrated that, in making visible their efforts, Native American interlocutors were resisting colonization as best they could. Their contributions enabled understandings of Native American languages, culturally relevant identification of material culture and gendered usages, music, and taxonomies that shaped worldviews of communities, families, and societies. The most renowned collaborator was George Hunt. Commissioned by Boas, Hunt created the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) collection for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. Thorough documentation of the narratives associated with cultural objects was central in his approach to collections. This approach ensured that descriptions given to objects accounted for cultural, societal, and status variations in usage (Blackhawk & Wilner 2018, Boas 1907, Jacknis 2019). The collaboration embodied by Hunt's work with Boas illuminates the models of past collaboration and their complexities upon which twenty-first century paradigms for greater inclusion of Native knowledge in museums can be created (Kidwell 1985, Lonetree 2006).

Bruchac focused particularly on collaborators who worked with anthropologists, but there were also Native American anthropologists in this early period whose work continues to be salient for museum-based knowledge. For example, William Jones, the first Native American to receive a

PhD in anthropology from Harvard University, held a position at the Field Museum. In 1905, he built a meticulous collection of Meskwaki material culture (Rideout 1912, VanStone 1998).

A student of Boas, Ella Deloria spoke to the importance of revised notions of cultural relevance, through not only her work for the Bureau of Ethnology, which later became part of the annals of the Smithsonian, but also her work on Dakota language (Deloria 1998, Medicine 1999). Francis La Flesche (1913) also furthered contributions to Native knowledge–based perspectives in museum descriptions of cultural items. Working for the Bureau of Ethnology at the Smithsonian, La Flesche contributed translations of Osage and Omaha languages used in the classification and descriptions of items as well as his collaborative fieldwork with Alice Fletcher, which informed anthropological understandings of Omaha songs and traditional instruments (Cohen 1988, Haskin et al. 2003, La Flesche 1913).

While all of these interventions should be considered cumulatively as contributing to decolonization, albeit sometimes subversively, more concerted pressure was put on museums after the 1970s, with the rise of modern American Indian activism. During the student strike of 1968 and 1969 at San Francisco State University, calls for more relevant education included the need for anthropological teaching of the contributions made by Native American museum practitioners and those who worked with museums (Johnson et al. 1997, Kemnitzer 1997). Native Americans pressured museums to change representation and be more inclusive. For example, in a report in 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) called for decolonizing education and including Indigenous ways of knowing and being in education. In 1969, Vine Deloria, Jr., published the landmark *Custer Died For Your Sins*, calling out anthropology for its transgressions in the treatment of Native Americans (Deloria 1969). Still, change was happening only sporadically.

Among the earliest to heed these calls for decolonization was the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada (Ames 1986). As Clapperton (2010) notes, MOA had a long history of collaboration (of sorts) with First Nations, but significant change began in the early 1990s during the directorship of Michael Ames and then Ruth Phillips (see also Kreps 2020).

Although MOA is in Canada and not subject to NAGPRA, staff there were aware of the significant change this legislation represented. The passage of NAGPRA in 1990 was a culmination of a two-decade effort to codify Native American sovereign rights to their ancestors, sacred objects, and objects of patrimony (Bruchac 2010). It accelerated the pace of change at museums in the United States and represents a major step in the decolonization process. NAGPRA, in itself, is flawed legislation (Colwell-Chanthaphonh & Nash 2012, Mihesuah 2000), but it opened the door for Tribes and First Nations to demand access to museum collections and to establish relationships that could become the foundation for paradigmatic change.

It took almost 15 years after NAGPRA's passage for perhaps the most dramatic change to occur: the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in 2004 (Lonetree 2012, Shannon 2014, West 2016). The NMAI was the product of years of advocacy and successfully established a historical presence on the National Mall for Native American representation of their own histories and cultures (Deloria 2018). As part of the Smithsonian Institution, the NMAI was funded in part by the US government and partly by private funds, including significant financial contributions from Native American Tribes. Under the auspices of three Native American Directors—Richard West, Kevin Gover, and most recently Cynthia Chaves Lamar—the NMAI has continued to advance decolonization efforts by indigenizing museum practices. In practice, this effort has meant moving toward an activation or empowerment of Indigenous knowledge. Australian Aborigine curator Stephen Gilchrist makes a useful comparison between decolonization and indigenization:

Even though both strategies are necessary and productive, I feel that there is a different inflection between a curatorial practice that privileges philosophies of decolonization over Indigenization. For me at least, the former is about undoing something that invariably feels like you are forever playing catch up. Indigenization for me is about doing; manifesting, instantiating, and running our own race on our own terms.... I think there is something crucial about openness and creating openings to Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing, and being. (Gilchrist & Skerritt 2016, p. 111)

The NMAI, for example, has implemented Indigenous methodologies of care for collections (Tuhiwai Smith 2012), new curricula for grades K–12 (**https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360**), as well as improved representation that privileges direct voice from Native American community members (**https://americanindian.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/Washington**).

The most recent museum to follow an indigenizing model is the First Americans Museum (FAM), which opened in 2021 and is dedicated to telling the stories of the 39 Native Nations that currently have sovereign territories in Oklahoma (**https://famok.org/**). Most were forcibly removed from other homelands and settled in the state in the nineteenth century. FAM took 30 years to build at a cost of $175 million (**https://www.neh.gov/article/new-museum-first-americans**). As with NMAI, FAM's leadership is Native American, but it is also under the auspices of the State of Oklahoma and Oklahoma City.

These trajectories of change and the impact of NAGPRA can also be traced in a review of articles in *Museum Anthropology*, the journal of the Council for Museum Anthropology. The journal was initiated as a newsletter in the 1970s, and, in the early years, little to no attention was given to complicity with troubling collections practices, salvage anthropology, or the legitimacy of retaining collections. Although there was a section in the newsletter about "accessions" and "deaccessions," it was usually a list of items from various museums. In 1990, the journal began to include articles on the new NAGPRA legislation, but the discussion was still largely descriptive. By 2010 and the following decades, more attention was given to issues of museums' relationships with source communities. For example, in 2011, an article by Boast (2011) questioned whether the notion of the museum as a contact zone fully captured the problematic of a "neocolonial" approach to collaboration that was playing out as museums heeded the call from critical museology scholars. This article remains one of the most cited in *Museum Anthropology*. While this article successfully critiques and exposes the dark underbelly of museum practice, one is left to divine the avenues and strategies necessary for the creation of more inclusive museum practices and the enrichment of collections that may be possible from contact and collaboration with Native American advisors.

The 2022 volume demonstrates the extent of the shift in museum scholarship as represented in *Museum Anthropology*. Thorner, in her introduction to issue one, discusses the diverse threads that are currently framing museum scholarship's reaction to the decolonization moment. Her abstract states,

There has been wonderful work animating vectors of relatedness, negotiation, and collaboration between museums and "source communities."... [W]e seek to...extend recent work arguing for an expanded view of museums as sites of translation (between local needs and global agendas) and frames for more inclusive, dynamic, collaborative, politically informed action. As a set, these articles argue that museum anthropology as a discipline must allow for ethnographic exploration of, coexistence with, and engagement across these emphases: the centrality of objects and how they are mobilized in various forms of knowledge production; debate over what a museum is and what its social role(s) might be (can a home be a museum? Can a city? What happens to our notion of "museum" when we expand beyond architectural objectifications of state/national authority?); and the embodied, affective, and sensorial experiences of museums and museum-like spaces. (Thorner 2022, p. 3)

While several of the articles (cf. Berk 2022) focus on the theoretical approaches to objects (materialization and agency, for example), others more directly address the ways in which museum

spaces might expand or move beyond their current institutional locations to encompass other sites of knowledge production and materialization. Bell (2022) in particular draws on Indigenous ontologies and methodologies (citing TallBear 2019) to make the case that a stronger connection needs to be made between a relational approach to museum work, materialization, and agency.

The following issue continues the discussion but highlights specifically issues of troubling museum representations and lack of representation. In her editorial, Turner states,

> The collections, objects, and artworks with which these authors are concerned are complex. They oscillate between issues of silence and voice, absence and presence, individual and collective. In their more positive or productive sense, these dichotomies are at the center of museum anthropological work, where there can be a productive tension between what to share, what can be shared, and what is not possible to know or to reveal. . . . Less positively, the history of museums and colonialisms are implicated in direct and violent erasure. What kind of work—especially after the past few years—is currently needed to reconcile or even perhaps simply face this kind of contradiction? (Turner 2022, p. 93)

These two issues demonstrate the significant influence that discourses about decolonization have had on the future of museum anthropology. Consideration of how to decolonize drives reimagining what is a museum, what is the purpose of collecting, and related concerns.

Other recent writings also advocate moving beyond acknowledging complicity with colonial practices to embracing different forms of engagement for museums. Janes, for example, has been an important interlocutor, bluntly excoriating museums for not addressing the most pressing societal concerns such as climate change and inequality. Janes, an archaeologist by training, is Editor in Chief emeritus of *Museum Management and Curatorship* and, as an independent scholar, has continued to publish on the responsibilities of museums. In his latest piece, Janes (2022) states, "The time has come for museums to acknowledge decolonization and repatriation—not only as the foundation for forging truth and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples—but also as essential conditions for museum integrity and accountability" (p. 742). He forcefully ties the process of decolonization to the urgency for museums to take on a more activist role in addressing the processes of societal collapse now underway. Another important voice on decolonization over the past several decades is that of Christina Kreps. Kreps (2003, 2016, 2020) has written prolifically about the processes through which museums are attempting to engage communities using a comparative lens. Kreps's early work had already pointed to the ways in which museums in Southeast Asia and Europe were changing practices to account for colonial legacies. Her latest book (Kreps 2020) updates the efforts of museums to implement decolonization by undertaking a variety of initiatives that engage communities, using case studies from her research in the Netherlands, the Republic of Indonesia, and the United States. For example, the Tropenmuseum has played a major role in cultural diplomacy, training international cultural workers and serving as a performance venue for world music and theater (p. 146). She makes the case that museum anthropology intersects more and more with applied anthropology in important ways. She points out that the two subfields share similar concerns, notably around promoting greater engagement with public audiences, albeit in different arenas. Citing Carattini & Walsh (2015), Kreps notes that many museum anthropologists perceive of their work as applied anthropology and are broadening the scope of what can be accomplished in addition to curation or care of collections.

Decolonizing Practices

In this section of the review, we discuss more specifically changes in practices that exemplify the paradigm shift occurring in different aspects of museum work: representation, collections care, and repatriation. It is through these changes that decolonization is being operationalized.

Representation. Much of the decolonization literature is devoted to the critique of representational practices that have been the most egregious manifestation of colonial ethos and practice (Ames 1992, Hall 1997, Harrison 1993, Karp & Lavine 1991, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Marstine 2006, Onciul 2015, Price 1989, Sandell & Nightingale 2012, Simpson 1996, Wrightson 2017). Lonetree (2012), an influential voice, critiques representations for not adequately confronting colonial legacies. Although her call to more directly address the harm done to Native Americans historically in exhibitions is powerful, it has been difficult to accomplish, in part, because of the limitations of the exhibition format. Exhibitions are generally not suited to discuss complex topics and often do not have room for nuance. Label texts and accompanying media or interactive elements can come across as sound bites, and the simplified language used can easily lend itself to generalizations about Native Americans that such exhibits would seek to avoid. Nevertheless, museums should, and have begun to, find creative ways to address colonial legacies (King 2017, Thorsgard 2008). This work is happening not just in the United States and Canada, but also in other countries (McFarlane 2022), including some in Europe, where major museums, such as the Tropenmuseum in the Netherlands, have undertaken efforts to address colonial origins and complicities since the 1980s (Kreps 2020). Another comparative case of museums attempting to more directly address colonial legacies comes from Australia (CAMA 1993, McIntyre & Wehner 2001, Sauvage 2010).

The treatment of colonial public histories may not be possible in traditional stationary museum exhibition settings; however, traveling banner exhibits, such as the Smithsonian's *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* (cocurated by this article's coauthor Robert Keith Collins), offer models for history presentation that come close to conveying the types of lived experiences that Lonetree asserts are in need of address.

This 20-banner exhibit traveled nationwide between 2009 and 2015. Central in its content was the use of graphics and narratives that told stories of the cultural and linguistic integrations and exchanges between African American and Native American people and the genesis of blended cultural and/or racial African–Native American heritage. The exhibition was centered on the lived experiences and voices of the people, so museum goers were presented with the shared lived experiences under policy, such as slavery, shared kinship, shared lifeways, and shared forms of creative resistance through music and self-determination between Africans and Native Americans in North, Central, and South America. These banners encouraged museum goers to contemplate the dynamics of being and belonging, community, creativity, culture, exclusion and inclusion, and race that shaped African–Native American lives (see **https://www.si.edu/exhibitions/indivisible-african-native-american-lives-americas%3Aevent-exhib-4736**).

In other instances, museums have been responding to the critique of representational practices by more deliberately privileging the participation of Native Americans as curators or advisors on major exhibitions. This effort is evidenced by a cluster of new exhibition catalogs and books on museums. An example is Yohe & Greeves's (2019) volume *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, which accompanies the exhibition by the same name that opened at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in July 2019, and traveled to three other museums subsequently. The exhibition showcases the contemporary and historical works of art of Native American women from all regions of North America. The selection of works was guided by a 21-member advisory board of Native and non-Native scholars and artists. Rather than being comprehensive or chronological, the book and the exhibition are organized thematically, divided into three sections: legacy, relationships, and power. The book goes beyond traditional catalogs to include extended explanations of selected pieces from the exhibition, such as poetry and reflections from the artists and volume contributors. It also, as explained in the preface, deliberately avoids a unified voice, opting instead to let the authors present their individual perspectives in their own style.

At about the same time, another exhibition—*Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art*—opened at the Yale University Art Gallery, accompanied by a catalog of the same title. The book authors and exhibition curators were undergraduate students (two of them Native American) who assembled artwork from Yale's vast collection that included historical and contemporary art. In the volume's introduction, coauthors McCleary & Shrestinian (2019) describe the problematic history of the Yale collection and then document the student activism that led to major changes in representational practices that made the exhibition possible. In addition, an essay by Blackhawk & Sutton (2019) discusses the importance of a "space" for Native American arts and culture on campus. The catalog sections of the book include text of the label copy written by the student curators. The labels reflect the Indigenous perspectives on representation, including innovations such as using the designation of "artist once known" instead of "unknown artist" or "unknown maker" or the generic Tribal affiliation that has been common in museums. By recognizing that the creators of these works were indeed known, but whose names are lost due to colonial practice, this innovation pushes forward the shifting paradigm.

A third example is the exhibition *Apsáalooke Women and Warriors*, curated by Nina Sanders, which opened simultaneously at the Field Museum and the University of Chicago's Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society. It was the first major exhibition at the Field Museum that was curated by a Native American. It featured both historical materials from the Field Museum collection and contemporary works assembled by Sanders. The accompanying catalog, edited by Sanders & Roelstraete (2020), included essays and artists' statements from more than 40 contributors to the exhibition. The essays are all diverse in style and perspective. As can be noted, this pattern of enabling a pluralistic mode of writing and representation seems to be a hallmark of the decolonizing moment in museum representation. Other major texts along these lines are also enriching the dialogue around representation by presenting Native American voices directly (Lamar et al. 2010, Well-Off-Man et al. 2020, Williams et al. 2005).

Collections care practices. While much importance has been attributed to changes in representation, equally significant has been the change in the core of museum practice: the care and stewardship of collections. We argue that this process presents a more difficult challenge than changing representation. As Greene (2016) points out and Turner elaborates (2022), the bureaucratization of museums led to the adoption of cataloguing and classification methodologies that were antithetical to maintaining Indigenous perspectives about the items in the collection. In what she calls the "Smithsonian" effect—the use of biological categories to record cultural items in the collections—Greene states,

> Museums of the twenty-first century justly celebrate their capacity to make collection catalogues available online, opening broad access to their holdings. This public access has provided an enormous impetus for the production of digital images of collections. . . . Much less attention and fewer resources have been devoted to the textual catalog data, the associated documentation that provides context for the images. This textual information, however, shapes viewers' intellectual responses to the online object and, ultimately, influences how museums contribute to the understanding of cultures. Museums often acknowledge and bemoan absences and inaccuracies in their information, and data enhancement is an important goal. However, anthropologists also need to think more deeply about the nature of collection catalogs and how their structure influences knowledge production. We need to become more aware of the hidden impact of nineteenth-century cataloging decisions as we chart a course for the future. (Greene 2016, p. 147)

Another influence in changing practices of museum cataloging and collections research was the Smithsonian Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology (SIMA), conducted from 2009 to 2017 under the direction of Candace Greene (and now under the direction of Joshua Bell). As captured in the 2018 special issue of *Museum Anthropology*, SIMA provided numerous young museum

professionals and Indigenous community members to work with the collections at the National Museum of Natural History and the NMAI (Nichols & Lowman 2018).

Digitization of museum catalogs and cultural items has been accelerating as new software and other tools have become more sophisticated and widely available. This effort has led to both opportunities and challenges for decolonization. On the one hand, if digital management replicates old systems of classification, it perpetuates old colonial nomenclatures and ways of thinking about collections items. As museum staff become more conscious of racist and offensive labels in their databases, they must take precautions to change these terms in electronic files. But, if new names are used, how do researchers search for the items that they have been used to understanding from the old labels? If a museum has a substantial collection, it can take a considerable investment in resources and labor to rectify the nomenclature, which museum administrations are at times reluctant to provide.

On the other hand, digital platforms for collections management allow for creating different relational structures to organize information, more in accordance with Indigenous methodologies (Smith 2012). New collective efforts are taking hold that allow for source/descendant communities to determine nomenclature and level of access. An exciting innovation comes from the work, called Local Contexts, of Jane Anderson and colleagues with Australian Aborigine organizations (Anderson 2005, Anderson & Christen 2013). Local Contexts is a Web-based platform that allows Indigenous communities to develop nomenclature and determine how researchers navigate collections databases.

Another innovation is Mukurtu CMS (**https://mukurtu.org/**), a Web platform developed at Washington State University "to manage and share digital cultural heritage," according to the website. It is open source and free to access. As with Local Contexts, Mukurtu CMS facilitates designation of Traditional Knowledge (TK) labels, establishes cultural protocols for sharing or protecting information, and includes multiple perspectives on the cultural items or stories in the database.

All these forms of recording and accessing collections are relatively new, so there is still little assessment of their value or how they might transform museum practice. Nevertheless, they represent a future for collections management that is part of the paradigm shift that museums are undertaking (Boast & Enote 2013, Srinivasan et al. 2010).

Conservation practices have also experienced changes, toward more inclusion of Indigenous voices (Bernstein 1992, Clavir 2002, Murphy et al. 2021, Murphy & Black 2022, Sully 2007). Murphy and colleagues document the changes that were undertaken at the Field Museum in conjunction with the installation of the new exhibition, *Native Truths: Our Voices, Our Stories*. The collaboration with elders and knowledge bearers led to significant changes in how items were conserved or prepared for display. Almost every single item on display was discussed with the relevant expert or artist whose story was being told. This exhibition was groundbreaking for the Field Museum in the depth of collaboration that was undertaken with an advisory committee of 11 Native American scholars, museum professionals, artists and community members, and more than 100 individual collaborators who told their stories using items that they selected from the collections as well as new commissioned or loaned pieces and multimedia made by Native American artists. A forthcoming book will document the processes of collaboration and the stories told in the exhibition.

Repatriation. The transformation in museum practice wrought by the process of repatriation has already been extensively discussed, most recently in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* by Nash and Colwell (2020; but see also Bruchac 2010, Colwell-Chanthaphonh & Piper 2001, Echo-Hawk & Echo-Hawk 1994, Haas 1996, Krmpotich 2014, Mihesuah 2000, Powell 2014, Trope &

Echo-Hawk 1992, West 2016). It is of note that academic anthropology has paid relatively little attention to repatriation concerns (as discussed in Nash & Colwell 2020). Yet, this lack of attention could change imminently as universities are coming under scrutiny for their major collections of ancestors' remains (Joyce 2022). Ongoing changes to the regulations governing NAGPRA have been a site of debate among museum staff, Tribal authorities, and NAGPRA personnel. NAGPRA Tribal officers and Tribal authorities continue to express concerns about the burdens on Tribes to comply with bureaucratic protocols. Most recently, in fall 2022, the National NAGPRA Review Committee issued new regulations (**https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1335/news.htm** and **https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/interior-department-takes-next-steps-to-update-native-american-graves-protection-and-repatriation-act.htm**) that are intended to ease the burden and more efficiently treat the repatriation of ancestral remains that are classified as "unaffiliated" in museum collections.

CENTERING COLLABORATION

Centering collaboration with Native American scholars and communities are actions indelibly linked to decolonizing processes. Although some scholars have focused on the need for collaboration, others have begun to describe what effective collaboration in the exhibition of Native American material culture looks like (Archambault 2011, Bodo et al. 2009, Cabrera 2006, Duggan 2011, Harrison et al. 2013, Hays-Gilpin & Lomatewama 2013, Ravesloot 1989, van Broekhoven et al. 2010, Wali 2015, Wali et al. 2012, Wali & Tudor 2017). Academic anthropologists and museum anthropologists alike are reexamining the strengths and weaknesses of museum practices with an eye toward more inclusive Native American participation, particularly on advisory boards and community member involvement in curatorial processes (Anderson & Montenegro 2017, Atalay 2012, Bell 2015, Chipangura 2018, Clifford-Napoleone 2013, Glass 2015, Hollinger et al. 2013, Phillips 2011, Shannon 2017, Wali 2020). Native American curators are also joining museums, albeit in small numbers.

For example, Fienup-Riordan (1999) illuminated how collaboration between Yupik community members and museum practitioners provided a model for partnership, despite museum structures that limited the nature of community participation. By combining curator and elder knowledge and facilitating the participation of tribal community members for input on exhibit content, Fienup-Riordan (1999) observed how Yupik community members aided in the creation of an exhibition that conveys cultural values "about authoring and ownership, cultural pride and personal responsibility" (p. 339).

Community collaboration was central in the design and framework that created the traveling banner exhibit *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, discussed above. Through active consultation with members of both African–Native American and Native American communities, in tandem with a convening meeting of 25 academic experts and community members, a dynamic advisory team was created to contribute expertise, knowledge of cultural objects, and lived experiences to the project. The significance of this approach could also be seen in the first-of-its-kind collaboration and consultation that occurred among members of the advisory team and with NMAI, the then newly created African American Museum of History and Culture (AAMHC), the Smithsonian proper, and Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) experts. As these entities worked together, the expertise of the engaged communities and respective museum institutions produced a new framework for exhibition that encompassed multiple sides of shared identities under policy, community, creative resistance, and lifeways and linked aspects of African–Native American being and belonging in North, Central, and South America. These examples of collaboration shed light on how collaborations are further enabling

museum anthropologists to learn how to address the concerns and critiques of Native Americans as museum goers, museum practitioners, and source communities of Native knowledge (Tayac 2009).

An example of the creative license and experimentation that can result from museum anthropologist responses to Native American critique can be seen with the renovation of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture and the impressive digital footprint created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Abandoning notions of curatorial authority in the 1990s, the Burke Museum created pathways for Native American cocurators from communities across the Pacific Northwest to engage in the expression of their artistic heritage using cultural objects within Burke's collection. This approach created a new framework for the curation of contemporary Native American artwork alongside historical works of Native ancestors, which give museum goers an understanding of the evolving nature of art and the agency that Pacific Northwest peoples continue to assert in its creation. During the shelter-in-place practices necessary to control the COVID-19 pandemic, the Burke Museum enhanced museum goer virtual experiences about Pacific Northwest art (see **https://www.burkemuseum.org/exhibits/northwest-native-art**).

AUTONOMOUS TRIBAL MUSEUMS

As with Indigenous interventions in the field of anthropology, the existence of autonomous Tribal museums has been little noted in the literature of critical museology until recently (but see Isaac 2007). However, Tribal museums and cultural centers have existed since the earliest days of museum establishment. One of the earliest was the Tantaquidgeon Museum in Connecticut established in 1931 by Gladys Tantaquidgeon (cf. Bruchac 2018 for a history of her work) and her brothers (Deloria 2018).

As Lawlor (2006) points out, the rise of American Indian activism in the 1970s (such as the Wounded Knee protests and the formation of the American Indian Movement) provided the impetus for an acceleration of Native American determination to control representation of their lives, ways of being, histories, and cosmovisions (see also Cooper 2007). According to the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM), there are an estimated 412 Tribal museums, archives, libraries, and cultural centers across the United States (Jorgensen 2012). They range in size and capacity, but all represent an essential addition to the museum world. Most are financed through a combination of Federal funds and Tribal government funds, often from revenues derived from casinos and other enterprises. Among the most well-known are the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Connecticut (**https://www.pequotmuseum.org/**), the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center of Zuni Pueblo (**http://www.ashiwi-museum.org/**), the Osage Nation Museum (**https://www.osageculture.com/culture/museum**), and the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Heritage (**http://www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing/**). Most tell stories specific to their Tribe. As non-Tribal museums interact with these organizations and form partnerships or other relationships with them, the work of indigenizing should expand and build on existing transformations. Tribal museums then should be perceived as being at the forefront of the paradigm shift.

CONCLUSION

The general theme of this review is that the movement from decolonization to indigenization of museums forms an indelible link between Native American critique of museum anthropology and museum practices. One outcome has been practitioner responses to these critiques that have increased Native American inclusion and incorporated the scholarship of Native Americans working for and in museums into more relevant exhibitions. As previously mentioned, museums are not uniform in practice, and work remains to be done; however, it is important to acknowledge

the changing paradigms occurring in museum anthropology that are leading to the creation of new frameworks and models for exhibition. Avoiding the trapping of Native American cultural objects by US misconceptions has been the contribution of both Native American scholars and museum practitioners and non-Native museum anthropologists seeking to bring interpretations closer to the knowledge and perspectives of the people who created them and further away from the colonial perspectives that defined them.

The increasing attention being given to Native knowledge continues to reshape museum anthropology and the analyses associated with objects of cultural patrimony. Consequently, Native knowledge is leading to the decolonization of museum practice, from Native American critique and museum practitioner response to ways that are continuing and enhancing collaborative paradigm shifts. Collaboration through advisory boards, increased Native American museum staff, and community engagement are practices that enable museum anthropologists to acknowledge and facilitate the inclusion of Native American cultural knowledge and the decolonization of the curation, exhibition, and interpretation of cultural objects. These practices and processes continue to face obstacles both from entrenched bureaucracies and mindsets and also from a continuing failure of academia to expand access for Native Americans to professional training (cf. Gupta & Stoolman's 2022 conclusions about the status of decolonization in academia). If museum professionals and scholars of museum practices continue to acknowledge that privileging Native Americans as museum professionals and scholars as well as audiences represents a paradigm shift, the cultural relevance and usage of museum collections will be further illuminated. Then, too, there could be a greater consistency and consonance in museum and Native American interpretations of this cultural heritage.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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