

POWER IN MEANING: CHANGING INDIGENOUS MUSEUM COLLECTION
NARRATIVES

BY

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Abstract

New Museum Theory is successful not only in creating space for Native voice(s) at the Spencer Museum of Art through the exhibition, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*, but also in beginning a new chapter for the ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas. In this thesis, I discover the success of the exhibition and the repurposing of the collection through critical analysis of how the collection has been and is now interpreted and managed. This discovery involves conducting a summative evaluation of the exhibit, and exploring the ways in which New Museum Theory affects the collection. The summative evaluation includes an analysis of visitor surveys, interviews with Native American artists, and observations of programming. The summative evaluation and my analysis reveals that New Museum Theory is successful in creating space for Native voice(s) in the museum, as well as changing the narrative of the collection. Broader conclusions can be drawn from these results for the positive effect New Museum Theory may have on the future of indigenous collections across the United States.

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Introduction

As long as museums and galleries remain the repositories of artifacts and specimens, new relationships can always be built, new meanings can always be discovered, new interpretations with new relevancies can be found, new codes and new rules can be written.¹

Currently, factions of the museum world and Native communities are pressing for new indigenous exhibits, as well as museum practices, that endeavor to create a holistic representation of American experience. These exhibits and practices are rewriting the traditional roles of museums, re-centering where museum knowledge comes from, how museums represent peoples and cultures, how museums treat objects, and whose voice(s) speak in museum exhibitions. The practices and exhibits follow new rules, also known as Indigenous New Museum Theory (NMT) or decolonizing the museum, and focus on Native knowledge, power, and experience. New interpretations, relationships, and relevancies can change the narratives of collections, from formerly forgotten or misrepresented objects to cohesive collections that focus authority within Native experience and voice(s). This thesis examines the role of Indigenous New Museum Theory in the success or failure of an exhibit using the ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas, in tandem with discovering if the techniques of New Museum Theory work to begin a new chapter in the narrative of the collection.

This thesis is driven by the following research questions: 1) Will the ethnographic collection's new home at the Spencer Museum of Art give new purpose to the collection? 2) Will

¹ Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums*, 20.

² Swann and Krupat, *Recovering the Word*, 566.

the indigenous collections gain a new voice in *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place?* 3) Is the use of NMT in the exhibit capable of changing the narrative of the collection? I examine how the move to the Spencer Museum of Art and the subsequent exhibition at the Spencer, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*, altered the narrative of the ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas. I discuss how NMT has plays a role in the changes to the collection and the techniques used in the exhibition. This thesis will show that the use of New Museum Theory in indigenous collections has the power to change colonial narratives into narratives controlled by Native voice(s). This change in voice leads to an indigenous collection reawakened with power and meaning.

Repurposing older ethnographic collections is an aspect of NMT, one that includes rethinking a collection's purpose or moving the collection to a new museum. The move of KU's ethnographic collection from Spooner Hall to the Spencer Museum of Art changed the ways in which the collection is regarded and interpreted. To evaluate the repurposing of the collection at the Spencer Museum of Art, I examine the changes that the move created in the collections. Using a critical analysis of notes and practices of how the collection is now approached and managed, I discover if the move has given a new narrative or purpose to the ethnographic collection. This includes a summative evaluation (Appendix A), through which I examine if the first exhibit using the ethnographic collection at the Spencer Museum of Art challenges traditional exhibition techniques (like those described in the literature review portion of this thesis). The summative evaluation encompasses the use of my own observations of public programming and gallery talks surrounding *Passages*, a visitor survey, American Indian artist interviews, and the subsequent analysis of this data. This evaluation will determine if audience attitudes or perceptions about American Indians were altered, challenged, or reinforced by

Passages, and how the exhibit influenced visitors. This evaluation discovers if the exhibit was successful or not in changing stereotypical notions of American Indians or emphasizing Native voice(s). Holistically examining the exhibit and the changing approaches of the Spencer Museum of Art towards the collection will ultimately explore what the success of NMT, if successful, means for the future of the ethnographic collection at KU.

The approach of this thesis is grounded in the discipline of Native studies, by examining the ways in which museum representation affects Native groups. With a critical analysis of the balance of voice in museums, my thesis will disrupt normative assumptions concerning museums, exhibits, and Native peoples. My thesis will discover not only what it means to tell stories through the medium of exhibition, but also what those stories imply about the people the exhibitions represent. This thesis continues the dialogue begun by contemporary Native studies scholars that Native studies is more than just researching the past history of Native peoples. Native studies should be concerned with solutions for contemporary Native communities, in order to halt the cycle of futile research that perpetuates inattentiveness to the real-world problems of Native communities today. This thesis will examine how a current exhibition uses NMT techniques to discuss the topic of Native removal in Kansas (and the subsequent effects of removal on historic and modern Native peoples) analyzing if the exhibition alters the ethnographic collection's dialogue and purpose. This project involves breaking down the colonial institutions and practices (in this case museums) that have bolstered Native assimilation, extermination, and neglect of Native communities and issues. This thesis also invokes reconstructional attitudes by examining the addition of Native consultants, artists, and oral histories into museums and museums' representation of experiences. In order to solve modern problems and productively contribute to relevant scholarship, Native studies must consistently

move forward and tackle new notions of collaboration and representation to better understand the world in which we live. This thesis does so, by examining if the techniques of NMT work in *Passages*, helping to change the narrative of KU's ethnographic collection to better represent Native viewpoints and experiences.

Essentially, this thesis looks at the narrative of the ethnographic collection at KU, examining how that narrative changes when new voices, experiences, interpretations, techniques, and meanings are introduced. Narratives, fundamentally stories, take many forms. They can be oral, written, visual, or abstract. Museum exhibitions can take narrative form, as can the life of a museum collection. Like human lives, collection lives have a beginning, formative years, interpretations, and paths on which they travel. From its birth to how it is understood, a collection has a story – a narrative. Native peoples have always recognized stories as important. As Kiowa author M. Scott Momaday says, “We are what we imagine.”² Narratives are glimpses into who we are, as people, as communities, as cultures. In examining narratives, we can understand more about who we have been, who we are, and what we create. This is true for museum and collection narratives. Exploring museum narratives reveals a complex relationship between formations of identity, community, and power that form what we know about the world. As Lenore Keeshig-Tobias writes, “Stories are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture thinks.”³ Indigenous collection narratives have the power to show us, through the way in which the collections are interpreted and treated, how museums construct ideas about Native identity and Native-ness. This thesis examines the narrative of the

² Swann and Krupat, *Recovering the Word*, 566.

³ Castellano, Davis, and Lahache, *Aboriginal Education*, 985–999.

ethnographic collection at KU to open a dialogue about the representations of Native Americans in museums. What they have been, what they are, and what they have the potential to be.

I recognize that Native American narratives and experience(s) are as varied as American Indians themselves. Each person, community, and culture has a unique story on our earth that cannot be replicated. The religions, cultures, arts, languages, opinions, peoples, and environments of Indian Country are heterogeneous, multifaceted, and real. I am aware that generalizing these peoples and cultures runs the risk of essentializing and dismissing the many voices and knowledges Native America encompasses. I try to acknowledge the many experiences and peoples throughout Indian Country in this thesis, past and present; however, I also recognize the common themes that present themselves within this people-scape. Threads that represent similar experiences of sovereignty, land, spirituality, and colonialism are interwoven across Native communities. Within this weft it is possible to discover a Native experience from which American Indian voices may speak -- to challenge, complicate, or replace dominant colonial narratives in America.

Overall, this thesis looks at the relationships between museums and Native peoples. It examines how and what these relationships encompass, the narratives these relationships have created, how and why the relationships have changed over time, and what could exist in the future for these relationships. In the first chapter, the literature review of this thesis, I investigate the ways in which museums create meaning through the displays of objects, the creation of identity in museums (including group and national identities), how museums create societal values through the display of objects, and the relationship and history between American Indians and museums. This will provide a foundation from which to discuss the ethnographic collection and NMT at the University of Kansas. The second chapter looks at what New Museum Theory

is, as well as the history of the ethnographic collection at KU. Endeavoring to discover what the influence of a move to the Spencer Museum of Art may be on the collection, the second chapter also discusses the unique spaces of university art museums, as well as the history of Native art and art museums. In the third chapter, I analyze how the exhibition *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* employed NMT. The third chapter also shares the results of the summative evaluation of *Passages*, illustrating how NMT changed audience attitudes and knowledge about Native experience, as well as whose voice *Passages* represented. Finally, the last chapter discusses the meanings of these findings, and what larger impact these findings have for indigenous collections in museums. It will also discuss the limitations of the study, and end on possible future research this study could inspire.

Definition of Terms

American Indian, Native, and Native American: Terms I use interchangeably for the first peoples of North America that currently reside within the borders of the United States of America.

Collection: A museum or other institution's contents derived from donation or acquisition that forms a core for activities, display, and/or research. Broadly, a collection is the whole contents of a museum. Specifically, a museum creates a collection around a category, with items and artifacts pertaining to that specific category amassed.

Decolonizing the Museum: A term many American Indian activists and/or scholars use for techniques in museums that disrupt colonial narratives, replacing colonial narratives with indigenous ways of knowing, history, and cultural expressions.

Ethnographic: A descriptive word derived from ethnography, the branch of anthropology that deals with the scientific description of specific human cultures.

Indigenous: While often seen as a political term, I use indigenous to describe in a broad sense the peoples or cultures that have a pre-colonial, historical continuity with the lands on which they live. Indigenous peoples continue to live on homelands that have been colonized, and do not self-identify with other dominant sectors of society that now live on those lands. I view and use

indigenous as a unifying term for indigenous groups across the globe, and use it when speaking about collections or experiences more broad than those of (although including) American Indians.

Indigenous New Museum Theory: New Museum Theory as it pertains to indigenous collections or exhibits that address indigenous cultures or use indigenous artifacts.

Narrative: A constructive format that describes a sequence of events.

New Museum Theory: Shaped by activism and developed by museum scholars, New Museum Theory is a set of guiding techniques or rules a museum or exhibition uses to engage new voices, interpretations, and dialogues, attempting to combat colonial or dominant narratives or harmful representations of peoples and cultures within the museum. New Museum Theory is used in part or whole by museum professionals (sometimes working with community and source community members), when designing exhibits or interpreting collections. New Museum Theory includes (but is not limited to): acknowledging unique cultural practices, oral traditions or other narratives of history, sharing previously untold stories (both historical and modern), collaboration with communities, new techniques in conservation, taking pride in and ownership of identity, approaching and discussing topical issues, and teaching new generations cultural knowledge and practices, such as language and art forms.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The Creation of Meaning

Museums influence how people interpret the world by creating meaningful experiences for visitors. By collecting, arranging, and teaching visitors about objects, museums shape audience attitudes about those items and the cultures from which they come. “Museums are ritual places in which society makes visible what they value. Through the selection and preservation of artifacts... museums begin to define for their societies what is consequential, valuable, and suitable as evidence of the past.”⁴ Museums convey social, economic, religious, or political meaning to visitors by displaying an object; visitors then remember and relate that meaning back to their lives. Museums create this meaning by providing numinous experiences. In this paper I refer to experience through John Dewey’s definition as the intertwining of human beings and their natural and artificial environments.⁵ Experience includes the past, present, and future, including all aspects of thought, doing, feeling, and living in the world. Ordinary experiences happen every day, but occasionally there are parts of experience that are different, marked by feelings of fulfillment.⁶ Like aesthetic experiences, where one has a transcendent moment with art or beauty, numinous experiences connect viewers to historical objects.⁷ From the Latin “a nod or beckoning from the gods,” numen is an individual’s personal association with an object or historical site that manifests in the viewer’s mind and body as a deep engagement, empathy, or

⁴ Sullivan, “Evaluating the Ethics and Consciences of Museums,” 258.

⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 25.

⁶ Ibid.; Latham, “The Poetry of the Museum: A Holistic Model of Numinous Museum Experiences,” 253.

⁷ Latham, “The Poetry of the Museum: A Holistic Model of Numinous Museum Experiences,” 254.

spiritual experience with the people or events of the past.⁸ Numinous objects in museums influence the public's perception of importance, value, and worth by possessing "sociocultural magic."⁹ This sociocultural magic comes from the objects' association with people, a place, or a time – an intangible quality that gives the item significance for viewers. The museum provides numinous experiences to viewers by displaying historical objects and explaining their connection to a time, place, or person; these numinous experiences connect viewers to objects, making the objects valuable and important to viewers and in turn society.

Visitors regard museum objects as valuable because they are authentic. People value objects that were present during a certain time, or have withstood the effects of time, more highly in museums (and society) than reproductions. Objects are "the real stuff" -- people use words like "unique," "authentic," "original," "genuine," and "actual" to describe them.¹⁰ Visitors believe that "real" objects are important because they form connections in the present by being from the past: "Historical objects are witnesses, things that were there, then. They bear their maker's marks in the weaves, textures, and shapes, and have a compelling agency to cause people living in the present to enunciate their relationships to the past."¹¹ If an object were not directly related to a time or place, museum visitors would not have a numinous experience with the item.¹² There would be no magical or spiritual connection. For example, upon viewing a top hat, a viewer is less likely to have a numinous experience than if they know that the top hat belonged to Abraham Lincoln. It is the associated story, the presence of an artifact in another place and time that makes a numinous experience possible. In this way, museums function as

⁸ Ibid., 253.

⁹ Cameron and Gatewood, "Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past," 67.

¹⁰ Gurian, "What Is the Object of This Exercise? A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums," 271.

¹¹ Lonetree, "Museum as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums," 333.

¹² Latham, "The Poetry of the Museum: A Holistic Model of Numinous Museum Experiences," 250.

time travel. Time travel, like foreign travel, connects visitors to a people or place. Just as tourists form attachments with other cultures by experiencing cultures first hand, museums connect visitors personally with historical periods and cultures. Museums and visitors then place value on these objects, because of their deeply personal experiences.

Visitors make meanings in museums not just because a museum collects historical objects, but also because museums arrange objects to tell a story and then share that story with visitors. It is exhibitions that make museums unique, and also what helps them create meaning. Meaning making occurs when visitors have an emotional or spiritual reaction to an item, the story it tells, or the exhibit in which the object is housed. By placing objects in a structured narrative on display, exhibits help form the meanings (social, cultural, or historical) that visitors make in museums.¹³ In order to have a numinous experience, many different factors must come together. The makings of a numinous experience are in the combination of ingredients found in the transactions between objects, exhibits, and viewer.¹⁴ Exhibits help visitors make meaning out of an object by providing a situation where the visitor knows about the object's history, has access to the object, and is allowed to bring forth their own unique experiences and ideas to evoke a connection with an artifact. Through the structure of exhibits, people learn more from museums than just dates and facts, they learn ideas and make personal associations. Personal associations, or numinous experiences, have three different aspects: "1) deep engagement and/or transcendence; 2) empathy; 3) awe or reverence."¹⁵ Deep engagement and or transcendence could be feelings of losing sense of time passing, intense concentration, or feeling mentally transported. Empathy can be imagining the thoughts, feelings, or experiences of people in the

¹³ Lindauer, "The Critical Museum Visitor," 210.

¹⁴ Latham, "The Poetry of the Museum: A Holistic Model of Numinous Museum Experiences," 254; Cameron and Gatewood, "Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past," 68.

¹⁵ Cameron and Gatewood, "Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past," 67.

past, imagining suffering or pain, and a feeling of how it would be like to live during that time. Awe or reverence can be feelings of spiritual communion, being in a sacred place, or in the presence of something holy or bigger than one's self. These are the ways that exhibits evoke numinous experiences and make meaning for visitors, doing much more than telling a story, but relating items to visitors.

Curators, directors, exhibit planners, staff members, and other museum employees create exhibits' and museums' points of view. These points of view are directly influenced by creators' ideas about people, life, and the world. Since no person is completely impartial, museum employees create biased stories around objects: "museums are not neutral spaces that speak with one institutional, authoritative voice. Museums are about individuals making subjective choices."¹⁶ These individual choices determine what museums collect, display, and what story is told in an exhibit. The subjective choices of museum employees are what often trigger numinous experiences, what viewers make into meanings, and society determines to have value.

Stories, meanings, and numinous experiences can solidify identity when members of the same group share them together. When an identity is shared between people, it forms a connection between those people; they identify as the same type of person or members of the same group. Objects and exhibits can strengthen a person's identity and his or her relationship to a group, as exhibits form meaningful connections and create numinous experiences between identities, objects, and people.¹⁷ For example, the textile exhibit, *Woven by Grandmothers*, at the Navajo Museum illustrates uniquely Dinè (Navajo) experiences and memories by highlighting the spiritual and psychological values woven into the displayed blankets.¹⁸ "The show projected

¹⁶ Marstine, "Introduction," 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸ Lawlor, *Public Native America*, 72.

to non-Navajo visitors a history, specific to Diné people... a narrative that distinguishes the Navajos as a society with a reproducible past and furnishes contemporary identity formations... recognized by Navajos.”¹⁹ Dinè people can have numinous experiences viewing the blankets and learning about the cultural values that the blankets symbolize. Viewers experience the objects; a transaction occurs between the objects, viewers, and the viewers’ identities.²⁰ The object and meaning made helps the viewer understand their identity more by strengthening the person’s sense of group identity. The exhibit illustrates to the viewer that the person who used or created the item shared the same culture, religion, ideas, or identity in the past.

Objects and exhibits can also help those who may not share the same identity as the creator or user of the object understand more about themselves and the world by making history real for that person. The history no longer exists in the viewer’s mind but has tangible evidence, perhaps eliciting thoughts of mortality or human connection. “Displayed objects of all types are made meaningful according to the interpretive frameworks within which they are placed and the historical or cultural position from which they are seen.”²¹ Depending on who is doing the viewing, connections and identity formation may be completely different, but no less powerful. A Diné person who visits the *Woven by Grandmothers* exhibit will form connections to identity completely different from a non-Diné person, but each visitor will connect to the exhibit. Exhibits form meanings between visitors by placing emphasis on important objects, objects visitors can then make meaningful together in the museum.

Museums create shared meanings by triggering associations visitors have with objects. Group identities are formed or strengthened when visitors share and remember memories and

¹⁹ Ibid., 75.

²⁰ Cameron and Gatewood, “Seeking Numinous Experiences in the Unremembered Past,” 68.

²¹ Sandell, “Museums and the Combating of Socail Inequality: Roles, Reponsibilities, Resistance,” 12.

associations together. Objects trigger associations symbolically, uniting people through numinous experience: “objects function as symbols of identity, relationships, and social groups; as reminders of lived experience; as beacons of possible future; and as symbols of nature, society, and the divine.”²² Numinous experiences function in the mind like reading.²³ When a word (symbol) is read, the reader makes a connection triggered by the word and the reader’s associations. Similarly in museums, the brain creates a fusion of ideas and feelings, triggered by the viewing of the object and the processes that occur when they view the object (thoughts, memories, expressions.) Group experience adds another dimension. When something is read in a group, everyone may initially have different associations, but when shared with the group each member understands the other’s associations. Group associations work similarly in museums, creating shared meanings and identity within groups.

Associations are stronger when an identity is shared in a group, as the group already has common traits. Museums make not only the object important, but the interaction viewers have with that object and each other becomes important: “by viewing or discussing such objects, people can learn, remember, or affirm their sense of affiliation and membership, a frequent museum experience.”²⁴ These associations form groups, or reinforce already existing groups. It is in this way that museums build identities and make group associations stronger. Identity formation in museums can be so powerful it can help form national identities and solidify nation-states.²⁵ For example, the Pequot tribal museum in Mashantucket uses photographs of tribal elders to unify Pequot tribal identity. Beneath the photos a quote reads “In addition to being a tribal nation, we are also a newly revitalized community – one that has been realized by years of

²² Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums*, 16.

²³ Latham, “The Poetry of the Museum: A Holistic Model of Numinous Museum Experiences,” 255.

²⁴ Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums*, 55.

²⁵ Marstine, “Introduction,” 14.

planning, hoping, and hard work.”²⁶ The Pequots are creating community at their tribal museum through place (the museum) and lineage (elder photographs) – an effort to build a nation by establishing that nation’s identity. Objects in exhibits are much more than just objects – they are powerful tools used to construct identity and make meaning. It is useful to understand the power of museum meaning making, in order to understand how museums directly influence and alter society’s attitudes about an issue or a people.

Museums, Hegemony, and Democracy

The narratives museums produce are the products of a push-and-pull dialogue. Forces of hegemony and democracy influence the museum in America, as American museums reproduce the structures of their environment (the United States). Museums, as societal institutions, reproduce hegemonic structures. In this project, I define hegemony as one group’s control and manipulation of a diverse society’s culture in order to dominate that society. Museums replicate American hegemonic structures (where colonizers are the dominant controller of culture and society) through exhibits, but rarely discuss the hegemony present in America or American institutions. Many museums present the beliefs of EuroAmerican colonizers (for example, the belief that EuroAmericans were always meant to control American land) to audiences, making “official history.” Official history is in the service of the state, promoting values and beliefs of the nation state.²⁷ This official history is interpreted by the audience on a sliding scale – some individuals will agree with the history presented, some will disagree, while others fall

²⁶ Lawlor, *Public Native America*, 54.

²⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 185; Gable, “How We Study History Museum: Or Cultural Studies at Monticello,” 110.

somewhere in the middle. The sliding scale influences how the public then relates or “talks back” to museums -- where the democracy of museums takes effect.

Because museums are public institutions, and most people have an opinion on “official history,” museums reproduce democracy, as well, in the museum. These democracies stem from museums’ need to pursue the public and cater to visitors’ desires -- if no one agrees with a museum then the museum will have very few visitors. Museum professionals may find themselves rearranging history or truth to conform to the public’s understanding of the past (even when the public’s understanding of history seems at odds with “official history”) in order to gain more visitors and not risk failure or embarrassment.²⁸ This hegemony vs. democracy creates a messy forum in museums -- a balancing act for many museums in managing authoritative knowledge and the (often factionalized) public at large.

The messy forums of museums influence how the public understands ideas and identity, as the dialogue between the public and the museum shapes the messages museums share. The museum’s message then forms the way in which audience members experience the museum and shape how visitors understand the world. “Museums are such a dominant feature of our cultural landscape that they frame our most basic assumptions about the past and about ourselves.”²⁹ When the public is well informed about (or have strong opinions regarding) issues, they have a vocal say in the way in which museums present an issue or people. For example, The National Air and Space Museum sparked a controversy with their aborted exhibit about the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, *The Last Act*. The exhibit intended to feature a portion

²⁸ Gable, “How We Study History Museum: Or Cultural Studies at Monticello,” 110.

²⁹ Marstine, “Introduction,” 1.

of the *Enola Gay* bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.³⁰ The exhibit endeavored to lead visitors to discuss consequences of atomic bombing, although opponents quickly cast it as a negative view of America's use of atomic arms and an insult to veterans.³¹ The National Air and Space museum received so much criticism that the museum eventually cancelled the exhibit and the director resigned. As this example shows, when the public did not like the message the museum tried to share, as it did not coincide with the way in which the public viewed the issue, the public forced the museum to change. The public's view changes the museum's message, and how the museum influences visitors.

However, when the majority of Americans share similar views about the history museums represent (or are uneducated about other histories), the public outcry will be less vocal. Hegemony has influenced American Indian displays in museums more than democracy, as the majority of Americans are not aware of the harmful representations of Native peoples in museums. Just as many Americans do not see anything wrong with stereotypical portrayals of Native peoples in movies or as mascots, they are unaware of the harm in negative portrayals in museums.³² The outcry has been largely silent, except for activists within American Indian communities. Exhibits remain the same without a democratizing voice. Many museums reproduce America's colonial, hegemonic structures by recreating a "lost past" of America through exhibits.³³ Museums cultivate this "lost past" by presenting racist, ethnocentric, and paternalistic views. Museums separate Native and non-Native people into distinct cultural and intellectual classes, establishing that Native Americans have separate and inferior cultures and

³⁰ Launis, "American Memory, Culture Wars, and the Challenge of Presenting Science and Technology in a National Museum," 19.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mihesuah, *American Indians*, 10-11, 14 .

³³ McMullen, "Reinventing George Heye: Nationalizing the Museum of the American Indian and Its Collections," 69.

intellects. Museums reinforce the power of a EuroAmerican culture through segregation, classification, and representation.

Museums in America help shape visitor identity and disseminate knowledge about that identity. Curators and museum professionals teach, display, and collect based on their personal beliefs or the goals of the museum (found in museum mission statements.) Museums/museum professionals present these beliefs or goals (influenced by larger hegemonic structures, cultural forces like democracy discussed above, and individual truths or points of view) to the public and influence how the public understands identity and ideas. And while museums claim to be “value-neutral, nonmoral, and nonpolitical in intent, in their actual practice and behavior, they are moralizing institutions, reflecting as well as shaping their communities’ moral ecology.”³⁴ In America, museums become public educators on art, history, and anthropology, but also on what an “American” is. “Stories, images, and artifacts of the past which are displayed in museums shape national identity by creating an “imagined community.”³⁵ Nations and national identities are “imagined communities” as most members will never know all their fellow members, yet all members hold in their minds an idea of unity and camaraderie (even if different factions exist within the nation as a whole.)³⁶ Museums form this community by showing what an American is or is not, by creating and disseminating ideas of what an American is, believes, and knows.

Culturally, many museums juxtapose Americans with what they are not -- American Indians. Through collecting and displaying Native American cultures, museums represent a unified EuroAmerican past that is not Native American. The unified past creates and legitimizes colonial identity, as it solidifies a shared past between members of the colonial group and the

³⁴ Sullivan, “Evaluating the Ethics and Consciences of Museums,” 258.

³⁵ Gable, “How We Study History Museum: Or Cultural Studies at Monticello,” 110.

³⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

subsequent colonial nation. The American identity is reinforced by museums' representations of self and other, creating an American citizenry, and an otherized, "Native" America. The creation of two types of museums in America, history museums for EuroAmerican culture and anthropology museums for non-EuroAmerican cultures, illustrates this otherization.³⁷ A unique history of America's growth is the collecting of local, Native American cultures to establish an American culture: "prideful claimstaking of the locale through collection and display of local materials."³⁸ Museums collected and represented Native American cultures to create a separate American culture.³⁹ As Marstine elaborates, "museums construct the 'other' to construct and justify the 'self'. In forming collections by appropriating objects from non-western cultures, museums reveal more about the value systems of the colonizers than about the colonized."⁴⁰ The division in which museums engaged, separating the past into two museums of history and anthropology, helped justify American colonial practices by creating two separate cultures. These two cultures were a new, EuroAmerican culture, and an old, Native past.

Museums have reproduced hegemony through many museums' treatment of Native American cultures as inferior to EuroAmerican culture. Museums' treatment of American Indians as inferior cultures begins with anthropology and ethnography. Museums used theories of anthropology and ethnography to explain and describe non-EuroAmerican cultures. Anthropology engaged in classifying world cultures, inscribing value to some cultures and not others. The field of ethnography (which emerged as a largely American study during the

³⁷ Bieder, "The Representations of Indian Bodies in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology," 19; Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," 514; Marstine, "Introduction," 14; Watkins, "Archaeological Ethics and American Indians," 7.

³⁸ Hinsley, "Digging for Identity: Reflections on the Cultural Background of Collecting," 49.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 48; Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 2; King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 17.

⁴⁰ Marstine, "Introduction," 14.

nineteenth century) collected objects in order to study and depict racial and cultural difference.⁴¹ Ethnography's racial and cultural difference assumed to show human "progress", illustrating why cultures have different values, traditions, and technologies. "Social philosophers erected stages of progress from savagery through barbarism to civilization to better describe their world. Non-European peoples were duly assigned a rank on the scale of progress. Europeans not only negotiated and then defined borders among non-European peoples but also inscribed their inferiority."⁴² Ethnology would influence anthropological thought for several decades. It also introduced the idea of classified cultures to museums, influencing museums' cultural displays.

Reproducing colonial hegemony, museums ordered cultures on a scale from primitive to civilized, with Native cultures ranking far below EuroAmerican cultures. Visitors learned that Native American cultures were not as advanced, creative, or important as western cultures.⁴³ Audiences learned to rank peoples, that some history was more important and more valuable than other history. Displaying "primitive" to "civilized" cultures, let alone naming a culture as "primitive", has consequences. It defines another's culture as less significant than the dominant culture, as well as "naturalizing the category of 'primitive', in which non-western cultures are in arrested development and frozen in time – metaphorically dead."⁴⁴ Representations that deny a people a present and a future are detrimental – they inform members of the represented culture that they are not "real" members of that culture, and teach members of other cultures there are humans that are lesser people than those of their own culture.

Not only did museums classify American Indians as almost sub-human, museums inscribed inferiority to Native peoples by displaying Native Americans in a comparable manner

⁴¹ Sliverman, "The Legacy of Ethnography," 109.

⁴² Bieder, "The Representations of Indian Bodies in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology," 19.

⁴³ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 89.

⁴⁴ Marstine, "Introduction," 14.

to museums' display of animals. Many Museums presented Native peoples in the same way they did the flora and fauna of the American wilderness. Evidence of this is the rise in popularity of diorama display styles to portray Native American life during the nineteenth century. The diorama display style, popular first with natural history museums portraying taxidermied animals, was transferred to natural history and anthropological exhibits displaying American Indian material culture. The diorama style showed "snapshots of primitive life long vanished."⁴⁵ Native Americans became another feature of a past American wilderness: "Indians were relegated to the status of a picturesque species of wildlife."⁴⁶ Dioramic representation ignores the cultural realities of American Indian life and relegates Native cultures to the status of animals. The exhibits construct, for anthropologists, a context that can be easily described, analyzed, and theorized, yet completely ignore the complexities of Native American cultures as well as the changes and adaptations with which Native American cultures have had to contend.

The inequality of Native American representations in museums is an aspect of the making of "official history." Many museums perpetuate imperialist histories found in the dominant American society. These "national narratives" frame the way in which Americans see themselves and others; they are the stories told, recreated, and celebrated by America to bolster patriotism and nationalist pride. "National narrative" history seeks to justify the colonial practices of America, practices that disempower Native peoples by supporting the taking of Native lands and the cultural assimilation of American Indians.⁴⁷ As McGuire explains: "This history has been dominant both because it reflects the viewpoint of the conquerors of the continent and because it overshadows all others. It resides in institutions, such as schools,

⁴⁵ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 108.

⁴⁶ Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 6.

⁴⁷ Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 2.

universities, and museums that produce and control knowledge in our society.”⁴⁸ Dominant history shapes the way in which Americans view themselves and the world. Museums take an active part in creating and disseminating dominant history (unless regulated by the public), helping to continue the suppression of other histories.

The democratizing aspect of museums can help regulate this national narrative or it can support it. When the public disagrees or challenges the national narrative, museums often change. For example, the historical site Monticello, plantation and home of Thomas Jefferson, went through a dramatic shift in the 1990s. Formerly focused on telling the dominant history of Thomas Jefferson as a moral founding father of America, Monticello deemphasized Jefferson’s role as plantation and slave owner. The narrative of Sally Hemings, a mulatto slave who many Americans believe to have had a long-standing sexual liaison with Jefferson, also was denied and suppressed by workers at Monticello.⁴⁹ Many Americans felt it was insulting and dehumanizing to leave out the slave experience or Sally Hemings’ view of Monticello.⁵⁰ It was only after years of public outcry, historical research, and media attention that the historical site of Monticello entertained questions regarding Jefferson as a slave owner or his relationship with Hemings. Dominant history censors all other history. One-sided versions of history leave out other perspectives, giving visitors only partial glimpses into the past. It is up to the public, however, to challenge this history. If there is no contest, the museum’s narratives often stay the same.

Museum scholars typically cast museums as makers of “official history,” sharing with the public the version of history that will shape a national identity. The relationship between museums and history, however, is much more complicated. Museums engage with the public,

⁴⁸ McGuire, “Why Have Archaeologists Thought the Real Indians Were Dead and What Can We Do About It?,” 77.

⁴⁹ Gable, “How We Study History Museum: Or Cultural Studies at Monticello,” 112.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

creating a textured landscape of public interest, authoritative knowledge, and public history. When the public does not know much about a subject (or does not have an opinion on a subject), however, the participation of the public in the museum forum is significantly less. Public absence leaves room for “authoritative knowledge” or “dominant history” to go unregulated. American Indian representation in dominant museums remains largely in this unregulated space. Rivaling other historical issues, American Indian representation is still dominated by a hegemonic and authoritative history.

Museums and Native American Representation

In order to understand the complicated relationship between Native Americans and museums, one must understand Native peoples’ experience with anthropology. Anthropologists studying and collecting American Indian cultures formed most of the museum collections about Native peoples in America. Anthropology directly impacted how museums represented Native Americans through the influence of anthropological theory in museum categorization, display techniques, and information about American Indians. These museum representations subsequently influenced a nation’s understanding about American Indian cultures and ways of life.

American anthropology began in the 19th century to answer EuroAmerican settlers’ questions about Native peoples and humanity in general, and ended up benefiting from and assisting in colonialism’s dispossession of Native peoples. Anthropology emerged as a consequence of imperialism; EuroAmericas met new and different peoples as a result of imperialist exploration and discovery. Settlers to new lands then strove to categorize and understand the different peoples which they encountered. EuroAmericans wanted answers to

questions such as: “Are these people in any sense our brothers? By what right can we claim this land as our own?”⁵¹ EuroAmerican settlers learned about the new land of North America through Native Americans, as well as “participate[d] in the universal quest for secrets of man’s origin, progress, and destiny” which was a popular philosophical and scientific topic at the time.⁵² Colonialism and anthropology worked synchronically. In order to discover the “secrets of man’s origins,” scientists needed a group of people to study that could be specifically investigated and categorized.

Colonialism in America made the anthropological study of American Indians possible by annihilating Native populations and dispossessing American Indians of their lands.

Anthropology hinges on observation and control – groups of people are more easily observed and controlled when powerless. Colonialism rendered many American Indian nations with less power than before contact with EuroAmericans: disease and warfare diminished populations, EuroAmerican expansion took land and resources, and after anthropology, American Indians suffered a loss of cultural control and cultural materials. Colonialism made Native peoples accessible to anthropology just as surely as “colonialism made Indian lands available for homesteaders, railroads, mining companies, and Eastern and European investors in the development of the American West.”⁵³ Meanwhile, Native Americans lost ancestral homelands and became objects of study and curiosity. Museums and anthropologists would ultimately reap the benefits of this dispossession.

Anthropology, ethnography, and museum displays supported the colonial policies of the United States government. The United States government’s American Indian policy (with such

⁵¹ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵³ Biolsi and Zimmerman, “Introduction: What’s Changed, What Hasn’t,” 12.

laws as the Indian Removal Act, the Homestead Act, and the Dawes Act) had detrimental consequences for Native peoples including genocide, assimilation, and theft. The emerging science of ethnography supported the EuroAmerican belief that settlers had a right to Native American land by reporting that Native peoples were less evolved and civilized than EuroAmericans. Because of this, American Indians could not “use” North American land as efficiently or as purposefully as EuroAmerican settlers, which meant that EuroAmericans could take the land justifiably (and with United States military force if necessary.) “American Indians became a domestic social problem that must be protected or destroyed. People turned to science and museums to accept trends of assimilation or extermination, to reassure the rightness of America.”⁵⁴ Anthropology’s influence on government policy directly affected the lives of Native Americans. The theories scientists tested by studying American Indian groups were represented in American museums, changing governmental and societal attitudes about Native Americans.

Anthropological theory influenced museum displays, supporting the notion that Native Americans would be extinct (either through death or by cultural assimilation) by the end of the nineteenth century. The anthropological practice of collection actively worked with museums, encouraging the belief that American Indians’ cultures must be preserved in the face of extinction. As settlers pushed into the West, so too, did anthropologists collecting Native cultures through “salvage ethnography.”⁵⁵ Western settlement and the assimilation or extermination policies of the United States government changed Native American cultures rapidly at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁶ It is these rapidly changing cultures that anthropologists documented, cultures at a time of upheaval and dramatic change.

⁵⁴ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 147.

⁵⁵ Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 87; Biolsi and Zimmerman, “Introduction: What’s Changed, What Hasn’t,” 12.

⁵⁶ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 68.

Anthropologists documented “vanishing” Native American cultures, so knowledge of Native cultures would not be lost when Native peoples died or no longer practiced their cultural traditions.⁵⁷ Anthropologists practicing salvage ethnography collected material culture at one point in time, reflected in the static museum portrayals of Native Americans. Salvage ethnography influenced museum professionals’ ideas about, and museum displays regarding, Native peoples for decades.

Basing collections on the disappearance of Native Americans skewed displays and representations in museums, which ultimately influenced the dominant societies’ knowledge of Native peoples. The first consequence of salvage ethnography/collection is that displays of Native Americans contained no historical depth.⁵⁸ Displays went no deeper than presenting the lifeways in which anthropologists found Native peoples at the point of collection, which were often in a state of escalation and upheaval due to encroaching settlement of EuroAmericans and United States military action. There was little, if any, presentation of how Native peoples existed before or after EuroAmerican expansion.⁵⁹ Exhibits showed mannequins fashioned to look like Native groups in their “natural habitats,” wearing “traditional” dress, surrounded by Native material culture, and performing tasks like gathering food or building fires. Visitors saw Native Americans not changing through time, adapting, or how they lived before United States expansion.

The second consequence of salvage ethnography is that museums presented two characterizations of Native peoples, either the noble savage or the ignoble savage. Salvage ethnography assumed that all American Indians would assimilate or die – but not all Native

⁵⁷ Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 87.

⁵⁸ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 94.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

peoples died or assimilated. Noble savages could not function in the face of progress and were destined to vanish with the North American wilderness, whereas ignoble savages were Natives that persisted in the face of civilization.⁶⁰ Museums presented noble savages in many dioramic displays, simplifying and incorrectly representing Native cultures. Noble savages were presented as living in a “romantic aboriginal cosmology,”⁶¹ a mythical place sparking the curiosity of Americans but not presenting real Native experience. Noble savages were destined to die out with the advances of civilization – too proud to continue without their “natural” way of life. Ignoble Indians, on the other hand, became the enemies of the United States and the casualties of civilization – demonized as heathens, drunks, or cheats.⁶² To many US citizens at the turn of the twentieth century, American Indians were either no longer living (with their culture displayed in museums,) or living a fallen existence on a reservation. These two ideas of Native peoples – noble or ignoble – became entrenched in American popular thought, recreated in literature, illustrations, and movies by the 1930s.

Aside from the influence of salvage ethnography, museum exhibitions involving Native Americans contained numerous problems, both in organization and content. Curators and museum professionals often mislabeled cultural materials, had little organization (when materials were not in dioramic displays), and/or inaccurately discussed the craftsmanship of materials. For example, when the Smithsonian Institution’s Anthropology Hall opened in 1880, the museum exhibited American Indian objects in glass cases with no order or explanation. Case eighty in Anthropology hall held “part archaeological relics, ethnographic curios, and historical

⁶⁰ Biolsi and Zimmerman, *Indians and Anthropologists*, 66; Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 3; King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 36; McGuire, “Why Have Archaeologists Thought the Real Indians Were Dead and What Can We Do About It?,” 67.

⁶¹ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 190.

⁶² Mihesuah, *American Indians*, 9-12, 97-98.

Americana.”⁶³ Curators did not consider context and function in museum exhibitions of Native Americans, visitors rarely learned about the use of the item in its original culture, and Native artistic skill was not acknowledged.⁶⁴ “Curators described non-western makers simply following convention; as opposed to western artists whose originality distinguished them as creative and intellectual.”⁶⁵ Museum exhibitions treated American Indian artists as groups who repeated a static culture, not individuals with a creative drive or intellect. This treatment kept Native works in the museological realm of ethnography, holding the artifacts only for the objects’ cultural relevancy and denying an item’s artistic merit or status worthy of art museums

Many museum exhibitions grouped Native American tribes according to geographical region, creating problems for an accurate understanding of American Indian identity. Most exhibitions referred to all Native peoples in America as one group with the term “Indian,” but also classified types of tribes by their geographic place in the United States. For example, exhibits in Anthropology Hall in the Smithsonian Institution, “used environmental and geographic reasons to explain the diversity of tribes, but acknowledged Indians as a single race.”⁶⁶ The US government used the concept of a unified race as justification for the inevitable assimilation of Native Americans – if all tribes are essentially the same, then tribes will all inevitably assimilate. Geographic dioramic presentations of Native life, while focusing on regional areas, commonly only used one tribal group to represent the region.⁶⁷ For example, when representing the Plains, many exhibits would display only Lakota cultural traditions,

⁶³ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 75.

⁶⁴ Marstine, “Introduction,” 15; Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 108.

⁶⁵ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 108.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁷ West, *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian*, 112; King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 28.

although at least twenty-four other tribes with unique cultural traditions resided in the region of the Great Plains.⁶⁸ Turning one area into a single sociocultural formation ignores other tribes and ways of life that exist and existed, hindering the visitor's perceptions of Native life.

The way in which museums represented Native peoples had a direct effect on the dominant society's perceptions of American Indians. Dominant societies' perceptions are often inaccurate, but continue to be reproduced in popular culture. Americans associate being Native American with the past, a lifeway that no longer exists: "the Indian in modern society in unreal and ahistorical."⁶⁹ This displaces and invalidates American Indians living today. The associations most citizens have with Native peoples are through stereotypical representations. These inaccurate representations have been derived from institutions such as museums, which perpetuate incorrect information about American Indian life.

Museums and Native Identity

Museums influence identity, and for American Indians, the influence that museums have extended over American Indian identity is harmful. Many American museums provide inaccurate representations of Native life, which has direct consequences for American Indian communities. "Identity consists of three related needs: to find belonging and affiliation with other people, or social identity; to experience uniqueness and autonomy from others, or personal identity; and to evaluate and view oneself positively, or self-esteem."⁷⁰ Museums influence all three needs of Native identity. By defining Native peoples as "others", museums place American Indians outside the group associations of EuroAmericans. This has "denied

⁶⁸ "Browse List of Tribes."

⁶⁹ Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 2.

⁷⁰ Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums*, 54.

[American Indians] an identity except in relationship to whites.”⁷¹ This robs Native peoples of an identity they have created themselves, and the ability to define who they are for themselves and others. There is power in the ability of representation to form identity. As Watkins shares, “whoever controls the definitions of a person has power over their identity.”⁷² Museum representations can hold power over Native American identity by being able to define and represent American Indians. Museums have controlled the representation of American Indian identity for over a hundred years, often supporting political and social oppression.

When museums perpetuate stereotypes of American Indians, museums are influencing visitors’ knowledge of what a Native person is. Due to these stereotypes, most Americans do not know the myriad of contemporary American Indian identities that exist today, and are not familiar with what a modern American Indian life is like. The Society of Indian Psychologists of the Americas states that “when stereotypical representations are taken as factual information, they contribute to the development of cultural biases and prejudices.”⁷³ Cultural biases and prejudices not only harm the dominant society, as the public learns inaccurate information, but are damaging to Native peoples: “children who see themselves portrayed only in stereotypical ways may internalize these stereotypes and fail to develop their own unique abilities, interests, and full potential.”⁷⁴ Stereotypes, inaccuracies, and silent spaces in history affect not only individuals, but are detrimental to American Indian communities. Inaccuracies about identity can affect the ways in which society and groups regard problems. Stereotypes “put Native communities at a political disadvantage when historic and contemporary economic issues – water

⁷¹ McGuire, “Why Have Archaeologists Thought the Real Indians Were Dead and What Can We Do About It?,” 66.

⁷² Watkins, *Indigenous Archaeology*, 218.

⁷³ Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 41.

⁷⁴ Sullivan, “Evaluating the Ethics and Consciences of Museums,” 259.

and mineral rights, land use, education, health care, and tribal sovereignty – are negotiated among United States and Native American governments.”⁷⁵ Museum representation influences the way in which society and the government treats Native peoples, as well as how Native peoples view themselves. Many museums continue to foster negative identities and oppression when they do not address the consequences of inaccurate representations.

Although museums can affect Native identity, Native Americans work to keep American Indian cultural identities alive through sharing Native culture and history, as well as working to alter museum practices. Despite hundreds of years of pain and oppression, Native communities continue to share American Indian culture and history with future generations.⁷⁶ As one American Indian contributed at initial meetings for the National Museum of the American Indian, “My grandparents were my collection.”⁷⁷ Through stories, teaching Native languages and cultural expressions (where possible), as well as passing on community and historical experiences to the next generation, American Indian communities continue to keep culture alive. Native stories, survival, and cultural perseverance illustrate that Native peoples are more than just subjects for museums and history to analyze; American Indians are active participants in history.⁷⁸ Native peoples continue to actively work to change their worlds, and are sharing their contemporary and historical experiences with museums. Native peoples are aware of the history museums perpetuate, and “Indians have started to become livid when they realize the contagious trap the mythology of white America have caught them in.”⁷⁹ Many American Indian peoples

⁷⁵ Lindauer, “The Critical Museum Visitor,” 218.

⁷⁶ McGuire, “Why Have Archaeologists Thought the Real Indians Were Dead and What Can We Do About It?,” 77; Mihesuah, *American Indians*, 108; Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 131.

⁷⁷ Shannon, “The Construction of Native Voice at the National Museum of the American Indian,” 83.

⁷⁸ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 15.

⁷⁹ Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 27.

would like to see their voices represented in museums, and representations changed. A number of American Indians currently work to share Native communities' histories with their own communities and in modern day museums, hoping to alter museums' stereotypical representations. The activism and work of Native peoples has sparked a change in American Indian representation, with changes in voice and collaboration influencing more and more exhibits.

Many American Indians have strong views and opinions on Native histories and how museums have treated Native peoples' identity and history. It is important to recognize, however, that not all Native peoples share a unified view on the subject. The topic of representation and identity in museums varies from tribe to individual.⁸⁰ While Native peoples struggle for museums to hear American Indian voices, "no one Indian voice exists; there are many points of view about oral history, ethnic fraud, Indian studies programs, and in fact, about every other issues associated with writing, teaching, and interpreting Indians."⁸¹ For example, some Native peoples believe that "collecting destroys, rather than preserves, their traditions," while others believe that museums should collect and display tribal material culture for community and cultural preservation.⁸² Some Native peoples emphasize cultural preservation and the education of traditional cultures, while other American Indians feel "emphasis on tradition implies Natives are reaching for a static past – not a true reflection of present day Natives."⁸³ The amount of opinions and ideas about how Native peoples should be represented

⁸⁰ Ibid., 15; Mihesuah, *American Indians*, 20; Mihesuah, "Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History," 37–38.

⁸¹ *Natives and Academics*, 17.

⁸² Marstine, "Introduction," 16.

⁸³ Rand, "Curatorial Practices: Voices, Values, Languages, and Traditions: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives on Curatorial Practice," 37.

can create challenges for Native communities and museums. However, Native peoples are facing these complications in order to fully express modern Native identity and issues in museums.

The negative relationship between anthropology, colonialism, museums, and Native peoples has not ended. Although the field of anthropology has tried to change its policies towards Native Americans through self-reflection and analysis, many non-beneficial Native anthropological studies persist. Biolsi and Zimmerman highlight in their assessment: “the continued economic and political oppression of Indian communities still makes Indians (more or less) available for anthropological research.”⁸⁴ The harmful effects anthropology and museums had on Native peoples have not disappeared. Indian Country still feels the negative consequences of anthropology and colonialism. Loss of land, dispossession, educational inadequacies, drug abuse, health care problems, domestic violence, and racism are only some issues surrounding Native communities. American Indians feel that little progress has been made to listen to their views or change outdated notions and representations of Native peoples. Despite work for self-reflection, colonialism (and the denial of it) is still supported by many in anthropology and museums.

The study and representation of Native Americans by anthropologists and museums directly relate to colonialism. Just as EuroAmericans became prosperous by taking Native lands, so too have anthropologists and museums gained recognition by studying and representing Native peoples. This is harmful to Native Americans, continuing a cycle of disempowerment.⁸⁵ Scholars and museum professionals reap the benefits of telling Native Americans’ stories (or the ways in which EuroAmericans perceive these stories). Anthropologists visit an American Indian

⁸⁴ Biolsi and Zimmerman, “Introduction: What’s Changed, What Hasn’t,” 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 13; King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 49.

community, conduct a study, and then leave. Rarely are the studies of Native peoples used to benefit Native American communities, and museums do not often listen to Native American perspectives.⁸⁶ Anthropologists and museums control the way Americans see and understand Native peoples, which is often distorted and incorrect. “We are the ones who write about Indian pasts for the general public, who prepare teaching materials for public schools, who instruct college students; and it is, by and large, archaeologists and anthropologists who control the great museum collections of objects from that past. . . . Rarely have our public presentations given an Indian view of the past or treated that past as part of an on-going Native cultural tradition.”⁸⁷ Practices such as these continue to foster colonialism in America. Native peoples see themselves represented in museums not how they are or feel, but how others perceive American Indians. In turn, visitors do not learn about current Native experiences in museums, nor do Native peoples participate in a modern expression of themselves.

In response to this crisis in representation, the movement of decolonization has reached the museum. Decolonization is an American Indian-led facet of NMT, with an emphasis on Native voices and truth-telling. Native activists work to fight many museums’ support of oppression and colonialism. Decolonization questions the legitimacy of colonialism, and requires reflection and action upon the world to change colonial practices.⁸⁸ The success of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is evidence of the decolonization movement. NAGPRA provides for the protection and ownership of American Indian materials found on federal and tribal lands and requires museums to provide an inventory of their

⁸⁶ Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 82.

⁸⁷ McGuire, “Why Have Archaeologists Thought the Real Indians Were Dead and What Can We Do About It?,” 65.

⁸⁸ Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 2.

American Indian cultural items to culturally affiliated tribes.⁸⁹ NAGPRA introduced a more balanced discussion of American Indian rights in museums. While the law largely focuses on repatriation of remains and cultural items, NAGPRA works to equalize museum settings for Native peoples. Museum professionals, American Indians, museum associations, and scholars currently discuss other American Indian issues in museums (such as the current subject of representation) due to the influence of NAGPRA.

Decolonizing the museum introduces new topics to museums, examining how museum displays represent and discuss American Indians. Many Native groups, as mentioned previously, want to introduce Native stories, histories, and experiences to exhibitions. The new question American Indians want museums to answer is: “what effect will it have over the lives of people?”⁹⁰ Native groups are charging museums with the task of challenging the stereotypes museums have represented for the past hundred and fifty years, confronting museums to tackle the “hard truths” (genocide, land theft, assimilation) of colonialism.⁹¹ Native peoples are decolonizing the museum, practicing cultural reclamation and fighting to remove negative imagery. Many Native nations are forming their own tribal museums or are working with museums to create “indigenous spaces that both reflect Native values and knowledge systems and languages and work toward the preservation of living cultures.”⁹² Native groups are working to make American Indian voices heard in museums. This marks a change for museums, one that is focused on Native truth.

⁸⁹ *American Indian Religious Freedom Act, U.S. Code 42 (2004), §1996.*
at § 3003, 3004.

⁹⁰ Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 99.

⁹¹ Lonetree, “Museum as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums,” 323.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 253.

Decolonization is a move towards empowerment for Native peoples. By telling Native stories and sharing the American Indian experience of colonization, Native tribes are teaching the dominant society another side of American history, as well as sharing Native stories. Both strengthen American Indian existence: “as we empower ourselves by telling the stories of our own suffering that have been diminished, silenced, or ignored, we are validating not just our individual experiences, but also the truth about our status as colonized peoples in a country that continues to deny its colonial reality.”⁹³ By breaking the silence surrounding American Indian experience, Native voices in museums are able to share a new reality with visitors turning the museum from “an instrument of colonization and dispossession into an instrument of self-definition and culture continuance.”⁹⁴ Decolonization is changing the nature of museums, working to share Native survivance. By challenging notions of a colonial past, and the representation of the way people experienced that past, Native peoples are validating their existence in the present and staking a claim for the future.

⁹³ Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 192.

⁹⁴ Shannon, “The Construction of Native Voice at the National Museum of the American Indian,” 81.

Chapter Two

New Museum Theory

During the 1970s through the early 1990s, a backlash arose against the inaccurate portrayals of Native Americans found in many American anthropological and natural history museums. The backlash against harmful museum practices created what many in the museum profession call New Museum Theory (NMT), often addressed by Native American scholars as “decolonizing the museum.” At this moment, NMT warrants discussion and explanation, as this thesis examines *Passages*, an exhibit that endeavored to use NMT to express Native voice(s) and alter the displayed collection’s overall narrative.

New Museum Theory is a guiding principle and set of ideas. NMT endeavors to replace colonial narratives with the empowerment of multicultural voices. NMT focuses on community, education, and cultural ownership, changing the dynamics of museum practice by reconfiguring what stories museums share and how museums/exhibitions represent people. As Kreps describes, “the new museology movement is largely about giving people control over their cultural heritage and its preservation as part of how they maintain, reinforce, or construct their identity.”⁹⁵ NMT alters the control of representations and stories in museums. This change seeks to promote a balance of power and voice in the museum world.

New Museum Theory came about because of a crisis in museums. This crisis formed in response to stereotypes, mistruths, issues of control, and silent spaces in museums. Native American and feminist activists started the dialogue about museums in the 1970s, working to

⁹⁵ Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 10.

question museums' control of stories and history.⁹⁶ Tired of the largely white, male dominated representations of history in many museums, Native American and feminist activists in the 1970s and 1980s scrutinized the lack of transparency in exhibit creation and collection management, as well as museums' elitist, authoritative control of knowledge. Both groups were striving to promote an increasingly critical social consciousness, while reflecting many minorities' dissatisfaction with conventional museum practices.⁹⁷ The activism of these two groups gained some ground and popularity in the public's mind. Reflecting pressure from patrons, donors, supporters within the field, and activist groups, museums and museum scholars began to seriously address the idea of inequity in museums. Born of this self-reflection and criticism, many museums began to establish the principles of New Museum Theory.

Advocates of New Museum Theory supported many changes to standard museum practices. Hoping to reform the way in which many museums addressed knowledge, power, and people, supporters of NMT advocated for a people-centered instead of a collection-centered approach to museum work. Reflecting this is NMT's concept of a "post-museum."⁹⁸ Either a new museum-entity from the ground up, or a reformed museum, the post-museum is based in community initiatives and power-sharing: "the post-museum actively seeks to share power with the communities it serves, including source communities... Instead of transmitting knowledge to an essentially mass audience, the post-museum listens and responds sensitively as it encourages diverse groups to become active participants in museum discourse. The post-museum does not

⁹⁶ King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 100.

⁹⁷ Lonetree, "Museum as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums," 326; Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 35; Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 9.

⁹⁸ *New Museum Theory and Practice*, 19.

shy away from difficult issues but exposes conflict and contradiction.”⁹⁹The “post-museum” develops long-term relationships with source communities, building trust instead of taking what information or artifacts museum professionals want without consultation or permission. It also has a distinct community focus, where success is measured by the amount of good the museum does for its community. New Museum Theory and the “post-museum” work to change the direction in which most museums have been heading for the past hundred years. “Post-museums” and NMT are promising a different path than previous museum entities or principles: to shift control of artifacts and representation to communities that previously did not have a voice, altering the structure of museum knowledge from top-down to bottom-up.

Supporters of New Museum Theory believe public service is the main goal of all museums; one can judge a museum’s public service on the benefit that museum has on its community. In NMT, a museum’s idea of community expresses a need for social reconstruction or social change. Influenced by post-colonial work, NMT sees museums’ communities as fluid – identities are self-assigned and re-imagined.¹⁰⁰ Here, those who are a part of the community create the community’s identity; it is not passively accepted from a colonizing entity. Museums focus on how best their programming and exhibits can help the community, hoping to bring awareness to community issues or help solve local problems.¹⁰¹ Museums tackle community issues by having a focus on healing and cultural heritage. For example, when addressing American Indian collections, healing is sought for Native Americans whom museums have harmed by misrepresentation, and for the colonizing community.¹⁰² A focus on community

⁹⁹ Marstine, “Introduction,” 19.

¹⁰⁰ Rassool, “Ethnographic Elaborations, Indigenous Contestation, and the Cultural Politics of Imagining Community: A View from the District Six Museum in South Africa,” 120.

¹⁰¹ Anderson, “Introduction,” 4; Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 4.

¹⁰² Wilson and Yellow Bird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 195.

changes a museum's view of collections, centering ideas about cultural heritage beyond material culture, and into realms of personhood and experience. NMT views cultural heritage as more than just material culture, but also a people's "collective memory, oral traditions, personal histories, and everyday experience."¹⁰³ This is a shift in priority for museums. The collections are no longer of the greatest importance for museums; rather a museum's relevance to its community is the new measure of greatness.¹⁰⁴ Influenced by community, there is an emphasis on self-determination in NMT's approach to public service. The emphasis on self-determination empowers people by making communities and community knowledge authoritative.

New Museum Theory is also changing museum protocol by altering who controls the objects in museums. NMT's people-centered approach to cultural heritage also affects preservation; each society determines for itself how and what they want to preserve, and why. Because of the influence of NMT, museums are giving greater access to objects to source communities, and museums have repatriated many cultural items back to American Indian communities. In this way, for many Native activists and Native scholars New Museum Theory is essentially about decolonization, giving those represented control of their objects and heritage.¹⁰⁵ American Indian communities after being unable to use, see, or participate in the conservation and care of cultural items, are now to taking part in the care of museums' ethnographic collections and are consulted as authorities on cultural objects.

Proponents of New Museum Theory, or decolonizing the museum, are changing the dialogue between source communities and museums. Drawing on the shifting notions of power and ownership found in NMT, more and more museums are developing trust relationships with

¹⁰³ Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, "Introduction," 1.

¹⁰⁵ Kreps, *Liberating Culture*, 10.

Native nations. Rather than losing their usefulness to the source community, items are stored in trust waiting for the time when the objects can be used again in ceremonies by Native communities.¹⁰⁶ Many Native peoples welcome the idea of a museum safely keeping their culture's important items, as long as the American Indian nation has a say in how the items are used. As Cherokee artist and designer Lloyd Kiva New stated: "this [does] not mean some kind of cultural embalming process wherein obsolete cultural ways are kept going beyond their time... A more important task should be using the objects to help Indian culture develop new ways to respond to the dynamics of an ever-changing social environment."¹⁰⁷ Native peoples have more control over how museums display and use these items, fostering new culturally significant uses for artifacts. This also redefines the notion of ownership in museums. Many museums and Native nations now jointly control the presentation, care, and repatriation of objects. Object ownership has become more complex, but more complete.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is an aspect of New Museum Theory. NAGPRA supports the return of American Indian remains and cultural items to Native nations, a change in previous museum practices. NAGPRA, as stated earlier, was a landmark law for the United States. Never before had the United States government supported the return of American Indian cultural materials to tribes. As UNESCO declared, repatriation is a basic right of all humans; all communities are equal and when any group loses part of its culture, all of humankind is at a loss.¹⁰⁸ NAGPRA started the healing process between Native peoples and museums in America. It also altered the relationship between museums and

¹⁰⁶ Gurian, "What Is the Object of This Exercise? A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums," 277.

¹⁰⁷ McMullen, "Reinventing George Heye: Nationalizing the Museum of the American Indian and Its Collections," 85.

¹⁰⁸ Marstine, "Introduction," 16.

Native nations, giving Native peoples more control over the property of their ancestors and tribes. Repatriation challenged notions of power within museums, converting the status of Native peoples from objects and resources into people, subjects to share stories and experiences.¹⁰⁹ With the advent of NAGPRA, museum points of view began to change. Some exhibits began to discuss the survival and continuity of American Indians, not their demise.¹¹⁰ Native nations were finally able to work with museums on more equal ground. NAGPRA has changed the dialogue between Native nations and museums from one of silence to a negotiation of power and respect.

New Museum Theory encompasses other aspects in the museum than just ownership, power, and care. Due to NMT, museums are changing the narrative content in exhibits and the way in which museum staff create exhibits. No longer supporting national narratives, museums using NMT are presenting Native worldviews and perspectives. Some museums are taking old ethnographic collections and reinterpreting their purpose by using the objects to tell Native American stories or historical experiences. As Rassool elaborates, “these moves represent attempts to transcend older frameworks of ethnography and racial science, at other times a quest to recover an Indigenous cultural history that had been distorted by colonialism.”¹¹¹ Sharing Native history and worldviews opens up a space for dialogues about colonialism, culture, and identity in the museum. This trend dramatically changes exhibit narratives. There is a shift in museum exhibits from the static and stereotypical to issues concerning resistance, exploitation, and cultural resurgence.

¹⁰⁹ King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 105.

¹¹⁰ Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*, 15.

¹¹¹ Rassool, “Ethnographic Elaborations, Indigenous Contestation, and the Cultural Politics of Imagining Community: A View from the District Six Museum in South Africa,” 107.

NMT can function to examine colonialism in the museum. Exhibits, or part of an exhibit, can acknowledge museums as colonial institutions or the museum as located in a colonial world. NMT calls for “reflexive exhibits,” where museum workers think critically about exhibition.¹¹² Through reflexive thinking, exhibits show new histories, the effects of objects and institutions on shaping audience thinking, and how museums are shaped by and shape the world. NMT also advocates for eliminating static or segregated exhibits, striving to balance voice in exhibits. Instead of featuring only a colonial, national narrative, NMT advocates for the “mutuality of historical events, encounters, and struggles as well as their resonance with the present, integrating Native Americans into structures of history.”¹¹³ There is also a call for new structures in museums, reordering museums’ priorities to account for the differences in Native and EuroAmerican experience, needs, or goals.¹¹⁴ Reordering priorities and structures in museums challenges hegemonic structures, while offering Native accounts of culture, worldviews, and history. Multiple side-by-side explanations of objects are also more common, with museums offering both the EuroAmerican and Native perspective. For example, *Wolves*, a Science Museum of Minnesota exhibit, presented “scientific data, Native stories, conservation, hunting controversies, and physiological information together in an evenhanded way.”¹¹⁵ By changing the narratives of exhibits, museums are working towards decolonization, opening a dialogue for

¹¹² King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 107; McGee, “Restructuring South African Museums: Reality and Rhetoric Within Cape Town,” 179.

¹¹³ King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 105.

¹¹⁴ Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 2.

¹¹⁵ Gurian, “What Is the Object of This Exercise? A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums,” 280.

Native peoples to discuss their own ideas and control their representations.¹¹⁶ In this way, New Museum Theory is changing the notion of what a museum is; making museums more accessible and helpful to the communities they represent, as well as providing more inclusive and truer knowledge to visitors.

New Museum Theory is changing the ways museums function in our society, putting communities before collections. Some, however, contest it may not be for the better, or even that NMT may not be changing things at all. By centering museums on community and ideas of cultural sensitivity, it is argued that NMT may be encouraging harmful ways of thinking for the museum community and museum visitors.¹¹⁷ As mentioned above, NMT has a focus on locality and community. It is argued that by narrowing the scope of a museum to a community, museums “invite a paternalistic sentiment and ideas of innocence and naiveté.”¹¹⁸ This can distort the goals of some museums, making them too narrow or seem less important than other museums -- especially larger and more prominent museums. In an increasingly competitive museum world, many museums see this change in focus as a detriment, not an asset.

Opponents of NMT state that multiculturalism may appear to change museum goals, perspectives, and narratives, but in fact changes little. NMT supporters believe new perspectives for narratives in museum exhibits promote multiculturalism, showing the variety of cultures and experiences that exist. However, others say the new perspectives inadvertently “reproduce

¹¹⁶ Abram, “Harnessing the Power of History,” 131; Corrin, “Mining the Museum: An Installation Confronting History,” 254; Shannon, “The Construction of Native Voice at the National Museum of the American Indian,” 221.

¹¹⁷ King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 81; Rassool, “Ethnographic Elaborations, Indigenous Contestation, and the Cultural Politics of Imagining Community: A View from the District Six Museum in South Africa,” 120.

¹¹⁸ Rassool, “Ethnographic Elaborations, Indigenous Contestation, and the Cultural Politics of Imagining Community: A View from the District Six Museum in South Africa,” 120.

colonial clichés.”¹¹⁹ Critics of NMT see multiculturalism as ineffective for several reasons. Opponents argue that no matter what changes in exhibit narratives, colonial discourses will still surface. In instances where Native peoples share experiences in exhibits, critics believe that although Native peoples are telling the stories, colonial narratives still persist, as colonial forces were present when the experiences were happening.¹²⁰ People creating the exhibits are also products of a colonial environment, so would not be able to change the colonial narratives in exhibits, as they exist in a colonial world.¹²¹ Little is actually altered in exhibit narratives, as the hegemonic structures that formed them ultimately remain unchanged. Colonial discourses are not diminished, state opponents, just funneled through new narratives and perspectives. Critics argue that multiculturalism itself is faulty at changing colonial narratives and that hegemonic structures cannot truly be overturned in the museum, therefore aspects of NMT are ineffective and do not change the message of exhibits.

While critics believe New Museum Theory changes little, many others support the changes NMT helps museums make. Whether New Museum Theory actually works and is a benefit to society still remains to be seen, and will be examined in practice later in this thesis. It is up to museums to try new exhibit styles and techniques, sharing new stories and perspectives that reflect the growing diversity in our society. The numerous museums rethinking exhibits and repurposing collections suggest that something about NMT is changing perspectives.

¹¹⁹ King, *Colonial Discourses, Collective Memories, and the Exhibition of Native American Cultures and Histories in the Contemporary United States*, 14.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

The University of Kansas's Ethnographic Collection

The ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas is experiencing effects of the NMT movement. New Museum Theory has influenced the attitudes of those at the University of Kansas regarding the ethnographic collection on campus. A factor of NMT is the move of the collections to a new home on KU's campus. The ethnographic collection has recently been moved to the Spencer Museum of Art, signaling a change for the collection and the museum. Currently standing at 9,778 cataloged items (with the majority from North America), the ethnographic collection is large and has faced many concerns of storage and care over the years. Here, the history of the ethnographic collection leading up to its move to the Spencer is discussed.

Early Years

The history of the ethnological collection is a varied one. The collection was assembled from many donations over time, and has lived in numerous locations often with little care. Among the ethnological pieces are Plains artifacts, Inuit materials, collections from Africa, and cultural materials from the Pacific Northwest. Before 1895, the University received only a few artifact donations, the majority being archeological in nature. Most of these items were accessioned into the collection at the Museum of Natural History. As follows are some of the largest early donations to the ethnographic collection. Lewis Dyche donated the first large ethnological collection, Inuit material culture from the Inuit of west Greenland.¹²² Another large piece of what is now the ethnological collection was donated by George Washington Reed, Jr. Reed assembled cultural items from the Pacific Northwest, transferring the collection to KU in

¹²² "Ethnological Collections at KU -- A Thumbnail Sketch," 1.

the 1930s.¹²³ One of the most important donations came from the large collection of Mrs. Sally Thayer in June of 1917.¹²⁴ Over the next eight years, Thayer added four thousand pieces to the original donation – many which are the Native North American pieces in KU’s ethnographic collection.¹²⁵ These three donations were the foundations of the ethnological collection that exists today. However, other additions were to come, as well as several moves while different administrations sought a home for the collection.

Unlike today, consolidation was not widely practiced during the first decades of the ethnographic collection’s existence. As such, the collection was not kept together or organized. The majority of the items were boxed and housed in various places across KU’s campus.¹²⁶ The items were not organized in exhibits or displayed, and little attention was paid to the items. The archaeological collections, items from pre-colonial times or discovered in archaeological digs, were granted a home in the various buildings that housed the Natural History Museum. The ethnographic collection remained in storage.

Due to a condition of Thayer’s donation, however, the administration of KU had to find a home for the collections. When Thayer donated her collection to KU in 1917, she donated it on the condition that KU had to provide adequate housing for exhibiting the collection within three years.¹²⁷ Due to “a series of administrative missteps and slow responses,” Thayer threatened to move the collection.¹²⁸ KU resolved to the problem to her satisfaction in 1928, when the then Governor of Kansas guaranteed KU a new library building, and KU promised Thayer that the

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ “The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections,” 2.

¹²⁶ “Ethnological Collections at KU -- A Thumbnail Sketch,” 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

old library (Spooner Hall) would be the new Museum of Art.¹²⁹ This would not solve all of the storage and collections-management issues surrounding the ethnographic collection, however. As the collection grew over the next several decades, a marked division between the archaeological collections and the ethnographic collection grew. The archaeological collections were housed and displayed at the Natural History Museum, whereas the ethnological collection, surviving on the promise of display in the Museum of Art, remained in storage.

The ethnological collection grew steadily over the next forty years, but storage, display, and care remained serious issues. Few people at the University of Kansas paid attention to the ethnological collection, and it remained boxed and unorganized. “The ethnological material was scattered all over the campus – some in the Art Museum, some in cartons stored under Hoch Auditorium, some stored underneath the Memorial Stadium, some in a building on West Campus, and some in the steam tunnels under Strong Hall.”¹³⁰ Many materials were considered lost – no staff or faculty on campus knew the whereabouts of some of the crates. For example, the Pacific Northwest cultural items donated by Reed were lost until in the 1950s, when Chancellor Franklin Murphy requested a search for them. They were found, crated in the basement of Hoch Auditorium.¹³¹ The Pacific Northwest materials were then uncrated and fumigated with DDT, and transferred to Dyche Hall where attempts were made to incorporate some of the materials.¹³² Other parts of the collection would not be found for some time. These items remained crated and stored in various basements and storage areas across the KU campus.

¹²⁹ Ibid.; “The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections,” 2; Diepenbrock, “Spencer to Show Off Spooner’s Prizes,” 1.

¹³⁰ “Ethnological Collections at KU -- A Thumbnail Sketch,” 2.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

The Mid to Late 20th Century

By the 1960s, changes in administration were happening at KU's museums. These adjustments would influence the future of the ethnological collections, bringing about modifications in storage and some in organization. In 1967, Raymond Hall resigned as Director of the Museum of Natural History and was replaced by Philip S. Humphrey. Humphrey was concerned with space problems – one condition of his acceptance of the Museum Directorship was that the “Division of Archaeology” be removed from Dyche Hall (the Natural History Museum).¹³³ Due to this move, the “Division of Archaeology” became the Museum of Anthropology in 1968.¹³⁴ Management of this museum was then transferred to the Department of Anthropology at KU. The museum and collections were moved to Blake Hall; most of the ethnological collections remained boxed, but were moved to the basement of Blake Hall.¹³⁵ This reorganization, although leaving the ethnological collection boxed, did succeed in placing some of the ethnological collection in one place. Other parts of the collection remained in storage around campus.

The problems of storage were relieved to some extent with the conception and construction of the Spencer Museum of Art in the late 1970s. During this time, there was a debate on campus about the best use for the now empty Spooner Hall. It was decided that Spooner Hall would become the new home for the Museum of Anthropology. Finally, all of the ethnological pieces were consolidated with the move to the new building in 1979.¹³⁶ The Department of Anthropology kept the ethnographic collection separate from the archaeological

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ “Ethnological Collections at KU -- A Thumbnail Sketch.”

¹³⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹³⁶ “The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections,” 2.

collections, housing the ethnographic collection on the second floor of the building. Although still created, the collection finally had a home.

Once in its new home, the ethnographic collection would see unprecedented growth. Over the next twenty years, public donors and faculty members added a large amount of items to the collection. Smaller collections from institutions around the state were also solicited for the collection, in order to consolidated holdings from across Kansas into one large collection at KU.¹³⁷ These additions more than doubled the size of the collection, growing the collection's size from 3,728 items to 9,700 items. This growth would prove to exacerbate issues with the collection's care, storage, and management.

Controversy of Care

The ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas was the center of a somewhat large controversy in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Although facing issues such as lack of storage space and commitment to care for a number of years, the ethnographic collection was paid little attention until the closure of the Anthropology Museum in 2002. This closure left the ethnographic collections essentially without any steward. Once discovered by concerned faculty and students, the care and fate of the collection became a heated topic on the KU campus, as well as a widely covered local media story. This controversy would ultimately lead to the implementation of techniques of New Museum Theory on the collection, including a repurposing of the collection at the Spencer Museum of Art.

The Anthropology Museum at Spooner Hall was forced to close in 2002, due to the funding cuts by the KU Center for Research (KUCR). KUCR is the research foundation that operates and oversees research conducted by KU faculty and graduate students. A board of

¹³⁷ "Ethnological Collections at KU -- A Thumbnail Sketch," 2.

trustees, including university and public members, governs KUCR.¹³⁸ The Vice Provost of Research and Graduate Studies is the president of the board, and along with board members is responsible for the decisions regarding budgets and funding.¹³⁹ At the time of its closure in 2002, the Anthropology Museum was under the jurisdiction of KUCR.¹⁴⁰ The board of KUCR decided to cut funding for the Anthropology Museum, as it was perceived by KUCR as “a relatively unproductive unit that takes up valuable space and does not bring in research dollars comparable to the centers [other KU research centers, such as the Bioengineering Research Center or the Information and Telecommunication Technology Center].”¹⁴¹ The Anthropology Museum closed, but the University decided that the collections would stay in Spooner Hall for storage. The collection and space was then renamed the Anthropological Research and Cultural Collections.

In a budget-deficit year, the University felt that closing the museum would be a prudent financial move. Once cut from the budget, the museum permanently stopped receiving funding from KUCR and closed to the public. The cuts were presented to the KU community as a cost cutting measure for the University, and as a measure that did not impact the institution’s teaching mission.¹⁴² Many faculty and students felt that KUCR did not recognize the importance of the anthropology collection for research or teaching, as they perceived it to be neglected and underfunded.¹⁴³ The lack of funding allotted to the museum left the collections in need of attention. Space, conservation, care, and access concerns faced the collection. After the closure of the museum, and the end of funding, the collection suffered even more.

¹³⁸ “About KUCR | Research & Graduate Studies at KU.”

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ “Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group,” 1.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

The first concern facing the collection influenced many of the problems surrounding the collection. This concern was a lack of adequate staffing. Already understaffed, the museum closure severely limited the staff at Spooner Hall. The staff was reduced from seven employees to one and a half: one full time employee and one part time student curatorial position.¹⁴⁴ Inadequate staffing led to materials being improperly stored, not taken care of, and left in a state of general disorganization. Many donors became worried about the status of their materials. As Mary Adair, interim director, stated in an interview with the *Lawrence Journal World*: “We’re caring for them to the best of our ability. Obviously, we have limited resources.”¹⁴⁵ Research also suffered. The administrative duties and other tasks necessary for operating the building limited the availability of staff to work with students and professors conducting research.¹⁴⁶ Lack of staffing also made writing applications for grants impossible, adding to the already challenging funding issues.¹⁴⁷ The lack of people taking care of the collection left many who were able to access the collection upset. As Carla Feathers, a Pawnee and Cherokee graduate student in 2005 stated: “The items haven’t been cared for. It’s really saddening. All of us leave (the collection) feeling really bad. Most of us have a personal connection to the items.”¹⁴⁸ The neglect of the items, due to an inability of one full-time and one part-time employee to take care of such a large collection, gave the feeling to some that the university cared little for the collection or the cultural significance of many of the items.

Space was another concern for the collections. The large collection had little room on its floor of Spooner Hall, affecting display space and access to the collections. Many classes could

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.; Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 1.

¹⁴⁵ Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 1.

¹⁴⁶ Van Noy, “University Needs to Better Support Museum, Student Research,” 1.

¹⁴⁷ “Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group,” 1.

¹⁴⁸ Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 1.

not access the collections, due to the small space.¹⁴⁹ Once the museum closed, there was also no space for exhibits in Spooner Hall, so the collections were never on display or organized in exhibits. This made it difficult for students to learn about the items in the collection, or even know that the collection existed. Mary Adair, interim director, stated: “many people within the KU community assume the museum is defunct, which makes it hard to initiate collaborations.”¹⁵⁰ Many professors and students did not know that they could use the collection for teaching and research purposes. The lack of space for display purposes also negatively affected the funding opportunities for the collection, as many grants require display/exhibit space in a museum.¹⁵¹ The issue of space made it difficult for the collection to gain funding to supplement the small amount the museum was allotted before the budget cut, and afterwards made it impossible to gain any outside funding through grants or use by faculty and students.

Faculty and students who worked with the materials in the ethnographic collection found storage and care of the collections to be a concern, both before and after the closure of the Anthropology Museum. After the closure of the museum, the issues facing storage of the collection came to light. Students were so concerned over the conservation and storage of items in the collection, they raised funds to bring in an outside consultant to review the care to of the collection. Many of the storage techniques were sub-par, leading consultant James Riding In, an associate professor of Justice Studies and American Indian Studies at Arizona State University, to state after visiting the collection: “other universities take better care of their collections.”¹⁵² The first major storage/conservation problem was that no sprinkler system existed on the floor where the collections were housed. The collections were not protected from possibly damaging

¹⁴⁹ “Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group,” 1.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ranney, “Expert Says KU Should Return Items to Tribes,” 1.

fire, a basic conservation protocol in museums. Many artifacts were also housed in acidic wooden boxes, as opposed to metal boxes where the items would not decay.¹⁵³ This type storage was hazardous to the materials within the boxes, and could shorten the life of the objects inside. Many museums view conservation and care of their collections as the museum's first and most important job as a steward of the collections. For the ethnographic collections at KU, conservation practices seemed not a priority.

Along with improper storage, artifacts were improperly identified and disorganized. Artifacts frequently were mislabeled by item type or source community. The items also were stored without any organizational system. "Some of the more than 5,000 artifacts in the collection are shoved into boxes. Items from tribes that were historically enemy tribes are sometimes placed next to each other, which some believe disrupts the spirits of the items."¹⁵⁴ The disorganization of the collection made conservation and identification of the items a challenge. Bobbi Rahder, a former lecturer in Indigenous Nations Studies, stated that the collection faced a problem of, "lots of donations with little documentation."¹⁵⁵ This left work to an interim curator to "overturn false, stereotyped classifications," and as of fall of 2011 many items were still in need of proper identification.¹⁵⁶ A collection is only as good as the care it receives, for a collection is those artifacts. With improper storage, the University was dangerously close to losing irreplaceable culturally significant items.

Many of the items in storage were culturally and spiritually sacred to the American Indian tribes from which they came. The storage and ownership of these items by museums can have complications. If it is established that the items are culturally sacred to their source

¹⁵³ Rombeck, "Students 'Depressed' by State of American Indian Artifacts," 1.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ "Native American Artifacts Will Be Returned to Tribes," 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

communities, the item or items should be repatriated according to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). NAGPRA protects two types of materials that are not associated with funerary practices or burials: “sacred objects” and items of “cultural patrimony”. “Sacred objects” are ceremonial objects that are needed by Native American religious leaders for the practice of Native American religions.¹⁵⁷ Items of “cultural patrimony” are not linked specifically to a ceremony or religious practice, but are items that have ongoing “historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture itself.”¹⁵⁸ These objects are/were never owned by one individual or family, but belong to the community or tribe as a whole. According to consultant James Riding In, Spooner Hall housed both types of artifacts at the time of his visit. Artifacts that there is, as Michael Yellow Bird stated, “no way to ever store... that could ever be respectful.”¹⁵⁹ Riding In and Yellow Bird supported the repatriation of these items back to their original tribes, as did many students. The issue, however, is complicated and the University and collection’s history with NAGPRA will be discussed in the following sub-section, Repatriation Concerns.

In terms of care and conservation, however, if repatriation was not an option the items should have received special care. The sacred value of many of the items required them to have different levels of care and attention than other artifacts in the collection. The University was apparently aware of this, as Mary Lee Hummert, Associate vice Provost for research stated: “we’re very much aware of the fragile nature of the items.”¹⁶⁰ In order to honor the spiritual significance of the items, many items need to, as Michael Yellow Bird states, “receive attention

¹⁵⁷ Trope and Echo-Hawk, Walter, “NAGPRA: Background and Legislative History,” 143.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 144.

¹⁵⁹ “Native American Artifacts Will Be Returned to Tribes,” 3.

¹⁶⁰ Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 2.

and ceremonies that were ignored while they sit in the museum.”¹⁶¹ Many students and faculty hoped that tribal consultants could view the items to determine if they could be repatriated, such as “ghost dance shirts, eagle feathers, or war bonnets.”¹⁶² As Johnny Williams, a member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi tribe stated to the Lawrence Journal World, “It’s very sacred stuff that’s up there, to these tribes. They’re not dead objects. They’re living.”¹⁶³ Sacred items should have received more than inadequate storage. Going beyond formal conservation, “the cultural context or social construction of an object or the different kinds of culturally mandated care possibly necessary for the social maintenance of the object” should be considered.¹⁶⁴ Holistic care should be practiced on items with cultural significance, more precisely care that maintains the cultural and spiritual importance of the item. Students in the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, who had worked with some of the items, stated that to show respect the items should be taken out for fresh air and for a smudging ceremony, to cleanse the objects of negative energies or spirits.¹⁶⁵ This would honor and respect the sacred items. This type of care would provide a more holistic conservation of the artifacts, working to conserve the items and respecting the cultures from which they came.

Another aspect of the controversy surrounding the collection was the limited ability to view or research the items in the museum. After the Anthropology Museum closed, the public, students, and faculty received limited access to the artifacts. In the case of the public, access was no longer an option. Once open to the public and the site of several exhibits and events throughout the year, such as the American Indian Arts Show, Spooner Hall and the ethnographic

¹⁶¹ “Native American Artifacts Will Be Returned to Tribes,” 3.

¹⁶² Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 2.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Barker, “Archaeological Ethics: Museums and Collections,” 77.

¹⁶⁵ Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 2.

collection were closed to the public after the budget cuts.¹⁶⁶ This limited the educational ability of the collections. It also limited the ability of the collections to qualify for grant money, as many grants require the beneficiary be open to the public.¹⁶⁷ The closure of the collections to the public limited the ability of the public to benefit from proximity to a world-class collection, as well as limited the collection's ability to benefit from grants given to museums that are open to the public.

The closure of the museum limited a valuable source of education and research for students, as well. Many students in the Indigenous Nations Studies Program and the Museum Studies Program came to KU because of the Anthropology Museum. As one student stated to the Lawrence Journal World in 2002, the Anthropology Museum was the magnet that drew her to study Museum Studies at KU. Once she realized the museum was closed, "it was a major disappointment. They said the cuts would not affect academic programming. This does affect academic programming. We really expected this would be here."¹⁶⁸ The closure of the museum, (as well as the inability of a small staff to work with faculty, students, the public, or take care of the collections) limited the collections' use for education and research. The closure of the museum drastically limited the number of people who were able to learn from and about the ethnographic collection. Limited access to the public, faculty, and students left the collection with an unclear purpose.

Repatriation Concerns

Many students in the Indigenous Nations Studies Program saw a new purpose for the collections, through repatriation. Many deemed that after the museum closure, items in the

¹⁶⁶ "Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group," 1; Rombeck, "Students 'Depressed' by State of American Indian Artifacts," 1; Van Noy, "University Needs to Better Support Museum, Student Research," 2.

¹⁶⁷ Rombeck, "Students 'Depressed' by State of American Indian Artifacts," 2.

¹⁶⁸ "Demonstrators Rally Support for Museum," 1.

collection would finally be repatriated to associated tribes. NAGPRA mandates that museums and institutions receiving federal aid work with tribes to identify all holdings of remains or culturally sacred items and return them.¹⁶⁹ By 1996, six years after the passage of NAGPRA, American Indian remains and cultural items were still stored in the collection. KU made efforts to contact some tribes, but issues with identification caused problems for repatriation. The skeletons of 219 individuals had yet to be identified or repatriated, with the University citing “time lag and incomplete information about the source items” as complications to confirming to which tribes the remains and items belonged.¹⁷⁰ Mary Adair, associate curator of the collections in 1996, stated that “we will eventually repatriate everything that we have, but we want to make sure that the correct ancestral tribe is consulted with and allowed to make a claim.”¹⁷¹ Nine years later, KU still had 168 sets of remains yet to be identified. From 2005-2006, the University negotiated the return of those remains to fourteen tribes who were historically found in Kansas. Culturally sacred materials in the ethnographic collection, however, still lay unattended in storage.

Hoping to inspire repatriation efforts and moved by the university’s lack of attention to the materials students in the Indigenous Nations Studies program raised funds to hire a NAGPRA consultant to assess the collection. Items that are used for ongoing ceremonies or funeral ceremonies must be returned to tribes under NAGPRA, but often this is uneasy to accomplish. As mentioned previously, students secured James Riding In, a member of the Pawnee nation and a professor at Arizona State University, to examine the collection. Riding In was familiar with the collection and the issues surrounding the items, as he had negotiated

¹⁶⁹ Barker, “Archaeological Ethics: Museums and Collections,” 77.

¹⁷⁰ Carpenter, “KU Museum Returning Tribal Property,” 1.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

aspects of the previous return of remains (in 2005/2006) to Kansas tribes.¹⁷² As with the remains, identification of the items and the materials' source communities were difficult to determine, as incomplete records were kept at the university. During his visit, Riding In identified several sacred items that should be returned to their tribes. Riding In made several suggestions to the university, urging them to hire a NAGPRA compliance officer, hire a full-time curator, ensure proper storage of the materials, set up a process for identifying, respecting, and returning items considered sacred, and to explore the environmental hazards posed by the turn-of-the-century practice of using arsenic and strychnine to protect artifacts from insects. Riding In emphasized the need for collection identification and repatriation. His ultimate conclusion, as a NAGPRA consultant, was that KU appeared to be out of compliance with NAGPRA.

The non-compliance of KU with NAGPRA is not unusual for universities and other institutions. Issues on both sides of museums and Native nations can complicate repatriation. Many scientists and museum professionals have felt that "their" collections are under attack from repatriation laws. Many museums and universities are hesitant to comply with NAGPRA, feeling that it will jeopardize research or future knowledge that could be gleaned from the items.¹⁷³ Riding In stated during his visit that conflicts over American Indian artifacts were not uncommon at universities.¹⁷⁴ The way in which universities understand the materials is different than tribal understanding. Within academia sacred items are often viewed in material rather than spiritual terms and many universities find it hard to reconcile the material versus spiritual importance of sacred materials. The challenge and time it takes to identify and repatriate items is something that many institutions feel they cannot sacrifice. Returning culturally sensitive

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Riding In, "Repatriation: A Pawnee's Perspective," 115.

¹⁷⁴ Rombeck, "Students 'Depressed' by State of American Indian Artifacts," 2.

materials to Native nations can be difficult for several reasons. Riding In states that “first, tribal leaders may be reluctant to provide details about traditional tribal ceremonies. Second, travel is an obstacle... many [tribes] lack resources to send people to these institutions to look at the items.”¹⁷⁵ Regarding KU’s collection, Associate vice Provost for Research, Mary Hummert, stated that she “wasn’t sure whether the university would volunteer to return items to tribes” and noted the difficulty of the situation: “this is not something you can just pick up a telephone and do. It’s a massive undertaking, and the university needs to proceed very carefully.”¹⁷⁶ Across universities, the response to repatriation is different. As Riding In noted during his review of the collection, “some universities seem eager to comply, KU seems to be reluctant.”¹⁷⁷ Repatriation can be a complicated issue. The collection at KU is an example of the multi-dimensional concerns and perspectives repatriation encompasses.

Public, Faculty, and Student Action

KU’s reluctance to repatriate, as well as their lack of funding or care for the items, frustrated many at KU and in the Lawrence community. The public staged protests; faculty wrote letters and voiced complaints to the administration. Student activism, however, was the most vocal of all outcries, and is what many at KU and in the administration say fostered the move to the Spencer Museum of Art and a new level of care for the collection. Student activism showed the university that there was a vested interest in the collection. The activism also demonstrated that students recognized there were important items that needed care as well as the opportunity to be studied, honored, and shared.

¹⁷⁵ Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 2.

¹⁷⁶ Ranney, “Expert Says KU Should Return Items to Tribes,” 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

Many members of the Lawrence community were outraged by the closure of the Anthropology Museum in 2002. People protested on campus, wrote letters to the Lawrence Journal World, as well as letters to KU's administration. At KU's 2002 Open House, supporters of the museum rallied in front of the museum. They gathered over 200 signatures on a petition, passed out fliers, and held signs that read, "honk for the museum" and "don't close our classroom."¹⁷⁸ Many felt that schools were losing a valuable resource for field trips, as well as a community space that promoted "cross-cultural understanding."¹⁷⁹ The local Lawrence, Kansas newspaper, the Lawrence Journal World, received numerous letters to the editor lamenting the closure of the museum and the inability of the university to adequately address the needs of the collection. One writer, who titled his letter "Poor Image," stated: "elimination of public exhibition space deprives not only our children, but all our citizens, as well as visitors to this community, the opportunity to benefit from the facilities at the museum."¹⁸⁰ Some alumni addressed the administration, such as attorney and alumnus Rod Borlase. Mr. Borlase wrote to Chancellor Hemenway, stating his concern for the closure of the museum: "all considered, I fear that KU has turned away from some programs (or been lured somehow to do so) that I believe vital to the liberal education that symbolizes KU's excellence."¹⁸¹ Members of the public and alumni felt that in closing the museum and taking funding away from collections, KU was betraying not only the public's trust, but sacrificing the collections and the knowledge the collections could provide.

Faculty at KU, especially those in the Department of Anthropology, also played a role in voicing dissenting opinions. Many recognized that the closure of the museum, reduction of staff,

¹⁷⁸ "Demonstrators Rally Support for Museum," 1.

¹⁷⁹ Cobb Kuckelman, "Museum Defense," 1.

¹⁸⁰ Shult, "Poor Image," 1.

¹⁸¹ Borlase, "Chancellor Hemenway Letter," 2.

and the funding halt would affect the ability of their students to conduct research and learn from the items. Many faculty members also felt that the neglect of the objects sent value statements about the objects to members of the community and students. Gitti Salami, a professor in the Art History and African & African American Studies departments, expressed distress that the university was failing to provide equal opportunity for everyone at the university. Dr. Salami stated, “stuffing the cultural heritage of people of the so-called Third World on cramped shelves in a building without a sprinkler system, while exhibiting the cultural heritage of Europeans and Asians in a hall decked with chandeliers and marble [the Spencer Museum of Art] is a gross violation of Equal Opportunity. It also reinforces outmoded ideas which view non-Western cultural productions and primitive and inferior to the cultural productions of EuroAmericans and Asians.”¹⁸² Many faculty agreed with Salami, echoing sentiments that people who were previously colonized and occupied were again being violated.

The Department of Anthropology sent a letter voicing concerns to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Joseph E. Steinmetz. The letter shared concerns of the faculty that they had no input on the treatment, use, or care of the items, and that the Department of Anthropology wished to have more control over the collections, as they had repeatedly been ignored by KCUR. The letter stated that the department had a vested interest in the collection: the collections “are essential to the mission of our department and are vital to the continued development of innovative faculty research.”¹⁸³ Faculty implored the dean to give some control of the collections to the Department of Anthropology. They also insisted to Dean Steinmetz that the faculty have a part in the management of all anthropological collections, and that the faculty

¹⁸² “Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group,” 2.

¹⁸³ Anthropology Department, “Dean Steinmetz Letter,” 1.

have a role in decisions affecting the evaluation, care, use, and disposition of the collection.¹⁸⁴

The Department of Anthropology hoped for re-inclusion on the discussion of the management of the collection, hoping to gain some control over the fate and use of the collection. The ability of students and professors to use the items, and the neglect of the conservation and care of the items, had many KU faculty hoping to alter the course of the collections.

As mentioned previously, the activism of students was outspoken and fierce. Many at the University of Kansas credit the wave of media coverage and community and faculty distress as beginning with student activism. Museum Studies students protested the closure of the Anthropology Museum in 2002, and students from the Indigenous Nation Studies department began a campaign to improve the conditions of the ethnographic collection in 2005. After encountering the objects and their neglect, and learning that the university considered selling some or all of the collection, students felt they had to take action. Inspired to change the collection's care, students then proceeded to present papers on the situation at Big 12 conferences, wrote complaints to the Lawrence Journal World as well as the University Daily Kansan (as well as successfully lobbied both newspapers to cover the controversy), were interviewed by the local TV station, wrote grant applications for funding for the collections, organized several panel discussions at KU and Haskell Indian Nations University about the collections, and raised money at a Pow Wow to bring in a tribal consultant (James Riding In).¹⁸⁵ Many students were frustrated that the university was not taking better care of the items and not trying to repatriate items that were sacred to Native American communities. As student Jancita Warrington, Menominee/Prairie Band Potawatomi/Ho-Chunk, stated, "It gets talked about,

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹⁸⁵ "Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group," 2; Rombeck, "Students 'Depressed' by State of American Indian Artifacts," 2.

there's an article in the newspaper and then – nothing. This is an issue that's not going to go away. I don't understand why it isn't being addressed.”¹⁸⁶ Many commended the students on their relentless pursuit of care on behalf of the collections. Consultant James Riding In said of the students, “I applaud them for showing their interest. The students saw the deep, rich, cultural significance of those items.”¹⁸⁷ Indeed, the students' efforts eventually gained faculty and community support, leading to the collection's new home at the Spencer Museum of Art. Building on themes taught at KU in their programs, such as NAGPRA and New Museum Theory, the students successfully engineered a campaign to ultimately change the course of the ethnographic collection.

Move to the Spencer Museum of Art

At the time of the controversy surrounding the ethnographic collection at KU, decisions about the future of the collection were hinging on the activism and efforts led by students to change the path of the collection. Faculty and administration began discussing what would be the best course of action for the collections. First mentioned during a meeting of the Anthropology Collection Group, following the visitation and critique of care of James Riding In, KU recognized around 2006 that it must find a new home and purpose for the collection. The Anthropology Collection Group stated in 2005 that the best possible outcome for the collection would be “a full-fledged cultural museum operating on the basis of updated museum practices with an adequate staff able to maintain and catalog the collection, while also creating significant exhibitions and outreach programs.”¹⁸⁸ The group decided that it would be in the best interest of

¹⁸⁶ Ranney, “Expert Says KU Should Return Items to Tribes,” 1.

¹⁸⁷ Rombeck, “Students ‘Depressed’ by State of American Indian Artifacts,” 3.

¹⁸⁸ “Minutes, Anthropology Collection Group,” 2.

the collection to persuade the university administration to move the care of the collection from under the “unsympathetic” control of KUCR.¹⁸⁹ By 2006, the Department of Anthropology conceded to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences that the authority over the collection, “may be assigned to the Spencer Museum of Art.”¹⁹⁰

History of the Spencer Museum of Art

What most know now as the Spencer Museum of Art was not always known as the Spencer Museum of Art – the museum has undergone several metamorphoses on the University of Kansas campus. The University of Kansas’ Spencer Museum of Art has historical roots leading back to the early 20th century, when it was founded in its initial form. The Spencer Museum of Art’s genesis lies in the donation of Kansas City art collector Sally Casey Thayer’s collection of art objects to the University of Kansas in 1917.¹⁹¹ Thayer hoped her donation would “encourage the study of fine arts in the Middle West,” and her donation started the first art collection at a Kansas university.¹⁹² The collection included paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, furniture, rugs, textiles, metalwork, ceramics, glass, and other examples of decorative arts, primarily from Europe and Asia.¹⁹³ Eventually, after the donation of a new library building by the governor, the University of Kansas Museum of Art was established in Spooner Hall on the KU campus in 1928.¹⁹⁴ This allowed space for exhibition and storage of the items. It is the first incarnation of what would eventually be the Spencer Museum of Art.

A new home for the collections, one where the space was built specifically to house and exhibit the growing collections, would eventually come to the campus. The collections continued

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Anthropology Department, “Dean Steinmetz Letter,” 2.

¹⁹¹ “The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections,” 2.

¹⁹² “History | About | Spencer Museum of Art,” 1.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ “The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections,” 2.

to grow over the middle years of the 20th century, and were running out of space by the 1960s. Another Kansas City patron of the arts, Mrs. Kenneth A. Spencer, donated \$4.6 million to build a new facility in 1974. The new space was christened the Spencer Museum of Art. The Museum of Art serves as “an academic support division” of the University of Kansas, and is the only comprehensive art museum serving the state.¹⁹⁵ The Spencer continues exhibition and serves as a resource on campus for teaching across curricula. Many faculty and students on campus use the Museum’s collection and facilities for a broad range of research and activities. The museum also serves the region’s schoolchildren and general public. The educational spirit of Thayer lives on, as the Spencer continues to expand the collections and inspires students and faculty to discover new ways of experiencing art.

The ethnographic collections were transferred to the Spencer Museum of Art in 2007. The Spencer Museum of Art pledged that their stewardship of the collections would be careful and diligent, helping the collections to serve an educational purpose. The Spencer Museum of Art hoped to update the collection’s storage facilities, catalogue and identify items in the collection, work with a NAGPRA consultant, and broaden the availability of the collections to those at KU and the source communities from which the objects came. The move to the Spencer, and the changes that it brought for the collection, will be detailed more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

Native Art, University Art Museums

The stewardship of the ethnographic collections of the University of Kansas now belongs to the Spencer Museum of Art and will influence the direction of the collection. Formerly

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.

housed in the Anthropology Museum at Spooner Hall, the home of an art museum lends a new nuance to the ethnographic collections. The type of museum (art, science, natural history, anthropology) can influence the treatment, discussion, and interpretation of items. Therefore, it warrants a moment to discuss the history American Indian art has had with art museums, and how a university art museum in particular can influence the interpretation and exhibition of objects.

Native American Art and Art Museums

Native American art and art museums have a brief past. Before 1940, most American Indian objects were seen not as art, but as material culture. As mentioned previously, curators and museum professionals did not think Native peoples were capable of creating individual, creative works. Instead, curators saw Native artistic expression as rote repetition of established patterns and cultural motifs.¹⁹⁶ Beginning in 1925, the Denver Museum of Art became the first art museum to display American Indian art/objects as works of art. By the 1940s, the primitivist art revolution started by Pablo Picasso (with African art) spread to the United States.¹⁹⁷ With the primitivist movement, art museum and gallery curators newly approached American Indian items. Two curators spearheaded the popularity of American Indian art at this time: Rene d'Harnoncourt, director of the US Indian Arts and Crafts Board (and later director of New York's Museum of Modern Art) and Frederic Douglas, curator of the Denver Art Museum's collection.¹⁹⁸ Together, d'Harnoncourt and Douglas created and organized the exhibition, *Indian Arts of the United States*, at the MoMA in 1941. The exhibition sparked a popular craze for

¹⁹⁶ Cooper, *Spirited Encounters*; Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian*.

¹⁹⁷ Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," 532.

¹⁹⁸ Schrader, *The Indian Arts and Crafts Board*, 124–128.

Native arts in America, spurring a boom in the Indian arts market.¹⁹⁹ Museums and galleries began accepting Native work as artistic and meriting status along with other cultures' creative works. Today, there are several world-renown art museums dedicated solely to American Indian art, such as the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, as well as prominent art museums with large Native art collections. Galleries around the globe display and sell Native American art, and there are several publications featuring Native arts. While Native artists are still not featured as prominently or frequently as EuroAmerican artists, *Indian Arts of the United States* altered the museum world's perception of American Indian art, changing the treatment of pieces and creating a space for Native American art in art museums.

Native American Art in Art Museums

There are some complications surrounding American Indian art in art museums. Just as natural history museums and anthropology museums have their own set of issues and controversies with Native artifacts, so too do art museums. Issues arise in art museums regarding how Native art is defined to how it is displayed. Museum professionals, art historians, Native artists, and members of Native communities all have differing opinions on museums' interpretation, use, and display of Native art.

Issues arise in how Native art is categorized. People on all sides of the American Indian arts issue have differing views on whether or not Native cultural items should be categorized as cultural material or art. When museums and galleries began collecting and displaying Native art, some saw it as an increase in respect for Native artists and Native cultural works. Differing opinions, however, exist. Some museums professionals and scholars feel that moving Native cultural materials from ethnographic collections to art collections may have a detrimental effect

¹⁹⁹ Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," 532.

on audiences' understanding of the pieces. Changing Native materials' categorization from ethnographic to art may "strip objects of cultural contexts" so that the visitor will not understand why the artifact was created or its function in the culture from which it originated.²⁰⁰ It is also worried that the movement of categorization from cultural materials to art privileges the physical material culture of Native peoples over the intangible cultural expressions in American Indian cultures, devaluing the actual living cultures and encouraging collection and consumption of Native cultures and art.²⁰¹ The conspicuous collection of Native art could then negatively affect those in Native communities, as their cultures are once again scavenged for cultural materials and motifs. These concerns widely regard the re-classifying of older ethnographic materials to art, changing the way material culture is labeled, displayed, and interpreted in museums.

Some scholars argue that museological categorization of Native items has no real effect on the interpretation of Native items, as Native cultural materials are already misinterpreted. As discussed in the literature review of this paper, many museums have a history of improperly or inaccurately handling, interpreting, and displaying Native American materials. Some scholars and Native peoples hold the position that art and anthropology are not dissimilar – both are two disciplines of Western culture – so their interpretations of American Indian materials could not be drastically different. Both anthropology and art history will view materials from a Western cultural perspective. It is argued that both disciplines' interpretations of the art/artifacts will differ greatly from the original ideas and interpretations of the makers and users of American Indian objects, so it is of no real consequence how the materials are actually categorized.²⁰²

Because the objects are no longer used or defined by the cultures that created the items, the

²⁰⁰ Rand, "Curatorial Practices: Voices, Values, Languages, and Traditions: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives on Curatorial Practice," 85.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Jacknis, "A New Thing? The NMAI in Historical and Institutional Perspective," 531.

understanding of the items (as long as the artifacts are in a museum controlled by a different culture) will be inaccurate. Proponents state that misinterpretation and categorization will be present until artifacts' source communities define the items, and even then (as the communities are different than those which created them due to time and cultural change) interpretation and categorization may not be accurate.

Modern American Indian art (art created by contemporary American Indians) has its own set of issues, including categorization, artist origins, and artist knowledge. Like the arguments about categorization of Native material culture, different opinions on contemporary Native art exist across cultural lines. There are arguments as to whether or not contemporary American Indian art should even be categorized as such. Often, it is disagreed as to whether or not the artwork is "Native", if it belongs to a modern Western artistic tradition, or if it is a modern tradition that crosses cultural lines.²⁰³ Those within Native communities and museum communities will argue about what constitutes Native art and what is a modern work of art by a Native person. Artists create cultural blurs with their works (which can sometimes contain cultural motifs, political expressions, modern and/or traditional techniques, and items from popular culture), which can make description and categorization difficult. This creates divides between groups on how to treat, describe, and display the works of art.

Native artists can face scrutiny about who they are and what they know from Native and museum communities. Legitimacy and authenticity are important in art spheres and in Native communities. Some non-Native peoples try to gain respect or believe it will give them an advantage in the art world if they pose as an American Indian, thinking it will make their work unique or more noticeable to museum and gallery professionals. This creates a problem of

²⁰³ Gurian, "What Is the Object of This Exercise? A Meandering Exploration of the Many Meanings of Objects in Museums," 276.

legitimacy and honesty in the art world, as well as the potential to damage the credibility and opportunities of Native artists. Issues of legitimacy also exist within Native communities: “some within Native communities... argue about the birth of American Indian artists; blood quantum, traditional upbringing, and knowledge of the language sometimes have considerable bearing on whether artists and their creations are considered Native.”²⁰⁴ In some cases, the decision to show a piece, determining what work is quality, and a museum’s collection of a work may have little to do with the work itself and more to do with the origins and knowledge of the artist. This can create issues for Native artists who have been displaced from their homelands, have grown up in urban settings or separate from their cultures, or whose language and traditions colonization has greatly affected or erased.

Circumstances surrounding Native art and museums can often be complicated. The issues must be examined in full, to determine the effects a museum setting has on Native art, as well as the effects Native art can bring to a museum. The blending of cultural expressions and viewers understanding of cultural expressions, as well as museum treatment of Native art impacts how art and artifacts are viewed, interpreted, and understood.

University Art Museums

University art museums present a forum for art different than other art museums. Because of their unique locations in university communities, university art museums have a focus on education and experimentation. Whereas natural history, science, technology, and anthropology museums mainly came into existence on campuses to maintain collections, university art galleries were often established without collections.²⁰⁵ The former museums had the

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ King and Marstine, “The University Museum and Gallery: A Site for Institutional Critique and a Focus of the Curriculum,” 267–268.

responsibility of preserving collections and providing research opportunities for scientists, whereas the later were able to show the visual artwork of faculty and students. The creation of a collection out of faculty and student work, and collections that were formed as learning resources, allowed for a much more informal and open educational setting at universities.

University art museums' informal spaces have the ability to create dialogues between artists, students, and patrons. University art museums encourage students are to discuss artwork with professors, artists, and each other. As Director of the Spencer Museum of Art, Saralyn Reese Hardy states in the Spencer Museum of Art's 2011 Fall Newsletter "as a university art museum, the Spencer provides an exceptional setting for memorable conversations. Conversations are one of the most interactive forms of human creativity, and they are an important factor in education."²⁰⁶ University art museums are available to all at the university, not just those in the fine arts or design departments. University art museums can establish "learning communities of students, faculty, and museum staff" and engage them in "an open-ended process intended to stimulate debate."²⁰⁷ Debate across disciplines not only helps those involved make new connections and learn about other topics, it can create fresh ideas for the museum. The all-university educational mission of university art museums, along with open access and involvement from students and faculty, encourages cross-discipline learning, involvement, and innovation.

University art museums not only foster spaces for education, they give students, artists, and museum staff space to experiment. In the university art museum, students are allowed close access to works of art, exhibition opportunities, programming that features lectures, movies, and

²⁰⁶ "Spencer Museum of Art Newsletter." 2.

²⁰⁷ King and Marstine, "The University Museum and Gallery: A Site for Institutional Critique and a Focus of the Curriculum," 271.

classes, internship and volunteer opportunities, and the ability to meet and discuss art with those who created it. University art museums afford students opportunities to work in museums, giving students the ability to influence and change how art is presented and perceived in the museum.²⁰⁸

As James Christian Steward, director of the Princeton Art Museum stated, due to their educational spirit university art museums are allowed avenues many other conventional art museums are not, including “undertaking projects that challenge the status quo in thinking about the art of the past, presenting the work of living artists not yet taken up by the art market—and resisting projects that are largely about the numbers (numbers of prospective visitors, volume of prospective shop sales) without equivalent content value.”²⁰⁹ University art museums are spaces of expressive freedom within the art world. In the university art museum, new ideas are often created and experimentation reigns.

The influence of new perspectives challenges to traditional ideas, and space to experiment affects the type of works shown and the university museum’s displays of art. The educational foundation of the university art museum and the freedom of spirit allowed within those walls fosters a unique space for experimentation. Students experience a new view of the museum as experimentalist and experience-based teacher. Artists experience a freedom of expression outside of normal art museum conventions. University museum employees experience the latitude to investigate new exhibition narratives and themes. In university art museums students, faculty, artists, and employees are allowed to not only rethink art, but also the space in which art takes place.

The Spencer Museum of Art, as a university art museum, is perfectly poised to take on the challenges the ethnographic collection may bring. As a space for innovation and

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 267.

²⁰⁹ “Summer 2010 — Princeton Art Museum.”

experimentation, the university art museum can employ New Museum Theory and new ways of exhibition to tell the unique stories only this ethnographic collection could share. Together, the Spencer Museum of Art and the ethnographic collection could create a space of examination, learning, and discovery about Native voice and experience. The Spencer Museum of Art, if handled correctly, is well situated to bring new life to the ethnographic collection.

Chapter Three

At the University of Kansas, the Spencer Museum of Art exhibited part of the University of Kansas' ethnographic collection for the first time in the fall 2011 exhibition, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*. Contributing to the new interpretation and purpose of the collection, this exhibition sought to share the untold story of Native migration and removal in Kansas, using aspects of NMT to share Native experience and culture in Kansas. This section of the thesis describes the techniques of NMT utilized by The Spencer Museum of Art and *Passages*, discovering if NMT techniques helped to effectively communicate Native experience and voice to the audiences of *Passages*.

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place, was an exhibit inspired by the commemoration of the Kansas Sesquicentennial, reflecting on the nature of place through the lens of American Indian cultures. Funded in part by the Kansas Humanities Council, the exhibit was located in Gallery 318 of the Spencer Museum of Art. The exhibition ran from September 10th, 2011 through January 15th, 2012. *Passages* utilized some of the University of Kansas' ethnographic collection, a contemporary piece from the Spencer Museum of Art, as well as contemporary and historical pieces on loan to the Spencer Museum of Art. Using both American Indian oral traditions and academic perspectives to interpret items on display, *Passages* was designed to provide reflection on the location of Kansas and its importance in Westward movement for EuroAmericans, as a place of relocations from American Indians moved out of as

well as in to Kansas, and the changes in boundaries, land, and American Indian cultures as Kansas moved into official statehood.

New Museum Theory in Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place utilized several different techniques of New Museum Theory to tell the story of movement in and throughout Kansas. The exhibit aspired to use NMT to tell another side of Kansas statehood, with a focus on the land loss suffered by American Indians and changed by Westward expansion. *Passages* used the following techniques/aspects of NMT to tell the story: repurposing the collection, acknowledging unique Native practices, oral traditions, sharing previously untold stories, Native collaboration, conservation, promoting pride/ownership of Native identity, discussion of topical Native issues, and cultural preservation. A discussion of how the exhibit used these techniques follows.

Repurposing the Collection

Changing the type of museum in which a collection lives and is used changes how the collection is understood. The type of museum influences all aspects of the collection's use, including how exhibitions will interpret and share the items. The recent acquisition of the ethnographic collections to the Spencer Museum of Art warrants an examination of how the Spencer Museum of Art interprets the ethnographic collection. As the previous section demonstrated, university art museums are unique places of learning—how the Spencer Museum of Art understands the collection influences the way in which exhibits, such as *Passages*, are designed and what benefits the museum hopes an audience will gain. The underlying interpretations and intentions of the Spencer Museum of Art affects *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* in the way in which the items are understood, what knowledge is disseminated

about the items, and how the audience will interact with and come to know the ethnographic collection.

The Spencer Museum of Art, on acquisition of the ethnographic collection, stated that the new stewardship of the collection at the Spencer Museum of Art should not be perceived as the appropriation of cultural objects into a western artistic interpretation. Instead, the museum's hope for the collection was to start a global and cultural dialogue at the museum. The Spencer Museum of Art saw the opportunity that the ethnographic collections could enable the museum to focus on presenting increasingly global, expressive, and multicultural stories. Part of this global and cultural dialogue would be that "the cultural meanings and traditions of the ethnographic materials in the collection must be respected and shared."²¹⁰ The Spencer Museum of Art committed to appreciating the materials not just for the items' artistic merit, but to view the items through different interpretive lenses.²¹¹ Through this dialogue, the museum hopes to engage many voices in interpretation with the collection. The museum plans to work with many departments across campus, including the Department of Anthropology, in the interpretation of the collection. In this, the museum hopes to "bring the perspective of cultural theory to the Spencer's entire collection."²¹² The museum also intends to be receptive to the interpretive claims of the source communities from which the objects come, and integrate diverse voices into museum policy and practice in the care of the materials.²¹³ The Spencer Museum of Art intends a collaborative approach with Haskell Indian Nations University regarding the collections, allowing access to scholars and members of Native nations, as well as collaborating on funding,

²¹⁰ "The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections," 2.

²¹¹ "American Heritage: KU Contributes to New Native Galleries at Nelson-Atkins," 2.

²¹² "The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections," 3.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

exchanging exhibit and programming ideas, and partnership opportunities.²¹⁴ Through these intentions, the Spencer Museum of Art hoped to engage source communities, multivocal interpretations, and cultural significance into the care and interpretation of the ethnographic materials. The exhibit *Passages*, as the first exhibit to utilize these principles, was seen as a part of that opportunity and intention.

Acknowledging Unique Native Practices

A fundamental aspect of Indigenous NMT is the acknowledgement of the individual and unique cultures amongst American Indian nations. Grouped into one category of “American Indian,” the tribal and cultural variance of Native nations in North America was historically ignored in many dominant museums. NMT seeks to correct this stereotype, by exhibiting cultural difference in Indigenous exhibits. *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*, illustrated not only the varying tribes that moved in and through Kansas, but also the myriad of cultural expressions that existed for these tribes.

The exhibit illustrates the many different tribes that existed in Kansas before Kansas’ statehood, and the variety of cultures that movement influenced. Through use of maps, artifacts, artwork, and explanation of the use and design of cultural materials, *Passages* illustrated the wide variety of tribal lifeways in and around the Kansas area. For example, artifacts from the Cherokee, Prairie Band Potawatomi, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, and Osage Nations displayed the wide array of cultures and the difference in material cultures in Kansas. The exhibit detailed why movement influenced these tribes, and how different Native artists manifested this influence in their works. For example, to show how movement affected many aspects of Plains tribal life, varieties of bags were shown along with explanation of from which tribe the bag

²¹⁴ Diepenbrock, “Museum New Supervisor of 10,000 Artifacts,” 1; Hardy, “Rod Borlase Letter,” 1,3.

originated, its use, and how the Native artist expressed their cultural traditions through the piece. A Cheyenne parfleche, a Kiowa strike-a-light bag, a Cheyenne Possible bag, and an Arapaho beaded pouch were displayed in tandem, with corresponding labels that detailed each bag's source community, why it was used, and what cultural influences would have inspired the artist. The exhibit also discussed the changes in culture, and in turn the design of bags that took place while Native peoples experienced movement to the reservation period. Across from this display, in the center of the room, was a Potawatomi cradle board next to Cheyenne dress. Each label told the story of the item, how it was used, and its importance to survival and culture for the tribe from which it came. In this way, *Passages* showed audiences the variety of cultures living in or moving through Kansas at the time, and the environment, necessity, belief, or traditions that influenced each tribe's cultures, motifs, and use of the item.

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place was not limited to discussing the cultural aspects and influences of 19th century Native peoples. The exhibit opened up a dialogue with current Native artists, placing identity and the modern effects of land loss within the exhibit space. Works like Martha Berry's (Cherokee) *The Struggle* bandolier bag, on loan from the collection of Bill Shaffer, showed that the bag as a vehicle for art is still in the consciousness of American Indian artists. The continuity of the beadwork tradition and the subject of a balance between themes of peace and war in the bandolier bag suggest to the viewer expressions about movement, life, duality, and culture are not a thing of the past for American Indians, but are very much a part of modern Native artistry. The materials of expression (from pigment to glass blown beads to manufactured beads) are adapting and changing along with Native culture in the modern day, but there is a feeling of extension and connection to the past. In this way, *Passages* shares American Indian culture and identity not only across tribes, but across time.

Oral Traditions

The importance of oral traditions in storytelling, record keeping, and cultural preservation to American Indian nations is often overlooked by many museums. Oral traditions are a centerpiece to many American Indian cultures, and NMT works to establish the authority of Native oral traditions in museums. The use of oral traditions in museum exhibitions acknowledges traditional methods of the transmission of knowledge, and gives Native communities authority as repositories of knowledge.²¹⁵ It also helps exhibits succeed in presenting new stories, as the Native experience as transmitted through oral traditions has often been left out of EuroAmerican written records. *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* utilized oral traditions to help tell the experience of tribes in Kansas that faced relocation and land loss. The exhibit and its companion piece *Heartland Reverberations* also used aspects of oral tradition to examine how relocation, movement, and land loss affects American Indian identity and experience today.

Passages employed oral traditions in several different capacities throughout the exhibit. Native consultants assisted with writing labels throughout the exhibit, using knowledge passed down through family and community associations to identify and tell the stories of the objects. For example, Menominee/Potawatomi/Ho-Chunk consultant Jancita Warrington described a beaded wedding dress from the Prairie Band Potawatomi. In her description, Warrington shared how when a young woman reached the age of marriage, a mother would bead a wedding dress for her daughter containing designs about family identity and cultural lessons to help the new bride transition into the roles of wife and mother.²¹⁶ Accompanying this was a section about the beadwork of the Potawatomi as a repository of generations of collective memory that taught

²¹⁵ Isaac, "Responsibilities Towards Knowledge," 314.

²¹⁶ "The Prairie Band Potawatomi Label."

stories of family, clan systems, societal and religious roles, plants, and medicines of importance to the Potawatomi people.²¹⁷ The label expressed Potawatomi beadwork as an oral tradition, including the importance of beadwork to tell stories of who the Potawatomi are and where they come from. This label included a statement by Warrington about the importance of beadwork and art to the Potawatomi people: “I feel blessed to have been born into a family of traditional artists who practice this cultural skill on a daily basis. It provides strength of character and identity. This cultural strength provides spiritual nourishment. This is what sustains and connects Potawatomi people to their past, present, and future.”²¹⁸ This label used oral traditions and beadwork as oral traditions to share Potawatomi experience with the audience. This display showed the depth and breadth of knowledge contained in oral history, and its prominence in the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation today.

The use of oral traditions influenced another aspect of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* -- *Passages* as a functioning dialogue with *Passages*' contemporary companion exhibit, *Heartland Reverberations*. *Heartland Reverberations* was exhibited at the same time as *Passages*, in an adjoining gallery, but displayed the artworks of five contemporary Native American Artists -- all members of federally recognized native nations that were removed from Kansas prior to statehood. The artists, Dianne Yeahquo Reyner (Kiowa), Ryan Red Corn (Osage), Bunky Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakama), Norman Akers (Osage), and Chris Pappan (Osage/Kaw/Cheyenne River Sioux), were brought together to express responses to the Kansas Sesquicentennial.

Passages was intended as one half of what Curator of the Arts and Cultures of the Americas, Africa, and Oceania, Nancy Mahaney, described as a “call-and-response” piece. The

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

“call-and-response” style of American Indian music has roots in the Eastern Woodland nations: “one singer utters a phrase of lexical text (call) and the other answers him with a vocable pattern.”²¹⁹ This style has found uses in contemporary American Indian dialogues, as well, moving beyond just musical expression. “Call-and-response” style has found use in Native activism, with letters, meetings, and dialogues about sovereignty and nationalism structured around this style.²²⁰ Activism and awareness are also a function of the two exhibits, especially *Heartland Reverberations* to serve as a “politically vocal/activist voice.”²²¹ This activist voice was intended to provide a Native viewpoint of removal affects in the twenty-first century. Each exhibition could be viewed separately, but when experienced together, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* and *Heartland Reverberations* functioned as a dialogue on movement, removal, land loss, homecoming, and identity for American Indians.

The exhibitions responded to each other, allowing the dialogue of removal and loss a contemporary and historical tone. *Passages*, sharing the perspective of Native nations before, during, and after the removal policies of the US and the transition of Kansas into statehood, was the “call” portion of the “call-and-response” style. *Passages* functioned to express the historical experience of movement and land loss for tribes in Kansas, giving viewers background knowledge about land removal policies, and a perspective from which to review the work of contemporary artists in *Heartland Reverberations*. *Heartland Reverberations*, then, was the “response” to the “call” of *Passages*. The contemporary Native artists responded to the land loss in *Passages*, expressing through their art feelings about loss, historical events, family, clan, and home. These artworks, and the Native artists behind the works, sought to express: “landscapes

²¹⁹ Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 41.

²²⁰ Weaver, Womack, and Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, 161.

²²¹ Mahaney, “‘Passages’ and ‘Heartland Reverberations’ Meeting.”

of possibly, where political boundaries are erased, landscapes of memory... intersect with popular imagery and current events.”²²² Echoing the feeling of movement found in *Passages*, *Heartland Reverberations* was a response that Kansas has been a home to migrants for hundreds, if not thousands of years, and the two exhibitions were not only a historical/experiential chronicle of those involved in movement, but a homecoming to those removed, a reminder for those present, and a zeitgeist for those yet to arrive.

Sharing Previously Untold Stories

New Museum Theory hopes to change the dialogue of Indigenous exhibits from a focus on the colonizing entity of an experience. The change is one where Native experience is privileged, where Native voices are able to share experiences and historical memories. NMT strives to make the discussion of historical events and presentations of life ways no longer one-sided, but multicultural and multi-vocal. *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* used American Indian experience, Native viewpoints, and current American Indian artworks to share Native American experience surrounding Kansas statehood. In this way *Passages* attempted to tell the previously un-exhibited Native removal experience, and its effects, in Kansas.

Creators hoped *Passages* could use the opportunity of the Kansas Sesquicentennial to provide viewers a reflection on the location of Kansas as a space of Westward settlement, of relocation and removal, and an examination of how boundaries and cultures changed due to these factors. In doing so, the exhibit hoped to share the experience of American Indian nations in Kansas or those removed out of Kansas – how removal affected culture, experience, and lives involved in relocation. For example, the exhibit spoke from both an academic perspective,

²²² “Heartland Reverberations Label.”

sharing traditional materials such as maps and treaties, but also spoke from a Native American perspective, sharing stories, artwork, and material culture.

On the wall space of the exhibition that discussed removal policies in Kansas, maps, historical posters, and photographs were shown side-by-side with descriptions and presentations of the events and places from American Indian perspectives. For example, a representation drawn for *Harpers' Weekly* of the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1867, which removed the majority of Native Americans remaining in Kansas and relocated them to reservations in Indian Territory (Oklahoma), was exhibited as part of *Passages*. Next to this piece, however, is a section spoken by Ten Bears (Comanche) after listening to the offers of the government in return for land. In the excerpt, Ten Bears eloquently discusses the unfairness of the offer, and counters with the statement that “you said that you wanted to put us upon a reservation, to build us houses and make us medicine lodges. I do not want them. I was born upon the prairie where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun. I was born where there were no enclosures and where everything drew a free breath. I want to die there and not within walls.”²²³ The powerful statement by Ten Bears shows the viewers the realities of removal that faced American Indians as well as the attitudes of Native peoples at time. This display allows a space for a historical Native voice, showing the human consequences of removal.

Removal and relocation affected Native American tribes on several levels. It changed the dynamics of movement and migration that many tribes had previously experienced, replacing them with a sedentary lifestyle on reservations. This altered the cultures and lifeways of the nations affected, but as *Passages* illustrated, American Indians continued to maintain their cultural identities. Through the display and explanation of dress, *Passages* showed how identity

²²³ Ten Bears, “Medicine Lodge Indian Council Address to the Indian Commissioner.”

was shaped and changed due to movement, relocation, and reservation life. *Passages* showed viewers how American Indian groups demonstrated cultural change and adaptation in ceremonial clothing styles and designs that were shared, modified, and passed down as a result of migration, intermarriage, and experimentation. As distinct cultural groups moved closer together due to reservation life, styles melded and new styles emerged as groups influenced design, borrowed styles or techniques, and innovated new traditions.

For example, *Passages* exhibited a number of Osage materials, explaining how movement and relocation influenced changes in Osage traditions and dress. The Osage section of the exhibit discusses the I'n-Lon-Schka dance as an example of changing cultural traditions. Osage culture changed dramatically with relocation to Oklahoma in 1872. Many elders did not survive the transition, and much cultural knowledge was lost as religious instruction and practice declined. The Osage credit the Kaw with giving them the I'n-Lon-Schka ceremony, which they adopted in the 1880s.²²⁴ The ceremony became an intertribal activity among many relocated tribes. An Osage dance blanket was displayed along with a description about the Osage origins of the I'n-Lon-Schka, as the blankets originated around the same time as the dance. The blankets were made for women and girls to wear during the dance, and were often gifted in giveaways to honor respected individuals.²²⁵ The blankets are often called "Friendship" blankets, as the making and giving of the blankets strengthen community ties and relationships.²²⁶ The display of the dance blanket and explanation of the Osage I'n-Lon-Schka allowed viewers an example of how removal directly influenced a cultural change for the Osage. Photographs, on loan from members of the Osage Nation, of Osage peoples dressed for the dance were also included in the

²²⁴ "Osage Culture Label: Dance Blanket."

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

display. *Passages* strove to use different modes of explanation, including labels utilizing Native voice, displays of Native artifacts, and photographs from personal and historical collections to share Native experience, allowing the viewer a multidimensional description of cultural change.

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place was also a space for the expression of a current Native voice. Along with the historical items and ethnographic materials displayed in the exhibition, *Passages* displayed three works from current Native American artists. The goal of the inclusion of current Native pieces was to allow a modern American Indian voice into the discussion of movement, removal, and land loss. The effect illustrated that issues of land loss are not in the past; land loss still has repercussions and an effect on American Indians living today. Works by Chris Pappan, Martha Berry, and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith utilized media influenced by Native artistic traditions, such as beadwork and ledger drawing, to express current-day feelings of conflict, loss, distortion, and confusion. Each piece was placed within a corresponding section of the exhibit, allowing the viewer to either start or end on the modern piece. This, curator Nancy Mahaney hoped, would “encourage reflection on modern Native experience.”²²⁷ Martha Berry’s *The Struggle* bandolier bag was placed within the section of 19th century American Indian bags, Chris Pappan’s painting of Little Bear against an advertisement of a railroad poster from the nineteenth century could be found amongst maps and treaties detailing removal and settlement, and Juan Quick-to-See Smith’s drawing *What is an American?*, where a Plains figure dressed in various historical and ceremonial attire is enclosed by American pop culture symbols, was surrounded by 19th century Plains ceremonial and dance dress. The placement of each modern artwork in a context of continual Native expression about identity and place spoke to a larger plain of loss, removal, and identity extending through time and place

²²⁷ Mahaney, “‘Passages’ and ‘Heartland Reverberations’ Meeting.”

Chris Pappan (Osage/Kaw/Cheyenne River Sioux) had two pieces in the exhibition, *I've a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore* and a figure study for *Not in Kansas....* Pappan often draws or paints American Indian portraits with distorted perception, against a backdrop of ledger paper or maps. The pieces exhibited in *Passages* presented a depiction of Little Bear. The figure drawing placed Little Bear on ledger paper, while the final painting utilizes an image of a 19th century railroad poster advertising Native lands. The *Passages* labels explained Pappan's artwork as reflecting the dominant culture's distorted perceptions of Native peoples while proclaiming the persistence of Native peoples.²²⁸ In the final piece, the image of Little Bear and the railroad poster background create juxtaposition between person and place, illustrating the context of relocation and displacement. It reminds the viewer that perceptions of Native peoples, stereotypes about use of land and ownership of land, and Westward expansion all impacted the ways of life, cultures, and traditions of displaced Native peoples. The effects of displacement are still present for American Indians today, as the title (a reference to the *Wizard of Oz*) reminds audiences that Kansas was once home to Native peoples, peoples who were subsequently forced out as EuroAmericans moved in and the land became a state. The placement of each piece of modern Native artwork with corresponding artifacts and documents points to a continuation of mourning and commemoration of land loss for modern American Indians. Through the use of these works, *Passages* broadened the dialogue from a singular examination of movement and removal to a discussion of the repercussions of loss and the importance of place for Native peoples in the twenty-first century.

²²⁸ "I've a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore Label."

Native Collaboration

Another aspect of New Museum Theory is the movement towards power-sharing in museum settings, between museum professionals and members of Native nations. This power-sharing often takes the form of collaboration with Native American consultants for item identification, artifact research, and exhibit creation. This goal of American Indian involvement in museum work with Indigenous objects is to restructure the hierarchy of traditional museums, so that Native voice is heard throughout exhibits and on matters of artifact information and care. It also allows new perspectives on items from the source community, often allowing new knowledge about the artifacts to come forward.

Passages featured Native collaboration on several fronts. Native consultants had a voice on all levels of the exhibit process, from the first meetings about the exhibit, to the final installation. Consultants for *Passages* included Chris Howell (Pawnee), Joni Murphy (Muskogee-Creek), and Jancita Warrington (Potawatomi). Consultants worked as members of the exhibit team, first helping identify numerous artifacts in the ethnographic collection that were previously unidentified. Consultants then contributed to label writing for the exhibit, as well as providing ideas about the structure of the exhibit, and the subjects the exhibit might address. The consultants' personal experiences with land loss and the effects of removal on their communities, families, and cultures was a main feature of the consultant's discussion, as well as their enthusiasm that objects from the ethnographic collection would finally be displayed and shared with KU, Lawrence, and Haskell communities. As consultant and collaborator Joni Murphy shared, many Native peoples in the Lawrence community were thankful the collection finally had a home at the Spencer, where the objects could be "looked at as art, not just ethnographic

artifacts.”²²⁹ The consultants’ enthusiasm to be finally able to work with and research the objects could be felt in *Passages*, giving a hopeful spirit to the exhibit – an excitement to teach others the knowledge and stories the collection could share. This collaboration was invaluable to the exhibit, providing an American Indian voice to *Passages*, as well as assisting in the care of the overall ethnographic collection through their identification of objects and uses for the objects.

Not only did Native peoples work on the creation of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*, but several pieces in the exhibit were loaned to the Spencer Museum of Art from Native individuals or nations for display in *Passages*. Consultant Jancita Warrington organized a loan from the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation of a wedding dress to display, illustrating Prairie Band Potawatomi beadwork and storytelling. Raymond Red Corn loaned a photograph of his male family members in regalia for the Osage I’n-Lon-Schka dance.²³⁰ This photograph added a modern dimension to the exhibit section, which featured a label about the dance, and an Osage dance blanket. The photograph’s generations of Red Corns participating in the dance showed the continuation of culture for the Osage community. As mentioned previously, Native artists also contributed to the exhibit, loaning pieces that also communicated a modern American Indian voice to the discussion of land removal, loss, and identity. Thanks to the contributions of Native nations and individual American Indians, *Passages* presented a holistic view of removal and the consequences of removal for American Indians.

Conservation

As part of Chapter Two discussed, the ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas had faced several decades of conservation and care issues. The collections were improperly stored, many objects could not be properly identified, and consultant James Riding In

²²⁹ Murphy, “‘Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place’ Film Series Introduction.”

²³⁰ Red Corn, *The Red Corns at the Pawhuska I’n-Lon-Schka Ceremony*.

found the university to be out of compliance with NAGPRA. These issues faced the Spencer Museum of Art upon gaining stewardship of the collections, and in order to care for and make the collection ready for display, the Spencer Museum of Art began several projects to update the care and conservation of the collection.

After the activism that arose in the mid-2000s regarding the care of the collections, the University of Kansas decided to hire a consultant to make the collections compliant with NAGPRA. This prepared the collections for a smoother transition to the Spencer Museum of Art, and also repatriated several items to Native nations. In 2006, the university named Thomas Foor, a professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Montana, to a temporary position as coordinator of compliance with the federal Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).²³¹ Foor's work would concentrate on sacred artifacts, artifacts that had been previously unidentified in the collection. After examining the collection, Foor stated to the Lawrence Journal World: "I believe what the University of Kansas is looking for is a way to systematically deal with these artifacts and to make sure we have as comprehensive an accounting for the importance of these pieces as we can make for Native groups."²³² Foor's tasks also included overseeing an upgrade of storage units for the collection, improving the database for the collection, and facilitating access to the collection for KU classes and research by students and faculty. Foor oversaw the repatriation of six items to Native nations, and at the time of the movement of the collections to the Spencer Museum of Art, 3,600 pieces were being examined to see if they would be subject to repatriation.²³³ After the move to the Spencer,

²³¹ "Artifact-Repatriation Coordinator Named," 1.

²³² Maines, "New Employee Oversees KU's Native Artifacts," 1.

²³³ Diepenbrock, "Museum New Supervisor of 10,000 Artifacts," 1.

however, the items for repatriation were estimated to be a much smaller number. Consultants and Spencer employees are currently working on cataloging and examining all of the items.

The movement of the objects to the Spencer Museum of Art saw the items undergo change in care, conservation, and documentation. This significantly increased the availability of the collections for exhibition and research. The director of the Spencer Museum of Art, Saralynn Hardy, established a process for digitalizing the Native American Plains objects from the collection, establishing a digital database.²³⁴ This would make the collection available for access not only locally, but regionally, nationally, and internationally. This was a major improvement in the access people would have to the collection, contributing to a “public understanding of the arts and cultures of the world.”²³⁵ The Spencer Museum of Art also invested in an improved storage system for the collection, and worked with a faculty member of the Indigenous Nations Studies Department (with assistance from tribal consultants) to create collection-conservation guidelines for the ethnographic collection.²³⁶ As of today, the Spencer Museum staff is still working to catalogue and research the collection, with help from Native consultants during the development of *Passages*. The Spencer Museum of Art hopes to eventually have the collection: “documented completely, managed professionally, cared for physically, disseminated widely as part of the digitization project, and respected culturally through collaboration, exhibition, research, teaching, and reflection.”²³⁷ These goals show a change in the care of the collection. The exhibition, *Passages*, assisted in cementing these goals. As *Passages* developed, research, identification, and access to the collection expanded greatly, allowing several of the goals of the Spencer to become more of a reality.

²³⁴ Hardy, “Mary Adair Letter,” 1.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Hardy, “Rod Borlase Letter,” 2.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Discussion of Topical Native Issues

An aspect of Indigenous New Museum Theory is the inclusion of topical Native issues to an exhibit. This inclusion not only brings awareness to the current situations facing Native nations, but also includes a modern portrayal of American Indian life. The addition of current American Indian issues works to combat harmful stereotypes of Native peoples that many dominant museums as well as popular culture perpetuate. The embracing of topical Native issues, such as water rights, sovereignty, cultural continuance, and education rights, makes exhibits much more than just vehicles to display ways of life or experiences, they create spaces for activism and change.

Passages featured discussions of topical American Indian issues, including the effects of removal and land loss on American Indians today. The issues of land loss feature prominently in Native activism, and play a role in many modern American Indian lives. Land loss is not in the past for Native peoples, it has documented psychological effects on those who have been subject to removal or land loss. As Valaskakis shares, “in the collective heritage of struggle and settlement – of reservations, resource exploitation, and land allotments – the meaning of land that emerges in the lived experience of current practice of Native peoples is interwoven with images of painful displacement, forced acculturation, and enduring indigence.”²³⁸ Incorporated in narratives of dominance and survivance, land and land loss to Native Americans is linked to past and present, as well as identity and politics.²³⁹ Themes of *Passages* endeavored to introduce these issues to a larger audience, bringing the issues of land and control to the topic of Kansas’ statehood.

²³⁸ Valaskakis, *Indian Country*, 94.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

The current issues surrounding land loss and displacement could be seen through the Native artworks in *Passages*. Continuing the discussion of statehood, removal, and loss, works by Chris Pappan and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith broached the subject of loss and identity for American Indians today. Pappan's work, as discussed earlier, opened a dialogue about displacement for Native nations once in Kansas. The effect of distortion of perception of identity, and the factors of colonialism on current American Indians, is one of the results of removal. A disconnection with place and identity resonates with Pappan's work, as a Native person living a distance away from the lands of his ancestors. Indeed, Pappan called featuring his work in *Passages* and *Heartland Reverberations* a "homecoming."²⁴⁰ This connection of land and loss is woven into many discussions of identity for American Indians. *Passages* worked to share that experience and feeling with a larger community, introducing these notions of loss and personhood to many in the audience.

Identity and modern Native issues was also discussed in the work of Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's (Flathead/Interior Salish/Cree/Salish/Shoshone) piece, *What is an American?* This lithograph was the current American Indian artwork on which many visitors to *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* ended. Smith's piece is designed as the interior of a parfleche – a Native American rawhide bag (a 19th century parfleche was featured in *Passages*, as well) – that has been opened. The interior presents a headless person in Plains Indian dress and the figure is bleeding a rainbow of red, white, and blue from a wound in the palm of the hand. Melding symbols from Christianity, American Indians Plains culture, and Americana, the piece addresses identity on many levels. The figure is also surrounded by the words, "what is an American?" challenging the viewer to ask this of themselves. This piece, the last for many to

²⁴⁰ Pappan, "Heartlands and Passages Interview."

see in the exhibition, reinforced the questions and issues of identity and Native American life raised by *Passages*. Smith looks at American Indian identity in its current form, often a mixture of cultures, traditions, and personal belief, as diverse and individual as every Native person. In this one piece, Smith questions how America constructed stereotypes of Native peoples, why these stereotypes continue, and what these stereotypes mean for Native peoples and issues today. This piece addresses not just removal and culture, but the identity of American Indians peoples today. In placing this piece where many finished the exhibition on the piece, *Passages* leaves viewers with powerful imagery and knowledge, asking them to dig deeper into what they may have learned at the exhibition that day. In doing so, the exhibition broadens its message into one of identity, construction, and the legacy of American experience.

Teaching New Generations

New Museum Theory places the goal of a museum firmly in the realm of education. The museum's function is that of educator, to share experience and teach audiences new knowledge, ideas, or attitudes. In regards to Indigenous New Museum Theory, the goal of education becomes one of multiculturalism and cultural preservation.²⁴¹ Multiculturalism seeks to “honor the comprehensive character of American experience”, correcting stereotypes of popular culture and the misinformation of many dominant museums.²⁴² This multiculturalism incorporates aspects of new stories and sharing Native experience to a wide audience, where all members of a community are exposed to the various cultures and modes of identity that make up not just Native American experience, but American experience. Cultural preservation seeks to make cultural practices, lifeways, and artifacts available to source communities. While repatriation should always be examined on a case-by-case basis, and opinions on repatriation and artifacts are

²⁴¹ Gaither, ““Hey! That’s Mine’’: Thoughts on Pluralism and American Museums,” 110–111.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 111.

varied in Native communities, some Native communities do not have the funds or resources to take care of items and wish the museum to keep the items as a steward, in order to protect and preserve the items. This allows the items to be protected in the museum, but accesses by source community members in order for Native communities to learn from the items in the museum's stewardship. *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* incorporated aspects of both educational models in its treatment of items. *Passages* disseminated multicultural ideas about American Indians and America as a whole, while the Spencer Museum of Art committed its stewardship of the items to full access for Native communities and students.

Passages incorporated multicultural teachings on several levels. This provided a new ability for the museum to reach out to a wide audience, sharing Native experience and stories of Native movement and removal in Kansas. As mentioned previously, *Passages* featured artifacts, Native stories, and shared modern Native experience and identity to tell stories about Native nations and their experiences of removal and land loss on Kansas' path to statehood. This story reached many in the community, as every fourth-grade class from Lawrence and surrounding communities visited the exhibit on field trips during the exhibition. This exposed all fourth-grade students in the area to these stories, sharing with students a new view of Kansas and American Indian identity. *Passages* also featured programs along with the exhibit, all open to the public. Museum programs provide opportunities of deeper connection and understanding for audience members and can "enhance understanding of humanistic and pluralistic values."²⁴³ These programs included a film series on American Indian identity, senior-session gallery talks, artist studio visits (where audience members would hear what inspired American Indian artists whose work was in *Passages* and *Heartland Reverberations*), and panel talks with the exhibits'

²⁴³ Ibid., 112.

curator, art history and anthropology professors, and Native artists. These programs covered American Indian history, stereotypes, identity, and experience in-depth, allowing audience members to ask questions and more fully understand components of *Passages* and American Indian experience.

The inclusion of cultural preservation in *Passages* and the Spencer Museum of Art's goals for the ethnographic collection broaden the scope and effect the collection can have for research and learning opportunities. The availability of the collection to be used by members of source communities is invaluable to continued research and understanding, as Native community members are able to learn from the objects as well as teach museum staff and visitors about the objects. The collaboration between Spencer staff and Native consultants during *Passages* has introduced opportunities for future collaborations between the museum and Native communities, opening up avenues for new exhibits and discussions. *Passages* also created opportunities for future collaborations with Haskell Native Nations University, as Haskell students and faculty were invited to take part in helping organize and participate in programming for *Passages*. The Spencer Museum of Art now has an ongoing collaborative relationship with Haskell that allows object access to scholars and members of Native nations by special arrangement.²⁴⁴ Access for source communities has extended beyond just KU, Haskell, and Lawrence with the digitization of the collection. The digitization of the collection that the Spencer is working to finish will allow unprecedented access for source communities to these items, whether in Lawrence or across the country. When digitization is complete, no matter where a person may live, they will be able to access the collection. The Spencer Museum of Art and *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* have started a new trend for KU and for the ethnographic collection. Now,

²⁴⁴ “The Spencer Museum of Art and the University of Kansas Ethnographic Collections,” 3.

Native knowledge is honored and community members have access and the ability to use, research, and learn from KU's ethnographic collections.

Methods and Results

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place was the first exhibit at the Spencer Museum of Art to use features of Indigenous New Museum Theory. The exhibit employed Native consultants in research and selection of items, Native and academic perspectives on the relocation of Kansas tribes, and Native perspectives on the celebration of the Kansas Sesquicentennial in 2011. The Spencer Museum of Art has hoped to start a new chapter in the life of KU's ethnographic collections, and *Passages*, as the first exhibition to take these perspectives, plays a vital role in beginning that chapter. The exhibit provides a unique chance to judge if the Spencer Museum of Art lends new voices to this previously under-used collection, and if NMT is successful in communicating Native perspectives to audiences. This section discovers if NMT an effective means or not to communicate Native experience in *Passages*, discovering what influences NMT has on audience knowledge or attitudes regarding Native peoples.

This section discusses a summative evaluation of *Passages* (Appendix A), conducted in the fall of 2011. Whereas a formative evaluation takes place during the planning and implementation stages of exhibit creation, a summative evaluation examines what, if any, effect the exhibit has on the audience. The summative evaluation of the exhibit includes analysis of audience surveys, Native artist questionnaires/interviews, and observations of programming and gallery talks. The best way to discover the effectiveness of a museum or an exhibit is to measure a change in an audience, and in this case the outcomes desired were a change in audience

attitudes or knowledge about Native peoples, as NMT strives to correct colonial narratives to narratives expressing Native voice. Ultimately, this section hopes to answer the questions, do any of NMT techniques really work? How do we know? The analysis of this project's summative evaluation of the exhibit will establish if the new home at the Spencer Museum of Art, new stories, collaboration with Native groups, and the exhibit's use of multiple voices formed an exhibit where the voices of those represented are as clear as those who created the exhibit. The summative evaluation, with my analysis, will determine if the use of NMT techniques in *Passages* effectively communicated Native perspectives and experience to an audience, giving the ethnographic collections a new purpose and life at the Spencer Museum of Art.

Discussion of Summative Evaluation

The summative evaluation of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* took place from October to December of 2011. I used surveys, interviews, and observations to document visitor knowledge and attitude outcomes. The following questions guided the summative evaluation, in order to determine what changes, if any, *Passages* caused in visitors: 1) Did visitor knowledge about American Indians and American Indian issues change? 2) Did visitor attitudes about American Indians change? 3) Whose viewpoint did audiences perceive *Passages* as representing? 4) What did visitors take away from their experience? These guiding questions sought to ultimately discover what effect the use of NMT had on viewers' perceptions and knowledge gained from *Passages*.

The summative evaluation used multiple methods to determine audience changes in attitude or knowledge. The primary method used for the study was visitor surveys, supplemented with interviews with contemporary American Indian artists and observations

during *Passages*' public programming. Thirty-two surveys were conducted for this study, using a Human Subjects Committee of Lawrence approved survey (See Appendix B). Visitors were approached as they participated in the Spencer Museum of Art's Student Advisory Board's Student Night, on October 27th, 2011. The sample consisted of members of the Lawrence community (adults living in or around Lawrence, Kansas with no affiliation with the University of Kansas), the University of Kansas community (faculty, staff, and students), and Haskell Native Nations University community (faculty, staff, and students). Surveys consisted of six questions, with four of the questions asking participants to rate a number of statements on a seven-point scale (with one being lowest and seven the highest). The statements addressed the following categories of outcomes: 1) Change in knowledge; 2) Change in attitudes; 3) Interest level; 4) Perception of viewpoints.

The study also gained American Indian artists' perspectives of *Passages*. Five contemporary American Indian artists were asked to participate in an email interview/questionnaire (See Appendix C). Two responded, providing answers to questions surrounding their contemporary artwork as well as their perceptions of and experience in *Passages*.

In order to gain a broader understanding of visitor experience in *Passages*, a series of observations were conducted during the public programming for the exhibit. Public programming included a weekly film series addressing American Indian identity, studio visits with Native artists, gallery talks, and panel discussions with professors (of Art History, Anthropology, and English) American Indian artists, Nancy Mahaney (the curator of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* and *Heartland Reverberations*), and other museum professionals. The audience consisted of members of the Lawrence community (adults living in or around Lawrence, Kansas

with no affiliation with the University of Kansas), the University of Kansas community (faculty, staff, and students), and Haskell Native Nations University community (faculty, staff, and students). Audience attendance, participation, and questions were recorded, noting the type of programming as well as the time at which the programming took place.

The data gathered for the study was coded in two separate stages. First, the numerical data from the survey questions, where audiences circled a response on a seven-point scale, were added for each question. Percentages of answers were then calculated, to find what percent of the audience responded to a particular answer. For example, the percentage of people who “would strongly recommend” *Passages* was 68.8%. Those who “would recommend” *Passages* was 28.1% and those who “may recommend” *Passages* was 3.1%. In total, 100% of participants might or would recommend *Passages* to a friend. Calculating and then analyzing percentages provided me with data from which to draw conclusions about how the exhibit affected members of the audience.

Second, the open-ended questions from the survey, the interviews with artists, and the observations of programming (including audience questions/comments) were coded. I specifically started this coding process using grounded theory, to not have a hypothesis about how audience members would respond or how the exhibit would affect audience members. This allowed me to ascertain what the data had to impart about the exhibit, without a preconceived notion about how the data should look (or what the exhibit should do). I coded these open-ended responses by the frequency of themes expressed by the participants. For example, when participants discussed or mentioned themes of home, I grouped these statements together. This revealed what audience members took away from the exhibit. I recorded how many times a theme was mentioned, subsequently revealing how many participants shared feelings about the exhibit. This allowed me

to find out what the exhibit communicated to people, what the audience was taking away from the exhibit, and how different techniques or pieces in the exhibit affected audience members.

I then combined all of my data in a summative evaluation. This provided a form to easily discuss and understand the data from the surveys, interviews, and observations. The summative evaluation allowed a discussion of the results in an organized layout, which could then be examined with the exhibit, or alone, to gain an understanding of the overall effect of *Passages* on audience members.

Summative Evaluation Results

Results from the summative evaluation show that *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* provided visitors with an educational, thought-provoking, emotionally resonating experience. Visitors learned about historical and contemporary American Indian issues and art, as well as how Kansas' path to statehood impacted movement and removal. The majority of visitors experienced new aspects of American Indian history and art, feeling that *Passages* communicated American Indian perspectives on experience in Kansas. Visitors connected to the objects on display and themes introduced in *Passages*, developing strong feelings about the experience and what they learned in the exhibit. Visitors felt encouraged and inspired to learn more about issues and themes introduced in *Passages*, and most would have recommended the exhibit to a friend. These findings point to the success of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* as a vehicle for communicating Native voice(s) and experience.

Did Visitor Knowledge about American Indians and American Indian Issues Change?

Results from this study showed that *Passages* successfully educates the majority of visitors. Many visitors reported learning more about American Indian experience in Kansas and contemporary American Indian issues than previously known. For example, one visitor

expressed learning about Native cultures: “I learned a lot more about American Indian culture in Kansas, such as the Kanza – and various tribes.... It was interesting and beautiful.” While others expressed learning about removal practices: “I learned that many of the tribes who lived here historically, pre-1850, are no longer here”; “It brought out the reality of 19th century removal policies of the US government.” Those participating in public programming asked questions and were engaged in learning about the material presented. Visitors reported learning about removal and movement in Kansas, American Indian history, American Indian art, as well as contemporary American Indian issues regarding land loss.

Passages peaked visitor interest, and many viewers reported a desire to learn more about themes and issues presented by the exhibit. Visitors were inspired to learn more about Kansas’ culture, contemporary American Indian issues, American Indian art, and American Indian history and culture. *Passages* inspired curiosity about topics introduced, with many programming attendees asking questions about materials in the exhibits, historical facts the exhibit discusses, and contemporary American Indian identity.

Did Attitudes about American Indians Change?

Results from the study showed that experiencing *Passages* somewhat changed audience attitudes about American Indians. A moderate amount of visitors had their perceptions of American Indians challenged by the exhibit. In total, more visitors had their perceptions challenged by *Passages* than those whose perceptions *Passages* reinforced. Overall, the exhibit challenged almost half of visitor’s perceptions about American Indians. Many visitors expressed not having familiarity with American Indian experience, as one visitor wrote: “it was not a subject I had received much exposure to before.” Many expressed, like this viewer, not knowing much about current Native art or viewpoints: “I learned Native artists are involved in current art

movements exhibiting Native themed pieces.” Others expressed during programming that they had virtually no idea about American Indian removal in the state of Kansas, and that the information in the exhibit had shocked them. Others still found it a celebration and an expression of voice for Native nations, sharing relief and joy that the exhibit was a space for Native expression. These findings suggest that *Passages* presented new ways of thinking about and experiencing American Indian culture, history, and viewpoints to many visitors. Some who visited the exhibit had their perceptions reinforced, although what those perceptions are is unknown and was not addressed by the study.

Whose Viewpoint did Audiences Perceive *Passages* to Represent?

The study showed that audience members of *Passages* perceived the exhibit to represent both the viewpoints of contemporary American Indians as well as American Indians in historical Kansas territory. This is most likely due to the fact that *Passages* contained both historical American Indian objects and contemporary American Indian works of art. The historical objects, such as the Parfleche and coup sticks, and excerpts like Ten Bears (Comanche) comments during the Medicine Lodge treaty meetings communicated the viewpoints of historical American Indians in Kansas territory, echoing themes of movement, removal, and cultural expression. The contemporary artworks allowed for a current American Indian view of, expression of, and associations with removal, land loss, identity, and culture. For example, one visitor shared that, “the exhibit gives voice to the Native community.” Yet another shared that the exhibit “Make(s) a statement to ancestors of colonists that American Indians are still here.” This aspect of voice was important to the exhibit, as exhibit team members hoped that visitors would walk away knowing more about American Indian experience in Kansas and Native viewpoints on land, culture, and identity. Items within, as well as their arrangement and

discussion, *Passages* communicated to visitors part of the American Indian experience in Kansas – an articulation of Native thoughts and feelings about movement, removal, and culture.

What do Visitors Take Away from Their Experience?

The study demonstrated that *Passages* had a cerebral and emotional effect on visitors. The exhibit provided a highly meaningful and thought-provoking experience – audience members, whether familiar to the topics addressed in *Passages* or not, found the exhibition to be educational as well as affecting. The following statements of visitors to the exhibit express the multitude of feelings and thoughts *Passages* inspired: “I really had some feelings brought to the surface”; “I would demand people go”; “I experienced feelings of home”; “It expressed positivity that American Indians are still here, remained despite great trials”; “Expresses a loss of land for Native peoples”; “I could explore my personal and cultural connections to the state of Kansas”; “I was able to reconnect with my roots and culture through old maps and ephemera”; “It was a homecoming for American Indian artists and viewers.” The objects and themes in *Passages* emotionally impacted many visitors – many expressed feeling a connection to the objects and stories told in *Passages*. Often visitors felt the exhibit offered a space to celebrate the persistence and survival of American Indians as well as a space to examine the beauty and artistry of American Indian works of art. *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* shared American Indian experience with movement and removal in Kansas through historical objects, American Indian statements, contemporary pieces, and historical documentation, providing a multi-layered, thought-provoking, and emotionally resonating experience for visitors.

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place, New Museum Theory, and Voice

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place effectively expressed Native voice(s) on themes of movement, land loss, identity, and culture. The exhibit used techniques of Indigenous New Museum Theory, such as repurposing old collections, acknowledging unique Native practices, utilizing oral traditions, sharing previously untold stories, Native collaboration and conservation, discussions of topical Native issues, and teaching new generations. Through these multiple means of communication *Passages* connected and reconnected viewers with American Indian experience.

Through the use of NMT techniques and characteristics in *Passages*, the Spencer Museum of Art established a space for Native voice in the museum. This expression was successful in connecting people to objects and experiences, changing the attitudes of, and inspiring audience members. These human objects and stories resonated with visitors, illustrating the power and wonder the ethnographic collections were always capable of creating. Placed in the right contexts, with room for the public and source communities to access and experience these powerful objects, in *Passages* the ethnographic collection served as a conduit for Native voice(s) to be heard, shared, and respected.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Given the popularity of New Museum Theory in dialogues about changing museum practices (particularly towards indigenous issues), and the increasing use of New Museum Theory by museums to update older ethnographic collections, I became interested in discovering if the techniques of New Museum Theory, or decolonizing the museum, really worked. I wondered if the changes in practices and attitudes of museums surrounding indigenous collections and exhibits provided any benefit to Native communities and museum audiences. I was lucky enough to begin this process at the same time that the Spencer Museum of Art decided to create their first NMT exhibit using the ethnographic collection at KU. Therefore, my specific purpose became to discover, describe, and understand the functions of NMT within this exhibit and if the techniques of NMT used really worked to change the narrative of the collection.

To answer my research question, I conducted a summative evaluation of the exhibit, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*. This summative evaluation allowed me to measure a change in attitude or perceptions that *Passages* may have triggered in audience members, discovering if the new techniques of NMT made a difference in how audiences perceived the materials shown and the subjects the exhibit addressed. I created audience surveys, interviewed Native American artists, observed programming, and analyzed the use of NMT in the exhibit. In doing so, I discovered that the techniques of NMT did create a change in audience perception, as well as creating a new narrative for the collection.

In this final chapter, I synthesize and analyze the data discussed in the previous three chapters and use this analysis to demonstrate that using aspects of NMT in the exhibit *Passages* at the Spencer Museum of Art creates a new narrative for the ethnographic collection at KU, a

new narrative of truth, power, and meaning. I also will explain that Indigenous NMT has broad implications for altering the narratives of indigenous collections across America. First, I will summarize my analyses by reviewing the method of analysis and the conclusions I drew about the effects of Indigenous NMT on collection narratives at the University of Kansas. Then, drawing from the conclusions I derived from my study, I will examine the implications the findings have for the University of Kansas' ethnographic collection, as well as the changes Indigenous NMT can bring to other museums. The third section of this chapter will contain a discussion of the limitations of my study. Finally, I will conclude with suggestions for future research.

Summary

Many dominant anthropological and natural history museums represent Native Americans as non-existent in America's history or deny them a cultural present by only representing static cultures. My literature review examined the ways in which museums influence societies' views of cultures, how museums have historically represented Native peoples, and what effect those representations have had on Native identity. The relationship between museums and Native communities was evaluated, commenting on the previous imbalance of power and voice in dominant museums. It also provided a discussion of the way in which museums help create national identities through constructs of "them" and "other", how the interaction between viewers and objects selected for display creates meaning, and how museums impact and influence societal values through what they display. Through these modes, many dominant museums have created static views of Native Americans, leading to stereotypes in displays without Native truth, perspective, or balance.

Combating the biased, stereotypical, and harmful representations of indigenous peoples in most traditional museums, New Museum Theory was born of activism. The changes NMT brought to the museum world included a change in the balance of power and representation in the museum. Some disagree whether or not NMT truly changes perspectives and narratives in museums. This project endeavored to discover if NMT changed perspectives and narratives at the University of Kansas, through the repurposing of the ethnographic collection.

By creating a survey of audience members, interviewing Native American artists, observing programming, and analyzing the use of NMT in the exhibit, I created a summative evaluation (Appendix A) of the exhibit *Passages*. This summative evaluation discovered that the exhibit changed audience attitudes and knowledge about Native peoples. This study pointed to the success of *Passages*, and NMT, in creating a space for Native voice within the museum. This success showed that the techniques of NMT could be successful in changing exhibit and collection narratives.

At the University of Kansas, the use of NMT changed the narrative of the ethnographic collections, from one of misuse to use and from silence to active voice. This project discovered that using techniques in the exhibit *Passages*, like acknowledging unique Native American cultural practices, oral traditions, sharing previously untold stories (both historical and modern), Native collaboration, conservation, discussing topical Native issues, and teaching new generations cultural knowledge and practices (such as language and art forms), changed not only how audience members perceived and understood Native culture and experience, but altered the direction of the collection. NMT for the ethnographic collection altered the way in which source communities were able to use and experience the collection, increasing access to and contributions from Native Americans and Native nations. The ethnographic collection

experienced resurgence in Native voice through NMT. This creates a more open, communicative collection. An open, communicative collection benefits the museum and audience members, through expanded chances for education and cultural understanding. An open, communicative collection also benefits the people from which the collections came, though access to materials and the sharing of power and knowledge between museums and Native communities.

Interpretation

At KU

Using New Museum Theory alters collection narratives. It does so by changing the way in which people experience the collections, placing Native voice(s) and power at the heart of exhibition and interpretation. This was shown in the case of the ethnographic collections at KU. Audience members received an emotionally impacting and educational experience, which expanded visitor knowledge about Native experience, identity, and knowledge. Native source communities were able to work closely with ancestral objects, sharing and gaining knowledge about artifacts in the collection. Native peoples were also able to contribute valuable knowledge to the exhibit, including stories, oral histories, artwork, photographs, and artifacts, re-centering the source of knowledge in the museum. A re-centering of knowledge helped the collection share the story of Native movement and removal in Kansas, broadening the spectrum of Native voice and adding valuable insights into Native experience. All of these aspects helped shape not only *Passages*, but the story of the collection. *Passages* and a repurposing of the collections at the Spencer Museum of Art have started a new chapter for the ethnographic collection at KU. The collection's narrative at KU, through the use of NMT techniques was altered from one of impermanence to permanence, misuse to use, and silence to voice.

Using techniques of NMT changed the collection's narrative from one of impermanence to permanence by museum commitments that changed upon the repurposing of the collection to the Spencer Museum of Art. The move changed the way in which the collection was treated. Formerly scattered, misidentified, and disorganized, the Spencer Museum of Art took action to take care of the collections. This includes updating storage, collaborating with Native consultants and nations in properly identifying objects, and organizing the collection so those at KU and source communities can access it. This makes the collection a viable resource for research and exhibition. This will allow students, faculty, the public, and source communities to learn from the collection. It also allows the collection a longer life, through proper care, and the ability to share the varied history and voices of the objects to viewers and researchers.

New Museum Theory techniques used in the exhibit *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* gave the collection the ability to teach a broad audience. This changed the narrative of the collection from one of misuse to use. The exhibition opened up a dialogue with source communities about the objects, creating a space for sharing and learning new knowledge. Without the collaboration of Native consultants in identifying objects, sharing stories, and expressing Native experience and the arrangement and exhibition of the objects, the collection would not have been able to share Native experience in Kansas. This increased the ability of the collection to introduce many audience members to new topics and stories. Through exhibition, the collection was able to reach a broad audience of people, including Native communities, the community at KU, schoolchildren, and the general public. Education gave a purpose to the collection instead of being stored, to teach the audience about Native experience and identity.

The move of the collection to the Spencer Museum of Art saw an awakening of voice for the collection. The exhibit *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* allowed a space for

Native voice(s) in the museum, and allowed the collection to share that Native voice(s) with visitors. The collections, through contributions of Native collaborators, a story to tell about Native American removal in Kansas, and the topics of loss and identity, found a revitalized voice. This voice communicated Native experience to audience members, changing audience perceptions and knowledge about Native Americans. This transformation drastically impacted visitors. The emotional response most visitors reported after visiting *Passages* relates to the voice of the collection. Given a space to communicate to visitors, the ethnographic collection resonated with audience members, deeply affecting those who visited the exhibit. This space for voice will continue, as the museum intends to replicate the success of *Passages* in future exhibits, is working on digitizing the collection so it may speak to many, and is providing conservation and care to the collection so it may share its myriad of stories for generations to come.

Opening Up a Broader Dialogue

The use of Indigenous NMT, or decolonizing the museum, also has broader implications. Beyond the ethnographic collection at KU, NMT has the power to change indigenous collection narratives across America. NMT has the capability to revolutionize narratives of national identity and the societal values communicated by museums. NMT can challenge and correct the value statements of museums, replacing national narratives and negative statements about Native social worth with statements of inclusivity and multicultural appreciation. Indigenous NMT could afford museums an opportunity to begin a social, cross cultural, multiethnic dialogue. This dialogue has the potential to transform perceptions of the world, people, and cultures. Through promoting cultural understanding with an emphasis on the worth of all peoples and knowledge

systems, Indigenous New Museum Theory can engage viewers in a conversation about place, art, expression, and identity, with the power to unite people across cultures.

Indigenous New Museum Theory has the ability to create more inclusive national identities. It has been shown through multiple examinations that museums help create national identities. These national identities are created through constructs of personal and group identity. These identities have traditionally been expressed in American museums as “them” and “other”.²⁴⁵ Museums have displayed and created an American national identity by exhibiting what an American is not – the “other.”²⁴⁶ Native American communities are the “other” in these dialogues of national identity. The multicultural techniques of NMT (expressing Native experience, presenting Native identity, acknowledging the authority of Native knowledge systems) can make constructions of identity more inclusive. Instead of an American identity of colonizer versus colonized, NMT shares the stories of all types of Americans, giving voice in the museum to groups that previously were not represented. Sharing new voices and interweaving cultures and experiences, NMT opens up the exploration of American identity. It has the power to make ideas of national identity inclusive. When all cultures are appreciated and expressed, notions of what is “them” and what is “other” are diluted. “Them” and “other” can be subsequently become included in notions of “us”. Just as *Passages* changed the notion of what a Kansan is by expressing Native identity, consequences of removal, and experiences with loss, an exposure to a more rounded view of culture and identity can lead to a holistic concept of what is an American and what is American experience.

New Museum Theory has the ability to change values and notions of meaning communicated in museums. As addressed in the first chapter, museums influence how people

²⁴⁵ Marstine, “Introduction,” 14.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

interpret the world by creating meaningful experiences for visitors.²⁴⁷ These meaningful experiences are created by the selection of objects, and the personal connections that come from numinous experiences within the museum.²⁴⁸ By opening up spaces for Native voice and experience, NMT will create an area for visitors to create numinous experiences with Native experience and objects. When these objects are interpreted through the lens of Native experience, visitors will draw from those interpretations, creating meaning and internalizing the communicated value statements of the exhibition. This can lead to audience understanding and appreciation of Native experience and culture. This could have broad implications for Native communities in museums, as well as for perceptions about American Indians by larger society. As *Passages* demonstrated, when presented with Native voice and a Native interpretation of objects, audience members form deep connections with Native experience, creating emotional associations that could then be used to increase an understanding of Native identity and an acknowledgement that Native knowledge is valuable. By changing the values shared within museums, including Native experience in exhibitions could change stereotypical and harmful representations in museums to creating confidence in community and identity, promoting cultural heritage, and celebrating cultural resurgence in Native communities.

Thanks to Indigenous NMT, museums are becoming an increasingly visible platform from which to share Native experience and concerns. From art and anthropological museums opening a dialogue about Native issues such as sovereignty and human rights, to tribal museums promoting cultural revitalization and spaces for Native conducted research, NMT is changing the role of museums from one of educational institutions to forums for indigenous activism. It is within these spaces that museums can examine the “hard truths” of colonialism or discuss

²⁴⁷ Sullivan, “Evaluating the Ethics and Consciences of Museums,” 258.

²⁴⁸ Latham, “The Poetry of the Museum: A Holisitc Model of Numinous Museum Experiences,” 254.

indigenous understandings of history.²⁴⁹ Through Native voice and collaboration, NMT can begin to provide an honest examination of the effects of colonialism on Native life and identity, address issues facing Native American communities, as well as celebrate indigenous survivance. Museums are poised in the twenty-first century to alter colonial narratives, creating opportunities to change perceptions of and teach new generations about Native experience.

The harms that museum representations have caused in the past one hundred years have the potential to be reconciled through NMT. Self-confidence and healing for Native peoples, addressing sovereignty for Native nations, the repatriation of Native remains and cultural items, and the expression of continuation of American Indian cultures all could be positively addressed by a change in the exhibition of Native cultures. If every child, Native or non-Native, encounters a positive and/or true portrayal of Native life in a museum, the chance to change ideas about Native peoples and reactions to American Indian issues cannot be underestimated. Exhibits could replace the harmful ripple effect of colonial narratives through visitor exposure, thought, and action, with themes of healing and honesty. Themes of positivity and truth could begin to permeate a dialogue about what it means to be indigenous in America.

Limitations

Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place, as well as a broader dialogue concerning collection narratives, was an interesting subject for analysis. As a space that is layered with ideas about indignity, colonialism, museology, identity, and object meanings, the intersection of Native studies and museum studies presented me with a number of challenging responsibilities, not the least of which was analyzing coherently the success of New Museum Theory in changing

²⁴⁹ Lonetree, "Museum as Sites of Decolonization: Truth Telling in National and Tribal Museums," 328.

the ethnographic collection's narrative at the University of Kansas. Although I have attempted to explain the relationship between museums and Native peoples, aspects of New Museum Theory, and the effects of NMT on indigenous collection narratives to the best of my ability, there are still a number of critical limitations to my study that warrant attention.

The insights yielded from this thesis have come from the perspective of a non-Native researcher. Consequently, this study is limited to the extent that it reflects the biases of someone whose personal investments in American Indian identity and community could not be as deep as those of some American Indian analysts. To those who believe that a Native American perspective would be better suited to interpreting the success of Indigenous NMT on exhibit and collection narratives, this study will seem limited.

I believe, however, that analysis of exhibit and collection narratives, as well as the relationship between Native peoples and museums, from a variety of perspectives can provide additional insights that may or may not have otherwise been discovered. It is here that I reference bell hooks, who expresses my point well: "I did not think that I needed to be a white man to understand Hemingway's *The Sun also Rises* nor did I think I needed to be in a classroom with white men to study this novel... [However,] as a black woman reading this white male writer I might have insights and interpretations that would be quite different from those of white male readers who might approach the text with the assumption that the novel's depiction of white male social reality was one they shared."²⁵⁰ Like hooks, I, too, believe that I have something to offer not only to non-Native and/or academic critics, but also to those with deep personal connections and commitments to American Indian communities. It may be in these

²⁵⁰ hooks, *Talking Back*, 47.

communities' interests to understand additional ways in which indigenous NMT is received by audiences without these ties.

I do have to acknowledge, though, that an interpretation of exhibit and collection narratives from the perspective of someone with deeper ties to Native American communities would be valuable. Such an interpretation would provide a different quality of sensitivity to issues related to colonialism and the emotional impact of Native experience. An American Indian perspective with a lifetime of culture-specific narratives, for example, might enable another researcher to see things in exhibit and collection narratives that I could not perceive.

Another area of concern has to do with the limits of my study in regards to the data collected. My visitor survey was conducted over one night, and to a limited pool of audience members. This provided me with limited data from which to draw my conclusions, and could have affected the results of my analysis. My conclusions could have been expanded if I had used a larger sample, and surveyed visitors over a period of time and at numerous alternative dates. However, the survey was supplemented with artist interviews and programming observations, which did allow a variety of different data. This provided my study with a more holistic analysis of the exhibit techniques, and in turn the effect of said techniques on collection narratives.

Another limitation of the examination was that of the scope of my analysis. My study only examined one collection and exhibit. This study focused on the effects of NMT on the ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas, providing only one example of NMT in practice. My study could have examined several more museums, collections, and exhibits, to more fully determine the effects of using Indigenous NMT in exhibits. This would have given the study a more rounded and full view of how, where, and to what effect museums are using NMT to alter collection narratives.

Suggestions for Future Research

The limitations of this study offer some opportunities from which future studies may arise. First, further testing and refinement of the way in which audiences and narratives are tested could provide more layered results. As the exhibition *Passages* is no longer running, more exhibitions using the ethnographic collection at KU could be tested and analyzed for their continuation or departure from the narrative change *Passages* signaled at the Spencer Museum of Art. More surveys, as well as audience interviews or audience group sessions could be used to discover the complex ways exhibits are affecting audience attitudes and knowledge about Native peoples. More refined testing could provide larger samples from which to gather data, creating a more diverse and accurate analysis. Future testing of narratives of the ethnographic collection at the University of Kansas could provide a more comprehensive view of the narratives NMT is helping to create.

This data also could have been limited by the western perspective from which the analysis comes. While providing insights that another researcher may not have discovered, my background as well as the fact that the study was completed by one person could have affected the results of the findings. The nuances and discoveries a more multicultural team of researchers could provide cannot be diminished. Having a team of diverse researchers, including analysis from researchers from source communities, could provide a more inclusive analysis and deeper findings.

A final opportunity of inquiry could be a look at how tribal museums are using NMT. Examining how source communities are using different techniques of New Museum Theory, or decolonizing the museum, could offer interesting insights into the changing territory of museums. Collections that have been repatriated to communities could be included in the

discussion, transferring the changing narratives of collections into a broader look at how repatriation changes narratives and how Native nations are using repatriated items. Examining how Native communities are using their own materials, stories, and histories to formulate new ideas about the display of Native materials could further the discussion of the changing roles of museums and collections. Using sites of tribal museums as sites of empowerment or cultural continuance could be a fascinating examination of the changing narratives of ethnographic collections. Studying these aspects of tribal museums could increase knowledge about how Native communities are representing indigenous forms of knowing, as well as what stories Native nations want to share with audiences. A look at tribal museums, NMT, and collection narratives could also envelop a discussion about sovereignty in Native museums, as well as how Native communities are using the structures of museums to deconstruct traditional sites of colonial knowledge production through the use of Native culture, ideas, identity, and history. Examining how Native communities are using museum forms and narratives to control cultural continuance and address American Indian issues could expand this discussion not only into what it means to be a museum, but how Native peoples can take colonial and state forms of knowledge production (such as museums), and transform them into sites of power, meaning, and decolonization for Native nations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Summative Evaluation

The Spencer Museum of Art
Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place
Summative Evaluation

Prepared by:

Patricia Baudino

December 2011

Executive Summary

In 2011, The University of Kansas' Spencer Museum of Art received funding from the Kansas Humanities Council in part to develop an exhibit inspired by the commemoration of the Kansas Sesquicentennial and reflecting on the nature of place through the lens of American Indian cultures. Located in Gallery 318 of the Spencer Museum of Art, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* runs from September 10, 2011 through January 15th, 2012. The exhibit utilizes the University of Kansas' ethnographic collections (formerly housed in the Anthropology Museum at Spooner Hall), a contemporary piece from the Spencer Museum of Art's collection, as well as contemporary and historical pieces on loan to the Spencer Museum of Art. Using both American Indian oral traditions and academic perspectives to interpret the items on display, *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* was designed to provide reflection on the location of Kansas and its importance in Westward movement for EuroAmericans, as a place of relocation for American Indians moved out of as well as in to Kansas, and the changes in boundaries, land, and American Indian cultures as Kansas moved into official statehood. This report describes results from a summative evaluation of visitors' experience with *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* and changes (if any) in visitors' knowledge and attitudes about American Indian experience involving Kansas. Multiple methods were used, including visitor surveys, interviews, and observations.

Overall, data from this study suggests that *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* provides an educational, thought provoking, and emotionally impacting experience for visitors, and connects visitors to the exhibit's objects and themes. Key findings include the following:

- *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* addresses pertinent issues for American Indians, in the exhibit's discussion of American Indian removal and land loss.
- *Passages* is a space for the expression of American Indian voice, through the incorporation of contemporary American Indian artworks.
- *Passages* teaches many visitors new information regarding human movement in Kansas by providing historical materials (including maps and documents) about movement and removal in Kansas.
- *Passages* encourages visitor interest in Kansas culture.
- *Passages* encourages visitor interest in contemporary American Indian issues through the use of contemporary American Indian artworks to respond to removal issues, as well as

providing a background on historical issues addressed by contemporary American Indian artists in the companion contemporary art exhibition, *Heartland Reverberations*.

- *Passages* encourages visitor interest in American Indian history and culture.
- *Passages* encourages visitor interest in American Indian art.
- *Passages* challenges the many visitor preconceptions of American Indians by showing multiple American Indian cultures, contemporary American Indian responses, and providing explanation of American Indian artifacts as well as American Indian experience in Kansas Territory and with Kansas' movement into statehood.
- Visitors perceive *Passages* as communicating the viewpoints of American Indians in historical Kansas territory and contemporary American Indians, through the use of historical and contemporary items.
- The majority of visitors are highly satisfied with their experience in *Passages*. Visitors were highly likely to say they would recommend visiting *Passages* to a friend.

Introduction

Project Overview

In 2011, The University of Kansas' Spencer Museum of Art received funding from the Kansas Humanities Council in part to develop an exhibit inspired by the commemoration of the Kansas Sesquicentennial and reflecting on the nature of place through the lens of American Indian cultures. The exhibit includes:

- Historic American Indian objects, interpreted from academic perspectives as well as American Indian perspectives
- Contemporary American Indian art as responses to historical and contemporary issues
- Educational materials providing background on land changes occurring around American Indian removal and the statehood of Kansas

Patricia Baudino, a graduate student in the Indigenous Nations Studies Program, with an area of specialization in Museum Studies, conducted a summative evaluation of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*. The study took place from October to December of 2011.

Evaluation Framework

The study uses surveys, interviews, and observations to document visitor knowledge and attitude outcomes. Specifically, the following questions guide the summative evaluation of *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*:

- Did visitor knowledge about American Indians and American Indian issues change?
- Did visitor attitudes about American Indians change?
- Whose viewpoint did audiences perceive *Passages* as representing?
- What do visitors take away from their experience?

Methods

The summative evaluation used multiple methods. The primary method used for this study was visitor surveys, supplemented by interviews with contemporary American Indian artists and observations during *Passages*' public programming. While the sample sizes are not large enough to be representative or generalizable to all Spencer Museum of Art visitors, the study points to initial trends wherever possible.

Surveys

A total of 32 surveys were conducted for this study using a Human Subjects Committee of Lawrence approved survey (see Appendix A). Visitors were approached as they participated in the Spencer Museum of Art's Student Advisory Board's Student Night, on October 27th, 2011. Surveys consisted of six questions, with four of the questions asking participants to rate a number of statements on a seven-point scale (with one being lowest and seven the highest). The statements addressed the following categories of outcomes: 1) Change in knowledge; 2) Change in attitudes; 3) Interest level; 4) Perception of viewpoints. Data was then coded and analyzed by Patricia Baudino.

The refusal rate for survey participation was extremely low, with only 2 surveys refused.

Artist Interviews/Questionnaires

Five contemporary American Indian artists were asked to participate in an email interview/questionnaire (see Appendix B). Two responded, providing answers to questions surrounding their contemporary work as well as their perceptions of and experience in *Passages*. Data was then coded and analyzed by Patricia Baudino.

The refusal rate was high, with three artists not responding to interview questions.

Observations

In order to get a broader understanding of visitor experience in *Passages*, a series of observations were conducted during public programming for *Passages*. Audience attendance, participation, and questions were recorded, noting the type of programming as well as the time at which the programming took place. Data was then examined and coded by Patricia Baudino.

Study Limitations

The researcher initially piloted an exhibit survey that focused on 4th graders visiting *Passages*, examining if the exhibit changed their knowledge of and attitudes surrounding American Indian experience in Kansas and allowing for a larger survey pool. However, time constraints made it impractical to conduct this research, and the researcher shifted the study to focus on adults (with an emphasis on the University of Kansas community). Thus, the current study does not address children's experience with *Passages*, but does involve the University of Kansas community.

The study samples are representative of Spencer Museum of Art visitors on multiple variables (including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and education level) lessening the likelihood that findings are biased toward a particular group.

Results and Discussion

Description of Samples

Surveys

Thirty-two visitors participated in the surveys. The survey took place on the Spencer Museum of Art's Student Advisory Board's Student Night. The sample consisted of members of the Lawrence community (adults living in or around Lawrence, Kansas with no affiliation with the University of Kansas), the University of Kansas community (faculty, staff, and students), and Haskell Native Nations University community (faculty, staff, and students).

Artist Interviews/Questionnaires

Two contemporary American Indian artists, whose art is featured in *Heartland Reverberations*, participated in the artist interviews/questionnaires.

Observations

Attendees for *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*'s public programming were observed for this study. Members of the audiences included members of the larger Lawrence community (adults living in or around Lawrence, Kansas with no University of Kansas affiliation), members of the University of Kansas community (faculty, staff, and students), members of the Haskell Native Nations community (faculty, staff, and students).

Did Visitor Knowledge about American Indians and American Indian Issues Change?

Knowledge

Data suggests that visitors to *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* learned a significant amount about American Indians and relocation in and out of Kansas. 46.8% of visitors “learned a lot” in *Passages*. 93.8% of visitors learned “something” to “a lot” in *Passages*, while those who learned less than “something” to “nothing” was only 6.3% (see Figure 1). The following comments help illustrate this point.

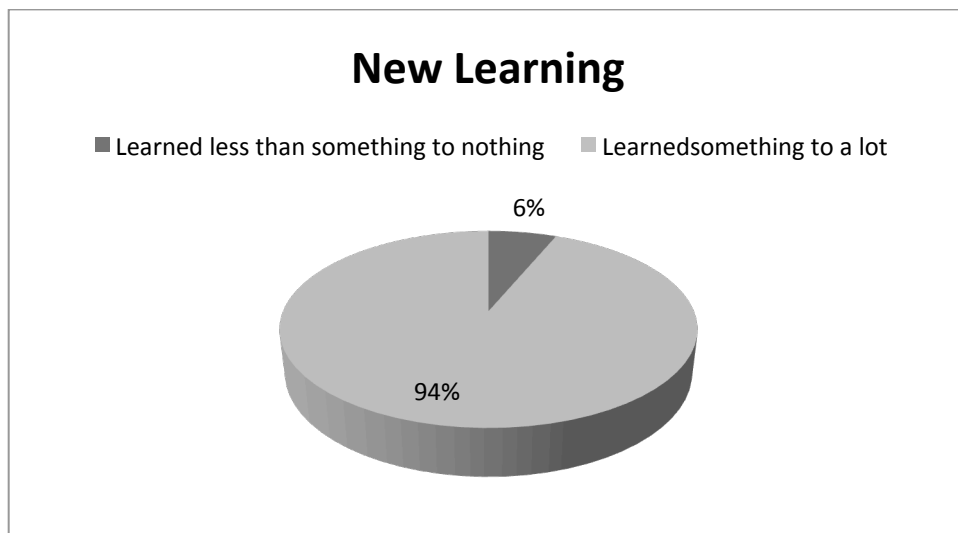
“I learned more about differences in clans and tribes, and the import those have in American Indian societies”

“I learned that many of the tribes who lived here historically, pre-1850, are no longer here.”

“It brought out the reality of 19th century removal policies of the US government.”

“I learned a lot more about American Indian culture in Kansas, such as the Kanza – an various tribes, and how they are still prominent today and how the celebrate their culture through art. It was interesting and beautiful.”

Figure 1: Amount of new learning from *Passages*



Interest

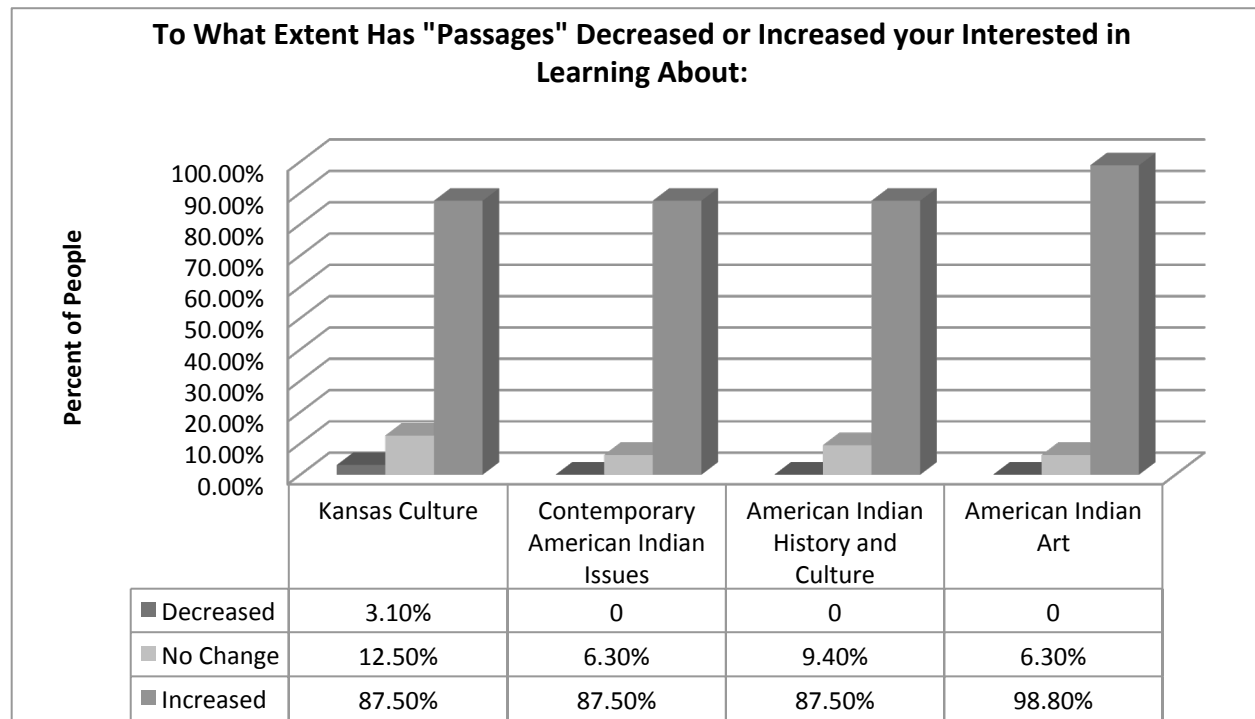
When asked about interests in learning more about issues and themes *Passages* addresses, visitors gave a variety of responses (see Figure 2). Regarding Kansas culture, 87.5% of visitor’s interest in learning about Kansas culture increased, 12.5% of visitors interest level did not change, and 3.1% interest in learning about Kansas culture decreased due to *Passages*. *Passages* increased 87.5% of participants’ interest in learning about contemporary American Indian issues, did not change 6.3% of participants’ interest in learning about contemporary American Indian issues, and decreased 0% of participants’ interest in learning about contemporary American Indian issues. Interest in learning about American Indian history and culture was increased in 87.5% of visitors, did not change in 9.4% of participants, and decreased in 0% of participants. Interest in learning about American Indian art was increased in 93.8% of

participants, interest levels in learning about American Indian art did not change in 6.3% of participants, and interest levels were decreased by 0%.

Overall, participants' interest in learning more about issues and themes in *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* increased. Only one topic, Kansas culture, had a small percentage decrease in participants' levels of interest in learning more about it.

Attendance for public programming was good, involving five participants in smaller programming, such as visits to artist Norman Akers' studio, to 60 plus participants in larger openings. When questions were permitted, audience members asked an average of six to twelve questions. Questions involved facts about historical items, American Indian cultures, experiences with removal and land loss, historical facts about American Indian removal, American Indian artist inspirations, contemporary perceptions of American Indian identity and culture, and contemporary American Indian art.

Figure 2: Interest in Learning Levels



Did Visitor Attitudes about American Indians Change?

Data suggests that overall, visitor attitudes about American Indians were somewhat changed by *Passages*. The percentage of participants that had their previous perceptions of American Indians challenged by *Passages* was 40.6% (see figure 3). 12.5% of participants' previous perceptions about American Indians were significantly challenged, while 28.1% of participants had their previous

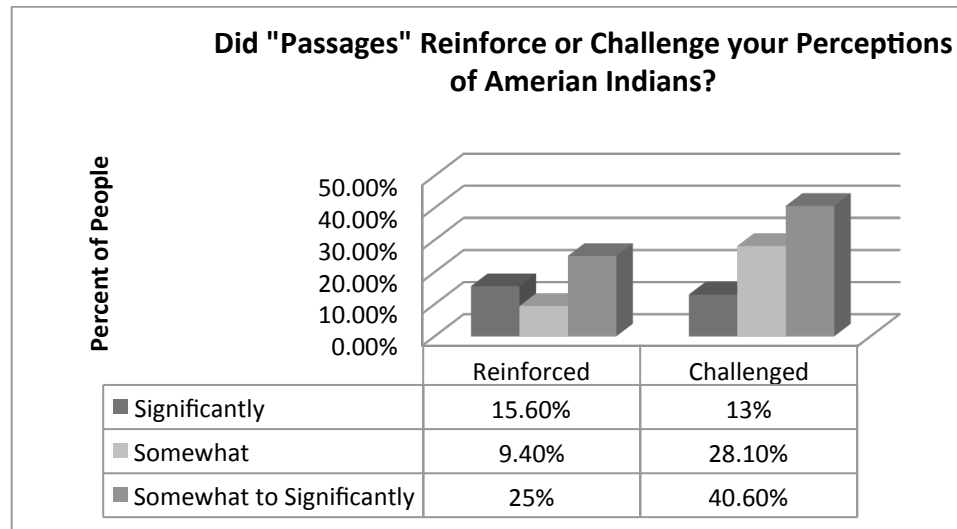
perceptions somewhat challenged. Some participants had their perceptions reinforced by *Passages*, about 25%. Of that 25%, 15.6% of participants' previous perceptions were significantly reinforced, and 9.4% of participants' previous perceptions were somewhat reinforced. 34.4% of participants' previous perceptions were not affected by *Passages*. Some of the comments below support these findings.

"I didn't realize the range of colors used."

"I learned Native artists are involved in current art movements exhibiting Native themed pieces."

"It was not a subject I had received much exposure to before."

Figure 3: Change in Perception of American Indians



Whose Viewpoint did Audiences Perceive *Passages* as Representing?

Data suggests that audiences perceived *Passages* to represent the viewpoints of both contemporary American Indians as well as American Indians in historical Kansas territory. 59.4% of participants thought the viewpoint of contemporary American Indians was best represented (see Figure 4). 59.4% of participants also perceived American Indians in historical Kansas territory's viewpoint as being best represented in *Passages*. 6.3% perceived that Kansas territory settlers' viewpoint was best represented, 9.4% thought that the University of Kansas' viewpoint was best represented, and 9.4% thought the viewpoint of art historians was best represented in *Passages*. Some examples illustrate these findings.

"Passages expresses a contemporary Native view."

“The exhibit gives voice to the Native community.”

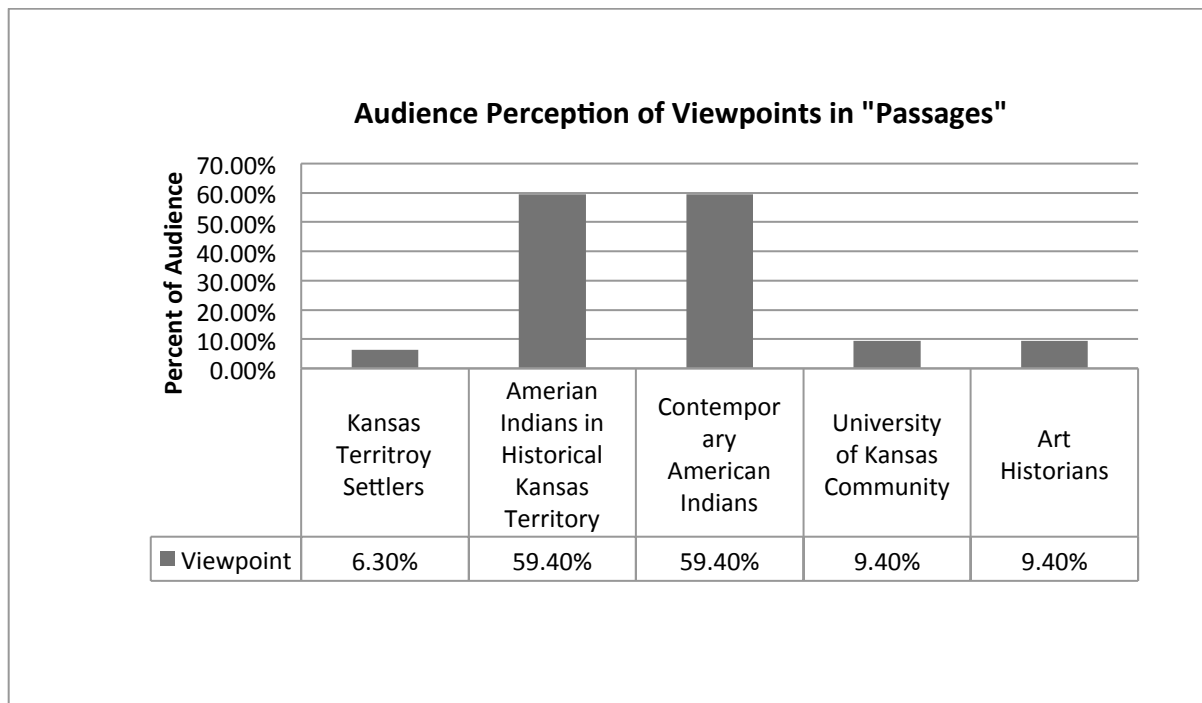
“Curation of contemporary ‘Passages’ could have been more extensive – broad based.”

“The exhibit is based on the selection of curatorial staff and artists.”

“Make a statement to ancestors of colonists that American Indians are still here.”

“Passages presents Native American perspective on events in Kansas history.”

Figure 4: *Passages Viewpoints*



What do Visitors Take Away from Their Experience?

Overall, findings suggest that visitors have a highly meaningful and thought-provoking experience in *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place*. Audience members, whether familiar to the topics addressed in the exhibit or not, find *Passages* to be educational as well as emotional. Most of those

surveyed would recommend that a friend go to the exhibit (see Figure 5). The percentage of people who “would strongly recommend” *Passages* was 68.8%. Those who “would recommend” *Passages* was 28.1% and those who “may recommend” *Passages* was 3.1%. In total, 100% of participants might or would recommend *Passages* to a friend. Some of the follow statements express how *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* affected visitors.

“I really had some feelings brought to the surface.”

“I would demand people go.”

“I experienced feelings of home.”

“It expressed positivity that American Indians are still here, remained despite great trials.”

“Expresses a loss of land for Native peoples.”

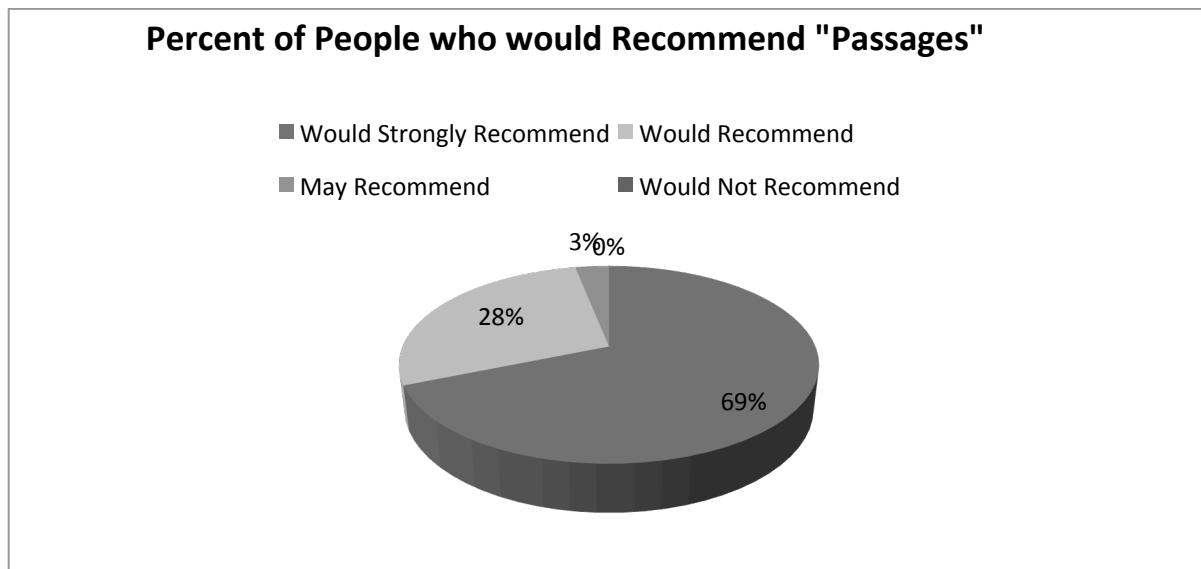
“I could explore my personal and cultural connections to the state of Kansas.”

“I was able to reconnect with my roots and culture through old maps and ephemera.”

“Was on par with major institutes such as the Heard or Eiteljorg.”

“It was a homecoming for American Indian artists and viewers.”

Figure 5: Recommendations



Conclusions

Results from this study show that *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* provides visitors with an educational, thought-provoking, emotionally resonating experience. Visitors learn about historical and contemporary American Indian issues and art, as well as how Kansas’ path to statehood

impacted movement and removal. The majority of visitors experience new aspects of American Indian history and art, feeling that *Passages* communicates American Indian perspectives on experience in Kansas. Visitors connect to the objects on display and themes introduced in *Passages*, developing strong feelings about the experience and what they learned in the exhibit. Visitors feel encouraged and inspired to learn more about issues and themes introduced in *Passages*, and most would recommend the exhibit to a friend.

Did Visitor Knowledge about American Indians and American Indian Issues Change?

Results from this study show that *Passages* successfully educates the majority of visitors. Many visitors report learning more about American Indian experience in Kansas and contemporary American Indian issues than previously known. Those participating in public programming asked questions and were engaged in learning about the material presented. Visitors report learning about removal and movement in Kansas, American Indian history, American Indian art, as well as contemporary American Indian issues regarding land loss.

Passages peaks visitor interest, and many report a desire to learn more about themes and issues presented by the exhibit. Visitors are inspired to learn more about Kansas culture, contemporary American Indian issues, American Indian art, and American Indian history and culture. *Passages* inspires visitor curiosity about topics introduced, with many programming attendees asking questions about materials in the exhibit and historical facts that the exhibit discusses.

Did Attitudes about American Indians Change?

Results from the study show that visitors to *Passages* somewhat changes audience attitudes about American Indians. Only a moderate amount of visitors had their perceptions of American Indians challenged by the exhibit. In total, more visitors had their perceptions challenged by *Passages* than those whose perceptions *Passages* reinforced. Overall, *Passages* challenged almost half of visitors' perceptions about American Indians. This suggests that *Passages* presented new ways of thinking about and experiencing American Indian culture, history, and viewpoints to many visitors. Others had their perceptions about American Indians reinforced. What these perceptions are, however, is unknown and not addressed by this study.

Whose Viewpoint did Audiences Perceive *Passages* as representing?

Results from the study show that visitors to *Passages* perceived the exhibit to represent both the viewpoints of contemporary American Indians as well as American Indians in historical Kansas territory. This is most likely due to the fact that *Passages* contains both historical American Indian objects and contemporary American Indian works of art. The historical objects communicated the viewpoints of historical American Indians in Kansas territory, echoing themes of movement, removal, and cultural expression. The contemporary pieces allowed for a contemporary American Indian view of removal and

land loss issues. Items within *Passages* communicated to visitors the American Indian experience in Kansas, expressing American Indian thoughts and feelings about movement and removal.

What do Visitors Take Away from Their Experience?

Results from the study show that *Passages* has a cerebral and emotional effect on visitors. As addressed previously, visitors learn new information about American Indians, movement, and removal in Kansas. The objects and themes in *Passages* also emotionally impact visitors. Many feel a connection to the objects and stories told in *Passages*, feeling that it celebrates the persistence and survival of American Indians and that it allows a space to examine the beauty and artistry of American Indian works of art. *Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place* shares American Indian experience with movement and removal in Kansas through historical objects, contemporary pieces, and historical documentation, providing a multi-layered, thought-provoking, and emotionally resonating experience for visitors.

Appendix B: *Passages* Survey

- Overall, how do you feel about “Passages”? Circle one number on the scale of 1 to 7 for each pair of descriptions below.

Learned nothing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Learned a lot

Would not recommend 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Would recommend

- To what extent has seeing “Passages” increased or decreased your interest in learning more about each of the following? Please use the scale from 1 (decreased strongly) to 7 (increased strongly).

Kansas Culture:

Decreased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Increased

American Indian history and culture:

Decreased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Increased

Contemporary American Indian issues:

Decreased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Increased

American Indian Art:

Decreased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Increased

- Did “Passages” challenge or reinforce your perceptions of American Indians?

Reinforced previous perception 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Significant change in perception

4. Whose viewpoint was best represented in “Passages”? Please circle one or two:
 - a. Kansas Territory settlers
 - b. American Indians in historical Kansas Territory
 - c. Contemporary American Indians
 - d. University of Kansas community
 - e. Art historians

5. Please feel free to explain any of your ratings further:

6. Tell us something new you learned or discovered viewing “Passages” or “Heartland Reverberations” (Comment on back):

The Department of Indigenous Studies and the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas support the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

We are conducting this study to better understand if the exhibit “Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place” changes viewer knowledge or attitudes about Native American experience in Kansas. This will entail your completion of a survey. The survey is expected to take approximately 1 to 5 minutes to complete.

The content of the questionnaires should cause no more discomfort than you would experience in your everyday life. Although participation may not benefit you directly, we believe that the information obtained from this study will help us gain a better understanding of how museum exhibits influence audience knowledge or attitudes. Your participation is solicited, although strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, please feel free to contact us by phone or mail.

Completion of the survey indicates your willingness to participate in this project and that you are over the age of eighteen. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385 or write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7563, email irb@ku.edu.

Sincerely,

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Appendix C: Artist Interviews/Questionnaire

Thank you for taking time out of your day to answer these questions. It will help me understand, for my evaluation of the Spencer Museum of Art's exhibit "Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place," your attitudes and feelings about these topics and the exhibits. Please feel free to add any additional comments or address something you feel I did not in these questions.

1. How would you characterize your associations with Kansas?
2. How do your associations with Kansas influence your work in "Heartland Reverberations"?
3. How do themes of land loss and removal influence your work?
4. How do you feel about the commemoration of the Kansas Sesquicentennial? How did that influence your work in "Heartland Reverberations"?
5. Did you visit the exhibit "Passages: Persistent Visions of a Native Place"?
 - a. If "yes," what were your perceptions of "Passages"?
 - b. Did "Passages" do a better or worse job in handling the interpretation of cultural items than other museums?
6. What importance does your work being in the Spencer Museum of Art and in this exhibit have to you? Why did you want to be a part of this exhibit?