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Lessons from Controversy: Interpreting the Sand Creek Massacre in
Colorado

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Katherine Hoadley

December 2020

Advisor: Dr. Christina Kreps

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Abstract

This thesis is a case study of the 2012 History Colorado Center exhibit, *Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s – Today*. *Collision* was an exhibit that attempted to showcase the history of the Sand Creek Massacre – an 1864 event where well over one hundred peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho people were murdered by the 3rd Regiment of the Colorado Military District. *Collision* remained open for a little more than a year – this thesis interrogates the reasons behind its closure and its status as a controversial museum exhibit. The findings of this thesis show that a lack of collaboration with the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho was only one of many problems at work. At the time of the exhibit, History Colorado prioritized the generation of revenue and “sustainability” over providing staff and stakeholders with a timeline conducive to the collaborative process. Additionally, *Collision* was developed utilizing an “audience first” methodology in order to attract visitors to the museum; History Colorado did not consider their stakeholders as an influential audience. The closure of the exhibit was ultimately facilitated by Tribal Representatives via Denver weekly paper, *Westword*. Journalist Patricia Calhoun’s articles exposed History Colorado’s lack of collaboration with the Tribes and in turn, public pressure demanded the closure of the exhibit. This thesis examines what can be learned from controversy, the importance of multi-vocality in exhibit development, and the decolonizing work that must be done from within museums.

Key words: Sand Creek Massacre, museum controversy, decolonization, collaboration

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For my mom, Jam

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Chapter 1 Introduction

How can museum professionals work towards showcasing the stories and histories of the communities they represent in a responsible way? How do museums put forward Native perspectives when the field is predominately made up of white staff members? How can museums, as institutions, cultivate and maintain a sensitivity to historical trauma? In response to these questions, museums, more and more frequently, are attempting to collaborate and engage with stakeholders and community members in order to tell stories and present exhibitions in a multivocal way. However, definitions of “collaboration,” exist on a spectrum that ranges from performative demonstrations to “meaningful” and mutually beneficial collaboration (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008). Many examples of contemporary museum controversy, such as *Into the Heart of Africa*, *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples*, and *First Encounters: Spanish Exploration in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570*, are founded on either a lack of collaboration between museums and their stakeholders or a superficial attempt at collaboration (Butler 2015, Phillips 2011, Coody Cooper 2008). While collaboration, as a concept, can be an answer to the preceding questions, performing collaboration successfully is a struggle that museums continue to face for a multitude of reasons.

This thesis is a case study of an exhibit entitled *Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s – Today*, which opened in April of 2012 at the History Colorado Center

in Denver, Colorado and closed a year later, in 2013. *Collision*, as an exhibit, focused on the history of the Sand Creek Massacre; a history that helped shape the early geographical boundaries of Colorado, as well as establish the political climate of Colorado as an emerging state.

The massacre, which occurred in 1864, was a source of tremendous trauma for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes who occupied lands that comprised the Colorado Territory. The massacre was carried out by the 3rd Regiment of the Colorado Military District and resulted in the deaths of well over one hundred Cheyenne and Arapaho people. This effectively pushed the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes out of the Colorado territory, and in turn, the Descendant Tribes no longer formally occupy land in Colorado. The contemporary Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes are the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Today, the massacre is a source of historical trauma for the Descendant Communities and remains a sensitive historical topic.

Collision, which intended to interpret this history, was closed for further consultation after several requests from Tribal Representatives and significant public pressure. This thesis is an in-depth exploration into the controversy that surrounds this exhibit. Much of my research focused on determining why this exhibit caused so much controversy; what went wrong? What were the missteps that led to the closure of this exhibit only a year after it opened? Why was the exhibit considered to be so offensive? In the case of *Collision*, the failure of the exhibit stemmed, in part, from a drastic difference in expectations surrounding consultation and collaboration on behalf of both History Colorado and the Descendant Communities. The disparity in those expectations, History

Colorado's "audience-first" approach to exhibit development, financial considerations, and numerous other issues and concerns on the part of the Tribes, ultimately led to the closure of *Collision*.

Therefore, some of the questions that have shaped my research are as follows: What are some of the facets of so-called "meaningful" collaboration? Why do museum controversies like *Collision* occur? What can be done to avoid conflicts such as these? Do museums, especially state-sponsored museums, have an obligation to tell difficult histories, such as the history of the Sand Creek Massacre, from multiple perspectives? These questions informed many of the questions that I asked my participants in interviews, either in person, or over the phone. In total, I spoke with ten individuals who were involved with the exhibition, either directly or indirectly. This thesis and the conclusions drawn from it are heavily influenced by these interviews, along with the limited access that I had to primary documentation. Additionally, I drew upon letters between Tribal Representatives and History Colorado administrators, audience reports, and newspaper articles to establish a firm timeline of events concerning the development and execution of *Collision* as an exhibit. The controversy surrounding *Collision* has become publicly known in Denver, thanks largely to the reporting of *Westword* editor, Patricia Calhoun. I was able to identify many of my participants thanks to Calhoun's thorough reporting. Although the exhibit closed in 2013, at the time of this writing, consultations for a new exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre continue with hopes of opening the exhibit within the next several years. This case study is still very much alive.

The overall goal of this project was to closely examine the development of the exhibit in order to understand the issues that occurred; it is my hope that by pinpointing

the issues within the content that made up *Collision*, and problematizing aspects of the exhibit development process, that other institutions may avoid making these same mistakes. Even with steady progress being made in the realms of consultation and collaboration in general, and within History Colorado itself, some museums are still learning how to collaborate in a meaningful way and to treat collaboration as a priority in the exhibit development process (Boast 2011, Brown and Peers 2003, Silverman 2015). I believe this work is meaningful and can contribute to the field of museum anthropology because it exposes that a museum's "trial and error" process, of learning how to collaborate appropriately, is often at the expense of marginalized and underrepresented communities. When collaboration is treated as an afterthought it can have a very negative effect on stakeholders, as is shown through this case study. This case study will also illustrate the importance of planning, funding, and a generous timeline when developing an exhibit in collaboration with any kind of stakeholder. It will also demonstrate that without proper consultation and collaboration when developing representations of historical events, historical trauma can be brought to the surface and damaging stereotypes or tropes that have real and lasting effects on contemporary communities can be reinforced. Prioritizing the voices of the Descendant Communities of the Sand Creek Massacre in the development of an exhibit about a sensitive historical event is key in creating a successful exhibit, i.e., one that does not alienate the communities that it wishes to represent and is enriching for the Descendants, visitors to the museum, and museum staff. Though this case study is not representative of how all museums should develop exhibits in tandem with Native or underrepresented communities, as this must be

evaluated on a case by case basis, it can help establish certain approaches that museums should generally avoid.

1.1 Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 2, I discuss the history of the Sand Creek Massacre. I also present a general overview of the exhibit, *Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s – Today*, at History Colorado. The history of the Sand Creek Massacre centers on the betrayal of a peaceful group of Cheyenne and Arapaho people on behalf of the U.S. military, led by Colonel Chivington. I discuss motivations for the massacre as well as the fallout from the massacre. I also have included excerpts of oral histories of the Sand Creek Massacre that were collected in the late 1990s by the National Park Service.

In Chapter 3, I examine several case studies of museum exhibits that lacked sufficient collaboration and the protests that followed the exhibit openings. I also discuss the shift towards collaboration in museums that has been slowly taking place over the last thirty years, as well as the reasons for this shift.

In Chapter 4, I address the historical and theoretical frameworks that have allowed museums to justify their lack of collaboration with marginalized communities, which includes a discussion of the work of Anne McClintock, Pierre Bourdieu, Kalí Tal, and poet Simon Ortiz. Each of these theorists discuss the discounting or silencing of certain perspectives: generally, those coming from within marginalized communities. I also discuss the ways in which institutions can address problematic behavior rooted in colonial precepts and how they can do the work of decolonization through methods identified by theorists Linda T. Smith and Amy Lonetree.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the methods that I used to collect data from my ten participants as well as my methods for procuring data from primary documents, newspaper articles, press releases, exhibit reviews, and dissertations.

In Chapter 6, I establish a timeline of events surrounding History Colorado's exhibit, *Collision*. This timeline illustrates the lack of consultations done by History Colorado, starting in 2009 and up to the opening of the exhibit in April of 2012. I include long excerpts from letters exchanged by the Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne, Joe Fox, Jr., and the CEO of History Colorado, Ed Nichols; dissatisfaction on behalf of the Tribes is expressed in these letters explicitly. I also discuss the mediation that occurred between the Tribes and History Colorado in the summer and early fall of 2013, along with some of the residual effects of the mediation.

In Chapter 7, I draw connections between my participants through their interviews. There are many common threads that run through the interviews that I conducted, and I have organized these ideas together in order to highlight those connections. The perspectives of my participants are highly valuable and are therefore quoted extensively.

In Chapter 8, I analyze and discuss the data that has amassed from Chapters 6 and 7. Based on the data that I have collected, I highlight three issues that arose in the development of *Collision*. The first issue I examine is the failure on behalf of History Colorado to consider the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre as an audience, as well as the prioritization of a "visitor first" approach that excluded the stakeholders. I then discuss how the "visitor" or "audience first" method is directly tied into the need for greater revenue after opening a new facility as large as History Colorado; both the

corporatization of museums and the acceptance of capitalistic ideals alienated History Colorado from the needs of its stakeholders. I then suggest the necessity of a generous timeline when working in tandem with communities; the needs and requests of stakeholders must be taken into consideration, meaning the exhibit process must not be deadline driven. Sensitive subject matter, such as the Sand Creek Massacre, is not compatible with an abbreviated or rushed timeline. After this discussion, I examine how the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre were able to do the work of decolonization themselves when they successfully went to the press via the Denver weekly paper, *Westword*, and harnessed the power of public opinion in order to close *Collision*.

In Chapter 9, the conclusion, I reflect on the importance of collaboration and why it is an asset for any museum; when collaboration doesn't occur and protests and negative press are the result, it is arguable, even from a business perspective, that collaboration is a necessity. Though, the consideration of capitalistic or neoliberal motivations is not necessarily a good or moralistic reason to participate in collaboration, it may incentivize museums that are more conservative to develop relationships with Tribes in order to produce exhibits that are culturally sensitive and relevant. Finally, I recommend that in order to continue on in the decolonization of the museum and in the wave of new-museum ethics, it should be seen as an imperative for museums to enthusiastically participate in collaboration and carry out work that is long overdue.

Chapter 2 Background

2.1 History of the Sand Creek Massacre

While the Sand Creek Massacre occurred more than 150 years ago at the time of this writing, the event is one that weighs heavily on the minds of those who are descended from the Tribes and individuals who were murdered on November 29, 1864. Dr. Alexa Roberts in her chapter, “The Sand Creek Massacre Site Location Study Oral History Project,” writes of the Cheyenne:

For most people who talk about Sand Creek, it is evident that the Sand Creek Massacre is not an event relegated to the past, but is a very real part of the Cheyenne peoples’ contemporary identity, as individual Descendants and as a Tribe. The massacre also set the course for more than a century of federal policies that have induced poverty and eroded the transmission of cultural knowledge from generation to generation, to the extent that some Cheyenne ceremonial and traditional practices were almost extinct only 20 years ago (Roberts 2000, 159).

In order to understand the reactions that the Descendant Communities had to *Collison*, the History Colorado exhibit that attempted to tell the stories of their ancestors, one must understand the context of the Sand Creek Massacre and the ways in which the actions and events of the past still reverberate into the present.

The Sand Creek Massacre took place in 1864 at the tail end of the Civil War, though it gained its own notoriety within that time period. President Lincoln called for soldiers to move west and settlers of the Mississippi West were seeking to establish statehood and acquire greater expanses of land (Kelman 2013). However, much of this land was already occupied by its Native inhabitants, and at this time, that included the

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, in her book *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, writes: “[The land speculator’s] eagerness to undertake the ethnic cleansing of the Indigenous residents to achieve the necessary population balance to attain statehood generated strong anti-Indian hysteria and violent actions” (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, 137). Chip Colwell, in his book *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits*, explains some of the lead-in to the massacre along with the complications surrounding land ownership perpetrated by settlers:

An 1851 treaty promised eastern Colorado and parts of Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas to the Cheyenne and Arapaho. But with the onset of the gold rush of 1859, thousands of men flooded the Rocky Mountains and its broad eastern plains, turning a dusty camp along the Platte River into the raucous Denver City (Colwell 2017, 69).

In Gary Roberts’ dissertation, *Sand Creek: Tragedy and Symbol*, he writes about the motivations of settlers:

Property stood at the center of their value system, and because they valued it so highly, they realized the moral dilemma of dispassion. To insulate themselves, they saw Indian treachery in every act of kindness, Indian duplicity in every generosity, until they persuaded themselves that they were the victims of a savage terror (Roberts 1984, 10).

The promise of wealth and land motivated many individuals to move West, and this migration came along with the systematic, and at times extremely violent, displacement of Native people.

In the prelude to the Sand Creek Massacre, an environment marked by anti-Indian rhetoric and sentiment was created and heavily influenced by the territorial governor,

John Evans:

From late 1863 onward, when faced repeatedly with the opportunity to allay settler colonists’ fears of Native people and agitations for war, Evans instead chose escalation and panic...Evans’s two proclamations in June and August 1864

represent effective declarations of war (an authority he did not have), which acted to inflame settler passions and put peace-seeking Native leaders in dangerously untenable positions (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 13).

Evans first proclamation on June 27th, 1864 stated the intent to exterminate “hostile” Natives explicitly, while offering shelter to those that were “friendly”: “The war on hostile Indians will be continued until they are all effectually subdued” (Evans quoted in Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 60). The proclamation also refers to different forts that specific Tribes were instructed to go to if they were “friendly”: “friendly members” of the Cheyenne and Arapaho were instructed to go to Fort Lyon for provisions and protection.

In August, Evans issued a second proclamation:
Now, therefore, I, John Evans, governor of Colorado Territory, do issue this proclamation, authorizing all citizens of Colorado, either individually or in such parties as they may organize, to go in pursuit of all hostile Indians on the plains, scrupulously avoiding those who have responded to my said call to rendezvous at the points indicated; also, to kill and destroy, as enemies of the country, wherever they may be found, all such hostile Indians (Evans quoted in Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 64).

Following this statement, the 3rd Regiment, led by Col. John Chivington, was raised: “...the 425 men of the 3rd Regiment were not [well trained and equipped]. The War Department had only authorized the unit on August 11, 1864” (Clemmer Smith et al, 2014, 6). The 3rd Regiment would go on to perpetrate the Sand Creek Massacre at the behest of Col. Chivington, who was known for being an especially brutal figure in the American West as well as a Methodist elder. In David Halaas' book, *Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent*, he writes of Chivington: “Chivington was a dangerous enemy. Not only did he command all troops in the Colorado Military District, he also saw himself as the hand and sword of God” (Halaas 2005, 121). Chivington was ambitious and carried out his campaign against the Cheyenne and Arapaho in order to

advance his position to brigadier general, though his bid was ultimately unsuccessful (Halaas 2005, 121).

It has been proposed that the catalyst for the Sand Creek Massacre was the alleged murder of the Hungate family outside of Denver on June 11, 1864: a direct precursor to Evans's first proclamation:

The causes of the massacre were many, but the fuse was lit by the Hungate family's gruesome murder. Outside Denver, the rancher Nathan Ward Hungate, his wife, Ellen, and two golden-haired daughters were killed during a stock raid. Nathan's body was found peppered with bullets, and the rest of the family mutilated and thrown into a well. Some blamed a Northern Cheyenne chief; others blamed Arapahos. But who actually killed the Hungates is unknown and unproven, and irrelevant anyway since the actions of just a few Indians could be used to justify punishing them all. To further stoke the flames of hate, the murdered family was put on display in Denver. 'The bodies were brought to town and placed in a box, side by side, the two children between their parents,' one settler remembered, 'and shown to the people from the shed where the City Hall now stands' (Colwell 2017, 70).

An atmosphere that supported the extermination of Native peoples, for a multitude of reasons, had been established by Evans, Chivington, and the 3rd Regiment. However, Black Kettle, a chief of the southern band of the Cheyenne, attempted to establish peace and called for a conference at Camp Weld in Denver on September 28, 1864 that was facilitated with the help of Major Wynkoop, the commander of Fort Lyon. The meeting included Wynkoop, the reluctant Governor John Evans, and Col. Chivington; Black Kettle pleaded before the men: "I want you to give all the chief of the soldiers here to understand that we are for peace, and that we have made peace, that we may not be mistaken by them for enemies" (Black Kettle quoted in Halaas 2005, 138). Chivington responded: "My rule of fighting white men or Indians, is to fight them until they lay down their arms and submit to military authority. You are nearer Major Wynkoop than

anyone else, and you can go to him when you are ready to do that” (Quoted in Halaas 2005, 138). With this assurance, Black Kettle convinced six hundred Cheyenne and Arapaho to surrender to Major Wynkoop by late October and moved the Tribes to Sand Creek, just “forty miles northeast of Fort Lyon” (Halaas 2005, 139). However, Major Wynkoop relinquished control of Fort Lyon to Major Scott Anthony who was unsympathetic to the Tribes and in turn would not allow them to stay at Fort Lyon as had been previously promised: “[Major Anthony] ordered Black Kettle to stay on Sand Creek, where the Cheyennes might find buffalo and fend for themselves. When Anthony received new orders from headquarters, he would contact Black Kettle and let him know where to take his people” (Halaas 2005, 139). The Tribes believed that they were safe as long as they stayed put and awaited direction from Major Anthony. However, this all changed at dawn on November 29, 1864 when the U.S. Army unexpectedly arrived at Sand Creek and began their indiscriminate slaughter of Chiefs, women, children, and men. It has been written that, “In the middle of the encampment, Chief Black Kettle raised an American flag, a white cloth beneath it, shouting for people not to be afraid” (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 4). However, this did nothing to dissuade the troops; seventeen of the thirty Chiefs at camp were murdered, including White Antelope who had received a peace medal in Washington D.C. in 1851 (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014).

The 3rd regiment led by Col. Chivington was physically responsible for the massacre that lasted nine hours and resulted in the deaths of approximately two hundred Cheyenne and Arapaho people (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 7). Robert Bent, the son of Owl Woman and prolific trader, William Bent, had been coerced into leading Chivington to Sand Creek, and heard Chivington yell as he charged into the encampment,

“Remember our wives and children murdered on the Platte and Arkansas!” (Halaas 2005, 145). However, not all soldiers present at Sand Creek participated in the massacre. Captain Silas S. Soule and Lieutenant Joseph A. Cramer, “...ordered their companies to stand down and not fire” (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 8). Shortly after the massacre, Soule and Cramer wrote letters to Major Wynkoop describing in detail the atrocities committed by the 3rd Regiment and eventually testified before the military commission. Soule was murdered in Denver by soldiers shortly after his testimony was received. The following is a passage from Soule’s letter in which he details the mutilations and murders committed by the 3rd Regiment:

The massacre lasted six or eight hours, and a good many Indians escaped. I tell you Ned it was hard to see little children on their knees have their brains beat out by men professing to be civilized. One squaw was wounded and a fellow took a hatchet to finish her, she held her arms up to defend her, and he cut one arm off, and held the other with one hand and dashed the hatchet through her brain. One squaw with her two children, were on their knees begging for their lives of a dozen soldiers, within ten feet of them all, firing – when one succeeded in hitting the squaw in the thigh, when she took a knife and cut the throats of both children, and then killed herself. One old squaw hung herself in the lodge – there was not enough room for her to hang and she held up her knees and choked herself to death. Some tried to escape on the Prairie, but most of them were run down by horsemen. I saw two Indians hold one of another’s hands, chased until they were exhausted, when they kneeled down, and clasped around each other the neck and were both shot together. They were all scalped, and as high as half a dozen taken from one head. They were all horribly mutilated. One woman was cut open and a child taken out of her, and scalped (Soule 1864).

When Soule offered his account of the massacre to federal investigators, he affirmed that the 3rd Regiment had known that the Cheyenne and Arapaho camped at Sand Creek were not dangerous and they were even considered as prisoners (Kelman 2013, 28).

Silas Soule is widely regarded as a hero by the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho. In a 2011 letter written to the History Colorado Center by Joe

Fox, Jr., the Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne, he describes the importance of Soule's actions:

Capt. Silas Soule sacrificed his life so that many Cheyennes and Arapahos might live. His refusal to obey Chivington's orders to fire on defenseless women and children and the elderly was an incredibly brave moral action by a man who knew the consequences must surely come...Soule authored one of the letters that initiated congressional and army investigations into Sand Creek, and his courageous testimony against Chivington before the Army hearings caused his assassination by Chivington supporters in the streets of Denver. His letter also brought about the creation of the national park, 143 years later (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

Indeed, at the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site in Eads, Colorado, there are large scale reproductions of both Soule's and Cramer's letters that bore witness to the atrocities committed by the 3rd Regiment.



Figure 1: Letter reproduction at the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, July 8, 2018; photo by Katherine Hoadley.

Chivington and the 3rd Regiment returned to Denver that December and were received as heroes: “A week later, the Denver Theater presented a play in front of a ‘full and fashionable audience,’ featuring ‘novel trappings, trophies of the big fight at Sand Creek’” (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 8). However, it did not take long for the massacre

to become the “subject of Congressional investigation,” thanks to, in part, the letters written by Soule and Cramer that were circulated by Major Wynkoop (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 8). It was determined by the “Joint Committee on the Conduct of the [Civil] War, the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the Tribes, and an army commission,” that the event at Sand Creek was a “massacre of Indians who were under the protection of the U.S. government” (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 9). John Evans was ultimately removed as Territorial Governor as a result of the inquiries, but Col. Chivington and Major Anthony were never prosecuted. George Bent, a survivor of the Sand Creek Massacre, “...viewed Sand Creek as a hinge in Cheyenne history, an event that ended a relatively peaceful and prosperous era for the Tribe and began a more violent and impoverished one: the Plains Indian Wars and the reservation era that followed” (Kelman 2013, 33).

On the aftermath of the massacre, Gary Roberts writes:

The Sand Creek Massacre marked a turning point in the history of Indian-white relations, and its shadow loomed over Indian affairs for nearly two decades. Sand Creek appealed to those who sought simple answers. In a single, horrifying image, critics found the apotheosis of the national failure to deal with the Indians fairly, while Westerners found in Sand Creek the only solution to the perplexing contest between civilization and savagery...At Sand Creek, Americans confronted the dark side of their common experience, and they were not able to let go of the moral imperatives until the Indians had passed into the oblivion of the reservations (Roberts 1984, 3-4).

In 1865, with the signing of the Treaty of Little Arkansas, Sand Creek was rightfully declared a massacre and the Cheyenne and Arapaho were promised to be awarded reparations of property and land. However, these reparations were never made and the first apology for the Sand Creek Massacre on behalf of the State of Colorado came in 2014, 150 years after the massacre, by Governor John Hickenlooper. On the steps of the Denver Capitol Building, Governor Hickenlooper read aloud:

We should not be afraid to criticize and condemn that which is inexcusable. So I am here to offer something that has been too long in coming. On behalf of the State of Colorado, I want to apologize. And I don't make that apology lightly. I talked to all of the living former Governors of Colorado going back for the past 40 years and each one of them agrees and in spirit is standing here beside me (Hickenlooper quoted in Calhoun 2014).

The impacts of the Sand Creek Massacre are still felt today by the Descendant Communities who were pushed out of Colorado and onto reservations: the land of their ancestors was stolen and many of their leaders and family members were murdered. Stories of the massacre have been passed down for generations between families and live on to this day.

2.2 The Sand Creek Massacre Site Location Study Oral History Project

In 1998, after the passage of the *Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Study Act*, signed by President Clinton, an oral history project was undertaken by the National Park Service in order to find the historic Sand Creek site. Ari Kelman in his book *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the memory of Sand Creek*, writes about the complications of finding the physical site of the Sand Creek Massacre; a project largely spearheaded by Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the help of many Descendant Community members, historians, and National Park Service members. In 2000, Senator Campbell passed the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Establishment Act of 2000 that established a formal memorial site for the Sand Creek Massacre in Eads, Colorado. The oral history project, led by Alexa Roberts of the National Park Service, resulted in the compilation of many accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre by those descended from victims and survivors of the massacre. Hubert S.

Warren of the Northern Arapaho tells the story of his grandmother, Singing Under Water, and how she survived the massacre, from her perspective:

The camp crier called out ‘Attention! Wake up Arapahos!’...The crier woke her up and she sat up and put her moccasins on. I ran outside. It was terrible. Everyone scattered all over and the big guns [cannons] were firing. The camp crier was an old man. He was still announcing ‘Scatter! We will meet again at the place we had out last Sun Dance!’ I was terrified...They were shooting at wounded children, Cheyennes and Arapahos. Later on there were random shots, they were burning the tipis and belongings (Quoted in Roberts 2000, 160-161).

An account of the massacre told by Mrs. Blanche White Shield of the Southern Cheyenne, relates her grandmother’s story as well:

Some old men, some Chiefs, wanted to make peace with the U.S. government. They had a meeting, they really trusted the white men. Once they become a chief, they must be honest and sincere and love their people and help them in good ways...So these two old men, Black Kettle and another one...Siting Bear?...they went a few days before to soldier camp to make peace and when they came back to the village, somebody told them the soldiers would come back to attack them. And they said, ‘no they won’t we were there to make peace with the soldiers (blue coats).’...But the next day they came, the blue coats, shooting at them. When they started shooting, Black Kettle and White Antelope got the flag. I guess they had gotten it from the soldiers. Somebody told them to wave it so the soldiers wouldn’t attack (Quoted in Roberts 2000, 192).

Mrs. Colleen Cometsevah, of the Southern Cheyenne, spoke about stories that she had heard since she was a child:

The soldiers mutilated the dead. Some of them didn’t die immediately. They were wounded and the soldiers stayed there and finished killing them the next day. I’ve heard different stories from different families. One was from a family about a little girl whose mother got a horse and was able to grab the little girl by the arm and pull her up and they got away. And then this lady, Mrs. Starr, told me that her great-great-grandmother was a little girl and she was covered up in a hole, covered with sand and leaves, and she survived. Then Laird had a story about two small children whose father managed to catch a horse and put his two small children on the horse and got them out of there and told them to keep going. The kids kept switching the horse and they ran and ran till the horse died of exhaustion (Quoted in Roberts 2000, 204).

Many of the oral histories included in this project illustrate how the Sand Creek massacre is still a part of people's everyday lives; these are stories that these individuals were told as children and as they grew up: stories about their own grandparents, great-grandparents, relatives, or their community members. The brutality of the event has contributed to intergenerational and historical trauma – greatly impacting the lives of the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho.

This collection of oral histories, gathered in order to locate the Sand Creek Massacre site for the National Park Service, can be considered as an act of “bearing witness.” As described by Kalí Tal: “

Bearing witness is an aggressive act. It is born out of the refusal to bow to outside pressure to revise or to repress experience, a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than submit to the seductive pull of revision and repression (Tal 1996, 7).

These oral histories bear witness to the history of the Sand Creek Massacre, however, as Dr. Alexa Roberts writes:

There is an irony in committing to writing stories that were meant to be handed down by way of the spoken word, because by preserving the stories in writing, something is also taken away. While this report is prepared with due respect, it can not possibly convey the depth of meaning the stories have to the people who told them or to their Descendants...But it does attempt to provide a portion of the historical record that has been underrepresented in the past... (Roberts 2000, 138).

Collecting these oral histories, though not without its own complications, allows for the centering of Native voices and a deeper understanding by outsiders of what the massacre means to those Descendants.

2.3 University of Denver: Report of the John Evans Study Committee

In November of 2014, the University of Denver published the *Report of the John Evans Study Committee*. The report was authored by a committee comprised of the following University of Denver faculty: Richard Clemmer-Smith, Alan Gilbert, Billy J. Stratton, George E. Tinker, Nancy D. Wadsworth and Steven Fisher, as well as David Fridtjof Halaas, former Colorado State Historian and consultant to the Northern Cheyenne. However, a much larger committee was also formed to create this report that consisted of six Sand Creek Massacre Descendants, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as alumni representatives of the DU Native American community and Native American Students Alliance (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, vii). The purpose of the committee was to "...[conduct] research and [report] their findings regarding [John] Evans's role in the events surrounding and consequences of the massacre" (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, vii). John Evans, the former territorial governor, was also the founder of The University of Denver in 1864 – the same year as the Sand Creek Massacre. The results of the report find Evans culpable for the Sand Creek Massacre:

We conclude that John Evans's pattern of neglect of his treaty-negotiating duties, his leadership failures, and his reckless decision-making in 1864 combine to clearly demonstrate a significant level of culpability for the Sand Creek Massacre. While not of the same character, Evan's culpability is comparable in degree to that of Colonel John Chivington, the military commander who personally planned and carried out the massacre. Evans's actions and influence, more than those of any other political official in Colorado Territory, created the conditions in which the massacre was highly likely (Clemmer-Smith et al 2014, iii).

The report is an effort for the University of Denver to acknowledge the complicated history of its founder:

This committee's hope is that by understanding our founder's role in this catastrophic event we can unite as a community and begin to forge a new

relationship to the past for the benefit of the public good. We offer this report as an initial step to promote empathy and healing, not only for those of us who have inherited this complex legacy, but also for the Arapaho and Cheyenne people, who have displayed an active sense of presence in the face of victimization and, lest we forget, on whose ancestral lands our campus sits (Clemmer Smith et al. 2014, iii-iv).

By including the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho in the creation of this report, the university rightfully offered an opportunity for the retelling of a history that has largely been told with the perspectives of EuroAmericans at the forefront.

Including the voices and stories of the Descendant Communities allows for

“remembering,” as explained by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, to take place:

The remembering of a people relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more specifically to the remembering of a painful past, remembering in terms of connecting bodies with place and experience, and importantly, people’s responses to that pain ... (Smith 1999, 244).

Remembering contributes to the work of decolonization, as does the collaborative effort that took place in order to create the report.

Conversely, Northwestern University, in Evanston, Illinois, also founded by John Evans, conducted their own report and published their findings in May of 2014.

Northwestern University did not work directly with any Descendant Communities of the Sand Creek Massacre in their research and came to a conclusion that has been interpreted by many as “absolving John Evans of responsibility for the massacre using the relativist claim that he was a ‘representative figure who believed in and lived out the dominant ideas’ of his time” (Stratton 2015). The difference in outcomes can at least partially be attributed to Northwestern’s lack of inclusion and lack of collaboration with the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho.

2.4 Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s – Today

The Colorado Historical Society, now known as History Colorado, was founded in 1879 by John Evans, the former territorial governor, William N. Byers, owner of *Rocky Mountain News*, and Major Scott Anthony, of the First Colorado Cavalry (Convery 2012). Both Evans and Anthony, as previously discussed, were major players in the Sand Creek Massacre. History Colorado holds a small collection of material from the Sand Creek Massacre and in 2005, a “...scalp that Major Jacob Downing had taken from the head of a Sand Creek Victim...” was repatriated to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Northern Arapaho Tribe, and Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma under NAGPRA: the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act that was passed in 1990 (Colwell 2017, 120 and Goff 2017, 7). Bill Convery, former State Historian, related in his dissertation that, “History Colorado’s NAGPRA program has become a model for collaborative stewardship, a partnership that has borne interpretive fruit in the creation of jointly-curated exhibits on American Indian history such as *Ancient Voices and Tribal Paths*” (Convery 2012, 26). Indeed, History Colorado has, under the steady guidance of Sheila Goff (History Colorado’s former NAGPRA Coordinator), repatriated “857 individuals, 2,108 associated funerary objects and five unassociated funerary objects to a large number of tribes” (Goff 2017, 1).

Tribal Paths, an exhibit at the Colorado Historical Society before it rebranded as History Colorado in 2009, has largely been considered a collaborative success; a letter from the curator, Bridget Ambler, in 2007 to the Northern Arapaho Business Committee outlines her partnership with Ben Ridgely, a Tribal Representative for the Northern Arapaho Tribe:

We have consulted extensively with the Northern Arapaho Tribe for this exhibit. Specifically, we sought input regarding the Sand Creek Massacre, Sand Creek Spiritual Healing Run, and the continued partnership between the Northern Arapaho Tribe and Arapaho High School in Littleton (Ambler 2007).

An exhibit review of *Tribal Paths* by Benjamin Filene and Brian Horrigan that appeared in *The Journal of American History* was somewhat mixed; they related positively that:

‘*Tribal Paths*’ shares one of the main goals of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian – to show that American Indians are ‘still here,’ as the introductory text panel states. Through displays of present-day commemorations of historic events and ceremonies, the exhibition leaves visitors with the strong impression that Indians of Colorado maintain a sense of cultural identity by melding old traditions with contemporary ways of life (Filene and Horrigan 2007, 877).

However, Filene and Horrigan also highlight that the exhibit replicated “...the traditional Euro-American narrative of American Indian history, and the use of nineteenth-century artifacts that people are accustomed to seeing in museums...” (Filene and Horrigan 2007, 878). As evidenced by *Tribal Paths*, the Colorado Historical Society had a more than surface-level awareness of the Sand Creek Massacre, while also running a successful NAGPRA program wherein an individual from the Sand Creek Massacre was able to be repatriated. However, these successes did not prepare the Colorado Historical Society for the controversy that would surround their interpretation of the Sand Creek Massacre in a new 2012 exhibit entitled *Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s – Today*.

Collision, a part of the larger exhibition entitled *Colorado Stories*, opened along with the brand-new History Colorado building in downtown Denver on April 28, 2012 (Rothstein 2012). The \$110 million, 200,000 square foot facility, has over 40,000 square feet of exhibitions space (Rothstein 2012). With the opening came a great deal of

criticism for several exhibits, but *Collision* drew attention in particular. Edward Rothstein, for the New York Times, wrote:

In the Sand Creek Massacre display, for example, much white wall space is meant as a kind of homage, but instead, it makes a visitor aware of how many gaps are left. What is this history of the conflict between the government and tribes in Colorado? What were the treaties and the betrayals? What effect did the massacre have? (Rothstein 2012).

Michael Paglia, art critic and frequent contributor to Denver weekly, *Westword*, wrote of the exhibit: “The other show, *Colorado Stories*, purports to “examine Colorado communities from the 1300s to the present,” and although it’s slightly more sophisticated than *Destination Colorado*, it shares the same dumbed-down spirit” (Paglia 2012). Paglia blamed the then Chief Operations Officer, Kathryn Hill, citing that she participated in a unique museum cult, “...in the art education realm; rather than trying to elevate the discussion, members of that cult consult interviews, surveys, charts, graphs and focus groups in order to arrive at the lowest common denominator for exhibits” (Paglia 2012). Indeed, this is a criticism that has been thrown at museums for some time now. In 1991, John Terrell wrote the seminal article, “Disneyland and the Future of Museum Anthropology,” in which he proclaimed the “era of the curator driven exhibit,” dead, 21 years before the opening of History Colorado (Terrell 1991, 149). Terrell writes: “From this day forth, we will give our “museum visitors” what they want, when they want it, and how they want it” (Terrell 1991, 149). This approach certainly was a flaw in the conception of an exhibit that deals with violent and sensitive historical content; Paglia’s assertion was correct that History Colorado based much of the content of their brand-new museum on the results of visitor studies and audience research. In an exhibit review by

Janet Ore of Colorado State University, she writes: “History Colorado undertook extensive audience research to discover how to lure people into the museum” (Ore 2013).

Based on somewhat limited access to photos of the exhibit, it is easy to surmise that *Collision* was not based on many objects related to Sand Creek from History Colorado’s collections. The exhibit was focused on creating an all-encompassing environment that included background audio of Lee Lone Bear singing the death or journey song of Cheyenne Chief White Antelope, as well as audio of cannons going off. Quotes were projected onto swaths of fabric in a rather dark and small exhibit space. Bill Convery, State Historian and Director of Exhibits and Interpretation at the time of the exhibit, included a description of *Collision* in his 2012 dissertation, *Colorado Stories: Interpreting Colorado History for Public Audiences at the History Colorado Center*:

The Sand Creek exhibit aimed to engage visitors by presenting multiple perspectives of Colorado’s seminal tragedy. While walking through this gallery [sic] visitors would discover objects taken from the site attesting to the personal violence of the massacre. These objects appeared in ghostly, backlit setting behind curving walls of stretch fabric, evocative of Plains Indian tipis. Floating overhead, projected quotes from witnesses and participants on both sides represented multiple viewpoints... (Convery 2012, 27).

The exhibit content attempted to provide perspectives from “both sides”: meaning perspectives of white settlers and Native people. Black Kettle was profiled in the exhibit as “the most influential leader of the Cheyennes” and Chivington is quoted saying, “I believe that it is right and honorable to use any means under God’s heaven to kill Indians...” (Convery 2012, 28). Also introduced were George Bent, Silas Soule, and Private Irving Howbert: “Although each viewed the events from the front lines, each conveyed different perspectives about the tragedy” (Convery 2012, 28). While George Bent and Silas Soule famously refused to participate in the massacre, Irving Howbert is

generally considered a Sand Creek Massacre apologist who enlisted himself as an “Indian fighting volunteer” (Convery 2012, 30). Convery writes:

His viewpoint reflects the insecurity felt by many non-Indian settlers, and the sense of one who perceives himself as a victim, even as he invaded the Cheyennes’ and Arapahos’ homeland. Settlers such as Howbert told and re-told chilling stories of victims who were ‘roasted alive, shot full of arrows, and subjected to every kind of cruelty the savages could devise’ (Convery 2012, 30).

Including the perspective of Howbert may not have been so damning if Convery and his team had not also included the perspectives of Laura Roper and Lucinda Eubank: two white women who were separately captured by the Cheyenne in preludes to the massacre. Including these three separate stories seemed to be an attempt to represent justifications for an unprovoked massacre while simultaneously ignoring that white settlers were encroaching on land that was not their own and committing their own acts of violence against the Tribes. While the pain and torment faced by these women is valid, it does not justify the slaughter of up to 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Convery writes: “Roper was among the group of captives repurchased by Black Kettle and released in Denver as a gesture of good will in September 1864. Yet despite her kind treatment, Roper expressed an extreme view on the issue of Indian removal...” (Convery 2012, 32). Roper had stated: “Hope your wish will come true that every one of the Indians will be extinguished” (Quoted in Convery 2012, 32). Including text that reflected these stories promotes the same narrative that was pushed by Colonel Chivington that invoked the sanctity of white femininity. General Chivington specifically used white femininity to justify his actions in the massacre. Kelman describes Chivington’s response to criticism about the massacre:

Chivington buttressed that contention by underscoring the essential fiendishness of all Indians, appealing to white racial solidarity, and invoking gender ideologies – the sanctity of white femininity – that structured Anglo-American society. ‘I had no means of ascertaining what were the names of the Indians who had committed these outrages,’ he stated, ‘other than the declarations of the Indians themselves, and the character of Indians in the western country for truth and veracity, like their respect for the chastity of women who may become prisoners in their hands, is not of that order which is calculated to inspire confidence in what they may say’ (Kelman 2013, 15).

Chivington is referencing the stories of women like Roper and Eubank and justifying his actions in the massacre through their captivity. Chivington and his men clearly had no quarrel with maintaining the sanctity and chastity of the native women that they tortured and slaughtered. In contrast to Roper and Eubank’s stories, *Collision* showcased the story of White Buffalo Woman, a survivor of the Sand Creek Massacre. The only text to which I have access that includes the story of White Buffalo Woman is a somewhat scarce interpretation that includes one quote from her great-granddaughter, Dr. Henrietta Mann: “As is true for all Cheyenne babies, White Buffalo Girl was loved. Her mother and other female relatives spent much time holding her and protecting her” (Mann quoted in History Colorado 2012).

While the content of the exhibit may have been critiqued by visitors, art critics, journalists, and graduate students like myself, the most meaningful critiques came from the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre themselves: critiques that would eventually shutter the exhibit altogether. The development of *Collision* as an exhibit began with a draft in 2010 written by Bill Convery, and in January 2011, a meeting took place between History Colorado and the American Indian Advisory Committee (Convery 2012). It was at this meeting where initial concerns were expressed that the exhibit draft placed too much emphasis on Colonel John Chivington, and this might cause a misinterpretation of

the events leading up to the Sand Creek Massacre as well as the massacre itself. On March 17, 2011, a consultation between History Colorado and the Northern Arapaho and Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma took place where it was established that there should be an emphasis on the “sense of betrayal at the massacre” (Convery 2012, 33). It was months later until the next consultation on December 14, 2011, in Billings Montana with the Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho, and Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma: the first time all of the Tribes had been present for a meeting. At this meeting, it was made very clear to Bill Convery and Bridget Ambler, History Colorado Curator of Material Culture, that the Tribes and Tribal Representatives, along with the previous state historian, Dr. David Halaas, were unhappy with the exhibit drafts as they stood. Revisions on behalf of the Tribes were suggested, including revisions of quotes that appeared to be taken out of context, dates that were incorrect, and messaging that implied that the massacre was justified: “The message conveyed by the quotes is that both sides share equal blame for the Sand Creek Massacre. That message undermines the crime of Sand Creek, the findings most historians, and the CHS main exhibit message which is that “The Sand Creek Massacre was an unjustifiable attack on innocent women and children...” (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011). Some adjustments were made to the exhibit text by History Colorado after this meeting but plans to open the exhibit in April of 2012 went ahead as planned. The Tribes formally requested that History Colorado postpone the opening of the exhibit; after that request was denied, the Tribes requested the closure of the exhibit two separate times in writing. Eventually, the Tribes took their case to the court of public opinion, enlisting the help of *Westword* journalist and Editor, Patricia Calhoun. In February of 2013, 10 months after

the opening of the exhibit, Calhoun published an article entitled, “A century and a half later, the wounds of Sand Creek are still fresh.” This article outlines many of the grievances and frustrations that the Tribes had with the exhibition:

The Sand Creek Massacre took place almost 150 years ago. But for the tribes that lost their ancestors there, the wounds are still very fresh. And this exhibit has poured salt on them, stirring more anger and mistrust. The concerns start with the exhibit's very title: *Collision*. That implies the Native Americans slaughtered that day were on the move, were confronting the troops (Calhoun 2013a).

Eventually, bowing to the public pressure generated by the articles that Calhoun published, the CEO of History Colorado, Ed Nichols, announced on April 10, 2013 that the exhibit would close and that History Colorado would make a commitment to meaningful collaboration with the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre: “...History Colorado will close the exhibit to the public during consultation and while any agreed-upon changes resulting from the consultation are made to the exhibit” (Quoted in Calhoun 2013c). Indeed, History Colorado has made a commitment to collaboration and reopening an exhibit about the Sand Creek Massacre, but at the date of this writing, a new exhibit has yet to open.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

The following chapter showcases the legacies of several museum controversies that have occurred in the past 30 or so years, followed by a brief history of the growing field of collaborative museum anthropology. Investigating controversial exhibits of the past helps to show that there is a general pattern that controversial exhibits that showcase marginalized communities seem to follow: Step 1: A museum seeks to create an exhibit that involves the history or the culture of Native people or people who hold other marginalized identities. Step 2: The museum then creates this exhibit without considering or engaging with their stakeholders in a mutually meaningful way. Step 3: The exhibit is then protested, changed, or closed. *Collision* follows this pattern, as do many others.

Even though this pattern is one that unfortunately persists into the present, the changing field of museum anthropology and the development of new museum ethics is helping more and more museums understand the need for collaboration and lessening instances of controversy. Discussing the shift in museum ethics that has been steadily taking place since the late 80s and early 90s illustrates that it is possible for museums to change their outdated and colonial practices and instead, embrace communities that have been historically excluded by museums and from conversations concerning their own history.

3.1 Landmark controversial museum exhibits

One of the most infamous exhibits of the past 30 years – *Into the Heart of Africa* – was curated by Jeanne Cannizzo and opened at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in 1989. Cannizzo attempted to create a postmodern museum exhibit related to African heritage in Canada. Unfortunately, the exhibit that Cannizzo created was unsuccessful for several reasons and it has become a posterchild for issues presented by the “postmodern” exhibit as well as the effects of insufficient collaboration with stakeholders. It is reasonable to postulate that if Cannizzo had engaged with the appropriate stakeholders, those in the Toronto community with African heritage, the controversy caused by the exhibit’s ironic and ambiguous usage of dated terms or bold imagery may have been prevented.

Cannizzo intended *Into the Heart of Africa* to explore themes of, “... imperialism and collection; Western traditions of exhibiting Africa; and finally, African culture” (Butler 2015, 160). Shelley Butler in her piece, “Reflexive Museology: Lost and Found,” writes: “...*Into the Heart of Africa* sought to reveal museological and colonial practices of representing Africa and to teach visitors about Canadian complicity with the British Empire” (Butler 2015, 161). She continues: “Intellectually the door was opened to discover multiple meanings, narratives, and social relations through material culture, all of which contrasted with the traditional image of collections being static and dead” (Butler 2015, 161). However, many visitors saw Cannizzo's interpretation of the ROM's collection as being racist when terms like “savage” and “Dark Continent” were used as buzzwords (Butler 2015, 164). Butler also examines Cannizzo's usage of quotation marks around the aforementioned terms; the quotation marks were intended to signal to the

reader that the terms held within them were outdated and racist, however, that signal was frequently misread and led to a fair amount of problematic interpretation.

Nicholas Mirzoeff describes postmodernism in the following way: "... the dominant postmodern style is ironic: a knowing pastiche that finds comment and critique to be the only means of innovation" (Mirzoeff 1999, 4). While there are many different interpretations of postmodernism, Mirzoeff's description falls in line with the postmodern application attempted by Cannizzo. However, Cannizzo failed to realistically consider how the exhibit might be interpreted or understood by the general public, and more importantly, the African community in Ontario. One of the underlying problems of the exhibit occurred when objects and text were not considered together; e.g., if a visitor skipped over or skimmed a text panel, the contextualization of the object or subject in question was lost. The ways in which visitors interact with an exhibit is a consideration that should be taken by any museum curator; it is not at all uncommon for visitors to walk through a museum without doing a "close-read" of the exhibit text. When objects become decontextualized in this way, alternate narratives are allowed to construct themselves. An example of this decontextualization found in Cannizzo's exhibit is examined by Butler:

In another area called 'Civilization, Commerce and Christianity,' visitors encountered a life-sized mimetic model of an Ovimbundu compound from Angola in 1895. Designers built a thatched roof house and furnished it with objects from the collection, creating a tableau of a traditional rural lifeway. This display, when juxtaposed with the Victorian parlor, reinforced a stereotype in which Africa is poor and rural, while Europe is wealthy and cosmopolitan. Yet, the curatorial intention was to positively highlight how the diorama provided contextual ethnographic information... However, visitors were not explicitly directed to look at the displays in this comparative fashion, and the reflexive museological subtexts went largely unnoticed (Butler 2015).

Without the provisioning of “contextual ethnographic information,” other conclusions than those intended were drawn. As Mieke Bal states: “To deny the image’s capacity to tell stories is one way of claiming narrative innocence for visual display - an innocence that is as untenable as it is necessary” (Bal 1992, 588). In other words, to imply that text can fully contextualize or resituate an image discounts the power of the image. This ultimately points out the complicated nature of creating a “postmodern” exhibit where the approach is over reliant on visitors being in “the know.” Butler makes a complementary point to Bal: “There are also exhibits that are so strong in their visual persuasiveness that no panel can counter their rhetoric” (Butler 2015, 592).

Ultimately, Cannizzo employed the irony, parody, and reflexivity of postmodernism in a way that was ambiguous if the museum visitor did not have a more than solid grasp on the tenets of postmodernism. As Butler writes, “Irony excludes those who do not get (or are offended by) the joke or critique” (Butler 2015, 167). Cannizzo is guilty of overestimating the ability of the museum visitor to interpret textual irony as well as failing to consider the consequences of misinterpretation.

In Moira Simpson’s book, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*, she critiques Cannizzo’s use of textual irony as well as the ROMs lack of collaboration with the Black community:

Indeed, the use of inverted commas in this context is highly ambiguous: the incorporation of a quotation does not exclusively indicate opposition to the quoted views, but can indicate entirely the opposite. It should, perhaps, not be surprising that this subtle message was not understood by those whose experiences of twentieth-century racism may have led them to expect little more than nineteenth-century views from a predominantly white institution with little or no record of liaison with the black community (Simpson 1996, 27).

Indeed, four months after the opening of *Into the Heart of Africa*, protestors from the Black community of Ontario began to assemble weekly outside the ROM and complained that the exhibition “did not tell their story” (Simpson 1996, 27, Phillips 2011). Simpson explains that doubt was cast on the real motivations of the protestors by those involved with the exhibit who claimed that protestors were simply using the exhibit as a political platform and that the ROM never intended to interpret “their story,” i.e., the story of the contemporary Black community in Ontario. However, it is worth pointing out that the history of people of African descent in Ontario might very well be relevant to that contemporary community. Simpson goes on to quote H.A. Da Breo who proposes a middle ground between claims that the ROM had not consulted with contemporary communities of African descent to claims that it had in fact done consultation:

Da Breo...questions the extent of the consultative process and suggests that ‘the ROM was not really seeking assistance or wanting input’ but was looking only for ‘approval and support’ and that discussions with focus groups took place after the exhibition was basically complete (Da Breo, 1989/90: 33, Qtd. in Simpson 1996, 28). Her explanation of the response of the black community suggests that it was the history of the collection itself and the absence of any prior relationship between the museum and the black Toronto community which resulted in the hostility towards the exhibition (Simpson 1996, 28).

The exclusion or discounting of the Black community’s input by an institution is something all too common and not often acknowledged or discussed by mainstream sources; this leaves those outside of marginalized communities generally oblivious to their treatment. However, due to the protests coming from the Black community in Ontario, other museums and the general Toronto public, which includes the Black community and other People of Color), were able to learn about the complexities of collaboration and the importance of inclusion when representing the histories of

marginalized communities. Unfortunately, this nuanced understanding came at the expense of and discomfort of the Black Toronto community.

In a similar nature to *Into the Heart of Africa*, both *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* and *First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570* were heavily protested by Native and First Nations communities who felt misrepresented, excluded, or manipulated by the exhibitions.

The Spirit Sings was an exhibit on Native Canadian art at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary that opened in 1988 - directly before the Winter Olympics. The exhibit became controversial due to its sponsorship by Shell Canada Ltd.:

Three years before *The Spirit Sings* opened, the Lubicon Lake Cree had called for a boycott of the Winter Olympics to draw attention to their land rights claim involving several companies, including Shell Canada Ltd, who were involved in destructive drilling activities on land the Lubicon claimed as their own. Shell had provided 1.1 million Canadian dollars of funding towards the cost of mounting [*The Spirit Sings*] but the Lubicon felt that the sponsorship of an exhibition of native artwork gave the impression that the sponsor supported native rights (Simpson 1996, 39).

The Glenbow Museum, by accepting this sponsorship from Shell, provided optics that supported Shell's alleged campaign to appear supportive of the Lubicon Lake Cree and other First Nations communities. Considering that the Lubicon had been vocal about the boycotting of the Olympics years ahead of time, it seems odd that the Glenbow Museum would accept a sponsorship from that company and not expect pushback from the Lubicon: "...in their view, [it was] yet another example of the cultural heritage of native peoples being used by white Canadians purely as entertainment and promotion of Canada, while the concerns of the native people themselves were being largely ignored"

(Simpson 1996, 39). Clearly, the Glenbow Museum prioritized white Canadian tourists over Native Canadians in the production of an exhibit that was meant to showcase Native artwork.

First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570, was a 1989 exhibit that focused on the colonization of the “new world” at the Florida Museum of Natural History; this exhibit opened to protests from both Native and Hispanic communities. The exhibit was criticized for its muted language: “...terms such as ‘forced laborers’ instead of ‘slaves’ to describe Indians who worked for the Spanish, and ‘subdue’ to describe Spanish control of Indians...” (Simpson 1996, 40). The exhibit traveled to a few different venues (though many museums cancelled their bookings of the exhibit), several of which invited criticism of the exhibit or included supplementary material. Rick Hill, who is Iroquois and was the director of the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum in Santa Fe, provided “additional commentary from an Indian perspective and corrected or expanded upon some of the points of view raised in the text” (Simpson 1996, 45).

First Encounters is perhaps most famous for an act of protest by a member of the American Indian Movement, Vernon Bellecourt, while the exhibit was at The Science Museum of Minnesota:

At the opening of the exhibition on Friday 29 May, Bellecourt held a press conference in the gallery during which he climbed aboard the replica of the *Niña*. With a sudden and unexpected movement, he produced a container of blood which he splashed over the boat’s sail and deck (Simpson 1996, 46).

The museum did not press charges against Bellecourt, but the message was received that the exhibit was extremely polarizing. However, the museum reacted to the protests in a way that encouraged dialogue with the community:

The Science Museum's crisis management campaign provides an example of museum actions that boldly confronted controversy by showing respect for an individual's right to protest, inviting dialogue, being receptive and sympathetic to the views and emotions of all parties, so creating something positive and constructive out of a symbolic act of vandalism (Simpson 1996, 47).

Allowing a dialogue about the content of the exhibit to then become a part of the exhibit promotes reflexive museum practices and allows a level of transparency, however, *First Encounters* is still generally seen as a failed exhibit among the museum community.

Museums are uniquely poised to present history in a way that educates the general public. Whether or not this history is presented in collaboration with the communities being represented can sometimes determine the overall success of the exhibit. Each of the aforementioned exhibits failed, at least initially, to consider their stakeholder's perspectives or to account for other public misinterpretations. Neglecting these important considerations is at least partially why they have been marked as "controversial" in the canon of museum anthropology.

3.2 The shift towards collaboration

The museum today is becoming representative of a shifting cultural and ethical landscape. The slow transition from the colonial to the post-colonial museum has brought with it a change in the way museums engage with the public and those who they represent; the categories of "public" and "stakeholder" are no longer seen as mutually exclusive. This transition has also brought about an imperative for collaboration with marginalized communities that is done in a so-called "meaningful" way. This shift has

been necessitated by several platforms over the past twenty-five or so years through legislation, like the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), protests by marginalized communities over controversial exhibits as previously discussed, and a cultural shift in the ethics surrounding representation. This shift has meant that museums are becoming more sensitive to their responsibility towards marginalized communities and are increasingly interested in sharing power with their stakeholders.

In 1997, James Clifford popularized the concept of “contact zones” and called for deeper community engagement, while in 2003, Ruth Phillips introduced the concept of the “collaborative paradigm” that promotes the sharing of power between the museum and the community in question. Engaging in dialogues with Indigenous communities has become a standard after NAGPRA, though, engagement or collaboration can be seen on a spectrum with a variety of results. Additionally, Janet Marstine (2011) reflects upon the fluidity of ethics and how they necessarily change over time, while Chip Colwell and TJ Ferguson (2008) discuss that collaboration happens on a continuum and can be done in ways that are superficial. With the shift to the post-colonial museum comes a shift in power. As Christina Kreps writes:

The post-colonial museum is fundamentally about inverting power relations and the voice of authority. In the post-colonial museum, the voice of authority is no longer that of anthropologists, art historians and professional museum workers but the people whose cultures are represented in museum (Kreps 2011).

As we are presently in the era of the post-colonial museum, controversies like the Canadian exhibits of the early nineties, or *Collision* of 2012, are becoming more and more infrequent. It is important to note here that this shift towards sharing power and

promoting Native voice in the museum is happening at a slow pace and not uncommonly at the behest of Native communities.

3.3 Post-colonial museum

The shift from the colonial to the post-colonial museum has been a long-awaited change for marginalized communities and various stakeholders whose cultural patrimony oftentimes lies in museum collections. As discussed by Tristram Besterman, the colonial museum relied on a EuroAmerican interpretation of history, artwork, ethnographic objects, etc. He explains that this is a symptom of a larger societal problem and writes:

Historic and continuing imbalances of power and unsustainable consumption that privilege the peoples of the developed world at the expense of the rest of humanity and the environment are recognized as the root causes of many ills that beset humankind. Museums are not to blame for this pathology in global equity, but in recognizing that they and their collections derive from, and are emblematic of, such imbalances, the values of cultural equity become a symbolic means of redress. Museums send out a powerful message when they recognize their accountability to peoples, hitherto denied a voice... (Besterman 2011, 252).

Besterman echoes the voices of Linda T. Smith and Amy Lonetree; addressing the imbalance of history and the favor shown to those from “the developed world” or EuroAmericans, can be a way to cultivate cultural and social equity. Besterman discusses the antiquated nature of the “Western-educated curatorial voice” that, if the new museum ethics are followed, will be phased out and replaced with a greater emphasis on the voices of stakeholders and members of communities who have not seen themselves represented appropriately in a museum context. Besterman additionally engages in a full discussion of how ethics have evolved historically, and specifically, how the concept of accountability is intergenerational, i.e., curators, educators, anthropologists, and museum professionals frequently do not see themselves as accountable for the “distant past.” He

refers explicitly to the dubious circumstances under which many museum collections have come to be and how laws regulating collecting have changed over time.

It is now agreed upon through established laws and acts that museums should repatriate the remains of Native Americans and their sacred objects, and that artwork collected during the Nazi era is subject to restitution, though these imperatives were only established relatively recently in the 1990s. Looting, commonplace in the late 1800s and even into the present, is now widely considered to be an unacceptable practice. Even still, many objects currently in museum collections were acquired illegally, whether they were stolen and sold to a museum or purchased under duress and then sold. Regulations on what museums are allowed to collect and the methods under which they may do so have changed drastically over the last 200 years, but it is only relatively recently that museums are becoming accountable for their previous collecting practices. This changing ethical landscape towards museum collections, i.e. tangible objects, has arguably contributed towards a change in the way intangible culture and history are being presented, that is, more consistently in collaboration with Descendant Communities and stakeholders. Indeed, the passing of NAGPRA was in response to protests over sacred objects and Native or Indigenous individuals being held in museum collections; the passage of this act has fundamentally changed the way museums and Tribes work together.

3.4 The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

NAGPRA was passed in 1990 by the U.S. Congress. This law establishes a method for the repatriation of Native American human remains, along with “funerary, sacred, and communally owned objects” (Colwell 2017, 7). Chip Colwell, in his book *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's*

Culture, writes: “A short seventeen pages, NAGPRA has impacted more than 1,500 museums, a dozen federal agencies, and essentially all of the nation’s 566 tribes. It established the human rights of more than 5 million Native Americans living in the United States today” (Colwell 2017, 7). The law gives Native Americans the same rights that every other culture group within the United States has when it concerns the physical remains of their ancestors. It is important to understand that this law came into existence as a result of actions and protests by Native Americans starting around 1970. The Act was pushed through in the early nineties thanks to the diligence of Suzan Shown Harjo, the then President of the National Congress of the American Indian, who is of Cheyenne and Muskogee descent (Colwell 2017, 83). When NAGPRA was presented to the House of Representatives in 1990, Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii spoke about the future impact of the law:

For museums that have dealt honestly and in good faith with Native Americans, this legislation will have little effect. For museums and institutions which have consistently ignored the requests of Native Americans, this legislation will give Native Americans greater ability to negotiate (Inouye quoted in Colwell 2017, 107).

Some repatriations, famously the Zuni War Gods, had already taken place before the passage of NAGPRA, but NAGPRA gave Tribes more significant legal grounds to call for the repatriation of materials from collections that receive government funds either directly or indirectly.

Importantly, the passage of NAGPRA mandates collaboration and consultation between museums and Native American Tribes. Anne Amati, in a technical insert for the Illinois Heritage Association titled, “A Roadmap to Repatriation: The Native American

Graves Protection and Repatriation Act,” asserts that consultation is key to a successful repatriation. She writes:

Consultation is the core of NAGPRA. It is how museums communicate with designated Tribal Representatives and lineal Descendants to determine identity, cultural affiliation, custody, control, treatment, and repatriation of human remains and objects covered under NAGPRA. Consultation is required throughout the NAGPRA process and should be ongoing (Amati 2018).

Requiring consultation with Native American Tribes significantly shifts the way museums have functioned in the past and forces institutions to recognize the agency of Native groups as well as take accountability for the contents of their collections.

Museums can now be held accountable and penalized if they refuse to consult with Tribes. NAGPRA has helped to establish a precedent in museums for consultation and in turn further collaboration, ushering in a new era of museum ethics. As Christina Kreps writes, “...NAGPRA is an example of how a professional body’s code of ethics can be inadequate in dealing with particular concerns, and how a law, in turn, can stimulate new ethical agendas” (Kreps 2011).

3.5 New museum ethics

With the advent of laws like NAGPRA and new ethical guidelines, it has become a standard museum practice that source communities are consulted in the development of museum exhibitions. Christina Kreps, in her piece, “Changing the Rules of the Road: Post-Colonialism and the New Ethics of Museum Anthropology,” writes: “Today, museums are urged to establish ‘on-going dialogue and partnerships with indigenous communities and to define a framework for respectful collaboration in the restoration of that inherent human right – the right to be the custodian of your own culture’” (Kreps

2011, 3). This ideal of dialogue and partnership is cited in the International Council of Museums, “Code of Ethics for Museums.” Section 6.1 states:

Museums should promote the sharing of knowledge, documentation and collections with museums and cultural organizations in the countries and communities of origin. The possibility of developing partnerships with museums in countries or areas that have lost a significant part of their heritage should be explored (ICOM 2006).

The development of these kinds of partnerships is an important step towards the post-colonial museum and recognizes the agency and vital perspectives of marginalized communities. The post-colonial museum is focused on changing the authoritarian voice of the museum as an institution to “...the voices of the people whose cultures are represented in museums” (Kreps 2011, 2). This relatively new ideal in the museum is the result of shifting attitudes towards representation and also protest from marginalized communities, as was the case with *The Spirit Sings, Into the Heart of Africa, First Encounters*, and *Collision*. Protest, and the changes protest affects, can be clearly seen in the museum-scape, as Kreps writes: “What we are witnessing is a humanistic turn in museum anthropology in which a history of detached scientific objectivity and aversion to politics is giving way to advocacy and engagement” (Kreps 2011, 7).

Karen Coody Cooper, a Native scholar, in her book *Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices*, discusses the importance of the protests that resulted from *The Spirit Sings* and along with other museum policies:

When viewed collectively, the protests can be seen as part of a movement seeking autonomy, self-definition, respect, dignity, human rights, and protection of religious freedom – all necessary ingredients for a people’s cultural continuation. The protests were against paternalism, hegemony, ignorance, callousness, appropriation of another people’s material culture and human remains, and disregard for laws regarding American Indian rights (Coody Cooper 2008, 172).

Indeed, it was predominately activism from within Native communities that resulted in the passing of NAGPRA, which has changed the course of the museum field drastically. Coody Cooper writes: “If protests had not publicized Native concerns about the actions of museum scholars and scientists and the vast holdings within museums of Native remains and materials, repatriation laws would not have been enacted” (Coody Cooper 2008, 173). The hard work is being done by the communities that are most affected by what is held in museum collections and as a result, museums are finally being held accountable for what they keep in their collections.

This type of activism can also be seen through organizations like “Decolonize This Place,” which is an “action oriented movement centering about Indigenous struggle, Black liberation, free Palestine, global wage workers and de-gentrification” (<http://www.decolonizethisplace.org/>). Decolonize This Place has organized protests surrounding museums and their hiring practices, as well as what museums choose to display. In early December of 2018, Decolonize This Place made a call for action via protest in a press release posted on their website. The protest organized was in support of a letter written by a staff member of the Whitney Museum in New York City. The Vice Chairman of the board of directors for the Whitney, Warren B. Kanders, was exposed as the “...CEO of Safariland, a corporation that manufactures ‘law enforcement products,’ including the tear gas used against migrant families presently at the U.S.-Mexico border, as well as the demonstrators in Ferguson, Standing Rock, Oakland, Egypt, and Palestine” (Small et al. 2018). A staff member, supported by approximately 100 other staff members at the Whitney, circulated a letter internally that expressed trepidation about Kanders and his position on the board of the Whitney:

For many of us, the communities at the border, in Ferguson, in the Dakotas, are our communities. We read the Hyperallergic article [reporting Kanders' connection to Safariland] and felt not annoyed, not intellectually upset – we felt sick to our stomachs, we shed tears, we felt unsafe (Quoted in Small et al. 2018).

Museum staff called for Kanders to resign but were not initially supported by their museum Director, Adam Weinberg. Eventually, Kanders was forced off the board of the Whitney in July of 2019. It is apparent that these kinds of protests will be and are shaping the future of museums; Decolonize This Place was able to assert their influence via protest in order to oust Kanders from the Whitney Museum Board. Protests like these are able to successfully attract public attention, which has the ability to sway the actions of museums and mold a new ethical landscape. The fear of negative press cannot be underestimated.

3.6 Collaboration exists on a spectrum

James Clifford, in his seminal work, “Museums as Contact Zones,” discusses the concept of “contact zones” as defined by Mary Louise Pratt:

...She defines ‘contact zone’ as ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict’ (Clifford 1997, 192).

Clifford interprets the museum as a contact zone; he acknowledges how certain people have been historically separated from the museum due to a number of factors, such as socio-economic background or race. In reference to both *The Spirit Sings* and *Into the Heart of Africa*, Clifford argues that, in order to prevent the polarization that those exhibits caused, museums must do more to promote a level playing field with those who they engage with and consult. Indeed, in the case of *Collision*, an exhibit about the Sand

Creek Massacre was almost fully conceptualized before the Descendant Communities were informed that an exhibit was being planned.

Clifford also acknowledges the difficulties that come along with his own call for change: “Museums routinely adapt to the tastes of an assumed audience – in major metropolitan institutions, largely an educated, bourgeois, white audience...Donors and trustees exercise very real ‘oversight’ ...on what kinds of exhibits a museum can mount” (Clifford 1997, 209). The influence of donors and trustees cannot be overlooked as they are a large part of why this shift towards greater collaboration has been so slow (Boast 2011). Ultimately, this is why it is so important that the public expresses its discontent with exhibit content that is one-sided and cause economic disruption within those institutions.

Ruth Phillips, in agreement with Clifford, introduces the “collaborative paradigm of exhibition production” that “involves a new form of power sharing in which museum and community partners co-manage a broad range of the activities that lead to the final product” (Phillips 2003, 157). Phillips emphasizes the importance of the inclusion of communities from the inception of an exhibit, to the identification of overarching and major themes, all the way through the execution of the exhibit. Phillips highlights the need to recognize the innate rights Indigenous people have to their own history as well as the additional investment of time that collaborative exhibits need in order to be effective sites of engagement (Phillips 2003).

It is crucial, not just from an ethical or business standpoint, to collaborate with source communities; museums must be able to reevaluate their ethical standards as

attitudes shift, i.e., they must be able to have a somewhat fluid ethical stance. In Janet Marstine's chapter, "What is New Museum Theory," she writes about the contingency of museum ethics and how real change in museums may occur:

As a discourse, the new museum ethics is not merely an idea; it is a social practice. Through debate among diverse stakeholders, ethical issues are identified, considered and acted upon. The contingent nature of the new museum ethics – its inherent changeability – suggests that the discourse be integrated across the museum sector and engaged on a consistent basis. Theoretically informed ethics discussions should not be reserved for crisis control or for once-a-decade revision to ethics codes (Marstine 2011).

Marstine emphasizes the importance for new museum ethics to be taught in professional development as well as museum studies programs so that the ethical landscape will naturally shift and continue shifting. Ultimately, it becomes the responsibility of the museum to change alongside its community: a community made up of diverse stakeholders. Marstine explains: "The contingent nature of the new museum ethics suggests not only that museums depend upon discursive practices with a diversity of stakeholders, but also upon innovative approaches to this engagement" (Marstine 2011, 7). Museums must be willing to attempt to engage their communities in a variety of ways. Providing options for different people with different identities and interests will only serve to create a more inclusive environment.

It is important to note that open communication is key when it comes to engaging and collaborating with communities. In some cases, like that of *Collision*, museums believe that they have engaged with their stakeholders and the relevant communities, while the stakeholders feel that no meaningful collaboration has actually been performed. The introduction to *Collaboration in Archaeological Practice*, by Chip Colwell and T.J.

Ferguson, critically considers engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and Descendant Communities. Colwell and Ferguson write:

From such endeavors we see that collaboration in practice exists on a continuum, from merely communicating research to Descendant Communities to a genuine synergy where the contributions of community members and scholars create a positive result that could not be achieved without joining efforts (Colwell and Ferguson 2008, 1).

In this way, collaboration is not a blanket term; collaboration exists on a continuum or spectrum. Assuring that collaboration is done in a more than superficial way at the inception of an exhibit, and not in a way that will simply inoculate an institution against criticism, is incredibly important and can determine the overall success of an exhibit (Foster 1996). Establishing the level of collaboration that a community would like to participate in, in conjunction with a museum, is equally important and can vary from case to case. Museums must not collaborate simply to avoid criticism, but to become better members of their communities, contribute towards decolonization, help right the wrongs of the colonial museum, as well as recognize the agency of Descendant Communities, stakeholders, and marginalized communities in the production of their own historical narratives. Collaboration should not be conducted with the motivation to simply avoid protest from the public or outcry from those being represented, but with a genuine interest in showing history in a new light and with new and relevant voices: so that those who visit the museum may understand a culture in a way that is appropriate.

3.7 Conclusion

The shift towards meaningful collaboration in the museum is thanks to the work of protestors, stakeholders, Descendant Communities, underrepresented communities, as well as allies within museums – all of which have fought to hold museums accountable

for what they hold in their collections, who they allow on their boards, and how they represent various communities. Due to an ethical shift in the past thirty years, many museums have changed their approaches to how they collaborate with marginalized communities, though, in some instances, the change is slow and there is still room for improvement.

Chapter 4 Theoretical framework

The following sections seek to illustrate the theoretical frameworks at play in the development of museum exhibitions that fail to adequately engage with the communities that they seek to represent. The work of Anne McClintock, Simon Ortiz, Pierre Bourdieu, and Kalí Tal illustrate the historical background and power imbalances that allows exhibits like these to be produced. Oftentimes budget and time restrictions are cited as forces that impact the level of collaboration museums conduct with stakeholders, however, the consistent lack of prioritizing collaboration is indicative of historical patterns that devalue certain groups of people. Further along, I discuss the theory of decolonization as examined by Linda T. Smith, Gerald Vizenor, and Amy Lonetree. Decolonization is often seen as the antidote to the symptoms of the colonial museum, one of those symptoms being the paternalistic compulsion to represent marginalized communities without their own input.

4.1 Anachronistic space

Until relatively recently, museums were willing, and generally able, to create museum exhibits without the input of stakeholders. What historical frameworks have allowed this behavior to be deemed acceptable by the “general public” in the past? What has allowed museums to inappropriately represent people? There are many answers to these questions, one of which is found in the concept of anachronistic space as proposed by theorist Anne McClintock. McClintock, in her book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender*

and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest, unpacks the legacy of the relegation of marginalized people to anachronistic space; a concept based on Victorian understandings of the colonized or the “other.”

The idea that Native people are “occupants” of anachronistic space is first explained by McClintock through the concept of “panoptical time,” in which, “...history appears static, fixed, covered in dust. Paradoxically, then, in the act of turning time into a commodity, historical change – especially the *labor* of changing history – tends to disappear” (McClintock 2013, 40). McClintock is essentially putting forth the idea that once a narrative or an image becomes fixed in the popular imaginary, it rarely changes. The ways in which a narrative may become fixed and perpetuated are many: official government narratives, history textbooks, and museum exhibits are just some examples. Each of these mediums, generally written by those with the most power, are responsible for writing certain groups of people out of history. Once a narrative is accepted and stable, re-writing history to any popular effect becomes incredibly difficult. Indeed, many narratives of Westward expansion focus on American historical progress and the populating (of already populated) “empty” lands, or at the very least, lands that were there for the taking once a certain population had been surreptitiously removed (McClintock 2013).

Stemming from her conception of panoptical time, McClintock explains her theory of “anachronistic space”:

At this point, another trope makes its appearance. It can be called the invention of anachronistic space, and it reached full authority as an administrative and regulatory technology in the late Victorian era. Within this trope, the agency of women, the colonized and the industrial working class are disavowed and

projected onto anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity (McClintock 2013, 41).

This projection of the colonized as not inhabiting contemporary spaces is a trope that is seen time and again. Native people have often been constructed as a prehistoric people and are frequently depicted in sepia toned photos from the early 20th century or the late 19th century. Edward Curtis is habitually referenced in the dissemination of the “vanishing Indian” trope, as he was meant to document Native Tribes before they allegedly disappeared:

For most people, Curtis’s sepia toned photographs of Native North Americans have come to embody the proud, sorrowful, and romantic Indian in the American imaginary...Debates about the cultural authenticity of his images aside, Curtis clearly aimed to provide a detailed visual record of the societies that he helped constitute as the ‘vanishing races’ (Aaron Glass 2009, 128-129).

Aaron Glass, in his article “A Cannibal in the Archive: Performance, Materiality, and (In)Visibility in the Unpublished Edward Curtis Photographs of the Kwakwaka’wakw Hamat’sa” continues:

...the endless reproduction of certain Curtis images – in his own day, but especially since the so-called Curtis revival of the 1960s and 1970s – in myriad coffee table books, posters, calendars, and screen savers, has contributed to the creation of fully frozen, decontextualized, and iconic fragments of Native American identity, history, and visual culture (Glass 2009, 130).

While the legacy of these photos is complicated, it is safe to say that they have contributed towards the commonplace depiction of Native people as inhabitants of the distant past or anachronistic space. The implication here is that if Native people inhabit the distant past or “prehistory,” then they are not an active part of the present. This idea gets at the root of why museums, among others, believe they can tell the stories of Native people on their behalf; the marginalized are not able to relate their own histories and

perspectives because they do not inhabit contemporary time or are not present and therefore lack contemporary agency.

4.2 Misrepresentation and trauma

Simon Ortiz, a Native poet and writer, supports McClintock's theories in his examinations of how Native people have been represented, or misrepresented in historical narratives. In the preface to his work of poetry, *From Sand Creek*, Ortiz expresses how written history often does not consider Native genocide and Native trauma or the ways in which Native peoples experience erasure from history:

Indian people have often felt we have had no part in history – American history in general and U.S. history in particular. Because Indians were alienated from history. Because Indians didn't matter. That was the feeling. We felt pushed away. Purposely. Intentionally. Deliberately (Ortiz 1981).

Ortiz examines the alienation and disappearance of Native people from American history. He actively repudiates and exposes narratives of dominance alongside the one-sided nature that history often takes on:

A true history of the U.S. has never really been presented – especially the fact that the U.S. is founded upon violence. The trauma that violence causes and the reverberations of the trauma have never been really exposed. If you don't talk about the history of violence, of destruction, then it's almost as if it never happened (Quoted in Brill de Ramírez 2009, 121).

Ortiz calls for the acknowledgement of history: one that recognizes the genocide faced by Native peoples in the past and the violence that actively carries over into the present. This trauma is widely forgotten or ignored by those who it does not directly impact, namely, EuroAmericans. Ortiz writes about the denial of violence by Americans in the preface to *From Sand Creek*:

Instead the United States insulates itself within an amnesia that doesn't acknowledge that kind of history. The victors ... can afford that, it seems, as long

as they maintain control and feel that they don't have to face the truth. But Indians? What choice do we have? (Ortiz 1981).

The trauma of colonization and violence faced by Native peoples undergoes “disappearance” as described by Kalí Tal: “Disappearance – a refusal to admit to the existence of a particular kind of trauma – is usually accomplished by undermining the credibility of the victim” (Tal 1996, 6). The undermining of Native credibility has been ongoing for centuries and falls in line with McClintock’s “anachronistic space.” Keeping Native people in the distant past or writing them out of history altogether is an act of disappearance and suppression.

4.3 The perpetration of symbolic violence

When institutions, like History Colorado, the Royal Ontario Museum, or the Glenbow Museum assert their dominance in the control of how an historical event is represented, it can be theorized that they are contributing towards an atmosphere that perpetuates the symptoms of symbolic violence. Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence examines some of the facets of exclusion and power dynamics and how historical patterns of “who has the power” become naturalized over time. Somewhat obviously, the construction of “natural” power dynamics is problematic to those who are not in power but beneficial to those who are in power. For example, museums are perceived as institutions that disseminate knowledge and are trustworthy to the public; they then simultaneously have the credibility to represent whoever and whatever they want with little question from the general public. According to scholar Janet Marstine, “In the US, museums are seen as the most trustworthy and objective of all the institutions that educate American children” (Marstine 2011, 4).

Bourdieu, in his book *Masculine Domination*, examines the mechanism of suppression that is frequently faced by marginalized groups through his explanation of symbolic violence, here referred to as symbolic force:

Symbolic force is a form of power that is exerted on bodies, directly and as if by magic, without any physical constraint; but this magic works only on the basis of the dispositions deposited, like springs, at the deepest level of the body. If it can act like the release of a spring, that is, with a very weak expenditure of energy, this is because it does no more than trigger the dispositions that the work of inculcation and embodiment has deposited in those who are thereby primed for it (Bourdieu 2007, 38).

Museums and institutions of power act on those dispositions created within their audiences to assert their dominance. They have been allowed to tell stories that do not belong to them because it has been naturalized that they can and will do so. Bourdieu elaborates on how these subtle kinds of violence can assert themselves and promote submission of societies in general:

...I have also seen masculine domination, and the way it is imposed and suffered, as the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I call symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling (Bourdieu 2007, 1-2).

The submission of the non-marginalized to institutions of power is an easy submission; it is easy to ignore a narrative in which you are not represented or misrepresented: one that you don't understand or don't wish to understand in any greater capacity. The concept that symbolic violence can also be asserted through "misrecognition" speaks directly to the ways in which historical narratives and museums in the past (and present) have functioned.

It is important here to understand that museums put forth dominant narratives or stereotypical narratives without input from Descendant Communities because they historically have been able to control those narratives with little issue, or without issue that has been damaging to the reputation of the institution. Protests from Native communities, like the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho, the Lubicon Cree, as well as Canadians of African descent, are do the work of exposing the suppression and symbolic violence that institutions like museums can assert. Toppling the authority of these institutions, damaging their reputations by exposing them publicly (to a public who cares), as Decolonize This Place has done, can contribute towards the reversal of symbolic violence, which contributes towards the work of survivance and decolonization.

4.4 Decolonization and survivance

Both survivance and decolonization are methodologies that advocate for the shift away from peoples being allocated to anachronistic space or being subjected to symbolic violence. These practices counter the actions made by institutions that are dismissive of or promote the misrecognition of Native people and marginalized groups. Survivance, a practice named by Native theorist Gerald Vizenor, is defined as “an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuation of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent” (Vizenor 2008, 1). Survivance, in many instances, can be seen as an act that promotes visibility, an act of resistance, and an act that asserts agency. Decolonization, in tandem with survivance, is a methodology that works to undo hundreds of years of damage brought on by colonization. This methodology is discussed in detail by Linda T. Smith in her work, “Twenty-five

Indigenous Projects” (see below). Smith outlines twenty-five ways in which Indigenous people are doing the work of decolonization: methods that can be used to start projects of decolonization and highlight Native voices. Amy Lonetree, complimenting the work of Smith, speaks to the importance of decolonization, specifically within museums. She highlights that museums, by participating in decolonizing work, are “...building momentum for healing, for community, and for restoring dignity and respect” (Lonetree 2012, 171). When museums collaborate with Descendant Communities and allow Native voices to come forward, survivance and decolonization can begin to take place in a way that promotes healing, instead of furthering historical trauma.

Vizenor defines survivance several times throughout his piece “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice.” Alongside the aforementioned definition, Vizenor explains: “Survivance is an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry” (Vizenor 2008, 11). Submitting to the dominating power of symbolic force is akin to giving into *victimry*. Victimry can manifest itself by promoting histories that fail to consider historical trauma or Native voices when writing about Native history. In these histories or stories, Native people can be seen as victims without agency. Vizenor, in his book *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*, discusses how accepted and dominant narratives, those whose dispositions have been deposited by “inculcation and embodiment” (Bourdieu 2007, 38), become part of how people are depicted and how their identities are discussed. He quotes Charles Taylor:

Taylor points out that ‘our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror

back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being' (Taylor quoted in Vizenor 1998, 22, Taylor et al. 1994).

Taylor describes the effects of symbolic force, as previously discussed, and the damage that can be done to people through distortion and misrepresentation. How people see themselves can be shaped by larger societal representations, stereotypes, and distortions of the truth. The misrepresentations referred to by Taylor also largely shape conceptions of Native identity by non-Natives and EuroAmericans. Therefore, resisting these dominant representations or resisting the narratives of "aesthetic victimry" (Vizenor 1998, 21), becomes a part of what composes Native survivance and in turn, is an act of decolonization.

Linda T. Smith's "Twenty-five Indigenous Projects" outlines actions that can do the work of decolonization. These guidelines can shape the ways in which museums interact with Native communities and, in turn, the types of stories they tell. While all of the actions that Smith outlines are relevant and important, there are three particularly relevant modes of decolonization which are "remembering," "representing," and "connecting." Remembering is particularly important when considering *Collision* and its representation of the Sand Creek Massacre. Smith describes the practices of remembering:

The remembering of a people relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more specifically to the remembering of a painful past, remembering in terms of connecting bodies with place and experience, and importantly, people's responses to that pain ... Often there is no collective remembering as communities were systematically ripped apart, children were removed for adoption, and extended families separated across different reserves and national boundaries. In these experiences the obliteration of memory was a deliberate strategy of oppression (Smith 1999, 244).

Allowing communities to come together to remember a painful past can contribute towards a communal healing process. Creating spaces for this re-membering can help recognize the ways in which history has been written and re-written that are not inclusive of Native memory.

“Representing” relates directly to the struggles faced by the communities that were being represented in *Collision*, *Into the Heart of Africa*, *The Spirit Sings*, and *First Encounters*. Each of these exhibits and institutions struggled with the ways in which they represented marginalized communities and each of these communities reacted to those representations. The curators and developers of these exhibits also failed to perform meaningful collaboration with the communities in question, which only serves to expose the complicated history of one-sided representation in museums. Of representation, Smith writes:

Indigenous communities have struggled since colonization to be able to exercise what is viewed as a fundamental right, that is to represent ourselves. The representing project spans both the notion of representation as a political concept and representation as a form of voice and expression. In the political sense, colonialism specifically excluded indigenous peoples from any form of decision making. States and governments have long made decisions hostile to the interests of indigenous communities, justifying these by offering the paternalistic view that indigenous peoples were like children who needed others to protect them and decide what was in their best interests (Smith 1999, 251).

Historically, Native people have been constructed as children by the United States Government, where the President, or those in power, function and are explicitly referred to as the “Father” or the “Great Father.” Anne McClintock, in *Imperial Leather*, illustrates the construction of “the family” as representative of “the empire,” a stand in for the U.S. or Canadian governments. McClintock structures this theoretical family with the white male as the father, the white female as the mother, and “the colonized” as the

children: “Projecting the family image onto national and imperial progress enabled what was often murderously violent change to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree” (McClintock 2013, 45). Indeed, a letter written by General J.B. Sandborn in the aftermath of the Sand Creek Massacre outlines the Treaty of Little Arkansas between the Cheyenne, Arapahoe and the U.S. Government and illustrates this familial construction. Sandborn writes: “Your Great Father at Washington has heard bad rumors concerning your treatment” (Clemmer-Smith et al. 2014, 2). This paternalistic influence can also be seen in the museum through the representation of Native people by non-Natives; the museum rules over their so-called “immature” children and represents their history however it pleases. In order to counter the paternalism of the museum, museums can actively advocate for the self-representation of Native people in their institutions and help to slowly undo hundreds of years of misrepresentation.

Amy Lonetree, in her book *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, examines specifically how museums can do the work of decolonization and how collaboration is necessarily a decolonizing practice. However, Lonetree points out that considering Native perspectives and countering stereotypes is only the beginning of “a decolonizing museum practice” (Lonetree 2012, 171). This practice is simply affording Native people the same rights that should be afforded to everyone. Lonetree calls for museums to acknowledge the painful truth of American history, as this acknowledgement can begin a healing process:

When museums shy away from telling these truths, they sadly limit their capacities to address the historical unresolved grief that is ever present in Native American communities. It does, however, take considerable vision to do this work (Lonetree 2012, 171).

Lonetree acknowledges that it is difficult to do the work of decolonization and collaboration, which is likely why there are so many cases in which a lack of collaboration is cited as the reason an exhibition was unsuccessful or controversial. If museums are sincere in their desire to be allies to Native, Indigenous, and marginalized communities, it is vital that they account for costs as well as time-commitments related to collaboration in their budgets and overall exhibition timelines. As Lonetree writes:

Developing community-collaborative exhibitions demands more than just being well versed in the scholarly literature on respective topics or on the latest in exhibition practices. It is about building trust, developing relationships, communicating, sharing authority, and being humble (Lonetree 2012, 170).

It takes time to build trust, to build relationships, and to communicate effectively with any community, but the payoff is a deep enrichment in exhibition content, the strengthening of community bonds, and the beginnings of the reversal of colonization that is so deeply rooted in American institutions.

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are historical structures and systems at work that have allowed museums to get by with one-sided and flat depictions of marginalized people – up until the recent past. The overall shift towards the post-colonial museum and towards new museum ethics, while often at the behest of Native activists and scholars, is gaining mainstream support. With pressure from the general public, museums have no choice but to acknowledge their complicated past or contend with the potentially disastrous results. Even though there has been outcry from Native people concerning their treatment by museums for a considerable amount of time, the time has finally come where those in

power are listening and making changes due to the mounting pressure coming from members of the media, the public, and stakeholders.

Chapter 5 Research Methods

5.1 Research questions

My primary investigation into *Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s – Today*, focused on several central questions:

1. What were the primary issues identified with the exhibit that necessitated its postponement or closure?
2. What conditions allowed History Colorado to believe that they had participated in sufficient collaboration with the Tribes? How did museum staff approach the interpretation of the Sand Creek Massacre?
3. Why did History Colorado refuse to close the exhibit after several formal requests on behalf of the Descendant Communities were made?
4. What should History Colorado have done differently when developing their exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre?
5. Do state institutions, such as History Colorado, have a responsibility to exhibit difficult or violent histories?

These questions attempted to get at the root of the problems that the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes identified in the exhibit. These questions also attempted to investigate what was happening internally, on the side of History Colorado, during the development of *Collision*: what was keeping staff from participating in meaningful collaboration with the

Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho? These questions elicited responses from my interviewees that indicated the multi-layered and complicated nature of the exhibit, as well as broader opinions about what should have been done by the museum in order to present an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre that was multivocal and addressed the concerns of stakeholders.

5.2 Methodology

In completing my research, I drew information primarily from semi-structured interviews as well as the analysis of primary documentation and secondary sources. This thesis is based solely upon qualitative data, rather than quantitative data, as it is focused on the narrative properties and thematic analyses of the events leading up to and immediately after the opening of *Collision*.

Semi-structured interviews

In total, I completed eleven semi-structured interviews with ten unique participants (See Appendix A for list with date and location of interview). A total of six of these interviews were conducted in-person and the remaining five were conducted over the phone. I recorded each interview with a digital recorder as well as the voice recorder on my iPhone after gaining verbal and written consent from my participants. I then completed full transcriptions of each interview. I was only able to meet in-person with five participants as they were located in Denver. The five participants that I was unable to interview in-person lived in Minnesota, Wyoming, and Oklahoma, or were unable to travel to meet due to health concerns.

The goal of these interviews was to understand specific experiences that each individual had with the exhibit. Their opinions, suggestions for improvement, and

reflections on the exhibit were all extremely valuable. For each interviewee, I created a list of tailored questions based on the roles that the individual occupied during the time of the exhibit. There were certain questions that I asked each participant and also unique questions that arose during the interview process. At times, the interviewee would answer a question I had prepared before I asked it, eliminating the need for me to pose the question: this required a restructuring of questions as I went with many of my participants.

The following are short biographies of each of my participants:

Max Bear

Max Bear is a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, and formerly the Director of the Culture and Heritage Program for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and the Director of the THPO office. Bear became involved in the controversy surrounding *Collision* in 2014. Bear signed the Memorandum of Agreement between the Tribes and History Colorado in place of the new governor of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma at the time.

Patricia Calhoun

Patricia Calhoun is the co-founder and editor of the Denver publication, *Westword*. Calhoun wrote several pieces on *Collision*, such as: “A century and a half later, the wounds of Sand Creek are still fresh” (Calhoun 2013a), “History Colorado could shutter its controversial Sand Creek Massacre exhibit” (Calhoun 2013b), “Sand Creek massacre: Tribes, History Colorado to consult on exhibit while *Collision* is closed” (Calhoun 2013c) and “Sand Creek Massacre: Exhibit closes as tribal consultations get under way” (Calhoun 2013d). Calhoun, who has a significant interest in Colorado

history, covered the controversy sparked by *Collision* and was able to bring the story into the public eye after receiving a tip from an anonymous source and then sitting down with tribal representatives to discuss the issue at hand.

Dr. Bill Convery

Dr. Bill Convery was the State Historian and Lead Exhibit Developer for *Colorado Stories*. Dr. Convery's PhD dissertation is titled: *Colorado Stories: Interpreting Colorado History for Public Audiences at the History Colorado Center*. Dr. Convery left his position as State Historian in 2015 when staff at History Colorado were being significantly reduced. Dr. Convery is currently the Director of Statewide Initiatives at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Troy Eid

Troy Eid is a Denver area attorney and former U.S. Attorney. Eid has been in positions working directly with Tribes for almost thirty years and has more than one hundred Tribes or Tribal entities as clients. Eid chaired President Obama's Indian Law and Order Commission on public safety and criminal justice on all Indian reservations, affecting all 568 federally recognized Tribes. Eid is also an elected official of the Navajo Nation, overseeing the ethics and selection of judges. Eid became involved in the exhibit at History Colorado as a mediator and was approached to do so by Ernest House, Jr. Eid led the mediation between History Colorado and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma in the summer of 2013.

Dr. David Halaas

Dr. David Halaas, who passed away in August of 2019, was a Colorado State Historian as well as a consultant to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. Dr. Halaas' book, *Halfbreed: The Remarkable True Story of George Bent*, is an historical account of the life of George Bent – a survivor of the Sand Creek Massacre. Dr. Halaas is a co-author on the University of Denver's *Report of the John Evans Study Committee*, which determined the culpability of territorial governor and university founder, John Evans, in the Sand Creek Massacre. Dr. Halaas worked closely with Tribes for over 25 years and was a member of the Crazy Dog Society, a military society of the Northern Cheyenne. Dr. Halaas was present at the consultations between the Tribes and History Colorado and was known as a strong advocate for the Tribes.

Dale Hamilton

Dale Hamilton is a Descendant of Chief Sand Hill, a survivor of the Sand Creek Massacre. Hamilton was a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma at the time *Collision* was being developed and when it opened.

Ernest House, Jr.

Ernest House, Jr. was, at the time of *Collision* and until 2018, the Director of the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs. House, Jr., who is an enrolled member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, became involved in the exhibit at History Colorado at the direct request of the Tribes: "...it was at the request from the Tribes, they had sent me a letter requesting that the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs to be a facilitator, to be the liaison, between History Colorado and the three Tribes to hopefully bring everybody

back together” (House, Jr. 2017). House, Jr. had previously worked with History Colorado on the *Tribal Paths* exhibit that was generally supported by the Tribes.

Dr. Holly Norton

Dr. Holly Norton is the current State Archaeologist and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for the state of Colorado. Dr. Norton also serves as the official liaison for the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre. Dr. Norton has been with History Colorado since 2014: first serving as a Section 106 Compliance Manager and then assuming her role as State Archaeologist in 2015. Dr. Norton has been involved with planning and carrying out consultations with the Descendants group and is playing a vital role in the development of the new exhibit that History Colorado plans to open on the Sand Creek Massacre.

Gail Ridgely

Gail Ridgely has been heavily involved in the memorialization of the Sand Creek Massacre for the past twenty years; Ridgely is a “Northern Arapaho Tribal Representative and Descendant to the Sand Creek Massacre Project” (Ridgely 2012). Ridgely has also been an educator and education administrator at the Wind River Tribal College, the Arapahoe Charter High School, Arapahoe School, and Northern Arapaho Tribe Immersion School. Additionally, Ridgely is:

...a U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Wyoming State Advisory Committee Member (2016-2020), and received a Cultural Freedom Award, recognized for Respected Achievement and Service to Native Education from the National Indian Education in San Diego, California. He serves on the Native American Community Board at [the University of Denver], Denver, Colorado (Ridgely 2019).

Steve Turner

Steve Turner is presently the Executive Director of History Colorado and has been with History Colorado for the past 10 or so years in different capacities; specifically, as the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. Turner was first appointed as the interim executive director after the departure of CEO Ed Nichols in 2015.

5.3 Primary documentation

Two of my participants, Troy Eid and Dr. Holly Norton, gave me access to some primary documentation. This documentation included information from the mediation between the Tribes and History Colorado that occurred in the summer of 2013, letters between Joe Fox, Jr., the Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne and Ed Nichols, the Memorandum of Agreement that was developed as a result of the mediation, the “Requested Revisions Report” pertaining to “Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre,” personal consultation notes, as well as the “Summative Evaluation of Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre at History Colorado,” prepared by People, Places & Design Research.

Having access to these documents made it possible for me to determine an accurate timeline of events that included the number of consultations that took place before the exhibit opened. I was also able to determine when and after what events the formal requests for further consultations, postponing the exhibit opening, or closing the exhibit were made by the Tribes. Documents from the mediation helped me understand the level of frustration felt by the Tribes as well as the errors that were contained within the exhibit. The existence of the “Summative Evaluation” alone was also able to indicate to me the prioritization of “the audience” by History Colorado.

5.4 Secondary documentation

The secondary documentation that exists in relation to *Collision* includes Dr. Bill Convery's dissertation titled, *Colorado Stories: Interpreting Colorado History for Public Audiences at the History Colorado Center*, as well as several articles on the exhibit that were published by Patricia Calhoun at Westword. Dr. Convery's dissertation clued me into the approach that he and other staff members at History Colorado took when developing *Collision*. Patricia Calhoun's articles were my jumping off point, essentially, as her investigative work exposed the major issues that the Tribes had with *Collision*. Her articles outlined the concerns of the Tribes and that those concerns were not being taken seriously by History Colorado's administration. Calhoun's articles also helped me identify specific people that I should speak to in regard to this project, such as Troy Eid and Dr. David Halaas.

5.5 Research analysis

I approached my research analysis in two separate ways. I began by building a timeline of events based on primary documentation and secondary sources. This helped me to establish exactly what happened, where it happened, and when it happened based on the dates that letters were sent, the dates that reports were generated, and the dates that articles were published. The timeline includes extensive quotes that illustrate the tensions that were developing between the Descendant Communities and History Colorado, as well as the results of the mediation that occurred after the exhibit was closed. Assembling this timeline helps the reader see the escalation of events in the letters between Ed Nichols and Joe Fox, Jr., specifically.

In addition to building this timeline, I also coded my semi-structured interviews after careful analysis of my interview transcripts. Coding helped me to identify the major themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews and allowed me to connect the opinions and thoughts of participants to one another in a coherent and organized way.

5.6 Ethical considerations

In preparation for my interviews, I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Denver. Each individual that I interviewed received a copy of my “Consent Form for Participation in Research” that outlined the scope of my project, including its purpose, the potential risks or discomforts, the benefits of my project, as well as an option for confidentiality if they felt that was necessary. This thesis has specifically dealt with the representation of Native Americans in museums; a topic that comes along with a host of ethical concerns and has historically not favored the input or self-representation of Native people. In order to address this historic imbalance, it was crucial for me to gain interviews with members of the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho. However, I wanted to make it clear to my participants that hold Native identity that I understood the potential for emotional distress in the questions that I would be asking. It was my goal to ask questions in a sensitive manner that directly dealt with the issues found within the exhibit. *Collision* has been an emotionally loaded exhibit for the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho; having a depiction of the murders of their ancestors portrayed in a way that was disrespectful and has been critiqued publicly as being a “disneyfied” version of events is not an easy burden to bear. Engaging with Tribal Representatives as well as the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre was crucial for this thesis in order to determine the feelings and opinions that

surrounded and still surround the exhibit, as well as the importance of having *Collision* closed. This perspective cannot be gained by solely interviewing museum staff that were involved in the exhibit.

5.7 Positionality

There are many ethical considerations that I have taken into account in regard to my own positionality in the writing of this thesis. Firstly, I am a white, cis-gender woman from New England. This means that I am not uniquely qualified to approach this research, nor does it mean that I have a deeper understanding of what it is like to have experienced deep historical trauma. My interest in this topic stems from my belief in the importance of the representation of marginalized communities in museum settings. My position as a museum professional does allow me greater insight into the processes and considerations that go into developing a museum exhibit. My hope is that through my understanding of the inner workings of museums and my research on this topic, I may be able to contribute to a better understanding of how museums need to approach exhibits that handle sensitive cultural content.

My position as an outsider in considering this topic means that I was not able to connect with everyone that I wanted to interview. Some emails that I sent inquiring after an interview were replied to with a healthy dose of skepticism, declined, or ignored. My motives have been questioned and it was the opinion of some that I was muckraking by researching this topic. Others likely did not have the time to respond to me as they have full-time jobs that require their complete attention. My ideal thesis would have greater input from Tribal Representatives as well as museum staff in order to have a more nuanced understanding of what happened in regard to *Collision*. I understand that this

project does not necessarily carry the endorsement of History Colorado or of the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho.

The individuals that I was able to get in contact with and that did grant me interviews have been incredibly generous with their time and provided me with incredible insight. I would not have been able to complete my thesis nor draw the conclusions that I have been able to without their help.

Chapter 6 Findings

In my research I have been very fortunate to have two sources (Dr. Holly Norton and Troy Eid) share with me some primary documentation from the interactions between the Tribes and History Colorado prior to the opening of *Collision*, as well as the mediation that took place following its closure. In the process of gathering data, I spoke with ten separate contributors who were involved in the exhibit in a variety of capacities. Their interviews are discussed in Chapter 7 and provide additional points of view on events showcased in the chronology, along with nuanced discussions about those events. The documents, letters, and reports that I reference in the chronology showcase the development, execution, and effects of *Collision*.

6.1 Chronology

I have identified twenty key events in the development and aftermath of *Collision*, ranging from its inception to the mediation that took place in the Summer/Fall of 2013. These twenty events have been arranged chronologically, which helps to establish a detailed account of what transpired between History Colorado and the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho.

A large portion of the chronology that follows relies on correspondence between Joe Fox, Jr., the Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and Ed Nichols, the CEO of History Colorado at the time of the exhibit. These letters provide insight into

specific requests made by the Tribes to History Colorado and the importance that the Tribes place on meaningful collaboration.

Event #1: Groundbreaking ceremony at the new History Colorado site, **August 9, 2009.**

History Colorado, the newly rebranded Colorado Historical Society, performed their groundbreaking ceremony on August 9, 2009: a little more than two and a half years before the building was completed and opened to the public. Dr. Bill Convery, the State Historian and Lead Exhibit Developer for *Colorado Stories*, of which *Collision* is a part, wrote in his dissertation that Governor Bill Ritter, at the groundbreaking ceremony, “specifically called on History Colorado to dedicate exhibition space for [the Sand Creek Massacre]” (Convery 2012, 22). Dr. Convery’s dissertation is titled, “Colorado Stories: Interpreting Colorado History for Public Audiences at the History Colorado Center,” and was published in May of 2012.

Event #2: Meeting between History Colorado and the American Indian Advisory Committee, **January 2011.**

Dr. Convery, in his dissertation, wrote:

In January 2011, the American Indian Advisory Committee commented on the Sand Creek Exhibit. Some committee members expressed concern over John M. Chivington’s prominent role in the exhibit, suggesting that visitors would take away the mistaken impression that the museum endorses the colonel’s views. Staff agreed to test this to make sure that visitors did not come away with an unintended takeaway message (Convery 2012, 33).

Event #3: Consultation between History Colorado, the National Park Service, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma on **March 17, 2011.**

Dr. Convery, in his dissertation, wrote that the group present at this consultation, "...felt that it was important to keep Chivington's role prominent, so that visitors might understand the hatred and bigotry that provoked the massacre" (Convery 2012, 33). This consultation did not include representation from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe.

Event #4: Otto Braided Hair, a Northern Cheyenne Tribal member and Descendant of the Sand Creek Massacre, and Dr. David Halaas, former Colorado State Historian and consultant to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, reach out to History Colorado to express concerns over the exhibit, **November 2011**.

Dr. Convery, when asked in interview when it first became apparent to him that Descendant Communities were identifying issues with the exhibit, he stated:

I began to realize that we were not satisfying the consultant groups in and about November of 2011, at the time of the Sand Creek Healing Run. That's when Otto Braided Hair and David Halaas reached out to us to talk about their concerns about the exhibit and I...for my part, brought that...forward to our leadership at the time, and actually, frankly, recommended that we slow [the exhibit] down (Convery 2017).

In an internal document from History Colorado entitled, "Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre, Requested revisions report, BC December 17, 2012," it is acknowledged that Otto Braided Hair and members of the Northern Cheyenne Sand Creek Descendants Committee requested a meeting with History Colorado and made a specific request to have all of the Tribes come together for a consultation (Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre; Requested Revisions Report 2012). This document outlines requests that were

made by the Tribes and the dates on which the requests were made. The document also includes specific actions that were taken by History Colorado in response to the requests.

Event #5: Letter *Re: Sand Creek Massacre exhibit copy* sent to Dr. Convery by Joe Fox, Jr., Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne on **December 5, 2011**.

On December 5, 2011, Joe Fox, Jr., the Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne, sent Bill Convery a letter outlining specific issues with exhibit copy: exhibit copy that was delivered to the Northern Cheyenne on November 27, 2011. Vice President Fox, Jr. writes:

We note that some of the exhibit material you sent us began circulating last April, yet we became aware of it just a few days ago, on November 27, 2011. We also must remark that no one from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe has received any communication from History Colorado on its forthcoming exhibit on Sand Creek (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

Fox, Jr. expresses his disappointment in the lack of communication between History Colorado and the Northern Cheyenne, especially because History Colorado, the National Park Service, the Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, are obligated to work with one another on interpretative and educational content at the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011). Convery, in his dissertation writes that the Northern Cheyenne felt left out of consultation because they had missed the consultation in March, and “Northern Cheyenne stakeholders felt left out of subsequent developments” (Convery 2012, 35).

Fox, Jr. highlights in his letter one of his major concerns with the provided exhibit text: a quote by George Bent that was edited by History Colorado staff. Fox, Jr. writes:

We point out especially our objection to the George Bent quote, which we address on page 2 of our comments. Your edited quote deliberately misstates Bent’s words and leads museum visitors to infer that Cheyenne warriors fought a war of

indiscriminate attacks on white people – attacks that led directly to and caused the Sand Creek Massacre (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

The edited quote Fox, Jr. is referencing is as follows: “The chiefs could not control the young warriors...They were going to clean out the road and kill every white man they could find. **George Bent**” (Quoted in Fox, Jr. Dec. 5, 2011). The full, unedited quote is as follows:

The Cheyennes were so stirred up over the killing of Lean Bear that the chiefs could not control the young warriors. They told him [a white man married to a Cheyenne] that the soldiers had just murdered their chief and that they were going to clean out the road and kill every white man they could find (Quoted in Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

The omission of the killing of Chief Lean Bear significantly changes the meaning of the quote and instead leaves the impression that the actions of the “young warriors” were in retaliation and not provoked. Chief Lean Bear had traveled to Washington D.C. in 1863 and received a peace medal from President Lincoln (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011). He was murdered on May 16, 1864 by the Independent Battery of Colorado Volunteer Artillery (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

A separate quote that was also critiqued in Fox, Jr.’s letter was by Col. Chivington: “I don’t tell you to kill all ages and sexes, but look back on the Plains of the Platte where your mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers have been slain! **Colonel John M. Chivington**” (Quoted in Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011). The critique of this quote is as follows:

Visitors will infer that many of Chivington’s troops had mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers killed by Indians on the Platte. A few of them did, but the vast majority did not. Visitors will also infer that the troops had good reason to attack Black Kettle’s village at Sand Creek. But Black Kettle was a peace chief... (Quoted in Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

Included in Vice President Fox Jr.'s letter to Dr. Convery is a "General Comments on Quote Section." This section is critical of the quotes included in the exhibit that seem to claim that "...both sides share equal blame for the Sand Creek Massacre" (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011).

Event #6: A consultation is held in Billings, Montana with representatives from History Colorado (Dr. Convery and Bridget Ambler), the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma on **December 14, 2011.**

The consultation at Billings took place shortly after Convery received the letter from Joe Fox, Jr. with Fox, Jr.'s proposed text revisions. Patricia Calhoun, in an article for Westword from April 25, 2013 entitled: *History Colorado could shutter its controversial Sand Creek Massacre exhibit*, writes: "That December, History Colorado representatives, including state historian William Convery, traveled to Billings, Montana, by the Northern Cheyenne reservation, to hear their objections. Which were numerous" (Calhoun 2013b).

This meeting was the first meeting about the exhibit that involved representation from all of the Tribes, along with Dr. Convery, Bridget Ambler, and Dr. David Halaas. This consultation is referenced in a letter that was sent to History Colorado in 2012 from Joe Fox, Jr.:

At the Billings meeting in December 2011, representatives from all three Tribes voiced their vehement opposition to the content of the draft exhibit copy. We found it laced with factual errors, half-truths and gross distortions, and its approach fundamentally flawed (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012).

Written in the document, “History Colorado, Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre, Requested revisions report, BC December 17, 2012,” are notes from the Billings consultation along with direct actions that History Colorado made as a result of the consultation. A request from the Tribes was documented: “Share panel text with tribes,” along with an action by History Colorado: “Action: Available panel text shared with tribes prior to March 19, 2012” (Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre; Requested Revisions Report 2012). Another similar request reads: “Give assurance that panels and exhibit will go through tribal review,” with the stated action: “Tribes received opportunity to review panels in March 2012” (Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre; Requested Revisions Report 2012). March 19, 2012 is approximately five weeks prior to the grand opening of History Colorado.

Event #7: A consultation is held in Denver with all Tribes represented on **March 19, 2012.**

This consultation, held in late March, yielded many suggestions from the Tribes before the exhibit opening in late April. Documented in “History Colorado, Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre, Requested revisions report, BC December 17, 2012” are requests to “Demonstrate respect for oral history of tribes by adding new oral histories,” and to have the exhibit address three separate goals: to address that the massacre was “a fundamental tragedy caused by hatred and intolerance,” that “healing is transgenerational,” and that “people stood up and took great risks to do what’s right” (Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre; Requested Revisions Report 2012). Some additional requests were to “Add Cheyenne and Arapaho translations to the intro panel,” to “Discuss how Cheyenne people consider White Antelope’s Song a ‘final journey song’

or ‘a coming home song’...an important part of burial ritual,” to “Discuss how [the] Spiritual Healing Run is intended to counteract [the] parade of human remains in Denver,” and to “Discuss [how the] loss of chiefs (12 out of a Council of 44) was equivalent to the destruction of [the] U.S. Congress” (Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre; Requested Revisions Report 2012). According to this document, few of the suggestions made by the Tribes at the consultation in March appear to have been acted upon by History Colorado; all but one of the suggested revisions listed is followed with, “Action: No specific action taken on this recommendation at this time” or some slight variation of that specific wording (Colorado Stories: Sand Creek Massacre; Requested Revisions Report 2012).

In a letter to CEO Ed Nichols on August 21, 2012 from Joe Fox, Jr., Fox, Jr. writes, “...at the Denver meeting in March 2012, we asked History Colorado to postpone the exhibit’s opening until consultation with the tribes could take place” (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012).

Event #8: A teleconference between Tribal Representatives and History Colorado takes place on **April 12, 2012.**

In the same letter to CEO Ed Nichols from Vice President Joe Fox, Jr. that was previously referenced, he writes, “In the follow-up teleconference...Chief Operating Officer Kathryn Hill announced that History Colorado would proceed with the exhibit as planned and open it for the Center’s Grand Opening on April 28. There was no discussion” (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012). The opening of the exhibit was not postponed.

Event #9: The grand opening of History Colorado takes place on **April 29, 2012**.

In the August 21, 2012 letter from Joe Fox, Jr. to Ed Nichols, Fox, Jr. writes:

As we feared, errors and omissions are scattered throughout the opened exhibit. Some are just the result of sloppy editing – i.e., Fort Lyons instead of Fort Lyon. Others reveal shabby research and a shocking lack of curatorial understanding of the massacre, the events surrounding it, and its meaning to history (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012).

The History Colorado Center opened to mixed reviews from a variety of critics on their approach to the interpretation of historical events in Colorado. Critics were also skeptical of a separate exhibit within *Colorado Stories* about the internment of Japanese Americans at Amache in Granada, Colorado. History Colorado has been consistently critiqued for presenting a “disneyfied” version of history.

Event #10: Dr. Bill Convery’s dissertation is published in **May 2012**. Dr. Convery writes a letter to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe on **May 3, 2012** thanking them for a “productive working relationship.”

The conclusion of Bill Convery’s dissertation, which was approved and published in May 2012, predicts the controversial outcome of *Collision*:

In retrospect, it was perhaps inevitable that some bad feelings would ensue in an exhibit about the Sand Creek Massacre. The wounds of 150 years of injustice are not ready to heal, and the challenge of interpretive representation for American Indian tribes is still volatile. Although History Colorado’s staff has revised exhibit copy in response to critiques, attempts to hold follow-up consultations have fallen through. Admittedly, History Colorado staff could have done more to reach out to the full spectrum of tribal consultants, and to involve them more thoroughly in the entire exhibit development process, although such consultations as time and budget constraints allowed did occur. At this late date, it is unlikely that developers will be able to find a satisfactory solution for all stakeholders, and controversy will almost certainly stalk the Sand Creek exhibit at the time of its opening (Convery 2012, 37-38).

After Dr. Convery's dissertation is accepted and published, he sends a letter to Joe Fox, Jr.. Joe Fox, Jr. responds to this letter in an additional letter to Ed Nichols on August 21, 2012:

Now we receive State Historian Bill Convery's extraordinary letter dated May 3, 2012, in which he expresses gratitude for the 'productive working relationships' History Colorado has built with the three tribes on interpretive projects. Insofar as the Northern Cheyenne Tribe is concerned, no such 'productive working relationship' exists...By the time you agreed to meet with us last December – only months before the exhibit was scheduled to open – it was far too late for us to have any impact. You had already established the exhibit's approach, content, and design (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012).

Event #11: Joe Fox, Jr. writes a letter to Ed Nichols requesting the closure of the exhibit on **August 21, 2012.**

While many parts of this specific letter have already been referenced and quoted, the letter comes to a conclusion where Fox, Jr. writes:

Again, we find History Colorado's present Sand Creek exhibit inaccurate, misguided and offensive. We hope that you will honor our request and close the exhibit and schedule meaningful consultation meetings with all the tribes. I am sure that together we can produce an exhibit that will reflect the profound importance of Sand Creek to all people (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012).

At the consultation in March, the Tribes requested that the exhibit opening be postponed. In this letter, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe formally asks for the exhibit to be closed, four months after its opening, for further consultation.

Event #12: Ed Nichols writes a response letter to Vice President Joe Fox, Jr. on **October 11, 2012.**

I do not have access to the letter that Ed Nichols wrote to Joe Fox, Jr., however, Joe Fox, Jr. directly quotes Ed Nichols in a response letter on November 5, 2012. Fox, Jr. writes:

We have twice requested that you postpone the opening of the Sand Creek exhibition or close it during consultation. You say that you desire collaboration yet no meaningful consultation has taken place. You ask that we ‘reassess [our] request to close the exhibit,’ yet you say that you ‘have decided to keep the exhibit open.’ We are deeply offended by your actions and attitude (Fox, Jr. November 5, 2012).

Event #13: Joe Fox, Jr. responds to Ed Nichols’ refusal to close the exhibit on **November 5, 2012.**

Fox, Jr. begins his letter to Mr. Nichols: “Your letter of October 11, 2012, is both hurtful and insulting and in many ways characteristic of the relationship that has emerged between History Colorado and the Cheyenne and Arapaho people” (Fox, Jr. November 5, 2012). Fox, Jr. follows his introduction with a list of requests made by the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and the “officially appointed Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre” who he explains have met together to compile the list. Addressing Nichols directly, Fox, Jr. writes:

We have determined that if you are sincere in your request for collaboration, we will agree to make one last attempt under the condition that you send us a letter including the following:

- an admission that past consultation meetings – which came only at our request – failed and agree that any future collaboration be conducted with mutual respect and a willingness to better interpret the massacre and its profound meaning to the tribes, the nation, and the world;
- an agreement to work with a committee composed of Cheyenne and Arapaho representatives to review and make changes to the Sand Creek exhibit;
- a promise that the exhibit will be closed to the public during the reinstallation, i.e. while the changes are actually being made;
- the appointment of a History Colorado representative to work with the Cheyenne and Arapaho people in the future and engage in a process that will ensure the free exchange of ideas and true collaboration (Fox, Jr. November 5, 2012).

Fox, Jr. outlines the actions that the Northern Cheyenne Tribe as well as the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre want History Colorado to take in order to present an exhibit

that has been created in the spirit of “true collaboration.” Based on these requests, it is clear that the Northern Cheyenne and the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre wish to engage with History Colorado in a meaningful way and work towards building a collaborative exhibit that will tell their story to the world. Fox, Jr. follows his requests in his letter to Nichols with a promise; if History Colorado refuses to engage in meaningful collaboration, the Tribes will take their case to the “court of public opinion” in order to expose what is happening between the Tribes and History Colorado. Fox, Jr. acknowledges that this is not a desirable outcome (Fox, Jr. November 5, 2012).

Event #14: Ed Nichols responds to Joe Fox, Jr.’s request letter on **November 21, 2012.**

In response to Joe Fox, Jr.’s requests on behalf of the Northern Cheyenne and the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre, Ed Nichols responds and proposes two solutions: “First, we propose to launch an audience survey of museum visitors who view the Sand Creek exhibit by an independent firm. This will enable us to better understand how our visitors are receiving and interpreting the information in the exhibits” (Nichols November 21, 2012). Nichols elaborates:

This exhibit is receiving a positive response by museum visitors, who after viewing it have expressed feeling both more informed and moved by the story of Sand Creek. Audience testing will help us define the specific areas that are resonating the most, as well as those areas that need to be revised (Nichols November 21, 2012).

This action is not in direct response to any of the requests made in the previous letter from Joe Fox, Jr.. I am unaware of any request on behalf of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre that History Colorado should complete visitor studies.

Ed Nichols' second proposition is a request for a mediation with the Tribes. He writes:

Secondly, we request to meet with you for an exhibit consultation conducted by an independent facilitator to be recommended by the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs. We believe this is an important step to take so that we may find the common ground necessary to move forward (Nichols November 21, 2012).

Ed Nichols does not offer, in this letter, to close the exhibit during consultation. In this letter, Nichols does not acknowledge that the consultation that did occur was minimal and was considered to be a failure by the Tribes. Nichols also does not agree to close the exhibit for reinstallation, but he does commit to future consultations facilitated by a mediator chosen by the then acting Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, Ernest House, Jr., who would go on to appoint former United States Attorney, Troy Eid, as the mediator.

Event #15: *Westword* publishes an article exposing the frustrations of the Tribes concerning *Collision* on **February 14, 2013**.

On February 14, 2013, Patricia Calhoun published an article titled, *A century and a half later, the wounds of Sand Creek are still fresh*. Calhoun outlines the ongoing conflict between the Tribes and History Colorado and why the Tribes perceive the actions of History Colorado as being offensive, including issues with the implications of the title of the exhibit, *Collision*. Calhoun explains that there would not be a response to Nichols' letter from November 21, 2012 from the Tribes as it was considered a "non-response response" (Calhoun, 2013a). Calhoun continues:

Nichols insists that the Northern Cheyenne were consulted. 'We have had consultations, and we're looking to continue those,' he says. 'I think the interactions were regarded, on our side, as a continuation.... On a number of points they suggested, we have made significant changes to the exhibit.' But

postponing the exhibit was not an option: Donors expected it. From the start, History Colorado had determined that Sand Creek would be one of the first stories featured. It 'is an important story in Colorado's history, but it also is one that was highlighted through our audience research,' Nichols explains. 'We did a lot of research' (Calhoun, 2013a).

In her article, Calhoun additionally quotes Norma Gorneau, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Sand Creek Massacre Descendants Committee:

'*Collision?* It's a massacre,' says Norma Gorneau, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Sand Creek Massacre Descendants Committee who learned about the massacre from her great-grandmother. 'They're not even trying to meet us halfway. We had asked them specifically to at least make some corrections. We asked them to take it down because it's supposed to be entertaining for them, but for us it's a major incident that was done to us...a major tragedy done to us...and they want to minimize it. When they said that they weren't going to take it down, it brought up a bunch of angry feelings' (Gorneau quoted in Calhoun 2013a).

Event #16: C.E.O. Ed Nichols pledges to close *Collision* during Tribal consultation on **April 10, 2013.**

In a letter to Joe Fox, Jr. on April 10, 2013, Ed Nichols agrees to close the exhibit during Tribal consultations and while revisions to the exhibit are being made. In another article by Patricia Calhoun, *History Colorado could shutter its controversial Sand Creek Massacre exhibit*, published on April 25, 2013, she quotes the letter that Nichols sent to Fox, Jr.. Nichols, quoted in Calhoun's article, writes:

History Colorado would like to invite delegates from the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre to consult with History Colorado staff and advisors to review the exhibit devoted to the Sand Creek Massacre at the History Colorado Center. To underscore our sincerity in wishing to engage in meaningful consultation, History Colorado will close the exhibit to the public during consultation while any agreed-upon changes resulting from the consultation are made to the exhibit. Further, History Colorado will appoint a representative to work with the Cheyenne and Arapaho people in the future to ensure future collaboration is conducted with mutual respect, is characterized by the free exchange of ideas, and aspires to present interpretation that is accurate, meaningful and effective (Nichols quoted in Calhoun 2013b).

Nichols, in this letter, is recognizing the requests that Joe Fox, Jr. outlined in his letter from November 2012: five months later. Nichols also explains that Ernest House, Jr. (the Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs) will be appointing a facilitator, upon approval of the Tribes, for the consultation between History Colorado and the Tribes. However, in the excerpts quoted by Patricia Calhoun, Nichols does not acknowledge that previous consultations were considered as failures by the Tribes.

Nichols continues in his letter:

It is our sincere wish that this consultation, and future consultations, will aid in re-establishing the productive relationship History Colorado has enjoyed with the Cheyenne and Arapaho people in the past and will result in an exhibit that reflects the profound importance of Sand Creek to all people (Nichols quoted in Calhoun 2013b).

Event #17: History Colorado, via People, Places & Design Research, begins surveying the audience of *Collision* on **April 11, 2013**.

Patricia Calhoun, in her article, *History Colorado could shutter its controversial Sand Creek Massacre exhibit*, writes: “Three days later, History Colorado launched that audience survey promised five months earlier” (Calhoun 2013b). When Calhoun says, “three days later,” she is referring to the surveys beginning three days after the letter that Ed Nichols wrote in which he pledges to close the exhibit during consultation. Nichols, on November 21, 2012, proposed that History Colorado would launch “an audience survey of museum visitors.” In the published “Summative Evaluation” by People, Places & Design Research, an independent evaluation firm, they state that they conducted interviews “between April 11 and May 5, 2013” (People, Places & Design Research 2013, 2).

Event #18: Winfield Russell, Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne (successor of Joe Fox, Jr.), responds to Ed Nichols’ pledge to close the exhibit during consultation on **April 29, 2013.**

In response to Ed Nichols’ letter in which he commits to “meaningful consultation” with the Tribes, Vice President Winfield Russell accepts the extended invitation for consultation with History Colorado. Russell accepts the majority of the previous letter from Nichols and is in agreement that there should be consultation in which there is a “free exchange of ideas.” However, Russell takes issue with a separate event that evidently occurred at History Colorado on April 22nd. Russell writes:

...we do not accept the statement you made to [History Colorado] staff and volunteers on April 22, 2013, that History Colorado ‘met with the tribes during exhibit development.’ The two meetings and one conference call we had with you occurred only after the approach and the content of the Sand Creek exhibit had been firmly established. At these meetings held in December 2011 and March 2012, we voiced our deepest concerns – indeed our opposition to the approach you had taken and requested that you delay the opening until proper consultation could take place. Yet you opened the exhibit as planned on April 29, 2012, with only minor changes (Russell 2013).

This letter comes exactly one year after the opening of the museum and *Collision*. Russell does not specify in what context the statement was made to History Colorado staff in regard to the history of the consultations that did occur between the tribes and History Colorado. Russell ends the letter by saying, “We hope that the consultation process you suggested are truly meaningful and result in an exhibit that reflects the profound importance of Sand Creek to all people” (Russell 2013).

Event #19: People, Places & Design Research compiles visitor surveys and interviews into a report titled, “Summative Evaluation of *Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre* at History Colorado” in **May of 2013.**

The summative evaluation analyzed the responses of 218 visitors in relation to the Sand Creek Massacre exhibit, *Collision*. The goals of the evaluation were to discover how familiar visitors were with the Sand Creek Massacre, how visitors were reacting to the exhibit, relating both to content and design, as well as how visitors were interpreting the meaning of the Sand Creek Massacre. The surveys were conducted via in-person interviews. In the “Principal findings” section of the report, the results of the evaluation are as follows: “In one sentence: visitors obviously got the main message that Sand Creek was an atrocity perpetrated by the U.S. Army and a complicit government; most visitors said the story was interesting, and they appreciated some aspects of the design” (People, Places & Design Research 2013, 4). Overall, visitors came away with the intended messages of the exhibit, but were unimpressed with the title of the exhibition, *Collision*:

‘Collision’ is the primary title of this exhibit, and on the posted sign in front of the entrance, that is the only word that appears (on the wall to the left of the entrance, the full title is used ‘Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre’). About half of the visitors interviewed thought the title was good, and half said they would prefer something else...Among the people who said they would prefer something else, the most common categories of reactions were that the title ‘Collision’ is not descriptive enough, that it should just be called the Sand Creek Massacre, that it was a one-sided attack, and that it sounded like a car accident to a few people (People, Places & Design Research 2013, 6).

The title of the exhibit is seen as problematic by some of the audience of History Colorado. The nature of the title of the exhibit, along with two separate exhibit design issues, were identified by People, Places & Design Research as potential areas to be addressed or revised. The report also reveals that when it came to the main message of the exhibit, visitors felt that it addressed several different ideas: “Visitors explained that the main idea of this exhibit in various ways, such as: *Let people know about history of state; The fact that this was an atrocity and not what you learn in school; and To portray*

what Native Americans felt about the massacre” (People, Places & Design Research 2013, 16). One of the concerns the Tribes had about the exhibit was that, because History Colorado was presenting a history of the Sand Creek Massacre, it would “appear to carry the endorsement of all the partners” (Fox, Jr. December 5, 2011). Ten percent of visitors felt that the main idea of the exhibit was that it “shows Native American point of view, how they feel, hard to heal” (People, Places & Design Research 2013, 17). While ten percent is not a large percentage of visitors, the idea that the exhibit would be perceived as carrying the endorsement of the Tribes or be seen as speaking for the Tribes in some capacity, is a concern that is justified.

Event #20: History Colorado hosts the “Sand Creek Exhibition Consultation” with participants from the Northern Arapaho Tribe, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe, along with the National Park Service from **June 18-19, 2013**.

This is the first consultation between the Tribes and History Colorado since April 12th, 2012. Several representatives from each Tribe attended, along with members of the National Park Service, History Colorado staff members, and the Director of the CCIA, Ernest House, Jr. This consultation is also generally considered as a mediation that was led by attorney, Troy Eid. Meeting minutes by Kathy White were prepared and outline the main events of the consultation.

On the first day of consultation, on June 18th, Troy Eid asked all of the consultation participants to introduce themselves and:

...explain what they hoped to get out of the consultation meeting and the Sand Creek exhibit at History Colorado. Beginning with the Tribal Representatives, each person at the table expressed their concerns related to the exhibit, the lack of

consultation prior to the opening of the exhibit, as well as their expectations for a future relationship between the Tribes and History Colorado (White 2013).

The group then reconvened later in the day where Ed Nichols, CEO, “expressed the desire to work together collaboratively, both on making changes to the exhibit and working toward the future. He suggested that the exhibit stay closed for consultation over the summer” (White 2013). The possibility of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding was also discussed; this would help establish guidelines for consultations between History Colorado and the Tribes. The consultation notes read: “The need for the exhibit to be truthful with full input from the Tribes was discussed as well. Troy then suggested that we break to view the exhibit, which is currently closed to visitors” (White 2013). The group viewed the exhibit where attendees pointed out errors that were then recorded (White 2013). The meeting for the day closed after Ed Nichols confirmed that copies of the Summative Evaluation of the exhibit would be distributed to the group.

The second day of consultation, on June 19th, consisted of a more involved discussion of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as well as longer term solutions for the exhibit. A smaller group broke off from the larger group to discuss what the MOU should entail, “The group developed an outline of the MOU which Troy Eid shared with the larger group” (White 2013). This smaller group developed an outline for the MOU which included a statement of purpose: “To [educate] the public about Cheyenne and Arapaho people and the Sand Creek massacre and prevent atrocities such as this in the future” (White 2013). The outline establishes the scope of the MOU, i.e., what parties are represented, that there will be annual meetings, who will carry costs for travel, and guidelines about communication in general.

Troy Eid also suggested some short-term solutions to the conflict that included having another meeting within 45 days, determining next steps, reviewing the MOU draft, and closing the exhibit “unless tribal representatives notify History Colorado otherwise” (White 2013). Eid also suggested that: “The closure sign currently in place will stay up for now, a new sign will be created with the exhibit reopens, to say that exhibit consultation is ongoing” (White 2013).

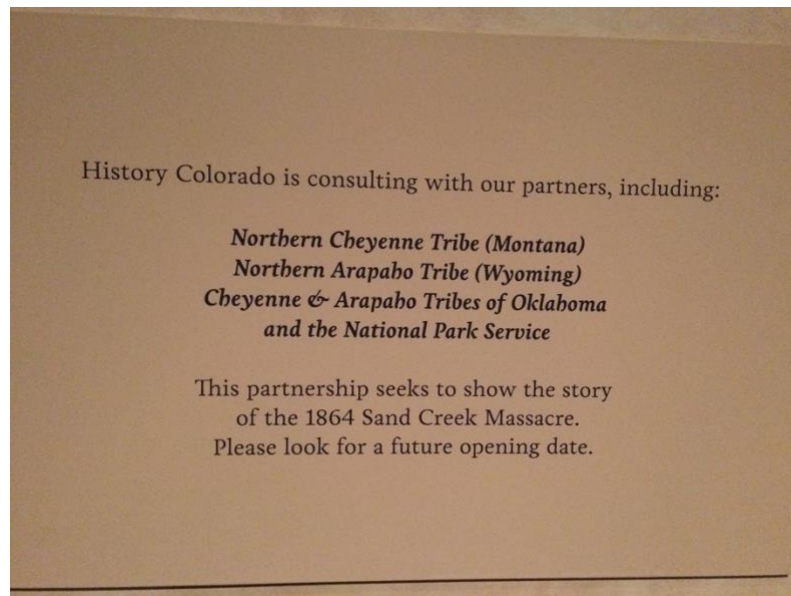


Figure 2: History Colorado Center, October 26, 2016; photo by Katherine Hoadley.

After the consultation on June 19th, a joint statement was released to “those media agencies seeking comment about the consultation process” (House, Jr. 2013). The statement provides a brief summary of the consultation effort and quotes a statement made by Eid:

‘The purpose of the Tribal consultation was to begin addressing concerns from the Tribes regarding the exhibit, as well as develop a plan for future relations between History Colorado and the Tribes. All of the participants agreed that this was an encouraging and productive meeting,’ said Denver attorney, Troy Eid, who mediated the consultation (Joint Statement on Progress of Tribal Consultation Regarding Sand Creek Massacre Exhibit at History Colorado 2013).

The statement continues:

Participants agreed to meet again late this summer for further consultation regarding the exhibit and that the exhibit will remain closed during these ongoing Tribal consultations (Joint Statement on Progress of Tribal Consultation Regarding Sand Creek Massacre Exhibit at History Colorado 2013).

Chapter 7 Findings Part 2

7.1 First impressions

In interviews, which I conducted either in person or over the phone, I asked most of my contributors what their initial impressions of the exhibit were; how did they feel about the content of the exhibit and what did they first take away from the exhibit? Several contributors felt that the exhibit presented a so-called “disneyfied” version of events, i.e., *Collision* showcased a sugar-coated interpretation of the Sand Creek Massacre. Patricia Calhoun stated, of *Collision*:

I was really waiting for it to open and then I went in and was like, ‘this is just plain stupid.’ I thought it was, and it is not the only exhibit there that I thought was stupid. It was very ‘Disneyfied’; they were much more interested in the technology than the history. I had been alerted to look for certain errors, and the certain errors were there even though [History Colorado] had been encouraged to fix [them], flat out dates and quotes, but I, basically thought it was...like a Disneyfied version of a massacre...it just didn’t make any sense (Calhoun 2017).

Calhoun had been warned by a source ahead of time that the exhibit was not supported by the Tribes and that there were certain errors within the exhibit. Troy Eid, who led the mediation between the Tribes and History Colorado in 2013, recounts his first impressions of the exhibit, which he visited with his family:

...I saw the exhibit with my family, right when it opened, I saw it before I did the mediation, and then I saw it when I went through with the tribal members [at the mediation]. So, there were three times I saw it. I thought it was a wholly inappropriate approach to the subject matter because it had the feel, to me, of a Disneyland like experience. The idea was, I think, to make you part of the action of what was going on, but there wasn't enough substance to evaluate that. And so, you came into it and it looked like there had just been a battle someplace. Remember, it was not called "massacre"...so it sounded like there had been two groups of people...it wasn't clear who they were, one was obviously the U.S. military, but it wasn't clear who [the other group of] people were, but that they had somehow come into conflict and that there had been a battle. It didn't have any connotation of a slaughter of innocents under a white flag. It didn't have the dimension of how they even got to be encamped in that place, or, the factors that led to their being encamped around a U.S. fort. You also didn't get the sense of what happened immediately afterwards.... Part of why Sand Creek is so compelling, other than the sheer tragedy of what happened.... Are the details of what happened in the political process. I mean this is an event during the Civil War where Ulysses Grant is outside of Richmond and he's getting word of this and he's writing about it – it's in his memoirs. This is something that was of interest as an atrocity during the Civil War, so it was immediately understood as a massacre by the Union Army, by the [Commanding] General of the army. The bottom line is that, this was a national event and it was viewed as a massacre by the U.S. Army in the midst of the bloodiest war in U.S. history...so that makes it

immediately different and compelling. And then of course there were the inquiries, the congressional inquiry, the military inquiries, there, that part of it was also lost. And then the part of what happened to the tribes in terms of how it permanently affected them, you know, that there was a focus in the exhibit on the fact that there had been raids in places like Jewelsburg and so on, but there was not a sense that they were driven out and just were never able to come back here. You know, [the tribes have] continued to endure to this day...they lost their land base, they lost their leadership and not temporarily, [and] they lost their ability, in a sense, to govern in the way in which they had. And that there had been assurances that these things would not happen, remember? This was not done through some negotiation or some dialogue. So, you went in [to the exhibit] and there's a cannon and there's a screen, and there's lights, and there's sounds of cannon balls going off, and it just was very Disney-like. It didn't seem like an historical event and it certainly gave the blatant misimpression that it was some kind of a battle between Native and non-Native forces, as opposed to a massacre of innocence. There was none of that. I remember going with our kids to it and they of course knew their history, our kids have been out to Sand Creek to the National [Historic Site], and to them, [the exhibit] didn't connect to what they had seen at the Sand Creek [site] at all. They thought it was a terrible exhibit because it didn't show that it was a massacre (Eid 2017).

Eid states explicitly that the exhibit did not give the impression that the Sand Creek Massacre was actually a massacre. This lack of clarity is affirmed by Dr. Holly Norton,

the current State Archaeologist of Colorado. Dr. Norton, when asked about her impressions of the exhibit, prior to her appointment to State Archaeologist, stated:

So, when I saw the exhibit, I didn't walk away thinking it was a bad exhibit. I walked away not...understanding that it was a massacre. I walked away thinking, all of those conflicts between white people and Native Americans on the Plains in the 19th and 20th centuries were terrible, and I kind of thought it was like one blip in that larger story instead of kind of the event that precipitated the Indian Wars and other things that occurred. I remember it being really noisy. And that's the impression that I'm left with is kind of the noise and the flashes and how sad that these things had to happen, these battles between these two groups. [Sarcastically] The battles. That's what I walked away with as somebody new to Colorado who didn't know about the Sand Creek Massacre. And like I said, it wasn't bad...it wasn't a great exhibit. There were very few artifacts, which is going to be a persistent issue. It was mostly pictures on a wall. And I remember the white soldiers more than I remember the Native Americans. Yeah, that's the image that I walked away with (Norton 2018).

Ernest House, Jr., the former Director of the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs, had a similar impression of the exhibit and highlights the shift away from object-based exhibits that museums around the country are participating in:

I thought [*Collision*] was interesting because it was one of the first exhibits I've seen by History Colorado [that attempted to] move from an exhibit text-object; the normal routine. And I think that's every museum in the United States, right? For a new demographic, for a younger demographic, and trying to get more

people into a museum and through the doors to make money, to make funds. Now, I'm not saying that they did it solely based on that, but I thought it was pretty interesting how they used different lighting; how they used...a narrator talking to you as you moved down the timeline instead of just putting a massive timeline up. And reading through it. I thought it was pretty neat (House, Jr. 2017).

House, Jr. understands the trend that History Colorado is following and how it is formulated to bring in an audience and produce revenue. However, after speaking with the Tribes about the production of the exhibit, House, Jr. formed a somewhat different opinion about the exhibit:

I think after talking with the tribes and understanding their perspective, that was really where a lot of the issues came out...there was incorrect information in there. There was misleading information in there, and when you take a step back, even the title itself was what [snaps fingers] kicked it off... (House, Jr. 2017).

The title of the exhibit, *Collision*, is frequently cited as being problematic because of the linguistic implication of a level playing field between the U.S. Army and Tribes that had surrendered themselves. Max Bear, a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, was not able to see the exhibit while it was open, but when asked of his impression upon seeing the closed exhibit, he stated: "I looked at it a few times...[the exhibit] was one-sided. When you tell a story, it's good to tell both sides of the story..." (Bear 2018). Gail Ridgely, a Northern Arapaho Tribal Representative and Descendant of the Sand Creek Massacre, pointed out inaccuracies in the exhibit that he felt were unacceptable, including issues he had with the title:

It was, to me, disrespectful. When you're a Descendant, and your grandfather was a Descendant, and his grandfather—how they felt, that's how I felt. Some people say, 'It's in the past, get over it, forget about it.' To me, we ought to remember where we came from. And the fact that [if] Soule and Cramer [hadn't] turned their men down, we probably wouldn't be talking on this phone today, basically. That was my initial reaction when I think about what I saw. It was not correct (Ridgely 2018).

Ridgely continues with a discussion of the title, *Collision*:

The most important theme [in the exhibit] I feel was the word 'collision.' 'Collision,' as interpreted by the tribes, is not a positive statement about the Cheyenne and Arapaho people living in Colorado who were systematically massacred and butchered. That's one of the themes it seems was not understood by so-called educators who study history, especially in operating the museum (Ridgely 2018).

Ridgely also described the appearance of the exhibit as a "Hollywood set" and was disappointed that History Colorado had not taken into account the oral histories of the Arapaho and Cheyenne. David Halaas, former Colorado State Historian and Consultant to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, evaluated a number of inaccuracies present in the exhibit:

...they had four images, I think, of White Antelope. And half of them were misidentified. And that was particularly bad, because they had White Antelope singing his journey song, or death song, as background in the exhibit, but they couldn't identify him. Their labels were almost nonexistent. They were put on

walls in sleeves, and if one person was looking at the label, nobody else could look at them...it was just a failure. Even the title was wrong (Halaas 2018).

The impressions of the exhibit from the individuals that I interviewed, overall, were not positive. Many believed that those who were not familiar with the history of the Sand Creek Massacre might come away from the exhibit without understanding the event as a massacre.

7.2 Consultations prior to the exhibit opening

In the development of *Collision*, there were three meetings between representatives from all of the Tribes and History Colorado: two in-person and one teleconference. The first of these meetings took place in Billings, Montana in the winter of 2011. When I asked my contributors about when they first became aware of the exhibit that was being prepared by History Colorado, many recalled their experiences in Billings. David Halaas described the meeting in Billings in the following manner:

I think it was 2011, that we understood they were going to do an exhibit, but they hadn't consulted the Tribes. And then they put it up, and it was outrageous. It failed on every level. And then a meeting up in Billings; Bill Convery came up to give an overview of the exhibit. We, in turn, gave them a five-page letter detailing the errors. The most egregious and dishonest was [their] quoting George Bent. And I spent ten years writing the book on George Bent. And I know everything, pretty much, what he said. And there was a quote with ellipses in the front of it, meaning things were left out. But the quote was that the Chiefs couldn't control the young men, who were killing indiscriminately on the road. But what they left

out was the beginning, [that this was] after the murder of Lean Bear (Halaas 2018).

Gail Ridgely recounted:

History Colorado: we met with their staff in Billings, and they assured us they meant to backtrack. More or less they put the cart before the horse and had to backtrack through and apologize, and mostly said their misunderstanding was about consulting with the Tribes and they took it upon themselves, educationally, to start on Sand Creek and make an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre (Ridgely 2018).

Ridgely brings up Billings again at a later point in the conversation to reiterate the emotions surrounding that consultation:

Back to Billings: I can tell you, honestly, we were lied to...I walked out of that meeting—I basically listened to [them], in faith, say that everything was okay. Reading [Dr. Convery's] language, reading his mannerisms...All of our people have been told this for centuries, since the country began—and lied to. Treaties broken (Ridgely 2018).

Dr. Convery, when I directly asked him about his experience in Billings, which he described as “the worst moment of [his] professional life,” related to me the following

I would say that part of what was going on [in the meeting] was [that] we had failed to honor a process, and we had moved too quickly, and we'd blown through some stop signs that we should not have blown through. I take full responsibility for that; I also think that there were individuals in the room that who had their own personal motivations to make a bad situation worse (Convery 2017).

Convery is alluding to his professional relationship with David Halaas, which I do not feel I have the authority to write about or comment on. Convery elaborates on some of the attempts at revisions that were made:

Now, based on those conversations in Billings, we made what I thought were significant revisions to the script and to the label copy. I think by that point it didn't matter what we did because it really felt to me that from then on, we would make revisions and then there would be more meetings about our failures and then we would make revisions and it would be more meetings about our failures. Not long after the meeting in Billings, the Tribes formally requested that we delay opening that exhibit. Our administration chose not to do that. At that point, I think there was very little we could do to [move forward] as long as that exhibit was going to open... (Convery 2017).

The consultation in Billings indicated to History Colorado that the Tribes were not satisfied with the developmental direction of the exhibit. In a consultation at History Colorado on March 19, 2012, the only other in-person consultation after the meeting at Billings, Gail Ridgely related that:

The Tribes walked through [the exhibit] and [there were] a lot of—I would say—a lot of errors. Misprints, mis-documentation of peoples' statements. More like, kind of like a Hollywood set. In my opinion, [the exhibit] was kind of embarrassing to show national and international people that come to see something that's supposed to tell a true story. Our story today is [one of] generational trauma and historical trauma. It affects all Tribal people (Ridgely 2018).

It was after this consultation that the Tribes formally requested the opening of the exhibit to be postponed. After the exhibit was finally closed in 2013, a mediation between the Tribes and History Colorado was scheduled. This mediation would serve as a consultation between History Colorado and the Tribes and as a way for the tribes and History Colorado to develop a Memorandum of Agreement, or MOA.

7.3 Exhibit closing

Collision was open to the public for about a year before a pledge to close the exhibit was made by History Colorado CEO, Ed Nichols in April of 2013. I spoke to many of my contributors about their feelings behind the closing of the exhibit: why did it remain open, especially after formal requests to have it closed were made by the Tribes? What was the catalyst or tipping point for the closure of the exhibit?

When conducting my interviews, and through my research, it became apparent that Patricia Calhoun had shed a significant light on what occurred at History Colorado through the multiple articles she published in *Westword*. I asked Calhoun if she felt that her articles had an influence on the closure of the exhibit. She responded:

Well, I think partly. It was the equivalent of public attention...I certainly had been in touch with the Governor's office about it, so I think that [History Colorado] paid more attention to it. I mean, clearly, they hadn't closed it for a year...10 months at that point. So, I do think public scrutiny was the reason it was closed...[*Westword*] set that in motion. It might have happened anyway. But I think going public did make the difference (Calhoun 2017).

It is certainly possible that one of the contributing factors to the closure of the exhibit and the following mediation was through the journalism of Calhoun.

Steve Turner, the current Director of History Colorado, explained that the opening of the exhibit wasn't postponed and the exhibit wasn't closed at the request of the Tribes for a number of reasons: one being that opening the museum without the story of Sand Creek represented would be problematical:

The thinking was, [Sand Creek] is such an important story to Colorado history that, how could we open a new museum and not address this story. So, a long way of saying [it], that's what created the challenge. And then once it was open, there was a lot of resistance on the part of the then [museum] administration to really address what were being identified as the flaws...that part, I'm honestly not quite as clear on. I can guess that part of it was...some resistance to... if we opened this [exhibit] to reinterpretation...can any exhibit be open to reinterpretation, in sort of a Pandora's box kind of a thing...I don't know that, I'm just sort of guessing, that might have been part of the thinking because there was a lot of resistance...(Turner 2018).

Turner continues:

We were asked to close the exhibit...there was some pushback against that. Ultimately, it was closed, and ultimately, it's been taken down. The walls are still there, but if you go behind the walls, there's nothing there. Actually, if you go behind the walls what you would see right now are Xeroxes of the new exhibit that we're hoping to build (Turner 2018).

Turner, though postulating about the cause of the hesitancy towards closing the exhibit, highlights the strong opposition coming from the museum towards the closure of the exhibit. This was not a stance that was taken haphazardly.

Dr. Bill Convery, had several ideas about why the exhibit was not postponed or closed after requests from the Tribes:

Well, I think there are a variety of complicated reasons. The first is that I think our CEO [Ed Nichols] and COO [Kathryn Hill] at the time, people who I respect, made an economic calculation that we would somehow lose critical mass...and the offerings that we have would somehow be insufficient to the visitors. I think that, quite frankly, there was some political components in play. Our CEO was a fair-minded man, but the truth is, he was under pressure from other groups to not cave in. He had long been receiving feedback from organizations in parts of Colorado that were more conservative, that didn't want to bow to pressure from American Indians. We had a really bruising phone meeting with the Adjutant General of the Colorado National Guard where he told us very bluntly that he thought that we were insulting troops by saying that the Sand Creek Massacre was a massacre. When we got off the phone, I kind of blew up. I was really angry that he would get on the phone and sort of bark at us [and tell us] that we weren't supposed to talk about the massacre, as if it happened in some other way. That told me that there was some pressure, I [previously] said from donors, and there was pressure from other factions of the Colorado State Government and pressure from other private citizens on Mr. Nichols to kind of hold the line. I would say that the last thing that was in play is that there were sort of different ideas of what it meant to have government-to-government relations. We really felt that, as representatives of the state of Colorado, that this should be a negotiation. That this should be a give and take. Once the Tribal Representatives began to, you know,

basically say, ‘It’s our way or the highway,’ I think our administrators kind of dug in and said this isn’t what [we do] when we go in to government-to-government negotiations over NAGPRA; there’s give and take. We say ‘Okay, here’s what we can do,’ and ‘Here’s what we can’t do,’ and ‘Let’s see how we can move the needle.’ And it felt like on our side that that process was being honored. There was no sense of good faith on the other side that we had our own legitimate, reasons for doing some things the way we did, and we very quickly acknowledged that we were in error, I felt, and that we were willing to keep working with the Tribes even after the exhibit was opened. It turned out, I think [that there was] really no political capital for us to think that way... and when we really pushed that we heard straight from the governor’s office that that wasn’t how it was going to be (Convery 2017).

Convery examines several layers of complication when it comes to the exhibit closing. The museum was experiencing political pressure and financial pressure, while also believing that the minimal consultation that had been done was appropriate for the exhibit at hand. Importantly, Convery touches on how the museum and the Tribes had very different ideas about how the consultation process for exhibits needed to work.

In conversations with some of my contributors, it was clear that financial considerations were a source of tension for the museum. Max Bear felt that History Colorado was hesitant to close the exhibit after requests were made due to the financial interests of the institution: “They would lose money if they did it” (Bear 2018). Bear felt that the CCIA, under the guidance of Ernest House, Jr., and Governor Hickenlooper also played a role in the exhibit ultimately closing.

Gail Ridgely, when I asked if he felt there was a financial consideration being made by the museum when they refused to close the exhibit, he replied: “Yes, exactly. I was telling you about the MOU. You just can’t tell somebody’s story without listening to them, without understanding them. And, again, it basically comes down to money. It’s how corporate America is today – their philosophy” (Ridgely 2018).

Dr. David Halaas echoes the opinions of Bear and Ridgely, while adding the acknowledgement of public pressure put on the museum by Patricia Calhoun through her multiple articles. Halaas states:

The Tribes made repeated requests that the exhibit be closed, taken down. In one telephone conversation with Kathryn Hill, she said that she owed it to the donors to keep it open. Finally, Patty Calhoun got involved, through *Westword*. But also, other people looking at it, and it was just a critical mass that caused them to suddenly close it, and it has not reopened. And that entire administration, with Nichols as president, and Kathryn Hill, were all either fired or asked to leave, and replaced by a new administration. With the governor appointing — I mean, there were like 25 board members, and it was reduced to nine. I think it’s up to 13 now. But, appointed by the governor. And I think—though you’d have to ask [Governor Hickenlooper] —Sand Creek was one of the catalysts for that (Halaas 2018).

Nichols and Hill publicly resigned in 2015 while greater financial difficulties were being faced by History Colorado (Paglia 2015).

When speaking with Holly Norton about why she felt the exhibit closed, she also points to financial strain being faced by the museum along with the feeling that the

closure of the exhibit could have been handled differently, resulting in an exhibit about the Sand Creek Massacre being open today. It is important to note here that Norton was not employed by History Colorado at the time of the exhibit, though, her institutional knowledge, and the role that she plays today as an intermediary between the Tribes and History Colorado makes her input highly relevant. I asked Norton if she had an idea of why the exhibit wasn't closed right away and what kinds of resistance were behind the hesitancy of the museum to do so. She responded:

Yeah, I mean I'm sure there's a couple of types of resistance. I don't know how the requests [for closure] came and, I think something like Sand Creek is always going to be controversial, so I can imagine that maybe [History Colorado] thought that maybe people are just having knee-jerk reactions, let it die down...because that was not the only exhibit that people were unhappy with, and the other ones are all still up. Also, I think part of that is that you know, it did cost like \$250,000 to make the exhibit – it took three or five years. So, [the museum was] really reluctant to throw that work and that money away. And again, I'm not sure that I completely disagree. I think there were fundamental issues with [the exhibit]. I think closing it down completely was probably the wrong answer, I do think it was the reactionary answer, and I think, it could have been closed down without being pulled down and I think it could have been fundamentally reworked and we could have had an exhibit up in the last few years. And we've lost all that time (Norton 2018).

When faced with a similar line of questioning, Troy Eid elaborates on the pressure felt by Ed Nichols, including pressure that Eid personally placed on Nichols, as well as the financial considerations taking place:

My view, where I thought I made a contribution, was really to appeal to the president of History Colorado, Ed Nichols.... You know I really appealed to him that he needed to shut down the exhibits and then allow a proper consultation to occur, that was the right thing to do. I also understood that that was [Governor Hickenlooper's] position, and frankly, what I thought would happen was that if [Nichols] didn't decide to do it on his own, that the Governor would just order him to do it. But I wanted Ed to make that decision. Ed struggled with it; he eventually did make the decision, but, you know, he had a plan. Part of the plan is financial too. It was explained to us that the museum had to generate a certain return and that was part of why they designed the exhibit the way they did; they made that clear to us. The focus group was partly to show how they could design the exhibit so that it would be well attended and it would produce a revenue stream... If you have one of your main exhibits on one of the main floors of the museum just closed permanently and there's just a sign that says 'Tribal consultation' and it's not open, that has an effect on how [the museum] can market itself; they had a new building and they had expensive needs that they had to address (Eid 2017).

Eid elaborates on the difficult position Ed Nichols found himself in, though, Eid never wavers from his position that the exhibit should have been shut down so that the exhibit

could be reevaluated and collaboration and consultation could take place in a way that was productive for both the Tribes and History Colorado.

When I spoke to Ernest House, Jr. about his feelings around the closure of the exhibit, he presented a sort of hybrid opinion that touched on financial difficulties being faced by the museum, the pressures being placed on the staff to open a complete museum with all new exhibits in a very tight time-frame, as well as the public pressure being placed on the institution by Patricia Calhoun. House, Jr. told me:

Well, I think that part of the process was also the pressure to open up a new museum. It was at the time when they were dedicating the brand new museum, they had raised a lot of funds to do it, their staff had created a lot of different programming and exhibits, not just this one... so it was an all hands on deck process and there was a big rush to also open it during that time frame. I think that that really is what it came down to. A lot of it was that time crunch (House, Jr. 2017).

House, Jr. goes on to elaborate why time is such an important consideration when working with Tribes and how it should be factored into the development of an exhibit:

A lot of times, even when [the CCIA] do consultations with different groups now, and people who have never worked with Tribes, one of the biggest things I try to tell people is, you need to take off your watch. You need to limit watching and looking at your phone. Out here [in Denver], we're so time driven, we have meetings from nine to five, you know, from nine to nine thirty...but we don't have enough, especially talking about this event, there's not enough [time] to get

into the...into the weeds of a lot of this stuff. So, I don't know if there's enough time dedicated to do that (House, Jr. 2017).

House, Jr. also points to some assumptions that History Colorado may have had about their previous relationships with the Tribes and then ultimately points to Patricia Calhoun's writing for *Westword* as a driver for public pressure:

I think what came down to closing [the exhibit] was probably public pressure. With Patti Calhoun writing articles and the Tribes obviously having good relationships with some media outlets around here who knew about this story, or knew about the process, or knew about the history and knew about the massacre. And contacting our office to get involved in the process – there was mounting pressure (House, Jr. 2017).

House, Jr. additionally comments that he is unable to speak to the pressure of opening a new museum and how that pressure may have played a role in the hesitancy behind closing the exhibit. He also brings up the many letters that went back and forth between the Northern Cheyenne representatives and Ed Nichols as a contributor to the mounting pressure to close the exhibit. House, Jr. touches upon many of the issues brought up by my contributors, indicating that there exist many perceived reasons that History Colorado refused to close the exhibit initially, as well as the many points of pressure that History Colorado was facing to both keep open and to close the exhibit.

7.4 The need for mediation

When I spoke to Ernest House, Jr. about his involvement in the mediation that occurred in the summer of 2013, he explained his previous involvement in exhibit development at History Colorado, specifically with *Tribal Paths*. After taking a hiatus

(post *Tribal Paths*) and then beginning his role as the Director of the CCIA, House, Jr. became aware of the tensions arising between the Tribes and History Colorado over

Collision:

When I came back – hearing what had happened [with the exhibit] – I actually came right into the discussion of how there had already been meetings that didn't go very well, and they were making a decision, 'they' meaning History Colorado, on whether or not they were going to move forward on it. So, I came back at that time, and I understood that the Tribes were so upset with the process and lack of consultation throughout, that they did not want the exhibit at all; it was in a very different position than when I left previously. When I came in, it was more of [a question of] how can I help right this ship, how can I help bring parties back together? It was at the request from the Tribes; they had sent me a letter requesting that the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs be a facilitator and be the liaison between History Colorado and the three Tribes to hopefully bring everybody back together...we're trying to pull folks back to the table. We're trying to correct some things, and we fully didn't know what had gone on, with History Colorado's process, we didn't fully know why the Tribes were upset at a lot of the details of it, but we knew that we had to bring these folks back together and try to rectify the situation (House, Jr. 2017).

When the need for mediation was established, Troy Eid, who has an extensive background in the realm of both mediation and Indian Law, was proposed as the leader for the mediation and was accepted by all parties. I spoke to Eid extensively about his experience with the mediation process and he offered a narrative of his experience:

In this case, Ernest House, Jr. [the Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs] had approached me and I talked to him and I talked to Governor Hickenlooper – Joe Garcia was Lieutenant Governor at the time – and thought I could be helpful, so I just volunteered my time. I got involved initially in working with History Colorado. You know where this controversy was at this point in time, which was that the exhibit had opened [and] the Tribes had not been consulted with in a meaningful fashion. There had been protests and a lot of opposition to the exhibits preceding when it was open to the public. I worked with the Governor's Office and Ernest, at the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, really before I met the Tribes. I tried to understand what the conditions might be, that would allow for a consultation to occur from the state side. And then when Ernest floated me to the three Tribes, I met with them individually; that's called a mediation, that's called a caucus. So, I was caucusing basically with both sides trying to understand. It was quite clear that from the Tribe's standpoint, that they felt that no consultation had occurred, and they also were of the opinion that the exhibit should not remain open. From their standpoint it had too many errors to remain open. So, as a condition...to having a discussion about a different relationship and so on, they wanted the exhibit closed. The first part of the mediation was to basically get a commitment, you know shuttling with the parties, that in fact they wanted to proceed that way, to have the exhibit closed...the state made sure the exhibit was closed, but I would not say that it was, it was an easy discussion to have...with History Colorado and [CEO] Ed Nichols. Subsequently, we were able to get the parties together. We had a two day session, and we also

produced a memorandum of agreement to try to define a relationship moving forward...It became clear that we weren't going to get any kind of agreement unless we focused on really looking at what our relationship could look like, and heading into the 150th anniversary, what we wanted it to look like. And once they were able to kind of focus on that, [History Colorado] were able to [agree to] a set of processes to communicate in a way that the Tribes would be able to review, and I think it's fair to say, to veto something that they objected to. [The Tribes] really didn't just want to be consulted; consultation in a legal sense means that you talk to someone and then the deciding official goes off and decides. Really, what the Tribes wanted, and what I would suggest happened in this process, is [that] the state committed that they wouldn't reopen the exhibit until the Tribal concerns were addressed. And that's part of why it closed and then it remained closed (Eid 2017).

Eid discussed the reactions that the Tribal Representatives had when they were able to tour the exhibit as it was closed:

When we got the parties together, we actually just said, 'Let's go look at the exhibit.' That was the first thing that Ernest and I did. Let's just stop everything and just go and look at the exhibit. With of course, no public there, Tribal members [were] going in, looking, and David Halaas and some of the others...[they] really spent a bunch of time thinking about this...When they went in, they had a very strong reaction, and they began to just document things that they thought were errors and they came up with many, many- I'm going to say more than fifty – they found a lot of errors, [things] that they perceived to be

errors. Then we adjourned and we came back, and essentially then the Tribal [Representatives] talked about what had happened and why the state, no matter what the state had said, from the Tribal perspective, they had not consulted with [them] at all and what they had done was not appropriate. So, the first day was a tough day because the reaction was so strong and so negative...bear in mind that they had heard about it but by and large the Tribal leaders had not ever seen the exhibit. I would describe it as very confrontational. Then the second day was...people were very raw. They went their separate ways that night. The second day, we were able to get to the point where we talked about, “Well, we’ve got this 150th anniversary, we want to try and see if we can have a better process,” and, “What would it take to try and reopen this exhibit?” That would include a process for...how we discuss it, and then also, a way to correct errors and identify errors, and then to change the exhibit. There were things they wanted to change (Eid 2017).

The mediation directly led to the formation of the Memorandum of Agreement held by the Tribes and History Colorado. Dale Hamilton, a representative of the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe, explained his initial experience with the mediation led by Troy Eid:

After [History Colorado] refused to listen to us about putting off the opening, we went our separate ways, and then the media got involved and they started putting things out in the newspaper...and lo and behold, the people at the museum kind of...they gave into our, you might say, ‘our demands,’ to close it...until such a time that we could all come to an agreement. It was opposite [to] whenever we

met the first time... [Ed Nichols] was very....it was like, it was his way or the highway you know? Whenever we broke, everyone shook hands and [were] parting ways and saying their goodbyes, and this guy was standing there with his arms crossed [laughs] like he didn't want to acknowledge the Descendants, which was fine... (Hamilton 2017).

There seems to be consensus that the mediation was productive in a general sense, due to the development of the Memorandum of Agreement. However, when I asked Bill Convery if he felt the mediation had been productive overall, he indicated that he felt the experience had not been a positive one:

No, I didn't...I think Troy [Eid] did an excellent job. He moved things forward, much further than they had been, but by that point, the goal was to work out a memorandum of understanding. I think by that point there was so much bad faith on either side that, that it felt to me like nobody really expected anything meaningful to come out of [the mediation]. We felt that we were coming as representatives of the state of Colorado, and yet, even with Troy's facilitation, ideas that we were proposing or reasons that we felt something wasn't going to work, weren't being listened to. I think we came out of it feeling pretty frustrated, although at that point, we were willing to do whatever it took to make the relationship work... There was sort of a moment at the end of [the mediation] when the Lieutenant Governor, Joe Garcia, came into the room and gave a speech about how important it was to follow the Tribe's lead, which of course we'd been doing. But then [he] really sort of told the Tribes that it was a one-way street, and they were going to be able to tell the story that they wanted to tell the way they

wanted to tell it. Garcia took me aside for just a moment, and this isn't an exact quote, but the impression I got from what he said was, something along the lines of, 'Sometimes you just have to suck it up,' and I said, okay, we have no support from above. We better just do what we're supposed to do (Convery 2017).

Convery goes on to emphasize that he felt History Colorado had no support from the Governor's Office to tell the story of the Sand Creek Massacre the way they wanted to tell it or interpret it. Convery also asserts his feeling that the staff had no political capital to assert their point of view about how the story should be told.

7.5 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

One outcome of the mediation led by Troy Eid at History Colorado was the development of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Tribes and History Colorado. When speaking with my participants, some identified this outcome as a step forward in the relationship between the Tribes and History Colorado, while others were more reserved in their judgment of its efficacy. In interviews, my participants used both "MOA" and "MOU" interchangeably to refer to the Memorandum of Agreement that was developed in 2013 (MOU refers to a Memorandum of Understanding). The memorandum is also frequently tied to the attempted revival of the exhibit in 2014, as well as the relatively "current" status of the development of the exhibit.

When speaking with Ernest House, Jr., he explained that MOUs (or MOAs) are generally created for times when people are not in agreement with one another and great care should go into the crafting those kinds of documents: "Those agreements are here for a time when nobody wants to be here. And that situation may come down the road. And that's where those agreements come into play. So, take your time on how they look

because either you're forced to that table, to create an agreement, or you take your time" (House, Jr. 2017). In the case of *Collision*, the parties involved had not come together prior to the conflict to create an agreement; the parties were very much "forced to the table." MOUs and MOAs generally institute the guidelines of a working relationship between two or more parties. The agreements can also establish expectations and time commitments between groups, such as having a certain number of meetings per year and agreeing on methods for settling disputes.

Bill Convery offered a unique perspective on the efficacy of the MOA and tied his argument that it was ineffective to the failed revival of the exhibit in 2014. Convery refers to the mediation with Troy and his own expectations of a working relationship with the Tribes following that meeting:

When we had the meeting with Troy [Eid], and signed the MOU, or the MOA, I guess it was a Memorandum of Agreement...the intention of that was to use that as a document to move forward on a new exhibit about Sand Creek, with the Tribes. So, it was a reset, right? We were supposed to start over. So, by that point we sort of understood where we stood with the Governor; we understood where we were with the Tribes. It wasn't long after that, that the Governor established a commission, the sesquicentennial commission, for the massacre, and Ed Nichols is on that; he was the only representative from History Colorado and it was pretty clear that he was there and not in a position to actually influence any of the decisions. But we continued to work with the Descendants' groups on an exhibit and that work went on either in person or on the phone and through the spring and summer and early fall of 2014. At that point, our policy was, whatever they want

to do, we're [going to] do. About 10 days before the exhibit was scheduled to open, about fourteen days, they told us they wanted to be present for all of the construction. Otto [Braided Hair] said something at the time, 'We just want to make sure you're being honest.' We said 'okay' and they sent out [a representative] for one meeting. We spent half a day with [the representative] and he went back and a couple of days later, they pulled out. Really, we thought that we had really come to an understanding with [the representative]: that we were trying to do everything they asked us to do (Convery 2017).

Convery felt that the MOA had not provided the museum with a "clean slate." Convery initially identified, with little confidence, that the representative he spoke with was Henry Bird. When I spoke with Max Bear, however, it became clear that Mr. Bear was the representative who reviewed the exhibit in 2014, prior to the Tribe's withdrawal of their support of the exhibit. Mr. Bear's side of the story is somewhat different than Mr. Convery's version of events. Mr. Bear stated:

At that time, when we signed the MOA, we also created an alliance with all the other Tribes—Northern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapahos down here. So, we created an outline of what we would like to see in that exhibit. So, that was created; it was sent out for approval; came back, and said, 'Okay, this is what we want.' We sent that to History Colorado, and they said, 'Well'—the idea, since 2014 is the 150th anniversary of Sand Creek Massacre, [was that] we wanted to get something started that end of the year, by November. So, we started the process back in February or March—the MOA, the outline. So, we started the process— 'Okay, let's have something ready, available,

for our people, so they can see—when they come up on the 150th, they’ll see something.’ We thought we were on the right track for a minute, then History Colorado kept saying, ‘Well, we can’t do this, but we can do this; we can’t do this, we can’t do that.’ So, there was a lot of back and forth, and there were some conference calls between that time. It came down to October and all the representatives from the Tribes met over a conference call and said, you know, ‘What can we do to see what their progress is?’ So, I said, ‘Well, I’ll go up there.’ So, I flew up there in October—it was like the middle of the month—and they didn’t have anything. The room still looked empty. They didn’t have any of the outline that we discussed, even the literature. It was funny, because they have a carpentry shop there, they have a print shop in there, and a shop that makes those boards—those text boards. They didn’t have anything ready; they didn’t have anything set, ready to go. So, they kind of dragged their feet on it. It was disappointing because in November we didn’t have anything to present (Bear 2018).

I asked Bear why he felt History Colorado was so unprepared:

I think money, or something. Or—I want to say probably money, because they kept saying, ‘Well, we can’t do this, but we can do this’—can’t get us a compromise. Even though we laid out the outline and it wasn’t that hard to get the outline together, you know: ‘This is what we’d like to see, and all you guys have to do is do the legwork, that’s it.’ And it was using stuff that was already in existence, or something they could easily get. So, I don’t know if they just

dropped the ball on their part, or whatever. Anyway, it just kind of seemed like they were dragging their feet (Bear 2018).

I followed up by asking Bear if he felt the MOA had been productive:

Yeah, it didn't help. Even to this day, it still hasn't helped. But, fast forward a little bit to 2016, 2017, we met again about it. The Arapahos went through an administration change, and they had different people in there. So, they wanted to take the MOA back and make sure it had the right wording in it. They had to redefine it. And so, when you do that—and you change the MOA, which was already established—you have to go back through the process of having a Tribe sign it...So, that kind of slowed the process down. For a while there, after 2014, I think, it just kind of went dormant (Bear 2018).

Bear is not overly optimistic about the overall productivity generated by the MOA or the pace at which things were being accomplished. When speaking with Dr. Holly Norton, she echoed Bear's sentiment and ultimate frustration at the ability to get things done within the museum and how it has been difficult to get everyone on board with all of the elements of the exhibit. Dr. Norton, however, was optimistic about the state of a revised MOA:

So, what we've been working on with the updated MOA over the last two years is honestly, so that the MOA is really about 'relationship' and what the Tribes think the 'relationship' between History Colorado and the Descendants' group should look like. The new MOA is very bureaucratic, its, you know, [these are] the meetings we will be having, [these are] the expenditures, providing a meal for the Healing Run every year, [these are] the exhibits that we'll be including... which

is, I think, also a sign of progress because it means that we've gotten past saying, 'We need to be friends, we need to get something done,' to being like, 'Okay, we're getting something done and this is how we do it.' Which is how MOAs really should be (Norton 2018).

When I spoke with Gail Ridgely about the MOA, he let me know that he felt it was an incredibly important document to have established and to be working from; however, he felt that the MOA should have been established before the initial development of the exhibit.

7.6 Foresight and hindsight

The participants in my project were able to identify why certain issues with the exhibit arose and what could have been done differently in order to avoid some of the negative feelings that surround the exhibit. Some of the key problems that were highlighted include: the assumption made by some History Colorado staff that consultation from prior exhibits would hold over to the new exhibit, the lack of funding and time provided to History Colorado staff, as well as the differences in approaches to interpretation and the collaborative process. As mentioned by Gail Ridgely, developing an MOU or MOA prior to the development of the exhibit may have been a better starting point in developing a relationship with the Tribes. Overall, meaningful collaboration and consultation with the Tribes from the inception of the exhibit was identified as the most important factor that might have contributed to a successful exhibit.

Ernest House, Jr. was able to identify missteps, along with areas for improvement, when it comes to *Collision*. House, Jr. related that he felt that his agency, the Colorado

Commission on Indian Affairs, along with History Colorado, should have had more conversations with the Tribes about what they wanted to see in the exhibit:

We as state agencies, History Colorado, the Commission of Indian Affairs, we didn't, in my opinion, we didn't take a step back and fully have enough conversations with the Tribes, about what we were venturing into. There was clear acknowledgement [in the exhibit] that needed to happen that hadn't happened...from numbers dead at the time, or massacred or murdered, families represented...it was almost just like, 'Hey, you know, let's put this together, we're on a time-frame, we're on a time-crunch, let's move things along.' When you do that, you miss steps. That is one thing I will always remember and take away from my involvement with this, that I move now to everything I work on, is to take that time. To reflect on what we're actually talking about. And who we're working with (House, Jr. 2017).

House, Jr. also highlighted an assumption that History Colorado staff was working under: that goodwill from previous exhibits and previous relationships would apply to this exhibit as well. House, Jr. elaborates:

I think for those relationships that History Colorado had with some groups, including the Tribes, maybe they thought that it was going to be an easy process, we're going to be able to go right through this, especially since they included it in other exhibits, in a smaller version, like the Spiritual Healing Run...and then you go through and you go through too fast and you don't spend enough time on certain things (House, Jr. 2017).

Another issue, identified by Dr. David Halaas, echoes this idea; Dr. Halaas points out that History Colorado felt that they had collaborated with the Tribes under their definitions of collaboration. Halaas stated: "...I think they thought they did [collaborate], mainly by asking Lee Lone Bear, who sang the White Antelope song. And they claimed that they had done it. And the Tribe said, 'No, no, you haven't. We've never talked to you.' So, there was great dishonesty. And the other thing is that that administration had no experience in exhibits. From Bill [Convery] to Kathryn Hill" (Halaas 2018). Dr. Halaas points to lack of experience from the History Colorado staff in creating exhibits, as well as differing ideas on what constitutes collaboration, as some of the main issues that contributed to the failure of the exhibit.

Steve Turner, the current Director of History Colorado, acknowledges that more time should have gone into the process of developing the exhibit. He stated, in reference to the successful collaboration effort that went into creating an exhibit about Ute culture:

I believe that it is fair to say we did not do that with Sand Creek, and...I don't know that there was malice behind it...it really partly was timing. Now, the Tribes, may not agree with that idea... I can't speak to that. But I think that's probably an exhibit that in hindsight, we should have not figured would be open on opening day. That that was going to take more time, and that we would need, because we would need more time that we couldn't open that on opening day (Turner 2018).

Turner acknowledges the limited timeline of the exhibit and that while the intentions of the staff members were not malicious, the exhibit opening likely should have been postponed.

As for how the exhibit could have been approached differently, my participants had many suggestions on methods of improvement. Max Bear felt that History Colorado should have started by consulting with the Tribes before the development of the exhibit:

Initially, what they should have done is consult with the Tribes or reach out to them – get that story. And then put perspectives together. You can't justify—or you can't highlight—murder. Maybe there is another aspect, or another museum, or something like that. History of Colorado isn't the place to do it. So, you really can't highlight that. So, when the Tribes weren't consulted, that's what made them upset; made us all upset. Because we're going to tell a story, we're going to talk about our people. You can't trust anybody else to say it or talk about it (Bear 2018).

Bear took issue with the way the massacre was interpreted by the museum, which could have been avoided by speaking with the Tribes and building trust.

I asked Gail Ridgely what he felt should have been done differently in the development of the exhibit: “They should have [gone] to each Tribe and drawn up a resolution or MOU. The exhibit would have been up and running” (Ridgely 2018). Ridgely emphasized several times throughout his interview the importance of MOUs and how MOUs can act as a treaty between the Tribes and the museum. Echoing Ridgely's sentiments, it was frequently acknowledged by interviewees that consultation should have begun at the inception of the exhibit.

When speaking with Bill Convery, I asked him what his approach would be if he had a chance to redo the exhibit and what he learned through his experience with

Collision:

...you know, here's what I've learned. I learned, and we kind of knew this, you know, at the beginning when we were thinking about Sand Creek, we were looking at the models, and of course one of the models was the consultations that the National Park Service were doing with the tribes, over at the National Historic Site, and we knew that the enabling legislation had been written in the late 1990s and in 2010, when we were starting to think about this, there was still no interpretive plan, and that was a twelve year gap, and we knew that we could not afford to wait twelve years to tell this story. What I learned, and you know I work at the Minnesota Historical Society now, and they asked me, 'What did you learn?' I would say, it takes as long as it takes when working with Tribes. That the first thing that you have to do is build trust. And that might mean a long period, years maybe, of not working on the content, but on building relationships, and I think, that's, we blew right through that. And we didn't build those relationships. We sort of took for granted that those relationships already existed. We had some staff people, people like Bridget [Ambler], who had worked with the Tribes in the past, who had relationships, but the institution did not have those relationships... (Convery 2017).

Building in a greater amount of time for the creation and development of the exhibit and dedicating time to building relationships and trust with the Tribes is again highlighted.

Patricia Calhoun, in our interview, also brought up the agreement between Tribes and the state that had been established in 2000 when Sand Creek was declared a National Historic Site. The law (Public Law 106-465) declared that the State and the Tribes would

work together in the management of the NHS: "...The purposes of this Act are - ...(3) to provide opportunities for the tribes and the State to be involved in the formulation and general management plans and educational programs for the national historic site" (Public Law 106-465, Nov. 7, 2000). In Calhoun's article, *A century and a half later, the wounds of Sand Creek are still fresh*, she references this law through a quotation of Joe Fox, Jr.'s letter to Bill Convery on December 5, 2011, where he states:

History Colorado, along with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Northern Arapaho Tribe, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and the Park Service are by federal legislation recognized as partners in the development and management of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site... Any exhibit on the tragic events of November 29, 1864, which is produced by History Colorado, we fear, will appear to carry the endorsement of all the partners... (Fox, Jr. quoted in Calhoun 2013a).

The law, while specific to the interpretation of the massacre at the National Historic Site, establishes a relationship between the state and the Tribes when it comes to how the Sand Creek Massacre is represented; for the state to act on its own, as History Colorado is a state-sponsored institution, is not illegal, but it is not acting within the spirit of that law when it comes to interpretation at History Colorado as an institution. Calhoun felt that this agreement should have been followed in the production of *Collision*: "...I think history museums should always...take on tough things... [History Colorado] should have followed the protocol which was to have consultations with the Tribes. They should have followed the rules that they laid out..." (Calhoun 2017).

Dale Hamilton also felt that the Tribes should have been involved in the exhibit right away:

I believe [History Colorado] should have involved the Tribes from the get-go. You know, the way we looked at it was that they were treating us as an afterthought. You know, one of the things that was discussed [was that], ‘Our wealthy people that have contributed to the exhibit will not be happy,’ and my response to that is: how can you gauge dollars and cents to lives? You know? And nobody could...there was no response from the museum folks (Hamilton 2017).

When speaking with Troy Eid, he brought up an additional issue: the need for History Colorado to identify what level of participation the Tribes would like to take on in the exhibit development process:

I don’t think people necessarily have ever given it that much thought, but, it’s just one illustration of a fact that, self-selective groups of people, you don’t want to discourage people’s enthusiasm, you want to challenge and welcome it, but at the same token I think you need to take other steps to have a bigger view and you may have to go out and actually recruit and see the participation and, one part of a dialogue with those Tribes is, how would you like to participate in the Colorado State Historical Society? (Eid 2017).

Eid continues:

And I see that in Tribal relations across the board. So many issues. So much of what Tribes have to do is determined by state law, and Colorado’s history is particularly tragic, in that, with the exception of the Ute strip in Southwest Colorado, all the Tribal people were displaced. This wouldn’t be as much of an

issue, say, in a state like New Mexico, where many of the Pueblo people were not displaced...But Colorado has a special responsibility because of the way in which the state developed and it really developed at the expense of Tribal people and in a very direct and violent way (Eid 2017).

Eid makes the point that the Tribes, in this specific case, really have to be offered a seat at the table; they are not obligated to participate in consultation and collaboration with state institutions in Colorado. History Colorado would have to change its bylaws in order to mandate consultation with Tribes that live outside of Colorado. The Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho have been excluded from this process as a result of the Sand Creek Massacre, after which the Tribes were forcibly removed from the Colorado Territory. Eid emphasizes that asking Tribes how they want their history interpreted and if they even want to participate in the work of an historical society is also crucial. Eid states: "People don't typically go where they're not welcome or where they're not invited" (Eid 2017). This statement is in many ways emblematic of the issues identified with *Collision* by my interviewees.

Chapter 8 Analysis

My research concerning the controversy surrounding the development and execution of the exhibit *Collision*, demonstrates only some of the issues that led to the exhibit's closure. I've taken care to research this topic in order to understand what problems arose – as well as why – in the development, execution, and opening of the exhibit, in the hopes that those issues identified may be taken into consideration by other museums in the future and avoided. By no means is this a comprehensive look into the internal politics of History Colorado, interpersonal relationships between the staff of History Colorado and Tribal Representatives, Descendants, or other liaisons, or the pressure that History Colorado felt as a state-sponsored institution from specific donors and other influential Coloradans. This research and its analyses are reflective of what might be done by museum professionals to avoid alienating stakeholders and breaking bonds between communities and institutions. Importantly, many museums are already doing highly collaborative work and involving stakeholders in the exhibit development process; my suggestions are geared towards museums that are attempting to do collaborative work and need additional guidance.

It is unfortunate that museum controversies have become “trial by fire” learning experiences for museums when these “experiences” are at the expense of marginalized communities - communities that regularly feel left out of the interpretation of their own history. It is my hope that a deeper understanding of *Collision* as a case study will help

institutions understand how to form stronger bonds with and be more considerate of their stakeholders, especially when interpreting sensitive historical events and traumas. In this chapter, I synthesize and analyze some of the primary actionable issues within *Collision* as identified by the individuals that I interviewed and the data that I was able to collect.

The first issue I will examine relates to one of the errors that History Colorado made in developing *Collision*: the failure to consider the Descendant Communities of the Sand Creek Massacre (the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma) as an audience or as visitors to their museum. Dr. Bill Convery, in his dissertation, described History Colorado's utilization of a "visitor" or "audience first" approach in the development of *Colorado Stories*, the larger exhibition of which *Collision* was a part. This approach harkens back to John Terrell's commentary on the future of museums where the satisfaction of the museum visitor is prioritized over all (Terrell 1991). It is important to understand that the "public" as well as the "audience," in the case of *Collision*, was constructed by History Colorado and its staff to mean non-Natives or non-stakeholders: an effective "othering" of the Descendant Communities. Many of my participants pointed out that History Colorado should have approached the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre at the inception of the exhibit; History Colorado chose instead to approach potential visitors to the museum. The "audience first" methodology is highly questionable when considering the extremely sensitive content present in an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre; who should an exhibit about the Sand Creek Massacre be for, if not the Descendants of the Massacre? I propose that the over-reliance on input from "the audience," exclusive of the

actual stakeholders, became one of the primary issues in the development of *Collision* that eventually led to its closure.

The second issue that I will discuss is History Colorado's need to generate revenue as a brand new \$110 million-dollar facility and how this is tied directly into the "audience first" approach to exhibit development. As Robert Janes writes:

The dominant ideology of capitalism and the decline of public funding for museums have coupled to produce a harmful offspring – a preoccupation with the marketplace and commerce, characterized by the primacy of economic interests in institutional decision-making (Janes 2009, 94).

Taking the "visitor first" approach is directly linked to History Colorado's need for an increase in visitation, and in turn, its contention with the greater marketplace. For institutions that charge an entrance fee and accommodate visits from large groups, greater visitation means greater revenue. History Colorado, during the time of *Colorado Stories* and *Collision*, was effectively functioning as a business by catering to its customer's perceived wants and needs. All of these "wants" and "needs" were determined by copious amounts of audience-based research amassed by History Colorado staff. History Colorado, as a business, became beholden to the spending power of its "audience" and therefore failed to prioritize the needs of the stakeholders in the development of *Collision*, as those stakeholders were "...a small audience..." (Convery 2017).

The third issue that I will focus on, which is tied directly to the economic concerns of the museum, relates to the abbreviated timeline that History Colorado was working with throughout the development, production, and installation of *Collision*. The amount of time that History Colorado allotted for exhibit development did not allow for any significant collaborative effort with the Descendant Communities of the Sand Creek

Massacre. A pattern that appeared throughout my research was the need for extra time and flexibility with timing on behalf of the museum. In order to collaborate with communities that have experienced extreme historical trauma, traditional Western museum practices need to be abandoned in favor of accommodating what the Descendant Communities need from the exhibit development process.

In addition to these identified issues, I will also discuss the methods utilized by the Descendant Communities that facilitated the closure of the exhibit after their explicit requests were either ignored or denied.

8.1 Audience First

The following quote from Dr. Bill Convery's dissertation about the development of *Colorado Stories* seems to capture a general anxiety held by historical museums that feel their relevance is waning and their audience is shrinking:

For much of America's rapidly diversifying, technologically savvy population, a visit to a history museum promises as much emotional satisfaction as a visit to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Across the nation, history museums face declining attendance, evaporating revenue streams, severe budgetary shortfalls, museum closures, and layoffs. Rising energy prices and falling school budgets are placing family vacations and class field trips—the bread and butter of many local history museums—out of reach. State- appropriated museums, such as the Colorado History Museum, could no longer afford to be complacent about weak attendance and a lack of repeat visitors. Although it went against the essentially conservative nature of a historical society to admit it, we perceived the painful truth: our museum needed to change, or die (Convery 2012, 6).

In this passage, Convery admits that a more aggressive strategy is needed in order to attract visitors to historical museums. One of History Colorado's strategies to combat the perceived lack of audience interest was to conduct audience research on a large scale.

The results of this research helped History Colorado staff determine what topics were

already of interest to their audience and would, in turn, draw visitors to their brand-new museum.

Dr. Convery and his team were charged by former Colorado Governor, Bill Ritter, to create exhibit content surrounding the Sand Creek Massacre; the ways in which that content was developed was greatly impacted by the audience research that was done by Convery and other History Colorado staff. Dr. Convery outlines the “visitor first” approach to exhibit development that History Colorado staff were employing, specifically with *Colorado Stories*:

To create [*Colorado Stories*], exhibition developers drew up an initial list of hundreds of Colorado communities, past and present, representing more than thirty different interpretive themes. Developers next winnowed the list down to twenty-five potential community stories. The candidates included communities from Colorado’s ancient past, countercultural and utopian settlements, mining camps, military bases, Cheyenne villages, an African American summer resort, a Japanese internment camp, and other communities representing a wide diversity of culture, geography, and economic activity. After visiting the twenty-five candidates, the team assembled initial treatments for approximately fifteen finalists, and then began a period of front-end audience testing in the winter of 2009 and spring 2010. Armed with clipboards, survey forms, and exhibit notebooks, developers fanned out to Denver-area museums, bookstores, and coffee shops to interview hundreds of potential visitors about their level of understanding and interest in the stories, themes, and potential activities related to each community. This task was essential to the development of historical interpretation that would meet visitors at their point of engagement for each story. The research suggested which stories were good candidates for elimination, which activities needed refinement, and which were likely winners in term of interest, audience engagement, and appropriate interpretive content. (Convery 2012, 10-11).

The approach used by Convery and his team is consistent with the ideals of “new-museology” that developed in the 1960s and 70s. New-museology centered on the engagement of museums with their communities and audiences: “Grounded in alternative ways of thinking about the purposes and functions of museums, one of [new-

museology's] central tenets was that museums should be primarily concerned with community needs and development, and be integrated into the society around them” (Kreps 2020, 12). The advent of new museology marked a shift towards the democratization of the museum and conceptualized the museum as an institution that serves and allows input from its community, instead of functioning as a gatekeeper of academic knowledge. Convery's approach was in line with these ideas; the exhibits that were developed at History Colorado were designed to be of interest to the audience and the community that the museum typically serves. However, it is important to understand that in the development of *Collision* (as outlined above by Convery), it appears that History Colorado was primarily attempting to engage with the citizens of Colorado, visitors to Denver, and so on, while only secondarily, and sometimes not at all, considering its stakeholders (the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho) as an audience, as evidenced later on in the development process. History Colorado, from my research, did not develop *Collision* in order to serve the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre, but to fulfill a request from a sitting Governor and attract visitors to the new facility. As noted previously, this failure to consider the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre and their needs at the inception of the exhibit is an error identified by many of my participants.

It is important to note here, that the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho live outside of Colorado due to the effects of the Sand Creek Massacre, after which they were essentially forced out of the Colorado Territory. This historic act, as evidenced in this thesis, has contributed to the exclusion of the Descendants from consideration as a primary audience concerning *Collision*; the Descendants lack both the proximity to

Denver and the ability to flock to Denver in numbers that would appeal to the revenue-focused administration of History Colorado. History Colorado had no technical obligation in their bylaws to collaborate with the Descendants as they no longer occupy Colorado. Clearly, the legacy of the Sand Creek Massacre cannot be relegated to “anachronistic space,” as defined by Anne McClintock; its legacy is a powerful actor into the present and occupies many contemporary spaces.

Dr. Convery goes on to outline some of the strategic methods he felt were necessary to attract and engage visitors while utilizing his “visitor first” model:

Brief text panels, strategic use of media, affective stories and experiences, and opportunities for visitors to interact with exhibits are often the most effective means of making stories memorable. Visitors flee, on the other hand, from wordy text panels, deep analysis, nuanced historical arguments, and exhibits that take for granted audiences’ understanding of context and significance (Convery 2012, 9).

The distillation of content and straying from nuanced historical arguments in the case of the Sand Creek Massacre seems to do a disservice to those communities that are still very much living with the consequences of the 1864 event. While trying to shrug off the academic-based restraints of old museology, Convery perhaps goes too far in order to appease his audience (Marstine 2006). Convery even acknowledges that Tribal Representatives were unhappy with compromises that were being made in order to pander to the “audience” in relation to the work that was being done on *Collision*:

Other areas of tension came from differing expectations about audience needs. Tribal consultants took exhibit developers to task for using quotation ellipses to distill brevity from complex quotations. The consultants correctly pointed out that in some cases, such distillation risked stripping the quotes of important context, or minimized the eloquence of tribal leaders. Yet, visitor research shows that such tradeoffs are sometimes necessary in order to maintain audience engagement. Such an explanation failed to satisfy some advisors. As one consultant put it, ‘why are you inviting stupid people into your exhibit? You should invite smart people with good hearts, who want to know the truth’ (Convery 2012, 37).

The prioritization of the visitor over the Descendant Communities, who are supposedly being represented in *Collision*, is shown time and time again. Also apparent from this passage are some of the differences in interpretive style between History Colorado and the Tribal Representatives; History Colorado favored content that was directed at a base reading level and disinterested audience members, while the Representatives favored a more nuanced approach that provided an opportunity for interested visitors to learn about the Sand Creek Massacre.

A lack of sensitivity to the needs of the Descendants in this case were very apparent; they were not what History Colorado considered to be “the audience” and therefore, their opinions and input were not as highly valued. Convery, in the above quote, separates the input of Tribal consultants from “visitor research”; he paints these groups as being mutually exclusive. The dichotomy that Convery builds between the stakeholders and the audience indicates that he does not believe satisfying both groups is possible. Based on his writing, if one group’s satisfaction has to be chosen over the other, it will be the satisfaction of the audience:

In the public sphere, successful historical performances are always a triangulation between scholarly content, the needs of audiences, and the desires of stakeholders. When we tell stories without making due diligence, we risk offending stakeholders and losing their trust. But focusing always on stakeholder or scholarly dynamics risks something equally bad, if not worse—the loss of visitor interest and, in the end, irrelevance (Convery 2012, 15).

Convery’s commitment to the audience is related to his anxiety surrounding the museum losing its relevance and having to shut its doors – without visitors, a museum ceases to exist. However, is there no middle ground? In conversation with Dr. Convery, I asked him if he stood by his approach to the development of the exhibit:

Why wouldn't we put the audience first? That's why we're doing it. And now, there are many audiences and many groups that bring something to the table. And I say, I guess that I've modified my views so far as understanding very clearly who the stakeholders in the exhibit are, and they're a type of audience. Sometimes they're a small audience but, as in this case, they're a very influential audience ... I still believe, what I believed then as strongly as ever, which is that the people who make exhibits, like you and I, the people who the exhibits represent, are not like the vast majority of visitors to museums. They have a level of understanding and a level of connection to the story that is stronger, deeper, than most people who visit a museum. And that means, that we, very often, as [people who create] exhibits, as experts, as historians, as individuals who tell these stories, often lose our empathy and try to tell stories for our peers, and not for the people who are trying to learn at the level that is not the same as our own. And, if we lose sight of that, then we are not being effective, we're not actually teaching much at all (Convery 2017).

Convery's move to recognize the stakeholders as an influential audience is an important shift; this realization shows Convery's thought process moving from the "new-museology" to the more inclusive practices of new museum ethics. However, Convery still seems to believe that it is not possible to satisfy both a lay-audience and the stakeholders. He essentially states that if a museum exhibit is not teaching to the lowest common denominator, the exhibit is ineffective.

Importantly, Convery was far from the only party that was guilty of choosing the audience over the stakeholders. Ed Nichols, History Colorado's CEO, also stood his

ground in choosing to keep the exhibit open after requests were made for closure; Nichols, in his reasoning, cited that the exhibit was quite successful among visitors. Nichols wrote a response to Joe Fox, Jr., the Vice President of the Northern Cheyenne, after Fox, Jr. requested the closure of *Collision*, and stated that History Colorado would hire an independent firm to conduct a survey of museum visitors in order to investigate what message visitors were “receiving and interpreting” (Nichols November 21, 2012). Nichols doubled down by saying that the exhibit was already receiving positive responses from visitors who came away from the exhibit feeling moved by the history of Sand Creek. Nichols also indicated that the visitor survey may reveal certain areas where the exhibit should be revised. Nichols wrote: “As we work together, we do believe it is important to keep the Sand Creek exhibit open to the one-thousand plus visitors we receive on a weekly basis, even when there are enhancements to be considered” (Nichols November 21, 2012).

To my knowledge, the Descendant Communities and Tribal Representatives involved in *Collision*, never requested to have audience testing conducted. Of greater concern was that the content that was on display was full of errors and ultimately did not tell the story of Sand Creek in a way that was appropriate. In one of the many letters between Joe Fox, Jr. and Ed Nichols, Joe Fox, Jr. wrote that the exhibit was “misguided and offensive” (Fox, Jr. August 21, 2012). The Descendant Communities did not need audience testing to tell them that the exhibit was not what they wanted it to be and that it was not up to the standards of how their history needed to be told. The request to close the exhibit was not taken seriously until April of 2013, nearly a year after the opening of the exhibit.

Dr. Convery, in his role as State Historian and Lead Exhibit Developer, found himself in a position where he was pressured to bring visitors into the museum at almost whatever cost. Opening a brand-new facility came along with pressures of opening a new business, where the visitor essentially becomes the “customer.” Convery writes:

One of the central challenges of public history is that, while maintaining authenticity and intellectual integrity, it must also appeal to the public in order to remain sustainable. History Colorado’s first goal is ‘audience first,’ that is, we must relay clear, simple, and emotionally satisfying stories about Colorado’s past to a lay audience in three-dimensional object and media- based exhibits. A successful museum exhibit is measured by a rewarding visitor experience, by an increase in repeat visitations, and by increasing financial sustainability over the next several years. That’s very different from producing the deeper historical analysis for an academic audience in a scholarly dissertation (Convery 2012, 15-16).

In this passage, “sustainability” can also be understood as “profitability.” In order for the museum to appear as a worthy financial endeavor for the state of Colorado to support, it must engage with visitors in order to bring them into the building. Robert Janes explains:

...even the debilitating effects of marketplace ideology have been insufficient to mobilize the museum community to rise to its own defense. The result has been the insidious imposition of quantitative performance measures based on money as the measure of worth (attendance, number of exhibitions, earned revenues, cost per visitor and so forth) in the absence of any substantive evaluation or comment by the museum community itself (Janes 2009, 105).

Janes’ explanation echoes Convery’s statement about the connection between the perceived “value” of museums and its visitation and production of exhibitions. As shown in the previous quote by Convery, his quantitative metric of success explicitly includes increases in repeat visitation as well as financial sustainability for the institution.

It appears to me that Convery felt the intense pressure of the marketplace and carried out his position in service of creating a more “sustainable” museum.

Unfortunately, this ideology does not necessarily allow room or time for collaboration: a

practice that is likely not seen as having a distinct monetary value by those in the boardroom. In the case of *Collision*, profitability, the ability to meet deadlines, and the development of the most appealing exhibit for visitors as possible, were all chosen over the concerns of the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre. As Janes writes:

Market ideology and corporatism have failed to demonstrate any real ability to deal with the complexities of a competent museum and are, instead, homogenizing the complex portfolio with a stultifying adherence to financial considerations – at the expense of most everything else (Janes 2009, 100).

In this case, History Colorado’s adherence to financial considerations, i.e., attracting an audience, was at the expense of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma.

8.2 The museum as a business

While Dr. Convery felt the pressures of the economy and the spending power of the visitor, the stakeholders were left to contend with an exhibit they found embarrassing and inaccurate. Troy Eid, in our interview, stated:

It was explained to us that the museum had to generate a certain return and that was part of why they designed the exhibit the way they did; they made that clear to us. The focus group was partly to show how they could design the exhibit so that it would be well attended, and it would produce a revenue stream...” (Eid 2017).

In order to create a revenue stream, Convery compromised nuanced historical viewpoints and “didacticism” for an exhibit that has been compared to a “disneyfied” version of events.

It is easy to place blame on Convery in many cases; however, he should not become a scapegoat for this controversy. It is very clear that he was pressured by the museum administration to bring in visitors with the exhibit content that was developed – with little consideration of the cost to relationships with the stakeholders. In his book, *Museums in a Troubled World*, Robert Janes examines how museums are expected to be run as businesses:

Unfortunately, in this age of hyper-capitalism, maximum self-sufficiency based on earned income has become the grail of many museum boards, subjecting all concerned to myriad complexities and pressures that have nothing to do with the inherent purpose of museums (Janes 2009, 98-99).

History Colorado's administrative staff fell prey to the ideals of capitalism while Convery's task of developing exhibits for a revenue-driven institution became one that was divorced from the inherent purpose of museums.

Ed Nichols, the CEO at the time of the opening of the brand new \$110 million-dollar facility, had previously owned his own software company and worked as an executive for a separate software company. Before either of these positions, Nichols worked in sales for IBM for over 20 years (Nichols <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ed-nichols-b9b3a544>). Nichols' credentials may have offered him sufficient experience in running a business and a more than cursory understanding of the business world, however, Nichols' professional background would have likely made it difficult for him to be as deeply aware of contemporary museological and anthropological practices. A lack of awareness to the needs of stakeholders, along with the importance of their history and its representation, was likely a factor in some of Nichols' decision making.

When speaking with Dr. David Halaas, Halaas specifically mentioned that he felt that the staff at History Colorado did not have enough practical museum experience in developing exhibits: “And the other thing is that that administration had no experience in exhibits. From Bill [Convery] to Kathryn Hill. I mean, she worked at the Holocaust Museum, but she wasn’t in exhibits” (Halaas 2018). Having a CEO that is primarily business savvy, with little experience in running a cultural institution, along with staff that are inexperienced in the development of exhibits, seems to have created a so-called “perfect storm” for a museum controversy.

Furthermore, Nichols’ deep concern for the “bottom-line” was frequently cited by my contributors as a reason that the museum exhibit was not closed after requests from the Tribes. Nichols’ intent appears to have been to keep the exhibit open at all costs, even with the understanding that it did not have the endorsement of the Descendant Communities. When I asked Dr. Convery why he believed the exhibit opening was not postponed, one of the reasons he cited was that an economic calculation had been made by the History Colorado administration; if the exhibit were to close, the museum’s offerings would be “somehow insufficient” (Convery 2017). Confirming this supposition, Dr. Halaas stated, as quoted in the previous chapter, that Kathryn Hill had made it clear that the exhibit would remain open in order to fulfill her obligations to museum donors (Halaas 2018). As Janet Marstine writes: “All funding sources demand something in return” (Marstine 2006, 11). Along the same lines, Troy Eid stated:

I think the financial end of it is really important because the state was talking very clearly, heading into the mediation, one of the factors was the financial considerations, another factor was the fact that they, you know, they expected so

many different people to see it, particularly school groups, but bear in mind that, that a lot of that was also tied into tickets...” (Eid 2017).

Eid understood that part of the concern with closing the exhibit was financially based and that the exhibit had been developed in a way that would essentially guarantee a revenue stream as a result of high attendance. The concern was that if *Collision* were to close (as it eventually did), it might take away from the number of tickets that were sold, as it took up a significant amount of space on the second floor of the museum.

Dr. Holly Norton, the current State Archaeologist, also cited that the museum had spent approximately a quarter of a million dollars on the exhibit and was therefore reluctant to close off the work that had been done to visitors. Ultimately the museum’s inflexibility with timing, their deep concern with attracting visitors, appeasing certain conservative organizations as well as donors, and a lack of exhibit experience, all seem to have been contributing factors in the controversy that surrounded *Collision*.

Nichols eventually did agree to close the exhibit after articles condemning it were published in *Westword* by Patricia Calhoun. Public pressure was cited by many of my interviewees as one of the main contributing factors toward the closure of the exhibit. Had History Colorado taken into consideration the stakeholders in this exhibit from the beginning, or perhaps postponed the opening of the exhibit, would an exhibit about the Sand Creek Massacre be open at History Colorado right now? It’s possible. History Colorado seems to have thought that if they made an exhibit that appealed to the general public, excluding the Descendant Communities, they would have a successful exhibit. Indeed, it appears that both Nichols and Convery were laboring under the age-old customer service ideal — “the customer is always right” — by pushing for what they felt

the visitor needed or wanted from this exhibit. However, after the Descendant Communities went to the press and made public their disappointment with the exhibit, it became clear that what *Collision* offered its audience would no longer be sufficient.

8.3 Timeline

History Colorado created an exhibit based on the Sand Creek Massacre that they felt would draw in and hold the attention of visitors for reasons motivated both by their educational mission and their economic responsibilities. Their approach to the development of *Colorado Stories* – doing extensive audience research instead of extensive collaboration with the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre – is where one of their first missteps took place. Most museum exhibits are planned years in advance and History Colorado began amassing audience data in late 2009 and early 2010. It took until November of 2011 (nearly two years later) for the team at History Colorado to realize that they were not satisfying the needs of their stakeholders – a mere six months before the opening of the exhibit.

History Colorado staff, while somewhat oblivious to the level of collaboration that needed to take place for this exhibit to be successful in the eyes of the Descendants, were, at this point, extremely short on time to be able to right the collaborative ship. It took until mid-December, in Billings, Montana, for the lead exhibit developer, Dr. Convery, to sit at a table with Representatives from all of the Descendant Communities for the first time. At this meeting, Convery and his colleague were informed of the errors that the Tribal Representatives and Descendants had found in the exhibit copy that they had been given for review. At this meeting it was promised that History Colorado would backtrack, revisit their work, and that there had simply been a misunderstanding about

the consultation and collaborative processes. Four and a half months remained after this “bruising” meeting for History Colorado to rework their exhibit and sufficiently collaborate with the Tribes in order for the opening of the exhibit to go forward on April 29, 2012.

It is at this point that a decision should have been made to postpone the exhibit opening. The logistical complications of having to coordinate with many different people to set up collaborative meetings meant that there was only one other in-person meeting with representatives from all of the Tribes and one teleconference meeting before the opening of the exhibit. To History Colorado, as an institution, these two further meetings meant that collaboration had been done and History Colorado even claimed that there was a working relationship between itself and the Tribal Representatives. This claim was met by open frustration on the part of the Descendants. As James Clifford points out, this pseudo-collaborative effort is generally seen for what it is:

Until museums do more than consult (often after the curatorial vision is firmly in place), until they bring a wider range of historical experiences and political agendas into the actual planning of exhibits and the control of museum collections, they will be perceived as merely paternalistic by people whose contact history with museums has been one of exclusion and condescension” (Clifford 1997, 208).

Ultimately, the approach that History Colorado took in developing an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre was so focused on appealing to its audience and keeping to a timeline in order to stay on budget that it failed to prioritize or really consider the needs of the stakeholders. This resulted in requests to postpone the exhibit that were denied, followed by requests to close the exhibit so that sufficient collaboration could take place, that were also denied. It wasn’t until the public grew uneasy about the impact *Collision*

was having on the Descendant Communities that History Colorado gave in and closed the exhibit.

Clearly, having a rigid exhibit development timeline is not conducive to effective collaboration, especially when problems arise. A significant pattern that emerged from my research and my interviewees was the idea that not enough time was given in order to come together and work on an exhibit that was satisfactory for all parties involved. In order to maintain relationships with Descendant Communities, collaboration needs to take place in a consistent and sustained manner – it is not enough to work with the Descendant Communities on one exhibit, such as *Tribal Paths*, and use that work as a basis for a future exhibit. Building mutually beneficial and enriching relationships between museums and Descendant Communities cannot be done over a four-and-a-half-month period. Creating meaningful content that honors the ancestors of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma should have been a much higher priority of History Colorado. The ideals of the neoliberal Western museum, which prioritize revenue from visitation and completing projects on strict deadlines to stay within predetermined budgets, are incompatible with the flexibility needed to consider the traumatic history of the Cheyenne and Arapaho. Running a non-profit organization, like a museum, in a manner similar to a for-profit business, can cut away many possibilities for building museum exhibits that are not only meaningful to the visitor, but for the communities being represented as well. As Ruth Phillips puts it, “...while collaborative projects take longer to develop than do conventional exhibitions, the added investment of time allows the project to become a much more effective site for research, education, and innovation. In collaborative

exhibits, the extended development process is, therefore, becoming as important as the physical exhibit itself” (Phillips 2003, 161). In other words, the investment of time and the sharing of resources between museum and stakeholders has the potential to make a successful museum exhibit for all parties involved.

8.4 Methodology of a museum controversy

In my literature review, I discussed several “infamous” museum exhibits that all garnered attention because they were either sites of protests, received negative press, or some combination of both. It is hard to say whether or not the attention of the press or public outrage are what were primarily responsible for changes made within these exhibits or their eventual shuttering, though it is apparent that these elements played large roles. *Collision* was brought to the public’s (and my own) attention through the intervention of the press, specifically, by Westword editor, Patricia Calhoun. Though Calhoun could not share with me who approached her about the conflict with History Colorado, she let me know that she spoke to several representatives before publishing her first article: “I had met with several people who I can’t name, in person [and] off the record. So, I probably met with, before that story I ran, met with at least six Tribal Representatives and talked to them” (Calhoun 2017). By being connected with Patricia Calhoun, a prominent Denver writer, the Tribal Representatives were able to make their story public and draw a significant amount of attention to the exhibit at History Colorado.

The process of going to the press, after being essentially ignored by History Colorado, appears to have been a last resort. In Joe Fox, Jr.’s November 2012 letter to Ed Nichols, he states his plan to go to the press if the requests in his letter are not taken seriously by History Colorado:

If you choose not to engage Cheyenne and Arapaho people in meaningful collaboration, we have determined to take our case to the court of public opinion. This latter course is not the most desirable in our view. We believe respectful negotiation and compromise to be the better way... (Fox, Jr. November 5, 2012).

About three months after receiving Ed Nichols' response to this letter, which failed to address the requests of the Descendants, Patricia Calhoun published her first article; *A century and a half later, the wounds of Sand Creek are still fresh*. In my interview with Calhoun, she acknowledged that the Tribes used her as a last resort, after all other avenues were essentially exhausted:

...My source's friend put me on with Tribes so I did meet with some of the Tribal members when they were in Denver, and again, this was long before the exhibit opened, like 9 months, and they were saying, 'We want to work through channels, but we're not getting responses, so we don't want to go public yet, but we're not getting responses.' So, I met with them initially and talked with them about what their concerns were, discovered...learned what their plans were, and then, as the fall and the winter went on and they weren't getting the satisfaction they wanted, finally, they decided they would go public. But they didn't go public until after the exhibit opened, and they only went public with me. They didn't [go public] initially, until after the exhibit opened, and they had exhausted what they thought was every avenue, which is unusual, normally...[complain] publicly long before they go through every avenue (Calhoun 2017).

Effectively, by going to press, the Tribal Representatives created enough public pressure and bad press for History Colorado that keeping the exhibit open was no longer a sustainable or "profitable" option. History Colorado additionally faced pressure from the

Governor's office to close the exhibit and CEO Ed Nichols, bowing to the pressure on all fronts, finally made the call to close the exhibit for further consultation.

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, and the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma were able to mobilize and gain the support of the media and the public in order to close *Collision*. The methods utilized by the Tribes are in line with post-colonial methodologies and the post-colonial museum in a number of ways (Smith 1999, Lonetree 2012). The Tribal Representatives were able to take control of the situation, assert their authority in the presentation of their own history, and also invert History Colorado's position of power. Where History Colorado had once been dictating to the Tribal Representatives how the exhibit was going to be presented and how their history was going to be written, now the opposite was true.

The Descendants were also able to employ, specifically, the post-colonial processes of intervening and negotiating, as defined by Linda T. Smith in her piece, "Twenty-five Indigenous Projects." Smith defines intervening in the following way: "Intervening takes action research to mean literally the process of being proactive and becoming involved as an interested worker for change. Intervention-based projects are usually designed around making structural and cultural changes" (Smith 1999, 245). The Descendants intervened in the way that History Colorado was presenting the history of the Sand Creek Massacre and demanded a change in the way they were being represented. Tribal Representatives continuously made formal requests to either defer the opening of the exhibit and then to close it – and made those requests a matter of public

record. In this way, the Descendants were able to have their voices and opinions taken seriously by the public and eventually by the institution itself.

Negotiating, according to Smith, "...is about thinking and acting strategically. It is about recognizing and working towards long-term goals." (Smith 1999, 264) The Descendants of the Cheyenne and the Arapaho never publicly suggested, to my knowledge, that their ties with History Colorado needed to be cut. Each request that was made, either to postpone or close the exhibit, came with the acknowledgement of further work that needed to be done as a part of a group effort. Museums occupy an important space in the public imaginary; the general public trusts the information that museums show them. Having an accurate portrayal of the Sand Creek Massacre that utilizes the voices of the communities most affected by it in a museum, means that the chance to educate the public about this atrocity is much greater than it would be otherwise. Ultimately, this is the long-term goal: to have an exhibit that is created and developed with the endorsement of the Tribes and that represents their history in a way that is multi-vocal and nuanced. This would not be possible if the bonds, however tenuous they may have been, between History Colorado and the Descendant Communities were severed. The Descendant Communities had to work strategically in order to shift the dynamic between themselves and History Colorado. Without going to the press, the Descendants would not likely have been able to occupy the space that they do currently - with a new exhibit that is being developed in conjunction with History Colorado that will hopefully open in the near future.

8.5 In summation

The research and analysis that I have been able to accomplish is hopefully insightful for museums that wish to create meaningful exhibit content in concert with either Tribal Representatives or Descendant Communities, specifically when examining sensitive and traumatic historical events. While not the focus of my analysis, it should be clear to museums that displaying content that is inaccurate or decontextualized will not result in a successful exhibit from the perspective of the stakeholders or the audience, and even more importantly: those identities are not mutually exclusive. As evidenced through my literature review (Chapter 3), many museums are already doing the work of decolonization. However, there are those institutions that are still catching up to these practices; practices that include in-depth collaboration with stakeholders and multi-vocality within exhibits. It is time that those institutions, institutions that are behind on practices that are becoming increasingly commonplace, do the work in order to insert themselves into the paradigm of the “post-colonial” museum. As evidenced by *Collision*, when a museum is not already doing the work of decolonization, the stakeholders in question are forced to perform extreme emotional labor in order to facilitate meaningful change within that institution – that labor might include enlisting a motivated public to help close an exhibit or insisting that a museum must engage in meaningful collaboration in order to create an exhibit that is multi-vocal and nuanced. The current collaborative relationship between History Colorado and the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho has now been cemented by the creation of the Memorandum of Agreement – the outcome of the 2013 mediation. Whether this MOA results in a new exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre is yet to be seen, though it is in the works.

Importantly, the onus should no longer be on stakeholder communities to do the work of decolonization; instead, this responsibility must shift to curators, educators, and administrators. People that occupy these roles in museums must demand that partnerships are developed with the communities they wish to represent, and not just so that they can avoid a museum controversy. Many museums do partner with the communities that they represent, resulting in enriching museum exhibits and the presentation of vital perspectives. Trends in museums show that this work is happening more and more often but exhibits like *Collision* can still slip through the cracks when museums choose to prioritize revenue and deadlines over meaningful cultural content and relationships. My intent is that through the examination of the case study of *Collision*, controversies like this will happen less and less.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The research that I have compiled for this thesis project is based on the information that I have had free and open access to, been given access to by certain individuals, along with the perspectives of people that have developed an interest in my project. This thesis is in no way an exhaustive look into the extremely complicated case study that is *Collision*, or the vast number of perspectives that exist among members of the Descendant Communities of the Cheyenne and Arapaho. The topic of *Collision* is a source of tension and discomfort for many people and some people chose not to engage in interviews, which is of course, their right. In this way, I am missing some voices in this project that would likely have provided valuable input and insight into the ways in which this case study has impacted them either personally or professionally.

Overall, my research has exposed many complicated layers that make up the case study of *Collision*. The first layer exposed that the historical content presented by *Collision* was offensive, inaccurate, and embarrassing to the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho – not to mention that the title of the exhibit characterized a massacre as something akin to a traffic accident. The secondary layer of my work revealed staff that were unprepared and unsupported by their administration to do the work that was required in order to collaborate with the Tribes – the “bottom line,” expectations of donors, and revenue that could be generated from the new exhibits were a much higher priority than the needs of the stakeholders.

It has appeared to me, after considering my complete body of research, that a major source of the exhibit's controversial nature was that staff members put the audience – essentially meaning “non-Natives” – first when interpreting themes and developing exhibit content that dealt with the Sand Creek Massacre. The audience or visitor first method is directly tied into the pressure put on museum staff to create revenue via ticket sales. Had the museum been able to remove their deep concern with generating revenue and instead concentrate on creating an exhibit that was enriching for both visitors to the museum and the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre, it is reasonable to suggest that a very different exhibit might have been created. It is, of course, realistic for a museum to take into account its budget and consider whether or not they have enough funds to accommodate a significant timeline and other expenses for an exhibit on an incredibly sensitive topic: a topic that requires great care and collaborative work. It may have been that History Colorado rushed into this topic where they might have instead, after gaining their economic footing in their new facility, attempted to develop an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre with the support of the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre. Some options to gain that secure footing might have included applying for grants, planning other “blockbuster” exhibits in order to raise funds, or soliciting support from private or corporate sponsors. Taking advantage of these suggestions would, theoretically, have allowed History Colorado to shrug off the Western corporate ideals of working with a hard and fast deadline; an ideal that this thesis has shown to be incompatible with interpreting an historic massacre with any success.

History Colorado's approach to the Sand Creek Massacre was indicative of an institution that situated itself firmly in outdated museum practices and appeared to be

generally unconcerned with processes of decolonization or sharing authority with their stakeholders, at least when considering the exhibits that were developed. This case study offers the chance for other museums or educational institutions to learn from History Colorado's mistakes and, at that time, their somewhat dated points of view. One of the most valuable lessons that can be gleaned from this research is the importance of taking the time to do the work and slowing down the exhibits process. In my interview with Ernest House, Jr., he explained to me what he took away from working on this project as the Director of the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs:

We as state agencies - History Colorado and the Commission of Indian Affairs - my opinion and looking back on it, we didn't take a step back and fully have enough conversations with the Tribes about what we were venturing into. There was clear acknowledgement that needed to happen that hadn't happened [in the exhibit]. Even from numbers dead at the time, or massacred or murdered...families represented, like, we just didn't...it was almost just like, hey, let's put this together, we're on a timeframe, we're on a time-crunch, let's move things along. And when you do that, you miss steps. And for an event like [the Sand Creek Massacre], that's one thing I will always remember and take away from my involvement with this, that I move now to everything I work on, is to take that time. To reflect on what we're actually talking about. And who we're working with (House, Jr. 2017).

House, Jr. sums up the importance of having meaningful conversations with stakeholders and taking the time to reflect on the work being done, while its being done, instead of working quickly and missing important steps along the way. Taking the time to build an

exhibit that is mutually beneficial also means embracing museums for what they are “supposed” to be: non-profit organizations with an educational mission.

When I spoke with my contributors about whether or not they felt that History Colorado or historical societies in general have a responsibility to represent difficult histories, all replied in the affirmative. *Collision* is not an example of an exhibit that people didn’t want or an exhibit that should never have been attempted. By all accounts that I have had access to, the only request was that the exhibit needed to be Tribally driven. Here are some of the responses I received from my interviewees about whether or not the story of Sand Creek should be told in museums:

Dale Hamilton “A story that needs [to be told] with all of its accuracy. You know? A lot of history books have been very – they tell slanted versions of whenever it involves Native Americans. But I know one thing is like, Colorado has taken the lead in being one of the first, that I know of, [with] trying to be a friend of us. Colorado has been trying to be truthful. We can’t change history, but we can at least educate people” (Hamilton 2017).

Dr. David Halaas “Oh, yes. I mean, I regard it as the most significant event to happen in Colorado. There should be a major exhibit on it—hard-hitting, far-reaching—and its significance to the future. It’s what pushed the Tribes out of Colorado” (Halaas 2018).

Dr. Bill Convery “[Museums] have the responsibility and they have the responsibility to engage stakeholder communities in meaningful ways. And that includes taking the time to build the relationships and the trust that are necessary. It also means, and museums, a lot of museums are pretty bad about this, they need to have, they need to hire staff that reflects the diversity of their stories. Right? So, that they are building, and I think, that the

museum field as a whole needs to build capacity...in its diverse museum training and recruitment programs, among American Indians, among all underrepresented groups, so that we can tell these stories honestly and in a way that reflects our mutual good will. The fact that we are all trying, we all have the same goal, but just to have a more complete understanding of stories that trouble us. If we had worked harder to actually hire Cheyenne and Arapaho museum developers and historians, or to work with universities to develop those professionals, I think we would have gone a long way towards not losing the trust in the first place. And, also have somebody internal who is telling us, teaching us how to listen” (Convery 2017).

Max Bear “Well, until recently, Colorado’s the only one that’s kind of making efforts to include indigenous stories and stuff like that. That’s the main historical society for Colorado, so, you know, they need to tell a good story. They’re leaps and bounds ahead of Oklahoma...” (Bear 2018).

Troy Eid “Yes, I think absolutely so. Part of the tension is that, you get an enthusiastic group of people who want to inform the mission of the state historical society, and this case the state museum as well, and, they’re very well-intentioned people. You don’t always get the participation from Tribal people because by definition they’ve been, for example with the Sand Creek Massacre, they’ve been dislocated, they’re not part of the state, and, just the bylaws of History Colorado for example, if you think about this, I mean, you’d have to make a special effort to change the bylaws to have representation from Tribes that are in other states, but they still have a current connection to Colorado. They were forcibly removed from Colorado and, it’s just an example, that the people who

are enthusiastic and participating do so through the law that allows them to do so, but the law does not, it's not designed in a way that Tribes are included" (Eid 2017).

Ernest House, Jr. "Absolutely. So, I think that the individuals working on the exhibit, that their hearts were in the right place. And I think the individuals, they've been working on this for a long time...I think state agencies, we have a huge opportunity to tell these stories the right way. And, I understand time, I understand funding limits, I understand all of that, but we need to come up with a way to slow that process down, because we're not, we're working on our time clock, when really we need to be working on the Tribe's process, with time, with events, with acknowledgement, with everything in that process...with emotions, and it needs to get there when it gets there and sometimes things don't get there and we need to be okay with that" (House, Jr. 2017).

These responses are indicative of the overall importance of having an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre represented at History Colorado, but one that takes proper consideration of the perspectives of the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho and includes ample time for collaboration. The answers from some of my participants show what they have learned from this process; Dr. Convery calls for greater diversity in hiring practices and Ernest House, Jr. reflects on the necessity to slow the exhibit development process down. Dale Hamilton, Max Bear, and Dr. David Halaas, all point to the need for the story of the Sand Creek Massacre to be told in a way that represents the truth and highlights the voices of the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre; this is an event that is foundational to the story of Colorado and must be represented in its historical museum. Importantly, the purpose of this study is not to discourage other museums from

attempting to interpret sensitive histories; clearly, in this case, they are needed and wanted, but they must be done in concert with the communities that they represent.

In the long run, History Colorado spent a significant amount of money on fully fabricating an exhibit that permanently closed within a year because they failed to honor a collaborative process. Would it have cost the museum more money up front to do all of the collaborative work that was necessary? Perhaps. However, it is apparent in this case that not sufficiently involving and engaging with stakeholders in the exhibit development process is an unsustainable practice as evidenced by the incredible work done by the Tribal Representatives and Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre in order to shutter the exhibit. Effectively, museums can no longer afford to ignore their stakeholders.

The consideration of neoliberal perspectives surrounding the profitability of museums is not necessarily a moralistic reason to participate in collaboration, however, it may motivate museums that are more conservative to develop relationships with Tribes in order to produce exhibits that are culturally sensitive and relevant. As Christina Kreps writes:

Critics might say that engagement... is just another marketing strategy for museums to increase their visitor numbers and revenue, and for museums and universities to justify their existence within the competitive context of neoliberal economics. Certainly, marketing agendas and corporatist thinking are often underlying motivations behind engagement efforts. Yet this perspective belittles the important work that has been and is being done by many to create and promote more useful and relevant practice. The emphasis on engagement, furthermore, can act as a countervailing force against neoliberal individualism, the loss of a sense of community and connection, and the ever-expanding commodification of cultural and social life (Kreps 2020, 14).

While collaborative and engaging work may initially be done to increase revenue and to appeal to a more socially conscious public, the benefits of this work should not be underestimated. In this case, the ends can justify the means.

Due to History Colorado's performative collaborative process in the development of *Collision*, Tribal Representatives, were essentially forced to go to the press to show the public how serious the issue of *Collision* was and that something needed to be done.

Within two months of the publication of Patricia Calhoun's first article on *Collision*, Ed Nichols pledged to close the exhibit for further Tribal consultations. It is important to note here that we live in an age where the public is becoming more and more sensitive to issues surrounding the representation of historically marginalized communities; young activists, such as those involved with *Decolonize this Place*, and a concerned general public are interested in holding institutions and people accountable for their actions.

Indeed, in June of 2020, the Civil War monument that occupied a space in front of the Colorado State Capitol in Denver was defaced and subsequently set on fire by those protesting the murder of George Floyd. The monument, that has since been dismantled, was "...designed by Captain Jack Howland, a member of the cavalry, and is intended to honor state soldiers who fought and died for the Union in the Civil War. However, members of the unit also took part in the Sand Creek Massacre on Nov. 29, 1864..." (Colorado Public Radio Staff 2020). This statue, erected in 1909, initially listed the Sand Creek Massacre as a "battle" in the Civil War, though, a bronze plaque was added to the statue in 1999 that helped to clarify that this was a mischaracterization of the event. In the current cultural landscape, museums cannot underestimate the interest that the public has in being forces for change in the way that history is being represented and told.



Figure 3: Colorado State Capitol, May 31, 2020; photo by Katherine Hoadley.

Echoing Troy Eid’s previous statement, the Descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho were dislocated from the state of Colorado as a result of the Sand Creek Massacre; their exclusion from the state’s historical society and its bylaws are just some of its many long-lasting effects. Due to these effects, and following Anne McClintock’s discussion of “anachronistic space,” it is clear that the event of the Sand Creek Massacre is not some anachronism – it is not a static piece of the past (McClintock 2013). Eid is quoted in one of Patricia Calhoun’s articles stating:

‘What happened at Sand Creek, you had leadership of very prominent nations completely destroyed, then exiled and never allowed to recover,’ says Eid. ‘Sand

Creek is with us now the way it was with us in the past. It's central to everything that happens to Colorado today, in our daily lives' (Eid quoted in Calhoun 2013d).

It is also apparent through the *The Sand Creek Massacre Site Location Study Oral History Project*, compiled by Alexa Roberts, that the Massacre has an active presence in the everyday lives of the Descendants of the Massacre (Roberts 2000). This is not an event that is “out of place in the historical time of modernity” (McClintock 2013).

Fundamental differences in how groups of people interpret and understand history almost certainly contributed to the way the inception and development of *Collision* was handled. To historians and museum staff who do not see the Sand Creek Massacre as an event that permeates the everyday, the way the exhibit was developed may have seemed appropriate. However, through the lived experiences of the Descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre and the information compiled in this thesis through interviews, we know this to be untrue.

At the conclusion of this case study, it is important for me to acknowledge that new work is being done on behalf of History Colorado to open an exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre as of the writing of this thesis. Regular consultations have been scheduled and followed through with and a fundamental shift has taken place in History Colorado's approach to their new exhibit. Some of my contributors are optimistic about the increase in consultations while also being slightly discouraged at how long the process is ultimately taking.

Gail Ridgely, when asked about whether or not History Colorado has learned from the past, commented: “Yes, History Colorado has learned from their previous mistakes from not including the Tribes in the development of the museum. Now, the

museum says it is committed to working with the Tribes on how to appropriately depict one of the most tragic events in American History” (Ridgely 2018). Ridgely also said that he felt that the new exhibit development process was headed in the right direction. Max Bear, when I asked him if he felt History Colorado was on the right track in their attempts to do more consulting, replied:

I think they’re on the right track because they keep consulting. So, if they keep consulting, we can kind of help them push forward. That’s all they need - a little boost. But yeah, I understand they’ve got financiers and ‘the money’ that they need to please as well, but in the long run, what’s going to cost them more money, you know? The negative press? Or not consulting with the tribes? (Bear 2018).

Bear was less optimistic about the timeframe in which the new exhibit would open and brought up that he has yet to see much progress on the exhibit at the time of our interview in late 2018. He also described a change in Director Steve Turner’s demeanor between consultations: “[Steve Turner] was all, ‘Let’s get this done, let’s take care of it.’ Now he’s just kind of the one that drags his feet now. So, he was there, we met with him, told him exactly what we wanted, what we wanted to see, so hopefully that sparks something. I think we’re supposed to have another meeting soon, after the New Year. So hopefully something gets done” (Bear 2018). Bear’s frustration is not unfounded; it has taken History Colorado a significant amount of time to recover from other financial difficulties that resulted in layoffs in 2015 and a complete restructuring of their museum board. CEO Ed Nichols was replaced by Steve Turner, Dr. Bill Convery was replaced by Patty Limerick as State Historian, Kathryn Hill was let go, and many of the people that worked on the original exhibit are no longer employed by History Colorado. This large bump in

the road has likely drawn out the process of developing a new exhibit as well as other budgeting and timing concerns on behalf of History Colorado. I agree with Bear in that I too hope to see a new exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre in the near future at History Colorado.

However slowly the process with History Colorado is moving, their new means of collaboration are encouraging and indicative of a museum that is moving into the future. Holly Norton commented on History Colorado's new approach to the planned Sand Creek Massacre Exhibit:

I think the institution is actually thinking about what collaboration means. So, I think in you know, 2011, 2012, I think it was a typical consultation where, we're going to get Tribal Reps in a room, they're going to talk, we may or may not listen, we're going to check the box that said that we existed in the same room on this topic and then we're going to make whatever choices we think we should make. This really is different [from that approach]. And I think that this team is really focusing on saying that this has to be a tribally driven exhibit. And that might mean that things are done in ways that we wouldn't do if we were left to our own devices. I honestly think that that's okay. Not just from a point of view of trying to have good relationships and trying to make a group that has been wronged both historically and recently, happy. But we are a public institution who exists to educate the public; that doesn't mean that that always has to be our voices doing the interpretation and the education. And, I think it's going to be really exciting that we have an exhibit that's created by the Tribes (Norton 2018).

The new exhibition strategy that Dr. Norton describes is encouraging and reflects a vastly different attitude from the initial approach to the exhibit that opened in 2012. Moving away from what was considered as a “typical” collaboration to an exhibit that is tribally driven shows a complete shift in behavior on behalf of History Colorado and is reflective of the work of decolonization that needs to be done in and by museums. Opening a new exhibit on the Sand Creek Massacre at History Colorado that is tribally driven may very well be the means of symbolic redress that are needed by the Descendant Communities (Besterman 2011). While a new exhibit opening may close a drawn-out chapter for both History Colorado and the Descendants, it is also indicative of a new way forward and the future of the relationships between the Northern Cheyenne, the Northern Arapaho, the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, and History Colorado.

In further highlighting History Colorado’s shift into the modern ethical landscape, History Colorado, in 2018, opened an exhibit entitled, “Written on the Land”; an exhibit on Ute culture that was created in conjunction with “...more than 30 tribal representatives who participated in many multi-day meetings to help develop the content” (PR Newswire 2018). According to the press highlights, the exhibit was developed in collaboration with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and the Ute Indian Tribe over a period of four years (PR Newswire 2018). *Written on the Land* is a long-term exhibit at History Colorado –moving History Colorado’s exhibit development process from the past, firmly into the present.

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Appendix

A. Interview dates and locations

Interview subject:	Location of interview:	Date of interview:
Max Bear	Phone call	December 12, 2018
Patricia Calhoun	<i>Westword</i> offices, Denver	September 7, 2017
Dr. Bill Convery	Phone call	October 27, 2017
Troy Eid	Office, Greenberg Traurig, LLP, Denver	September 28, 2017
Troy Eid	Office, Greenberg Traurig, LLP, Denver	October 26, 2017
Dr. David Halaas	Phone call	December 19, 2018
Dale Hamilton	Phone call	November 2, 2017
Ernest House, Jr.	CCIA Office, Colorado State Capitol	September 29, 2017
Dr. Holly Norton	Office of the State Archaeologist, History Colorado, Denver	November 19, 2018
Gail Ridgely	Phone call	December 19, 2018
Steve Turner	Director's Office, History Colorado, Denver	July 9, 2018