

CONFRONTING
COLONIALISM
THROUGH
CONTEMPORARY
ART

KATIE NABER

Confronting Colonialism through Contemporary Art

A thesis submitted to The University of the Arts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Museum Exhibition Planning + Design graduate program.

For additional information contact:

Katie Naber

knaber1@gmail.com

katienaberdesign.com

© 2021 Katie Naber All Rights Reserved

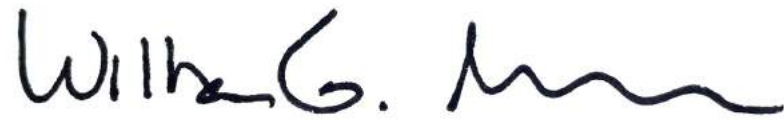
No part of this document may be reproduced in any form without written permission of the author. All photographs and designed elements are the property of Katie Naber unless otherwise noted. Material owned by other copyright holders should not be reproduced under any circumstance. This document is not for publication and was produced in satisfaction of thesis requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Museum Exhibition Planning + Design in the Department of Museum Studies, The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

CONFRONTING
COLONIALISM
THROUGH
ART
CONTEMPORARY

Katie Naber

Masters of Fine Arts Thesis
Museum Exhibition Planning + Design
University of the Arts
Spring 2021

Committee



Committee Chair: Bill Adair

Co-editor of *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User Generated World*.
Independent museum consultant and adjunct professor at University of the Arts,
Museum Studies Program.



Thesis Advisor: Stacey Mann

Independent Interpretive Planner & Experience Designer
Senior Lecturer and MEP+D Thesis Advisor, University of the Arts



Committee Member: Erika Katayama

Former Director of Exhibitions for Museum of Man (now Museum of Us)
Freelance museum consultant



Committee Member: Polly Olsen

Tribal Liaison for the Burke Museum



Committee Member: Aletheia Wittman

Freelance museum consultant
Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Inluseum

There are so many who have supported me along this path!

To my thesis committee Bill Adair, Stacey Mann, Erika Katayama, Polly Olsen, and Aletheia Wittman, I am so grateful for all of your guidance, support, and insight along the way. Your support has immensely added to the fulfillment of this thesis, and in my interests moving forward in this field.

A sincere thanks to all of my University of the Arts professors, including our fabulous leader, Stephanie Reyer, all of whom have guided and challenged my thinking surrounding the capabilities of museums.

My family and friends were instrumental in lending an ear, offering (and eager!) to read my thesis, and sharing their generous feedback. A special thanks for your never ending support.

To all of the wonderful museum professionals and artists I interviewed along this process. I was eager to soak up all of your knowledge, and am thankful for your willingness, time, and thoughtful ideas.

And a forever thanks to Chachamakamino, my unruly, unwilling, and disobedient cohort, who were an inspiration throughout graduate school. We're in this together, I'm so proud of us!

Thanks

Abstract

In today's world, increased societal awareness of systemic inequalities toward minority populations is becoming more prevalent. The root of these inequalities are punctured with misrepresentation, misunderstanding, and complacency. Throughout history, museums have played an unfortunate role in perpetuating these ideas, thus therein lies a responsibility to instigate progressive change. Museums have a unique opportunity as trusted sources of cultural knowledge and resources to reframe stereotypical and inaccurate perceptions of Native people, often constructed by the institutions themselves.

This thesis questions how contemporary Indigenous art can be situated as part of decolonizing practices in museums. Focused specifically on institutions with Indigenous collections, this research offers opportunities for healing from cultural harms by drawing upon interviews of museum professionals and artists, case studies, research of current decolonizing practices, as well as contemporary art interpretations and installations. While simultaneously reviewing current decolonization approaches and opportunities for the inclusion of contemporary art, equity-focused guiding values and practices are discovered that offer prompts for museum professionals to consider their personal and institutional impact on reframing museum narratives surrounding Native people. These guiding values of relationship, representation, and recognition integrate respectful museum and personal practices that have relevancy and healing at its core.

The project culminates in a self-reflection journal and through thoughtful, yet spontaneous calls to action. This multidisciplinary approach is intended to be implemented by museum professionals wishing to collaborate for Native artists. While developing an applicable framework and tool, this equity-centered approach demonstrates the opportunity for museums to take actionable, yet carefully considered steps toward decolonization.

Through my privileges as a white, western woman, I will never know what it is to be a Native. I do not claim to be an expert on Native art, traditions, or ways of knowing. However, I aim to demonstrate ways institutions are thinking differently and more inclusively with Native individuals and communities. In addition, I hope to respectfully portray the viewpoints that I have uncovered throughout this research. I am an ally, committed to uplifting voices close to home and around the world.

Coming from a diverse extended family, filled with people of different countries of origin, races, and beliefs, I have experienced the slightest glimpse into diverse cultures and ways of understanding. This experience has further influenced my interest in travel and the belief in the beauty and extension of cultures. My most memorable experiences thus far have resulted in an expansion of the ways I thought was "normal" and a sincere openness to promoting the beauty in these cultural differences. Though through this research, I've received a deeper crash course on confronting my own whiteness and ways of knowing.

Growing up, I had an immense curiosity for the people who inhabited the United States, before European settlers claimed it as their own. All the while not realizing how little I knew about the differences between tribes compared to the stereotypical images seen in mass media, incorrectly depicting a diverse people. Further, I recognized a disconnect

between how Native people were portrayed of as the past in museums versus seeing empowered people protesting today for their rights. These experiences gave me the drive to learn more about their varied cultural beliefs.

Observing the acts of hatred and prejudice towards people that offer diverse and invaluable perspectives, instilled in me a fire to be a positive force of change. The craft, symbols, and beauty of people of the past needs to be honored, while acknowledging the lives and culture that exist today. It's essential to repair relationships to Indigenous communities to promote cultural prosperity and to give rightful acknowledgments of the continued harm caused by colonialism.

Even more so today, I am an advocate for underrepresented communities to be visible, that have been subdued, taken advantage of, and not given enough opportunities to thrive as they could. I envision a future that is not anglicized, but one that upholds and honors diverse ways of life. Throughout this research process, I aim to listen with a discerning ear, an openness to expand, and to shape a paper and project in a thoughtful way that gives others navigating the complexities of this work the opportunity to become better representatives of the work. It is helpful to remember that both the work itself, and personal growth, do not happen overnight, but that they are shaped through continual and repeated acts.

Today, I humbly acknowledge that I still have much to learn.

Personal Statement

Land Acknowledgment

I respectfully acknowledge that I have been conducting my research for this thesis at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, situated on Lenapehoking, the ancestral lands of the Lenni-Lenape. Their name fittingly translates to the “Original People.”¹ Through this statement I express an appreciation for those whose land I have been researching, writing, and residing on, and who have influenced my interest in this topic. I hope this research will promote deeper cultural appreciation, added presence, relationships based in respect, and cultural longevity. Today, the Lenni-Lenape are actively working to revive their community in Pennsylvania.²

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I first considered the inclusion of a land acknowledgment to be an obvious and crucial part of the overall thesis. However, through its creation — from reviewing many institutional acknowledgments as well as researching the Lenape people and where they are today — I missed one major aspect, the lack of input from the Lenape people. And taking a step back further, how do I know if they even want to be represented in this way, in my thesis?

While my intention of creating a land acknowledgment was one based out of respect, it is hard to know whether it is ultimately right to include. Making this acknowledgment is a way that I want to respectfully recognize the community as a living culture.

I have since reached out to the Cultural Center & Trading Post of the Lenape Nation in Pennsylvania, located in Easton, PA. I hope to visit, and first listen and learn. Due to COVID restrictions, they are currently closed. I feel conflicted about

reaching out specifically for my thesis before developing a relationship with them, and therefore, while I include this statement, I do not officially recognize this as a suitable land acknowledgment until the relationship is developed and their input included.

If nothing else, through this process I’ve learned how complex the work can be. And even more so, the intention and time it takes to establish authentic relationships.

A few of the questions that have come up during this process include:

- How do I as an individual without institutional resources or collections connect with the Lenape people?
- How do I confront what I think I know to become more vulnerable and open, instead of extractive?

Table of Contents

I.

INTRODUCTION

- 3 - Introduction
- 6 - Thesis Question
- 7 - Glossary
- 8 - Rationale

CURRENT STATE

- Current Museum Approaches - 13
- Evaluating the Current Landscape - 32

II.

III.

THESIS PROJECT

- 48 - Defining a Framework
- 76 - Evaluating the Framework
- 79 - Equity in Design
- 92 - Summary

CONCLUSION

- Conclusion - 96
- Bibliography - 100
- Image Credits - 106

IV.

V.

APPENDICES

- 112 - Appendix A: Additional Interview Insights
- 116 - Appendix B: Survey Form
- 124 - Appendix C: Self-reflection Journal

*“Someone needs to complicate the
of Indigenous*

*incredibly narrow understanding
aesthetic and material histories.”*

– Jeffrey Gibson
Bomb Magazine

Jeffrey Gibson

AMERICAN HISTORY, 2015

Wool, steel studs, glass beads, artificial sinew, metal
jingles, acrylic yarn, nylon fringe, canvas

89 x 66 x 5 inches

226.1 x 167.6 x 12.7 cm

Photo Credit: Pete Mauney



INTRODUCTION

Approved for construction in 2016, the Dakota Access Pipeline posed a serious threat to the natural resources and sacred lands of the Standing Rock Sioux.³ From the perspective of the Sioux tribe, the construction of the pipeline violated an article within the Fort Laramie Treaty that protected these lands.⁴ While the local Standing Rock Sioux tribe was to be most affected by the building of a crude oil pipeline, the protests brought together Native Americans across the country, as well as non-Native people to stand up for Native American and environmental rights.⁵ Protests that ensued demonstrated the long-standing disrespect of Native American resources, treaties, and viewpoints, the ongoing effects of colonization afflicted upon Native people.

In addition, the Black Lives Matter movement was sparked by traumatic recent deaths of many Black individuals at the hands of citizens and the police.⁶ These events, which have not only been present in recent years but throughout US history, demonstrate long-standing racism within

March regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota
September 7, 2016
Credit: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images



the country. The increased awareness and happenings surrounding both movements have unearthed inequalities and injustices in a striking and apparent way. Both the Standing Rock and Black Lives Matter protests, due to its documentation and expansion through various media, have prompted many more people all over the world to evaluate how they might have contributed to racial, economic, and social injustices in their own communities.

It is evident to see the presence of continued biases within institutions, such as museums, who have their foundations rooted in colonialist power. Built on the idea of conquering and collecting from "exotic" places, the people and cultures they collected, stole, and looted from suffered. For people and cultures historically underrepresented in museums, particularly Native Americans, these institutions can be a source of pain.⁷ Past harms include biological warfare, forced capitalism, epidemics, and "reeducation" through use of boarding schools. While today, intergenerational trauma still occurs. Some of the trauma exists in lack of access to clean drinking water, continued land disputes, and displacement from ones heritage.⁸ Because of the growing awareness by the public and museums of these cultural harms,

museums have decided to write a formal statement against injustices or to hold talks on the subject of equality. Yet, they have been reproached for being late to the conversation or for not following through in other areas of the museum's operations, hiring practices, or collections.⁹ Many museums are looking more deeply into ways they have caused harm to world or local cultures in the past, as well as how they are being just today in hiring practices and interpretation of cultural objects. They are considering how to repair the relationships where trauma has been and continues to be inflicted. Considered by the American public as a trusted source of information, museums have the obligation and power to combat these inequalities in a proactive way to ensure cultural continuance.

Native American communities have been dealing with the trauma of colonialism since white settlers first moved across their land, a trauma that continues today. Right now as injustices and mistreatment of Native Americans are being more readily acknowledged through mass media channels. In conjunction with mass media is the addition of social media, which has accelerated the rate of information exchange among individuals and communities. Because

of these channels, the issues that Native people are facing today as well as in the past are becoming more understood by people all over the world. Therefore, there is a present and pressing need to address these harms.

As institutions built out of colonialism, it is past time for museums to acknowledge their histories and impact. If museums do not actively respond to the growing needs of their country and communities, they will promote the continuation of these harms. They will also continue to not be fully trusted by Native people, other underrepresented groups, as well as a growing number of non-Native allies.

In conjunction with these timely conversations appears another pertinent conversation evolving around the importance of the arts. For the last few years that the Trump administration has been in office, they have proposed to defund major art organizations that provide funding to cultural institutions, libraries, individual projects, and other organizations that provide learning to a large number of people in this country.¹⁰ Specifically in Philadelphia, the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy was eliminated due to "revenue loss" from the Coronavirus pandemic in May 2020. This organization provides grants to hundreds of organizations within the city, supporting many who are economically disadvantaged.¹¹ These organizations are an important outlet to the communities which they support.

While difficult to measure the fulfilling impact of the arts, diverse art forms—from film and theater to poetry and fine art—greatly impact the well-being of its participants. We rely on many different art forms to provide comfort, laughter, relaxation, and a temporary escape on a daily basis. Among many examples includes being pulled into a favorite TV show,

dancing to music, listening to a provocative podcast, experiencing a summer concert, or gazing at a colorful neighborhood mural. In addition to providing an outlet for people of all backgrounds, they are also tools for learning and growing.

Cultural institutions, including and in addition to art museums, have begun to partner with artists to reinterpret objects on display, content, and ideas. These partnerships provide visitors with new opportunities to understand and connect with the content. Many museums are also developing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion initiatives in order to create a hierarchical shift in a white western mindset, aiming to better represent the diversity within their communities and the world.

Arts funding can disproportionately affect underrepresented communities, including Native artists.¹² Therefore, it is important for museums to consider how to collaborate with these artists, and how art has the potential to be powerful for visitors.

The historically flat representation of Indigenous artifacts, in addition to the importance of art and creative comprehension can be leaned on simultaneously to stimulate conversations around unethical acquisitions, cultural harm and healing. The introduction of contemporary Indigenous art brings an immediacy to the conversation that helps visitors see in new ways and create opportunities for deeper reflection.

Thesis Question

The thesis will address the following question.

How can contemporary Indigenous art be integrated with decolonizing practices in museums that hold Indigenous collections in order to facilitate healing from cultural harms?

In order to answer this question, the research will examine the following parts:

- Current decolonization approaches by cultural institutions
- The importance of the arts
- Contemporary art installation
- Key values of this work

Glossary

ANCESTORS, OBJECTS, BELONGINGS, or CULTURAL RESOURCES

The above terms are used throughout this paper to refer to what many museums consider Native and Indigenous artifacts and items. The term also depicts a meaningful relationship to past relatives, acknowledging that the object is a part of a culture/ community, created by their hands. It also shows a current and deep connection between the object and its people.

CONTEMPORARY ART

Artwork created by contemporary, or present day, people. This includes both traditional artforms as well as more modern approaches.

DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization refers to an overall review of an institution's practices in colonialist behavior, beginning from the domination and exploitation of lands by European settlers to continued oppression today and then implements steps to counteract these behaviors. In this research it mainly relates to colonialist behaviors affecting Native groups.

INDIGENOUS, NATIVE AMERICAN, FIRST PEOPLE & ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The original habitants of lands around the world go by many names. The research includes the common names found in these areas. In the United States, Native Americans; in Canada, New Zealand and Australia, Aboriginal people. However, all are also used under the term "Indigenous" or "Native." These broad terms cover all groups of people who are considered the first recorded to inhabit a specific land, prior to the arrival of new groups that became the dominant culture. Specific tribal names are also used for key examples.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Land Acknowledgments are developed by institutions wanting to acknowledge the placement of their building on lands that once belonged to Indigenous people, but where they may no longer reside. These lands were often obtained through force and have had a damaging effect on the cultures of Indigenous people. Some museums are attempting to take a first step in awareness and apology by recognizing the original inhabitants of the land.

NATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Native Advisory Councils have been developed by museums and Native peoples to create a space for discussion and knowledge-sharing for how cultural institutions should display Native objects.

REPARATIONS

Making amends for wrongdoings caused by one party. With Native communities, tactics of reparations can come in a variety of ways, including repatriation and acknowledgments of colonial behaviors coinciding with decolonial actions. Full reparations are not achieved through one effort, but expected to be a continual effort.

REPATRIATION

The return of objects to its culture or country of origin.

WHITE SUPREMACY

A point of view, policies, and practices that place hierarchical importance on white people as superior to other races. This perspective was key to colonialist behaviors that has systemic roots in western culture, and in particular to the foundations of museums.

THE NEED TO REFRAME A NARRATIVE

As museums are considered by the American public to be the most trusted sources of knowledge and resources in America, these institutions are ideally positioned in society to unearth hidden histories and provide this knowledge to the public.¹³ They offer researched and credible information to the public which educators and experts turn to. Therefore, museums have the power to expose histories and voices that have been suppressed throughout history and today.

Museums influence stereotypes and understanding of Native peoples and their culture. They take on the role of authority over cultural works, imposing their own knowledge onto an object, that does not always take into account the voices of those whom the object belongs to.¹⁴ Instead, the museum's voice does not often speak for the represented community. Simply highlighting another culture within the museum reinforces the idea of "different" and the "other."¹⁵ While this is problematic in itself, there is opportunity to have difficult conversations that have long been neglected. Therefore, museums also have the unique ability to change the mindset of those who visit the museum, including the general public. Moving forward, it is essential for them to reframe how Indigenous culture and belongings are interpreted and displayed.

While many museums have made large steps to both their understanding of Native cultures, and connecting with representatives from tribal communities, there is still much to be considered. This includes how museums work with source communities to interpret works on display, and stimulate conversation that can address past harms and create space for dialogue around colonization harm and practices upheld today. Bringing in Native professionals as well as creating various partnerships can drive willing museums to be agents of change. The inclusion of Native museum professionals helps to shift the narrative that museums are spaces for the white and elite.

Contemporary art within museums can stand alone or alongside historical objects and themes, as well as present large concepts in more accessible ways. It creates connections between the past and present and adds humanizing elements to the display. Because of these reasons, contemporary art is uniquely suited to work alongside the decolonization process to include Native voices and depict these diverse groups as active cultures.

This thesis examines the opportunities for museums with Native collections—specifically but not limited to art, natural history, anthropological, and ethnographic museums—to partner with contemporary Indigenous artists in order to stimulate dialogue around unethical acquisitions, practices, and cultural harm to past and present communities. For the purpose of this research, American and Canadian Indigenous groups and museums were reviewed. Though it is recognized that

other countries in addition to these two could also be included in future research. Specific anthropological and natural history museums such as the Abbe Museum, American Museum of Natural History, and Penn Museum are taking steps towards a more well-rounded approach toward decolonization, and will be reviewed in closer detail. This thesis does not try to solve the complex issues of colonialism, but aims to uncover and offer small steps that individuals and institutions can take toward more equitable relationships.

The below research points to the effective and ineffective ways in which cultural institutions are taking steps towards decolonization, and how contemporary art fits into this framework. It will offer approaches for museums and museum professionals to reconsider traditional ways of working and thinking. In addition, it will show how the integration of contemporary art in exhibitions and programs aids in learning and equity-building, that aims to move past colonialist behaviors and to develop greater cultural appreciation. Through the use of aesthetic and thoughtful display, well-rounded forms of interpretation of contemporary and traditional art, and the involvement of Native communities, cultural institutions can take steps toward reparations from unethical practices and cultural harm.

Endnotes

- 1 Walter Licht et al., "West Philadelphia Collaborative History - The Original People and Their Land: The Lenape, Pre-History to the 18th Century." Accessed February 14, 2021. <https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/stories/original-people-and-their-land-lenape-pre-history-18th-century>.
- 2 Lenape Nation, "Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania" [lenapenationofpa](https://www.lenape-nation.org/), 2018, <https://www.lenape-nation.org/>.
- 3 Sam Levin. "Dakota Access Pipeline: The Who, What and Why of the Standing Rock Protests." *The Guardian*, November 3, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>.
- 4 "Standing Rock Sioux and Dakota Access Pipeline | Teacher Resource." <http://nmai.si.edu/nk360/plains-treaties/dapl.cshtml>.
- 5 Sam Levin. "Dakota Access Pipeline: The Who, What and Why of the Standing Rock Protests." *The Guardian*, November 3, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>.
- 6 Monica Anderson, "History of the Hashtag #BlackLivesMatter: Social Activism on Twitter," Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech (Pew Research Center, December 31, 2019), <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2016/08/15/the-hashtag-blacklivesmatter-emerges-social-activism-on-twitter/>.
- 7 *We Must Decolonize Our Museums* | Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko | *TEDxDirigo* (YouTube, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyZAgG8--Xg>.
- 8 *Decolonization Is for Everyone* | Nikki Sanchez | *TEDxSFU*, (Youtube, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP9x1NnCWNY>.
- 9 Holland Cotter, "Museums Are Finally Taking a Stand. But Can They Find Their Footing?," *The New York Times*, June 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/arts/design/museums-protests-race-smithsonian.html>.
- 10 Peggy McGlone, "For Third Year in a Row, Trump's Budget Plan Eliminates Arts, Public TV and Library Funding," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 2019,, https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/for-third-year-in-a-row-trumps-budget-plan-eliminates-arts-public-tv-and-library-funding/2019/03/18/e946db9a-49a2-11e9-9663-00ac73f49662_story.html.
- 11 Stephan Salisbury, "Mayor Kenney Calls for End to City Arts Agency, Cutting \$4 Million in Cultural Spending," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.inquirer.com/news/arts-culture-budget-cuts-elimination-20200501.html>.
- 12 Michelle Chen, "If NEA Funding Gets Cut, Say Goodbye to These Vital Community Cultural Projects," *The Nation*, April 7, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/if-nea-funding-gets-cut-say-goodbye-to-these-vital-community-cultural-projects/>.
- 13 "Museum Facts & Data," American Alliance of Museums, January 24, 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/>.
- 14 "Resources." MASS Action, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.museumaction.org/resources>.
- 15 Hugh H. Genoways, Lynne M. Ireland, and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, *Museum Administration 2.0* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

“Native American art is actually not collected detritus of the expansion of

seen as art, it is seen as the west.”

– Teri Greeves

Decolonizing the Arts series through The Albert Lepage Center for History in the Public Interest at Villanova University

Teri Greeves
NDN Art, 2008



I CURRENT STATE

Due to recent protests, including the Dakota Access Pipeline and Black Lives Matter protests, the inequities and treatment of underrepresented people in society have resurged, prompting the public to consider how they have contributed to these inequalities. Further, the Trump administration’s cultural insensitivity is influencing more people to take a stand for justice and equality. Some individuals are educating themselves through social media, literature, and other platforms. Alongside the public’s increased awareness of unequal representation and treatment, institutions are reviewing equitable practices including decolonization and repatriation of cultural resources.

Through the use of literature reviews, interviews with museum professionals, and a formative survey, the following research addresses decolonization efforts of Indigenous belongings, the role of art in learning and meaning-making, and how the role of contemporary art can introduce new avenues of critical conversations and modes for creating reparations and meaningful, extended

Current State of Museum Practices

relationships. Examination of these topics aims to set a standard for how cultural institutions can move forward in their decolonization practices and simultaneously support living artists. While there has been much research on these two topics separately, few sources take them into consideration jointly.

DECONSTRUCTING DECOLONIAL APPROACHES

“We must first acknowledge the past injustices that Indigenous people suffered as a result of inappropriate museum practices.”¹

– Mat Trinca, Director, National Museum of Australia

Colonial Roots

Museums were historically created as repositories for collections. They took on the responsibility to protect important artifacts for future generations and the progression of society. However, many of these items were “collected” through various means including extraction of natural resources and forcible looting from various communities. Cultural and natural resources were acquired to build the wealth of dominant Western cultures. They often created a classification

system that hierarchically ordered its collection by importance, with a white, western perspective.² The history of museum practice in the United States exuded power and dominance, a country expanding and consuming all that lies in its path.

As museums developed in the United States, they focused on being centers of enlightenment and education, primarily for white, educated, and wealthy individuals.³ This focus centered the importance of the dominant culture and kept many under an oppressive heel, including ones whose belongings were on display. Colonial practices produce a hierarchy, with their own race and western ideologies affixed to the top. This has created a singularly focused viewpoint, believing their knowledge is superior and that anything else is secondary.

During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth the Native population in the US declined dramatically from genocide and disease. During this time, anthropologists sought to “salvage” materials of a “dying” culture. Paralleling this decline was the forcible assimilation of Native Americans into western culture. Yet, consequentially this assimilation meant leaving behind the traditions and practices which made these objects.⁴ The material objects, not the people, were valued for their uniqueness. Around the world there are many other examples of forced assimilation and genocide of Native peoples.

Institutions have focused, and in some cases continue to focus, on examining the qualities of an object, void of an authentic personal perspective. Through displaying these stolen

objects, the culture and people were seen as distant, exotic, different, and were put on display as if an oddity at a circus. Creating this distance between the object and the viewer makes the culture feel like it’s of the past, removed from everyday life. Many times Native people are characterized as one group, yet there are many differences between tribal communities in their practices and way of life. This has created space for incorrect and standardized images of Native people.

While museums continue to evolve, colonialism and white supremacy are still deeply woven into western tradition. This presents itself through ‘othering’ and the objectification of historically marginalized peoples. In addition, the white supremacist mentality can be seen in hiring practices and interpretation of cultural resources by a non-Native curatorial scholarly voice. The continued misrepresentation of Native people and minority cultures communicates a lack of trust to its visitors.⁵ Until this misrepresentation is acknowledged and actions are put in place to create equitable exchanges, museums will not be relevant to all in society.

“Healing begins where the wound was made.”⁶

– Alice Walker,
American Novelist

Confronting Colonialism

In the United States, it has been federal law since 1990 to repatriate Native American sacred belongings, funerary objects, and ancestral remains through the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). It acknowledges that these belongings should be in the hands of Native communities where they were taken from. The law was intended to improve communications between museums and Indigenous people for deeper understanding and stronger relationships.⁷ The law requires “federal agencies (excluding the Smithsonian Institution) and museums . . . to return human remains and associated funerary objects upon request of a lineal descendant, Indian tribe, or Native Hawaiian organization.”⁸

Similarly, other countries such as New Zealand enact the protection of cultural expressions of Indigenous people, while Australia enforces laws from the federal to territory level. Though Canada does not have federal law similar to NAGPRA, much of the cultural heritage protection and preservation efforts are enacted per province or territory.⁹

While all of these laws should be upheld, it’s essential to move beyond the legal requirements of each country or territory, and consider an overall impact for greater equity. I argue that whether requested or not, it is the museum’s responsibility to initiate the conversation about the life of the collection. That way colonization practices can be dismantled and inequities acknowledged.

The **Glenbow Museum** in Calgary, Alberta, Canada carried out a progression of poor practices that intentionally or unintentionally harmed the Blackfoot people, followed by an examination of their collection and practices.

After a controversial exhibition displaying sacred Blackfoot belongings in 1988, the museum started to make changes to the way they thought about objects within the museum. For years prior, museums saw sacred medicine bundles as items for research, and a way of preserving the cultural heritage of the Blackfoot people. Many bundles were sold by the Blackfoot people during the early 1900's when ceremonial practices were not being participated in, and many were purchased by museums through documented sales. While legal, they were part of a "reeducation" initiative by the Canadian government, aiming to eliminate practice of their cultural traditions. Yet, these bundles were sacred living beings to the Blackfoot people. Exchanging the bundles among families functions was a tie to their ceremonies, connection to the gods, and was critical to their way of life.¹⁰

The museum started to make changes to the way they thought about cultural resources within the museum. They first started loaning out objects in a cyclical format for use in ceremonies, then back to the museum. As the museum became more familiar with Blackfoot customs, they decided they needed to fully repatriate the belongings to their people. This process of repatriation was carried out over twenty years. In repatriating the medicine bundles, the Blackfoot people

started to integrate and remember the ceremonial rituals.¹¹

Decolonizing practices, such as those carried out by the Glenbow Museum, can help institutions become relevant to their nearby communities, or find new communities that forge meaningful and long-lasting relationships that benefit the collective over the individual. By repatriating these items back to their Indigenous communities, it strengthened the Blackfoot people's relearning of their heritage and heightened the longevity of their culture.¹²

Today, museums are reevaluating their approaches to combat this prevailing structure and trying to become more relevant to their communities. They are undertaking decolonization as a means to "unsettle" the current landscape through acknowledging injustices. Some approaches museums are taking toward decolonization include:

- Land acknowledgments
- Review and repatriation of objects
- Transparency around the decolonization practices in all facets of the museum
- Access to collections

Similarly to the Glenbow Museum, the **Museum of Us** in San Diego, California, formerly the Museum of Man, has taken on forward-thinking approaches to decolonization throughout the organization that surpass federal law. The following illustrates the work that the institution is doing to become a leader in the work of decolonization that incorporates the above approaches.

*Kumeyaay: Native Californians/
Iipai-Tipai exhibit at the Museum of Us
San Diego, California*



The Museum of Us has had a strained relationship with their local Indigenous communities throughout the institution's 100 year existence. However, over the years, particularly the past five years, the Museum of Man began reflecting on their holdings beyond NAGPRA law to consider and repatriate items of ceremonial or personal familial significance.¹³

Erika Katayama, previous Director of Exhibits at the museum, mentioned how centuries of detaching from cultures and communities that differ from us has created a mindset of not considering the "others" human. Now the museum is trying to overcome this existing mindset prevalent in many institutions.¹⁴

As of 2012, the museum also began partnering with the Kumeyaay Nation, one of the local Indigenous communities, in order to include the voices and perspectives from their own history. The museum worked to reinterpret the tribe's belongings to acknowledge the significance of the people and their culture.¹⁵ From 2017–2018, based on policies developed by the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, New Zealand's Te Papa Tongarewa, and Abbe Museum, the Museum of Man decided to develop their own policies to connect Indigenous descendants to their belongings. These included a Colonial Pathways Policy and one on curating ancestor remains.¹⁶ They also began looking at barriers of the Kumeyaay people to the museum, such as transportation and access to ancestral belongings.¹⁷

In their exhibit on the Kumeyaay culture, the museum commissioned contemporary

objects from the local community. These objects are traditional in practice, created by people of the nation that are still thriving today. This helps visitors to see that these objects are from a living culture. Along with the contemporary objects is signage talking about decolonization.¹⁸ Having information about the museum's decolonization efforts up front will set a standard for guests from the very beginning of their museum experience.

The institution's decolonization efforts started within their Cultural Resources departments, and has now stretched out to every department within the organization.¹⁹ Through marketing and interpretation, the museum created signage and included on their website why they decided to embody decolonizing practices.²⁰ In addition, their programming aims to be much more meaningful, as they consult with the Kumeyaay people for guidance and knowledge.

While the museum's decolonization efforts exceed those of many other institutions within the United States, there are still aspects to improve upon. The Museum of Us is reviewing a strategic plan to consider how decolonization and better practices occur on their board, and with programming, exhibits, and hiring practices. Further, the Museum of Us does not currently have an advisory council, or an Indigenous member on their board, something that they should strive to do in order to have deeper relationships with the Kumeyaay people.²¹

In addition to the museums' partnership with Kumeyaay people, their website includes a section on their decolonizing initiatives.

The initiatives fall into four sections that encompass general Decolonizing Initiatives, Land Acknowledgment, Colonial Pathways Policy, and their Policy on the Curation of Human Remains at the Museum of Us.²²

The decolonizing initiatives section highlights four guiding principles the museum uses based on the *Decolonizing Museums* book by Ho-Chunk scholar, Amy Lonetree. These include:

- Truth telling and accountability
- Rethinking ownership
- Organizational culture shift supported by systems and policy
- Indigenous Representation

Today, the museum continues to develop deep relationships with their Indigenous communities and understanding that generational trauma cannot be quickly remedied. Through their partnerships with Indigenous communities and decolonizing initiatives, the Museum of Us is helping the public to become more aware of the cultural harm inflicted upon Native people, showing value and honor to the descendants of today, and creating space for the Kumeyaay community to feel welcome at the museum. Repairing these injustices will evolve to repairing other areas of harm caused by colonialist systems, that will continue to create greater integrity and trust in museums.

Decolonization insists that an institution reflects on all aspects of how colonial practices can be seen within and outside its walls. This includes "smaller," yet essential changes such as reviewing the

use of language to describe the objects, considering how employee roles can work toward decolonization, and even messaging in email signatures. Deeply rooting an institution's decolonization in every aspect of the museum and with its employees can start to make reparations and promote cultural understanding and knowledge among visitors. In addition, many museums are also developing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion initiatives in order to create a hierarchical shift in a white, western mindset, aiming to better represent the diversity within their communities and the world.

INTRODUCTION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

*"Artists can be powerful influencers because art can cross boundaries and ideological barriers."*²³

– Kate Wolford, President,
McKnight Foundation

Artist Interpretations

The arts are a way that people communicate their values, traditions, and explore identity.

Art can have an immediate impact and play deeper into our emotions and understanding of the world, rather than simply consuming textual information. It can stimulate emotion and action, inspire, and create wonder. In addition, the arts can help explain challenging and urgent issues. The arts can be visual, immediate, apparent. In a less formal way, it can show people how their lives are affected by an issue. It does something different than simply stating data. If a visitor sees historical descriptions in a museum, and they have opposing viewpoints, they may walk past without further inquiry. However, the immediacy of art helps to depict information in a way that is more relatable and will stay with someone long after their encounter.²⁴

Moreover, art offers a freedom from traditional methods of learning. In conjunction with information and data, art offers a more well-rounded approach to learning and access to

information. Each person has the ability to synthesize their own meaning for art. Artistic interpretation invites observers to learn differently, but even more, it sparks a curiosity to learn.²⁵

Regardless of the type of included work, artist representations can illuminate objects and conversation in a new way. Based on the Nassau County Museum of Art case study, research showed that just one work of art allowed for multiple ways of entry into conversation, from descriptive information to aesthetic critique.²⁶ For non-Native speakers, visuals can be especially appealing and accessible to learning and offer feelings of being welcomed. Many tactics used to create an immersive experience are also effective in this regard — hearing songs with people's voices, listening to an audio oral history, noticing specific tribal patterns, or touching a recreated basket, and more give a greater amount of depth to the works.

The incorporation of contemporary works in non-art museums has the opportunity to present a more powerful approach in natural history, history, or ethnographic museums, as art museums inherently hold and display contemporary art. The art is expected here. But placed outside the realm of what is expected allows for undoing of preconceived notions of cultures of the past. It also has the ability to confront visitors who do not typically visit museums with art collections.

Varying institution types such as the Museum of the American Revolution, the Science History Institute, and the Academy of Natural Sciences, all located within Philadelphia, have

worked with artists in different capacities finding successes in their collaborations.

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University is currently in transition to engage in more collaborations with artists. In an interview with Chief Learning and Engagement Officer at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Niki Stewart, she mentions, "We can no longer be only for people who like science."²⁷

One collaboration *"We can no longer be only for people who like science."* the museum has initiated is working with different artists to imagine, based on the structure of dinosaur fossils, what the entire dinosaur might have looked like down to their skin colors. Drawn on a blackboard with different colored chalk, the imagery is placed at the entrance of the museum, greeting visitors with a wow experience. The different artist interpretations encourage their main audience, families with children, to be curious, wonder, have questions about science, recognize that there are still unknowns about the exact features of dinosaurs, and spark interest to learn more.

Niki Stewart believes that art can reach a broader audience and help visitors to visualize different realities, such as envisioning what dinosaur skin looks like. This approach realizes that art is for everyone and it can extend beyond language barriers. Overall, incorporating artwork has the ability to communicate immediately, effectively, and can make "the invisible visible."²⁸



In addition, The Academy of Natural Sciences hopes that through the incorporation of art, visitors will be influenced to take action on important topics, such as climate change. Niki believes that for visitors to take action, they need an emotional response; if they are provoked to feel, this may influence them to take action.²⁹ Through art, there is potential to create this emotional connection and response by feeling first, then being moved to take next steps.

While similarly using art to engage audiences, the **Museum of the American Revolution** took a different approach to incorporating artists within the museum. Staff interest influenced collaborations with artists and craftspeople into programming, sometimes actively creating work that visitors can view during their visit. This form of in-person artist collaborations was a gateway for visitors to engage. Oftentimes, visitors seemed more willing to learn about a topic or object by seeing the process and the person behind its creation. It inspired curiosity, and allowed for hands on learning.³⁰

For one artisan who works with the museum, **Jana Violante**, she finds that visitors are often

able to make a personal connection to the craftworks through anecdotal comments such as, "my grandmother used to sew." She found that some people become more engaged in the work when there is a person standing behind it and stay for a longer period of time. A hand-stitched flag project she worked on at the museum allowed visitors to learn how to make a stitch on fabric, providing hands-on learning opportunities.³¹

Jana is also able to open bigger conversations about the present day fashion industry by looking at how garments in the eighteenth century were made. She prompts visitors to consider how long it takes to make a garment today to reflect on fast fashion versus the slow process of hand stitching. Visitors are also able to make a connection to the people in the eighteenth century by understanding that they were also interested in fashion.³²

With the integration of artists, the Museum of the American Revolution hopes to make connections between contemporary and historical themes. In an interview with Manager of Special Programs, Hannah Boettcher, she notes that the museum wants to help people create connections to the

past by understanding that history was not inevitable, but that everyone was making choices and every moment mattered.³³

Artists can help make connections throughout time. However, being a history museum, sometimes there are challenges in working with contemporary artists. This includes not wanting visitors to interpret contemporary art as a historic work, even if it is traditionally made.

Other challenges to artist interpretations were discovered for the **Science History Institute** in Philadelphia. In an interview with Exhibitions Projects Manager, Christy Schneider, Christy offered a glimpse into drawbacks of including art within some scientific-based museums. This was because art representations may not depict scientific phenomena accurately, and can show a symbolic representation of the subject.³⁴ This may be confusing for

visitors who expect to see actual scientific data. Therefore, it's crucial for museums such as this one to depict clarity between contemporary artist interpretations and the rest of their collection. For this reason, we must consider whether the inclusion of art limits the intention or outcome for visitors.

While there were also challenges for this institution in working with contemporary artists, there were newly considered benefits. In interviewing Research Curator at the Science History Institute, Lisa Berry Drago, she described the connection between art and science as communication. Through the inclusion of contemporary artists in exhibitions and programming, the museum was able to gain new audiences and institutional connections, such as in partnerships with Eastern State Penitentiary and The Clay Studio in Philadelphia.³⁵



Uprooted exhibition depicting papier-mâché root interpretations by artist Katie Holten
Science History Institute,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

She mentioned how there is an emotional response that can be created by having contemporary art present. Art put visitors into different mindsets in the museum, thinking on a more personal level. It provided more opportunities for emotional engagement and conversation. The inclusion of contemporary art within the institute helped to answer deeper questions related to science such as Why do we as humans preserve things? Why are certain material items important to us and what is worth keeping? Can artists look at objects differently than scientists would, and in turn reinvent the objects in ways to promote scientific research?³⁶

Further, during an exhibition involving artists, media sources wrote about their institution, in a publication relating to humanities and culture.³⁷ This allowed the institution to be presented in front of new audiences.

Likewise, other institutions including the historic Betsy Ross House in Philadelphia, Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, and the National Maritime Museum Cornwall in the United Kingdom, found that the inclusion

of contemporary art helped to diversely engage new or existing audiences, create new interest, develop personal connections, and open previously undiscovered pathways of engagement. While some of the institutions mentioned overall challenges, these helped shape the way that the institutions consider working with artists that best align with their overall missions. All museums interviewed found benefits from artist collaborations and would pursue future opportunities to engage.

While many of the institutions did not have specific data relating to visitor interest, **Longwood Gardens** located in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, was able to capture how much the inclusion of art installations influenced visitorship.

In 2015, the botanical gardens held art installation and experience by Klip Collective called *Nightscape*. This installation included digitally-mapped lights that were projected onto the garden's landscape after dark. This collaboration was similar to a 2012 installation by artist, Bruce Munro, who developed



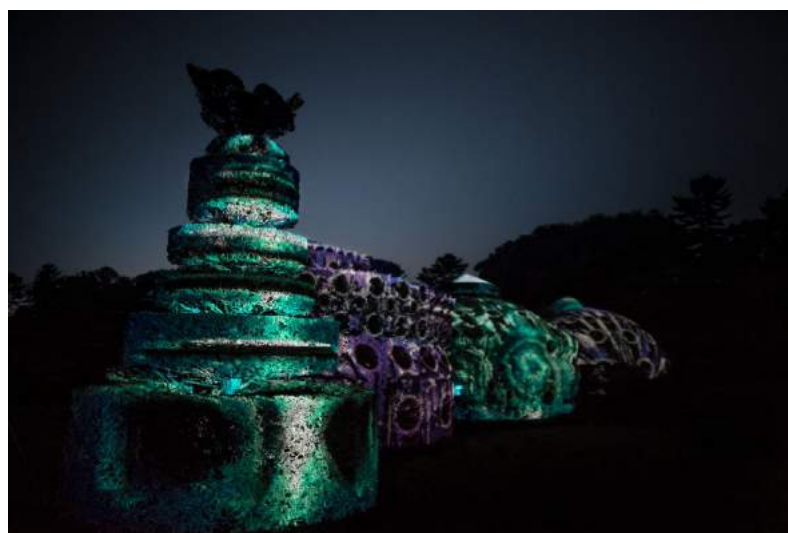
Artisan workshop series at the Museum of the American Revolution,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

a light-filled sculptural experience. With *Nightscape*, as well as the Bruce Munro installation, the institution found that these projects uplifted the gardens in unexpected ways.³⁸ Further, Longwood Gardens gathered visitor data from the *Nightscape* experience that showed an increase in membership by 44%, and then 23% the following year where they brought back the installation once more, proving an overall success for the gardens.

Longwood Gardens found in both of these collaborations that the art created access to the gardens in a way that visitors wouldn't typically see or consider. It offered an otherworldly view filled with magic and intrigue. These partnerships engaged the community as well as staff who helped install the works. Because of this, the staff was able to communicate and interpret the works to guests in a new way.

While overall successful, working on such a large installation scale required a lot of work by various departments within the gardens and many months of planning.³⁹

Nightscape by Klip Collective
at Longwood Gardens
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania



Through these key examples of artist and museum collaborations, various themes emerged. Some of the benefits included:

- Increased visitor interest, or new interest, when including contemporary art and artists. In some cases, this led to increased attendance
- Art helped communicate ideas and connect visitors to the content
- Art offered new opportunities for diverse engagement
- All organizations interviewed have interest in continuing relationships with artists in the future

Considerations for institutions to work with contemporary artists in the future included:

- Having clarity in expectations by both the museum and artists are important to an effective partnership
- It often takes more resources or staff work to include artists in the museum

By acknowledging the successes of contemporary artist engagements within museums, the arts can also be a way for institutions to stimulate the contemporary voices of Native peoples. However, museums needed to be aware of their personal and institutional intentions and biases prior to engaging in new collaborations.

One area to consider in displaying Indigenous works within museums is that they can still often be considered "primitive" in nature by a western lens. Some critics believe that this can enforce the perception of work as "timeless, unchanging, traditional, collective," and can therefore influence work to be seen as distant and lacking individuality.⁴⁰

Further, Indigenous artists are also facing the issue of museums deciding what Native art is, and how it's distributed to the public.⁴¹ This extends western ideologies of Native art, as many times those who are choosing what to display are white and maintain their own perceptions and biases. Institutions should be clear on what their intent is to partner with Native artists. This may include whether they hope to interpret imagery in contemporary artwork alongside historical works, or whether they are more concerned with contemporary aesthetics and are educating themselves on Indigenous artists for more well-rounded representation.

In speaking with former Interpretation Program Manager, Aletheia Wittman, at the **Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture**, she offered new insight into the progressive efforts of decolonization and Native art inclusion carried out by the museum. The Burke has had a long history of engaging with their local Indigenous community within specific departments of the museum. In this time of increased transparency, the museum has had a greater opportunity to evaluate the work they are doing through the lens of decolonization and indigenous sovereignty.⁴²

Part of this work includes the integration of contemporary Native artists. While the Burke has done extensive work with contemporary artists and collections, the addition of a new porous building has created the opportunity to put the contemporary work front and center for audience viewing. The design is being considered to create open interactions between artists and visitors. It aims to allow the art to be a learning opportunity, while



Artwork titled "Synecdoche" by artist, Ryan Feddersen at the Burke Museum Seattle, Washington

being mindful to not position Indigenous artists as if they are on display. Part of the inclusion of art is now done through the commission of large scale Native artworks and integrating art into the environment beyond just the exhibits and programs. One work by Native artist, Ryan Feddersen, spans the inside corridor from floor to ceiling across three floors. Further it incorporates imagery throughout the Burke's collection. As an interdisciplinary museum, the Burke is figuring out how to center native artists across disciplines in order to open new conversations and perspectives.⁴³ Further, the Burke Museum always displays their historic and contemporary art together.

They don't separate the contemporary from the historical in order to show cultural continuance.⁴⁴ The museum prides itself on supporting Indigenous creativity, and they are uplifting these voices further since a greater commitment to decolonization.

In conjunction with the display of Native works includes how the museum provides access to their collections. The museum aims to make their collection accessible to their Native community, while remembering that they are taking care of and being stewards of the collection.⁴⁵ Tribal Liaison, Polly Olsen's focus at the museum is to work towards repair and healing due to institutional harm

to their Native communities. Some of the ways they do this includes acknowledging lands the collections derive from, avoiding cultural appropriation or misrepresentation, repatriation, as well as returning knowledge to Native people. To return knowledge, they create access to collections and create space for mourning, memory, and trauma.⁴⁶

Through the incorporation of artist voices, thoughtful design techniques, and access to collections, the Burke Museum has positioned itself to be a leader in decolonization work.

While regarding the benefits of artist collaborations to cultural organizations, it is also important to understand how these partnerships work best from the artists point of view to ensure a bilateral relationship, equal opportunities to utilize museum resources, and communicate their intentions. For instance, some artists found different collaborative methods effective when working with museums.

In working with museums, contemporary artist **Julie Buffalohead** often finds that museums don't often understand the artistic process and schedule, by requiring work to be created long before a show opens. At the same time, she understands that many artists tend to work last minute and complete works shortly before they are due. In regards to working with Native communities, Julie believes that it's crucial that decisions are not made by one person in considering the display of Native belongings. She states "That's how we always do this, we open things up for everybody, it isn't just one person making a decision."⁴⁷ One of the most

beneficial approaches museums can take is to create councils or groups to consult with.

For contemporary artist **Wendy Red Star**, the best type of relationships are ones that can be sustained whether through giving lectures about her artwork, the museum re-exhibiting purchased work, or loaning her work with other museums. For her, her experience at the National Museum of the American Indian showed what approach museums can and should take when working with Native artists. This included full, almost unrestricted access to the belongings of her ancestors.



Artist, **Julie Buffalohead** standing in front of her artwork, "The Garden," at the Minneapolis Institute of Art

“The arts are particularly great at connecting with the deeper parts of ourselves, and one of the most effective ways of engaging us emotionally.”⁴⁷

— Anthony Leiserowitz, Director of Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

Her experience included not needing to wear gloves, as well as museum staff acknowledging the objects belong to her and her community, not the institution itself.⁴⁸ This allowed Native artists to feel like they do have more freedom and stewardship over these belongings.

Artist **Virgil Ortiz**, who uses his art as an education tool, takes on a more assertive approach when collaborating with museums. “Personally, I always offer to help/assist curators and directors with the design/direction for all my shows. I’ve learned that the more I become involved, the better the outcome of the presentation and delivery of the intended message/theme.”⁴⁹

Overall, the way that traditional and contemporary objects and artworks are incorporated influences the way visitors perceive and understand the works on display, and can help them see the included cultures through a new lens. Contemporary works can stand on their own or in conjunction with historical pieces to amplify a continual story from the past to present. Contemporary artwork that portrays language, aesthetics, and other cultural representations can demonstrate to visitors how artistic traditions have evolved over time. Highlighting the methods and tools of creating puts visitors in the shoes of the artist. Further, it opens opportunities for dialogue and deepened understanding. However, there is also an opportunity to dismantle the ideas of what is Native art by incorporating works that don’t fit into a Native-perceived “box.”

Artist, Virgil Ortiz,
working in his studio



Contemporary Art Installation

Because of efforts made by the United States and Canadian governments toward the erasure of Native culture, federal agencies and cultural institutions have the obligation to consider how to ensure the longevity of these cultures. Part of this includes considering the modalities of representation and interpretation of artworks, historical and contemporary.

The role of art through various forms of aesthetic and interpretive action can disrupt traditional museum practices. Indigenous art and curatorial practices can draw the focus away from the dominant perspectives and invite Indigenous involvement in the creation of exhibitions. The inclusion of contemporary art and thoughtfully considered aesthetics reframes how Indigenous belongings are interpreted and displayed.

In order to surpass the stereotypical interpretations of displaying Indigenous culture as a whole, institutions must take carefully considered steps in choosing how to exhibit works by artists and if included, the ancestral objects of the collection. While there may be instances that influence whether the work delivers a story, or is purely for an aesthetic purpose, there are many creative ways of engaging visitors.

STORYTELLING & VOICE

Some techniques for effective interpretation include storytelling and mobilizing “Native voice.” As many Native people developed an

oral history and way of storytelling, there is opportunity to embrace storytelling through audio, video, and in-person interpretations.⁵⁰ It’s important to reflect on exhibition techniques we are accustomed to as part of a western culture, which may not be representative of the culture they aim to represent. For example, audio instead of text, may be more appropriate and inviting to a culture that favors speech over written word.

Part of this storytelling includes establishing intent of how to interpret Indigenous cultures as a whole, specific to one community, or to one individual voice. Depending on the institution, sometimes more personalized and singular shows may be better suited to temporary contemporary art exhibitions, while broader exhibitions are able to hold a wider variety of voices suited for more permanent type exhibitions. For artist Wendy Red Star, having her work in a group show feels very generalized, as institutions can accommodate many different Native backgrounds. Group exhibitions, while good-intentioned, do a disservice to the intricacies of her work.⁵¹ Similarly, for artist Julie Buffalohead, she finds that oftentimes museums want to lump artists into one group show to make up for years of underrepresentation. Because Native people are often lumped together in group shows, Julie finds that sometimes these artists can “fall into a wormhole,” creating works that fit into this particular sphere. At the same time, one exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art called *Hearts of Our People* was different from any group show she’s participated in. This exhibition brought in many Native voices in its decision-making process and the

exhibition allowed for greater associations between a range of contemporary and historical works.⁵²

In general, museums should think carefully and considerately about whether they intend to show a more well-rounded, but generalized, version of history, or whether they are interested in more personal, but potentially narrow exhibitions. Institutions that have a large collection of Indigenous belongings originating from multiple tribes, may incorporate broader Native perspectives to a permanent exhibition. However, in establishing a permanent exhibition, it's vital to remember that the overall narrative is continually changing with living cultures. In addition, singular shows often only highlight individual perspectives, and are not always representative of a specific community as a whole or depict a more expansive Indigenous culture.

Alongside how an institution chooses its artists and overarching story includes how an artist, individual, or group's voice is brought forward. When repeat visitors to a museum hear information in an artist's or Native voice, in opposition to a curatorial voice they're familiar with, it can make them listen more. The voices come through differently in speaking style and tone, gravitating the visitor to "listen" in a way they had not previously considered.⁵³

Talking in third person about a group doesn't often create a depiction of cultural longevity. Yet by developing first person interpretative, as speakers of today and/or of the ancestors, visitors have a more immersive, personal,

and present experience. This tactic moves away from listing facts and focuses more on Native knowledge.

For artists, many times their work speaks for themselves, and is louder than any type of interpretation. As a contemporary artist, Wendy Red Star states in a New York Times article that "Everything that I put out there visually is the way that my voice speaks the loudest."⁵⁴

By including the voices and stories of Indigenous artists in the interpretation process surrounding their work and other cultural belongings, museums help to dismantle harmful narratives about Native people and cultures.

LABELS & TEXT

In various forms of interpretation, text in the source community's Native language should be included in order to uphold and honor the language of the peoples represented. This is vital for museums to hold respectful and authentically sustained relationships. Moreso, it's important that the museum also considers Indigenous groups as their audience so they also have a chance to learn more about their past.⁵⁵ Interpretation methods such as these offer a sense of belonging.

SPACES FOR HEALING

Whenever the damaging effects of colonialism are present, past hurt may be brought to the surface, and therefore there needs to be space for healing as well.⁵⁶ The display of contemporary art and Native artifacts may require moments of

separation, where people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous take space to reflect. Often living fast-paced lives, areas of quiet contemplation takes visitors out of their typical flow and situates moments of reflection for empathy-building in their place. It considers that visitors are each coming to the museum with their own bases of knowledge, allowing moments for reflections upon their past understandings. This can come in the forms of a quiet, contemplative space, or even one of therapeutic and creative expression. The National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia created such a space. Around the perimeter of their core exhibits sits a quiet space for reflection and one to grapple with the difficult and sometimes overwhelming content interpreted within the museum. Similarly, the National Museum of African American History and Culture envelopes visitors in a meditative space to watch the rhythmic water droplets of a circular waterfall falling into a pool. At the same time, quotes displayed on the surrounding walls offer words of inspiration, strength, and resiliency.⁵⁷

In conclusion, artists help shape the public's perceptions and find common understanding.⁵⁸ Museum partnerships with Indigenous artists benefit the visitor through new ways of accessing information and making their own meaning. The integration of the arts in cultural institutions can provide different ways of seeing and understanding the world as diverse learning modalities.

While we are starting to see a shift in the exhibition and purchase of Indigenous

The Contemplative Court at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture



artwork especially over the past year, there is still a need for personal and institutional growth in the representation of Native artists, as well as other minority groups. Institutions have the responsibility to work with artists from underrepresented communities that have been systemically marginalized and misrepresented, whether traditional or modern in ways of creating, by giving them a platform for their voice. Taking the noted actions exudes respect and value of these communities, and takes steps towards reparations and healing.

Evaluating the Current Landscape

METHODOLOGY

In November 2020, a survey was created and shared with museum professionals via personal emails, the National Association for Museum Exhibitions (NAME) Facebook page, and the American Alliance for Museums online discussion. Part of the intention of the formative evaluation was to determine if and in what ways institutions were implementing decolonizing practices. The second piece reviewed the frequency of including contemporary artists in their organizational practices and programs.

The aim of this survey was to understand the current landscape and intended implementations of decolonization practices, how to create effective artist partnerships, and how these two pieces can work together in the larger decolonization efforts.

The survey was constructed in these two parts: Part 1 asked questions relating to decolonization practices in museums, while Part 2 inquired into an institution’s interest in artist partnerships. Both sections combined took approximately 5-12 minutes to complete. Respondents included their name and name of organization, but later had an option of keeping this information anonymous.

With survey findings, a toolkit or guidelines were intended to be developed that would offer ways to implement decolonization approaches through the inclusion of contemporary art.

After receiving feedback from a couple of respondents about a definition of decolonization in relation to the research, I broadly defined the term as it “refers to an overall review of an institution’s practices in colonialist behavior, and steps taken to confront a focus on western/Euro-centric narratives.” As some institution’s don’t use the term decolonization as it relates to their initiatives and efforts, I added that other approaches toward this work could show up as Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) work at an institution.

The results included feedback from 42 respondents around the United States, including respondents who worked for the Penn Museum, Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum, Milwaukee Art Museum, New York Hall of Science, Field Museum, Indian Arts Research Center at the School for Advanced Research, Science Museum of Minnesota, the Mercer Museum & Fonthill Castle, and other similar large and small institutions.

FINDINGS

FIGURE 2.1 What is your role? (n=42, respondents could chose more than one role)

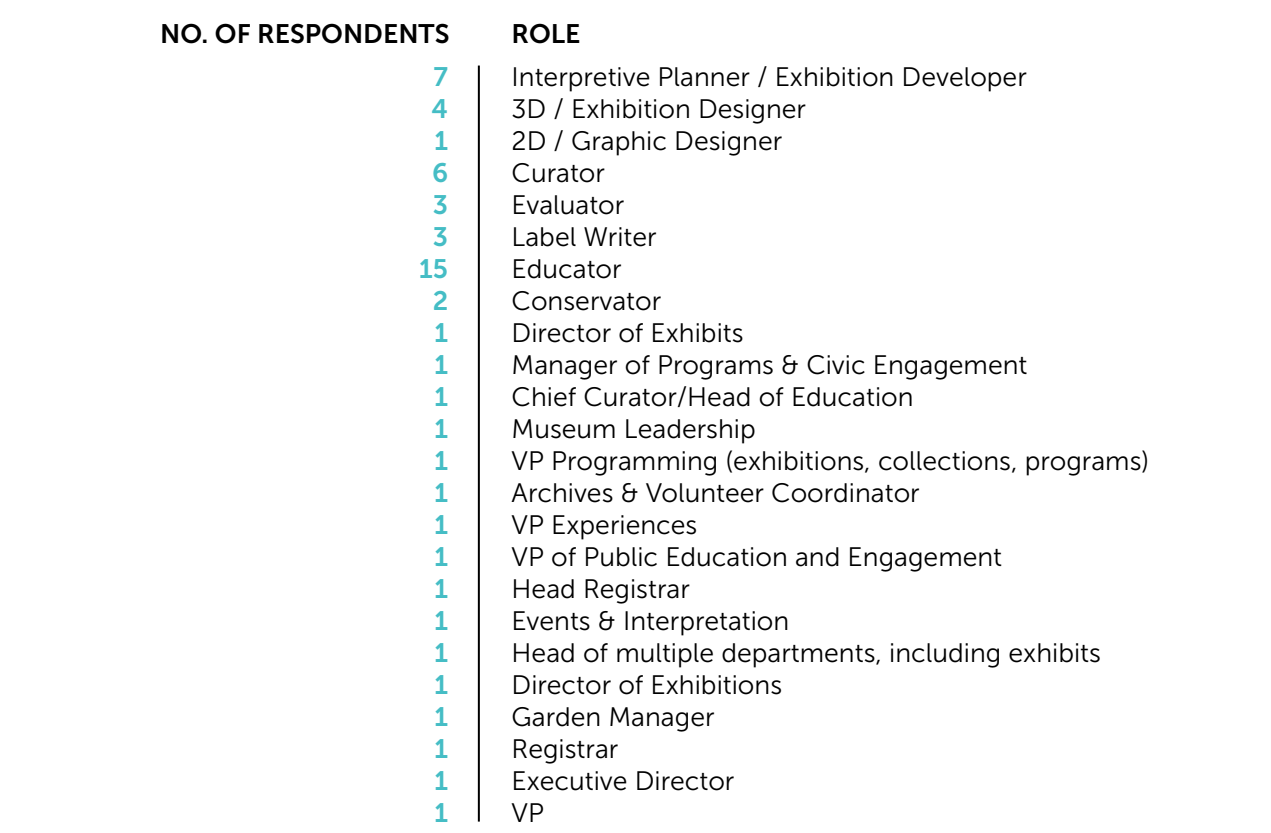


FIGURE 2.2 What type of organization do you work for? (n=42)

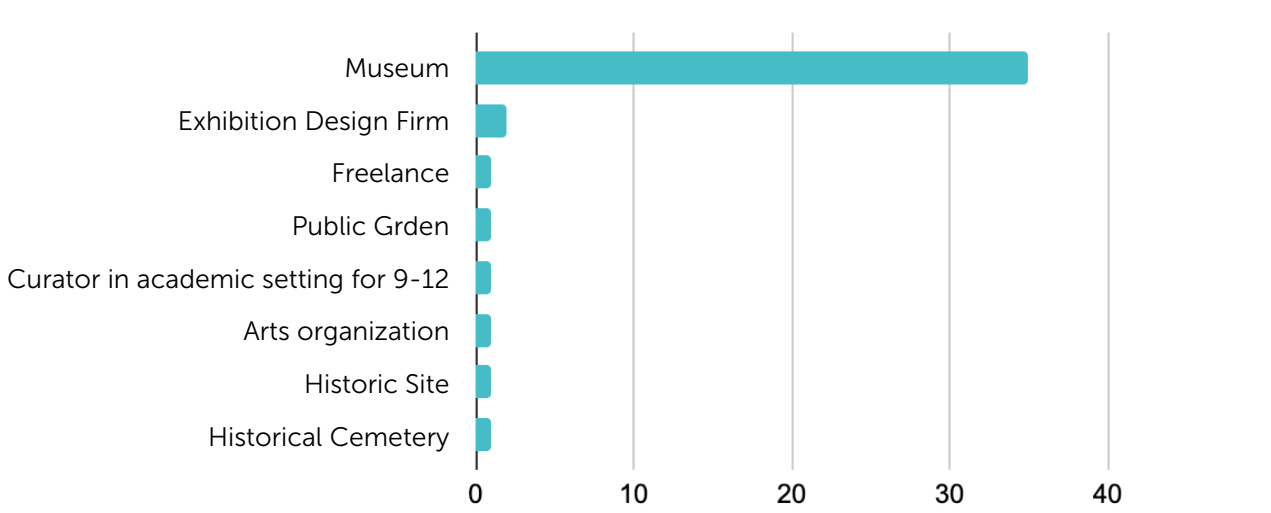


FIGURE 2.3 If you work in a museum, what type? (n=42)

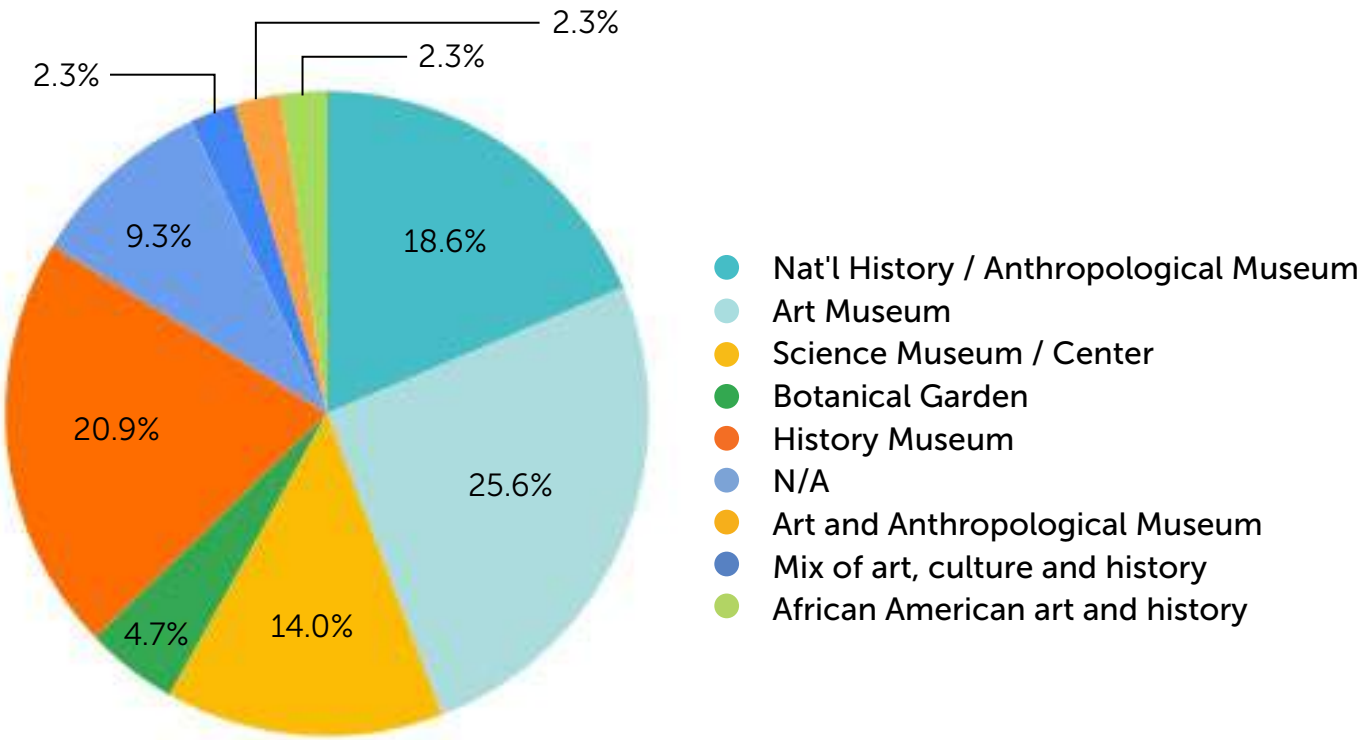
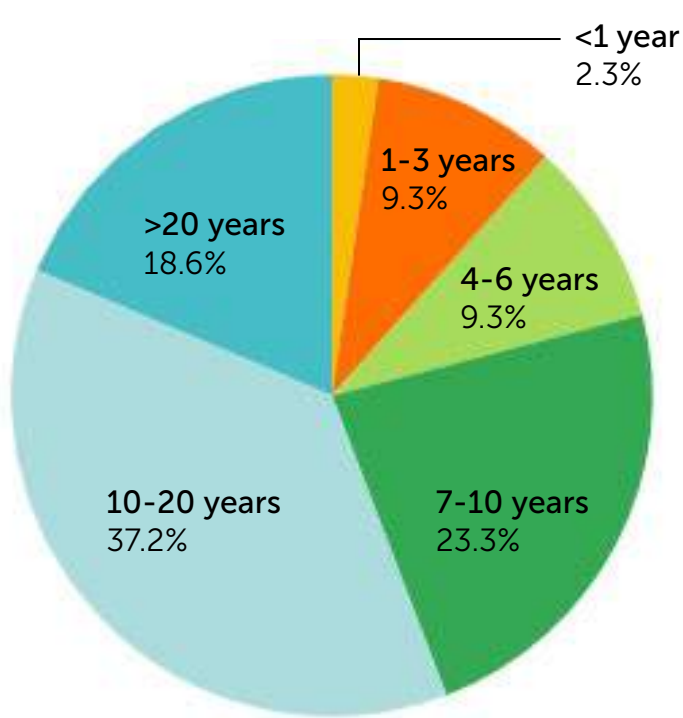


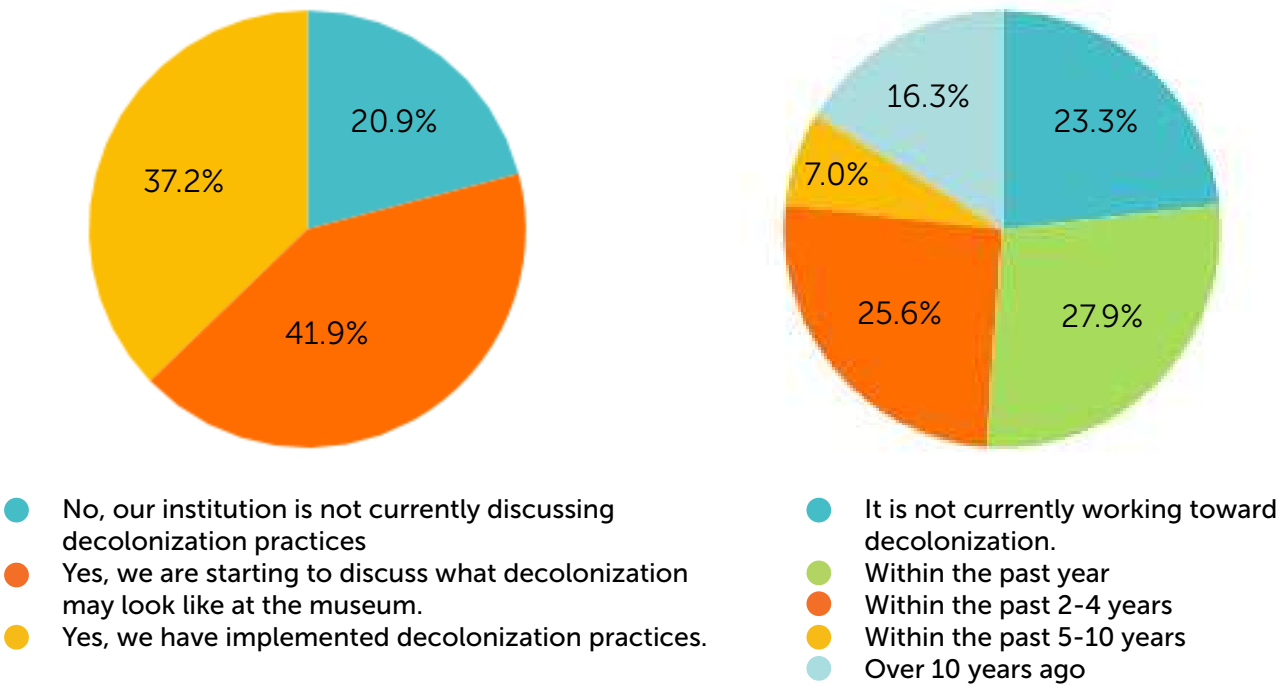
FIGURE 2.4 How long have you worked in the field? (n=42)



PART 1

FIGURE 2.5 Is decolonization being discussed and/or implemented at your institution? (n=42)

FIGURE 2.6 When did your institution begin work toward decolonization? (n=42)

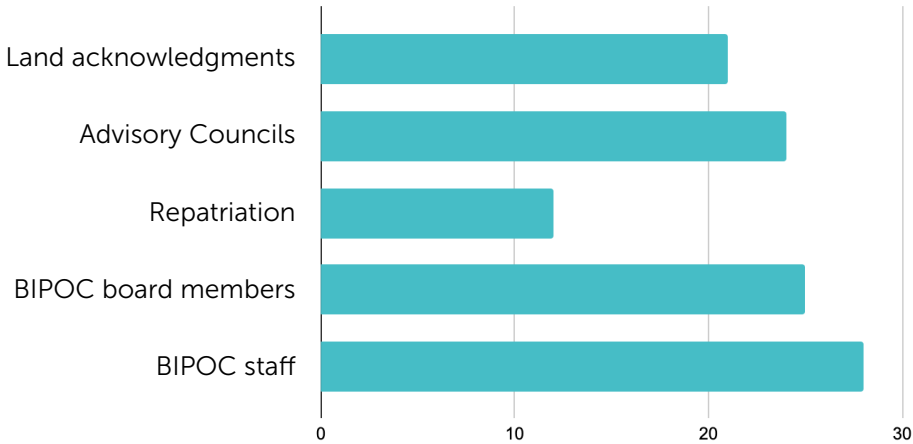


What made the institution begin its decolonization efforts?

Common answers to why institutions were involved in decolonization work included that it had always been part of the museum’s interests from conception, it is part of the museum’s mission or strategic plan, a changing community around the institution, new hires brought with them new ideas or vision, staff pressure and interest, and a greater interest in DEAL practices and hiring. Further, answers also developed around the Black Lives Matter movement including outside pressure and recent events. There were also some mentions of NAGRA, though one respondent mentioned how complying with federal law does not necessarily signify decolonization.

Other answers included pressure from funding organizations that had shifted their requirements, concerns about the homogeneity of their staff, conversations with their community, as well as questions about African American history and needing to train staff to answer appropriately.

FIGURE 2.7 What steps, if any, does your museum take in decolonization (n=42, respondents could chose more than one response)



What other steps, not listed here, is your organization currently doing or engaged in relating to decolonization?

There were many additional answers contributed outside of the included options. Some included:

- Working with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and LGBTQ consultants to co-develop exhibits and programs
- Sharing objects from the museums with their source communities
- Presenting diverse, non-white, perspectives and voices
- Presenting decolonization through programming and exhibits
- Training staff as well as conferences and readings
- Offering paid internships and scholarships
- Reviewing language, labels and interpretation
- Admission at lower or no cost
- Establishing various equity teams (among them included Diversity Committee, Collections Reviews Project, and a Social Justice group)

One respondent answers of interest included:

- Tour program led by people from the country of the object’s origin
- Creating guidelines for collaborations
- Museum manual for everyday decolonial language
- Costumed interpretation by Native American contract staff
- Financial contributions to NAACP & other organizations

What are the next steps in your institution's decolonization process?

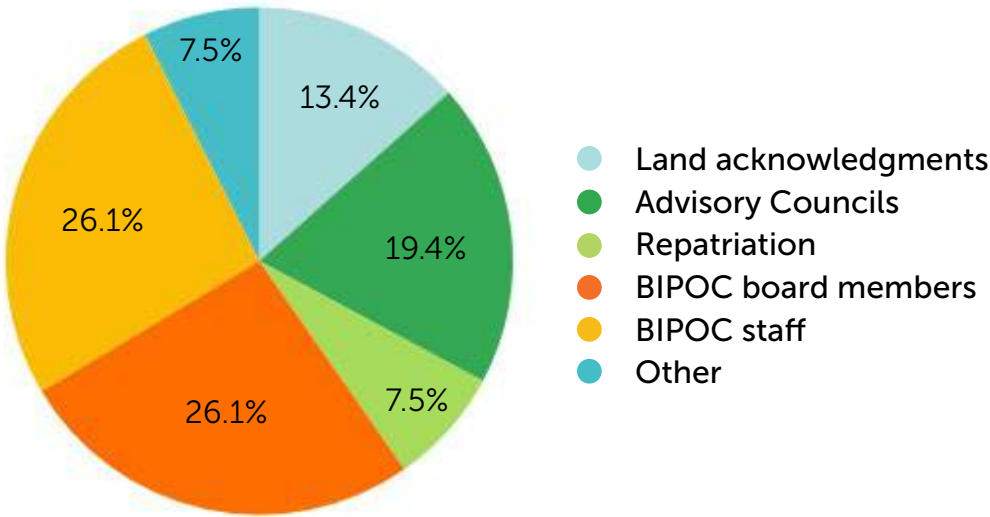
Respondents offered next steps that their institution would take, if any, along the decolonization process.

Some plan to continue assessment of their institution as an anti-racist institution, participating in programs, such as the OF/BY/FOR/ALL program, preparing a standard for excellence, and **reviewing policies, procedures and staff diversity**. Some institutions are **working on uplifting non-western perspectives** and determining how to best go about the **process of co-creation in exhibits and programs**.

Further, there were also answers specific to Native communities including **land acknowledgments**, developing programming to work with Native communities, allowing special **access to collections**, and **improving Native representation throughout** the museum.

FIGURE 2.8 What areas do you think your institution could improve? (n=42, respondents could chose more than one response)

Per a survey of 42 cultural workers, areas that museums could improve included 83.3% mention from all respondents of BIPOC board members and staff. Followed by 61.9% of all respondents mentioned their institution could improve by creating advisory councils.



PART 2

FIGURE 2.9 Have you worked with artists in programming or exhibitions? (n=42)

FIGURE 2.10 How often do you work with artists? (n=38)

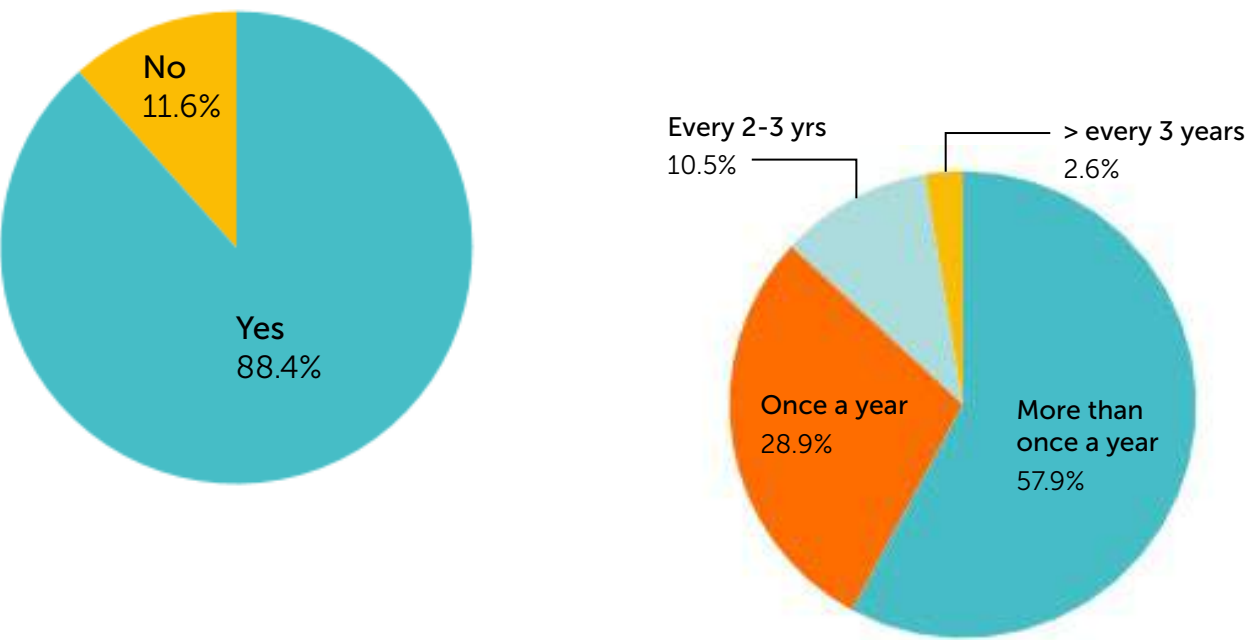
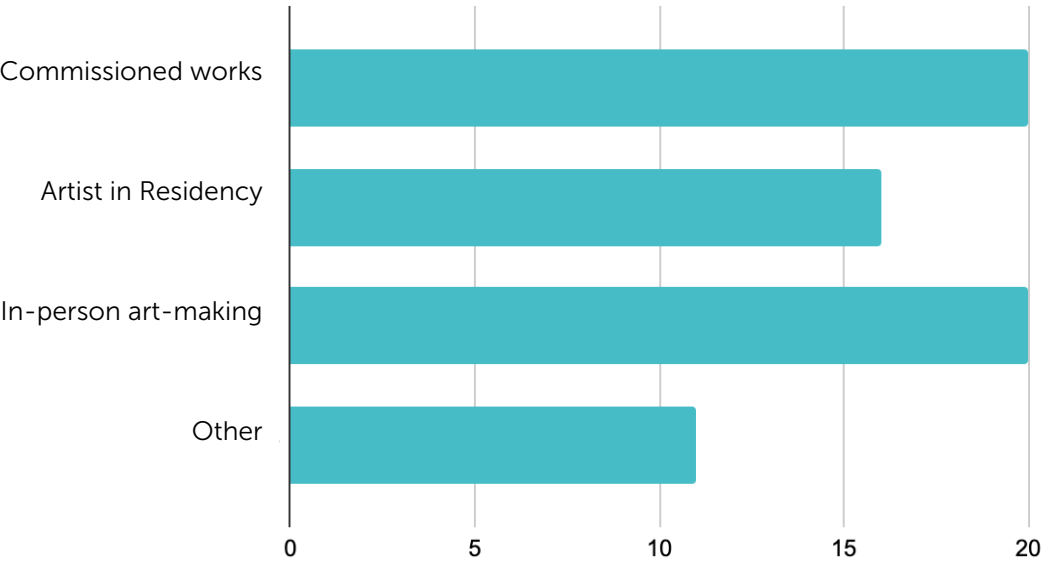


FIGURE 2.11 What type of partnership do you find most effective for your institution? (n=38, respondents could chose more than one response)



What are some of the benefits from working with artist(s)?

Respondents noted a number of benefits from working with artists. Some answers that were recognized by multiple respondents mentioned the inclusion of artists offered visitors and staff with an **exchange of ideas, new perspectives, offering different modalities of communication, thinking, engagement, interpretation, and understanding, as well as bringing in conversations around current events.** A few respondents also found that artists were able to move beyond curatorial and/or institutional constraints, allowing there to be a challenge of the status quo, and developing new ways of connection to audiences.

Some responses included enlivening the space and bringing in visually appealing and thought-provoking solutions. Others mentioned that artists demonstrate their lived experience as well as the experience of society. Some professionals thought that by working with artists within their institutions, and having a live artist interacting with visitors offers an accessible atmosphere and more closely linked connection to a real person. This includes opportunities for questions, connection, and learning.

One respondent also mentioned how art can express beyond text and language. This can allow for more visitors to access information and feel a connection to the museum. It opens the opportunity to connect with people whose Native language is not English, or even those who have reading or learning disabilities.

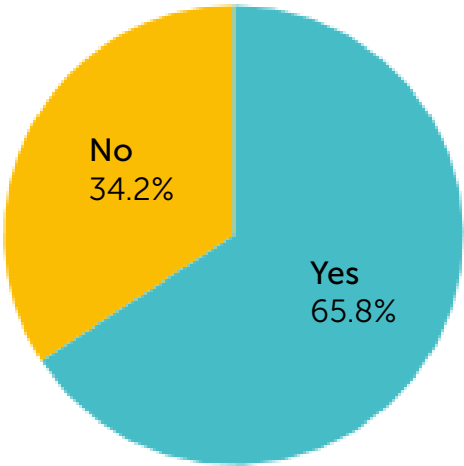
What are some of the challenges from working with artist(s)?

Even prior to initiating a connection to an artist, there can be difficulty with institutional buy-in. Then, once the museum chooses an artist to work with, the artist themselves may have difficulty articulating their vision, furthering difficulty to get support to work with an artist, as well as not knowing exactly what the end result will be. Overall, communication and usage of different language from both parties may lead to confusion and complications.

Artists do not always have an understanding of museum processes and expectations.

What came up multiple times in the survey responses was that the artistic process does not always parallel the institutional schedule and deadlines. This can create difficulties for both parties — for artists in receiving additional pressure, as well as for institutions in all departments to maintain their efforts, and in consideration for both to partner again.

FIGURE 2.12 Has your institution done evaluation of visitor response/interaction with the work of contemporary artists? (qualitative or quantitative) (n=38)



If YES: What were some of the key findings? (i.e. did the artist interventions change visitor perceptions of the collections)

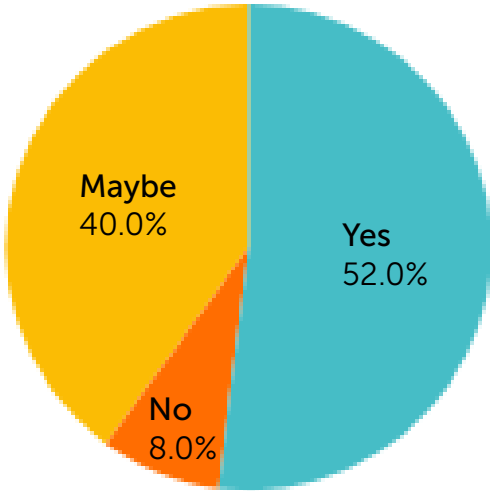
In most cases, evaluations have been typically qualitative. This seems to come in the form of visitor comments or feedback via social media.

Visitor experience is often discussed in the key findings, including visitors introduced to ideas and voices that they would be unlikely to read via a lengthy text panel. Other feedback included the presence of art or an artist shared new perspectives and life experiences, presented authenticity, changed understandings, and deepened the experience for visitors, volunteers, and staff.

For one institution, when artwork was first introduced, the traditional audience found it challenging to engage with, yet younger and more racially diverse groups responded more enthusiastically.

While this data is encouraging, having more evaluation is helpful to better determine audience interest. At the same time, this goes back to the understanding that the value of art is not always easily expressed.

FIGURE 2.13 If NO: Do you plan to evaluate in the future? (n=25)



What form might that evaluation take? (n=25, respondents could chose more than one role)

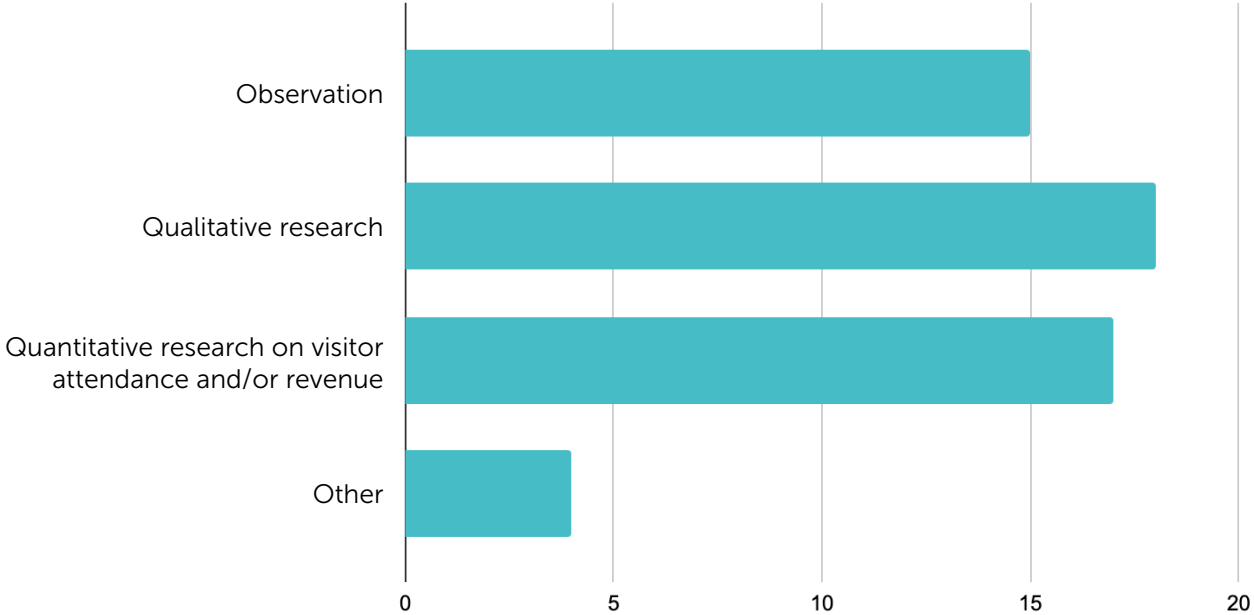
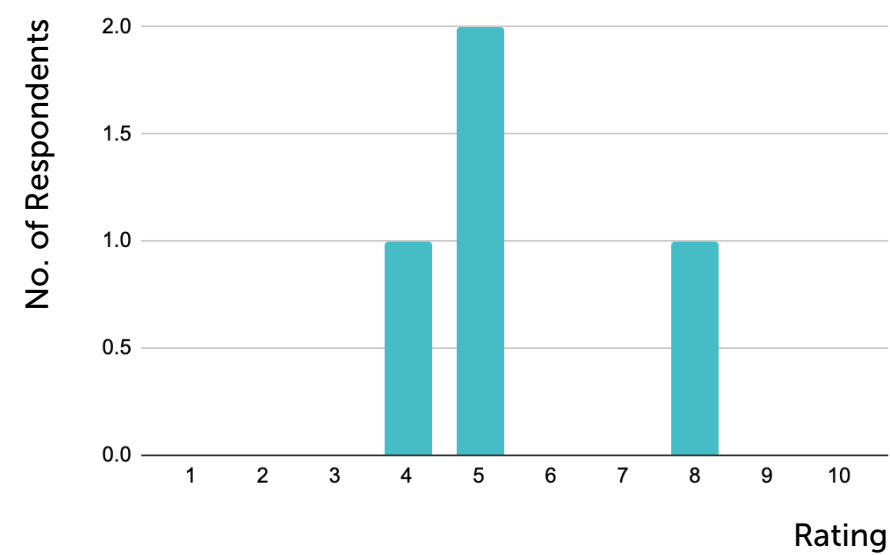


FIGURE 2.14 If NO: How likely is your organization to work with artists in the future? (n=4, scale from 1=Not likely to 10=Very likely)



Why or why not?

A couple of the respondents mentioned that expanding their visual arts interpretation is not a focus or institutional mission, or that their collection does not relate to contemporary art. One respondent mentioned that they hope to work with artists in the future, but are unsure of what that may look like.

What are your hopes and/or expectations for decolonization practices in the museum field in the next 5-10 years?

This answer was one that was responded to more fully by most, many respondents had a lot they wanted to express and hope for in the future of the museum field. Answers that were brought up multiple times included the **continued work of decolonization**, addressed in a wider spectrum of museums and becoming second nature for institutions. **Repatriation** and **working more closely with source communities** often went hand in hand. This included more meaningful and continuous relationships, with collaboration on exhibition content and interpretation. Part of this is also maintaining an openness about the museum’s past. In addition, many respondents discussed **diversifying staff**, especially those in higher positions, as well as board members, donors, and audiences. At the same time, having more equitable hiring and work practices including fair wages for staff at all levels in all departments.

SUMMARY

The formative evaluation offered insights into where many individuals and organizations are currently positioned regarding decolonization efforts as well as experiences working with artists. The survey, as well as overall research, proved beneficial to understand the current state for many museum professionals.

Regarding decolonization, the majority of individuals participating in the survey noted that their organizations were either beginning to discuss decolonization efforts or had already implemented various decolonization practices. From that number, over half had just started their efforts within the past 1-4 years. At the same point, many institutions seemed to be influenced by outside pressure, changing communities, and recent events including the Black Lives Matter movement, seeming as if institutions were grappling with how to develop new equitable initiatives. While there were general responses about structural changes and the inclusion of new perspectives and voices in the museum, many respondents felt like there was still much work to do as far as representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the museum. Because of this, it was clear that many museums were new to equity, inclusion, and decolonization work, and perhaps could benefit from a resource to aid them in navigating new ways of thinking.

Based on the responses to the art-specific questions, over 90% of respondents confirmed having worked with artists in

programming or exhibitions. Of that 90% over 50% work with artists more than once a year. Overall the type of partnership that the respondents felt was most beneficial varied per museum, including commissioned works, artist-in-residences, and in-person art-making. This data demonstrates that many organizations already have a familiarity in working with artists. Further, it reinforced the idea that there is no one way for museums and artists to effectively work together. These interactions are dependent on the specific artist, collection, community, and institution.

Respondents noted the benefits of working with artists included an exchange of ideas, new perspectives, interpretation and engagement, and different ways of understanding. This feedback demonstrated that many respondents acknowledged an appreciation for what artists can offer to an institution and its audiences. However, one major challenge noted by a few respondents was that the artistic process does not always work in tandem with an organization's schedule. Developing as much flexibility and open communication as possible, is as important in working with artists as it is in creating new partnerships.

Developing and maintaining relationships was a key idea that came up multiple times in the survey feedback, demonstrating its primary importance to the process.

Endnotes

- 1 "1. Reimagining Representation." Indigenous Roadmap, accessed January 4, 2021, <https://www.amaga-indigenous.org.au/1-reimagining-representation>.
- 2 "Resources." MASS Action, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.museumaction.org/resources>.
- 3 Edward P. Alexander, Mary Alexander, and Juilee Decker, *Museums in Motion an Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).
- 4 Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- 5 MASS Action. "Resources." Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.museumaction.org/resources>.
- 6 "27 Amazingly Powerful Quotes From Black Writers | HuffPost," accessed April 27, 2021, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/black-writer-quotes-_n_4718529.
- 7 "Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (U.S. National Park Service)" National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), accessed November 8, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/index.htm>.
- 8 Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- 9 Tariq Ahmad, "Canada," Protection of Indigenous Heritage, March 1, 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/indigenous-heritage/canada.php>.
- 10 Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance* (Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2016), pp. 173-78.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Erika Katayama, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, September 21, 2020.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Rachel Hatzipanagos, "The 'Decolonization' of the American Museum," *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/10/12/decolonization-american-museum/>.
- 16 "Knowing Better, Doing Better: The San Diego Museum of Man Takes a Holistic Approach to Decolonization," American Alliance of Museums, January 8, 2020, <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/01/08/knowning-better-doing-better-the-san-diego-museum-of-man-takes-a-holistic-approach-to-decolonization/>.
- 17 Erika Katayama, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, September 21, 2020.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 "Balboa Park Museum: Events in San Diego." Museum of Us, accessed September 27, 2020, <https://museumofus.org/>.
- 23 Helicon Collaborative, *Farther, Faster, Together: How Arts and Culture Can Accelerate Environmental Progress* (Brooklyn, NY: ArtPlace America, February 2018).
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Marina McDougall, Bronwyn Bevan, and Robert Semper, *Art as a Way of Knowing* (San Francisco, CA: Exploratorium, 2012), <http://www.exploratorium.edu/knowning/reports.html>.
- 26 Betty Farrell and Maria Medvedeva. *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (American Association of Museums, 2010), <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Demographic-Change-and-the-Future-of-Museums.pdf>.
- 27 Niki Stewart, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 5, 2020.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Tyler Putman, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 16, 2020.
- 31 Jana Violante, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 19, 2020.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Hannah Boettcher, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 23, 2020.
- 34 Christy Schneider, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 16, 2020.
- 35 Lisa Berry Drago, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 15, 2020.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Erin Feeney, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 19, 2020.
- 39 Dottie Miles, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 11, 2020.
- 40 Fred Myers, *Handbook of Material Culture* (London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications : 2006).
- 41 Victoria Hutter, "Outside the Box," National Endowment for the Arts, 2016, <https://www.arts.gov/stories/magazine/2016/2/challenges-arts-21st-century/outside-box>.
- 42 Aletheia Wittman, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, October 23, 2020.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Katie Bunn-Marcuse, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, February 11, 2021.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Polly Olsen, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, December 21, 2020.
- 47 Julie Buffalohead, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, March 11, 2021.
- 48 Wendy Red Star, interview by Katie Naber, phone call, August 5, 2020.
- 49 Virgil Ortiz, interview by Katie Naber, e-mail correspondence, February 23, 2021.
- 50 "STORYTELLERS," Craft in America, December 11, 2020, <https://www.craftinamerica.org/episode/storytellers>.
- 51 Wendy Red Star, interview by Katie Naber, phone call, August 5, 2020.
- 52 Julie Buffalohead, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, March 11, 2021.
- 53 Michael Kimmelman, "An Improbable Marriage Of Artist and Museum," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/08/02/arts/art-view-an-improbable-marriage-of-artist-and-museum.html>.
- 54 Fahima Haque. "The Native Artists Showing Us What's Happening in Indigenous America" *The New York Times*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/10/us/indigenous-art-aperture-magazine.html>.
- 55 Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Allison Keyes, "In This Quiet Space for Contemplation, a Fountain Rains Down Calming Waters," *Smithsonian Magazine*, September 21, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/quiet-space-contemplation-fountain-rains-down-calming-waters-180964981/>.
- 58 Center for Cultural Innovation. *Creativity Connects: Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2016).

“It’s always been such a surreal experience and watch people observing them as if



to see my community’s objects on display these were peoples of the past.”

– Wendy Red Star

Wendy Red Star
Apsáalooke Feminist #4, 2016

Quote regarding the Roosevelt Monument presence at the American Museum of Natural History in New York.
CNN.com

III THESIS PROJECT

Following the preceding research and included case studies, and in response to recurring themes found throughout, the following framework was developed. This framework demonstrates key values and practices for museum professionals to apply to their work in collaborating with Native artists. These values and practices are built on respect that offer a way for cultural workers to both personally and institutionally move toward more equitable and inclusive approaches. Further, it examines how these interactions can work alongside the larger decolonization process.

Following data gathered from the framework evaluations, the developed framework and toolkit consists of three guiding values for institutions to implement when working with contemporary Indigenous artists. These concepts demonstrate how informed and respectful interactions can occur when aligning operational methods within the framework. As a result, institutions will have the opportunity to become more relevant to their communities and to society. The

Defining an Equitable Framework

transition taking place will involve bridging the gap from uninformed notions of the past to achieve current, cultural awareness and authenticity that are implemented as best practices in the future for healing from past and present cultural harms.

The included values reflect respect that lead toward being more relevant to the communities represented, institutional audiences, and society in general. By personally and institutionally embracing these values, it can lead towards reparations and healing from years of cultural harm. While the precursory research is specific to working with Native artists, the created framework has the opportunity to be utilized by cultural workers in collaborating with both Native artists and their communities.

As a matter of happenstance, the three determined guiding values all begin with an R, which in turn aims to offer a memorable way to recall these values.

“For the past 100 years these bits and pieces, facts and objects, have been arranged and rearranged in a changing mosaic in which we have constructed an image that we claim represents Native American art and culture.”¹

— Janet Berlo, Art Historian

GUIDING VALUES FOR COLLABORATIONS

Relationship

Development of authentic and sustained interactions.

While some museums have already developed connections with Indigenous communities, even more museums today are reevaluating their collections, who has access to the collections, and reconsidering how to forge relationships with Indigenous people. Authentic and equity-driven relationships are essential to working with Native artists and communities. Because of a long distrust of white people by Native communities, and an imbalance of prevailing colonialist power within cultural institutions, the creation of equitable relationships takes a lot of careful consideration and time. While many institutions are rushing to establish relationships and make noticeable changes to combat their colonialist practices, the relationship-building process is much slower and more complex. Some institutions fear societal backlash for not being quick enough to own up to these truths. All the while, institutions who are not outwardly demonstrating their relationship-building approaches, or acknowledgment that they are in the learning process are often reproached.

Before initiating interactions with their intended communities, it is vital for institutions to consciously consider who they want

to develop relationships with, what type of relationships they aim to develop, and why. A sustainable and equitable relationship will not be created if the interactions are a way to extract information from a community. Sustained relationships based on reciprocity make people the priority, over collections or other institutional operations, and are beneficial to both parties. The actions taken determine the type of relationship that is hoped to achieve.

Searching for quick solutions will not be sustainable in the long term without understanding the institutions motivations for making changes, as well as truly understanding the needs of the intended community.

Taking the time to understand the hopes for a relationship will allow the institution and community to get clear on their intent and will ultimately lead toward better transparency. Considerations for strong relationships include creating or finding spaces that promote dialogue, experiencing vulnerability, and practicing deep listening.

Representation

The people, places, and collection are included in the organization, and how they are portrayed.

Oftentimes, Indigenous objects are positioned adjacent to historical artifacts, giving the illusion of a culture of the past. A Native American collection is placed next to the dinosaur hall, an unchanging and dehumanized display, separated from modern

life.² The “artifacts” label states the location, the tribe name, and what it was used for. While anthropological and historical insights of creative objects can be a learning experience, this manner of engagement lacks emotion and meaning. This method of interpreting Indigenous artifacts continues to ignore the culture and relates to the object more as a “thing” than being made by people. Also, it does not take into account the richness of the culture, and even more so the Indigenous peoples who are still thriving today. Due to the flat representation of Native cultures in museums, lack of community involvement, as well as stereotypes seen in mass media, there are many people in society unfamiliar with these living communities.

An important question arises of how to depict these living and evolving communities as well as authentically tell the histories of traumatic harm done to them, often caused by museums themselves.³ More so, there is an opportunity for those whose cultures were documented and are represented to tell their own stories. Consider who is the guiding or knowledgeable voice of the artwork, object, or overall exhibit.

While not all museums have a historical or contemporary Native permanent collection, there is still opportunity for institutions to question how they represent works on display. How people, places, and collections are represented shows what the institution values. The way objects and stories are portrayed in context and time affects how visitors experience them, and how they share their experiences with others outside the museum.

Are collections displayed as if they are of the past while living cultures are prevalent today? Whose voices or perspectives are missing? Are there any gaps in context or collection?

Recognition

Acknowledging our impact within the organization and within society.

Cultural organizations are reviewing their societal impact through various tactics including self-reflection, equity-training, workshops, and more. In many cases they are outwardly recognizing past and present harms, as well as their intentions for the future. While this may allow museums to become more credible and trusted, it's crucial to thoughtfully consider what is hoped to achieve by these actions. Ethical decision-making is core to creating authentic recognitions and acknowledgments.

One approach museums have begun taking is to recognize the injustices of the past by stating land acknowledgments on their website or in conferences/presentations, bringing greater visibility to local Indigenous groups. This approach brings integrity to the museums, and helps the institution and public to reflect on the land they are on, as well as the people who have been displaced and harmed in the process.

While this acknowledgment of the past is a proactive first step, there is much more that cultural institutions can do to repair cultural harm inflicted upon these communities. For instance, institutions can address the histories

that enabled them to obtain the land, what happened to the people, and where they are now. Taking a step further, museums can relinquish existing power structures in their planning and operations.⁴ These types of relationships can be seen in different forms including co-curation and advisory boards. Prioritizing Native perspectives and truth-telling allows the present narrative to shift and for new authentic conversations to form.⁵

Another key approach museums should take is to reevaluate their collections as it pertains to repatriation, access, cultural authenticity, and reinterpretation. Items that were taken by force should be reviewed and the people these cultural sources were extracted from should be proactively contacted and returned to, if the community so desires.

Cultural exhibits help viewers to construct their knowledge of the Nation's history, and with museums as a place devoted to educating the public, it is crucial for them to layout a full history. Cultural institutions can make people and cultures in exhibitions come to life, as many Indigenous communities are living today.

Furthermore, if a museum exhibition is outdated, finding ways for the museum to be transparent about these inaccuracies can help the viewers question and reflect on their perspective of Indigenous communities, as included representations influence the way the public sees Indigenous communities.⁶ Cultural institutions have the responsibility to make exhibitions come to life, to show that Indigenous people are evolving today. One approach for institutions to do this is through

partnerships with contemporary artists as well as Native communities to make sure their experiences are told presently and accurately.

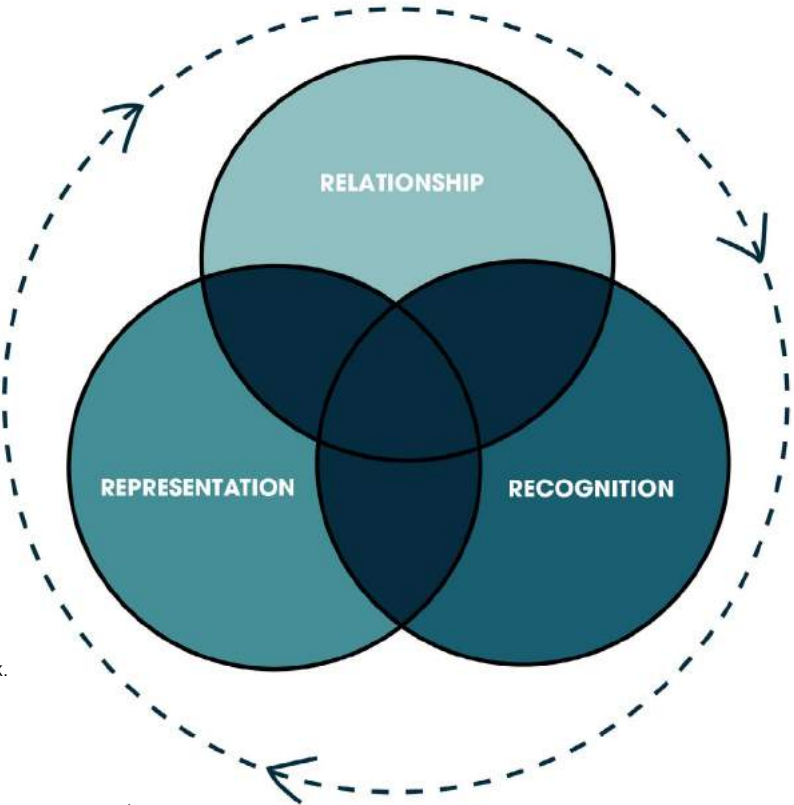
Based on the input of numerous museum professionals, Canada's decolonization efforts far precede those in the United States. Much of the work being carried out in Canada is due to the acknowledgment and research of past harms done through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This was developed in 2007 to review the damaging effects of the residential school system which removed Indigenous children from their families with the intention of assimilating them into white, western culture. Through the commission, they came to label this policy as "cultural genocide." Due to the governmental and societal review and acknowledgment of these harms, these steps have created space to reconcile and reconstruct interactions.⁷

Other respectful practices aimed at recognizing cultural harms include educating visitors to understand that they can also contribute to decolonization, bringing everyone in on dismantling current systems of oppression. A range of diverse approaches, particularly through everyday and micro actions, can effect the larger decolonization practices that are needed for justice.⁸ Decolonizing educator, Nikki Sanchez, aptly states "This history is not your fault, but it is absolutely your responsibility."⁹

"This history is not your fault, but it is absolutely your responsibility."

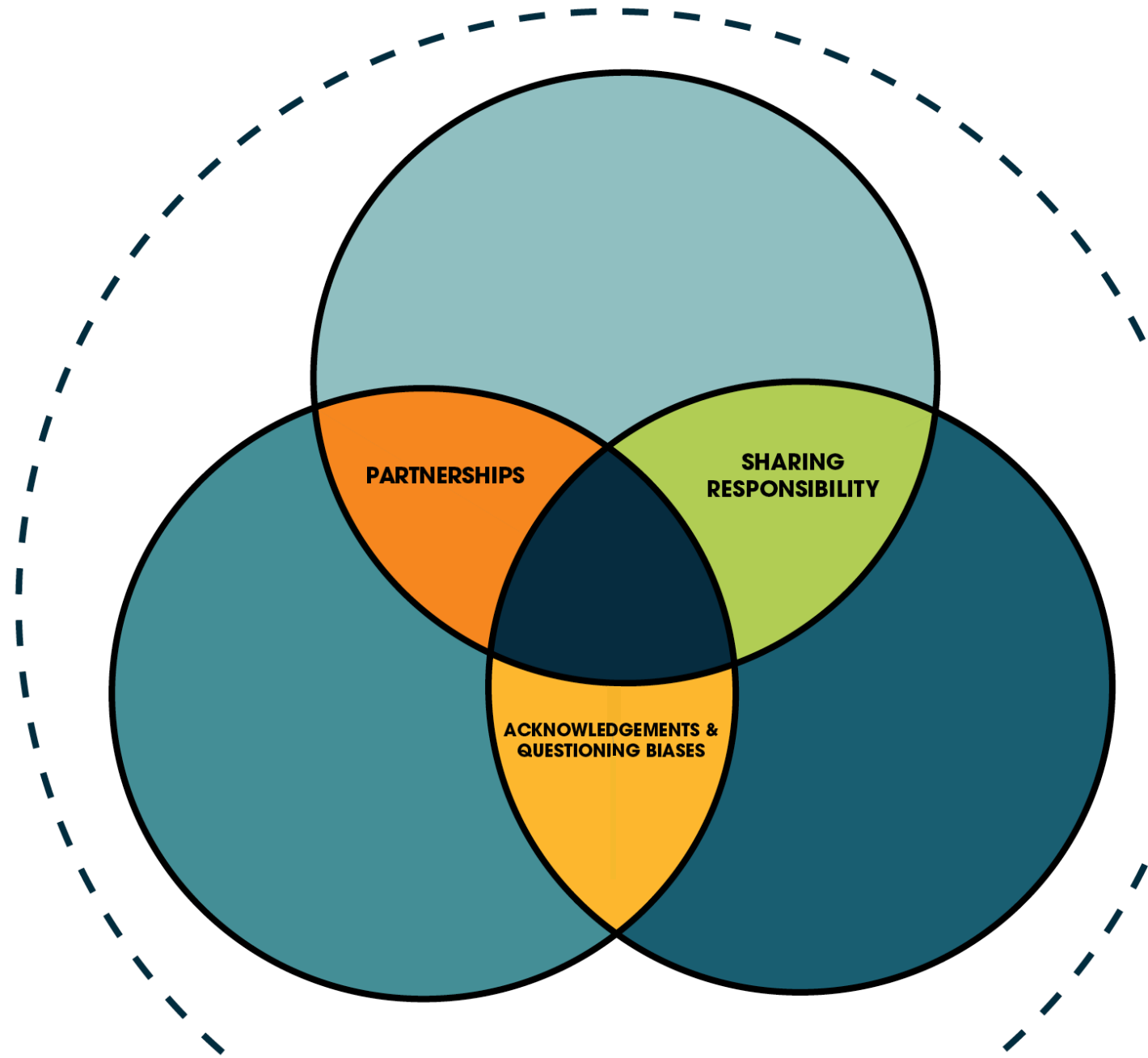
– Nikki Sanchez,
Decolonizing Educator

The three values live in relationship to one another within a larger circle and directional arrows showing the cyclical nature of this work.



VALUES IN PRACTICE

The following practices offer respectful and meaningful approaches to harnessing the 3-R values mentioned above. These encompass tactics that were found at the intersections of the guiding values. While there are additional practices, these practices were determined that intersected two or more of the key values.



Partnerships

Relationships between Native communities and institutions.

All departments within museums have the responsibility to restructure a hierarchical mindset to one of better representation and inclusion of multiple viewpoints. These multiple perspectives become even more evident when the focus moves away from knowledge of a single expert to a collective of experts.¹⁰ Partnerships among groups of people offer varying perspectives that expand relevance to greater audiences of people. Even more important is the potential to create an environment for new sharing, learning, and healing.

At the same point, the American Alliance of Museum’s 2010 forecasting report, “Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums,” proposed increases of minority and Indigenous populations. This forecast reinforces the importance for museums to forge partnerships with these communities to instill greater relevance in society and support of Indigenous cultures. The National Education Association’s 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts showed a decline, directly related to race, ethnicity and cultural participation, in art museum and gallery attendance, as well as in other cultural initiatives.¹¹ If we want our museums to be relevant and important places of learning and engaging, it is crucial to implement a more inclusionary approach. Not only is

the support of Native communities of the Americas important to its citizens, but these inclusionary approaches within museums can make other minority groups feel welcomed, and with the possibility to be heard, acknowledged, and appreciated.

For institutions that maintain a Native collection, one way to ensure extended relationships with Native people is through a collaborative arrangement initiated within museum planning.¹² A Native Advisory Board or Native consultants introduces the most authentic and knowledgeable perspectives. This partnership shows respect for the Native culture and an openness to learn. Museums including the Burke Museum in Seattle and Field Museum in Chicago have started integrating advisory boards into their planning process.

Alongside this process is the importance of paying people for their time and knowledge. This decolonial practice replaces the colonialist idea of taking for one’s own gain, with one acknowledging the importance of knowledge holders, their time, and expertise.

“Personally, I always offer to help/assist curators and directors with the design/direction for all my shows. I’ve learned that the more I become involved, the better the outcome of the presentation and delivery of the intended message/theme.”¹³

– Virgil Ortiz, Pueblo potter and multidisciplinary artist

Collaborative models create stronger connections to a museum’s communities. Some of the models to develop partnerships between institutions and communities involve:

- **Inclusion of Native board and/or staff members.**

Museums that welcome and include Native people within their board and staff are more likely to have deeper relationships and better understand Indigenous communities they intend to represent.

- **Native Advisory Councils**

Similar to the inclusion of Native board and staff members, advisory councils can allow museums to include more effective representation of collection/belongings and reconsider access to collections.

- **Contemporary Artists**

There are a number of ways to create partnerships with artists that influences visitor learning and understanding of living cultures. Some of these include artist-in-residencies, commissioned works, purchases, and programming.

Overall, developing partnerships takes time. It involves a thorough understanding of an institutions needs as well as the needs of the communities intended to collaborate with. There are many unknowns when creating these partnerships. Yet, creating “with” instead of “for” and embracing vulnerability at any stage in the relationship can lead to more equitable and authentic partnerships.

Case Study 1: Art in Conversation

Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Photograph of *Dress*, by artists Breanna Moore and Emerson Ruffin, Penn Museum. 2021.

INTRODUCTION

Through their anthropological and archaeological-based work, the Penn Museum has collected objects throughout the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean.

In 2019, the new Africa Galleries opened which were reimagined to take on a re-situated decolonizing approach. Their approach included recognition of objects’ origins, and even more so highlighting the maker behind the works. They interpret the colonial origins of many of the objects, inviting visitors to think critically about these acquisitions. Regarding this approach, Lead Curator of the Africa Galleries, Tukufu Zuberi mentions “With the Africa Galleries, we’re going beyond the traditional colonial messaging associated with exhibiting these objects outside of Africa.”¹⁴

ARTIST INSTALLATION

As part of the newly renovated galleries, the museum commissioned works by contemporary artists to live in direct response to the other objects on display.¹⁵ Through the inclusion of contemporary artists, as well as other interpretive tactics, the Penn Museum is able to connect visitors to living cultures within Africa. The museum has also partnered with contemporary artists throughout multiple exhibitions. Among them includes the current Native American Voices gallery and the “Cultures of Crossfire” exhibition in 2018. These exhibitions proved successful in engaging visitors on a more personal level and opened new means of connection to the themes and topics of the



exhibitions. However, the approach used in developing their permanent and newly renovated Africa Gallery, relationships with related communities, along with three works of contemporary art, provides deeper insight into the connection, response and learning of the public through the arts.

In the planning of the new gallery, curated by Dr. Tukufu Zuberi, the Penn Museum worked with an advisory board in order to tell stories in a more authentic way. They



(Top) Muhsana Ali and Amadou Kane Sy
in front of their work *Presence of a
Fundamental Absence*

(Center) Emerson Ruffin in front of *Dress*,
he co-designed with Breanna Moore

(Bottom) Jorge Dos Anjos in front of his work,
Wall of Memory for an Ancestral Palace



also considered a new approach to the exhibition design through the use of non-conventional case shapes, to allow visitors to see and interact with the objects more three-dimensionally. Labels were reconstructed to identify the name of the artist(s) when known, brought in the historical context, and made the English translation secondary. In addition, they worked with their community to develop first person videos of contemporary people.¹⁶

As part of the new gallery make-over, artists were commissioned to create permanent works that would represent the gallery and be in conversation with the other objects on display, yet present contemporary artistry. The works included a geometric metal sculpture by Jorge Dos Anjos, Muhsana Ali and Amadou Kane Sy's mixed-media wall display of discarded objects from Senegal, and Breanna Moore and Emerson Ruffin's Kente cloth garment. While not typical to have contemporary art within the archaeological and anthropological museum, they found a widely positive response from visitors.

In evaluation of their Imagine Africa Gallery, a prototype for the renovation, the Penn Museum gathered data on visitor timing with objects, interactives, and contemporary artwork. They found that the typical time visitors would take to look at an object and read its label was 23 seconds. When an interactive, such as a book, digital media, or tactiles were introduced it was four times that amount. They also found that visitors had stronger absorption rates with these included interactives. These findings were similar to the introduction of contemporary art. Even more so, the Penn Museum found that with the

inclusion of interactives or contemporary art, visitors were able to recite the exhibition's goals back to them more often than without use of these creative modalities.¹⁷ This demonstrates a new level of critical and creative thinking, as well as highlights contemporary art as an effective way of gathering data and perceiving information.

Former Director of Exhibitions and Special Programs, Kate Quinn, mentioned how people are drawn to contemporary art. "It can be a gateway" to learning about historical objects and cultures. Yet, she doesn't believe art interpretations should be included everywhere.¹⁸

Through the Penn Museum's evaluation of their renovated Africa Gallery, they found that art helped visitors to interpret and absorb information more.¹⁹ A visual artform can portray an immediate emotive and connective message unlike items that require deeper interpretation through written text. While exploring the museum, visitors were able to look at contemporary art and make connections to objects and cultures as a whole through the contemporary arts' inclusion of specific material, symbols, and other defining characteristics that were in conversation with the other objects on display.

In a conversation with Architect and Exhibition Designer, Joshua Lessard, he spoke about the consideration of decolonizing the exhibits process. This includes who is controlling the overall narrative, how objects and works are talked about, as well as consideration of creating spaces which are not neutrality bound, but that are "accomplices of the decolonization effort."²⁰

In the case of specifically working with artists, part of this is releasing the control of spaces to work within an artists' timeline instead of the organization's time structure, and allowing the artist to construct their own design techniques for absorbing their work. Joshua goes on to mention, "We can't be prescriptive because then it's not their narrative anymore, it's our narrative through their lens."²¹

Kevin Schott, Associate Director for Interpretive Programs, and Jess Bicknell, Head of Exhibitions, of the Penn Museum held an online presentation for University of the Arts Museum Studies graduate students on September 18, 2020. During the presentation, Kevin Schott mentioned that the museum has not received repatriation requests for any artifacts on display. Yet, their goal is to consider the future of these objects. Therefore, during the renovation process for the Africa Gallery, they opened communication with eight different museums in Africa about related objects currently at the museum.²² While many museums may not be approached, like in the case of the Penn Museum, it is still their responsibility to ethically consider the implications of the objects within their collection. Jess Bicknell added that some objects are meant to decay, as it is a Western notion to preserve objects for the future. Therefore, this idea is also being taken into consideration when constructing future object displays.²³

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the contemporary artworks on display in the renovated Africa Galleries provided new avenues for visitor learning and understanding. It linked the conversation of more historical objects to the present day through reflection of the contemporary interpretation. The Penn Museum's method of working with artists by relinquishing control over timeline and finished product is key for effective partnerships anytime an organization is representing another artist, community, or culture.

At the same time, the museum incorporated decolonizing practices of repatriation, collaboration, and recognition of object origins, that in itself portrayed a more humanizing connection. The items were created by a specific maker, not solely displayed by anthropological facts. Today, the Penn Museum continues partnerships with artists through lectures and talks by the artists.

Case Study 2: A Decolonizing Design

Abbe Museum
Bar Harbor, Maine

INTRODUCTION

The Abbe Museum is a museum of Wabanaki art, history, and culture.²⁴ As a tribal museum, they have the unique focus, unlike other more comprehensive museums, to devote their energies to the Indigenous people they represent. Located under the strategic plan section of their website, the vision statement notes the museum "will reflect and realize the values of decolonization in all of its practices, working with the Wabanaki Nations to share their stories, history, and culture with a broader audience."²⁵

PARTNERSHIPS & EXHIBIT COLLABORATIONS

In speaking with Former President and CEO at the Abbe Museum of ten years, Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, she detailed the evolution of the museum toward decolonization practices. When she first joined the Abbe Museum in 2009, it was during a time of recession, and they were working towards financial recovery. During this time she began asking questions about tribal community engagement. Luckily, the museum had previously initiated strong relationships with artists and held programs that were community led.²⁶ This provided an easy transition to continue conversations.



After prompting the idea of governance to her board, they decided they needed a Native Advisory Council, and held its first meeting in 2012. The museum discussed approaching each tribal leader in Maine, a total of five, and appointed one from each tribe to the board. At the time, the board was adverse to the idea, wondering if who the chief appointed to the board would be a good fit. Following a tribal retreat for board and staff four months later, the board's mindset shifted and at their next meeting, they decided to decolonize the museum. The museum quickly formed a task force with a focus on education.²⁷

At the time, decolonizing practices were not being implemented by other institutions in the United States, with few places to turn to for guidance and standards. However, their partnerships with tribal community members and involvement with programming helped prepare them for a strong strategic process.²⁸

In addition, the creation of a new core exhibit, called *People of the First Light*, initiated major exhibit changes. The Abbe took on a decolonizing approach from the beginning of its design. Not only did the museum work with thirty Native advisors and four Native artists to design the gallery, but also realized the need of having Native representatives on the board to have better Wabanaki representation and decision-making.²⁹ *People of the First Light* welcomes visitors to learn about the Wabanaki people, from the voices of the Wabanaki themselves. The exhibition includes over 12,000 years of history taking place in the Wabanaki homeland that incorporates multiple perspectives and various forms

People of the First Light exhibit at the Abbe Museum in Ben Harbor, Maine
Credit: Derek Davis/Staff Photographer



People of the First Light exhibit at the Abbe Museum in Ben Harbor, Maine
Credit: Derek Davis/Staff Photographer

(Bottom right) A Passamaquoddy urchin basket made in 2007
Credit: Derek Davis/Staff Photographer



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Abbe Museum takes on various forms of partnerships with Wabanaki members and artists, through a Native Advisory Council, board, staff, and artist-led exhibitions and programming. These partnerships make the museum relevant to their communities, and provide ways for both Native and non-Native visitors to take part in cultural connection-building. Various modes of communication including a contemporary design and interpretation shaped by the Wabanaki people, help reaffirm that the Wakanaki people are still here today. They encourage visitors to make connections and have a better understanding of their continued culture and lived experiences.

With the openness of the staff and board to decolonize, and even more so with the strong influence of the local tribal communities, the Abbe Museum developed decolonization practices through these strong partnerships that permeate through most areas of the museum. To acknowledge there is continual work to be done, the museum shifted from using the term "decolonization" to "decolonizing."³⁷

of content. Stories are told through digital interactives, photographs, personal stories, historical accounts, and cultural knowledge.³⁰

Through a contemporary design, the exhibit was created by Wabanaki artists and their work. The aesthetics were shaped by artwork and illustrations by Wabanaki artists that portray both cultural traditions as well as present day experiences.³¹ Here, artifacts were decentered, along with the white perspective. Indigenous people are named and the voices of the Indigenous communities welcomed visitors into and throughout the exhibition.³²

In addition, the subject of time was contentious for the tribal communities, due to disagreements between them and the government about how long they've inhabited

the land. Therefore, the decision was put into the hands of the Native Advisory Council, who decided to not include specific dates, but note that their people came from "thousands of generations." Text began including all ways of knowing about the past and the present.³³

Outside of their core exhibit, and in addition to an equity-based partnership with a Native Advisory Council, much of the work the museum does is with contemporary artists and craftspeople. The Abbe began holding contemporary art exhibits every two to four years, where the work of Wabanki as well as other national Native artists are displayed.³⁴

Today, the Native Advisory Council meets in person, as well as over the phone once a

month. They use this time to document the voices of the tribal communities. In addition, half of the board is Indigenous, and Chris Newell of the Passamaquoddy Tribe is the new Executive Director at the museum.³⁵

The Museum of Man also began working towards decolonization a year after the Abbe Museum had started, and began learning from one another throughout the process. The Museum of Man declared the Abbe Museum "the first non-tribal museum to have the organizational mandate to decolonize." In addition, *Decolonizing Museums* written by Amy Lonetree came out in 2012. This book acted as a manual for the museum and guided their decision-making processes. For the museum, decolonization became a filter for all strategic efforts within the museum.³⁶

Sharing Responsibility

Full input and access in all areas of the museum of the peoples being represented.

Similar to the development of partnerships is how to manage those partnerships in ways that recognize the unique knowledge of the community. This approach suggests an uprooting of traditional power dynamics and hierarchical presence that derive from a colonialist mindset. It requires that museum professionals let go of the ideas that they are the ones that hold all of the knowledge related to the museum's collections. Consider what ways the institution creates access to knowledge and resources, while accepting different forms of knowledge as credible.

While there may be many organizational barriers to maneuver through in offering access to collections or deeply considering input of the community, giving over or sharing authority can help the museum be more relevant and accessible. It also shows institutional values of meeting the needs of the community.

“[A museum's] collection, in Maori terms, is not just the collection; it's also the Maori viewpoint. They're not just collections; they're ancestors.”³⁸

— Rose Evans (Te Atiawa), Former Objects Conservator, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Case Study 1: Reclaiming Historical Narratives

Maryland Historical Society
Baltimore, Maryland

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1844, the Maryland Historical Society, today called the Maryland Center for History and Culture, is the oldest operating cultural institution within the state. Located in Baltimore, this museum and library holds 350,000 objects and seven million documents and books.³⁹

ARTIST INTERVENTION & INSTALLATION

In April 1992, a collaboration took place between the museum and an artist that challenged historical truths within the institution. The Maryland Historical Society worked with artist Fred Wilson to create an intervention called *Mining the Museum*. Along with the invitation of the Baltimore arts organization, The Contemporary, and the inclusion of Director, George Ciscle and Curator, Lisa Corrin, Wilson was invited to deeply explore the collection.⁴⁰

All artistic decisions and the historical direction came from Wilson who selected and installed objects from the museum.⁴¹ He developed a system of classification for items in the collection that raised questions about historical interpretation at the Maryland Historical Society and in general all history museums. On display were objects previously hidden within the collection, but never put on display for their jarring connection to slavery and racism. Among the objects were a Ku Klux Klan hood, whipping post, cigar store Indians, and shackles used while auctioning slaves. Wilson reconsidered how works

were interpreted that encouraged dialogue between the collection and the public.⁴²

Wilson disrupted traditional museum classification by consciously-considered pairings that challenged visitors to question their own perspectives. While the connections were considered shocking in some cases, and less obvious in others, it often allowed visitors to come up with their own understandings of what was on display. Corrin adds “[B]y questioning how omissions from cultural and historical narratives occur, Wilson provides a strategy for the audience to reclaim the terrain of the museum for itself.”⁴³



Installation view of *Mining the Museum*
(Cabinetmaking 1820-1860)

The museum also went a step further by encouraging people to start questioning the works they were seeing by posting a handout with critical questions. Some of these questions included “For whom was it created?” “For whom does it exist?” “Who is represented?” and “Who is doing the telling? The hearing?”⁴⁴ These questions prepared visitors to question their pre-existing biases by shifting the way they discovered works in the exhibition.

Wilson held extensive discussions to work with the African American community around the museum and particularly within Baltimore to better understand the prevailing racial dynamics.⁴⁵ The intervention acknowledged difficult truths, harmful items in the collection, and harnessed the experiences of the African American community. Further it showed how the institution gave over authority of the interpretation to both the artist and community, that led to astounding results.

CONCLUSION

Mining the Museum showed how the influence of an artist’s intervention and way of challenging the status quo can present collections in unexpected ways. The intervention provided new perspectives on historical content that challenged visitor perceptions. These interpretive approaches helped visitors to reconsider their ways of thinking and knowing, while acknowledging that the curatorial voice can also be biased. Further it demonstrated the profound effect of contemporary art in museums. *Mining the Museum* portrayed how artists and institutions have the ability to face historical truths head on that challenge existing inequities from past to present day.

Installation view of *Mining the Museum* (baby carriage and hood)



Case Study 2: Reshaping Collaborations

The Field Museum
Chicago, Illinois

INTRODUCTION

With a collection of almost forty million artifacts and specimens, the Field Museum, promotes discoveries of nature and culture. Among their collections includes fossils, cultural objects, animal and plant specimens.⁴⁶

Initially one of the targets of and negotiators of NAGPRA, the Field Museum has been working to decolonize their collection. With the addition of a repatriation director, a Community Advisory Board of 12 members, and 77 content advisors, the museum has repatriated many of the Native American materials from their collection, as well as human remains back to New Zealand, applying the work of NAGPRA to all areas of their collections. Through their decolonization efforts, in addition to small gallery shows of contemporary artists, they were able to raise funds for the renovation of their new North American Hall, and reconsider how to include the voices of Indigenous people within exhibitions and the exhibitions process.⁴⁷

CO-CURATION AND SHARING RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH EXHIBITIONS

In addition to repatriation, the museum’s focus is on co-curating exhibitions with Indigenous people. They aim to make sure the voices of the people they represent in their exhibitions are heard. While raising funds for the North American hall, expected completion November 2021, they held small gallery shows that included contemporary Indigenous artists including Bunky Echo-Hawk, Rhonda Holy Bear, and Chris Pappan.

The artists were invited to explore the historical collections, and pair their own artwork with new or existing artwork. With these shows the museum learned not to speak for people, and included the communities they represented. In developing the exhibition, staff listened to the artists, resulting in all text and quotes directly from them. These small modern art shows were able to help the museum to raise the funds needed for the renovated hall, and helped donors to imagine what the hall could become. It also led to how the current *Apsáalooke (Ahp-SAH-luh-guh) Women and Warriors* exhibit was developed.⁴⁸

The Field Museum worked with Native American scholar and Apsáalooke woman, Nina Sanders to curate this exhibition. The exhibit aimed to bring to light harmful displays, where oftentimes shows are curated by scholars who do not originate from or have the first-hand, specialized knowledge of Indigenous communities. Sanders states,

Curator, Nina Sanders, and mount shop supervisor, Ann Prazer, installing the *Apsáalooke Women and Warriors* exhibit
Credit: Erin Hooley / Chicago Tribune





Apsáalooke Women and Warriors exhibit
at the Field Museum, Chicago, Illinois



"What we create here is going to reshape the way that cultural institutions and communities work together, how exhibitions are constructed, and who gets to educate the public about Native American culture."⁴⁹

Nina Sanders worked alongside eighteen Apsáalooke artists and scholars to construct the exhibition. Ideas and histories were shared, as well as artworks including photography, beadwork, video animation and clothing.⁵⁰ Ultimately, the exhibit aims to educate the public on contemporary Native life, while showcasing the artistry of Apsáalooke artistry from past to present day.

Through the current *Apsáalooke Women and Warriors* exhibition, as well as past small gallery shows of contemporary Native artists, the museum is gaining more knowledge and practice for how to include the individual perspectives of Native Americans in their soon-to-be renovated hall.⁵¹ This differs from using a multi-perspective, universal approach. For institutions claiming a universal approach to Native American voices, this could be conflicting, controversial, or differing in some individual points of view. Smaller exhibitions seem to be satisfactory with a single

perspective, though the renovated hall may take another approach to be more inclusive of a broader range of perspectives.

In consideration of the design aesthetics for the new hall, the museum not only works with a Native American Graphic Designer, but also seeks the advice of other Native partners. They do not plan on implementing one single design, such as specific patterns, as it may be exclusionary in only reflecting one tribe. Therefore, the aesthetics are kept neutral because it is representing many numbers of tribes/people. They are also considering universal elements that can be incorporated into the design, such as natural materials like locally-sourced wood.⁵²

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Field Museum is working toward becoming more inclusive and relevant to their Native communities. Through sharing responsibility of exhibition curation as well as including individual perspectives throughout the development and design processes, they are confronting past and present colonial practices.

Acknowledgments & Questioning Biases

Approaches to transparency and truth-telling.

“Land acknowledgments are good, but they’re a footnote.”⁵³

– Kay WalkingStick,
Contemporary Painter

In partnership with contemporary Indigenous artists, advisory boards, or other tribal members there is an opportunity to look deeper at what historical content visitors experience. In research titled *Native American Cultural Dissonance & Dark Heritage Solutions*, the author affirms that museums should not shy away from controversy, but to rework incorrect narratives regarding Native American history. Institutions should face the histories head on, often by including the feedback from advisory boards and tribal members. Part of this includes the dark or difficult history.⁵⁴ For one, this not only offers tribal members the chance to heal, but makes sure their story is told accurately. Equally as important, it educates the public on a full history, not one limited by our history books.

Cultural exhibits help viewers to construct their knowledge of the Nation’s history, and with museums as a place devoted to educating the public, it is crucial for them to lay out a full history. Many museums grapple with how to interpret difficult information or events throughout history. However, there are

many museums already experienced in this type of interpretation. While the Holocaust Museum tells of a dark history, it has become a place for research, knowledge, and healing.⁵⁵ Overall, cultural organizations must consider how the content, interpretation, terminology, and visual hierarchy graciously acknowledges past harms and a full truth, all while providing visitors with accurate information they need to connect emotionally.

One-off solutions do not lead to needed change or reparations for past harms. There is also no way to completely repair the past harms that have been caused by colonialist behaviors. However, there is an opportunity to uncover implicit biases in ourselves, our institutions, and shift our thinking in order to dismantle the current system and make museums more inclusive. Making these changes will not only have the potential to offer healing between institutions and native communities, but influence a more equitable mindset to allow for understanding and healing with other minority groups.

In her book, *Decolonizing Museums*, author Amy Lonetree suggests that the only way for museums to truly work towards being a decolonizing museum is to recognize past injustices and effects of colonialism. Truth-telling and acknowledgment of Native American’s traumatic past and effects of

colonialism lead towards decolonization.⁵⁶ Practicing transparency and truth-telling can be difficult and complex for organizations to navigate. It is a continual process of self-discovery on top of organizational acknowledgments to promote more equitable societies.

Further, the museum should take additional steps not only to return these objects, but to make amends with the communities from whom they were taken. This could be in the form of an apology and/or reinterpretation of existing or removed objects from the museum. Even removed items can offer the opportunity to discuss why an object is no longer represented in the museum, by leaving an empty space where it once belonged.

Case Study 1: Design for Dialogue

American Museum of Natural History
New York City, New York

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1869, the American Museum of Natural History is well-known for its scientific and cultural collections including dinosaur fossils, dioramas, gem and materials, and various ethnographic objects. Today, their global mission seeks to “discover, interpret, and disseminate information about human cultures, the natural world, and the universe through a wide-ranging program of scientific research, education, and exhibition.”⁵⁷

INTERPRETATION INTERVENTION

The American Museum of Natural History took a unique approach to an existing problematic diorama that opened up the opportunity for visitor dialogue. The museum, not unlike many other museums around the United States, displayed harmful depictions of Native people. This diorama, created

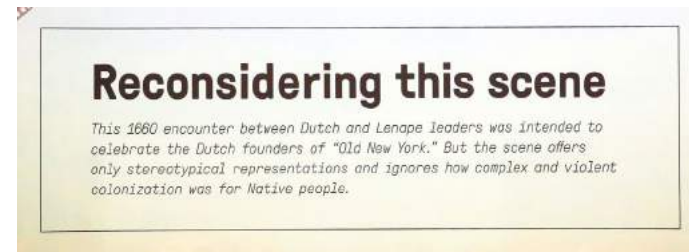
in 1939, had outdated, oversimplified, and incorrect information depicting a moment in time between the Dutch settlers to the United States and Lenape people. It showed both dominance over the Lenape by the Dutch, as well as incorrect stereotypical images of the Lenape people. Critics have called this scene one of cultural hierarchy instead of cultural exchange, as it was intended to imply.⁵⁸

Instead of redoing the scene, the museum decided to face head on the problems it presented to visitors. They consulted Lenape members, including visual historian Bradley Pecore, for direction of the old diorama. They hoped to determine how to most effectively reinterpret the diorama and directly call out the deficiencies in the scene. With the input of Lenape members, the museum posted oversized labels on the glass to grab visitor’s attention, prompting questions about the scene in front of them.



Re-interpreted scene of the 1939 Old New York diorama at the American Museum of Natural History
Credit: R. Mickens /© AMNH

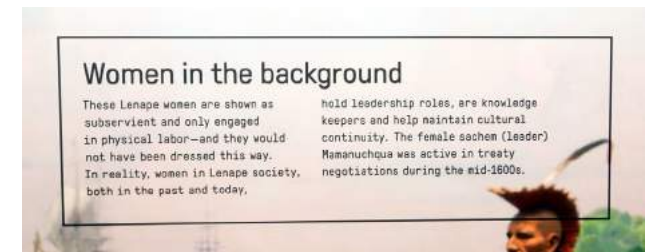
Re-interpreted panels on the glass
of the 1939 Old New York diorama
Credit: R. Mickens / © AMNH



The signage upon the glass points out the cultural inaccuracies of the Lenape people compared to the more correctly defined Dutch settlers. It demonstrates the lack of knowledge about the culture and people. In addition, one panel asks about where the Lenape people are now, acknowledging that the culture is still alive today.

The museum has also turned this into a learning tool for students. In a learning tool for grades 3-5, the text mentions “This is part of a larger effort to acknowledge the ongoing impact of colonialism, as well as the urgent need to reconceive how diverse peoples and cultures are represented in the Museum.” An included activity let’s students see the diorama pre-signage prior to their visit, and then explore the included signage during their visit. It prompts students to “discover biases” in the original diorama of who created the representations. A post-visit follow-up activity encourages the class to discuss perspective and bias.⁵⁹

Regarding the decision to add signage to the old diorama, Curator Peter Whiteley states “We definitely want people to have an awareness of past depictions. We don’t want to forget that, because otherwise we forget a history of past oppression. And until we’re prepared to recognize that, the possibility for genuine reconciliation is not going to be there.”⁶⁰



While the museum could have taken steps to completely change their existing diorama, they decided to actively combat the stereotypes through a transparent approach. They found opportunity in leaving the misrepresentations on display for visitors to question their own biases. This hopefully encourages more critical thinking when visiting other museums that include Native American representations.

CONCLUSION

In reviewing this study, there is a similar opportunity for artist interventions that can offer thought-provoking layers of information to existing exhibitions. As artists have the ability to challenge the status quo in expansive ways, there is a great opportunity to apply this tactic to artist partnerships to promote new methods of transparency with institutional spaces. This tactic could prove especially useful for more permanent exhibitions which can be costly to quickly alter to parallel societal shifts.

Case Study 2: Telling Their Own Stories

Minneapolis Institute of Art
Minneapolis, Minnesota

INTRODUCTION

Not only recognizing a lack of Indigenous art within the contemporary art field, but also specifically a lack of female-identifying Native artists represented within museums, drove the need for a first of its kind exhibition. From that need, *Hearts of Our People* was created as the first major exhibition of Native women artists at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. This show of fifty Native artists and one hundred and seventeen artworks highlighted creators over a time span of one thousand years.⁶¹ The exhibition recognized and honored the lives of women artists.

ACKNOWLEDGING TRUTHS & EMBRACING TRANSPERANCY THROUGH A NATIVE-CREATED EXHIBITION

On display were traditional works including textiles and baskets as well as contemporary works such as video and installation pieces. The names of the creators were included wherever possible to show the individuals behind their art.⁶² This approach works in contrast to the typical anthropological tactic of highlighting the materiality, time frame, and tribe name, which often did not include information about the maker. The exhibition sought to change this minimizing way of portraying Native works.

In an interview with Co-curator for the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Jill Ahlberg Yohe, she mentions that her, as well as her co-curator for the exhibition, Teri Greeves, knew they needed to include the specialized input of Native representatives to make an

exhibition that told the truth of the wide variety of the Indigenous experiences. Therefore, they developed an Advisory Board of Native and non-Native women specifically for this exhibition that was six years in the making. The curators acknowledged that they as well as the museum did not have the right to tell the stories of these women, yet the women themselves did.⁶³

Oftentimes contemporary Indigenous art is interpreted as craft or not being of high quality in order to display alongside other fine art. Yet, there are many Indigenous communities that contain their own specific aesthetic systems with their own values that inform their work. Jill goes on to say that “the majority of Indigenous artists understand that they have a legacy that they are responding to from the past that they have to the future, and a responsibility of the present . . . to the future.” She notes that this understanding produces cultural accountability that is part of a collective.⁶⁴ While this creative process and conceptualization may differ per artist, it is distinct from traditional ways contemporary western artists create, which often takes on a more individualistic approach.

The exhibition was developed surrounding the question, “Why do women create?” Three major themes derived from this question; Legacy, Relationships, and Power. Therefore, instead of focusing on a chronological examination, the exhibition was arranged with these themes in mind. The inclusion of historical and contemporary side by side led to relationships that could be seen throughout history.⁶⁵ One example includes an unlikely pairing: a 1985 El

Camino displayed next to a storage jar. While seemingly unrelated, the artist Rose Simpson drew inspiration for her “vessel’s” unique painting from the traditional black-on-black Pueblo pottery styles of artist, Maria Martinez (1887-1980). The El Camino, aptly named *Maria*, speaks to identity as well as the empowerment of women.⁶⁶

The stories of these women were critical to the exhibition, and a way for the artists themselves to speak their truths. Part of the way they highlighted these voices was through extensive video interviews with around thirty women throughout Canada and the United States. These videos were displayed on screens throughout the exhibition. In addition, quotes were included on the exhibition’s walls from these interviews. Headphone stops of around

20–30 objects let visitors explore the artist's intent directly from the artist's mouths.⁶⁷

Further, there was thoughtful consideration of language throughout the labels. Whenever possible, the language of the creator was included, which ended up in forty different languages represented.⁶⁸ While an arduous collection and translation process, the inclusion of different languages showed respect to the creator and their culture and demonstrated their importance to the public.

Jill mentioned that through the artwork and labels, they aimed to help visitors gently question their assumptions about Native art and artists, with the possibility of constructing new knowledge about the vast array of Indigenous experiences. Visitors would learn about the history of the objects and lived experiences of those who created



Hearts of Our People exhibit pairing of artists Maria Martinez and Rose Simpson at the Minneapolis Institute of Art



Hit installation by artist Tanis S'eiltin

them.⁶⁹ Tanis S'eiltin's mixed-media work, *Hit*, exemplifies the persisted toxic masculinity due to settler colonialism through wartime extraction and control, acknowledging harms to Native women and communities.⁷⁰ Each artist had their own lived experiences which visitors could see through their work.

Community engagement groups for the exhibition were established to connect with Native communities in order to allow them to feel safe within a museum space and acknowledge there were no sacred or burial items exhibited. Further, being a vessel for truth-telling about difficult truths created an emotive experience. Therefore a Native-only reflection room was presented in the museum, to create space to feel everything that goes along with the exhibition including history, pain, and beauty. While difficult truths were addressed, the exhibition was overall about the empowerment of these women to uphold their Native cultures despite historical and present day hardships.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the exhibition acknowledges the importance of women art-makers to their communities, which the mainstream American art world has largely ignored.⁷¹ What made this an even more important exhibition was that the museum acknowledged they were not the experts, demonstrated in the long process of relationship-building and inclusion of Native voices. The art and artists' stories embraced the truths of trauma and suffering, and even more so, Native empowerment. The museum, through this exhibit, created space for transparency around the discrepancies in American history, and hidden histories. Because of this, the exhibition offered a step forward in visitor understanding and community healing.

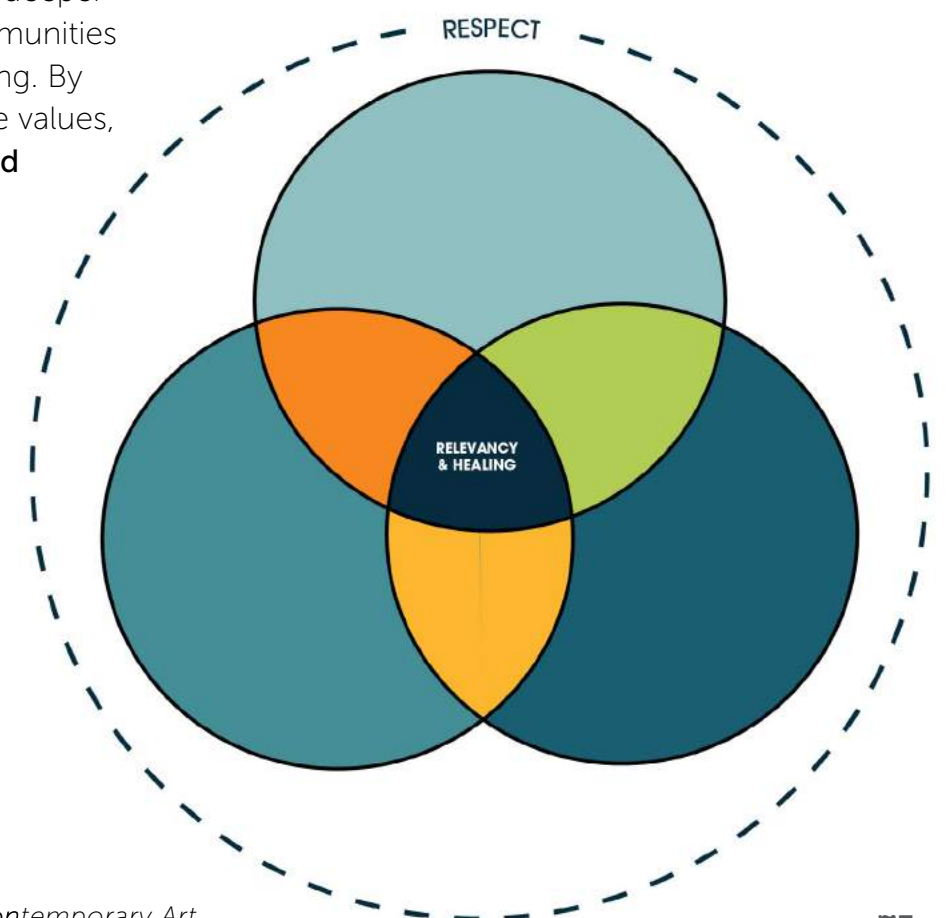
RESPECT, RELEVANCY & HEALING

The chosen examples show how cultural organizations can implement the 3-R values of Relationship, Representation, and Recognition into thoughtful practice. Through reviewing commonalities among these examples, the ethics of **respect** become apparent. This includes respect for others of diverse ethnicities, origins, and ways of life. These organizations harnessed a respectful approach that involved removing their ego and personal perspectives and biases to create space for new knowledge and perspectives.

In demonstrating values and practices based on respect, the museums found deeper relevance to their intended communities as well as opportunities for healing. By acknowledging the impact of the values, the opportunity for **relevancy and healing** appear at the center of

these guiding values. Relevancy encompasses inclusion, understanding, and most importantly, healing. It includes both relevance to the cultures represented and relevance to society. There is a great opportunity through incorporating practices based on respect that open doors to create a welcoming space for Native people to integrate their unique knowledge and promote cultural continuance. Creating a welcoming environment not only demonstrates respect for Native people, but an openness to better understand and represent people of all backgrounds.

Respect is illustrated around all of the guiding values and practices. At the center is relevancy and healing.



Evaluating the Framework

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation of the framework built on values and practices was tested with organizations who were at different stages of relationship-building with their Native communities to understand if the framework was usable at different stages. The Burke Museum, Baltimore Museum of Art, and Michener Art Museum were the predetermined institutions where there were existing connections and a general understanding of institutional experiences with Native communities. In addition, other museum professionals provided their feedback to a presentation on the framework at the National Association for Museum Exhibitions Wednesday Coffee Break on March 10, 2021.

About the Institutions

The **Michener Art Museum**, opened in 1988, is a regional art museum located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Their museum collects and exhibits historical and contemporary art and cultural heritage of works within the Buck County area, including a large collection of impressionist paintings.⁷² While the organization does not currently have a Native collection, they are interested in pursuing a relationship with Native artists and are examining potential strategies to do so.

Founded in 1914, the **Baltimore Museum of Art** in Maryland holds an array of historical and contemporary works, with an extensive Henri Matisse collection. Their galleries

include art from African, European and American works, textiles from around the world, and emerging contemporary artists.⁷³ Their 2020 vision included collecting works of only women-identifying artists, with the addition of two works by well-known contemporary Native artists, a first for the museum. Along with this collecting approach, they decided to work toward deaccessioning works by white male artists to fund diversification efforts.⁷⁴

The **Burke Museum**, opened in 1885 and located in Seattle, Washington, collects and exhibits natural and cultural collections. They actively work with Native communities to repatriate works from their collection as well as have developed a Native American Advisory Board for programming, policy, and advocacy guidance.⁷⁵ Further, they have been working with Native artists for many years to authentically develop lasting relationships.

The **National Association for Museum Exhibitions (NAME)** Wednesday Coffee Break is presented by the American Alliance of Museums. They are an informal conversation on exhibit topics discussed with museum professionals. The framework was presented and discussed with ten people including museum students and professionals.

FINDINGS

Michener Art Museum

Laura Igoe, Curator of American Art



USABILITY

For an institution like the Michener Art Museum, the framework, in curator, Laura Igoe's point of view seems to be usable. While too broad to utilize via an action plan, this framework could be applied throughout different areas of the museum's functions.

CONCEPT CLARITY & UNDERSTANDING

While overall very clear, it could be helpful to see case studies of successful collaborative projects between museums and artists.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

While historical works of art may not coincide with their institutional focus, contemporary art is of interest. In the meantime, Laura is considering the creation of an exhibition that pairs a well-known painting of the Penn Treaty with Lenape artists perspectives.

TAKEAWAYS

Museums without Native collections could still utilize a framework like this to provide guidance and reflection in engaging with Native communities. While this framework had a focus specifically for museums that hold Indigenous collections, it can be expanded to fit the needs of other museums.

Baltimore Museum of Art

Darienne Turner, Assistant Curator of Indigenous Art of the Americas



USABILITY

In first review of the framework, curator Darienne Turner believes this type of framework could be best utilized in a Natural History type-museum where she believes greater harm has been inflicted. In addition, smaller scale institutions would be able to benefit from such a framework.

GUIDING VALUES

The 3-R values seem like the right ones.

CONCEPT CLARITY & UNDERSTANDING

The framework initially included questions and additional resources for considering Land Acknowledgments, however, Darienne mentioned that it felt like a separate topic. In determining language for the practices (now “Sharing Responsibility”) she believes the term “Sharing Authority” was correct over “Giving Over Authority.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Below are additional considerations Darienne felt would benefit such a framework:

- Define the audience
- Include paying people for their labor
- Consider how these practices can be inexpensively applied when developing an exhibit in smaller institutions.
- Simplify text

TAKEAWAYS

To explore the topic of Land Acknowledgments on a deeper level, more questions would need to be included. In addition, synthesizing information into the most important points will offer a more understandable and easily accessible tool for museum professionals

Burke Museum

Polly Olsen, Tribal Liaison
Kate Bunn-Marcuse, Director, Bill Holm Center for the Study of Northwest Native Art
Curator of Northwest Native Art



USABILITY

Polly: A framework such as this can be usable for institutions if there is a 2-way focus.
Katie: The questions included in the framework are helpful and ones that will need to be asked over and over again.

GUIDING VALUES

Polly: The mention of healing is crucial as relevance is obtained through a respectful and healing relationship.
Katie: She introduced her own practice with her chosen 4-Rs. It includes Respect at the top followed by Relationships, Responsibility, and Reciprocity. She mentioned I already have reciprocity built into key questions.

CONCEPT CLARITY & UNDERSTANDING

Polly: The framework should demonstrate bilateral benefits. Along the lines of language considerations, Polly believes “giving over authority” is better than “sharing authority.” In a second discussion and preceding iteration of the framework, Polly notes that the included questions are good ones to ask. Through questions such as “What is uncomfortable about sharing responsibility” and “What does a successful relationship look like?” there is an opportunity to become more present which allows a collaborative shift to occur.
Katie: Overall the framework is clear, with a few areas of further consider. For one, it’s

important to consider the equity in benefits. Often it is easy to say what the benefits are to the institution as they receive almost all benefits. Katie also suggests to include paying people in responsible ways. Lastly, in taking the realization of one’s personal or institutional biases a step further, it’s important to consider how those biases will be realized, part of which includes being surrounded by people who will help them be uncovered.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Polly: In consideration of sharing additional resources, such as Indigenous territory land maps, Polly states that maps portray a colonial control over land. The desire to contain leads toward another layer of erasure.
Katie: Overall, different departments within the museum may use this framework in different ways such as in the store, gallery, collections, research departments. Therefore the answers may differ for each such as with the question “How will you and your institution embrace other ways of knowing?”

TAKEAWAYS

Ensure the questions are focused on equity. For example, the the term “empathy” can be power-altering language, therefore, transitioning to more equity-based language such as “reciprocity” will be more effective. In addition, a self-reflection journal will match the reflective / actionable intent of the framework.

National Association for Museum Exhibitions (NAME)

Various museum professionals within the United States



Overall, the conversation was more heavily focused on how to decolonize rather than the specific questions relating to the clarity and usability of the framework.

USABILITY

Some respondents mentioned wanting to know the steps to take toward decolonization in a more linear format. They felt like they wanted to know more information on the overall process of decolonization.

CONCEPT CLARITY & UNDERSTANDING

The specific relationship to Native artists was not as evident within the general decolonization prompts.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following notes were shared by various museum professionals on the call

- The work of decolonization is 98% about relationships.
- Institutions have to acknowledge that they will change as a person as well as an institution in order to do this work.
- For some institutions, the idea of decolonizing practices derived from being approached by an outside individual/organization and whether they were ready to jump on the opportunity.
- Does the model change depending on who starts the process (institution-led or artist-led)?
- Consider the word “input.” Are real and binding decision-making practices being handed over to Native people?

TAKEAWAYS

It’s important to be clear that this journal does not stand on its own, but is a larger part of the decolonization process, research, and resources.

SUMMARY

Each organization provided feedback that helped shape the quality of the framework and intent of its creation into a usable tool. This included clarifying language, general language-use for equitable interactions, areas that could exist beyond the scope of the framework, and acknowledgment of where this framework lives in the larger decolonization conversation. While sometimes there were conflicting ideas between organizations, each perspective was vital in understanding how organizations and museum professionals that are at different stages of decolonization work could benefit from using a tool developed out of the included values, practices, and prompts.

Equity in Design

Based on the previous research of formative evaluation, interviews, literature reviews, and case studies, an interactive and equity-centered tool was developed for its potential to be used by cultural workers and institutions in collaboration with Indigenous artists. The created tool aims to work alongside the decolonization process and provide reflective prompts for cultural workers to use at any time. The framework does not provide linear steps toward decolonizing a museum but aims to bring an awareness of personal biases, encourages readers to question their and their organization's intentions of these collaborations, and challenges museum workers to consider more equitable interactions with Indigenous artists and communities. This tool encourages cultural workers to reflect on the work of their museum specific to each artist, community, and collection they come across.

The goals of the framework and related tool aim to:

- Encourage a reflective practice based on reciprocity.
- Demonstrate values through an easy to remember acronym, that can be applied to all areas within museum practices, particularly exhibition development and design.
- Offer different approaches to implement these values into practice in order to promote equity.
- Include prompts that encourage institutions to review their decolonization approaches in relation to working with Native artists and communities.

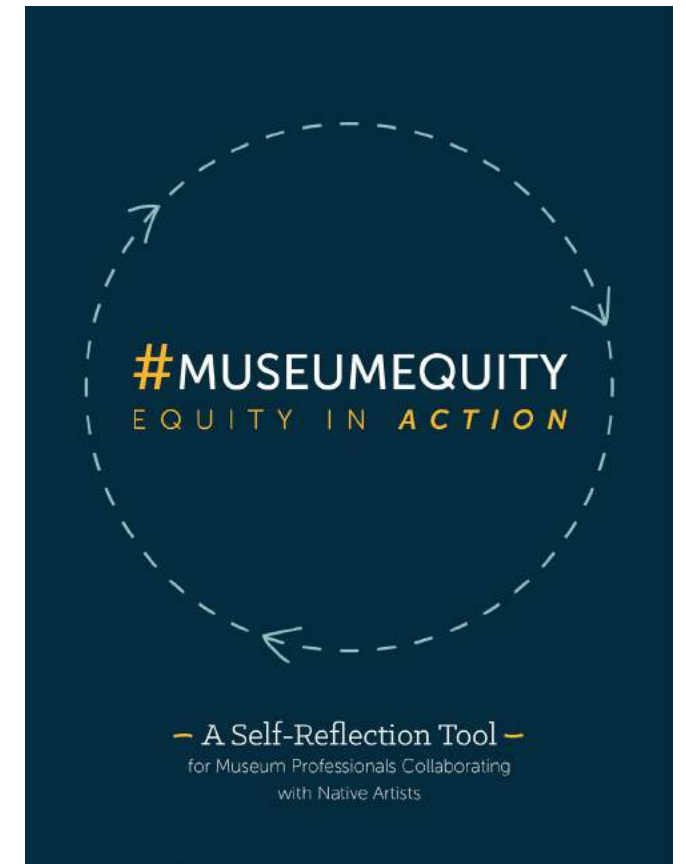
- Promote actionable steps through the use of journal prompts that include space to re-envision practices through writing and drawing.
- Demonstrate that this work is an ongoing and lifelong process.
- Explore how to apply these internal practices to more external work of museum activism.

DESCRIPTION OF TOOL

The tool created out of this framework is intended to be used by museum professionals and other cultural workers at any institution type in working with contemporary Native artists. The type of tool developed based on the needs and interests of museum professionals is a self-reflection journal. Here, the framework values and practices are illustrated via a Venn diagram with descriptions. Following brief descriptions of each practice are prompts for cultural institutions to reflect upon. These prompts are designed to guide organizations and individuals on how to achieve approaches which are most in line with their mission while integrating cultural accuracy and authenticity through inclusivity. The prompts are a self-reflection tool to be used alongside the decolonization process. They serve as a call to action, encouraging organizations to take meaningful steps forward in this work. Instead of creating a set of best practices, these prompts were developed to be easily

applied to operational methods and practices of various museum types. This is because the work is specific to each community, location, collection, and more. In an ever changing field, there is no one correct way to fulfill this work. The journal promotes a cyclical process for organizations to continually refer to and evolve with. The prompts are a way to decolonize our minds and ways of experiencing the world, that open up space for new, authentic interactions of understanding.

While the application of this work may differ per museum type, all institutions that have a Native collection can use this framework to dive more deeply into decolonization work with contemporary Native artists, including history, natural history, and art museums. The hope is that one day in the near future, the entire field will naturally incorporate decolonization and equitable practices at its core.



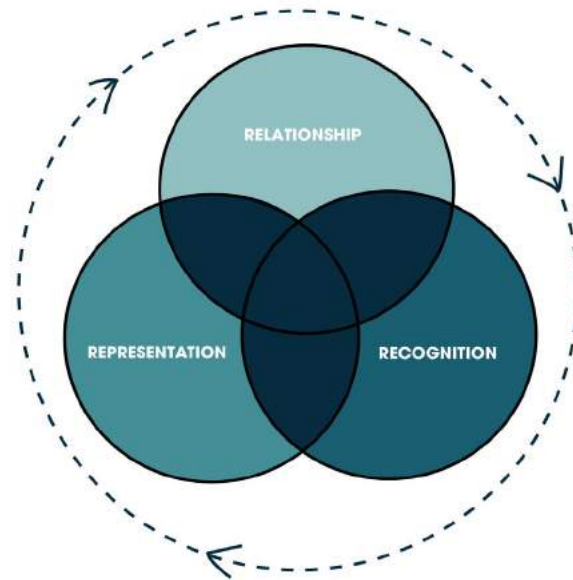
The self-reflection tool is presented with the title #MuseumEquity. Museum Equity stands as straightforward language, encompassing what the journal aims to achieve. In addition, as many social movements today have been largely driven via social media, the hashtag is included as one that is easily dispersible via social media campaigns to promote curiosity, interest, and momentum in this work. Further, a subtitle "Equity in Action" reinforces that the act of self-reflection demonstrates action being taken.

The title is encompassed in a circular path with arrows to highlight the cyclical and continual nature of reflection.

| 3 Guiding VALUES

The depicted 3-R values provide a framework for cultural workers in developing respectful interactions with contemporary Native artists and communities. It prompts individuals and institutions to review their intention and hopes for these interactions by incorporating an inclusionary and decolonizing approach.

The values are shown in relationship to one another shaped by circles, demonstrating a cyclical process, as the work is ongoing. Each new exhibition, relationship, and experience will create new opportunities for considering the 3-Rs both personally and institutionally.



The three guiding values essential to this collaborative work are shown in relationship to one another through overlapping circles. Further, they are illustrated within a larger circle, showing a broader connection.

Following the introduction to the 3 guiding values, each value is individually highlighted to dive further into the importance of each one, while still illustrated as part of a larger whole. Icons are incorporated as a memorable way to visualize the values.

RELATIONSHIP

RELATIONSHIP

→ **Development of authentic and sustained interactions.**

Authentic and equity-driven relationships are essential to working with Native artists and communities. This approach makes Native communities the priority, over collections and institutional operations. This value is one of, if not the most important considerations for this work and necessitates thoughtful consideration of who an organization wants to develop relationships with, why, who it benefits, and what type of relationship they hope to create.

Defining the *VALUES*

REPRESENTATION

REPRESENTATION

→ **How people, places, and collections are included and portrayed.**

How people, places, and collections are represented shows what the institution values and what they portray to the public. This portrayal affects how the public experiences them. Museums should consider who is the guiding or knowledgeable voice expressing their meaning, and whether there are gaps in voice or context.

Defining the *VALUES*

RECOGNITION

RECOGNITION

→ **Acknowledging our impact within the organization and within society.**

What are we acknowledging about our past, present and future? What can we acknowledge about ourselves as well as our institution that will allow museums to become more credible and trusted by doing so? What do we need to let go of? Institutional actions should be carefully and ethically considered for their societal impact.

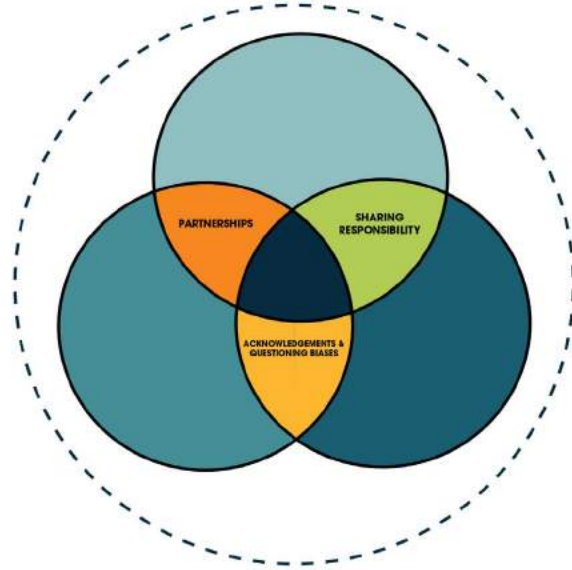
Defining the *VALUES*

Values in *PRACTICE*

At the intersections of the 3-R values is an opportunity to engage more fully in inclusion and decolonization by implementing these values into practice in meaningful and respectful ways.

These practices include, but are not limited to, Partnerships, Sharing Responsibility, and Acknowledgements & Questioning Biases.

Alongside these practices are on opportunity for self-reflection that has the potential to turn into actionable steps. The self-reflection prompts are not linear, but exist at any stage of the decolonizing and inclusionary process, and are intended to be repeated. Efforts toward equity are never finished.



Following the brief definitions of all guiding values are approaches for implementing these values into thoughtful practice. Each of the practices also include brief definitions and related icons for easy recollection. Further, the practices include key questions for each individual and institution to using it to reflect upon. These questions were developed with people in mind, prompting users to consider how the institution partners with Native artists, shares responsibility with Native artists, and develops transparent practices while questioning their own biases.

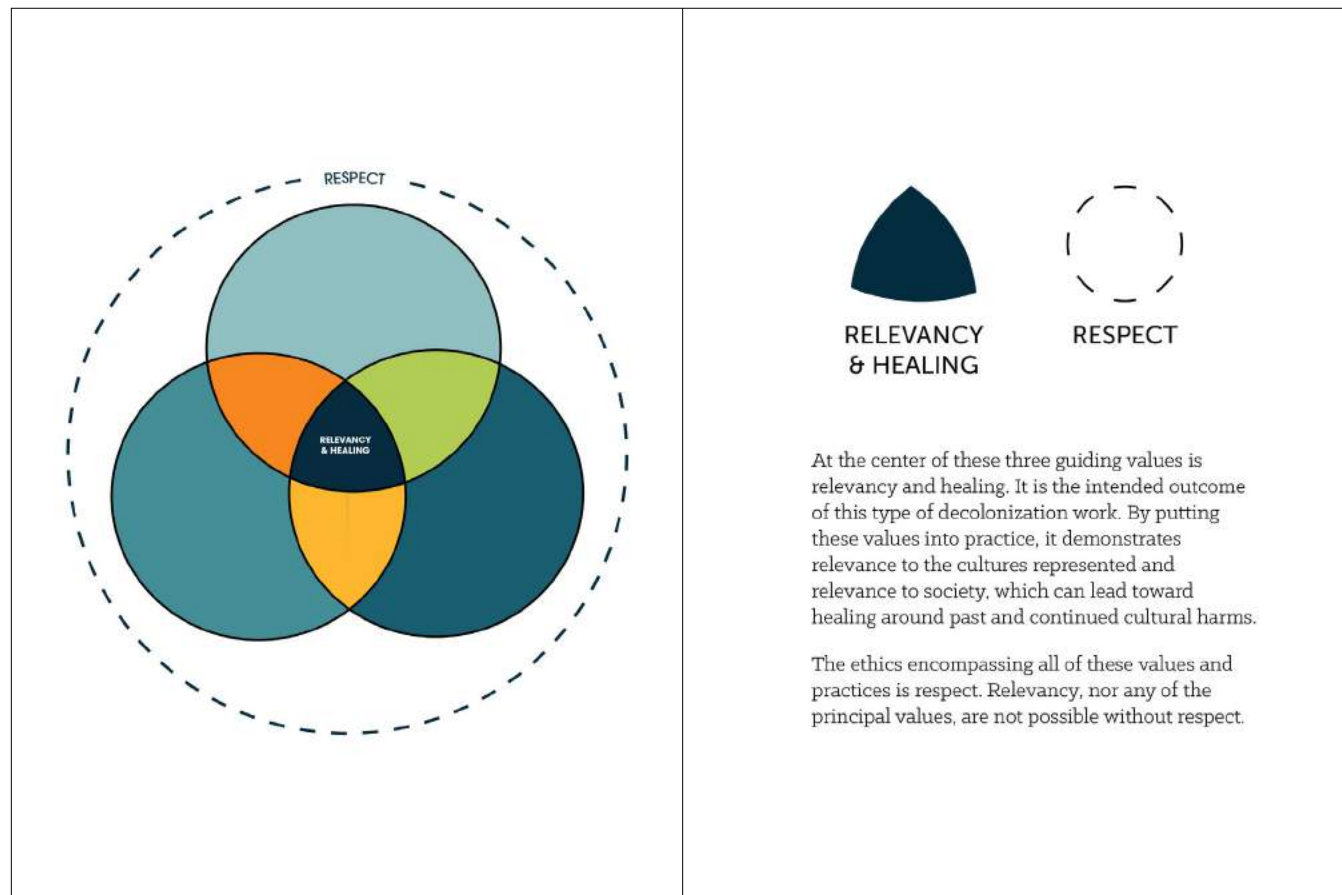
With the knowledge of the complexities of this work, the questions ask individuals to reflect on their actions as it relates specifically to them personally and institutionally.

Questions were carefully considered to encourage individuals to think outside of their typical museum routine and implement a more inclusive and equity-focused model of continual inquiry.

These questions get to the root of relationship-building which is essential for collaborative practices with all people, especially those who have been underrepresented, misrepresented, and harmed by museum practices.

Knowing that people retain information in different ways, an open space is provided following each practice for museum professionals to write or draw in their re-imagining of these practices.

<p>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & QUESTIONING BIASES — Self-Reflection Prompts</p>  <p>Approaches to transparency and truth-telling.</p> <p>This practice of transparency and truth-telling can also be difficult and complex to navigate. Not only is it important to acknowledge the work of organizations, but firstly, understand the personal work needed to promote better equity. If done authentically and thoughtfully, this practice processes larger trust in the institution. Consider what these acknowledgements mean to ourselves and society. How can we start and/or maintain the continual work of questioning our own personal and institutional biases?</p>	<p>What biases exist in your mind in working with Indigenous artists?</p> <p>Who can you rely on to point out biases you may not be aware of?</p> <p>How can you challenge these biases?</p>	<p>In what ways is your organization successful or unsuccessful in achieving transparency for difficult truths and/or their colonial impact?</p> <p>What interpretation techniques could be used to allow space for greater truth-telling and authentic conversation? What are some of the challenges? What are some opportunities?</p> <p>How will you and your institution embrace other ways of knowing?</p>	<p>Use this space to reconsider how we make acknowledgements and what it means to ourselves and others.</p>
<p>PARTNERSHIPS — Self-Reflection Prompts</p>  <p>Relationships between Native communities and institutions.</p> <p>Developing partnerships takes time. It involves a deep understanding of the institutional needs and needs of the communities intended to work with. There are many unknowns when creating these partnerships. Yet, stepping back to let others forward and embracing vulnerability at any stage in the relationship can lead to more equitable and authentic partnerships.</p>	<p>Consider who you want to create a partnership with and why it is important to you and/or your organization.</p> <p>What are the benefits of this collaboration for the organization, artist, and community? How are these benefits distributed?</p> <p>How are or will these relationships be developed?</p> <p>How are or will relationships be sustained? Are they temporary or long-term?</p>	<p>What does a successful relationship look like?</p> <p>How do you plan to compensate someone for their time and expertise?</p> <p>What sort of environment will you create to allow for sharing, learning, and healing?</p> <p>What does it look like to create "with" instead of "for"?</p>	<p>Use this space to visualize what new partnerships could look like.</p>
<p>SHARING RESPONSIBILITY — Self-Reflection Prompts</p>  <p>Full input & access in all areas of the museum of the peoples being represented.</p> <p>Similar to the development of partnerships is how to manage those partnerships in ways that recognize the unique knowledge of the community. This approach suggests an uprooting of traditional hierarchies in museum functions that derive from a colonialist mindset of superiority, that then creates space for new knowledge sharing and reciprocity.</p>	<p>What does decision-making look like at your institution? Who makes decisions?</p> <p>What are the needs of the community you intend to serve?</p> <p>What is uncomfortable about sharing responsibility and why?</p> <p>What are barriers to sharing responsibility?</p> <p>If your institution has a Native collection, how do you allow access to your collections?</p>	<p>How do you include, or plan to include, Indigenous artists' voices? Whose voices are missing? Why is it successful or unsuccessful?</p> <p>What techniques will you use to effectively share responsibility in reciprocity with this individual/group?</p> <p>Who decides what is Native art? Who decides who is a Native artist?</p> <p>Listen. Open space for artists to have their voices heard.</p>	<p>Use this space to reimagine what sharing responsibility looks like.</p>



Lastly, in order to show the opportunity of putting these values into practice, the diagram illustrates relevancy and healing at the core of the work, with respect shown as the larger encompassing circle. The acts of personal inquiry allow for a deep disruption of the colonial structures within ourselves and our places of work. By undoing these harmful colonial practices, and implementing new ones that have people are the forefront, there is opportunity for healing.

CALL TO ACTION

Based on the research, evaluations, and self-reflection journal, a call to action is also necessary to promote awareness to this type of people-focused and reflective inquiry. These calls to action offers ways to apply the values and practices found within the journal to museum activism.

Some potential opportunities for calls to action include succinct messaging on apparel, accessories, or projections on museum walls. These calls to action aim to incite further reflection in museums practices, with the act of reflection itself an action toward more people-focused thinking. These simplified yet direct words encourage cultural workers to recall equitable approaches through use of the 3-R values of Relationships, Representation, and Recognition, coining it as “#MuseumEquity” or “Equity in Action” for museum practices. While the examples can directly relate to decolonization practices, they are also essential to museum interactions with Indigenous artists.



- ▲ A projection asks “Who is included? Who is Missing? Who Decides? Who Benefits?” These questions are displayed both for the museum’s staff and visitors. Staff are prompted to consider their own approaches to working with individuals and communities. Visitors can ask questions about what the projection means, or begin to explore their own questions about what messages museums project to the public.



◀ Apparel incorporates the hashtag "MuseumEquity" to promote the term as a part of a potential movement. The first shirt includes all 3 values from the self-reflection journal via Venn diagram, while the other notes the incorporated values as part of "The New Museum Normal."

▶ A variety of pins includes different versions of designs that incorporate the hashtag, circle, 3-R values, and action subtitle.

ADDITIONAL BRAINSTORMED IDEAS

Native Flash Mob

This moment of activism delivers an unexpected presence and creates the opportunity for museum staff to ask themselves questions about representation and inclusion within the organization.

Native Silent Dance Party

This event speaks to the underrepresentation and often lack of Native voice in the museum.

While these examples demonstrate a small array of the possibilities for calls to action, true opportunities for museum equity involve the relinquishment of typical programmatic decision-making to include Native voices.



SUMMARY

Through applying a framework of key values and ways to implement those values into practices, a self-reflection journal becomes a usable and easily applicable tool for museum professionals in collaborating with Native artists. Further, the journal offers a multi-disciplinary approach that works alongside various learning styles, and therefore has the potential to be used by and influence a larger variety of people.

In addition, the calls to action have the opportunity for an impactful intervention. These interventions can stimulate new dialogue among museum professionals and Native communities, and well as the public experiencing these calls to action. The journal and calls to action become more accessible by use of a hashtag that has the potential to expand through social media channels.



Endnotes

- 1 Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- 2 *We Must Decolonize Our Museums* | Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko | TEDxDirigo (YouTube, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyZAgG8--Xg>.
- 3 Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *We Must Decolonize Our Museums* | Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko | TEDxDirigo (YouTube, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyZAgG8--Xg>.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ted Loos, "A Canadian Museum Promotes Indigenous Art. But Don't Call It 'Indian,'" *The New York Times*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/13/arts/design/art-gallery-of-ontario-indigenous-art.html>.
- 8 Keith Martin, Dylan Robinson, and David Garneau, *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016).
- 9 *Decolonization Is for Everyone* | Nikki Sanchez | TEDxSFU, (Youtube, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP9x1NnCWNY>.
- 10 "Is That Hung White?," American Alliance of Museums, May 19, 2020, <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/05/19/is-that-hung-white-a-conversation-on-the-state-of-museum-exhibitions-and-race/>.
- 11 Betty Farrell and Maria Medvedeva. *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (American Association of Museums, 2010), <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Demographic-Change-and-the-Future-of-Museums.pdf>.
- 12 *We Must Decolonize Our Museums* | Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko | TEDxDirigo (YouTube, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyZAgG8--Xg>.
- 13 Virgil Ortiz, interview by Katie Naber, e-mail correspondence, February 23, 2021.
- 14 "Africa Galleries Trace Objects' Rich Histories," Penn Museum, Accessed March 17, 2021, <https://www.penn.museum/about/contact-us/2-uncategorised/381-africa-galleries-trace-objects-rich-histories>.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Jess Bicknell, Penn Museum Virtual Presentation, September 18, 2020.
- 17 Kate Quinn, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, June 10, 2020.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Joshua Lessard, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call, February 5, 2021.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Kevin Schott, Penn Museum Virtual Presentation, September 18, 2020.
- 23 Jess Bicknell, Penn Museum Virtual Presentation, September 18, 2020.
- 24 "Abbe Museum Strategic Plan," Abbe Museum, accessed October 3, 2020, <https://abbemuseum.wordpress.com/>.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, interview by Katie Naber, Zoom call September 29, 2020.

“I think what’s important about art and express their point of view, their voice, you just become more humane to the

having Native artists is that they can their opinions. And when you see that, culture and who was here.”

– Julie Buffalohead

Quote from interview on March 11, 2021

Julie Buffalohead

Revisionist History Lesson, 2015



IV

CONCLUSION

While inequalities toward minority populations have been present throughout United States history, today’s heightened societal awareness and contemplation is the ideal time for museums to reflect on their past and current practices, and begin to implement more equitable methods of practice. The implementation of these practices, however, should be thoughtfully considered, not rushed into as a performative exercise. It is crucial to take the first steps toward mutually beneficial outcomes. Museums are widely accepted as trusted sources of information, giving them a vital responsibility to combat stereotypes and inaccurate understandings of Native people. Without actively responding to the growing needs of Native populations within the United States, misrepresentation resulting in cultural harm and public misunderstandings will prevail, fueling the mistrust of cultural institutions by underrepresented communities.

The preliminary argument of this thesis states that by integrating contemporary art into exhibition development and design in conjunction with progress towards decolonization, museums can work towards a more accurate and equitable representation of Native communities. The preceding

research demonstrates effective approaches which organizations have taken that can be applied when collaborating with Native artists and communities. This research also shows how the integration of Native contemporary art into exhibitions supports educational initiatives whereby the public is shown an overarching message of museum equity. The findings show that decolonization is imperative to breaking down barriers of cultural misunderstanding and misinterpretation within society. Through these findings, key themes arise that show how the process centers around ethical, respectful, and collaborative practices. Integrating these practices gives space for Native communities to be the deciders of their own cultural continuance. Additionally, while art in its own right can be healing, tying it to historical narratives and contemporary experiences uncovers new ways of relating to cultures with diverse beliefs.

Through research and interviews, anecdotal and data-driven feedback reinforces the importance of art in museums that sparks visitor curiosity, challenges pre-existing perceptions on historical truths, and museums as a place for Native people to have their voices represented. Undoubtedly, the cultural and stereotypical picture of the past that museums often portray of Native people has the potential to be confronted and recalibrated to uncover true Native histories while accurately portraying Native life today. Furthermore, it incorporates the voices of Native people to decide how they want to be portrayed. The research supports the idea that art can be a vital tool to help reinterpret objects, content, and overall collections. Additionally, art often extracts an emotional response which allows people to connect to themselves and acknowledge the experiences of others.

In order to assist museum professionals in developing effective interactions and collaborations with Native people, a self-reflection journal was developed for professionals to use as part of their practice. The self-reflection journal was created out of recurring themes derived from research that formed into key values and practices. The key values include relationship, representation, and recognition, all of which resurfaced throughout the research, case studies, and interviews. These concepts apply to the work of museum professionals in organizations that hold cultural collections. Furthermore, the self-reflection journal includes a multidisciplinary approach that caters to a wide range of pedagogies. By utilizing such a tool, museums create space to respectfully incorporate the voices, perspectives, and unique knowledge of Native artists that can lead to greater institutional relevancy and healing from cultural harms.

While this thesis is primarily focused on Indigenous inclusion and representation in the museum sector through contemporary art, the concepts and the self-reflection journal aim to be applicable to institutions working with a variety of minority and underrepresented populations.

The research started looking specifically at the inclusion of contemporary art and artists within museums and has expanded to integrate relationship-building, healing, and personal growth as part of essential practice. The tool invites people to reflect personally and professionally. While this reflection can be difficult, it is the starting point for true and progressive systemic change. Moments of personal reflection within the thesis are a testament to this opportunity for museum professionals and organizations.

Future Research

OVERALL RESEARCH

Future research on this topic includes a review of other institutions around the world, such as in New Zealand and Australia that are at the forefront of decolonization practices. These insights would offer a more global viewpoint to the overall findings. Alongside this research would be additional interviews with artists to convey more well-rounded perspectives, and an exploration of other artistic interventions as case studies.

DESIGN APPROACH

A more comprehensive review of the usability, successes and short-comings of the self-reflection tool would be reviewed with various museum professionals and museum types. In addition to this, evaluations would be conducted on the efficacy of the conceived calls to action. A Native partner would be connected with as soon as possible and involved in the decision-making process of the implementation of both efforts.

Further iterations of the journal would be designed to determine aspects that are most visually and interactively engaging. Part of these iterations involves the integration of key case studies within the journal as examples for individuals and organizations to reference.

Lastly, the finished book and created tool would be shared with those that have contributed to the overall research.

Bibliography

"1. Reimagining Representation." Indigenous Roadmap. Accessed January 4, 2021. <https://www.amaga-indigenous.org.au/1-reimagining-representation>.

"27 Amazingly Powerful Quotes From Black Writers | HuffPost." Accessed April 27, 2021. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/black-writer-quotes-_n_4718529.

"A Groundbreaking Exhibition Finally Tells the Stories of Native Women Artists." PBS NewsHour. October 18, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-groundbreaking-exhibition-finally-tells-the-stories-of-native-women-artists>.

"Abbe Museum Strategic Plan." Abbe Museum. Accessed October 3, 2020. <https://abbemuseum.wordpress.com/>.

"About." Baltimore Museum of Art. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://artbma.org/about/index.html>.

"About." Burke Museum. Accessed March 14, 2021. <https://www.burkemuseum.org/about>.

"About." Field Museum, February 22, 2019. <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/about>.

"About the Maryland Center for History and Culture." Maryland Center for History and Culture. Accessed March 20, 2021. <http://mdhistory.org/about/>.

"About the Museum." American Museum of Natural History. Accessed March 20, 2021. <https://www.amnh.org/about>.

Acker-Moulder, Lisa. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 5, 2020.

Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski. *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2020.

Adair, Bill. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. August 4, 2020.

"Africa Galleries Trace Objects' Rich Histories." Penn Museum. Accessed March 17, 2021. <https://www.penn.museum/about/contact-us/2-uncategorised/381-africa-galleries-trace-objects-rich-histories>.

Ahlberg Yohe, Jill. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. February 26, 2021.

Ahlberg Yohe, Jill and Teri Greeves. "Decolonizing Art: A Conversation about Indigenous Arts and Exhibitions with artist Teri Greeves and Dr. Jill Ahlberg Yohe." Webinar from Villanova University, Villanova, PA, March 17, 2021.

Ahmad, Tariq. "Canada." Protection of Indigenous Heritage, March 1, 2019. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/indigenous-heritage/canada.php>.

Alexander, Edward P., Mary Alexander, and Juilee Decker. *Museums in Motion an Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

Anderson, Monica. "History of the Hashtag #BlackLivesMatter: Social Activism on Twitter." Pew Research

Center: Internet, Science & Tech. Pew Research Center, December 31, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2016/08/15/the-hashtag-blacklivesmatter-emerges-social-activism-on-twitter/>.

Bach, Kirstin. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. December 7, 2020.

"Balboa Park Museum: Events in San Diego." Museum of Us. Accessed September 27, 2020. <https://museumofus.org/>.

Berry Drago, Lisa. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 15, 2020.

Boettcher, Hannah. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 23, 2020.

Buffalohead, Julie. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. March 11, 2021.

Bunn-Marcuse, Katie. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. February 11, 2021.

Canadian Conservation Institute. "Caring for Sacred and Culturally Sensitive Objects - Preventive Conservation Guidelines for Collections." September 24, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/preventive-conservation/guidelines-collections/caring-sacred-culturally-sensitive-objects.html>.

Catlin-Legutko, Cinnamon. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. September 29, 2020.

Center for Cultural Innovation. *Creativity Connects: Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2016.

Chen, Michelle. "If NEA Funding Gets Cut, Say Goodbye to These Vital Community Cultural Projects." The Nation, April 7, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/if-nea-funding-gets-cut-say-goodbye-to-these-vital-community-cultural-projects/>.

Corrin, Lisa G. "Mining the Museum: An Installation Confronting History." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 36, no. 4 (December 1993): 302–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2151-6952.1993.tb00804.x>.

Cotter, Holland. "Museums Are Finally Taking a Stand. But Can They Find Their Footing?" The New York Times, June 11, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/arts/design/museums-protests-race-smithsonian.html>.

Decolonization Is for Everyone | Nikki Sanchez | TEDxSFU. YouTube, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP9x1NnCWNY>.

Duguid, Lauren. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. May 29, 2020.

Farrell, Betty, and Maria Medvedeva. *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums*. American Association of Museums, 2010. <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Demographic-Change-and-the-Future-of-Museums.pdf>.

Feeney, Erin. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 19, 2020.

Fota, Ana. "What's Wrong With This Diorama? You Can Read All About It." *The New York Times*, March 20, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/20/arts/design/natural-history-museum-diorama.html>.

Genoways, Hugh H., Lynne M. Ireland, and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko. *Museum Administration 2.0*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.

Haque, Fahima. "The Native Artists Showing Us What's Happening in Indigenous America." *The New York Times*, September 10, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/10/us/indigenous-art-aperture-magazine.html>.

Hatzipanagos, Rachel. "The 'Decolonization' of the American Museum." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, October 29, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/10/12/decolonization-american-museum/>.

Helicon Collaborative. *Farther, Faster, Together: How Arts and Culture Can Accelerate Environmental Progress*. Brooklyn: ArtPlace America, February 2018.

Holy Bear, Rhonda. Interview by Katie Naber. Phone call. November 25, 2020.

Hoogstraten, Jaap. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. August 3, 2020.

Hutter, Victoria. "Outside the Box." National Endowment for the Arts, 2016. <https://www.arts.gov/stories/magazine/2016/2/challenges-arts-21st-century/outside-box>.

Iacona, Joseph. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 17, 2020.

"Innovation and Tradition: Jeffrey Gibson Interviewed by Emily Zimmerman - BOMB Magazine." Accessed April 29, 2021. <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/innovation-and-tradition-jeffrey-gibson-interviewed/>.

"Is That Hung White?" American Alliance of Museums. May 19, 2020. <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/05/19/is-that-hung-white-a-conversation-on-the-state-of-museum-exhibitions-and-race/>.

Katayama, Erika. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. September 21, 2020.

Kelley, Sean. Interview by Katie Naber. Phone call. July 10, 2020.

Keyes, Allison. "In This Quiet Space for Contemplation, a Fountain Rains Down Calming Waters." *Smithsonian Magazine*. Accessed March 20, 2021. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/quiet-space-contemplation-fountain-rains-down-calming-waters-180964981/>.

Kimmelman, Michael. "ART VIEW; An Improbable Marriage Of Artist and Museum." *The New York Times*, August 2, 1992. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/08/02/arts/art-view-an-improbable-marriage-of-artist-and-museum.html>.

"Knowing Better, Doing Better: The San Diego Museum of Man Takes a Holistic Approach to Decolonization." American Alliance of Museums, January 8, 2020. <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/01/08/knowing-better-doing-better-the-san-diego-museum-of-man-takes-a-holistic-approach-to-decolonization/>.

Lenape Nation. "Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania." *lenapenationofpa*, 2018. Accessed October 18, 2020. <https://www.lenape-nation.org/>.

Lessard, Joshua. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. February 5, 2021.

Levin, Sam. "Dakota Access Pipeline: The Who, What and Why of the Standing Rock Protests." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, November 3, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/03/north-dakota-access-oil-pipeline-protests-explainer>.

Licht, Walter, Mark Frazier Lloyd Frazier Lloyd, J.M. Duffin, and Mary D. McConaghy. "West Philadelphia Collaborative History - The Original People and Their Land: The Lenape, Pre-History to the 18th Century." Accessed February 14, 2021. <https://collaborativehistory.gse.upenn.edu/stories/original-people-and-their-land-lenape-pre-history-18th-century>.

Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Loos, Ted. "A Canadian Museum Promotes Indigenous Art. But Don't Call It 'Indian.'" *The New York Times*, July 13, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/13/arts/design/art-gallery-of-ontario-indigenous-art.html>.

Lukavic, John. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. July 28, 2020.

Marie, Cedar. "Review: Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists." *First American Art Magazine*, August 13, 2019. <https://firstamericanartmagazine.com/hearts-of-our-people-2/>.

Martin, Keith, Dylan Robinson, and David Garneau. *Arts of Engagement : Taking Aesthetic Action In and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Indigenous Studies Series. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016.

McDougall, Marina, Bronwyn Bevan, and Robert Semper. Rep. *Art as a Way of Knowing*. San Francisco, CA: Exploratorium, 2012. <http://www.exploratorium.edu/knowning/reports.html>.

McGlone, Peggy. "For Third Year in a Row, Trump's Budget Plan Eliminates Arts, Public TV and Library Funding." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, March 19, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/for-third-year-in-a-row-trumps-budget-plan-eliminates-arts-public-tv-and-library-funding/2019/03/18/e946db9a-49a2-11e9-9663-00ac73f49662_story.html.

Miles, Dottie. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 11, 2020.

Mitchell, Jennifer. "Bar Harbor's Abbe Museum At The Forefront Of Movement To Redesign Exhibits Around Tribal Culture." *Maine Public*, October 31, 2018. <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/bar-harbor-s-abbe-museum-forefront-movement-redesign-exhibits-around-tribal-culture>.

Moore, Taylor. "The Field's First Major Exhibit by an Indigenous Curator." *Chicago Magazine*, March 9, 2020. <https://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/March-2020/Nina-Sanders-Apsaalooke-Women-and-Warriors/>.

"Museum Facts & Data." American Alliance of Museums, January 24, 2018. <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/museum-facts-data/>.

"Museum History." James A. Michener Art Museum (blog). Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.michenerartmuseum.org/about/museum-history/>.

Myers, Fred. "'Primitivism', Anthropology, and the Category of 'Primitive Art.'" In *Handbook of Material Culture*, 267–84. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848607972.n18>.

National Equity Project. "Liberatory Design Card Deck." Accessed February 20, 2021. <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/tools/liberatory-design-card-deck>.

"Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (U.S. National Park Service)" National Parks Service (U.S. Department of the Interior). Accessed November 8, 2020. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/index.htm>.

"Old New York Diorama." American Museum of Natural History. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/theodore-roosevelt-memorial/hall/old-new-york-diorama>.

Olsen, Polly. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. December 21, 2020.

Ortiz, Virgil. Interview by Katie Naber. E-mail. February 23, 2021.

"Our Museum." Penn Museum. Accessed September 27, 2020. <https://www.penn.museum/about/our-story>.

"Our Tribal History..." Accessed October 18, 2020. <https://nanticoke-lenape.info/history.htm>.

Packard, Cassie. "The Baltimore Museum of Art Concludes a Year of Collecting Work by Only Women Artists." Hyperallergic, December 31, 2020. <https://hyperallergic.com/611583/the-baltimore-museum-of-art-concludes-a-year-of-collecting-work-by-only-women-artists/>.

Paquet, Rose. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. January 11, 2021.

Parker, Victoria. *"Native American Cultural Dissonance & Dark Heritage Solutions."* University of Montana, 2019. <https://scholarship.law.umt.edu/ss/1>.

"People Are Calling for Museums to Be Abolished. Can Whitewashed American History Be Rewritten? - CNN Style." Accessed April 28, 2021. <https://www.cnn.com/style/article/natural-history-museum-whitewashing-monuments-statues-trnd/index.html>.

"People of the First Light." Abbe Museum. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.abbemuseum.org/core-exhibit>.

Putman, Tyler. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 16, 2020.

Quinn, Kate. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 10, 2020.

Raicovich, Laura. "What Happened When Fred Wilson Dug Beneath a Museum's Floorboards." Hyperallergic, August 16, 2019. <https://hyperallergic.com/507245/mining-the-museum-an-installation-by-fred-wilson/>.

Red Star, Wendy. Interview by Katie Naber. Phone call. August 5, 2020.

"Resources." MASS Action. Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.museumaction.org/resources>.

Salisbury, Stephan. "Mayor Kenney Calls for End to City Arts Agency, Cutting \$4 Million in Cultural Spending." <https://www.inquirer.com>. The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 2, 2020. <https://www.inquirer.com/news/arts-culture-budget-cuts-elimination-20200501.html>.

Schneider, Christy. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 16, 2020.

Simon, Nina. *The Art of Relevance*, 173–78. Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2016.

Slade, Stuart. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. July 14, 2020.

"Standing Rock Sioux and Dakota Access Pipeline | Teacher Resource." Accessed October 20, 2020. <http://nmai.si.edu/nk360/plains-treaties/dapl.cshhtml>.

Stewart, Niki. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 5, 2020.

"STORYTELLERS." Craft in America, December 11, 2020. <https://www.craftinamerica.org/episode/storytellers>.

Thackara, Tess. "The Hand of Native American Women, Visible at Last." *The New York Times*, May 31, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/31/arts/design/native-american-women-art.html>.

Turner, Darienne. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. January 28, 2021.

Violante, Jana. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. June 19, 2020.

Walkingstick, Kay. Interview by Katie Naber. Phone call. February 5, 2021.

We Must Decolonize Our Museums | Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko | TEDxDirigo. YouTube, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyZAgG8--Xg>.

Wittman, Aletheia. Interview by Katie Naber. Zoom call. October 23, 2020.

Image Credits

- Pg 2** Loos, Ted. "A Canadian Museum Promotes Indigenous Art. But Don't Call It 'Indian.'" *The New York Times*, July 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/13/arts/design/art-gallery-of-ontario-indigenous-art.html>.
- Pg 4** "Judge Halts North Dakota Pipeline Construction Temporarily after Protests." *The Guardian*, September 7, 2016. <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/07/judge-halts-north-dakota-pipeline-protests-standing-rock-sioux>.
- Pg 12** "Origins: Teri Greeves." PBS LearningMedia. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/c534761e-2b6a-4e21-aaa1-ed50647ea645/c534761e-2b6a-4e21-aaa1-ed50647ea645/>.
- Pg 17** "Visit the Newly Refreshed Kumeyaay: Native Californians/Iipai-Tipai Exhibit," Museum of Us. August 20, 2019. <https://museumofus.org/visit-the-newly-refreshed-kumeyaay-native-californians-iipai-tipai-exhibit/>.
- Pg 21** "Changing Exhibits," March 26, 2021. <https://ansp.org/about/press-room/photos/changing-exhibits/>.
- Pg 22** "Artisan Workshop Series." Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.amrevmuseum.org/at-the-museum/programs/public-programs/artisan-workshop-series>.
- Pg 23** "Uprooted," Science History Institute. August 1, 2016. <https://www.sciencehistory.org/uprooted>.
- Pg 24** "Nightscape — Klip Collective." Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.klip.tv/nightscape>.
- Pg 26** RYAN! "Projects Archives." Accessed April 20, 2021. <http://ryanfeddersen.com/projects/>.
- Pg 27** Highpoint Center for Printmaking. "The Hand of Native American Women, Visible at Last." Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.highpointprintmaking.org/highpoint-news/2019/6/3/the-hand-of-native-american-women-visible-at-last>.
- Pg 28** "The Future Is History," October 16, 2018. <http://www.virgilortiz.com/future-is-history>.
- Pg 31** "In This Quiet Space for Contemplation, a Fountain Rains Down Calming Waters | At the Smithsonian." *Smithsonian Magazine*. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/quiet-space-contemplation-fountain-rains-down-calming-waters-180964981/>.
- Pg 46** "Apsáalooke Feminist." Wendy Red Star. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.wendyredstar.com/apsalooke-feminist>.
- Pg 54** "Contemporary Art Enhances Penn Museum's Africa Galleries." Penn Today. Accessed April 19, 2021. <https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/contemporary-art-penn-museum-africa-sculpture>.
- Pg 54** "Penn Museum Reimagines Its African, Central American Galleries with a Modern View." WHYY. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://whyy.org/articles/this-is-not-an-old-story-penn-museum-reimagines-its-african-central-american-galleries-with-a-modern-view/>.

- Pg 57** "People of the First Light." Abbe Museum. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.abbemuseum.org/core-exhibit>.
- Pg 59** "People of the First Light." Abbe Museum. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.abbemuseum.org/core-exhibit>.
- Pg 58** "'People of the First Light' at Abbe Museum." Press Herald. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.pressherald.com/media/gallery/people-of-the-first-light-at-abbe-museum/>.
- Pg 59** "'People of the First Light' at Abbe Museum." Press Herald. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.pressherald.com/media/gallery/people-of-the-first-light-at-abbe-museum/>.
- Pg 61** "How Mining the Museum Changed the Art World," BmoreArt. May 3, 2017. <https://bmoreart.com/2017/05/how-mining-the-museum-changed-the-art-world.html>.
- Pg 62** "How Mining the Museum Changed the Art World," BmoreArt. May 3, 2017. <https://bmoreart.com/2017/05/how-mining-the-museum-changed-the-art-world.html>.
- Pg 63** Johnson, Steve. "Apsáalooke Women and Warriors' Is Field Museum's First Major Show Curated by a Native American Scholar." *chicagotribune.com*. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/museums/ct-ent-field-museum-apsalooke-warriors-native-american-show-ttd-0312-20200312-abvgtrkvbav3paqblbeb7hgpe-story.html>.
- Pg 64** "Apsáalooke Women and Warriors." Field Museum. June 13, 2019. <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/traveling-exhibitions/apsalooke-women-and-warriors>.
- Pg 67** "Old New York Diorama." American Museum of Natural History. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/theodore-roosevelt-memorial/hall/old-new-york-diorama>.
- Pg 68** "Old New York Diorama." American Museum of Natural History. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/theodore-roosevelt-memorial/hall/old-new-york-diorama>.
- Pg 70** "Third Thursday: Hearts of Our People — Minneapolis Institute of Art." Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://new.artsmia.org/event/third-thursday-hearts-of-our-people/>.
- Pg 71** "Tanis Maria S'eiltin - Tlingit." Contemporary North American Indigenous Artists. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://contemporarynativeartists.tumblr.com/post/1128219080/tanis-maria-seiltin-tlingit>.
- Pg 74** "Museum History." James A. Michener Art Museum (blog). Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.michenerartmuseum.org/about/museum-history/>.
- Pg 75** "About." Baltimore Museum of Art. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://artbma.org/about/index.html>.

Pg 76 "New Chinook Art Piece Welcomes Visitors to the Burke Museum." Burke Museum. Accessed April 20,2021. <https://www.burkemuseum.org/news/new-chinook-art-piece-welcomes-visitors-burke-museum>.

Pg 77 "National Association for Museum Exhibition." National Association for Museum Exhibition. Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.name-aam.org>.

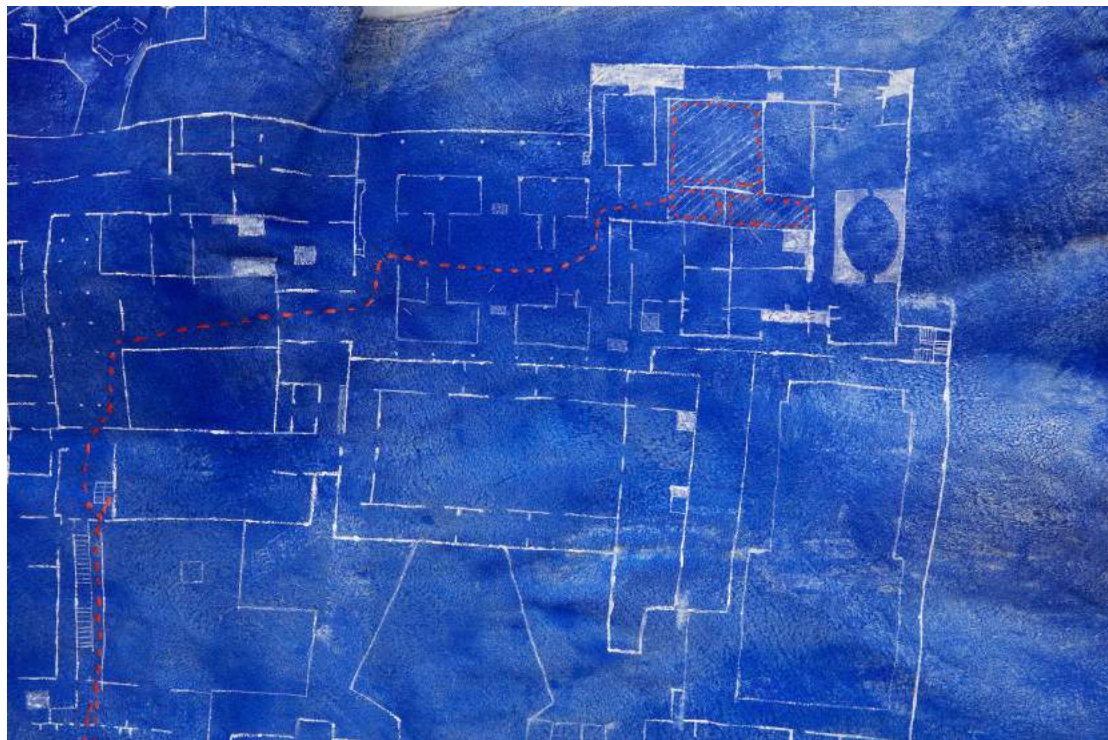
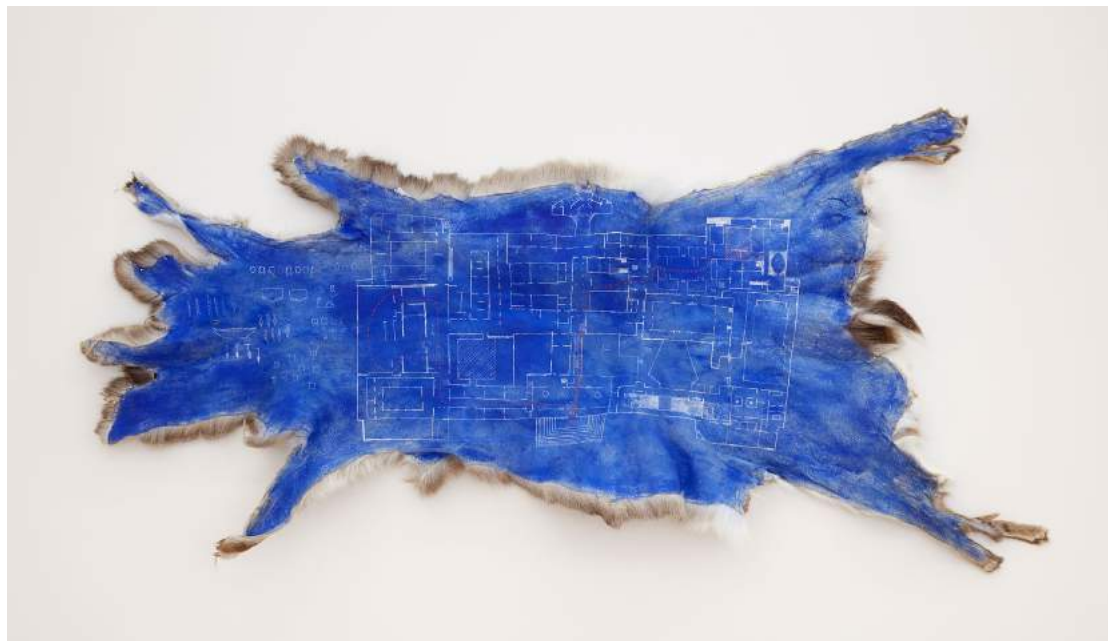
Pg 90 "Julie Buffalohead." Accessed April 20, 2021. <http://www.juliebuffalohead.com/collection/2854338d/work>.

Pg 94 "Created to Hold Power (Intellectual Property)." Accessed April 20, 2021. <https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/created-to-hold-power/>.

Pg 105 "Benjamin Wills: Airplanes." Accessed April 25, 2021. <https://www.easternstate.org/explore/artist-installations/benjamin-wills-airplanes>.

Pg 107 "Aurora | Exploratorium Museum Exhibits." Exploratorium, April 3, 2018. <https://www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/aurora>.

“TSU HÉIDEI SHUGAXTUTAAN
“We will again open this container



II”
of wisdom that’s been left in our care.”

– Nicholas Galanin

Nicholas Galanin
Architecture of return, escape
(Metropolitan Museum of Art), 2020

Title of performative work and statement
by the artist
craftinamerica.org



APPENDICES

Additional Interview Insights
Survey Form
Self-Reflection Journal

Artist contacted Winter 2021 for interview
request and Spring 2021 for image use
request. Pending opportunity for dialogue.

Appendix A – Additional Interview Insights

The interviews below show the expansiveness of arts inclusion in cultural institutions. Whether having visitor data to demonstrate value, or qualitative feedback on visitor experience, the professional feedback indicates art impact, challenges, opportunities, and takeaways from various institution types working with artists, as well as artist perspectives on working with institutions.

Interviews with museum staff demonstrate a multiplicity of ways to partner with artists to enhance visitor experience, drive visitor attendance, stimulate conversation regarding the exhibit topic, and promote learning and healing.

A few questions that derived from the interview process include:

- What might the most effective partnerships look like between artists and museums?
- How can museums evaluate the integration of contemporary art?
- How can partnerships be sustained while bringing in new artists?
- What design tactics can be used to stimulate conversation relating to colonization/ decolonization?

The Betsy Ross House

Historic House
Philadelphia, PA
Interview with Director, Lisa Acker-Moulder

The Betsy Ross House was able to have a dual opportunity of engaging visitors while also providing furnishings for their historic home. Originally they worked with first person interpreters who would show visitors what they, “Betsy,” worked on. However, they changed tactics to have their interpreters also learn Betsy’s craft that they would demonstrate in front of visitors. This approach opened communication for visitors, who were not often comfortable initiating conversation with first person interpreters. It also led to more questions and interest in the house itself, as well as learning and understanding within the museum. Visitors were excited to see the person behind the craft.

With the addition of first person interpreters/ craftspeople who are accurately recreating upholstery work from Betsy’s time, scholars began connecting with the house after they initiated themselves as an authentic eighteenth century upholstery shop. This opened new avenues for learning and sharing with others in the community and the world. Focusing on Betsy’s life as a sewer opened the opportunity to become a women’s history museum as well. They also feel like they are telling real history by having interpreters/ craftspeople, offering a glimpse of what life was like in Betsy’s time.

Eastern State Penitentiary

Historic Site
Philadelphia, PA
Interview with Senior Vice President and Director of Interpretation, Sean Kelley

While Eastern State has been commissioning artists since 1995, Sean has mentioned this can sometimes seem like a “transactional” exchange as the artists work is on display temporarily. In addition, often commission costs for artists are not enough to make a living. For their institution, the artists and artwork can move away from a more factual voice and also bring in a first person perspective. This helps promote engagement and connection for visitors.

While there are stereotypes of artists, most of the time Sean has had good working relationships with them, and they have been “joyful” and creative. However, as with most professional relationships, it helps to set expectations in writing so all parties are on the same page.



National Maritime Museum Cornwall

Maritime Museum
Cornwall, UK
Interview with Head of Public Programmes,
Stuart Slade

With the addition of various theatrical partnerships, new audiences were engaged that wouldn't normally visit the museum. Part of this was due to the partnering art organization's social media presence and following, which added to their existing marketing efforts.

Commissioning artists "bumps them out of a rut" as it forces them to think about and respond to the space and what can do to the space in genuine new ways. More than that, artists bring energy into the space.

However, when working with artists, it's important to be mindful of how the artworks connect to the interpretation of the museum. This has reinforced previous findings about the importance of relevance to the museum's collection and interpretation, and how in general related artwork makes the museums more relevant and accessible to new audiences.

Denver Art Museum

Art Museum
Denver, CO
Interview with Curator and Head of Native Arts department, John Lukavic

The Denver Art Museum has had a solid foundation and connection to Indigenous communities. The goal should be to build and protect those relationships to let Native people feel acknowledged and respected. Native belongings often embody the spirit or are a literal representation of their ancestors, as their hand and life can be seen in their work. Being able to have that kind of access to ancestors is crucial to respect and longevity of Native ways of life. In seeing contemporary artists, this interpretation can help to humanize the rest of exhibitions, and push people to think about this very living culture.

Exploratorium

Science Center
San Francisco, CA
Interview with Arts Interim Director at the Exploratorium, Kirstin Bach

In an interview with Arts Interim Director at the Exploratorium, Kirstin Bach, she discussed the interests of the museum's founder, Frank Oppenheimer. He believed that scientific knowledge was for everyone, not only for those pursuing this field of study. And therefore, considered experiences and hands-on tools to help people understand science and in general, the world around them. Part of the potential to engage in hands-on learning is through explorative processes, such as in art-making. This expansive way of seeing creating greater access to science led to their Artist in Residence program, established in 1974.

This program invites artists to commit to a two-year program that focuses on the process of creation. It offers access to the center's collections then culminates in a physical project. Through these projects the artists help "retranslate ideas" from the collection.

Not only do they continually hold Artist in Residence's, but the Exploratorium also has artists on staff as well as commission and purchase artwork.

While often the end result is unknown, Kirstin believes the residence is successful if there's an openness to what the artist can produce, without directing the artist to create something specific. And further, if the artist is proud of their end result, as well as if there is a public impact. While there are no formal evaluations to determine a measurable public impact, this is on purpose. The museum does not want to create separations between art and science, and therefore aims for these "blurred lines."



Appendix B – Survey Form

Integrating Contemporary Art Alongside Decolonization Practices in Museums

As part of my graduate thesis research, this survey aims to understand if and in what ways museums and museum professionals are taking steps towards decolonization practices, and how artists may be included in this process.

The term "decolonization" used here refers to an overall review of an institution's practices in colonialist behavior, and steps taken to confront a focus on western/Eurocentric narratives. This could also show up as Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion work at an institution.

Part 1 looks at decolonization practices within institutions.
Part 2 looks at an institution's interest in artist partnerships.
Both sections combined take approximately 5–12 minutes to complete.

Your name *

Short answer text

Name of organization *

Short answer text

What is your role? *

☐ Interpretive Planner / Exhibition Developer

☐ 3D / Exhibition Designer

☐ 2D / Graphic Designer

☐ Curator

☐ Evaluator

☐ Label Writer

☐ Educator

☐ Other...

What type of organization do you work for? *

☐ Museum

☐ Exhibition Design Firm

☐ Freelance

☐ Other...

If you work in a museum, what type? *

☐ Natural History / Anthropological Museum

☐ Art Museum

☐ Science Museum / Center

☐ Botanical Garden

☐ History Museum

☐ N/A

☐ Other...

How long have you worked in the field? *

☐ <1 year

☐ 1-3 years

☐ 4-6 years

☐ 7-10 years

☐ 10-20 years

☐ >20 years

Thesis Survey: Part 1

Description (optional)

Is decolonization being discussed and/or implemented at your institution? *

☐ No, our institution is not currently discussing decolonization practices.

☐ Yes, we are starting to discuss what decolonization may look like at the museum.

☐ Yes, we have implemented decolonization practices.

When did your institution begin work toward decolonization? *

☐ It is not currently working toward decolonization.

☐ Within the past year

☐ Within the past 2-4 years

☐ Within the past 5-10 years

☐ Over 10 years ago

What made the institution begin its decolonization efforts?

Long answer text

What steps, if any, does your museum take in decolonization: (Check all that apply) *

☐ Land acknowledgement

☐ Advisory Councils

☐ Repatriation

☐ BIPOC (Black/ Indigenous/ People of Color) board members

☐ BIPOC staff

What other steps, not listed here, is your organization currently doing or engaged in relating to decolonization?

Long answer text

What are the next steps in your institution's decolonization process?

Long answer text

What areas do you think your institution could improve? (Check all that apply) *

☐ Land acknowledgements

☐ Advisory Councils

☐ Repatriation

☐ BIPOC board members

☐ BIPOC staff

☐ Other...

Thesis Survey: Part 2

Description (optional)

Have you worked with artists in programming or exhibitions? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

If YES:

Description (optional)

How often do you work with artists? *

☐ More than once a year

☐ Once a year

☐ Every 2-3 years

☐ More than every 3 years

What type of partnership do you find most effective for your institution? (i.e. commissioned works, artist-in-residence, etc.) *

☐ Commissioned works

☐ Artist-in-residence

☐ In-person art-making

☐ Other...

What are some of the benefits from working with artist(s)?

Long answer text

What are some of the challenges from working with artist(s)?

Long answer text

Has your institution done evaluation of visitor response/interaction with the work of contemporary artists? (qualitative or quantitative) *

☐ Yes

☐ No

After section 4

Continue to next section

Section 5 of 10

If YES:

Description (optional)

What were some of the key findings? (i.e. did the artist interventions change visitor perceptions of the collections) *

Long answer text

Would you be willing to share evaluation results? (*there will be an option to share an e-mail address at the end of this survey) *

☐ Yes

☐ No

120

Appendices

Confronting Colonialism through Contemporary Art

121

If NO:

Description (optional)

Do you plan to evaluate in the future? *

Yes

No

Maybe

What form might that evaluation take? *

Observation

Qualitative research

Quantitative research on visitor attendance and/or revenue

Other...

Go to section 8 (Vision for the Future)

If NO:

Description (optional)

How likely is your organization to work with artists in the future? *

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Not likely

Very likely

Why or why not?

Long answer text

Vision for the Future

Description (optional)

What are your hopes and/or expectations for decolonization practices in the museum field in the next 5-10 years?

Long answer text

Thesis Findings

Description (optional)

These answers may be published in my thesis. Please note if you are comfortable in having your name and organization mentioned. *

Yes, feel free to use my name & organization

Yes, use only my name (not my organization)

Yes, use only my organization (not my name)

No, please keep this information anonymous

If any new questions arise from the survey answers, are you open to follow up questions? If so, kindly share your email address here.

Short answer text

Thank you very much for completing the survey!

122

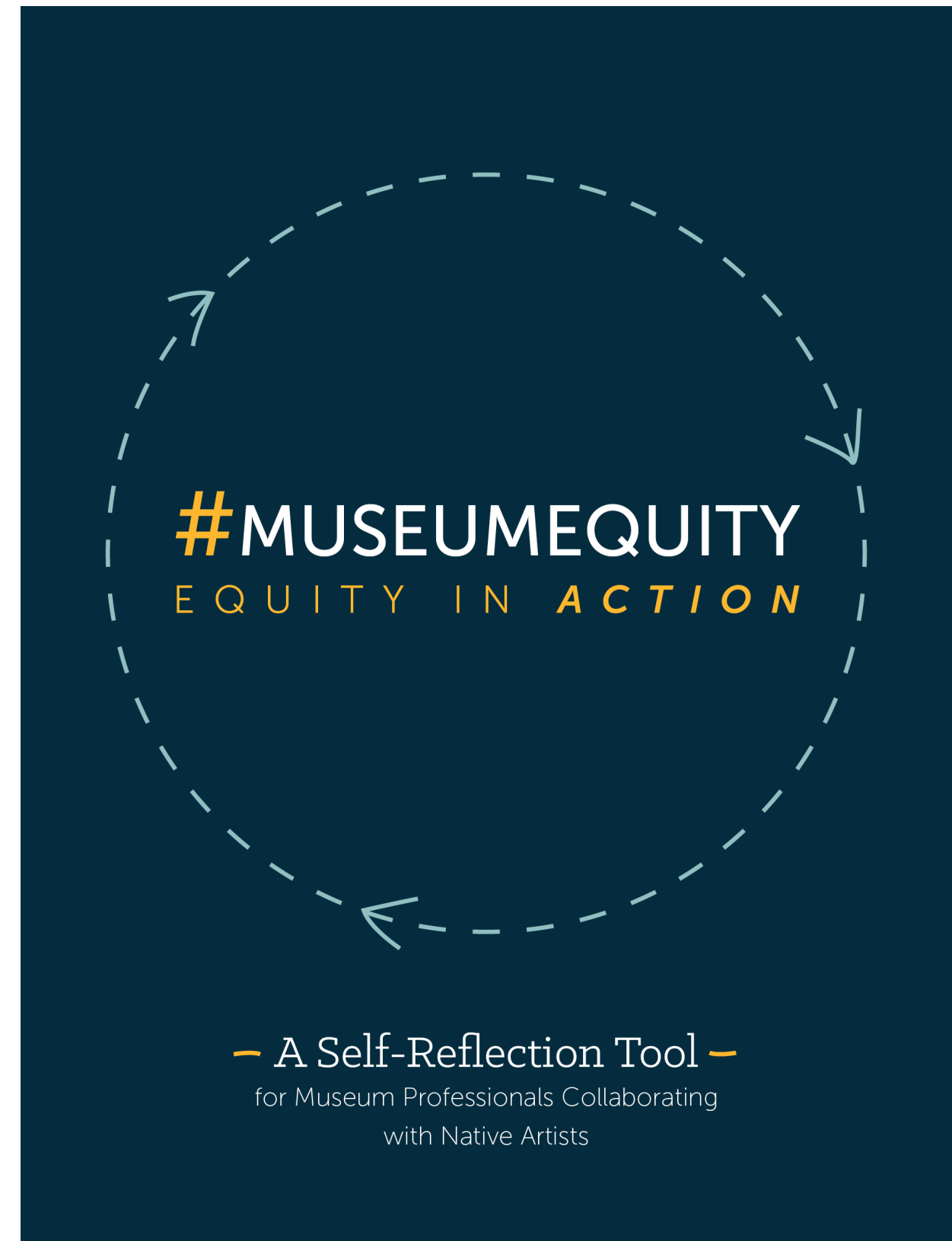
Appendices

Confronting Colonialism through Contemporary Art

123

Appendix C – Self-Reflection Journal

The self-reflection journal can be conveniently printed on 8.5" x 11" paper and folded in half. The size of 5.5" x 8.5," is intended to be one that is easily printable and distrubutable.



ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

This self-reflection journal aims to be an expansive tool for museum professionals who work in institutions with Native collections. The journal presents a framework to work toward equitable and inclusive collaborations with Native artists.

The self-reflection journal does not provide linear steps to decolonization, but was created to allow individuals to dig into the complexities of the work, specific to their organizations. It can help realize the potential of new collaborations by thinking deeply, creatively, and outside the status quo.

This journal coincides with the larger decolonization movement, and provides one approach among other models and research available. The included framework does not provide the only steps to decolonize one's museum. However, this framework offers critical questions on a personal level that can have a larger institutional influence if continually integrated into one's practice.

In pursuit of this work, there are a few key points to acknowledge throughout the process:

→ **This work is messy and uncomfortable.**

Relationship-building on its own is difficult. And anytime you are working with people who are dealing with real trauma relating to cultural harms including experiencing abandonment of one's culture in mainstream society as well as extractive museum practices, a lot of hurt, resentment, and distrust will come to the surface. Understanding this broader context of relationship-building and harms people are experiencing will allow you to embrace its messiness in order to lead toward authenticity, relevance, and healing.

→ **It is also time intensive.**

Developing relationships built on authenticity and trust takes time. The self-reflection journal may not be completed within one session, or two, or three. It may even take months or years. And even then, it is essential to go back and review prompts with each new interaction, exhibit, etc. Do not get discouraged. The fact that you are pursuing this work means you're on the right path.



Power dynamics will remain.

In doing this work, it is helpful to remember that while you've altered your methods of thinking regarding collaborations with Native communities, there are still systems of inequities in place within the museum and society. Regardless, pursuing this work is critical both personally and institutionally, even in small steps.



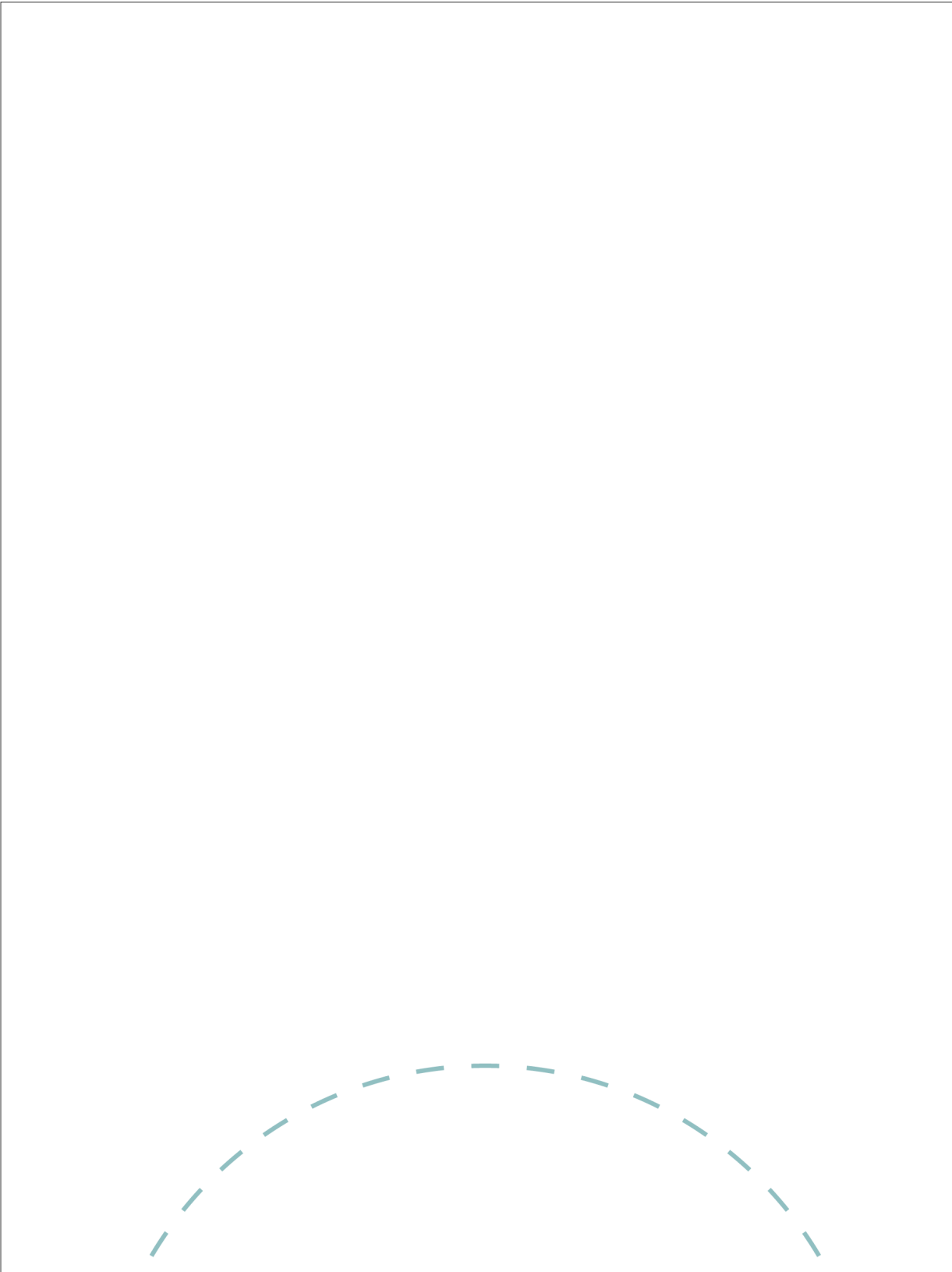
Your ability to sit in discomfort means you're ready to begin.

Based on the messy and complex nature of the work, there will be many moments of vulnerability about what you don't know or owning up to mistakes you've made. Acknowledging your discomfort means you're ready to begin taking on this work.

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

The self-reflection journal first offers a set of memorable guiding values, all beginning with an R, illustrated in relation to one another for museum professionals to refer to throughout this process. These values are critical to recall in both short and long-term interactions. Following the defined values are ways of integrating the values into practice. The guiding values are the root of how to enact respectful practices around decolonization. Following each practice are a set of prompts that are essential for questioning how to move through the work in ways that are equitable and inclusive. Because the work of decolonization is specific to each community, location, collection, and more, there is no one specific way to fulfill this work. Therefore, the prompts should be used as an ongoing personal and institutional reflective practice. Following the prompts are open pages for drawing or writing, encouraging different ways to reimagine how collaborations are constructed.

**As noted, this form of self-reflection is a time intensive process. Do not expect to be able to complete the answers within one sitting.*



THE DO NOT'S

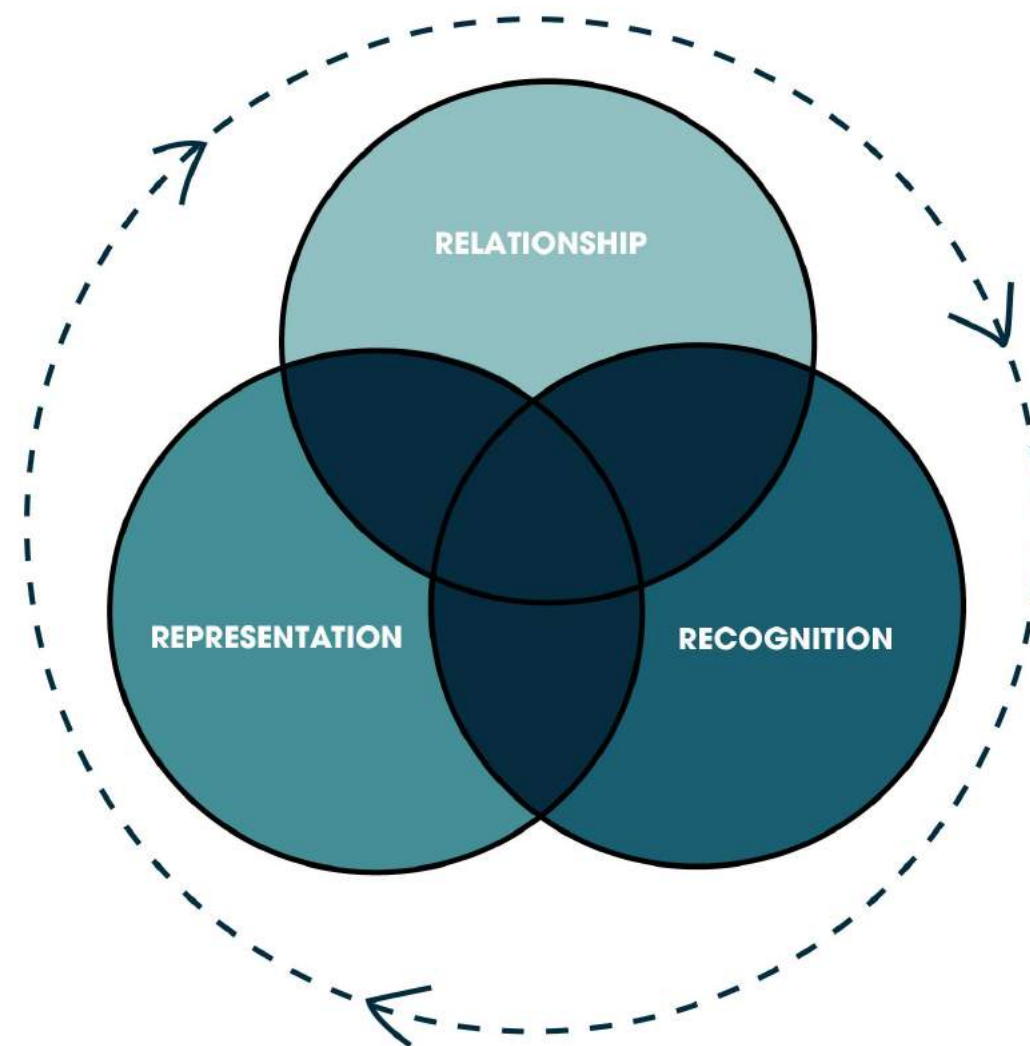
Below are a few critical points of practice:

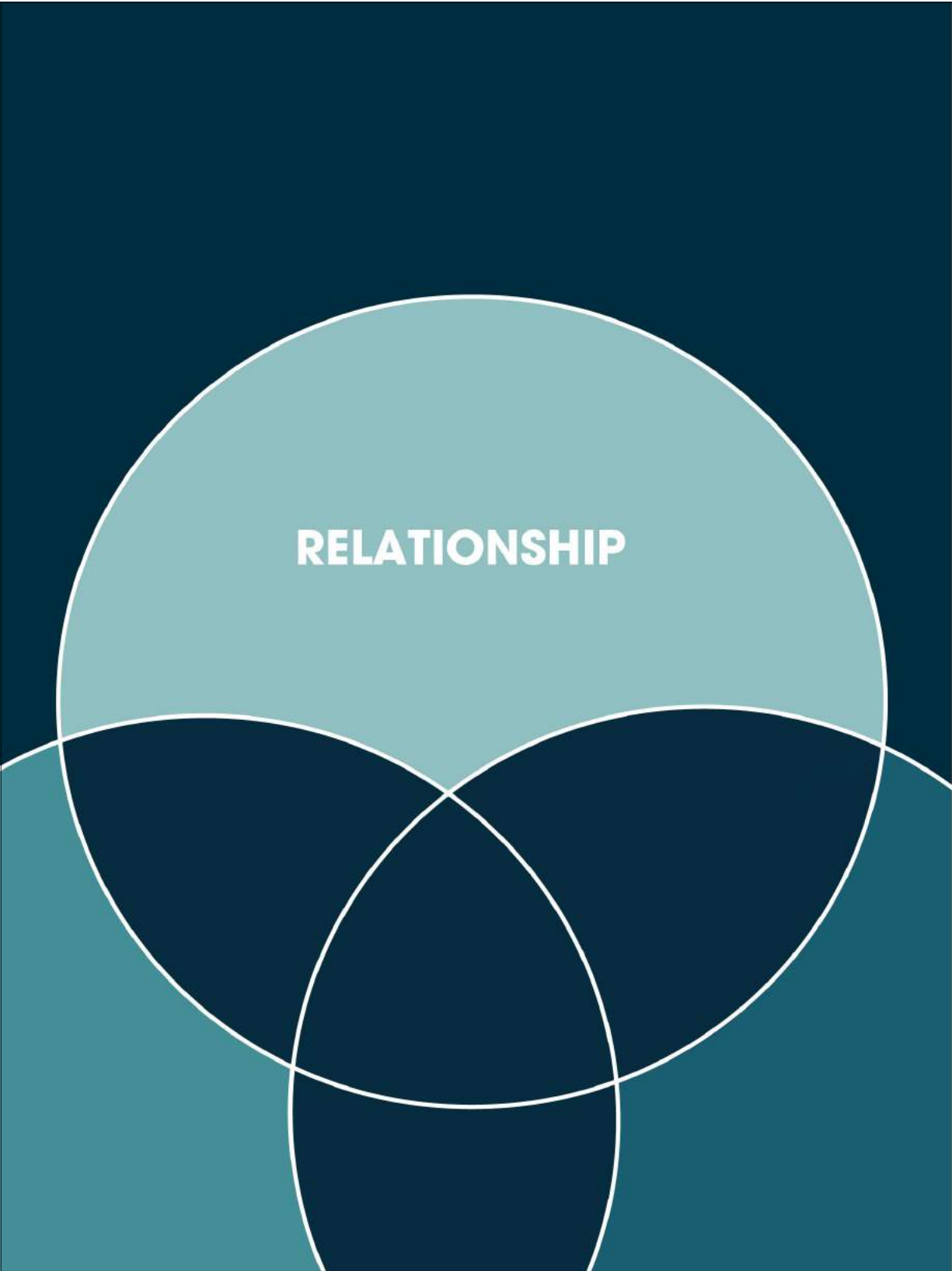
- Don't avoid the truth. Instead, lean into it.
- Don't make choices without determining your intention as an individual and organization.
- Don't make decisions about represented cultures without the involvement of those cultures.
- Don't connect with the Native communities if the intention is extractive.
- Don't make rushed choices. Relationship-building as well as understanding the needs of each community takes time.
- Don't embrace the status quo. Try new things, get creative, and step outside of your comfort zone.
- It is not the work of Indigenous people to teach non-Indigenous museum professionals how to decolonize. Don't look to them to teach you. It is the responsibility of museum professionals to educate themselves on past harms and how it manifests itself today.

| 3 Guiding *VALUES*

The depicted 3-R values provide a framework for cultural workers in developing respectful interactions with contemporary Native artists and communities. It prompts individuals and institutions to review their intention and hopes for these interactions by incorporating an inclusionary and decolonizing approach.

The values are shown in relationship to one another shaped by circles, demonstrating a cyclical process, as the work is ongoing. Each new exhibition, relationship, and experience will create new opportunities for considering the 3-Rs both personally and institutionally.





→ *Development of authentic and sustained interactions.*

Authentic and equity-driven relationships are essential to working with Native artists and communities. This approach makes Native communities the priority, over collections and institutional operations. This value is one of, if not the most important considerations for this work and necessitates thoughtful consideration of who an organization wants to develop relationships with, why, who it benefits, and what type of relationship they hope to create.

Defining the *VALUES*

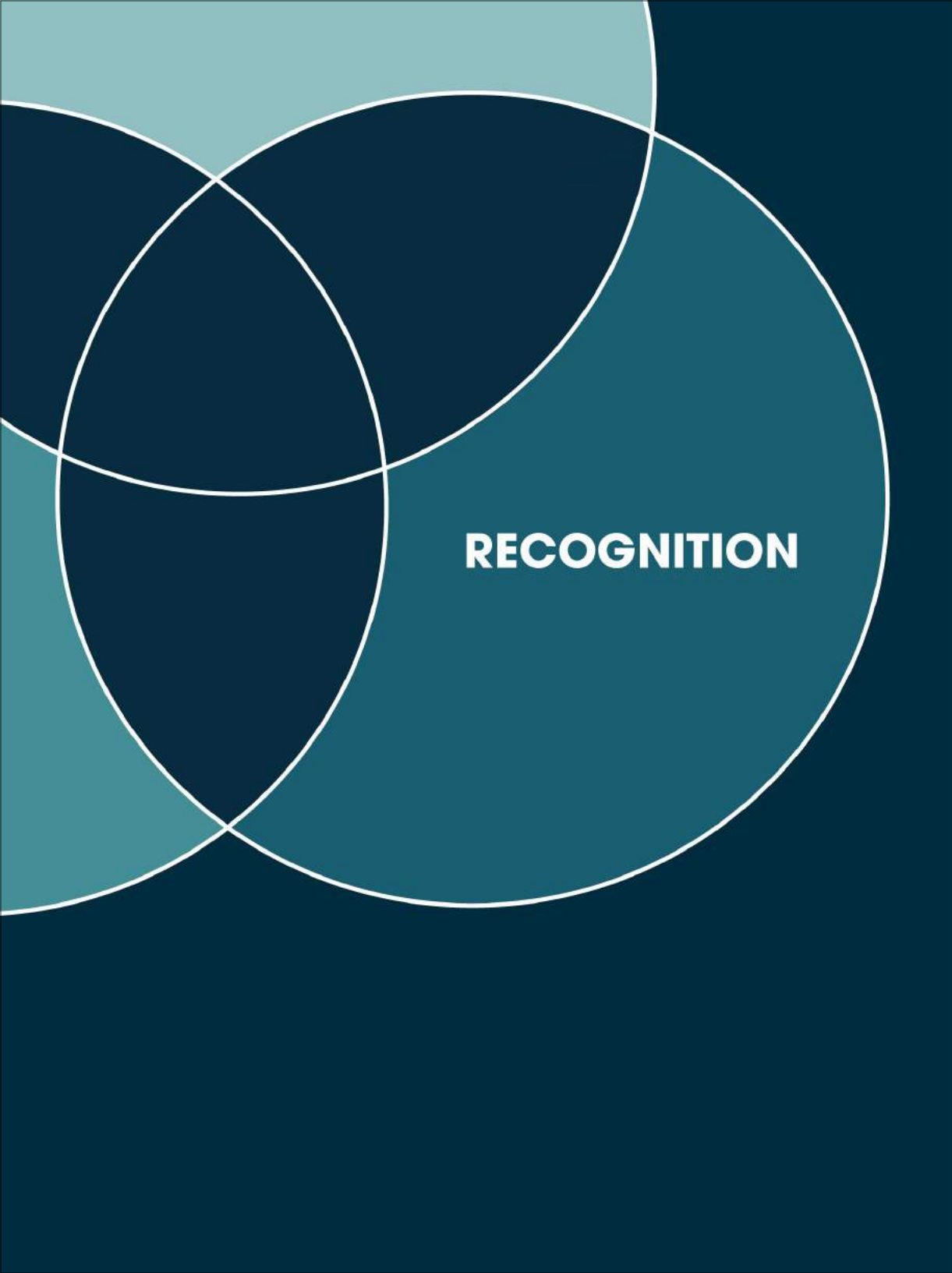
REPRESENTATION



→ *How people, places, and collections are included and portrayed.*

How people, places, and collections are represented shows what the institution values and what they portray to the public. This portrayal affects how the public experiences them. Museums should consider who is the guiding or knowledgeable voice expressing their meaning, and whether there are gaps in voice or context.

Defining the *VALUES*



RECOGNITION



***Acknowledging our impact
within the organization and
within society.***

What are we acknowledging about our past, present and future? What can we acknowledge about ourselves as well as our institution that will allow museums to become more credible and trusted by doing so? What do we need to let go of? Institutional actions should be carefully and ethically considered for their societal impact.

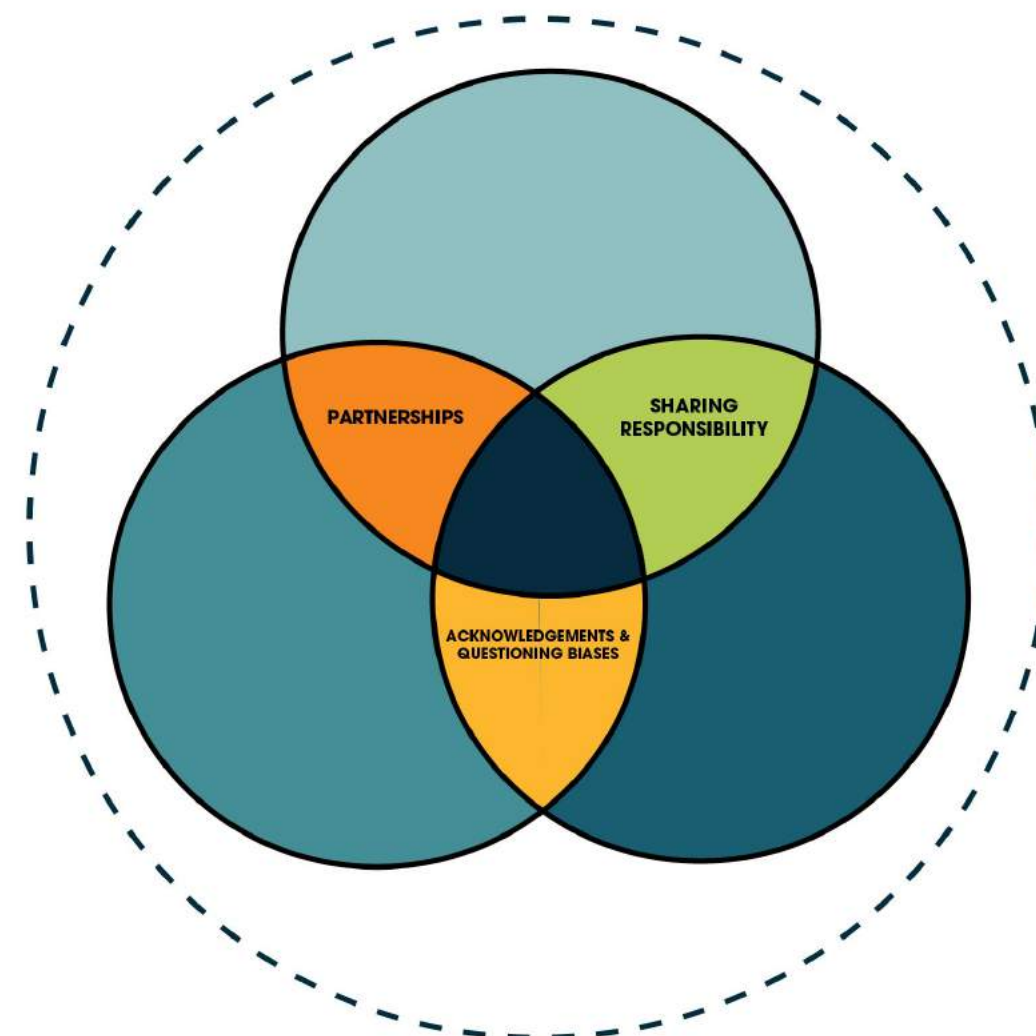
Defining the **VALUES**

Values in *PRACTICE*

At the intersections of the 3-R values is an opportunity to engage more fully in inclusion and decolonization by implementing these values into practice in meaningful and respectful ways.

These practices include, but are not limited to, Partnerships, Sharing Responsibility, and Acknowledgements & Questioning Biases.

Alongside these practices are on opportunity for self-reflection that has the potential to turn into actionable steps. The self-reflection prompts are not linear, but exist at any stage of the decolonizing and inclusionary process, and are intended to be repeated. Efforts toward equity are never finished.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & QUESTIONING BIASES

+ Self-Reflection Prompts



Approaches to transparency and truth-telling.

This practice of transparency and truth-telling can also be difficult and complex to navigate. Not only is it important to acknowledge the work of organizations, but firstly, understand the personal work needed to promote better equity. If done authentically and thoughtfully, this practice promotes larger trust in the institution. Consider what these acknowledgements mean to ourselves and society. How can we start and/or maintain the continual work of questioning our own personal and institutional biases?

What biases exist in your mind in working with Indigenous artists?

Who can you rely on to point out biases you may not be aware of?

How can you challenge these biases?

In what ways is your organization successful or unsuccessful in achieving transparency for difficult truths and/or their colonial impact?

What interpretation techniques could be used to allow space for greater truth-telling and authentic conversation? What are some of the challenges? What are some opportunities?

How will you and your institution embrace other ways of knowing?

Use this space to reconsider how we make acknowledgements and what it means to ourselves and others.

PARTNERSHIPS

+ Self-Reflection Prompts



Relationships between Native communities and institutions.

Developing partnerships takes time. It involves a deep understanding of the institutional needs and needs of the communities intended to work with. There are many unknowns when creating these partnerships. Yet, stepping back to let others forward and embracing vulnerability at any stage in the relationship can lead to more equitable and authentic partnerships.

Consider who you want to create a partnership with and why it is important to you and/or your organization.

What are the benefits of this collaboration for the organization, artist, and community? How are these benefits distributed?

How are or will these relationships be developed?


How are or will relationships be sustained? Are they temporary or long-term?

What does a successful relationship look like?

How do you plan to compensate someone for their time and expertise?

What sort of environment will you create to allow for sharing, learning, and healing?

What does it look like to create “with” instead of “for?”



Use this space to visualize what new partnerships could look like.

SHARING RESPONSIBILITY

+ Self-Reflection Prompts



Full input & access in all areas of the museum of the peoples being represented.

Similar to the development of partnerships is how to manage those partnerships in ways that recognize the unique knowledge of the community. This approach suggests an uprooting of traditional hierarchies in museum functions that derive from a colonialist mindset of superiority, that then creates space for new knowledge sharing and reciprocity.

What does decision-making look like at your institution? Who makes decisions?

What are the needs of the community you intend to serve?

What is uncomfortable about sharing responsibility and why?

What are barriers to sharing responsibility?

If your institution has a Native collection, how do you allow access to your collections?

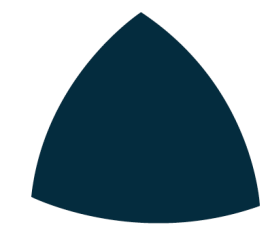
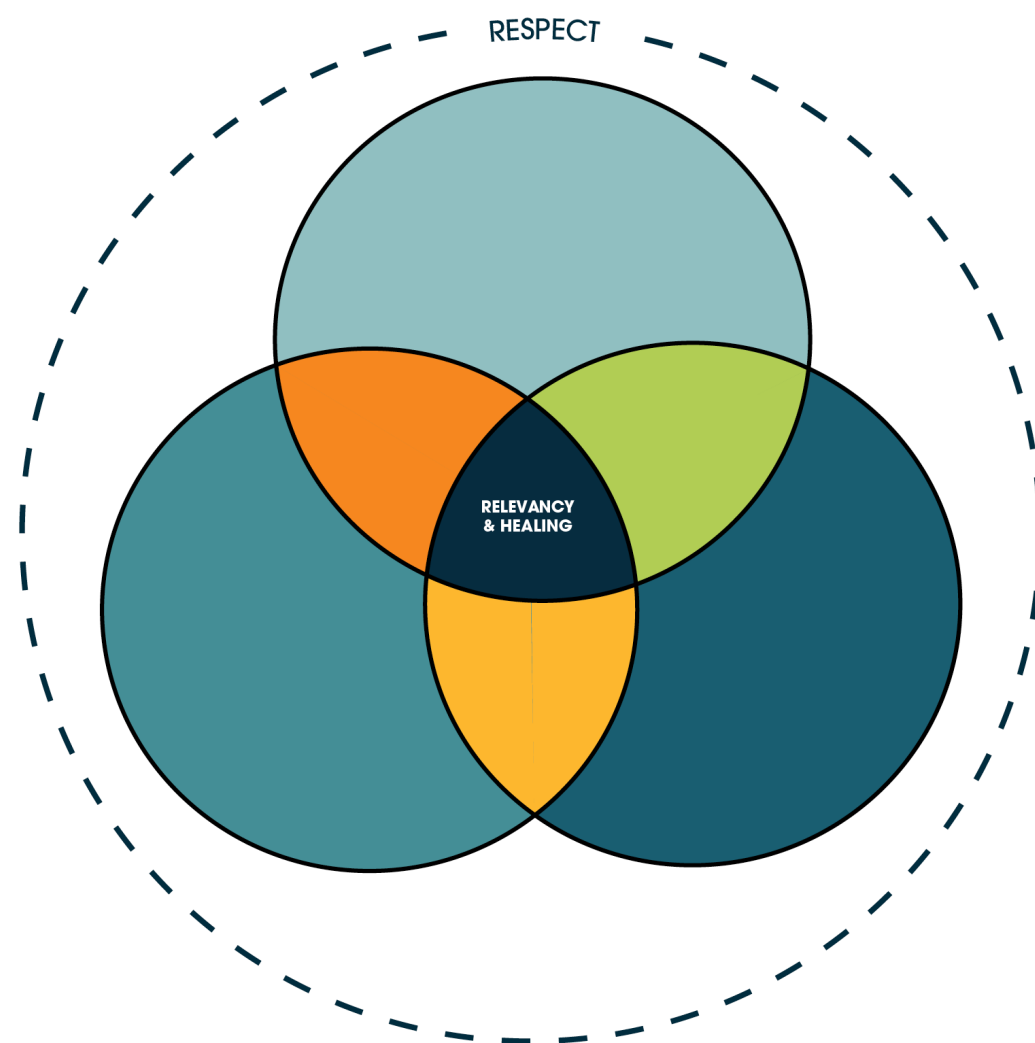
How do you include, or plan to include, Indigenous artists' voices? Whose voices are missing? Why is it successful or unsuccessful?

What techniques will you use to effectively share responsibility in reciprocity with this individual/group?

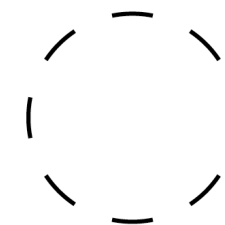
Who decides what is Native art? Who decides who is a Native artist?

Listen. Open space for artists to have their voices heard.

Use this space to reimagine what sharing responsibility looks like.



RELEVANCY
& HEALING



RESPECT

At the center of these three guiding values is relevancy and healing. It is the intended outcome of this type of decolonization work. By putting these values into practice, it demonstrates relevance to the cultures represented and relevance to society, which can lead toward healing around past and continued cultural harms.

The ethics encompassing all of these values and practices is respect. Relevancy, nor any of the principal values, are not possible without respect.

SOURCES CITED

Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski. *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*. London: Routledge, 2020.

Amy Lonetree. 2012. *Decolonizing Museums : Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

“Guidelines for Collaboration.” Accessed March 28, 2021. <https://guidelinesforcollaboration.info/>.

MASS Action. “Resources.” Accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.museumaction.org/resources>.

Naber, Katie. “Confronting Colonialism through Contemporary Art.” Master’s Thesis. University of the Arts, 2021.

National Equity Project. “Liberatory Design Card Deck.” Accessed February 20, 2021. <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/tools/liberatory-design-card-deck>.

© 2021 Katie Naber All Rights Reserved



*“This history is not your fault, but
it is absolutely your responsibility.”*

– Nikki Sanchez, Decolonizing Educator