Different Approaches Towards Representation:

Aboriginal Cultural Centres and the Portrayal of Pacific Northwest First Nations

by

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B.A., University of Colorado, Boulder, 1992

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Anthropology

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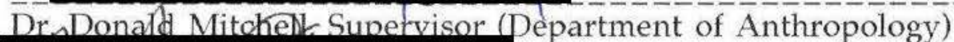

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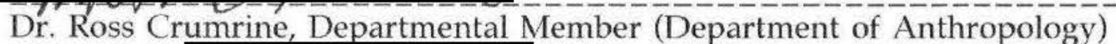

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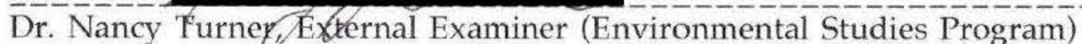

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ABSTRACT

Evidence of First Nations involvement in the portrayal of their cultures can be seen within the exhibits of aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums. Within today's world, the importance of First Nations owned and run museums is becoming increasingly apparent.

In an attempt to discover how aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums portray First Nations cultures, observations and analyses from several northwest coast museums are utilized. The "languages" used by these museums in the depiction of aboriginal cultures forms a basis of analysis. Elements of museum languages, such as exhibit text and artifact presentation, are scrutinized and evidence of many parallels between the two types of institutions in the areas of exhibition technique and the flow of information from exhibit to observer can be found. Differences are found between the two types of museums in terms of the aboriginal or non-aboriginal originators of exhibits, and the fact that aboriginal museums usually represent a single First Nation, allowing for a strong focus and detailed explanation of that culture.

A primary importance of aboriginal cultural centres lies in the fact that they are expressions of ownership and self-representation. The establishment and continuation of aboriginal museums can be seen as an important step in the work of First Nations to maintain their cultural traditions. These institutions represent a strong link for many aboriginal peoples to their heritage, and a vital source of knowledge and information to other cultures of the world.

A critical evaluation of the techniques of exhibition utilized in aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums illustrates the merits of both types of institutions, and points out how the cultures of First Nations are becoming increasingly involved in the portrayal of aboriginal peoples.

Exa

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Excerpt from James Fenton's poem (1983: 81):

The Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford

Is shut
22 hours a day and all day Sunday
And should not be confused
With its academic brother, full of fossils
And skeletons of bearded seals. Take
Your heart in your hand and go; it does not sport
Any of Ruskin's hothouse Venetian
And resembles rather, with its dusty girders,
A vast gymnasium or barracks--though
The resemblance ends where

Entering
You will find yourself in a climate of nut castanets,
A musical whip
From the Torres Straits, from a Mirzapur a sistrum
Called Jumka, 'used by aboriginal
Tribes to attract small game
On dark nights', a mute violin,
Whistling arrows, coolie cigarettes
And a mask of Saagga, the Devil Doctor,
The eyelids worked by strings.

. . . Beware.
You are entering the climate of a foreign logic

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aboriginal People and Cultural Representation

Over the past decade, many of the world's aboriginal populations have initiated movements towards the reclamation and revitalization of their suppressed cultural traditions (Walker 1993: 1). Cultural revitalization is manifested in many ways, such as land claims, official recognition of aboriginal languages, issues regarding trade and economic development, and questions surrounding the representation and interpretation of aboriginal cultures (Ames 1992:13; Nicks 1992:87).

This study focuses on the last of these many important concerns--the issue of cultural representation to the world. Aboriginal peoples of today are tightening their grip on how their ancestors and relatives are presented to and perceived by themselves and others (Sewid-Smith 1979: 3; Koulas 1987: 16). In particular, criticism is leveled against those who have been primarily responsible for culture interpretation in the past (Ames 1992: 99). For example, the position of the non-aboriginal anthropologist or museum curator as the legitimate authority on aboriginal cultures is questioned. Increasingly, aboriginal peoples are assuming the role of identifying and explaining what they perceive as important about their cultures (Cranmer-Webster 1992: 35).

> The current, self-examining mood in anthropology has caused a re-evaluation of the assumed objectivity of museum exhibits which interpret the cultures of "others" for the edification of the museum going public. But an equally compelling force for reappraisal comes from external communities which are

> increasingly challenging the authority of established institutions to determine how their cultures and histories will be represented (Nicks 1992:87).

The part played by museums is critical, since these institutions often are on the front lines of representation. For people being introduced to aboriginal cultures, museums play a significant role in forming many of the first impressions of a First Nations culture. While not being the only (or even the most persuasive) source of information regarding aboriginal cultures (Ames 1992: 105), these institutions are probably one of the most visible. This visibility frequently makes them subject to critique and often disapproval from patrons and professionals, non-aboriginal and aboriginal alike.

While there is a large and growing body of literature concerning the use of exhibitry as an often complex method of cultural representation (e.g., Ames 1986, 1992; Halpin 1983; Karp and Lavine 1991), much of the applicable discussion is patronizingly critical--pointing out how Western-based museums have failed at portraying aboriginal peoples in an accurate and non-biased manner, but seldom forthcoming with alternative approaches.

Aboriginally owned and operated cultural centres, some having been in existence for many years, take a very different approach in the collection of data and artifacts which pertain to the cultures they explain and illustrate (Cranmer-Webster 1992:35; Dawn 81:201). Methods of ethnographic research, sometimes utilizing non-academic techniques of interpretation, are used by these institutions. It can be argued that this results in different perspectives of First Nations cultures.

The techniques of data and artifact acquisition that have been utilized by aboriginal cultural centres are a major concern of this study. The different processes of ethnography and museum languages used by these institutions are explored and analyzed. Ways in which artifacts are employed in such institutions are also looked at in the course of study. All of these factors are compared to similar examples found in museums developed and administered by non-aboriginal people to find where areas of similarity or difference may exist between the two categories of institution.

1.2 The Relevance of Museum Languages to Aboriginal Institutions

For many years, museums have functioned largely within the confines of their own "languages of interpretation." These languages allowed institutions to interpret aboriginal cultures to individuals from the western perspective. The languages of museums were largely developed by the institutions themselves over time, and evolved in manners similar to those of other languages of the world. The museum languages are the principal vehicles that many institutions use to present aboriginal culture.

For this study, it is important to possess a knowledge of the languages of museums to understand and analyze the methods of communication that are utilized by the aboriginal museum or cultural centre. Are the languages of the aboriginal museum similar to those used in a western museum? Are they rooted in the same origins? Can an aboriginal museum truly convey a unique message if the western museum's language of interpretation is used? If the languages are dissimilar, where do differences in emphasis and structure exist? These questions should be considered when striking a comparison between aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums. To be able to answer these questions correctly, one must understand how existing

languages of museums work, and what purposes they can serve, both in western and aboriginal museums. Chapter Four of this thesis describes many of the theoretical approaches that were used in the analyses of museum languages for this study.

CHAPTER 2.

CONTEXT

Over the past one hundred years, the cultures of aboriginal peoples have been interpreted and portrayed by a variety of media. Many forms of communication including television, books, movies, songs, stories, academic writings and museum exhibits have been used to describe and sometimes even to explain the cultures of the original inhabitants of North America. These portrayals provided Western cultures[1] with convenient generalizations of aboriginal people; letting them become categorized and stereotyped in often inaccurate and/or uncomplimentary terms (Walker 1993:6). Scholars such as Doxtator (1988:26), state that:

> In the past, the image of the "historical Indian", as a member of a disorganized, unsophisticated, scattered people occupying a virtually empty land, has been used to explain how Europeans came to control the lands that now make up Canada. As part of post-World War II social criticism, Canadian history and literature often employ "the Indian" as a symbol of victimization by society, a victim who nevertheless perseveres in the face of adversity.

Such characterizations regarding the diverse aboriginal populations of North America using either of these perspectives are obviously inaccurate. While this fact is well-known within today's forum, it still demands serious consideration. There is much acknowledgment of how indigenous peoples have been misrepresented over the years; however, proactive changes which

[1]In the context of this study, the words "Western" or "Western cultures"refers to the cultures of European-based populations; they are terms of conveniece used to differentiate from First Nations cultures.

confront this issue still need to be made. Museum exhibits are important links in the issue of representing aboriginal cultures. Their exhibits can be seen as windows to the changing of attitudes which are now prevalent concerning aboriginal cultures and their representation to the outside world.

2.1 The Collection of Artifacts in the Past

Looking at how artifacts were collected from aboriginal cultures, particularly those of the Northwest Coast, provides an illustration of how non-aboriginal anthropologists and researchers often acquired and exhibited material culture without fully or accurately considering the cultures which originated them. Many of the people who were involved with the period of intensive collection around the turn of the century, saw their cause as being both noble and justified. The museum professionals and their contractors who worked on the Northwest Coast saw the aboriginal cultures situated there as being in danger of quickly disappearing. From the time of James Swan's first commission in 1875 until the Great Depression, the practice of artifact acquisition in the Pacific Northwest was at its peak (Cole 1985:286). A profound sense of urgency prevailed through these years, with museum curators scrambling to gather as many pieces of material culture as could be incorporated into their huge collections and elaborate exhibits. Museum professionals and collectors such as Stewart Culin decided to let their fieldwork in archaeology wait in lieu of collecting from existing cultures (Jacknis 1991:241). Archaeological specimens were seen to be safely in the ground, while the materials of live peoples were becoming increasingly rare.

Artifacts that celebrated aboriginal cultures in the halls of museums were sometimes acquired by means which could be considered highly ironic: waiting until lean seasons, purchasing from towns that had been ravaged by

illness, and later, purchasing them through agents which confiscated ceremonial objects in potlatch seizures (Cole 1985:299). In doing so, curators sometimes were actually helping to suppress the same cultures they depicted in the halls of their institutions.[2]

Potlatch seizures are of particular interest on the Northwest Coast. Similar to today, the material culture of the Northwest Coast was highly prized by collectors. By purchasing goods seized under the anti-potlatch law of 1885, curators of institutions throughout Canada were sometimes able to acquire this material quickly and cheaply. The biggest potlatch seizure occurred in 1922 when a government agent, William Halliday, seized and confiscated over four hundred items from the Dan Cranmer Potlatch of the Kwakwala-speaking peoples of Vancouver Island, later selling them to museums in Ottawa and Toronto (Cole 1985: 299)[3]. In 1951, the anti-potlatch provisions of the Indian Act were finally dropped. With this, a new period of cultural revival ensued in the Northwest that, according to Cole and Chaikin (1991:160), ". . . prompted a renewal of potlatch ceremonies all along the northwest coast." It is important to note that the potlatch ban was never successful in fully eradicating the cultural practices of Northwest Coast aboriginals (Sewid-Smith 1979:2; Cole and Chaikin 1991:2). Despite the law, sacred events and cultural activities were maintained in revised form or simply out of sight of official eyes.

The collections which exist in museums today are proving to be valuable resources for aboriginal peoples who are using objects as references

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[2] However, it is important to state that many instances of collecting consisted of deals made between willing aboriginal people and collectors. While individual aboriginal traders were sometimes not considered to be the appropriate representatives for the deal, the fact remains that many artifacts were gained through "credible" means.

[3] For a detailed account of this event and others surrounding the suppression of the Northwest Coast potlatch, see Cole and Chaikin(1991).

to their ancestry, and their continually evolving cultural traditions (Ames 1992:81). Objects which were gathered by people such as Charles Frederick Newcombe at the turn of the century are today becoming centerpieces in the aforementioned movements of cultural revitalization.

The mass procurement of artifacts in Newcombe's time indicates how aboriginal peoples were regarded by Western-based cultures. The acquisition policies which many museums adopted during this time took on an air of extreme competition to have the biggest and the best. This competitive spirit, while still seen today in the trade of aboriginal artifacts, was at an all-time high in the early years of this century, sending the value and prestige of Northwest Coast objects to extreme heights (Cole 1985:286-290).

2.2 Modern Western Museums

Museums, in the traditional sense of the word, usually have been designed for and constructed by people of Western descent. The target audience and the subsequent mission of western museums are usually quite clear. They often serve as store houses for objects from distant peoples--status symbols which illustrate the power and worldliness of the sponsor and patrons (Ames: 1992: 103) . As most of the literature surrounding the issue today highlights, the Western museum is often seen as an environment which serves to decontextualize and marginalize the very cultures which they exhibit (Freedman 1979:54; Ames 1992:53).

By briefly looking at the foundations of modern museums of anthropology, one can get a sense as to how the discipline of anthropology helped to create the environment which is seen in the exhibit halls of the present. In the time between 1840 and 1890, anthropology was deeply

embedded in what Sturtevant (1969:662) called the "Museum Period" of the discipline. During this time, museums acted as primary sponsors for the research of anthropologists. They provided funding and institutional bases for researchers of ethnography (Ames 1992:39). Collection of artifacts was looked on as a necessary step in gaining knowledge about culture. Museum professionals competed with each other to obtain large numbers of artifacts which would make their collections seem truly noteworthy.

After this period, increasing numbers of universities began to utilize museum professionals such as Boas to teach in their newly-established anthropology departments. A "Museum-University Period" lasted from 1890 to 1920 (Sturtevant in Ames 1992:39). During this time, academics worked closely with collections institutions to gather objects as part of their fieldwork. Simultaneously, a feeling that the cultures of study were fast "dying out" was prevalent. Collectors again strove to acquire as many specimens as possible, often at the expense of ethics, sensitivity and contextual understanding.

Finally, the "University Period" of anthropology began in the 1920s when teaching institutions began to support almost all of the anthropological fieldwork being undertaken (Sturtevant in Ames 1992:39). As a result, the intensive collection policies of the previous two periods began to lose their importance. Museums were left with large conglomerations of artifacts which were all too often gathered in the spirit of competition rather than for the goal of attaining a true understanding of aboriginal culture.

The interpretation of aboriginal cultures by largely non-aboriginal museums has been examined repeatedly in the academic literature over the past years. Therefore, I have chosen only to touch upon the issues which have been discussed at length within this literature in recent times. In an examination of the problems that are associated with the non-aboriginal

museum in this context, Claudia Haagen (1990:62) identified eight concerns associated with this issue:

1. Museums continue to perpetuate the idea of a moribund culture and a dead people (as do universities and school textbooks).

2. Native culture has up to now been presented solely from a non-native point of view. There is little native involvement in non-native cultural organizations that deal with interpreting native culture. Native people are not incorporated to any significant extent as resource people in academic departments or museums that deal with native culture.

3. Museums emphasize, almost exclusively, an historical material culture to the exclusion of other aspects of culture values, (oral traditions, language, skills and so on).

4. Museum exhibits often lack animation that could provide a sense of a living people, for example the added dimension of modern images, cultural context and sound, that could be provided by photographs, voices, music and contemporary audio-visual productions.

5. The museum audience is primarily non-native.

6. Most native people, and especially children in the course of their education, do not have access (let alone continuous access) to urban institutions holding collections from their locality. They are thereby essentially cut off from their material heritage.

7. Native history, as collected and presented by non-native historians and anthropologists, is incomplete, and often inaccurate. To correct this, existing recorded information requires the verification and completion by elders and native researchers.

8. Museums have successfully provided a safe and reliable holding facility for native material heritage, but a better arrangement for access or repatriation of collections must be achieved once native groups are able to provide facilities considered appropriate by museum professionals.

While some of the concerns listed above by Haagen have been addressed over the past years, the process of addressing the many aboriginal concerns associated with museums will take a great deal of work and time. Additionally, these concerns have been developing over time and have taken on new implications with changes in public perspective, aboriginal politics, and countless other factors. In confronting these questions, some areas of concern have to be assigned higher priority than others. Additionally, some concerns need to be better defined before they can be approached effectively.

For example, in Haagen's final point above, one must consider on whose authority will the "museum professionals" that she speaks of deem an aboriginal facility as "appropriate" to receive repatriated material. Clearly, these are very complex issues that will emerge over time and take on a wide variety of new meanings and implications.[4]

2.3 The Emergence of First Nations Museums

A number of aboriginally-run museums have recently been created as part of the aboriginal cultural revitalization movements (Dawn 1976:201). At first glance, these institutions sometimes appear very similar to western museums except for the fact that they are operated by First Nations. However, there are many ways in which these organizations differ from their Western-based counterparts.

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[4] Similarly, the Royal B. C. Museum in Victoria's "Policy Respecting the co-Management of cultural Property by the Royal British Columbia Museum an the Aboriginal Peoples" states (1993:3.8): "Material of cultural or museological significance will not be released to a requestor unless adequate facilities to care for the materials exist that meet basic museological standards for environmental conditions and physical security; have properly trained personnel responsible for the collections; have stable funding; and reasonable assurance of continuity." This statement illustrates the continuing concern that museum professionals often have regarding the return of materials to aboriginal peoples. It shows that the aboriginal peoples of today still are under in the influence of priorities that are often not necessarily their own.

Today's aboriginal cultural centres and museums are created with a very different set of goals and intentions from Western-based museums. These goals have objectives which go beyond making interpretive generalizations in an effort to educate the general public. They are often focused on ideas of cultural preservation and revitalization, taking an active position within the very cultures from which they have emerged (Clifford 1991:245). Rather than relying only upon techniques of acquisition and observation, aboriginal museums often take a more active role in the preservation of local culture. Cultural events and activities are often organized by these institutions and coupled with techniques of exhibition which emphasize aboriginal viewpoints and ownership of the objects which are on display (Koulas 1987:18). Objects are interpreted in ways that illustrate their connection to a tangible and present group of people, sometimes pointing out which member of a particular band still retains ownership of an object, or that specific objects are still actively used in the cultures which created them (Kwagiulth Museum n.d.). Frequently, exhibitions in Aboriginal museums incorporate explanations of material culture directly from the mouths of their people, taking out the interpretive middleman which many Western-based museum curators have come to represent (Clifford 1991:239). Explanations in exhibits are taken verbatim from band members of the past and/or present, or in many cases, through oral interpretation. Again, connections with the culture of origination are emphasized in this setting, giving the viewer a true sense that the artifacts which he or she witness are a fundamental part of the local area and culture.

Aboriginal museums often choose to primarily address a target audience which is based in the surrounding community (Clifford 1991:229).[5] In general, this is very different from the practices of the traditional museum where aboriginal cultures are often interpreted as being distant from the dominant culture, situated in places which are removed from the viewer.[6] In an aboriginal museum, the viewer experiences aspects of a culture which are surrounding him or her, especially since he or she is usually standing on aboriginal land in such an institution (Clifford 1991: 230).

2.4 Aboriginal Museums as Recipients of Repatriated Material

Repatriation of aboriginal collections is becoming increasingly common as aboriginal peoples take back artifacts from Western-based institutions. In the United States, Public Law 101-601 was implemented in 1991 as a legislative measure to ensure that objects of cultural patrimony will be made available to applicable First Nations (Price 1991:32; Lieu 1991:74; Gibbons 1991:750).

While British Columbia has no law which specifically calls for the return of objects upon request, The Heritage Conservation Act has undergone changes which address the issue (Province of British Columbia 1993:6-7). Additionally, a task force of the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association has set up " . . . guidelines under which objects acquired illegally by current legal standards should be returned and museums should consider requests for the return of material obtained legally" (Matas 1993:4). In the meantime, many instances of repatriation have already taken

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[5] However, it should be noted that many native cultural centres may serve as revenue-generating tourist attractions. This is a topic which will be explored at further length within this study. For further discussion of this issue, see Zukowski 1994; and Koulas 1987.
[6]The course of this study examines whether the non-aboriginal "local" museums that were examined interpret aboriginal culture in this manner.

place in Canada without much legal action (Abbott and Inglis 1991:18). These instances have helped to fuel the creation and maintenance of band-held aboriginal cultural centres which hold and care for the newly repossessed objects (Assu and Inglis 1989:106). In 1979 and 1980, the return of objects from the 1922 Cranmer Potlatch incident resulted in the establishment of two aboriginal museums (Cranmer-Webster 1992:35; Assu and Inglis 1989:106). The objects which were recovered from the collections of the National Museum of Canada and the Royal Ontario Museum now form the basis of the collections for the Kwaguilth Museum at Cape Mudge and the U'Mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay (Cranmer-Webster 1988:43; Clifford 1991:228; Sewid-Smith 1979:3). These institutions go beyond teaching the general public about aboriginal culture; they help to maintain and reinforce it. According to Cole and Chaikin (1991:173), "The presence of these potlatch masks, rattles and coppers within the two major Kwakiutl centres has been yet another element in the renewal not only of the potlatch but of other aspects of aboriginal culture." It can be said that the aboriginal cultural centres which have become more abundant over the past few years are an essential part of the movement of First Nations towards cultural reclamation (Cranmer-Webster 1992:37). These movements show aboriginal peoples as having an increasingly strong hold on their ways of life, and on how their ways are interpreted to the surrounding community (Ames 1992:81).

2.5 Summary of Context and Purpose

The importance of aboriginal owned and run museums is becoming increasingly apparent. These institutions will serve future generations in the capacities of receiving and caring for repatriated material, reinforcing movements of cultural revitalization, acting as from-the-source bases of

information, as well as educating and entertaining the public. It is important at this stage to recognize them as viable organizations and look at them in ways which may provide for greater insight as to how they may be a valuable resource for aboriginals and non-aboriginals alike. By seeing that such institutions may have different perspectives and goals from the museum in the traditional sense, one may be able to use them in a more creative and constructive manner.

All of these statements have become increasingly clear and accepted by aboriginal people, scholars, and museum professionals in the past years. This study examines how these concepts are reflected in the actual world. Whether aboriginal cultural centres are able to carry out and achieve some of the philosophical stances that they were founded upon, and whether the non-aboriginal museum professional is successfully adjusting to these new changes will be examined.

The purpose of this analysis is not to compare different institutions and declare one as being "more successful" in interpreting aboriginal culture. It is, rather, to examine the techniques and objectives utilized by aboriginal collections institutions to find *how* that culture (or those cultures) are interpreted. We are attempting to understand the methods that aboriginal peoples, in an environment of their own control, see as appropriate for the portrayal of their culture. It further assesses the extent to which these practices differ from those of their western counterparts. Additionally, it is important to recognize that First Nations cultures are usually a single part of a number of different peoples that non-aboriginal museums present within their exhibits. One must consider this fact when comparing them to institutions such as aboriginal museums that primarily represent one particular culture.

The establishment and continuation of aboriginal museums can be seen as an important step in the work of First Nations to maintain their cultural traditions. These institutions represent a strong link for many aboriginal peoples to their heritage, and a vital source of knowledge and information to other cultures of the world. This study examines how these institutions deal with many of today's issues in the areas of collections management, culture representation and heritage conservation.

CHAPTER 3.
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

The main body of research for this thesis consisted of a comparative study between two aboriginal and two non-aboriginal institutions. The aboriginal museums served as "treatment" groups that were scrutinized for several traits involved in the presentation of aboriginal cultures. These traits are described below. The non-aboriginal museums were used as comparative "control" groups. These two types of museums provided a basis for comparing the similarities and differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions.

The aforementioned "museum languages" are the primary framework of analysis for this thesis. Chapter 4 consists of a literature-based explanation of languages which museums use to communicate meaning. The different types of museum languages present in the institutions studied are exemplified and analyzed in accordance with theoretical models described in Chapter 4. These museum languages are then compared in the context of the institutions under study, identifying the similarities and differences that exist within methods of presentation.

To collect data related to the languages of the museums scrutinized, several different methods of study were utilized. Visits to aboriginal and non-aboriginal organizations where examination of museum label copy and style of presentation took place; observations during time spent working in a volunteer capacity within such an institution; questionnaires and interviews

with aboriginal museum professionals; and an ongoing literature review were the main tools used to gather information.

A practical application of research and work time at aboriginal cultural centres provided many valuable insights into the perspectives of people at such institutions. Similar to other organizations, museums often have many traits and tendencies that are invisible at first glance. The first time visitor to an exhibit might come away with a different interpretation of how a culture is represented within a museum than would a person who has had extended interactions with the people and cultural objects which are essential in forming the museum's character. Single visits to museums are sometimes insufficient to provide for an accurate representation to how aboriginal cultures are being portrayed.[7]

It is for this reason that some research into this topic involved actual work at an aboriginal museum in British Columbia. This time allowed for research that included not only the initial interpretations that a visitor would have from viewing the exhibits on display, but also reflections on what goes on in such a museum on a day to day basis. This research yielded results that an overview of a museum's activities would not.

The Kwagiulth Museum invited the researcher to spend time at the museum, helping with such daily duties as cataloging, photographing artifacts, staffing the gift shop, and constructing exhibits.[8] In the summer of 1994, the researcher spent a week, working full-time at the Kwagiulth Museum. Time spent at the museum was on a volunteer basis, assisting the curatorial staff with practical needs in addition to researching the topics of

[7]However, many people will only visit an institution once. To account for this, a look at possible initial impressions from first-time visitors to an institution has been incorporated into the study. This is done through the analyses of the Campbell River Museum, the Alberni Valley Museum, the U'Mista Cultural Centre, and visits to a variety of different institutions.
[8]See letters of introduction to the Kwagiulth Museum in the Appendix.

cultural interpretation discussed above. By making a positive contribution to the operation of the museum, the researcher hoped to assist with the daily duties of the institution, while being subjected to more realistic circumstances in the operation of the organization. Working at the Kwagiulth museum provided data in all of the areas of inquiry for this study.[9]

Visits to a variety of aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions in British Columbia and Washington State provided the researcher with perspectives regarding the differences and similarities between them, and allowed for comparison. Four museums (the U'Mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, the Campbell River Museum, the Kwagiulth Museum in Cape Mudge, and the Alberni Valley Museum), were compared and analyzed. Two half-day visits were carried out at the Campbell River Museum, U'Mista Cultural Centre and the Alberni Valley Museum. At the Kwagiulth Museum, the researcher had an initial day-long visit, followed by the week-long work term. Most visits consisted of the researcher reviewing and observing the exhibits and their accompanying label copy. Notes on the institution were taken following the checklist that can be found in the Appendix, leaving room for the researcher to add information on any aspects of the institution that were not covered by the checklist.

Exhibits in the institutions studied were analyzed in terms of the number and kind of artifacts presented, physical method of presentation and enclosure, security, collections accessibility, and conservation. The priorities of the organization regarding these factors were noted and recorded. Label

[9]Additional practical knowledge for this thesis project consisted of the researcher working in four different museums over the past three years, including time spent helping to open the Oneida Indian nation's Cultural Center in the summer of 1993. These experiences proved to be highly applicable within the institutions of study.

copy was also analyzed in institutions. A number of factors were taken into account and documented when looking at label copy:

- whether artifact ownership is mentioned;
- specifics on origination or use;
- emphasis on historical context, and whether present-day use is noted;
- amount and structure of labels was recorded, along with the educational level of audience they may be intended for;
- any information which can be obtained regarding the gathering of copy data and final writing of labels was of special interest.

When events or special exhibits organized by the museums took place during the time of intern or visitation, a detailed documentation of methods utilized to represent First Nations cultures took place. Where nothing of the sort happened during this time, curators were asked about past events, as well as any plans for future initiatives or undertakings. The institutions in which this took place were: The Campbell River Museum which had a temporary exhibit in place that documented the exploration of the Strait of Georgia; and the Kwagiulth Museum, which had five school group visitations during the time that the researcher spent there.

Discussions with curators and questionnaires sent to museums provided perspectives on the running of the museums, the cross-section of the visitor body, future initiatives of the museum, and presentation of artifacts. Goals related to public education, community involvement and cultural sustainability were highlighted. See the Appendix for a detailed outline of topics that were scrutinized during visits to the four institutions.

As mentioned before, analyses of western-based museums took place to examine differences and similarities with aboriginal museums. The

Alberni Valley Museum and the Campbell River Museum were intensively examined on the same level as the U'Mista Cultural Centre[10]; in addition, information concerning four more western-based museums was available through the questionnaires. Again, the checklist that outlined some of the major components of a museum's exhibits with reference to aboriginal cultures provided a base for scrutiny. Analyses of the Western museums provided plenty of material for comparison with data gained from the study of the aboriginal institutions.

Analytical visits to the aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions provided information relevant to several of the areas of inquiry for this thesis. Particularly, these visits provided for in-depth information pertaining to the methods of portraying First Nations that each institution utilized. Insights were gained in the areas of exhibits techniques, styles of portraying aboriginal people and alternative methods of representation. Additionally, the visits provided data on the involvement of aboriginal people in the workings of the institutions. These data were often obtained from the label copy of exhibits. Still more information was gathered regarding the use of these institutions in the capacity of tourism and economic development. Data gained from these visits were used in comparative analyses that identified similarities and differences between the organizations. The analytical visits did not provide for a great deal of information pertaining to institutional mandates, future goals, acquisition and collections policies, and operational considerations such as origination and funding.

To cover a wide spectrum of opinion regarding issues involved in representing aboriginal peoples, 30 questionnaires were mailed to aboriginal

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[10]The Campbell River Museum and the Alberni Valley Museum were also useful for comparison with the initial visit to the Kwagiulth Museum and the time spent working there.

and non-aboriginal cultural organizations in British Columbia. The questionnaires were designed to survey the beliefs of the museum professionals who deal with the presentation of aboriginal culture on a very practical level. Some of their day-to-day experiences in this area were captured in the questions, which can be viewed in Appendix B.

Participants for the questionnaire were recruited in a straightforward manner. Various aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums in British Columbia were approached. Initial selections for contacts were made using listings provided by the British Columbia Association of Museums; contact was made by introduction, telephone, or letter. Further respondents were gained using a snowball sampling methodology.[11]

A covering letter and a sample interview schedule/questionnaire were sent to each of the participants explaining the nature of the study. The study was explained again verbally prior to any interview. Prior to taking part in the research, each participant was asked to read a consent form provided by the researcher. Had a participant not wished to take part in the research at that point, no further efforts would be made to secure his or her cooperation. Upon completion of an interview or written questionnaire, the participant was asked to sign the consent form.

The number of respondents to the questionnaire proved to be less than was hoped for. Out of the original pool of 30 inquiries, eight institutions responded. The initial pool of only 30 institutions in the area of study does not allow for the sample to be highly credible. Various factors probably

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[11] A "snowball" sampling methodology refers to a technique where further respondents are found by using contacts provided by the initial pool of subjects. Therefore, the pool of subjects "builds upon itself."

affected the rate of response, including:

- time constraints which staff from such institutions inevitably face;
- the fact that questionnaires from other research projects were already in circulation in British Columbia, possibly overloading the respondents;
- the fact that such organizations often do not ever hear from "research projects," once they have responded to them;
- time of year: early spring to summer is generally a busy time for these institutions.

Nevertheless, a sample of four aboriginal and four non-aboriginal institutions was received and analyzed. Fortunately, this sample did contain a diverse cross-section of the institutions involved in portraying aboriginal cultures. Small local museums, historical societies, large western museums, and four very different aboriginal cultural centres are all represented in the study. This author feels that the range of responses provided for highly beneficial variety. Even though the sample size was small, the analysis that was carried out on the questionnaire responses proved to be revealing. Insight gained from the questionnaires serves to supplement the findings from the more detailed analysis of the four institutions described above. From the questionnaire, some very interesting results were found, illustrating the complexities surrounding issues that this thesis addresses. In many ways, the questionnaire served to cover many of the areas which institutional visits did not. Questionnaires provided information related to institutional mandates, future goals, acquisition and collections policies, and operational considerations such as origination and funding. These were all areas that often were not able to be covered through observational visits. In addition, the questionnaire also supplied "anecdotal" information to supplement findings from visits to aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums.

The researcher briefly visited and viewed the operation of several other institutions. These visits broadened the perspective of the study, giving the researcher a chance to compare his findings from the more in-depth areas of the study with the basic observations gained in this method. Additional measures of control (and subsequent confidence in the study's findings) were supplied through these visits. Institutions studied in this manner included: the Royal British Columbia Museum (Victoria), the UBC Museum of Anthropology (Vancouver), the 'Ksan Indian Village (Hazelton), the Makah Research Center (Neah Bay), the tems swiya Museum (Sechelt), the Cowichan Native Heritage Center (Duncan), and the Burke Museum (Seattle).

An ongoing literature review was an integral part of the study, incorporating academic and popular opinions regarding issues surrounding the representation of aboriginal people in museum exhibits. Current trends in the area of museum and aboriginal relations were brought into the context of the study, and illustrated or contrasted with what was observed through other methods of analysis.

Several additional contacts were made with various people involved in the world of aboriginal museums. Informal interviews with representatives of the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation provided extensive insight into subjects such as how aboriginal institutions gained initial funding, and retained support over time.

CHAPTER 4.
THEORETICAL CONTEXT:
THE LANGUAGE OF MUSEUMS

4.1 Museum Languages: An Introduction

Museums are institutions that are often heralded as being pillars of society. To many people, they stand for excellence that may be hard to find within the everyday world (Coxall 1991:93). Museums are frequently believed to represent the very best of a culture; interpreting it to the masses in ways that are accurate and credible. It is this with act of interpretation that this thesis is concerned.

In the museum environment, objects, photographs and other media are supplemented with interpretive label copy to form an overall experience for the viewer. Through this experience, museum professionals hope to convey a message to their audience, communicating through the components of the exhibit. This method of communication forms a unique "language" used by museums.

There are several factors that make the language of museums unique, and often hard to fully account for. A number of variables can come into play within the context of a museum exhibit, resulting in different "messages" being received by the observer. Considerations such as the physical environment of an exhibit, the missions and objectives of the institution, the inventory of the museum's collection, the objects themselves, and the writing and interpretive ability of curators all join to form a message. Often, some of the most important or active elements of a museum's language are hard to measure or define. To make matters seem even more arbitrary, the

message of an exhibit is subject to further redefinition through the interpretation of each individual who will pass through the gallery.

With such a large number of elements acting within the arena of the exhibit, one might think that analyses of museum languages would be impossible to undertake. However, several issues can be identified and addressed that affect museum communications, and studies exist that look at the power of museum exhibits and the transfer of knowledge through this medium.

4.2 The Museum Staff and the Origination of Museum Languages

One of the more obvious issues in looking at museum communications is the fact that a museum exhibit is constructed by a number of individuals, often with varying viewpoints, objectives and duties. The messages that are conveyed within a gallery are an amalgamation of many human thoughts. These groupings of compounded thoughts reflect in some way the influence of every person who was part of making an exhibit. As an example, take a sculpture within a modern art museum. The meaning resulting from the sculpture being placed within an exhibit will consist of the message that the artist intended for the piece, coupled with the added interpretations of curators, educators, exhibit designers, and other museum staff. At this point, it might seem that there is a large potential for the artist's original message behind the sculpture to be lost in the process; however, this example does not even consider the added components of influence such as its placement in relation to other sculptures, lighting, and other physical factors.

The process of development that museum label copy must follow is extensive. Written copy is usually originated by a curator who supplies his or her own interpretations of the objects within the exhibit, using them to illustrate and justify the intended message. The draft copy is then passed on through the rest of the museum staff; each person revising and editing it to suit their own objectives. Ideally, label copy cycles through this process, often several times, until everyone agrees on style and content. Usually, it takes someone with authority to stop the process, making important final decisions so that the exhibit can be installed. Commonly, considerable internal discussions take place over the style and content of label copy.

What often results from the process of copy writing is an interpretive statement that has been drafted by curators (sometimes with input from cultural authorities, original collectors, etc.), shortened by exhibit designers, politicized by directors and administration, simplified or put into "accessible terms" by educators, and literally changed by all. This is not always as bad as it sounds. Each position in a museum exists for this very reason, with specialists interjecting their professional opinions in the hope that an exhibit can be truly accessible and useful to all. Nevertheless, in the process, many of the messages of an exhibit can be altered. A large spectrum of opinion goes into the writing and revision of the work which originated at the hands of the ethnologist or curator (Ames 1992:42). Label copy is consistently revised and hand tailored to fit what every person within a museum's power structure feels is important (see Figure 1). It is easy to see how a writer's original thoughts and ideas could be obscured or cut out under such scrutiny.

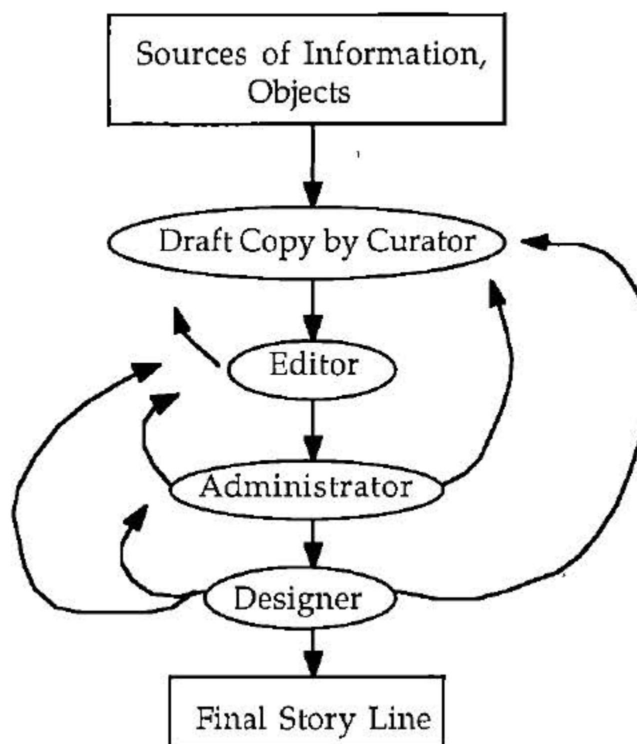


Figure 1: The Creation of Museum Label Copy

As a side note, the accurate representation of human cultures for the public eye must always be the primary concern of a museum anthropologist while he or she produces ethnographic material. This is because the written messages displayed in museums will constantly come under strong criticism from the public, other museum professionals, governing bodies, and most important, according to authors such as Michael Ames (1992:41) of the UBC Museum of Anthropology, from members of the populations which are depicted in the exhibit. This phenomenon can be easily seen in any local museum that presents First Nations cultures.

The perceived tendency for museum label copy to give the reader a "watered down" version of the originally intended message has been addressed at length in academic literature. In an article entitled "Anthropology as Artifact," Marjorie Halpin (1983:267) compares the writing

of interpretive label copy to the development of stories used by human beings to explain the unexplainable. Halpin draws on the work of Barthes to illustrate what she means:

> In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: It abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (Barthes 1973:142 cited in Halpin 1983:268).

From Barthes' quotation, one can clearly see the argument which Halpin is trying to clarify--that exhibit labels can only scratch the surface, pointing out the obvious through filtered lenses.

4.3 The Use of Objects Within Museum Languages

What makes the language of museums truly distinct is the use of material objects to convey ideas and meaning. This practice gives museum-based communication an added facet; putting meaning into three dimensions. The added dimension of a physical object often gives the language of museums more credibility than is ultimately deserved. Coxall (1991:93) states in her essay on museum languages that this tendency ". . . lies in the assumption that the object, like the camera, 'cannot lie'." By having the subject of the exhibit at least partly "in the flesh" a museum exhibit seems to convey authority and accuracy. Through museum-based interpretation, ownership is often equal to the power.

Coxall (1991:93) states that the role of the object in a museum exhibit is similar to that of a photograph in today's society. She takes direction from Roland Barthes essay (1977) "The Photographic Message" to illustrate her point. Coxall's comparison is rooted in Barthes' notion that the photograph,

> . . . transmits its "innocence" to any text accompanying it. This occurs even though the text may misrepresent the image, take it out of context, or even deliberately mislead the reader. If this is the case with a photograph of an object, it is obvious how much more easily the same assumption can be made of the authentic object itself (Coxall 1991: 94).

In saying this, Coxall is explaining that having an object in the presence of other media will help a museum language to authenticate the points of meaning that it is trying to communicate to the observer. This is a point that should be made more available to the bulk of people that visit the museum.

Objects are often used as punctuation marks within museum exhibits. They sometimes serve to give a justifying ring to the statements that are made within an exhibit. In doing so, the object will authenticate the intended message of the curator. While this is not necessarily a negative act, objects can be selectively chosen to justify only a single point, leaving out other areas of potential meaning or value.

To make matters even more complex, there are at least two schools of thought regarding the role of objects within museum languages. "Formalist" thinkers view material objects in their own right; often as pieces of art (Ames 1992:52-53). This means that the museum object is important in itself and has its own meaning without considering the environment in which it originated. "Contextualists," on the other hand, point out how an object functions within its surrounding natural environment. In this case, the way that an object was created and what purpose it serves in the context of the real world is of utmost importance. The object means nothing except in relation to the rest of the environment surrounding it (Ames 1992:51-53).

The conflict between the formalists and the contextualists is traditionally suppressed if the formalists stay within their art museums or galleries, and the contextualists remain in the confines of museums of natural history. "Only when boundaries are crossed do people get agitated or confused. . . . If a museum of anthropology displays the material workings of a tribal society as fine art, then a boundary is violated, categories become mixed, and people are likely to become disoriented and upset." (Ames 1992:53). According to Clifford (1988:227), the boundaries between the two types of interpretation are deeply founded; having different, long-standing ideologies which are seen in museums of art and natural history. "Whereas in the ethnographic museum the object is culturally or humanly

'interesting,' in the art museum it is primarily 'beautiful' or 'original'," he says.

This debate points to one of the many complexities that the languages of museums must deal with in the display and interpretation of material objects. It seems that by including physical artifacts or specimens, the language of museums makes for a truly challenging field to work in, and even more challenging to analyze.

4.4 Studies of Museum Languages

Several studies have taken place that observe and analyze some of the different factors that come into play within museum communications. These studies primarily focus on the label copy of exhibits; evaluating the effect that color, font size, and length of text have on the accuracy of the statement, and amount of information conveyed. More specialized studies look at other aspects of museum communications such as possible combinations of different media, lighting, and object density and placement.

A study by Borun and Miller (1980) is one of the most straightforward relating to museum languages. Entitled *What's In a Name? A Study of The Effectiveness of Explanatory Labels In A Science Museum,* this study employed a statistical methodology that isolated several elements within a museum visitor's experience.

Borun and Miller start their study from ground zero, recognizing that many museum professionals do not understand the importance of label copy. They state that the ongoing debate regarding the importance of label copy has clearly defined borders:

> Some museum professionals believe that labels detract from the direct experience of an artifact . . . . Those who hold the opposite view contend that the creative use of printed materials is essential in order to communicate information and concepts to a diverse audience . . . (Borun and Miller 1980:1)

From this statement, it becomes clear from the start that Borun and Miller are going to be addressing one of the most primary questions of museum languages among others. The specific objectives for the study (Borun and Miller 1980:3) were as follows:

(1) Whether or not visitors choose to "study" the content of specific exhibits during their visit and if so, the relationship between this and other visitor behaviors;

(2) what kind and length of explanatory label produces a significant increase in visitors' understanding and enjoyment of a display.

While Borun and Miller only had these two objectives for their study, the number of variables that they had to consider was very large. The researchers used five different investigations to pursue their goals. In a "Whole Visit Study," the researchers followed a number of adult visitors, watching which exhibits they paid the most attention to, and whether they read the respective labels. A "Transfer of Misinformation Study" monitored whether adults with accompanying children would relay misinformation while explaining exhibits in the absence of label copy. Similarly, in a "Preliminary Labeling Study" the researchers watched visitor interaction with labeled and non-labeled exhibits. "Label Presence, Content, and Length Experiments" examined the structure of written copy and its result on

viewers. Finally a "Children's Explanatory Label Experiment" tried to determine what type of labels were most attractive to children.

The findings of the study were often unsurprising, but among the interesting discoveries were:

> . . . it was found that while visitors read an average of only 18% of the labels available to them in the exhibit halls they entered, they read an average of 68% of the labels on the displays at which they stopped. This suggests that if a display is able to attract and hold a visitor's attention, he or she is likely to read the label associated with that display (Borun and Miller 1980: 48).

These results show that museum visitors are very selective of what they invest time in while at a museum. So, much in the same way that a person might only absorb certain elements of a conversation with another, museums also cannot expect to have every element of an exhibit be taken into a person's mind. Much depends upon the "initial interest" that a display can generate, pulling the observer in to read further on the subject. This initial interest has a great deal to do with "resonating themes" an exhibit can possess. The topic of "resonating themes" will be discussed further in the remainder of this chapter.

The importance of having some form of interpretive written copy was illustrated in the "Transfer of Misinformation Study," where adults were frequently observed giving the children accompanying them false explanations for exhibits that contained no explanatory writing. This is an outcome that most museum professionals would cringe at. According to the researchers (Borun and Miller 1980:50): "[the] findings suggest that an unlabeled display is likely to be misinterpreted and that an explanatory label can enhance the instructional effectiveness of a display."

One of the final verdicts of Borun and Miller's (1980: 51) analysis is that:

> Rather than bemoaning the fact that visitors do not read all of the printed material available, it the responsibility of museums to provide visitors with concise, intelligible explanations of displays.

With conclusions such as these, it is easy to see why label copy is a source of constant interest to museum professionals; they often feel that they are not being "heard." In a related article entitled: "Noodling Around With Exhibition Opportunities", Gurian (1990:185) discusses how label copy can be manipulated to better serve and hold the visitor. Using an interesting example, the author shows how alternative methods of label writing can be employed that may prove to be more effective in reaching the visitor. Gurian (1990:185) explains that the Monterey Aquarium ". . . has set a new standard by writing label copy that is conversational in tone. The reader feels like he or she is chatting with a friend rather than being lectured to by a professor." This method, according to Gurian, would promote further discussion among museum visitors, leading to a sense of greater involvement in the explanation of museum objects. The author also notes that some museums have even gone as far as addressing several levels of reading on a single label, hoping to reach a greater swath of the public audience (Gurian 1990:186). Through examples such as these, museum professionals are beginning to realize that the language they use within the label copy of their exhibits can be molded and creatively changed to become highly effective.

However, it is important to remember that the exhibit label copy is not the only language of museums that can be studied. Physical factors that help to form an exhibit's message can also be analyzed. Peart (1982) in a study

entitled*Knowledge Gain, Attitudinal Change, and Behaviors at Museum Exhibits Ranging From Abstract to Concrete,* analyzed which components of an exhibit are most effective in holding a visitor, and inducing knowledge gain. The attractive power of the exhibit and subsequent learning could be read as the successful communication of museum languages.

Peart took a single display in the Royal B. C. Museum and observed visitors interacting with it. Over time, he would alter the components of the exhibit, analyzing how the changes affected the visitors' levels of learning and attraction.

The first display that Peart observed was what he termed "Abstract;" this was an exhibit that consisted only of written copy, leaving the visitor to read about the subject at hand. The researcher then progressed through the study, adding components of sound, physical objects and images to enhance the message. In the final exhibit, termed "Concrete", written text was supplemented with all of the added components. Not surprisingly, Peart found that this "Concrete" exhibit was the one that attracted the most visitors and resulted in the highest transfer of knowledge. Peart (1982:73-74) summarizes his study by saying

> Knowledge gain does occur upon viewing certain exhibit types, especially those exhibits that are concrete. It is evident that exhibits utilizing objects from the collection in a three-dimensional format; providing clear and concise labels, and involving the visitor in interactions are more effective for communicating messages and accomplishing goals than abstract exhibits consisting of flatwork, and none or few objects.

The results of this study may seem obvious. However, Peart's observations clarify that museum languages function in a unique way: using many different media to transfer knowledge. The merits of the "concrete"

museum exhibit could potentially be overlooked or underrated by museum professionals. Museum languages need to be approached with the understanding that they are not complete without a variety of media being utilized to convey meaning.

4.5 The Semiotics of Museum Languages

An important way in which the language of museums can be looked at is through semiotic analysis. Most methods of inquiry study exhibits from the inside, analyzing the intended message of label copy and exhibits design. Semiotic analyses, on the other hand, study the museum from the outside in, concerned with how the point of view of the individual observer is affected by the mythical museum experience (Hooper-Greenhill 1991:51).

Semiotics, as defined by Innis (1985:viii cited in Hooper-Greenhill 1991:49), is "the doctrine of general theory of signs . . . [which] deals with meanings and messages in all their forms and all their contexts." Therefore, with methods of semiotic analysis, researchers look for particular underlying signs that often exist as hidden "cues of human universals" within a museum exhibition. These signs could be formed by a great number of factors: exhibit layout, lighting, choice of objects, the absence or presence of written copy, content of explanation, and many others. All of these factors would combine to create an overall "myth" for the observer to absorb and accept as valid.

Hooper-Greenhill (1991) expresses doubts about the traditional forms of semiotic analysis being used within the museum context. In "A New Communication Model For Museums," she argues that most semiotic analyses assume that the visitor to a museum exhibit is a passive observer,

absorbing all of the underlying messages without truly thinking about them. She states:

> Barthes . . . assumes, in so far as he is interested, that visitors are automatically deceived by the messages of the exhibition . . . . Visitors are assumed to be passive and uncritical, incapable of making their own meanings, and manipulated by the hidden social and ideological functions of the museum (Hooper-Greenhill 1991:52).

It is important to challenge this tendency to "assume the visitor to be passive." Museum visitors bring their own set of background messages that they use to create their own interpretation of an exhibit. Hooper-Greenhill (1991:52) states that researchers in the past have over-emphasized the power that galleries and museums have to create subliminal messages. She believes that this type of criticism is getting away from the true purpose of museum analysis; that is, helping museum professionals to create exhibits that convey more meaning and have a greater impact.

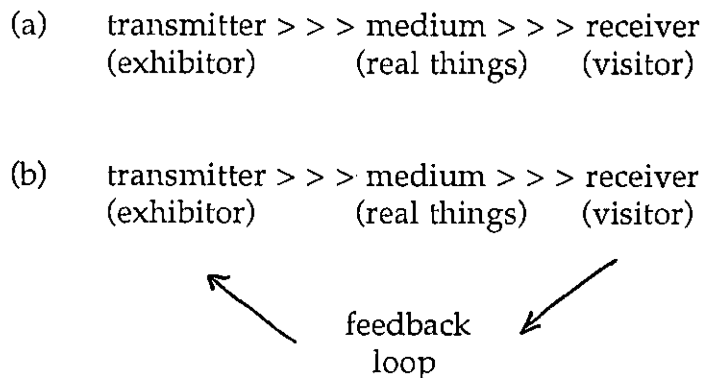
As a possible solution, Hooper-Greenhill proposes to use an alternative form of semiotics to create a better communication model for museums, drawing on the work of the French semiotician and linguistic theorist, George Mounin. According to Mounin, there are two types of semiotics. The first, which he terms "the semiology of signification" deals primarily with the hidden or subliminal meanings that are conveyed by signifying systems. This is the type of semiology that Mounin believes theorists such as Barthes have fallen into; emphasizing the power of museums to convey subliminal messages to ignorant viewers.

The second type of semiology outlined is called the "semiology of communication." According to Hooper-Greenhill (1991:53):

> Mounin identifies two important characteristics of systems of communication: first, they involve a conventional code that is acquired through social learning; second, that there is an intention to communicate which is recognized by at least two people.

Therefore, the first semiology deals with unintended or unconscious message, and the second deals with recognized and intended forms of communication between the source and recipient parties. Using the second model of semiotics, the new museum communication model is constructed.

As an introduction, two traditional models of communication taken from Cameron (1968: 33-40) are illustrated by Hooper-Greenhill (1991: 56-57):



(Figure 2: Cameron's Model, Cameron's Model With Feedback Loop)

The second model adds a tool for visitors to communicate what information is being received from exhibits. A feedback loop allows the museum visitors eventually to engage in a dialogue with the museum professionals through an exhibition. This feedback would probably only be slightly effective due to the time delay and methodological awkwardness of gaining visitor response. However, it still illustrates progress towards having some form of outside response and influence on the exhibits themselves.

Using semiotic theory influenced by Mounin, Hooper-Greenhill (1991:59) proposes the following communications model for museums:

team of communicators >>>> media (meanings) <<<< active meaning makers

(Figure 3: Hooper-Greenhill's Model)

Hooper-Greenhill's model assumes that visitors bring their own meanings and interpretations to a museum exhibit, and together with the initial constructors of the display, create an overall combined meaning. This meaning is the one that Hooper-Greenhill believes is important for museum professionals to be aware of. While there is no way that exhibit designers can be aware of every perspective an audience will bring, knowing that this variety exists should be of some benefit. She suggests that this awareness will better equip museum workers to identify subjects of potential "pertinence" to their audience.

> From a material socio-cultural phenomenon (an artifact or specimen, an exhibition, a museum) people will select (imperceptibly) those indices that are pertinent to their own agendas at that time. Things will become of meaning if relevance is found between the phenomenon and the viewer (Hooper-Greenhill 1991:59).

Therefore, by accepting that there are elements in the world that will be important to most people, the museum worker can consciously include them in an exhibit as a strong point of resonance with his or her audience. Instead of approaching the "myths" of museums as underlying and unconscious statements of a museum's agenda, an institution can straightforwardly choose to use those myths, knowing that it will strike a chord with their visitors.

This methodology could quite possibly create a small revolution in the area of exhibition design and mission. Museum professionals may now

understand and be comfortable with the fact that they will not be able to give all of their viewers the exact same message through an exhibit. They might instead become more focused on establishing these points of resonance in their displays, knowing that they will at least hit a point of personal importance with the museum patron, having a lasting effect. Through this method, the initial pull to the display will be increased, and the exhibit will have more holding power, allowing the interested visitor to absorb more information.

4.6 Conclusions Regarding Museum Languages

The studies of museum languages that have been undertaken by these scholars and others point towards the importance of understanding the communications models that museums use. Through this understanding, a better sense of how museums can efficiently engage their audiences is achieved.

To the casual observer, museums might seem to have a straightforward methodology of communication. However, a person who looks deeply into the language of museums will find that a complex and diverse array of tools is used in the process. Over time, these tools of articulation have evolved much in the same way as the spoken languages of the world have evolved: with new forms of speech and techniques of delivering messages.

To the museum professional, it is necessary to have a firm grip on the types of museum languages and dialects that are continually being refined. This understanding provides him or her with a strong base of knowledge that will help to deliver messages that are creative, educational, interactive, and interesting. This is not an easily accomplished task, given the often unseen

mechanisms that work within the format of exhibitry. However, with time one can become more aware of the many facets that affect the language of museums. Through this effort, exhibits of value can be produced.

4.7 Museum Languages and Aboriginal Institutions: An Exploration of the Different Factors Involved In Portrayal

The use of museum languages as outlined above can provide an observer of museum methods with a good background for looking at and analyzing the different factors that come into play within the format of the museum exhibit. However, it is important to recognize that the different institutions (such as the aboriginal institutions that come under the scrutiny of this thesis) may choose to use different methods of communication, based upon their intended audience and mission. The recognition of this fact is highly important to the researcher in looking at aboriginal institutions. In considering only the viewpoints and perspectives that adhere to the western museum model, one would be unable to account for differences in style and method of communication. However, as the findings of this research will show, some typical elements of museums do exist within aboriginal institutions. To know the elements that make up a museum exhibit will help in looking at aboriginal institutions.

CHAPTER 5.
WORK, OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEWS IN ABORIGINAL MUSEUMS:

5.1 The Structure of Aboriginal Institutions

5.1.1 The Mandate of Aboriginal Cultural Centres

Aboriginal cultural centres characterize themselves as having a wide array of objectives. However, all of these aims center around the preservation and sharing of the First Nations culture that surrounds them. Mission statements of each institution observed targeted but a single First Nation. Such singularity allows cultural centres to look at and focus on the unique aspects of one culture; to portray and celebrate the heritage of a single people. With this stance, a pan-Indian viewpoint of interpretation is unnecessary.

Examples of this can easily be found. The annual report for the U'mista Cultural Society (1995:2) states that their main priority is to "ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage" of the area's First Nations. This statement illustrates how the aboriginal institution's goals are firmly grounded within the local community.

Observations made through the period working within the Kwagiulth Museum paralleled this concept. The chief goal at this institution seemed to be the communication of the local First Nations heritage, coupled with a strong emphasis on cultural preservation and the education of non-aboriginal visitors. The effects that this mission had on the workings of the institution were made very clear through the efforts of the staff, the structure of displays and activities, and time spent with visitors.

All four of the aboriginal organizations which responded to the questionnaire stated that at least a fair part of their mandate was to illustrate the cultural heritage of the area's specific First Nation. Responses ranged from identifying this as being the only general objective of an institution, to much more elaborate and developed statements that prioritized collection, education, academic study, conservation, historical documentation, repatriation, and traditional activities such as dancing and carving. Goals such as these are highly diverse, with aboriginal organizations often sponsoring a large number of different activities.

Mandates for the observed aboriginal institutions were found to be determined by boards of directors comprised of a variety of people from the local community. First Nations councillors, elders, museum curators, and non-aboriginal consultants were also credited as having an influence on at least one of the cultural centres' mandates. Institutions contacted were satisfied with their general mandates, and did not report that their mandates were constraining in any way.

5.1.2 Establishment, Funding and Operation:

A variety of causes may necessitate the establishment of aboriginal cultural centres. Local institutions such as band level governments and library boards have expressed a desire to preserve and interpret aboriginal cultures as early as the 1950's.[12] As mentioned before, two institutions in British Columbia were constructed to house the repatriated artifacts that were seized by the government (Cranmer-Webster 1992:35; Assu and Inglis 1989:106).

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[12]Sources: questionnaire respondents.

Another institution contacted was originally constructed to house the materials of an archaeological dig that was carried out in conjunction with the area's First Nation. This centre served as the primary recipient of archaeological specimens from the dig, and a base of research for the unearthed materials. With time, other programs and priorities were added into the mission of the institution.

Additionally, at least one First Nation established a museum as part of a local economic development venture. In this instance, a museum was put in place as part of a facility that housed a health centre, educational centre, tourism bureau, gift shop and theatre. The factor of tourism sometimes plays heavily in the considerations that First Nations address while looking at the feasibility and worth of cultural centres. This topic will be discussed further in section 5.4.

Decisions in aboriginal institutions are often made by a Board of Directors. Boards are usually comprised of a variety of people, representing a number of local interests. Taking from the U'mista Cultural Centre's Annual Report for 1995 (page 1):

> The U'mista Cultural Society is governed by a Board of Directors, elected by the honorary, individual and family members. The ten (10) directors represent at least five of the bands in the northern Vancouver Island area. Terms for Board Members are two years, with five (5) expiring each year. The board elects a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary/Treasurer from its members.

Another institution contacted stated that the decision-making structure consisted of a "cultural consultant," the institution's aboriginal curator, and the Band's set of Councillors.

Sources of funding for aboriginal institutions usually come from memberships, band-level contributions, on-site gift shops, and visitor entrance fees. The economic ability of the individual First Nation, coupled with needs and the scope of the institution, usually determines how a centre will be funded.

Various grants from organizations such as the British Columbia First Peoples' Cultural Foundation allow for additional support. Funding for feasibility studies and operating costs is available through such organizations that act as liaison between government and First Nations. Please refer to Appendix C: Guidelines: First Peoples' Cultural Foundation for a sample of application forms and criteria that First Nations must meet in order to receive governmental contribution.

5.2 Collections, Exhibits and the Interpretation of Aboriginal Culture

5.2.1 Methods of Interpretation: The Languages of Aboriginal Museums

Most of the aboriginal cultural centres observed use a variety of methods to portray First Nations cultures. While many forms of "traditional" museum exhibitry are utilized, other techniques are employed. This practice points towards the tendency for these institutions to utilize whatever methods of communication they feel are most appropriate, attractive, and effective. Cultural centres provide a unique format that is highly conducive to experimentation. Different techniques of information transmission can be used.

The two institutions that were analyzed in detail used similar methods of presentation. However, differences did exist within them that can be

noted. At the Kwagiulth museum, traditional museum-style exhibits are the most utilized form of presentation. In addition, oral presentation, hands-on exhibits, and video tapes are also utilized. The majority of information at the Kwagiulth Museum is conveyed by exhibits that are further supplemented by oral explanations that are provided by an on-staff elder.

The U'mista Cultural Centre generally uses the same methods of portrayal as the Kwagiulth Museum. The bulk of the presentations at U'mista consist of objects on display. A large video-viewing area is often utilized with a variety of educational programs. Hands-on exhibits are provided to give viewers a chance to experience objects through touch.

The aboriginal institutions that responded to the questionnaire all selected the utilization of museum-style exhibits as being the primary means of information relay. However, the respondents also included methods such as demonstrations, traveling exhibits, video presentations, educational brochures and school assignments, lectures, audio tapes, and informal explanation in their list of methods utilized.

Oral presentations were frequently seen to be utilized by the Kwagiulth Museum. School groups often visited the institution, and were guided around the exhibits by an on-staff elder who explained their content. One institution that was surveyed noted that informal oral explanation was often used to supplement label copy saying that "not all information can be contained in labels and some people do not read labels." This point is important to make in consideration of the traditional debate over the usefulness of museum label copy that was touched upon earlier in Chapter 4 which discussed the languages of museums. Whether label copy explanation is inadequate, or lacks the holding power to captivate a viewer, a human

touch is always found to be appreciated. It is common knowledge that many First Nations cultures transfer cultural knowledge primarily through the use of oral history. This makes aboriginal cultural centres highly conducive to explanation through human interaction and storytelling. A different respondent stated that oral interpretation was used because the First Nation being represented in their institution was part of "orally based cultures . . . that's how we share, learn."

Formal presentations such as scheduled topical lectures or talks were reported to be a part of aboriginal cultural centres. However, lack of organization, time, and funding were cited as reasons for not having them as a regular feature of day-to-day activities. It is doubtful whether aboriginal institutions would always prove to be an appropriate forum for formal presentation. Most activities at the aboriginal cultural centres observed are based in learning through sharing, interaction, and contemplation. Returning to the concept of museum languages, the flow of information in such organizations does not always seem to be entirely one way, as in a formal lecture.

Another consideration is, of course, video presentation. Video is a medium that is fast becoming commonplace in modern centres of learning such as classrooms, seminars and museums. This method is a possible avenue of presentation for institutions that would otherwise be unable to supply docents or other people for personal information sharing. Organizations such as the U'mista Cultural Centre have produced explanatory videos that have been widely distributed throughout North America.[13] These videos are highly beneficial links between cultural centres

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[13] For instance, see the U'mista Cultural Centre's video: Box of Treasures, which explains the circumstances surrounding the seizure of regalia from the Cranmer potlach, the subsequent repatriation of artifacts, and the formation of the Cultural Centre.

and other communities. The video theatre at the U'mista Cultural Centre seems to be one of its most utilized resources. People were observed to take time and view the video productions. Many of the scenes depicted in them show the surrounding community of Alert Bay, and the relationship that U'mista has with the area in maintaining Kwakwaka'wakw Culture.

Interestingly, two of the four respondent museums to the questionnaire said that video was used infrequently. In the case of these institutions, this medium was only used in the background of exhibits, to supplement label copy, and provide a backdrop of stimulation. One respondent stated that video was: "too time consuming for most visitors although we often have videos available and going." Again, a possible parallel with the observed emphasis on oral explanation might be drawn here. During time spent at the Kwagiulth Museum, the researcher noted that videos were available for museum visitors in the basement to use at their own desire. Visitors were frequently seen to walk away from them after only a few minutes to roam through the displays of Kwagiulth regalia.[14]

To summarize, most of the aboriginal museums that were observed utilized museum-style exhibits to convey the bulk of information, with other methods used in supplement. The museum-style exhibits found at these institutions almost entirely followed Cameron's (1968) general model of museum communication:

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[14] As a related counterpoint, Ames (1992: 105) in *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* touches upon this subject. He sees major problems with typical museum exhibits in terms of public education and access to collections, saying that other media can be seen to be much more effective in conveying meaning. He singles out video as being a more efficient method of teaching. One wonders if Ames is pointing at a future where all learning is carried out through observing a television monitor; this is a thought that could repel any person who appreciates learning through tangible sources, be they human or object.

transmitter > > > medium > > > receiver
(exhibitor) (real things) (visitor)

(Figure 4: Cameron's Model; Illustrated in Hooper-Greenhill 1991:56-57)

In this way, a great deal of knowledge in aboriginal museums is transmitted in a one-way stream of learning. Thinking in terms of Peart's study noted in Chapter 4, most of the exhibits found in aboriginal institutions were "concrete," that is, they consisted of three dimensional objects that were supplemented by label copy and photographic images. In most cases, the exhibitor uses material objects to convey meaning. However, this is not always the case. In institutions such as the Kwagiulth Museum, a "feedback loop" is put into place with the addition of a person on staff to provide interaction with the visitors to the museum.

The other methods of interpretation at the aboriginal institutions utilized different methods of communication, leading to both one and two-way flows of information. Video and audio resources, by their very nature, are one-way styles of presentation. The use (although infrequent) of formal presentations and lectures would also be one-way. Two-way streams of interaction were found in the hands-on exhibits found in organizations such as the Kwagiulth Museum and U'Mista Cultural Centre. In these hands-on exhibits, visitors are encouraged to handle and interact with specific cultural objects. In this way, the preconceptions of the visitor are utilized to arrive at an assessment of meaning for the object that he or she is holding.

5.2.2 The Use of Exhibitry In Aboriginal Museums

Exhibits in the aboriginal institutions that were observed consisted largely of displays that at the first glance parallel many of those found in western museums. However, as with any comparison of cultures, differences

existed between institutions in style, purpose, material, and several other factors. The diversity among the various aboriginal museums was highly apparent at this level. Many of the factors that influenced these differences probably had much to do with who constructed them, time and budgetary constraints, and the institution's individual priorities.

The author's findings at the Kwagiulth Museum were enlightening. The exhibits methodology that is currently in place in this institution was seen to incorporate the priority of orally interpreting existing displays. Most of the exhibits within this institution would probably fall into the category of being "typically" constructed: objects appear within glass cases, along with photographs and some degree of interpretive written copy. Display cases in the institution generally house artifacts that are supported by exhibits furniture, or suspended by monofiliment. Label copy inside of the cases gives general information on the artifacts within them; many of the labels include the names of the artifacts' owners. However, many of the similarities with other western-style exhibits stop there. Rather than relying only on label copy for interpretation, the visitor at the Kwagiulth Museum receives a large amount of information from an authority on the culture that is being presented. That is, the viewer receives information from a member of the culture that is featured within the display. Usually, an elder that is on staff takes time to explain the contents of the cases and their meaning.[15] This results in a two-way stream of learning, rather than the common method of having the exhibit standing as the absolute authority on a culture.

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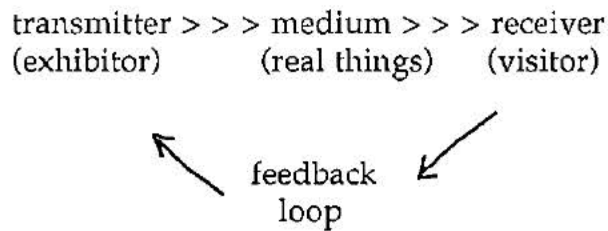
[15]This position could be described as being very similar to a docent in a non-aboriginal museum.



(Figure 5: Cameron's Model With Feedback Loop); Cameron 1968: 33-40)

The feedback loop between the museum language and the visitor that was discussed in Chapter 4 is seen in a pure form at the Kwagiulth Museum. The visitor has a chance to review, clarify, and discuss the meanings of the presentations directly with a representative of the museum and the culture being portrayed. In this way, the staff of the museum can have a grasp on what areas of their exhibits are often misunderstood or require further explanation. A pattern of two-way knowledge exchange is developed. When considering some of the most viable options for explaining First Nations culture, one can not overlook one of their most traditional methods of interpretation--oral history. The Kwagiulth Museum illustrates this concept in practice.

Rotations between collections facilities and display cases were quite frequent, with the observer helping with this on occasion. The cause for one particular rotation was the transfer of artifacts between two aboriginal cultural centres. This act was done upon the request and consultation between First Nations officials regarding which institution was the most appropriate holder of a set of artifacts in question. This instance illustrates the fact that First Nations are cooperating together in many organizational aspects of cultural representation. In this case, the artifacts that were removed from display were replaced with others from the existing collection without much trouble or inconvenience to the staff.

U'mista Cultural Centre has a practice of placing artifacts in the consecutive order of appearance at a potlatch. Many of the objects of the "Potlach Collection" have been taken out of cases and put into open displays, allowing viewers to come close to (without touching) the artifacts. The artifacts are then supplemented with quotations from their original owners, and the Indian agents that had a hand in confiscating them. This methodology allows for several features of learning to occur at once. The viewer has a strong physical sense of the occurrences at a traditional occasion, and has a chance to read statements from the people that had a deep personal connection with the events being depicted. Additionally, all of the artifacts make a single statement together. This exhibit is effective because the objects seem to naturally belong together (as they do in the context of a potlatch), as a single unit. The viewer may take all of them in as one, single, unified declaration of one facet of Kwakwaka'wakw culture. The designers of the U'mista Potlatch Collection exhibit have taken this trait and used it in a way that sends a strong message of unity to the viewer. This message gives the viewer a feeling of the objects as standing in symphony; they are stronger as a single expression.

In this way, the "typical" method of presenting objects (often standing upon their own for interpretation), is overruled. Instead of only having an object identified with a common name or categorization and a brief description of its use, the object is placed within a closer approximation of its original context.[16] The viewer comes away with a sense of how an individual object fits into the overall importance of a cultural event or practice. This

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[16]It should be noted, however, that U'mista does plan to supply this type of information in the future. This will be done through a "catalog book" that would allow the viewer to look up information pertaining to an individual piece, while still maintaining the overall continuity of the "Potlatch Collection" exhibit. (From discussions with the Director of the U'mista Cultural Centre.)

technique of presentation is very different from displaying a collection of unrelated and decontexualized names and categories of material objects. By not having individual labels, the artifacts in this exhibit work together to form a singular statement about their importance in the potlatch--the result is striking.

U'mista also has several displays of objects in typical style museum cases, with explanatory labels that give the names, dates of creation, and general explanation of the objects. These displays serve to give the visitor who is interested in this type of information a chance to view aboriginal artifacts in this way. A large number of exhibit cases were filled with objects that were given to the institution by a variety of First Nations individuals, collectors, other aboriginal museums, and aboriginal groups from other nations. In these cases, direct ties between objects and individuals were recognized in label copy that gave the name of the donor with acknowledgment of their relationship with the institution.

Another display at U'mista consists of a detailed explanation of all of the traditional Kwakwaka'wakw communities and Bands. Locations of Kwakwaka'wakw settlements and descriptions of the people who lived there are featured in written copy and photographs. This exhibit illustrates the Centre's priority to feature and illustrate exclusively the Kwakwaka'wakw people to whom it belongs.

A wide variety of exhibits-related considerations were addressed through the questionnaire. The participants in the questionnaire varied in their responses to questions about the initial construction of their organization's exhibits. One institution stated that its exhibits, which were all between one month and two years old, were constructed by the institution's curator. Elders from the community took part in a process of consultation

while the writing of label copy was underway. Another was quite different, stating that their exhibits fell into age categories of between five and ten years of age (20%), and even older (80%). These particular displays were constructed by several different persons, starting with an outside contractor, and later moving into First Nations museum interns and an aboriginal curator who now coordinates their conception.[17]

Much in the same way, respondents varied in their feelings as to how well their museum-style exhibits represented the collections that they possessed. One curator complained about their exhibits' lack of proper written explanation of the small number of artifacts that were already on display, much less their ability to represent the entire collection. Yet another stated that their collection was very well represented through their exhibits. Once again, the variability of how such institutions can operate was highlighted.

However, similarities did exist in the questionnaire responses. Both of the two aforementioned institutions stated that about half of their collections were out on display, and that they sometimes rotated artifacts between collections storage and exhibits cases.[18] Also, these same cultural centres stated that their exhibits were effective in revealing and carrying out the institutional mandates of their organizations.

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[17] These facts alone point towards the diversity of duties that the staff of such institutions must deal with. Curators must be able to concieve and carry out the logistics involved with exhibitry, in addition to the other multiple duties of museum-style work.

[18] An exception to this was found with one institution that was originally constructed as a recipient for archaeological materials. (Later aquisitions were added to the collection through other means.) This institution stated that only 1% of its entire collection was on display. Having visited this particular institution, and being impressed with the large amounts of ethnological material that were within exhibits, the author concludes that this institution is a notable exception to the norm in aboriginal cultural centres. The vast amount of material objects acquired from excavations and other means that this organization must keep in its holdings to only have 1% on display is quite staggering.

The cultural centres that were contacted also had some ideas that they would like to pursue in future exhibits. Many of the topics that were on the institutions' "wish lists" actually did not follow the more obvious lines of presenting traditional artifacts and explaining their use. Institutions stated that they had a desire to pursue a number of important and current issues that directly affected their First Nation today. These topics would range from First Nations treaty negotiations to current resource use practices. Additionally, cultural centres voiced a priority in having their institutions teach more about the cultural perspective of First Nations, such as how traditional aspects of culture are shared, the basis of oral tradition, and the importance of elders in First Nations communities. Only one of the respondents expressed a priority in exclusively presenting the "traditional" aspects of First Nations culture. This priority was directly tied to their mandate that specifically called for the survival of their cultural heritage.

5.2.3 Acquisition and Collections Policies

Acquisition methodology is an issue that is defined early on for most aboriginal institutions. Often, the circumstances surrounding an institution's creation will determine whether active collecting will be pursued.

In the cases of the U'mista Cultural Centre and the Kwagiulth Museum, their initial collections were put into place by the repatriation of Cranmer Potlatch materials. From that time on, however, these institutions have taken separate paths in the area of artifact acquirement. The Kwagiulth Museum collection still consists mostly of the initial set of repatriated materials with a small number of yearly additions through donation or further repatriation. Artifacts are registered using catalog cards with written descriptions and photographs to document them. The cataloging of the

collection is still one of the major projects underway at the Kwagiulth Museum. Often volunteers or interns are relegated this duty; it is highly time consuming and takes a great deal of work.

U'mista is now recording all incoming accessions on a computerized database, helping to streamline their record-keeping process. Much work is involved in sorting out and organizing the previously used written records and historical documentation to make them ready to enter into the computer. This provides for a unique challenge in deciding what information is needed for the database, and where possible sources lie. Once this is done, this database will prove to be a highly useful resource for U'mista.

Following is an excerpt from the U'mista Cultural Centre's Annual Report for April 1, 1994 to March 31, 1995 (page 10), explaining the how the database can streamline the process of cataloging and information retrieval:

> When inputting the documentation we were sure to include the original owner's name to ensure that the families could research through our collection to find all of the regalia, which used to belong to their father or grandfather. Formerly, this was an extremely difficult and cumbersome process. This information was obtained through lists made when the objects were confiscated and from the regalia itself which often has the owner's name written right on it. The original owner's Kwak'wala name, where known, is also entered.

At the time of writing, the U'mista database of objects consisted of information on over 430 artifacts. In addition, the U'mista Cultural Centre also holds many objects in trust for local First Nations people. These objects are often taken from the Centre for frequent use.

> The U'mista Cultural Centre is also used by the Kwakwaka'wakw to store their personal and family regalia. At

> the moment the current number of pieces of personal regalia stored for others is one hundred and thirty-five (135). This regalia needed to be sorted and cataloged as well, since it is signed in and out frequently (U'mista Cultural Centre 1995: 9).

In designating storage areas for artifacts that are in active use, the U'mista Cultural Centre provides a service for local aboriginal people while still being able to have these objects in the proximity of their collection.[19]

The collections practices of the respondents to the questionnaire also suited the individual needs and situations of each institution. Means of acquisition relied heavily upon gifts from local First Nations individuals and families. In many cases, an object was given to the institution by the family of a deceased relative to whom the artifact once belonged. Purchasing of objects from local artisans or others was more infrequent, probably due to the obvious budgetary constraints of aboriginal cultural centres. Archaeological excavations were also cited as being a primary source of collections for at least one institution. Growth of collections does seem to be a priority for most aboriginal institutions; one respondent reported that since their institution opened, collections have doubled, and more artifacts are constantly being gifted to their holdings.

An exception to this was found in one institution that reported they have not actively collected since the 1970's. In this particular case, loans are often used to supplement their existing collections. Such loans are a highly valuable option for organizations that lack a place in their budget for purchasing new additions to their collection. Larger organizations and other cultural centres can (and do) implement programs of loan exchanges between institutions to provide for variety of objects. This practice facilitates more

[19]Additionally, one respondant to the questionnaire stated that their institution provides this same service to their local First Nations people.

opportunities for education, and helps to alleviate "museum fatigue" for repeat visitors.

5.2.4 Repatriation

Nearly all of the aboriginal cultural centres contacted have strong policy positions on the issue of repatriation. As mentioned before, repatriation is a subject of high importance to such institutions. Many of them were created with the mission of being the representatives and recipients for their particular First Nation's objects of cultural heritage. Currently, most institutions are experiencing a time of slow but steady progress within this issue. A set of human remains and associated funerary objects were returned in 1995 to one institution observed. A proper reburial ceremony was organized by the cultural centre, with the institution's staff acting as liaison between the First Nation and the museum that returned them. This cultural centre reports that other acts of repatriation were in progress during the writing of this study. Another institution contacted has added nine more repatriated artifacts to its collection in the past year.

Aboriginal cultural centres seem to be taking a point position, pursuing questions of proper ownership and consulting with representatives of other institutions to work out transfers of objects and other applicable issues. As land claims negotiations progress within British Columbia, First Nations cultural centres are anticipating that the issue of repatriation will become part of the substantive issues discussed. However, the treaty table is definitely not the only place where First Nations feel these issues can be addressed and solutions found. One respondent stated that: "We would welcome repatriated objects coming back here." This is an issue that does not have to

be totally resolved by formal means. Western-based institutions, by taking the initiative to share information regarding their collections holdings, are often starting to create a greater spirit of cooperation and understanding around this important issue.

5.3 Local Involvement in Aboriginal Institutions

All of the First Nations cultural centres contacted are situated within communities that are primarily made up of aboriginal peoples. They exist largely to celebrate, preserve, reinforce, and develop the cultures of the aboriginal communities of which they are part. However, this does not mean that First Nations people are always the primary users of these institutions. In fact, one organization reports that in a year, 30,000 to 40,000 visitors from outside of the community pass through its cultural centre.[20] Therefore, it is important to consider the level of involvement from the local aboriginal community while looking at these institutions. To have only a minimal amount of aboriginal participation in an organization could arguably diminish its mission to be an active part of the local First Nations community.

Generally, the respondents to the questionnaire stated that most involvement of local First Nations people was carried out on an "as needed" basis, with advisors and elders often being consulted for input on very specific questions (e.g., how a particular object should be displayed or described within an exhibit, how to properly care for a piece of regalia, what they would like to see in an upcoming program or exhibit.)

[20]Information gained from questionnaire respondent.

Respondents stated uniformly that local involvement has remained the same over time, undiminishing since the opening of each institution. Depending on the organization, it was reported that First Nations people frequently or occasionally come in by their own initiative to make suggestions. Recommendations from First Nations people consisted of what they would like to see within the cultural centre, changes of inaccuracies, and other issues and ideas. This finding is important, since it points to the fact that these institutions are accessible to their aboriginal communities. Individuals feel that they are able to have an impact on the progress of the institution. As a result, they make an effort to do so. Respondents stated that specific suggestions have included requests for more space to exhibit objects within, and for the incorporation of certain stories and legends into the displays and activities within cultural centres.

At the U'mista Cultural Centre, examples of local involvement were found:

> . . . [Our elders] have kindly helped us with our "talking" dictionary, research into our collections, the ethnobotanical project, traditional Potlatch protocol, and every other aspect of our culture language and heritage (U'mista Cultural Centre 1995:3).

At the Kwagiulth museum, a local elder is actually on staff to provide advice on questions relating to local culture, custom and tradition. This type of involvement from local authorities illustrates how such institutions are devoted to hearing the opinions and creative thoughts of the communities that they are part of.

Local volunteers seem to be a common occurrence at about half of the cultural centres contacted. This is another possible level of involvement for

aboriginal people within their local institutions. However, the amount of time that such a commitment involves is probably a limiting factor for many people, since many projects in these organizations are time-intensive and sometimes tedious. Speaking of their own volunteer program, the U'mista Cultural Centre positively reports:

> Our volunteer support has been consistently increasing. These volunteers work on various projects including but not limited to: construction of the traditional Big House Addition, fund raising, tracing, recovering and transporting artifacts, publication of the monthly newsletter, organization of exhibits, conservation and cataloguing of the collections, audio and audio-visual taping of songs, dances, ethnobotanical research, Kwak'wala words and the memories of the elders, conducting tours of the facility, cooking, dancing, baking, creating works of art for fund raising, etc.
>
> Due to the diversity of various volunteer activities, it is impossible to translate all of the their time into "volunteer hours"; however, the recorded "volunteer hours" for individuals working on a few specific projects during the 1994/95 fiscal year was 2,500 hours (U'mista Cultural Centre 1995: 3).

Clearly, highly fruitful volunteer programs are a possibility for such institutions. At the Kwagiulth Museum, "repeat volunteers" made up the majority of non-staff help. These people often come back seasonally to chip in on the various duties of the museum. The volunteer pool observed at this museum was quite small; however, it seemed that the people involved were highly devoted. It takes time and organization to develop such programs, and it is probable that other First Nations organizations will do more to exercise this option in future times.

While the daily rate of local visitors to such institutions sometimes makes up a low percentage of the overall figure[21], it is important to remember that almost all of the communities in which they exist are very small. Most local people are aware of what is happening within their representing organization, if not having some form of involvement (advisory or other) in it. Tourism does play a part in the overall picture of some of these institutions. However, what is ultimately important for local First Nations is their ability to influence how their own culture is being portrayed, and to have the opportunity to be part of the activities of the institutions.

5.4 The Aboriginal Cultural Centre as a Local Economic Development Strategy

> Aboriginal heritage is now increasingly placed in the awkward position of being both a politically useful economic commodity and a tool for reinforcing cultural identity and tradition (Nicholson 1992: 3).

Many articles have been written which point to the growing importance of tourism in the economies of aboriginal communities. Cultural centres are, of course, playing a part in this endeavor. Whether or not the aboriginal museum can be useful to the community in a cultural sense while still playing an important role in the economic enterprises of a First Nation is a question that should be addressed.

Aboriginal museums and cultural centres have been seen as a positive economic opportunity by people other than First Nations. Bodies such as the

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[21] One institution reported as much as 25 percent of visitors were local First Nations, another reported that hardly any people came from the surrounding community, and another was not able to provide a figure.

provincial government of British Columbia also seem to have taken the cue that First Nations can potentially inject large amounts of tourist cash into an area. The First Nations Tourism Association, an organization affiliated with the British Columbia Ministry of Small Business, Tourism, and Culture, recently published a brochure that points tourists in the direction of several First Nations attractions.

> If you could travel back through the centuries into the traditional world of British Columbia's First Nations, what an extraordinary, mystical journey it would be. . . . The traditional First Nations ways have continued and flourished. In British Columbia, there are still many places where people continue to live by the skills of their ancestors--primarily hunting and fishing. However, experiences of traditional life are not restricted to isolated or remote areas. Most First Nations sites and attractions are either right in, or within a very short distance of, the major cities (First Nations Tourism Association 1994: 1).

In reading such a brochure, a prospective tourist is persuaded to visit an aboriginal attraction, interested in gaining some of the essence of the "extraordinary and mystical journey" that the ad speaks of. Is this an act of commercialization which might overshadow traditional aboriginal values? Maybe partly, but the answer is not certain. In another article, entitled: "Masters of Ceremony: Inside the Mystical World of the First Nations," the offer of capturing the essence of British Columbia's aboriginal peoples is again made. Within "Masters of Ceremony," Helena Zukowski (1994:45-50) points towards the facts in the growing world of aboriginal tourism.

> The number of native-owned and operated tourism enterprises has more than doubled in the last decade--a leap from 80 businesses to 182. These include art galleries, native

> restaurants, fishing camps, theatre companies, tours to sacred places and reconstructed traditional villages.
>
> Although many of the new businesses promote cultural awareness and First Nations people, others provide mainstream tourist services such as hotels, lodges and water parks. . . . Bus tours carrying European and Asian travelers who stop briefly at each attraction make up a large percentage of the visitors (Zukowski 1994: 45).

Again, is this the most effective way for First Nations to display their cultures in the public eye? The addition of economic stimulus could easily facilitate this if applied correctly. However, the inverse of this situation could also become a factor. Like many other museums and cultural organizations, aboriginal institutions are looking at possibilities for expanding into the tourist market. The commercialization of aboriginal cultures is something that anthropologists of today might become concerned about. Curiously, little concern has been heard regarding this issue from First Nations directly. Speaking to this issue in an article entitled: "Cultural Centres or Trading Posts," Heather Norris Nicholson (1992:4) concludes that: "Proximity to larger settlements clearly encourages a more commercially oriented approach, . . . while the wish to foster local community interests in educational, cultural and psychological ways is more apparent in ventures where plans have been less shaped by outside advisers." The involvement of aboriginal people in the formation of their own institutions seems to be the most feasible (and obvious) way to come up with places that hold a strong balance between the two extremes. Aboriginal peoples must be recognized to be the primary authorities with respect to issues such as these. They are highly aware of the countless factors that come into play between the cultures in which they live.

Their solutions to the problem, if addressed wholeheartedly, will be the ones that work.

5.5 Future Goals and Desires of Aboriginal Institutions:

The goals and desires of aboriginal institutions are fundamentally tied to their specific concerns, their objectives as aboriginal organizations, and their practical abilities to carry out future plans. It is necessary for aboriginal institutions to define and analyze what they would like to see come about in their future. In doing so, these goals can be addressed, and their feasibility comes more easily. The cultural centres that were observed during the course of this study outlined a variety of goals, both specific and theoretical, that they would like to obtain. This section will delineate some of these objectives.

In the time spent at the Kwagiulth Museum, many concerns were heard regarding very practical applications. Funding was desired to improve exhibits, hire staff, and give curators a chance to catch up on various duties. Clearly monetary concerns are a problem for many cultural centres. The limits that funding constraints place upon these institutions are severe, and should be addressed. The benefits resulting from increased funding potentially far outweigh the investment.

The U'mista Cultural Centre's Annual Report (1995: 5) provides a whole list of objectives for their institution. Most of these objectives are from a rather large-scale perspective. This list follows:

1. Continue the development of the Centre as an Information and Resource Centre, including the cataloguing of the various collections, the genealogical research project and the ethnobotanical research project.

2. Continue to work for the development of Language Retention Programs.
3. Complete the Upgrade of the U'mista Cultural Centre and work towards expansion of the Centre.
4. Continue to administer and maintain the Traditional Big House.
5. Expand the traditional cultural activities available to the community.
6. Continue to conserve, maintain and exhibit the historical and contemporary collections at the Centre, especially ensuring the display of all the artifacts in the "Potlatch Collection" and expanding its relevance to the Kwakwaka'wakw.
7. Continue to promote the production of quality arts and crafts by the development of the U'mista Cultural Centre as a world wide distributor of Kwakwaka'wakw art.
8. Develop and research a Specific Claim.
9. Continue to encourage the training of Kwakwaka'wakw in various skills and act in an advisory capacity for Aboriginal Cultural Centres.
10. Complete the video Insiders/Outsiders to Broadcast Level.
11. Continue to carry out projects which increase the visibility of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

One institution that responded to the survey had some very specific goals of re-labeling their entire set of exhibits with aboriginal names, developing an educational slide collection and curriculum, and the adding of more centre-sponsored research into the history and tradition of their First Nation.

Another organization's list of goals included the development of an aboriginal language office at their institution, arranging for a large scale loan from other institutions to result in a blockbuster-style exhibition, making museum catalogs available in several languages and on CD ROM, having the collection photographed, and having more time available to catch up on the many miscellaneous duties that need to be addressed on a daily basis.

The above goals and objectives are as diverse as the aboriginal cultural centres that created them. They show the large array of individual needs and priorities of these organizations. Additionally, they point out that these institutions are not static, trying to expand themselves in ways that are practical, beneficial and creative.

5.6 Applying Knowledge:

What Constitutes A Successful Cultural Centre? Are They What We Think They Are? Could They Be Considered Differently?

In section 5.5, some of the goals and objectives of aboriginal institutions were outlined. This section will address the question of what aboriginal cultural centres are, what they could be, and what First Nations people see as potential beneficial attributes of them.

More often than not, this study has found that aboriginal cultural centres mean much more to the community around them than serving only as a museum. They have taken upon themselves a variety of duties and functions that all share the objective of cultural reinforcement and perpetuation.

Observed institutions and questionnaire respondents pointed towards other uses besides traditional museum practices that their institutions take on. These other activities often become just as, or more, important components of the centre's identity. Answers to questions regarding other uses for cultural centres had a wide range. Importance was heavily placed upon the language classes that institutions coordinate. These classes seem to make up one of the primary components of aboriginal cultural programs.

Other uses included dances, concerts, cultural awareness classes, meetings and social gatherings.[22]

It seems that these institutions can not be regarded only from the standpoint of the museum. The communication of the museum is, fundamentally, one way; with the institution supplying knowledge and the viewer receiving it. As discussed before, there are many ways to make communications programs for museums that accommodate information exchange from several directions, and such programs are currently seen in several institutions. The strengths of museum exhibits, however, will not overshadow the importance of the other functions of the aboriginal cultural centre. These other uses illustrate the two-way nature of interaction that is seen to take place between aboriginal institutions and their communities. These organizations are statements of political and cultural solidarity, examples of culture for individuals to identify with, and active elements in the evolution of aboriginal societies. For the modern observer, all of these

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[22] A related note: From the author's own experience with the Oneida Indian Nation, it was found that the Oneida most often used their cultural centre as a gathering place. Nation Members would come to the Centre to sit down, speak in their native language, talk about current issues, and socialize. There was a strong feeling of community that was present at such gatherings. The Oneida often said to me that they liked to be among the objects of their heritage while they spoke of the matters currently affecting their Nation. These gatherings attracted a rotating stock of people; different individuals would show up every day. The cultural centre was a place to drop in and have a chance meeting with someone that was not always in a person's immediate group of acquaintances. More than half of the visitors were young people.

Whenever a new exhibit was installed in the "museum" section of the building, visiting aboriginal people would scrutinize, make suggestions, and voice approvals. They would then soon be back to their normal routine of discussing more current issues, leaving the exhibits to the visiting tourists. At least in the case of the Oneida Indian Nation of New York, the most important aspect of their cultural centre to the aboriginal people was obvious. It was a place to go and receive and reinforce a sense of connection to the aboriginal community that surrounded it.

things might not be fully apparent at first glance. To spend time on the subject, and recognize this interconnectedness is an important step.

Table 1: OVERVIEW OF STUDIED MUSEUMS

MUSEUM	*CAMPBELL RIVER*	*ALBERNI VALLEY*	*U'MISTA CULTURAL*	*KWAGIULTH*
GENERAL INFORMATION				
TYPE	Local Culture	Local Culture	Aboriginal	Aboriginal
ESTABLISHED	1946	1966	1980	1978
CURATORS	2	2	1	1
OTHER STAFF	2+volunteers	1+volunteers	2+volunteers	1+volunteers
COLLECTIONS	Local History, Aboriginal	Local History, Aboriginal	KWAKWAKA'WAKW	KWAKWAKA'WAKW
MANDATE	Local Culture, Aboriginal	Local Culture, Aboriginal	KWAKWAKA'WAKW	KWAKWAKA'WAKW
METHODS OF PRESENTATION				
EXHIBITS	YES	YES	YES	YES
VIDEO	YES	NO	YES	YES
ORAL PRESENT'N	YES	NO	NO	YES
HANDS-ON EXHIBIT	YES	NO	YES	YES
COMMUNICATION WITH VISITORS				
ONE-WAY	YES	YES	YES	YES
TWO-WAY	YES	NO	NO	YES
FIRST NATIONS INVOLVEMENT				
F.N. OPINIONS	Consultation	Consultation	From Community	From Community
REPATRIATION	Consultation; Policy	Consultation; Policy	Recipient	Recipient
OTHER USES OF INSTITUTIONS				
LANGUAGE CLASSES	NO	NO	YES	YES
GATHERINGS	NO	NO	YES	YES

CHAPTER 6.
WESTERN MUSEUMS AND ABORIGINAL CULTURES

This chapter will describe some of the issues that Western museums address in the portrayal aboriginal cultures. A detailed breakdown of findings at the Campbell River Museum and the Alberni Valley Museum will examine this topic. In addition, it will look at how four Western museum respondents to the questionnaire faced this issue, and whether they incorporated aboriginal peoples into the process of museum interpretation.

The Alberni Valley Museum and the Campbell River Museum were two institutions that were highly applicable for this study. They are situated in communities of approximately the same size. In addition, the areas that they are in have high populations of aboriginal peoples. While many similarities existed between these museums, there were striking differences that made for interesting comparisons between them, and among these and the aboriginal museums that were observed (see Table 1, preceding page).

The diversity of the respondents to the questionnaire provided for a fascinating comparison: one large and well established institution, two medium-sized local institutions, and a smaller museum run by a historical society made up the cross section of analysis. These four institutions each provided for very different perspectives on the issue; showing that at this time, there is not a fully uniform approach in the area of aboriginal peoples and Western museum policy.

6.1 Museum Mandates

Two out of the four museums surveyed made direct reference to aboriginal peoples in their mission statements. The remaining institutions did not state specifically that aboriginal cultures were within their scope. However, further questions revealed that their collections did hold aboriginal artifacts, and their exhibits interpreted aboriginal culture at some level.

One institution that did address First Nations in its mission had an interesting viewpoint. The largest institution contacted by the questionnaire stated that its mission was to

> . . . investigate, preserve, and present objects and expressions of human creativity in order to promote understanding of and respect for world cultures with special emphasis on the cultures of the First Nations and other peoples of British Columbia.

The mission statement of the Campbell River Museum mentions aboriginal culture, saying that one purpose of the institution is for the

> . . . the preservation and conservation of native Indian artifacts and contemporary art . . . .

At the time of writing, a mission statement was not available from the Alberni Valley Museum.

Mission statements in these institutions are determined by either the staff of the institution or connected boards of trustees. From these examples, one can see that some non-aboriginal institutions have mission statements that call for the incorporation of aboriginal cultures in their objectives.

6.2 The Portrayal of First Nations in Western Institutions

6.2.1 Methods of Interpretation: The Languages of Non-Aboriginal Museums

Many techniques of aboriginal representation were utilized by the non-aboriginal museums observed in this study; many of them were similar to those observed in the aboriginal institutions. Most of the institutions utilized methods that emphasized traditional forms of museum exhibition to interpret aboriginal culture, and the other cultures of the regions that they describe. Differing degrees of "abstract" to "concrete" forms of museum exhibits were observed within the institutions depending on the resources used to form an exhibit. For the most part, the exhibits were largely "concrete," with label copy supplying information about artifacts and visual aids such as photography. Further descriptions of the exhibits seen in non-aboriginal museums are contained in the following section.

Other techniques of presentation included seminars, video, oral explanations, gift shop sales, and sourcebooks that provided for in-depth explanation. Almost all of these techniques follow the one-way model of communication that has been seen with frequency within the context of this study.

transmitter > > > medium > > > receiver
(exhibitor) (real things) (visitor)

(Figure 2: Cameron's Model; Cameron 1968: 33-40)

As described before, this method of transmission does not provide for large amounts of interaction, and is subject to the preconceptions that the visitor takes into the museum exhibit.

Two way interaction in the form of oral explanations were reported to take place within three of the four institutions that responded to the

questionnaire, and was observed at the visits to the Campbell River Museum. With the addition of the human element of the museum docent or staff member, visitors now had a chance to utilize the aforementioned "feedback loop," helping to clarify and strengthen a museum's message.

6.2.2 The Use of Exhibitry in Non-Aboriginal Museums

The Alberni Valley Museum and the Campbell River Museum provided for contrasting methods of portraying aboriginal peoples. The Campbell River Museum has an interesting approach of incorporating the cases that display aboriginal culture into the rest of the historical displays that explain the settlement and development of the area around present-day Campbell River. Cases that display aboriginal artifacts are set beside exhibits of colonial costumes, furniture and tools. An exhibit display labeled "Tools," incorporates pictures of logging, a big house under construction and aboriginal masks with material examples of elbow adzes, wood knives, axes and chain saws. This approach blends the cultures of the area's First Nations with the non-aboriginal Campbell River settlers. Non-specific language is used within the exhibits in this sense:

> For scores of generations of Northwest Coast woodworkers the marvel of the cedar tree was that it could be worked in so many ways with a minimum of tools. Uncomplicated though most of these tools were, their very simplicity speaks of knowledge and experience refined over a long time span (from Campbell River Museum Tool Exhibit label copy).

However, not all of the displays at the Campbell River Museum "incorporated" aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultures. Three cases of particular interest displayed artifacts from the Nuu-chah-nulth,

Kwakwaka'wakw, and Coast Salish First Nations. Within each of these cases, artifacts from a single First Nation are displayed with label copy that gives an artifact name, an object description, and sometimes, the object's maker. The display that addressed Coast Salish weaving seemed to go farther than the other two; having quotations from present-day aboriginal artisans. This exhibit reinforces that First Nations are actively practicing traits distinctive to their cultures. A quotation from the Coast Salish weaving and basketry exhibit:

> An almost lost art has been revitalized by many women in the Coast Salish area. More and more beautiful blankets are being produced, along with several new dyes.

Each of the area's First Nations is given a case of representation. However, in viewing the exhibits at Campbell River, one receives more information about the area and its inhabitants in a way that is not culture-specific. This tendency is seen in exhibits that portray the aboriginal and non-aboriginal inhabitants of the area together, without always differentiating between the two. Rather, importance seems to be placed upon the acts and/or possessions of the area's inhabitants (e.g., fishing, woodworking, costumes). A great number of the exhibits at this institution take this approach. A quotation prominently displayed at the Campbell River Museum reads:

> People are what history collections are all about. People: their hopes, dreams, triumphs, and tragedies all reflected in the everyday pieces of their lives.
> --Arminta Neal

The aboriginal cultures of the area are included in this perspective which the Campbell River Museum possesses.

Other methods of interpretation at the Campbell River Museum include a library with a wide selection of videos that describe First Nations culture. Some of them are produced by aboriginal institutions such as the U'mista Cultural Centre. Many topics are addressed in the videos, including one that describes the lifestyle of aboriginal women on Vancouver Island. Finally, one must note that this museum recently has moved into a new space, and that its exhibits will probably evolve over time as the institution develops.

At the Alberni Valley Museum, there is a marked difference in the styles utilized to present First Nations culture. The First Nations section of this historical museum is entirely placed at the entrance to the exhibit hall. There is none of the mixing of cultures found at the Campbell River Museum. Rather, exhibits consist largely of visible storage cases that display nearly all[23] of the museum's aboriginal collection. "Visible storage" or "open storage" refers to a technique of displaying all of an institution's collections in cases that also double as displays. This allows the viewer to have a grasp of the museum's holdings.

In a book entitled: *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes,* Michael Ames addresses considerations around this type of exhibition. Chapter Nine develops the idea of public access within the museum format, critiquing the practice of open storage as a method to increase public awareness of the vastness and contents of museum collections. Ames (1992: 95) asserts that there are many problems associated with having a system of visible storage, such as conservation and lack of interpretation. He concludes that while there are merits to the open storage method (such as in his own UBC Museum of Anthropology) the public might obtain more knowledge if the

[23]According to the Curator of Collecions, roughly 95%.

attitudes of the curators who are responsible for the objects changed. This change would be one of encouraging the public to utilize the collections beyond the context of the exhibit for their own personal research or interests, much like a resource person or librarian (Ames 1992: 96).

Ames' critiques are valid in many contexts. However, in an institution such as the Alberni Valley Museum, the system of visible storage has some highly positive traits that would probably meet with Ames' approval. Open storage addresses many of the practical concerns that smaller institutions often have such as time constraints and lack of storage facilities. In addition, the Alberni Valley Museum provides catalog books on stands next to the storage displays. These books give the observer all of the information that the museum has regarding each object that is exhibited. In this way, the visitor can view a large number of artifacts, and select the ones of interest for further study.

The Alberni Valley Museum's application of visible storage seems to be successful in many ways. This is the primary way in which aboriginal cultures are represented within the institution. A notable exception to this is the recent case of a temporary art exhibition that featured the work of a single local aboriginal artist, done in cooperation with the artist, and highlighting his present-day activity.

First Nations people are portrayed in the exhibits of all four questionnaire respondents. Questions which addressed how aboriginal people were portrayed were answered with an explanation of each institution's method of portrayal and what perspectives were obtained through these methods.

The smallest of the institutions observed reported that there were very few aboriginal people living in the local area of the museum, and

consequently, aboriginal peoples were portrayed largely from a historical perspective. This method illustrated aboriginal peoples as being part of the past of the area, ". . . pre-European settlement." Present day activities of local aboriginal people were not highlighted. The museum used historical artifacts and models to illustrate the cultures of First Nations. The exhibits in this institution were constructed by volunteer efforts, and decisions on content were made by committee.

A different respondent to the questionnaire did report that their institution addressed the present day activities of aboriginal peoples through their exhibits. In this case, aboriginal cultures were portrayed in ways that illustrated them as "living" cultures, in addition to showing traditional lifeways and cultural heritage. Not only are exhibits used in this institution, but evening lectures from aboriginal peoples were featured, and works of aboriginal art are for sale in the museum's gift shop.

This institution stated that some of the challenges that they have faced in the interpretation of aboriginal culture have to do with the overlapping of traditional territories in the area which the museum serves. In response to the questionnaire, this institution stated:

> As a regional museum our collection area includes territories belonging to three different native language groups and numerous autonomous socio-political groups. We lack time, money and resources to involve representatives as fully as we would like to.

Clearly, this is a issue that would have to be considered by any institution that operates on a regional level. A representation of First Nations in a specific area would often have to consider overlaps of territory, and thus, many cultural differences.

The largest respondent to the questionnaire will now be addressed. This institution's exhibits were almost entirely composed of features which depict British Columbia's First Nations. Again, more than just traditional exhibits were used to represent aboriginal peoples. Seminars, video, oral explanations, gift shop sales, and sourcebooks that provided for in-depth explanation are all utilized by this institution. Aboriginal cultures are presented from a historical and present-day perspective, with historical artifacts and information being juxtaposed alongside modern artwork and discussion of current issues. Visible storage systems give the viewer a better sense of the museums actual holdings.

6.2.3 Acquisition and Collections Policies Related to Aboriginal Materials

Non-aboriginal institutions contacted through the questionnaire cited many ways in which collections were gathered. Gifts to the institution were the most common way that these museums acquired objects. Purchases, loans and grants designed with acquisition budgets were also often used.

Two institutions made specific note regarding the acquisition of First Nations artifacts. One museum stated that they would occasionally commission a local First Nations artist(s) to create contemporary "masks for a specific exhibit." Another stated that they "offer [the] First Nations community opportunity to loan material on an ongoing basis." In this case, artifacts would be held in trust for aboriginal people, and subjected to the care of the institution. This practice was also seen in the excavated Tseshaht and Opetchesaht holdings at the Alberni Valley Museum's open storage exhibit.[24] Some of the Western museums contacted also lend aboriginal artifacts that

[24] This arrangement is discussed in detail in the following section.

are frequently used for traditional ceremonies and other purposes. One respondent stated: "We maintain a collection of contemporary masks etc. which are loaned for potlatches." It is important to note that additions of aboriginal artifacts to the collections of these institutions were from area First Nations. Interaction with local First Nations was emphasized. These practices are examples of how some Western museums are making efforts to facilitate a sense of involvement with local aboriginal peoples in respect to their collections policies.

6.2.4 Repatriation Issues

Non-aboriginal museums are increasingly taking steps to deal with issues of repatriation. The largest institution contacted through questionnaire stated that they have a repatriation policy in place and that the issue is one that they take very seriously. Many of the larger museums throughout Canada are serving as role models for other institutions regarding this issue.[25] In fact, a questionnaire respondent stated that they "are not actively pursuing such a policy at the moment, watching for direction/leadership from larger institutions." One of the respondents stated that they see themselves as a resource available to local First Nations in the process of repatriating artifacts. This is a situation in which the relationship between aboriginal people and non-aboriginal museums can be strengthened.

6.3 Aboriginal Involvement

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[25]An example of policy regarding this issue can be seen in the Royal British Columbia Museum's policy statement that is contained in the next section.

The Alberni Valley Museum and the Campbell River Museum have both taken steps to involve aboriginal peoples within their operations. The results of some of these activities are visible within the exhibits themselves. At the Alberni Valley Museum, a display has been constructed that houses the artifacts that were obtained from an archeological dig involving the Tseshaht and Opetchesaht Bands of the Nuu-chah-nulth. The Museum holds the artifacts in trust for the bands, stating in label copy that they will be returned upon the completion of a aboriginal cultural centre that is in the planning stages. In addition, the Alberni Valley Museum has undertaken specialized exhibits such as one featuring the work of a local aboriginal artist, as described in the preceding section.

At the Campbell River Museum, a small exhibit exists that discusses how a First Nations person was consulted for the meaning about a particular mask that once belonged to his grandfather. In the label copy for this display, the names of the original owner and maker of the mask are given, along with a description of how a relative of the original owner was consulted in the process of making the exhibit. As mentioned before, there is also a display of Coast Salish weaving and basketry at the Campbell River Museum that uses knowledge derived from aboriginal authorities.

Three of the four respondents to the questionnaire described aboriginal involvement in the workings of their institution. All three stated that First Nations people have the ability to (and do) make suggestions regarding the content of First Nations exhibits, and museum policy towards aboriginal peoples. Two institutions stated that aboriginal participation in the workings of their museums have advanced in recent years. New policies have been put into place by these organizations to facilitate this process. One respondent stated:

> We're setting up a First Nations Advisory Committee to direct and advance participation by First Nations people at all levels.

Clearly, the policies and practices of Western museums regarding aboriginal peoples have been changing in recent years. In doing so, there are many new and different challenges that these institutions must face.

One respondent stated that with their consultation process, there has been some concern over differing opinions that have been forwarded by First Nations individuals and the Band to which they belong. In this case, the museum decided to respect the wishes of the larger political unit of the band-level government. Institutions such as this one state that they are trying to formalize their relationships with First Nations bands so that better definition can ease the process of consultation.

Some institutions have already taken the first steps towards formalizing a working relationship with First Nations. Locally, the Royal British Columbia Museum has issued a "Policy Respecting the Co-Management of Cultural Property by the Royal British Columbia Museum and the Aboriginal Peoples" (1993). An excerpt from this statement follows:

1.1 The Royal British Columbia Museum shall provide for:

  1.11 increased involvement of Aboriginal people in the interpretation of their culture and history by the Museum

  1.12 improved access to the Museum collection by Aboriginal peoples

  1.13 resolution of (requests for) the repatriation of artifacts and human remains

1.2 The Museum shall establish partnerships or cooperative groups to consist of representatives of First Nations people and the Royal British Columbia Museum, with a mandate to develop directions on points 1.11 and 1.12 above, to make decisions regarding co-management or

transfer of cultural property, and to arbitrate unresolved requests for repatriation of cultural property.

Having such policies is very beneficial in terms of defining the expectations of Western museums and First Nations. However, implementing these statements could be a difficult matter. Such changes call for redefinition of roles, power and attitudes. The Western museums of today are now being called upon to make these changes. For a further example of what some Western museums are doing in conjunction with aboriginal peoples see Appendix D: UBC Museum of Anthropology: Recent Major Research, Teaching, Training and Educational Projects at MOA Involving First Nations Groups or Individuals.

6.3.1 Current Movements Towards Consultation

An article written in 1988, entitled "Proposed Museum Policies for Ethnological Collections and the Peoples They Represent," outlined some basic guidelines for consultation with aboriginal peoples. For this article, Michael Ames of the UBC Museum of Anthropology, Julia Harrison of the Glenbow Museum, and Trudy Nicks of the Royal Ontario Museum (1988:47-52) worked together to come up with a set of statements that they proposed to be helpful in the ongoing issue regarding First Nations involvement in the making of museums and their exhibits.

The authors of the article address several topics of importance to the issue, including the need for museums to consult with First Nations in the planning of future initiatives. In Section B: *Policies For Museums and Native Collections*, two types of "Publics" which museums must consider are recognized. The constituents represented the first and larger public that makes up most of a museum's audience. These are the people that come to

see the different cultures of the world, including First Nations. The "originating populations" were the peoples who were represented within the body of the exhibit. According to the authors, museums should have strong and specific mandates that serve and address the needs of both publics.

In the case of aboriginal representation in the crafting of cultural identities that are satisfactory for both "Publics", the article states (Ames, Harrison, and Nicks 1988:50):

> 12. *Interest vs. Representation.* While constituents may call for museums to be more interesting or entertaining to them, originating populations are more likely to be concerned about how museums represent them.
>
> 13. *Serving Both.* Museums have professional obligations to deal satisfactorily with both populations
>
> 14. *Interests of Originating Populations.* The above considerations suggest the principles that populations or communities whose cultures and histories are represented in collections, have legitimate interests in the disposition of those collections and therefore should be consulted, that there should be continuing relationships with the cultural representatives of these communities including "partnerships" in planning programs, exhibits, etc., and that their expert advice should be entered into the museum's decision making process regarding collections.
>
> 14.1 *Different Publics.* As public trustees of collections, in other words, museums should recognize the public they serve includes a number of different populations whose legitimate interests may also differ from one another.
>
> 14.2 *Consultations.* It also follows that museum programming, exhibitions documentation, and management of

> collections should involve whenever possible consultations with the populations represented.

While these basic concepts have been widely discussed and modified over the past few years, they describe many aspects of what a museum should consider in forming a consultation process. The need for museums to recognize and understand that there are at least two different cultural considerations that they must address in the making of a cultural representation is fundamental. It clarifies and reinforces the need for active consultation with the factions that are becoming the subjects of an exhibition. This is where "the authority of the scholar" becomes mixed with the "authority of the subject."

With further development, these principles can be molded into a useful consultation process. Questions such as: What is consultation? How many people must be contacted? Who determines the proper authority? What is the proper procedure? and Who determines the line of feasible consultation versus practical consultation? must all be answered.

In an article reporting on some of the decisions that came out of the *Task Force on Museums and First Peoples,*[26] Trudy Nicks (1992:90-91) summarizes the conclusions regarding aboriginal involvement in museum exhibits.

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[26]The Task Force initially met as a working group in February 1990 at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. At this meeting the concerns raised at the 1988 conference were reviewed and grouped under three major issues for further consultation and the development of policy recommendations. The three major issues identified were:

1) increased involvement of Aboriginal peoples in the interpretation of their culture an history by cultural institutions;
2) improved access to museum collections by Aboriginal peoples; and,
3) the repatriation of artifacts and human remains.

(Taken from *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples,* Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, 1991. Context p.1.)

> The Task Force findings and recommendations challenge the authority of non-Native museum workers to decide unilaterally how the cultures and histories of "others" will be presented . . . . Canadian Native peoples want to be involved in all phases of planning exhibitions and other types of public presentations concerning them. If such projects are not overtly multivocal they should at least be informed by a Native voice . . . .
>
> It may be the desire of museum curators and special interest groups to use the museum as a forum for experimentation, debate, and even confrontation. But the image of the museum as a temple, a source of timeless, universal truths, more closely fits the expectations of many visitors.

Nicks sounds rather negative about the general public's ability to accept the museum as having a new role in creative debate and formation of cultural representations, rather than acting as a supreme and unquestionable authority. However, it is most important for the curator of today to accept his or her position as being on the front lines of representation; this role must be recognized as one of trying new options, and susceptible to occasional mistakes. This author believes that Nicks is right in stating that today's museums, while consulting aboriginal peoples, should be prepared to receive a variety of diverse opinions and perspectives. These different viewpoints can only serve to make a more objective and rounded product.

Finally, one must consider the new duties and roles the museum professional must take on in order to incorporate aboriginal peoples into the museum's structure of interpretation. Additional considerations which did not exist before will have to be confronted and dealt with. Questions such as the ones posed earlier in this chapter will have to be answered in the context

of each exhibit, calling for a new level of operation in the production of any exhibition that calls for First Nations involvement.

> The Task Force report calls for museum exhibits that will both accommodate the desire and authority of Native peoples to speak for themselves and, as well, respect academic research. It is a challenge, but not one which has thus far proven impossible (Nicks 1992:91).

This author believes that each new undertaking will have to be evaluated on an individual basis, determining the truly appropriate levels of consultation, involvement, and liaison. A case-by-case methodology of approaching the challenge will allow everyone involved a chance to pursue a common goal that confronts and works with any concerns connected to a display. As stated before, this will result in a whole new set of responsibilities for museum professionals. But in the end, if they are accepted as a natural and necessary part of any exhibition, they will become routine. The incorporation of a consultation process into the normal chain of events in museum planning will eventually become a step that people will only question if it is not present.

6.3.2 Examples of Consultation

As seen in the institutions described above, many non-aboriginal institutions are taking steps to involve aboriginal people in the presentation of their cultures. The Royal British Columbia Museum (1993:5) in Victoria released a statement that outlined many of its policies regarding the involvement of aboriginal peoples within the workings of the institution. An excerpt from this statement follows:

> Procedures
>
> The Royal British Columbia Museum endorses the philosophy of co-management and co-responsibility with the First Peoples of British Columbia for the care, preservation and exhibition of cultural property relating to aboriginal cultures.
>
> The Royal British Columbia Museum endorses the consideration of Restitution, Transfer of Title and Shared Authority to Manage Cultural Property as options to be considered regarding the management of First Nations Cultural property presently located at the Museum.
>
> 1.2.1 Where possible, agreement will be reached by the Joint Stewardship Group representing the originating First Nation and the Museum, regarding requests for Restitution, Transfer of Title and Shared Authority.
>
> 1.2.2 It is the responsibility of the requestor to satisfy the Joint Stewardship Group that any conflicting claims of ownership have been resolved.
>
> 1.2.3 The Joint Stewardship Groups will evaluate, on a case-by-case basis, the ability of the requestor to care for, preserve and exhibit collections under consideration for transfer of title or co-management in a location other than the Museum facilities.

This statement is an example of the kinds of basic groundwork which must be laid within any non-aboriginal institution that plans to have a constructive relationship with First Nations. While there is a large amount

of grey area in statements such as these, such policies need "room to breathe" in order to address the complex concerns that they must work with.

The process of consultation with aboriginal peoples in the making of museum exhibits has not been fully explored to its true potential at this point. As illustrated in the examples above, new opportunities of involvement will lend themselves to projects that are highly innovative and practical. First Nations people can provide expertise and ideas to museum professionals that would otherwise be unseen and not utilized. To recognize this potential is still an important first step that many people involved in the field of museum studies are currently making.

Chapter 7: Differences and Similarities Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Institutions

7.1 Comparisons of Mandates: Differences in Scale

As seen in the preceding study, the mandate statements possessed by aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums have clearly different priorities. Where many of the differences between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions lie is in the fact that the aboriginal institutions observed are only focused upon the portrayal and perpetuation of a single First Nations community. This allows them to center themselves upon finding different ways to interpret the culture of which they are a part. Within the aboriginal institutions observed for this study, a single First Nation is focused upon. The aboriginal institution therefore has a strong ability to develop its message, bringing out many aspects of a culture that a non-aboriginal museum might not be able to, due to time and space constraints.

In comparison, the focus of the non-aboriginal museum is often much wider: on a local or provincial scale. Local non-aboriginal institutions provide information regarding the cultures of one or more First Nations, local settlers, minority populations, and other peoples. Larger institutions that were observed, by virtue of size, scope and mandate, took more of a "pan-Indian approach." Common sense prescribes that this is possibly one of the most available approaches for such institutions to make. While different First Nations are sometimes delineated within the structure of a larger

museum's exhibits,[27] the scale most commonly utilized is one of "British Columbia First Nations." Clearly, smaller local institutions are better equipped and possess different priorities that allow for them to address the unique features of a specific First Nation. Again, the aboriginal cultural centre's unique position in the lives of First Nations communities is highlighted.

Many of the differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums are subtle, hard for the first-time viewer to see. Still, their importance can not be overlooked. The differing points of scale and perspective between the two types of museums help to define each other's viability in the arena of cultural interpretation. To have institutions with these differences does not have to be seen as a value-loaded contest between the two types of organizations. If done constructively with appropriate consultation, many different styles of interpretation can offer a great deal to the people that they serve. In the end, the differences in aboriginal cultural centres, such as their focus on a single First Nation, are what often makes them unique and important to the aboriginal and non-aboriginal community alike.

7.2 Comparisons of Representation

7.2.1 Style And Methodology

Many points of comparison can be discussed in regards to the representation of First Nations in aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums. To the first-time observer, many of the techniques of exhibition within these two types of institutions will appear to be quite similar, if not the same.

[27] As described before, this approach was also apparent at the Campbell River Museum, with three different First Nations being described within a single exhibit.

Objects are often displayed within glass cases, supplemented by written texts that explain the nature of their use. Photographs, both new and old, appear on the walls to give a sense of place to the objects subject to the viewers scrutiny. Often, a videotape or audio cassette can be heard in the background that either documents aboriginal life or gives the listener a taste of traditional music forms.

The museum/cultural centre visitor moves through the displays, stopping at the ones that are successful in attracting his or her attention. He or she will momentarily stop, look, and absorb a small "snippet" of knowledge that is to be added to their collective impression of what aboriginal culture is. These "snippets" are blended in a mixture of personal interpretation, individual experience, genuine knowledge from cultural authorities, and biases of one form or another. It is this mixture of human knowledge that most cultural centres and museums try to influence. The museum exhibit is one way in which these organizations carry out this objective; and in many ways this is done similarly from one institution to the next.

However, differences do exist. In the aboriginal institutions observed sometimes subtle exceptions are seen in the techniques of cultural interpretation. In some aboriginal institutions such as the Kwagiulth Museum, a heavy emphasis on oral presentation and storytelling was utilized. The objects within the cases were illustrative devices for the stories that were told by the authorities present at the cultural centre. Label copy seemed to exist for times when an interactive dialogue could not take place.

In the U'mista Cultural Centre, a sense of oral explanation was provided within the label copy of the exhibits themselves. Rather than having tags that define each specific object, quotations from the lives of

aboriginal peoples and the European populations that interacted with them adorn the exhibits. Instead of providing the obvious (the name of the object), this institution decides instead to arrange them in a physical way that has meaning. To do so, the objects are placed in order of actual appearance during a traditional ceremony. The quotations that surround them become the "voices" of the actual makers and users of the objects themselves. The objects in this display speak as a single, unified representation of the culture that they represent.

Within aboriginal institutions such as the Kwagiulth Museum or the U'mista Cultural Centre, objects are often taken out of display, with a card being left in place explaining the whereabouts and ongoing necessary functions of the artifact. To read one of these explanations gives the viewer a sense that the objects in these institutions are truly part of the culture which controls them. The objects are still active.[28]

Contrasting these findings from what was observed at the non-aboriginal institutions can be highly beneficial. In doing so, one finds that their efforts to represent aboriginal culture are often both respectful and accurate, incorporating ways to creatively represent and consult with First Nations. As seen in the Campbell River Museum, it is possible for a western-style museum to successfully explore the relationships and similarities between the area's aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations. Additionally, the Alberni Valley Museum creatively uses the method of visible storage to give the viewer a straightforward look at its' holdings of First Nations

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[28] A whimsical quotation from Bruce Chatwin's 1993 work of fiction, *UTZ*:
"An object in a museum case must suffer the de-natured existence of an animal in the zoo. In any museum the object dies--of suffocation and the public gaze--whereas private ownership confers on the owner the right and the need to touch. Ideally, museums should be looted every fifty years, and their collections returned to circulation. . . (Chatwin 1993:25)" In the case described above, the objects within an aboriginal institution's collections are *still* in circulation.

material, while explaining that they have taken aboriginal considerations into account through processes of consultation and cooperation. In both cases, this is done in the context of the historical museum.

7.2.2 Comparisons of Museum Languages

As described in the preceding section, there are many similarities in the styles and techniques that aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions utilize to portray First Nations. Most of the observed institutions utilize an approach of representation that emphasizes "concrete" forms of museum exhibits. That is, meanings are conveyed through the use of material objects that are supplemented by written texts and other visual elements, such as photography and pictures. This method results in a essentially one-way stream of learning that takes place in both types of institutions.

In some cases, the addition of a "feedback loop" was present where visitors to the institutions would have the ability to interact and ask questions on a level of dialogue. This is achieved through the use of some form of oral interpretation. Whether trained docents or on-staff elders are used for these purposes, this method of interpretation can be observed in each type of institution, supplying an extended level of communication between the visitor and the museum professional.

Where the main differences in looking at the languages of these two types of museums lie is in the originators or "speakers" of the languages. Obviously, one of the aboriginal institution's objectives is to point out that the information an observer would gain comes from an First Nations-owned and operated institution. In comparison, information gained from non-aboriginal museums often comes from museum professionals that have consulted with First Nations individuals and other sources such as

anthropological writings. These two types of "speakers" can be seen to be legitimate in their own ways; the comparison of the two perspectives can only result in a more holistic view of aboriginal cultures.

7.2.3 Comparisons of Collections Policies

In the same way that the mandates the two types of museums differ, the collections practices of First Nations institutions focus on a single aboriginal culture. This allows them to acquire a strong and diverse representation of the material culture of a single First Nation, rather than having smaller numbers of representative pieces portraying an entire culture, as observed in the non-aboriginal museums.

7.2.4 Comparisons of Aboriginal Involvement

The findings related to this topic proved to be highly obvious. Aboriginal museums were found to function as a part of the First Nations community surrounding them, with direction and innovation coming directly from the aboriginal people that they represent. In contrast, the non-aboriginal institutions observed for this study were found to take increasing steps that involve aboriginal people in the making of museum policies and exhibits that concern First Nations. Non-aboriginal museums are making progress incorporating First Nations into their initiatives; consulting with aboriginal advisors during the making of exhibits, drafting of aboriginal collections policies, and addressing concerns such as repatriation.

7.3 Comparisons of Priorities

Once again, there are many similarities that can be seen as parallel between aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions. Smaller local museums such as the Campbell River Museum and the Alberni Valley Museum shared a sense of involvement with their immediate communities. Factors such as the input of people from the region, exhibits that featured the achievements of the community, collections that were gleaned from resident populations, and local volunteer programs all pointed towards a priority of local involvement and pride. This similarity was observed between aboriginal institutions and local non-aboriginal museums alike.

Perhaps the highest difference in priority that exists between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal institutions observed lies in the publics that each serve. This fact is manifested in how each type of organization chooses to place importance on the different activities that take place within them. While exhibitry is often the main activity that a non-aboriginal museum will undertake, the aboriginal institution will often have its exhibits as part of a large number of different uses for the institution. As mentioned before, the priority of visual displays within aboriginal institutions is sometimes overshadowed. Alternative uses for these institutions often take part in conjunction with, or separately from, museum-style exhibits. This fact points towards the flexibility that such organizations often possess in order to carry out their objective of serving as viable and contributing forces within the culture around them. To recognize that these types of differences exist on the level of institutional priority is highly valuable. From this, a clear perspective of what aboriginal cultural centres stand for can be achieved. These institutions can not only be scrutinized on the level of museums.

7.4 Conclusions

There are many similarities that can be drawn between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal museums of the Northwest Coast. Using the language of museums as a base of study, this author has found many parallels in the two types of institutions. These similarities are contained in many of the elements of representation such as exhibitry. Differences were found between the two types of museums in terms of the aboriginal or non-aboriginal "speakers" behind the exhibits, and the fact that aboriginal museums usually represent a single First Nation. This allows aboriginal museums to have a strong focus, leading to detailed explanation, and strong representation through collections and exhibits that illustrate a single aboriginal culture.

The main importance of aboriginal cultural centres lies in the fact that they are expressions of ownership and self-representation. These local institutions are strongly tied into the fabric of the communities surrounding them. They are extremely susceptible to the concerns and interests of the First Nation that they represent. The variety of activities and duties that First Nations institutions carry out point towards their unique stance in aboriginal culture. In many ways besides cultural representation, aboriginal museums are important socio-political statements of cultural autonomy, pride, and strength to the outside world and to the people that own them.

In addition, to state that all aboriginal institutions are alike in the ways they represent First Nations cultures would be wrong. These are institutions that are as susceptible to change as the same people that they represent would be. Additionally, many other differences exist among these institutions, much in the same way that differences exist between non-aboriginal

museums.[29] They are the subject of budgetary constraints, political concerns, and the whims of the public that they serve. At the same time, the many diverse cultural aspects of the First Nations to which they belong shape their perspectives, styles and goals. All of these numerous factors combine to create organizations that are especially suited to the communities within which they exist.

The aboriginal cultural centres of today are becoming more aware of the role that they have taken upon themselves. These institutions are dealing with the presentation, preservation and celebration of First Nations cultures in ways that are accurate, creative, and respectful.

This thesis does not attempt to portray these organizations as being the only solution to the concerns that are involved with aboriginal cultural representation. It does, rather, recognize that these organizations, by their very nature, are especially suited and qualified to address this topic. Museum professionals have a great deal to learn and benefit from these facts.

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[29]As seen in the context of this study, several differences in style and method existed between the Campbell River Museum and the Alberni Valley Museum. Strong examples of these differences include alternative styles of exhibition such as the open storage method at the Alberni Valley Museum and the culture-inclusive nature of the displays at the Campbell River Museum. Much in the same way, differences in style existed between the U'mista Cultural Centre and the Kwagiulth Museum.
Examples of this diversity, such as the U'Mista Cultural Centre's "Potlatch Collection" that shows artifacts in a consecutive order of a potlatch, and the Kwagiulth Museum's emphasis on oral presentation, were manifested in the breakdown of their exhibits in Chapter 5.

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Appendix A:

Sample of Letters Sent to the Kwagiulth Museum, U'Mista Cultural Centre and Campbell River Museum.

April 26, 1995

Board of Directors
U'Mista Cultural Centre
P.O. Box 253
Alert Bay, B.C. V0N 1A0

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to ask if your institution would be interested in participating in a study of the representation of aboriginal cultures in museums, and aboriginal cultural centres. This study will be examining different types of ethnography that are specifically utilized to gather cultural information intended for the museum context, and also the representation of aboriginal culture through exhibits.

I am currently in pursuit of my Master's Degree at the University of Victoria with a focus on aboriginal-museum relations. My interest in this subject stems from working in a variety of museums over the years, including the Oneida Indian Nation's new Shako:wi Cultural Center in New York State. My master's thesis is going to be centered on the establishment and development of Aboriginal Cultural Centres and Museums. This study constitutes part of the research for my thesis.

Please find enclosed a questionnaire that outlines some of the main areas of inquiry for this study. In addition, please look over the informed consent form that describes the voluntary nature of participation in the project.

Participation can take place in several ways: by filling out and returning the questionnaire, telephone interview, in-person interview, or another suggested way. It is hoped that the data for this stage of the study could be gathered by late May/early June of this year. The involvement of your institution will make a vital contribution to this study. Results from the study could be utilized in planning future aboriginal museums and cultural centres. All participants in the study will have a chance to review and suggest revisions to the rough draft, and will receive a copy of the final manuscript.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me directly by phone or using the postage-paid envelope enclosed. Thank you very much for your time and response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Craig R. Noordmans
70 Moss Street
Victoria, B.C. V8V 4L8

Appendix B:

Sample Questions For Museums and Cultural Centres:

The following questions will be asked within an "open ended" structure, allowing room for subjects of interviews to expand upon their points or delve deeply into a specific line of thought:

QUESTIONNAIRE

General:

1. What is the mission/mandate of the museum?

    -Who determines the mandate?

    -Is the staff of the museum happy with the mandate?

    -Is the mandate constraining in any way? Please explain:

2. How is the museum funded?

    -Is the museum run by a board, committee, other? Please explain:

    -How are decisions made?

3. How willing is the local community in their support of the museum?

    -Please elaborate:

4. How much of your collection consists of repatriated materials?

    -What other means of acquisition have been used:
    -Gift (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
    -Purchase (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
    -Other:________________ (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
    -Please elaborate:

5. Is the issue of repatriation important/not important to your institution? Please explain:

-Does your institution plan to pursue a policy of repatriation in the future?

6. How much has the collection grown since the opening of the museum?

7. Why was the museum introduced to the community? Please explain:

8. What would you do (if anything) differently with the museum, if there were no constraints of time, money, policy, etc?

9. What are some future goals you have for your institution?

10. Would you classify your institution as a museum, cultural centre, or both? Why?

11. What are the three most common activities at your institution?
Please rate from one to three:
-Exhibits
-Lectures
-Cultural rediscovery classes, talks, etc.
-School education
-Genealogy or family lineage studies
-Language education
-Lectures
-Meetings
-Social gatherings
-Other (please specify):___________

12. What are some of the issues, challenges, etc. faced by your institution when representing aboriginal peoples?

-How do you address them?

Local/First Nations Involvement:

1. Would you describe the local community you serve as primarily:
(First Nations) (European descent) or (other, please explain):

2. What role does the museum/cultural centre play in the community or communities it serves? Please explain:

3. What is the involvement of the local community within the workings of the museum?
(heavy) (often) (infrequently) (never)

-Please elaborate:

-Are there any local volunteers or frequent advisors?
(heavy) (often) (infrequently) (never)

-What is the approximate rate of visitors from the surrounding community? (almost all) (3/4) (1/2) (1/4) (1/10) (very few) (none)

4. Are local First Nations Cultures presented in your museum/cultural centre? If so, how?

-from a historical perspective?

-highlighting present-day activities of Aboriginal Peoples?

-other ways?

5. Do local First Nations people ever make suggestions regarding the representation of aboriginal cultures within your museum? y/n
-How often? (often) (infrequently) (never)
-If so, what is suggested?

6. Has local participation in the museum (advanced) (declined) (remained the same) since the museum opened?

-Why?

7. What other features besides museum exhibits would be desired or useful to the immediate community?

8. Is your museum/cultural centre utilized by the local community for other purposes? (ie: meetings, social gatherings, language classes, potlatches, etc.)

<u>Exhibits Questions:</u>

1. What percentage of your exhibits are of the following age categories:

   (1-2yrs) percentage:

   (2-5yrs) percentage:

   (5-10yrs) percentage:

   (older) percentage:

2. What is the main "language" used within your institution? That is, how valuable are the different methods of interpretation utilized within the museum:

   -label copy; used: (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
   -Why?

   -oral; used: (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
   -Why?

   -presentation; used: (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
   -Why?

   -video; used: (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
   -Why?

   -other ________________
   used: (heavily) (often) (infrequently) (never)
   -Why?

3. Who constructed the exhibits within the museum?

4. Who was consulted within the preliminary stages of exhibits design, label copy writing, subsequent revisions?

5. How well do the exhibits represent the museum's collection?

   -are artifacts changed in displays: (often) (sometimes) (never)
   -how many artifacts from the collection are on display:
   (all) (most) (half) (few)

6. How well do the exhibits convey the museum's mandate or mission?

-Why?

7. If anything, what else would you like to see the museum's exhibits illustrate, explain, or expand upon?

Appendix C:
The First People's Cultural Foundation and Services Available to Aboriginal Cultural Centres:

Guidelines:
First Peoples' Cultural Foundation

In May 1990, the First People's Heritage, Language and Culture Act was introduced and passed in the legislature establishing the administrative structure for a five-year, $10.7 million operating and capital grant program to support Native heritage, language and culture centres in British Columbia.

An advisory committee, with one representative from each tribal council, has been established to provide policy advice on the program. Six members of the committee have been nominated and appointed to a nine-member council that acts as a Crown agent to administer the program.

What is a Native Heritage, Language and Culture Centre?

For the purposes of this funding, a Native heritage, language and culture centre is a community-based and supported centre or program whose main purpose is to preserve and enhance Native heritage, language and culture.

Centres recognized under this initiative must:

A. Be Native-owned and operated;

B. Increase understanding and sharing of knowledge within and between both Native and non-Native communities;

C. Heighten appreciation and acceptance of the wealth of cultural diversity among all British Columbians.

THE SURVIVAL OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES IS CONSIDERED BY THE FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL COUNCIL TO BE A PRIORITY. PROPOSALS TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF "AT RISK" LANGUAGES WILL HAVE PRIORITY OVER OTHER INITIATIVES.

DEADLINES FOR REVIEW OF PROPOSALS ARE ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNCIL AND TRIBAL COUNCILS WILL BE NOTIFIED OF THESE DATES. APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO:

FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL FOUNDATION
7-2475 MT. NEWTON X ROAD
SAANICHTON, B.C.
V0S 1M0

PHONE: 652-2426
FAX: 652-3431

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

1. Sponsorship is restricted to tribal councils. Only one centre or program per tribal council will be designated for provincial support, based on the unique language and cultural characteristics of the group. Tribal councils that share language and cultural characteristics and want to pool their resources into one centre or program will be eligible for the same amount of funding as if each council had applied.
2. Projects must demonstrate community support and inter-agency consultation and sponsorship.
3. Independent bands must submit a joint proposal with a tribal council or must be able to demonstrate that they represent an isolated language group.
4. Off-reserve organizations must submit a joint proposal with a tribal council.
5. Capital and operating grants will only be approved simultaneously if a feasibility or community planning study has been done, a comprehensive program plan is in place, or viability is demonstrated through existing operations.
6. Cost sharing arrangements are the responsibility of the applicant group i.e, operating and capital grants will only be approved based on evidence of minimum one- third federal and one-third private support.
7. Applicants that are applying for operating grants may apply for up to three years maximum or to the end of the program, whichever comes first. However, the applicant must apply each year. Funding for multi year applicants will be distributed following completion of an audit and successful program evaluation.
8. Because the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council is a Crown agent, private donations to the program are eligible for the federal tax credit for "gifts to the Crown."

PROGRAM CRITERIA

A Feasibility Studies/ Community Planning Grants

Maximum grant: $15,000.00 Amounts will depend on the nature of the project and evidence of cost-sharing by the sponsoring group.

Selection of the person or persons conducting the study or doing the planning is the responsibility of the sponsoring group.

Once the feasibility study/community plan is complete a copy of the study must be given to the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, to be kept on file, before any further requests for funding will be reviewed.

Feasibility or community planning grants can be used to plan;

- a capital project i.e., new centre;
- a language or culture program;
- assess the state of a language;
- other sources of funding or ways that the centre or program may become more self sufficient.

Applicants must provide:

- a current, signed, Tribal Council resolution or should the sponsoring Tribal Council not use resolution forms, a letter specifically authorizing and supporting the applicant to apply to this program for funds under the Tribal Council's name and signed by the Tribal Chairperson;
- satisfactory evidence of community support of existing operations;
- evidence of secured funding from other sources;
- the proposed terms of reference for the study;
- a detailed plan for inter-agency or community consultation and co-operation.

B Operating or Program Grants

Maximum grant: up to one-third of the approved project cost, maximum $75,000 annually for up to three years.

Larger amounts must be approved by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Audited financial statement and program evaluation based on the criteria and objectives listed in the program plan will be required before operating funds are released in the second and third years for those that apply for multi-year funding.

Applicants must provide:

- a current, signed, Tribal Council resolution specifically authorizing the applicant to apply for funds from this program under the name of the Tribal Council or if the sponsoring Tribal Council does not use resolution forms than a letter authorizing the above, signed by the Tribal Chairperson;
- evidence of community support;
- evidence that the other two-thirds of approved project support is available from sources other than the province (audited financial statements will be required where applicable);
- a comprehensive heritage, language and culture program plan including economic viability and any steps that have or may be taken for self sufficiency e.g., charging admission or course fees.

The comprehensive program plan should include the following types of information:

Research in aboriginal languages:

- The nature of the research.
- Why it is needed.
- The number of people who will benefit from it and how.
- Any expected revenue that may contribute to the ongoing operating of the centre or program.

Community language initiatives:

- How they will complement the ministries of Education and Advanced Education's curriculum development or teacher training programs for the public school system or programs operated by band schools or other community agencies.
- What specifically the initiative will entail.
- How it will dovetail with other initiatives.
- How many people in the community will benefit.

Preservation of key ceremonial objects:

- Specifically what objects will be preserved and how.
- The number of people who will benefit and how.

Promotion of quality arts and crafts development:

- Expected outcomes e.g., number of artists who will be assisted, number and types of arts and crafts shows, projected revenues from sales that will contribute to the ongoing operation of the centre or culture program.

Preservation and promotion of Native history and traditional values through educational materials:

- Specifically what materials will be produced.
- How they will be used.
- The number of people who will benefit.
- Any expected revenue that may contribute to the ongoing operation of the centre or program.

Special projects and cultural events designed to promote public understanding and appreciation of Native culture.

- The type and number of projects and cultural events.
- The number of people who will benefit.
- Any economic benefits or expected revenue that may contribute to the ongoing operation of the centre or program.

Visual displays of items of cultural significance to Native people:

- The kinds of items that will be displayed and where.
- The number of people who will have access to the displays.
- Any expected revenue that may contribute to the ongoing operation of the centre.

An audited financial statement and program evaluation based on the criteria and objectives listed in the program plan will be required before operating funds are released in the second and third years of multi-year applications.

C Capital Grants

Maximum grant: up to one-third of approved project costs, maximum $300,000 and evidence that the other two-thirds of approved project support is secured. Requests for grants higher than $300,000 must be approved by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Projects should be suitable for one time funding only.

Funding will not be considered for work already completed or equipment already acquired.

Existing cultural centre's land and building will not be counted as equity in the non-provincial, two-thirds contribution. In other words, there must be other sources of new funding, besides the provincial contributions, before capital projects proceed.

Projects must be submitted by a tribal council or submitted with tribal council support.

Project should have community support and become self sufficient.

Applicants will be considered on the basis of availability of capital funds at the time the application is reviewed.

Applicants should show social and economic benefit to the community.

Applicants must provide a financial plan demonstrating adequate project support including funding, volunteer labour and donated material.

If actual project costs are less than the estimate, the grant will be one-third the lesser amount.

If the actual project costs exceed the estimates on the application, the over-run is not the responsibility of the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Program.

Valuation of Volunteerism and Donations

The value of volunteer labour may be included in the total costs of the project **only** at the following rates:

- $8.00/hour for unskilled labour.
- $16.00/hour for skilled labour, qualified trades or professionals.
- Donated materials valued at verifiable fair market value.
- Donated heavy equipment valued at up to $45.00/hour.

Only these rates will be accepted when claiming payment.

The value of donated land is **not** to be included in the total project costs.

The cost of land is only included when it is purchased from private sources and will be used IMMEDIATELY for a development project.

NOTES:

- All claims for volunteer labour and/or donated materials MUST be verified.
- Total project costs may include financing costs, professional fees and donated labour and materials.

Payment of Grants

Capital grants are **not** paid in advance.

Responsibility for arranging interim financing rests with the applicant. However, project financing charges may be included in the estimated total project costs.

Grants are paid in accordance with the payment schedule included with approval documents.

Grants under $100,000 are usually paid in two installments as follows:

- One-half when the project is half completed as certified by an independent professional;
- One-half upon completion as certified through an independent professional audit of expenditures including a detailed breakdown and verification of claims of volunteer labour, donated materials, etc.

Grants over $100,000 will usually be made in three installments:

- One-third when the project has begun (contracts let, expenditures made, etc.);
- One-third when the project is half complete as certified by an independent professional;
- One-third upon completion as certified through an independent professional audit of expenditures including a detailed breakdown and verification of claims of volunteer labour, donated materials etc.

Ownership of assets acquired as a result of a grant may not be held by an individual. The registered owner must be the tribal council or grant recipient.

GRANTS ARE PROVIDED
ONLY FOR EXPENDITURES MADE AFTER THE APPLICATION
HAS BEEN RECEIVED AND APPROVED BY THE
FIRST PEOPLES' HERITAGE,LANGUAGE & CULTURE COUNCIL.

A Feasibility Studies/Community Planning Grants

1

NAME OF TRIBAL COUNCIL ______________________

CONTACT PERSON ______________________

TELEPHONE: WORK ______________ HOME ______________

MAILING ADDRESS ______________________

POSTAL CODE ______________________

2

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

PROPOSED START DATE ______________________

ANTICIPATED END DATE ______________________

LOCATION OF PROJECT ______________________

WILL YOU BE USING A CONSULTANT? ______________________

NAME OF CONSULTANT? ______________________

NAME OF COMPANY ______________________

COMPANY ADDRESS ______________________

CONTACT PERSON ______________________

3

FEASIBILITY STUDY/PLANNING COSTS:

GRANT REQUESTED ______________________

TRIBAL COUNCIL CONTRIBUTION ______________________

OTHER FUNDING CONTRIBUTION ______________________

TOTAL COST OF PROJECT $ ______________________

4

PROJECT DETAILS – ENCLOSE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

1. LOCAL LETTERS OF SUPPORT: (ENCLOSE LETTERS)
2. TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION
3. TERMS OF REFERENCE
4. DETAILED PLAN FOR CONSULTATION WITH OTHER LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN NATIVE HERITAGE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.
5. DETAILED BUDGET (INCLUDE FINANCIAL PROJECTION)
6. WRITTEN PROPOSAL
7. OTHER DETAILS ______________________

B Operating Program Grants

1

NAME OF TRIBAL COUNCIL ____________________

CONTACT PERSON ____________________

TELEPHONE: WORK ____________ HOME ____________

MAILING ADDRESS ____________________

POSTAL CODE ____________________

2

COMPLETE IF PROPOSAL IS FOR OPERATING COSTS:

A) ADDRESS OF CENTRE ____________________

B) START DATE ____________ FISCAL YEAR END ____________

C) ACCOUNTANT/AUDITOR'S COMPANY NAME AND ADDRESS ____________________

____

3

COMPLETE IF PROPOSAL IS FOR PROGRAM COSTS:

LOCATION AND ADDRESS OF PROGRAM ____________________

B) NATURE OF PROGRAM ____________________

C) START DATE ____________ END DATE ____________

D) INSTRUCTOR'S/TUTOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS ____________________

____

4

OPERATING/PROGRAM COSTS:

PROVINCIAL GRANT REQUESTED ____________________

FEDERAL GRANT REQUESTED ____________________

OTHER FUNDING CONTRIBUTION ____________________

TOTAL COST OF PROJECT $ ____________________

5

PROJECT DETAILS – ENCLOSE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

1. LOCAL LETTERS OF SUPPORT: (ENCLOSE LETTERS)
2. TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION
3. TERMS OF REFERENCE
4. DETAILED OUTLINE FOR PROGRAM
5. WRITTEN PROPOSAL THAT INCLUDES A PLAN FOR ECONOMIC VIABILITY AND STEPS THAT MAY BE TAKEN FOR SELF SUFFICIENCY
6. DETAILED BUDGET
7. OTHER DETAILS ____________________

____

____

C Capital Grants

1 NAME OF TRIBAL COUNCIL ______

CONTACT PERSON ______

TELEPHONE: WORK ______ HOME ______

MAILING ADDRESS ______

POSTAL CODE ______

2 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

LOCATION ______

DO YOU OWN THIS PROPERTY ______

OR ARE YOU PROPOSING TO PURCHASE THIS PROPERTY ______

PROPOSED START DATE ______

ANTICIPATED COMPLETION DATE ______

CONTRACTOR'S NAME ______

.DDRESS ______

______

3 COSTS:

GRANT REQUESTED ______

FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION ______

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS ______

TOTAL COST $ ______

PROJECT DETAILS – ENCLOSE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

1. LOCAL LETTERS OF SUPPORT: (ENCLOSE LETTERS)
2. WRITTEN PROPOSAL
3. TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION
4. TERMS OF REFERENCE
5. COPY OF FEASIBILITY STUDY OR COMMUNITY PLANNING STUDY
6. DETAILED BUDGET (INCLUDE FINANCIAL PROJECTION)
7. COPY OF DETAILED PROGRAM PLAN THAT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED
8. VOLUNTEER HOURS AND MATERIALS
9. OTHER DETAILS ______

______

______

______

______

Appendix D:
UBC Museum of Anthropology: Recent Major Research, Teaching, Training and Educational Projects at MOA Involving First Nations Groups or Individuals.

Museum of Anthropology

Recent Major Research, Teaching, Training and Educational Projects at MOA Involving First Nations Groups or Individuals

Section 1
Research and Related Projects

1.1 Transforming Image

MOA has assembled a database of over 1000 Northwest Coast paintings, many accessible for the first time in this century, through a combination of photographic techniques.

For the past 12 years MOA designer/graphics Bill McLennan has been experimenting with infrared and high contrast film to reveal previously hidden painted images on Northwest Coast housefronts, poles, boxes and other objects. Aboriginal artists have collaborated to recreate these painted images on cedar boards for exhibition and training. The intention is to make image banks accessible to aboriginal communities and to their artists, as well as to produce an exhibition that can travel throughout British Columbia and beyond. Aboriginal artists involved in this work include Lyle Wilson, Doug Cranmer, Jim Hart and many others.

This research was reported to the Vancouver public in the special exhibition at MOA July '92-April '93, and a portion of that exhibit is now on display at Prince Rupert and will travel to aboriginal communities and cultural centres if funds can be secured.

1.2 Under the Delta

A conference on and exhibition of perishable artifacts from the Fraser delta are being produced by MOA in response to requests from Musqueam and Tsawwassen band members who had participated in wet-site archaeological projects, and to archaeologists and other residents of the Vancouver area.

Wet-sites are little documented and endangered because of continued urban growth. Co-investigators Ann Stevenson, MOA collections manager, and Kitty Bernick, archaeological research associate, therefore have consulted with First Nations and archaeological experts and have collaborated with aboriginal educators, artists,

illustrators and speakers to further the research and to prepare for the conference and exhibition.

Topics to be highlighted in the proposed exhibit, scheduled for late fall 1994, and the associated international conference, scheduled for spring 1995 include information on early aboriginal settlements and technologies, resource management and site preservation.

1.3 Prehistoric Art from the Coast Salish Region of British Columbia

Research on the beauty and antiquity of prehistoric art from the Coast Salish region of British Columbia will be presented in the form of an exhibit scheduled for October 1994. The project is being conducted by Dr. David Pokotylo, UBC archaeologist, and Margaret Holm, archaeology research associate, and is intended to increase public awareness and understanding of the artistic traditions of this area. At the request of the Musqueam band fragile objects will not be travelled to other venues, but will be replicated. Interpretive documentation will be produced in English, French and Hunquminum Salish. A specially designed school kit and a series of public programmes will also be developed around the research and exhibition.

1.4 Proud to be Musqueam

The photographic exhibition produced by Musqueam women Verna Kenoras and Leila Stogan, during the training session at MOA, is travelling widely throughout British Columbia.

Kenoras and Stogan told the history of Musqueam families from 1980-1970 using photographs borrowed from family members. Their exhibit was first displayed at MOA in 1990, and the original series is now housed at the Elders Centre at Musqueam. Two additional copies of the exhibit have been produced, a framed version circulating throughout B.C. museums, and a laminated version circulating to schools, community centres and correctional institutions. A fourth version is a school kit circulating throughout the Greater Vancouver area.

1.5 Vancouver International Airport Exhibits Planning

MOA designer/graphics Bill McLennan is serving as "thematic advisor" to the Vancouver Airport Authority on aboriginal art, and is also acting as coordinator

between Musqueam and the Vancouver International Airport to develop and implement a Musqueam exhibition in the new international building.

1.6 Haisla Bighouse Project

Haisla artist Lyle Wilson and MOA's Bill McLennan, at the request of the Kitimaat Band Council and Eco Trust, are developing architectural plans for a traditional Haisla bighouse to be used in the community's Rediscovery Programme.

Section 2
Teaching and Research

2.1 Graduate Student Research

Graduate student research was offered in two exhibitions:

Heiltsuk student Pam (Windsor) Brown completed her thesis on Heiltsuk women in canneries and produced an exhibition ***Cannery Days: A Chapter in the Lives of the Heiltsuk,*** which will travel first to Bella Bella and then to other coastal communities.

Charlene Garvey examined issues of identity and anonymity in relation to MOA's Nuu-chah-nulth baskets, many of which have until now been identified only by the names of collectors rather than the makers. The resulting exhibition, ***Who Shall Remain Nameless?*** first appeared at MOA and is now being prepared for display at the Port Alberni Museum, where Garvey now works.

2.2 Ethnographic and Archaeological Field School

The Sto:lo Tribal Council has invited MOA and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology to establish ethnographic and archaeological field schools in their area.

The archaeology field training course (Anthropology 306) was held at Scowlitz, near Chilliwack, May and June 1993 under the direction of Dr. R.G. Matson, UBC archaeologist. The excavations focused on discovering and dating house structures at the Scowlitz sites, and was the third in a succession of cooperative projects with the Sto:lo Tribal Council. First was work at Hatzic Rock directed by UBC archaeology professor David Pokotylo, and the second was at Scowlitz, investigating burial

mounds, under the direction of UBC archaeologist Dr. Michael Blake. Pokotylo will continue his research at Hatzic Rock this year and Professor Blake plans to return to Scowlitz in the near future.

The ethnology field school was held at Sardis in the summer of 1993 under the direction of Dr. Julie Cruikshank, MOA curator, and Dr. Bruce Miller of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. Five graduate students conducted separate research projects for the Tribal Council, including organizing and evaluating oral history tapes in the Tribal Council Office, compiling a resource book on cultural centres in Canada, Australia, and the U.S., studying Coast Salish women's artistic traditions and preparing life histories of Sto:lo chiefs and war veterans.

These field schools will continue in the summer of 1994.

2.3 Other Research Projects

Other research projects include curriculum development for the Tsimshian Language Series by Dr. Marjorie Halpin, and conservation needs for aboriginal communities by conservator Miriam Clavir.

Section 3
Training Programmes

As a university museum, the Museum of Anthropology has been actively engaged in training hundreds of students, including those of aboriginal ancestry, for work in the cultural sectors. Four programmes are specifically designed for First Nations.

3.1 Museum Aboriginal Training Programme

Six aboriginal interns from different parts of British Columbia completed a successful three week workshop at the Museum of Anthropology in January.

This was part of a pilot training programme for workers in First Nations museums and cultural centres, funded by the Ministry of Tourism and the Minstry Responsible for Culture, and operated in association with the Royal British Columbia Museum and the University of Victoria. The MOA segment of this programme was designed to provide the six students with practical museum skills and to introduce them to the resources available to them at UBC. Pam (Windsor) Brown, Heilsuk, was MOA's in-house co-ordinator for the programme.

3.2 Native Youth Programme

A leadership training programme for aboriginal high school students is entering its 15th year at MOA.

The Native Youth Programme (NYP) is co-sponsored by the Native Indian Youth Advisory Society and the museum, with MOA serving as its base. Students study various aspects of British Columbia's coastal First Nations cultures and are trained to use the museum's collections and resource. Graduates of this programme have travelled to various locations in Canada and the United States to give presentations on their work. It is the first programme in North America to give Native youth the opportunity to research and interpret their own cultures within the museum setting. Interest in the programme has been widespread, with inquiries coming from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and other parts of Canada.

3.3 Native Education Centre Student Interns

Students from the Native Education Centre's professional programmes in tourism and administration regularly serve internships of 4-6 weeks at MOA. They are supervised by staff and complete projects appropriate to their studies. One student specializing in tourism has just completed a 4-week practicum here, and hopes to return in late spring to continue her research.

3.4 First Nations Residency

An endowment for First Nations residency at MOA is being developed with the assistance of friends of the museum and museum shop revenues. The purpose is to enable artists and cultural experts to spend time at the university and to participate in research and other activities. The first residents are expected to be appointed in 1994.

Section 4
Educational Programmes

4.1 Corrections Canada Outreach Programme for Native Inmates

MOA has been providing educational services to aboriginal inmates in federal penal institutions since 1980, funded by Correctional Services of Canada. Native resource

peoples are recruited to teach beadwork, carving, printmaking, etc. and to provide culturally appropriate entertainment such as hoop dancing, storytelling, and drumming and singing. In 1993 this programme was extended to include inmates of institutions for women as well as for men.

4.2 Spinning in Time: Vancouver Through the Hands of a Musqueam Weaver

The artistry of Musqueam weaver Debra Sparrow will be used to introduce school children to the social, political, academic and artistic traditions of Musqueam.

MOA is producing a school programme in collaboration with Debra Sparrow to introduce students to the complex traditions and changes which have shaped the Musqueam community as it is today. Following a review and evaluation by the Musqueam Band Council, the pilot programme will be introduced at MOA and subsequently offered to schools, and will include maps, photographs, weavings and spindle whorls commissioned by the museum, and extensive teacher notes designed to encourage further study. Consultants to the project include Joy Rusch (Haida/Tlingit MOA intern) and Lorna Williams (First Nations Educations Advisor to the Vancouver School Board).

4.3 Greg Staats Residency

Mohawk artist Greg Staats, whose work is featured in the current "Multiplicity" exhibition at MOA, will be artist in residence this February. He will host a workshop for grade 7 students from MOA's partnership school, Grandview Elementary, and give several public lectures at MOA plus one or more information gatherings at the First Nations House of Learning at UBC and the Native Education Centre in Vancouver. Coordinator for the public presentations is Madeline McIvor, Assistant Director of the First Nations House of Learning.

Section 5
Other Services

5.1 Safekeeping/Loans In

MOA has a programme of holding objects for safekeeping for First Nations families and organizations.

Examples: 1. Contemporary weavings made by the Musqueam Weavers are

stored here and frequently returned for use. Recently their blankets (and MOA's) have been worn by Musqueam council members at an important signing ceremony, displayed at a First Nations conference, and shown at the Musqueam Community Centre.

2. Family or individually owned regalia or containers are stored here. The Stanley family regalia is currently featured in an in-house exhibition co-curated by family member Alana Stanley.

5.2 Loans Out of MOA'S First Nations Collections

These loans range from our own travelling exhibition programme, loans for major exhibitions such as the Smithsonian's ***Cross Roads of Continents***, contemporary art loans to local venues (Air Canada), loans to a variety of venues and institutions at the request of artists or First Nations organizations, and loans to individuals or families.

Examples:

1. Loan of Debbie and Robyn Sparrow's blanket to a Seattle contemporary art gallery, at the request of the artists.

2. Loan of a headdress to the son of the original owner for ceremonial use.

3. Loan of regalia to the family of Chief Harry Mountain for use in Chief Mountain's memorial potlatch.

4. Loan of the Skagit river atlatl to a small Washington state museum at the request of the Swinomish Tribal Community for Treaty Day celebrations, and the loan of Barbara Marks' blanket for the same celebrations (at the request of the artist).

VITA

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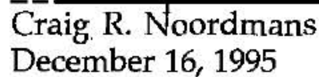
Title of Thesis:

Different Approaches Towards Representation: Aboriginal Cultural Centres and the Portrayal of Pacific Northwest First Nations



Author

Craig R. Noordmans
December 16, 1995