Power Dynamics and Decolonization: Understanding Native Representation in the Pacific Northwest

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HIST 400

Professor Sackman

I begin this paper with an acknowledgement of the Puyallup Nation on whose land the University of Puget Sound stands on. Despite being the targets of invasion, occupation, and displacement, leading to centuries of trauma, the Puyallup people have extended us the courtesy of a welcome to their home. We are guests and beneficiaries of this welcome. Through this acknowledgement, we signal our participation in the necessary project of re-imagining the social contracts between Native people and the rest of us who have shown up through different routes to these Native Nations. Our solidarity is with Native people in their effort to end generations of historical trauma. Breathe in the beauty of these settings beside the Salish Sea. As guests, do take full advantage of every opportunity for learning and growth, but please do so with an awareness of the living heritage of the land on which we stand.

- *This statement was developed as a part of the preparations for the 2018 Race and Pedagogy National Conference at the University of Puget Sound. Professor and Director of the Race and Pedagogy Institute Dexter Gordon developed the statement with the help of Professor Grace Livingston with the input from Puyallup Tribe of Indians Chief Leschi Schools' Director of Parten and Community Binah McLeod and Professor Doug Sackman*

Introduction:

The roots of public history in America come from a deep sense of colonization and preservation of cultures as a way to show superiority and exoticism while promoting nationalistic ideas. The Burke Museum, one of the case studies being presented in this paper, opens their *Culture is Living* exhibit with this statement on the role of these public history institutions:

> Museums reflect a history of colonialism, a form of cultural dominance, that alienates and misrepresents many communities. Collecting practices often disconnect cultural belongings and art from their people and homes. We recognize that museums often undervalue the involvement of communities by imposing their own authority when deciding how to collect, care for and interpret cultural property.[1]

[1] Wall Text, *Culture is Living,* Burke Museum, Seattle, Washington.

This is an exceedingly significant understanding of how the museum as a colonial institution needs to evolve because "all cultures are contemporary – a present-tense practice informed by the past and the future."[2]

These dominant society museums, often starting as curiosity cupboards by people participating in amateur archaeology, have a lengthy history promoting colonizer ideals, but unlike this expansive history, tribal museums in America didn't gain traction until the 1960s and 1970s during the height of the Civil Rights movement.[3] The tribal self-determination movement sparked an increase in pride in tribal history and culture, which combined with federal funds for tourism, allowed many tribes to create cultural centers that promoted their sovereignty.[4] Curating new exhibits in a dominant society museum without some sort of rhetoric that promotes Native self-representation and legible sovereignty allows for the museums to follow the same colonial standing.[5] By utilizing museums as a source of communication, Native communities are taking part in constructing these sovereignties over their culture.[6] One of the main ways that these cultural centers, as well as main stream museums, are combating colonial representations is by utilizing the "Indigenous Paradigm."[7]

In Amy Lonetree's book, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums,* she discusses the concept of the "Indigenous Paradigm" which

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[2] Wall Text, *Culture is Living,* Burke Museum, Seattle, Washington.
[3]Hoerig, Karl A. "From Third Person to First: A Call for Reciprocity Among Non-Native and Native Museums." *Museum Anthropology* 33, no.1 (2010): 67
[4] Hoerig, "From Third Person to First," 67.
[5] King, Lisa. *Legible Sovereignties : Rhetoric, Representations, and Native American Museums*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2017. 2
[6] King, *Legible Sovereignties,* 3.
[7] Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. 25

focuses on Indigenous representation in public history by recognizing four main areas that need to be discussed and presented to show proper representation: indigenousness, sovereignty, colonialism, and decolonization.[8] Researchers and Public Historians who follow the indigenous paradigm:

> adhere to a research methodology that includes producing scholarship that serves Native communities; following Indigenous communities' protocols when conducting research; rigorously interrogating existing literature; incorporating Indigenous languages, such as place-names, names of people, and proper nouns; and finally privileging Indigenous sources and perspectives over non-Indigenous ones.[9]

This paper will be following this paradigm and will use it as a framework to critique public history establishments such as the Washington State History Museum, the Burke Museum, and the Makah Research and Cultural Center.

Much of the scholarly work done on museum practices looks specifically at how a museum deals with a problematized past and the concept of "truth-telling," which Lonetree argues is "perhaps the most important aspect of a decolonizing museum practice of the twenty-first century, however painful it may be."[10] In order to properly critique a colonial institution, it is important to understand the three main power dynamics that are working to undermine decolonization methodologies. These are language use which includes truth telling, space and material culture, and collaboration versus consultation versus co-curation. Each of

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[8] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 24.
[9] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 25.
[10] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 23

these power dynamics plays a part in the, often negative, representation of Natives because they don't discuss Native culture as a living culture still practiced by people in this country. Removing colonial legacies from public history institutions establishes space for accessible and comprehensive learning of American history and cultures while also "creating spaces for healing and understanding**.**"[11] **Utilizing the paradigm set out by Lonetree and understanding the role of these three power dynamics in decolonizing practices, this paper will discuss positive and negative methods being used in public history institutions in the Pacific Northwest as a way to increase positive Native representation and acknowledgment.**

Language Use as a Power Dynamic:

The first power dynamic, and the one that is the most expansive, is language use because "language is vital to cultural continuity and provides a deeper understanding of museum collections."[12] This includes the truth telling concept from Lonetree and places importance on proper names. One of the most important language barriers is broad overarching terms such as "Indian." "Native American," and "Indigenous." In the preface to *Interpreting Native American History and Culture at Museums and Historic sites,* Raney Bench discusses the difference between the terms Indian and Native American.[13] When using proper names of tribal communities, there is usually a difference in what the tribe calls itself and the way it is identified by the Federal Government. *Indian* is mostly used in legal standing by the government in laws and similar legislation.[14] The term *Native American* came into popularity during the Civil Rights

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[11] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 22
[12] Wall Text, *Culture is Living,* Burke Museum, Seattle, Washington.
[13] Bench, Raney. *Interpreting Native American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites.* Interpreting History. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. IX
[14] Bench, *Interpreting Native American History,* IX

Movement when tribal self-determination and sovereignty recognition movements were prevalent. Bench mentions one issue that is felt among some parts of the Indigenous community with the term *Native American,*

> It has been argued that this term allows non-Native people to ignore painful histories of Indian-white relations. The term *Indian* is loaded with the history of colonization, and some indigenous people feel it is important to remind non-Native people about that history through continued use of the term *Indian.*[15]

This goes back to the truth telling concept because discussions on colonization tend to gloss over the true effects of colonization on Indigenous groups including massacres, stolen land, widespread disease, and many other tragedies that have deteriorated the populations. The role of truth telling is to "generate the critical awareness that is necessary to heal the historical unresolved grief on all the levels and in all the ways that it continues to harm Native people today."[16] Lonetree continues by saying that placing emphasis on Indigenous survival rather than the reason they needed to survive removes blame from the colonialist because it could be offensive to white visitors. On the other side, placing emphasis on the atrocity rather than survival "keeps Indigenous people mired in the horror of victimization and hence entrenched in the victimhood narrative" which Lonetree identifies as not completely the truth.[17] This complicated dynamic poses a serious problem that needs to be discussed by museum decision makers as it determines how the audience could view Native communities. If a curator chooses to emphasize survivorship it undermines colonial actions but if they choose to only display the

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[15] Bench, *Interpreting Native American History,* IX
[16] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 23
[17] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 23

atrocities of colonialism then the narrative of victimization will be continued. The way a display is framed and the language used should have a mix of both concepts so not to further ostracize these communities and their stories.

Language use as a power dynamic goes beyond terms used; it also includes acknowledging the history of land and the cultures being represented in a way that shows their sovereignty and power. The land acknowledgement at the beginning of this paper is one way to participate in positive language use for Native representation and recognizes the history of land of which the University of Puget Sound resides. Within the parameters of the Indigenous Paradigm, language use is highly important, not just in the way of truth telling but also the use of Indigenous languages in exhibits. This includes discussion on proper names of items, people, and places.[18] At the Burke Museum's "Culture is Living" exhibit, they open with a discussion on how language choices have shaped their exhibit because "Languages are knowledge systems rooted in a community – each a unique form of cultural self-determination and expression."[19] Each exhibit plaque includes two names for every object, one in common English and one in the Native language being represented. Utilizing bilingual labels opens a space for discussion on experiences with language restriction and revitalization which supports the sovereign identity of the Makah people.[20] The use of bilingual languages is not specific to exhibit plaques, at the MCRC, the organization of collections is also categorized based on cognitive categories rather than English categories further breaking down colonial language use.[21] One example used is the categorization of a box. In the Makah language a box is not considered a container unlike in

[18] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums*, 25
[19] Wall Text, *Culture is Living,* Burke Museum, Seattle, Washington.
[20] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendorf, *Voices of a Thousand.* 194.
[21] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendorf, *Voices of a Thousand.* 183.

English which is why it does not make sense to categorize a box as a container when organizing artifacts using Makah names. The suffix for a container in Makah is *sac* but the word for box doesn't have the same suffix so they weren't considered containers and shouldn't be organized with the containers.[22] This ideology of changing the organizational system was important because it emphasizes the importance placed on the Makah language and their sovereignty over the more common English organization system, this further removes colonial imposition from the Tribal Museum. An opportunity was presented when planning the exhibits to include the Makah language because, "sharing the Makah names for objects perpetuates the original and appropriate names of the objects and educates Makah and non-Makah peoples about the original meaning of the term."[23] This use of bilingual exhibits also emphasizes reeducation of the Makah people whose language had severely diminished because of the historic language oppression by the federal government to further control and force assimilation of Native communities.

The language use at the Washington State History Museum shows a mix of practices, because many of the exhibits haven't been updated recently while others are newer, and therefore language use is discontinuous from one exhibit to the next.[24] As a general practice, the WSHM tries to use the preferred tribal names as a way to identify association with objects but when the need arises to generalize, the terms *Indian, Native American,* and *Indigenous* are used interchangeably.[25] When asked about this Gwen Whiting said that *Native* is the most common term used because "it's a practical one. We see a large number of younger students and are trying

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[22] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 182
[23] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 193-194.
[24] Gwen Whiting, email message to author, November 4, 2020.
[25] Wall Text, *Great Hall of Washington History,* Washington State History Museum, Tacoma, Washington.

to make our exhibits accessible to them as well."[26]In Washington State, it is a requirement that schools teach tribal history so creating accessible and properly named exhibitions is crucial to the understanding of Native history and representation for younger generations.[27] Utilizing language as a way to teach further emphasized the power dynamic present in main stream museums because without proper understanding of the nuances of language, exhibits could easily be interpreted in the wrong way. Language is just one way to interpret an exhibit and though language use can be understood as its own power dynamic, it also influences and informs the other power dynamics that will be discussed including space and material culture.

Understanding Space and Material Culture as Power Dynamics:

Space and material culture are the core of any main stream museum, since they are often object-centered rather than people-centered and "naturalized the voyeuristic treatment and commodification of Native culture."[28] An object-centered display diminishes the human role in the creation and use of the object while a people-centered exhibit includes first-person accounts, discussion on traditions and cultural relevance and emphasizing the human aspect of an object. The object has become no more than a prop in the story being told. Tribal museums utilize this people-centered view on exhibit making, focusing on the stories of their people rather than specific objects. By presenting an object-oriented display, curators are promoting the colonial

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[26] Gwen Whiting, email message to author, November 4, 2020.
[27] Brownstone, Sydney, and Brendan Kiley. "Teaching Tribal History Is Finally Required in Washington Public Schools." The Stranger. June 24, 2015. https://www.thestranger.com/news/feature/2015/06/24/22438654/teaching-tribal-history-is-finally-required-in-washington-public-schools
[28] Brady, Miranda J. "A Dialogic Response to the Problematized Past: The National Museum of the American Indian." *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives.* Ed. Sleeper-Smith, Susan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 137

purpose of museums to preserve objects rather than culture, people-oriented displays remove the focus from the objects to remind the viewer that culture is a people-centered concept that is very much alive.[29] Promoting a colonial object-oriented display, the language use could emphasize when and where an object was made, or specifically what material it was made out of. A decolonized approach would attach a personal story to an object and discuss cultural use.

With this shift from object to person and evidence to testimony, exhibits have created a space where "the object is made authentic by its author, by the authority of the subject by the 'Nativeness' of the person who created it. It is the authenticity of subject rather than object that is now emphasized."[30] Many of the artifacts depicting Native culture within dominant society institutions were taken by force or coerced due to economic hardship in the 19th and 20th centuries.[31] These stolen objects were meant to create a patrimony for the Nation and promote nationalism.[32] The displays created with these stolen artifacts were used to "reinforce the power and authority of colonial regimes by displaying the collected, and often times confiscated, or stolen, possessions of the dispossessed."[33] Mainstream museums still have access to a majority of these stolen artifacts but with the creation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, more tribal museums are gaining access to their ancestral material culture. In Karl Hoerig's article "From Third Person to First: a Call for Reciprocity

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[29] Brady, "A Dialogic Response," 145.
[30] Shannon, Jennifer. "The Construction of Native Voice at the National Museum of the American Indian." *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives.* Ed. Sleeper-Smith, Susan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 227.
[31] Hoerig, "From Third Person to First," 63.
[32] Brady, "A Dialogic Response," 138.
[33] Macdougall, Brenda, Carlson, M. Teresa. "West Side Stories: *The Blending of Voice and Representation Through a Shared Curatorial Practice." Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives.* Ed. Sleeper-Smith, Susan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 167

Among Native and Native Museums," he discusses the differences in the loaning system and taking care of artifacts between tribal and main stream museums.[34] He starts his paper with a discussion on the standard facility report that needs to be filled out by tribal museums when loaning artifacts that are historically theirs from a main stream museums, or as Hoerig uses dominant-society museum.[35] There is no equivalent for the report for main stream museums to fill out to show that they were prepared to take care of culturally significant objects. Part of this is because of how Native cultures view objects very differently from how main stream museums view them. An understanding of traditional patterns of ownership as well as the cultural understanding of objects as alive is necessary to fully present an object in its true sense. At the National Museum of the American Indian "the drive to preserve objects still reflects Heye's original mission from 1916, which sought to 'gather and preserve for students everything useful in illustrating and elucidating the anthropology of the aborigines of the Western Hemisphere."[36] Climate controlled areas and placing objects behind glass removes the living aspect of the object, it is now stagnant. The way an object is displayed plays a large role in the visitor's understanding of the cultural or spiritual significance, a visitor's perception of the exhibit could change depending on wording, lighting, or even whether or not the object is behind glass.[37] To fully understand and "represent identity in a museum then, requires representing the unspoken, the feelings, the memories," which promotes the concept of living culture.[38] Washington State History Museum adheres to the practice of placing objects behind glass, removing them from

[34] Hoerig, "From Third Person to First," 62.
[35] Hoerig, "From Third Person to First," 62.
[36] Brady, "A Dialogic Response," 145.
[37] Shannon, "Construction of Native Voice." 226
[38] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 177.

their living function. Unlike WSHM, "cultural objects at the Burke aren't tucked away on shelves. They are alive, embodying the knowledge, language, and stories of people and cultures." [39] There is growing awareness among main stream museums on better practices for creating culturally appropriate exhibits that adhere to spiritual practices and understanding.[40]

The concept of living culture is highly important and plays a significant role in how the Makah Cultural and Research Center has created their exhibits and frame their objects in relation to their people. At mainstream museums, Native material culture is often viewed as an artifact rather than an object connected to a group of people. At MCRC they force visitors to "consider the precontact material to be 'personal possessions of our ancestors'" and those values still need to be respected.[41] These traditional patterns of ownership create a unique dynamic for the MCRC because they adhere to both traditional and modern patterns and "walk a fine line between service to the entire community and adherence to traditional patterns of ownership and control of personal objects and private knowledge."[42] Intellectual property rights is also highly guarded in a similar way to material objects. Because of the emphasis on the human experience of culture, many of the sources come from people in the form of song, oral histories, techniques, and traditional knowledge.[43] A tribal museum is often the face of the tribe with visitors from all backgrounds so protocols need to be in place to protect their intellectual and material possessions. The MCRC requires researchers to understand how their individual research can

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[39] "Culture is Living." n.d. Burke Museums. https://www.burkemuseum.org/exhibits/culture-living
[40] Macdougal, Carlson. "West Side Stories." 167.
[41] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 187.
[42] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 187-188.
[43] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 188.

impact the community.[44] Any researchers, archaeologists or scientists who want to study the people or material culture "are constrained by the same value system as the ancestors who created those materials five hundred years ago," further adhering to the concept of traditional patterns of ownership and value systems.[45] Researchers are supposed to submit any findings to the tribal council for verification of authenticity and correctness as well as to make sure that nothing inflammatory is being said that could potentially harm the community. This creates a safe space for the Native and accentuates their sovereignty.

Along with this lack of reciprocity and recognition of objects and part of a living culture, another important distinction is the space between artifacts and the communities they represent. The National Museum of the American Indian for example is located in Washington D.C., which is a significant geographical distance from many of the communities that it represents.[46] The idea of audience plays an important role in how exhibits are advertised and created. A tribal museum is typically located within tribal lands where their main audience is Native. For main stream museums Native visitors are considered constituents rather than audience because despite possibly not being able to visit a museum displaying their culture, they will still be served by the museum, and here the language use power dynamic is emphasized again.[47] The Burke Museum and the Washington State History Museum are both on traditional Coast Salish land but are still very separated from the communities they display. Not only is geographical space important in representation but also the actual space of the gallery or exhibit.

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[44] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 187.
[45] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 189
[46] Brady, "A Dialogic Response," 143.
[47] Brady, "A Dialogic Response," 143.

How an exhibit is set up helps form the story that the museum wants the audience to understand. At the Washington State History Museum, the galleries are set up in chronological order. One problem with this is that after a certain time period, Native representation quickly diminishes. Chronological displays enforce object-centered concepts and continue the colonial idea that Native cultures are no longer relevant. This is often done with dioramas that "freeze Indians in the past," giving no indication that they are still a prevalent community.[48] WSHM is working to move away from this though there a still multiple dioramas in use currently. One example is the long house display which features mannequins inside weaving backets and cooking with an overhead speaker mimicking conversation.[49] This is noticeably different from how the MCRC organizes their exhibits. Rather than presenting their story chronologically, they organize it based on a season. They chose this method as a way to "disrupt visitor distanciation, or emotional distance, by placing artifacts and visitors in simulated cultural and natural context." [50] Emphasis on the happenings of each season follows the cultural concept of a people-centered story and educates the visitor on life as something that revolves around seasonal time. This creates a space for the Makah people to educate in their own way because

> galleries frame as what social scientists would call precontact Makah artifacts. But they are also presented as possessions of their ancestors and contemporary Makahs, the Makah cultural center and community museum begins to redirect and refocus the Euro-American lens that frames the image of their people.[51]

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[48] Brady, "A Dialogic Response," 145.
[49] *Great Hall of Washington History,* Washington State History Museum, Tacoma, Washington.
[50] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 190.
[51] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 191.

Much of the focus in these galleries to promote this redirection, text panels include first person voices and oral histories that allows for visitors to learn about the value of oral tradition and the contemporary presence of the Makah people.[52] The Makah Cultural and Research Center has designed a space that allows for visitors to learn and ask questions as a way to break down stereotypes and false interpretations from previous museum experience.[53] The utilization of space in a museum of any kind is meant to allow dialogue and understanding of history.

Collaboration vs. Consultation vs. Co-Curation: The Difference in Power

The final power dynamic that will be discussed is the idea of Collaboration Vs. Consultation Vs. Co-Curation. These terms are in relation to exhibit curation and how involved a particular Native community is in the creation of exhibits that portray their culture and history. This dynamic specifically affects both language and space use because depending on the level of interaction between Native liaisons and main stream museum curators, there could be some disconnect between the needs of the museums and the surrounding community. Language use is important here because of the undertones of each of these words and their individual interpretations. Collaboration and Consultation are terms that are often used outside of the museum context and are easily understandable. Collaboration is when two people in a museum setting work together to create an exhibit and there is some credit given but majority credit goes to the main stream museum curator rather than the collaborator. For consultation there is little to no credit give, consultants do not have much power and are unable to make decision regarding the exhibit, they can only give advice. But Co-Curation is a very different kind of collaboration.

[52] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 192.
[53] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 193.

Co-Curation is when a person who does not usually work for the museum creates an exhibit about their own cultural background or about a topic specific to them. Full credit is given and there is little to no adjustment made by the museum to alter the exhibit. Understanding these differences in power is critical especially for main-stream museums with colonial exhibits. In the tribal museum setting these will look exceedingly different because of the switch in power of representation. Some form of Native collaboration or consultation is becoming common practice in main stream museums when creating exhibits that involve Native representation though some museums allow for more involvement than just consultation.[54] In Robin Boast's article "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited," she discusses the intricacies behind these terms and how they should be applied to museum exhibit curation to create a decolonized space.[55] When thinking about these terms Boast describes a museum as a "microcosm of the wider society in which inter-ethnic relations are played out through a struggle over interpretation and control of cultural resources."[56] The need for control over cultural and intellectual property plays largely into the power dynamic of this section because those who regulate the story can manipulate its interpretation and affect constituent and stakeholder communities. Her article also discusses the concept of a Contact Zone and its relation to collaboration. She defines a Contact Zone as a "term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of

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[54] Daniels, Brian Isaac. "Reimaging Tribal Sovereignty Through Tribal History: *Museums, Libraries, and Archives in the Klamath River Region." Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives.* E.d. Sleeper-Smith, Susan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 283.
[55] Boast, Robin. "Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited." *Museum Anthropology* 34, no. 1 (2011). 56.
[56] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 57.

power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[57] Boast's main concern with the creation of these Contact Zones is that often there are still power dynamics at play that infringe on the progress towards decolonization which is why she calls them "Neocolonial."[58] Part of this theory of the Contact Zone, emerge from the 1970s when the idea of new museology came about, this is no longer a popular term but provides important context for the evolution of the collaboration, consultation, and co-curation in a museum environment. Boast argues that the "goal of the new museology was, and largely still is, the transformation of social practices through the transformation of the museum from a display of singular expert accounts to a site of different educational engagements."[59] The role of collaboration here is highly important because if there is only one person or one group of people with similar backgrounds in charge of deciding what stories to tell then there is a privileged group of stories that will continuously be told. We can see this in common Native representation such as the idea of the Wild West, and the Savage image of Native people as a curated story that privileged a nationalistic view of America as a country that tamed the wild.[60]

Collaboration between Native groups and museum personnel creates a space for these stories to be rethought and broken down. In the collaboration vs. consultation vs. co-curation dialog, collaboration is a positive step above consultation. However there are arguments that collaboration and the idea of the Contact Zone is really "an extension of the museum as an instrument of governmentality, expressed as multiculturalism" rather than a true collaboration.[61]

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[57] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 57.
[58] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 57.
[59] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 58.
[60] Daniels, "Reimagining Tribal Sovereignty Through Tribal History," 283.
[61] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 59.

Part of the problem of understanding collaboration is the role that the visitor plays in shaping understanding, "visitors are often overlooked or their responses oversimplified. Yet as is increasingly acknowledged… visitors do not come to museums wholly passive or as blank slates."[62] There are instances where collaboration includes community curation through dialogic spaces created through collaborative work. At the National Museums of the American Indian curators created committees of Native community cocurators and spent a significant amount of time visiting each community as a way to increase collaboration rather than consultation.[63] This is one way to prioritize community input and collaboration without diminishing the role of the Native voice to only a consultant. Community collaboration is a form of collaboration that has been internalized and successful in Tribal Museums like the MCRC because of the emphasis on telling the community story and creating a Native museum for a Native audience.[64] For the MCRC "the museum should be a neutral ground where both voices can be heard … This interest in multivocality, or in creating the space for multiple perspectives to coexist, is one of the collaborative innovations that has shaped the MCRC."[65] Collaboration is a complicated but necessary process for the museum community because it requires cooperation from both sides in equal measures, this is very different from Consultation or Co-Curation.

The Washington State History Museum relies heavily on consultation, as they had a Tribal Advisory Board, and currently have a Tribal Liaison but these positions aren't credited in exhibit creation and only advise on direction.[66] Of the three power dynamics, consultation has the

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[62] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 60.
[63] Shannon, "Construction of Native Voice." 223.
[64] Child, "Creation of the Tribal Museum," 253.
[65] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 179
[66] Gwen Whiting, email message to author, November 4, 2020.

most negative connotations in terms of museums use, it "implies specific legal and political rights" but varies on the application.[67] A consultant will inform curators on proper use of language, display of objects etc. but doesn't actually have any power to make the changes necessary to remove colonial methodologies. The practice of consultation is waning in favor of collaboration but the complications of collaboration are still present and even though "collaboration between museums and Native peoples over the past three decades has improved, Native sentiments can still become muffled, even in their community museums."[68] In Lonetree's introduction, she says that "Native American museums/cultural centers are hybrid embodiments of Native and non-Native perspectives. As a synthesis of cultural forms, they reveal a process of collaboration between diverse peoples amid conditions of unequal empowerment."[69] Tribal museums are the epitome of collaboration because of their unique mix of western main stream museum practices with their own community values and knowledge. The Burke Museum has a different process of collaboration, they focus on Co-Curation.

In their *Northwest Native Art* exhibit, six Pacific Northwest Natives from different tribes co-curated and created pieces of the art exhibit as a way to answer the question "what is your artistic heritage?"[70] They all had different artistic backgrounds but each provided a section of the exhibit to display pieces of their choosing to discuss the idea of legacy and heritage while also teaching about Native art. The Burke included a video with audio introducing each artist and curator to the audience in a similar sense to oral histories.[71] In each area that is curated, the

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[67] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 57.
[68] Erikson, Pierce, Ward, Wachendor, *Voices of a Thousand People,* 178
[69] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 20.
[70] Burke Museum. "Northwest Native Art." University of Washington College of Arts and Sciences, 2020. https://www.burkemuseum.org/exhibits/northwest-native-art
[71] Wall Text, *Northwest Native Art,* Burke Museum, Seattle, Washington.

Native artist and co-curator has created wall text that emphasizes their expertise and background in the medium they are displaying. Each wall text includes bilingual sections with the artist's name and material names in their Native language. Some of the tribes being represented in this exhibit include Suquamish, Wasco, Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, Tlingit, and Okanogan and Lakes. The gallery is meant to represent "not only their interests in the rich artistic traditions of our region, but also their own journey as artists."[72] Co-Curation in this sense creates a different dialog for the audience viewing the exhibit because co-curation is only now growing in popularity but much of Native representation in exhibits is through collaboration rather than co-curation. Co-Curation brings elements of tribal museums into main stream museums because "tribal museums are indigenous spaces that both reflect Native values and knowledge systems and languages and work toward the preservation of living cultures,"[73] which is very similar to the role of a co-curated exhibit in a main stream museum.

Understanding and changing the power dynamics in a main stream museum should start with the initial awareness of the level of interaction between curators and the Native communities they are trying to represent. This comes with identifying what type of interaction the main stream museums' needs, whether that's consultation, collaboration or co-curation and is a decision that should be made after analyzing previous interactions and how museums have created previous exhibits. Without some form of interaction, change cannot be made to the language use and the comprehension of space and material culture would stay under colonial influence. Collaboration is the minimum interaction necessary but to properly apply Lonetree's

[72] Burke Museum. "Northwest Native Art."
[73] Child, "Creation of the Tribal Museum," 253.

Indigenous Paradigm to the museum setting, co-curation is fundamental to further positive Native representation and prioritize Native stories.[74]

Conclusion:

In terms of decolonization, tribal museums are significantly different from mainstream museums because "tribal museums, while rooted in a Western institutional tradition, are furthering goals of decolonization and tribal sovereignty. They are museums, but they are also significant centers for community life today."[75] They support the Native audience and promote positive power dynamics like collaboration, bilingual language use, and a people-centered exhibit space rather than object-centered. They are examples for how main stream museums should be created in order to follow the Indigenous Paradigm.

Understanding colonial power dynamics in main stream public history institutions and working towards decolonization establishes space for proper Native representation. The idea that museums are colonial institutions "that created the ordered representations that contained, objectified, and reduced the colonized world for the paternalistic imperialism that characterized the 19th and early 20th centuries – is beyond dispute" according to Boast.[76] Redress is necessary in order to eradicate colonial agendas but Boast argues that this is likely impossible because museums still collect, exhibit and educate, "so rather than being mere 'leftovers,' these are new platforms for a neocolonial positioning of the new museum in relation to the ex-colonial Other." [77] Therefore much of the work being done to decolonize museums isn't actually decolonizing but

[74] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 25.
[75] Child, "Creation of the Tribal Museum," 253.
[76] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 64.
[77] Boast, "Neocolonial Collaboration," 65.

rather creating a space for understanding colonial powers. True decolonizing works would be completely eradicating the museum practice. Removing museums still leaves a hole in public understanding of history and Native representation which is why main stream museums participating in eliminating as much of the colonial influence possible should address the power dynamics discussed in this paper. The three main concepts that need to be addressed are language, space and material culture, and choosing the type of collaboration that works best for individual institutions. These follow the Indigenous Paradigm put forth by Amy Lonetree as a way to accurately present Native stories and culture in research as well as museums and archives.[78]

These power dynamics can be seen and have been critiqued in each of the case studies presented, proper practices that have been put into place under each power dynamic at the case studies have been discussed as well. In terms of language use these include incorporating bilingual text plates in exhibits and participating in proper "truth-telling" which includes acknowledgment of the land and atrocities peppered throughout American history. For space and material culture, the main shift that needs to be made is switching from an object-centered exhibit platform that is often stagnant to a people-centered exhibit that promotes personal experience and oral histories. In the final dynamic, participating in collaboration or co-curating is the only way to start the decolonizing work that needs to be done, consultation leaves space for interpretation that does not properly represent Native lives. This paper discusses significant changes needed in order to create safe environments for learning and coming to terms with the problematized past of the United States of America. Native representation and decolonization of

[78] Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums,* 25.

public history institutions in the Pacific Northwest are making progress but there is still much work to be done to properly spread decolonization practices.

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