

Native American Representation in Museums:  
A Cross Cultural Comparison of the Effects of Cultural Resource  
Laws



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The image of Native Americans in the United States has changed through the passage of time. Part of this change is directly related to the representation of their cultures in a museum setting and the inception of cultural resource laws that govern them. This research looks at four museums, two in the United States and two in the United Kingdom, and compares their representation of Native Americans. Unlike museums in the United States, museums in the United Kingdom do not have to comply with laws that protect source communities. A source community is defined as the original group that an object found in a museum setting originates. Laws like the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) have shaped the relationship between museums and Native Americans in the United States. It has fostered a deeper understanding of Native American worldviews in American museum displays. This research demonstrates

how American museums have changed the way they plan for and create displays about Native Americans because of cultural resource laws. This research reveals three movements in the United States that have occurred, due in part to cultural resource laws. First, the dichotomy between museums' relationship to their visitors in comparison to their responsibilities to source communities and how this has shifted; second, funding and the power struggle it has created in museums. Third, the issue of repatriation of objects, both nationally and internationally, due to the variety of opinions that surround this topic; and how this demonstrates a better working relationship with Native Americans in the United States, and is cause for great strife for the United Kingdom and other countries. These three illuminate the uneven relationship between museums and Native Americans and how cultural resource laws in the United States have begun to alter this relationship. NAGPRA has helped to reestablish Native Americans' legal authority over their culture in the United States.

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A Cross Cultural Comparison of the Effects of Cultural Resources Laws  
by  
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Misty Thorsgard, Author

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# **Native American Representation in Museums: A Cross Cultural Comparison of the Effects of Cultural Resources Laws on the Representation of Native Americans**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Setting:**

My research into the representation of Native Americans in museums began during my undergraduate education. As a history major, I wanted to connect a human element to what seemed like dry, factual information of a bygone era. Volunteering as a museum docent in the San Diego Museum of Man, I gained my first encounter with a museum. It became my first glance into an institution where opinions were voiced and information was brought to the public. As a docent you are expected to facilitate the learning process, answer questions, and act as a police officer. I did all of these things, but I also watched and listened to the visitors and staff. Shortly after starting my position at the museum I picked up a second major in Anthropology. I continued to volunteer in several museums and learned about the important role they play in the education of the general public.

At the same time, I became deeply involved in my husband's Native American culture. After having our first daughter, my husband's culture came to me in the form of a mother-in-law. She introduced me to 'women's roles' and told me the things that only

I could teach my daughter. I became an insider and an outsider. Spradley describes this position as a form of 'participant observation' (1980). I am privy to knowledge and information that outsiders might not acquire, and yet, I am rarely allowed to voice my own opinion. I have learned vast amounts of information about my husband's culture through my interactions with his family.

I continued my museum education while working at a small historical society the senior year of my undergraduate degree. The small historical society and museum prided itself in 'telling the true history' of the area, but that truth was an edited version of history. They were certainly interested and proud to tell the public about their pioneer and Euro-American heritage. But, they omitted the area's deep connection to the Native American and Asian communities, both of which played important roles in shaping the history of the area. I soon realized that this small museum was not the exception and that many small museums used an edited version of their history. They felt it was easier to develop a truth that they felt comfortable discussing rather than telling of a past that they weren't proud of. Museums are the site of collective memory and each party involved has a different perception of the truth. The question is how to tell the most accurate truth (Zolbery 1995:71).

I spent much of my time at this small historical society developing a different version of the area's history, one that told of the Native Americans who had also lived there. To tell this story I had to draw upon a much larger state funded museum. At this museum, I saw yet another version of the truth; this version displayed the many lines of regional history. The museum worked closely with 'source communities' that had

contributed objects to the museum's collection. Several Native American tribes were among the groups that had items at the museum. I saw first hand the way a museum could work with a community they represented and how they worked to tell the most accurate truth possible.

I learned many skills in my experiences with the two museums that year. The most influential piece of information was the way cultural resource laws worked inside of museums. I began to understand how these laws, particularly the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), influenced a great deal of events inside some museums. The laws shaped the museum's interaction with other groups. Laura Peers explained this interaction between Native Americans, museums, and cultural resource laws:

“Museums have proved to be acceptable mechanisms for post-colonial purposes. Mainstream museums, through working with indigenous peoples, have learned to understand ethnographic collections as records of human relationships within native cultures and between native and non-native groups and are being transformed in the process. Indigenous peoples have become museum-literate both in the sense of learning to negotiate with colonial institutions-NAGPRA has given Native Americans new tools of language and procedure and the sense of adapting museums to their own purposes of cultural revitalization, self-identification, and self determination in a complex, increasingly urban and global world” (Peers 2003:25).

Based on her comment, I wanted to know just how influential these laws were in shaping museums' views, interactions, and representation of Native Americans. This quest eventually became the research project for my graduate degree, and I developed a thesis that would pair my understanding of Native American communities and my love of museums.

## **1.2 Defining the Problem:**

The purpose of this project is to determine how Native Americans are represented in American museums and how closely this representation is tied to the inception of cultural resource laws. The interaction between Native Americans and museums has changed through time. The question that this research seeks to answer is whether this shift is related to the inception of cultural resource laws, and if it is, what part does it play? I will explore the impact of these laws by comparing United States museums with international museums in terms of how they represent Native Americans. This will help determine if cultural resource laws in the United States do influence the way Native Americans are represented. Not only will this effort benefit Native Americans, but it will also have the potential to influence other indigenous groups and how their stories are told.

There are international laws and resolutions, such as the UNIDROIT Convention and the United Nations Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which deals with artifacts from other countries. These laws and resolutions only apply to those collections that were gathered after the inception date of the laws or conventions. Another problem arises when countries choose not to ratify resolutions or laws, making them virtually worthless. It makes the laws ineffective because countries then have a choice to follow the laws or only follow them to a lesser degree. Lastly, international laws are often set up to protect countries, not groups of people, such as Native Americans. In comparison, domestic cultural resource laws are in place to protect a wide array of cultural resources.

I chose this research because of the assumed impact that the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act has had on the representation of Native Americans in museums in the United States. By looking at how cultural resource laws are applied in different countries, I hope to ascertain how these laws change the representation and interpretation of indigenous cultures. This study compared four museums in two countries, two in the United States and two in the United Kingdom. Justification of using the United States and the United Kingdom resulted from the both being similar in their collections of Native American artifacts, but different in their laws and funding. This allowed me to compare and analyze the effect that laws and funding have on the representation of Native Americans.

The United Kingdom has a large collection of Native American artifacts that currently reside in British museums. Other cultural similarities to the United States include a difficult past interacting with Native Americans, but both countries work to represent Native Americans in a seemingly accurate way. In the United Kingdom there are minimal laws that are used to protect cultural heritage in contrast to the United States that is under the jurisdiction of NAGPRA and other cultural resource laws. The result is a significant difference between the laws in the United States and those found in the United Kingdom. For example, American laws such as NAGPRA apply to any agency receiving federal funding; this prevents them from not complying. Laws that are set up in the international communities are merely suggestions and hold little weight.

American museums that receive federal funding are required to comply with cultural heritage laws, such as the NAGPRA. NAGPRA requires museums to inventory

their collections and determine if they have any Native American items. These inventories are then given to associated tribes and it is their responsibility to make claims to such items if they feel that they are culturally affiliated to those human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony in the inventory. This gives Native Americans the power to reclaim items once lost to them (NAGPRA 1994). In contrast to the United States, British museums do not have such laws.

It is important to examine issues such as Native American representation in museums in an applied anthropological setting. Applied anthropology seeks to answer difficult cultural problems using theoretical and methodological tools to answer issues such as this. Applied anthropology, unlike strict academic anthropology, works with communities to identify and solve difficult questions that face them. It also attempts to connect local issues to larger societal and global issues. Anthropology is moving toward a more 'moral based' model, where "the primary purpose of this model is to identify what is good and what is bad" instead of an 'objective' model where an observation is supposedly judgment free (D'Andrade 1995:609).

True objectivity is difficult to accomplish and the shift to a moral model attempts to deal with the natural human aspect associated with research, in particular, that all humans are biased and ethnocentric. No one can completely remove him or herself or be totally rid of their own culture when doing research, and each culture has its own self-imposed bias. The moral model gives a way for the anthropological research to correct some of the past wrong doings. Roy D'Andrade suggests that this might be done "by

giving voice to those who resist oppression [or], at least identify the oppression and the oppressors (D'Andrade 1995:611). Applied anthropology seeks to do these things. Like applied anthropology, this research strives to demonstrate the benefits of working with source communities to develop a more holistic view of their cultures in museum; this can be achieved through the inception of more cultural resource laws both domestically and internationally.

The groups that are included in this research are the museum community, Native Americans, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The museum community will benefit from the results of this work through the potential growth in understanding of various viewpoints. Not only will British museums gain an understanding of the importance of direct contact with Native peoples but American museums can begin to evaluate their relationship with Native communities and the effectiveness of those relationships. This research has the potential to lead to a deeper understanding of how different variables, such as laws and communication between Natives and those who represent them, as well as affect a museum's ability to create accurate representations.

### **1.3 Theory Framework:**

Theoretically, I draw upon several approaches that shape my research. The first is structuralism as outlined by Claude Levi-Strauss. He believed that while cultures are different on the outside, they are "products of underlying universal patterns of thought" (McGee 2003:345). Structuralism is a Western creation, and museums were historically created under these structuralized ideals, such as universalism and binary opposites.

Structuralism is founded on the need to give order, to categorize, and to define the world. It is difficult to fit any culture into defined parameters; culture is continually changing and it is problematic to believe that there is a universal pattern of thought that propagated the varieties of culture.

Structuralism states that it is natural for humans to create 'binary oppositions' to understand and give meaning to their way of life. By breaking down human thought into root binary oppositions, one can understand the source of all human interactions (McGee 2003:346). Unlike Levi-Strauss who would say that this concept functions in all societies, I believe that this idea is predominately a function of Western society. Westerners tend to think of things in terms of good or evil, black or white, all or nothing; we think in absolutes and truths (Levi-Strauss 1963:364). In regard to this research, museums try to classify objects into certain categories, like what is considered sacred and what is not. George Horse Capture once commented when asked what Native Americans consider sacred he stated that, "sacredness in the Indian world is like the early morning dew, it falls over everything. Nothing is exempt, everything is sacred" (2003:73). Native American's worldview is much more holistic than the Western world recognizes.

Binary oppositions and how they play a role in the representation of Native Americans inside a museum, is important to understand. Binary oppositions that play out in museum displays are seen when one looks at how those who are in power (museum officials) act toward those who are not in power in this case, Native Americans. Typically museum officials are not Native American, and they take the authority of interpretation out of the control of Native Americans.

Levi-Strauss also talks about Universalism, or ideas that unite all cultures. Even though there are certain themes that every culture is concerned with such as food, shelter, and family, each culture has unique characteristics that play a role in who they are, and by simply looking at cultures in universals it can cause great harm rather than fostering deeper levels of understanding. By focusing on only the cultural similarities, we miss out on the important cultural nuances.

Many museums have colonialist histories that were created to explain European interactions with other cultures. In order for those museums to develop beyond their current role in society, they have to evolve past their role as preservationists (Nicks 2003:21). Museums need to serve a variety of communities through education, communication, and facilitation of greater cultural understandings. Museums will always have some form of order and structure, which is deeply ingrained in the institution itself (Levi-Strauss 1945:364). The museum, like structuralism, compartmentalizes people into topics such as economics, religion, politics, language, art, etc... and they try to explain how each of these systems feed into the next. This is seen when museums select a few artifacts to explain an entire culture. Museums are now reinventing themselves to function in a post-modernist world where each voice involved is a valid one and should be heard.

Another theory I draw upon in my research is that of symbolic anthropology. We use symbols in order to interpret events that happen during our lives. The symbols that are created influence the way people in a given culture think about their world. Symbols are then used to communicate understanding to others within that culture. I drew

primarily upon the symbolic anthropology of Victor Turner. He believes that one must seek the understanding of those within the culture in order to understand the cultural context in which the symbol was created (Turner 1967:536). One must study the way in which people create meaning in their lives in order to represent their culture accurately.

Humans create their reality by interpreting events in their own cultural past and portray that meaning through cultural symbols, which may take the form of material goods. Correct interpretations of material goods require an insider's perspective to ensure proper representation. It is important to ask what kind of meanings are being represented and imposed on Native Americans by non-native curators. Curators are choosing objects that will symbolize Native American culture and there is no regulation, specifically in Europe, as to the types of objects used to represent that culture.

I focused my research on the way in which British museum officials looked at Native Americans to determine what symbols they use to represent Native American cultures. I also looked at how museum officials in the United States used symbols to represent Native American culture and if these symbols are different because of their interactions with Native Americans.

Keensing also notes that using Native Americans as informants or curators can also be problematic because of their 'positionality' within their own society. 'Positionality' is the status that any one person holds within a culture. The position that an individual holds in a society determines their understanding of their culture and also reflects how much cultural information is accessible to them. For example, a religious leader will have a very different view of cultural meaning than a teacher. Keensing points

out that "...only experts ... make the full panoply of connections in the symbolic system, who see global patterning where others see only parts and surfaces" (1987:161). If we ask Native American informants to choose symbols, in the form of objects that convey their cultural understanding, we are asking them to define their cultural knowledge in terms of their particular worldview. One Native American informant might not have the same knowledge as another Native American informant, and opinions can also vary from one person to the next. Ideally, each tribe would have a group of informants who could then advise museums about the proper way to display their culture.

There are many complexities when interpreting symbolic meaning. It is difficult to expect someone working outside of the cultural context to begin to understand or interpret meaning without help from a group of informants. As such, museum officials should work closely with Native informants to attempt to understand the symbols that will be chosen to convey the meaning of their culture. The capacity to which museums develop a working relationship with Native Americans will depend on many factors such as accessibility to information, funding, cross cultural communication, etc.

When feasible, museums should use Native American informants to interpret their own symbols. This insures that we do not limit ourselves from gaining a deeper understanding of their worldview, thereby increasing our chances of portraying Native Americans accurately. However it is proposed that not only the physical distance, but the cultural separation of Native American society from British society that is problematic in their attempts to accurately represent Native Americans. This research will document that the physical separation from Native Americans and the lack of cultural resource laws

have a negative influence on how museums in the United Kingdom portray Native Americans.

I am also deeply influenced by postmodernist theory, particularly by the writings of Foucault.

“Foucault’s idea is that every mode of thinking involves implicit rules (maybe not even recognized by those following them) that materially restrict the range of thought. If we can uncover these rules, we will be able to see how an apparently arbitrary constraint actually makes total sense in the framework defined by those rules” (Gutting 2005:32-33).

He believes that power relationships are deeply ingrained in society and are imposed on others through the way that the dominating class defines ‘normal’. They “preserve their power through mechanisms of control such as prisons, hospitals, asylums, and museums” (Erickson 2003:158). Society defines itself by identifying the ‘other’, the act of defining people allows for a power relationship to occur. In a museum, this is seen in displays about Native Americans. Information is presented as ‘truth’ with no consideration given to the collector’s cultural agenda. He discusses this in his work, ‘The History of Madness’:

“The results of examination are recorded in documents that provide detailed information about the individuals examined and allow power systems to control them (for example absentee records for schools, patients’ charts in hospitals). On the basis of these records, those in control can formulate categories, averages, and norms that are in turn a basis for knowledge” (Gutting 2005:86).

This occurs in museums when they classify and analyze human culture into a manageable package. That package is then placed on display to tell museum visitors about another culture.

A major limitation of postmodernism is that ethnography tends to show the ‘truth’ from the researcher’s point of view and truth is relative to the person imposing it (Erickson & Murphy 2003:155-158). Museum displays are another form of ethnography, and like ethnography, museum displays are interpretations imposed on another culture. Anthropology is not a strict empirical science in which there are rules that apply all of the time. The act of collecting ethnographic data is subjective and the same is true when conducting research to create displays in museums (Rosaldo 1989:580-82). My decision to interview some of the museum officials and not all of them may have caused a bias in my findings. Some museums choose to work with Native Americans at varying degrees, and others do not, resulting in multiple interpretations of their culture. Hermeneuticist Hans-Georg Gadamer said, that “we cannot separate our ways of knowing from our language and our culture, it is impossible for us to interpret the world in a truly detached, objective manner” (McGee 2003:575).

#### **1.4 Overview of Methods:**

In order to determine the extent to which Native American representation in museums is influenced by cultural resource laws, certain methods were utilized. Analysis of the representation of Native Americans was accomplished in a three-part process. This process was replicated at two museums in the United Kingdom and two in the United States. In the first part of the process I examined all of the museum displays dealing with Native Americans in the museums that I worked in, including The British Museum, the American Museum of Britain, the Maryhill Museum of Art, and The Burke Museum of

Natural History and Culture. Next, I conducted interviews with a museum official at three of the museums. Lastly, I examined each museum's publications that discussed Native Americans.

Through these methods I will show how the lack of cultural resource laws combined with the distance separating Natives from European countries play into the way Native Americans are represented in the United Kingdom. It will also shed light on how museums in the United States are influenced by cultural resource laws.

In chapter two I examine the history of Native American representation in museums in the United States and how changes in laws have shifted the interaction between Native Americans and museums. In addition, I analyze international laws that are in place to protect cultural resources. In chapter three, I explain the methods used during this research, and the reasons why those methods were chosen over others. In chapter four, I discuss the results of the research. Chapter five is where I draw conclusions from the previous chapters and offer suggestions for further study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Cultural Resource Laws: the United Kingdom and the United States**

The laws in the United Kingdom and the United States that regulate cultural resources are different from each other. Laws in the United Kingdom are referred to as cultural heritage laws; in the United States, they are referred to as cultural resource laws. Cultural heritage laws are implemented to protect the heritage of nation-states and not the cultural resources of individual cultural groups. There are a number of cultural heritage laws in the international community, but most of the large countries refuse to partake in the implementation and enforcement of the laws, which makes these laws unsuccessful. International cultural heritage laws are generally enacted to protect organizations, such as museum and individual collectors. The laws give little regard to non-nation states, such as indigenous groups.

Much is written about the creation of cultural resources laws in the United States and the struggles of Native Americans to gain the passage of those laws. The return of cultural items on an international level and the passage of international laws regarding these cultural items are important. A large amount of research has been conducted to discuss the ramification of colonialism on Native American culture. However, there is a lack of current research on whether or not the passage of cultural resource laws in the United States influences the exhibition of Native American culture. If there is a positive

impact, exploration of new laws on an international level that would help in the representation of Native Americans by the international museum community.

In the following section I review the literature of some of the major findings on these subjects. I first examine the extent and types of cultural heritage laws that are found in the international arena and note whether the United States or the United Kingdom have ratified these laws. I then discuss the cultural resource laws in the United Kingdom and current collecting trends practiced by museums in that country. After establishing the international laws and those in the United Kingdom I then compare them to the cultural resource laws in the United States. I first look at the historical events in the United States, including trends and the Indian art market that has shaped the creation of cultural resource laws. I then review the cultural resource laws that are currently in practice in the United States. To conclude I then explore the Native American views on the implementation of these laws and their views on museum representation of their culture.

## **2.2 International Cultural Heritage Laws:**

The following are some of the important international laws, which all originated in the United Nations in some form or another. These laws have taken shape over the years to protect cultural heritage on a more global level. Wherever possible I have indicated whether the United Kingdom or the United States has ratified the law.

### ***2.2.1 The Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (Hague) (1954)***

The Hague Convention was created to protect museums and libraries as well as movable cultural items that are endangered during an armed conflict (Hague Convention 1954). This law makes it illegal for countries to exploit the cultural resources of another country that they occupy during a time of war. If items are removed during the occupation, they are subject to return after the conflict to the country of origin. It was the first international effort to protect cultural property (Greenfield 1989:187). By March 1993, eighty-three countries ratified the convention and Protocol. The United States and the United Kingdom are not party to this protocol.

### ***2.2.2 The Convention of the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO) (1970)***

The UNESCO convention made the attempt to address problems associated with the removal of cultural property from a country that was previously a colony and to stop the illegal trade of these items (Greenfield 1996:185). It states, "...a cultural object which has been unlawfully excavated or lawfully excavated but unlawfully retained shall be considered stolen, when consistent with the law of the state where the excavation took place" (Schneider 1995:6). The convention makes suggestions of a preferred set of actions that pertain to items that were previously removed from another country by a colonizing force. For example, it states that the General Conference should have the opportunity to gain the return of such items that were previously removed. However, it

does not require a country to return items found to be protected under this law. The removal of items from a country that was once a colony posed a serious problem for the implementation of this international law, because the law is not retroactive.

“From the earliest times, many cultures have been the victims of systematic exploitation. This was true of ancient Egypt and of the pre-Colombian American civilizations, and more recently those of Africa and Asia... Thus the great museums and private collections of Western world are replete with treasures acquired in circumstances of doubtful legality or of undoubted illegality and the hemorrhage continues to this day” (Schneider 1995:1).

As Schneider points out, many museum collections came from questionable backgrounds, and the argument that museums are preserving the global heritage of the world is no longer a valid argument.

Illegal exportation of cultural property is also addressed in this convention. No matter what laws are in place, illegal trade still exists today (Shneider 1995:2). Without diligence and stricter international laws, there is little that can be done to stop the trade of cultural property.

The Convention was not without opposition, particularly because ‘cultural property’ was so vaguely defined that many countries were reluctant to participate. The United States became a party to this convention in 1983 and the United Kingdom in 2002, with the understanding that the stipulations of the convention would not be retroactive.

### ***2.2.3 The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)***

This convention sought to make each signing member responsible for preserving cultural heritage that existed in their own country. Cultural heritage was defined as monuments, buildings and sites that were man-made or a combination of man-made and natural. This act specifically deals with non-moveable objects. Each state was asked to provide a list of sites to the World Heritage Committee (Unesco 1972). The United Kingdom became a party to this convention in 1984 (Greenfield 1989:107). I was not able to ascertain if the United States is a party to this convention.

### ***2.2.4 The UNIDROIT Convention (1995)***

This convention made provisions for the return of cultural objects between two contract states or states that have signed on to the convention. The convention is not retroactive. The convention covers stolen or illegally excavated objects that can be claimed legally by another state. It also made provisions for the return of objects exported illegally. Contracting states have a fifty-year window in which to make claims on objects. To this date neither the United States nor the United Kingdom are participating states. This convention is set up to facilitate contracting states in communication, but has no provisions for those states that break the sanctions.

### ***2.2.5 Summary of International Laws***

As stated before, laws on an international level are used to protect organizations and countries. They are of little use to indigenous communities that are governed under

the umbrella of nation-states. Objects have become a symbol of power and status.

Western countries, which were the original oppressors, continue to define indigenous communities inside of their museums, forcing them into conformity.

## **2.3 Cultural Resource Laws in the United Kingdom:**

### ***2.3.1 Historical Overview***

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of the Enlightenment period drove socialists to impose scientific methods on their practices (Erickson & Murphy 2003:37-39). They believed that scientific methodology could be imposed on human culture, and like scientists they sought to gather information about their subjects. The drive to gather and document large quantities of objects that they felt were disappearing was much like that of the rest of the Western World, and they thought that this information might hold the key to unlocking modern civilization (Erickson & Murphy 2003:39).

“The United Kingdom stands out as a principal holder of some of the major cultural treasures of the world, primarily because of her colonial history, although not all the treasures were acquired as a direct result of this. Many were acquired simply as the result of long-distance archaeological raids and these were not always carried out by archaeologists” (Greenfield 1989:91).

This mode of collecting brought about the dislocation of vast amounts of cultural items, as different Western powers raced against each other to gather and steal items from third world countries. The collection of cultural items became a status symbol for many countries.

The United Kingdom is the biggest government that opposes international cultural heritage laws, especially with regard to implementing these existing laws in their own

country and in the creation of new laws. The English government believes that it plays an important role in preserving the world's cultural heritage (Greenfield 1995:105). This idea is directly related to their country's residual ideals of colonial superiority. There are a few laws that are enacted in the United Kingdom that protect their own cultural heritage. However, it does not grant the same protection to other countries or nations and their cultural items, like the cultural resource laws in the United States. The first of these laws enacted is the Export and Customs Power Act.

### ***2.3.2 Export and Customs Powers Act (1939)***

This act gave the government of the United Kingdom the power to stop the exportation of any item from their own culture that is more than fifty years old at the time of exportation. A board of directors would review the exportation and rule on its importance to the heritage of the United Kingdom (Greenfield 1989:110). An item is only exported if it is less than fifty years old and the item is not judged to be a historical or national treasure after a review. This law is governed by a six-man board of directors who have the right to advise the Arts Minister to withhold an exporting license.

### ***2.3.3 British Museum Act (1963)***

This Act was passed in order to establish a museum to house the collection of Sir Hans Sloan, who was a "physician, a naturalist and an antiquarian" (Wilson 1989:13). The Act made provisions as to how the museum would be managed. One of the most important things to note is that this act makes it virtually impossible for items that have been accessioned into a collection to be de-accessioned. There are three situations in

which an object can be de-accessioned from the collection: if the object is a duplicate; if the object was made before 1850; or, if the object is a “copy made by photography or a process akin to photography”. In all of these situations the objects must be deemed “unfit to be retained in the collection of the Museum and can be disposed of without detriment to the interest of students” (British Museum Act 1963).

However, this law does not pertain to other museums in the United Kingdom, and yet it has set a precedent when other museums deal with issues of repatriation. This is partly due to the British Museum’s national status. Some items have been repatriated from other museums but these cases are limited.

## **2.4 Historical Overview of Native American interactions with the United States and cultural resource laws:**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Westward movement put pressure on Native American cultures. Tribes were being pushed west, out of their ancestral homelands, by Euro-American settlers. In some cases, whole tribes were disappearing due to the introduction of new diseases to North America and warfare with other tribes and the United States federal government. The nature of anthropological fieldwork came from the perceived necessity for collecting information from Native American cultures before they were gone (Maurer 2000:14-15). Little thought was given to the displaying of artifacts. The main focus of these early anthropologists was salvage ethnography and mass collection of cultural material. During this phase, sacred objects and human remains were displayed without concern for cultural taboos that might have been broken (Maurer 2000:20).

### ***2.4.1 Sovereignty***

Native American tribes are considered sovereign Nations within the United States which established a political relationship between a tribe and the United States (Wilkins 2006:19). Native American tribal governments are sovereign because of government to government treaties that took place first in the 1800's (Delaware Nation and U.S. 1777). "Sovereignty... means that in some contexts Indians are regaining a degree of local autonomy at the state and federal level" (Oswalt 1999). Sovereignty gives Native people self-determination over the way they live their lives. This also defines the way the United States views them. Tribal governments are:

"...nations in the most fundamental sense of the word. That is, they are separate peoples inhabiting specific territories that they wield some governmental control or jurisdiction over" (Wilkins 2006:45).

Sovereignty gives them the authority to do the things that they deem important on their own land and ultimately gives them authority over their culture. The greater exercise of sovereignty has created opportunities for negotiations between Native American governments and United States government. It has shifted the dynamics of the political relationship from the oppressor and the oppressed to communication between governments.

### ***2.4.2 Removal to Termination 1819-1960***

In the early 1800's the forced migration of Native Americans began, also known as 'removal time' because of their forced removal from their land. During this time the Civilization Fund Act (1819) encouraged the United States government to remove eastern

tribes west of the Mississippi River, in an effort to free up more land for white settlers (Wilkins 2006:113). The policy that removed Native Americans from their homeland was “voluntary in name and coerced in fact” (Wilkins 2006:113).

By the mid-1850 the United States government developed a new policy in an effort to acculturate Native Americans. It was known as the reservation policy, and was administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Reservations were seen as the first step to civilizing Native Americans (Wilkins 2006:114). Also used in the process was the replacement of:

“...traditional communal economic base with a system of private property, intensified education, primarily through boarding schools, the regulation of every aspect of Indian social life, including marriage, dispute settlement, and religious practice, and the granting of citizenship” (Wilkins 2006:116).

All of these factors contributed to the destruction of the Native American way of life.

The government’s actions eventually led to one of the most destructive policies, the General Allotment Act of 1887. This act was used to undermine Native Americans’ notion of common stewardship of land, which was seen as one of the main reasons hampering their enculturation. The act split reservation land into individual parcels:

“...heads of house-holds received 160 acres, single persons over eighteen received 80 acres, those under 18 received 40 acres” (Wilkins 2006:117).

The land was held in trust and could not be sold for 25 years. This act split reservation land but left much of it unclaimed. The surplus land was then purchased by the government and then sold off to settlers.

Government policy shifted after the study by Lewis Meriam in 1926, which illuminated the horrible conditions that Native Americans were subjected to. The

Meriam Report and other studies on the same subject led to more changes to federal Indian policy. Assimilation was the ultimate goal, but the government employed new methods in the transition. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 ended the allotment policy by:

“Providing measures whereby Indian land could be restored or new reservations created, established a \$10 million revolving credit fund to promote economic development, permitted tribes to hire attorneys, and authorized tribal governing bodies to negotiate with non-Indian governments”(Wilkins 2006:119).

The act successfully stopped the rapid loss of Native American land.

By the end of World War II, the United States Government felt that the continual monetary support of Native Americans hampered their assimilation into the general population. Resolution 108 in 1953 deemed that Native Americans “should be freed from all disabilities and limitation especially applicable to Indians” (Wilkins 2006:120). The CIA developed criteria for determining a tribe’s ability to survive off of government support. Those found ‘civilized’ were then slated for termination. The termination of one hundred and nine tribes happened between 1945 between 1960 because of Resolution 108.

#### ***2.4.3 American Antiquities Act (1906)***

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a shift from mass collection to display of artifacts (Maurer 2000:27). Anthropologists and museum officials made new attempts to become more culturally aware of the people behind the objects that were on display. This shift also led to the creation of several cultural resource laws that protected Native American

archaeological sites and eventually laws that protected Native American rights. The first of these laws came in the form of the American Antiquities Act of 1906.

The westward movement paired with the small economic depression in 1890 had a detrimental effect on pre-historic archaeological sites. Looting of sites became the livelihood and survival of some. These two significant occurrences joined with other events such as the destruction of cultural material that led to the creation of the 1906 Act.

The creation of two organizations (the American Anthropological Association and the Archeological Institute of America) in 1892 acted as catalyst for the growing concerns over the protection of historic and pre-historic sites. Both of these organizations worked relentlessly to inform the public about the great loss of historic and pre-historic sites. The Southwest Expedition, led by A.F. Bandelier, produced significant reports that gave real evidence to the “damage being done to Southwestern ruins by vandals and looters” (Cole 1985:146). The Bandelier Expedition and others like it gave the government hard evidence demonstrating that valuable sites were being destroyed. Other concerns came with the realization that important cultural items were being shipped overseas by foreign explorers. These situations caused the government to re-evaluate its position on protecting cultural resources, eventually leading to the passage of 1906 Antiquities Act.

The American Antiquities Act of 1906 provided the United States government with laws that allowed them to prosecute looters of important pre-contact archaeological sites. It also allowed the government to designate significant cultural sites as national

monuments. Although it was an important move, the law had very small penalties for those who violate its mandates, making the law ineffective.

#### ***2.4.4 Native American Activism***

Political activism by Native Americans began when they started to fight against termination era policy. The American Indian Movement (AIM) in 1968, and several stand-offs with the government lead to yet another change in government policy. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 sought to impose United States constitutional rule on tribal governments, intruding further into the lives of Native Americans.

Eventually, the new administration of President Nixon worked to gain a better working relationship with Native American governments by passing acts such as the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, and the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Wilkins 2006:122). He also restored the Menominee Nation in 1973 and created the American Indian Policy Review Commission in 1975. The compilation of these events started a new era of equality, moving back to a government-to-government relationship.

#### ***2.4.5 American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978)***

Another law that shaped the way Native Americans were represented in museums was the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. For the first time, this act made Native American religious practices legal in the eyes of the government, and Native Americans were no longer arrested for practicing their own religions. However, the Peyote religion, officially known as the Native American Church, is the only Native American religion

that has had any problem with the limitations of this law. The substance used in the practice of this religion, peyote, is still considered illegal and those who use peyote are not protected under the law (*Employment Division, Department of Human Resources v. Smith* 1988). But, generally speaking, this recognition states that items used by Native Americans in the practice of their religion are important to their spiritual beliefs.

#### ***2.4.6 Federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act 1990:***

One should also note the influence of tourism on the types of goods Native Americans produced. Tourism began in the 1700's with the movement of Europeans to the West. With this movement there was an increased demand for 'Native American Crafts', creating the so-called Indian Art market.

In the 1700's significant numbers of European settlers entered into North America. Slowly they moved across the continent introducing European goods into the Native American economy.

“Initially the introduction of European trade goods enriched but did not seriously disrupt the accustomed modes of subsistence, which were based on hunting, gathering, and farming supplemented by a small amount of specialized, intertribal artisan trade” (Phillips 1984:4).

The access to traditional foods became limited as Native Americans were moved off of their home lands; this void was filled by European foods. In the early 1800's, settlers put more pressure on western Native Americans as the settlers pushed further and further across the continent. As a consequence, Natives were left with a decreasing means of providing for their families. Their subsistence-based life style changed, they became more dependent on outside sources for food. Ruth Phillips discusses this shift when she

states that, “with the disappearance of land and game, commodity productions closely tied to the expanding tourist trade had become essential to many local economies” (Phillips 1984:4). The tourist market became a means for many families to survive.

The creation of the tourist market invoked many stereotypical terms to classify Native American art. Sometimes their work was called ‘curiosities’, ‘toys’, ‘trinkets’, ‘crafts’, or other derogatory terms. “Tourist art summons up the inauthentic, the mass-produced, and the vulgar, (while) White art, in the Western tradition, is identified with the beautiful and rare and the elite” (Phillips 1984:6). The association with White art being beautiful and Native art as a ‘craft’ is something that Native Americans and others in the art and scholarly community have fought to change. The market for Native American art also created a stronger image of Native Americans as the ‘other’, which reinforced the romantic notion of Native Americans.

In the late 1800’s, people sought what they considered authentic Native art. Many envisioned Natives as simple people with a closer connection to nature. Phillips points out that the demand for authentic Native art “...can be traced directly to the new interest in tourist travel that had developed in England” and to the expansion of the railroads in the 1800’s (1998:26). The railroads brought large numbers of tourist to remote villages, eliminating the need for Native Americans to travel to the buyers. Native American villages became places to sell ‘souvenirs.’ The village market also acted to authenticate the work that was sold because Europeans could get Native American artwork at the source. Europeans and white Americans would travel to the villages as part of a souvenir buying experience (Phillips 1998:31). Eventually, Native Americans in remote areas

migrated to the popular resorts frequented by visitors from Europe in order to sell their goods. Native Americans began to understand the importance of playing the part of being Indian. White tourists had an image in their mind, and they wanted to see that image.

In 1985 the United States Department of Commerce surveyed the 'Native American Arts and Crafts' market and found that it generated almost \$800 million in revenue each year (Smith 2005). Non-Natives began mass-producing Native American goods that caused a drastic shift in profitability for Native Americans. Prices sky rocked and Indian art became profitable for non-Indians because they could mass-produce the same items cheaper than Native Americans. People were no longer able to make a living selling their work, partly due to counterfeits and machine-made look a-likes being marketed as authentic handmade Native American goods. The mass produced goods sold at a much cheaper price. "The fakes [drove] down the prices drastically, putting many legitimate artisans and stores out of business" (Smith 2005). These fakes caused great hardships for Native American families who were dependent on the revenue generated from these sales in order to survive. Although, art that was considered fine art increased in value as whites drove up the prices. A breakthrough in 1990 occurred with the passage of the Federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act. This law made it illegal for non-Natives to represent their work as Native American. The law was backed by hefty fines that could equal up to \$250,000 and five years in prison for the first offense. Even though a stiff penalty was imposed for falsifying authenticity, fakes are still found in the market. This is partly due to the lack of enforcement of the law.

This law also brought up issues of what it meant to be a Native American or who was considered a Native American. Under the law, only card-carrying Native Americans from federally recognized tribes could claim their work was Native American, thereby excluding Native Americans from non-federally recognized tribes from selling their art as ‘authentic’.

#### ***2.4.7 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (1990)***

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act passed in 1990 required all museums in the United States that received federal funding to produce a list of all artifacts in their collection that were related to Native Americans. This list was then sent out to the associated federally recognized tribes through the National Park Service. The tribes then have the option to claim culturally affiliated human remains, burial goods, or items of ceremonial significance and cultural patrimony.

“The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act provides Native American people and tribes with the right to recover and exercise control over human remains and various cultural items. Although it will not result in the return of all items that could be returned or the complete protection of all graves sites, it does provide Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations and certain individuals seeking to reclaim their ancestors and heritage, or protect grave sites, with a number of enforceable legal rights” (Trope 1996:9).

This single act changed museums’ relationships with Native Americans in the United States. Authority over Native American items was no longer solely in the hands of museums but shared with Native American tribes. Rennard Strickland discussed the importance of NAGPRA to the Native Americans when he stated:

“NAGPRA recognizes that Native peoples are not themselves museum objects of dead cultures or even isolated remnants of quaint lost tribes; they are

members of ongoing governmental, social, economic, religious, and political units. Native peoples are free under the law to define themselves and their life ways, including their own legal systems definition of what is a sacred object, what is cultural patrimony, what property maybe transferred by individuals, and what property can be alienated or placed in trust only by the entire tribal group” (Strickland 1997:88).

We have now moved into an era in which Native Americans are advisors, directors, and curators to some of the top museums in our country. Museums are even owned and operated by tribal groups taking the representation of Native Americans completely out of the hands of the dominant culture.

#### ***2.4.8 Summary of United State Laws***

The inception of cultural resource laws in the United States has shifted the power structure in museums. Native Americans now have a voice in how they want their culture represented in museums as well as what should be represented. This voice is given authority because of the governmental laws that now allow Native Americans to express their opinions and tell others what they believe to be important information about their culture. Based on this history, my research asks to what extent those laws have changed the way museums interact with and display Native American culture. According to a statement published by the National Museum of the American Indian, Richard West implies that these laws have helped give power to Native American communities.

“Its (National Museum of the American Indian) work reflects a strong belief that Indians are necessary to understanding, interpreting, managing, conserving, and exhibiting its unique collection of more than one million artifacts made by Indian people” (West 1999:99).

The National Museum of the American Indian is a leading institution, contributing to the changing view on Native Americans and the importance of including their views (Penney

2000:47). At the very least the laws have forced museums into a relationship with Native tribes.

## **2.5 Native American Implementation of Cultural Resource Laws:**

Domestic laws in the United States that are meant to give power back to Native Americans have sometimes fallen short. Laws found in our county do not always take into account the cultural differences found between different Native American groups. Laws focus on the similarities, failing to see diverse cultures and issues.

Despite these problems, as stated earlier, the laws have opened up opportunities for dialogue between Native Americans and museums. For example, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) has incorporated Native American worldviews into their collection and exhibition practices. Tribes were asked to identify items that were of cultural significance to them within the collection and they could then determine if they wanted these items returned. If they chose not to obtain such items, they were then given the opportunity to control how the museum would store and use these items (Rosoff 2003:73-76). This dialogue, along with other factors has significantly changed the way Native Americans are represented at the NMAI.

NAGPRA has also brought into the forefront the difference between the ideals of Natives and Non-natives when dealing with cultural items. Clair Farrer notes that there is no firm rule when dealing with the cultural items protected under NAGPRA (Farrer 1994). Each individual tribe has their own way of claiming rights to items, and the understanding of ownership in a Western sense is different from that of Native

Americans. Also, the method of returning items to Native Americans can vary greatly between groups. Finally, it is important to state that just as no two tribes are alike, it is also true that no two museums are alike (Harlan 1996:55). All of these factors add to the problems in implementing cultural resource laws.

## **2.6 Summary:**

This research will demonstrate a relationship, which can be used to inspire the international government to create laws that will influence the ways Native Americans are displayed, or to set to up a situation in which Natives have a more prominent voice in the international museum community.

Museums in the United States have taken a long journey of understanding, one that will never be over. One museum official stated that every museum has:

“...the responsibility to engage in ongoing dialogues with representatives of specific cultural groups whose art objects are to be the focus of exhibitions. In addition, responsible action includes taking the time to research and internalize the different ways in which specific cultural groups shape their knowledge and structure the experience of their art objects” (Kelm 1993:158).

The first step is to equalize the power relationships found between museums and Native Americans. The United States’ relationship with Native Americans has evolved from first contact to the present, fostered by the development of cultural resources laws. Native American relationships with museums today are also related to the unique relationship between Native American Tribes and the federal government in the United States, as seen in the government-to-government relationship. The relationship between Native Americans and museums has now developed into a better relationship based on mutual

understanding of each other's desires. The battle in the United Kingdom has only begun and they can learn much from mistakes and triumphs in the United States. The result would make the museum experience more educational for all.

## Chapter 3: Methods and Research

### 3.1 Overview:

In this research, I compare the representation of Native American cultures in two museums in the United States, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture and the Maryhill Museum of Art, both located in Washington State. I then compared them to museums in the United Kingdom, the British Museum and the American Museum of Britain.

My domains of inquiry were museum officials in the United States and the United Kingdom, museum exhibits, and museum publications dealing with Native Americans. I choose to use these domains to replicate a typical museum visitor's experience, except the interviews. I chose the two museums in the United States because they have large Native American collections and because of their accessibility. In the United Kingdom, there are four museums with Native American artifacts in their collection, but because of my limited time frame, I was only able to study two.

For the purpose of this study, I have defined 'accurate representation' of Native Americans in museums as a museum that shows Native Americans with a foundation in the past but also firmly established in the present. Richard West states that a museum is a "hemispheric institution of living cultures... [it] focuse[s] on the cultural present and future as it is on a cultural past" (Richard West 1999:8). A museum that strives for accurate representation is one that has direct contact with Native Americans and has

attempted to foster a relationship of mutual understanding. Items on display give the audience a basic understanding of Native Americans without using potentially sensitive cultural material such as ceremonial items. Native Americans should be included in the entire process of creating displays that are culturally accurate. This definition combines my own research with those other scholars concerned with Native American representation in museums such as Harlan (1996), Hill (1999), Hopper-Greenhill (2000), Kelm (1993), Maurer (2000), and Riegel (1996).

### **3.2 Examination of displays:**

In order to examine the ‘accurate representation’ of Native Americans, I studied displays using a model developed by James D. Nason (1999:37). This anthropological model defines four types of museum displays that are used to represent Natives. I used Nason’s types of museum representation because they closely follow the development of museum representation. As the understanding of Native Americans changed, the representation of them changed inside of museums. By looking at Nason’s types you can begin to distinguish where a particular museum is situated in their relationship to Native Americans.

Nason’s first display type is the open storage method. Objects are displayed in one place with no regard to “age, provenance, or other relevant criteria” (Nason 1999:37). Museums with smaller collections tend to display their items in the open storage manner.

The second type of display is the ‘Museum-visitor-as-tourist model’, also called the ethnographic model. In this display type, Native Americans are represented in such a

way that the museum visitors are taken on a journey as they view each display. Display materials are presented from one region or cultural group, and the museum visitor is responsible for learning about the material. In the ethnographic model, museum displays are locked into a particular time period.

Nason's third form of exhibit is called the 'habitat model.' In this type, objects are displayed to recreate or simulate a scene either historical or cultural (Nason 1999: 37). For example, a re-creation of a Potlatch ceremony would be a demonstration of the 'habitat model'.

The fourth type is the developmental exhibit. This display type concentrates on the development of some object or technology, such as the evolutions of fire making or weaving. The title of a display might read 'Native American Weaving', a vague description given to the visitor with little or no information about individual groups.

I have added a fifth category that takes into account those museums that might represent Native Americans in a more accurate way, which is created out of my own research. I refer to this as the 'contemporary connection display' model. This type of display connects Native American groups on display to their modern day equivalent. Museums that fall into this category would demonstrate direct connection between the past and the present. This might be observed in a museum by the presence of a Native American advisory board, periodic consultation with Native American representatives, or actually having Native Americans working in the museum.

For each display I looked at the topics discussed, the tribes included, the objects picked to demonstrate those topics, whether or not contemporary topics were discussed,

the way the objects were displayed, what lights were used, the colors in and around the display, and so on. I examined each exhibit between thirty minutes to an hour, depending on the size of the exhibit.

### **3.3 Museum Publications:**

I examined publications produced by each of the museums in an effort to discover the amount of information and the type of knowledge released to the public on Native Americans. I looked at factors such as the location of the publication, how difficult it was for the public to gain access to the information, and cost. I also looked at the context of the information about Native Americans and how it was presented. Finally, I performed a content analysis of each of the publications, looking at the variety of topics covered in each of them. For example, I looked at the context in which Native American cultures were explained, the use of certain terms such as colonization or European, and how many tribes were represented.

### **3.4 Interviews:**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with museum curators. (See appendix 'A' for list of questions.) I created open-ended questions to ask about things such as the relationship between cultural resource laws and display construction, level of education about Native cultures, and the relationships each of the museums had with Native American Tribes. Latitude was given if interviewees wanted to go into more detail or to make tangential but relevant comments. The questions were then used as a way of

probing the museum officials' understanding of Native Americans and the extent to which they collaborate with the Native peoples they represent.

I transcribed the interviews in a straight transcription method. This method is used when the content of the interview is more important than the style in which it is recorded (Schneider 2002:156). I then analyzed the interviews by related topics and themes. Some of the themes that appeared within the interviews were: accurate interpretation of Native Americans, the use of Native Americans as consultants, age of displays, colonialism, cultural heritage, how museums research Native American cultures, object selection, ownership issues, protection of objects, visitor importance, and funding.

Through examining museums in a variety of methods, I expected to see how cultural resource laws in the United States shaped their relationships with Native Americans. I believed that the interviews in particular would elaborate the extent to which the representation of Native Americans has changed since the inception of cultural resource laws. The examination of the displays and museum publications should further demonstrate this shift. I predicted that the displays and publications would reflect more of a Native American worldview. At the same time, I used these methods to see if the lack of cultural resource laws in the United Kingdom contributed to a disconnection between museums and contemporary Native Americans. This should be apparent in each of the methods used in this research. I believe that cultural resource laws have shifted American museums' ethos, and this same awareness will be reflected in the displays and publications of American museums.

I began my research in England by first going to the British Museum. I specifically chose England because they speak English and I felt that there would be fewer cultural barriers to work through. When I got off the plane I found myself in such an unfamiliar environment that it took me a few days to adjust. It is easy to forget that the English have a very different culture from our own and that just because we both speak English, we do not have the same culture.

After spending time there, I continued the rest of my research in Bath, at the American Museum of Britain. After returning to the United States, I made two trips, one to the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture and one to the Maryhill Museum of Art. I spent one day at each, looking at displays and collecting their official museum publications. I set out with the notion that museums in the United Kingdom would be less likely to represent Native Americans accurately and that they would fall into one of the first four models.

After beginning my research I quickly realized that trying to classify each museum into a set category, like open storage or the developmental model, was difficult. Like people, each museum and even each museum display case, has its own unique characteristics. They each draw upon some of the qualities set out by Jason Nason (1999), but they by no means follow his categories exactly. After finding that most museums did not fit nicely into one of the types that Nason identified, I decided to gather as much information as possible about the displays themselves and the information found within them.

I gathered most of this information by moving from one display case to the next, examining the way the displays were constructed. I took photographs of each of the displays so that I could analyze them further. I formulated a number of questions that I used when looking at each of the displays, such as how big is the exhibit on Native Americans? How many tribes are represented by the museum? What topics do they represent in each of the museums (religion, art, subsistence)? How is the exhibit constructed? How much does the written panel add to the exhibit conduct? Does the museum use Native American voices? Is there a reflection of 'binary oppositions' in the museum displays of any of these museums?

I looked at the types of objects that were on display and what decisions curators made. I inquired during my interviews about the use of Native American representatives when developing displays and the extent to which Natives were consulted. I also looked at the topics represented in the displays and whether these were contemporary topics or historical topics.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **4.1 Overview:**

In this chapter, I first describe the two museums in the United Kingdom that were included in this research, which were the British Museum and the American Museum of Britain. I describe their displays, examine their official publications and finally discuss information received from interviews and each museum. After the section on the United Kingdom, I replicate the process for the United States. The museums in the United States reviewed for this project were the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture and the Maryhill Museum of Art. I found that each of the museums in this study looked at representing Native Americans in differing fashions.

### **4.2 United Kingdom:**

#### ***4.2.1 The British Museum:***

The British Museum made a formidable attempt to represent Native American history, which in turn was also one of their main problems; history and culture are two separate entities. History is shaped by those who record it and culture is passed on through group and community interactions. The British Museum explained Native American history after 1492, after Native American contact with European settlers. The museum also had one display case of pre-historic artifacts from Mound City, found in the Ohio Valley. Native American consultants were used in some situations to gather

information about particular topics but the topics were chosen by museum curators (Interview with Director of Ethnographic Department 2004).

#### ***4.2.1.1 Displays:***

The displays on Native Americans in the British Museum were found in three places. The first part of them was found in a gallery called ‘Living and Dying’, which looked at how people from different cultures dealt with life and death. The second place was a gallery, completely dedicated to Native Americans, which were both completed in 1994. The final place with Native American objects was in a gallery that looked at ‘Cabinet of Curios’ called ‘The Hall of Enlightenment’. One author explained the context of in, which Cabinets of Curios were found in Europe.

“As the Age of discovery made Europeans aware of the vastness and diversity of the world which lay beyond the continental boundaries, explorers of these new worlds brought back samples of natural and human phenomena for those who had financed the expeditions. These collections were often housed in rooms filled with ‘cabinets of curiosities’ where gentry could reflect upon the strange wonders of the world” (Conaty 2003:228).

They were called ‘Cabinets of Curios’ because of the manner in which these collections displayed a wide assortment of curiosities, many of which had no relation to one another.

The displays found in the gallery of ‘Life and Death’ showcased several things, including a restored totem pole, regalia from a shaman, and transformation masks. In particular, the exhibit panels examined the relationship between people and animals from the North West Coast region. This section of the display covered topics such as: potlatches, a Haida creation story, the importance of animals in Native American culture, and shamanism. The museum panels gave contextual information, including a brief

background to the displays or a short history of the items and then gave a description of that item. For example, the description given with the Raven crest was:

“Haida people, Northwest coast of America, Alaska or British Columbia, 19<sup>th</sup> century. Raven is a central crest and personality of the Northwest Coast. He helped to create the world and discover human beings, crawling out of a clam shell on the beach. He used a black pebble to form Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands). Raven is a gluttonous trickster, always greedy and creative Eagle is his constant competitor for food” (Museum plaque 2004).

The museum plaque spoke briefly about the creation story of the Haida but not about the people themselves. Although this section of the museum did not lend itself to an in depth examination of the Haida people, the displays all fit into the topic of living and dying.

The point of the exhibit was to compare and contrast several cultures’ concepts and rituals associated with life and death. Some of the other cultures included in this display area were the Erari Turkmen from Afghanistan, the Shona from Zimbabwe, and the Papyan from Columbia.

The next group of displays found in the main Native American Hall included regional representations of different native groups: Northeastern Woodlands, Southeastern Woodlands, California, Northwest Coast, West Coast, Northern Plains, Arctic, and Southwest. Each display case was broken into regional groups, and most discussed historical events. In a display case entitled ‘The American West’, the subject of the early historic period was described as followed:

“During the early historical period, peoples living on the American Plains formed two cultural groups. The fertile river valleys were sites of village dwelling agricultural farmers, the Mandan and the Hidatsa on the Missouri and the Pawnee and the Oto to the Southwest” (British Museum 2004).

Other topics included in this display were the Dawes Act, Napoleon selling French America to the United States, the New Deal, European contact, massive epidemics, the origin of Native Americans from a Western perspective, pottery, and ceremonial art. They did show contemporary Native American culture by displaying photographs, and by describing current cultural activities such as the Powwow. However, the museum gave little consideration to contemporary Native Americans. For example, the exhibit gave historical information with virtually no mention of contemporary Native American weavers other than to say “little basketry is made by the Chumash now” (British Museum 2004). The museum missed a great opportunity to inform the public about contemporary issues that surround basket weaving. If there was a closer relationship with Native Americans, this issue might have been addressed.

The last exhibit with Native American objects was located in the gallery entitled ‘Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century’. The museum displays in this section were purposefully put into a colonialist context to show visitors how museums once displayed their objects. The museum told of the methods in which early collectors sought to gather items that were unusual and different from those found within their own culture, hence the name ‘Cabinets of Curios’. This also showed the changing display methods inside museums in England, by displaying lots of items with no relation to each other, and grouping items together that told a story from the same culture.

Overall, the British Museum’s displays were visually sterile. The backgrounds in the display cases were bright cream colored and the informational panels were printed on

white board with a few colored photos dispersed amongst the text. Objects in some cases were placed on clear stands, which held them in varying heights; this created the illusion that the objects were floating in space. The display cases themselves were very tall, placing the visitor at a lower level. This caused the visitor to look upwards in order to see the objects clearly. It is my opinion that this was done in an effort to eliminate distraction from the objects themselves but failed by drawing more attention to the space left around them.

In the main room that housed the regional displays, the collection was stark, with large areas of nothingness. The floor was made out of what looked like marble, and there were a few benches for visitors to sit on. Each of the displays cases were domineering and overpowered the information and objects found within them.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Museum Publications:***

There are many written documents from the British Museum, but I will only discuss a few in this thesis. However, I found the accessibility of written documents to the public was severely limited in this museum. This resulted in missing a vital publication that would have been applicable to my research. This caused me to use three free pamphlets and a recently published guide to a touring exhibit. The three free pamphlets were two pages each and the other guide was twenty pages long.

These three pamphlets were free and readily available to the public. All of them discussed the recently created gallery entitled 'Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century'. There were a few Native American items in this section of the museum making these publications useful. The other museum publication I analyzed

included the guide to a collection of tours for several museums in the United Kingdom and Ireland. This booklet was entitled 'Native American Art: Irish American Trade the Stonyhurst Mullanphy Collection' (British Museum 2003). Although this booklet was not available to the general public, I felt that it was important to include it in this research, because at the time it was the most current written document produced by the museum regarding Native Americans. There was also a guide to the entire museum that was for purchase. Unfortunately, I was unaware of this guide therefore it was not included in this research. It appeared that most visitors had the same experience I did, and did not purchase this guide. There is a greater tendency for visitors pick up free pamphlets rather than those that cost money.

The main gallery guide to the Enlightenment exhibit was a brief historical overview. The British are very proud of their heritage and find it important to remind others how the museum was created out of the era of Enlightenment. The entire exhibit was created to look like the library of King George III in 1828. According to the pamphlet, the Enlightenment was:

“...a time when people all over Europe began to look at the world in a new way. They questioned ‘old’ knowledge, taken from classical authors and the Bible, and instead based their ideas on reason and first-hand observation of the natural world of man” (Enlightenment gallery guide 2004:1).

The Enlightenment period created a phase in museum history that was exemplified by mass collection of objects from around the world.

This exhibit and guide brought up important information that pertains to this research and the way that the United Kingdom and much of Europe collected artifacts from non-Western cultures. The mindset of the Enlightenment period still plays a role

today because it still influences the outlook of museum officials. Historically, the British Museum aspired to “create...an encyclopedia of the world in one place-a universal museum” (Enlightenment 2004:2). The remnant of this same mentality is still present in this museum. The policy that the museum has about returning items to other cultures is an important example. They claim that they are holding important cultural items for the good of all society (British Museum web page 2004).

The next booklet was found in the Enlightenment Gallery and is called ‘Carry on Collecting’. This guide gave a description of eight objects found outside of the Enlightenment gallery and encouraged the museum visitor to look at their place in the context of the culture they are from. This pamphlet was geared towards school-aged children. “You will notice that the objects in the Enlightenment Gallery are arranged to show how, at the time, they contributed to universal knowledge, while in the rest of the museum they are shown in their cultural context” (Carry on Collecting guide 2003). This guide only spoke about Native Americans once, when it referred to the Nuu-chah-nulth alder wood gull mask.

The last in this series of pamphlets is entitled ‘Eighteenth Century to E-bay: family travel’. This was also geared towards a younger audience. The booklet connected collecting in the eighteenth century to collecting in the present. It discussed the topic of selecting items to be collected and why people find some things collectible and other objects undesirable. Another topic examined was the way people categorize objects, which was then related to the 18<sup>th</sup> century practice of grouping things together by what they are made of.

The last museum publication included in this research from the British Museum was the gallery guide entitled 'Native American Art: Irish American Trade, the Stonyhurst Mullanphy Collection'. This publication looked at the collection of Native American objects gathered by a trader Bryan Mullanphy.

The booklet talked mainly about the collector and less about how the collection exemplified Native Americans. There was a brief section that discussed American treaties but the subject quickly changed to the collector and his purchase of a unique deerskin map (British Museum 2003). Subjects also covered in this booklet included: pipes and tobacco, hunting, warfare, the role of women in trading, and tourism. The last subject discussed was the revival of Native American culture after European contact. The author of this booklet claimed that Powwows were a 'central feature' of this revival movement. In comparison, Brent Florendo, a Native American dancer and professor at Southern Oregon University, stated that the Powwow began due to the movement of people from reservation to reservation. Certain reservations had commodity foods or foods that were distributed from the government to supplement Native American diets. The celebrations that arose out of this movement for food became the Powwow (Personal communication with author November 2002). The Powwow was then related to colonialism and the oppression felt by Native Americans during this time. This was not a revival of traditional ways but an outlet for some traditional ways to be expressed under colonial rule of the Americans (2002).

Overall, this publication discussed important issues such as treaties, cultural revival, and women's roles; some of these issues could be explored further or in a

different context. The publication also had a tendency to use broad inclusive terms and generalized images. It used the word 'all', when referring to Native Americans or Indians, implying that all Indians were alike instead of saying 'some' Native Americans. For example, "all adult men owned a pipe of their own as did some women" (British Museum 2003:8). The publication also tended to use stereotypical images of Native Americans, like that of a Plains Indian Warrior wearing a headdress, which was used several times to represent Native Americans.

This publication talked about information that only scraped the surface of issues, such as historical treaties made with Native Americans. Rather than taking the opportunity to explore specific treaties and how they influenced Native Americans both historically and contemporarily, they only mentioned the concept of treaties. This publication also talked briefly about Native Americans and their relationship to land, missing the opportunity to inform the public about deeper issues like sustainability, pollution, and other important issues that explain why Native Americans still have a connection to the land.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Interview:***

My interview at The British Museum was smooth and informative, which lent to the free exchange of ideas. Like me, the director of the Ethnographic Department was interested about the things that we could share with each other.

During the interviews, I asked how the curators researched and created displays. It was obvious that the British Museum had a firmer grasp of the true reality surrounding Native Americans, which was something I was not expecting. They at least included

some contemporary information on Native Americas, and consulted them when creating their newest display. This was partially due to the amount of funding that they received from the government and their connection to the international museum community. Also, several Native American informants were used in the creation of the newest gallery in 1994.

They are at least interested in contemporary issues of Native Americans. During a casual conversation with the director of the Ethnographic Department from the British Museum, the topic of blood quantum was discussed and included issues that now surround Native Americans identity in relation to tribal enrollment. He had no idea that children in the same family can fall under different blood quantum rules. These rules can allow children from the same two parents to have different enrollment status, virtually making one a tribal member and the other not a member. In all fairness, many American citizens do not understand or have knowledge of enrollment issues.

During the interview, we discussed the importance of connecting a museum exhibit to the visitor's experience. He stated that the common thread between the museum and its visitors was European contact and expansion (Director of Ethnographic Department 2004).

I was also interested in the museum's position on human remains because it is one of the main elements of NAGPRA. This museum estimated that 1 in every 1000 Native American objects was some form of human remains. This is a very serious issue for Native Americans, and is only now being dealt with in England. To begin with, the English have a different view on human remains. There is no legislation protecting

people's rights' and doctors have the right to lay claim on someone who has passed away in the name of research. For example, when a body is accessioned into the greater collection of the government it then falls under the same rules as other objects. Because of this there are no provisions for disposing of bodies once they are collected. Unfortunately, Native American remains fall under this category, which means that they will continually be stored in museums until legislation changes (Wood 2004).

However, Karenne Wood, a government official, stated that...“most recently, a summit meeting took place in London because 38 museums in the UK hold collections of Native American remains, and they were deciding whether to issue guidelines recommending repatriation” (e-mail to author 2004). The return of human remains would be a good start to the healing process that could continue with the return of other items and ending in greater collaboration in the future. The director of the Ethnographic Department stated that he was encouraged by the government's effort to make right something that was wrong. He also explained that the museum could do little to repatriate human remains because they still fall under the accessioning rules of the museum (Director of Ethnographic Department 2004).

#### ***4.2.2 The American Museum of Britain:***

The American Museum of Britain's collection is housed in a Victorian manor home located in the city of Bath, making it quite different from the British Museum. Each room in the house depicts a different time in American history from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. A publication produced by the museum explains the context surrounding the museum.

“The museum comprises a spectacular series of diverse and authentically furnished rooms, tracing the American way of life from Colonial times to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rooms showing how the Shakers lived, a stenciled bedroom, an elegant Greek revival dining room, Native American artifacts and the finest collection of American quilts outside America are particularly popular” (American Museum 2004).

Funding issues negatively influenced the American Museum of Britain. They have a limited amount of outside funding, which was exemplified throughout their outdated displays. The lack of contemporary topics in the museum demonstrated just how dated the displays really were, which is expounded by the museum’s use of over-generalized objects to typify the different regional groups. It is likely that their funding issue also prevented their ability to bring in Native American consultants. Recently, they received a grant that would allow them to update some of their displays about Native Americans.

#### ***4.2.2.1 Displays:***

The Native American collection was located in the basement of the house, at the end of a winding maze of darkness. There were approximately six cases in the display area. The collection also included a few historical photos on some of the walls. The ceiling in the basement was very low and there were pipes running along the top. The exhibit was lit by only a few overhead lights and some inside of the display cases. The walls in the display area were painted dark brown and caused the whole area to look very ominous.

When entering the Native American collection, visitors were greeted first with the story of Pocahontas, with the text presented on three lithographs. On a small plaque it stated:

“Lithograph shows a Victorian interpretation of the Pocahontas story. The princess, whose likeness was carved on merry-go-rounds and appeared on tobacco packets, has been transformed into a heroine of folklore” (American Museum).

Unfortunately, the story on the lithographs was overpowered by the rest of the display, making it difficult for a visitor to see.

The next set of displays explained different living structures found in different parts of North America. There was a large map of the United States with strings attached to different parts of the country and the other end attached to a living structure. These include: a Mandan earth lodge, a North West plank house, a Southwest Pueblo, a nomadic Plains Indian tipi, a dome shaped bark wigwam, and an Iroquois long house. The plaque that accompanied this display briefly described the methods used in making the structures.

“The models of typical Indian dwellings shown in this case range from the bark-covered wigwam of the nomadic hunters of the North East Woodlands and the Iroquois long house, to the typical building on stilts of the Seminole tribe of the South east, to the Tipi made of buffalo skins of the Central Plains Indians. The Mandan Earth Lodge of the North, and the mud-covered Pueblo of the South West” (American Museum 1970).

Next to this display was a list of different tribes found in North America organized according to what state they were originally found. This list of the tribes was not an exhaustive list. For example, in Oregon, the plaque listed only six tribes when there are actually over seventy tribes and bands that reside in Oregon. The rest of the displays were broken into regional groups: Southwest, Plains, etc. The museum displays show

only a limited sampling of artifacts from each regional area. The Southwest section had a display about pottery and Navajo jewelry. Next to the display on Navajo jewelry was a sign explaining how pawns and pawnshops worked in the American Southwest.

“Pawns became an integral part of trading post business, the jewelry being used as collateral for food and merchandise, not money. The Indian Bureau’s regulations for reservation trading posts stated that articles accepted as pawn must be held by the trader for at least one year and owner must be informed after the deposit was due. If the pieces were then not reclaimed the trader was free to sell it. A very great deal of the better and older type of Navajo Jewelry has been this ‘dead pawn’, acquired from trading posts, some of which operated in very remote areas of reservations” (American Museum 1970).

The exhibit failed to tell the horrible circumstances that made pawnshops a necessity. The curators chose not to explore fully their own culture’s place in Native American history. They tended to focus on the good things and overshadow the bad. The exhibits in this museum continually referred to Native Americans as entities of the past, and gave no indication that Native American culture continues to flourish in the Americas today. This museum did not give an accurate representation of Native Americans because there was no indication in any of the texts that they consulted with or otherwise communicated with contemporary Native Americans. This is partly due to the age of the exhibit, which was installed in 1970. At the time it was created, anthropologists were considered authorities of the information, leaving Native informants out of the discussion.

The next display had a single Plains style War bonnet from 1920’s, which was a large symbolic representation of what white culture might think of when looking at Native Americans. The museum grouped stereotypical images from regional groups together: such as, plains War bonnet, Navajo turquoise jewelry, and Pueblo style pottery.

However, they failed to examine their objects on a deeper level. For example, one of the plaques stated:

“By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, encroaching settlement in the Northeast deprived the native peoples of their traditional ways of living. Many turned to making commercial items to survive. Traditional materials gave way to cloth, glass beads and silk threads” (American Museum 1970).

They failed to explain further the reasons why this event was happening or discuss further the Indian art market. A small amount of research into this time period would explain why Native Americans started selling art objects. As a result they gave their museum patrons only a semi-accurate representation of Native Americans.

Overall, the displays were not maintained in accordance with the changing times. Almost everything in the display area was permanent structures and fixtures that would not be easy to remove or change. The objects themselves were the only things that could easily be removed. All of the displays in the museum, Native American or not, were old and outdated. As a side note these displays were installed in the 1970's and the current curator was not on staff when they were installed.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Museum Publications:***

The publications of the American Museum consisted of three booklets. The first was the main guide to the museum that visitors were given after paying their entrance fee. The next publication was a travel brochure found at many of the local bus stations and hotels. The last publication I obtained was a gallery guide to a temporary exhibit that they recently disassembled.

The main guide to the museum told about the creation of the museum and then described each of the rooms or areas of the museum briefly. The only mention of Native Americans was to tell the visitors of the Native American collection in the basement. This guide gave a perfect example of how the museum overlays all of American history within the context of European contact. The entire guide became more of an explanation as to the connections between England and America than an explanation of American history. For instance, each of the rooms was a depiction of some point in American history. For example, the "...period room which represents one of the reasons why people chose to leave Europe to cross the ocean and settle in America- freedom to practice their religion" (American Museum in Britain 2004). The history was continually related back to Europeans and specifically to the English.

The travel brochure only talked about the collection briefly and then gave some dates of events at the museum. For example, it spoke of an American Indian dance group that performed at the museum every year. After inquiring about this group the director informed me that they were English citizens that dressed up and pretended to be Native Americans, which causes one to question the level of authenticity of the dance.

The last publication that I examined was the gallery guide to the exhibit entitled 'The North American Indian: as varied as the land.' As I mentioned before, this exhibit had recently been removed from public display when I arrived. The beginning of the publication gave a disclaimer stating that everyone has a different view on who Native Americans are and no two views are the same. They do state that they are only trying to tell a part of the whole story and that they are limited by the objects that they have in

their collection. The three page publication was then broken down into regional groups. Half of the publication was dedicated to explaining Plains Indians and Southwest Indians leaving the last half to cover seven other over-arching indigenous groups. In this publication, Native Americans were usually referred to in a historical context, reflecting an obsession with romantic notions about Native Americans. In fact, there were only twelve sentences that gave the reader contemporary information. There was some information about the large population of Native Americans in the state of California and Native American artists. For the latter, the author says “today some Native American artists prefer to be considered artists who happen to be Indians; others consciously adhere to their native traditions” (American Museum of Britain 2004). The author could have used this opportunity to talk about a variety of issues that face Native Americans, rather than more generalized subjects.

A statement at the end of the publication exemplified their view of Native Americans. It stated: “the huge diversity of American Indian people became lost and confused behind the image of the plains warrior” (The North American Indian 2004). It seemed that they are also caught up in this image, illustrated by the large amount of information given on the Plains Indians. The stereotype was given in the same publication that claimed to tell a different story.

#### ***4.2.2.3 Interview:***

The interview that I conducted at The American Museum of Britain was different from than that of the British Museum. The entire interview took only about 15 minutes. The director of the museum answered all of my questions as short as possible even

though I asked open-ended questions. She was very guarded in her answers and acted very suspicious of my research. After the taped part of the interview she talked more freely.

One of the first topics I discussed with her was how their museum created exhibits about Native Americans. She stated, in regards to a recent temporary exhibit:

“We start by using the objects themselves and we would have to use what objects we had, but then we would try to put them into context. In fact when we did our exhibition we organized them geographically by different (inaudible). And we would look at the objects and why they were created, what they meant to the people rather than as just objects” (American Museum 2004).

During this part of the interview we talked about the resources available for curators when doing research about Native Americans, and how they vary at each museum. The director stated that at this museum they had a good library, which was their only resource. However, curators should explore the objects that they have in their collection, as well as their written documents. This allows them to then formulate questions about those objects and take those questions to the people who made the objects or if not available, another reputable source. Written documents should only be the first step in researching Native Americans or any museum exhibit.

Another topic discussed during this interview was the drum group that came to the museum to perform each year. The drum group was comprised of English citizens that dressed up like Native Americans and performed all over England.

“They love the culture...they went over and learned how to do it accurately; they learned the dances and how to make the costumes” (American Museum 2004).

Despite their 'authentic' Native American dance it is unclear if any Native American groups have ever been asked to visit their museum. Thus questioning the representation of Native Americans by non-natives, such as the romantic notion that non-Natives have of Native American culture, which could be an issue.

This interview brought up significant issues that museums in the United Kingdom face. One of the most important issues is the lack of funding, which affects their displays and their involvement with Native Americans. If they had unlimited resources, they could potentially bring different Native American groups to the museum to act in collaboration with the museum.

### **4.3 United States:**

#### ***4.3.1 The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture:***

The Burke Museum is the best of the four I researched in regards to how museums should represent Native Americans. The Burke Museum is located in Washington State, on the campus of University of Washington. The museum collection consists of natural history items as well as cultural items. During the planning phase of their newest cultural displays, Native Americans were consulted from the beginning, according to the information in their gallery guide (Burke Museum n.d.). Not only were they allowed to determine what topics would be discussed in the exhibit, but they also decided which objects would be used to tell those stories. As museums gain a better understanding of different cultures, this type of display method is becoming more and more popular.

#### ***4.3.1.1 Displays:***

The Native American displays were housed on the second floor of the museum in an exhibit entitled 'Pacific Voices'. This exhibit explored the 'cultural identity' of those people who lived along or on the Pacific Rim. Each part of the exhibit was broken down into regional groups: Samoans, Native Americans, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, etc... From there it was broken down into three parts entitled 'Our Languages', 'Our Stories', 'Our Teachers', and 'Our Ceremonies'.

As one came into the exhibit from upstairs, all visitors were greeted with a salutation from a person from each of the represented groups, one of which being Native American. At the bottom of the stairs, there was an introduction to the exhibit called 'Pacific Voices: Worlds Within Our Community.' There was a film playing that depicted people who represented their cultures in the exhibits. The individuals talked briefly about their people and where they were from. Included in this part of the display was a map and in front of the map was a set of photos. The first part of the Native American piece of the exhibit talked about 'Lushootseed: Puget Sound's First Language.' This part of the display showed photographs of Lushootseed speakers, which included Chief Seattle, as well as examples of Salish weaving.

Next were three cases dealing with oral traditions and storytelling. Included in these cases were the oratorical regalia of a Tlingit chief, a variety of masks from Alaska, and one case of Northwest Coast masks. The next set of displays examined teachers from each of the cultures. This information was housed in three large cases, and covered significant teachers from northern, central and southern Northwest Coast regions.

Included in this part of the exhibit was a display of some of Charles Edenshaw's argillite carvings including a photo of him. In the display case was a short description of the significant contributions that Charles made in the traditional carving world.

The last part of the exhibit discussed ceremonies. In the center of this case was a contemporary sculpture of Inupiaq whaling. The sculpture was surrounded by different items related to whaling and the yearly whaling ceremonies. The next case talked about the First Salmon ceremonies and included tools used in fishing. The last two cases dealt with Potlatch ceremonies, which displayed a variety of Potlatch masks and potlatch regalia and gifts.

Overall, the museum shared a lot of information with its visitors, although it was a bit overwhelming. The exhibit was well lit and was obviously newly constructed. The overall flow of the exhibits was sacrificed in an effort to relate the different cultural groups included in the display. Despite all of the problems with flow, the exhibit did give the audience a clear understanding of North West Coast Native Americans by connecting them to real contemporary people. One plaque says:

“Colonization occurred earlier on the Southern North West Coast than further North. Although traditional language and religion continued underground, many art forms ceased. Beginning in the 1960's, Southern North West Coast, many artist trained in mainstream art schools, began to reconnect with their art. They studied museum pieces that had long ago been taken from their communities” (Burke Museum 2004).

Native Americans were not displayed as a dying culture; they were shown thriving and living in the modern world.

The museum displays were less stark and impersonal compared to the ones found in the United Kingdom. One was able to get a real sense of the people that was being

represented. This allowed the audience a multi-dimensional view of Native American life, instead of the typical depiction of Natives that many museums portray. Only tribes in the Pacific region were represented by this museum. They decided not to overextend themselves in trying to cover every tribe in the United States. The plaques in this museum added relevant information to the displays by giving important historical information while grounding Native Americans in the present. The topics were also relevant to Native Americans because they were chosen by them, something that museum patrons would discover if they read the gallery guide. The topics that the museum covered included: traditions, teachers, elders, art, ceremonies and language, among other things.

#### ***4.3.1.2 Museum Publications:***

There were two museum publications that I found at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. The first was a small museum pamphlet at a rest area. The other was an Exhibit guide to their Ethnographic exhibit entitled 'Pacific Voices'.

The museum pamphlet consisted of a brief explanation of all of their exhibits and information about cost of admission, location and operating hours. Native Americans were only discussed in the context of the exhibit of the cultural traditions of the Pacific Northwest.

The next museum publication entitled 'Pacific Voices, celebrating the worlds within our community', discussed the cultural heritage of the Pacific Northwest. The first part of the publication examined the creation of the display and those they consulted. The publication's author stated:

“In the past, museums assumed that curators were authoritative interpreters of other cultures. Today, however, museums are working closely with the people whose objects are displayed to learn how their heritage should be portrayed for museum visitors” (Pelz 1998:1).

The author’s comment symbolized the overall philosophy of the museum and their representational policies. The publication went on to explain that the museum had consulted over one hundred and fifty individuals, who helped in all aspects of the development and construction of the cultural display. The cultural informants helped with “design conceptualization, object selection, label writing, photo selection, video screening, program planning, fabrication, and installation” (Kahn 1998:2). Through this process they linked living Native Americans to museum displays.

This publication consisted of an introduction and three chapters: ‘Our Languages and Our Stories’, ‘Our Teachers’, and ‘Our Ceremonies’. Each of the chapters were broken into each of the cultural groups exhibited in the display.

The introduction began with a welcome from the first people of the Puget Sound area, the Coast Salish people. This section also introduced the Salish people as well as some of their pivotal teachers. Most of this booklet talked directly about items within the display while giving relevant background information in the context of the culture. For example, the exhibit had a canoe that was hanging above the stairway and the exhibit guide gave cultural information about the canoe:

“The twenty four foot canoe was carved from a single cedar log by a Quileute carver. It is typical of the canoes made by Native people of the Pacific Northwest Coast...Considerable skill was needed for each step in creating these highly seaworthy craft-from selecting the log, to initial rough carving, to shaping its hydrodynamic curves- and the master carvers who made these canoes were respected members of Northwest villages” (Pelz 1998:10).

This was an effective way to discuss the exhibit. This was achieved through giving a context to the items, rather than placing objects in a display with little or no information.

In the first chapter, 'Our Languages, and Our Stories', the author talked about the importance of language preserving cultural heritage. The sub-section that discusses Native Americans was entitled 'Lushootsee: Puget Sound's First Language'. It began by discussing the history of Lushootsee, and then talked directly about the objects within the exhibit. In this same chapter, the topic of oral traditions and storytelling called 'Breath of our Ancestors: Languages and Oral Traditions' was also discussed. The publication examined the use of objects to enhance an oratory experience.

The second chapter, 'Our Teachers', discussed Native American teachers in a section entitled, 'Northwest-Coast Artists: Carriers of our Traditions'. In this section, a short history of Northwest Coast Art was described. In the Northwest-Coast tradition, artists were considered teachers, which was not always true in other cultures. It also explained the changes that occurred in the art in an effort to retain the traditions during the late 1800's and early 1900's when Canada suppressed their way of life.

“Instead of making artwork for ceremonies, northern artists such as Charles Edenshaw mostly made pieces for sale. Men carved model poles in wood and argillite (a black stone). Women wove baskets and hats for sale to outsiders. Through these objects, links were retained with the cultural past, but the function of art changed” (Pelz 1998:30).

The publication described the revival that took place, which enabled elders to preserve these traditions in hiding. They also used museum pieces to study some of the traditions that were lost to them (Pelz 1998:31). The chapter then described the items in the exhibit giving the reader supplemental information.

The final chapter, called 'Our Ceremonies', discussed Inupiaq whaling. The publication explained the importance of the whale hunt to Inupiaq society. The chapter also talked about the First Salmon Ceremony and the Potlatch. This pamphlet did a good job connecting the historical information with the present day application of the ceremony. It also described the importance of the ceremony, how it was connected within the culture, and not separated from it.

This exhibit guide was effective in its effort to connect living culture with the objects in the museum. The author discussed the context surrounding the exhibits and objects; however the objects themselves didn't take precedence over the people who created them. There was a lot of information in this guide and it was well worth the price, although it is unfortunate that all of this information was not also in the exhibit.

#### ***4.3.1.3 Interview:***

Unfortunately, I was unable to secure an interview at The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. The main reason for this was due to the staff being inundated with requests and they were not able to meet with me.

#### ***4.3.2 Maryhill Museum of Art:***

The Maryhill Museum of Art is located in Washington State along the Columbia Gorge. It was originally designed to be a ranch home for Samuel Hill and his family but was never completed. A close friend to Mr. Hill convinced him to turn his empty home into an art museum in 1917 (Tesner n.d.). The Maryhill Museum of Art is unique because it interacts differently with Native American communities. They use Native American

consultants whenever possible, and they try to bring in a Native American curator as a guest. However, funding limits the frequency of this option. Also, the location of the Maryhill Museum put them in close proximity to several Native American communities, which allows them to use information from them that would not necessarily be available to others.

#### ***4.3.2.1 Displays:***

The Native American display of the collection was located on the bottom floor, in a structure connected to the main house. It was broken up into two different parts. First, part of the display included some of the museum's earliest dated objects or things that were considered pre-contact and then the rest of the collection was broken into nine regional groups. These groups included; Plains, Woodlands, California, Southwest, Great Basin, Arctic, Sub-Arctic, Northwest Coast, Plateau regions. In the center of the Native American displays, there was an exhibit discussing Lewis and Clark.

Each of the display cases was systematically organized. Often objects were placed in some sort of pattern. For example, the arrowheads in the pre-contact area were all displayed in a spiraling geometric pattern. This method of display was used on other objects such as war clubs, or any other object that the museum had in large quantities, with the exception of their basket collection. The displays were integrated with historical photos of the people from different areas. Each of the regional areas began with an informational board that described the region and the people of that area.

Overall, the displays were well lit and the visitor could see all of the objects in the display cases without any difficulty. The objects could easily be removed and replaced

with other objects and the descriptive plaques within the cases appear to be easily removable. The background in the display was a blue-gray color rather than white, which created a better visibility of the objects. The way Native Americans are displayed in this museum might be the result of issues such as funding, or the lack of staff.

There were many tribes represented in the museum but the orientation was geared towards regional groups. It was hard to ascertain the Native American voice in the museum displays because the exhibit plaques did not give direct quotes from Native American people. The plaques in the displays added some relevant information to the displays but were mostly historical in nature and lacked significant information about contemporary Native Americans.

#### ***4.3.2.2 Museum Publications:***

There were three different publications of the Maryhill Museum that mentioned Native Americans. The first was a gallery guide, which gave an overall presentation of the most significant objects in the museum's collection. The next were three miniature educational guides, and the last was a gallery guide to an exhibit about cornhusk bags of the Plateau Indians.

Most prominently, Native Americans were discussed in the main gallery guide. The name of the publication was called 'Maryhill Museum of Art'. It discussed the history of the museum and then briefly overviewed the areas inside of the collection. This publication noted the connection that the founder of the museum, Sam Hill, had with the Native American community, which gave context to the collection as a whole. Sam Hill was particularly interested in the history of the indigenous people of the Pacific

Northwest and collected many artifacts during his lifetime. He was a good friend to Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce and was adopted into the tribe at some point. Also described in this publication was his work in erecting a monument that resembled Stonehenge, to honor the Klickitat men who died in World War I. However, no reason was given as to why he chose to represent Native American people with a monument that resembled Stonehenge.

The later parts of the publication described the collection of Native American artifacts in more detail. It explored the basket collection, which included over eight hundred baskets that represented almost every type of basketry-making technique found in North America. It also illustrated the collection's regional organization and included a section that discussed the effects of European contact on Native American goods. This publication was a good introduction to the history of the museum and its collections. It was fairly lengthy, at 117 pages, and would not necessarily be something that one could read while at the museum. Another factor in determining the accessibility of this publication was the price, which was approximately \$15 and found only inside of the gift shop.

The next type of publication included three miniature guides that were located at the entrance of the museum. The titles of these publications were 'Be Maryhill Museum's Sculpture Expert', 'Be Maryhill Museum's Cultural Expert', and 'Be Maryhill Museum's Corp of Discovery'. All of them listed a mission for the museum visitor and seemed to be geared towards school-age children. The publications took the visitors to different locations inside of the museum to explore and answer questions about the collection. The

questions were designed to have the visitors think critically about the objects within the museum. The miniature guides were free and accessible to the public. After completing them, the visitor was encouraged to show them to the front desk to receive a prize.

The last museum publication was the gallery guide to the cornhusk bags. It discussed cornhusk bags and their association with the Plateau people. It nicely followed the use of cornhusk bags before contact and how its use changed after the diet of Plateau people changed. The publication then discussed weaving techniques, material use, design, and the major shifts in the designs of the bags. 'Cornhusk Bags of the Plateau Indians' was a great introduction to cornhusk bags and gave the museum visitor another source of information on a topic that they might be interested in. The publication was found in the gift shop for a cost of \$2.00.

It is unfortunate that this museum lacks the ability to allow visitors access to a wider variety of publications free of charge. The publications are also lacking in that they did not give a considerable amount of information about contemporary Native Americans.

#### ***4.3.2.3 Interviews:***

After a great amount of effort, I finally was granted an interview with two of the museum officials at the Maryhill Museum of Art. One was granted by the director of the Maryhill Museum of Art and the other was with an advisor to the Native American collection. The interview with the advisor was only a side notation of the main interview and gave no significant information to this research; therefore, it is not included. All of the interviews were conducted via email and took place in a series of five messages. Two

of them started out as an interview between the director and myself and then were forwarded to the advisor to the Native American collection. It took almost a year of continuous effort to get the interviews completed. Unfortunately, the interview was not under the best of situations. This method allowed the interviewees a lot of time to choose their words carefully and did not lend to discussion beyond the questions asked.

The interview with the director of the Maryhill was nevertheless informative. It was evident that the museum has contact with Native American groups but not to the extent that I assumed. They have a curator that is just for the Native Collection and also an advisor that lived for many years on a reservation in the Northwest. They frequently invite guest curators and tribes to work on displays, but funding still became an issue that affected this museum. The director discussed the exhibit's installation.

“We have made few if any changes to the permanent Native Peoples exhibition since it was installed in 1990. It is geographically based to inform people about all the main tribal groups” (Maryhill 2006).

The museum did not outwardly reflect any changes due to NAGPRA. However, in the interview I was told that NAGPRA has changed this museum's internal working and its relationships with different Native American groups. Also, in the interviews, I found that they do have contact with several of the local tribal groups and these groups have acted as consultants on displays and programs (Directory of Maryhill 2006).

Overall, the interview gave me a different view into the issues faced by museums in the United States in comparison to those in the United Kingdom. Museums in both the United States and the United Kingdom were concerned about the interpretation of Native Americans but on varying levels. Many museums in the United States tried to interpret

objects in the most accurate way possible and they believe this is best achieved by using Native American informants. The director of the Maryhill Museum of art stated that they try to implement Native American worldviews through a variety of methods.

“We do not have a curator of our Native American collection on staff; we invite guest curators and have an advisor that spent many years living on reservations in the Northwest. We try and involve the tribes in our area when we tell stories through exhibitions and to explain things from the broadest perspective possible” (Director of Maryhill 2006).

The museum has developed innovative ways to communicate with a variety of Native Americans.

## **4.4 Summary of Results**

As a result of examining two museums in the United Kingdom and two museums in the United States, I found that there are significant differences between the two countries. In the following section I will summarize the results from each of the museums.

### ***4.4.1 The British Museum***

The British Museum reflects the growing awareness of indigenous issues and global museum standards, which is exemplified in their attempt to include Native American voices in their displays. This is also demonstrated by their understanding of the museum’s collection of human remains and their attempt to return it to Native Americans (Wood 2004). This museum has changed over the years but still fosters colonialist

attitudes. The combinations of these opposing forces are found within the museum's displays, publications, and interviews.

The displays in the museum that included Native Americans were found in three separate areas of the museum. The displays in the main area split Native Americans into regional groups. They discussed historical issues throughout the displays with few indications of contemporary issues that surround Native American lives. Modern issues were overshadowed by historical events in the attempt to establish European connections to Native Americans.

The museum's publications further reflected residual colonialist ideals, along with structuralist ones. The Enlightenment Guide explored the need for the English to create a place where the world's knowledge and objects could be stored. Even though the museum still functions as a storage place for knowledge, it has also shifted its focus to other areas such as the cultural rights of source communities. The museum is caught up in issues surrounding the repatriation of different items to a variety of cultural groups and has reflected the desire to return some culturally sensitive items to the communities they originated from (2004). Unfortunately, the government and the general public have failed to modernize as quickly, refusing to consider the repatriation of any items.

During my visit to the British Museum, I had one interview with the director of the Ethnographic Department. His interview showed that he had a firm understanding of modern museum standards and practices. The interview gave me a better understanding of how the museum was founded, and how history still plays out in the operation of the museum. The museum and the English are steeped in multiple levels of traditions. The

tradition of protecting the world's knowledge is a difficult tradition to change. We also talked at great length about the issues of human remains and the changes that are hopefully the beginning of other changes in the future.

#### ***4.4.2 The American Museum of Britain***

When representing Native American culture, the American Museum of Britain has faced many obstacles. Two of the many difficulties they have faced are due to the lack of funding and the physical distance from Native Americans. Both of these issues have influenced their displays and publications relating to Native Americans.

The Native American collection was housed in the basement, and began with a diorama of well-known Native American dwellings. The final part of the display area was split up according to regional groups, with each region represented by a subject that typifies that area. The displays represented the Southwest are Navajo jewelry and pottery. Each of the displays told a neutral version of history, failing to mention the negative incidences.

There were three publications in the museum that mentioned Native Americans. Only one led to any significant discovery about the museum's philosophy. The exhibit guide 'The North American Indian' was from an exhibit that was removed just before I arrived at the museum. The guide was broken down into regional groups; half was used to explain Southwest and the Plains, and then the final part was used to explain seven other indigenous groups. The publication had generalized topics and failed to go deeper into the finer points of those issues. They told the reader, for example, that some Native

American artists prefer to be known as artists first and Indians second while others followed traditional practices. There was no discussion of why.

The formal part of the interview was very short. After the tape recorder was turned off the director of the museum was more relaxed. The director talked at great length about how the museum chose objects to tell stories about Native Americans. She felt that Native American stories were embedded in the objects that they made. She also discussed the museum's funding issues and how that hampered their desires to update their displays.

The American Museum of Britain was outdated on many levels. This was partly related to funding and also due to the physical distance between the museum and Native Americans. Unfortunately, Native American views were not always presented in this museum. Recently, they received a grant to update their exhibition area, and even small changes to the area could change the overall feeling of the exhibit. They could change some of the outdated information and add more contemporary information, or include more detail in their existing displays.

#### ***4.4.3 The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture***

The Burke Museum represented Native Americans differently. They have taken many of the curatorial decisions away from the museum staff and allowed the Native American community to represent themselves. The staff acted as facilitators to the Native American community's wishes.

Each of the museum's displays informed the public of a different piece of the story and history, which reflected the influences of the community. The topics that they chose to talk about were language, stories, teachers, and ceremonies. This museum was also different because it chose to represent the local Native American people, rather than all Native Americans, a common practice in the other museums.

The main publication for this museum was the exhibit guide to 'Pacific Voices', the exhibit that housed the Native American collection. The publication explained why they chose to ask the people to tell their own story. This became the museum's effort in order to shift the authority out of the museum staffs' hands and back into the community that was being represented. The museum chose to have community informants help with designing the display by choosing objects to go on display, writing text, program development, and installation. This publication, unlike the other, showed how Native Americans have a clear connection to the contemporary world as well as a firm grounding in the past. Unfortunately, I was unable to secure an interview.

#### ***4.4.4 The Maryhill Museum of Art***

At the Maryhill Museum of Art, I began by examining the ten displays that were organized by regional groups. Each group was represented by objects from the cultural group that made them. The displays were set up in a circular room. Each of the displays was accented with historical photos of individuals. Also housed in the Native American collection was a display about Lewis and Clark and the introduction of European trade goods into the Native American economy.

I had a total of two interviews with officials, one was the director and one with a guest curator to the Native Americans collection, at the Maryhill museum. The interview with the director turned out to be the most informative because the director explained how cultural resource laws, particularly NAGPRA, shaped the relationships between federally funded museums and Native Americans. These laws have, according to the director, fostered an environment of communication. The director also explained that the Maryhill had a good working relationship with local tribes but the lack of funding hampered the museum's ability to update their displays. The two following interviews were extremely brief and consisted of only side comments added to the main conversation between the director and myself. They lent little to this study's overall understanding.

The museum publications were examined to determine if there was any information pertaining to contemporary Native Americans. Unfortunately, there was no information in the museum publications that would allude to the museum having a working relationship with modern Native Americans.

#### **4.5 Conclusion:**

The accurate representation of Native Americans in museums is a difficult issue, one that will continue to be discussed for many years to come. This research has examined how cultural resource laws influence a museum's ability to accurately represent Native Americans. The results of this research suggest that the laws encourage American museums to use Native American informants to gain accurate and meaningful

information about their cultures and objects. The laws have encouraged museum displays that demonstrate historical and contemporary issues that affect Native Americans. In United Kingdom museums are not subject to cultural resource laws, and as such Native American informants are rarely used. The effect of this is museum displays that only discuss topics on a surface level, or ones that lack contemporary issues. Another important issue that results illuminated were the constraints that funding places on museums when creating accurate displays. This was an excuse given by the two smaller museums as to why they had outdated displays. However, the Maryhill Museum still solicits input and help from Native American groups and the American Museum did not. This demonstrates how the implementation of cultural resource laws in the United States and the lack of them in the United Kingdom effect the representation of Native Americans. The museums in the United States have fostered a working relationship with Native Americans and only the publicly funded museum in the United Kingdoms worked on a minimal basis with Native Americans. Repatriation further illuminates the power of relationships found inside museums. These topics will be explored further in the conclusion.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Museums, like other social institutions, are continually changing and evolving. They are influenced by many factors such as: funding, staffing, collections, source communities, visitors, ethical issues, and, in the United States, cultural resource laws. This research included a small number of museums and therefore the findings suggest trends that occur in museums. Through the focus of cultural resource laws, a perspective can be ascertained about the influence they have over a museum's approach to how they represent Native Americans, which will result in an evaluation of American cultural resource laws. In the conclusion I will illuminate this issue by looking at three trends. I will begin by examining power relationships in museums as displayed through the interaction with visitors and source communities. Second, I will look at funding and how it influences cultural resource laws inside of museums. Lastly, I will examine how the repatriation of objects is related to cultural resource laws and power relationships.

The museums in this research vary in degrees of transformation from the modernist museum to the post-modernist museum. By moving away from the modernist phase of museum management, museum officials are becoming increasingly culturally sensitive to diverse interest groups (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:104). In the United States the transition has been influenced by cultural resource laws. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill terms the 'post-modernist museum' as a museum that is concerned with the communities that they serve, rather than being simply a storage facility accessible by a few elite (2000:103). The Burke Museum is somewhere at the top of this transformation, listening

to a variety of interest groups and allowing them to tell their stories. Then on the other side, museums in the United Kingdom have taken a different course because they lack cultural resource laws that take into account the needs of source communities.

Compounding this situation even more is the example of the American Museum of Britain which was influenced by concerns over funding.

There are several factors that can be looked at to determine where a particular museum is in their transformation to a post-modernist museum. The first factor is how museum officials treat various stakeholders, especially visitors and the source communities, which reflect the power relationships inside of a museum. Source communities are those communities whose objects and cultures are the source for what is on display. The two museums in the United Kingdom framed Native Americans in the context of European contact. They allowed the visitors' needs to override all other parties involved. In the United States, cultural resource laws have influenced a museum's interactions with Native Americans. The two museums in the United States are different because of the obligatory relationship with Native Americans required by law.

### **5.1 Visitors and the Represented (A Discourse in Power):**

Museums are continually balancing their responsibilities between those they represent and their visitors. It is important for museums to weigh their responsibilities to all parties involved and present the most accurate information to the public while continuing to consider the cultural rights of those on display. This is by no means an

easy task and the job comes with many obstacles. The museums included in this study are no exception.

Museums innately have power and authority over what they display. Visitors go to museums because they expect the institution to teach them valid information (Riegel 1996:87). It begins with their outward appearance which makes a statement of their importance and power. For example, the British Museum with its structure based on Romanesque architecture creates a sense of importance, which leads one to believe the information enclosed is valuable and true. The balancing act between visitors and source communities can become unbalanced. This can occur when a museum prioritizes visitors and the funding they generate over other concerns. Cultural resource laws have helped to balance this relationship in museums in the United States. Although this is not the only issue, it reminds museum officials that they have a responsibility to those they represent as well as to the visitors. In the following section, I examine how museums in the United Kingdom tend to focus more on the visitors' needs, while museums in the United States focus more on the relationship between themselves and source communities. The relationship in the United States fosters a better understanding of Native American worldviews, which benefits museum patrons and source communities.

### ***5.1.1 The Visitor:***

A majority of museums are the result of colonialist interactions with other cultures. However, despite the colonialist roots of museums, not all museums continue to

be influenced by this history. There are plenty of museums that work diligently to include source communities in exhibit creation and interpretation (Nason 2000:29).

Museums tell visitors about themselves and their nations. They shape the way people view the world and others in it. “Museums solidify culture; endow it with tangibility, in a way few other things do” (Dubin 1999:3). Therefore, it is the responsibility of the museum to present the most accurate information to those seeking knowledge behind their doors. Unfortunately, British collections were gathered in an effort to glorify the British nation, and they say more about those who collected them than the cultures they came from (Dubin 1999:5).

The two museums in the United Kingdom had a tendency to focus on the visitors’ needs. For example, the American Museum of Britain made an attempt to display American culture; it continually connected its displays back to English or European peoples. This began with the tour of the historical rooms, which began with supposed ‘English colonist homes’ and continued into the displays representing Native Americans. The first information about Native Americans was filtered through the context of European exploration and the story of Pocahontas. Native Americans and everyone on the North American continent were treated the same, but they were only important to visitors because of their connection to Europe.

The British Museum also felt compelled to take into account visitors’ experiences over those of source communities. The director of the Department of Ethnography stated that it was important to relate exhibits to visitors’ understanding so that it was meaningful

to them. The British Museum chose to connect its exhibits to European expansion and European contact (Director of Ethnographic Department 2004).

When focusing on visitors' needs, a museum has a tendency to lose sight of issues that surround source communities, thereby presenting only part of the story. This hampers their ability to understand contemporary issues, and how it relates to Native American identity (Director of Ethnographic Department 2004). Museums are not just representing objects. More importantly they represent the people who made the objects. The objects that are used to represent Native Americans were appropriated by colonial agents, and the visitor is told little about the person who made the object. "We learn much about Western constructions but little about those who were separated from the objects appropriated by Westerners" (Cole 1985,Xi).

Like structuralism, museum curators employ universals, when selecting objects to represent other peoples on display. Museums use objects to tell a story about a particular culture. 'Cultural objectification' happens when a culture's characteristics are imposed upon an object (Handler 1988:14). The objectification rationalizes the study of those cultures. All museums objectify other cultures to varying degrees. Native Americans have a viable living culture with unique issues and views that museum officials should be aware of and consider when creating displays about them. The British Museum might consider itself as the protectors of world culture but this is contradictory because of their lack of simple understanding of central issues facing Native Americans, such as land use issues.

The two museums in the United Kingdom lump all Native Americans into one category, 'Indigenous', for the benefit of the visitor. Indigenous groups from around the world have some similarities, but also have a larger number of variations. Too long have Native Americans been lumped into a single entity. The British Museum, like the American Museum of Britain and the Maryhill Museum of Art, group Native Americans into regional groups, which is similar to grouping them together as Indigenous. This act devalues their unique traditions and heritage.

All of this reflects Levi-Strauss's theory of binary opposition. This is the notion that people have an underlying desire to categorize people and to create an 'us and them' situation. This overshadows the important variations between all people, not only the variety of tribes. Westerners categorize people in an effort to understand themselves and others better. The simple act of separating people into cultural groups is a reflection of our nature to create binary opposites (Levi-Strauss 1945:364). By lumping Native Americans together it detracts from understanding the vast differences between Native American tribes, which ultimately does a disservice to visitors and to source communities.

Although it is important to focus on the visitors' experiences it is also important to understand the desires of source communities. Museums can create better opportunities to understand those they represent by including the source communities' desires and worldviews in the creation of their displays. By representing groups such as Native Americans appropriately it will in turn create a better experience for the visitor. This is only achieved by creating a situation that fosters more cross-cultural

communication. Therefore, the international community, particularly the United Kingdom, would greatly benefit by implementing laws that would protect cultural resources of source communities and encourage meaningful communication.

### ***5.1.2 The Represented:***

Changing ideals in museums, particularly those in the United States, are shifting the focus to those who are represented (Native Americans) rather than just the visitor, which has caused a shift in the power structure.

“If museums wish to become socially inclusive, alternative perspectives need to be recognized, acknowledged, and made both visible and audible” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:7).

The National Museum of American Indian, located in Washington DC, is at the forefront of the implementation of Native American philosophies into the care and representation of their collections (Rosoff 2003:73). Native Americans act as consultants in every phase of collection management. After the passage of NAGPRA, human remains and sacred items in the collection were restored in a culturally sensitive manner with regard to the wishes of individual tribes.

“The Human Remains Vault is smudged with a mixture of tobacco, sage, sweet grass, and cedar every week; drawers containing sacred materials such as bundles have been flagged so that people know where this material is and can show it proper respect; during the full moon, the sacred Crow objects in The Plains vault are smudged with sage” (Rosoff 2003:73).

Museums have shifted their focus to include more collaborative curatorial practices because of the reflexive post-modernist movement inside the fields of social science (Phillips 2003:158). The Maryhill museum also has changed their curatorial practices

because of cultural resource laws. The director of the Maryhill Museum of Art stated that cultural resource laws changed their museum's interaction with Native Americans:

“The only change is that it gave us an opportunity to get to know more about and to meet with some of the tribes whose pieces we hold in trust at Maryhill... it helps us make sure the stories are told from a Native American point of view. It also helps us care for the materials in our museum according to standards that have been developed as the Native peoples have found their voice about items in non-Native museums” (March 2006).

There is a raised awareness that “earlier, objectifying traditions of material culture display have supported colonial and neo-colonial power relations” (Phillips 2003:158). Although laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act do not directly require museums to respect Native American wishes, mutual understanding has become a welcome addition.

Just like the National Museum of the American Indian, the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture has worked to change the power structure inside of the museum's newest exhibit. They collaborated with Native Americans in every phase of creating the display with curators acting as facilitators to the wishes of the Native representatives (Kahn 1998). Working with Native Americans opens up discussions of topics once silent or overlooked, making “formerly invisible histories visible” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:19).

Instead of focusing on the objects and how they relate to the visitors, some museums are focusing on how they can become more accessible and usable to Native American communities.

“Academically trained curators, for example, perceived values in objects based on Western scientific categories of knowledge, Western post-Renaissance

concepts of aesthetics, and a point of view that may assign significant terms of type specimen...Native American museum specialists, by contrast, regard objects in a more direct and personalized manner that holistically connects objects to each other and to broader perception of community meanings and cultural values” (Nason 2000:40).

The museum of the future “needs to include sufficient room for private viewing, discussion, and ceremonial activities by groups of people” (Peers 2003:22), including Native Americans.

Valuable cultural information can be ascertained when museums facilitate Native American involvement with their collections. A deeper understanding of the collection and how to traditionally care for the collection is the ultimate goal of many top American Museums, which has “spurred to a significant degree by repatriation legislation and its demands for museum-Native American community consultation” (Nason 2000:41). This shift is related to another important factor, “the evolving discourses of human rights” (Phillips 2003:158). The government, influenced by the human rights movement, changed the governance of cultural property. Laws, like NAGPRA, allow tribes to take a dominant role when dealing with their cultural items. For example, tribes are acting as their own historical preservation offices and as Smithsonian designated repositories, further shifting the advisory role out of the hands of non-natives.

Another example of how NAGPRA allowed tribes to take a dominant role occurred in Oct. 2006, when a First Nations group in Canada sought to have an item repatriated from the Burke Museum. The item was a stone that came from the T’Xwelalse nation of British Columbia. Unfortunately, laws like NAGPRA do not apply to tribal groups outside the United States. The director of the museum stated, “as a public

trust, the museum is unable to return any of its collections without an explicit legal mandate” (2006). However, because it does apply to federal tribes in the United States, the T’Xwelalse nation collaborated with the Nooksack Indian tribe, who claimed the stone as an ‘object of cultural patrimony’ under NAGPRA and then returned it to the T’Xwelalse tribe. The director of the museum commented during the repatriation ceremony:

“The cooperation between the Burke and these two tribes across international borders is an enormous achievement and a fine model for museum and Native relations everywhere” (2006).

Not only does NAGPRA make possible the return of important cultural items to Native Americans, it facilitates a cross-cultural communication between a variety of groups.

## **5.2 Funding:**

Funding was given as an explanation for why displays were outdated for some museums. In order to compare the effects of funding verses the effects of cultural resource law on the representation of Native Americans, one must study the relationship between museums that have public funding and those who are funded privately and examine the way each of them represent Native Americans. Funding in museums can take precedence over other goals. Museums are constrained by their economic viability and their varying responsibilities to visitors. However, funding is not always a valid excuse for the lack of accurate representation.

This research looked at two museums in the United States and two in the United Kingdom. Each country was represented by a federally funded museum and private

institution with outside funding sources. The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture is housed in a federal and state funded institution where it derives much of its financial support. The Maryhill Museum of Art is a private museum, which receives funding from outside sources. The British Museum, like the Burke, is a federally funded institution. The American Museum, on the other hand is a private museum that receives outside funding.

### ***5.2.1 United State Museums:***

The Burke Museum did not seem to have funding issues. They had up to-date displays focusing on a holistic view of Native Americans, implementing them in the creation of the displays. On the other hand, funding was a factor for the Maryhill Museum of Art. They had to choose between changing their exhibits frequently to attract more visitors, and developing programs that showcase local Native American tribes (Director of Maryhill 2006).

### ***5.2.2 United Kingdom Museums:***

The British Museum, also federally funded, had displays dealing with Native Americans. While funding was not an issue, they only minimally consulted with Native Americans on objects found in the displays. They did not use source communities to their fullest potential or to communicate their worldview; instead curators chose what would be presented to the public. Funding was also a factor for The American Museum of Britain. Their displays were outdated because of a lack of funding, and they did not consult with Native Americans. Instead, they chose to use easily accessible and therefore

inexpensive non-natives to represent Native American way of life as seen in their English drum group. I recently found out that they have received a grant to change some of their exhibit space, which will include the Native American collection.

Funding is an issue when representing Native Americans, but it is not the entire cause for the lack of communication between museums and Native Americans. If funding were the only limitation to accurate representation, the British Museum would be more culturally accurate, or have a more complete picture of Native American worldviews. Cultural resource management laws in the United States are a determining factor in terms of how museums represent Native Americans. Richard W. Hill states that:

“Today’s museums have begun to change the way they do business with Indians. There is more collaboration with Indians and, as a result, exhibitions are beginning to reflect more of the beliefs and values of the Indians themselves. Certainly the Native Americans Graves Protection and Repatriation Act has had an impact on this. Museums have been forced to rethink their relationship with Indians and to reassess their knowledge of their own collections. Objects are being reviewed to determine whether they are needed for Native rituals, proper to exhibit, or candidates for repatriation” (Hill 2000:104).

Unfortunately, international museums do not have to adhere to the same standards as museums in the United States. Again, funding is intrinsically related to the power structure that is set up inside of museums. Visitors often have the power to dictate a direction that a museum will follow because of the revenue they generate.

### **5.3 Repatriation and the Preservers of World Culture:**

Another trend that is evident during the discussion of this research is repatriation, which reflects the power struggles that occur in museums. Museums in the United States work under repatriation laws that attempt to equalize the unequal power relationship that

they have with Native Americans. In the United Kingdom, no repatriation laws exist and the power structure is unbalanced away from Native Americans and other source communities. Richard West, founding director of the National Museum of the American Indian, discusses this issue in his article 'A New Idea of Ourselves: The Changing Presentation of the American Indian'.

“This sense of continuum extends to a belief in the links between Native peoples and collections of their material culture in a number of the world’s great museums. Under U.S. law, the reality of that link can mean that museums must return some of their holdings to Native communities” (West 1999:99).

However, repatriation of objects and human remains internationally is a difficult issue that will continue to be fought by indigenous groups. The repatriation of an item is to admit to the wrong doings of its collectors. The colonization and exploitation of third world countries continues to be acceptable because it has been acceptable for so long. In 2005 Zahi Hawass, Egypt’s chief archaeologist, made Egypt’s wishes known to the world by requesting five of its most prized possessions to be returned. His request included the Rosetta Stone, currently housed in the British Museum. The Museum’s spokeswoman said that to give such an object back would be a disappointment to millions of visitors who come to see the stone each year (Sydney Morning Herald 2005). This shows that the British Museum gives more priority to its visitors rather than the source communities.

Cultural resource laws have changed the way that museums in the United States look at Native Americans. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act has become a model for other groups to negotiate for themselves the return of their own cultural treasures. Further still, it can be used to change the international community’s policies when dealing with the return of objects of important cultural heritage or at least

the display of such items. For example, international laws facilitate the changing representation of indigenous people, but only when countries choose to partake of their offerings.

Other countries, such as Australia, have recognized the importance of hearing and heeding aboriginal concerns and requests. In 1978, recommendations from a UNESCO regional seminar led to a collaboration between Australian Aboriginals and the Australian Museum.

“Indigenous delegates claimed the right of Aboriginal people to influence the management of object used to represent their communities and the presentation of their knowledge and practice in exhibitions. They focused on the need for the employment of Aboriginal staff to manage Aboriginal collections and greater indigenous involvement in the development of exhibition and education programs, and they raised concerns about the management of secret/sacred or restrictive objects and the management and reburial of collections of Aboriginal human remains” (Bolton 2003:45).

UNESCO, like NAGPRA, has acted to create a better understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous people by shifting the way that museums represent indigenous peoples from around the world.

Historically, museums were seen as great preservers of culture. This might have been true in the past but many of the cultures that museums were supposedly preserving are now capable of doing it themselves. Many times, the only reason why they could not do it in the past was because of the oppressive governments that occupied or colonized their homelands. NAGPRA is changing this relationship between Native Americans and United States museums. In comparison one director of The British Museum stated that:

“The British Museum is an important part of the cultural heritage of the whole world; as it has existed for 225 years it has become a universal museum

and has safeguarded material which would otherwise have been destroyed or dispersed...If one destroyed the British Museum then one would be destroying a center of world culture” (Sir David Wilson 1989).

This view is still strongly upheld by the current administration. The current web page of The British Museum makes a similar claim stating, “the museum exists to illuminate the histories of cultures for the benefit of present and future generations” (2006). The British Museum has altered some of its practices. It now consults with Native Americans, although it is on a minimal basis. Old ideas hold on and play out in present day procedures.

The British Museum prides itself as the protectors of the world’s culture and that the objects they are holding are objects that would have been destroyed had they not rescued them. This is not always the case. For instance, one of the most famous legal actions against the British government came from the request from the Greeks for the return of the Elgin Marbles. The Marbles were removed in 1801 by Lord Elgin, under illegal terms according to the Greek government (Greenfield 1996:42-45). Ethically, it seems only logical that the Elgin Marbles should be returned. Greece is quite stable and capable of protecting their heritage. International cultural heritage laws could shift the dialogue to include all concerned parties. In reality, the Elgin Marbles or the Rosetta Stone would not be repatriated under current United States laws. Even though we have made significant strides to give legal rights to Native American communities, the United States has not offered the same rights to other outside communities. Some museum officials even suggest that museums should move toward a cultural resource management

paradigm, a paradigm in which all parties are consulted in order to make the best decisions about the world's cultural heritage (Longenecker & Stapp 2005:180-182).

#### **5.4 Conclusion:**

Historically, museums were not institutions that were found in traditional Native American society.

“The Indians may have retained heirlooms; they did not collect Indian artifacts... The museum, as an institution dedicated to acquisition, exhibition, and preservation, was a European phenomenon” (Cole 1995:311).

In the past, museums reflected colonial interactions with Indigenous communities and exhibited the uneven power relationship with the dominant society. Museums need to find their place in a world that is ever expanding. They need to endeavor to be meaningful to non-Westerners as well as Westerners. Cultural resource laws in the United States act as one of the missing links between Native Americans and museums. Due in part to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other cultural resource laws in the United States; museums have changed their representational practices of Native Americans. Meaningful communication between Native Americans and museums in the United States is now a possibility. The laws foster a situation where those being displayed in museums have an opportunity to control what information is presented to the public and what information should be off limits because of its sacred or sensitive nature.

Native American involvement in the museum is also a factor that has altered the way museums represent Native Americans and their worldviews. Cultural resource laws

facilitate Native Americans in their efforts to bridge the communication barrier. Native Americans in the United States have challenged the stereotypical views imposed upon them by shaping cultural resource laws. The passage of NAGPRA and other laws like it have created a unique situation that facilitates cross-cultural communication, changing the relationship between museums and Native Americans.

The overriding theme in this research is that there is an underlying power structure that is integrated into museums. As researchers we are so accustomed to seeing these power relationships that we have a difficult time recognizing them. Just the fact that we give some people the power to represent others in a museum exemplifies the uneven relationship between cultures within our own country. Going to the United Kingdom helped me see this type of relationship in our own country. Thanks in part to cultural resource laws; the shift in power is changing. This research shows that it has not changed completely but it has begun to change.

It is difficult to delineate the true effects that cultural resource laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act have had on the representation of Native Americans in museums. I have looked at the way that museums have changed after the inception of NAGPRA. One of the most important things that have developed because of this law and other like it is the beginning of meaningful cross-cultural communication between museum officials and Native Americans. Although some museums in the United States, such as The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, are further along the developmental lines towards a more culturally sensitive museum, others are still working on developing a more meaningful relationship with

Native Tribes. It is hard to make generalizations within the United States; each museum is in a very different state of evolution. Yet they are all changing and it is due in part to the passage of cultural resource laws. NAGPRA has helped to reestablish Native Americans' legal authority over their culture. This is just the beginning of a new paradigm of cooperation, self-determination, and representation.

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APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When was this museum first created? Where did the Native American collection come from? Was there a significant source for the collection?
2. In your opinion what is an accurate representation of Native Americans in regards to museums?
3. Can you think of a time when you have seen an inaccurate representation of Native Americans? When? Where?
4. What factors would this museum explore when creating a museum display about Native Americans?
5. What research material does the museum have available for curators when exploring Native Americans? Does the public have access to this material?
6. How many times in the past five years have the displays representing Native Americans changed? How have they changed?
7. Does your museum have a working relationship with any Native American tribes or groups? If so explain.
8. Has the museum had a Native American representative come and advise the museum on its collections? Please explain.
9. How would you describe your museum's relationship with educating the public about Native Americans? Please describe any programs or outreach to the public that the museum sponsors.

10. What percent of the total Native American artifacts that the museum holds is on display for the public? How often is it rotated? Is there ever an opportunity for the public to see other items that they might be interested in that is not on display?

11. Are there any laws that dictate how people are represented in the United Kingdom? Are there governmental or international laws that might influence the representation of Native Americans?

12. Can you tell me about any affiliations that museum has with other museum in the United States? How has this helped/ or not helped the museum when dealing with native American Artifacts?

13. Are indigenous cultures of the United States represented differently than the other cultures presented in the museum?

14. Can you tell me about the issue of human remains being dealt with in your government? Has your museum repatriated any human remains?

15. Can you tell me about some of the current research the museum is working on in regards to the Native American collection? What is some of the planned future research?