

Whose Heritage?:

The Conflict Between Native People and Museums

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the bases of the conflict which has arisen between Native people and museums. There exist some fundamental problems which are inherent in a cross-cultural situation as well as in the very nature and purposes of the museum itself vis-a-vis Native ethos and cultural integrity.

A significant number of the criticisms dealt with in this paper are not focused specifically on the museum, but on various component disciplines. Nevertheless, to the extent that museum workers are ethnologists, archaeologists and educators, they too must address themselves to these criticisms. It is also important to realize that many of the criticisms come from within the field itself.

The biases which should be identified at the outset are that this writer is not (as yet) enculturated within the outlook of museology. Therefore, perceptions of the issue, coming as they do from outside this field, may tend to ignore or misinterpret the view of museologists. In addition, this writer normally supports much of the recent Native protest in other areas of concern. Finally, this study, by its very nature, and purpose will tend to over-emphasize the seriousness and extent of the problem. Given the well-known nature of modern Native factionalism, the use of the inclusive term "Native people" may be slightly misleading in that it will almost never mean all, or even most, Native people. Often, for every criticism, it would be possible to find an opposing view by another Native person. The purpose here is not to resolve all of these contradictions, but merely to delineate some of the major areas where conflict does occur.

Collections

Fundamental to the concept of a museum are the major purposes and obligations of collection, maintenance, research and exhibition/education. Native people have come into conflict with museums
under each

under each of these mandates.

Collections, of course, are basic to the existence of museums. On this front, Native people are questioning the manner (legal and moral) in which collections are obtained, their own limited access to these collections, and the political implications behind the process of collection itself.

At the Convocation of American Indian Scholars in San Francisco in 1971 speakers asserted that many artifacts had been stolen, coerced (see also Nason et al 1973:24), or fraudulently obtained (American Indian Historical Society, hereafter cited as AIHS, 1971:192). K. R. Hopkins, Director of the State Capital Museum, Olympia Washington (Nason et al. 1973:23) has gone so far as to state... "The holder of stolen property has no right to that property. This has always been a Western legal tradition. As for materials that were not 'stolen', I doubt their existence."

Aside from the obvious hyperbolic intent of the latter statement, it is unfortunately apparent that illegal collection practices are not merely part of a less enlightened past. The Winnipeg Free Press of August 30, 1977 reports the concern of the residents of Klukwan Alaska over increasing pressure to sell their clan house artifacts to collectors. Their reluctance to part with their hereditary treasures, despite economic or even conservation arguments, has led to some of the artifacts being stolen.

According to Stan Cuthand, Professor of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba (personal communication), there are recent cases in Saskatchewan where museums have collected medicine bundles which have not been paid for as promised.

On the other hand, many of the transactions which have in fact been carried out legally resulted from the poverty-stricken necessity of feeding a starving family (Nason et al. 1973:24), or through repressive legislation limiting the freedom of religion. For example, American and Canadian laws in the 1880's and 1890's outlawed the Ghost Dance and potlatch and provided for the confiscation of the attendant paraphernalia (Finster 1975:41, Key 1973:310). Such acquisitions are now being questioned on moral grounds.

In spite of the foregoing, it has been admitted, however,

that many of the transactions were in fact not only legal, but made quite voluntarily. Still, recognizing the individual's right to dispose of personal property, Joe Little Coyotte, at the American Indian Scholars Convocation, maintained that the keepers of tribal medicine bundles for example, as individuals, had no right at all traditionally to dispose of communal ceremonial items. These bundles, he argued, were held in trust for the entire group. "We feel it is the tribe's fault for not watching out for those things, and properly caring for them. It is one of our mistakes" (AIHS 1971:204).

The validity of these transactions is still in question, however, for, as Fred Dockstader, Director of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation in New York, has stated, "... probably...tribal custom would take precedence, legally. This is the case with wampum belts obtained by New York State, and demanded by the Onondaga themselves"(AIHS 1971:209).

Professor Cuthand is also critical of the manner in which museums have been collecting recently, legally or otherwise. He maintains that these institutions are characteristically too aggressive in their dealings with Native people. In their hurry to amass a collection they have created "bad feelings" among the people, not to mention the neglect of complete documentation (pers. comm.). The quality of "respect" (a term which has a wealth of meaning for Native People), not only for the objects themselves but for the people themselves, has been lacking in the activities of many museum collectors. Nason (1971:21) refers to "materialistic greed-based collecting practices".

It has been argued further, not only by museums but by some Native people too, that many of the artifacts were given up to museums because the ceremonial knowledge needed to control their power was disappearing under attack by missionary and governmental forces, apathy of younger generations, the ravages of time, and the death of experienced religious practitioners. There ^{are} numerous examples of families who did not wish to keep the powerful ceremonial materials in their possession because they were afraid that without the means, interest or knowledge to control this great power, they themselves would be harmed. Burdensome finan-

cial obligations involved in the process of renewal^e has also been a motivationⁿ here. Under these circumstances, a ready solution was to sell or donate to a museum (Finster 1975:47, Cuthand pers. comm.).

The above argument may be valid for dealing with some of the aspects of the problem, but it is falacious to assume that all Native groups will think and react in a similar way. There is also much evidence which indicates that some Native people do in fact wish this very ceremonial material to be returned^{to them} (AIHS 1971; Anon. 1972:21, Rogers 1977/8:37). There is currently a revival in traditional religion among many Native people. These people^{participating in this revival} want these ritual artifacts returned, precisely because they are still so extremely powerful. They are to be used in^{the} ongoing religious ceremonies.

Native people are also highly critical of what they see as a deliberate policy of museums to limit their access to the collections (Elias 1973:47). This is above and beyond W. C. Sturtevant's (1969:635) general criticism that museums tend to discourage access to their collections at the best of times. "Museum materialism" and possessiveness about their collections, as well as the conception of the "protective storehouse" function, often override accessibility. Such "materialistic possessiveness" applies not only to inhouse collections, but to "reasonable and possible extensions of museum services and policies" (Nason et al. 1973:21).

For R. W. Force (1975:254), what may be the most important function of the museum, "maintenance in perpetuity", becomes "...inimical to uncontrolled access and use, even by descendants of those who made and used the specimens." Force (1975:254) also maintains that decisions concerning access should be made primarily on the basis of the best interests of the collections.

Disregarding for the moment Native-specific arguments, this seems to contradict a basic tenet of museum philosophy; i.e. museums and their collections exist for the public good. To maintain the importance of preservation above that of public access seems to place the cart before the horse. Collections, despite the fact that they will deteriorate through research (and certainly through^{ceremonial} use), can hardly be for the public good if access to them by the public is restricted. Obviously there must be some sort

of balance here. Native people and others would contend, however, that at present, the balance is heavily weighted against their access (AIHS 1971:209; Nason 1973:21; Elias 1973:47).

On the other side of the coin, museums have allowed non-Native people such as author Rudy Wiebe, who, admittedly, are not the "proper persons", to gain access to important ceremonial collections. Wiebe (1975) reports that ^{during research for a novel} he was allowed to open the sacred medicine bundle of Big Bear without the proper knowledge of attendant songs, rituals and prayers. This in effect defiled the sacred bundle. There was no true scholarly intent or result of Wiebe's access here, only the satisfaction of mere personal curiosity.

Native people also complain that their access is limited by geographic factors as well as by financial and professional constraints. They assert that most of the "good artifacts" went to large museums away from the people (AIHS 1971:195). This criticism refers particularly to the concentration of artifacts in New York. There is also ~~to~~ a perception that museums are obstructing the entrance of native workers into the professional field through the creation of elitist standards as well as financial and administrative barriers (Elias 1973:47; CMA Training Division 1973:6; AIHS 1971:199).

Although it is not yet a widespread Native approach, the problem of museum collections must also be examined under the rubric of colonialism. Collections, (not only of Native materials) have often been made in an imperialistic fashion (Bostick 1974:26). The control of these collections by an outside authority can be considered to be symbolic of a loss of autonomy and an arrogation of the power to be able to define an identity through these materials. Emma LaRoque (1975:8) has asserted that the definition of their identity by those outside the culture is one of the most serious problems facing Native people today. Some Native people are incensed that their culture is being interpreted for them by an ^{other which is} essentially alien. (Winnipeg Free Press, Sept 1, 1977).

Since artifacts are symbolic of a group's cocultural identity, the control and interpretation by museums of these artifacts (de Borhegyi (1964:123) calls this "symbol manipulation") often

← For other than native people also?

places Native people in a powerless and therefore colonialized position vis-a-vis their own material culture.

According to Basil Johnson (1976:173) Native Ethnologist at the Royal Ontario Museum, it is this powerlessness regarding museums and their manipulation of Native materials "...which the native peoples construe as the exercise of the prerogatives of the stronger over the prerogatives of the weaker and the enforcement of, among other things, the values of the many to the subordination of the values of the few."

Even further, D. McNickle (1972:33) and H. M. Jackson (1971:34) claim that the activities and research directions of anthropology (and, by association, museums) have tended to give credibility to assimilationist policies and superordinate attitudes of white society, as well as directly supporting the manipulation and control of minority peoples by governments (witness the situation in Brazil for example). Berreman (1973:112), in speaking of anthropologist/Third world relations, has stated,

The context in which anthropologists are being called to account by Third World peoples is the post colonial and neo-colonial world -- in which social science is perceived as a product of Western culture which grew out of colonial interests, consciously or not, leaving a legacy of colonialist attitudes and assumptions to many of its practitioners.

The claims that museums are only "preserving" the Native heritage can ^{also} be looked at as colonialist statements. K. R. Hopkins (Nason et al 1973:23) responds by pointing out the irony in ^{the former} argument, which he considers to be "...specious at best and at worst arrogant white racism. We in the white museum world have no God-given rights to these materials, regardless of how they were acquired...it hardly seems reasonable that white civilization should arrogate unto itself the position of sole interpreter of the very cultures it has tried so hard to destroy."

Since Native people often separate themselves from the general public interest (in fact they are often diametrically opposed to such interests; for example land claims and pipeline questions), the laws which are designed to protect this "public interest" (Archaeological Sites Advisory Board, Burham 1974) are

and colonialist
often viewed as oppressive/in terms of Native interests.

In summary then, the conflict over the collection mandate of museums has arisen over questions of legality and morality of acquisition, the problem of restricted access by Native people to the collections, and what may be considered to be the negative political implications of extra-cultural control of these collections.

Preservation

The next facet of the Native/museum conflict to be examined is the responsibility for care and maintenance of the collections.

One of the major arguments put forward by museums is that Native materials must be collected and controlled by museums in order to ensure their proper conservation, preservation and study. A corollary of this argument is that Native people have neither the facilities, training nor funding to be able to accept responsibility for collections (Nason et al. 1973:23).

When examined closely however, this type of argument is weakened considerably when the actual provisions for care and study at many of the museums are noted. It is also true to say that, because of funding cutbacks (and the entire potential of the prevailing "Proposition 13" mentality); lack of space and sufficient professional staff; as well as outright mismanagement and fraud; these same museums must admit to less than acceptable "stewardship" of collections.

Several cases exist where a lack of funds is jeopardizing Native collections. Major institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation have deaccessioned Native materials to "friends" and dealers in what many consider to be a dishonest and unethical manner (Corey 1978:93). J. Russell (1974), G. Glueck (1974) and F. Ferretti (1974) report on the financial difficulties of the prestigious Museum of the American Indian which have caused trustee, Dr. Edmund Carpenter, to initiate legal proceedings to prevent the further decimation of this important collection.

On the other hand, the American Association of Museums Committee on Ethics (1978:21) has established that it is in fact quite ethical to deaccession and sell artifacts; that is, if

necessary, and if proper channels are followed. However, if, as it is argued by museums, they are holding Native artifacts in trust to ensure their preservation, is deaccessioning not a betrayal of this trust? The Iroquois-Delaware Nation has protested vigorously over the auction of ^{their} sacred wampum belts (Anon. 1972:21). One wonders whether it would also be considered ethical for the Vatican for example to auction the Holy Shroud of Turin.

Another important facet of the argument that museums ^{must} control Native material culture is the responsibility for study of that material. This argument proves to be quite ironic since the study of material culture is patently being ignored in current anthropological research by those very same museums (Reynolds 1970:6-8). W. C. Sturtevant (1969:632-3) has asserted that up to ninety percent of museum ethnological specimens have never been studied ^{and} that as much as eighty-three percent of collections have been effectively "lost in storage" through poor cataloguing and documentation, ^{and} even new museums such as the Vancouver Centennial are deficient in proper storage and working space (Key 1973:313). This whole situation is in fact deteriorating, as interest in material culture wanes (Mason 1960:393), and as museums are losing research dollars and professional staff through financial cutbacks.

It therefore becomes apparent that museums, especially in these times of high inflation and financial restraint, cannot validly argue that they alone are best able to care for collections. It seems that museums are attempting to impose stringent conditions on Native access and control of collections which they themselves are failing to meet. To continue arguing in this vein ^{not} makes museums appear ^{only} to be irrational, ^{simply} but ^a materialistically possessive.

Research

Beyond the failings of museums to live up to their responsibility for maintenance of collections, the aspects of their mandate for research which they are able to fulfill bring them into further conflict with Native people.

Native people have found that research has, more often than not, been carried out under questionable motivation, in an insensitive manner, without adequate consultation, and with little

beneficial return to Native people (Maynard 1974:402, Freeman 1977:71). Despite the strong case which can be made concerning the application and value of anthropological research (Rogers 1977/8:36; Pettipas and Kelly 1977), Native people have found that the research accomplished to date has been irrelevant, and worse, inimical to their real interests (Ortiz 1971:11).

Ever since Vine Deloria gained exposure for his ideas in Playboy and later in his book Custer Died For Your Sins, anthropologists have come under increasing attack for what is seen to be unwarranted and insensitive intrusion into Native lives.¹ E. S. Rogers, Chief Ethnologist at the ROM, admits that Native people are justified in their criticism of anthropologists on the basis of abundant documented evidence. E. Maynard (1974:403) asserts that "badgering" by anthropologists has continued unabated since the beginning of the reserve period in the 1870's.

Deloria (1969:98) makes the point that it is "essentially dehumanizing to be a subject of study". This must be particularly so when the major concerns of museums for example seem to be related to objects and remains rather than on the people themselves (Medicine 1972:26).

John Dockstader, an Iroquois artist and teacher, states, "...it seems I've spent my whole life fighting against ethnologists and archaeologists, who categorize us and take the human quality out of our culture" (Bruce 1976:29). Maynard (1974:402) maintains that Native people "...are prone to consider the anthropologist as a predator who is using the Indian to further his career, i.e., as a stepping stone to an academic degree or as a way of providing material so he can add another publication [or we might add "acquisition"] feather to his professional bonnet."

Native sensibilities become bruised because some anthropologists have, "...attempted investigation of topics that the Indians feel are not for the eyes and ears of outsiders or of the uninitiated, such as traditional religious practices" (Rogers 1977/8:36).

In this vein, one of the most contentious issues involved in museum activities has been that concerning their research on Native burials. Illustrative of this conflict is the case of the Neutral Indian burial ground excavation near Grimsby Ontario. In a move paralleled throughout North America, Delbert Riley, Research Director of the Union of Ontario Indians, made a citizens arrest

charging excavation party chief, Walter Kenyon, with offering an indignity to human remains and failure to comply with the Ontario Cemeteries Act (Anon. 1976:6; McClement 1976:74). The Native argument as reported in The Native Perspective (Anon. 1976:6) follows:

They (the UOI) feel that the Attiwandarok people should be allowed to rest in peace. In the Attiwandarok culture, the afterlife and the final resting place were important, and great care was taken to bury them with dignity. The circus-like atmosphere that prevailed at the excavation site was inconsistent with the dignity in which the people were buried.

The argument of archaeologists is spelled out by C. Thomas (1971:273) as follows:

That all remains which illuminate any facet of the human past, remains whether visible, tangible, detectable or recoverable, are valuable in themselves because we can use them to increase the sum of our knowledge of Man in his environment, past and present. The corresponding ethical element, the consciously-expressed duty, that has to be linked to the acceptance of this premise is that every generation inherits the duty to examine, to record in advance of destruction, and selectively to preserve, all such remains.

In addition to the above, an Editorial" in the Anthropological Journal of Canada (T.E.L. 1977, see also AIHS 1971:199) questions whether Native people have the right to demand reclamation of bones which are probably not "ancestral" because of tribal migrations and, specifically, because of the "extinction" of the Neutral group.

First of all, this denies the historical fact that the Neutral were actually absorbed into the Iroquois and Algonkian groups around them (who are represented today by the UOI). It also denies the general Native reverence for the dead (regardless of relation), as well as emerging Pan-Indian tendencies. Noel Starblanket, President of the National Indian Brotherhood, enunciated the Native perspective at the opening of the "I Wear The Morning Star" exhibition at the National Museum of Man. Starblanket stated, "I invite you to stand with me in contemplation of these relics of my people. They were not my direct ancestors, but in the manner that we (Indian people) still follow,

they are my Grandfathers and Grandmothers by virtue of having lived before me" (Anon. 1978:46).

Native people contend that burials are excavated in violation of their religious conceptions, not to mention without their consent. They cite lack of dignity and "respect" for the remains as well as for the descendants (Kraemer 1977). Leo Pettipas, (pers. comm.) Manitoba's ~~Chief~~ ^{Staff} Archaeologist, ^{Historic Resources} reports that some Native people resent the undignified publicity connected with the digs (Selkirk burial issue 1975) as much as the actual excavation itself. Even "middle America" can be critical of the lack of respect shown to Native remains as was reported to the 1971 Plains Anthropological Conference (Plains Anthropological Association 1971:22-3).

The whole question appears to boil down to one of different perceptions of the "metaphysics" involved. According to an article in the Native Perspective (Anon. 1977:21), the Native ethos is not "...linear and dialectic, materialistic, nor particularly historical in outlook." This broad philosophic stance combined with specific religious beliefs conflict with their non-Native counterparts.

Basil Johnson (1976:174) states that for Native people, "... death is not the end of life, though it may be that in one sense, rather it is but another form of existence." An elderly Indian lady has reported to A. Brew, archaeologist at Bemidji State College, that, "For our minds the unborn and the dead hold equal value...", thus placing excavation in analogy with abortion, both being considered ~~as~~ ^{to be} desecration. The question of ~~the~~ cross-cultural differences as the origin of the entire conflict will be examined further below.

So bad have relations between museums, archaeologists and Native people become on this issue that in many cases the former are caught in a "Catch-22" situation. They are criticised for excavating, even when not to would mean their destruction through construction or natural forces. Despite some archaeologists' perceptions to the contrary (Winnipeg Free Press May 15, 1975), a symposium in Winnipeg (Plains 1971:21) reported that many Native people now feel that burials are better flooded, destroyed or pot-hunted than to be excavated by archaeologists. 2.

Some archaeologists have reached the point where they either avoid excavation of burials because of the implications (technical as well as political and philosophic), or they simply do not report that they have encountered burials. Some others, such as A. Brew (Plains 1971:23) have "...found the experience (with protests over burial excavations) to be emotionally and mentally quite distressing; quite difficult to handle...I can no longer justify the excavation of burials."

It is apparent from the recent statement of the American Association of Museums Committee on Ethics (1978:25) which deals only with tightening up controls over skeletal materials as archival material, that museums have not yet faced up to the reality that Native people are questioning the very basis of ^{the} right ^{of archaeologists} to excavate burials. The AAM does state that such research must be carried out in a manner acceptable to religious beliefs. However, the AAM has isolated this from the Native stance;-that traditional religious beliefs preclude all investigation of burials.

The question ^{then} becomes where does freedom of academic enquiry begin to interfere with the integrity of a culture? Anthropologists assert that knowledge about other cultures is important and that "...it is necessary to stress that no groups's culture can become to be regarded by that group as a private possession, to which access may be denied to those who genuinely wish to understand, marvel at and cherish it too"(Freeman 1977:74).

From a characteristic standpoint of anti-intellectualism, Native people on the other hand are saying that researchers in all fields overstep the limits of academic freedom and, furthermore, that they have failed in understanding the true nature of Native culture at any rate. Vine Deloria (1969:98) states, "Compilation of useless knowledge 'for knowledge's sake' should be utterly rejected by the Indian people. We should not be the objects of observation for those who do nothing to help us...Academic freedom certainly does not imply that one group of people have to become chessmen for another group of people."

Concerning the Neutral burial conflict above, the Union of Ontario Indians "...believes that there is a point at which scientific and historical curiosity must give way to respect for

human dignity."

Despite the statements of Clyde Klukhohn and other eminent anthropologists that anthropological enquiry is vital to the fate of Western society (Weaver 1973:i), several members of the profession such as N. O. Lurie have asserted that the concept placing scientific purity above considerations of the practical Native interest is no longer supportable. G. D. Berreman (1973:113) states,

...many anthropologists have abandoned the notion that scholarship justifies itself. Many have come to the conclusion that it must be justified in the light of the ends it serves and the consequences it wreaks, especially the consequences for those among whom their research is done and upon whose trust and cooperation its accomplishment entirely depends.

It is difficult to determine other than it seems as if the limits of scholarly enquiry should be drawn where it begins to impinge on the cultural or personal integrity, and where to proceed would injure those being studied. Native people have perceived museums to have gone beyond these limits.

In summary here, the research obligation of museums has caused a widespread disenchantment among Native people because it has been accomplished with a lack of attention to Native sensibilities and their right to be consulted. There seems to be a direct opposition of religious with scientific ideals and a deep suspicion of scholarly motivations.

Exhibition/Education

The final obligation of museums which brings them into conflict with Native people is the use of Native materials for exhibition and education purposes. Native people tend to feel that museum exhibits often mock, misrepresent and misunderstand the true nature of Native societies. (Native Students 1977:6). Some professionals in the field are also critical of museums' treatment of Native people in their exhibits. These often turn out to be no more than "curio cabinets" (Swauger 1975:115).

Ever since Native materials began to be included in major exhibitions such as the American Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, observers have been critical of the form and content of these exhibits. In criticizing this exhibit, J. B.

Zegas might have been dealing with any number of modern counter-parts;

Baird's (exhibition organizer) goal of attempting to enlighten the public about native cultures probably did not succeed largely because exhibit techniques were not sophisticated enough to deal with the general public attitude that Indians were inferior and primitive beings. In fact, it might be said that the exhibit reinforced these beliefs by displaying Indian culture amid the other displays of America's finest accomplishments. (especially since this exhibit occurred in the context of the defeat of Guster at the hands of the Sioux.)

It is unfortunately apparent that the quality of ~~such~~ exhibitions has not really improved since that time. J. D. Nason (1973:21), S. F. de Borhegyi (1964:123), J. A. Mason (1960:341), J. Demmert (1972:9), and H. M. Jackson (1971:34) all remain critical of an ethnocentric, even racist, approach to Native exhibits which perpetuates stereotypes and fosters attitudes of Western superiority.

W. C. Sturtevant (1969:644) quotes a S. F. de Borhegyi article, "A New Role For Anthropology in Natural History Museums" as follows:

Good point
 ...museum exhibits in general, and natural history museums in particular, instead of stirring the imagination of visitors, tend to perpetuate the visitors' stereotypes of "savages" and "quaint primitive" cultures. The anthropology exhibits keep on cultivating the romanticism of the visitor by showing exotic "tribal" peoples in "peculiar" attires, amidst prettily staged sentimental settings, or appeal to his sense of the macabre by the inevitable showing of mummies, skeletons and shrunken heads...
 Museum anthropologists continue to be primarily object and tribal rather than subject or concept oriented in their exhibits, and most of them rightfully deserve the title of "keepers"...rather than "doers".

Critics see not only a sort of passive inertia here, but outright misrepresentation of Native materials (AIHS 1971:192). On a picayune level perhaps, but still illustrative of the problem, several docents handling the Plains Indian program for school children at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature incorrectly demonstrate the use of a bone flesher ^(making the tool appear inefficient). Further, A. Strynadka (1970:32) asserts that anthropologists have been instrumental in perpetuating what Native people feel are misrepresentations of the "Sun Dance" terminology and "windigo psychosis" for example.

According to de Borhegyi (1964:122-3), the actual selection of materials to be displayed, because of a lack of curatorial objectiveness, adds to this problem. He states, "Because of the limited number of objects displayed, the exhibit frequently gives a false, sometimes greatly magnified or an excessively minimized impression of a specific aspect of culture." *True of any display!*

It also seems to be the case that the interpretation given to these exhibits fails to promote, or improve the level of, cross-cultural understanding (Swauger 1975:116). Museum workers still resist the ideal that Native people might better interpret their own culture (Freeman 1977:74, Glueck 1974). However, Native people believe (Lazore 1978) that they themselves are much better **qualified** to make these interpretations. Their argument here is not based on racism or "genetic heritage" as Force (1975:254) tries to suggest. It is founded, however, in the belief that their cultural heritage provides them with a much closer understanding than anthropologists are able to achieve. Elias (1973:47) reports "It was felt by all that Natives, in their position of ones who have lived a part of their history, are equipped to give new and creative insights to their own histories."

At present however, Native materials remain portrayed as mere "exotica" and so foster no cross-cultural understanding (Nason et al. 1973:21). A major difficulty here, according to B. Y. Newsom and A. Z. Silver (1977:94) is that museums represent the past to a public which transfers it out of historical context into the present. They assume that Native cultures remain in a "savage state". The failing of museums here is their neglect of adaptation and change, which are not only major characteristics of Native cultures, but important concepts in anthropology as well. De Borhegyi (1964:124) states, "...in far too many museum exhibits, the North American Indian makes his 'last stand' along with General Custer at the Little Big Horn. Apparently what has happened to Indian culture in the twentieth century machine economy is of little concern to the average museum anthropologist." According to J. A. Mason (1960:341), many museums seem to have no concept of ^{the universality of} culture change, while Collier and TSchopik (1954:775) ^{and medicine (1972:27)} have been critical of a lack of acculturation studies. McNickle (1972:34) maintains that it is this lack of acculturation study in museum

exhibits which helps to foster the attitude of "superordination" of Western culture in the visitors.

Such attitudes are supported not only by the exhibits themselves, but by the education activities connected with them. Emma LaRoque (1975:116) makes a statement concerning education institutions in general which can be applied to the museum situation. She maintains, "It (the education system) is treating Indian history as if it were frozen at a fixed point in time; as if Indians cannot change and adapt with the rest of humanity. It is not taking into account the fact that considerable change has and is occurring in all peoples, and certainly in Indians."

J. L. Swauger (1975:116) makes the point that trained museum educators can help compensate for failings in the exhibits. However, it is also noted that there is a lack of such trained teachers. The lack of training and cross-cultural sensitivity is witnessed by the use of the old chestnut "Eskimo noses are short because they use ulu's to cut their meat while holding it in their teeth". This comment was used not only for a grade three program on the Inuit at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, but in a university level Inuit art course at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It is this type of comment, even if only jokingly recounted, which adds to ^{the widespread} "cumulative negative evaluation" ³ of Native peoples.

I hadn't heard this one before

It seems to be still unfortunately true, as Collier and Tschopik asserted in 1954, that museums are not fulfilling their educational potential. At that time these authors believed that "... (t)he majority of these exhibits are out of date in terms of the present theoretical position of anthropology, in terms of educational effectiveness for either students of the public, and in terms of the role that anthropology would like to play in the present world crisis" (Collier and Tschopik 1954:774).

There are also criticisms that exhibit design often over-whelms and distorts the meaning of artifacts within cultures (de Borhegyi 1964:121, 122; Mason 1960:347; Zegas 1976:704). There are also criticisms concerning the use of the "ethnographic present" (Reynolds 1970:9, Demmert 1972:9, McNickle 1972:33) which confuses many visitors and militates against their interpretation of the exhibit in its historical context.

Quite often, there is also a subtle, but powerful, taint of colonialism in exhibits. Take for example the display of Louis Riel's leg shackles by the Hamilton-Wentworth police (Winnipeg Free Press May 30, 1977) or that of a lock of Riel's hair in the Glenbow Alberta Museum. The symbolism of shackles and especially the sheared hair must not be overlooked. It is nothing but demeaning to the person of Louis Riel and to his people. The manipulation of these symbols, contrary to the claim that museums are apolitical, makes it clear that when dealing with Native materials, the political aspects are unavoidable. As G. D. Berreman (1973:9) maintains, "Anthropology, by the very fact that it is a science of man, has political impact." This impact cannot be easily escaped.

Native people also take issue with the types of museum exhibits on metaphysical grounds. Demmert (1972:9) states that from the Native viewpoint, "...museums continue to exhibit ceremonial materials, ones that retain great cultural and/or religious significance and should not be displayed." After viewing the exhibits at the Smithsonian, a participant at the Convocation of American Indian Scholars stated, "...the way they are exposed, behind glass, just makes me feel that his spirit is uncomfortable; he's not at rest, Dugtup ifor ever; he'll never be peaceful. It is desecraton" (AIHS 1971:203).

Basil Johnson (1976:175) goes so far as to say that, because of the beliefs of Native people, it is doubtful whether any improvement in display techniques would help to preserve Native dignity, ^{and} to solve the present conflict. Some Native people regard all exhibition of ceremonial objects as "infringement" on Native religion, while others do not object to objects "respectfully" displayed (Bruce 1976:34).

A native person on the design staff at the ROM has expressed bitterness at the isolation of Native material culture in museum showcases. "Its like the white man took a big knife to Indian cultures. Now we're on the outside and our things are inside the museum behind glass, not with us" (Bruce 1976:34). Some groups are opposed to display of artifacts because that precludes their use for ongoing religious ceremonies (AIHS 1971:20).

✓ Native people also resent the fact that, very often, exhibits dealing with their cultures are displayed in natural history museums, thus, by implication, placing their cultures on the same level as animals. It is interesting to note that, even in museums such as the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, which attempt to combine human and natural history, that the only other bones beside those of animals on display are those of Native people. The fact that the bones are only simulated does not alter the implication.

It is argued by museums that it is necessary to exhibit burials in order to portray certain important aspects of social life and religion (). However, it is again interesting to note that in the same museum, Hutterite and Mennonite cultures, for which one might assume religion has an equal importance, escape without the necessity of displaying bones to illuminate their culture.

Basil Johnson (1976:174) makes the point that when human remains are displayed along with artifacts they appear "as if they were of no greater consequence or merit in nature, essence, substance and character than metal or wooden temporal objects."

Thus, there are several aspects of display and interpretation which disturb Native people. In short, misrepresentation, ethnocentrism, dated display concepts, poor design, unacceptable interpretation, neglect of acculturation^{studies}, and the political and cultural implications of exhibits lead to the conflict in this area.

Cross-Cultural Difficulties

Perhaps at the base of the entire conflict are the problems inherent in any cross-cultural situation. Differences in outlook, misunderstandings and lack of real communication compound, if not initially create, the conflicts outlined above.

An analysis in The Native Perspective asserts that the conflict rises out of

...a basic level of a difference of religious outlook, of life view and of the philosophies which stem from religions and the religious view of life... (Archaeologists)... even if moved by profound regard for the remains of the culture they excavate, or even by reverence for the dead, are not and cannot be, involved in the cyclical, inclusive, essentially non-European Native life view. (Anon[1977:41])

Such differences in fundamental outlook or ethos are nowhere more apparent than in the burial issue. Archaeologists maintain that excavation of burials is carried out to protect important and little-known aspects of history (Kenyon 1977:6). The question becomes from whose viewpoint is this 'protection' seen? When newspapers report that archaeologists are guarding burial excavations twenty-four hours a day to prevent vandalism, from whose viewpoint is "vandalism" defined? Native people consider excavation to be vandalism not protection.

Walter Kenyon (1974:3) will state, as will any other archaeologist, that burials need to be treated with dignity and reverence. It can be argued however, that "dignity" and "reverence" are culture-based perceptions. What is perceived as appropriate behaviour in one culture will not necessarily be viewed as acceptable by another. Anthropologists should be the first to recognize this.

We must now ask ourselves whether we do in fact have a basic conflict of morals and values here as Kraemer (1977) and others would assert. It is this writer's contention that value incongruence is not necessarily the cause of the conflict.

D. Bruce Sealey (pers. comm.), head of Cross-Cultural Studies in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, maintains that the concept of value conflict between Native and non-Native people is essentially a myth. For example, Walter Kenyon, the American Association of Museums Committee on Ethics (1978:25) as well as Professor Stan Cuthand and many other Native people all express a high value on the need for dignity and reverence with regard to burials. The value itself here, Sealey would contend, is identical, and further, that the quality of these concepts in both cultures is quite similar.

If there is no real value or behavioural conflict, the problem then appears to be the application of a double standard by museums in dealing with Native people and their material culture.

From their viewpoint, Native people see only that a ^{historic} Neutral burial ground (which apparently is not legally defined as a 'cemetery') is excavated while a nearby pioneer cemetery is left undisturbed (Anon. 1976:6). Fox chief, Peosta, who was buried at his request beside his non-Native friend and counterpart Julien

Dubuque was excavated and then displayed while his contemporary non-Native friend was reinterred with a monument (Anon. 1972:21, Plains 1971:31). The only other bones displayed besides those of Native people are animals indicating that Native bones are scientifically significant while those of Hutterites or W.A.S.P.'s are not. Native people point out how outraged non-Native people would be if their own traditions, institutions and symbols were ridiculed, desecrated, defaced, or destroyed (Johnson 1976:174), and wonder out loud if college credits could be obtained by excavating white cemeteries (Plains 1971:21).

Further aspects of the double standard in operation are revealed when museums cannot meet the stringent conditions that they impose on Native people before they can control their own artifacts. Museums auction off important religious artifacts, but ~~this~~ would obviously be unacceptable if they were Christian artifacts. They also allow non-Natives such as Rudy Wiebe to have access to sacred materials while obstructing that of people such as chief John Snow (Elias 1973).

Ralph Steinhauer, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta and also a Cree, concurs with Sealeyⁱⁿ maintaining that the basic values of both Native and Euro-Canadians are identical. It therefore seems that the conflict arises not out of value incongruence but from the operation of a double standard regarding the collection and use of Native materials. One explanation of the occurrence of this double standard is that, from an ethnocentric basis, museums and anthropologists really do not afford Native materials and the people themselves as much dignity and respect as society and the discipline demand for non-Natives.

The response of museums to the above criticisms has only added fuel to the fire. Despite the fact that in some cases museums have deferred to the wishes of Native people, J. D. Nason (1973:21) Curator of Ethnology at the Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, reports that the most common response is that the collections, regardless of how obtained, legally belong to the museum, and that in these matters, Indian feelings are irrelevant. They condescendingly maintain that Native people do not really understand the functions of maintenance, research and education

(Nason et al 1973:21). In reality however, it is clear that Native people understand all too well the implications of these museum functions to their personal and cultural integrity. In a survey examining museum/Native conflicts in 1972, B. Medicine (Nason et al 1973:26) determined that the museums generally ignored or depreciated Native concerns. Bostick (1974:27) has suggested that this has occurred because there is a gap between the protesters who are essentially political, and museums who report to a board and who are only in a limited way ^{responsible to} a political authority. The two opposing groups, therefore, are not really communicating on the same level.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while recognizing the difficulties in making generalizations, it becomes apparent that ^{many} Native people are opposed practically and philosophically to museums and their functions. Collections were and ~~are~~ ^{are} still being acquired, in some cases illegally, and in other cases unethically. Native people are protesting their lack of access to collections basing their arguments on the ideal of democratization of centralized collections. They are also beginning to realize the political symbolism inherent in their lack of control over their own material culture, and they are concluding that this is just one more facet in their colonized status.

The care and maintenance of collections held by museums is not satisfactory to Native people (nor when measured against the professional ideals). By acts of fraud and omission museums have failed to fulfill their mandate for responsible "stewardship" (in its broadest sense) of their Native collections. The obligation of museums to engage in research has collided with the struggle of Native people to maintain their cultural integrity. Insensitivity, lack of consultation and beneficial return has further tarnished the reputation of museums in the estimation of Native people.

Museums are also being criticized for their dated, inaccurate even racist portrayal of Native people. The education activities of museums, far from meeting stated objectives, actually contribute to ethnocentrism and negative stereotyping leading to the assump-

others too!

? more than other groups?

tion of Western superiority. Museums have also tended to ignore the important concerns Native people have been expressing.

The argument that the real basis for the conflict exists in the cross-cultural nature of the situation must be re-examined however. It becomes obvious that both sides are enunciating identical values (eg the right to freedom of religion, the need for respect and reverence etc.). It seems however, that museums, by limiting access to, and maintaining control over, sacred materials, and by excavating Native burials qua Native burials, they are in fact hypocritically impinging on the Native conception of religion. The conflict arises not out of differing values but out of the denial of equal "due respect" for the culture and the ancestors of Native people. In short, a double standard is operating.

The problem is not therefore based on the fundamental cultural differences (which Sealey maintains are more apparent than real) but on intolerance and insensitivity, coupled with a lack of interest in real communication with Native people. As is so often the case in dealing with the conflict of Native people's with Euro-Canadian society, the question boils down to one of morality. Is it right that Native people be dealt with on the basis of standards which would be unacceptable to the society at large? *I would submit that it is not.*

In closing, the very purpose of this study has tended to bias the results toward an over-emphasis on the extent of the conflict. This is not to say that the problems are of any less significance because they may be criticized only by a minority. ^{The} problems are no less real because they may not be perceived ^{as such} by non-Natives. If Native people perceive problems, they are real to them, and museums, if they are interested in people, must therefore deal with these perceptions *as real, serious difficulties demanding tolerant and truly understanding responses.*

Endnotes

1. For Native people, anthropologists have now been ascribed the role of "universal devil" (as explained by Eric Hoffer in his book The True Believer). However, Rogers (1977/8:38) asserts that an important factor in this problem is the Native people's perception that there are more anthropologists pestering them than there actually are. Freeman (1977) points out that quite often anyone who comes to Native communities, social workers, government officials etc, are lumped under the term "anthropologist" and as a consequence, all the failings of these groups are also attributed to anthropologists.
2. As an aside here, the organization of this symposium illustrates rather well one fundamental cause of the conflict. It is quite typical that the organizers had invited only archaeologists while "neglecting" to invite Native representatives to this symposium which was entitled "American Indian Militants vs Archaeologists".
3. See A. B. Hodgetts, What Culture? What Heritage?, Ontario Institute For Studies in Education. Hodgetts deals with the treatment of Native people in school texts and explains the concept of "cumulative negative evaluation".

Bibliography

- Archaeological Sites Advisory Board of British Columbia.
 ? The British Columbia Relic Collector and the Law. Victoria:
 Provincial Secretariat.
- American Association of Museums Committee on Ethics.
 1978 "Museum Ethics". Museum News 56/4:21-30.
- American Indian Historical Society.
 1971 Indian Voices: The Native American Today. San Francisco:
 American Indian Educational Publishers.
- Anonymous.
 1978 "Culture: The Remains of An Effort to Revitalize Tradition on Exhibit in Ottawa". The Native Perspective 3/1:46-7.
 1977 "Rest In Peace: Interest in the Past Must Include Concern For the Dead". The Native Perspective 2/7:41.
 1976 "Archaeologist Arrested For Violating Burial Ground." The Native Perspective 2/1:6.
 1972 "Grave Robbers and Other Scholars". Akwesasne Notes 72:21.
- Berreman, G. D.
 1973 "The Social Responsibility of the Anthropologist". To See Ourselves. T. Weaver ed. Glenview, Ill: Scott Fossman and Company.
- Bostick, W. A.
 1974 "The Ethics of Museum Acquisition". Museum 26/1:26-33.
- de Borhegyi, S. F.
 1964 "Some Thoughts on Anthropological Exhibits in Natural History Museums". Curator 2/2:121-7.
- Bruce, J.
 1976 "Reclaiming the History of Canada". Saturday Night 91/4:29-34.
- Burnham, B. ed.
 1974 The Protection of Cultural Property: Handbook of National Legislations. Tunisia: Tunisia National Committee, ICOM.
- Canadian Museums Association, Training Division.
 1973 Museum Training For Native People. As First Citizens See Us: Panel Discussion. 26th Conference of the CMA.
- Collier, D. and Tschopik, H.
 1954 "The Role of Museums in American Anthropology". American Anthropologist 56/4 pt. 1:768-79.
- Corey, T.
 1978 "Bringing Museum Ethics Into Focus". Art News 77/4:93-8.

- Deloria, V.
1969 Custer Died For Your Sins. New York: Avon Books.
- Demmert, J.
1972 "Opinion: Which Came First -- The Museum Or The Indian?"
Museum News 51/4:9.
- Elias, D.
1973 "Report on the 'As First Citizens See Us' Panel at the
1973 Annual Meeting of the CMA". Dawson and Hind Quarterly
2/3:46-8.
- Edinburgh, A.
1977 "How We're Repatriating the Indian Artistic Heritage".
Financial Post August 6:28.
- Eriksen, P. L.
1976 "Letter: To the Editor". Winnipeg Free Press June 3:
- Ferretti, F.
1974 "State Investigates American Indian Museum". New York
Times October 3.
- Finster, D.
"975 "Museums and Medicine Bundles". Indian Historian 8/2:40-8.
- Force, R. W.
1975 "Museum Collections -- Access, Use, and Control". Curator
18/4:249-55.
- Freeman, M. M. R.
1977 "Science and Ethics in the North". Arctic 30/2:71-5.
- Glueck, G.
1974 "Indian Museum Weighs Move to the Southwest". New York
Times July 31.
- ICOM Ethnographic Committee.
1973 Recommendations: Passed September, 1973 by the Inter-
national Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences,
Milwaukee August 29-30.
- Jackson, H. M.
1971 "Anthropologist -- Community Collaboration? New Univer-
sity Thought 7/4:25;8.
- Johnson, B.
1976 "The Cultural and Ethical Aspects of Archaeology in
Canada: An Indian Point of View". New Perspectives in
Canadian Archaeology, Proceedings of a Symposium Spon-
sored by the Royal Society of Canada. Toronto: Royal
Society of Canada, Royal Ontario Museum, National Museum.
- Jorgensen, J. G.
1973 "On Ethics and Anthropology". To See Ourselves: T.
T. Weaver ed. Glenview, Ill: Scott Fossman and Company.

- Labreche, J.
1977 "Bringing Back the Past at Today's Prices". Macleans 90/6:78.
- LaRoque, E.
1975 Defeathering the Indian. Agincourt: Book Society of Canada.
- Lazore, M.
1978 "Museum Returns Ancient Bones to Mohawks For Proper Reburial". The Native Perspective 2/6:12.
- Lurie, N. O.
1971 "As Others See Us". New University Thought 7/4:29-32.
- Kenyon, W. A.
1977 "Some Bones of Contention: The Neutral Indian Burial Site at Grimsby". Rotunda 10/3:4-13.

1974 "Focus: On the Ethics of Archaeological Excavation". Rotunda 7/3:2-3.
- Key, A. F.
1973 Beyond Four Walls. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd.
- Kraëmer, R.
1977 "Precedence: Morality or History?". Anthropological Journal of Canada. 15/2:59.
- Mason, J. A.
1960 "Observations on the Function of the Museum in Anthropology". Essays in Honour of Paul Radin. S. Diamond ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Maynard, E.
1974 "The Growing Negative Image of the Anthropologist Among American Indians". Human Organization 33/4:402-3.
- McNickle, D.
1972 "American Indians Who Never Were". The American Indian Reader: Anthropology. J. Henry ed. San Francisco: Indian Historian Press Inc.
- Medicine, B.
1972 "The Anthropologist As the Indian's Image Maker". The American Indian Reader: Anthropology. J. Henry ed. San Francisco: Indian Historian Press Inc.
- Nason, J. D., Hopkins, K. R. and Medicine, B.
1973 "Finders Keepers?". Museum News 51/7:20-6.
- Native Students of the Native Studies Programme at Trent University and the North American Travelling College.
1977 "Anthropology and the Native People of Ontario". Gazette 10/4:6.

- Newsom, B. Y. and Silver A. Z.
1977 "Indian Art -- 'Living With the Political Realities".
Art News 76/10:92-5.
- Oritz, A.
1971 "An Indian Anthropologist's Perspective on Anthropology".
Indian Historian 4/1:11-4.
- Pettipas, L. F. and Kelly M. E.
1977 "Why Archaeology? A Discussion of the Benefits Arising
From the Study of the Past". Dawson and Hind Quarterly
6/1:42-53.
- Plains Anthropological Association,
1971 "American Indian Militants vs Archaeologists". A Sym-
posium Transcription of the 29th Plains Anthropological
Conference, Winnipeg, October 11.
- Reynolds, B.
1970 "Ethnology in Museums". A Paper Delivered at the North-
east Museums Conference, September 1970.
- Roberts, F.
1975 "Museum Skeletons Re-Buried in Quiet Riverbank Ceremony".
Winnipeg Tribune, June 3.
- Rogers, E. S.
1977/8 "Indians and Anthropologists: Contention or Cooperation?".
Rotunda 10/4:34-9.
- Russell, J.
1974 "The Sad Decay of the Museum of the American Indian".
New York Times, September 1.
- Strynadka, A.
1970 "One Native Person's Comments on the Field of Anthro-
pology". Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology
1/3:32-6.
- Sturtevant, W. C.
1969 "Does Anthropology Need Museums?". Proceedings of the
Biological Society of Washington 82:619-50.
- Steinhauer, R.
1975 "The Canadian Heritage: A Native's Point of View".
Preserving The Canadian Heritage, Royal Society of Canada
14th Symposium. Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada.
- Swauger, J. L.
1975 "Indians See Past in Museum". Toronto Globe and Mail,
November 26.
- T.E.L.
1977 "Indian Rights". Anthropological Journal of Canada 15/4:??.

- Thomas, C.
1971 "Ethics in Archaeology". *Antiquity* 45/180:268-74.
- Weaver, T.
1973 *To See Ourselves: Anthropology and Modern Social Issues*.
Glenview Ill: Scott Fossman and Company.
- Wiebe, R.
1975 "All That's Left of Big Bear". *Macleans* 88/9:53-5.
- Zegas, J. B.
1976 "North American Indian Exhibit at the Centennial Exposition". *Curator* 19/2:162-73.
- Zelle, A.
1971 "Acquisitions: Saving Whose Heritage?" *Museum News* 51/8:19-26.

News Papers

- Anonymous.
1977 "Museum to Display Riel's Leg Shackles". *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 30.

"Mohawks Win Return of Bones From Dig". *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 1.
- 1976 "AIM Opposes Grave Openings". *Winnipeg Free Press* Dec. 4.

"Occupation by AIM Ends as Pact Near on Disposal of Bones". *Winnipeg Free Press* December 2.
- 1975 "Dealers, Indians Squabble Over Artifacts". *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 30.

"Skeletons Found In Burial Mound Near Selkirk". *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 15.