

CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN MUSEUMS: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF
CHANGES ON VISITOR EXPERIENCE

by

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Abstract

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Cultural Representation in Museums: Assessing the Impact of Changes on Visitor Experience

Thesis directed by Professor Jennifer Shannon

In the last few decades museums in the United States had experienced major changes. Responding to extensive postmodern critique of the field, museums made a concerted effort to reevaluate their role in their communities. This “re-thinking” led to some of the most interesting changes in museum practice and how these institutions relate to their public. One of those changes is the dramatic increase in the amount of attention that museums now pay to the socio-economic and cultural diversity of their audiences. Museums are not only acknowledging that diversity, but also are focused on accommodating it within their walls. This research looks at two different museums: one is a major mainstream American museum that had implemented many of these changes in the design of its new Native American Arts gallery. The other is a large tribal museum. Through the use of evaluation techniques this research reveals the impact of the new design strategies used by the mainstream museum of visitors’ experience. The results are then compared to similar research conducted at the tribal museums.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Defining the problem

I'd say it's a good mix of past and present and maybe the future. It's nice that it is not just so historical that you think "been there, seen that." I was able to recognize some old stuff, but even that tells you where it came from and where it is going. It's a nice story.

Visitor to the Denver Art Museum

Probably those photographs on the wall, those had really impacted me greatly. They seem more like individuals. 'Cause like, they all get depicted the same way. So, their faces make it like there's people [sic] behind it... So it is nice to see 'cause you realize that they were actual people.

Visitor to the Denver Art Museum

The above quotes were collected during the summative evaluation of the newly re-designed Native Arts gallery at the Denver Art Museum. Although at the first glance they might not seem all that remarkable, they actually express the intent of the new gallery almost perfectly. The possible effect that this renovation has on the visitor experience in this new exhibit is the primary focus of this research.

Gallery renovation is a normal part of museums' practice. However, the idea that fueled the change in the Denver Art Museum is considered to be a result of the major changes in the museum practice in the United States in the last several decades. Responding to extensive postmodern critique of the field, museums made a concerted effort to reevaluate their role in their communities (Kahn, 2000, 57).

This "re-thinking" led to some of the most interesting changes in museum practice and how these institutions relate to their public. One of those changes is the dramatic increase in the amount of attention that museums now pay to the socio-economic and cultural diversity of their audiences. Museums are not only acknowledging that diversity, but also are focused on accommodating it within their walls.

In the last few decades, American Association of Museums (AAM) has made a conscientious effort to ensure that those changes were not mere slogans. To ensure that museums stay relevant in today's society, AAM identifies education and public engagement as central to museums' practice. Education is no longer considered to be a small part of museum function, but an institution-wide focus especially if museums want to be accredited by the Association (American Association of Museums [AAM], 1992, 12).

Besides education, a greater engagement with communities in museum practice is also strongly promoted by the AAM. Museums are encouraged to be proactive in establishing strong relationships with diverse cultural groups that comprise their audience, as well as to incorporate various cultural perspectives into their practice (AAM, 1992, 20).

Another significant development was the rise of the truly collaborative projects. Although in the past many museums had brought in community advisors during exhibition planning, ultimately the decision was made by a curator and an exhibit development team and so the power remained within the museum (Ames, 2003, 172).

Today's collaborative exhibits are fundamentally different from that early practice. The community consultants are involved in every part of the exhibit planning not only as advisers but as decision-makers as well. In these types of projects the sharing of power and authority between museums and their communities serves as the foundation for the exhibit (Phillips, 2003, 158).

These changes only became possible after museums recognized that their audience also includes the very communities that they were making exhibits about, and that the way museums represent those communities has a significant effect on them. Museums also began to acknowledge these source communities, whose material culture makes up many museum collections, as the experts on their own cultures (Peers & Brown, 2003, 1).

Collaborative projects had a profound effect on the exhibiting strategies used by mainstream American museums (museums whose practice is based mostly on Eurocentric models), that attempted to exhibit different cultures, particularly in the case of Native Americans. The changes include arranging objects according to the community's understanding of their meaning and function, including a wider variety of objects into the exhibit, etc. This led to overall increase in exhibits in which "Native voice" is very prominent, which is to say that Native American communities present

themselves in the way they consider is correct and appropriate (Shannon, 2009, 218-247).

This issue of the “correct” representation of the Native American cultures is what drives all these changes in the first place. Part of the challenge that museums face is that there is no single way in which a culture can be defined. Even within communities there is no absolute agreement on the meaning and significance of many ideas. Despite all this, I believe that exhibits about cultures can be transformative educational experiences; they can challenge the established ideas by presenting different ways of thinking about Native Americans and by engaging visitors in a dialog about those differences. Exhibits expose visitors to objects they do not see in their everyday lives and a good design can prompt viewers to form new concepts and change some of the existing ideas they might have (Hein, 1998, 152).

My interest in this topic began with an event that occurred at the University Of Colorado Museum Of Natural History a couple of years ago. At the time the museum was exhibiting its renowned collection of Navajo textiles which drew quite a bit of attention and a definite increase in visitors. Although the exhibit featured a number of contemporary textiles, one tended to draw more attention. It was an image of Santa Clause and it was woven in such a way that the fibers that made up a beard were sticking out, producing a 3-D-like effect.

Among many comments made about that particular textile, one sparked a lot of conversations among several of the museum staff. After viewing the exhibit, one of the

visitors remarked that that textile was not “really” Indian because it depicted a figure that is so obviously a part of the Western cultural tradition.

This incident demonstrates another constraint that mainstream museums have to consider when planning an exhibit about different cultures. Even if their knowledge of the subject is limited, visitors come to museums with certain ideas and expectations and museums cannot disregard that – they must incorporate those ideas and expectations into the exhibit design process. The renovation of the Native Arts gallery at the Denver Art Museum was especially interesting, because many of the educational components in the new gallery challenge these expectations by asking questions about them. This approach to exhibit design presented an excellent opportunity to look at how museums manage such compromises, and to assess their impact of on visitors.

Overview of methods

In this research I compare two museums that have Native American materials on display: the Denver Art Museum, located in Denver, Colorado, and the Navajo Nation Museum, located in Window Rock, Arizona. These museums display their material from two very different points of view. The Denver Art Museum is a well-established, mainstream museum that has collections from around the world. The Navajo Nation Museum on the other hand is a tribal museum focused on the history and culture of the Navajo people. It represents the history and culture from the point of view of the Navajo people. I compare the results of the interviews from these two museums to see whether such different perspectives were noticed by the visitors.

Both museums have extensive collections, were accessible and agreed to my research. Denver Art Museum is located nearby, and I had a chance to work with the Navajo Nation Museum on an unrelated project, which gave me an opportunity to collect data for this research.

My focus of inquiry at these museums was the visitors that viewed their exhibits about Native Americans. For the purpose of this research, I have defined “more accurate representation” of Native Americans in museums as the one that attempts to represent Native American cultures with a foundation in the past but also firmly as part of the contemporary world. This idea was expressed well by the founding director of the National Museum of American Indian Richard West when he described that museum as “a hemispheric institution of living cultures... [it] focuses on the cultural present and future as it is on a cultural past” (West, 1999, 8).

A museum that strives for accurate representation is one that is open to working with Native Americans to establish a good relationship of mutual understanding. Without that understanding, a respectful partnership of any kind would be very hard to achieve. Such a museum also understands that items on display should give the audience a basic understanding of Native Americans without using potentially sensitive cultural material such as sacred and ceremonial items. It is open to the fact that Native Americans must be included in the entire process of creating displays to ensure that they are culturally accurate and appropriate. This definition stems from my own research and personal experiences, as well as from the works of 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).

Museums

Denver Art Museum.

Mission statement: to enrich the lives of Colorado and Rocky Mountain residents through the acquisition, preservation, and presentation of artworks in both the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions (Denver Art Museum [DAM], Mission and History, 2012).

The Denver Art Museum is a private, non-profit organization that views education as one of its major goals. It is widely recognized for its innovative and family-friendly approach to the educational programming and gallery designs. Located in one of the major urban centers of the Rocky Mountain region, the museum strives to serve the highly diverse population of Colorado and beyond in accordance with its mission.

The Denver Art Museum was founded in 1893. Today it houses an impressive array of the works of art from around the world. In particular, it has one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Native American works of art in the country. In fact, the Denver Art Museum was the first major American museum to collect and exhibit Native American material as fine art and its current collection covers the artistic works of the majority of the Native tribes in the United States and many from Canada (DAM, American Indian Art, 2012).

Although it has always been one of the main attractions in the museum, in the summer of 2011 the Denver Art museum closed its Native Arts gallery for a much needed renovation. The project was the first attempt at a major re-design of the gallery in more than 20 years. The previous gallery was installed in 1988 and, with few minor

changes throughout the years, remained untouched until it was closed. The organization of the gallery reflected the accepted (at that time) way of dividing Native American peoples into groups arranged by geographic regions and culture areas.

Objects were displayed against a monochromatic, gray background with large format black and white historical images of various Native groups marking major regions. There was little connection between the objects within each grouping and vast majority of the material on display highlighted historic or prehistoric works. The few contemporary pieces that were featured were displayed in a small portion in the back of the gallery, which was set apart from the rest of the exhibit through the use of much brighter background color (Brooks, 45, 2012).

After the renovation, the overall layout of the new gallery remained the same, but the current exhibit has a very different feel to it. It is much brighter, much more colorful and engaging, and it includes a greater variety of art works. The number of contemporary works is much greater as well and they are dispersed throughout the gallery rather than being relegated to the back of the space. In fact, works of the contemporary Native American artists greet visitors at both possible entrances into the main gallery. However, the most significant changes are the presentation of the material and the overall message of the gallery.

The main objectives of the renovation project were to increase the visibility of the Native American artists and to highlight their individuality and creativeness (DAM, "Request," 2006). The museum did this by implementing a number of changes. Many of the contemporary art works, such as a painting by Jean Quick-to-See Smith, are

accompanied by the additional information that explains the artists' inspirations and intent. Throughout the gallery, a number of design elements display questions to the audience, for example, "What is Native American Art? Does it have to be functional? Does it have to be made from certain materials?"

The museum also arranged for many of the practicing Native American artists to visit the gallery, providing opportunities for visitors to engage with art and artists on multiple levels. They even commissioned a renowned Native artist Roxanne Swentzell to create a piece inside the gallery as an art-in-progress project, so that museum visitors could observe an artist at work.

The change that most clearly evident is in the labels used in the gallery. Although the museum did not move completely away from some of the more traditional ways of displaying Native American material (geographic and culture area groupings), it was more in response to the visitor expectations that became obvious after early visitor's studies, rather than curator's desire to keep them (Randi Korn & Associates, 2003). Even with this particular organization remaining, the way those culture areas are labeled is fundamentally different. Each area is signified by a large scale image of a Native American individual that belonged to one of the tribes in that area and is labeled "Artists of..." The labels for all of the objects in the gallery follow the same model (but without images), and when the name of the individual artist is not known (as is the case for many objects on display), the label still says "Zuni artist" or "Hopi artist."

Such seemingly small difference, adding the word "artist" to a label, carries a very powerful message. It signifies that objects on display were not produced by the entire

culture, but by an individual in that culture. By highlighting the individuality of the people that made those objects, the exhibit is challenging not only the ideas about Native American art, but about Native Americans in general. Focusing on the artists acknowledges their individual creativity and skill; as well as the fact that although artists are working within the ideas and traditions of their cultures, are not completely bound by them.

Just like other artists, they express their own understanding of the world around them through their work. They build on the existing traditions while adding their own interpretations of those traditions and their experiences of the many changes that affected Native Americans. By acknowledging Native artists the museum is validating their voice as the authority in their own art, and affording the same respect that is given to the non-Native artists.

Navajo Nation Museum.

Mission statement: Striving to achieve Hozho through contemporary and traditional exhibits, programs and tours; to promote our Dine culture, language, history and sovereignty (Facebook, n.d.). (Hozho can be approximately translated as a concept of balance and beauty)

Navajo Nation Museum is a unit of the Navajo Nation and is a part of the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department. It was established in 1961, and for a while, it was constrained by the small size of the building in which it was located. In 1998 the museum was moved into a much larger building that also houses Navajo Nation Library and a Visitor Center and the office of Miss Navajo Nation. Today, the museum houses a

very extensive collection of archival, ethnographic, art and archaeological material that deals with the history and culture of the Navajo people (MuseumsUSA, 2012).

The museum features an active and well-developed exhibit program with most exhibits produced in-house. The exhibit space is divided into several galleries with rotating exhibits that focus on a number of different topics, from the works by Navajo artists, to history and culture. In addition to exhibits, the museum also runs a number of educational programs that are implemented by the Education Curator and Navajo Cultural specialists. These programs include gallery tours and presentations to school groups and other visitors, as well as education programs in schools for younger students, teachers, and families. The Navajo Nation Museum is recognized as one of the most important sources of cultural education for the Navajo youth (MuseumsUSA, 2012).

Visitors begin to experience Navajo culture from the moment they step into the museum. The lobby is designed to resemble a traditional Navajo structure, or Hogan, with a sand-and- tile floor mural in the center depicting four sacred mountains marking Navajo territory. In the lobby there are looms set up for those who are interested in weaving and would want to try it firsthand. The museum's galleries take up over half of the building and follow the curved form of the building. Although the exhibit space can be considered a single, continuous gallery, it is actually subdivided into several distinct spaces. At the time of the data collection there were five different exhibits featured: one displaying paintings of the Navajo artist Jim Abeita; an exhibit about forced relocation of Navajo people to Fort Sumner, known as the "Long walk"; an exhibit about some of the central cultural traditions and ideas; an exhibit about Chief Manuelito who was

instrumental in negotiating the return of the Navajos to their homeland; and, an exhibit of the works by young Navajo photographers.

From my conversations with the curator, the museum has always been following this pattern of mixing art, historical and contemporary exhibits, and it was evident from the interviews with the visitors that they liked it.

Interviews

To examine visitors' perceptions of the material on display I decided to do personal interviews. To collect data I conducted structured interviews with the visitors to both museums. Although structured interviews are usually less flexible in terms of the direction of the conversation (Diamond, Luke, Uttal, 2009, 74), and the interviews that I had developed did have a predetermined script, the interviewees were not discouraged from providing additional information if they wished to do so. I had created a set of open-ended questions that attempted to understand if and how different ways of displaying cultural material affected visitors' experience in the galleries of both museums.

A total of fifty interviews were collected, twenty five at each museum. Each interview consisted of two parts: the first part included demographic questionnaire and was completed by the participants; the second part was tape-recorded question-and-answer. Once interviews were collected, I transcribed them for the analysis (see Results).

I chose personal interviews over survey as a data collection method for several reasons. First, I was not looking specifically at how many people had a particular idea

about Native Americans, so qualitative methods were more appropriate. The topic of my research deals with a polarizing history that may makes some people uncomfortable. Keeping that in mind, I asked open –ended question during one-on-one interview would be the most productive.

I also wanted to use this form of evaluation to explore the idea of exhibits as educational devices. Visitor studies and program evaluation in museums are much more than just learning who the visitors are and why they are coming to museums. I wanted to illustrate how assessment can be used to assess the extent of the impact of the exhibits on the visitors beyond just whether they liked them or not. I believe that if museums have a better understanding of how and what visitors learn from exhibits they can better utilize the resources available to them to achieve their educational goals.

The idea that exhibits can and should be used for educational purposes is far from being new. People had been debating the role and the value of museums in the society for a very long time, and the understanding of those ideas has changed significantly since the establishment of museums. As different theories of learning have developed, the the value of informal learning has become more and more prominent (Hein 1998:9-13). It was fairly recently that the American Association of Museums released a report that solidified the educational priorities of museums:

The community of the museums in the United States shares the responsibility with other educational institutions to enrich learning opportunities for all individuals and to nurture an enlightened, humane citizenry that appreciates the value of knowing about its past, is resourcefully and sensitively engaged in the

present, and is determined to shape a future in which many experiences and many points of view are given voice (AAM, 1992, 28).

It is that last line of that statement that is of interest to this research. Considering the history of the relationship between the Native American peoples and mainstream museums, it might seem surprising that museum exhibits would be anyone's choice of method by which to address and possibly correct that history. The fact remains, however, that despite all the criticism that museums had faced, and the tremendous changes that had occurred in the last few decades in term of displaying cultures, people continue to view museums as the most trusted sources of information that present and interpret different cultures through objects (AAM, 2001).

Museums are still all about using objects in their collections either for preservation or for use in scientific research. What makes the difference now is how those objects are presented and interpreted. Increasingly, museums serve as sites where national and local histories are challenged and re-examined, dramatically expanding their social role. (Hein 1998:9-13) The changes that the Denver Art Museum implemented in its new gallery provide a good example of how museums can use objects to prompt visitors to think about certain issues.

In the past art museums played a significant role in "defining" what Native American art should be. They set the parameters that determined whether the works produced by the Native artists conformed to their definitions (Anthes, 2006, 143). It is thus especially interesting that one of those art museums is using its collection in an attempt to change the perceptions that, in a way, it had helped to create in the first

place. Increasing the visibility of contemporary Native American art and artists, asking questions throughout the gallery that challenge visitors to re-think their ideas about American Indian art all point to the museum's greater understanding of its potential to affect change.

Of course I doubt that anyone is expecting that this one exhibit is going to completely change how people perceive Native American in general. Those perceptions have been, and in some respect still are, formed by a number of different factors of which museums are only a part. That being said, one has to start somewhere, and exhibits like those at the Denver Art Museum are definitely better than maintaining status quo.

I chose evaluation to explore the results of the changes implemented in the new Native Arts gallery, as well as visitor experience at the Navajo Nation Museum. The interviews that I had conducted ended up being a summative evaluation of sorts (although I did not start out with that particular goal in mind). Although my sample size was relatively small, the results revealed some interesting trends in both places.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

History of the Relationship between Native Americas and the United States museums

Museums as agents of empire.

In order to understand the complexity of the relationship that exists today between the various Native American peoples and mainstream museums one has to look not only at the history of the United States as a nation, but at the history of museums as institutions as well.

It would seem that acquiring things, especially things that are considered exotic, is a part of being human. Throughout history people collected things that fascinated them with their beauty or with their strangeness. As various civilizations grew and developed collecting became a common part of the military conquest. As Elissa S. Myerowitz (1996) puts it:

Since the dawn of civilization, powerful nations have plundered and pillaged whatever cultural property they could carry from the nations that they conquered. The history of cultural looting dates back to the Roman Empire in 400 B.C. The Romans did not display their loot for its artistic value, but rather to demonstrate the prowess of their own victories. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the resulting political chaos increased the destruction of cultural property. From the

Crusades and the Spanish search for gold, to the European Thirty Years' War and the French Revolution, armies continually ransacked cultural property. The Nazis' reign during World War II also involved the plunder of cultural property. The Nazis seized art from conquered nations as a symbol of their strength (1961-1962).

Thus, the practice of displaying the objects taken from the conquered peoples existed long before the European colonization of the New World and it continued well afterward. It was a sign of prestige and conquerors were doing it for a long time to show their superiority over the nations they had subjugated. Kathleen Fine-Dare (2002) calls it a part of the “nation and empire building” process (17-18), which was made possible by the inherent power of the cultural display. Collected items served as evidence of the power of the nations that took them (Hendry, 2005, 6).

Of course, cultural items were not collected only during conquest, but armed conflicts made it much easier to justify taking the materials afterward. In late 18th century Europe, the close association of archaeology with the state's military expansions resulted in two things: archaeologists and other collectors gained access to new areas of the World, and in exchange their work helped the imperial nations justify the conquest as the “enlightening of the savages” (Fine-Dare, 2002, 15-16). Europeans firmly believed that, as the most civilized people in the world, it was their responsibility to impose that civilization on everyone else (Errington, 1998, 30). In the United States, this attitude was best expressed by the notion of Manifest Destiny – the idea that it was this nation's “divine right” to conquer the continent in the name of God.

The meaning of this notion is perhaps best expressed by this famous quote by John L. O'Sullivan: "Our manifest destiny [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions" ("Westward," 2012). Early Americans viewed this idea as a rightful reason for the continental expansion at all costs. It was also used to defend often genocidal policies aimed toward Native Americans. Since they stood in the way of achieving its destiny, the young nation felt justified in how it dealt with the first inhabitants of the land that refused assimilation (Zimmerman, 1997, 94).

Despite the long history of people and nations collecting the material from other cultures, until museums became a part of the national heritage of many European countries there were no systematic attempts to collect ethnographic material. Early museums started out as what later would become known as cabinets of curiosity. Most of those objects were part of the private collections which, while not completely haphazard, were highly idiosyncratic and reflected the particular interests of the collector. Often, those early collections were displayed not according to a particular classification system, but to reflect the adventures of the collectors (McLoughlin, 1999, 62).

It was only after those collections became part of state museums that there arose a need for the scientific approach to collecting and curating of those objects. They were no longer "curiosities" but scientific specimens that required new ways of handling (Ames, 1992, 17). This preoccupation with the notion of "scientific" was a reflection of significant changes in the European society. The colonialist's practices had a tremendous influence not only on the indigenous peoples around the world, but also

on the predominant scientific and social paradigms of the 19th century (McLoughlin, 1999, 69). This can be seen in the way that Darwin's theory of Natural Selection was adopted to explain cultural diversity.

During the late 1800s Darwin's theory of evolution was becoming more and more influential and scientists increasingly began to challenge the Biblical story of human history. The European intellectual community was trying to find other explanations in order to understand the origins of humanity. All that debate resulted in the emergence of several major theories that attempted to explain it from the "scientific" rather than religious point of view: monogenesis, polygenesis, and social evolutionism (McLoughlin, 1998, 69).

Out of those three theories, social evolutionism would have the most impact on the museum display of cultural material. Its proponents, such as Lewis Henry Morgan (McLoughlin, 1999, 100) attempted to apply the principles of Darwin's theory that explained biological diversity to differences found in cultures (Fine-Dare, 2002, 23). I believe that eventual acceptance of Darwin's theory had a lot to do with how prevalent this particular theory turned out to be, because the idea that the observed differences were a part of a "natural" development of human cultures was very powerful.

This preoccupation with finding scientific explanations led to the emergence of what would later become known as scientific racism. Just like the idea of Manifest Destiny in the U.S., scientific racism was used to justify colonial expansion, as all other cultures were always compared to the European civilization and all of the discrepancies

and “deficiencies” were attributed to the physical and mental inferiority of the non-European peoples (Fine-Dare, 2002, 41).

However, for these ideas to become accepted as scientific truth, researchers needed to have proof. To obtain that proof, scientists turned to measuring such obvious physical characteristics as the shape of people’s heads and the size of their brains. The idea was that if the inferiority of the non-Europeans was proven using “objective and impartial” (emphasis mine) scientific method, then the colonization would become justified as a necessity in order to “civilize” the people (McLoughlin, 1999, 71).

In order to conduct such studies scientists needed a sizable collection of human remains, which resulted in a widespread practice of decapitating Native American human remains at the sites of battles or massacres, as well as the desecration of many burial grounds under the guise of “scientific prerogative.” These activities were so widespread that even Franz Boas, who many consider to be the founder of American Anthropology participated in them (although he did it to disprove the ideas put forth by the scientific racism) (Fine-Dare, 2002, 30-33).

All these ideas and practices had significant consequences for early museum practice. It was most influential in how objects were collected and displayed to the public.

Collecting.

How things are collected tells a lot about the attitudes and beliefs of those doing the collecting. It also reveals many aspects of relationship between groups that exchange things. Early ethnographic collecting had often been considered by some as a

practice that contributed to the colonization of non-European people, since a lot of it did take place in various colonies (O'Hanlon, 2000).

Raw materials extracted from the colonies helped fuel the industrial development of the 19th century Europe and America and that, together with commercialization had changed how these societies saw things produced by the non-industrial cultures. These attitudes were “personified” by the numerous industrial exhibitions of that age (Hinsley, 1991, 344-345).

On the one hand those events were organized to showcase and celebrate the achievements of the industrial nations. The way it was done though was through the comparing of the European and American societies to the rest of the world, specifically to the colonized peoples (Hinsley, 1991, 345). Cultural objects, as well as indigenous people hired to participate in the exhibitions, were collected to demonstrate the superiority and dominion of the colonizing powers over “primitives.” (Errington, 1998, 14).

Many collectors also believed that they were doing a very important work. This attitude was a result of another notion that had a tremendous effect on the relationships between mainstream museums and Native American people. It was the idea that due to the contact with the European settlers, American Indian cultures were on their way to become extinct. Many museums sponsored large expeditions that produced large and often comprehensive collections of everyday items in order to preserve the last remains of the Native cultures, known today as Salvage Ethnography (Jackins, 2002).

Although many of the objects that found their way into museum collections were either purchased or given as gifts, many more were obtained using highly questionable and often completely unethical methods. To a large degree it was a result of the government's policy of assimilation and acculturation that many Native American religious and ceremonial practices were forbidden and large number of objects associated with the Native religious practices were confiscated and then sold to private collectors and museums. Although many objects were given to the researchers as gifts, many more were stolen or dug up from the graves (Fine-Dare, 2002, 32).

To that effect, physical objects and human remains were not the only things that were being collected during those times. As part of the effort to record as much of their "vanishing" cultures as possible, early ethnographers and anthropologists also collected information about religious and ceremonial practices, often without permission and against the wishes of the Native communities. This information had then been made public, violating established cultural traditions in regard to knowledge access and sharing (Isaac, 2007).

This history had resulted in very tense relationships between Native American communities and museums, even after significant changes in the scientific and social attitudes led museums to the abandon of many of the early collecting practices. For a very long time, despite the requests from many Native communities, many museums refused to return any of their holdings back to the people they were taken from. Museum justified that by insisting that existing Native peoples had lost their cultures through the constant contact with Euro-Americans, and that museum curators were greater experts on their cultures than the Native peoples themselves. They argued that

all those objects were now a part of global human heritage and thus were much better off remaining in museums where they can be preserved for posterity. Human remains were viewed as scientific specimens that could be potentially used in future research (Fine-Dare, 2002, 5).

Early displays.

All this history had left a lingering effect on the way the Native American Cultures were represented in the mainstream American museums. The early displays were heavily influenced by the ideas of progress which was defined primarily in terms of technological advances. That put European cultures squarely at the top of the “civilized” world and allowed European scientists to compare everything else to it (Errington, 1998).

As mentioned above, many theories were proposed to explain why there was such a variety in the world’s cultures, with Social Evolutionism being one of the major one. It reinforced the idea that European cultures were the pinnacle of cultural evolution as well as situated all other cultures in a particular stage on the evolutionary path. Social evolutionism also meant that “civilized” Europeans had moral authority to spread their civilization onto other. This particular theory had a profound effect on museum displays for a very long time. Perhaps one of the most known techniques that came out of the ideas of social and cultural evolutionism was the typological display developed by G. A. Pitt-Rivers (Chapman, 1985).

Pitt-Rivers believed that human cultures evolved linearly from primitive to complex and that this development could be demonstrated through the display of

objects. Based on the level of their technology most Native American cultures were characterized as primitive and this notion stuck. Creating typological displays also led to the notions of authentic and inauthentic ethnographic material. In order to demonstrate that cultures go from primitive to complex, it was necessary to show that the change in the design and complexity of objects was present before the “civilizing” contact with Europeans. Following that notion, museums were concerned with attaining pre-contact material, as anything made after that was considered to be “corrupted” by the European influence and not truly Native American (Jackins, 2002).

This type of display led to a very static and outdated portrayal of the Native American peoples that they have been resisting for a very long time. The fight by Native Americans for the right to their cultural patrimony closely parallels a larger struggle for self-determination and cultural autonomy. For years many Native groups insisted on the return of their cultural material. When requests to museum went unheeded they turned to law, often with mixed results. Since there was no definitive law addressing the issue at that time, many court cases turned into long and difficult legal battles. The Pawnee tribe of Oklahoma had to use a number of different state and federal laws in order to facilitate the return of the remains of their ancestors (Fine-Dare, 2002, 102). However, many museums had been willing to work with the communities on their good will without the requirement by any legislation. For example, the Peabody Museum in Harvard had returned a sacred pole to the Omaha Nation when they had requested it back well before any laws that would require it (Ridington, 1997).

These struggles made the issues much more visible to the public and to the museum community in particular, which in turn helped change the relationships

between museums and Native American communities. Some of the most notable changes that occurred both in the realm of law and museum practice were the passage of Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act and the increasing inclusion of Native communities in the exhibit and program development.

Native Americans and Cultural Resource Laws. Brief Overview.

The legislature dealing with the Native American cultural material had been around for a long time. In the 19th century, the constant advance of the westward expansion put Native Americans into an increased contact with white settlers. The looting of graves was becoming such a widespread activity that the archaeologists and government officials became concerned that all of the important sites were going to be destroyed. As a result, the federal government passed several laws that had significant effect on both Native Americans and museums.

Among some of the early such legislations was the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906. It allowed the government to declare all of the archaeological sites, especially the ones that were known to have pre-contact materials, as national monuments (Bureau of Land Management, "Antiquities Act," n.d.). Only professional archaeologists with federal permits could conduct research there, all of the remains from the burials and associated materials found on those lands were sent to the museums as archaeological specimens. It is obvious that while this law was designed to protect Native American cultural material, it was actually very detrimental to the Native American communities. Under this law, the Native American ancestors and the funerary material found with

them became objectified to the point that they became “things” that scientists could study (Fine-Dare 2002, 62).

Native American activism.

Native American political activism became much more visible during the Civil Rights movement that was changing the country during in the middle of the last century. The American Indian Movement, founded in 1968, fought for a number of issues that led to the passage of such laws as the Indian Education Act of 1972, the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, etc. One of the acts passed during that period was of particular significance to museums. American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 recognized the right of Native American to practice their religion in accordance with their cultural practices. (Fine-Dare, 2002, 79).

One of the problems with this law was the fact that many of the objects that were essential to the practice of Native religion were now in possession of museum. There were no laws or regulations that would require museums to relinquish their holdings, which created a new obstacle for many Native groups. The efforts to correct the failings of the Religious Freedom Act however led to the passage of the law that had the most significant implications for the nation's museum.

NAGPRA 1990.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act passed in 1990 is considered to be one of the most important legislations in the history of the relationship between Native Americans and the US federal government.

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 (1997) 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 may be transferred by individuals, and what property can be alienated or placed in trust only by the entire tribal group (88).

Undoubtedly, NAGPRA was one of the most significant pieces of legislation that happened as result of unrelenting struggle by the Native communities for their rights. This law also had a profound effect on museums and how they structured their relationships with their communities. Although the law is not perfect, it led museums to acknowledge the necessity of consultation with Native communities. That in turn

resulted in increased collaborations for other purposes as well, such as increased inclusion of indigenous perspective in exhibits, and collaborations between mainstream museums and an increasing number of tribal museums and cultural centers. Many Native American Nations now have their own museums where they can present their own views of their culture and history. Many of these tribal museums also function as educational centers for Native American youths.

These developments led to some notable changes in how Native cultures are exhibited. More and more museums are trying to include contemporary Native material, and to highlight issues faced by the Native Americans today, rather than present a historic account of the culture as it used to be. This trend to let Native cultures speak for themselves is seen not only in the tribal museums. One of the most known examples of a mainstream museum attempting to do so is The National Museum of American Indian in Washington, D.C.

This particular museum is interesting in that despite being a mainstream institution (it is a part of the Smithsonian Institution), the way that it presents its collections is very different. The museum is focused on celebrating not only the extensive history of the Native Americans, but also living Native cultures of today, and communities represented in its exhibits are given control over how they are portrayed.

Chapter 3

Data Analysis

Methodology

Data for this study was collected through the series of personal interviews with the visitors to two different museums: the Denver Art Museum (DAM) and the Navajo Nation Museum (NNM). The interviews at the Denver Art Museum were conducted between July 1, 2011 and July 29, 2011; the data were collected in the Native Arts gallery of the museum at one of the exits. The interviews at the Navajo Nation Museum were conducted between August 3, 2011 and August 11, 2011; the data were collected in the lobby of the museum, at the exit from the galleries.

For this study I used convenience sampling strategy. My method of recruitment was to approach the first visitor that exited the galleries to solicit an interview. If that visitor agreed I proceed with the interview, but if the visitor declined, I approached next person that came out of the galleries.

A total of fifty interviews were collected, twenty five at each museum. Each interview consisted of two parts. The first part included demographic questionnaire and was completed by the participants. The second part was tape-recorded question-and-answer, each following a set script that was transcribed and coded for analysis. On average, interviews took about five to six minutes to complete.

The data were coded manually by the researcher. Initially, the data were reduced to the most frequent trends that could be identified in the responses to each question. The reduced data were further reduced to identify the major themes/trends.

The visitors

At the Denver Art Museum, the visitors interviewed were noticeably unequally divided between men and women, with women comprising vast majority (21 to 4), but were almost equally represented between in-state residents (12 visitors) and out-of-state residents (11 visitors). Majority were first time visitors, Caucasian, over the age of 61. These results fall within the usual demographic of the art museums (Museum Demographics, 2010).

At the Navajo Nation Museum, the difference between the genders was not quite as large, but still noticeable with sixteen women and nine men. The majority of visitors came from Arizona (9 visitors) and New Mexico (8 visitors), with some from other states and one from out of the country. Out of those seventeen visitors that came from Arizona and New Mexico, fifteen were the residents of the Navajo Nation Reservation. A majority of the visitors (14 visitors, 56%) have been to the museum before, sometimes multiple times. The largest age bracket was 18 – 30 years old, although the ages were spread fairly evenly across other age brackets.

Results

Denver Art Museum

Visitor opinions.

Although one of the main goals of this study was to assess the effect of the exhibit on visitors' perceptions of and attitudes towards Native American cultures, visitors were not questioned about these things directly. The interview questions focused on the existing knowledge of and interest in the Native American cultures, but through those answers some of the attitudes became fairly obvious.

Level of interest in Native American cultures.

At the Denver Art museum, visitors' comments about their interest in the American Indian cultures leaned overwhelmingly towards being very general. Twenty out of twenty five people interviewed indicated that they were visiting the Native Arts gallery as a part of a general visit to the museum.

Out of those twenty visitors, six indicated that they had no particular interest in Native American cultures and were just looking around. The remaining fourteen visitors had a varying degree of interest, although none had more than just general "I think it's nice" type of reason. Some (5 visitors) indicated that they liked certain type of things that Native American cultures are known for (beading, pottery, basketry) and they wanted to see those items. Two visitors indicated that they were interested because they either grew up near a reservation or had lived in an area with sizable Native American population.

Only five of the visitors interviewed at the Denver Art Museum had a particular interest in coming to the gallery. Two had done some work with Native American communities in the past and had retained a high degree of interest in the cultures. The

other three visitors said that their interest in coming stemmed from having Native American ancestry.

Prior encounters with displays of Native American material in museums.

The vast majority of visitors had seen exhibits about Native American in museums prior to the visit to the DAM. Out of twenty five visitors that were interviewed, only three said that they had never seen any exhibits about Native Americans prior to visiting DAM and another three indicated that it was a very long time ago and that they could not remember what or where it was.

Out of the remaining nineteen visitors many (12, 63%) were able to recall particular museums where they had seen those exhibits although they were not specifically asked to. Interestingly, when asked to give their opinion of what they had seen, the comments were overwhelmingly positive. Only three people said that they were not impressed or did not offer any assessment at all. The rest indicated that they had enjoyed them, although few could remember what it was that they saw.

Opinions about the new gallery.

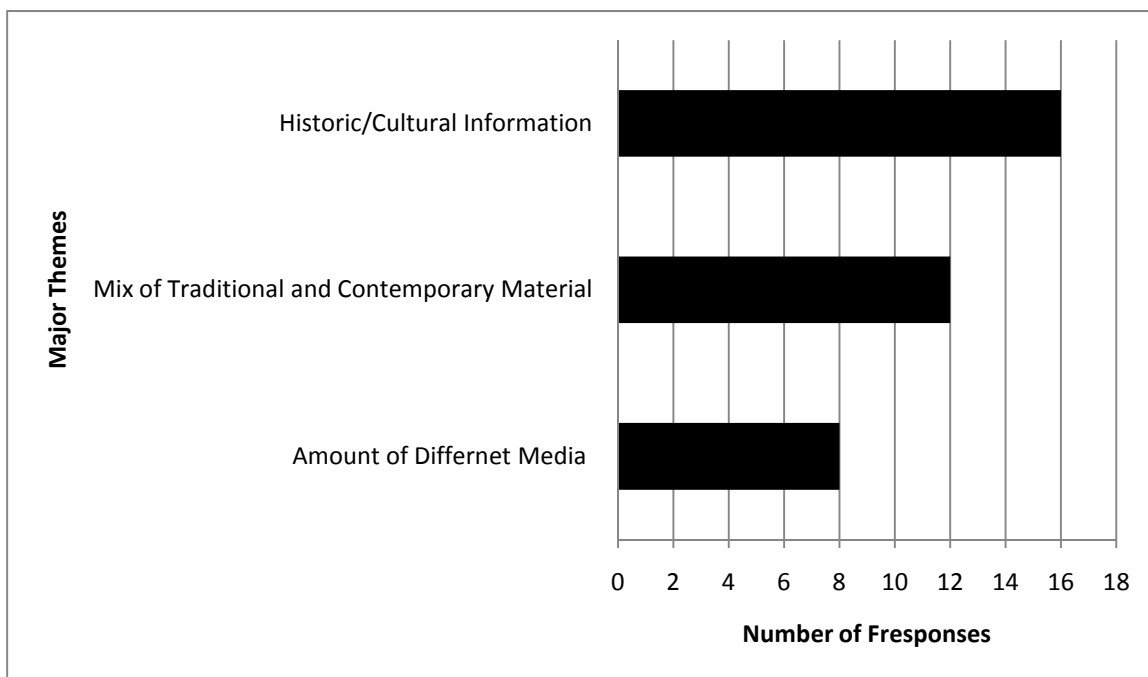
When the gallery was being redesigned, one of the major goals was to promote the idea that Native American art is just like any other art tradition: it grows and changes with the cultures that produce it. The new gallery also attempts to challenge visitors' ideas about the nature of Native American art, for example what makes Native Art, Native. Since art is a huge part of a cultural identity, changing how people view and

understand art can have a significant effect on how people view and understand cultures that create that art.

In an attempt to assess the impact of the new gallery on visitors, several open-ended questions were asked. None of these questions (see Appendix A) had asked visitors if they had noticed the new focus of the gallery directly. Instead, the goal was to get visitors to discuss their experiences in the gallery, and see if their answers reveal any common trends.

All of the visitors liked the gallery and offered very positive assessment of what they saw. In these responses three major themes were noticeable: greater juxtaposition of “old” and “new”, history of Native American art and cultures, and the variety of different media represented.

Figure1. Major themes in the visitors' assessment of the new gallery (in number of responses)



Almost half of the visitors (48%) noticed, and liked, the mix of traditional and contemporary works by Native American artists, as illustrated in the following remarks:

D6: "I like to see mixture of modern Native Artists within more historic traditions. Diego Romero I saw in other places and it is great to see his work in a place where it is seen by so many people."

D12: "I like the variety that is displayed here, and learning a little about the traditional Indian art and then the contemporary; broaden the view of what Indian art is."

The greater presence of the contemporary material was the only theme that was prominent in the responses to all of the questions that dealt with the new gallery. Visitors brought it up when asked about a particular piece that caught their attention, something that they thought was unusual or surprising, and when asked how they would describe the gallery to others:

D16: "I enjoyed the dolls and I enjoyed the clothing. I enjoyed reading Oscar Howe's letter and I enjoyed the Houser piece that you have. Oh, and I love that Mud Woman over there."

D18: "...And range of time as well, which is unusual. Usually most museums show just old things, you know, or just replicas. You have a lot of modern stuff here."

D8: "The corn – that whole exhibit was interesting."

Many visitors (8, 32%) were surprised by, and liked, the variety of the materials presented, both in terms of the materials that objects were made of and the number of tribes represented. People did not expect to see so many different things on display, and were surprised by the size of the collection:

D15: "It covers ceramics and fabrics, and it had the woodcarving, and it is pretty comprehensive; a wide variety of stuff and from broad spectrum of tribes."

The third theme that was prominent in the responses to these questions was that the gallery gave a good overview of the history of the Native American art. Although the museum made an effort to move away from the labels with heavy ethnographic content, many (16, 64%) visitors felt that what they had seen and read gave them interesting information about the people who produced the pieces on display:

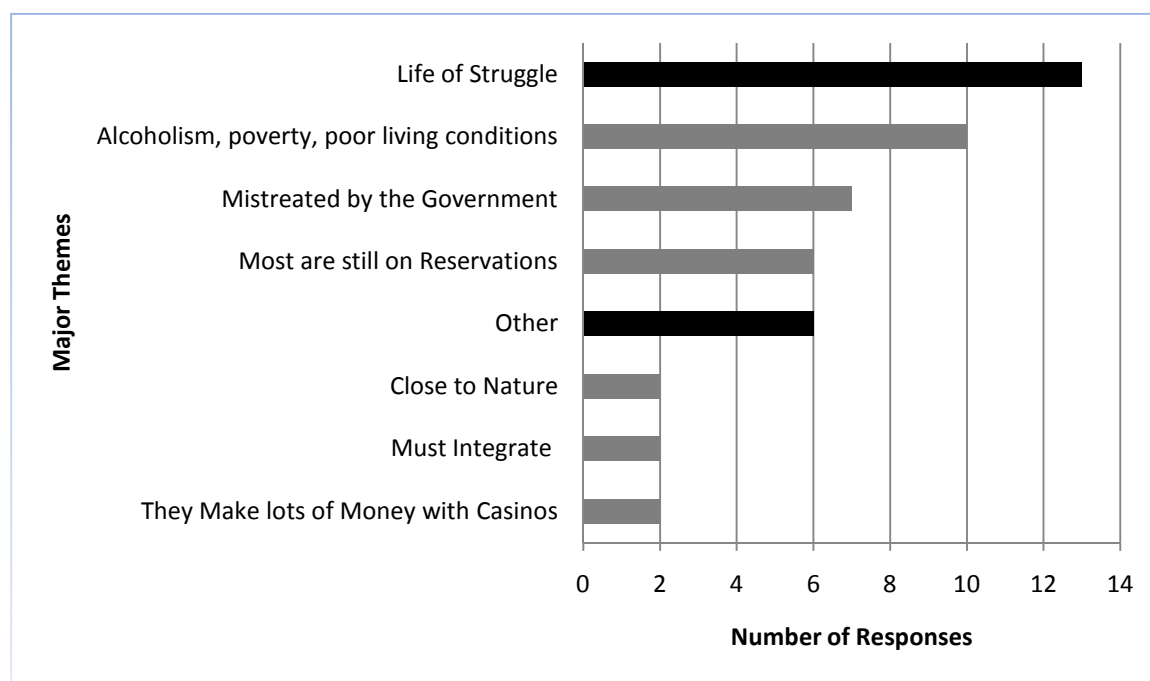
D6: "... you know, the moccasins I was actually pretty amazed by. I've always been interested in the concept of the integration of art in the everyday. I think that is such a wonderful thing to see that it was happening for so many centuries before modern day and needs to be seen more often and appreciated. The craftsmanship of it and the history of people, and the trade, and the women who made them."

Overall, the comments about the gallery were very positive. Visitors were impressed by the material in the gallery, and those who had visited it before the renovation noticed and liked the greater presence of contemporary works.

Ideas about contemporary Native Americans.

When discussing contemporary Native Americans, visitors' responses were much more negative and largely conformed to what could be called "standard" or "accepted" stereotype (emphasis mine): ether poor and always drunk, or living as one with nature. Overall, the life of modern Native Americans is perceived as that of a struggle with thirteen visitors (52%) mentioning various problems that the Native American community faces. The comments were primarily focused on the poor socio-economic conditions of modern American Indians.

Figure 2: Major themes in the thoughts about contemporary Native Americans (in number of responses)



Ten visitors (40%) mentioned alcoholism, poverty, and poor economic and living conditions. Six visitors (24%) thought that the majority of the Native American

population still lives on the reservations, which are strongly associated with many of the negative conditions mentioned above. Many visitors (7, 28%) also considered past and present mistreatment by the U.S. government to be a major cause of today's conditions. Visitors believed that the Federal Government is not doing enough to help Native Americans overcome the difficulties they are now facing. These views are perhaps best demonstrated by the following reply:

D2: "Drunk Indians in the middle of the road. Unfortunately, so many Indians are still on the reservations and they don't feel like they have any kind of future... The addiction is hard to get out, you know. Maybe they don't have enough help, programs and stuff. One of the most depressing places I've ever been to is in Montana. It is the heart of the Blackfoot Indian reservation."

Of course, not all comments about contemporary Native Americans were negative, although these were not as numerous. Two visitors thought of the Natives' harmonious relationship with nature; another two visitors mentioned casinos and how those tribes that have them seem to benefit from them both economically and politically. A few (3) visitors mentioned some "typical" imagery such as teepees, headdresses, beads, etc. A couple of visitors answered with, "I don't know/ have no idea." One visitor said that he thought of contemporary Native Americans as just all other Americans, and another one said that there is too much diversity among Native peoples to give a single image.

The most memorable experience.

The final question of the interview asked visitors to describe their most memorable experience in the gallery. The goal of this question was to see if any of the topics mentioned earlier in the conversations about the gallery would be brought up again. Again, overall the responses were very positive and fell into three major categories: larger presence of the contemporary material (6 visitors, 24%), the size of the collection (3 visitors, 12%), and a particular object (or type of art, like beading- 14 visitors, 56%). However, eight of the visitors that mentioned a specific object, pointed to the works of contemporary Native American artists, although they did not use the word “contemporary” to describe them. Taking this into account would make the works by the modern American Indian artists to be the most memorable experience of the visit for fourteen (56%) of the interviewees.

Navajo Nation Museum

Visitor opinions.

For the interviews at the Navajo Nation Museum, the interview script was slightly modified to account for the expected differences in the demographics. No new questions were added, and instead some of the questions that were asked of the visitors at the Denver Art Museum were omitted. The questions that asked visitor opinions about galleries were kept identical for both museums (see Appendix A).

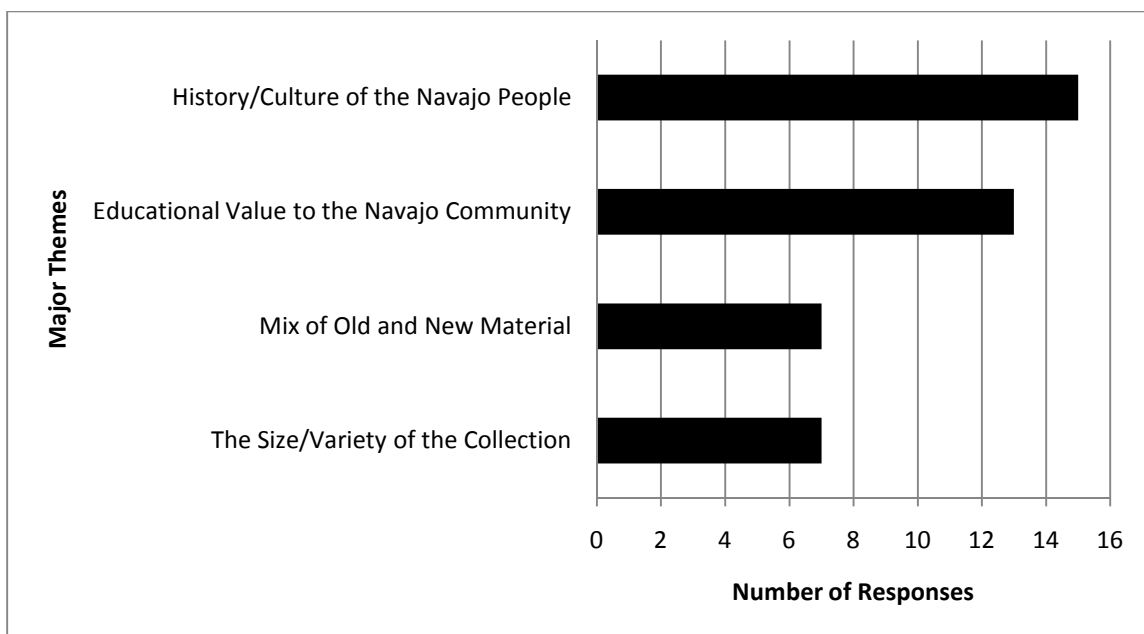
Prior Encounters with displays of Native American material in museums.

The visitors to the Navajo Nation museum were pretty evenly divided when it came to prior experiences with the Native American materials in museums. Twelve visitors (48%) said that they had never seen anything before, and thirteen visitors (52%) said that they had. However, of the thirteen visitors that had had prior experiences, few were able to recall what it was that they had seen or what those exhibits were about. When asked their opinion about what they saw, majority of the visitors (9 visitors, 69%) offered a positive, although very generalized “it was nice”, or “it was good” type of response. The other four visitors (30%) said that they were not very impressed by what they saw at other museums, because those exhibits had too little information about the Native history in general, and about Navajo history and culture in particular.

Opinions about the museum.

In order to understand visitors’ experience in and opinions of the galleries at the Navajo Nation Museum, the same set of questions was asked as at the Denver Art Museum. Just as it was the case at the Denver Art Museum the responses to the Navajo Nation Museum were overwhelmingly positive. Interestingly, some of the themes very similar to those at the Denver Art Museum were evident here as well, although they were focused specifically on the Navajo peoples.

Figure 3: Major themes in the visitors’ assessment of the galleries (in number of responses)



The notion that this museum is a good place to learn something new about the Navajo people, both in terms of their history and their culture was the most prominent in the visitors' responses (15 visitors, 60%):

N8: "I thought it was very good. A lot of historical stuff, the photograph, explanations with them. I liked the program on Jimmy Abeita, you know, when he is talking on the video. I thought it was all pretty good."

N3: "Exhibits are about traditional culture and history. Like that part about the treaty has a lot of information, and also about the Navajo Nation. If you want to know something about the Navajo culture come visit Navajo museum."

Interestingly, there was a noticeable difference in how two particular groups of visitors perceived the museum. Those visitors that were out of state (majority of who were non- Native American) saw museum primarily as a good way to get a brief

introduction on the Navajo people. Many Navajo visitors on the other hand had viewed the museum not only as a way to reconnect with the history of their people, but also to pass it on to the new generation. These differing points of view are clear in the following responses:

N14: "I kind of like it. I have kids and like to take them to the museum to see stuff that was made back then. I have two boys, I was telling the little one, you know, 'cause they hunt now, but it's just more like camouflage stuff. And I was telling them, 'Look, it's the hunter's gear from back then.' I like it because it's preserving our history and it's good for the little ones."

N19: "It's well prepared. I think you get an overview on history, culture. I think it's really nicely done. It's well presented."

Many visitors had also noticed the presence of the contemporary materials in the galleries. Although one of the visitors was surprised to see them in the museum in the first place, majority were very pleased:

N1: "I am very impressed at how they were able to rotate things. A lot of it from the past like the exhibit on Long Walk, and more modern stuff like modern photography and modern art. It's about people's past and present. I really like what they are doing here."

Interviewer: So you think it's important to show both sides, present and the past?

N1. "Very, very important. I've always heard that one thing that us Navajos had, that made us so big, is that we were always able to adapt, and keep up with contemporary and being able to hold on to what we had in the

past, and be able to progress. I think it is very important to not assimilate, but to be able to co-exist. So bringing the contemporary and the past is what I loved about these two galleries.

What many visitors (8, 32%) also found very surprising was the variety of the material in the exhibits, as well as the presence of certain materials and items:

N8: "Yeah, things I didn't know and even inside the photographs, the presentation of some of the historic dress, and tools and blankets. I wasn't expecting to see that, I thought it would be this one exhibit. So it's a lot more than I would have expected."

The most memorable experience.

When asked what they would remember the most from their visit fourteen visitors (56%) mentioned things that dealt with the history and culture of the Navajo Nation. The other eleven visitors (44%) said that it was the contemporary materials that they would remember the most.

Discussion

Although these two museums were chosen specifically as a way to examine the similarities and differences between the mainstream museum and the tribal museum, a true direct comparison was not entirely possible. The Denver Art Museum is exactly that, an art museum, so it approaches its materials and the way of displaying them from a very specific point of view.

The Navajo Nation Museum cannot be as easily categorized. At the time that the interviews were conducted, the museum featured five different exhibits that ranged from art, to history, to traditional knowledge, to contemporary photography. As a tribal entity, Navajo Nation Museum is not only a museum, but a cultural center as well.

However, despite their differences, these museums are dealing with the same issue of presenting cultures through creating exhibits about them. The point of interest here is whether those different perspectives that these two museums espouse affect how they present the information and, more importantly, how it affects visitors' perspectives.

Overall, and despite the differences between the two museums, a number of similar themes came to the fore. In both places the majority of people came in with the idea that exhibits will be dealing primarily with the history of Native peoples. This attitude is not very surprising in case of the Navajo Nation Museum because it deals specifically with the history and culture of the Navajos. However, in case of the Denver Art Museum I did find it somewhat surprising, because art museums are not generally thought of as places where one would go to learn more about the history of different cultures.

A good example of that were some of the conversations I had with the visitors at the Denver Art Museum before the Native Arts gallery was redesigned. At that time the museum hosted a travelling exhibit about the King Tut. During that time I was working at the museum as a family program facilitator so I had spent a lot of times interacting with visitors in the galleries. Many visitors were genuinely surprised that an exhibit about

ancient Egypt was being displayed at the art museum and not at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Yet the visitors that I had interviewed considered the new gallery to be as much about the history of the Native Americans, as it was about their art. I believe that these kinds of expectations imply certain ideas many people carry about Native American objects in museums, namely that it is mostly old, historical material from the culture mostly gone.

Another surprising thing was that at both places many visitors noticed and liked larger presence of the contemporary material. Despite it defying the general expectation, many visitors enjoyed seeing increased amount of the work by the contemporary Native artists. This suggests that despite the prevalent ideas about modern Native Americans, people are open to discussing new ideas about the topic:

DAM19: "I really enjoyed it! I liked the material and objects, everything really. The modern stuff had really intrigued me the most, because that is not something I've had a lot of experience with or seen a lot of. "

NNM12. "I'll probably mostly remember the photographs that they have now. More up to date; not just the paintings, like oil paintings, but the photographs. Modern ones, yeah those were nice."

More importantly though, the data shows that in both places museum visitors had responded positively to the idea of mixing historical and contemporary material in the exhibits. Although museums are targeting largely different audiences, both organizations used this exhibition technique to convey the ideas of continuity of both people and cultural traditions.

There were of course significant differences as well; for example what visitors perceived to be the ultimate purpose of each museum. While visitors to the Denver Art Museum appreciated the esthetic value of the material that they had seen, it was a more generalized and somewhat detached appreciation. There was no personal connection to the material or to the place. It was not really surprising, considering the target audience of the Denver Art Museum, but it was noticeable. This same attitude was fairly evident in the responses of the non-Navajo visitors to the Navajo Nation Museum as well.

Things were quite a bit different for the Navajo visitors to their museum. For many of them, the museum is a place to reconnect with their own history and for some, cultural traditions. People seemed to have an immense sense of pride in the fact that the museum presented such a varied picture of the Navajo people. There was also a very strong sense of ownership. Visitors viewed the museum as an important part of their community, and words like “our” and “us” were used often:

N4. “... I like that it is educational. It’s very touching because that’s our history...Sometimes it is good to come here to kind of refresh your memory and your thoughts about that. Our ancestors that had endured the things they had to go through in order to be here today.”

In general, the analysis of the data produced some results that were surprising, and some that were not. The notions many visitors had about the lives of contemporary Native Americans pretty much conformed to the widespread stereotype non-Native

populations seem to hold, such as poverty, alcoholism, and confinement to reservations.

Even those comments that were not overtly negative showed that for many people the old image of Native America created in the last century, or at least some elements of it, still serves as a default. Although these ideas were not very prominent, their presence demonstrates the pervasiveness and persistence of that image. There is still a notion that Native Americans live in the perfect harmony with nature, that most of them still live on the reservations. People still tend to think of American Indians as belonging to a single, monolithic culture and even that they are mostly gone.

D6: "Um, you know, I think of the integration with the natural world. Not as this super imposing force upon nature, but actually as this symbolic relationship with the natural world, and something that quite sustainably existed for a lot longer than our modern, mechanized world. There is wisdom to that that I wish we could get back to."

D17: "I think that the culture is probably less diverse than certain other cultures, but I still see a bit of diversity in the culture. I think they are exceptionally dedicated to the arts, the land and to one another."

D20: "Today...I mean I have a lot of sad images when I think of...When we think of Native Americans, you know, it's kind of sad for us to think how they are not around."

Despite the fact that new gallery at the Denver Art Museum focuses specifically on the Native American Art, some of the messages that are the focus of the exhibit are

very much cultural. Although the designers made a conscious effort to move away from ethnographic labels, many of the objects on display makes it impossible to do so entirely. As it was mentioned before, art is an integral part of the culture that produces it, and if we try to change some of the pre-conceived notions about the artists, we might change the way people think about those cultures.

Conclusion

It is obvious that in the past few decades, museums have experienced a lot of changes that created some serious ripples in the field. These changes forced museum to re-evaluate their understanding of the role they play in the society and their potential to be more. Accepting and embracing these changes is not always easy for it requires a fundamental change in self-perception.

It also requires museums to be a lot more proactive. It is not enough to just return objects back to their rightful owners or to include a foreign language label if museums want to be relevant to the community they serve. They have to adopt new practices and include multiple perspectives into their research and display practices (Kreps, 2003, 9).

This research shows that some museums do attempt new strategies, specifically when it comes to exhibits, and they are fairly successful. I say fairly because there will always be someone with a very set idea about what a museum should do or be and museums have to accept that and work with it. It doesn't mean though that that kind of opposition should stop museum from experimenting.

The new Native Art gallery at the Denver Art Museum is a good example of this type of problem. Visitor research about the proposed renovation revealed that while

some visitors indicated that they would like to see contemporary materials in the gallery they still wanted to see historical material as well ("Request," 2006). This convinced the museum to keep the old culture area organization because people were not only familiar with that concept, but actually expected to see that in the American Indian gallery.

Though this research focuses on just two museums, the results are still indicative of the potential that this particular exhibiting strategy, mixing historical and contemporary materials, has a good chance of resonating with visitors in other museums. The number of visitors interviewed at the Denver Art Museum, while not very large, nonetheless represents a good sample of the audience that one can expect to see in the mainstream art museum. The research also shows that museums can learn from each other's experiences, even if their missions and target audiences are very different.

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APPENDIX A

Questions for the DAM visitors

- 1) Is this your first time visiting this gallery?
- 2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?
- 3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

- 4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?
What was it?
What did you think of that?
- 5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?
Anything about the material that have caught your attention?
- 6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?
- 7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual?
Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?
- 8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?
- 9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

Questions for the NNM visitors.

- 1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?
- 2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?
- 3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?
What was it?
What did you think of that?
- 4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Anything in particular that caught your attention?
- 5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?
- 6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual?
Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?
- 7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

APPENDIX B

Raw Data

The Denver Art Museum

DAM #1

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
Specifically this gallery.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
I always have. I've been doing some work with the Seneca Nation in Salamanca in NY and quilting with some of the women occasionally, and so I just to come and enjoy it. Especially the bead work. I love to see the beadwork.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

Well it would be pretty hard not to rate it at 10.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Oh yes. I've been to the Washington museum in Washington DC, and the Cody museum at Buffalo Bill, and I think I've been to Missouri, St. Louis I think I've been to an exhibit there. It's something that I enjoy very much.

What did you think of that?

They were great!

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
I think they are wonderful. I even sent a text to my friend back home who's in the NA studies. I just love it. I especially love the beaded horses over there, they are just amazing.

Researcher: Do you mean the soft sculpture?

Yes, they are just beautiful.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I think it's really worth seeing. I think it's hard to describe it to someone who's, you know, not very familiar with the NA culture, but I think it's wonderful and I think it is really worth seeing, especially if you are interested in the history at all, whether it is NA history or whatever; especially if you like textiles and those kinds of things. It's wonderful to see.

- 7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

Well, I guess not really. I don't think I've seen so many of the dolls before, and I love the horse masks and saddles. I don't know if I'd seen the saddles before like that. And the saddle blankets were especially nice.

- 8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

Well, I guess the women that I work with they are elderly women and they've all struggled. They had a life of struggle. They were often sent to school that they were you know, forced to go to school, white schools. They just had a difficult life from what I've observed. They had a very difficult life. And they've made the best of it but it's not been easy.

- 9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**

The beaded horses! (laughs) I have a horse, so I am especially interested in horses.

DAM #2

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
We came for the Mud exhibit and we wanted to the Nampeyo.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Um, no. She is a potter.

Researcher: Is that right?

Yeah, and I'm from Southern New Mexico, so Hopis and Zuni were, you know, kind of neighbors.

Researcher: what about you?

Oh I'm interested in many things.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
This magnitude - no. When I've been to California, my son and I would go to one that's called Getty, it's in Pasadena. It has a wonderful Asian collection. The guy who was in charge of it went to Asia and got a lot of pieces, but they don't have a lot of NA stuff.
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
This is just amazing! Incredible, the different media, the cloth and then the clay, the beads, and then you are looking at the beautiful weaving.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Oh the pottery. There was one pot over there oh! And then these are really neat, the Seminole Indians in Florida. They started a lot of this after the Europeans came and they'd have tourist places and they made a lot of these for tourists. And then there are some clay tablets over there, and they are just like postcards made out of clay and they were also made specifically for tourists. In 1800s people were travelling more and some of them would go back. I didn't know that.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
Awesome, awesome on every level. Visually it's very interesting; it gets your interest wherever you go.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Postcards and these dresses. I never thought about NA a hundred years ago making their art specifically for tourists. A hundred years ago! Why? I mean now it's everywhere, but I never thought it that much of a tradition.

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

Drunk Indians in the middle of the road. Unfortunately, so many Indians are still on the reservations and they don't feel like they have any kind of future. Many of them do, it's just kind of a.... My sister married a Blackfoot and he was one of those who was drunk in the middle of the road so...that's why.

The addiction is hard to get out you know. Maybe they don't have enough help, programs and stuff. 'Cause my girlfriend married one also a Lakota and it's similar.

One of the most depressing places I've ever been to is (). It's the heart of the Blackfoot Indian reservation and it's just so no wonder. But then, the Mexican side of Fort Collins wasn't all that great either 30 years ago, so.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

These dresses. They are just fascinating. It looks like each stripe is a patchwork.

DAM #3

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
Just a part of a general visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Um, yeah, I think it's beautiful, fascinating, as far as any ancestors or anything, I don't really have any.
- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
I have. It was in Bend, Oregon. I went to the () museum there. It's a much, much smaller museum there. There's so much to look at.

What did you think of that?
It was nice.
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
Oh, yeah, I mean all the beautiful costumes and the bead work, pottery, lots of baskets, everything! It's beautiful.
- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I think the whole museum s great.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
Nothing really
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
I did spend a lot of time looking at some of those pictures. Just you different people, the artists of the baskets, you know, the East, the Southeast. Native Americans today? Um, I didn't think about it that much. Looking at this stuff I admire a jacket that somebody did, um, in honor of the people. You know it was very modern looking, with flowers and stuff. So I have a lot of respect, you know for them, and. I guess I probably...
- 9) **What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**
That there are so many things that you can touch. (continued to include the rest of the museum).

DAM #4

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Not really. I do like looking at it and I particularly liked the photos of the Indians over there (sepia prints).

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

I'd say pretty low.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Um, no I guess not. I saw some paintings of Indians, but not actual objects.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
Oh, very nice. It's very... you know, a lot of different... Covers a lot.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Well, those photographs (sepia), they are pretty good.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
Um, I don't know. That it has a lot of different aspects to it. It's about different cultures of the Indians. It offers more variety.

- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
Dolls

- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
I don't really know.

- 9) **What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**
Probably the beadwork

DAM #5, male and female, from Sweden.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Not as such, we just basically came here to look around
- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Can't say that I have, no
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
It is really nice. A lot of writing, nice looking, well kept.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Actually, now that I think about it, some of it looks somewhat similar to things that some of the native Swedish people have, especially up north. Like that blue coat over there with colored feathers sticking out of the hat. That's very similar to what we have for some reason.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
That's a good question. I'd say it's really well laid out. It's really spaced out, so you don't feel crowded. It's a good place to be!
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
I can't say that I have actually. As I've said, I'm not that familiar with them, most of what I know comes from movies and such, and they are not always portrayed in the best of way. So it's hard to say.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
I'm not quite sure how they live today as such, but I would say, with reservations and all, it's still sad. As little as I know, they are still mistreated. It's still drawing from history and such, but I think they could be treated better.
- 9) **What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**
Everything was really nice, but I nothing really stood out.

DAM #6

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No, I've been here before.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit. I'm an art history major in studio artist.

- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
I do actually. I think it's some of the most exquisite work that exists.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?
I think 10.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
I have although I think it's always something under-represented considering the land we are standing on.

What was it?

I've been in Santa Fe and I've seen some great works there. I'm always surprised how it seems like it is still sort of relegated to the separate space than other things. I mean thematically it happens sometimes that way. It seems like this layout is trying to integrate the many chapters of our history, and it seems like there is a flow to it. It is nice to see.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
I think it's exquisite. I like to see a mixture of modern Native artists within more historic traditions. Diego Romero I saw in other in other places and it is great to see his work in a place where it is seen by so many people.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Humm, you know the moccasins I was actually pretty amazed by. I've always been interested in this concept of the integration of art in the everyday. I think that's such a wonderful thing to see that it was happening for so many centuries before the modern day and needs to be seen more often and appreciated.. The craftsmanship of it and the history of people and the trade and the women who made them.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I'd say this gallery is probably intentionally at the lowlight setting to preserve colors; it's an open floor plan, so it feels fresh and new, yet the

things that you are seeing are centuries old, if not more than that. It's exciting; seem like the space moves very well.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Yeah, let's see. One of the modern portrait's here was pretty remarkable. It was a self-portrait of a man who is part Native and part Mexican (Diego Luna). It really caught my eye, just how powerful his self-expression was.

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

Um, you know I think of this integration with the natural world. Not as this super imposing force upon nature, but actually as this symbiotic relationship with the natural world, and something that quite sustainably existed a lot longer than our modern, mechanized world. There is wisdom to that that I wish we could get back to.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I think the beadwork.

DAM #7

1) Is this your first time visiting this gallery?

No, I live here so I come here a lot, though I have not been here since they've redesigned it.

2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?

I have friends visiting and they are especially interested in the Western art and Western history, so.

3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?

Um, some yeah.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

I used to work with the Southern Ute Indian tribe, so that piqued my interest. So I guess from 1 to 10, for someone who is not a member of the culture, because obviously it would be higher then, I'd say 6 or 7.

4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Very little, but there is certainly presence in Santa Fe and that area.

What was it?

Well, Anasazi, ruins and such.

5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?

Oh, I think it is wonderful. I love the way it is displayed and I love that it mixes the ancient with the modern and that really challenges you.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

I have to say that the James Luna's piece with the half-Mexican and half-Native was very moving. And the Wounded Knee painting with the video on the background was also very moving.

6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Hmm, what it's about? I mean it's about beauty, it's about history, it's about community, it's about connectivity.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

The Great Lakes area over here. I don't know if I didn't notice it before because of how it was displayed of what, but I thought "Wow, this is very different!"

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

I think of beauty, but I also think of poverty. I think of community, but I also think of effects of having families torn apart. I think of resilience, I guess I always think of nature

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I think it's some of the contemporary Indian art that I found the most immediate for me; and I think to appreciate that you need to see everything else; I think that it's beautiful, but it is angry.

DAM #8

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
I mean sure. I am pretty fond of anything turquoise and when I think turquoise I think NA art.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?
6.
- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?** Yes.

What was it?
I've seen some of the head-dresses and tipis and other things like that in other museums, as well as the dress-ware.

What did you think of that?
It's beautiful.
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
It all seems relevant; fits quite nicely, so I liked it a lot.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?
Definitely the tipi and head-dress area. That was really cool, I really liked that.
- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I don't know, I guess I feel like I'm walking into their own culture, into NA culture, but ... I don't know.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
The corn; that whole exhibit was interesting.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
Not good things, not pretty things.

Researcher: what do you mean?

Just because in school we talk about them a lot, I think of alcoholism, and like poverty, intense poverty. That's what I think of, sadly enough; other than the whole tipi, and horses, and head-dresses.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I think that canoe painting; we sat for a bit in front of it; so I think I'll probably remember that one.

Researcher: Why?

The interactive part of it was really cool.

DAM #9

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Not really, not my favorite culture I guess. I like Asian art a lot more than NA, but interesting to see.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
I've been to museum in Minnesota, there's one about Ojibwas. I don't remember much about it, I was really little. Beyond that, not really, no.
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
Really interesting; I really liked the pottery and the photographs on the wall (sepia prints).

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Tipi, I liked that.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
Large, lots of different parts of NA are exhibited; throughout time too, as I've noticed they spanned large period of time too; and it's really like a maze, but in a great way.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
Kind of, just the amount of painting was surprising. I mean I knew about the beading, and other types of stuff. But the new Native paintings and different types of pottery, I didn't think there was that many, that much variety I guess. I was impressed by that.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
Before coming here? I don't know, nothing really, just Americans, but with the Native face and stuff. I don't know. Now I have all this stuff to think of.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

Probably those photographs on the wall; those had really impacted me greatly.

Researcher: Why?

They seem more like the individuals. "Cause like, they all get depicted the same way. So, their faces make it like there's people behind it, you know what I mean? So it, nice to see, 'cause you realize that there were actual people.

DAM #10

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Yes, I think generally I am interested.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

5.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Yes. It was in and around Phoenix, AZ. Also a museum close to Apache Junction, AZ.

What did you think of that?

Very nice, very good.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
Very good, very interesting. A lot of diversity, and representing artists from different time periods and different tribes and so on.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

I really liked this pottery here (Nampeyo).

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
That they've tried to collect a variety of art forms, in terms of clothing, carvings, some paintings, pottery, etc; showing the different skill and types of art of NA, and different tribes. So I think it's a good overview of kinds of things made by NA.

- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

Those bentwood boxes, I've never seen those before.

- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

From what I've seen, very poor living conditions in places in the not very rich land that was given to them. They've developed many casino properties in the Midwest where I come from, and I don't know if it's helping them financially, and with educating their people and what not. But

my general impression is that if they are not with the wealthy place like the casino, then there's a lot of poverty and poor education.

9) **What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**

The volume of things that they have here, the number of pieces.

DAM #11

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** To the new gallery, yes.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
My mother is visiting from NM, so we came here because we hadn't been to the DAM in quite a few years. She hadn't seen new building yet.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
I love the beadwork, and I love this new stuff, it's beautiful. (soft sculpture).

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

10

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Yeah, I've been to the few museums in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

What was it?

Just historical.

What did you think of that?

It was good, I think mostly pottery

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
I think DAM's Indian Art is fabulous. All the clothing, I like all the history, and of course there's a huge pottery collection too.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

These dolls, the contemporary dolls.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I don't know. I would just say it's huge and it's beautiful, it's amazing.

- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

Well, there were a few coats that I thought were kind of unusual: the one that uses military uniform and feather dusters, and the one that had American flags on it. That was very surprising; sort of including the angle of our culture with Native American

- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

Today? Well, I really like, oh I don't remember his name, he has a wall.

Researcher: Mateo Romero?

Yes. I liked that little exhibit where he was interviewed. I think there were several times where contemporary N. Americans talk about the history as well as how different it is for them now. You know, somebody said:

"People think of NA artists as something from the past almost, and have that stereotype; and how they were mingling contemporary culture and their heritage. And I think it is one of the things for me with contemporary dolls: that they are emulating an art of the past, but it's their own work and it represents to them... like one lady (artist) said that it was to honor her grandmother that she made the dolls.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

Well, I guess the dolls. I did a little bit of bead work back in the 60s, I made a little doll. I love the bead work, and I kept thinking the whole time: "I gotta ask somebody how they make the beads?" And then I saw almost at the end that they were brought from France and England, the beads, the glass beads.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Not specifically, no.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

Low.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Yes

What was it?

I've seen some of the clothing and the weavings and the woven baskets in Santa Fe Heard Museum.

What did you think of that?

I was very impressed with the artistic level and very impressed with the weaving and pottery

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
I like the variety that is displayed here, and learning a little about the traditional Indian art and then the contemporary. Broaden the view of what Indian art is.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

I liked the pottery.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I would probably say it has a wide variety of the traditional and contemporary Indian art.

- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
I haven't seen it all that, but I was surprised by that (words composite). I wasn't expecting that. And I love the Mud woman!

- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

I don't think a great deal about it. At today? What comes to mind is what their journey must be to preserve their Indian heritage and be more integrated in to the overall society, and how difficult that would appear to be.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I think the one thing is to start thinking a little bit more about contemporary Indian art as opposed to just traditional Indian crafts and arts.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
General visit. I wanted to see Mud Exhibit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Not really we just wanted to see what the outfits looked like and the head dresses and stuff.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?
- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Not for a long time
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
It's very nice, very interesting. Especially the bowls from 1400s, those are very neat.
Anything about the material that have caught your attention?
We liked the coat over there.
- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
It's very nice.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
Not really. We've heard a lot of good things about it.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
I have no idea.
- 9) **What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**
You have an extensive collection. That what's neat, a lot of artifacts to look at.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
Just a general visit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Ahh, no.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Yes, I think it was in South Dakota, there was a little thing there. And a few years back I went to the Four Corners.
- What did you think of that?**
It was alright, it was different, learned something.
- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
It's nice. I'm not much into art or anything. This is just a place to check out I guess.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?
I kind of liked the pottery.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
Interesting, a place to check out; relatively cheap.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
That pot with the sculpture inside of it of Mesa Verde. That was cool.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**
Cowboy movies, beads.
- 9) **What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**
Probably this conversation right here.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No, I've been in the old gallery.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
Just the whole museum.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
I came in here because I wanted to see the Pacific NW wood carvings, and then I just wandered up there.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?
Probably 5, I guess.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Yes.

What was it?

I've been to the Detroit museum and they have a small collection of NA things.

What did you think of that?
I thought it was small.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
I thought it was outstanding. It covers ceramics and fabrics and it had the woodcarving and it is just pretty comprehensive; a wide variety of stuff, and from the broad spectrum of tribes.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?
The beadwork over on the Great Lakes.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
I don't know. Big, this is big. It's probably the largest collection I've seen. And I've been to the Smithsonian too many years back. So yeah, this is a big collection.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
No, not really.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

I don't know. I really don't know. I've been to some reservations, so I thought it's pretty dismal places in a lot of ways.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

The carvings.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No, but I hadn't been to the new one, no.
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
We came to see the Mud Exhibit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
Well, I am part Indian, so yes I do.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Oh yeah.

What was it?

Well, the Bishop museum in Minneapolis, St. Paul and a gallery in Hawaii. We also have been to some other museums

What did you think of that?

Well, they were great!

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
It's very impressive.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

I enjoyed the dolls and I enjoyed the clothing. I enjoyed reading O. Howe's letter and I also enjoyed the Houser piece that you have. Oh and I loved that Mud woman over there.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
Well, I think it would help people see the different crafts that Indians do and different arts that they do. I liked watching that movie where the guy was talking about his own use of drugs and guns and how it influenced his work.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
I don't think so.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

Well, you know, we go their powwows and you think about gambling, they make a lot of money today; and they have a lot more political power than they used to which is great. I hope that they keep working with their art.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I'm thinking the mud lady. He like the beads, Ojibwa beads, which is from Minnesota where we are from.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No, but first time since it's been re-done
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
Yes and the Renaissance exhibit.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
I have an interest, sure.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?
8.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
Yes.

What was it?

I've been to the museum in Phoenix, and we go to Santa Fe about every year.

What did you think of that?

Very positive thoughts about the exhibits that I've seen in those places.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
I think it's superb, fantastic.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

The woman on the horse there, pulling the twins.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**
Well, I'd say that there are NA figures that are highly decorated using NA crafts, you know like beading and stitching, etc.
- 7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**
That I've never seen before? Yes, the wedding coat there was fashion from the donation of the coat and then embellished by the women back on the reservation or the settlement.
- 8) **What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

I think that the culture is probably less diverse than certain other cultures, but I still see a fair bit of diversity in the culture. I think they are exceptionally dedicated to the arts, the land and to one another.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

Probably the soft sculpture, but I love the cradles and when I get a chance to look at the beading like on those cradles I always look at them very carefully.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**
 (F) General visit.
 (M) Honestly though this gallery was what made us come here. We'll probably see other galleries as well after this one.
- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**
 Oh yes, very much so.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

(F) I'd say 7 or 8. Well, part of my ancestral back ground is Cherokee, so that's why I stated studying. We've also spend a lot of time in NM and made appoint to visit different Pueblos and things like that. So, in general, everything is kind of builds upon it, so we were very excited to see this.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**
 Oh yes.

What was it?

What did you think of that?

Oh, well, any time we are tourists, we find a museum like that and we saw a museum in Vienna that NA art and it was not very good, it was very stereotypical. Some of the ones in MN were very good though.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**
 (F) It's very good, the only thing that's a little confusing is sometimes you guys have very traditional things and then you have artists who work in the traditional styles, and I sometimes get confused what's 'traditional' in the sense of 'old' and what's traditional I the sense of 'now'. That was my only confusion.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

(F) I really was very interested in the dolls here. I hadn't seen anything like that before. It looks very traditional but also very unique, so I like that a lot. And we were also very happy to see Kickapoo, because we are from Texas. You don't hear a lot about Texas tribes, even I Texas, which is very interesting.

(M) The one thing that I really appreciated about this exhibit is that it really does cover the whole North America. I'm not sure I've ever seen another institution take such a holistic approach to covering Native Americans before. It probably would have easier for you guys in Colorado to just do, you know, the Ute, the Apache, the Arapahoe, and the Navajo, and be

done with it. But instead, you've allocated the space to bring everyone in, and that's very impressive.

6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I'd say that it's a very good sampling of the arts and handicrafts from most of the major native groups of North America. Very well chosen for both geographic and cultural range, as well as the range of materials and items.

(F) And range of time as well, which is unusual. Usually most museums show just old things, you know, or just replicas. You have a lot of modern things here.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Some of them were the political things like the Canoe; I was surprised, yes – it wasn't what I expected.

(M) Another thing that slightly surprising to me is that there was nothing archaeological or slightly pre-historical. You know, would have expected to see something from Anasazi or ancient Puebloan stuff. I mean, I 'm not upset that they are not here, it's just that might've been more expected.

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

(F) It so hard to say, because it is all so, so different.

(M) It's really hard to speak of any one 'typical' NA experience just as it is very hard to speak of any 'typical' American experience.

(F) I mean when we visit Oklahoma where the Cherokee are, it is so completely different than when we go the pueblos. Everyone is so different, so I think it would really, really hard to say anything like that.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

(M) I would have to go with the NW exhibit, just because I've never seen a good collection of artifacts from that cultural grouping before, and those totem poles and other things are so impressive. So yeah, for me it was that, probably because it was a novel experience and so objectively impressive.

(F) For me, emotionally, I'd say the dolls. I don't know; they are just so haunting. You can spend a long time just looking at details on one of them, there are just so many. So yeah, for me it's the dolls.

1) Is this your first time visiting this gallery? Yes

2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?

General visit.

3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?

Actually, I was a trained jeweler, particularly silver-smithing and at the time I was working with a lot of different NA artists, jewelry makers.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

6

4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yeah, we went to the one in Nebraska and they had quite bit of stuff there.

What did you think of that?

It was a nice collection.

5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?

I like the idea of it being over a hundred years; different tribe represented over the years. It's nice to see the progression of even how tight the cultural ties were, and then all of a sudden.... And I saw a lot of this in 70s and 80 when a lot of silversmiths were starting to break away from the traditional and they were starting to put their take on that. A lot of commercialism was the driver behind that, but that's a good thing.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

I liked the modern stuff very much. It's really nice to see the progression.

6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I'd say that it's a good mix of past and present and maybe the future. It is very interesting, and I think they should bring some eastern stuff; I mean from the Eastern US tribes. It's nice that it is not just so historical that you think: "been there, seen that." I was able to recognize some old stuff, but even that tells you where it came from and where it's going. It's a nice story.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Not really. It flows really well, so I didn't think that anything was out of place. That's what I usually pick up on, like, "why did they put this here?" Everything here was enjoyable.

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

Oh, pleasure just because I'm still friends with a lot of them from my work. I think that unfortunately there's always been a certain amount of feeling of unfairness, as far as the way they've been treated. I don't think that a lot of people understand that it is very difficult for them to live in 2 worlds at the same time. Most of the people that I know that are here in the cosmopolitan area have tried to maintain their culture as much as possible, which is not a very easy thing to do. It's one of those things that hopefully we will address as a nation. They are all individuals and as long as we treat them fairly just like everybody else; and not leave them stuck on the reservations with not much to work from. I'm kind of funny at this whole idea of throwing money at the problem instead of engaging people in solving a part of it themselves by giving them resources to do that. I think that's what we've done a lot of, and not even enough at that, as far as money.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I really enjoyed it. I liked the materials and objects, everything, really. The modern stuff had really intrigued me the most, because that's not something I've had a lot of experience with or seen a lot of.

DAM #20

1) Is this your first time visiting this gallery? Yes.

- 2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**

General visit.

- 3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**

Yeah, that's why we wanted to come here to see the whole everything.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

I'd say 7 or 8.

- 4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**

There's some in the Museum of Natural History in NY, and in Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY.

What did you think of that?

It's good but it's much more comprehensive than this museum, there's a lot more.

- 5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**

We thought it was very cool, we also thought the kid-friendly stuff was really interesting; and then all the different materials, costumes and such.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Definitely the costumes!

- 6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**

Interesting, colorful.

- 7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

Nothing unusual, no, although we have spent a long time in the kid's area playing beads, so that was fun. I've never seen anything like that.

- 8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

Today.. I mean I have a lot of sad images when I think of...We we think of Native Americans, you know, it's kind of sad for us to think how they are not around; terrible things happened to them, but also beautiful things like their costumes and their art, jewelry.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I would definitely say all the costumes.

DAM #21, female and male.

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes
- 2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**

General visit.

- 3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**

I think it's fascinating. It's not something necessarily that jumps out as one of my particular interests, but it's nice.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

I guess a 5.

- 4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**

Um.. I mean I've been to other museums with exhibits about NA cultures although I'm blanking out on exactly what.

What did you think of that?

I liked it.

- 5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**

Well, I really liked the garments.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

There's an exhibit with something that's supposed to be a container for butter, it's kind of a satirical piece about American Indian exploitation. I've enjoyed that.

- 6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**

(F); Well....I don't know....

(M) Well, there are lots of sort of miniature displays of the style of dress, and the part that interests me the most is about older Indian cultures. I studied Anthropology in undergrad and I recognized some of the stuff. And you have the displays of modern as well, oh I don't know if 'ancient' is the right word...

Researcher: Historic?

Yes, historic, thank you! So you can get the picture of the two, because it's very different. In the modern you have to incorporate some of the oppressed aspects of American Indians, and it's always interesting to see how a museum decides to display the art as a sort of celebrating that, or highlighting the art as a way of self-expression and I guess keeping separate identity. So this one seem to be mostly more displaying the art that it is the ethnographic.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

(F) No, I don't think so. Although in some ways it was surprising in a way. You know those stereotypes of NA that you have in your mind, it sort of lends itself to those stereotypes, in a way...

Researcher: What do you mean?

Well, I don't know, it's not necessarily a poor stereotype, it's just when I imagine NA culture I imagine, the animal hide clothing and the tipi, and there was an exhibit with corn and I've always associated corn with NA people, so things like that.

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

(M) I know enough to get depressed about it, because reservations tend to be areas that have poor natural resources, the alcoholism is a huge problem, and it's sort of interesting that modern Indian artists, I feel like sometimes they want to have a monopoly on this style, which is I don't know it's odd, because I very much buy in to the freedom of America, which if you like the style you are free to use it. And it's a long and upsetting history, so it's not necessarily that the exhibit highlighted that, it's just something that is always comes up for me. I mean if you know anything about it you are going to get depressed

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

(F) Probably this interview (laughs). I just usually don't have to ponder what I've looked at so carefully.

(M) I very much enjoyed all of the miniature figurines over there. It lets you see a wide variety of different styles and designs in the dress in relatively small area. It's uneasy to detail something so small.

1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No.

2) **Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**

Well, kind of both. We definitely wanted.. this was one of our priorities to come to this gallery, but we've been all over the museum.

3) **Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**

Well my daughter really does. We've been reading lots of books about it, so we come down here to look at some of the things we've been reading about.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

4) **Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**

Yes I have.

What was it?

In Kansas City I went to their museum there and saw a lot, I think.

What did you think of that?

Was really long time ago, but not much I guess. It didn't make a huge impression on me at the time.

5) **What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**

I love it, I think it's fantastic.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Well, we've been really interested in the cradle boards and these dolls over here with all the beading; and also all of the clothing and headdresses. I mean a lot of it, it's been really interesting.

6) **If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**

I would say it's really rich in all the different pieces to look at, all the different cultures that you can see. It is bright and colorful and interesting

7) **Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

Yeah, like in the beading area being able to see like the porcupine quills, and the bones and all the different thing beads were made out of, that was very interesting.

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

Definitely the headdresses and tribal kind of clothing, beading on the moccasins, things like that, feathers, dream catchers. That kind of stuff.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

Probably looking at these dolls and seeing that clothing and cradleboards and stuff.

DAM #23, (foreigner)

1) Is this your first time visiting this gallery? Yes

- 2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**

General visit

- 3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**

No

- 4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**

No, this is first time

- 5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**

It was informative.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Mostly I liked the paintings.

- 6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**

I'd say colorful and powerful.

Researcher: Powerful? In what way?

Because it gives you a lot of sense of what is going on from the past and in the way you feel their emotions for the things that they lost that were not really recognized.

- 7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

No, not really.

- 8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

Well, I'm a visitor from other country so I really don't have a lot of pictures of the Natives, only things that I've seen in films and stuff like that and I haven't met the one yet.

- 9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?**

I think I'll remember almost everything.

DAM #24

- 1) Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** Yes

- 2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**

General museum visit

- 3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**

Yes

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

Pretty high. I'm part Cherokee, so...

- 4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**

Yes

What was it?

We saw one at the Smithsonian.

What did you think of that?

Not very good, this is a lot better. There just wasn't much there. There was the whole building and yet not a lot of exhibits. You could probably take this one gallery and that would be that whole building. This is much better.

- 5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**

Very good, very good.

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

I love the totem poles and the masks downstairs.

- 6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**

NA culture from all different NA tribes, and obviously it's got the statues, it's got the clay, it's got the clothing, just great variety of items and it's not just one tribe either

- 7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?**

The only thing that I thought was a little weird was the corn one.

- 8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?**

I don't know...as far as NA in general, I don't think they are treated very well. I feel like they are not respected enough. I know a lot of them live on the reservations and they are poor and they don't have much, and as a society I feel we should help them more.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

I don't know because there were so many things I liked. It was good, a good variety of things.

DAM #25

- 1) **Is this your first time visiting this gallery?** No, but first time in the new one.

- 2) Have you come here to specifically visit Native American Arts gallery or did you stop here as a part of your general visit?**

This gallery, I wanted to see the changes.

- 3) Do you have a particular interest in American Indian cultures?**

You know, museums are not normally my thing, but I grew up partially in NW Montana, and for awhile you had a pretty large exhibit about Blackfeet, and that was the tribe around the area where I grew up, so I wanted to it.

On the scale from 1 to 10, with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you rate your interest?

- 4) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?**

Oh yeah

What was it?

Most recently we were visiting northwest and we saw some totem pole exhibits.

What did you think of that?

Great. That stuff is very interesting. I think as Americans our tendency seem to be to discount and to say that "Oh, America doesn't have an old culture. America is new." But it's not and it's kind of important to remember that there were artists for many, many years before the western culture came here.

- 5) What did you think of the material displayed in this gallery?**

I like it. I like this studio especially, the beading studio. I like the reorganization of course, and oh like that sculpture being made right now. What an incredible thing!

Anything about the material that have caught your attention?

Well, I stood and looked a long time at that really modern piece with words written on these big white pieces of paper. That was unusual.

- 6) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?**

I guess, being ceramics fan I would probably point them to that area first, but it's kind of what you see first when you get off the elevators; I would tell them that they could see a lot of examples of dress, and what I've noticed is that you seemed to arrange it sort of around crafts, like needlework area, beading area.

7) Was there anything in the gallery that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Well, I'm not an expert, but I was kind of drawn to those tourist objects. Apparently there was some kind of tourist trade with the Hopi and I thought "How industrious!" I totally would have bought one!

8) What thoughts and images come to mind when you think about American Indians today?

Native American today? Well, you have to feel a lot of sympathy for them as a culture you know. What comes to mind is the sorry situation they are in, and I'm sure that it's only becoming more disappointing as the federal government struggles to support different programs in our country, and I'm sure they get pretty short end. I guess growing up in Montana I had a chance to go to a couple, I mean in my head I seem to remember they are called powwows, but that can't possibly be what they are actually called, so I feel like I was around; and then I had couple of students in my classes, so. Knowing them individually you didn't get that feeling of despair, but I guess if asked what's first and foremost in my mind, I'd say alcoholism, poorly funded, desolate reservations, and yeah.

9) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience in this gallery today?

That sculpture. (Mud woman)

NNM #1

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

I've been here many times.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

General visit

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

I've been to Wash D.C. Not the NMAI, I went there before that one opened. I am very glad that they opened that one because in the Museum in of American History, the portion about Native history was so small.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I am very impressed at how they were able to rotate things. A lot of it from the past like the exhibit on Long Walk, and more modern stuff like modern photography and modern art. It's about people's past and present. I really like what they are doing here.

Researcher: So you think it's important to show both sides, present and the past?

Very, very important. I've always heard that one thing that us Navajos had, that made us so big, is that we were always able to adapt, and keep up with contemporary and being able to hold on to what we had in the past, and be able to progress. I think it is very important to not assimilate, but to be able to co-exist. So bringing the contemporary and the past is what I loved about these two galleries.

5) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Not really.

6) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I've been here so any times that it is hard to pick. The one thing that I like is that they keep it going and changing materials around. So the one thing that I'll take back is the sense of security that it is still here, still in operation. I hope that it is not being taken for granted.

NNM #2

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Second one

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

We wanted to visit the zoo actually. We could not visit it last time and we just stopped at the museum to see if they had any new exhibits, and to buy some gifts for our friends.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No, this is the first Native American Museum I've seen; this is the first reservation I've visited. Pretty much all I know about Native Americans comes from here.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Again, I don't really have anything to compare it to, but this is pretty amazing, selection of materials. It is amazing how much was preserved and how much they tried to destroy that heritage with all those boarding schools.

5) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

I liked part about Code talkers. This is something that I've always been interested in the whole WWII stuff and I never knew how big of a role Navajo Code Talkers played in it. That was pretty impressive.

6) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Code Talkers.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

I came to the library actually and I just went into galleries.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I liked it, but I would like to know... I know that at the Indian hospital has very old pictures, I thought they would have them too, so I was looking forward to seeing that.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Probably that they should come to see it if they like seeing old clothing and old tools.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

I think the blanket originally worn by the chief, I thought that was interesting. That chief was a legend.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

The pictures and the images of blankets and then tools.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I visit about twice a month.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just the whole museum.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes, on the National Mall.

What did you think of that?

It was ok. There was not much representation of Navajos over there though, just different other cultures.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

It nice. It's good, I like it, I like history. The part about Spanish conquistadors, I liked that.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Exhibits are about the traditional culture and history. Like that part about the treaty has a lot of information, and also about Navajo nation. If you want to know something about Navajo culture, come visit Navajo Museum.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No, not really.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I liked the paintings.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, this is... several times.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Pretty much just visiting, but I sure like that Manuelito exhibit.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No, not. I don't come here too often, but there are no other Native American museums like that here. When I get a chance to go down to Fort Apache, I often visit old Fort Apache site.

What did you think of that?

Their museum has come a long ways. It's improving and the facility is improving also.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

The Abeida display is good, very educational. I like that it is educational. It's very touching because that's history. It's not something that you see every day or hear every day. The Manuelito display is very good and something you don't see anymore and also a lot of documentation in terms of history of Navajo people. Sometimes it's good to come here to kind of refresh your memory and your thoughts about that. Our ancestors that had endured the things that they had to go through in order to be here today.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I would tell them pretty much the same thing. The Manuelito display would be the most highlight. I would recommend it to them. The others, the arts will be here forever, that's just something we live with. But not the history, not this person, and their perseverance. They would have to see that whole thing, but Manuelito is a must.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No, I think I've seen just about everything, but I just like to see it again.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

One of the things I really liked is that wagon they had in there. I collect things, so...

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

General visit.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yeah

What was it?

Different things.

What did you think of that?

Informative. Historical

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Very informative.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I'd just tell them to come by and check it out. Make their own opinion.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Lot of synthetic dyes. I was looking more for herbal dyes, natural herbal dyes. I didn't see that.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Oh my interview with you.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just visiting the museum. I liked the jewelry.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Not in any other museum, no.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I think it is very telling of the culture that was before and it's quite interesting because I saw a lot of the things that we use back home in Nigeria, like the grinding stone for the corn and such.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I would say if you want to know the origin of this part of the country, you need to come to the museum and see. Especially the exhibit about the Long Walk, that was quite interesting to see that like in any other place there are people who sacrificed for some us to enjoy what we enjoy now. That's quite moving.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

The rugs. I saw one from 1880 and that's beautiful, that's really beautiful.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I think it's my 3rd time.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Well today we came to the gift shop to buy some books, but it was closed, so we went through here.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes.

What did you think of that?

Actually back home there are quite a few different exhibits about Creek or Blackfoot. It was interesting to see the history.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

It's interesting to read all on all the background of what took place.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

It would be well worth to take time and stop and go through it. See a piece of history.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Not really.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I don't know, just re-read some of the history. Again, I've read up on it before but it's nice to refresh.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Jimmy Abeita exhibit.

Particular interest?

Yeah, I'm interested in it. I work a lot with them and I am part one, so yeah...

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes.

What did you think of that?

It was really good.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I thought it was very good. A lot of historical stuff, the photographs, explanations with them I liked the program on Jimmy Abeita, you know, when he is talking on the video. I thought it was all pretty good.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

It's right next to the mountains as you are coming in, and then it's presented in a way that you are facing East when you come in, which is a traditional format. And it is kind of shaped as a hogan and everything centers out on the wheel. It is really very accommodating, very open. It is also very interesting, because you don't even get into exhibits before you start seeing things that are actually in the central area. Even, you know you have a number of items in each case, there's a lot of history behind it. There is very little written, but there a lot more history behind it, so it brings up a lot of different facets about history and even current culture and what's going on. Even like this (point to the painting in the lobby) is very current, and I had no idea this guy did this. So yeah there's a lot of historical stuff but also contemporary and it all quite good.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Yeah, things I didn't know and even inside the photographs, the presentations of some of the historic dress, and tools and blankets. I wasn't expecting to see that I thought it would be this one exhibit. So it's a lot more then I would have expected.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I think probably Jimmy Abeita program because that's what I really wanted to see and hearing him talking about his life and issues that he was going through, I thought it was quite good. But also, looking at, it's hard to say one thing: the photographs from young people are really good, and it's you know up and coming art medium, so it's good seeing all these young artists coming up.

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I've been here once before, 5 years ago.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just in general.

Particular interest:

I've noticed the photography, I liked that a lot. I got into photography lately, so it is interesting to see what other people see, especially growing up here, what they see is very different from what we see.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I really only looked at one, you those photos; but I know they've changed a lot since the last time I've been here. I feel like culturally it includes more of this generation's perspective than just the past which I like. You know how the Navajos, the Dine around here really embraced what has happened in the past but also add to the culture today, so. I like that a lot.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

It gives you a very clear picture of the past and traditions that are still upheld. At the same time how much has changed and yet still remains today among the younger generation, and what continues to be valued as they get older, so I think that what I would share.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Well, I knew, but I didn't think they would have actual sample clothing from some of the chiefs' wives. I thought that was interesting, and it made me think: "Did they wash it seeing how old it is or do they just keep it as is?" (laughs) I know, silly.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

There was a photograph done by one of the younger photographers and it is a series of 6 pictures with the mascot and the giver, they are wearing t-shirts in front of fences, a Navajo wearing one and an Anglo wearing one. I thought it was pretty insightful for someone of that age. I thought how old

she was too, so I was a little surprised how deeply they consider their culture and cultural fences, so liked that one a lot.

NNM # 11

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I've been here 3 or 4 years ago.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just visiting.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No, not yet.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

It was good, it looks nice and they talk about a lot of different kinds, and long time ago. Who they used to fight with, and how they used to use their tools.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I probably would just ask them if they've been to this museum before or not and then explain to them some things that I saw.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Yeah, kind of but I kind of just went through. The paintings looked nice.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Probably about Chief Manuelito. He was a leader and warrior and everything. Sometime I see a newspaper or a book about him and I read it.

NNM # 12

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

General visit

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes

What was it?

It was down in Phoenix in Heard museum. In Farmington also where I'm from.

What did you think of that?

I thought they presented it pretty good so.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I liked it, it was nice.

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

The conquistadors I guess, the Spanish stuff was pretty neat. The war cap with shark's tooth, the quiver, the mountain lion quiver, that was pretty cool, pictures.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I would probably use "like the Farmington museum", with pictures and everything. More pictures than anything really. Couple of I guess just cool stuff.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No, not really. I've seen pretty much all of that stuff in other museums.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I really liked the quiver and warrior's cap with sharks tooth. I thought it was cool. I mean who would have thought all that time ago... I've never seen anything like that before.

NNM # 13

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

General visit

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes actually I have

What was it?

What did you think of that?

Mostly paintings. I've been to a museum in New York and saw some paintings and beadings, Native stuff.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Informative. A lot of this stuff I didn't even really know, like the difference between the male and female arrowheads. I didn't think there was a difference, so.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Pretty much just a lot of paintings. Mainly just paintings and they have some stuff, I guess the blankets, the shawls, all that. I remember going to a museum in Phoenix (Heard) and they have stuff from dormitories, different things you know. I just noticed picture from the long walk it doesn't take the kids what they went through in dormitories, it just has the pictures.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No, nothing really surprising, it was just nice to see it.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I'll probably mostly remember the photographs that they have now. More up to date not just the paintings, like oil paintings, but the photographs. Modern ones, yeah, those are nice. Some of them are not so great but they were nice.

NNM # 14

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I've been here. It's probably my 3rd time in the building.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just general visit.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No I haven't, I guess mainly because I know they won't show that. They won't show what I see here. And, just being very proud of our Navajo Nation, what we've done. And my father also a Navajo Talker.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

They are beautiful. A lot of information that you, you know, read along. It's good.

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

No, not really.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I'd tell them I guess, like my niece in Florida. She doesn't know a thing about her culture and I would bring her here so she can learn. It's very interesting really, everything there and you can see.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No. If I hadn't seen it, I've heard about it, and I've seen it now

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I think the Jim Abeita, the information that he provides (video), I think that was nice. That was amazing to me. Some people, you know, will not tell their actual life story and how they thought of these things, so I think that was neat. He tells all about himself and he's work. I thought that was nice.

NNM # 15

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Actually I think it's my second time.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just to the galleries, 'cause I like to see our culture back in the days. I mean it's just nice to see something and also new, old and new.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I kind of like it. I have kids and I like to take to the museum to see stuff that was made back then. I have two boys, and I was telling the little one, you know 'cause they hunt now, but it's just more like camouflage stuff. And I was telling them, "look () it's the hunter's gear from back then." I like it because it's preserving our history and it's good for the little ones.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

One thing I think they need to make it more...I don't know, the landscape could be better. Everything else inside is nice, but they need to do more work inside also. I think they need more art, more info or just more things guess.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No. I think the surprising one was the treaty. It was kind of, "Wow, they didn't make any mistakes writing back then using ink!" and then my husband goes: "oh wait, there's a mistake right here!" But I think that was one thing that was kind of new for me.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I think the treaty. I like to know who the leaders were, that was kind of interesting. Other than that, I think everything else I've seen I've seen before. I mean

NNM # 16

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No it's not. This is my second time.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just general visit.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

A few, in the museums back East.

What was it?

Small exhibits of jewelry, rugs, a few baskets.

What did you think of that?

They were pretty nice, small but nice.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Wonderful!

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

Well, I've never seen that much of Jimmy Abeita's work in person, so that was fabulous just walking through that gallery.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I don't know. I would maybe just say it's a wonderful way to learn about Navajo culture. Yeah, that's what I would say.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Definitely Abeita's work. I really like to see artwork up close, especially so much of it. Because back East I really don't get a chance to see a lot of it in any one given place. .

NNM # 17

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just general visit.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Very interesting. I didn't know there was a lot of stuff that the Native, the Navajos had before, before our time. It kind of made me have tears in my eyes because the same thing that Jews went through. You know I was watching Jean Simmons, and his mother was in Holocaust and went through it. He didn't want to take part in it until he went back to see where his mom was born and where he was born and the same thing that they shown in that museum and thing here... You know similarities in the rations and the ledgers of people's names are exactly the same. It is very sad.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

It's very beautiful and I didn't know there Native American artists, and a lot of their work is very interesting and wonderful to see. I would definitely recommend for them to come out here and see.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Well I wanted to know more about the Long Walk. How they, the Navajo people had taken that long walk and how they suffered, and how they... I guess when they came back they talked about it, but I've never really... "Well, it can be true, but ..." And then one of my uncle's wife's father is pictured right there. And we visited him last month, Joe Vanderver, he is in his 80s I think.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

The Long Walk exhibit. That was the most... that really was very interesting to me.

NNM # 18

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I come about once or twice a month.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just visiting.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yeah, I think the one in Washington DC

What did you think of that?

It was nice.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

It's pretty neat. You don't see stuff like that on the Navajos. It's different and I think it's why I like coming back and looking at it, because it's stuff that you don't see, I guess the beauty of it.

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

I think I like to look at the documents. Like pictures and stuff like that, the original stuff that they had.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I guess I'd say it's a..., I would describe it as a show and tell like people would do at schools only at the museum, stuff like that.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No, not really.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

I think today I really liked looking at the rugs, Navajo rugs. I think weaving is really... I really admire that. It is something I wish I knew how to do.

NNM # 19

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

We came to see Window Rock and then my wife wanted to come in here.

Particular interest:

Yes. My wife has relatives who live in Gallup and since we've been coming to Gallup, I've gained an interest in the culture and artistic stuff that surround it.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Maybe up in Ohio when I used to live there, but if I did it was very long time ago and I would not swear on it.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Some of it was really good, some of it so so, but like the one guy (Abeita) his stuff is wonderful, just incredible stuff. I really liked that and then some of the old rugs, bow and arrows; stuff like that was kind of interesting too.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I would probably say that it's more of an art exhibit and some artifacts. Not so much that tells you of the history of the Navajo people, although I didn't get to walk around and read too much because of the little one.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Some of the more contemporary pieces like the horse on top of the upside down horse. I was surprised to see something so contemporary. I don't know why, it just surprised me.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Just some of the art, especially some of the contemporary. How neat it was, how different and surprising it was to see something like that.

NNM # 20 (Switzerland)

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Yes, in the Native culture, especially in the Navajo. It started as a very, very young child when I was reading books about Indian tribes, so. And it evolved over time until I get here.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Yes, I was in the Fort already, so I've seen about the Hopi.

What did you think of that?

I think this one is really good, so..

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

It's well prepared, I think you get an overview on history, culture, I think it's really nicely done. It's well presented.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Just like I said before.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

I remembered that some Navajo scouts helped catch Geronimo. I have already read that, but now I have remembered that again.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

The wonderful old loom for the weaving, and you have 2 very nice weavings in there: one is absolutely beautiful, fantastic. I think it's dated from 1885 or something like that, so it's really great. Great stuff.

NNM # 21

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Yes

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just visiting.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I liked it. I really liked it. There were thing that I never seen before which I saw.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I'd say it's nice

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Old cradle board and moccasins, just stuff like that. You know what they used to use for the spoons, utensils, stuff like that.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Maybe the dress that I saw in there and the cradle boards.

NNM # 22

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I come in once in a while.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

General visit

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

Some of it I've never seen before. It's nice

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

There's quite a few that caught my attention in there.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Just bring them over. Just tell them what I know from my experience.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Yes. I don't know what it's called, but it's right around the corner there (points into the gallery). It's almost like a dream catcher.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

The baskets.

NNM # 23

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, I come here every now and then

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just a general visit.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

It was, nice, very informative.

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

Not really

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I have no idea because it is easier to just come here with them than try to explain it to them.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Not really because my grandma pretty much tells me a lot.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Just the exhibit on Chief Manuelito, and stuff about his wife.

NNM # 24

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

No, it's probably 3rd or 4th.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Yes, the Jimmy Abeita.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

Oh yes, we lived near Washington DC and we've seen things there, so it has added to our education. In New York too, we've travelled all over.

What did you think of that?

Most of them were pretty good, very informative.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

This is very nice, yeah, we like this museum. The exhibits they have are always really good. We came to the jewelry one and the rug exhibit. That was fabulous.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

Oh, I'd say it has a nice introduction to Navajo history and it gives you an idea, you know. And it has nice changing exhibits, so it's worth coming back to, you know.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

No not really. We knew a lot about the history, you know. We knew about a lot of injustices for our reading and from living in DC area. I was a librarian for the Justice department and we had Indian resources section, and you know, had to do a lot of research on things that went on in treaties and so. But I can see when people who come in for the first time it is a nice introduction, it is really good at presenting.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Oh, the Abeita for sure.

NNM # 25

1) Is this your first time visiting this museum?

Oh no, I've been here couple of times, but I think they have new stuff now.

2) Have you come here to visit a specific exhibit or were you interested in seeing whole museum?

Just visiting as general.

3) Before today, have you seen anything about American Indians in museums?

No.

4) What did you think of the objects displayed in this museum?

I thought it was very interesting about our ancestors: clothes there wore, jewelry they had, everything was traditional, everything was amazing. I've never seen anything like this before. My granddaughter here I think she picked up a few things that I was telling here about the Navajo Nation Seal. The only thing I couldn't remember what the arrowheads was really representing. And I told here this is how they were long time ago which very interesting for me too you know. I learned lot even, the treaty I noticed there were some pages about the treaty, and that's interesting too. You know how people didn't have a last name, but they just put X as their signatures.

Anything in particular that caught your attention?

Not really. Just the treaty and some antique stuff.

5) If you were trying to describe what this museum is about to your friends, what would you say?

I would probably describe it the same way. As antique for the Navajo Nation and we should all know about our culture way and you know stuff like that. I would say it is very interesting.

6) Was there anything in the museum that you have found surprising or unusual? Something that you have not seen before or didn't know about before?

Well, I noticed Abeita, Jimmy Abeita's artwork here, and that's interesting that his kind of like a famous art person and that was interesting too, that at his age he is still doing it, how it's probably his thing to do. And his mom is there too.

7) What one thing do you think you will remember from your experience today?

Probably the treaty. I was telling her how they have that word, you know, the treaty. How the kids were dressed, how they went boarding schools,

and they signed the confirmations, and stuff like that. And the other one was the Code Talkers. That was very interesting too. And maybe long time they didn't keep up with the photos, the pictures. But the code that they used that was interesting too, ants, you know, what that means in Navajo and how to say it in Navajo. I didn't know that, I know they have names for them, but it's interesting to see actual worlds. I learned too.