

Decolonizing Museums by Reconceptualizing Museum Practice:  
Undergraduate Honours Thesis

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## Introduction

In March of 2019 I visited the British Museum in London while traveling through Europe. Being an anthropology student with an interest in museums, my travels consisted largely of visiting as many museums and galleries as possible and the British Museum seemed like a must-see attraction. However, as I navigated the museum I was struck by an uneasy feeling when faced with a large gallery dedicated to the material culture of Indigenous peoples of North America. The aesthetics and designs, especially those originating from the Pacific Northwest Coast, were immediately recognizable to someone who lives in Vancouver. Entering the gallery and recognizing the carvings, weavings, and prints on display, I felt uncomfortable with the presentation of these 'artifacts' without any discussion or acknowledgement of how they came to be there, where they came from, and under what conditions they were removed from their communities of origin and previous owners.

It is easy to understand why museums want to display Indigenous material culture, the objects were beautiful and most of the museum visitors seemed fascinated. However, as someone familiar with stories of the colonization of Canada and of the relationships that existed—and continue to exist—between colonisers and Indigenous communities, the presentation of Indigenous culture without acknowledgement of the exploitative and sometimes violent ways in which the artifacts likely came to be on display so far from where they originated left me feeling uncomfortable. This experience opened my eyes to the problematic nature of many museum collections, the issues with how museums display the cultures and stories of colonized peoples, and the extent to which visitors pass through the galleries unaware of this history.

There is a great deal of literature that explores how the museum as an institution has been historically rooted in a western-centric, colonial ideology. This literature critiques museums that have participated and been complicit in systems that exoticize and generalize Indigenous cultures in the interest of 'educating' or 'entertaining' the general public (Ames, 1992). These texts tell a somewhat uncomfortable history of museum work, one that involves forced removal of sacred objects, the exploitation of both traumas and mundane stories, and a high degree of bias and stereotyping on the part of museum professionals (Peers and Brown, 2003). However, unsettling as these histories are, they lay the basis for another body of literature, one which considers what contemporary museums have done to make their institutions more collaborative, accessible, and democratic (Tolia-Kelly, 2016). As is common in contemporary anthropological literature, these scholars identify the historical issues in the field of museum work, shining a light on what was done wrong in the past, and actively exploring how to do better going forward.

One of these scholars is Anthony Romero, a Professor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, who reflected on the problematic histories of museums in an article on New Year's resolutions by museum professionals (Romero, 2019). In his resolution, Romero conceptualized the museum as a tool with a bloody history. He considers how despite its past uses, it is important to keep in mind that "there are no clean tools, only those that still serve a purpose and those that don't. Just because a tool was invented with one purpose in mind does not mean it cannot be repurposed and work just as well or better". Here Romero touches on the point that despite the historically problematic practices of certain museums, there is still value in the institution itself. Rather than simply dismiss the museum as a colonial space, scholars like Romero urge the importance of changing how we go about doing museum work, demonstrating

how valuable and meaningful museums can be if decolonizing work is done in thoughtful and productive ways.

My research examines how museum professionals in Metro Vancouver are working to decolonize their institutions through shifting traditional museum practice. My interest lies in how established and longstanding ideas of what ‘museum work’ looks like might be reconceptualized and challenged in the interest of identifying and addressing its colonial roots. Whether that refers to rethinking about how artifacts are collected and stored, how exhibits are proposed, designed, and implemented, or the purposes that museums serve in any given community, I see these processes of redefining and reconceptualizing as fundamental in the process of renegotiating what museums do, who they relate to, and to whom they are accessible.

In this paper I explore this process using two galleries in two museums as case studies. I understand and identify the process in question as decolonizing museums through reconceptualizing museum work. In my exploration of reconceptualizations of museum work, I identified three main themes, each of which I explore in more detail below. I begin by exploring how museum professionals approach the relationship between their institutions and communities of origin—referring to the communities whose belongings and stories comprise the exhibits and galleries. I then consider perceptions of material culture—artifacts or objects, and what they do. Finally, I consider reconceptualizations of the museum as an institution—what it does, who it serves, and how it is run.

## Literature Review

In the early 1990s, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association collaborated to form a Task Force on Museums and First Peoples. The task force produced a report entitled “Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples” (1994). This report came as a result of a great deal of backlash to an exhibition

organized by the Glenbow Museum for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. That exhibit, *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, displayed material culture from Indigenous people of Canada that had been sourced from museums around the world (Phillips, 2011). Critiques of the exhibition resulted partly from the Glenbow Museum's decision to promote Shell Oil as a major corporate sponsor in the midst of a number of oil-related land disputes. However, the backlash against the exhibit also largely resulted from its inappropriate and uncollaborative approach to displaying material culture from Indigenous groups. Collections on display included materials that had been forcibly removed from their original owners and that were being displayed in culturally insensitive ways, and/or borrowed from museums that had previously been unwilling to consider repatriating belongings or human remains to their originating communities (Phillips, 2011).

Following this controversy, representatives from the Assembly of First Nations reached out to the Canadian Museums Association in the interest of co-sponsoring a conference on the topic of improving Indigenous representation and involvement in Canadian museums (Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples, 1994). The findings of these collaborations emphasized the importance of involving Indigenous communities in museum processes, of funding and support for projects involving Indigenous Peoples, and of improving efforts to repatriate culturally sacred artifacts and human remains to their originating communities. This event is understood as a turning point in how Canadian museums have approached displaying Indigenous culture, and is cited by many Canadian museum scholars (Phillips, 2011).

Anthropological research on decolonizing museum practice is not a new phenomenon. However, over time the approaches scholars have taken to decolonizing practices have changed, built on previous efforts to advance understandings of decolonization. The late

Michael Ames, a curator and director at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, was identified by Jennifer Kramer as one of “the first anthropologists that made museum spaces the focus of anthropological study, as opposed to a place where you express anthropological knowledge” (Interview, 5 February, 2020). Ames’ book, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes* (1992) is a widely cited source in museum anthropological literature. The text provides a detailed analysis of the museum as an institution, its history, and the changes it has seen throughout its existence. Ames is critical of the museum as an institution, considering its colonial roots and exploitative practices. Justifying the title of his book, he describes museums as “cannibalistic in appropriating other peoples’ material for their own study and interpretation,” and proceeding to “confine their representations to glass box display cases” (1992, 3). While he is critical of the museum, Ames’ work exists to encourage museum scholars to rethink the practices and methods they were taught, and to understand the ways in which their institution is rooted in colonial thought in order to make it more responsible and respectful.

Ames provides a history of the museum as an institution, using examples like the British Museum to demonstrate how the objectives and meanings of the museum have changed over time. For example, the museum has become more accessible to the general public and to individuals from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds. He also considers these shifts by aligning the history of museums with the history of anthropology, considering how, for early anthropologists, the museum was a space to display research and to disseminate knowledge to general (or specific, academic or elite) audiences. Over time, understandings of what museums are and what they do have shifted, and the institution has come to be understood in many different ways. With these shifts has come a variety of literature that considers the museum itself as a subject of ethnographic observation, rather than simply a space for the display of ethnographic findings.



Scholars like Divya Tolia-Kelly focus their research on experiences of being in museums and of coming in contact with the tangible and intangible culture on display (2016). Tolia-Kelly explores affective politics and experiences of museum spaces through a postcolonial lens. Work like this disrupts typical understandings of museum spaces as objective spaces for disseminating knowledge, rather considering them as emotional and political spheres where colonial histories and traumas are displayed and experienced. Similarly, Ann Fienup-Riordan's research follows a reunion between a group of Yup'ik elders and a collection of their cultural belongings, removed from Alaska almost a century prior (2003). This study describes the meaningful and emotional responses elders felt when reunited with this collection in a German museum, as well as the reactions of Fienup-Riordan and the museum staff present in witnessing this reunion. The author uses her case study to describe a shift in how 'objects' are understood in museum settings, and how their meanings and values are perceived differently by the institutions than they are by their originating communities. Lissant Bolton also considers how objects in museums are understood (2003). Her work takes into consideration the problematic history of museums and the exploitative ways in which they have acquired artifacts and collections, exploring the question of how the meaning of an object changes when it is removed from its originating community. She argues that when museums display artifacts in decontextualized ways, isolating them from their cultural origins and meanings, the objects are stripped of their significance and appreciated only for their resilience in having survived being removed so far from where they originated.

Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown contextualize museum anthropology by considering the historical dynamics between museums and communities of origin (2003). They describe these relationships as having historically been, "predicated on another set of relationships, between museums as institutions within imperial powers and source communities in colonised

regions,” and how within these contexts, relationships were often founded on an assumption that “the peoples whose material heritage was being collected were dying out, and that the remnants of their cultures should be preserved for the benefit of future generations” (2003, 1). This understanding of ‘preserving cultures’ that were beautiful but inherently temporary aligns with colonial assumptions about modernity and civilization, which can clearly be understood as having informed fields like museum studies, as well as anthropology. Aligning the development of the museum and the field of anthropology—much like Ames—Peers and Brown discuss the shifts in the dynamics between museums and originating communities, and the importance of collaborating in order to portray them in more respectful and accurate ways.

Peers and Brown explore how the museum, often seen as an educational or cultural institution, holds a certain amount of status, much like a university. Given that museums are generally understood as institutions for disseminating cultural stories—for displaying histories and cultures to the general public—museum staff are often perceived as experts of culture and history. Parallels can be drawn here between the museum curator, who is understood as an authority when it comes to the telling of cultural stories to the general public, and the cultural anthropologist. This aligns with Ames’ consideration of how both parties are responsible for translating stories so that they are accessible to a specific audience—though anthropologists’ audiences tend to be more academic and thus less universally accessible than museums (1992). It also relates to Margaret G. Hanna’s discussion of increasing pressures on archaeological museums to be more inclusive and respectful of First Nations worldviews, and to incorporate more collaborative museum methods (1999). She describes critiques of contemporary archaeology and its “self-assumed monopoly on knowledge about the past” (1999, 43). Like Ames, Peers, and Brown, Hanna dives into the discussion of how museum

professionals and academics came to be understood as 'experts' about culture and history, and why that is problematic.

Just as many contemporary anthropologists have become cognisant of the power imbalances between themselves and the communities they study, museum scholars have shifted how they approach their relationships to communities of origin, and their involvement in museum processes. Miriam Kahn explores the process of collaborative curation in her analysis of Seattle's Burke Museum's first collaborative exhibit, *Pacific Voices*, which established a Community Advisory Board in order to involve representatives of the communities whose material culture was to be on display in the exhibit planning process (2000). The article details the many challenges and controversies that arose in attempting a collaborative exhibit for the first time, and Kahn concludes that, despite the ambitions of the project and the praise it received from the general public, she felt that museum staff did not go far enough in their efforts to collaborate. James Clifford is often cited for his assertion that many museums that claim their work is collaborative do not do enough to involve community representatives (1997). He argues for more significant change in how exhibits are created in order to replace frameworks that rest on the assumption that museum curators can be authorities—experts—speaking for and representing a culture to which they do not belong. By making methods more collaborative, museum staff interrupt the dynamic of researcher/subject, acknowledging community representatives as knowledge holders and allowing them agency over how their stories are told and how their material culture is displayed.

In his discussion of welcoming community representatives into the curatorial process, Ames touches on the importance of understanding past relationships between museums and source communities (or anthropologists and their informants) (1992). Ames describes instances in which his institution was criticized for not doing enough to make the space accessible to

communities of origin, and to provide them with opportunities to speak for themselves. Ames, who was the director at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC, acknowledges that this was a weakness that was taken for granted by museum staff, and describes how this realization encouraged him to rethink how community representatives should be involved in exhibit design and implementation.

In his chapter on the census, the map, and the museum, Benedict Anderson analyzes three institutions of power in colonial states, and the ways in which they can be seen to have changed national and colonial imaginaries (Anderson, 1983). Benedict considers what purpose museums have historically served, especially in the context of colonized peoples. Specifically thinking about Southeast Asia, Anderson suggests three possible justifications for the interests of colonial states in the 'museumization' or archaeological restoration of antique monuments. Anderson found that the ways in which the construction and legitimization of archaeological monuments by colonizers allowed for their having a sense of ownership and, by extension, the ability to capitalize off of sacred local sites. Not only does this transform sites into tourist attractions for European visitors, it allows colonial powers the authority to dictate who is welcome in the space, and in what ways it may be used. This came with a classificatory, colonial way of thinking which allowed the state control over cultural practices of colonized people. These texts are just a few examples of the extensive literature that exists on the subject of decolonizing museums and establishes important understandings of the history of museums and what they do.

## Field Sites

During the winter of 2019/2020, I conducted observation in galleries at two museums in the Vancouver area, both of which I see as demonstrating efforts to reconfigure how museums display the cultures of Indigenous Peoples as a means of democratizing and decolonizing their

institution. These galleries are the Multiversity Galleries at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, and the Indigenous Hall at the Museum of Surrey. I found both of these institutions to provide strong, if different, demonstrations of the actions museum professionals can and do take to decolonize their institutions. My observations consisted of multiple visits to each museum, where I spent time walking through the gallery in question and taking in the stories and cultures on display.

### The Multiversity Galleries at the Museum of Anthropology

The Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia has a long existing reputation for collaborative work with Indigenous communities of British Columbia. Since it was first established in 1949, MOA has displayed tangible (objects) and intangible culture (stories) from a variety of Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia, making efforts to ethically and respectfully tell the cultural histories of these peoples (Museum of Anthropology). In 1976 MOA moved from its original location in the basement of what is now the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at UBC, to its present site in a purpose-built structure. The new space included a large, visible storage unit. The introduction of visible storage to MOA was a demonstration of the museum's work to democratize their collections and to make them visible to the public. In the space, visitors could navigate the expansive collection of tangible culture at MOA at their own pace and, in theory, interpret it without the overarching narrative of text panels or articulated displays.

While the visible storage was celebrated for its efforts to display collections in a non-biased way, it was not without its criticisms. In a semi-structured interview Dr. Jennifer Kramer, curator of Pacific Northwest collections at the Museum of Anthropology, described some of these critiques (Interview, 5 February, 2020). One was of the assumption that it was ever

possible to display collections without their organization being inherently shaped by the perspectives of the curators. Specifically, Kramer described the extent to which curators might take for granted the fact that their systems of categorizing and storing artifacts come from a European standpoint, claiming that it became important to acknowledge that when curators are responsible for placing artifacts on display, there is no true 'neutrality'. In describing the original organization of the visible storage, Kramer explained that

It had no geographical relationship... basically, it seemed like things got case space based on how big a collection was... so there were cases that were just mixed multicultural cases, because they were large, oversized objects. So the placement didn't have to do with the geo-cultural area, and so you got some very funny pairings based on how big a collection was. (Interview, 5 February, 2020)

Kramer used this point to demonstrate the push for greater collaboration with communities of origin in the redoing of MOA's visible storage, and the organization of the new visible storage, now known as the Multiversity Galleries, is quite different than previously.

In 2010, MOA completed a renovation which involved updating the visible storage unit to what is now known as the Multiversity Galleries. The renovation of the visible storage was meant to address the earlier criticisms and to create a space that was more accessible and democratic in terms of how visitors were able to interact with the collections without being interpreted by museum staff, as well as more appropriate in terms of how artifacts were stored and displayed. Part of this process involved MOA's curators reaching out to communities from whom collections had come (specifically British Columbian First Nations communities) and consulting them on how, if at all, their material culture should be displayed in the Multiversity Galleries. Given the fact that the majority of MOA's collections comes from Indigenous groups throughout British Columbia, collaboration with those communities was prioritized over communities in other parts of the world.

The Multiversity Galleries are a large space with incredibly diverse materials on display. Material culture is displayed, for the most part, with minimal interpretation or explanation, with most artifacts accompanied only by a label denoting their community of origin and, if known, date of production. The galleries are organized geographically, with collections grouped according to the Nations from which they originated. As visitors enter the galleries, the first collection they see is that of Musqueam First Nation, a purposeful choice because the museum sits on unceded Musqueam land. Collections from other Coast Salish communities and Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples follow, and further into the galleries visitors find collections from Asia, Africa, and more.

The organization and display of artifacts varies from case to case. This comes as a correction of another critique made of MOA's original visible storage, which was that some objects were displayed in culturally insensitive or inappropriate ways. In our semi-structured interview, Dr. Susan Rowley, Curator of Arctic collections and public archaeology at MOA, described critiques of displays being overcrowded, with some artifacts not being visible at all. Another problem, which was also touched on by Dr. Kramer, was that the system of organization seemed to be uniform and formulaic. In reorganizing the visible storage, the museum staff identified the need for greater communication and collaboration with communities of origin to establish how they wanted their cultural items displayed. A great deal of variation in how each case or collection is organized according to the preferences of community representatives was an outcome of this consultation.

## The Indigenous Hall at the Museum of Surrey

The Museum of Surrey, currently located in that city's Cloverdale area, dates back to the late 1930s. As a municipal institution, the museum has undergone a number of changes since it

was first established. The latest update to the museum began over the summer of 2017, with a large-scale renovation. Reopening in September of 2018, the museum now has space for a larger number of galleries, offices, and programming spaces.

One of the new galleries established following the renovation was the Indigenous Hall, a space dedicated to rotating exhibits about Surrey's three First Nations, Semiamhoo, Katzie, and Kwantlen. The purpose of the Indigenous Hall is to display exhibits that are proposed and designed by representatives of those three Nations, providing them with the space and resources to tell their own stories. I sat down with Lynn Saffery, Museum Manager at the Museum of Surrey, who played an important role in the changes undergone by the museum during the renovation. Saffery described what the museum looked like when he arrived in 2014 (interview, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020); specifically, he described the museum's display of artifacts and stories belonging to and representing Indigenous Peoples as being quite general, and largely relating to groups residing outside of the Surrey area altogether: "I just felt right from the get-go that this isn't appropriate... if we are a museum that's going to represent [the Surrey community], we need to engage with the First Nations of this area" (interview, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

At Saffery's initiation, the Museum of Surrey staff implemented significant changes to how the museum displayed Indigenous stories, and they started by inviting representatives from Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, and Katzie to the museum to share their thoughts on the existing displays. Saffery explained,

We brought them in for a meeting, and the first thing that happened was one of the counselors from Semiahmoo stood up and said, 'you guys are doing this all wrong. Everything here is wrong. The first thing is that the people who have the territories here need to be consulted. The last time Semiahmoo was consulted was in 1991, and when that happened, you gave us about six boxes of ancestral remains and walked away. There was no ceremony, there was no apology'. (Interview, 18 February, 2020)



Following requests from the Indigenous representatives, the museum staff began to follow Semiamhoo protocol and remove artifacts and display material. They also began planning an apology ceremony which Saffrey described as having been instrumental in establishing relationships with Semiahmoo, as well as with Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations. Museum staff worked with representatives from the Nations to establish the appropriate protocol to formally recognize the historically problematic representations of Indigenous peoples at the museum, and by doing so important relationships were formed between the museum and these three First Nations, and the base for the collaborative nature of the Indigenous Hall was established.

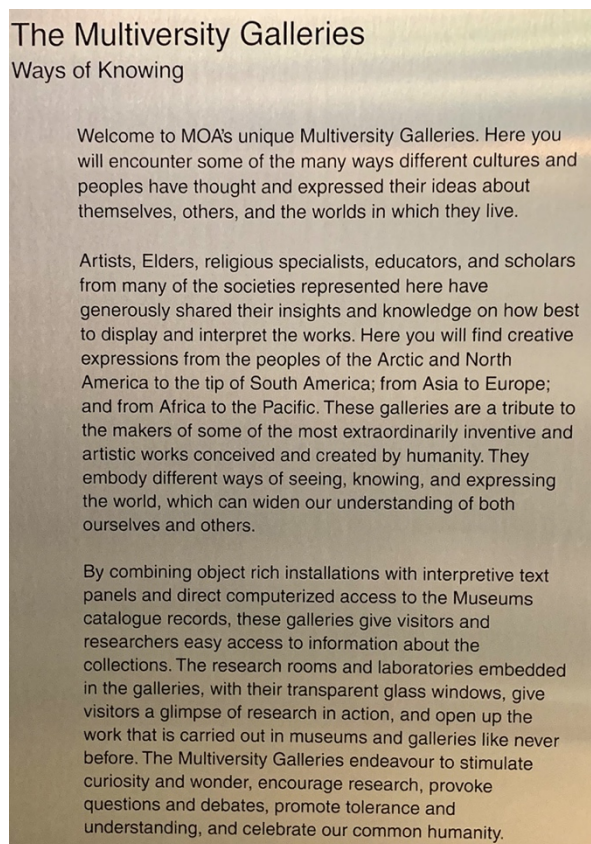
At the time of my observation, the Indigenous Hall was displaying the “We Are Kwantlen” exhibit. This is the second exhibit in the redesigned space, the first having been about all three land-based First Nations of Surrey, and their relations with each other and to the area. Saffrey explained that after this first gallery, each nation will have their own gallery in which they can tell their specific story in whichever way they choose. “We are Kwantlen”, specifically, tells about the history of Kwantlen Nation, their language, their practices, and some of their community members.

Now that I have introduced the institutions at which I conducted my fieldwork, I will consider how they have taken on—and how they continue to take on—what I identify as the reconceptualization of museum work, beginning with the rethinking of relationships between institutions and Indigenous communities of origin.

## Relationships

In each of the semi-structured interviews I conducted, the significance of the types of relationships formed and maintained between museum staff and communities of origin was

emphasized as being intrinsic to the process of decolonizing. The underlying purpose of both the Multiversity Galleries at MOA, and the Indigenous Hall at the Museum of Surrey, is the provision of space in which community representatives are able display their cultures, belongings, and stories in the ways they see most appropriate. Even in their title, “The Multiversity Galleries; Ways of Knowing” emphasize ways of viewing and understanding cultures that differ from ‘traditional’ museum portrayals of culture and history, which tend to position museum staff as experts and their interpretations of culture as objective. Rather, they align with the communities themselves and their subjective experiences and values. In the welcome panel to the Multiversity Galleries, it is stated that “Artists, Elders, religious specialists, educators, and scholars from many of the societies represented here have generously shared their insights and knowledge on how best to display and interpret the works” (Museum of Anthropology). Here



*Figure 1: Introductory Panel to the Multiversity Galleries, Museum of Anthropology*

they explicitly introduce the galleries and their contents as subjective and varying, specifying whose voices are on display in the space.

The welcome panel for the Indigenous Hall at the Museum of Surrey states the space's intended purpose as "a space where Surrey's three land-based First Nations...can represent their histories, stories, and share other Indigenous based narratives as they determine". It also specifies that the Hall "will evolve and change as relationships grow and strengthen" (Museum of Surrey). In this case, visitors at the museum are made aware that the gallery's contents are presented to them from the perspectives of Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo peoples. Community representatives are identified as those with the ability to speak about their cultures and their people's histories. The welcome panel also explicitly identifies the dynamic and changing nature of the relationships between the First Nations and the museum.

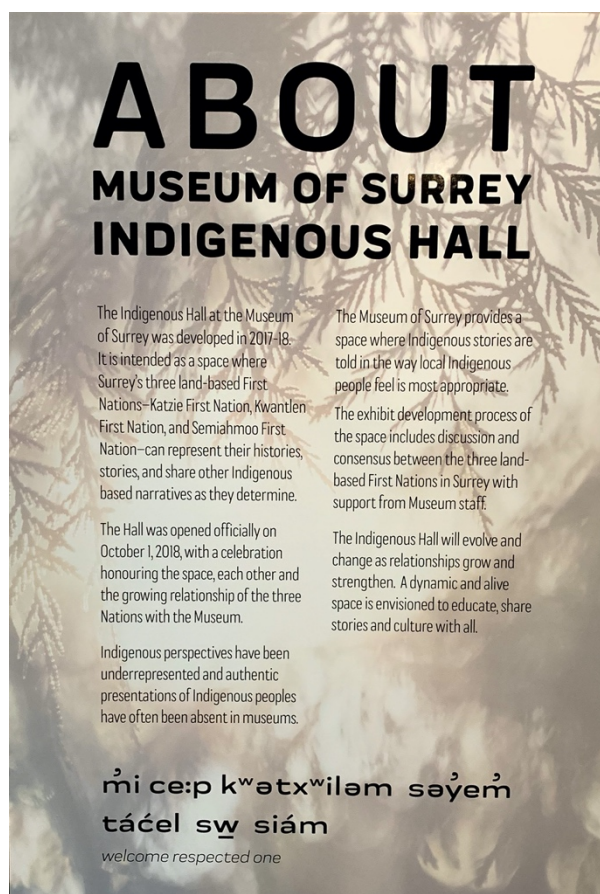


Figure 2: Introductory Panel of Indigenous Hall, Museum of Surrey

In both these cases, I identify a transfer of power and authority over what displays look like, demonstrating a recognition on the part of museum professionals of community members as experts when it comes to their own culture. To some this might seem like an obvious statement—that a Musqueam person is more of an expert on Musqueam culture than a non-Musqueam curator. However, when we consider the history of the museum as an institution, we see a pattern of museum curators speaking about communities of origin in biased or stereotypical ways (Clifford, 1997). Again, parallels can be drawn to cultural anthropologists who historically have been criticized for representing their research subjects in objectifying or inaccurate ways.

This is a point that arose in my conversation with Susan Rowley, who reflected on how many museums have evolved within decolonizing frameworks (Interview, 5 February, 2020). Rowley described a shift away from museum professionals taking on the responsibility of representing a culture to which they do not belong through extensive research, and towards acting as a facilitator so that those communities can speak for themselves and tell their stories as they see fit, while being supported by museum staff with extensive technical museum experience. She described “that shift that occurs, that is the shift from us telling their story to people telling their own stories, the self-representation piece. And I think that’s a really important one” (Interview, 5 February, 2020). This shift—which symbolizes a transfer of authority and agency—creates more mutual and reciprocal relationships in which community representatives feel more empowered and less objectified (Kahn, 2000). These relationships, which can be understood as being strengthened by the sharing of authority and the disruption of unequal power dynamics, then lay the groundwork for museum environments in which more meaningful and impactful exhibits and displays are created.

This leads to an important discussion of how and at what point community representatives should be involved in museum processes, a point which has been reflected on by many academics who have studied museums, including James Clifford. Clifford argues that communities' involvement must be to a greater extent than simply consulting on finished products, and that failing to involve them in all aspects of museum practice risks the continuation of colonial legacies in museums (Clifford, 1997). In considering my conversation with Rowley, it is clear that the Museum of Anthropology recognizes this, and has for some time. She explained that "even right from the get go when MOA first started, Indigenous communities have been working with us and stepping forward, especially Musqueam, to...question who we are and why we work in the ways that we do" (Interview, 5 February, 2020).

In terms of community involvement in the Multiversity Galleries, Kramer explained that "It's about trying to involve them as early as possible" (Interview, 5 February, 2020). In the renovations of MOA's visible storage, one of the first steps in the planning process was reaching out to groups from which MOA had collections and asking for their input. Kramer described that MOA:

sent out letters to every community in British Columbia saying that this project was happening, telling them that their belongings... would be off of view for a while, and this is what was going on. And we invited representation to come down, do a big conference on what visible storage look like now and ideas for the future. And then we started sort of making relationships and doing one on ones, curator to community representatives, [about] redoing the space, reinstalling the space, [and] reverse researching this space (Interview, 5 February, 2020).

Kramer and Rowley both emphasized the important role that establishing and strengthening relationships between MOA and communities of origin play in this type of museum work. In a project like the Multiversity Galleries where the intent is to display materials in ways identified as appropriate by community representatives, those representatives must feel

comfortable and welcome in the space, and as though their input and knowledge are as valuable as that of museum staff.

In considering the involvement of community members at the Museum of Surrey, we see another example of what Clifford would identify as more involvement by community representatives than simply consulting. During our conversation, Saffery described the importance of the Museum providing space and resources for First Nations in Surrey to tell their own stories, and described his roles and those of his colleagues at the museum as more in the way of facilitators:

Right from the get go, my philosophy has always been that they have stories to tell, and I want them to tell the stories that they want to tell. So instead of us being the curators of the exhibit, we are not the curators, we are the facilitators, we provide a space for them. We provide an opportunity for them to tell what they need to tell, what they want to tell, and then they develop the program and they tell us what it is. (Interview, 18 February, 2020).

In our discussion of the implementation of the Indigenous Hall, it was clear that representatives from Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo First Nations became involved early on in the planning process. In this case the impetus for redoing the Museum of Surrey's presentation of Indigenous content came largely from the feedback of community representatives. In the process of applying for grants to fund the museum's renovation, Saffery described sitting down with community representatives and ensuring they supported the museum's plan: "I went through [the grant] with the three nations, sat down with them, and made sure that that was what they wanted" (Interview, 18 February, 2020). Saffery described the meaningful impact of the apology ceremony ceremony and the ways in which it repaired past relationships between the museum and local First Nations, and in some cases established new relationships:

We apologized on our behalf, we had smudgings, then we had a blanketing ceremony... and then, all of a sudden, we were on the in. We had the ear of Semiahmoo, which was sort of the best thing that could have happened because the Semiahmoo's territory is the

closest to the museum, so as per protocol, we talked to them first then the other land based nations which are Kwantlen and Katzie (Interview, 18 February, 2020).

Through these efforts to acknowledge the mistakes the Museum had made and demonstrate regret, Lynn and his staff showed their intent to be a resource and to provide a platform for local First Nations to tell their stories, rather than to exploit their histories in their own interests.

Whereas scholars like Clifford criticize museums that bring community representatives into the exhibit process as ‘consultants’, with little authority over the actual exhibit itself, the Museum of Surrey demonstrates a case of actively shaping the exhibit process around the opinions and views of community members. Saffery described Indigenous representatives being present in discussions of what the physical gallery space would look like and how education programming would be designed. He also described the realities that for certain communities, especially for certain Indigenous communities, the museum had to learn to adapt some of their timelines and processes in an understanding of originating communities’ unique needs and priorities—one example he mentioned was a certain amount of flexibility with groups like Semiahmoo who, at the time of these consultations, were dealing with a boil water advisory. While these adjustments could be difficult for a staff accustomed to certain practices and procedures, he also expressed how meaningful and important his relationships with those communities had become, and how much deeper an understanding he held of colonial processes and the need for decolonizing work as a result (Interview, 5 February, 2020).

The resulting work, the Indigenous Hall and “We Are Kwantlen”, extend those meaningful relationships to museum staff and members of the non-Indigenous Surrey community. The exhibit displays personal narratives that allow all visitors to feel connected to the Kwantlen community, and encourage them to engage with their stories and histories in personal ways. When we consider past dynamics between museums and communities of origin

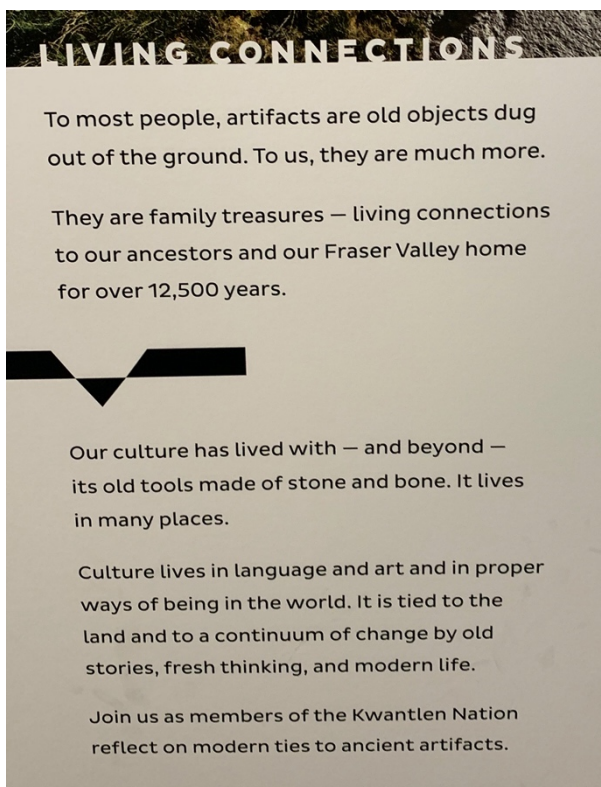
as Ames (1992) or Peers (2003) do, galleries like “We Are Kwantlen” demonstrate how much work has been done to dismantle imbalances of power and create more reciprocal relationships. The Museum of Anthropology demonstrated similar intentions in the renovations of their visible storage, and introduction of the Multiversity Galleries. As Kramer described, one of the most significant intentions for redoing the space was to incorporate local attitudes and ways of knowing into the organization and display of material culture. As such, curators at MOA were tasked with reaching out to communities from which the museum had collections, and working to establish the most appropriate ways to move forward. Dr. Kramer described the importance in these scenarios of community representatives feeling a sense of trust in their museum contact, and in the museum itself on a larger scale, just as First Nations in Surrey felt greater trust in the Museum of Surrey after their apology ceremony.

## Objects

James Clifford opens his discussion of museums as ‘contact zones’ by describing a meeting in the basement of a Portland art gallery, in which Tlingit elders were asked to comment on and provide details related to the museum’s “Northwest Coast Indian Collection” (1997). Clifford describes his and the museum professionals’ assumptions that Tlingit representatives, upon being shown the artifacts, would provide details of their past uses, production, and ownership. However, the results were not so. Upon being shown the artifacts, the Tlingit representatives were inspired to tell stories or sing songs, each of which was recalled through coming in contact with a piece of their tangible culture. Upon describing this occurrence, in which the presence of cultural artifacts triggered the sharing of intangible culture (stories, histories, and teachings), Clifford considers how, in this context, the artifacts in question came to be understood as more than simply ‘objects’.



Much like examples provided by Fienup-Riordan (2003) and Lissant Bolton (2003), this demonstrates how attention to promoting relationships between material culture and their communities of origin may encourage museum professionals to shift the ways in which they understand ‘objects’ and their meanings and—by extension—to rethink how they house and



*Figure 3: Living Connections Panel, Museum of Surrey*

display those pieces of tangible culture. Like these scholars, I maintain that aligning our understandings of objects or artifacts with those of communities of origin results in a shift in how they are held, used, and displayed in museum settings. Both of my case studies demonstrate a shift in how ‘objects’ originating from Indigenous communities of origin are conceptualized, and how that shift results in changes to their museum practice.

Within the Museum of Surrey’s “We Are Kwantlen” exhibit, there are multiple text panels that consider different understandings of ‘objects’. One of these panels, titled “Living

Connections,” reads “[to] most people, artifacts are old objects dug out of the ground. To us, they are much more. They are family treasures—living connections to our ancestors and our Fraser Valley home for over 12,500 years.” This panel identifies a taken for granted assumption in many museum settings, that museum ‘artifacts’ are often thought of as old ‘things’ recovered from ‘ancient’ civilizations, and that their value lies in their preservation (Bolton, 2003).

Alternatively, “We Are Kwantlen” frames artifacts on display in the gallery as cultural belongings which hold complex meanings to Kwantlen people. By articulating that relation of the community to the objects on display, visitors to the gallery are invited to challenge more typical ways of engaging with museum exhibits—of walking around and observing ‘objects’ and perhaps reading from where and when they originated. Alternatively, displays in this gallery provide a great amount of context so that visitors not only understand what artifacts were used for, but what that use meant to the community, and how it still matters in contemporary Kwantlen culture.

One example of this is a display of stone carvings, arrowheads, and tools in “We Are Kwantlen”. A small text panel accompanies the display describing what the artifacts are made from and, in some cases, when they were made. Above the display case is a much larger text panel titled, “Toolmakers were artists who knew the properties of stone and bone. They were expert wood carvers” (Museum of Surrey). This panel details different types of tools developed by Kwantlen people, how they were used, and how those historical practices shape the modern Kwantlen community. The panel features a quote from Statlomot/Les Antone: “We are proud of the legacy our ancestors left us. They taught us how to make tools from Mother Earth to provide for our people” (Museum of Surrey). This panel goes further than displaying culturally significant artifacts as important pieces of history. Instead, it displays physical objects and provides context

that invites museum visitors to consider the meanings those objects had to their originating communities, and how they still shape and influence Kwantlen communities today.



Figure 4: Toolmakers, Museum of Surrey

This aligns with Clifford's description of objects as means of sharing stories and experiences (1997), or with Bolton's critique of museums displaying an artifact in a way that "gives it a significance as a survivor," rather than identifying its meaning to its originating community (2003, 43).

Keeping in mind that "We Are Kwantlen", like all exhibits in the Indigenous Hall, was designed and shaped by representatives of First Nations in Surrey, it is clear that this distinction of the meaning behind 'objects' is an important one for the Kwantlen community. During our conversation, Saffery and I discussed the process of transforming the museum's representation of First Nations communities, and what that looked like:

We completely pulled everything before we started the Indigenous Hall... after the apology ceremony, we had another ceremony to pull everything out and blanket of all the artifacts and put them in an area that could be watched over and looked at by the different elders of the different Nations. Some of them have been put back in storage like... a Haida totem pole... it has no relation to [Surrey], it was not put up here with permission from Haida Nation. (Interview, 18 February, 2020)

Saffery described the importance museum staff placed on not displaying artifacts that were not relevant to the Surrey area, as well as those that had not been obtained ethically. In describing efforts to reach out to originating communities regarding objects in their collection, he stated that “we email or try to contact a Nation about an object, they don’t reply, we pull the object... because it’s not ours, it’s not our story to tell” (Interview, 18 February, 2020).

Given that the Multiversity Galleries are less of an exhibit than a visible storage space, there is much less text situating artifacts and collections. However, Dr. Kramer described some instances where community representatives and museum staff felt it necessary to provide some context or explanation (Interview, 5 February, 2020). Speaking of one example, Kramer explained that curators and community representatives felt it was important to include discussions of the contexts for the objects on display. In this case she explained that “there’s actually a different sized label [affixed to the artifact] than we were actually allowed, we were very limited by the designers about how much text [we included] because it wasn’t technically an exhibition, right? So, we don’t do as much” (Interview, 5 February, 2020). Despite those



*Figure 5: Wrapped Kwakwaka'wakw Mask, Museum of Anthropology*

limitations, MOA curators and collaborators felt certain collections or artifacts needed textual explanation in order for their display to be understood in appropriate ways.

These instances serve as strong examples of the meaning objects take on in community or museum contexts, and the importance of acknowledging how they are understood by communities of origin. Within the Multiversity Galleries, there are several artifacts that are hidden or protected from the view of the visitor. One example is a Kwakwaka'wakw mask that is on display wrapped in a blanket. This mask is accompanied by a text panel titled 'Kwikwaladlakw (Things that are hidden)', which discusses the complexity of this particular piece of tangible culture (Museum of Anthropology). The panel explains that certain Kwakwaka'wakw belongings, such as headdresses, are understood as having supernatural

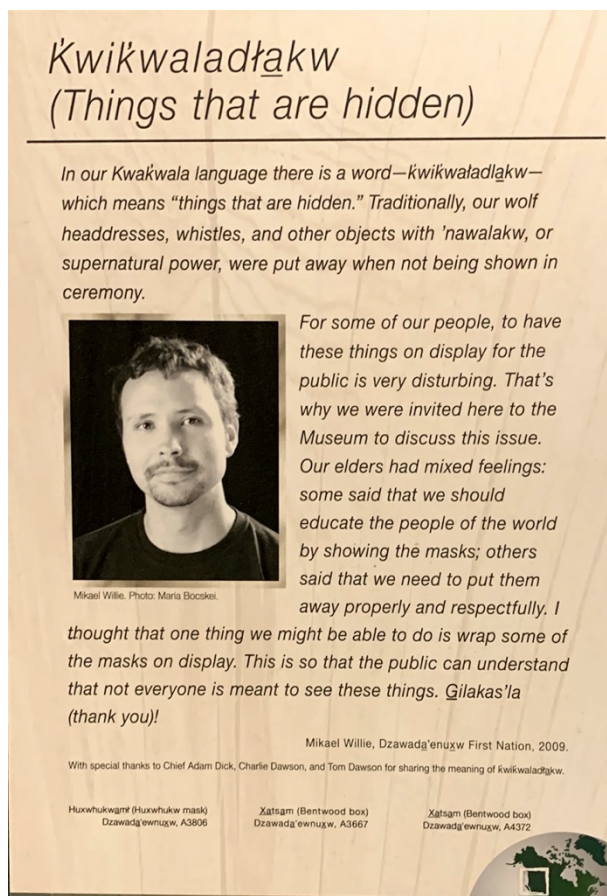


Figure 6: 'Things that are hidden' text panel, Museum of Anthropology

power, and so are not meant to be seen outside of their use in ceremonies. For this reason, certain community members felt uncomfortable having the masks on display in the museum for the public to see. However, other community members felt belongings like this should be available in the gallery for young people, especially young Kwakwaka'wakw people, to see. The text panel explains that rather than simply display or hide this mask, the choice to show it wrapped in a blanket allows visitors to “understand that not everyone is meant to see these things”.

A display featuring hidden artifacts is a fairly untraditional museum display, given that the point of museums is generally understood as a place to view cultural objects. Through presenting material culture in this way, MOA disrupts typical museum processes, not just of displaying objects, but as understanding their complex meanings, and the importance of complying with how they are perceived by communities of origin. It also reminds visitors and museum staff of the diversity of thought and opinion that exists within a given community—that not all Indigenous people, or even all Kwakwaka'wakw people, think the same way about their culture. Displays like these encourage visitors to think differently about artifacts as ‘objects’, and to consider the complex and varying meanings that physical belongings have to different people depending on their relationships to them.

When I asked Kramer about the choice to display the mask in this way, she explained her approach to decisions surrounding culturally sensitive materials and the inevitable critiques that come with displaying material culture: “You can explain the process you went through... I think if you lay your cards on the table, [and] that doesn't mean you don't spend time worrying or stressing about it, and there is no one ethical answer, but you can out the problem (Interview, 5 February, 2020)”. Kramer identified that decisions of whether or not to display materials are made by community representatives, and that she and her fellow curators honour those

decisions. That being said, she understands that there will be questions of whether those decisions were right, and she identifies the process of reconsidering displays and engaging in those—sometimes uncomfortable—conversations as necessary in the process of decolonizing museums.

Given its reputation for strong, collaborative relationships with Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia, the Museum of Anthropology is also known for its repatriation practices. Dr. Rowley, who is currently head of MOA's repatriation committee, discussed the complexity of repatriating, as well as its importance it is in the process of decolonizing:

Part of the role of repatriation in museums is recognizing mistakes, thinking through what went into making those mistakes, surfacing those histories that have only been told from one side, and saying, this is the way it was, and we got these things. And... just because I've had it for 50 years doesn't mean it's rightfully mine or of this institution. How did it come to be here? What's the contextual framework in which it was excised from its community of practice, and then working through all of that. (Interview, 5 February, 2020)

Rowley draws on the problematic histories of many museums and expresses why processes like repatriation are so important. Like Kramer and Saffery, she also identifies the importance that museums not display objects without the knowledge or consent of originating communities. These perspectives also maintain that cultural artifacts hold unique meanings in the contexts of their originating communities, and that it is unlikely that museum staff would be able to portray that without collaboration with community representatives. On this note, Kramer stated, "I always say that if a belonging or a being can do better work back home, then it should go back home" (Interview, 5 February, 2020).

## Institution

Thus far, I have discussed the ways in which museums are reconceptualizing traditional practice in regards to their relationships with communities of origin, and their understandings of

objects and artifacts. I now turn to a broader theme, that of the institution of the museum itself. I have touched already on the history of the museum, and scholars like Michael Ames (1992) have discussed it in detail. Understanding the history of museums and the roles that they have played in society has demonstrated some of the problematic, colonial roots of the modern museum. That being said, in previous sections, I have explored some of the diverse ways in which museum scholars are working towards reshaping their institutions and rectifying those past injustices.

Often when we think of a museum, we think of a space that is dedicated to the representation of a society or community through displays of stories and belongings (Bolton, 2003). People often identify museums as responsible for disseminating histories through displaying artifacts in ways that are accessible to the general public (Phillips, 2003). However, for many scholars who focus on decolonizing museums, one major factor in that process is understood as shifting understandings of what museums do and who holds authority in them (Clifford, 1997). This means opening up museums as more accessible and more democratic for those whose cultures are on display, and challenging hierarchies of power where curators and museum staff are solely responsible for 'disseminating' knowledge by creating displays and exhibits that are voiced by community representatives.

One part of this opening up of our understanding of museums is the process of introducing the voices and subjectivities of curators and community representatives. Much like what has occurred in the field of anthropology, there has been a shift away from the tradition of presenting research or information from a—supposedly—objective point of view (Kahn, 2000). This ties into my previous discussion of relationships between museums and community members in how authority and agency are being shifted when it comes to whose voice is heard in galleries. It also ties into my discussion of understanding cultural objects in relation to their



origins. When museums acknowledge the subjectivity of histories and stories, when they present stories as inherently being told from a point of view, they actively challenge historical perceptions of museums as institutions for disseminating knowledge and introduce new understandings of them as spaces for engaging with stories and subjectivities.

Saffery touched on this point in our conversation, noting that in recent years, the Museum of Surrey had reshaped its outlook on the role the museum plays in the Surrey community (Interview, 18 February, 2020). Saffery criticized ‘ivory tower’ complexes in museum settings and expressed his desire to create a space of cultural learning and engagement, where community members could share their own stories and experiences and engage with those of others. In this case, it meant shifting away from more ‘traditional’ museum practices and aesthetics through rethinking how galleries come to be, what they look like, and who has the authority to have their voice heard. As I discussed in earlier sections, the Indigenous Hall provides a space where local First Nations communities are able to tell their stories, and that becomes important when we consider historically problematic relationships between museums and colonized Peoples.

As recently as 2014 Saffery described methods of displaying material culture and histories at the museum that, according to representatives from communities of origin, were pan-indigenizing and stereotyping. In order to move away from these static and surface level portrayals of Indigenous Peoples—which Saffery described as ascribing to problematic theorizations of the ‘noble savage’—museum staff had to actively adapt how they went about doing its work. When asked about how the vision of his institution had changed in the past few years, Saffery explained, “that’s our intention. We are becoming experts in engaging in our community to tell their stories. And that’s a total shift, because ‘the museum as the ivory tower’... that just doesn’t work in a contemporary world” (Interview, 18 February, 2020).

The resulting gallery is one that focuses less on artifacts as representing cultures, and more on stories and histories that tell some of the diverse experiences and perspectives that exist within the Kwantlen community. The language used in the exhibit—far from a uniform narration one might expect to find in museum settings—introduces representatives of the Kwantlen Nation and emphasizes the qualities that make them so valuable to their community. These individuals are described as bright, hardworking, caring, thoughtful, and passionate. They are introduced through their contributions to the Kwantlen Nation through their art, their music, their leadership, or simply their kindness and support for others. These diverse voices and perspectives might not be sought out and displayed in an exhibit voiced by museum staff. Rather than attempts on the part of the institution to tell a complete story through a museum exhibit, “We Are Kwantlen” demonstrates the powerful effects of providing a community with the space and resources to tell their own story, emphasizing people and practices that are important to them. This challenges ideas of museums as places for disseminating objective research findings, opening up the institution as a more democratic and engaging space.

Considering that museums are traditionally conceptualized as spaces for disseminated objective knowledge, the concept of visible storage as it has been implemented by the Museum of Anthropology is unique. And while more and more museums are introducing visible storage to their institution, the idea of presenting a large volume of material culture without interpretation or facilitation by curators can be a challenge to past museum dynamics. Both Rowley and Kramer, in our discussions, emphasized the theme of democratizing MOA’s collections as a key factor in the Multiversity Galleries. In describing why people tend to be drawn to visible storage, Rowley explained that

[Visitors] love the fact that they don’t need to talk to any of us. Yes, they have to get through the door, but they don’t have to call and make an appointment. They can just walk in, and they can spend as long as they like, they can arrive at ten in the morning, and they can leave at five in the evening and no one is going to disturb them. And we

also know that artists love it because they can see a large range of material from their nations, again, without having it brought out and having somebody in the room looking at them going, 'how much longer are you going to be'. (Interview, 5 February, 2020)

This emphasizes a somewhat unconventional practice in 'traditional museums', of letting visitors access and interpret collections in their own ways and not relying on museum staff to interpret materials.

Rowley also emphasized the importance that within the visible storage, artifacts and collections are stored in respectful and culturally appropriate ways. She described one of the main critiques of MOA's original visible storage: "we also knew that some people felt that the way that [collections] were displayed was disrespectful. At one time, they had become quite crowded, and because it was storage... there were things like baskets within baskets, so you couldn't actually see them" (Interview, 5 February, 2020). In this case despite MOA's attempts to display material culture in accessible and democratic ways, the fact that the ways in which materials were stored were still decided by museum staff had been overlooked. As discussed previously and as emphasized by Kramer, the idea that visible storage could truly be 'neutral' was one that museum staff came to understand as incorrect.

After their renovations, the Multiversity Galleries became a more collaborative space. As visitors walk through the gallery, they are likely to notice the differences in how cases are organized—some by object, some by ceremony, etc.—and how artifacts are displayed. This shift away from consistency and uniformity in a gallery space, whether that be uniformity of voice or consistency of aesthetics, demonstrates the ways in which MOA's staff have prioritized the respectful and culturally appropriate displaying of materials over traditional museum practice.

As well, it demonstrates a shift in what MOA, as a museum, does. When asked about what makes the Multiversity Galleries so unique, Kramer said that it creates a space for meaningful

conversations about culture and history, and a new understanding of what museums do. She explained,

The whole point of a [the collaboration] was to encourage more communities of origin to think of the museum as a resource for them... I always love the example of a grandparent bringing a grandchild... and they're able to say this represents us. That was the goal, and I do see that happening. I've had examples of people from Bella Coola coming in, elders and youth, and there's tears and there's songs and prayers, and people are on the whole, pretty happy. (Interview, 5 February, 2020)

These types of collaboration and restructuring are the changes scholars like Clifford (1997) and Ames encourage (1992). Rather than continuing to display material cultures from Indigenous groups in decontextualized, categorical, and 'traditionally' organized ways, my case studies demonstrate reconceptualizations of what the museum, as an institution, does. These galleries shift away from the portrayal of overarching narratives derived from detailed research, and towards the provision of a platform with which communities that have historically been spoken about may tell their own stories as they see fit. Their agency in relation to their own cultural property empowers them to design and influence spaces that have historically been structured by colonial hierarchies (Bolton, 2003). And while, as all three of my interviewees emphasized, there is more to do to decolonize their museums, the actions so far demonstrate genuine work towards making their institutions more ethical, and making their relationships with the communities whose cultures are displayed more positive and reciprocal.

## Conclusion

My research explored dynamics in two museums in Metro Vancouver with attention to how they displayed the culture of Indigenous groups in respectful and collaborative ways. I chose my case studies because I felt they both demonstrated the actions being taken in contemporary museums to challenge traditional ideas of what museums are. Within my case studies, I identified themes and practices that stood out to me as a researcher. While I identify

the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia and the Museum of Surrey as demonstrating strong decolonizing practices, there is great diversity in the approaches and methods of different museums. Decolonizing work, which is not new, nor is it unique to these two institutions, is conceptualized differently by different scholars and in different contexts.

Both of my case studies have approached their work based on the contexts of their institution. The Museum of Anthropology's existence has long involved strong relationships with local Indigenous communities. This has resulted in exhibits and spaces that prioritize respectful and appropriate displays of material culture and stories. Museum staff have been mindful of the colonial roots of many museums and their work reflects that. The curatorial staff, comprised of anthropologists and archaeologists, have published extensive academic literature that explores how museums have and continue to become more ethical. The Multiversity Galleries are one example of how MOA engages in this kind of work by making museum collections more accessible and democratic to the communities from which they came, and by actively ensuring that material culture is displayed in respectful and culturally responsible ways. As a second iteration of their visible storage, the space also demonstrates the dynamic nature of MOA's relationship with originating communities and with their collections. Museum staff has acknowledged the necessity that their decolonizing work be ongoing—that they continue to nurture relationships with those communities and to adjust their practices in response to questions or critiques that arise.

The Museum of Surrey has seen significant changes in how Indigenous culture is displayed in the past few years. This shift came from a recognition of past mistakes, and a desire to create exhibits that were more representative of Surrey's diverse community. Specifically, the museum was criticized for projecting a generalizing image of Indigenous Peoples that had little relevance to local communities and cultures. In becoming aware of these

weaknesses, museum staff began to explore ways in which they could create more relevant and appropriate exhibits that encouraged visitors to engage with local Indigenous cultures in more meaningful ways. The Indigenous Hall was established as a space where representatives from First Nations of Surrey could curate their own exhibits with the support and resources of museum staff. The gallery was part of the Museum of Surrey's shift away from more traditional museum practices and towards their new conceptualization as a centre for community engagement with stories and subjectivities. By creating space for exhibits voiced by community representatives, museum staff challenged dynamics of power in museum settings and acknowledged those representatives as experts of their own culture and heritage.

I have explored these two institutions and their decolonizing work through analysis of three themes. The galleries I observed each demonstrated a rethinking of relationships between the museum and the communities whose material culture and stories they display. In both cases, the museums developed more collaborative and reciprocal methods of implementing exhibits or displays and shifted authority so that community representatives were able to determine what was most appropriate. Comparing my case studies to analyses of the history of museums by scholars like Ames (1992) or Peers and Brown (2003), these relationships represent a shift away from the exploitation of colonized peoples and towards more mutual and respectful dynamics. Whereas, historically, museum staff have been perceived as cultural or historical experts responsible for disseminating stories, contemporary museums staff, such as my interviewees, may identify themselves as facilitators for cultural knowledge holders.

The galleries also demonstrated diverse understandings of 'objects' and their meanings. Given museums' problematic histories of forcibly removing material culture from colonized regions and portraying it in decontextualized or insensitive ways, rethinking how museums handle, store, and display objects or artifacts is an important part of decolonizing. My case

studies have both received critiques for their institution's display of material culture in the past, and in both cases, staff have responded by rethinking their institution's practices. Both museums have become more conscious of how the display of artifacts is shaped by exhibit designers. Changing how exhibits or displays are designed and who holds authority over what spaces look like—specifically by welcoming community representatives into the design process—has led to different understandings of each institution's collections. The complex meanings held by material culture became clearer, representing shifts in many museums towards more complex and diverse perceptions of objects.

Finally, each of my case studies has demonstrated an ongoing shift in how the museum as an institution is conceptualized. The museum staff interviewed expressed critiques of past museum practices and the ways in which they were rooted in colonial thought. Rather than identifying their institution as a space for displaying cultures before they inevitably disappear, my informants described more contemporary conceptualizations of museums as spaces for engaging with subjectivities and experiences. The Indigenous Hall's focus on sharing diverse and subjective perspectives on Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo communities disrupts understandings of museums and their staff as objective knowledge holders. The Multiversity Galleries are intended to democratize MOA—to open up the institution to different interpretations and voices. Visitors interact with collections organized through collaboration with originating communities and without interpretation by museum staff.

These two institutions demonstrate just a few of the ways that museums and their staff are approaching decolonizing work. Within each museum's context, the work they have done, and continue to do, is particularly appropriate, and other museums' work is likely to look different. Many scholars who focus on decolonizing museums—including those I spoke to—identify the decolonizing process as ongoing, without a perceived 'end point'. This perspective

acknowledges that decolonizing work is not new and that it is not complete, but rather that it must continue to be rethought and reconfigured going forward. Each of my case studies provides an example of methods of displaying Indigenous material culture that, upon their implementation, were considered appropriate, but that later drew critiques. This process of acknowledging mistakes and collaborating with communities to work towards meaningful solutions can be understood as a pivotal part of the decolonizing process. It also demonstrates why there is such a diverse collection of literature on the subject of decolonizing museums; as more research is done and more communities of origin are welcomed into museum settings as experts of their cultures, that collection of literature can only become more expansive. As the introductory panels to both the Multiversity Galleries and the Indigenous Hall emphasize, as relationships between museums and communities develop and change, gallery spaces come to look different and become more meaningful to visitors, museum staff, and the communities they represent.



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## Appendix A: Ethics Certificate

<b>PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS</b> <i>Navigating the ethics of human research</i>	<b>TCPS 2: CORE</b> 
<h1><i>Certificate of Completion</i></h1> <p><i>This document certifies that</i></p> <p><b>Kathryn Bruyneel</b></p> <p><i>has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)</i></p> <p>Date of Issue:     <b>18 September, 2019</b></p>	

## Appendix B: Interview Schedule

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide, Museum of Anthropology

1. Can you tell me about your museum experience and how you came to be a curator at MOA?
2. As curator, could you tell me a bit about your role here at the museum?
3. How are you involved in the design and implementation of new exhibits or galleries?
4. MOA is a very well established museum and it's often recognized starting conversations around colonialism and reconciliation, can you tell me a bit about its history and how it came to be that way?
5. MOA displays stories and physical culture from a wide variety of different cultural groups, especially Indigenous cultures in the BC area. How does your museum work collaboratively with the communities whose stories are being told in exhibits?
6. Can you tell me about how you approach working with communities of origin?
  - a. Establishing relationships
  - b. Establishing boundaries
7. Can you walk me through how communities of origin are involved in the various steps of planning and implementing a new gallery or exhibit?
8. Can you tell me about the multiversity galleries?
9. How do the multiversity galleries incorporate collaborative museology?
  - a. Artifact display
  - b. Text displays
  - c. Organization
  - d. What is displayed (culturally sens.)
10. How much say do members of communities of origin have in the process?
  - a. Power over what stories are/are not told
  - b. Power over what artifacts are displayed publicly
  - c. Review/
11. Why did the museum see it as important to implement this type of project?
12. Why aren't there more galleries like that?
13. Can you think of an example of an artifact or story in the multiversity galleries that demonstrate the collaborative and reciprocal relationship between the museum and the community of origin?
14. How do you think a collaborative approach differ from a non-collaborative one and why is it important?
15. Can you tell me about some of the challenges of collaborative curation?
16. Can you tell me a bit about the process of repatriation at MOA?
17. Do you see collaboration in museum galleries as playing a role in decolonizing museums?
18. Can you give me an example of collaborations?
19. Can you tell me about the process of introducing a collaborative curating method?

## Semi-Structured Interview Guide Museum of Surrey

20. Can you tell me about your museum experience and how you came to be a curator at MOS?
21. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of the museum of surrey?
22. Can you tell me a little bit about the Indigenous hall? (history and goal)
23. How did the Indigenous hall come to be when was it implemented?
24. Why do you see the indigenous hall as important in the museum?
25. Can you tell me about the exhibit on display in the hall now, the We are Kwantlen exhibit?
26. Who were the community members responsible for this exhibit?
  - a. How does this collaboration take place?
  - b. How do you establish relationships with these communities?
  - c. How do you go about selecting your contacts for these projects?
  - d. How do you source artifacts for the exhibits?
  - e. How is it decided what types of stories will be displayed?
  - f. How often do the exhibits in this hall change?
  - g. What role does museum staff (ie curator) play in this process?
27. How are communities of origin involved in exhibit design?
  - a. What steps
  - b. Stories
  - c. Voices
  - d. Artifacts
  - e. Descriptions
  - f. Format
  - g. Spatial organization
28. Can you speak to the role that museum exhibits like this play in the process of reconciliation?
29. Can you describe some of the challenges of working collaboratively with communities as you do in the Indigenous hall?
30. What do you think is important in approaching these types of projects in terms of...
  - a. Relationships
  - b. Boundaries
31. How much say do members of communities of origin have in the process?
  - a. Power over what stories are/are not told
  - b. Review/
32. Why aren't there more galleries like that?
33. How do you think a collaborative approach differ from a non-collaborative one and why is it important?
34. Do you see collaboration in museum galleries as playing a role in decolonizing museums?