APPROACHES TO ESTABLISHING MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS WITH INDIGENOUS GROUPS: AN EXAMINATION OF PROTOCOL FROM EIGHT MUSEUMS

by

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Dedication

To my highschool math teacher, Mrs. Purnis who told me to reconsider going to university because of my marks.

Lol.

Abstract

Museums are often regarded as respected places of learning; however, they have played a significant role creating and disseminating stereotypes about Indigenous People by misrepresenting them and their cultures. This, coupled with the often violent way that material culture has been collected, has left museums with legacies that can be harmful and unwelcoming to Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous activism both within and outside heritage spheres has led to documents such as UNDRIP, which affirm Indigenous sovereignties and rights to their culture and heritage, and have set a new precedent for how museums should operate and represent Indigenous cultures.

This thesis examines eight museums from across Canada, the USA, and Germany to understand how they are engaging with the Indigenous Nations they represent, and further, how they are counteracting their legacies. This is coupled with the observation of the first stage of *Creating Context,* a community-project that brought Nunatsiavummiut to Germany to reconnect with material culture in two museum's care. It was found that the establishment of meaningful relationships is based in trust, and brought to action with three guiding principles (1) ontological empathy; (2) power-shifting and (3) culturally specific care protocol. These themes are foundational in guiding museums toward a better museum practice.

Land Acknowledgement

I was born in North Vancouver, on the unceded and traditional territory of the *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh* (Squamish) and *səl̓ilwətaɬ* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. My childhood to teen years was spent between Elliot Lake and Sault Ste. Marie (*Baawaating,* place of the rapids), Ontario, on Treaty 61 – Robinson-Huron Treaty, traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg Garden River and Batchewana First Nations, as well as the Métis Nation of Ontario. It was at this time that I began learning about Canada's legacy, specifically to do with the Shingwauk Indian Residential School that was a few blocks from my house. From my late teen years to my early twenties my family moved to Cambridge and then Brantford, Ontario which are situation on the traditional territories of the Neutral confederacy, the Anishinaabe, and the Six Nations of the Grand River (comprised of six Haudenosaunee Nations: the Seneca, Cayuga, Tuskarora, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk). During this time, I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto Mississauga, which is situated on the lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississauga's of the Credit. It was there that my interests in Indigenous and community-based archaeology was sparked and encouraged by faculty. From there, I moved to St. John's, which sits on the Ancestral and traditional homelands of the Beothuk, and the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq. Labrador is the territory of the Innu of Nitassinan, Inuit of NunatuKavut, and the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, whom I worked with closely for this research.

As a settler academic who has always lived and worked on Indigenous lands, I strive to center Indigenous stories and interests in my research. I am incredibly lucky for the opportunities I have had, and respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of the many Indigenous groups I have worked with and lived among.

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List of Acronyms

SESS – *Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen*

UN – United Nations

UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

LILCA – Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement

NG – Nunatsiavut Government

BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of Color)

NAGPRA – Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

CBPR – Community-Based Participatory Research

RBCM – Royal British Columbia Museum

ICAR – Indigenous Collections and Repatriation

DRIPA – Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

MIP – Museum of Indigenous People

HBC – Hudson's Bay Company Collection

IAIS – Institute for American Indian Studies

DDT – Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane

List of Translations

Qulliq – soap stone oil lamp

Qullit – plural of qulliq

Amautiit – plural of amauti

Katsina – plural of Katsinam

Kalaaleq Inuk – Greenlandic Inuk (singular Inuit person)

Qamutiq – sled pulled by dogs

Qayaat – plural of qayaq (kayak)

Umiat – plural for umiaq, a boat that holds multiple people, commonly known as the women's boat.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

> Archaeology came into the First World as a strategy in support of the state, an association that pervades its theory, method and data even today. In its present practice, archaeology makes it harder to envision logical alternatives to state societies, and it falsifies the archaeological records on non-state societies to look like incipient states or failures to reach statehood.
>
> —H. Martin Wobst, Indigenous Archaeologies, 2010

Museums are spaces meant to spark curiosity about the past and present, where we might learn about human experiences that we would not have otherwise. Further, museums hold materials from across the world to educate visitors about different cultures and time periods. Unfortunately, many museums share the legacy of taking materials that do not belong to them and refusing to return them when asked. Indigenous Nations are disproportionately affected by this, stemming from a history of colonialism and discrimination. Archaeologists and museums justified the mass-collection of Indigenous material culture by supporting the belief that Indigenous Peoples would disappear due to assimilation and natural causes, and otherwise, the public would lose valuable information about Indigenous cultures. The threat of such a loss resulted in the buying, bartering, and stealing of material from Nations in the hopes of preserving their physical history for the settler publics to appreciate.

Today, most archaeologists and museum professionals understand the detrimental impacts of separating Indigenous material culture from Indigenous communities, two of which I will address. First, it has isolated the cultural materials from the people and practices necessary to maintain them and their agency (Flynn and Hull Walski 2001; Gilchrist 2021; Poirier 2011). Second, without access to their material history, Indigenous Peoples are losing the Traditional

Knowledge that is associated with those materials (Coble 2018; Simms and McIntyre 2014; Loo 1992; Poirier 2011; Rankin et al. 2022; Withey 2015). As such, Indigenous Nations have been increasingly interested in locating and bringing home the material culture housed in museums worldwide (Jessiman 2011; Sanborn 2009; Usbeck 2023).

While returning materials might be the preferred path for some communities to reconnect with their heritage (and vice-versa), it is a complicated, expensive, and slow-moving process—and sometimes not within the capacity of the community to execute (Coble 2010; Jessiman 2011; Knight 2013; Poirier 2011; Simms and McIntyre 2014; Withey 2015). Moreover, as was explained to me by staff working with Indigenous groups[1] to showcase their materials; 1) some communities might want their materials in museums so non-locals can appreciate them, or 2) some communities wish for the museums to hold their materials in trust until repatriation/rematriation/return[2] is possible. While the staff I spoke to for this project seemed genuinely interested in caring for materials in appropriate ways, we must acknowledge that an institutions willingness to adapt care within the museum is likely also influenced by their desire to keep materials within their collection.

When repatriation/rematriation/return is not in progress or not immediately an option, it is the responsibility of the museum to house and care for Indigenous material culture in ways that align with the given Nation's ontology and further, to adapt the museum space to be an environment where Indigenous People and their material culture feel seen, heard, and respected.

[1] Indigenous 'groups' is used instead of Indigenous 'Nations' as there are Indigenous collectives that do not identify as 'Nations'. Moreover, this avoids confusion with Canada's First Nations, which are distinct from Métis and Inuit.
[2] Preferred terminology for the return of materials and Ancestors varies between Indigenous groups. To some, repatriation reinforces patriarchal contexts and therefore other terms are preferred, such as rematriation. Further, repatriation/rematriation infers legal transfer, so if materials were taken in illegal ways, terms such as return or setting right should be used.

To understand what this might look like, this thesis examines the changes underway at eight museums to counter their colonial legacy. I interviewed museum staff working with Indigenous ethnographic and archaeological collections across Canada, the United States of America (USA), and Germany, and discuss their practices in Chapters 4 and 5.

Moreover, this thesis demonstrates the importance of genuine, meaningful partnerships between museums and the Indigenous Nations by observing a community outreach project called *Creating Context: Finding Value and Meaning in Dormant Collections Through Reconciliation.* The project is a partnership between researchers from two Canadian universities; Memorial University and University of Manitoba, the Nunatsiavut Government, and Germany's *Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen* (*SESS*), in English the Saxonian State Collections of Ethnography, who hold Nunatsiavummiut material culture and wish to decolonize their practices. The connection between Inuit of Northern Labrador and Germany officially began in 1771 with the establishment of the first Moravian mission in Labrador and continued for 234 years, leaving behind an intertwined history and contemporary culture. Because the Moravian Church established its headquarters in Saxony in 1722, the *SESS* has a collection of material culture from mission sites, showcasing two centuries of Inuit life (Thoms 1971). The *Creating Context* project aims to determine how the museums might best care for Nunatsiavummiut's material culture by establishing a long-term partnership with the between the two. The project's first stage brought community members to Germany for hands-on experience with the collection, allowing a bi-directional flow of knowledge and highlighting community interests. The relationships established during this trip demonstrated the importance of holistic, genuine, and empathetic partnerships when seeking to decolonize a colonial space. Considering the history shared between Nunatsiavut and Germany, the involvement of *SESS* staff brings a unique perspective of

a non-settler state's relationship with colonized communities.

With the theme of holistic and genuine partnerships in mind, the theoretical foundations of my masters research were inspired by Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and *Etuaptmumk*. The former addresses the need for community engagement within research involving Indigenous communities, where work is done with, by, and for the community (Atalay 2006a, 2006b, Atalay 2012; Cipolla et al. 2019; Lyons 2014; Nelson 2017; Rahemtulla 2020). The latter explains that when working in spaces occupied by both Indigenous and Western knowledges, we must "see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together" (Hatcher et al. 2009a:3). With my research situated in these two theories, Indigenous curation situates these perspectives their themes within a museum space where staff must adapt the ways they care for materials to reflect Indigenous ontological needs and not necessarily traditional museological practices. Indigenous Curation reevaluates how material culture is cared for and recognizes that Western ways of doing cannot necessarily be projected onto Indigenous materials (Ames 1994; Gilchrist 2021; Popson 2004). Importantly, it also suggests that museums must approach change *holistically,* so that protocol shifts happen at all levels of the museum.

Chapter 2 offers a background in decolonial concepts, a short history of the legacy created by archaeology and museums and introduces important participants of this project. Chapter 3 reviews Indigenous socio-political activism of the 20th century and explains how it influenced heritage spheres, and the research and theoretical changes it inspired. In Chapter 4, I describe the changes happening at seven museums to create more comfortable, equitable, and ethical spaces for Indigenous Peoples and their material culture. In Chapter 5, I review *Creating Context's* trip to Germany in June of 2023, and the protocol that the *Staatliche Ethnographische*

Sammlungen Sachsen. Chapter 6 is dedicated to discussing the themes seen throughout this project, and it might be impactful to museum studies and archaeology on a whole.

Chapter 2 – Background

To understand the significance of this project, this chapter introduces readers to the historical and socio-political realities that make this research necessary. As colonial agents, archaeologists and museum staff have helped generate racist and patriarchal stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples by becoming '*experts'* on '*other'* cultures. After centuries of these '*experts'* collecting, Indigenous material culture has been stored and showcased in museums, often without their cultural and ontological needs being met. It is not that staff were necessarily aware that their method of care was unfit, but that they believed that Western concepts of care and curation were the only way to preserve material culture for future generations. These decisions were made without the knowledge, input, or consent of the Indigenous groups who made those materials, therefore, to move toward a better practice, museums must actively develop meaningful relationships with Indigenous groups where individuals become partners.

This chapter will also introduce eight such museums and nine staff working to improve their practices to make museums more welcoming spaces for Indigenous Peoples and their material culture. Before I begin, however, I must define several terms used throughout this thesis.

2.1 Definitions

The first term I will define is *Indigenous*, and although it might seem unnecessary to some, I think it is essential to lay the foundation for whom I have written this research about and for. As this project has referred heavily to the United Nations' *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), I find it most appropriate to use their definition. The United

Nations (UN) states that:

> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them [United Nations 2023].

While on the surface, this definition is inclusive and offers those who have been colonized distinction from the colonizer society, Indigeneity is not a straightforward concept. The term itself groups Indigenous People from across the world into one category, often being used as a substitute for Nation names and identities. It is crucial to keep in mind when discussing Indigeneity that the experiences, histories, cultures, and ontologies of communities are unique, and we must be careful not to make blanket statements. With this in mind, this project focuses primarily on the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and the USA; therefore, the interests, literature, and recommendations throughout this thesis should not be projected globally.

We must also recognize that different forms of colonialism affect Indigenous Peoples. Tuck and Yang define colonialism using two over-arching categories of colonialism: external and internal (2012)[3]. External colonialism focuses on the exploitation of the land and its resources: plants, minerals, and animals, as well as the inhabitants for labor (Tuck and Yang 2012). Internal colonialism happens when the colonial power takes over the "biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna," (Tuck and Yang 2012:4). It is the process where both of these forms of colonialism happen together that we find ourselves in settler colonial states, such as Canada and the USA. In these states, citizens of the colonial power become settlers and need the destruction of Indigenous sovereignty over land and its living and non-living relations to reify their occupation (Tuck and Yang 2012:6). In these states, colonial

[3] Tuck and Yang's definition is one of many frameworks to describe colonialism. Their definition was used as it is reflected in the process of colonialism of Canada and the United States of America, where colonial power holistically inserts itself into all aspects of it's new colony.

governments use Indigeneity to invalidate people, claiming that someone is not entitled to certain rights or respects that settlers are entitled to.

In Canada, this included the right to practice their religions, to continue engaging in their socio-political processes, and even to be recognized as Indigenous (Indian Act 1876). In the USA, challenges to Indigenous rights are similar, where the government placed concern on 'managing' Indigenous Peoples rather than interest in their well-being (Hill and Ratteree 2017). Historically, museum spaces in both countries compounded these issues by regarding Indigenous Peoples as entities to be studied before their inevitable disappearance (Ames 1994; Feest 1993:8; Hantzsch 1930:180; Hill and Ratteree 2017; Moravian Church 1981 [1871]:14). This justified the mass collection of Indigenous material culture and their latter speciminification, thereby establishing the museum as an unwelcoming space for Indigenous Peoples.

The next term that needs to be defined is *material culture*. Within the context of this project, material culture describes what most would understand as the artifacts of Indigenous Peoples held within museums. I did not choose this term at random, and I recognize that it is based on a Western understanding of the world and does not necessarily capture the significance of the material being discussed. While some may understand, for example, a mask as being an inanimate object without agency, others may understand it to be alive and breathing (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Hakiwai and Diamond 2015; Jessiman 2011; Popson 2004; Poirier 2011). It is difficult to assign a word to such a complex concept, especially in a language that separates living from non-living, subject from object, and does not account for entities who could embody more than one of these identities simultaneously or situationally. A term mentioned during this project that might better suit the reality of material culture is *belongings;* however, this word comes with its own concerns. First, the concept of ownership may not be applicable depending

on what Nation is being discussed. Second, if all parties within the discussion agree that there *is* ownership over something, and the transfer of ownership was done legally (i.e. where a fair, consenting, and ethical transaction was completed), does that mean that communities have relinquished their involvement in the care and control of those entities because they now ‘belong’ to a museum? Or that they should not be able to request their return? Is this morally correct when considering the historical context of museums and Indigenous Peoples?

I believe that term(s) for material culture should be decided by the Nation they originated from. In *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, the *Māori* word *taonga,* meaning “treasure,” is used rather than *artifact*, *material culture*, or other English terms (Hakiwai and Diamond 2015:108). This decenters the claim of ownership by colonial power by emphasizing that *taonga* are not something of colonists but of *Māori* creation, essence, and stewardship. Projecting this example of self-representation onto countries such as Canada and the USA would take significantly more work than within *Aotearoa* considering the 70 Indigenous languages spoken within Canada (Statistics Canada 2023), approximately 180 in the USA (Sparks 2023), and any community-specific adaptions to languages. It is a challenge, but not impossible, and is one of many changes that museums must address.

The next term that needs to be defined is *ontology*. In simplest terms, ontology is how we understand existence: of ourselves; of what is around us; of what is and is not. This concept plays a significant role in creating conflict between museums and Indigenous Peoples by ignoring non-Western realities and understandings of material culture, leaving the needs of material culture unmet.

2.2 Indigenous Material Culture in Museums

For some people, it might be difficult to understand why there is conflict about museums

holding Indigenous material culture. For a Euro-Western individual looking in, having things in museums eternalizes them, allowing the public to appreciate a piece of history by prolonging its natural life by keeping it within precise conditions. Items such as clothing, dishes, and other everyday items might be included in a European/Western ethnographic display, with a Nation identifier to demonstrate who is being showcased. These items are understood as *things*; non-living, non-person, non-agentive objects. Therefore, it seems like common sense to maintain them indefinitely. If you walked through an ethnographic collection of the '*other*' (i.e. non-Euro-Western), you would likely see much of the same: unfamiliar clothing and dishes made differently. But you might also begin to see items taken from graves, items that have "sacred" written beside them, items that to someone outside that culture are just *things*, but to those within, are not meant to be held within a glass box.

Furthermore, cultural context does not always play a role in the care of materials after collecting and accessioning material into a museum. The *curator's* ontological view influenced how the material should be treated. Museological sciences were developed to preserve material culture for as long as possible, therefore techniques such as the careful control of humidity and heat, pest avoidance, and the application of chemicals were and are used. The issue comes when these techniques were forced onto material culture that prior existed as they were meant to within its cultural context, such as natural deterioration or survivance through use. This is not to say that an Indigenous person would not be glad to see their material culture within a museum—many would be excited to see their culture displayed in a way that authentically represented them; however, there are significant issues that make museum spaces antagonistic rather than welcoming to Indigenous visitors.

These reasons for discomfort are plentiful and unique depending on the cultural context

and manner of collection. Within Canada and the USA, archaeology and museums became tools of colonialism; used to promote the incoming Nation's power and emphasize the strangeness of the '*other'*. Settlers viewed '*others'* as disappearing, lesser-than people, who could only be considered full citizens of the Nation with their assimilation to the ways of the colonizer group (Ames 1994; Indian Act 1985; Powell 1885; Rompkey 1996 [1893]). The most obvious and well-known reason that Indigenous Nations might not want their material culture in museums is because of the unethical ways they were taken.

In some instances, collectors used coercion or duress to convince individuals to give up materials, such as in the seizing of Potlach goods during the Potlach Ban between 1884 and 1951 (Knight 2013). Potlach is a form of governance and economy practiced by Indigenous communities on the northwest coast of North America that settler authority believed to be evil and immoral, leading to its outlawing (Knight 2013; William Lomas to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, October 21st, 1895, LAC, RG-10, Volume 3631, file 6244-0). Communities were unwilling to accept settler law in place of their own and continued Potlaching at the risk of jail (William Holland to Captain Fitzstubbs, October 1889, Library and Archives Canada, RG10. Volume 3831, file 62-977; Knight 2013; R. Loring to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, October 1889, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, Volume 3831, file 62,977). At a now-famed Potlach held by Chief Dan Cranmer in 1921, the Canadian government confiscated hundreds of masks, pieces of regalia, and other materials—some of which were bartered for suspended sentences (Knight 2013:33; Sanborn 2009). After their confiscation, materials were either placed into private collections or accessioned into museums for the settler public to appreciate. This treatment as artwork went against how the materials should have been treated;

> It was not common for us to display our ceremonial masks and regalia anywhere other than in our ceremony. It was distressing for our people to see them on public display after

> confiscation. The masks and regalia are normally kept, carefully wrapped, in our box for treasures until the next ceremony. Yet they were placed on display… [Sanborn 2009:83].

In this situation, government agents took on the role of collector and justified stealing goods because Potlaching was illegal in settler law.

Not all material culture within museums was taken in nefarious ways. In fact, collections are often full of tourist souvenirs that non-locals could purchase to show off the exotic culture of the '*other'*. While global travel is significantly more accessible today, traders, soldiers, and scientists were actively visiting 'new' places during the early contact years in the Americas (post-1490s), where they bought or traded for materials of the local '*other'* (Feest 1993; Lonetree 2012:28; Rankin et al. 2022). Museums would have also sought out materials from communities, either directly from individuals or from dealers who traveled themselves, to learn and create displays about Indigenous Nations.

Once material culture was in museums, curators had free range to do as they pleased, projecting their ontological understanding onto Indigenous creations and sometimes neglecting—purposefully or not—the needs of those materials. As Andrea Sanborn explained above, Potlach masks are not meant to be seen outside of ceremony and should be covered unless being used; therefore, when placed into display cases, this need was actively being denied (Sanborn 2009:83). It is not that the curators were necessarily *ignoring* the needs of the material culture, but that they prioritized their ontological understanding of how materials should be cared for over that of the materials own ontological position.

The last few decades have shown the shift in attitude regarding the needs of material culture, and even more recently, they have begun shifting the power imbalance to create space for Indigenous Peoples to be primary caretakers (Ames 1994; Dibbelet et al. 1988, Fay 2023;

Feest 1993; Simms and McIntyre 2014). This shift directly results from Indigenous activism within and outside heritage spheres. Unfortunately, it was only sixteen years ago that the United Nations published their *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This is distressing not only because the document was released so recently, but also that it was needed at all (United Nations 2007). The document addresses religious freedom, education, health, as well as heritage, stating in Article 11 that;

> Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural tradition. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature, [United Nations 2007:11].

And further that;

> States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs, [United Nations 2007:12].

This project allows me to examine the willingness of museums to acknowledge these rights within their practices.

2.3 Context

I now need to contextualize this thesis within both archaeological and museological spheres. Archaeologists tend to work closely with museums, for example in-house as curators, or peripherally as researchers who turn to museums to store excavated material culture after it is unearthed. Both disciplines are affected by Indigenous heritage rights, as it is their responsibility to involve Indigenous Nations in their processes, whether that be in fieldwork or in curation. Many of the museum staff that I interviewed are archaeologists, and therefore have experience working in both disciplines.

2.3.1 Museum Interviewees. I had the opportunity to engage with eight museums across Canada, the USA, and Germany to discuss how they are enacting changes within their institutions to create environments where Indigenous Peoples feel heard, seen, and respected. The museums included in this project are not Indigenous-run (but some have Indigenous staff, management, and/or executive members), have collections of Indigenous material culture, and have shown some interest in involving Indigenous Peoples in their daily protocol. I identified this interest by looking at their online presence and through academic literature and reached out to museum staff[4].

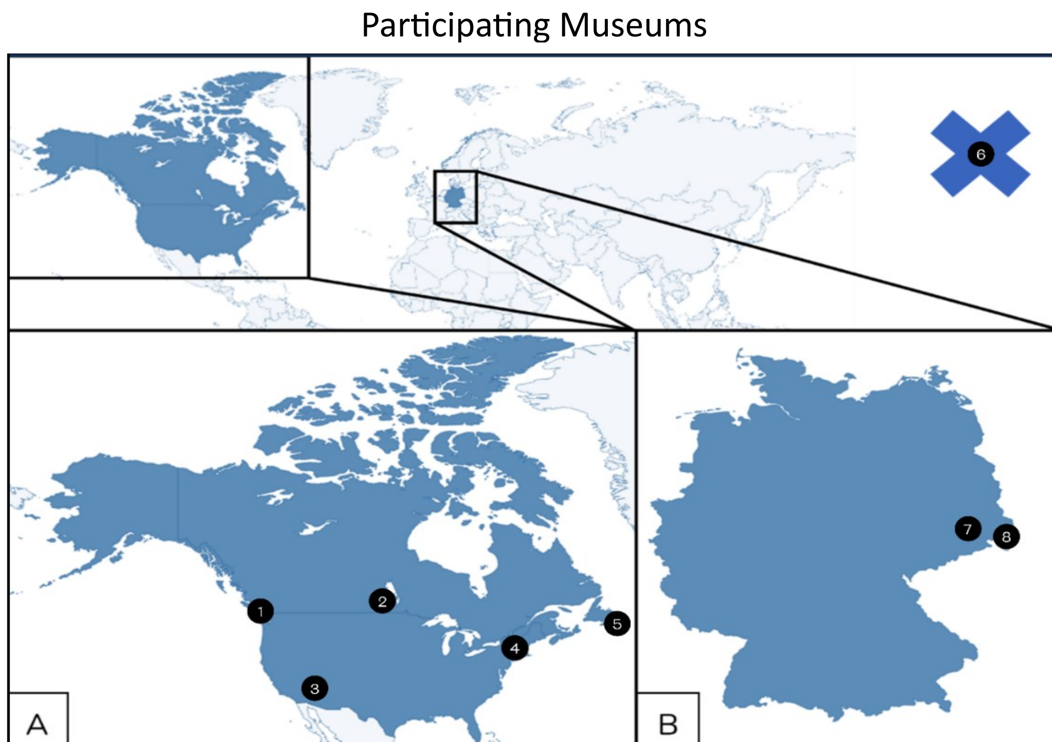

Figure 1- Map showing 8 participating museums in Canada, the United States of America, and Germany. As Museum X (6) is anonymous, they have been placed outside of map borders between Canada/USA and Germany. Base map provided by MapChart.com

[4] While I reached out to more museums than are in the sample, I interviewed all staff who responded to my request.

I wanted institutions to cover a broad geographical area and therefore, attempted to select museums on a regional basis (i.e., south-western United States, north-eastern North America, etc.) (see Figure 1 and Table 1). These parameters excluded the Dresden Ethnographic Museum and the Herrnhut Ethnographic Museum, as their involvement was de facto with their role in *Creating Context.* Of the nine participants, one requested to be anonymous and will be referred to as Curator X from Museum X. Short histories of each museum will be included in a later chapter.

As a brief note, while Indigenous territories are included beside institution names, these are not the only Indigenous groups who occupy/occupied those lands[5]. Further, it is important to acknowledge that museums hold materials from non-local Indigenous groups as well. I have included this information to emphasize that regardless of where museums are situated within the borders of what we call Canada and the United States of America, they are on Indigenous territory.

[5] Indigenous groups in Table 1 were identified based on Land Acknowledgements posted on municipal or institutional webpages, however, these would not be the only Indigenous groups that are or have been present on that land. Many Indigenous groups across Canada and the U.S. travel seasonally within their territories, and therefore have traditionally occupied large geographical areas. Territories also changed depending on relations with other Indigenous groups. As colonization increased, Indigenous groups were dispossessed because of encroaching settlers, leading to land agreements that transferred them to reservation lands. Often, these agreements were not honored by settler governments, leading to further dispossession of Indigenous communities into alternative reservations or urban centers. Because of these histories, it would not be possible within this thesis to identify all Indigenous groups who occupied the regions included in my sample.

Participating Museums

	Museum	Staff	Location
1	Royal British Columbia Museum	Kevin Brownlee	Lək̓ʷəŋən Territory (British Columbia, Canada)
2	Museum of Indigenous Peoples	Andrew Kristenson	Yavappi-Prescott Territory. (Arizona, U.S.A.)
3	Manitoba Museum	Amelia Fay	Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Nakota, and Métis Territory (Manitoba, Canada)
4	Institute for American Indian Studies	Paul Wegner and Karen Larkin	Weantinock's, Pootatuck's, and Schaghticoke's Territory (Connecticut, U.S.A.)
5	The Rooms	Kate Wolforth	Beothuk and Mi'kmaq Territory (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada)
6	Museum X	Curator X	X
7	*Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* (Dresden Museum of Ethnography Dresden)	Frank Usbeck	Dresden, Saxony, Germany
8	*Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut* (Herrnhut Ethnographic Museum)	Johanna Funke	Herrnhut, Saxony, Germany

Table 1- Participating museums, staff member(s) interviewed, the location of the museum, and the Indigenous Traditional territories the museums are on. Museums have been ordered from 1-8 in geographical order from West to East beginning in British Columbia.

2.3.2 The Moravian Church in Labrador. The Moravian Church was organized officially in 1457 as the *Unitas Fratrum*—The Unity of the Brethren—in Bohemia (modern day Czechia), eventually establishing its headquarters in Herrnhut, Saxony, Germany in 1722 (Thoms 1971). Throughout the following century, the church grew significantly due to the founding of missions worldwide including in British Guiana, Suriname, Southern Africa, Greenland, and along the coast of Labrador. The first attempt to introduce Moravian Christianity to Labrador was in 1752, ending in the death of the missionary leading the expansion (Cary 2004; Thoms 1971). It was not

until nineteen years later, in 1771, that Jens Haven was successful in establishing and maintaining a mission in Nain (Thoms 1971:16). Over the next one hundred and fifty years, seven additional missions would be found in Labrador: Okak, Hopedale, Hebron, Zoar, Ramah, Makkovik, Killiniq (see Figure 2), as well as two congregations in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Northwest River (Hiller 2001). For this thesis, I will only include missions, as the congregations are all located outside of Nunatsiavut, the territory of Inuit self-government in Labrador. The influence that missionaries had on Inuit was deep-rooted, impressing on them a new belief system that, whether welcomed or not, changed the ways Nunatsiavummiut lived.

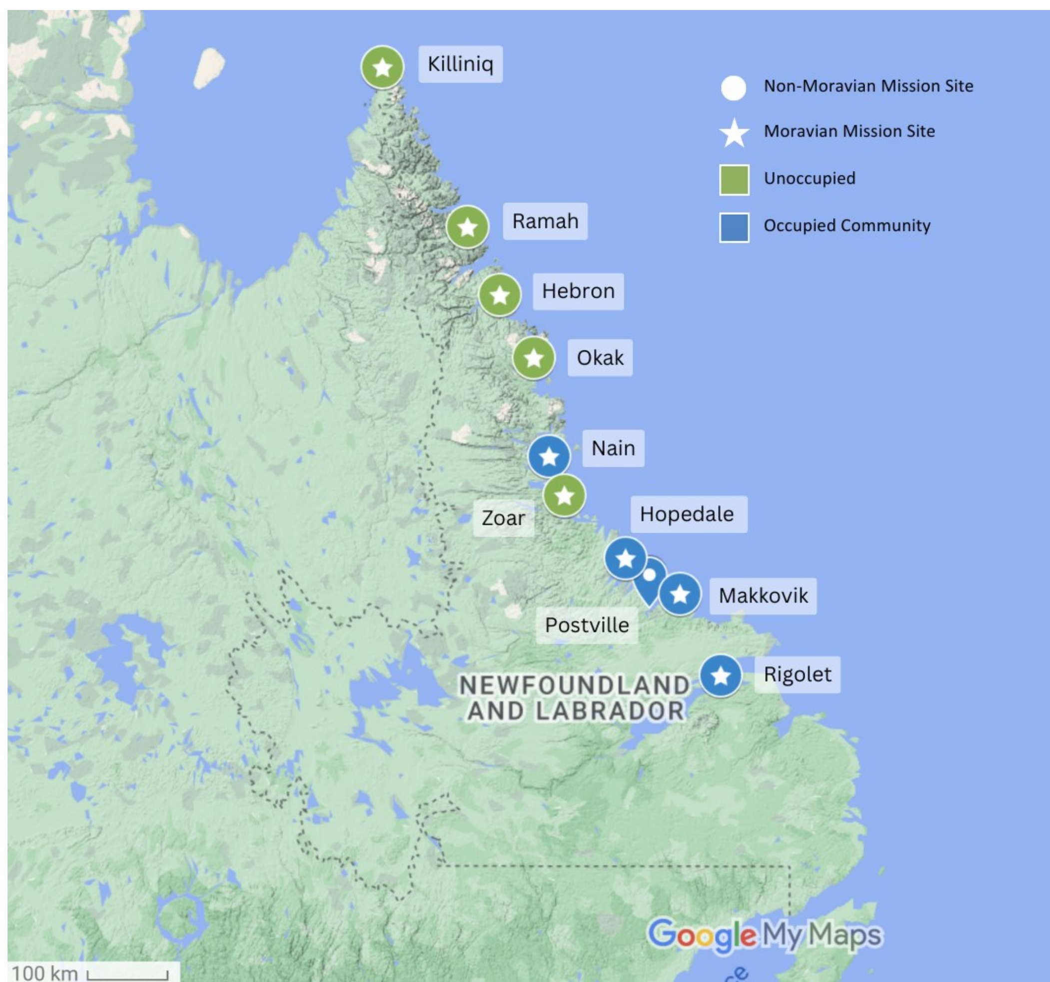

Figure 2 - Map showing Labrador including currently unoccupied and occupied communities and Moravian Mission Sites. Base map provided by Google Maps.

Christianity changed the religious and daily practices of Nunatsiavummiut, where new habits were introduced, such as following the Bible, participating in sermons, and adhering to the tenets of the Moravian Church.

Missionaries also promoted European ways of living, and an example of this was the transition from sod houses—structures ideally suited to the landscape of Labrador—to wooden-framed homes. Sod houses were semi-subterranean structures built primarily of animal bone and sod, with low entrance passages ending at cold traps allowing access into the main room of the house (Kaplan 1983). The sod that covered the tops of the houses (and snow in the winter) would keep the structure insulated while the air inside was warmed by *qulliq*[6]. Depending on family size, houses could have multiple partitions for sleeping, keeping goods, or housing dogs (Rankin 2015; Whitridge 2008). Flat stones covered in furs often made up the floors, while sea mammal intestines over bone framing created windows to let in natural light (Rankin 2015; Whitridge 2008). When missionaries and colonists began living alongside Inuit, they thought of these houses as dirty animalistic (Whitridge 2008:289,295), and insisted people transition to living in above-ground, wooden frame houses. These houses were not suited to the environment; first, to build wooden houses, wood is needed—a challenge of the Labrador coast where most vegetation is low-lying and scarce (see Figure 3) (Elliot and Short 1979; Loring and Ardendt 2009:51; Webster 1887:292). They were also poorly insulated compared to sod houses, so we can see transition periods where Inuit and European construction were combined (Loring and Ardendt 2009:50). The structure of a home was wooden, but walls and rooves were covered in sod to better keep in heat (Loring and Ardendt 2009:50). Slowly, Inuit began shifting from using *quilliq* and sea mammal oils to wood stoves and kerosene lamps for primary heating, cooking, and light,

[6] Soap stone oil lamp

therefore relying on shipments from Newfoundland and aboard for fuel (Budgell 2018; Loring and Ardendt 2009:51; Whitridge 2008).

Figure 3 - Hebron, Nunatsiavut in July 2023, taken by the author. Approximately 20 km north of the tree line.

This is not to say that Inuit ways of living and traditions were lost to European influence. Even during the missions' active years, it was not uncommon for Inuit to refuse to join missions; instead, they moved northward and only met with settlers for trade (Gilbride, personal communication 2023). Missionaries translated the Bible and hymns into Inuttut so Inuit would continue speaking their own language, demonstrating a blending of two worlds that Inuit today

are still engaged in. People continue to use *qullit*[7] and dress in *amautiit*[8], but many also still sing Christian hymns and engage in Moravian rights of passage, such as young girls and boys day (OKâlaKatigêt Society 2015). Understandably, however, opinions about the church vary among Nunatsiavummiut, as the history between the two groups is complex. Generational trauma stemming from disease, dispossession, and forced dependence on the Canadian government connect back to the establishment of the Moravian church in 1771; however, many Nunatsiavummiut still proudly hold onto their Moravian upbringing and have found ways of healing through the church.

2.3.3 The Removal of Inuit Material Culture. As with many other Indigenous groups worldwide, outsiders were actively trading and collecting Inuit material culture, which has subsequently ended up in museums far from Nunatsiavut, including the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the British Museum in London, the Marischal Museum Aberdeen Scotland, the National Museum of Denmark, the Canadian Museum of History, three museums in Saxony, Germany, and many more (Rankin et al. 2022:55-56). The Moravian Church played a significant role in this, ensuring non-Inuit traffic into Inuit communities through missionaries. Many of the exported materials can be attributed as keepsakes or souvenirs, possibly for the children of missionaries sent back to Germany to receive higher education. Eliot Curwen spoke of this practice;

> It is a rule of the Moravian Society that all children are to be sent home to Germany to be educated when they are 6; they remain at school till 14 or 16 and *never* return to their parents, going either into trade [with the Mission] or becoming ministers or mission[ar]ies in other parts of the world, [Rompkey 1996 [1893]:100].

Frank Usbeck, the curator of American collections at the *SESS*, suggested some of the

[7] Plural of q*ulliq*
[8] Plural of *amauti* – a women's jacket with space for carrying infants

materials may have made their way to Germany as missionary children's souvenirs (Usbeck, personal communication 2023). It is also possible that these were souvenirs for adult tourists or collectors to show how an exotic '*other'* who lived on the other side of the world. The encouragement of Nunatsiavummiut to make souvenirs for tourists by the Moravian missionaries, along with the presence of colonial companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company, simultaneously encouraged and facilitated individual capacity to function within a cash-based economy (Jekanowski 2021). These items may have been sold for money enabling Inuit to purchase goods as part of a cash-economy, but it is also believed Inuit crafts were sold by the missions to raise money, as bankruptcy was a consistent threat (Bowers et al. 2022; Usbeck, personal communication 2023).

While some materials were traded or purchased as keepsakes, there are many examples in Nunatsiavut of individuals taking material culture—particularly materials from graves—without permission. One figure who plays a significant role in the relationship between Nunatsiavut and the *SESS* is Bernhard Hantzsch. An ornithologist by trade, Hantzsch is known primarily for identifying two Icelandic bird sub-species and his later travels in Labrador and Baffin Island (Anderson 1928). His 1906 expedition to Labrador began in Killiniq (the northern-most area of Labrador, but within the current territorial boundaries of Nunavut and Nunavik) before traveling south, stopping at the six operating mission sites at the time: Ramah, Hebron, Okak, Nain, Hopedale, and Makkovik (Anderson 1928). Arguably, his most significant impact stems from his study of Inuit graves, which he methodically desecrated and robbed to obtain "material for anthropological collections," (Hantzsch 1930:pg180,182)—which unfortunately included both grave belongings and Ancestors (human remains). He went as far as to write an article for *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* where he coached readers on the best way to access graves and

anything that laid within (Hantzsch 1930).

For context, Inuit were traditionally laid to rest above ground within rock cairns carefully built around them. Personal belongings were placed in a cache within or near the grave and were meant not to be touched by others. To ensure belongings were left alone, items were made unusable; for example, a *qulliq* might have a hole drilled through the bottom so others could not refill it with oil. The purpose of these burials is to allow a person to rest undisturbed upon death. Individuals such as Hantzsch demonstrated no respect for Inuit Ancestors or their descendants, describing in detail those he disturbed in the name of science (Hantzsch 1930). I will not excuse his actions as being normal or acceptable within the early 20th century because had the reverse been done, where someone exhumed one of his Ancestors to examine them as a specimen, I can only assume he would find it to be extremely disrespectful and traumatic. These acts were acceptable only when done to the '*other*', as they were seen as lesser than and undeserving of the same respect by scientists. Hantzsch was not the only individual to travel to Labrador and collect material culture and Ancestors as specimens; others include Junius Bird, Eliot Curwen, and Alpheus Packard (Bird 1945; Rompkey 1996 [1893]; Packard 1891).

2.3.4 Ratification of Nunatsiavut. In 2005, 234 years of missionary activity in Labrador came to an end when the last Moravian missionary left Hopedale—the same year as the ratification of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (LILCA) (CBC 2005; Nunatsiavut Government 2005). Since the recognition of Nunatsiavummiut self-governance, they have had full authority over the archaeological research in their territory and any associated material (Nunatsiavut Government 2005: 241). To house some of their material culture, the Nunatsiavut Government (NG) built the Illusuak Cultural Center in Nain, offering a space for Inuit to showcase their culture (Inuit Art Quarterly 2019). As the building is not equipped to act as a

repository for all materials, most of their collection remains at The Rooms—Newfoundland and Labrador's provincial museum (Wolforth 2023). As the clause within the LILCA does not account for any material culture collected before 2005, NG has been developing additional strategies to reconnect Inuit to their physical history held outside of their jurisdiction. Objectives lay with determining what material culture was removed before the agreement, where it currently resides, and how Nunatsiavummiut can become active caretakers of their physical history (Brice-Bennett 2003; Kelvin et al. 2020).

This need led to the development of *Creating Context,* a community-based research project created by my supervisors, Dr. Lisa Rankin and Dr. Laura Kelvin. The purpose of their project is to (re)connect Nunatsiavummiut to their material culture currently held at the *SESS*'s institutions: the Dresden Ethnographic Museum, the Herrnhut Ethnographic Museum, and the Leipzig Museum of Ethnography. In addition to community goals, *Creating Context* also hoped to address challenges faced by museums as they deal with overflowing legacy collections that are accompanied by few records[9] by seeking answers from Nunatsiavummiut. The project has already seen community members travel to Dresden and Herrnhut during a trip to Germany in June of 2023 and is awaiting a second trip that will bring *SESS* staff to Nunatsiavut to continue discussions in a community setting. The project hoped to give space for Nunatsiavummiut participants to develop recommendations for the care of material culture, begin the conversation of repatriation/rematriation of collections, and add context to material culture that had little information accompanying them. In total, six Nunatsiavummiut traveled to Germany (five public community members, one Nunatsiavut Government archaeologist), a *Kalaaleq* (Greenland Inuk)

[9] There are a number of reasons for missing records at the *SESS* including non-archaeologist or museum staff collecting who were unfamiliar record keeping practices, destruction of records via wars, and the movement of materials and records between locations.

archaeologist, a non-Indigenous Nunatsiavut Government archaeologist, Dr. Lisa Rankin, Dr. Laura Kelvin, and myself. Community members were chosen by a community-based committee and participants varied in age, career, and hometown, bringing a range of lived experiences and interests to the trip. My thesis has stemmed directly from *Creating Context*, where I could record the first steps of a community-project in real time.

Creating Context was developed to address the intertwined history of the *SESS* and Nunatsiavut and was realized by the dedication of *SESS* staff in unsettling their institutions. As mentioned briefly earlier, the cultural headquarters for the Moravian Church is in Herrnhut, Saxony, and as a result, the Herrnhut Ethnographic Museum has a significant collection from Labrador. While smaller in number, the Dresden Ethnographic Museum also holds a good number of materials and Ancestors. The staff within the *SESS*, particularly Frank Usbeck, have shown their dedication to actively unsettling their institutions by partnering with Indigenous communities to understand how best to move forward.

This dedication needs to be reflected in archaeologists as we move toward a practice that addresses and remediates the legacy created by the removal of Indigenous material culture from Indigenous communities. We should be shifting our practice to be supports for Indigenous groups to call upon as they navigate contemporary colonialism. Further, we must be aware that *how* we act as supports must depend on community history, interest, and comfort. This project couples a global and community view of these changes, offering perspectives from museums and Indigenous Peoples to demonstrate the impact of a new museum practice.

Chapter 3 – Indigenous Heritage Rights

Native involvement in the museum world did not happen because of academic epiphanies by non-Native academics or curators, but as result of prolonged and committed activism.

—Amy Lonetree, Decolonizing Museums

My research aims to demonstrate how eight museums have adapted from traditional museological spaces to ones that promote the comfort and interest of the Indigenous Nations they represent. To understand the impact of these changes, I have pulled from three theories: Community-Based Participatory Research, *Etuaptmumk*, and Indigenous Curation. Together, they address the need to (1) work respectfully with Indigenous Peoples as *partners*; (2) recognize and celebrate Indigenous Knowledges alongside Western Knowledge; and (3) create alternative museum frameworks that authentically represent Indigenous Peoples. Keep in mind, while these theories are used within archaeological and museological spheres, they were developed by Indigenous Peoples advocating for their rights (Atalay 2012; Awama et al. 2009; Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001). By looking through the history of Indigenous Rights Movements, we can understand the driving moments that led the discipline to where it is today.

3.1 Indigenous Rights Movements of the 20th Century

For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have protested their unequal treatment by settler governments. Across Canada and the USA, Indigenous Peoples were forced into assimilative programs such as residential and boarding schools (Wilson and Schellhammer 2021; Lonetree 2012), dispossessed from their traditional lands (DeWitt 1996; Lonetree 2012:22:27; Ly 2014),

forcibly adopted out of communities (Stevenson 2020), faced disenfranchisement and were quantified by their Indigenous blood (Hill and Ratteree 2017; Indian Act 1985). These tactics aimed to erase Indigeneity by severing kinship ties, stopping the transfer of knowledge, and denying legal agreements, such as treaties and hunting/fishing zones.

Indigenous rights movements across Canada and the USA are distinct in that the specific issues faced by Indigenous communities across the vast landscape vary depending on state/provincial and federal policy; however, the borders that separate Nations within and between the two countries are constructed by the settler governments. Nations and activism do not exist within a vacuum; there was and continues to be a constant exchange of influence from either side of the border.

3.1.1 The Long Sixties and its Major Movements. In the post-war era, social movements that decentered the white male experience were forcing their way forward, emphasizing the presence of women, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), non-hetero sexualities, non-binary genders, and the many intersections of those identities (Kýrová and Tóth 2020). This was especially prevalent in the 'Long 1960s', the period from roughly 1953-1978, marked by notorious protests, takeovers, and marches that saw Indigenous People advocating for their rights (Cobb et al. 2020). 1969 is a particularly relevant year, given the release of the *White Paper* and the (re) occupation of Alcatraz.

In Canada, the Pierre Trudeau Government released the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (white paper)* in 1969. The term 'white paper' is a lay term for a policy suggested to the public; however, the legislation it contained resulted in the document being known as *the White Paper* for the racial discrimination it attempted to legalize. The document

sought to solve the political, economic, and social disparity among Indigenous communities by "abolishing the Indian Act, phasing out the treaties, and transferring responsibility for Indigenous peoples from the federal government to the provinces," (Nickel 2019:2). Contrary to its goal to eliminate inequality between settler Canadians and Indigenous Peoples, it took on a 'ignore it and it will go away' approach that opted to erase Indigeneity as a socio-political identity. In response, the Indian Association of Alberta published *Citizens Plus*—more commonly known as the *Red Paper*—which instead suggested additional rights are owed to Indigenous Peoples of Canada, reminding the settler government of the treaties and promises made since contact (Nickel 2019:13). After extreme backlash from Indigenous Nations across Canada, the government withdrew the paper in 1971.

In the USA, 1969 saw the takeover at Alcatraz Island, a movement that sought to bring attention to the termination and relocation policies revoking reservation land to move Indigenous Peoples into urban centers (Beisaw and Olin 2019; Ly 2014). Although this push was meant to offer more economic opportunity, it resulted in separating people from their cultures (Ly 2014). Hundreds of Indigenous people from different Nations occupied the island with the message that the island was "Indian Land," (Beisaw and Olin 2019:541). The same year that the *White Paper* was withdrawn, the occupation of Alcatraz ended with their forced removal by the Nixon administration, both for safety concerns and to regain control of the island (Andrew 2014). Alcatraz was cited as a catalyst for Indigenous activism in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces, inspiring "protest occupations [that] occurred in Indian country," (Beisaw and Olin 2019:540). These are but two events in the history of Indigenous activism where Indigenous voices demanded to be listened to.

The Red Paper and the (re)occupation of Alcatraz were socio-politically motivated protests which brought to light the unjust treatment of Indigenous Peoples in contemporary settler states. During this same period, activists were addressing the need for Indigenous self-representation—especially within heritage spheres. For centuries, Indigeneity was defined and controlled by Western settler agents who believed Indigenous Peoples incapable of speaking for themselves. This led to Indigenous activists working against heritage authorities to callout the discriminatory practices which held them away from their material culture and Knowledge.

3.1.2 Impacting Heritage/Archaeology. During the Long Sixties, Indigenous activist Vine Deloria Jr heavily critiqued social sciences—in particular anthropology and archaeology—for their appropriation of Indigenous histories, Knowledge, material culture, and Ancestors (Atalay 2012:40; Martínez 2019:179). The mass collecting of material culture (Feest 1993; Lonetree 2012:27), and subsequent cultural interpretations by non-Indigenous "Indian experts" (Atalay 2012:32), left Indigenous Peoples with little control of their own stories, leading to caricatures that presented Indigenous people as static, pre-historic, and disappearing (Feest 1993; Lonetree 2012:30; Martínez 2019:52,55; Task Force Report 1992:5). Whether researchers recognized the power they held, for centuries research was done on Indigenous Peoples, not about or for them. Overwhelmingly, only the researcher would have benefitted, wherein they could reap processional and academic advantages without the involvement of those they were appropriating and while invalidating Indigenous Peoples with their supremist and patriarchal interpretations. Even when there were outright objections by Indigenous communities to fieldwork and excavations, the researchers interest took priority (Hantzsch 1930; Martínez 2019:178,197). This is another example of the Western researcher knowing better than the *'other'*, where an outsider

claims their work is for the greater common good, even if it is against the wishes of the studied group. Regardless of their intent, however, harm was done and we must recognize but not excuse those individuals' actions.

In what seems to be a driving moment, Yankton Sioux activist Hai-Mecha Eunka (Maria Darlene Pearson, or Running Moccasins) opposed the speciminification of an Indigenous woman and her child who were disinterred along with a number of settlers during construction of a highway in Iowa (Ames History Museum [AHM] 2024; Martínez 2019: 179; Starr 2018). The site was found to be an unknown 18th-century cemetery, and while non-Indigenous individuals were reburied, the woman and her child were transferred into Iowa state custody as an object for study (Ames History Museum [AHM] 2024; Martínez 2019: 179; Starr 2018). Hai-Mecha Eunka's advocacy to have the pair repatriated and reburied was ultimately refused by the state archaeologist (Starr 2018:10). It was only through Hai-Mecha Eunka's work with the state governor that a new state archaeologist was appointed who eventually laid the pair to rest (Starr 2018:10). Hai-Mecha Eunka continued her work to develop legislation in her state, leading to a state grave protection act—the first of its kind, and the forerunner of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (AHM 2024; Nash and Colwell 2020; Starr 2018).

After this explosive period of activism, policy and legislature in Canada and the United States began to reflect changing social spheres. The early 1990s saw two important documents introduced regarding Indigenous heritage rights; the first was the United States' Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 (Nash and Colwell 2020), and in Canada, it was the Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples in 1992 (Assembly of First Nations [AFN] and The Canadian Museum Association [CMA] 1992).

NAGPRA is federal legislation that outlines the process of returning Indigenous Ancestors, grave belongings, and cultural items to federally recognized Indigenous Nations and descendants (Nash and Colwell 2020). Museum 'ownership' of Indigenous Ancestors was (and is) based on the racist beliefs that "defined Native American human remains found on federal land [are] *objects* of *antiquity*," (Nash and Colwell 2020:3), and has been protested heavily. NAGPRA gives Indigenous Nations an avenue to have their Ancestors repatriated/rematriated/returned—including contemporary discoveries.

The Task Force Report takes a more holistic approach to Indigenous heritage rights by addressing overall engagement between museums and Indigenous Nations. Developed in partnership between the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museum Association, it was written after the publication of NAGPRA and was inspired by its policies (AFN and CMA 1992; Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples 1994). It came about as an effect of Lubicon Lake First Nation's boycott of the Glenbow Museum's *Spirit Sings* exhibition, which was funded by Shell Oil—the company that was in a land claim battle with the Nation at the time (AFN and CMA 1992; Dibbelet 1988; Jessiman 2011). To address the need for Indigenous involvement in museum processes, the Task Force assembled in 1990, creating the report which detailed recommendations for involvement, access, funding, and repatriation (AFN and CMA 1992). Since its publication, the Task Force Report has been revised and supported by additional documents such as the Canadian Museum Association *Moved To Action,* which offers guidelines for implementing UNDRIP into museum spaces (CMA 2022). Unlike NAGPRA, the Task Force Report and Moved To Action are *not* legal documents but ethical guidebooks, and to date in Canada, no laws address Indigenous rights over their heritage. Canada's *United Nations*

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act does require the Canadian government to implement the changes as outlined in UNDRIP—which includes heritage rights—however, there are still no laws to support Indigenous control over their heritage (Government of Canada 2021; United Nations 2007).

While there are no formal regulations for engaging with Indigenous Nations (nationally or internationally), the ethical and moral changes within the discipline have influenced archaeologists and museums to do better. Whether working in research or with existing collections, we must develop genuine partnerships wherein Indigenous partners have decision-making authority and their interests are emphasized. Further, we must keep in mind the legacies and continued effects of archaeology and museums, and approach partnerships empathetically. The following theories methodologize these changes and iterate a common lesson: we must decenter Western ways of knowing and doing to make room for Indigenous Peoples and their ontologies.

3.2 An Engaging Way of Doing Research

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is most often associated with research done with historically excluded groups, such as Indigenous communities. CBPR is a cross-disciplinary framework highlighting the importance of creating an equitable relationship when conducting research with descendent and local communities (Atalay 2012; Hacker 2017). Research interests can address health, natural resources, archaeology, or other disciplinary spheres; however, the relationship and impacts on a community are always central themes.

3.2.1 With, by, and for. The activism of the 20th century made waves in the archaeological world, ushering in new policies about Indigenous engagement—however, there was still little to define what that engagement meant. The 'consultation' outlined in legislation and guidelines such as NAGPRA and the Task Force Report were left ambiguous and open-ended. On the one hand, this encouraged those within the heritage field to treat every situation on a case-by-case basis, but it also led to the risk of consultation as a box to check off (Atalay 2012). As mentioned previously, there is no Canada-wide legislation *or* guidelines for conducting archaeology with or without Indigenous Peoples, meaning archaeologists were left to conduct research as they saw fit.[10] Whether they were unknowingly doing harm or consciously did not care about the effects of their research, archaeologists have faced a moral reckoning.

Adapting research approaches should not just be done to appease ethics boards but to help remediate the legacy created by researchers who regarded people from other communities as objects of study rather than fellow humans. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a *Māori* scholar, began her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* with:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The world itself, 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful… It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity [2021:1].

Doing research in a good way requires empathetically shifting our perspective about the effects of research when we are asking to develop projects with Indigenous communities. Projects should not be *drop-in, drop-out* scenarios where researchers capture data and leave; we must

[10] While Canada does not have Federal legislation in this regard, this thesis did not examine provincial legislation. The inclusion of provincial and state legislation of Canada, the USA, and Germany was beyond the bounds of this study.

build trust with communities and seek to make genuine and lasting relationships that address a community's needs and/or interests.

To address the still-lacking involvement of Indigenous communities in archaeological work, Sonya Atalay, an Anishinaabe-Ojibwe archaeologist, further developed the concept of CBPR to offer guiding principles for working with Indigenous communities. Her term *with, by, and for* has encouraged archaeologists to rethink how they design and conduct archaeological research at every stage of a project. Rather than outsider archaeologists coming into communities to answer self-motivated questions, community interests, and needs should guide the research (Atalay 2012). This does not mean that the outsider archaeologist cannot have lines of inquiry that they hope to address, but CBPR prioritizes community interests rather than the researchers.

3.2.1.1 Principles. Atalay outlines five principles that CBPR projects must include: (1) they utilize a community-based partnership process; (2) they aspire to be participatory in all aspects; (3) they build community capacity; (4) they engage a spirit of reciprocity; and (5) they recognize the contributions of multiple knowledge systems (2012:63).

For a research project to meet Atalay's first and second principles and be participatory in all aspects, the researcher must act beyond consultation and undefined engagement to work with community members as *partners*. This means community members work on the research team to develop, collect, analyze, and disseminate the information collected (Atalay 2012:66). Researchers should keep in mind that the work being done may not be allocated equally, and discussions about participants' degree of involvement and the work expected should be ongoing. Moreover, flexibility to adapt to sudden change is key. Community members working on the team are likely not career researchers; they may have other roles and responsibilities that make

them unable to participate as they intended to. Partnership also means involving community members in decision-making from project conception to publication—and respecting their choices (Atalay 2012:68).

Atalay's third principle calls for building community capacity, which will differ based on community and individual interests. Archaeological projects might see community members participate as field technicians where they gain skills through survey and excavation, which might (but not necessarily) set them on a trajectory to pursue archaeology within their community. Opportunities to build other skills, such as computer training, event organizing, and grant writing, are also common within CBPR projects (Atalay 2012:71). In an Indigenous youth workshop I helped oversee, resume writing and conference presentation skills were at the forefront of student's minds. As with the degree of involvement of participants, capacity-building opportunities might change through the project, so communicating with participants and community leaders should be consistent.

Atalay's fourth principle emphasizes reciprocity. As she explains, research with Indigenous communities is not neutral; outsiders will gain academic and professional benefits by way of a community's land and Knowledge and might not realize this access is not a *right* (Atalay 2012:74). When done reciprocally, research projects generate benefits for both the archaeologist and the community (Atalay 2012). As with the degree of involvement, this might not be split equally between parties, so community needs should be discussed during the design phase and reassessed throughout the project (Atalay 2012).

The final principle that Atalay outlines addresses the difference between *researcher and non-researcher*, *researcher and subject*, and necessitates that each person involved is both a

teacher and learner—a familiar concept in many Indigenous cultures (Atalay 2012; Hatcher et al. 2009b:146; Rheault 1999). The dismantling of knowledge hierarchies is fundamental in decolonizing methodology wherein Western academic knowledge is no longer considered the only "legitimate knowledge" (Smith 2021:72). Knowledge is gained through experience, whether it comes from a Western academic institution or traditional ceremony, and when in Indigenous spaces, the flow of knowledge can and should come from all directions (Rheault 1999; Surface-Evans 2020:77). Indigenous and local Knowledges are full of lessons and information that can help us understand the pasts we are studying, the world we currently live within, and the future for the next generations (Atalay 2012:75; Rheault 1999). As outsider archaeologists, we must appreciate sharing this knowledge not as data, but as aspects of a culture passed down through generations. We also must understand the hesitance—and sometimes refusal—to provide that knowledge, whether excluding a particular research question or ending a research project. As Atalay states, research projects with communities "is a privilege, not a right," (2012:74). By breaking down the notion that knowledge taught through Western institutions is the only valid knowledge, we can take advantage of the best and most relevant aspects of multiple knowledge systems to answer questions in ways that we could not otherwise—and even find *new* questions (Atalay 2012). This concept of weaving of alternative ways of knowing is a common approach when working with Indigenous Peoples, and has been developed into an education framework called *Etuaptmumk* or Two-Eyed Seeing.

3.3 Weaving Knowledges

I want to emphasize here the use of the plural Indigenous Knowledge(s). This is done to demonstrate the diversity of Indigenous Nation(s) who all have unique and distinct Knowledge

systems. Along with their unique histories, societies, politics, arts, languages, clothing, and countless other aspects of their cultures, we must appreciate their unique Knowledge systems, constructed through experiences with their worlds over generations.

3.3.1 Indigenous Knowledges. To state simply that Western knowledge has been prioritized over Indigenous Knowledges does not do justice to its reality. It is not just that community knowledge has been ignored; it is that the settler governments of Canada and the USA systematically attempted to erase those systems of thought through aggressive assimilation programs (Wilson and Schellhammer 2021). Children were the primary targets of assimilation, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, with residential, day, and boarding schools that stopped the flow of knowledge from Elders and parents to children (Benally 1992; Kalluak 2017; Kelvin et al. 2020; Wilson and Schellhammer 2021). By blocking the flow of knowledge that people had practiced since time immemorial, their ways of living—which have deep emotional and spiritual impacts—were halted. Western Knowledge claims to be unbiased, quantitative, and *correct;* therefore, those who have other ways of knowing need correcting—especially Indigenous Knowledges, which are considered anecdotal and qualitative (Reid et al. 2020:245). Rather, Indigenous Knowledges seek knowledge in experiences that Western Knowledge does not. For example, in his book *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin*[11], D'Arcy Rheault explains that in Anishinaabe philosophy, *Kendaaswin* is "the way of learning" (1999:99), and includes *Manidoo-waabiwin* (seeing from a spirit way), in which Anishinaabeg learn from dreams, visions, and intuition (1999:114)—methods unfounded to Western Knowledge as this would be unmeasurable to its quantitative approaches (Bienkowski 2012:47). Anishinaabe learning is holistic and

[11] How to live in a good way.

interwoven with the worlds around oneself, which Paul Bourgeois (Ojibwe) explains in *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin;*

> The Anishinaabeg have no term for [the separation of] man/nature, or [this] subject/object dichotomy in their language, because there is no nature, or environment, as such, understood to be separated from the self. In my initial research in the [Anishinaabemowin] dictionaries I did not find words for art, philosophy, mind, and knowledge… What I am talking about is a completely different worldview, a worldview where we relate and interconnect everything with manido (spirit) dwelling within everything [Rheault 1999:29].

This interconnectedness within Anishinaabe ways of life and many other Indigenous Nations illustrates how halting one aspect affects the whole (Hatcher et al. 2009b; Rheault 1999). Language is an essential part of the whole for many cultures, which shapes one's worldview and determines how we navigate it (Rheault 1999). Inuktitut speakers in Nunavut, Canada, describe time in relation to the events that happen at a given time rather than in dates, such as changes in nature or periods of childrearing (Briggs 1992:87). Briggs explains:

> The passage of time relates to changes in human lives, its notation is even more obviously a matter of personal judgement and experience. A 'baby' is a 'child' when it behaves like one and defines itself as one. People are ready to marry when they have acquired the requisite skills, and they are ready to bring up a baby when they have learned to love, [1992:88].

Language, therefore, demonstrates the relationship between people and time, where time is related to the action, whether that be of nature, a person, animals, or so on (Briggs 1992:87).

Due to paternalistic endeavors that sought to erase Indigeneity and supplant English in place of traditional languages, many Nations saw a partial or complete loss of language. The impact of this was significant, as Wilson and Schellhammer explain, "language carries the essential concepts and worldview of each Indigenous culture" (2021:46). As I will discuss later, subject and object, living and non-living, animate and inanimate are all structures of language

that alter our understanding of how we should engage with the world and often is the source of ontological clash between Western and Indigenous ontologies (Rheault 1999).

When we hold Indigenous ways of knowing in the same regard as Western knowledge, it not only gives them respect but acknowledges that Indigenous ways of knowing and doing deserve the same space as Western ways. As with the principles of CBPR, this weaving will not always be equal, and as non-Indigenous researchers, we must appreciate that our knowledge is not always fit to answer a question. This is not to say that there is no place for Western Knowledge when doing research with Indigenous communities; instead, we should “see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and [use] both of these eyes together,” (Hatcher et al. 2009b:146).

3.3.2 Etuaptmumk. Elder Dr. Albert Marshall and his late wife, Elder Murdena Marshall, developed *Etuaptmumk*, or Two-Eyed Seeing, to demonstrate how Mi’kmaq and Western Knowledge could be used in tandem (Hatcher et al. 2009b). By “overlapping” knowledges—not merging or pasting from one to the other—one is offered a better view of the world that benefits from two comprehensive systems (Iwama et al. 2009:4). Hatcher et al. states this effectively; “Two-Eyed Seeing intentionally and respectfully brings together our different ways of knowing… one does not have to relinquish either position but can come to understand elements of both,” (2009b:146). Although *Etuaptmumk* is a Mi’kmaq concept, its lessons can be applied to other Nations' knowledge systems, allowing researchers to “build an ethic of knowledge coexistence” (Reid et al. 2020:235). The possible applications of *Etuaptmumk* cross disciplines,

with research in social contexts such as education, medical contexts, and even within natural sciences like fishery management[12] (Hatcher et al. 2009b; Reid et al. 2020; Wright et al. 2019).

Weaving knowledge systems in archaeology greatly benefits Indigenous communities and outsider archaeologists alike. First, it creates space for Indigenous communities to develop research questions and projects based on their knowledge rather than through a Western bias. *Etuaptmumk* works hand-in-hand with the tenets of CBPR by encouraging projects to stem from community interests rather than only that of an outsider researcher (Atalay 2012). Second, by bringing in multiple world views, understandings of the past become much more thorough than with only a Western lens (Atalay 2012). Finally, by including Indigenous Knowledges from the outset of a project, the process of knowledge production is altered; no longer working to address the research question with a Western answer, but instead creates a process where information is created by and for the community (Atalay 2012:58).

The holistic framework of *Etuaptmumk* allows it to be implemented in museums where research is not necessarily the staff's goal. Instead, the ways that material culture is controlled, understood, and referred to are shifted so that it is not a Western concept being projected onto non-Western materials, but the appropriate Knowledge from a material's creators being "reactivated" so it may continue existing (or degrading) in the way it was intended to (Gilchrist 2021:22). Making space within museums to have multiple equally-valued knowledge systems gives control back to Nations to represent themselves and their cultures in ways that are authentic to themselves and not the narratives created for them by colonial powers.

[12] The separation of spheres (ie. social, medicinal, and natural sciences) is an example of the distinctions inherent in the English language that are not necessarily present within Indigenous Knowledges and languages.

3.4 The Museum as a Site of Regaining Control

As the theoretical structure of the museum is a Western and colonial creation, it tracks that the ways material culture is thought of and dealt with follow a Western ontological approach (Kelvin et al. 2020; Lonetree 2012). That does not, however, forgive the patriarchal ownership of non-Western materials in museums without having their cultural needs met. Traditional museum practices would see material culture collected, accessioned, treated by conservationists, and then placed onto a shelf to wait until it is relevant to display. The care given to materials is largely preservative; steps are taken to ensure that the material will last as long as possible through temperature, moisture, and handling control. Techniques for caring for textiles and ceramics vary greatly, as their material requires different environments and care. The same principle should be applied to materials that might need non-preservatory care, and it is the role of museum staff to meet the needs of those materials, whether that is the incorporation of ceremony or regular offerings of sustenance.

3.4.1 Indigenous Curation. If done properly, a partnership between museums and Indigenous Nations is an application of knowledge weaving, as it takes from both Western and Indigenous Knowledges to view materials collected from the past more clearly. This approach, commonly referred to as Indigenous curation, emphasizes the necessity of including cultural Knowledge in the care plan. Indigenous curation should be considered a partnership where there is a ceding of Western authority and the bolstering of Indigenous voices. The ways this might happen are countless, and so I will focus on three themes: (1) ontological stance; (2) access; and (3) co-curation.

3.4.1.1 Ontology. The ontological stance is necessary as a starting point for understanding Indigenous curation practices. As a reminder, ontology is how we understand existence; of ourselves, of things around us, of what is and is not. With varying ontologies, how one understands and travels through the world will be different, so this must be at the forefront of museum staff's minds as they work with people with differing ontologies. From the broader ontological concept, Indigenous views of spirit and time often go unacknowledged within heritage spaces.

In Western ontologies, there is a separation of living and non-living beings and, furthermore, animate and inanimate. It is both a cause and an effect of language (seen in English and countless other languages), where subjects and objects are distinct. In these language paradigms, an object can never be alive and, more importantly, can never hold spirit. There are *representations* of spirit, such as holy objects; however, they are always inanimate and cannot become animate. If you remember, this is the basis of my difficulty in choosing a word for *material culture*. It is also clear that I am a Western thinker, as I have referred to materials several times as *it* (as an object) rather than *they* (as a subject). As Wilson and Schellhammer explain, "heritage language forms the base of identity and relationships contained in the worldview," (2021:62). Unfortunately, English does not (succinctly) allow for alternative labeling, which creates difficulty in grasping a world that does not objectify. Even in casual conversations about, for example, an animal, the words *it* and *they* can be interchangeable. Further, we might face the metaphysical question of whether that animal has spirit. And more, what *is* spirit? These questions stem from a Western ontology with a predominantly Christian influence, which views humans as the center of life and the universe.

Alternatively, as explained earlier by Paul Bourgeois, many Indigenous Nations view themselves *within* the structure of the world, not independent of it (Rheault 1999). In *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: What Inuit Have Always Known to Be True*, Donald Uluadluak wrote about *Pamiqsainirmik,* or Training Children (Uluadluak 2017). Uluadluak explains how from a very young age children are taught that all living things should be respected and revered: "I think she [his grandmother] taught us about insects and the smallest of creatures because they teach us to never be proud, and we will never think that we are better than anyone else around us," (Uluadluak 2017:170-171). The close relationship between Inuit and animals is seen in many oral traditions, including those about the *Inuk-Nanook* (person-polar bear) relationship, which recalls the interchangeability between the two (Barras 2018:2). A *nanook* could transform into an *Inuk* and vice-versa, and it was behaviour that decided if one was a *nanook* or *Inuk* (Barras 2018:2). This animal-human relationship is echoed in many oral traditions, such as the story of Kiviuq, who marries a goose as a second wife and after upsetting her, goes through trials to find her again (Rhoda Akpaliapik Karetak 2017:197). The lessons from these traditions mean to teach that animals are seen as beings with consciousness and feelings that should be respected as one would a human (Kalluak 2017:55). The human is one of many beings, some of which are human, some of which are not, some continually have life and spirit, and some only have spirit in specific contexts (Coble 2018; Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Uluadluak 2017). The theory of Animism is seen across borders and manifests differently with each Nation, although objectifying animated beings in museums is a common form of disrespect (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Gilchrist 2021).

To combat the speciminification of beings within museum spaces, there needs to be a de-

prioritization of Western ontology, where museum staff adapt the care given to materials so it appropriately follows the needs of those materials—rather than supplanting Western needs. This might include curation changes such as covering materials with cloth or storing material in an alternative container (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Popson 2004). Sacred storage is another physical change that addresses the spiritual needs of many materials. These rooms are ceremonial spaces where needs that cannot necessarily be met in regular storage are encouraged, such as smudging and sustenance offerings. With museums, we must consciously recognize how our biases might clash with others to foster an environment where differing ontologies can co-exist.

The second ontological branch is time. Contrary to Western thought which sees time as linear, many Indigenous Nations see time as cyclical, where regardless of 'distance' from oneself, the past and future are not far-removed (Bienkowski 2012; Gilchrist 2021). Western thinkers tend to distance themselves relationship-wise from the past, where unless it affected a known generation (such as two or three generations back), there is little connection (Bienkowski 2012:47). Many Indigenous ontologies do not view the belongings of someone from the 'far past' as something old and unwanted—or as belonging to the archaeological record and consequently, to a given government body. Where one might see a jacket as an interesting piece of history, another might feel a deep connection to their kin who created it. Moreover, recall the Ancestors who were stolen from their resting places to become research specimens—people who, regardless of the years separating the time of death and time of disruption, are held as immediate kin. I can only imagine this would make seeing Ancestors within museums all the more difficult. To avoid treating material culture and Ancestors as long-ago specimens, we

should approach these topics empathetically and without prioritizing an alternative understanding of time.

3.4.1.2 Access. The second theme of Indigenous curation is the community's ability to visit museums and engage with their material culture. This allows people to see materials they might not have been able to see otherwise and hopefully establish connections between them and their cultural identity. By visiting materials, community members can connect to their histories impactfully. Natasha Lyons describes this process, where Inuvialuit Elders looked over a collection of whaling tools:

> They often recognized or could piece together the function of implements that has long since passed out of use… and would discuss various options for objects they did not recognize based on their own knowledge and use of traditional technologies [2014:190].

Bringing community members into museums to see collections is not where access should stop; there should also be the opportunity to *handle* materials. Ceremonial objects, for example, might need to be used to continue or renew their role, so it has become slowly accepted to allow community members to engage with materials in a culturally appropriate way. Unfortunately, it is often preferred that people wear gloves and other protective equipment when handling materials (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Gadoua 2015). There are two reasons for this: first, to avoid transferring oils and dirt to materials which could lead to damage. The second is to protect the individual from the toxins and chemicals used as preservatives and pest control (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001; Gadoua 2015; Simms and McIntyre 2014). When toxins are applied to materials, it is usually impossible to remove them, so personal protective equipment must be worn when handling. During the *Creating Context's* trip to Germany, the group experienced this firsthand and were required to wear gowns, gloves, and N-95 masks—as well as

sign waivers stating we understood the risk of handing materials treated with arsenic and other toxins (see Chapter 5 for a full description of this visit). Despite the safety purpose, personal protective equipment creates a barrier—literally and figuratively—between a person and the materials they are engaging with. Gadoua wrote about the impact of unhindered contact with cultural materials and how engaging the senses creates opportunity for remembrance, knowledge sharing, and learning (2015). While the risk to personal health needs to be weighed against the benefit, the community member should have decision-making power with museum staff there as support.

3.4.1.3 Co-Curation. The final theme I will address is co-curation, which effectively takes everything that I have mentioned in this chapter and applies it to designing exhibitions that facilitate self-representation by Indigenous Nations. This approach goes beyond consultation by partnering with Nations before starting an exhibition to discuss what of themselves and their culture they want to showcase. Similar to CBPR, this highlights community interests and values, and avoids the issue of incorrect interpretation. The goal of co-curation is to "shift museums from being strictly curator-controlled sites to more inclusive and collaborative spaces" (Lonetree 2012:38), which see the voices of community members as the leading storytellers. The degree of involvement of museum staff will vary depending on community capacity, experience, and comfort level, and they should primarily be present to work on logistic and technical support.

There are challenges to this approach, namely the ability of a museum to undertake such a project. The time and money required to design an exhibition are costly, not including the costs of hosting possible non-local communities and giving due payment for their work and time. Moreover, in the chance that multiple Nations are being represented, ensuring everyone is being

showcased equitably and in ways that do not infringe on the others must be considered. These are challenges that museums are already overcoming through planning within their institutions and with Indigenous partners.

With all of this in mind, we must not make finalizing statements that co-curation is the end of Indigenous plights in museums. Co-curation is one avenue for redress and self-representation; however, it is not always a long-term solution. On-going communication between Indigenous groups and the museum are necessary, where discussions can take place about where and how materials are cared for. Some communities are happy to have their materials being showcased at museums as it brings attention and appreciation to the material and the material's maker. Other groups might want the museum to hold materials until there comes a time where they can establish their own repository. At any rate, decision making should be left in the hands of the Indigenous group being represented, and any changes in their interests should be accepted.

3.5 Conclusion

The central lesson of each theoretical approach that inspired this project—Community-Based Participatory Research, *Etuaptmumk,* and Indigenous curation—is that it is long overdue for Indigenous Nations to have space and authority to represent themselves authentically. For centuries, Indigenous Peoples have fought for the continuation of their cultures in the face of assimilative and erasive discourse, and it is because of Indigenous activists that changes were ushered in. As I have demonstrated, Indigenous engagement goes beyond undefined consultation and embodies holistic involvement, where we as non-Indigenous researcher partners acknowledge our disciplines' legacies and make changes to amend them.

In the following chapter, I will discuss in detail how eight museums are adapting their

protocol to better care for Indigenous material culture and how they are combatting their own legacies to make space for Indigenous Peoples within their institutions.

Chapter 4 – Museum Practice

The previous chapter addressed Community Based Participatory Research, Etuaptmumk, and Indigenous Curation as distinct lines of thought; however, in application, each relies on and influences the others. When addressing how museums strive to become more inclusive spaces for Indigenous Peoples, we must see the three theories as an interwoven web of practices. This chapter will review museum protocol through the lens of these theories, starting with introductions to the institutions and participating staff, followed by an analysis of how each institution is working to include Indigenous groups in the care and control of their material culture. In conclusion of this chapter, I identified three themes that guided practices that supported meaningful relationship building. To maintain continuity between the themes at the *Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* and *Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut,* the *Creating Content* project, and the trip to Germany, details about the *SESS* will be discussed in *Chapter 5.*

Before getting started, I need to acknowledge that the information in this chapter is limited by what I could learn from the one- to two-hour interviews I had with staff. This means that while interviewees represent the institution, staff or the institution on a whole cannot be simplified into what I have included below. Moreover, we must understand that staff might have held back in what they said, as their opinions and statements reflect directly on the institution. This also means that the interest of the individual cannot be equated to the interest of the institution—and vice versa. This means; 1) what the individual might want to advocate for may be held back by the institution, and 2) the goals of the institution might not align with what the individual is interested in seeing through. The practices that are or are not happening, such as

repatriation/rematriation/return, might be advocated strongly by a staff member, but if the bureaucracy disagrees, there is little the individual can do. They are bound by their capacity as much as their institution's goals reflect on them. Similarly, this thesis did not examine the policies and guidelines of individual institutions and instead focused on the experiences of staff members. This was done as institutional standards may or may not be followed, so importance was placed on what *is* being done according to staff.

As a reminder from Chapter 2, the Indigenous groups and their Territories listed alongside each museum are not the only Indigenous groups who occupy/occupied that land, or that the museum holds materials from.

4.1 The Royal British Columbia Museum, located on Ləkʷəŋən Territory.

The Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (RBCM) is both the provincial museum and archive. First established in 1886, it has grown into a major repository over the last 137 years (Royal British Columbia Museum [RBCM] 2023a; RBCM 2023b). Museum staff primarily collected materials that represented provincial archaeology, history, and natural history, although they also hold materials from other Canadian provinces and the USA (Brownlee 2023; RBCM 2023b). Of the archaeological and ethnographic collections from BC, Indigenous material culture accounts for nearly half the collection, with 99% of the archaeological record being Indigenous, but only about 8% of ethnographic materials[13] (RBCM 2023c; RBCM 2023d; RBCM 2023e). These materials represent nearly all 203 First Nations in BC, whom the institution has pledged its dedication to moving toward a more respectful museum

[13] Archaeological materials are collected through excavation, whereas ethnographic materials are collected contemporaneously from communities.

practice (Brownlee, personal communication 2023).

From the RBCM, I spoke with Kevin Brownlee, an Ininew[14] archaeologist whose research has focused on highlighting Indigenous experiences in the archaeological record. He maintains this theme in his role as curator of Indigenous Collections and Repatriation (ICAR) where he incorporates his Knowledge and perspectives as an Indigenous person to best care for the materials within his stewardship.

Brownlee consistently referred to material culture as belongings—sparking my internal debate on appropriate terminology—but also reiterated that that there is no single term that communicates properly the relationship between Indigenous groups and their materials, as well as the material's own state of being, whether living or non-living. The term *belongings* fit well at the RBCM, as many of their materials were taken without permission and therefore rightly *belong* to the Indigenous Peoples they were taken from. In other regions, or where materials were traded or purchased, belongings might not be the most suitable term. As mentioned earlier, it is best to be flexible with terms for material culture, and more importantly, to listen to a given group on how they want to refer to their material culture.

Thankfully, the RBCM is open to these changes and is actively addressing the needs of the Indigenous groups they represent. Brownlee explained that part of their dedication is due to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), a provincial act published to ensure the application of UNDRIP (Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act [DRIPA] 2019). DRIPA's purpose is to:

(a) to affirm the application of the Declaration [UNDRIP] to the laws of British

[14] Ininew (Cree) Ancestral territories span across the prairies and into Ontario.

Columbia; (b) to contribute to the implementation of the Declaration; (c) to support the affirmation of, and develop relationships with, Indigenous governing bodies [DRIPA 2019].

4.1.1 Protocol at the RBCM. The most visible way the RBCM is working to be DRIPA compliant is by closing its human history galleries—a publicly controversial move undertaken in 2022 alongside a general overhaul at the museum. The RBCM released the *Report to British Columbians,* which acknowledges detrimental issues within the museum such as racism and discrimination, exclusion of BIPOC communities within exhibits, and toxic work environments. The document also lays out the steps they will (and have since) taken, including training, adapting their governance structure, and as mentioned, the closure of human history galleries.

Brownlee explained that in addition to helping with logistical changes as the institution undergoes relocation, the closure is being used to "make sure that we are aligned with UNDRIP, and that the content that we're presenting is coming with full consent and participation from the communities we are [representing]," (Brownlee, personal communication 2023; Lutz and Colby 2022). The return of material culture to communities is priority, with "pretty much everything" within the Indigenous collection open for repatriation (Brownlee, personal communication 2023). The non-Indigenous history gallery has since been reopened, but the Indigenous history gallery has remained closed with no solid plan on when or how it will reopen. To ensure the museum is still broadcasting Indigenous voices, the RBCM has an ongoing exhibit called *Sacred Journeys* that showcases the revival of the canoe and journeys between Nations (Brownlee, personal communication 2023). Although this removal of Indigenous materials from public view impacts visitation, the RBCM remains committed to re-evaluating their practices to create spaces

for Indigenous Peoples and their materials to feel comfortable.

When lessons of CBPR and Indigenous curation are engaged with, power is shifted from museum to the hands of communities, emphasizing the inherent right of Indigenous groups to have stewardship over their material culture. This process challenges the authority museums have had over Indigeneity. As Brownlee explained, “We're now no longer the owners and the deciders on it, the community are the ones, not only controlling what is said about them, but how they're used, and so then you've got a power dynamic that has really shifted entirely around (personal communication 2023). The closure of exhibits, the welcomeness to repatriation, and the emphasis on including Indigenous voices in alternative ways demonstrate this shift, but we can also see this in other ways at the RBCM. Brownlee works to ensure communities are fully involved in the care and curation of their materials and seeks “informed decision making on collections, whether it is how they are housed, how they're exhibited, interpreted, must go through communities,” (personal communication 2023).

Of the less blatant changes needed within museums, there is a focus on recognizing and altering terminology that work to distance Indigenous Peoples from their material culture and perpetuate false narratives. Brownlee recalled a conversation with a Sto:lo Chief who advised against using *repatriation* during restitution talks:

> They actually, they didn't like the idea or the even using the term repatriation, they said that repatriation satisfies an institution. What really this comes down to is, does the museum hold title over belongings, things in our care. And if we don't have title to those, then—and we never had title—then those all have to go back to the community. And it's not repatriation, at that point, it's actually sort of putting things correctly where they are, which I thought was really interesting, sort of, maybe twist on the interpretation. But yeah, I thought it really set the stage because… the RBCM was established in 1886, we have this like giant colonial history of taking belongings from communities, communities under duress, from Potlatch ban, from residential schools, from all kinds of things, and to the benefit of the museum, to the—as was being lost in the communities, and I think that

> there's a real opportunity for us to reassess [Brownlee, personal communication 2023].

In circumstances where museum ‘ownership’ came about in ways that were not legal, or more importantly, *moral*, return is just that: return meant to rectify a past wrong—not a chance to highlight a colonial procedure.

Considering how alternative ontologies can lead to friction, RBCM protocols demonstrates the process of implementing changes to create a better space. One such protocol is the inclusion of Indigenous ways of doing in care and curation. Covering materials not meant to be seen by non-community members is a widespread and simple solution to communicate with collection staff that the material below needs extra care (Brownlee, personal communication 2023). This awareness goes beyond material culture and applies to archival photographs and videos publicly available from ICAR. In the past, the museum has had community members visit to look over audio/visual materials and identify subjects as well as anything that might be culturally sensitive; however, if by chance something was not flagged, there is a chance it was publicized (Brownlee, personal communication 2023). When the museum has either identified or been notified of something that should not be public, those materials are immediately removed (Brownlee, personal communication 2023).

Hearing about the steps the RBCM has taken as they reconsider their position as a colonial institution was very impactful. Even though they have faced criticism for closing their human history galleries, they have decided to keep Indigenous materials off display to move forward in a better way. The risk is considerable when thinking about the many visitors who go to the RBCM to learn about Indigenous Nations, but the RBCM considers it a necessary step that

places precedent for other museums to consider how to move forward.

4.2 The Museum of Indigenous People, located on Yavappi-Prescott Territory.

The Museum of Indigenous People (MIP), formerly the Smoki Museum, has a unique and controversial history that they address through contemporary inclusion and awareness. The museum was established in Prescott, Arizona, USA, by a "white, civic group, the Smoki, who were doing native dances in order to support both the museum and the local rodeo," (Christenson, personal communication 2023). Similar to the thought that mass collection would protect Indigenous material culture from its falsely-anticipated disappearance, appropriators at the Smoki Museum claimed interest in preserving the region's Indigenous culture (DeWitt 1996). This romanticized caricature of the local 'Indigenous Person,' where white settlers dressed and danced in ways they decided were 'Indian,' was protested by the Hopi from whom inspiration was taken (Christenson, personal communication 2023; DeWitt 1996; Museum of Indigenous People [MIP] 2024). The Smoki Museum held its final dance in 1990, and with the end of the annual display also came the end of the group's control of the museum (Christenson, personal communication 2023; DeWitt 1996; MIP 2024).

Over the last three decades, the museum's mission has shifted to educating the public about the Indigenous Peoples in the southwest in more accurate and respectful ways. Their collection strategy focused primarily on Hopi and Diné, as well as Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, but they also have materials from the Canadian and Greenlandic Arctic. Despite the fact that the museum is not Indigenous-run, there is Indigenous representation at all levels of their institution, including in their board of trustees, staff, and volunteers, allowing Indigenous interest to be highlighted from the top down. There is a clear willingness to implement necessary changes,

especially from Andrew Christenson, the MIP's curator whose research focus includes Indigenous and settler history of Arizona.

It should be noted that unlike the large provincial institutions included in this thesis, the Museum of Indigenous People is a small community museum, with a team of five staff, and therefore relies greatly on its volunteers. This also means that their capacity is likewise smaller than that of larger museums, which might have better funding opportunities and more staff able to develop projects, and ability to develop more complex exhibits and programming. With that said, the MIP takes advantage of the capacity they do have to improve their practices.

4.2.1 Protocol at the Museum of Indigenous People. At the MIP, Christenson explained that smaller changes, such as altering displays, can be as easy as opening cases. He recalled one situation where a visitor told him a Diné wedding basket was oriented in the wrong direction; "It was pretty simple issue to rotate it, and most people wouldn't recognize it, but a Native person would. That was an error on my part, but easy to solve," (Christenson, personal communication 2023). Similarly, he explains that changes to display labels to reflect correct community names or spelling can be remedied easily; however, the museum sometimes relies upon community involvement to ensure accuracy. In one such situation, a display of Hopi Kachina, dolls that represent Spirit Beings of the Hopi, or Katsinam[15] , had a Katsina[16] incorrectly spelled (Christenson, personal communication 2023; Teiwes and Froman 2022:6). Unfortunately, Christenson was not around when a community member identified the misspelling, and his

[15] There are over 400 Hopi Katsinam, however they are not all seen across Hopi's three Mesa's, the flat-topped elevated land that Hopi have occupied since time immemorial (Hopi Education fund 2024; Teiwes 2022). Mesa's also have varied dialects, so the names and spelling of Katsinam can differ.

[16] Singular of Katsinam

attempts to contact the individual have been unsuccessful (Christenson, personal communication 2023). In situations such as this, we must keep in mind the lessons from CBPR and understand that even when community members are interested in helping, they might not always have the capacity to.

Indigenous representation is not limited to the staff and volunteers at the MIP; Indigenous community members regularly visit and participate in events at the museum, such as events that host local artists and pow wows. Christenson explained that this presence often stimulates changes within the museum (personal communication 2023). In one instance, while looking through a donated collection, staff identified material they believed may have been used in Hopi ceremony. By chance, there was a Hopi man at the museum at the time, and in talking with him and later his Chief, it was decided that one of the materials should be returned to the land and the other two could remain in the collection. In-person feedback from visitors is the most common avenue for changes, but this reliance on community members means sometimes change cannot happen:

> Unfortunately, we don't get as much as I'd like because we do have objects sitting out there that have wrong information on the label and a visitor may know that, but often they don't want to come forward on their own and suggest corrections. But if you approach someone who seems knowledgeable and say, 'Hey, do you see any problems with this case?', that may lead to some useful corrections, [Christenson, personal communication 2023].

For such a small museum, the MIP is engaged in many of the same practices that larger institutions are, demonstrating that while size can be hindering, positive change can still happen when there is a desire for it. Andrew Christenson seems glad for the involvement of community members, and their dedication to representing Indigenous groups shows in their current

programming. With this in mind, I believe that the MIP could be more proactive in addressing the misinformation within their displays, but I also recognize that this could be a significant capacity issue. At this point, deepening the relationship between the museum and communities through events—such as the artists they host and annual pow-wows—could help to broadcast interest for such projects. From there, establishing discussions about community capacity, compensation, and project focus could take place. This is not to say that attempts have not been made or that the attempts that have been made are not enough, but I believe a community project could be beneficial for both communities and the MIP.

4.3 Manitoba Museum, located on Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Nakota, and Métis Territory.

The earliest version of the Manitoba Museum opened in 1932 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, as the Museum of Man and Nature; a gallery filled with Indigenous lithics displayed alongside moths and butterflies collected from around the world (Heritage Winnipeg 2021). The Civic Auditorium housed the gallery, and over the following three decades, it collected materials until reaching its capacity point (Heritage Winnipeg 2021). To meet the growing interest in a provincial repository that was sizable enough to showcase local history and Peoples, a new building was constructed in 1970, establishing the Manitoba Museum as we recognize it today (Heritage Winnipeg 2021; Winnipeg Architecture 2024). Collection focused on in-province culture and history; however, collections include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous materials from across Canada and internationally (Fay, personal communication 2023). Winnipeg recently published *Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord;* a document highlighting the city's commitments to reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples through UNDRIP (Winnipeg's Indigenous Accord 2017). While this recent document certainly impacts museum practices, the

Manitoba Museum has been actively addressing the need for Indigenous involvement in the museum for decades. Amelia Fay, the Hudson's Bay Company Collection (HBC) curator, is an archaeologist whose research interest focused on Inuit-Settler trade relations in present-day Labrador. Fay expressed that her predecessors ingrained "not about us, without us," into daily practices (personal communication 2023), thereby paving the way for subsequent changes.

4.3.1 Protocol at the Manitoba Museum. The ontological empathy demonstrated by Fay within the Manitoba Museum is visible in how she approaches all of her work with the HBC collections, but specifically in two aspects of her work: first, in the care of sacred materials, and second, in the power-shifting associated with access to collections. Fay explained that her predecessors strongly advocated creating a designated space to respectfully house spiritual or sacred materials. In such space, materials from a number of Indigenous groups are "living together;" imagery that depicts an active atmosphere rather than the taxonomic organization and cold metal shelves in traditional storage rooms (personal communication 2023). To ensure comfort to materials and communities, a Knowledge Keeper visits the space to see to specific needs, such as smudging. Communication is also an essential aspect of the room, and when the Knowledge Keeper visits—along with any staff—it is understood that they should acknowledge and speak to those in the room. Fay made a point to address the fact that the Knowledge Keeper is Anishinaabe and therefore speaks Anishinaabemowin, a language that not "all of the items in the room would be familiar with," however, there is a hope that Anishinaabemowin is more fitting than English (Fay, personal communication 2023). In these spaces, as well as regular storage, keeping in mind the relations between Indigenous groups and whether or not they get

along should influence how their materials are stored. This means that if there is an unfriendly relationship, groups' materials should be stored separately.

There is also interest in finding caregivers who speak the languages of different materials, it is difficult to find individuals locally who could come in to provide the necessary protocol for all cultures. With that in mind, returning materials to communities is of interest and something Fay is working toward for the future. Specific care protocols are also met, for example, ensuring a drum that needs water always has a full cup beside it and covering certain belongings with red cloth when they should not be seen. Further, there is an adherence to cultural norms, such as not entering the room when menstruating or pregnant—a common precaution to protect women around certain materials (Fay, personal communication 2023; Funke, personal communication 2023; Usbeck, personal communication 2023).

A common practice within museums today is allowing community members to request access to collections to see materials in person. According to Fay, this "is such an important thing for so many communities, so that's probably my biggest kind of contact is people wanting, wanting to just come visit items, come see things, come learn more," (personal communication 2023). And while this is a common practice, conservationists and collection staff can sometimes put rules in place to disallow people to handle materials without protective equipment such as gloves—especially when chemicals have been applied to materials. With the support of the museum's conservator, as long as the given material is physically stable enough to handle, staff will leave the decision to wear protective equipment in the hands of community members. This approach also applies to using materials in ceremonies, such as the request to smoke pipes from the museum collection:

> The request of the Elders was that every year these pipes have to come out and go to ceremony to be asked, again, to perform this role for the museum. So we do take these pipes, and some folks do like to smoke these pipes… And so kind of working through that, and working through the fact that a lot of sacred and ceremonial objects that were collected in the early 1900s were treated with arsenic and other contaminants, and so… ones that have known contamination, we will say, like, 'you should not handle this pipe without gloves, or you should not smoke this pipe at all'. And so there is some of those discussions as well, and really kind of informed consent… because some folks decide anyway, they want to touch that pipe without gloves. And if they're well informed that that pipe likely has arsenic and other things, that's kind of their choice to touch it… balancing the community's needs and the spiritual needs, and balancing health, [Fay, personal communication 2023].

Leaving decision-making in the hands of community members, even when we might consider the outcome dangerous, is essential, as "it's their cultural heritage, so who am I to say, like, don't touch that," (Fay, personal communication 2023).

With a long history of Indigenous partnership, the Manitoba Museum has shown interest in giving space to Indigenous groups within their institution for decades. It is clear how important it is to respect the ontology of those they represent and to see to the needs of materials. In our conversation, Amelia Fay was passionate in her position that it is not up to her to make decisions about materials, but that communities must be involved and recognized as decision-makers.

4.4 Institute for American Indian Studies, located on Weantinock's, Pootatuck's, and their descendants, the Schaghticoke's Territory.

Opening in 1975 in Washington, Connecticut, USA, the Institute for American Indian Studies (IAIS), formerly the American Indian Archaeological Institute, aimed to educate the public about the Indigenous Peoples of New England (Institute for American Indian Studies [IAIS] 2024a). Focused heavily on archaeology, the IAIS has identified over 500 sites with the

hopes of connecting Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to the region's history (IAIS 2024a). While their collection and research focus has been on Indigenous groups in New England, the IAIS holds material culture from across the Americas (Wegner and Larkin, personal communication 2023). In addition to museum exhibits that display ten thousand years of Connecticut's Indigenous history and stories of identity and endurance, the IAIS also has a garden growing traditional foods and medicines, a replica Algonkian village, and offers education programs for children and adults (IAIS 2024b). I was fortunate to speak with two individuals from the IAIS. The first is Paul Wegner, whose research has focused on pre-colonial ceramics in New England and establishing community outreach projects. The second individual was Karen Larkin, the collection and curation assistant who develops exhibit spaces and runs programming for the museum. In speaking with Wegner and Larkin, they expressed the responsibility they feel to ensure that the Knowledge of the Indigenous groups they represent is authentic and correct (Wegner and Larkin, personal communication 2023). Their practice is rooted in "nothing about us, without us," and discussed their dedication to shifting Western science traditions to those that reflect the needs and interests of the hundreds of groups they represent (Wegner and Larkin, personal communication 2023).

4.4.1 Protocol at the Institute for American Indian Studies. The IAIS, while not Indigenous-run, centers its practices around the interests and needs of those they represent. Correctly orienting materials is just as important as managing the moisture in vaults, creating a very personalized process of care for materials. Wegner mentioned how Elders advised them that certain materials must be sustained, so they are given water and cornmeal—a museological faux-pas due to humidity control and pests. But Wegner explained that:

> The pests don't go for the cornmeal. They don't. So, ya know, I don't know why. I don't want to ask why. The water itself… overall, we have like a moisture problem, anyway… it's either drank or evaporates very quickly. We don't know, I'm not watching it. I don't want to watch it [Wegner, personal communication 2023].

Another way of respecting the materials they house is allowing them to rest:

> We have a Potlatch mask… and while it wasn't used in a traditional potlatch ceremony… we were advised to rest it, so we actually pull it out a lot. So, it's out on display, it actually comes back into the vault to take a take a nap. People ask like, 'Why did you pull the masks?', like, well, it has to rest. It got too much attention, [Wegner, personal communication 2023].

This interest in the well-being of material culture supersedes the public interest in viewing materials; a simple but excellent example of a museum relinquishing control to ensure they are giving appropriate care to the collections they hold.

The last thing that stood out about the IAIS was the general concern for cultural revitalization, especially for groups who are disconnected from their Traditions because of colonization. Wegner explained:

> There's this kind of disconnect. And part of that is because of the early colonization of east coasts [sic], and its disruption of Indigenous Nations and, and the wider like, diaspora of Indigenous People throughout the rest of the United States after like the 1600s, [personal communication 2023].

Without the ability to pass on Knowledge through generations, practices such as basketmaking have sometimes been lost. In these situations, rather than museums feeling possessive over materials, they should see opportunities to reconnect communities to Knowledge. Wegner explained that the IAIS has:

> … done programming with like wampum, beadmaking, and things like that where we… invite tribal members from specific groups to come to the museum and learn from other tribal members, or other people who are knowledgeable about these skills to kind of regain that cultural knowledge. And so that has kind of put us on the radar, I guess, as being a place where you can engage with that, [Wegner, personal communication 2023].

The IAIS is a unique and engaging museum that leans into experiential learning. Their approach to education is holistic, where knowledge is pulled from Traditional Knowledge, archaeology, history, and contemporary stories. There is an apparent interest in ensuring Indigenous ontologies are respected, and Wegner and Larkin demonstrated this as they spoke about their roles at the museum. They use their skills to meet the needs of materials and ensure the Indigenous groups they represent can reconnect to materials through programming.

4.5 The Rooms, located on Beothuk and Mi'kmaq Territory

Merged into one institution in 2005, The Rooms, located in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, acts as the provincial museum, art gallery, and archives (The Rooms 2024). The Indigenous archaeological and ethnographic collections represent the five current Indigenous groups within the province: Nunatsiavut Government, Innu Nation, NunatuKavut Community Council, Qalipu First Nation, and Miawpukek First Nation, as well as the culturally deceased Beothuk who were eradicated through genocide by settlers in the early 19th century (Adhikari 2023; Wolforth, personal communication 2023). Collection at The Rooms has focused on materials from both Indigenous and settler communities in historical and contemporary settings, and attempts to highlight Indigenous stories and presence in all three departments of their institution. Kate Wolforth, the director of Art, Museums, and Visitor Experience, uses her knowledge of museum studies to address contemporary needs within The Rooms. Wolforth explained that the museum has shifted its dogma to understanding itself as a repository *for,* not owners *of* Indigenous material culture, saying, “we talk about caring for collections, on behalf of people,” (personal communication 2023). As mentioned, the Nunatsiavut Land Claims Agreement has authorized The Rooms as the place of holding for Nunatsiavummiut collections

until NG can establish their own repository large enough for all collections (Wolforth, personal communication 2023).

4.5.1 Protocol at The Rooms. In speaking with Wolforth, there seems to be genuine interest in giving decision-making power to the Indigenous groups the Rooms represents. The Rooms has made opportunities for Indigenous community members to be involved in the care, storage, and display of materials. Wolforth explained that:

> Our collection managers work with Nations and groups over, you know, how do you, this is your belonging, how would you like [it] to be cared for? And then the curators will work with the group over, okay, we're going to do an exhibit, or would you like to do an exhibit? What kind of story or what kind of context would you like to place around this, this object? Or do you want to include it at all? [Wolforth, personal communication 2023].

This is seen in their most visibly cooperative space: the level four gallery *From This Place,* which was co-curated by community members from Nunatsiavut Government, Innu Nation, NunatuKavut Community Council, Qalipu First Nation, and Miawpukek First Nation. The gallery "takes each theme and then presents that particular theme from perspective of various people," and further, describes both the positive and negative interactions between Indigenous Peoples and settlers. By approaching the gallery in this multi-vocal way, individual experiences could be reflected and shared with the public. Despite this, there is still room for improvement that the Rooms is aware of. In particular, Wolforth mentioned the issue of hierarchizing different knowledges on displays:

> One gentleman that I was talking to, and he, he rightfully pointed out that in the first section with the Mi'kmaw shirt and the map, the text says something like, you know, 'the Mi'kmaq or Traditional history, or Mi'kmaq oral history seems to suggest that people have been here for time immemorial', and then the second line says something like 'that archaeologists disagree with this'. And he rightfully pointed out that if you—you can say

> both things, but the fact that you're negating the Mi'kmaq version with the archaeologist version, it just cancels the Mi'kmaq version out. And there are different ways you could say that, you can say exactly the same thing, but prioritizing differently, to make it stronger, to make the Mi'kmaq version stronger… to equalize it [Wolforth, personal communication 2023],

Comparatively, their oldest permanent exhibit, Connections, is heavily critiqued for its racist representations that display Beothuk People beside extant and extinct animals (Butler 2019). This natural history gallery reiterates the problematic stereotypes of Indigenous Peoples being lesser-than, static, and disappearing. Of course, Wolforth is aware and concerned that "a lot of the terminologies and ways of presenting culture are very outdated," but at the time of the interview, there was no clear way to remedy it (Wolforth, personal communication 2023). Permanent exhibits, such as the *Connections* and *From This Place* cost "about $5 million to develop," meaning changes cannot necessarily happen quickly (Wolforth, personal communication 2023). Further, the Rooms wants to redo the gallery in an Indigenous-led manner, so changes must be made *with* and *by* Indigenous partners, and in doing so, it is necessary to ensure that partners "are ready to work with us, have time, have availability, have the emotional energy to do this work," (Wolforth, personal communication 2023).

A final note I want to mention is the benefit of the institution's structure, which has the museum, art gallery, and archives housed together in one building. Despite the separate departments, both the museum and art gallery reflect an interest in correcting past issues, which is seen significantly in the art gallery's consistent inclusion of Indigenous artists. While this thesis focuses on archaeological and ethnographic materials in museums, by having an art gallery steps from the museum space, there is a demonstration of continuity and contemporaneity (Rankin et al. 2022).

While Kate Wolforth is not a curator, she nonetheless showed genuine interest in promoting best practices and care toward the Indigenous groups of the province and their material culture. Having the co-curated exhibit *From This Place* allows for a multi-vocal space that shows Indigenous and settler experiences thematically rather than temporally. There are, of course, updates that are needed, such as the issue of hierarchized knowledge, and this should not be overlooked for the broader picture of a successful gallery. Moreover, while I am sure discussions have been ongoing about the *Connections* gallery and how to fix it, there was no plan for moving this forward at the time of the interview. The question of display is not easy to answer, as The Rooms would have to consider logistical challenges, such as the physical space necessary for showcasing the Beothuk elsewhere, with the ethical challenges that come from showcasing a group who cannot give instructions on their representation. As Wolforth stated, this change needs to be done in partnership with the province's present Indigenous groups, and I am invested in seeing how the Rooms with honor the Beothuk.

4.6 Museum X

As a long standing and large institution, this museum has a significant capacity to engage with Indigenous Nations and their interests regarding their material culture. Like most colonial states, Museum X is located in a region with a long history of dispossessing Indigenous communities, leaving many groups with overlapping interests in territories and material culture. Curator X explained that broadly, the institution's approach is holding materials in trust for all residents, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Further, as an institution with materials from across the world, they are trying to find the best ways to work with Indigenous groups from outside of their country.

4.6.1 Protocol at Museum X. Curator X understands the importance of involving Indigenous Peoples in the care and control of their materials, and explained their experience since starting to work at Museum X:

> We certainly have had, as you see many institutions across Canada, more and more community visits, more and more collaborations with First Nations, more and more repatriations and discussions of repatriation or at least of, of care of objects. And so what that entails then, is a shift in curation, [Curator X, personal communication 2023].

As we have seen in the previous chapter, involving Indigenous Peoples in museum practices is fundamental for self-representation and due respect. To support cultural revitalization and partnerships, projects such as 3D scanning carvings, reconnecting descendants to their Ancestors regalia, and repatriation talks have been established which encourage disseminating knowledge—and hopefully material culture—back into communities (Curator X, personal communication 2023). Loans to communities are another way that the institution is trying to keep Indigenous Peoples connected with their material culture, even when they are "being handled in ways that we wouldn't… you know, frankly, want them to be handled from a conservation point of view… to do damage to those pieces in ways, of course, we didn't want (Curator X, personal communication 2023). This fear of damage is understandable; museums are meant to showcase material culture for as long as possible; however, the benefits to communities outweigh the cons.

Further, with Indigenous staff and educators in-house, conversations about what is important to communities, how they want to be represented, and which stories they want shared or protected can happen easily. Partnerships give space for dynamic and changing storytelling, and importantly, they give Indigenous groups the decision on when and who they share their

stories with:

> We talk about fairly traumatic stories of the encounters between settlers and First Peoples. … Indigenous Knowledge Keepers in the early 2000s wanted to have those stories told, wanted to really have that trauma out there… Some of our Indigenous museum educators today, and other people that have come in as advisors, they understand that story… but they're saying, hey, you know, we want to have more contemporary artwork. We want to have other stories there [Curator X, personal communication 2023].

When Indigenous Peoples have the power to curate and showcase their culture in the ways they see fit, we once again can see the dismantling of the power structures historically present within museums. Unfortunately, the lack of standardized protocol between museums means that Indigenous groups might not be given the same opportunities depending on who they are working with:

> What you have seen, is kind of a lot of variety, you know, in institutions and the ways in which they approach these and other topics, right? Which is, in part I think, the nature of those institutions and nature [of] their histories and their relations as people. But there's also a lot of variation. And I think, at least in my mind, just lead [sic] to to more difficulties and confusion, right? Because you don't understand the reasoning for why one museum does something and other one does different because the ways in which they operate, it can be so distinct, and so confusing to a lot of—certainly First Nations communities trying to interact with one museum and realizing well, they don't play by the same playbook as that museum we just talked to last week [Curator X, personal communication 2023].

While there is no perfect solution, museum staff must focus on what they can do to make partnerships with Indigenous groups as productive as possible, whether that be through co-curation, in-house care, or repatriation.

4.7 Emerging Themes

Each institution engaged with the themes of Community Based Participatory Research, *Etuaptmumk*, and Indigenous Curation in unique ways, dependent strongly on context of their

institution. However, CBPR can be seen clearly in the Rooms' multi-vocal exhibit *From This Place,* where all five of Newfoundland and Labrador's Indigenous groups participated in the planning and designing of their newest exhibit. They follow Atalay's principles in that; (1) and (2); they approached and aspired to have community participants in all aspects; (3) they created opportunity for capacity building wherein participants took on roles typically reserved for museum staff; (4) demonstrating reciprocity by giving community members storytelling power; and (5) highlighted the varying Knowledge systems of Inuit, Southern Inuit, Innu, and Mi'kmaq groups. As for Etuaptmumk, Manitoba Museum is an excellent example of weaving Knowledge, especially within their sacred storage. There is a very clear and encouraged process of caring for sacred materials with Indigenous and Western ways—creating an environment that does not perpetuate Western superiority. Finally, I believe that the Royal British Columbia Museum demonstrates a particularly strong example of Indigenous Curation by removing their Indigenous material culture. In consultation with the Indigenous groups they represent, as well as understanding the steps needed to be DRIPA and UNDRIP compliant, they are effectively engaging in Indigenous Curation by *not* curating exhibits with material culture. There is a recognition that change needs to happen, and rather than making small concessions, they pursued the most impactful approach in stopping storytelling on behalf of others. The Indigenous groups they represent, therefore, become the holders of authority.

In reviewing how CBPR, Etuaptmumk, and Indigenous Curation are engaged with at museums, I identified three themes that were foundational to creating a meaningful relationship; (1) ontological empathy, (2) power-shifting, and (3) culturally specific caretaking protocol. These themes are interconnected and reliant on each other, unable to be extricated from the others, but

distinct in their role. The first, ontological empathy, requires museum staff to be empathetic of Indigenous ontologies within museum spaces. In practice, this means respecting the differences in ontologies between staff and Indigenous partners, and acknowledging how historically, Indigenous and Western ontologies have clashed. This is visible especially when thinking about Indigenous Curation, where multiple Knowledge systems and ontologies must work alongside each other. The second theme is powershifting, which sees museums giving decision-making power to Indigenous partners. In practice this means having consent, feedback, and participation of Indigenous groups when working on displays or galleries about said group. To do so in the best way, there must be a thorough understanding of community capacity to participate, and where museum interests are not placed above those of the group being represented. The third theme, culturally specific care protocol, directly refers to caring for Indigenous material culture in the ways that meet the material's needs. This requires staff to be proactive in understanding the ontology of a group and giving power to Indigenous partners to decide how best to meet those needs in storage and on display.

To be clear, these themes are guiding principles for engaging in a more equitable museum practice. The ways that they are actualized will be different with every museum depending on their context, relationship history with the Indigenous groups they represent, and so on. However, they are all principles which can be negotiated into the regular innerworkings of a museum in meaningful ways. With this in mind, the following chapter will describe the trip to Germany with *Creating Context,* and unlike the established relationships that this chapters' museums had with the Indigenous groups they represent, the *SESS* is only in its first steps of partnership with Nunatsiavut.

Chapter 5 – Germany 2023

5.1 Creating Context

Creating Context was developed through a partnership between the Nunatsiavut Government, *Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachen*, and Dr.'s Laura Kelvin and Lisa Rankin after a search for Nunatsiavummiut material culture in museums across the world by Kelvin and Rankin. The first stage of this project was to physically connect Nunatsiavummiut with their materials in Germany, with goals to establish long-term partnerships between NG and Germany where Nunatsiavummiut can have decision-making power over their materials. It was decided that participants should be chosen independently from grant holders and research partners, and therefore a community committee was created, made up of individuals involved with heritage in Nunatsiavut that would review applications to participate in the project. The committee chose five individuals, resulting in a delegation diverse in age, religion, occupation, and home communities. In addition to the five selected Nunatsiavummiut participants, there was also an NG Nunatsiavummiut archaeologist, a non-Indigenous NG archaeologist and Ph.D. student, and a *Kalaaleq*[17] archaeologist and Ph.D. student, as well as Dr.'s Kelvin and Rankin, and myself on the trip. The project prioritizes community impact, hoping to highlight the interests of individuals and foster meaningful relationships between people, materials, and places. This project is a continuation of the history between the *SESS* and Nunatsiavut—and one that addresses the need for Nunatsiavummiut involvement.

[17] Greenland Inuk

5.2 Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen (Saxonian Ethnographic Collections of Ethnography), Saxony, Germany

The *Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen* consists of three museums: *GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* (The Grassi Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig, Saxony), *Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* (Dresden Museum of Ethnography, in Dresden Saxony), and *Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut* (Herrnhut Ethnographic Museum, in Herrnhut Saxony). As we did not visit the museum in Leipzig, it is not discussed; however, as all three institutions are part of the same museum group and are overseen by the same curator, their mandates and practices are similar. What stands out about the *SESS* is their focus on acknowledging and reconciling their colonial legacy through partnerships with Indigenous and descendant groups worldwide (GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig [GMFVZL] 2024a). They represent Indigenous Peoples and descendant groups from every continent, so for the sake of space, I cannot list each group specifically (Funke, personal communication 2023; Usbeck, personal communication 2023). Repatriations, such as those to the Gunaikurnai, Menang, and Ngarridjeri communities of Australia, as well as community outreach projects such as *Creating Context* are being established as ways to reconnect communities to their material culture (Grazzi Museum für Vëlkerkune zu Leipzig 2024b).

These projects are supported by Germany's *Guidelines for German Museums: Care of Collections from Colonial Contexts*, a 220-page document that encourages sympathy, highlights best practices, and offers a comprehensive overview of global colonial rule (Guidelines for German Museums 2021). Collection strategies between Dresden and Herrnhut are distinct; with Dresden focusing broadly on global cultures and Herrnhut being specific to Moravian missions.

Creating Context would not have been possible without the *SESS's* curator of American collections, Frank Usbeck. His researched has examined Germany's use of Indigenous imagery within their national identity, and has demonstrated a thorough interest in establishing meaningful relationships that might offer reciprocal learning opportunities. Usbeck's colleague and collection manager at the Herrnhut Ethnographic Museum, Johanna Funke, also spoke with me in detail about her role in caring for collections in ways that reflect the communities they originated. Her research area focused in African cultures and ethnography, offering a unique perspective working with descendant communities affected by Moravian missionaries. Usbeck spoke about practices across the *SESS*, while Funke spoke specifically about the Herrnhut collections, and both interviews took place in-person in Herrnhut during the trip.

Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden (Museum of Ethnography) Dresden, Saxony, Germany. The museum's roots began in 1560, making the Museum für Völkerkunde in Dresden is the oldest museum participating in this project (Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden 2024). The eighteenth century saw an increase in the collection of materials worldwide, leading to 100,000 objects in their care (*Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* 2024). Materials in Dresden leaned more toward excavated and research materials, with a considerable portion being grave belongings taken by Bernhard Hantzsch, among ethnographic materials that were possibly purchased, traded, or taken. Unlike *Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden*, the *Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut* is a missionary museum dating back to 1758 in Barby, Saxony. As a missionary museum, materials came from Moravian mission sites and were shipped to the Moravian headquarters in Herrnhut (Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut 2024). An official order for missionaries to collect materials was

given in 1878, and in 1901 the museum in Herrnhut opened (Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut 2024).

5.3 Germany, Monday, June 5th to Sunday, June 18th 2023

Before the trip began, the museum hosted a virtual meeting where they explained what to expect for the two weeks we were in Germany. This included details about logistics such as hotels, transportation, and things to do in the areas we were staying in, as well as briefing us on some of the topics the museum hoped to discuss. At this time, they encouraged participants to ask questions and clarify anything that they could help with, which participants mentioned was a comforting aspect of the meeting. The group arrived in Germany on Monday, June 5th, 2023 (see Table 2 for schedule while in Germany). Some participants were meeting for the first time, and others reunited, having known each other for years.

The organizers of this project understood that participants would be dealing with emotionally and spiritually heavy topics, so with this in mind, working days were intentionally broken up. Rather than spending full days in the museum for a shorter number of days, the delegation spent approximately three hours in the mornings engaging with their heritage, then had the afternoons free. This allows participants to decompress without the pressure of a full day's work. Tea, coffee, and water was provided alongside baked goods made by the museum staff—a touching gift that everyone appreciated greatly. In collections, there was a two-way exchange of information, where the museum hoped to find answers about materials with incomplete records, and participants sought to learn about the heritage that their Ancestors had created. Over lunch, the atmosphere turned from gathering information to discussion, allowing participants to compare thoughts and feelings, share stories, and on occasion, engage in guided

meditation.

June 2023						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	5th Arrival in Germany	6th - Dresden Working at Museum	7th - Dresden Working at Museum	8th - Dresden Working at Museum	9th - Dresden Working at Museum	10th - Dresden Free Day
11th Travel to Herrnhut	12th - Herrnhut Working at Museum	13th - Herrnhut Working at Museum	14th - Herrnhut Working at Museum	15th - Herrnhut Working at Museum	16th - Herrnhut Working at Museum	17th Travel back to Dresden
18th Return to Canada						

Table 2 - Timeline of events in Germany, June 2023

Considering the finiteness of time that projects such as this have available, it was hoped that by having a light schedule outside of work at the museum, participants would not feel burdened with work. In the process of these days, we learned that while a light work schedule had a positive impact, a structured debrief session after time in the collections was needed. Guided meditation and structured discussions were two impactful ways for everyone to decompress and were both led by Nunatsiavummiut. Community projects such as *Creating Context* should always be approached with flexibility and an understanding that adaptions to schedules might need to change. Further, each individual and each group will be different, and therefore project organizers should lean into the needs of a given group to ensure they have the supports they need.

After we finished lunch on working days, participants were free to spend their afternoons and evenings however they wanted. Most time was spent exploring surrounding neighbourhoods,

but we were also given a few excursion options. Some highlights from Dresden were the museums, a river cruise down the Elbe, and a vineyard where we spent an afternoon. Herrnhut—a town a fraction of the size of Dresden—allowed everyone to slow down after being in a busy city. There, we were taken on walking tours, travelled to nearby towns and cities, and connected with locals in ways not possible in Dresden.

On our first day at the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, we began by discussing how the following two weeks would proceed. Museum staff briefed on safe handling, as the material culture we would be handling was treated with chemicals such as arsenic and Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT). We were required to sign statements of understanding and wear personal protective equipment that included gowns, gloves, and masks while in the collection storage rooms. At this time, we were also made aware that collection methods and uncertain provenience meant that the collections we were looking through included materials from Alaska, Labrador, Greenland and possibly Nunavik (Northern Québec). The delegation was lucky enough to have a *Kalaaleq* archaeologist with the group while in Dresden, which generated discussion about building techniques and clothing styles, and more importantly, about the kinship between the related but unique Inuit groups. Having a diverse group of participants and research partners on the trip allowed for discussions to subjects touching on ethics and morals, the unique colonial experiences of Nunatsiavummiut and Kalaallit[18], and Knowledge passed between generations.

5.4 Within the Collection

Having participants in collections allowed for the most valuable goal of *Creating Context*

[18] Greenland Inuit, plural of Kalaaleq

to be met; reconnecting Nunatsiavummiut to their material culture. Over nine days, we toured through vaults and collection spaces, seeing the many items brought over from Nunatsiavut. As with many museums, however, the *Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* does not have a dedicated viewing space within their institution. Storage rooms are utilitarian and often filled to their maximum with material culture, making extra space a luxury. To meet room capacities, our eleven-person delegation needed to be split in half; an unfortunate circumstance that delayed full-group discussion until lunch. This also meant that participants had different experiences depending on interest and knowledge; for example, on our first day, one group happened to consist of all archaeologists, so our discission about qulliit and miniature figurines would be very different than that of the non-archaeologists in the other group. Luckily, when we were visiting the *Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut*, they had a gallery in the process of being redone, so we were able to use the space and stay together in one large group. Moreover, as the collection was kept within the gallery, participants always had access to see and handle materials throughout the week. Having everyone together meant that conversation could happen as we were handling materials, encouraging discussions about techniques and the sharing of stories.

The collections we saw were largely miniatures and models, such as animals, *qamutiq*[19], *qayaat*[20] and *umiat*[21], animals, and homes, but also included textiles, weaving, jewelry, and tools. Much of what we saw was made by Nunatsiavummiut to be sold as souvenirs to travelers and missionaries, and the money would be used to support the local mission and encourage a cash-economy among Nunatsiavummiut. The detail of these materials is remarkable, such as walrus-

[19] Sled pulled by dogs
[20] Plural of qayaq (kayak)
[21] Plural of umiak,i a boat that holds multiple people, commonly known as the women's boat.

tusk dogs and ducks no bigger than a thumb nail, boots for figurines roughly eight centimeters long, and model *qamutiit*[22] with accompanying tackle and tools (see Figure 4). Model homes and tents were another significant portion of the collection, all of which had removable panels that revealed home wears such as pipes, tables, drying racks, and tools (see Figure 5). For slightly unfamiliar materials, discussions about the form and function took place. While looking at dried fish from the 19th century, a participant commented on how it was cut along the diagonal rather than the horizontal, as is common today, and suggested that the angle might help grease drip off while drying.

In another instance, while looking at an envelope-style beaded bag, the group discussed how it might have been worn: crossbody, around the neck, or other ways. The question hung around until we came upon a figurine wearing a bag—and then a bag strung on a model *qamutiq*, showing that it was versatile rather than worn in a single manner. Another piece that struck discussion within the group was a pair of boots with a tie along the back instead of the front. A range of suggestions were given, from possible colonial influence, ease of wearing, or possibly that style was the preference of whoever made them.

The textile collection, which included *amautiit*, black-bottom boots, and bags, was particularly popular among participants. Although I have argued that wearing protective gloves, gowns, and masks can act as a disconnection from material culture, it was evident that participants still learned and engaged with materials made by their Ancestors in profound ways. This connection was extremely evident watching participants interact with the textiles and examining the precise stitches made by women generations ago (see Figure 5). They studied

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[22] Plural of qamutiq

patterns, photographed and traced embroidery, and have since re-integrated designs into their sewing projects (Allen 2024).

Figure 4 – Model qamutiq *with tackle and tools in a box.*

These connections would not be possible without museums being a driving force for community-engaged projects. They have an inherent responsibility to initiate contact so communities know an institution has materials, and further, to work with them as partners to decide the best path forward with community interests and ontological needs taking priority. The *SESS* demonstrates their genuine interest in developing relationships and reconsidering protocol to reflect the needs of those they represent.

Figure 5 – Nunatsiavummiut studying the embroidery on an amauti.

5.4.1 Protocol at Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen. With little legislative support for Indigenous materials in museums, there is a risk that the engagement with Indigenous groups is disingenuous, where participation ends at notifying communities of museum plans and not working *with* groups. Usbeck addressed this issue a number of times, where museums might see engagement with Indigenous communities as a box to tick rather than a responsibility as a colonial institution. To counter this, Usbeck mentioned the concept of working at 'eye-level' with communities, which he described as "not only gaining insight, and asking, asking Indigenous groups opinion, but also asking permission involving Indigenous groups in decision making processes… wherever possible," (personal communication 2023). By approaching their work in this way, Indigenous interests are centered within their practices. This concept goes hand-in-hand with their goal of being transparent with communities—specifically regarding the materials they hold from communities globally. Funke explained that one of the ways they are trying to do this is by sharing images of collections online:

> That means that we give the information, what we store what we have here, which objects are in our museum because somebody in the rainforest of Suriname don't [sic] know that maybe these kinds of seat, or table or something like this is in our museum… That is the first step, to show them, and therefore me—myself and Frank, we have spent a lot of time here… to prepare and to show it online… making photographs, get measured, do the provenance research [personal communication 2023].

This, of course, comes with risks; if first contact comes from communities seeing images posted online, there is a risk that outsiders are seeing sensitive materials or imagery, in which case, more damage is done than good. Community projects, where community members can decide if something is appropriate to be publicized, are necessary in such situations. Usbeck explained that it is important that he learns about "community perspectives on their representation and the self-representation that they envision," as it gives him "a better understanding on what they what they [sic] would like to see and what they expect from us" (personal communication 2023). One way they combat the possibility of sharing something sensitive is by using "dummies" or placeholder images with descriptions that communities could read and then contact the museum to discuss (Funke, personal communication 2023; Usbeck, personal communication 2023). When communities do contact the museums to discuss their material culture, there will also be a conversation about specific care-taking protocols that the community might want given to their materials.

Their involvement of Indigenous Peoples in museum processes is not a necessarily new practice in the *SESS*, but according to Usbeck, they are trying to make the process less harmful:

> Our museum has included, you could say… Indigenous knowledge and voices to an extent throughout the 20th century. And that they have sought to debunk stereotypes about Indigenous people throughout the 20th century to an accelerating and expanding degree. In the process, they have brought in new stereotypes, of course, sometimes, and very often, our colleagues, our predecessors have not been aware of their own Eurocentric biases,
>
> …

> The first real good occasion was the big exhibit from 2005 to 2008 where curators from different areas, flew in community representatives to build life size, dwellings in our museum space, often with original materials. I think that also was a huge source of pride for for [sic] the colleagues back then. And it is—it constantly is a point of contention or where disagreements and struggles sprang up among staff about ethical considerations in museology. Because some of the displays that were developed with communities back then are now considered stereotypical. And that's extremely interesting as a researcher for me because in modern museology in Europe, has been talking how figurines, in museum displays, or general in situ displays, like dioramas have a tendency tendency [sic] to build stereotypes to encourage racism, especially in the figurines and museums at around 1900 have also been used for racial studies to show people in stereotypical depictions, [Usbeck, personal communication 2023].

Contemporary representation at the SESS looks very different than it has before. A previous exhibit in Herrnhut in 2021, *Pop Culture and Everyday Life: Politics, Health, and Sports / Games in Indigenous North America,* offered visitors contemporary and relatable experiences of Indigenous Peoples, addressing topics such as the 2020 US presidential election, COVID-19, and Indigenous athletes (Usbeck, personal communication 2023). This exhibit sought to counter stereotypes possibly held by the 1300-strong rural town of Herrnhut and create connection between people on opposite sides of the world (Usbeck, personal communication 2023). Such exhibits are augmented by community projects, which often bring community members to Germany, such as with *Creating Context* (Funke, personal communication 2023). Although I cannot speak for other projects, Usbeck, Funke, and all staff were involved and empathetic toward Nunatsiavummiut and their interest in connecting with their material culture abroad, as well as eager to learn how they could adapt their protocol.

Working with the *SESS* for *Creating Context* and my own research showed how broadly unsettling discussions have reached. Of course, the *SESS* has a unique connection to Canada and more specifically, Nunatsiavut/Labrador, but seeing their involvement with communities across the world demonstrate their dedication to an equitable museum practice.

5.4 Meaningful partnerships

When thinking of how to approach partnerships meaningfully, we must understand it in terms of the technical side—as in establishing relationships, recognizing capacity, creating schedules—but just as importantly, the emotional side, which addresses the fears, curiosity, joy, nervousness, and all other feeling that participants could be feeling going into a project such as this. If a museum goes into a community project with a business mindset, where the humanity is separated from the person, there will be no space for a meaningful relationship. Emotions need to be encouraged on both sides of the partnership as this work is emotional. People are connecting material culture that has been kept from them, sharing stories between the group, thinking what could have been if that disconnection never happened, wishing others from their community could experience the same, wishing they could share their long-awaited visit with late family and friends. There will also be feelings excitement; handing materials that are slightly unfamiliar, ushering in thoughts of who made, used, and left it. When museum staff does not approach a project with a business mindset, they will also experience strong emotions, although theirs might sway more toward eagerness to get participants into collections, sympathy for participants, and even possibly guilt. It is important to embrace these emotions rather than pushing them away, as they could be the catalyst for more positive change and relationship building.

By encouraging an emotional process, real and meaningful connections—and importantly—trust can be formed. Usbeck approached the project as a partner, interested in learning about participants on a personal level, and did so honestly. At all times, he was engaged with participants, demonstrating that it was not his research interests driving his actions, but his hope to establish long term relationships that participants could rely on. As he commuted from Leipzig

while we were in Dresden, he wasn't able to spend as much time with us, but nonetheless was very involved in making sure everyone was comfortable. He met us at the hotel the first morning, showing the way to the tram stop while telling us some of the local history, accompanied us on the river cruise, and brought delicacies from Leipzig. While we were in Herrnhut he stayed with us, giving everyone much more time to get to know each other. We had meals together, travelled, and organized excursions for the group based on individual interest. Usbeck organized a trip to the local Moravian Archive, where participants found family members in records and photos (see Figure 6). One of my most vivid memories is when he sat with us at a little Donair shop, answering our curiosity questions about living in Germany. These seemingly unrelated and small acts of kindness set the tone of the trip to be that of cooperation and sincerity. This wasn't a project meant to extract answers as institution and subject. Instead, the project was based in humanness, where Usbeck spent time building the trust of participants, demonstrating his hopes as genuine and in good faith. This is an essential step of community projects as Indigenous Peoples do not owe museums or researchers their Knowledge. In fact, I believe it is the opposite; that museums and researchers owe Indigenous communities *their* knowledge, as well as their time, focus, and willingness to learn. It is only with that basis that there can be discussion of a flow of knowledge can begin. In the circumstance of *Creating Context,* a foundation of trust has been built over two decades by Dr. Rankin, and later Dr. Kelvin (among many other researchers), which developed through community-projects and on-going engagement with Nunatsiavut. Furthermore, based on the fact that Dr.'s Kelvin and Rankin had a previous project with *SESS,* there was a degree of trust that creating a project and moreover *participating* in the project would be a safe and positive experience. But it was only with the efforts made by staff at the *SESS,* and particularly Frank Usbeck, that meaningful person-to-person relationships could form. This trust

made future endeavours more exciting—such as the visit of Usbeck to Nunatsiavut where participants could show him a glimpse of their life in the same way he did for them.

Despite the overall positive atmosphere of the project, there were still learning moments. Some participants felt overwhelmed at times having someone at the table typing notes about what they were discussing. While contextualization of collection records was part of the project goals, it is understandable how this could feel intrusive and objectifying. It is also unclear if there is a solution; staff could take hand-written notes to be more subtle or, offer the option of audio-recording if participants feel comfortable.

Figure 6 – Participants at the Moravian Archives in Herrnhut, Germany.

This would be accompanied by its own logistical and privacy issues, however, giving as many options as possible would place decision-making power into the hands of participants. In the future, briefing, giving options, and paying close attention to participants comfort levels could help mediate these feelings.

In the chance that someone makes a mistake, it is important to correct oneself with grace rather than defensiveness. Especially in projects where people's culture and language are different, it is possible for outdated and offensive language to be used without malicious intent. The material culture at the *SESS* was collected from the 18th to 20th centuries and accompanied by racist and derogatory terms used for Indigenous and Inuit groups. This was not a situation of staff repeatedly using or referring to participants by those terms, but of mentioning them in the context of collection and records. We must recognize that the socio-political atmosphere of Canada is different from Germany, that the origin and intent of words has often been forgotten by those the term does not refer to, and we were working with individuals who speak English as a second language. This does not excuse their use. After being told that those terms were unacceptable, staff immediately stopped using them. As settlers, colonizers, and the citizens of colonizing states such as Germans, there is going to be a degree of discomfort when participating in projects such as this—but that is important. Of course, we want to avoid making mistakes, but when they do happen—and they do—it is how we take criticism and learn that demonstrates our sincerity in learning and doing better. There were also discussions about the unfairness that museums knew more about some material culture than community partners. It is a bittersweet circumstance, as there is preservation of Knowledge and practices, but that preservation was done without the consent or involvement of Nunatsiavummiut. This emphasizes the need to

partner with Indigenous groups, and although there is no way to rectify for the past, museums must seek to find solutions where possible.

5.5 Conclusion

As explained in the previous chapter, ontological empathy, power-shifting, and culturally specific care protocol are principles to guide action. At the *SESS,* there is a focus from first contact with Indigenous groups to establish a basis of ontological empathy. Understanding what photos are or are not appropriate for publishing, for example, demonstrates this. This is also arguably power-shifting, as the institution is rendering control to the given Indigenous group to decide how they want to be showcased—but this is not the only way the *SESS* is engaging with power-shifting. One of the goals of *Creating Context* was to help contextualize the collections in Germany as record were not thorough. In asking for help from Nunatsiavummiut for answers about the collection, there is a shift of power in who is considered the expert. The 'experts' that mentioned earlier is a clear illustration of an unequal power dynamics that raged in museum spaces. The process of knowledge exchange in Germany subverted this teacher-learner dynamic by emphasizing that both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners had valuable knowledge to offer. While it was not a perfect system as I explained earlier, it is a challenge to traditional power-structures.

The final theme, culturally specific care protocol, is in a unique position in *Creatin Context.* This step of Creating Context was meant to engage Nunatsiavummiut with their materials but was not meant to solidify long-term solutions. As care for materials is significant question, it would not be fair or appropriate to expect the six participating Nunatsiavummiut to answer. Instead, community gatherings taking place in Nunatsiavut at a later date will allow

Nunatsiavummiut to offer suggestions on these sensitive topics. This ensures that those who were not able to participate on the trip to Germany can still be actively engaged in the care for their materials. Further, these community gatherings will allow for the discussion of repatriations, which must be negotiated on a community-scale rather than a small group. For this reason, it is not necessarily possible to detail how the *SESS* engage in culturally specific care protocol—as those details have not happened yet. However, they are eager to know how material culture should be cared for, and Nunatsiavummiut are aware that this is at the forefront of staff's mind.

These community gatherings will include Usbeck and other staff from *SESS,* and will take place in Nain and Hopedale. This will allow for community interests to be highlighted, and possibly more answers regarding how Nunatsiavummiut might want their Ancestors and material culture cared for.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

This thesis sought to analyze how museums were working with the Indigenous groups they represent to understand how they are moving toward a more meaningful and inclusive practice. The institutions in this thesis demonstrated active relationships with Indigenous groups, albeit in different capacities. The Royal British Columbia Museum, for example, has taken the most drastic approach of the group by removing Indigenous material culture from view of the public while the Museum of Indigenous People focuses on bolstering local histories to correct past misrepresentations. In addition to general practices that support meaningful partnerships, interviews allowed me to identify three themes that are the foundational to meaningful relationships that can first, help establish and/or solidify trust for museum staff by demonstrating willingness to change; and second, oppose the long-held belief that Indigenous Peoples should not be respected as experts of their own cultures.

By being empathetic to alternative ontologies, staff demonstrate their intention to respect and emphasize the ontological needs of Indigenous groups and their materials. The way that Fay engages with materials within Manitoba Museum's sacred storage is a clear example of ontological empathy. She recognizes the differences in her ontology and those of the materials in sacred storage, but still engages with them in a culturally appropriate way, such as acknowledging and speaking to them, and not entering the room if menstruating or pregnant. There is, therefore, a yielding of her own ontological stance to make room for another to ensure materials are receiving the appropriate respect.

By shifting power to communities, staff demonstrate they want to see Indigenous groups in control of their materials, stories, and Knowledge. This be seen at Museum X, where there was power given to communities to decide what stories they wanted to share and acceptance of those they wanted to change to establish a new narrative. This is also commonplace at the Museum of Indigenous People, where Christenson welcomes correction on displays to ensure they are showcasing communities in appropriate ways. Finally, we see power-shifting at *Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen* in the ways they approach publishing images online. Staff gives Indigenous groups decision making power on whether images are published online or not, ensuring that culturally sensitive imagery is not shared with outsiders.

And by adapting how materials are cared for to suit the materials needs, staff demonstrate how they are no longer the unrightful owners of materials, but stewards of materials in partnership with Indigenous groups. I identified a number of examples of culturally specific care protocol, however the Institute for American Indian Studies demonstrates this theme this particularly well. The staff at the IAIS work with Elders to ensure materials have sustenance and rest, and therefore, appropriate care. Using material culture in ceremony, as mentioned by Fay and Brownlee, is another important method of care that should always be offered if communities are interested.

Staff were overall enthusiastic about engaging with Indigenous groups as much as possible, with two focuses: the presence or planning of sacred storage, and the establishment of outreach projects. The majority of museums in this project have or are planning to build sacred storage spaces where materials and Ancestors may reside with the appropriate care. The greatest challenge of this endeavour, however, is the space available for materials. While in Herrnhut we

were given a tour of the vaults: a familiar scene of rolling cabinets filled to their capacity, and unfortunately, not enough space to dedicate for on-site sacred storage. Materials are organized by size and type rather than culture, a normal practice in museums as physical space is a finite resource. In my conversation with Brownlee, he suggested a re-working of storage where museums should organize materials based on group instead of artifact type. This would make community visits less overwhelming by having a dedicated space for each group as well as gives a solution to storing materials of unfriendly groups next to each other. This demonstrates two aspects of care that non-Indigenous persons might not think of. First; the necessary empathy for historic and contemporary relationships between groups; and second, the respect due toward materials' agency. This is why the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the care of materials is of utmost importance in museum and heritage spaces.

The establishment of community outreach projects was the second common practice that I identified from museums. These projects focus on getting Indigenous groups involved in the museum, such as through 3D modelling projects and repatriations. Prior to *Creating Context*, my supervisor Dr. Laura Kelvin established a project with *SESS* to 3D scan Nunatsiavummiut material culture that could be brought back to Nunatsiavut so community members could engage with collections in Germany. Curator X mentioned a similar project, where community members from the Northwest Coast are planning to scan carvings so that youth might use them as reference as they learn. Digital artifacts have become an increasingly popular method of reconnection as 3D scanning technology is becoming easily accessible and affordable. Digital collections are supported by servers such as Reciprocal Research Network and Mukurtu, community-controlled and account protected repositories created by and for Indigenous groups.

These servers give moderator access to individuals in a given community, who then give access to community members through accounts to view collections. Communities have the ability to restrict viewing depending on account type, meaning there is limited risk of outsiders seeing something they should not. These platforms are not without challenges. The Reciprocal Research Network, for example, requires access to internet as it is a web-based program, meaning communities who are rural, or individuals who do not have access to internet, cannot use the program. Mukurtu, for example, can be used offline, but is an open-source code, meaning the website is not already set up and requires someone with knowledge of coding to establish it. These challenges can be helped or alleviated by creating community projects, where museums can help find solutions to the issues communities face.

As part of the objectives of this research project was to understand how museums are caring for Indigenous material culture in the interim or in place of repatriation/rematriation/return, focus of interviews was not on repatriation projects. With that being said, repatriation/rematriation/return was clearly at the forefront of the institutions in Canada, Germany, and Museum X, as they brought up the process unprompted. The return of materials to communities is a necessary step as we move toward restitution for Indigenous groups across the world.

Not to undercut the importance of repatriation/rematriation/return, I should emphasize that there are different perspectives on the presence of Indigenous material culture in museums. For example, Johanna Funke explained that Indigenous representatives from Suriname have shown interest in keeping their material culture in Germany as they are proud to show aspects of their culture to people who might never visit the country (personal communication 2023).

Conversely, there are instances that repatriation/rematriation/return is necessary, such as when materials should not be on display, when materials were taken under duress, when materials are sacred to a group, or that Indigenous groups want their material history returned. We saw this clearly with the RBCM who hopes to return a majority of collections, but also as a constant theme in interviews. As Wolforth explained, there is a shift that museums should no longer be the owners of materials, but carers of materials on behalf of Indigenous Peoples (personal communication 2023). While it cannot be assumed that every museum acts on this principle, the staff I spoke with overwhelmingly lean toward shifting power to communities.

I will restate here that the staff I spoke to had to be careful in what they shared with me, and that the answers given were carefully crafted to present their institution positively. This is not to say that staff were not honest about their institution's histories, the challenges they face approaching these subjects, or their genuine interest in changing practices—in fact the staff I spoke with seemed extremely eager to seek alternative museum practice that support Indigenous communities rather than '*othering'* them. There was an obvious dedication to learning and dismantling traditional museology, and instead, challenges tended to lean toward difficulties due to funding, bureaucracy, capacity, and other factors.

In particular, staff brought up the challenge of addressing uncomfortable topics without driving visitors away. It is not uncommon to see settlers react poorly when faced with the truths of history, as we have long had the privilege not needing to be aware of it. Settlers have benefitted from the injustices done to Indigenous Peoples, and whether we recognize it or not, refusal to acknowledge our place in a colonial society contributes to injustices. It is not that these subjects should not be addressed, but that museums must find ways to educate the public without

driving visitors away. On the other hand, if museums choose to share a 'toned-down' version of history—one which whitewashes both settler, government, *and* the museum's role in '*othering'* Indigenous Peoples—museums will actively lose the trust of Indigenous groups. There must be balance when sharing history; one that tells a multi-vocal account and that emphasizes those that have been excluded from public view. In a similar vein, ensuring that the stories being told in museums are accessible and understandable to those who know little about the subject, such as tourists or newcoming residents.

A topic I have not delved into yet is the toxicity of material culture; a quiet challenge with significant implications. Preservatory chemicals applied to material culture have left them toxic, and although materials regardless of culture were treated the same way, I argue that this impacts Indigenous groups in a deeper way. Even as an unintended consequence, this toxicity unfortunately reflects hopes of assimilation programs, and further, is an example of continued barriers created by colonialism (Simms and McIntyre 2014). Materials are forever dangerous to be handled, and use of materials, such as smoke a pipe as what happened in Manitoba, cannot happen safely. In the chance that repatriation happens into a community museum or cultural center, workers and visitors will need to wear protective gear when handling—an extra cost and barrier. In the chance that materials are to be (re)buried, the effect of toxins on the environment needs to be take into consideration. These impacts are a direct effect of colonial paternalism and entitlement, where there was a disregard of Indigenous opinions, spiritual needs, and consent because the Western thinker knew better. This will be an important factor to consider if the Nunatsiavut Government decide to have their materials returned to Nunatsiavut.

These are themes we must consider as we approach discussions about 'decolonizing'. This term is often used to demonstrate an interest in countering colonial concepts within an institution; however, I do not believe an institution that is inherently colonial can be *de*-colonized. We can use the example of a museum; it was a symbol of nationalism, where an *'other'* could be compared against the superior group. Western—as museums are a western invention—interpretations of *'other'* cultures allowed for misinterpretations and stereotypes to flourish. Linnaean taxonomy was imposed onto material culture, offering a systematic way of understanding the relationship between people and the things they make. We can see this in the study of stone tools; where minute measurements can be taken to show learning patterns, environmental changes, hunting changes, and other traits that differentiate axes. This taxonomic organization influences how materials are stored: where clothes are stored with clothes, household implements are stored with household implements, and so on. And this, of course, is not always true, the capacity of space is a significant factor in how materials are stored, but overwhelmingly, storage is to do with *type* and not meaning. Its type *becomes* its meaning, and as a result, part of it's life history. Therefore, can the institution be decolonized when there is no way to separate Indigenous material culture from it's time in a museum? Or, is it possible to remedy the impacts that it's separation has had on Indigenous communities, such as loss of Knowledge? This is why it is important to think critically about buzz terms like decolonization when our society is colonial. Further, we cannot discount Indigenous Peoples as *contemporary* Peoples. We all live within the same world—albeit with different challenges and perspectives. This is why I prefer the term decentering; where Western practices can be sidelined to emphasize the '*othered'* non-Western.

6.1 Limitations

A significant impact to this thesis, I believe, is the dispersion and size of institutions in my sample. The three Canadian institutions included (Royal British Columbia Museum, The Manitoba Museum, and the Rooms) are all provincial or federal institutions which have significantly more capacity than the two American museums (Museum of Indigenous People and Institute of American Indian Studies) which are community museums. This was relatively unavoidable, as I was only able to work with those that responded to my interview request, however, should be kept in mind as I was not able to record practices at larger museums in the United States, or smaller museums in Canada. It would have been interesting to see how practices might differ and what engagement looks like at different scales, but this is outside of the scope of this project. With that being said, while the institutions I spoke with are overall engaging with good practices, there are many museums across all three countries that might not be. The practices in this thesis cannot be accepted as common place or the norm, but should be regarded as part of a movement toward a better museology.

The most significant limitation, I believe, is the inability for me to speak with the Indigenous groups being represented at each museum as well as the staff acting as stewards. This would go well beyond the scope of this thesis, but would have provided more context of past and current partnerships. Further, conversations with community partners might spotlight discrepancies—if any—with what I was told during interviews and experiences of community members.

During the trip to Germany, I had the opportunity to discuss or listen to the interests of participants, but it was decided to instead focus on the work museums are doing rather than of

Nunatsiavummiut experience. First, as *Creating Context* is a project with, by, and for Nunatsiavummiut, it is their place to speak about their experiences. Not only would paraphrasing possibly miscommunicate what they wanted to say, but participants should be able to share their thoughts and interests at their own pace and in their own way. As a researcher, I have no right over their stories, and therefore unless an individual directly approaches me to collaborate, expressing those stories should be left in their hands. Secondly, as this project is dealing with the care and possible return of materials, participants were hesitant to offer solutions without consulting other Nunatsiavummiut on a larger scale.

6.2 Implications of Research

The opportunity to base my research around *Creating Context* gave me a real-time view of how a museum might go about establishing a partnership with Indigenous groups, and in particular, community members. This began with the work of archaeologists at Memorial University, such as Dr.'s Rankin and Kelvin through community projects that worked with, by, and for Nunatsiavummiut. The decades of work they have done was foundational to *Creating Context* and my own research, showing that trust building is a long-term process that needs time and energy to succeed. And this process was bolstered by the empathy shown by Usbeck toward participants and the project on a whole. He took time to learn about Nunatsiavummiut, their personal lives, their culture, what their interests are both regarding their material culture and in general, and importantly, he was open to answering the same questions in return. In order to move beyond museum legacy, we must regard meaningful partnerships as meaningful *relationships* that need to be built and fostered.

By interviewing museum staff, I was able to pull the three themes that are foundational to facilitating a meaningful relationship with Indigenous communities. Naming these key themes and how they can be implemented gives opportunity to target specific needs within an institution, and possibly gives a starting point to those who are unsure of where to start. What is valuable about ontological empathy, power-shifting, and culturally specific care protocol is that they are implementable at different levels depending on institutional capacity. There are exceptions, such as sacred storage which requires additional space, funding, and staffing. Overall, the ways these themes are applied can be negotiated with communities to ensure their needs and the needs of their materials are being met. As we move further into this period of unsettling, staff should be advocating for Indigenous Peoples to be seen, heard, and respected, and identify what changes their institutions need to meet this goal. This project attempts to consolidate some of the ways this can be done by highlighting practices from museums: 1) with different capacities; 2) in different regions; and 3) in different countries.

The solutions to reach these goals, of course, cannot happen without money, and for this reason, research that highlights the needs of museums and Indigenous groups is necessary. If community projects are being established where participants are helping researchers in some way, there needs to be compensation for their time and their work. For example, if community members are taking on roles as curators in a co-curated exhibit, they should be paid as curators. Direct monetary compensation is not the only consideration for working with community members. Offering transportation to and from the research location and offering meals can demonstrate the genuine interest of the museum to ensure partners are comfortable and respected. We saw this in Germany when staff organized excursions and made baked goods,

showing they were willing to put in effort into making participants comfortable and go beyond a strict research-research partner relationship.

But of course, not all institutions have the capacity to organize cross-continental projects. Budgets are often a combination of visitation fees and grants, and if staff are not well versed in grant-writing, or funding agencies do not see the value in a certain research project, they may not have money to properly engage with Indigenous groups. This is also applicable to updating signage and exhibits as even simple changes take time and money. Research projects such as this one can bring awareness to the importance and impacts of community partnerships, so hopefully, funding agencies are more eager to offer grants for such projects in the future.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

I want to return now to the beginning of this thesis, where I identified two impacts that stem from the separation of Indigenous People from their material culture: the first, that materials are left without the appropriate care that they need, and second, that Indigenous Peoples can be left without the Knowledge from those materials. This thesis demonstrates that partnerships between museums and Indigenous groups helps mitigate the effects of this separation by establishing relationships that seek to holistically partner with Indigenous groups. When examining these impacts, our focus is therefore split between care to material culture and care for communities.

By approaching alternative ontologies empathetically, giving Indigenous partners decision making power, and then facilitating the care protocol they see fit, there can be a shift within museology that encourages rather than disconnects Indigenous Peoples from their material culture. By engaging with these themes, the agency of materials can be recognized and reaffirmed rather than disregarded as a qualitative concept does not fit into a Western world view. Establishing sacred storage is one way that museums can meet the cultural and ontological needs of materials, where they can be cared for by means of sustenance, appropriate respect, and acknowledgement. Importantly museums need to move beyond this to ensure that Indigenous groups are: 1) aware of the materials in museum collections, and 2) be regarded as stewards in the same way that museum staff are. This will look different for each group being worked with; some groups will have more capacity to participate at the museum, some might be too distant to take a regular hands-on approach, but regardless, there needs to be an active, communicated

partnership established. Through collaboration with Indigenous partners, roles and responsibilities should be hashed out, along with a living document that will outline care protocol.

While deciding on a basis of care for materials, museums should be seeking to strengthen the relationship between the Indigenous groups they represent and themselves, and more importantly, the relationship between Indigenous groups and their material culture. By offering programming that facilitates Knowledge transfer within and between groups, practices can be re-integrated into communities. Not only does this encourage cultural revitalization, but it also brings people into the museum where further connections can be made. In particular, getting community members into collections can lead to the most impactful moments; where they can see, feel, smell, listen, remember, and think. Connection becomes deeper when engaging the senses and targeting aspects of lived memory. We can imagine how hearing a pipe being smoked or a drum being played could incite powerful emotions after being held in collections. How the texture and shapes of embroidery could remind someone of their mothers or grandmothers' work—and encourage reproduction, as we saw with Nunatsiavummiut in Germany. As an outsider, we can only imagine how powerful and significant it must feel to see materials being used as they were intended to be.

Reconnecting Indigenous Peoples with their material culture is a multi-faceted and complex process that delves into more than just someone's general interests. It approaches sympathetically and finds ways to best support whomever is being worked with. The staff at the eight included museums demonstrated uniquely how they facilitate this connection, all of whom

explained that in order to approach a good practice, you need to be empathetic to ontologies, shift power to community partners, and care for materials in ways that align with their culture.

Care for Indigenous material culture, therefore, goes beyond physical acts of bubble wrapping and latex gloves. Care necessitates meaningful partnerships that emphasize Indigenous ontologies, cultures, and protocols, and is the only way both Indigenous Peoples and their materials can be given the respect, agency, and dignity that they deserve.

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