Standards for Museums with Native American Collections

A guide to all aspects of work within museums holding Native collections

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Introduction

Museums and cultural institutions have the power to educate, inform, and change the way people engage with the world. Countless examples exist of museums making significant impacts on collective thought through the reinterpretation of histories. It follows that misinformation, blind spots, and insensitivities that continue to pervade public understandings about Native American peoples can be redressed through these powerful, highly impactful institutions (Reclaiming Native Truth 2019).

Native communities themselves have a deep investment in museums. As buildings for the storage and exhibition of precious cultural materials, museums have the power to interpret the cultures, histories and experiences of Native people. Too often, the communities being represented are not included or invited to participate in interpretation.

A growing number of institutions recognize value in the inclusion of Native perspectives, protocols, and expertise, particularly in collections-centered work, such as conservation, documentation, and curation. However, many museums have yet to recognize the benefits of Native involvement and input across all areas of the museum. This document aims to reveal the mutual value of collaboration, as well as to provide paths toward institutional change.

The Standards for Museums with Native Collections (SMNAC) has adapted the National Core Standards developed by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), to reflect the needs, values and goals of Native communities, in seven functional areas: PUBLIC TRUST AND ACCOUNTABILITY; COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP; EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION; MISSION AND PLANNING; LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE; FINANCIAL STABILITY; and FACILITIES and RISK MANAGEMENT. It also provides practical recommendations for each functional area.

Recommendations may be taken in any order according to what is most feasible for each institution. The issues that museums face were created over a long period of time and as such, it is important to maintain realistic expectations. That said, the process toward change should be constant, measurable, and incorporated into the day-to-day management of museums.

A note on language use: For the purpose of this document, the core team made the decision to primarily use the word "Native" to refer to American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native people individually and as a group. Terms used throughout the document can be found in the Glossary of the Resources section near the end of the document.

Goals of SMNAC

Museums seeking meaningful engagement with Native peoples need examples that, at minimum, build a foundation of understanding of the issues and complexity of working with Native people. SMNAC meets the need for a shared set of standards and benchmarks that guide all facets of operation in museums charged with stewarding Native cultural belongings.

SMNAC provides these standards as well as case studies from several institutions that exemplify meaningful collaboration and inclusion. At the end of this document is a list of resources for further exploration and research. The specific goals of SMNAC are to:

- Provide actionable recommendations for Native inclusion;
- Motivate museums toward collaboration and partnership with Native communities;
- Emphasize the responsibility and accountability inherent in the stewardship of Native collections as well as the teaching and representation of cultural content;
- Recognize the colonial legacy of museums and provide opportunities to educate others about this history and its ongoing impact on Native people;
- Address the need for cultural sensitivity and competency;
- Provide support for Native American museum professionals, staff, board members, and volunteers;
- Inform museums about the unique status of Tribal governments and sovereignty; and
- Develop inclusive and respectful methodologies for working with Native communities.

Regardless of size or capacity, all museums with Native collections are expected to act in good faith towards realizing these core standards. This contributes to building better relations with originating communities.

How This Document Was Developed

In October 2017, Dr. Deana Dartt, a Coastal Band Chumash museum scholar and curator, gave a presentation at the Association of Tribal Archives Libraries and Museums (ATALM) conference, pointing out that for real change to occur in museums with regards to Native American communities and collections, there has to be awareness through all areas of the museum about the history of the land wherethe facility sits, the trauma associated with collecting the materials now held there, and most importantly, how to appropriately engage Native stakeholders. This knowledge must exist across the museum, and ideally, not only are Native constituencies addressed in these museums, but Native leadership recruited in all areas of the institution.

Dr. Dartt's ATALM presentation stimulated dialogue and a challenge to reach out to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) to suggest that they develop a set of standards that align with Native-appropriate practices. These conversations led to the development of a core group of individuals to develop these standards in collaboration with the School for Advanced Research (SAR), and in consultation with AAM.

SAR, already a leader in the field of developing museum guidelines, had published another collaborative document to help bridge the gap between communities and museums, the Guidelines for Collaboration, in 2017. While the Guidelines focused primarily on the areas of collections management and conservation, it was agreed upon early on that these new standards would address all areas of the museum field. The goal was that the Standards for Museums

with Native Collections (SMNAC) would create a baseline for museums housing Native collections to strive for, and put the onus on the museum field as a whole to take responsibility for its colonial legacy.

Drawing inspiration from the AAM Welcoming Guidelines developed by the LGBTQ+ Alliance, the core group began work in 2019 to align Native best practices with the function areas in AAM's core standards, making clear recommendations for museums with Native collections on how to be accountable and responsive to Native stakeholders.

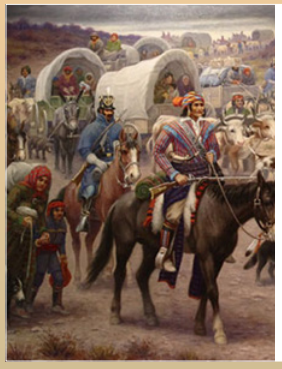
Over the course of two years, the core team worked to develop an initial draft document. In addition, the SMNAC document was vetted four times by Native museum professionals and those working for museums privileging Native perspectives. Between each vetting session, the results were synthesized and the document revised by the core group before going back out. During the final vetting session in late 2022, based on an open call to the museum field, the document was read for usability and clarity by AAM stakeholders. All in all, over 70 people have viewed, reviewed, and shared their experiences to make this document a reality. This has truly been a tremendous effort put forward by many people who have come together with the desire to assist museums by providing them with the tools for making meaningful change within the field.

Background: US Governmental Policy and Its Impact on Native Relationships to Museums

For Native peoples, cultural belongings are not merely objects of art and antiquity, but are significant links to traditions, family, and spirituality. Many are regarded as living beings, ancestors, and members of the community. The importance of reconnecting Native peoples with their cultural heritage cannot be overemphasized. In fact, research has shown that ownership and control of cultural materials and the ability to develop one's own narrative have the capacity to heal. Many examples of this impact can be seen in communities where a Tribal museum or cultural center exists. Rich, contemporary stories rooted in deep history are combined with programming for preserving, perpetuating, and revitalizing cultural practices. These places are often the hub of community activity, informed by and reflective of the cultural belongings held in their trust.
It follows that museums holding Native cultural

materials have a deep responsibility to the communities whose cultures are represented in their collections. Over time there has been increasing pressure on museums to share or relinquish control over the care and interpretation of these materials. As Native peoples have protested the exhibition, insensitive use, and in some cases, illegal ownership of their cultural materials, federal and museum institutions have developed new laws and policies.

Below is a summary of some influential events and US governmental policies impacting Native American relationships to museums. A key to understanding these histories and experiences is recognizing their complexity. The next several paragraphs address six important issues. More detailed descriptions and resources are available in the Resource section.



Indian Removal Era

- 1830 Indian Removal Act
- 1838 Cherokee Removal Act
- Creation of Indian Territory
- Dawes Act 1887

Early Collecting

- Salvage ethnography
- Formation of large ethnographic museums
- Antiquities Act of 1906
- World's Fairs and Expositions

Activism

- 1938 Tribal museums and cultural centers begin to be formed
- 1944 Establishment of National Congress of the American Indians
- American Indian Movement
- Alcatraz Takeover

Legislation Sparking Change

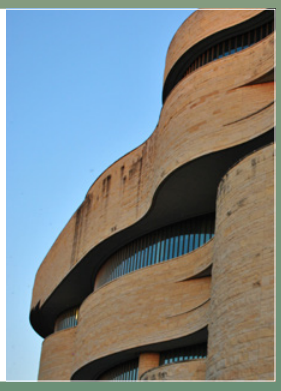
- 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act
- 1989 National Museum of the American Indian Act
- 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
- 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act
- 1996 National Historic Preservation Act amendments

Post-NAGPRA Trends

- More consultations due to NAGPRA
- Increase in Native American museum professionals
- Establishment of organizations like the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums
- Partnerships

Ongoing

- SAR Guidelines for Collaboration and SMNAC shape equitable partnerships
- Policy for inclusive practices
- Accountability to Native people



Indian Removal: The involuntary movement of Native peoples from their original territories manifested in many ways across the United States of America. After initial settlement, and the impacts of foreign diseases, the new colonial American government began a campaign to forcibly remove and contain Native peoples. The ultimate goal of these removals was to seize land for white settlement and to contain what was seen as the "Indian problem" on reservations. The separation of Native peoples from their lands was directly related to the collection of their cultural materials by museums. As Native lives and cultures were disrupted, villages and communities decimated, salvage ethnologists and archaeologists aggressively collected cultural materials, as did a plethora of looters and pillagers.

Early Collecting: Early museum collecting was characterized by the belief that Native Americans were vanishing and that their belongings were rare commodities for teaching about their presumably extinct cultures. Even Native peoples themselves, living and deceased, were collected to preserve scientific and cultural information of "vanishing" peoples. The imperative to collect was so pervasive that buried remains were exhumed by the thousands and precious cultural materials scavenged, questionably purchased, or confiscated for breaking colonially imposed laws, such as the Potlatch ban from 1885 to 1934 for the USA and 1885 to 1951 in Canada. There are many recorded instances of outright theft and other unethical collecting practices, as a market for these materials.

Activism and Pro-Indian movements: Native peoples have resisted and persisted through devastating systemic oppression over centuries; therefore, highlighting a short moment in this long history can be misleading. But one important period to recognize is the Civil Rights Era (1954-1968), which was characterized by intertribal Native activism, and its legacy. In the 1970s especially, the Red Power Movement, which included organizations such as the American Indian Movement and several protest occupations, walks, and demonstrations, brought media attention to the human rights issues impacting Native communities. Some museums, responding to the outcry for justice, began working with Native peoples to remove exhibited Native remains, return sacred materials, and exhibit the work of contemporary Native artists as a way to demonstrate that Native people are not relegated to the past and are still here.

Legislation Sparking Change: Native ancestral human remains are over-represented in museum collections. As G. Timothy McKeown notes in In the Smaller Scope of Conscience, "In testimony to the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Jan Hammil, director of American Indians Against Desecration, estimated the number of Indian bodies in university, museum, and laboratory collections to be between 300,000 and 600,000." (2012:10)

The passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966 mandating the establishment of State Historic Preservation Offices was pivotal for Native involvement in environmental and archaeological work at the national level. And in 1992, the amended law provided for the establishment of Tribal Historic Preservation Offices.

Activism and protest by Native peoples and allies pressured museums to remove human remains from view and return some of them home, along with sacred belongings. This led to the development of local and state preservation laws, and the establishment of federal laws such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Passed in 1990, NAGPRA requires federal agencies and institutions receiving federal funds to create and distribute inventories, and work with communities for the possible return of Native American ancestral remains, funerary objects,

sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to their respective descendants. While NAGPRA has been the most significant, other laws have shaped Native/museum relations such as the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), and the 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA).

Post-NAGPRA: NAGPRA provides a mechanism for museums and Native communities to begin conversations, some leading to more inclusionary practices and eventually true collaboration. Such initiatives and innovative approaches to collections care and curation have led to myriad language, culture, and art initiatives for and within Native communities and between museums and communities. Another result of collaboration and openness has been a growth in the number of Native museum professionals in all areas of museum work, as well as the establishment of professional organizations such as the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM). Such organizations provide support, education, and networking opportunities for those professionals.

Unfortunately, some museums have not been legally or ethically compelled to change and continue to operate with little, if any, input from descendent communities. These institutions continue perpetuating misinformation that could be corrected through Tribal consultation and collaboration.

Ongoing Activities: Recent and ongoing social justice activity has spurred renewed commitments to inclusionary practices, equity, and diversity. As described in this document, additional consideration beyond race is needed to understand the unique position of Tribal governments as sovereign Nations. Eventually, SMNAC may provide a model for museums outside the USA that work with Native American communities and steward Native collections to support collaborative efforts. In recent years, the overall trajectory of museum practices has been a positive one, and includes

the efforts of foundations that are promoting diversity in curatorial and conservation work, as well as organizations that promote Native leadership.

This document, too, is intended to serve to center Native priorities. SMNAC is inclusive of Native perspectives at an institutional and policy level and guides the development of partnerships with Native communities. In so doing, SMNAC provides support for the growing number of Native people working in these institutions, as well as non-Native museum professionals navigating the historically fraught landscape of Native and museum relations.

PART TWO:

Aligning Native Goals With AAM Core Standards by Functional Areas

A. Function Area: Public Trust and Accountability

AAM CORE STANDARD: The effectiveness of a museum is directly related to the public's perception of its integrity.

Native Americans are members of the public whose interests should be prioritized. In order for Native people to trust, benefit from, visit, and support museums, institutions need to appropriately represent them and their interests. Museums are accountable to laws that apply to sovereign Tribal Nations and Native American collections such as NAGPRA and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act.

Recommendations

A.1. The museum demonstrates responsibility and accountability to Native communities through responsible stewardship of Native collections, by:

a. Acknowledging and contributing to changing the ongoing impacts of the colonial history of collecting and misrepresentations of Native peoples.

b. Committing to collaborate with Native communities. The museum recognizes that Native expertise is essential to the accuracy and cultural appropriateness of information provided to researchers and presented to the public through exhibitions and programs.

A.2. The museum 1) identifies the Native communities it serves by conducting research and then reaching out to them and 2) makes appropriate decisions on how to serve them.

a. These communities may include those that are indigenous to the area, such as state and federally recognized Tribes, as well as removed Tribes, individuals from tribes elsewhere living in the local area, and descendant and affiliated communities with a cultural relationship to collections.

b. To serve those communities, the museum engages in meaningful dialogue with them in an effort to better represent their histories and cultures. This may include developing an advisory board of Native community members, appointing Native people to boards, and recruiting Native people to staff positions.

c. The museum develops long-term partnerships with Native communities.

A.3. The museum serves the Native people on whose traditional territories it is located. This includes:

a. The development of Native acknowledgements. This can be developed in a number of ways. For example,
    i. A statement of accountability can describe how the organization is responsible to Native communities with ancestral ties to the land on which the museum occupies as well as the communities represented in their collections.
    ii. Acknowledging institutional history and the harms it may have caused to Native communities.
    iii. This can be shared in a variety of formats such as public program introductions, websites, permanent signage, promotional materials including banners and other external marketing.
b. Inviting local Native communities to engage with program and exhibition development.
c. Working to create transparency about the inner workings of the museum with Native communities. This might include being transparent about budgets and/or making collections, exhibition, and DEAI policies and procedures publicly available.

A.4. The museum commits to mutually beneficial collaboration with Native people internally and externally, by:

a. Providing a welcoming and respectful environment for Native people (Tribal delegations, visitors, consultants, collaborators, staff, board and volunteers).
b. Recognizing the status of Tribal leadership and government officials as dignitaries.
c. Educating governing board, staff, and volunteers by providing community informed cultural competency and sensitivity workshops. This enables culturally appropriate exhibitions, programs, policies and advertising.
d. Creating opportunities for community engagement through online platforms.
e. Sharing authority and decision-making with appropriate community advisors, including cooperative planning, definition of outcomes and roles, task accountability, and clear structures for continued communication, and developing open and transparent relationships with communities to create culturally informed policies, practices, and content.

A.5. As an institution of learning and understanding, and a repository of material culture and information, the museum is responsible for meaningful collaboration with Native Americans in order to:

a. Represent Native American voices, cultures, knowledges, and perspectives;
b. Support shared stewardship.

A.6. The museum is dedicated to increasing public understanding and appreciation of Native art, history, knowledge, and culture through collections preservation, and interpretation, by:

a. Serving as a resource for Native communities as well as the general public in terms of accurate and culturally appropriate education and support for cultural continuity;
b. Collaborating with Native communities, enabling the documentation of the context, meaning, and relevance of collections, and committing to sharing authority on what information is shared to the public through exhibitions, programs and websites, and;

c. Establishing and working actively with a Native advisory committee or board to identify considerations for stewardship and programming related to Native materials and communities;

d. Understand and facilitate culturally appropriate access and restrictions to archives and collections.

A.7. The museum addresses the lack of cultural knowledge and sensitivity that has historically characterized museum treatment of Native collections, recognizing that Native collections have meaning that goes beyond western interpretation, by:

a. Writing, publishing, and making accessible information for new board members, staff, and volunteers which describes community-informed efforts.

b. Connecting Native American collections with originating communities for more meaningful, relevant, and culturally appropriate interpretation, care, loans, and documentation. This benefits all parties, including the communities, the museum, and visitors.

c. Making available all relevant and appropriate materials (archives, accession records, photographs, etc.) to originating Native communities.

d. Recognizing sensitivities surrounding human remains, funerary items, and sacred items, and making every effort—through staff and docent trainings, signage, maps, etc.—to be transparent about any presence of human remains or images of human remains onsite (mummies, posters of burials, etc.).

A.8. The museum supports and enforces state and federal repatriation law, including NAGPRA regulations and processes, cultural and intellectual property rights, copyright law with respect to Tribal sovereignty, by:

a. Providing training opportunities for staff and board pertaining to such laws;

b. Keeping Native stakeholders abreast of compliance with these laws and regulations;

c. Recognizing there are ethical responsibilities that go beyond the law, for example with protection of contemporary Native artists and their designs, and;

d. Building trust with Native communities by discussing and agreeing on how collected information is ethically used, shared, and archived.

B. Function Area: Collections Stewardship

AAM CORE STANDARD: Collections are held in trust for the public and made accessible for the public's benefit, as important means of advancing the museum's mission.

Collecting and caring for Native materials requires ongoing collaboration to understand the profound connections between Native people and their cultural heritage held in museums. It also requires a deft understanding of past and present legal conditions, acknowledgement that historic exclusion from museums resulted in distrust, and an awareness that cultural sensitivity must be prioritized.

The development of appropriate cultural protocols for care, study, preservation, storage, and access are necessary for the development of trust. Ultimately, cultural preservation outweighs the risks associated with access, and as such, the most generous possible access for use of the collections is expected for Native communities.

This document is not meant to serve as a guide for NAGPRA processes. The resources pages in the back of this document will direct you to information on NAGPRA, its processes and consultation. There are areas where this document may fill in gaps where the federal law does not apply. Close working relationships defined in the pages that follow can help your museum navigate these issues.

Recommendations

B.1. The museum stewards, exhibits, and uses Native collections as appropriate to its mission, by:

a. Reviewing its mission in relation to its responsibility to Native cultural sensitivity and authority;
b. Ensuring that the collections policy accommodates Native ways of knowing, understanding, and caring for the Native collections in its care;
c. Being aware of and respecting limitations to the access and use of certain Native collections;
d. Curating exhibitions in collaboration with Native experts.

B.2. The museum legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections, by:

a. Recognizing that Native peoples have an inherent right to access their tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
b. Adhering to laws relating to Native collections management such as NAGPRA;
c. Understanding that museums may have different policies as they relate to different communities and collections. For example, Native collections might broadly have one set of care policies while another area of the museum might have another set;
d. Updating outdated, racist, or insensitive nomenclature in a collaborative manner;
e. Posting warnings or disclaimers about items or documentation that may be culturally sensitive;
f. Collaborating with communities to integrate cultural care methods into collections management and conservation;
g. Supporting collaborative conservation and curation processes including examination, documentation, decision-making and treatment;
h. Integrating community knowledge as standard practice into museum databases, as appropriate.
i. Developing a process for the protection of intangible knowledge.

B.3. The museum's collections-related research is conducted according to appropriate Native ethical standards.

a. Processes for collections related research are developed to include review, notification, and permissions from Tribal leadership for accessing potentially sensitive collections or conducting invasive and destructive analysis.
b. Native cultural protocols need to be considered as part of any collections-related research.

c. Community experts are recognized as having equal standing to Western-trained professionals and compensated accordingly.

d. Access to cultural collections should be prioritized for originating Native community members.

e. Encourage researchers to develop components within their projects that are inclusive of and beneficial to the community of origin.

f. Recognize that the outcomes of research on Native collections may have an impact on living Native communities.

g. Consider tribal opinions with regards to Institutional Review Boards (IRB), if applicable, especially if the tribe has their own board already established.

B.4. The museum strategically plans for engagement with and development of Native collections within its care.

a. Through collaboration with community members, the museum integrates Native protocols and consultation to guide its collections policies and procedures.

b. Where collecting scope allows, the full breadth of Native materials considered for acquisitions includes contemporary work, reflecting the continuity of cultures.

c. Collection policies are developed that reflect ethical standards and the interests of Native stakeholders. For example, a policy might require Native consultation before making decisions about destructive analyses.

d. When deciding upon materials for acquisition, the museum considers whether donations are more appropriate for a Tribal museum or cultural center, and makes the appropriate recommendations.

e. Museum policies should consider the complications and the needed tribal consultation involved with accepting items that are considered culturally sensitive or have questionable provenance/ provenience.

f. When considering the removal (including deaccessioning) of cultural materials from the museum, the community of origin should have first right of acceptance.

B.5. Guided by Native consultation, the museum provides culturally appropriate access, applies cultural protocols, and includes cultural use considerations in the policies for preservation and care, such as:

a. Including ceremonial use and cultural practice in loan, deaccession, and repatriation policies;

b. Providing transparency about pesticide treatments;

c. Offering a "clean hands" option rather than requiring gloves;

d. Notifying Native visitors about human remains and/or funerary objects in collections areas/ exhibitions prior to entrance;

e. Excluding collections from public access that are, or may be, culturally sensitive, and;

f. Recognizing that the cultural benefit of loaning to Tribal museums may outweigh conservation concerns.

C. Function Area: Education and Interpretation

AAM CORE STANDARD: Museum education enhances each visitor's ability to understand and appreciate museum collections, exhibitions and public programs.

The museum is dedicated to developing culturally informed narratives and appropriate materials for exhibitions and programming, utilizing Native knowledge content experts and in dialogue with Native stakeholder communities. Content should include a contemporary component to counter stereotypes, such as historic extinction narratives.

Recommendations

C.1. The museum is dedicated to overall educational goals, philosophies, and messages that are in line with its mission and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Native peoples. Native stakeholders are included in the development of that material. In line with these objectives, the museum:

a. Includes programs with Native peoples as developers, presenters and participants.

b. Prioritizes Native perspectives.

c. Counters stereotypes and misconceptions by highlighting complexity and sophistication of knowledge.

C.2. The museum understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential Native audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation. It also recognizes the pervasive misunderstandings about Native peoples among the general public and partners with Native advisors to create diverse, dynamic, and myth-busting interpretation and programs. Towards these ends, the museum:

a. Identifies the Native communities as an audience they serve.

b. Recognizes that local and originating communities are key stakeholders in the development of material for Native audiences.

c. Evaluates existing programs and exhibitions and identifies where Native inclusion and programming is absent.

d. Educates the public and is transparent about the role the museum has had in creating misunderstandings about Native peoples past and present. This, for example, might be done in the telling of how the institution was formed or through an extended land acknowledgment.

e. Creates opportunities for Native community participation and inclusion such as conducting outreach to schools and recruiting Native youth for internships.

C.3. To prioritize Native traditional knowledge and oral histories in interpretive content rather than relying solely on Western research and academic scholarship, the museum:

a. Involves Native advisors with the content and programming at the development stage and continues through execution of the exhibition or program.

b. Develops exhibitions featuring Native collections, including Native advisement from the appropriate communities or vetting by cultural knowledge keepers.

c. Prioritizes Native presenters who can share about their own communities and/or experiences in their respective fields.

d. Avoids culturally sensitive designs and subject matter when developing content and materials.

C.4. Museums conducting primary research utilize Native scholarship in addition to Western scholarship. In order to do so, they:

a. Seek out primary sources written by Native scholars, artists and other cultural knowledge keepers.

b. Recognize that Native primary resources can offer a deeper, more nuanced understanding than Western academic research, and should be prioritized in research efforts.

c. Conduct historic research and scholarship in dialogue with stakeholder Native communities, to ensure cultural protocols are followed and adhered to. In some cases, Tribes have already developed such protocols for research.

d. Develop and produce new research in collaboration with stakeholder Native community members.

e. Prioritize Native cultural and intellectual property rights, using proprietary information only with permission.

f. Recognize and reference unpublished content, adhering to the above.

C.5. Technologies, techniques, and methodologies utilized for interpretation are done in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. The museum endeavors to:

a. Recognize and reference already published content by Native authors, artists, and scholars and incorporate them into exhibits and programs.

b. Support the development of new content by Native community members.

C.6. The museum presents accurate and appropriate content by working closely with Native people on the development of that content. Towards that goal, the museum:

a. Recognizes the complex nature and histories of Native communities and presents this information as such.

b. Understands that many historical texts on Native American communities and cultures can reflect inaccurate and/or inappropriate content and should be carefully vetted before use.

c. Understands that one individual cannot speak for their entire Tribe, unless they have been appointed by that community as their spokesperson on a specific topic.

d. Hires Native interpreters to deliver this content wherever possible.

C.7. The museum understands that high quality Native-centered programs need to feature Native community perspectives and include participation when possible.

C.8. The museum seeks and implements Native perspectives in its surveys and assessments of its exhibits and programs.

a. The museum makes an effort to distribute these surveys to local communities and those whose land the museum resides on.

D. Function Area: Mission and Planning

AAM CORE STANDARD: A museum's mission guides museum activities and decisions by describing the purpose of a museum — its reason for existence.

A mission statement articulates that the museum understands its role and accountability to the public and its collections. While this may not be Native-centric, it can demonstrate institutional awareness of a multifaceted public responsibility. Native originating communities are members of the public and have unique connections to museum collections that should be considered when creating or revising mission statements.

Strategic planning produces a mutually agreed-upon vision of how the museum meets the needs of its audiences and communities. Such plans, covering all aspects of museum operations, should be actively relevant to Native stakeholders and should document diverse participation of Native communities in the planning process. Good plans establish measurable goals and methods by which the museum evaluates success in its inclusion efforts with Native communities. All staff should be aware of the museum's mission and strategic plan.

Recommendations

D.1. The museum has a clear understanding of how its mission impacts Native communities and how Native communities impact the museum. It recognizes its responsibility to Native stakeholders.

a. The museum partners with Native stakeholders to determine how the mission and strategic plan serves Native interests.

D.2. Native interests are considered in all aspects of operations as they relate to its mission.

a. The museum develops policies related to Native interests.

b. The museum conducts regular evaluations to ensure implementation, reporting those results to museum governance and identified Native stakeholders.

D.3. The museum makes a clear commitment to acquiring, developing, and allocating resources to engage and support Native interests that have been articulated in their mission and strategic plan.

D.4. The museum engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes consultation/collaboration with Native stakeholders.

a. The museum commits to including Native people in all facets of museum planning from the outset of these activities and throughout the process(es) as appropriate.

b. The museum's inclusion strategies support ongoing, meaningful engagement with Native communities.

D.5. The museum establishes measures of success through the application of these core standards. Its evaluation of success includes Native interests and feedback, articulated through meaningful community consultation, and implements and adjusts its activities accordingly.

a. The museum works with Native partners to identify mutual benefits and shared measures of success.

b. The measure of success for collaborative work may not be quantifiable but assessed in terms of the establishment of positive, long-term, and ongoing relationships between museums and Native constituencies.

c. The museum recognizes that success may take time and have a different meaning for Native communities.

d. The museum's strategic plan and goals should include specific goals related to Native engagement in ways that can be measured. This may include fulfilling recommendations within this document.

e. The museum conducts debriefings at the conclusion of collaborative projects with staff and Native partners to build dialogue and identify areas of improvement and opportunity.

E. Function Area: Leadership and Organizational Structure

AAM CORE STANDARD: The effective operation of a museum is based on a well-functioning governing authority that has a strong working relationship with the museum staff.

Inclusive governing authority and museum leadership are expected to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and to prove they are accountable to those stakeholder communities. Because museums with Native collections have a particular responsibility to Native communities, including Native peoples at all levels of the institutional structure is recommended, particularly at the board and executive leadership level. A Native advisory group is also key for supporting Native staff and board members.

Recommendations

E.1. In alignment with the museum's mission, the governance, staff, interns, and volunteer structures and processes support Native interests by:

a. Recognizing the barriers that prevent Native people from entering the museum field, and actively working to remove those barriers.

b. Formally evaluating the diversity of their governance, staff, interns, and volunteers, and creating dedicated positions to increase diversity where gaps exist.

c. Acknowledging the Native communities represented by their collections and those represented in the geographic location of the museum, and working toward including Tribal representatives among governance, staff, and volunteer structures.

E.2. The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities related to Native interests.

a. Cultural competency trainings are provided for all staff, volunteers and board. This includes administration and executive staff.

b. Staff, volunteers, and board are educated about the Native history of the area.

c. Onboarding materials are developed for staff and board related to the museum's responsibility to Native communities including these core standards.

d. Boundaries of professional roles are respected by recognizing that no one Native individual staff, board member, or volunteers should be expected to speak for all Native peoples. Roles and responsibilities of Native staff should be no different than those of non-Native staff in similar positions within the organization.

E.3. The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically and effectively carry out their responsibilities related to Native interests.

a. The museum recognizes Tribes as sovereign nations.

b. Board, staff, and volunteers are trained on Tribe-state-federal relationships and the laws that dictate these relationships such as Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990), the Antiquities Act (1906), Archaeological Resource Protection Act (1979), etc.

c. The museum has written, approved, and published a policy of non-discrimination.

d. The museum implements policies that include Native peoples and their interests in its functions, investments, and activities.

e. Governing authority, staff, interns, and volunteers acknowledge and support the unique relationship between collections and the communities from which they originate.

E.4. The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the museum's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out goals related to Native interests, by:

a. Actively recruiting Native peoples for board and staff positions at all levels;

b. Assessing and revising human resources processes to support the hiring of Native peoples. For example, Native cultural knowledge and experience should be given equal weight to formal education and should be compensated accordingly;

c. Providing flexibility to Native staff, board members, and volunteers to accommodate cultural responsibilities, and;

d. Promoting and supporting professional development of staff to increase understanding of Native cultures past and present.

F. Function Area: Financial Stability

AAM CORE STANDARD: Nonprofits like museums look to their constituencies for support in establishing and maintaining financial sustainability.

Transparent and solid fiscal performance can foster trust and demonstrate accountability to the public and funders, which include Native communities.

Recommendations

F.1. The museum legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances Native interests, as determined by sustained relationships with Native stakeholders.

a. Campaigns and donor outreach should include Native peoples and communities. Institutions should consider that community and Tribal priorities may limit contributions.

b. Avoid exploiting Native staff and volunteers for development purposes.

c. Commit to financially supporting the care, access, and programming for Native collections. This commitment extends to community outreach, events, and/or programming. It is the responsibility of the museum to continually support these initiatives and should be normalized as part of the annual budget.

d. Develop gift acceptance and acknowledgement policies that align with Native interests and ethics.

F.2. The museum plans for long term fiscal sustainability for the advancement of Native interests as determined by sustained relationships with Native stakeholders. These should include allocating funding for: the stewardship of Native collections; hiring and retention of Native staff, board members, and volunteers; engagement with communities; and regular Native programming and exhibitions.

G. Function Area: Facilities and Risk Management

AAM CORE STANDARD: Museums care for their resources in trust for the public. It is incumbent upon them to ensure the safety of their staff, visitors, and neighbors, maintain their buildings and grounds, and minimize risk to the collections that they preserve for future generations.

For Native visitors and staff, risk and safety may extend beyond the physical to include cultural sensitivities, protocols, and historic trauma associated with museums that could affect an individual's well-being. Additional risk may include the loss of cultural knowledge related to deterioration of collections items and archival materials. By acknowledging and addressing these risks, museums can create a welcoming and safe place for Native communities, staff, and visitors.

Recommendations

G.1. The museum works with Native advisors to identify and be responsive to the physical needs of the community, collections, visitors, and staff as they relate to Native concerns.

a. The museum facility has areas that can be used for quiet and/or private contemplation, prayer, and quiet discussion, or any other need of Native staff and visitors such as seating for Elders.

b. The museum provides access to spaces for Native community gatherings.

c. Facility policies are implemented to accommodate the ceremonial needs of Native visitors and staff. This may include providing spaces for and negotiating safe practices related to the placement or use of organic materials as offerings or cleansing, including within collections and exhibition spaces.

d. The museum protects Native staff and visitors from exposure or proximity to culturally sensitive materials, human remains, burial items, or posted images of remains or burial items. Conferring with appropriate Tribal authorities can help museums find solutions. These may include providing separate facilities or spaces where the items in question can be segregated, coverings over objects or spaces, or clear signage.

e. The museum provides private spaces where tribal visitors can be alone with the collection (to be able to visit with their ancestors and relatives in a healthy way).

f. The museum provides a place for eating and nourishment for people.

g. In consultation with appropriate communities, the facility may develop processes for the proper disposal of materials associated with sensitive collections, such as storage mounts/frames/etc., when appropriate.

h. Cultural appropriateness is taken into consideration, such as the placement of cameras in storage areas. For example, Native communities may not want cameras in spaces with culturally sensitive materials/human remains.

G.2. The museum works with Native communities to develop and implement an effective and culturally appropriate plan for the proper maintenance and long-term growth and updating of its facilities, including the housing of Native collections.

a. Cultural protocols are considered with this care, including pest management.

b. Outside vendors and staff should be advised of cultural protocols that are in place for Native collections and museum spaces.

c. Financial support is provided for the care and long-term maintenance of these facilities.

d. Processes are developed for renovation of current facilities.

G.3. The cleaning, maintenance, and monitoring of museum facilities holding and exhibiting Native collections is part of a preventive, non-toxic, and non-invasive approach to care, including pest control.

a. Cultural protocols are followed to maintain the appropriate physical and cultural care of, and access to, the space.

G.4. The Museum incorporates appropriate Native cultural protocols when defining risk and loss to the museum. It recognizes that western museological standards of risk may differ from Native views.

a. The museum works with Native communities on evacuation procedures and notification protocols in the event of disasters or loss.

b. The museum works with Native communities to develop priority lists for evacuation and procedures for culturally appropriate handling guidelines for sensitive collections during disaster recovery.

c. Ethical, legal, and reputational risks such as those relating to Native identity or collecting sensitive materials should be considered.

Glossary

Collaboration
Collaborations between museums and communities are built on a foundation of positive, ongoing relationships. The deep expertise and perspectives of Native partners are recognized as essential to the accuracy and cultural appropriateness of work in museums with Native American collections. From conservation to public programs and fundraising, collaboration is a transparent, reciprocal, and iterative process rather than an extractive one, and includes activities such as decision making, implementation of programs, and governance. Each collaboration is unique to the people and institutions involved, but all are rooted in relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

Consultation
Consultation implies a short and focused session between museum staff and community members, rather than a long-term relationship. A consultation, whether NAGPRA or not, has the potential to become a collaboration, and therefore be designed to employ the principles of collaboration in terms of providing a positive experience, shared authority, and respect for indigenous expertise and knowledge.

Community/Native advisor(s)
Subject experts may include members of a particular cultural group, representatives, or delegates from the tribal council, historic preservation office staff, or cultural leaders. Selection of appropriate advisors depends on the nature of the project and subject matter.

Cultural and intellectual property rights
The right to protect cultural knowledge (tangible and intangible) belonging to a particular Native group, including but not limited to, aspects of cultural heritage represented in the visual arts, literature, and performing arts, as well as in science and traditional medicines.
For more information, see UNDRIP in the References section.

Culturally appropriate
To be responsive to, and affirming of, a culture's beliefs and values, ethical norms, language needs, religion, and individual differences.

Cultural belongings
Items, both individual and communal, that are tied to heritage and ancestral significance. This term is often used to replace the term "objects."

Cultural competency and sensitivity (also cultural humility)
The capacity to engage sensitively and respectfully with communities and individuals from Native cultures. Although constantly a learning process, a training may provide museum staff with information relevant to the Native group or groups represented or whom they are working with, including history, culture, contemporary life, and political issues, addressing settler privilege and biases associated with Native Americans. Trainings often provide tools on how to better engage, collaborate, and navigate cultural differences.

Cultural patrimony
A cultural belonging that is owned collectively by the cultural group or sub-group itself, rather than property owned by an individual. For a full definition as applied under NAGPRA, see https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/glossary.htm

Cultural protocols
An agreed set of guidelines or procedures that govern etiquette and behavior within a particular community in order to uphold the community's cultural norms. They are embedded within a community's cultural belief system and make visible the position of communities as custodians of traditional knowledge. These vary from group to group.

Descendant and affiliated communities
Descendant and affiliated groups and individuals have a direct lineal affiliation to the collections and their origin community. The National Park Service adds that "cultural affiliation should be based upon an overall evaluation of the totality of the circumstances and evidence pertaining to the connection between the claimant and the material being claimed and should not be precluded solely because of some gaps in the record." As such, descendant and affiliated communities may include individuals from non-recognized tribes in addition to state and federally recognized tribes.

Federally recognized Tribes
A federally recognized Tribe is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the attached responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations. There are 574 federally recognized Indian Nations (variously called tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages) in the United States. Approximately 229 of these ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nations are located in Alaska; the other federally recognized tribes are located in 35 other states. Additionally, there are state recognized Tribes located throughout the United States recognized by their respective state governments.

"Indian Problem"
In the 1950s, the United States came up with a plan to solve what it called the "Indian Problem." It would assimilate Native Americans by moving them to cities and eliminating reservations. The 20-year campaign failed to erase Native Americans, but its effects on Native peoples are still felt today.

Intangible cultural heritage/knowledge
See Tangible and intangible cultural heritage/knowledge.

Land Acknowledgement
A formal statement to acknowledge the primacy of indigenous people and the lands from which they come. For more about land acknowledgments, see Landacknowledgements.org

Native
A complex and nuanced term, Native essentially means indigenous to or having biological, cultural, and social ties to a place (See Guidelines for Museums Recognizing US Tribal Identity). For the purposes of this document, we are speaking specifically about Native Americans.

Native Expert (see Community/Native Advisor)

Non-recognized Tribe (also Unrecognized Tribe)
A Native American community that is not designated as a state recognized or federally-recognized Tribe. According to the National Congress of the American Indian, "Non-recognized tribes face the arduous task of submitting applications for federal acknowledgment that satisfy the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Part 83 Criteria. These criteria are extensive and are meant to ensure that recognized tribes are district autonomous communities, existing as such since historical times and recognized as such prior to 1900. In many instances, non-recognized tribes find it difficult and costly to compile the historical data expected to supplement applications for acknowledgement. However, tribes may also seek recognition through the less arduous process of Congressional legislation."

Red Power Movement
Social movement led by Native Americans to demand self-determination for Native Americans in the United States. Organizations that were part of the Red Power Movement included the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), among others.

Removed Tribes
The United States governmental policy of forced displacement of Native Americans from their ancestral homelands. For example, in the eastern United States, tribes were removed to lands west of the Mississippi River — specifically, to a designated Indian Territory (roughly, present-day Oklahoma.)

Sacred Objects
Under NAGPRA, sacred objects are defined as "Specific ceremonial objects which are needed by traditional Native American religious leaders for the practice of traditional Native American religions by their present day adherents." [25 USC 3001 (3)(C)]

Sensitivities surrounding human remains
According to the Guidelines for Collaboration, "**Human Remains:** The presence of human remains in museum spaces can be a serious issue for many communities. People may not want to be near or see human remains. Talk with the community contact about human remains in your museum's collection to determine if there are concerns about being in the vicinity of remains, including those from other cultures. Discuss what accommodations can be made, such as avoiding certain areas in the museums. Be aware that images of human remains can be an equally sensitive issue." In addition, the remains themselves and how they are stewarded may require specific accommodation.

Shared Stewardship (also stewardship)
In contrast to outright ownership, shared stewardship is a philosophy supporting shared authority in how collections are managed and interpreted and inviting engagement on all other areas of museum operations.

State Recognized Tribe
According to the Administration for Native Americans, "State recognized tribes are Indian tribes and heritage groups that are recognized by individual states for their various internal state government purposes. State recognition does not confer benefits under federal law unless federal law authorizes such benefits…According to a 2013 listing of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), there are sixteen states that have recognized Indian tribes (i.e., Native American groups with self-government

authority) outside of the federal processes—Alabama, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington. State recognized Indian tribes are not federally recognized, but federally recognized tribes may also be state recognized.

Source communities
Cultural groups and/or communities from which collection items originate.

Sovereignty
"Sovereignty is a legal word for an ordinary concept — the authority to self-govern. Hundreds of treaties, along with the Supreme Court, the President, and Congress, have repeatedly affirmed that tribal nations retain their inherent powers of self-government. These treaties, executive orders, and laws have created a fundamental contract between tribal nations and the United States. Tribal nations are located within the geographic borders of the United States, while each tribal nation exercises its own sovereignty." For more about sovereignty, see: Indian_Country_101_Updated_February_2019.pdf (ncai.org) (page 18)

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage/knowledge
Cultural heritage does not end at tangible monuments and collections of objects. It also includes intangible traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors and passed on to descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festival events, and traditional ecological knowledge, or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional arts.

Tribal Leadership
Appointed or elected officials that represent a Native community in intertribal, state, and federal matters.

Other Guidelines Documents

Guidelines for Collaboration

Guidelines for Museums Recognizing US Tribal Identity for Exhibitions, Collections, and Research Purposes

International Council of Museums - ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums

Protocols for Native American Archival Materials

Smithsonian Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (unesco.org)

Laws and Acts

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), 1978, "protects the rights of Native Americans to exercise their traditional religions by ensuring access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites." (Citation: 42 U.S.C. § 1996)

The Antiquities Act (16 U.S.C. 431-433), 1906, was the first United States law to provide general protection for any general kind of cultural or natural resource. It established the first national historic preservation policy for the United States. (Citation: 225, 54 U.S.C. §§ 320301–320303)

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, also referred to as ARPA, is a federal law passed in 1979 and amended in 1988. It governs the excavation of archaeological sites on Federal and Indian lands in the United States, and the removal and disposition of archaeological collections from those sites. (Citation: 96–95, §1, Oct. 31, 1979, 93 Stat. 721)

The Dawes Act, 1887, " 'An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations,' known as the Dawes Act, emphasized severalty — the treatment of Native Americans as individuals rather than as members of tribes." (Citation: Statutes at Large 24, 388-91, NADP Document A1887, National Archives)

The Indian Arts and Crafts Act (IACA), 1990, "prohibits misrepresentation in marketing of American Indian or Alaska Native arts and crafts products within the United States. It is illegal to offer or display for sale, or sell any art or craft product in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian or Indian Tribe or Indian arts and crafts organization, resident within the United States." (Citation: Public Law 101-644, U.S.C.)

The Indian Removal Act, 1830, "was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson on May 28, 1830, authorizing the president to grant lands west of the Mississippi in exchange for Indian lands within existing state borders. A few tribes went peacefully, but many resisted the relocation policy. During the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839, the Cherokees were forcibly moved west by the United States government. Approximately 4,000 Cherokees died on this forced march, which became known as the 'Trail of Tears.' " U.S. Department of State, Office of The Historian: Indian Treaties and the Removal Act of 1830 (Citation: Public Law. 21-148, U.S.C.)

Indian Territory. According to the Library of Congress, "In the early nineteenth century a movement began in the United States to remove Indian tribes from their ancestral lands in the rapidly developing eastern states and settle them in the newly acquired lands west of the Mississippi River. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 established the government policy of relocating the eastern tribes to a separate, reserved "Indian Territory" on the Great Plains. A chronology of contemporaneous maps of the Indian territory reveals the continuous loss of portions of this reserved land, owing to the pressure from non-Indian settlers and the commercial interests in opening Indian lands for non-Indian use. By the 1870s, Indian Territory — which had once extended from the present Texas-Oklahoma border to the Nebraska-Dakota border — had shrunk to encompass only what is today most of the state of Oklahoma. The Geography and Map Division has a strong collection of maps, both federally and commercially published, which document the diminishing of Indian Territory. There is also good coverage of Indian and Oklahoma Territories from the post-Civil War period to 1907 (when the remaining portions of Indian Territory

were incorporated into the newly formed state of Oklahoma), and maps of individual parcels of land, such as the "Cherokee Outlet," which were ceded to the United States and opened for non-Indian settlement."

The National Historic Preservation Act, 1966, "was passed primarily to acknowledge the importance of protecting our nation's heritage from rampant federal development. It was the triumph of more than a century of struggle by a grassroots movement of committed preservationists." (Citation: Public Law 89-665; 54 U.S.C.)

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), 1990, "was enacted to outline a requirement and process for museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items (including human remains) to lineal descendants, culturally affiliated Indian tribes, or Native Hawaiian organizations." It should be noted that NAGPRA only applies to federally recognized tribes, which often excludes opportunities for repatriation by state and non-recognized tribes. (Citation: 3001 et seq., 104 Stat. 3048)

The National Museum of the American Indian Act (NMAI) was enacted on November 28, 1989, as Public Law 101-185. The law established the National Museum of the American Indian as part of the Smithsonian Institution. (Citation: Pub.L. 101–185)

The Potlatch Ban was legislation forbidding the practice of the potlatch passed by the Federal Government of Canada in 1885 and lasting until 1951, under the Indian Act (Loi sur les Indiens, also known as An Act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians), a Canadian act of Parliament.

The Tamaki Makau-rau Accord on the Display of Human Remains and Sacred Objects. Adopted in 2006 by the World Archaeological Congress, and in recognition of the principles adopted by the Vermillion Accord, this document recognizes the display of human remains and sacred objects as a sensitive issue. It provides principles to be taken into account by any person or organization considering displaying or already doing so. This includes taking into account cultural appropriateness and obtaining permission from the affected community or communities.

The Vermillion Accord on Human Remains was created in 1989 and adopted at the World Archeological Inter-Congress, South Dakota, USA, in 1990. The Vermillion Accord is a set of six clauses adopted by the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) which concerns science and the treatment of the dead. It is of high significance to the archaeological profession and Indigenous groups, and its development and adoption is a key moment in the history of the reburial movement. The Vermillion Accord was the first document developed together by archaeologists and Indigenous people to provide a set of principles for behavior, decision making, and mutually agreed ethical approaches to the question of archaeological (and other scientific) interest in the mortal remains of the dead.

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Young Sugpiat men with their completed model angyaat. Photo by Sven Haakanson.

Page 29:
Ramah Navajo Weavers and staff members from the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture examine a Navajo dress woven around 1850 and a Navajo rug from around 1940. Photo by Landis Smith.

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