

Museums as Sites of Decolonization

*Truth Telling in National
and Tribal Museums*

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Beginnings

The beginnings of this project are rooted in my previous work on the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and its presentation of Indigenous history and memory in their exhibitions. In May 2007 I completed a coedited volume on the NMAI with Amanda J. Cobb entitled *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*. While working on this volume, I also had the pleasure of presenting my scholarship on the NMAI to a range of audiences at scholarly and museum-related conferences, which afforded opportunities for me to wrestle with my ideas regarding the NMAI's significance to the changing historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and museums. In my scholarship on the NMAI, I have asserted that, while the museum advances an important collaborative methodology in their exhibitions, their historical exhibits fail to present a clear and coherent understanding of colonialism and its ongoing effects. My critiques focus mostly on the institution's presentation of Native American history in the gallery *Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories*, which I argue conflates Indigenous understanding of history with a postmodernist presentation of history and, secondly, fails to tell the hard truths of colonization and the genocidal acts that have been committed against Indigenous people.¹ I focus on the second of these two issues in the discussion that follows. Given the silences around the subject of colonialism and its ongoing ef-

fects, I argue that the museum fails to serve as a site of truth telling and remembering and that it remains very much an institution of the nation-state. Thus, I caution against referring to this site as a "tribal museum writ large" or, even more problematically, as a "decolonizing museum," which both scholars and NMAI staff members have done.

My desire to complicate the discourse on the NMAI stems from my concerns about the co-optation of the language of decolonization by scholars who assert that this institution is a decolonizing museum. In an article published shortly after the museum's opening, Australian archaeologist Claire Smith argues, "As a National Museum charting new territory, the NMAI is leading a nation down a path of understanding and reconciliation. . . . A cultural and spiritual emblem on the National Mall of Washington DC, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian exemplifies decolonization in practice. Through being consciously shaped by the classification systems, worldviews, and philosophies of its Indigenous constituency, this new national museum is claiming moral territory for Indigenous peoples, in the process reversing the impact of colonialism and asserting the unique place of Native peoples in the past, present, and future of the Americas."²

The assertion by Claire Smith that the NMAI is a "decolonizing museum . . . reversing the impact of colonialism" ignores the absence of a clear and consistent discussion of colonization throughout their museum. This type of discussion is critical, for, as Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird argue, "The first step toward decolonization then is to question the legitimacy of colonization."³ The silence around the history of colonialism throughout the Americas at the NMAI fails to challenge the public's steadfast refusal to face this nation's genocidal policies that had, and continue to have, a devastating impact on Indigenous people. Nor does this silence assist Native communities in recognizing how colonialism has affected all areas of their lives, including how to embark on the necessary changes to move toward decolonization and community healing.

Another point of concern is Smith embracing the idea that the NMAI is "leading a nation down a path of understanding and reconciliation." This seems presumptive given that the U.S. government has never formally apologized to Indigenous people nor is there a reparations process in place. Canadian scholar Pauline Wakeham in her article, "Per-

forming Reconciliation at the NMAI: Postcolonial Rapprochement and the Politics of Historical Closure,” highlights the process by which the NMAI, through its opening ceremonies, “bypasses any performance of apology for colonial injustices and moves straight to a joyous, de-politicized celebration of reconciliation.”⁴ Even though her emphasis in this argument was on the opening ceremonies of the museum, I would argue that this desire to move to a “joyous, de-politicized celebration of reconciliation” permeates the entire institution and is certainly reflected in its exhibitions. The exhibits in all three of the permanent galleries at the NMAI fail to explicitly address the hard truths of colonization and imply that this is a closed chapter in our history.

I want to make it clear that I am not discounting the role that Native American knowledge systems played in influencing aspects of the development of the NMAI, nor am I dismissing the museum’s important collaborative methodology with Indigenous communities throughout the Western Hemisphere. But this alone is not decolonization.

The NMAI represents the most ambitious collaborative project to date, and collaboration and the inclusion of Native voice in all aspects of museum practice reflects the most important new direction in the last thirty-plus years of our relationships to mainstream museums. Instead, my goal is to raise awareness of the complicated identity of the NMAI, which reflects a still-evolving relationship between Indigenous peoples and museums, and to caution against referring to the NMAI as a decolonizing museum or as a form of “museological reconciliation” achieved that can problematically “lend itself to complicity with and co-optation by the state for the purposes of staging postcolonial rapprochement via the cultural milieu of museums,” as Pauline Wakeham argues.⁵

Decolonizing Representations: Truth Telling in Exhibitions

While attempting to complicate the discourse on the NMAI, I have been faced with several questions regarding how to effectively present Indigenous history within exhibition spaces. In essence, if there are problems with this particular national museum’s presentation of Native American history, how does one effectively represent the complicated and challenging history that both addresses the hard truths of colonization and also

honors Indigenous understandings of history? Furthermore, if I caution against referring to the NMAI as an example of a decolonizing museum, what would a “decolonizing museum” look like?

During my research at both national and tribal museums over the last ten years, I have been greatly influenced by the work of those Indigenous intellectuals who have been working in the area of decolonization, and I have been thinking critically about how museums can serve as sites of decolonization. Indigenous scholars Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird recently assembled a collection of essays focusing on decolonization strategies for Native communities, which has greatly informed my analysis. In this volume, *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, nine intellectuals from a range of tribal and disciplinary backgrounds provide insights into the work that needs to take place in Indian Country to bring about decolonization and healing for our communities. The purpose of this volume is to encourage critical thinking skills so as to “mobilize a massive decolonization movement in North America.”⁶ The contributors powerfully and persuasively illustrate the “importance of understanding how colonization has taken root in our lives” and explore how to counteract the devastating impact of colonialism by encouraging critical thinking on Indigenous governance, education, citizenship, diet, language, repatriation, and stereotypes and images.

In *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, a compelling final essay by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson emphasizes the importance of truth telling and calls for a truth commission in the United States, similar to truth commissions that took place in South Africa and other parts of the world, to address the ongoing and systematic attacks on Indigenous bodies, land, sovereignty, and lifeways that have continued to occur throughout the Western Hemisphere. She states that this is necessary to bring about the healing of our communities and to empower future generations of Indigenous people. Additionally, the only way for Native people to heal from the historical trauma that we have experienced—genocidal warfare, land theft, ethnic cleansing, disease, and the attempted destruction of our religious and ceremonial life at the hands of the government and Christian churches—is for us to speak the truth about what has happened, document the suffering, and name the perpetrators of the violence in our history. Wilson

argues that, given the steadfast denial of Americans to face this history, truth telling becomes a crucial part of the decolonization process.⁷

Furthermore, in speaking the truth about the violence in our history, we are also ensuring that future generations can never claim ignorance of this history. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu states, regarding the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "No one in South Africa could ever again be able to say, 'I didn't know,' and hoped to be believed."⁸

This call for truth telling as a decolonizing strategy is critical, and our museums should serve as sites where the hard truths are told honestly and specifically. We need to make sure that our museums include the difficult stories that serve to challenge deeply embedded stereotypes—not just the ones of Native disappearance that museum presentations of the past have reinforced in the nation's consciousness, but the willed ignorance of this nation to face its colonialist past and present. In my years studying exhibits that have been related to Native Americans, I have found that most contemporary museums are successful in producing exhibits that challenge the vanishing-Indian stereotype by emphasizing contemporary survival and sustained presence; but they have had limited success in presenting a hard-hitting analysis of colonization. I believe it is time for a more careful and critical discussion of how the hard truths of Native American history are presented in our museums of the twenty-first century. Truth telling is a critical aspect to decolonization, and our museums need to assist in these efforts. As Taiaiake Alfred states,

Decolonization . . . is a process of discovering the truth in a world created out of lies. It is thinking through what we think we know to what is actually true but is obscured by knowledge derived from our experiences as colonized peoples. The truth is the main struggle, and the struggle is manifest mainly inside our own heads. From there, it goes to our families and our communities and reverberates outward into the larger society, beginning to shape our relationship with it. In a colonized reality, our struggle is with all existing forms of political power, and to this fight, we bring our only real weapon: the power of truth.⁹

It is the absence of the hard truths of the specifics of Native-white relations at the NMAI that have led me to view this site as a missed opportunity

to educate and assist tribal communities in efforts toward decolonization and healing. I am left then with the question of how museum exhibitions can effectively disrupt colonial constructions of Native history and culture, engage in truth telling, and also honor Indigenous understandings of history and contemporary survival. I believe that I have found a place that is very successful in achieving these complex goals and that reflects a decolonizing museum practice in a tribal museum.

The Ziibiwing Center: Indigenizing Museum Practice

I first visited the Saginaw Chippewa's Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in May 2006 while attending a tribal museum development symposium on their reservation. I have since returned for numerous research visits. What became immediately apparent during my first visit is how this community center embodies a decolonizing museum practice and creates an engaging learning experience for visitors. The 32,000-square-foot facility includes a state-of-the-art research center, a gift shop and café, and a 9,000-square-foot exhibition space that features the history, philosophy, and culture of the Saginaw Chippewa community as told from their perspective. This cultural center, though unique in content, grows out of an emerging movement of large-scale, tribal-museum development of the last twenty years that includes places such as the Museum at Warm Springs (Warm Springs, Oregon), the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute (Pendleton, Oregon), the Mille Lacs Indian Museum (Onamia, Minnesota), and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (Mashantucket, Connecticut).¹⁰

The Ziibiwing Center reflects some of the most current and innovative exhibition strategies, including exhibitions that are more thematic than object centered; film presentations and multimedia that are state of the art; more storytelling and first-person voice; and, most significantly, emphasis on twentieth-century survival within the context of what Native people survived in the first place.¹¹ The museum provides an engaging and in-depth presentation of Saginaw Chippewa history and culture in the permanent exhibition *Diba Jimooyung: Telling Our Story*, which opened in 2004. A range of topics are covered in the gallery, including precontact Anishinabe history and seasonal living; tribal creation stories and the oral tradition; first contact with Europeans; the lasting lega-

cies of colonization; and contemporary issues such as language revitalization efforts, protection of tribal sovereignty, gaming, repatriation efforts, and reclaiming and revitalizing Saginaw Chippewa culture and identity today.

What I will highlight here is the Ziibiwing Center's treatment of two themes that I believe represent the best interpretative strategies and reflect a decolonizing agenda: (1) their representation of history that reflects more closely an Indigenous understanding of history (as opposed to a postmodern sense of history) through a presentation of the oral tradition and (2) their ability to speak the hard truths of colonization in their exhibitions.

As Indigenous peoples, we have long established that we have a different way of understanding history than non-Native people, the most important differentiation being our adherence to the oral tradition. As Wilson states, "We have our own theories about history, as well as our own interpretations and sense of history, in which our stories play a central role."¹² The privileging of the oral tradition is what happens on the exhibition floor at the Ziibiwing Center and provides the overarching framework for the visitor to engage with Anishinabe history and culture. Through their presentation of the oral tradition within the exhibits, this museum engages with the best emerging scholarship in Native American history, which seeks to "position oral traditions as vehicles to create histories that better reflect Native people's perspectives on the past."¹³

The exhibitions highlight the "Seven Prophecies/Seven Fires" of the Anishinabe people, which are part of their oral tradition. The museum is organized around the prophecies, and this is a very effective and intimate manner in which to narrate their history. As visitors travel through their 9,000-square-foot exhibition, each of these prophecies is introduced on text panels; and visitors then hear the prophecy—spoken first in Anishinabe, followed by an English translation. The prophecies are the narrative thread that connects the contents of the museum and provides an understanding of their tribal philosophies and spirituality.¹⁴

By representing historical events within the context of the prophecies instead of through a rigid adherence to the specifics of U.S.-Indian relations, the museum is engaging in an important decolonizing strategy that privileges the oral tradition and Indigenous conceptions of history. The historical material is in there, but it is presented in a tribally based frame-

work of understanding history that illustrates the themes of the prophecies. A case in point is their treatment of history within the fifth prophecy, their time of separation and struggle during the nineteenth century, which I will elaborate upon in a moment.

Another important point about their desire to have the prophecies be the overarching narrative structure is that the museum, while honoring tribal understanding of history, also provided a well-organized structure in which the visitor can engage with the material. There is organization in this museum—and it is definitely clear and coherent while introducing new knowledge to the visitor.

The uniqueness of the Ziibiwing approach, having oral tradition be the guiding narrative structure for the museum, builds and expands upon other previous efforts at sites that I have visited and studied. In my research on the Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Onamia, Minnesota (a collaborative project with the Minnesota Historical Society and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe), the museum's exhibition narrative—while informed by oral histories of past and present band members, several of whom are quoted throughout the museum—is not organized to follow the oral tradition as an overarching framework.

I offer this recollection not to disrespect the choices of the Mille Lacs Band advisory board but to contextualize the significance of the Ziibiwing Center's staff decision to have the prophecies be the organizing structure of the museum. I have witnessed changes in tribal-museum development over the last fourteen years, and it is important to acknowledge these changes. In the case of the Mille Lacs Band, the decisions of the advisory board were based on their own unique identities and circumstances as a collaborative project with the Minnesota Historical Society at a particular moment in time, which served their interests and the needs of their intended audience. But in the case of the Ziibiwing Center, the staff members felt it was appropriate to share their oral tradition and spirituality, and as one staff member recognized, "We tried something that we felt was very daring and unusual, but made sense to us."¹⁵

Narrating the Hard Truths of Colonization

The second point I would like to make regarding the effectiveness of the narrative strategy at the Ziibiwing Center relates to their presentation of colonization. The community's desire to build this museum had every-

thing to do with wanting it to be a site of “knowledge making and remembering” for their community and also a place where the difficult stories could be told.¹⁶ As one staff member stated, “We felt by building this facility and acknowledging our past, it would allow us to begin a healing process for our community and the communities that surround us. Years of generational trauma, experienced as a result of years of oppression and alienation, have left our community with many blanks in their communal history.”¹⁷

By narrating their history in this museum, the community did not shy away from speaking the hard truths of colonization and the lasting legacies in their community. A significant amount of floor space at the museum is devoted to emphasizing their survival within a colonial context—a direct challenge to stereotypical displays that were produced in the past that emphasized Native disappearance in the wake of westward expansion. However, the museum does not avoid telling the difficult stories of land theft, disease, poverty, violence, and forced conversion at the hands of Christian missionaries. The context of what makes their survival so amazing and worthy of celebration is their treatment of colonization in the preceding sections. And they devote a considerable amount of floor space in the museum to address important contemporary issues and Saginaw Chippewa survivance. However, there are no silences about the forces that sought to destroy them. For example, we can look at the following text panel that occurs in the section of their museum focusing on the effects of colonization. Additionally, notice their use of the active voice:

Gichi Ogimaa Do Naakonigewinan
The Laws/Rules Made by the Government

The United States government implemented many policies that were destructive to our way of life.

Government policies included ruthless efforts to remove the Anishinabek from their lands. Genocide, smallpox, and forced removal were ways to secure the highly valuable and fertile grounds of the Michigan Territory. For the Anishinabek who would not move, the government brought an era of cruel acculturation through the establishment of government and missionary schools.¹⁸

They also do not shy away from speaking about the devastating impact of alcoholism, which they describe as a “weapon of exploitation”:

Waawiindimaagewinan Gii Zhichigaadek
When the Promises Were Made

This is how a treaty signing may have looked.

An interpreter, hired by the government, “translated” the negotiations between the two nations. Many gifts were brought to the treaty table as “gestures” of goodwill, including alcohol. Alcohol was a foreign substance to the Anishinabek and we had no context for its use. It was intentionally used as a weapon of exploitation.¹⁹

In this section of their museum, where the hard truths are spoken in the Effects of Colonization Gallery, the exhibits focus on the tragic period in their history that includes “loss of land, life, and language.” The design elements in this section illustrate this sense of intense pressure—it is here that the walls literally begin to narrow, thus giving a sense that the world is closing in on them. This gallery relays a painful story, which is done so effectively by layering information and including voiceovers and images that provide a visual break to the painful stories visitors are reading. The maps, text panels, images of their ancestors, and treaties, all provide an important context on this devastating period of the fifth prophecy, which “foretold that the Anishinabek would encounter separation and struggle for many generations.”²⁰

The use of audio in this section is very effective. In one area, visitors hear voices of individuals who are reading some of the documents featured on nearby text panels. The words of Ojibwe leaders and government officials such as Lewis Cass and John Hudson are all heard as you walk through this space. Listening to the venomous language of the colonizers is very difficult, and the exhibit strategically makes sure that no one misses hearing these words. It is easy to pass by and not read a text panel, but it is another thing entirely to miss these words as they are repeated over and over again overhead as you move through this space. Listening to the deep-seated hatred of someone that Lewis Cass and others had for the Ojibwe people is an emotional experience, and the exhibit makes it almost impossible to avoid this.

Another important point about the impact of this section is that it touches upon the intergenerational trauma that was experienced during this period and connects the social problems of today to what happened in the past. The community is also not afraid to acknowledge that there are problems they still must confront as a result of the effects of colonization, and I greatly respect their willingness to speak of what we as Indigenous people know but are somewhat reluctant to talk about within a museum context. All too often our concern of coming across as if we are subscribing to the language of victimization, or perhaps the more legitimate concern that this information could potentially reinforce stereotypes, prevents us from speaking the hard truths about our present social problems and connecting those issues to the colonization process. In an effort to “acknowledge our past . . . and begin a healing process for our communities and the communities that surround us,” the curators at the Ziibiwing Center bravely state,

**Gichi Aakoziwin Miinawaa Nibowin
Great Illness and Death**

Government policies resulted in profound health problems for the Anishinabek.

The Anishinabek fell into poverty and despair from our loss of land and livelihood. The settlers brought diseases for which the Anishinabek had no immunity or cure. Many villages were completely wiped out by these new sicknesses. Tuberculosis and mass burials were common. The Anishinabek suffered greatly and we still suffer the effects of this era today. Due to the poverty that we have endured, health problems such as diabetes, tuberculosis, heart disease, and alcoholism still plague us.²¹

During the planning process, audience evaluations were conducted with community members and museum professionals to assess the effectiveness of particular sections, and feedback on the Effects of Colonization Gallery indicated that this “was a very painful and emotional era for people to visit, see, and hear.”²² In light of this information, the curators decided to provide a place where people could collect their thoughts and have a moment of reflection after witnessing these painful truths. In an

attempt to provide a healing space so as to “not leave . . . open wounds in the hearts of our people,”²³ the exhibition team developed a gallery entitled Blood Memory. This unique exhibit is very effective, engaging, and profoundly moving.

As you are standing in the latter part of the Effects gallery, audio is used effectively to draw you toward the Blood Memory space, which has a curvilinear, almost womb-like design and the healing smell of cedar.²⁴ You begin to hear a heartbeat and a beautiful song that three women from the community are singing. The singing helps pull you forward from the difficult space in colonization to this healing space. The following text panel introduces this concept:

**Mindjimendamowin
Blood Memory**

Blood memory is an inherent connection we have to our spirituality, ancestors, and all of Creation.

Blood memory can be described as the emotions we feel when we hear the drum or our language for the first time. The Creator gives these emotions to us at birth. We use these emotions or blood memories to understand our heritage and our connection to our ancestors. Blood memory makes these connections for us.

Today, many Anishinabek use their blood memory to relearn our language. Our beautiful and descriptive language is deeply rooted in the land and our connections to it. As more and more Anishinabek recall their blood memory, our language and our spirituality will be spoken for the next Seven Generations.²⁵

Included in the Blood Memory space is a display with beautiful objects that have been made by tribal individuals, objects that are meant to convey this important “take home message”: even through the darkest and most painful period in their modern history the Saginaw Chippewa ancestors managed to create works of great beauty. The display case *Creating Beautiful Things in Difficult Times* features beautiful beadwork items including bandolier bags, vests, belts, and leggings with labels identifying specific objects.

The idea that these objects embody the strength of their ancestors re-

flects an important point made by Ruth Phillips: "Historical objects are witnesses, things that were there, then. They bear their makers' marks in their weaves, textures, and shapes, and have a compelling agency to cause people living in the present to enunciate their relationships to the past."²⁶ The relationship to the past embodied in the Ziibiwing Center objects connects contemporary tribal members to their ancestors and artistic traditions, and it conveys an important message of tribal strength, which is a part of their identity as Saginaw Chippewa.

By presenting examples of their rich artistic tradition in this manner, the museum is providing a unique perspective on early twentieth-century material culture. While I have seen many museums present these types of objects in a manner that challenge age-old art versus ethnographic categories or that demonstrates cultural continuance by placing contemporary objects nearby, this is the first place I have seen an effort to explicitly have these objects illuminate survival during the "crying time." Their presence reminds tribal members of their ancestor's strength and endurance.

The Effects of Colonization Gallery along with the Blood Memory Gallery, in my mind, represent one of the most effective methods that a tribal museum can use to assist community members in the truth telling and healing processes. The Ziibiwing Center did not shy away from telling the difficult stories. But alongside those stories they also provided a healing place where tribal members could gain strength from understanding and reclaiming their rich cultural inheritance and identity.

Museums, as we know, are as much about the present and future as they are about the past. As we look to the future, I believe it is critical that museums support Indigenous communities in our efforts toward decolonization, through privileging Indigenous voice and perspective, through challenging stereotypical representations of Native people that were produced in the past, and by serving as educational forums for our own communities and the general public. Furthermore, the hard truths of our history need to be conveyed, both for the good of our communities and the general public, to a nation that has willfully sought to silence our versions of the past. We need to tell these hard truths of colonization — explicitly and specifically — in our twenty-first-century museums. As Apache historian Myla Vicenti Carpio argues, "It is vital that Indigenous communities freely

discuss (and even debate) the history and impacts of colonization to begin healing and move toward the decolonization of Indigenous peoples."²⁷

My current research on the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways builds upon my previous work on the NMAI and on my concern over the labeling of the NMAI as a "decolonizing museum." While I fully support the NMAI's collaborative methodology of working with tribal communities from throughout the hemisphere, my concern is over the absence of a clear, coherent, and hard-hitting analysis of colonialism and its ongoing effects. And without that context, the museum falls short in moving us forward in our efforts toward decolonization.

As one of the newest tribally owned and operated museums, the Ziibiwing Center exemplifies a decolonizing museum practice through privileging oral tradition and through speaking of the hard truths of colonization to promote healing and understanding for their community. The complex story of this tribal nation is presented powerfully and beautifully and embodies the best new representational strategies; it is heavily informed by important scholarship in the Native American studies field. It is no surprise that visitors have responded very favorably to the museum's exhibitions, as conversations with staff members have indicated. Tribal and non-tribal members have referred to their engagement with the permanent exhibit *Diba Jimooyung: Telling Our Story* as "a spiritual experience."²⁸ This museum provides an important forum for Saginaw Chippewa members to gain understanding of their unique history and culture and is designed to empower current and future generations. Founding director Bonnie Ekdahl suggested that the "healing of our own community" is the primary goal for this museum; and by honoring the oral tradition and engaging in truth telling, they are taking important steps forward in that direction.²⁹

Notes

Portions of this essay appeared in a shorter exhibition review in the *Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (2008): 158–62. Copyright © Organization of American Historians. All rights reserved. Excerpted with permission.

1. Amy Lonetree, "Continuing Dialogues: Evolving Views of the National Museum of the American Indian" in *The Public Historian*, Invited Roundtable on the National Museum of the American Indian, 28, no. 2 (2006): 57–61; and Amy Lone-

- tree, "Missed Opportunities: Reflections on the National Museum of the American Indian," in "Critical Engagements with the National Museum of the American Indian," ed. Amy Lonetree and Sonya Atalay, special issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 30, nos. 3–4 (2006): 632–45. Revised and expanded form of the essay as Amy Lonetree, "Acknowledging the Truth of History": Missed Opportunities at the National Museum of the American Indian," in *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations*, ed. Amy Lonetree and Amanda J. Cobb (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 305–27.
2. Claire Smith, "Decolonising the Museum: The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC," *Antiquity* 79, no. 304 (2005): 437.
 3. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird, "Beginning Decolonization," in *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, ed. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellowbird (Santa Fe NM: School of American Research Press, 2005), 2.
 4. Pauline Wakeham, "Performing Reconciliation at the NMAI: Postcolonial Rapprochement and the Politics of Historical Closure" in Lonetree and Cobb, *National Museum of the American Indian*, 354.
 5. Wakeham, "Performing Reconciliation," 355.
 6. Wilson and Yellow Bird, "Beginning Decolonization," 3.
 7. Wilson and Yellow Bird, "Beginning Decolonization," 7.
 8. Desmond Tutu, quoted in Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird, "Relieving Our Suffering: Indigenous Decolonization and a United States Truth Commission," in Wilson and Yellowbird, *For Indigenous Eyes Only*, 204.
 9. Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough ON: Broadview Press, 2005), 280.
 10. For a recent analysis of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, see John J. Bodinger de Uriarte, *Casino and Museum: Representing Mashantucket Pequot Identity* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007). Other important monographs focusing on tribal museum development include Gwyneira Isaac, *Mediating Knowledges: Origins of a Zuni Tribal Museum* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); and Patricia Pierce Erikson, *Voices of a Thousand People: The Makah Cultural and Research Center* with Helma Ward and Kirk Wachendorf (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
 11. I do not want to diminish in any way the importance of objects in exhibitions. What I am referring to here is the recent move to allow themes, rather than objects, to drive exhibit content. In newer types of exhibitions, objects are still very important but are used as illustrations of certain themes.
 12. Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 50.
 13. Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Dine History: The Legacies of Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 7.
 14. The Fall 2006 issue of *Museum Design* magazine featured an interview with Bianca Message—president of Andre & Associates, the center's exhibit-design firm—describing the uniqueness of the center's approach to present their tribal philosophies. "A Conversation with Bianca Message," *Museum Design*, Fall 2006, 1–16.
 15. "Narrative: History of the Diba Jimooyung Permanent Exhibit/Two Voices; The Ziibiwing Cultural Society and the Exhibit Designer," Exhibit Curator Files, Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan.
 16. Erikson, *Voices of a Thousand People*, 30.
 17. "Narrative: History of the Diba Jimooyung Permanent Exhibit/Two Voices," p. 2.
 18. This quotation was taken from a text panel in the Effects of Colonization exhibit (Area 7) at the Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways.
 19. Effects of Colonization exhibition text panel.
 20. Effects of Colonization exhibition text panel.
 21. Effects of Colonization exhibition text panel.
 22. "Narrative: History of the Diba Jimooyung Permanent Exhibit/Two Voices," p. 7.
 23. "Narrative: History of the Diba Jimooyung Permanent Exhibit/Two Voices," p. 7.
 24. "A Conversation with Bianca Message," 24.
 25. This quotation was taken from a text panel in the Blood Memory exhibit (Area 9) at the Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways.
 26. Ruth B. Phillips, "Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age," *Canadian Historian Review* 86, no. 1 (2005): 108.
 27. Myla Vicenti Carpio, "(Un)disturbing Exhibitions: Indigenous Historical Memory at the NMAI," in "Critical Engagements with the National Museum of the American Indian," ed. Amy Lonetree and Sonya Atalay, special issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 30, nos. 3–4 (2006): 631.
 28. "Narrative: History of the Diba Jimooyung Permanent Exhibit/Two Voices," p. 3.
 29. Founding director Bonnie Ekdahl as quoted in, "A Conversation with Bianca Message," 16. Ekdahl also shared this view during a panel presentation at Embracing a Community: A 21st Century Tribal Museum Model Symposium, at the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, May 2006.