Unsettling Assumptions about Community Engagement: A New Perspective on Indigenous Blackfoot Participation in Museums and Heritage Sites in Alberta, Canada

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Abstract

In post-colonial nations such as Canada, sharing power and authorship is increasingly used as a strategy by museums to attempt to pluralise, democratise and decolonise relations with, and representations of, Indigenous peoples. While honourable in its intentions, the increasingly ubiquitous practice of community engagement in museums has been under analysed, and its difficulties and complexities understated.

This thesis critically analyses engagement in museum and heritage practice and carefully unpicks the nuances of, and naturalised assumptions about, collaboration and self-representation. Power relations and their tangible manifestations in the form of exhibits, employment, relations, and new curatorial practices, are at the core of the analysis.

As a comparative study the research provides a cross-disciplinary analysis of mainstream and community museums and heritage sites through four case-studies. Each of the case-studies engaged with Indigenous Blackfoot communities in southern Alberta, Canada, through consultation, partnership, co-ownership or community control. Between 2006 and 2009 I spent twenty-four months in Alberta researching the case-studies and conducting forty-eight in-depth interviews with museum and community members.

This research makes a new contribution to the field through its emphasis on community participants' perspectives; the importance of inter-community collaboration; and its development of the concept of 'engagement zones' which builds on James Clifford's theory of the museum as contact zone. I argue that engagement creates risks and costs for participants and is not necessarily as empowering or beneficial as current discourse purports. The research illustrates that sharing power is neither simple nor conclusive, but a complex and unpredictable first step in building new relations between museums and Indigenous communities. Understanding the current limits of engagement and restrictions to museum indigenisation will enable collaborative efforts to be strategically utilised to work within and go beyond current boundaries and facilitate reciprocities that can begin to decolonise relations and enrich both museums and communities.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In post-colonial nations such as Canada, sharing power and authorship is increasingly used as a strategy by museums to attempt to pluralise, democratise and decolonise relations with, and representations of, Indigenous peoples. While honourable in its intentions, the increasingly ubiquitous practice of community engagement in museums has been under analysed, and its difficulties and complexities understated.

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The research develops a new concept of 'engagement zones' which builds on James Clifford's (1997) theory of the museum as contact zone and makes a new contribution to the field through its emphasis on:

- community participants' perspectives;
- the importance of inter-community collaboration;
- the risks and costs engagement creates for participants;
- the limits of current engagement practice;
- how engagement, power and representation function in community controlled museums compared to mainstream museums

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and restrictions to museum indigenisation will enable collaborative efforts to be strategically utilised to work within and go beyond current boundaries and facilitate reciprocities that can begin to decolonise relations and enrich both museums and communities.

1.1 Research Question, Aims and Objectives

This research sets out to answer the question: How and why have southern Albertan museums and heritage sites engaged with Blackfoot communities, and can this engagement be improved?

The research has four main aims and objectives:

Aim 1: Analyse why the case-study museums and sites and Blackfoot communities chose to engage with each other and the context in which this occurred.

  1.1 Analyse the role of museums in the history of (post)colonialism and cross-cultural relations pertinent to current Blackfoot relations with the case-studies.
  1.2 Analyse how engagement was negotiated and how power was shared.
  1.3 Analyse the processes of and differences between Western and Blackfoot approaches to cultural heritage management.

Aim 2: Analyse and compare the process of engagement in practice to engagement in theory.

  2.1 Compare four models of Blackfoot engagement practiced at the case-studies: consultation at Head-Smashed-In; partnership at Glenbow; co-ownership at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum; and community control at Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.
  2.2 Analyse what participants aim to achieve though participation and why.
  2.3 Analyse the terms upon which community self-representation occurs within the case-studies and the power relations of engagement and community representation.
  2.4 Identify and analyse factors that enable or constrain engagement and community representation at the case-studies.

Aim 3: Analyse the products of engagement and the extent to which they met expectations of participants and the bodies they represented.

3.1 Analyse change and products created by engagement – specifically representation and curatorial practice at the case-studies and if, how, and why the case-studies adapted or accommodated Blackfoot approaches to cultural heritage management.

3.2 Analyse whether the process and products of engagement met participants' expectations.

3.3 Identify and analyse any barriers that limited engagement processes and products.

Aim 4: Examine the future of Blackfoot community/museum relations and if improvements or changes could be made.

4.1 Analyse how any un-met expectations could be achieved.

4.2 Explore if and how Blackfoot/museum relations could be improved in the future.

1.2 An Introduction to the Blackfoot Confederacy

This research specifically analyses museums and heritage engagement with Blackfoot communities[1] in southern Alberta. 'Blackfoot' is a term used to refer to members of four Blackfoot Nations: Siksika (also known as Blackfoot or Northern Blackfoot); Kainai (also known as Bloods, Many Chiefs or Many Leaders); Piikani (also known as Apatohsipikani or Peigan); and Blackfeet (also known as Amsskaapipikani or Peigan or Southern Piikani). [2] Three Nations (Siksika, Kainai and Piikani) have reservations in southern Alberta, Canada, whereas the Blackfeet reservation is in northern Montana, America. Traditional Blackfoot territory was vast extending from the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta, south roughly six-hundred miles to the Yellowstone river in Montana, and from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains westwards for an average of around four-hundred miles to a point beyond the Great Sand Hills in Saskatchewan (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:4).

In September 1877 Treaty 7 was signed between the British Crown and Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Tsuu T'ina, and Nakoda. The Blackfoot Nations were placed on reserves (see the grey areas representing the reserves within the orange area that is traditional

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[1] The term community will be unpacked in chapter four.
[2] There are discrepancies in the spellings of Blackfoot names. These spelling have been borrowed from the Glenbow's Blackfoot Gallery Committee (2001:2-3), with the exception of the spelling of Piikani, which is taken from the preferred spelling of Piikani interviewees at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre.

Blackfoot territory on figure 1.1). A new Kainai 'reserve was established in 1883 and, at 547.5 square miles, is the largest in the country' (Brown and Peers 2006:19) and is home to over 10,000 members (Blood Tribe 2011). Siksika has a population of approximately 6,000 members (Siksika Nation 2011) on a reserve of 432.8 square miles. The Piikani Reserve is 267.37 square miles with a population of 3,500 with over 1,500 members living on the reserve (AANDC 2011a). The Blackfeet reserve in Montana is 3,000 square miles with a population of around 10,000 (Blackfeet Nation 2011). Each reserve is governed by its own elected Chief and Council.
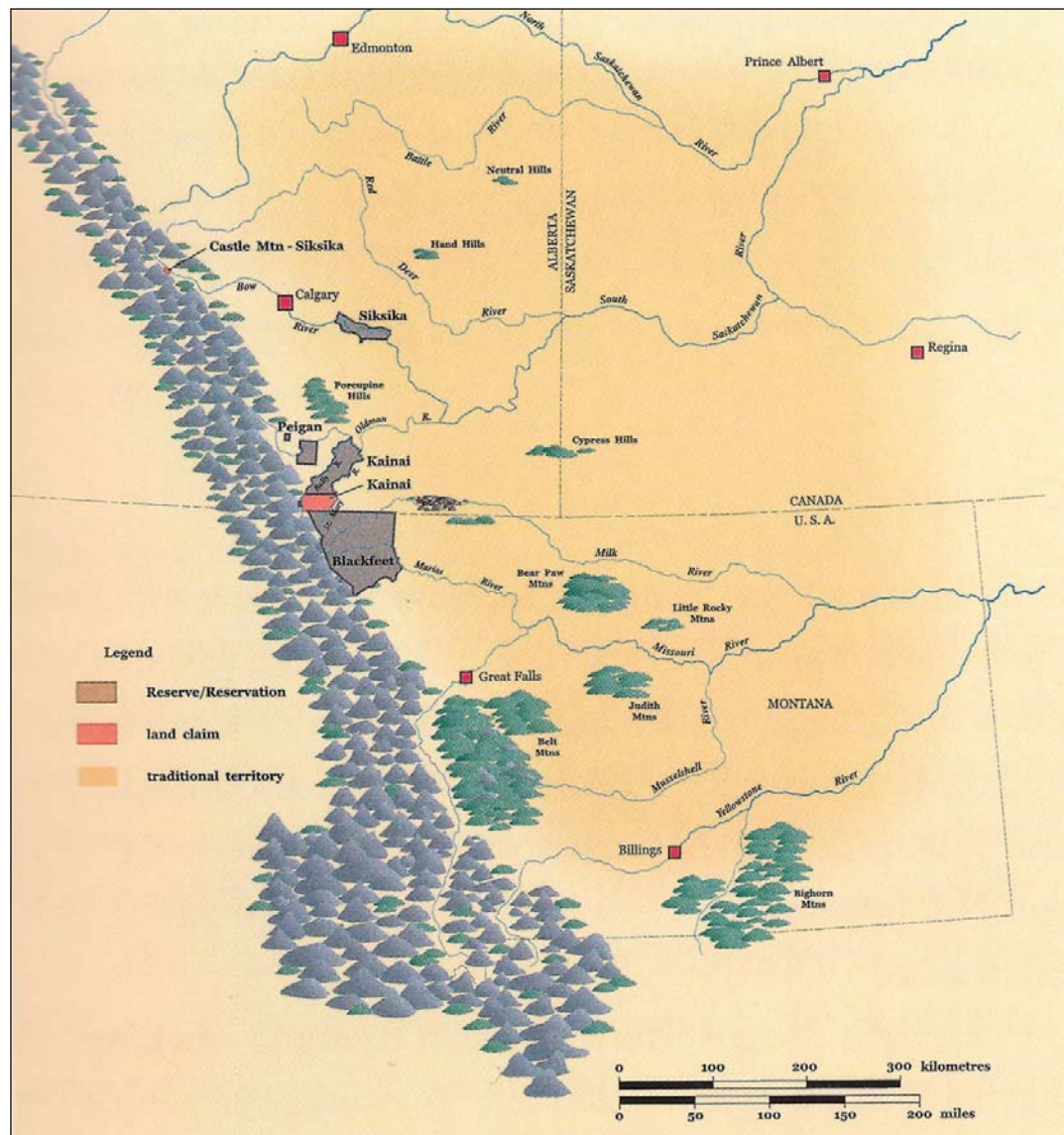
Figure 1.1 Map of Blackfoot traditional territory (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:77).

In 1876, the Blackfoot came under the *Indian Act.* The Act defined who could be 'Indian', identifying some Indigenous people as 'Registered Indians', commonly known

as 'Status' (AANDC 2010). The legal definition of Status has changed over the years. Originally women would lose their Status if they married non-Status men. On June 1985 Parliament passed an amendment to the Indian Act, Bill C-31, to bring it in line with the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (AANDC 2010). The Bill had 'the specific intent of correcting more than 150 years of discrimination against First Nations women' as it 'removed discriminatory provisions, eliminated the links between marriage and Status, provided greater control of membership to individual bands, and defined two new categories of Status' (AANDC 2011d). 'With this amendment some 60,000 persons regained their lost Indian Status' and a separation was made between band membership and Indian Status: 'while the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs would continue to control Status, bands had completely control over their membership lists in accordance to their own rules' (AANDC 2011d). On 31st January 2011 the Act was amended again with Bill C-3, as it was found to be unconstitutional by the Court of Appeal for British Columbia. The new bill 'will ensure that eligible grand-children of women who lost Status as a result of marrying non-Indian men will become entitled to registration (Indian Status). As a result of this legislation approximately 45,000 persons will become newly entitled to registration' (AANDC 2011c).

While the government controls who can be 'Status Indians', the nations control their own Band membership lists defining who is Blackfoot. In Montana, Blackfeet membership requires a direct decedent named on the 1935 *Official Census Role* and at least one fourth degree of 'Blackfeet Blood' (Blackfeet Enrollment 2011). In comparison, the Piikani Nation's *Draft Constitution* states 'members of the Blackfoot Nation must possess some degree of Blackfoot ancestry and/or be adopted/recognized through traditionally-recognized institutions; no specific "blood-quantum" is required for recognition of Blackfoot citizenship' (Piikani n.d.).

Blackfoot identity is legally and locally defined, restricted, and recorded. However, the Blackfoot define themselves as Ni-tsi-ta-pi-ksi (also called Nitsitapii) meaning the Real People, as distinct from spomi-tapi-ksi (Above Beings), ksahkomi-tapiksi (Earth Beings), and soyii-tapiksi (Water Beings) (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:9). They are known as Blackfoot due to the fact they speak local dialects of a common Blackfoot language derived from Algonquin and share a common culture. The majority of the Blackfoot also speak English.

An important figure in Blackfoot culture is their trickster, or old man, called Napi. He features in many of the traditional stories. The Napi stories remind the Blackfoot to maintain a balanced life and not break social rules or go to extremes.

> Napi, Old Man, always acted on impulse. He was rude, mean, and stingy. He often lied and played dirty tricks. He was always getting into trouble and suffering the consequences of his bad behaviour. And yet, he did not act out of malice. He merely overdid things and caused chaos as a result (Glenbow Museum 2011a).

The stories hold valuable information about social etiquette, the local environment and how to survive in the Blackfoot territory. This knowledge enabled the Blackfoot to live sustainably and successfully in the harsh climate of the plains and mountains landscape (Glenbow Museum 2011a).

The Blackfoot maintain their traditional culture while living modern Canadian life styles. In Blackfoot culture there is no separation between secular and spiritual life; the religion, history and culture are connected. Within the community there are important people known as Elders. These people are spiritual leaders who have high standing in their communities. They have earned their knowledge through Blackfoot secret societies, transfers of sacred objects and knowledge, and they continue many of the traditional customs of pre-contact Blackfoot life. The Elders, *Kaaahsinnooniksi,* in the community are the custodians of the traditional knowledge and they teach it to the new generations through age-graded societies, ceremonies and cultural events (Bastien 2004:222).

To help contextualise the research it is necessary to very briefly outline the history of Blackfoot/European relations. Fur traders entered Blackfoot territory in 1740 seeking meat and furs in exchange for 'tobacco, guns, steel knives and arrowheads, blankets, cloth and many ornaments' and liquor (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:55). The first recorded contact with Europeans was in 1754 when Anthony Henday, an Englishman working for the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) visited what is thought to have been a Blackfoot camp in an attempt to develop trade (Berry and Brink 2004:32). In 1787 another HBC employee, David Thompson, wintered with a Piikani camp on the Bow River, and in 1792 Peter Fidler, also from HBC, travelled with a Piikani band from Edmonton to South-western Alberta and back (Berry and Brink 2004:28). But it was not

until the 1800s that contact became more regular and sustained and with trade came diseases including smallpox, measles, whooping cough, tuberculosis and influenza (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:59).

> Every fifteen to twenty years... a new epidemic spread through our people's camps. Each time, a half to three-quarters of our people died: infants, children, adults, our old people. Families were devastated. The knowledge of our ceremonial leaders and old people began to disappear (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:60).

From 1830-1880 American whiskey trade for buffalo hides surpassed the fur trade and Blackfoot communities were ravaged by the effects of, and deaths from, alcohol (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:60-61). This was a period of unstable relations, tensions and suspicion as '[o]ral accounts relate how during the 1860s and 1870s, Kainai people were frequently subjected to brutal and traumatic attacks in which entire families were slaughtered, women were raped, and camps were burned (Rufus Goodstriker to Brown, Pers. Comm. 15 November 2001)' (Brown and Peers 2006:17). In 1855 the Blackfeet in America signed the Lame Bull Treaty with the United States Government. Despite the agreement the government soon began reducing the size of Blackfeet territory and resistance efforts were termed the Blackfoot War 1865-1870 which ended with the Baker Massacre (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:63-4).

In 1874, 275 North West Mounted Police (NWMP) officers arrived in southern Alberta to stop the American whiskey trade (RCMP 2007). At first the Blackfoot welcomed their presence, but the NWMP soon began enforcing laws on behalf of the Queen which restricted Blackfoot freedoms (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:61; Dempsey 1972:80). In 1875 fifteen Blackfoot Chiefs wrote 'a memorial to the Queen's government protesting the increasing invasion of their country by mixed-bloods and whites' and requesting a meeting with a commissioner to discuss the potential for treaty (Dempsey 1972:83-4). In 1876 the *Indian Act* was passed without First Nations consultation and made them wards of the state (Brown and Peers 2006:18).

> Recurring waves of sickness, especially small pox, which almost obliterated their populations, the destruction of the bison herds, which has sustained them for generations, and the gradual reduction of other game combined with the unceasing encroachment of non-Native society, compelled band leaders to negotiate Treaties with the British Crown (Brown and Peers 2006:17).

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When the Blackfoot signed Treaty 7 in 1877 it was agreed that the government would provide 'educational facilities, rations, and agricultural assistance' along with the establishment of reserves (Brown and Peers 2006:17). By 1879 the buffalo had 'disappeared' and 'in 1890 nearly one-quarter of Amsskaapipikani [Blackfeet] starved to death on Ghost Ridge', as such the Blackfoot began to depend upon government rations (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:70).

On these reserves the Indian Agent appointed by the Canadian Government held 'complete authority over the lives' of Blackfoot people (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:68-9).

> Indian agents could limit or refuse to give out rations. In Canada, Indian agents issued passes that permitted people to leave the reserve for three days; any person caught off the reserve without a valid pass was sent to jail for thirty days. Indian agents issued permits to sell crops and livestock. They made sure the children went to school. Indian agents ran our council meetings and often selected the chiefs and members of council (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:69).

Residential schools were established on the reserves and Blackfoot children were forced to attend as part of a nationwide government effort to assimilate Indigenous children through Christian education. Blackfoot children were discouraged from practicing their culture or speaking their language in the schools (Miller 2004:246) and disobedience was at times severely punished (Milloy 1999:282). Some children went at a young age and remained in the schools till their late teens without visits home (Brown and Peers 2006:26). Schools were often unsanitary and ill-health and neglect was common (Brown and Peers 2006:27; Milloy 1999:98-99) and 'sexual and physical abuse by staff and students was widespread' (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:76). The last federally-run residential school closed in 1996 (Health Canada 2011).

In 1960 First Nations people in Canada gained the right to vote without losing their Status. The late 1960s and 70s saw Native American political movements such as AIM (the American Indian Movement) publically challenge the status quo in America, and the development of Pan-Indianism and a new sense of pride and cultural revival in many communities such as the Blackfoot. Despite enduring terrible hardships, oppression and segregation, the Blackfoot and their culture survived colonisation and

they continue to be a strong and proud people. Brown and Peers capture this in their comparison of a comment made by an Indian agent in 1909 and Blackfoot members self description in 2006:

> Samek... cites a comment made by the Indian Agent in 1909 that his wards maintained 'a proud and imperious spirit which after 28 years of reservation life is still the dominant characteristic of the Bloods' (Samek 1987:134). Community members today frequently refer to their strong sense of cultural identity and their pride in being Kainai (Blackwater 15 August 2002) (Brown and Peers 2006:19).

On Wednesday June 11, 2008 the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, made a Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools, on behalf of the Government of Canada. However the effects of the residential school era continue to be felt in First Nations communities and families today, and affect the survivors and their children and grandchildren.

Today Aboriginal people in Canada are the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population (AANDC 2009a) and 'Alberta is privileged to be home to one of the largest, youngest and fastest-growing Aboriginal populations in Canada' (Government of Alberta 2011). The Blackfoot Nations are maintaining and reviving their cultural practices, teaching their language, taking control of their education, law and order, governance, creating economic development, and working towards self-determination. Kainai are currently in negotiations with the Canadian Government to secure further rights to self-governance. 'On October 17, 2003, Canada, Alberta and the Blood officials signed an agreement-in-principle (AIP) on governance and child welfare' (AANDC 2011b; 2009b). On 11th July 2011 the Kainai Nation made the current Conservative Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, an Honorary Blackfoot Chief to acknowledge the apology he made for the residential school system in 2008.

1.3 An Introduction to the Case-Studies

Before moving onto the discussion in the following chapters it is necessary to briefly introduce the four research case-studies as they are referred to throughout the thesis. They are all located in southern Alberta within traditional Blackfoot territory (see figures 1.2 and 1.3).
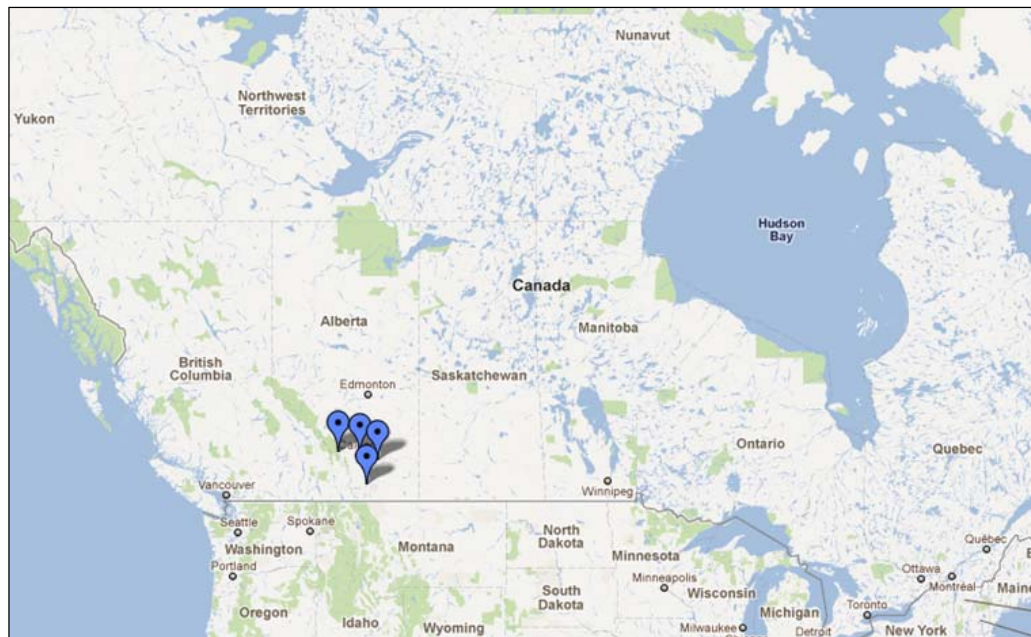
Figure 1.2 Map of case-studies (Created by Onciul using *My Google Maps* 2011).

Glenbow Museum

Buffalo Nations
Luxton Museum

Blackfoot Crossing
Historical Park

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo
Jump Interpretive Centre
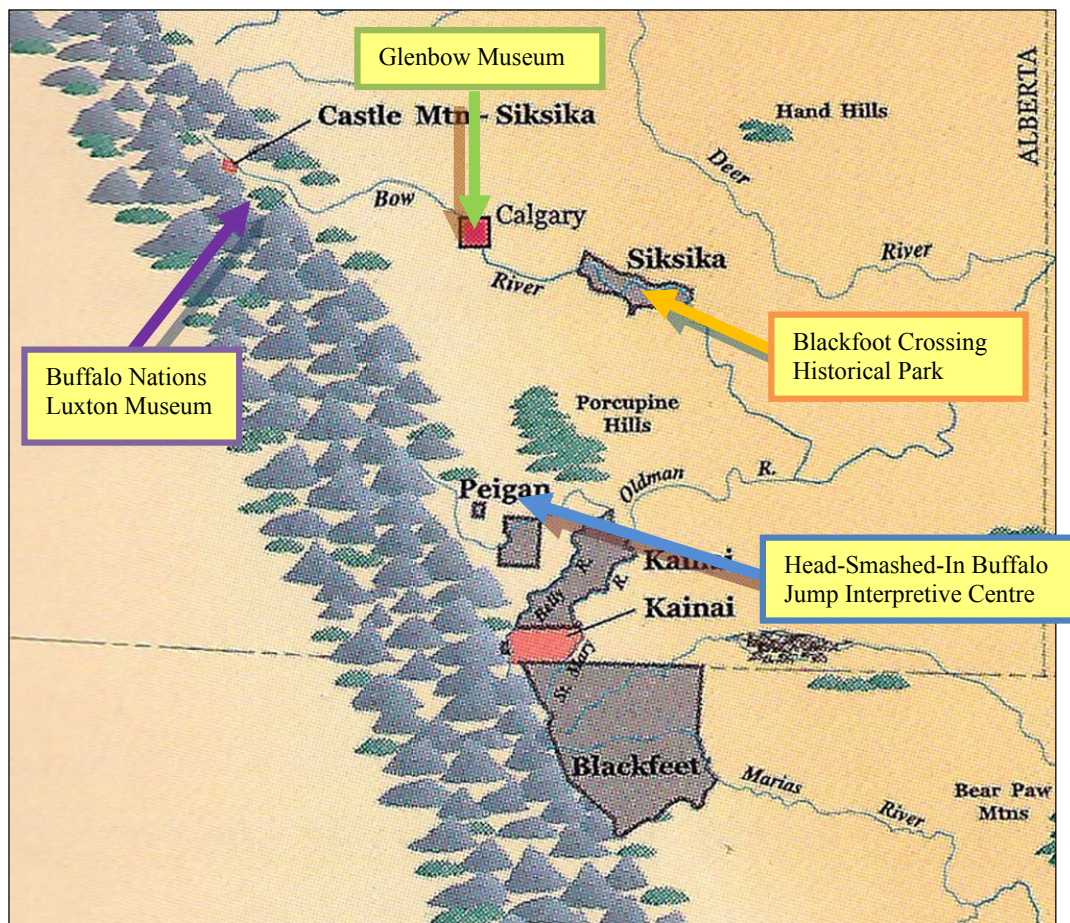
Figure 1.3 Map of case-studies within Blackfoot traditional territory (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:77 adapted by Onciul 2011).

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1.3.1 Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre is located in southwest Alberta where the foothills of the Rocky Mountains meet the plains, 18 kilometres northwest of Fort Macleod and adjacent to the Piikani Blackfoot reserve.

Head-Smashed-In is one of the world's oldest, largest and best preserved buffalo jumps known to exist. 'There is solid evidence that ancient hunters inhabited the site more than nine thousand years ago' (Brink 2008:19-20). Archaeology digs at the site since 1938 have unearthed evidence of the cliff being used as a buffalo jump more than 5800 years ago (Brink 2008:23). To help protect the site from vandalism and pothunters Head-Smashed-In was designated a National Historic Site in 1968 and was declared a Provincial Historic Site in 1979 (Reid 2002:24). It received world heritage status in 1981 and 890 hectares (2,200 acres) of the site are owned by the Province and covered by protective provincial legislation (Clarke 2009).

Figure 1.4 Head-Smashed-In entrance in winter (Photo by Onciul 2008)

Head-Smashed-In is an important cultural site for the Blackfoot peoples. Along with the jump, the site includes drive lanes, a gathering basin, a processing area, campsite, petroglyphs, and a vision quest that is still in use.
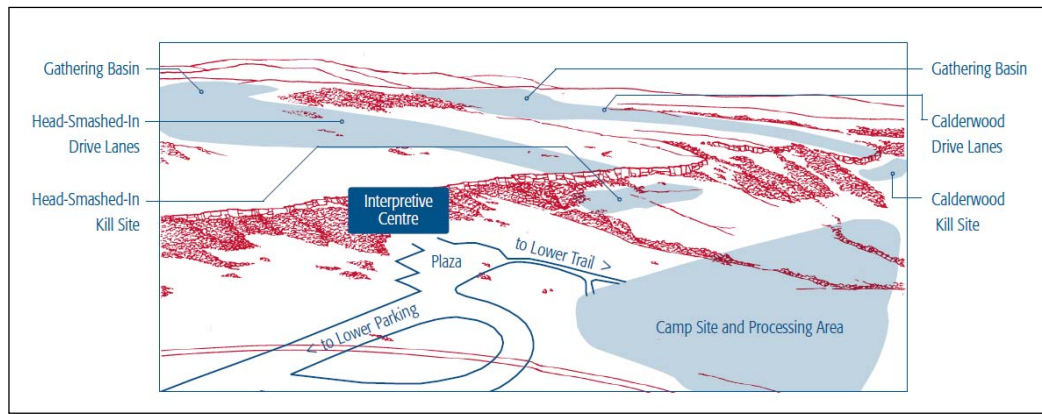
Figure 1.5 Map of Head-Smashed-In site (Head-Smashed-In n.d.).

Following its World Heritage listing, the Government of Alberta funded a $9.82 million development of a seven-tiered, 2,400m^2 interpretive centre which opened on 23 July 1987. Head-Smashed-In 'currently receives approximately 75,000 visitors each year, mostly between May and September' (Hassall 2006:29). Government managed and operated, the centre is predominantly subterranean, sunk into the cliff, and is unobtrusive on the landscape (see figures 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6).
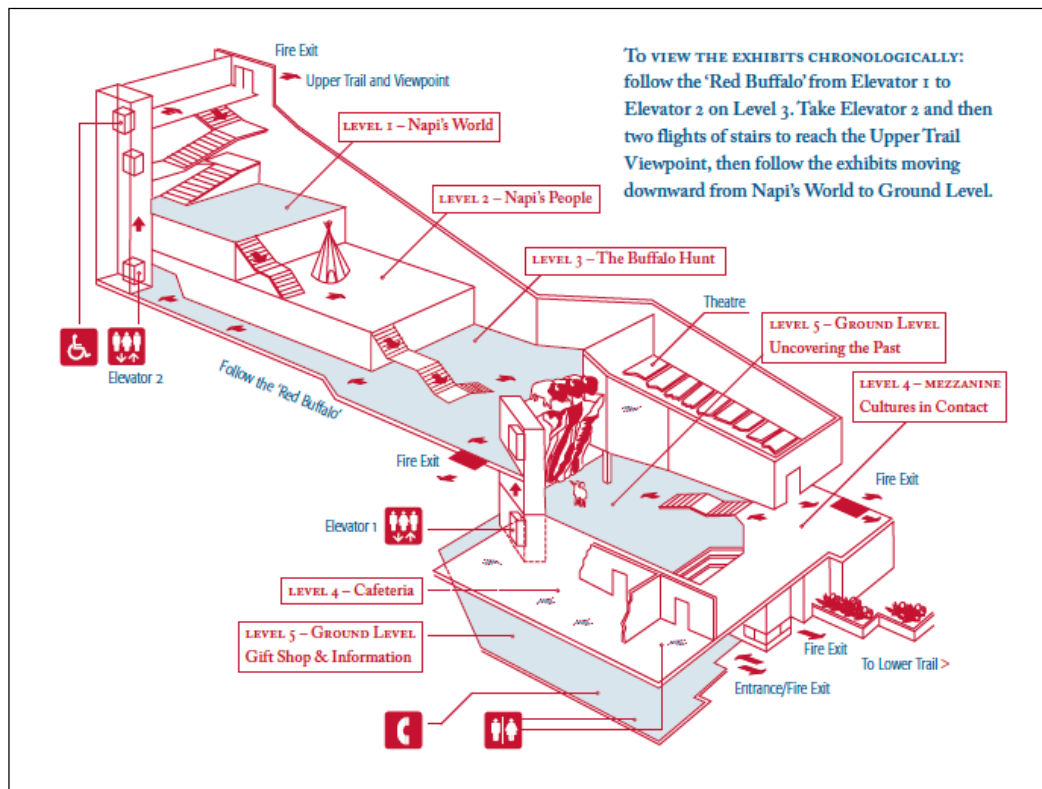
Figure 1.6 Map of Head-Smashed-In interpretive centre (Head-Smashed-In n.d.).

Highly commended for its subtle in situ design, Head-Smashed-In's modest presence on the landscape conceals a large interpretive centre within the hillside at the cliffs (see figure 1.6). The centre provides interpretation on the history of the buffalo hunting and Plains people, predominately interpreting the jump and Blackfoot culture. The interpretation is spread across five floors, and presents a chronological story of the land formation, the use of the jump, through to the archaeological digs at the site. The levels are themed and named: *Napi's World; Napi's People; The Buffalo Hunt; Cultures in Contact; Uncovering the Past*. Visitors are directed to watch an introductory film in the theatre to start their visit, which presents a re-enactment of a Blackfoot buffalo hunt at Head-Smashed-In.

The interpretation is complimented by short walks along the cliff top and below the cliff to view the jump. The centre also offers an on-site tipi camp where visitors can stay overnight in the Old Man River Valley, below the visitor centre, and participate in Blackfoot cultural programming. Every Wednesday throughout the summer Head-Smashed-In hosts First Nations dancing at the front of the building. Head-Smashed-In also provides 'Sunday at the Jump' activities aimed at the local community.

The interpretation was originally developed in consultation with Blackfoot Elders from Kainai and Piikani Nations, and it employs Blackfoot staff predominantly to provide interpretation (this and recent redevelopments will be discussed at length in the thesis).The recruitment process used at Head-Smashed-In has adapted government requirements to include criteria specifically targeting Blackfoot people to become employed as guides at the site (Hassall 2006:29). Blackfoot guides lead interpretive tours and provide programming and activities such as storytelling, drumming, singing and dance. Blackfoot Elders participate at the jump as part of the guides training week, for an annual Christmas dinner, as advisors during consultation, and to provide prayers and spiritual guidance.

Website: www.head-smashed-in.com

1.3.2 Glenbow Museum

The Glenbow-Alberta Institute, operating as the Glenbow Museum, is a public museum housed in the Telus Convention Centre, situated on traditional Blackfoot territory in the city of Calgary, Alberta (see figure 1.7). The museum includes a shop, library and archives and 'with over one million artifacts and more than 30,000 works of art, the

diverse collections of art, history and world cultures make Glenbow the largest museum in Western Canada' (Glenbow Museum 2009:1). The museum consists of eight floors, five of which are open to the public, with three floors of dedicated exhibition space.
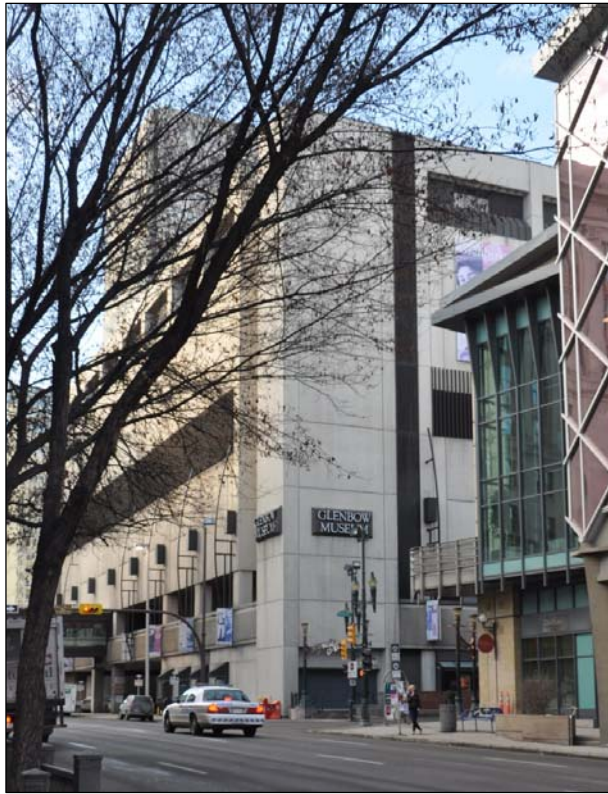
Figure 1.7 Glenbow entrance inside the Telus Convention Centre (Photo by Onciul 2008).

The museum was founded by 'the West's most notable philanthropist, petroleum entrepreneur and lawyer' Eric Lafferty Harvie (Glenbow Museum 2011b). Oil was discovered on his land in the late 1940s and he used his wealth to collect cultural material from western Canada and Indigenous North America. As 'probably the richest man in western Canada' Harvie 'collected the world' (Kaye 2003:98) 'with extraordinary artifacts and art from Asia, West Africa, South America, and islands in the Pacific, eventually amassing a huge museum collection'(Glenbow Museum 2011b). In 1954 he established the Glenbow Foundation with the vision to be 'Where the World Meets the West', and in 1966 he donated his collection to the Province of Alberta as a centennial gift (Kaye 2003:102). 'By the time of his death Eric Harvie had donated about half a billion dollars (in current value) to Canada' through his 'support for the creation of the Glenbow Museum, the Banff School of Fine Arts, the Luxton Museum, the Calgary Zoo, Heritage Park, and Confederation Square and Arts Complex in Charlottetown, P.E.I.' (Glenbow Museum 2011b).

'Today, Glenbow Museum is one of the most entrepreneurial museums in Canada, playing an essential role in defining Western Canadian culture' (Glenbow Museum 2011b). With 93,000 square feet of exhibition space spread over three floors, it presents its main collections: Native North America; Community History; Military and Mounted Police; World Cultures; and Minerals; as well as visiting exhibitions. 2009-2010 the Glenbow received a total of 117,818 museum visitors and 7,711 Archives and Library users (Glenbow Museum 2010).

Figure 1.8 *Nitsitapiisinni* Gallery at Glenbow (Photo by Onciul 2009).

On the 3rd of November 2001 Glenbow opened a new 760m^2 $1.915 million gallery (Conaty 2003:238) called *Nitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life, The Blackfoot Gallery* which had been developed in partnership with Blackfoot Elders from the four Nations over a period of four years (see figure 1.8). This gallery is the focus of this case-study in my research and will be discussed at length in the thesis. Glenbow works with First Nations in its community gallery, and has hosted other temporary Blackfoot exhibits such as *Kaahsinnooniksi Ao'toksisawooyawa: Our ancestors have come to visit: Reconnections with historic Blackfoot shirts* (March 26 to May 16, 2010); *The People and Places of Treaty 7* (July 16 to August 16, 2009); *Honouring Tradition: Reframing Native Art* (February 16 - July 13, 2008); *Tracing History: Presenting the Unpresentable* (February 16 - June 22, 2008); *Situation Rez: Kainai Students Take Action with Art* (December 1, 2007 to December 2008); *10 Grandmothers Project* (June 18 2002).

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Glenbow has involved and employed Blackfoot people as Native liaisons, interpretive guides and school programmers, and through its Native Advisory Board (which was not active at the time of interviewing in 2008).

Website: www.glenbow.org

1.3.3 Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum

Figure 1.9 Entrance to Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum began life as Norman Luxton's personal collection of First Nations cultural material. Luxton was a 'local taxidermist and proprietor of the Sign of the Goat Curio Shop' (Wakeham, 2008:81). He founded the shop in 1902, 'which specialized in Stoney Indian handicrafts and taxidermy specimens' (The Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation 2010). Through his trade and his promotion of the Banff Indian Days 1909-1950, Luxton developed connections and friendships with local First Nations (see Meijer Drees 1993 for discussion of Banff Indian Days). 'Luxton's relationship with Native people was undeniably paternalistic, but paternalism was virtually the only model available to him at that time' (Kaye 2003: 106). Despite his paternalism, he developed friendships with Stoney people and was 'made an honorary chief of the Stoney [Nakoda] tribe and given the name Chief White Shield' (The Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation 2010).

Luxton's collections began as a by-product of his commercial ventures. He collected trophy heads of Rocky Mountain animals and mounted fish to add to the outdoorsy feel of the trading post. Stony artists presented him with art objects as part of the exchange of gifts involved in traditional Native trade patterns.[...] After nearly a half century of collection, he had amassed a formidable hodgepodge of material that ranged from invaluable to worthless, rare to abundant. And had begun to wonder what would happen to his stuff after his death (Kaye 2003:106-107).

In 1953, with assistance from his friend Eric Harvie, Luxton established the Luxton Museum of Plains Indians. Luxton began by moving the Old Banff Gun Club building, which he had built, onto the museum site to act as living quarters and constructed the first room of the museum (Text panel, Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum 2008). In 1955 Luxton added a second larger room, and in 1957 enlarged the museum with a wooded fort-like structure (see figure 1.9) and finally finished the museum in 1960 with the addition of a final rounded room (Text panel, Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum 2008). Harvie and Luxton built the 'museum in the shape of a Hudson's Bay Company log fort, thus carrying on the idea of the trading post' (Kaye 2003:108). In this museum he presented a collection of First Nations cultural materials, taxidermy animals and dioramas populated with Indigenous mannequins.

'The Luxton was leased to the Glenbow in February 1962' (Kaye 2003:115) and in October 26th 1962 Luxton passed away and Glenbow ran the Luxton museum as a satellite site. In September '1991 the Glenbow Institute stopped operating the Luxton and in March 1992' (Kaye 2003:116) it was sold to the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society for a nominal fee of one dollar. 'It has now been reopened and continues to exhibit much of the same material in the same fashion that it did in the 1960s' (Kaye 2003:116).

As a museum co-owned by Blackfoot people, with many Blackfoot representatives on the board, and several Blackfoot presidents, this case-study provides a different perspective on Blackfoot community engagement.

1.3.4 Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park

Figure 1.10 View of Blackfoot Crossing from the valley (Photo by Onciul 2009).

Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park opened in 2007 (see figures 1.10 and 1.11). As a $25 million 62,000 square feet facility located on a 6,000 acre historical park (BCHP 2007) Blackfoot Crossing presents a combined offer of parkland, museum, interpretive centre, archives, library, theatre, conference facilities, shop, restaurant, sacred keeping place, ceremonial space, Annual World Chicken Dance venue, cultural activities, meeting place, educational facility, archaeological site, and tourist attraction. As 'a museum exhibition with recreational and other outdoor offerings [it] is an entirely new type of venture for the community and possibly unique in Canada' (Bell 2007:5). 'Jack Royal, President and General Manager of Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park revealed that the total cost to open and operate the Park is estimated at $33 million making it the largest single First Nation cultural tourist attraction in Canada' (BCHP 2007).

Blackfoot Crossing is located on the Siksika Reserve, 110 kilometres east of Calgary in southern Alberta. It was developed by the Siksika Blackfoot community, for the community (of 6,000 members), with community money[3], on community land, and it is run and staffed by the community. Blackfoot Crossing's development began in the 1970s, gaining momentum as a result of the interest in the valley due to the centenary commemoration of the 1877 treaty:

> The success of the Treaty No.7 Commemoration in 1977 intensified the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation's vision of building a unique world-class tourist attraction designed to engage visitors in authentic cultural experiences with the Blackfoot people (BCHP 2011).

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[3] Initial Capital Contributions prior to 2008 to fund the development of BCHP were $9,174,523 from Siksika Nation, $6,000,000 from Federal government, and $4,500,000 from the Province of Alberta (Bell 2007:19)

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Figure 1.11 Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park opening celebration (Photo by Onciul 2007).

The centre overlooks a river valley which has been an important place for Blackfoot peoples for generations. Literally a river crossing known as '*soyopowahko*, the ridge or bridge under the water,' (BCHP 2011) it was used by buffalo and Blackfoot peoples and was a geographically and culturally significant part of Blackfoot territory. The land has been in continual use pre-contact to today and is part of the Siksika reserve. The Bow River Valley was 'a traditional camp site and focal point of trade' (Getz and Jamieson 1997:100) and was also a ceremonial site for the annual Sundance. Within the park there is also what appears to be a Mandan Earth Lodge archaeological site which is currently under investigation and Blackfoot Crossing hosts University of Calgary archaeological study groups who work on the dig each summer. From the centre visitors can see the site where Treaty 7 was signed in 1877. Siksika Chief Crowfoot negotiated to have the signing on Siksika territory and all the other Blackfoot, Tsuu T'ina and Nakoda Nations' leaders gathered there to sign the Treaty. The Treaty 7 history has made Blackfoot Crossing a designated National Historic Site and it has been recommended for World Heritage listing (Hassall 2006:3). The valley has been relatively untouched and is one of the last pristine prairie river eco-systems (BCHP 2007).

Website: www.blackfootcrossing.ca

1.4 Thesis Synopsis

The thesis is divided into three parts, the introduction, context and findings. The introductory section includes chapters one, two and three. Chapter two gives a brief overview of the literature that specifically addresses Blackfoot engagement with museums in Alberta. It illustrates the contribution this research makes to the field and positions it in relation to what has already been done. Chapter three sets out how the research project was designed and explains the methods and culturally sensitive approaches used to collect the research data.

The second part of the thesis (chapters four and five) sets the work in its historical and theoretical context. Chapter four explores the current debates on power and voice in museum representation through an analysis of the literature. Chapter five discusses Indigenous relations with colonial and post-colonial museums, particularly in Canada, and sets the historical scene for the context of current Blackfoot relations with the case-studies.

The third part is the core of the thesis and addresses the research fieldwork and findings. Chapter six analyses engagement theory and compares it to practice at the case-studies, exploring how engagement was initiated and negotiated. The chapter proposes that current engagement models and terminology do not fully explain what occurs at the case-studies and argues for the need to consider internal community collaboration, alongside cross-cultural engagement. The chapter proposes a new term 'engagement zones' which reworks Clifford's (1997) idea of museums as contact zones, to incorporate these findings.

Chapter seven explores the impact engagement has on the case-studies. The meaningfulness and influence of engagement can be indicated by the changes engagement inspires in curatorial practice at the case-studies and, if and how, relations with the community are institutionalised into the culture and ethos of the museums. At the same time the chapter considers the practical, professional, and socio-political barriers to museological change and the institutionalisation of engagement.

Chapter eight tracks the engagement process and museological adaptation through to the physical manifestation of power and voice in the co-created museum exhibits. The

chapter asks if community self-representation enables museum decolonization[4] and explores what is shared and what is withheld in exhibits about sensitive subjects such as the Residential School era and restricted sacred ceremonies. Blackfoot self-representation within the case-studies is considered in terms of the framing and limits placed on voice by the museum as a cultural form, exploring the messages conveyed by both the building and galleries. The chapter argues that exhibits are strategic, essentialised, limited public presentations that create a place from which to speak (Spivak 1990) and have the agency to influence change, develop cultural pride and potentially begin to decolonize cultural relations.

In chapter nine I consider engagement from the community perspective, and unpick the assumptions that engagement is inherently beneficial for community members. Split into two parts the chapter first addresses what it means for Blackfoot participants and employees to be on display within the museum, highlighting the fine line between empowering and exhibiting people in the process of representation. The second part addresses the costs and consequences for community members and argues that engagement can be beneficial but can also be problematic and challenging. The chapter argues that museums need to actively interrogate these dynamics to ensure community members and employees do not become 'living artefacts' or tokens of former participation.

Finally chapter ten summarises the thesis arguments and research findings. Concluding with a discussion of how engagement could be improved and where further research is needed.

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[4] Waziyatawin Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird have defined decolonization as 'the intelligent, calculated, and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitations of [colonised peoples'] minds, bodies, and lands, and it is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation' (2005:2).

Chapter 2. Museums and Blackfoot Community Engagement: A Brief Literature Review

In Canada the 1990s was a period of change in museum practice as Indigenous communities became more involved in exhibitions and collections through engagement. As a consequence there was a flourishing in the literature as practitioners and academics recorded and analysed collaborative projects. This chapter will focus on the literature that specifically addresses Blackfoot engagement with museums, particularly what has already been published on my case-studies. In doing so, I will situate my research, identify what has not yet been addressed, and how my work contributes new knowledge to the field.

My comparative analysis of the specific case-studies is unique in current museology literature on the Blackfoot. The most similar Blackfoot cross-institutional analysis comes from the field of tourism in the form of Getz and Jamieson's 1997 analysis of Canadian rural Aboriginal tourism in southern Alberta; Australian Kate Hassall's 2006 comparative report entitled *Assess Models for Managing Conservation Areas Through Tourism that Involve Partnerships Between Indigenous Communities, Government and The Private Sector in Canada and South Africa*; and Siegrid Deutschlander and Leslie J. Miller's 2003 *Politicizing Aboriginal Cultural Tourism*. However they differ from my study as Getz and Jamieson's focus was on a Tsuu T'ina tourism initiative; Hassall's report is designed to provide guidance for policy and meet the needs of the Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management; and Deutschlander and Millar focus on the 'tourist encounter' at 'aboriginal cultural "attractions"' (2003:28).

Individually each of the case-studies has been the subject of, or used as an example in, publications from fields such as museology, tourism, archaeology, history, and architecture. Of the four case-studies the Glenbow Museum has received the most literary attention for its Blackfoot engagement work and *Nitsitapiisinni* Blackfoot Gallery. The primary source of these publications has come from employees and those involved with engagement at Glenbow, such as The Blackfoot Gallery Committee (2001); Gerry Conaty (1996; 2001; 2003; 2006; 2008); Gerry Conaty and Beth Carter (2005); Gerald Conaty and Robert Janes (1995; 1997); Gale Kahnapace and Beth Carter (1998); Julia Harrison (2005); Robert R. Janes (1995). These works present museum-insider perspectives. Non-Glenbow members have also published reviews of the exhibit, including Alison Brown (2002); Cara Krmpotich and David Anderson (2005); and

Joanna Ostapkowicz (2005). Similar to my research, Seema Bharadia's (1999) MA thesis on Glenbow's repatriation of sacred material to the Blackfoot and Alison Brown's (2000) Ph.D. thesis on visual repatriation and the meaning of objects in collections to source communities including the Blackfoot, both entailed fieldwork that included interviewing Blackfoot Elders to gain community perspectives. My research contributes first-hand community perspectives on the engagement process and exhibits at Glenbow, which has not yet been addressed in the literature.

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre, like Glenbow, is internationally renowned and is a Provincial (1979), Historic (1968), and World Heritage Site (1981). The archaeology at Head-Smashed-In has been extensively published (Reeves 1983; Brink 1986, 1988, 1989, 2006; Brink and Dawe 1989, 2003; Brink, Wright, Dawe, Glaum 1985, 1986; Brink and Rollans 1989). However literature on the Blackfoot community engagement in the development and the running of the centre has not been so prolific (Brink 2009, 2008, 1992; Sponholz 1992). A number of Masters theses have been written on the centre (Rollans 1987; Cannon 1990) including my own work *Blackfoot Consultation and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre* (Slater 2006) which was a precursor to this research.

Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum has received less attention in the literature. The history of the museum, and its founder Norman Luxton, has been presented by Frances Kaye (2003) whose archival work provides a rich account of Glenbow and Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum's foundation. Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum has also been discussed in terms of its relations to Glenbow by Robert R. Janes (1995). The museum was used as an example of Aboriginal representation and taxidermy by Pauline Wakeham (2008). Community ownership of the museum is addressed in two publications from the field of tourism (Mason 2009; Getz and Jamieson 1997); however none of these publications present the community perspective.

'Until the early 1990s there were few examples of aboriginal people acting as entrepreneurs or owners of tourism enterprises' (Getz and Jamieson 1997:93). The last decade has seen increasing publications on community developed centres, such as Gwyneira Isaac's *Mediated Knowledges: Origins of a Zuni Tribal Museum* (2007) and Nick Stanley's *The Future of Indigenous Museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific* (2007). However my research is the first to address community engagement and exhibits at Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park, Siksika Reservation. Current

publications on Blackfoot Crossing have all discussed Blackfoot Crossing prior to opening. The architecture has been discussed by Kaner et al (2008). The tourism initiative is discussed in Getz and Jamieson (1997:100) and Hassall (2006:35). The only publication to address museological issues is Heather Devine's (2010:232) discussion of a University of Calgary *Museum and Heritage Studies 201* programme that was provided for Siksika on the reserve in 2005. Consequently my research on Blackfoot Crossing provides a unique contribution and, through the interviews with staff, provides an insight into the community perspective on the centre.

My four case-studies are certainly not the only museums to have engaged with the Blackfoot people. The Royal Alberta Museum co-created an aboriginal exhibit in 1997 called *Syncrude Gallery of Aboriginal Culture* and is accompanied by a book by Susan Berry and Jack Brink (2004). The exhibit has been reviewed by Frits Pannekoek (2001) and Siksika member and Blackfoot Crossing curator Irvine Scalplock (1998). On 20 June 2007 Writing-on-Stone opened its new interpretive centre co-developed with the Kainai Nation. Although no publications have yet been made on the interpretive centre, the archaeology of the site is well documented (Brink 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 2007; Brink, Campbell, and Peterson 2003; Brink and Klassen 2005). Jack Brink has also published discussions of the rock art with Kainai Elder Narcisse Blood (2008) who helped developed the interpretive centre.

The Galt Museum in Lethbridge has also hosted Blackfoot exhibits and most recently was one of two venues for a temporary exhibition of 17th Century Blackfoot Shirts from The Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK (Pitt Rivers Museum 2009:2). Alison Brown and Laura Peers (Brown 2000, 2001, 2005; Brown and Peers 2006) have worked extensively with members of the Blackfoot Nation, a key example being their project: *Photo-elicitation among the Kainai Nation: a cross-cultural reengagement with history*, which resulted in their (2006) *Pictures Bring Us Messages* publication. The touring exhibit *Kaahsinnooniksi Ao'toksisawooyawa, Our ancestors have come to visit: Reconnections with historic Blackfoot shirts* was also produced in collaboration with Blackfoot Elders and visited the Galt Museum 5 June – 29 Aug 2010, and the Glenbow 27 March – 16 May 2010. The project included a 'handling sessions for Blackfoot people to examine the shirts closely and learn about the manufacturing techniques and their spiritual meanings' (Pitt Rivers Museum 2009:2) and a conference was held at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford 30-31 March 2011, with a publication forthcoming.

Other Blackfoot repatriation efforts have been discussed in works such as Cynthia M. Chambers & Narcisse J. Blood (2010) *Love Thy Neighbour: Repatriating Precarious Blackfoot Sites*; Gerald T. Conaty (2003:230, 2008); Moira Simpson (2007:69-71; 2009); Catherine E. Bell (2007); Seema Bharadia (1999); and recorded in Lorretta Sarah Todd's (2003) film *Repatriation and the Blackfoot people. Excerpts from Kainayssini Imanistaisiwa: The People Go On*. Other UK museums have participated in Blackfoot repatriation and engagement, such as the University of Aberdeen Marischal Museum (Brown 2008) that repatriated a Kainai Sacred Headdress in 2003, as discussed by Neil G.W. Curtis (2005, 2007, 2008, 2010). Recently the internet has been utilised to help build bridges with Indigenous communities and enable digital participation and repatriation (see Jane Hunter, Ronald Schroeter, Bevan Koopman, and Michael Henderson (2004) and Carl Hogsden and Emma Poulter (forthcoming).

Whilst rich and informative, the current discourse on Blackfoot engagement is dominated by curatorial and academic perspectives; as such community voice, perspectives and reflections on their collaborations are under-represented. The literature primarily presents analysis of individual, museum or exhibit specific, approaches to engagement and consequently there is a lack of comparative analysis of the multiple kinds of engagements and ways in which the Blackfoot have worked with museums and heritage sites. Engagement theory, such as the work by Arnstein (1969), Farrington and Bebbington (1993), Pretty (1995), White (1996) and Galla (1997), is under-utilised and the relation of this theory to practice is not explicitly addressed. Significantly, Blackfoot created self-representations, such as Blackfoot Crossing, have not been a subject of enquiry.

Consequently this research makes a useful addition to the current literature on Blackfoot engagement, as it examines engagement theory and how it is put into practice at four museum and heritage sites providing a comparative cross-institutional analysis of a spectrum of engagement approaches. The research involved extensive fieldwork and includes Blackfoot community voice and perspectives on the engagement they participated in, collected using in-depth interviewing techniques (see chapter three). This thesis also offers the first analysis of Blackfoot Crossing, which has so far been absent in the current literature.

Further still this research presents a critical analysis of engagement, examining the risks and costs of engagement to community participants, the current limits of engagement

and museum indigenisation, and challenges the idea that community control is a solution. Instead I argue that empowerment is the first step to creating new relations between museums and source communities which will have its own challenges and dynamics. The research is a timely contribution, because although community engagement is by no means a new topic in museum and heritage studies, it is gaining increasing popularity and we are seeing an accompanying proliferation of literature. Classic texts include James Clifford's (1997) *Routes* (discussed at length in chapter six); Karp et al (1992) *Museums and Communities*; Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown's (2003) *Museums and Source Communities;* Sheila Watson's (2007) *Museums and Their Communities*; and Elizabeth Crooke (2007) *Museums and Community*. The latest addition is by Emma Waterton and Steven Watson's (2011) *Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation?* and is an edited volume representing new critical perspectives on community engagement (further review of this literature can be found in chapters four, six, seven, eight, and nine).

In Canada Michael M. Ames (1987; 1990; 1992; 1999; 2000; 2006) was a fore-runner for the promotion and thoughtful critique of First Nations engagement. In North America the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) has sparked critical review of Indigenous representation, such as West (2000) *The changing Presentation of the American Indian;* Sleeper-Smith's (2009) edited volume *Contesting Knowledge;* Susan Berry (2006); and Amy Lonetree (2006). In the UK a flourishing of recent publications on the challenges of community engagement has developed mostly in response to collaborative exhibits developed for the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade (such as Lynch 2010; 2011; Lynch and Alberti 2010; Fouseki 2010; Smith, Cubitt and Waterton 2010; Smith, Cubitt, Wilson, Fouseki 2011); and new discussions are occurring on the ethics of museums (Marstine 2011a). These studies touch upon similar issues to what my research has found in Canada – that engagement is not necessarily empowering or democratic. As such this thesis makes an important and timely contribution to current discourse.

Chapter 3. Methods of Engaging with Communities and Case-Studies

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the research was to analyse Blackfoot community engagement with museums and heritage sites in Southern Alberta to understand how engagement works in practice, compared to theory, and identify areas of disconnect where improvement may be possible. To achieve this, the research strategy drew upon ideas of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and Geertz's 1973 notion of 'thick description'. The aim was to understand the relationships on their own terms and in their wider context. The data collected (using the methods described in this chapter) enabled the identification of gaps between theory and practice, and from this data I developed my new theory (set out in chapter 6).

To conduct the research I utilised a combination of qualitative research methods that would enable triangulation of the data to highlight any anomalies, improve accuracy and verify the research results (Berg 2001:4-6; Miller and Fredericks 1994:28). To analyse engagement in practice I selected four comparative case-studies within the same geographical area, southern Alberta, that each used a form of community participation with communities from the same Blackfoot Confederacy, and in some cases with the same people, within a similar timeframe. This enabled me to compare current engagement theory, namely Sherry Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Participation* and Amareswar Galla's (1997) heritage engagement theory, with practice at the case-studies, allowing for what Yin terms "analytic generalization" 'in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study' (Yin 2003:32-33).

The research analysed both the *process* of engagement and the *products* created by engagement, such as co-produced exhibits, changes to curatorial practice, museum policy, community employment, programming, out-reach, and the relationship between the museum and community. Methods were tailored to target these two primary units of analysis in the data collection. *Process* was analysed through in-depth interviews with former and current engagement participants at the case-studies, participant observation, and compared with archival records such as unpublished minutes from the meetings, museum policy and records. *Products* were examined through a textual approach method, in-depth interviews with participants about the changes created by engagement,

with particular focus on curatorial practice. This was then supplemented by archival analysis and participant observation of practice at the case-studies.

The rest of this chapter will guide the reader through the process of selecting and analysing the case-studies and the methods used to gather data from engagement participants at the case-studies. My reflexive approach enables the consideration of my own influence on the data and that of the context in which it was collected. Finally, negotiating access and the issues of ethics and cultural sensitivity specific to my research will be addressed.

3.2 Case-Studies

A comparative case-study approach was selected because it allows for the detailed consideration of the phenomenon of engagement in a number of comparative settings, though the use of 'several data collection methods, such as personal interviews, document analysis, and observation' (Johnson and Reynolds 2005:84) enabling engagement theory and models to be compared to practice (Yin 2003:32-33).

Qualitative methods were selected over quantitative approaches, as they can provide more focused and detailed data, although this makes the findings less reliable when applied to other situations or universalized (Silverman 2005:135; Yin 2003:10). This was appropriate to the research because the aim was to analyse the subtleties of engagement and draw out the perspectives of participants about the processes and products of collaboration within on-going contemporary real-life contexts. To do this, it was necessary to gain an understanding of the perspectives, or worldviews, of the individuals involved and examine how the individuals and cultural discourses interacted (Kvale 1996:5-6). Qualitative methods allowed for the exploration of thoughts and feeling and provided the tools to gain insights into different cultural perspectives on heritage and representation.

Qualitative methods generally require smaller sample sizes as methods like participant observation and in-depth interviews are time-consuming (Marshall and Rossman 2006). 'Generally speaking, qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail... for qualitative researchers 'detail' is found in the precise particulars of such matters as people's understandings and interactions. This is because qualitative researchers tend to use a non-positivist model of reality' (Silverman 2005:9). During the course of the research it was necessary to down-scale the original research plan to focus and deepen

the scope of the research. Thus early in the project the focus moved from a cross comparison of museum relations with communities in the Blackfoot Confederacy in Southern Alberta and Northern Montana and Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw[5] communities on Vancouver Island to a specific Blackfoot focus. This decision was pragmatic to fit the time-scale and limited budget of the project. It was also made in recognition of the many communities and possible case-studies within each cultural group that would each require considerable time on location to develop the necessary relationships, access and detailed data collection required. After conducting a literature review it appeared that there had been more work done in this field on the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw than the Blackfoot (Mithlo 2004; Mauzé 2003; Clavir 2002; Jacknis 2002, 1996; Clifford 1997; Cranmer-Webster 1995; Ames 1992; Boas 1897). Thus, in the interest of creating original work and contributing new knowledge the project focused solely on museum and heritage site engagement with members from the Blackfoot Confederacy in Canada.

The case-studies were purposefully selected to 'seek out groups, settings and individuals where...the processes being studied are most likely to occur' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:370). The case-studies selected each self-professed to have used one of the following approaches to community involvement: consultation, partnerships, ownership, and community development. They were respectively: Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre near Fort McLeod and the Piikani Reservation; Glenbow Museum in Calgary; Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum in Banff; and Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park on the Siksika Reserve. Both museums and heritage sites were selected as case-studies, as relationships with Blackfoot communities had been developed at both, and the Blackfoot community developed Blackfoot Crossing as a museum, interpretive centre and park rolled into one.

Analysing these different forms of engagement at the case-studies provided an opportunity to compare the real-life practice with the theory on: community involvement (Arnstein 1969); representation (Hall 1997b; Spivak 1988); power sharing (Foucault 1990, 1995; Lewis 2005; Smith 2006); agency (McCarthy 2007); plurality (Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007); dissonance (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1995); the role of curators (Carnegie 2006); and the role of museums (Cameron 1971; Clifford 1997; Bennett 1995, 1998, 2004; Witcomb 2003).

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[5] This is the term the U'Mista Cultural Society uses to describe their community (2011).

Case-study methods can lack rigor (Yin 2003:10) and generalisability (Silverman 2005:135; Yin 2003:10). Yin argues that researchers in the past have 'allowed equivocal or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions' (2003:10). To counter this all evidence should be reported fairly (Yin 2003:10) and rather than selecting case-studies that are likely to support an argument 'it makes sense to seek out negative instances as defined by the theory with which you are working' (Silverman 2005:132). Consequently, Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum was included as a case-study as it appears to be an anomaly in the field. It is owned by Buffalo Nations Cultural Society which is made up of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, yet it continues to present a theoretically outdated form of representation of the Indigenous people who own it. Cultures are mixed together in a typology display and dioramas present stereotyped representations of secret aspects of First Nations culture, and sacred artefacts appear to be on show. Silverman argues that to choose a deviant case offers a crucial test of a theory (2005:133), thus it was included in the study.

Concerns about generalisability of the findings can be countered, by the theoretical sampling (Mason 1996: 93-4) used to select the comparative case-studies. Peräkylä argues that 'the comparative approach directly tackles the question of generalisability by demonstrating the similarities and difference across a number of settings' (2004:296). It is not necessary for the case-studies to be representative of general populations as they do not seek to make statistical generalisations (Yin 2003:10).

To investigate these case-studies a combination of qualitative methods were used to enable different methods and sources 'to corroborate each other' to provide methodological triangulation (Mason 1996:25), which enables verification of findings. It is to the following methods the chapter now turns: textual approach method; participant observation; in-depth interviewing; archival analysis; and data analysis.

3.3 Textual Approach Method

Before conducting interviews at the case-studies, I familiarised myself with one of the key co-produced products of engagement: the exhibits. A textual approach method 'involves reading the object of analysis like a text for its narrative structures and strategies. In museums, the textual approach can involve analysis of the special narratives set up by the relationship of one gallery or object to another, or it might consider the narrative strategies and voices implicit in labelling, lighting, or sound'

(Mason 2006:26). Developed from cultural theory, textual analysis is yet to be rigidly defined as a method for analysing museums (with the notable exception of Serrell, 2006). However, museum analysts such as those identified by Mason: 'Clifford (1997), Dicks (2000a, b), Cooke and McLean (2002), Macdonald (2002) and Witcomb (2003), for example, have all carried out studies which combine analysis of textual representation, institutional conditions of production, and a discussion of audiences and consumption' (Mason 2006:29).

Textual approach enables analysis of 'the poetics and the politics of exhibiting other cultures' (Lidchi 1997). The method recognises that there are 'many possible constructions of meaning depending on things like the design of the display, the context in the institution, the visual semiotics engaged, the historical background presented' (Hutcheon, 1994:208), because, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, exhibits are made up of fragments 'informed by a poetics of detachment' (1998:18).

Reading exhibits as texts enables analysis of the intended and unintended messages presented. Mimesis and metonymy combined with in-situ, in-context techniques (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:19-21) create reproductions of the world within museums. Objects, texts, images, audio, visuals, space, lighting, temperature, and live interpretation work independently and in conjunction to produce meaning that is then framed by the gallery, museum and location. Analysis of decoding, encoding, denotation, connotation, presentation, presence and representation and how these blur (Lidchi 1997) highlights (in)consistencies and reveals (un)intentional messages and absences in exhibits. Vocabulary can give an insight into naturalised assumptions, prejudices, and give 'a sense of the balance of power between competing discourses at a particular juncture' (Jones 2003:139). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that 'in situ installations, no matter how mimetic, are not neutral' (1998:20).

My analysis in this thesis explores the representation of the living Blackfoot culture and the inclusion of live Blackfoot interpreters within exhibits, and draws on the work of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), Stanley (1998) and Peers (2007). My analysis considered how different forms of representation affected the message presented and the level to which messages are naturalised and neutralised.

Rhiannon Mason has explored the dynamics of semiotics in museum display and the influence of Foucault and poststructuralism on museum studies (2006). Mason

(2006:27) highlights Michael Foucault's (1969) and Roland Barthes' (1977) works that each challenged the idea of the author-centred approach to literature. Barthes' (1977) polemic argued that the meaning of a piece of literature was not dependent upon the author but the reader, who creates meaning from the text independent of its creator. These works popularised the idea of multiple readings and constructed meaning-making, and have been applied to museum studies by people such as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1994) and Mason (2006). Visitors are now understood to be active participants in their own meaning-making process. Thus it is possible for multiple and contradictory readings of an exhibit. Gaynor Kavanagh (2000) develops this idea using Sheldon Annis' (1987) argument that a museum visit occurs, at some level, in the visitors' dream space: the 'field of interaction between objects and the viewer's subrational conscious' (Annis, 1987:170). As such, audience meaning-making is partially dependant on the visitors' previous experiences and emotional connection to the subject, and is a personal experience within a shared cultural map.

To standardise my own textual approach I created a list of questions, or exhibit analysis matrix (Chapman 2008), to guide my analysis of each exhibition (see appendix III). My matrix identified questions and aspects to be examined to help analyse the meanings produced in the exhibits. I identified signs that indicated the intended audience, such as vocabulary, cultural capital required, and marketing. I identified funders and stakeholders and analysed related documents such as: policy; mission statements; publicity and marketing materials; exhibition materials; and laws pertaining to the specific case-studies. In addition, meanings change over time as museums are 'a constantly evolving social artefact that exists in a constantly changing social world' (Hutcheon 1994: 208). As such, the analysis is placed in a socio-political and temporal context (in chapter five), following Mason's example of contextualising her analysis of The Museum of Welsh Life (2004).

One of the key limitations of exhibit content analysis is the individual's gaze (Marshall and Rossman 2006:98). Mason highlights the 'polysemic quality of museum objects' and notes the potential for exhibits to be read in different ways by different audiences (2006:20). Exhibits can be read for specific reasons, such Carol Duncan's (1995) feminist reading of art museums, or Bennett's class politics reading of Beamish (1995). Read again with a different agenda textual analysis could produce different results. My textual analysis of the exhibits focused upon the decolonising potential of co-produced exhibits, Blackfoot self-representation, and the limits imposed by the museum. To

balance my personal reading of the exhibit, interviews, participant observation, and archival and document analysis were used to explore alternative readings and provide triangulation.

3.4 Semi-participant Observation

'Observation...has often been the chosen method to understand another culture or sub-culture' (Silverman 2005:111). Observation methods can range from full participation (Maykut and Morehouse 1994:69), to non-participant observation (Marshall and Rossman 2006:98-101; Bernard 2006:347). Balso and Lewis argue that semi-participant observation is 'necessary when [the] researcher is [an] obvious outsider' (2008:168). As a female, British, research student attending Blackfoot exhibitions, museums and community events in Alberta, Canada, I was an 'obvious outsider' to both the Blackfoot and museum communities.

Semi-participant observation enabled me to build relationships with gatekeepers and potential interviewees whilst I learnt about the case-studies, their staff and community participants. As a researcher in unfamiliar settings it allowed me 'to pick up nonverbal clues to help...identify regular patterns of interaction and to distinguish the important from the unimportant' (Balso and Lewis 2008:162). Conversation and participation gave me access to 'the group's own experiences and interpretation of their activities' and access to 'aspects of group life that may not be accessible to direct observation' (Balso and Lewis 2008:166).

Participating (in guided tours, attending dancing, storytelling, Annual World Chicken Dance Competitions, Powwows, Indian Days, festivals, workshops and live interpretation) and volunteering (at some of the case-studies, Stampede, Native Pride Week, Siksika Day and Native Awareness Day) enabled me to analyse the intangible forms of representation presented by the communities and case-studies, which supplemented my analysis of the tangible exhibits. At the same time it was an effective way to gain access to get to know community members and to reciprocate participants' generosity in allowing me access to their lives (Marshall and Rossman 2006:81). Marshall and Rossman argue that 'some sort of direct and immediate participation in the research environment usually becomes important to building and sustaining relationships... Such interaction is usually highly informative while remaining informal' (2006:73). It also enabled me to analyse the internal culture and politics of each case-

study, and the importance of individuals and groups within the case-studies and communities.

I was extremely privileged to be invited to attend Blackfoot ceremonies and Okan (Sundance) which gave me insight into the 'off stage' secret aspects of Blackfoot culture that are not represented at the case-studies. Witnessing is an important part of Blackfoot culture and my physical presence at these sacred Blackfoot events helped develop my credibility within the community over the years of my research.

These activities helped me to gain trust with the individuals I wished to work with. It gave us a chance to get to know each other informally before any formal data collection took place. They were able to question me and my research, for many months in some cases, before having to decide if they wished to participate.

> Gaining trust is essential to the success of the interview and, once gained, trust can still be very fragile. Any faux pas by the researcher may destroy days, weeks, or months of painfully gained trust (Fontana and Frey 2003:78).

A clear limitation of this method was the effect my presence had on what I observed (Blaso and Lewis, 2008:168). However, as an outsider this is unavoidable, without using potentially unethical covert methods.

> ...the success of qualitative studies depends primarily in the interpersonal skills of the researcher...building trust, maintaining good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity, and sensitively considering ethical issues. These entail an awareness of the politics of organizations as well as a sensitivity to human interaction. Because the conduct of the study often depends exclusively on the relationships the researcher builds with participants (Marshall and Rossman 2006:78).

Negotiating with gatekeepers was a vital stage of gaining and maintaining access (Punch 2005:181) and required large investments of time to develop rapport necessary to gain access to relatively closed Blackfoot community groups and case-studies. Aspects of Blackfoot life and museum workings remained off-limits to my research, and therefore I do not claim that this research presents an insiders' perspective on the events.

Semi-participant observation helped me to structure informed interview questions, identify issues that were not openly discussed in the interviews, and conduct a comparison between the tangible exhibition, the aims and goals of the people who

created it, and the intangible use of the exhibition space and other forms of community self-representation.

3.5 In-depth Semi-structured Interviewing

To deepen the research data I conducted in-depth interviews targeted at people who had participated in the museum/community engagement relationships and/or the creation or interpretation of co-produced exhibits. Devlin argues that 'unlike quantitative approaches, random sampling is not a focus in qualitative research' and notes Averbach and Silverstein's (2003) combined use of 'convenience sampling (finding relevant people who are available) and snowball sampling (asking people who participate to recommend others who might participate)' which I used as a model for my sampling (Devlin 2006:54). Potential interviewees and their gatekeepers were identified though semi-participant observation, document and textual analysis (see appendix I for the list of interviewees).

Gatekeepers tended to be those who had developed, managed or at least participated in the relationship between case-study and community. They tended to know the interviewees personally and felt that they had the authority to grant or deny access. Some gatekeepers arranged meetings on my behalf while others simply gave me contact details. At each case-study I had to go through a series of gatekeepers to gain different levels of access to different people. It was not possible to interview all the individuals involved with engagement at the case-studies as some had sadly passed away, others were in ill health, many were elderly, and others I simply was not granted access to or were not available.

Building rapport was vital to enable interviews to take place. The Blackfoot confederacy, like other First Nations, has been heavily researched by anthropologists and ethnologists, and as such some Blackfoot community members are resistant to participating in further studies, especially when they believe previous researchers have misused information or misrepresented them. Working with the Blackfoot on a previous study (Slater 2006), community members made me aware of one such researcher:

> We had people like… Adolf Hungry Wolf, really exploit the Elders… He really betrayed us… We are very wary now, whereas before the Elders were naïve, and very generous with their knowledge… We are very cautious now (Per. Comm. First Rider 2006).

Hungry Wolf responded to and defended his actions in his book, stating the Elders' support for his work (2006:5). Nevertheless, researchers have had to negotiate with the effects of such occurrences, as Jack Brink described in his account of his consultation with the Blackfoot in the 1980s:

> We were dealing with some of the backlash from that, with people saying "you're just another Hungry Wolf, you are just here to rob us of our culture, put it somewhere and get something from it for yourselves and that's it. Well screw off". I was literary thrown out of peoples' houses at times. People saying "get the hell out of here. We are not talking to you" (Per. Comm. Brink 2006).

As a researcher it is important to act ethically, especially considering the research involves people (Oliver 2003: 12-13) and public institutions. As a result of past practices the Blackfoot are particularly conscious of ethics, intellectual property rights, and the dissemination of sacred knowledge. I took to heart my 'responsibility both to safeguard the proper interests of those involved in or affected by [my] work, and to report their findings accurately and truthfully...to consider the effects of [my] involvements and the consequences of [my] work or its misuse for those [I] study and other interested parties' (BSA 2002:2). I had a 'responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants [was] not adversely affected by the research [and] strive to protect the rights of those [I] study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting interests' (BSA 2002:2-3).

Building rapport and gaining trust took considerable time and resources. Even in the late 1800s research findings could not be 'obtained by rushing up to the first Indian (Sic.) you meet, notebook in hand' (Matthews 1898:227). I followed Marshall and Rossman's advice that 'researchers should... be sensitive to the need for time to pass, for flexibility in their roles, and for patience because confidence and trust emerge over time through complex interactions' (2006:80). As such, I spent twenty-four months in 2006-2009 frequenting the case-studies and getting to know staff and community members.

Sandra Crazybull explained the Blackfoot approach to deciding whether or not to work with researchers: 'we recognise the ones that are there for just a pay cheque and we really kind of test the ground before these people kind of come into our community... People just kind of watch you and they won't say much to you until they really feel like they're, that you are there for a genuine reason' (Pers. Comm. 2008).

I built relationships that allowed me to conduct forty-eight in-depth interviews with forty-six individuals from Blackfoot communities and the case-studies. I was allowed access to archives, behind-the-scenes, staff meetings, exhibits, and most importantly to people. By taking the time to develop real relationships, I gained meaningful insight into the case-studies as interviewees trusted me with their personal experiences and insights.

Qualitative research interview methods are effective tools for collecting rich detailed data as their purpose is to 'obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale 1996:5-6).

Kvale suggests two metaphors to describe an interviewer's approach to knowledge formation. One is the miner who seeks to excavate nuggets of 'given' knowledge; the other is the traveller who undergoes a scholarly journey with the interviewee to elicit their own stories about their lived world, 'a post-modern constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research' (Kvale 1996:3-5). I took the 'traveller approach' and use semi-structured, purposeful, professional conversations to obtain interviewees' perspectives on themes and issues relevant to my research. Averbach and Silverstein recommend a narrative approach where the interviewer 'ask[s] questions that take the research participants through their history with the phenomenon in question' (2003:16). A narrative approach was culturally appropriate for Blackfoot participants as narrative is an integral part of Blackfoot oral history and it is traditional to allow Elders to tell their story without interruption.

The interviews were designed to be semi-structured so that there was a clear theme of questioning, but there was flexibility to 'travel' with the interviewee on their narrative and explore new areas of discussion as they occurred. The use of structured interviewing with closed questions (Fontana and Frey 2003:68-69) would have been inappropriate for this research as it would have imposed prior categorizations that would have been culturally Eurocentric, limited the field of enquiry, and obscured the participants' worldviews by limiting their responses to a set of pre-determined categories. On the other hand a completely unstructured interview (Fontana and Frey 2003:74-79) would have produced too varied and wide ranging discussions that would have lacked the depth required for critical analysis.

I developed a general interview schedule based on my key research questions then personalised the schedules for each interviewee to build in personal and cultural sensitivity. The questions aimed to collect qualitative data on interviewees' understanding of their role in the process that created the case-study exhibits; experience of working with people from different cultures; opinions on the finished production and its relevance to the Blackfoot people; effectiveness of the collaboration; and the ongoing relationship after the exhibit opened. After each interview I reflected on how the questions were understood and any new topic areas that arose, and used this information to improve consequential interviews.

Each interview was digitally recorded with the permission of the interviewee to enable transcription and detailed analysis of the interviews. I returned an audio-copy of the interview to each interviewee and asked them to review their contributions, allowing them to add or subtract material, clarify details or withdraw their data if they wished. This was important to ensuring the interviewees data was provided with consent and would not do harm to those individuals or the engagement relationships they participate in. Transcribed quotes used in this thesis were returned to interviewees for review before use wherever possible and full transcripts of the interviews were provided to all participants on request. Traditionally a full sample transcript would be included in the appendices to illustrate the interview process. However the length of the interviews (which frequently lasted two hours or more) combined with issues of confidentiality and the need for interviewees to review their quotes before inclusion in the thesis, was preventative in this case.

The interview transcripts were analysed using my theoretical framework to draw out key themes and took a grounded theory approach to enable new theories to be discovered through the analysis of the data. N:Vivo software was not used for the analysis due to the programmes high demand on computer system resources combined with my need to work on a laptop given my frequent field trips and need to work remotely. Instead I manually coded the data, identifying key themes and topics and grouping transcript quotes accordingly using Word documents. I then reviewed the audio recordings and transcripts to identify additional issues and clarify meaning and emphasis on the key issues identified. This enabled detailed analysis of the data and from this I drew out the key issues that this thesis addresses and developed the new theory of engagement zones (discussed in detail in chapter 6).

The narrative interview approach provided 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) and suited Elders who tended to prefer to tell me their story and have me ask questions at the end, following Blackfoot protocol. Narratives encourage the use of individual expression and knowledge construction, and allowed interviewees to frame the discussion in their own terms, thus reducing my influence and cultural framing on the results. Their narratives tended to directly answer my key questions as my I set out my research objectives at the beginning of the interview.

A consent form and a plain language statement (see appendix IV) gave interviewees information on the project following Marshall and Rossman's advice to describe my 'likely activities while in the setting, what [I am] interested in learning about, the possible uses of the information, and how the participants can engage in the research' (2006:79). The plain language statement 'explain[ed] in appropriate detail, and in terms meaningful to participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be disseminated and used' (BSA 2002:3). The consent form made participants aware of their right to withdraw from participating at any point in the process; their right to reject the use of tape recorders; how their data would be protected; and choices for anonymity and confidentiality (BSA 2002:3). I encouraged questions with the aim of ensuring interviewees were comfortable and giving fully informed consent. Taylor and Bogdan advise researchers to be 'truthful but vague' (1984:25) However I felt this was insufficient and followed Patton's advice for: 'full and complete disclosure [as] people are seldom deceived or reassured by false or partial explanations' (2002:273).

As power relations in interviews are generally asymmetrical, privileging the interviewer over the interviewee (Kvale 1996:6) it was particularly important to address this balance somewhat by sharing information. 'Research relationships should be characterised, whenever possible, by trust and integrity' (BSA 2002:3) and people should be 'treated with respect, should not be harmed in any way, and should be fully informed about what is being done with them' (Oliver 2003:22). Traditionally the interviewee is expected to disclose information for the interviewer's benefit, while the interviewer does not have to reveal anything in return (Lee 1993:108). However, many Blackfoot participants asked questions of me creating more of a two-way conversation. Entering into these forms of sharing, helped to avoid subjectifying interviewees and instead treated them as active participants. Interviewees could refuse to answer question or terminate the interview at any point, for any reason, maintaining their right to veto. Interviewees were also

encouraged to 'alter the content, withdraw statements, provide additional information, or add gloss on interpretations' (BSA 2002:3) (via copies of audio recordings and transcriptions) and received copies of the research findings as requested (Oliver 2003:17). By following these measures, the research was conducted in an ethical manner that empowered the participants to give informed consent to the collection of research data, and gives validity and credibility to the research.

Participants' knowledge of my research objectives did not devalue the data collected, instead it tended to encourage open and honest discussion because there were no hidden agendas. Furthermore, a number of interviewees came to the interview having spent a considerable time musing over the issues and ready to talk at length on the topic. However, the approach was not without problems, as a number of Blackfoot interviewees felt uncomfortable with signing paperwork, as they feared they may sign away their rights to knowledge, and some because their first language was not English and felt uncomfortable with the vocabulary. This was resolved through discussion and all interviewees agreed to be digitally recorded to enable transcription and detailed analysis. However if the project was repeated perhaps a traditional Blackfoot approach to consent giving, through the exchange or rejection of gifts, may be more appropriate.

During the interviews I attempted to limit my influence on the data as vocabulary, emphasis and body language can all affect the interviewees' answer to a question. Marshall and Rossman advise that 'being an active, patient, and thoughtful listener and having an empathetic understanding of and a profound respect for the perspectives of others' is vital to conducting qualitative research and 'interpersonal skills are paramount' (2006:78). I aimed to make interviewees feel at ease, and encouraged them to share their perspective with me, and was quick to recognise and explore new information. I recognised that the interviewees are all 'meaning-making and defended subjects who:

- may not hear the question through the same meaning-frame as that of the interviewer or the other interviewees;

- are invested in particular positions in discourses to protect vulnerable aspects of self;

- may not know why they experience or feel things in the way that they do;

- are motivated, largely unconsciously, to disguise the meaning of at least some of their feelings and actions (Hollway 2000: 26).

The purpose of interviewing was not to find out 'truths', but to collect interviewee's perspectives on their experience with engagement. Ultimately the interviewees choose what information they would share (consciously or unconsciously), thus the data collected for the research was limited to what they were willing to share at that moment in time. This was influenced both by their relationship with me, their investment in the topics discussed, and the context in which the interviews took place. Physical locations of interviews can also alter the findings because places have different politics, rules and meanings for individuals. For example, some interviewees wished to be interviewed in their office, while others requested we meet away from their place of work.

Although context was attempted to be standardised in the research design, in reality interviews occurred where interviewees felt most comfortable, which was frequently in restaurants. Although, such places resulted in poor audio-recordings, they ultimately created richer interviews as participants were more relaxed. Initial attempts to use a standardised private room created discomfort and stilted results and was quickly abandoned. Ideally interviews would be repeated over many years to verify the data. This was possible with two interviewees and by repeating interviews conducted as part of my MA research at Head-Smashed-In, but time constraints and distances prevented implementation on a wider scale.

I collected perspectives from different stakeholders in each of the case-studies to enable triangulation and to build a picture of the complexities and intricacies that affect engagement and representation. As there were a limited number of people involved at each case-study I interviewed as many relevant people as possible. I succeeded in eliciting forty-six interviewees from across the case-studies. The main problem with this form of sampling was the difficulty of maintaining the anonymity of interviewees, as they could be easily recognised by associated factors. Interviewees were informed of this and given a choice to be identified or remain anonymous.

The majority consented to being identified, which enabled their quotes to be placed in the appropriate context and reduced the problems of anonymity rendering the data unusable (BSA 2002:5). It was also culturally sensitive as it is traditional in Blackfoot culture to self-identify, state family connections and their authority to speak before

making comment. Some interviewees saw the work as part of their legacy, as Sandra Crazybull wished to be identified so that her grandchildren in the future could learn about her and what she did (Per. Comm. 2008).

One of the greatest concerns about research for Blackfoot participants' was showing respect for the privacy of sacred information. I was aware of this before interviewing as a result of participant observation and document analysis. Consequently I drew on the notion of outsider-insider access and the need to respect privileges of access discussed in Shryock (2004) and used sensitivity to respect cultural protocols and restricted or deleted data if participants felt it was necessary. Sensitivity was also used when asking interviewees to reflect on projects they worked on with colleagues, friends and/or family. Consequently, I was able to engage in in-depth meaningful interviews with interviewees and interviewees were enthusiastic and open. Interviews frequently ran to two hours or more, and several interviewees were keen to continue discussions after the formal interview ended and even do second interviews at later dates.

3.6 Reflexivity

The data collected for this research was influences by both the context in which it was collected and the person who collected it. Being an 'obvious outsider', neither Blackfoot nor Canadian, had both benefits and problems. I was aware of my location and '*positioning relative to the participants...*[and] the *"direction of [my] 'gaze'"* (Marshall and Rossman 2006:98 emphasis original) as well as my 'reflexive screens: culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, political praxis, language, values' (Patton 2002:66).

Within the Blackfoot community there are some negative feelings towards researchers and students as a result of their community being heavily researched and feelings that their information has been misused and commoditised for others' gain. Frequently interviews with Elders began by them describing researchers who had abused their trust and how privileged and precarious my own access was. Often I was asked how I would gain from their contributions. I had to negotiate with people's preconception and assumptions about why I was there and earn access to the case-studies and build rapport with gatekeepers and potential interviewees. I overcame some of these challenges though participation and cultural sensitivity, as discussed.

The research was limited by my cultural and linguistic knowledge. A number of my interviewees spoke Blackfoot as their first language and English as their second or third. I do not speak Blackfoot and there are considerable differences between British and Canadian English, especially with dialects, expressions and colloquialisms. During my research I became accustomed to Canadian and Blackfoot terms, which facilitated interviews. Although I sought to learn Blackfoot, access to resources is very limited as the language is not widely taught. A combination of lack of time, resources and skill resulted in my going no further than learning some basic phases. Thus I conducted interviews in English and was unable to access Blackfoot, except by translations provided.

These linguistic issues came to a fore in my interview with Elder, Rosie Day Rider. When I asked her a question she would turn to Beth Carter (Canadian) who was visiting Rosie with me, and ask her to translate what I had said into Canadian English. Then after contemplating the translated question she would discuss it in Blackfoot with her son, before giving me an answer in English or Blackfoot.

Beyond the issues of languages my data was also limited by the aspects of Blackfoot culture that are 'off stage' and private. I respected boundaries of privacy and sacredness and was careful not to ask about off limit areas, and if discussion moved on to the topic of sacred or private information I would offer to turn off the recorder or not to use the material as required.

Although, I lacked insider knowledge and cultural capital, there were some advantages to being an outsider. I was not involved in the politics between government, museums and First Nations communities, nor was I connected to internal case-study or community politics. Thus I was able to work with a wide range of people, some of whom would not necessarily work with each other. Many of my participants saw me as an international visitor to their country and took on hosting roles and were keen to help me visit places and learn things that were particular to their lives. For example, staff at Blackfoot Crossing took me on a tour of the reservation and talked me through the Nation's history and their personal experiences of growing up at Siksika.

By building genuine relationships of trust with participants I was able to conduct meaningful in-depth research. And I was honoured when one Blackfoot interviewee told me during an interview that:

> The people here at the museum have made real connections with the people on reserve and we have really adopted them as our own, including you (Per. Comm. Crazybull 2008).

This comment meant a lot to me as it showed that, despite the obstacles, I had succeeded in developing meaningful relationships with research participants.

Exiting the field was a difficult thing to do, as I had developed real relationships with the staff and communities at the case-studies. Marshall and Rossman note that 'the logical, but often forgotten, extension of entry, access, role reciprocity, and ethics is the researcher's exit strategy' (2006:91). They recommend 'a gradual exit, talking about the completion of the project, providing samples of how the report will look, and leaving gifts or offers of assistance as tokens that supplement words and notes of gratitude' and staying in touch by sending 'photos from the setting and other personal notes [to] ease potential resentment or a sense of abandonment' (Marshall and Rossman 2006:91). Following their advice I endeavoured to remind interviewees of the temporariness of my presence, and thanked all interviewees verbally, then formally with their audio recordings and transcripts (as requested) for their review. When possible I engaged in reciprocity and gave culturally appropriate gifts and volunteered my time to show my gratitude. I have maintained relationships where possible with participants by visiting, emailing, writing, and attending cultural events such as Okan (Sundance).

Qualitative research is context dependant and interviews especially capture an image of thoughts and feeling of the moment, if repeated results may well be different. Thus it is important to acknowledge the socio-economic and political context of the research. Many interviewees mentioned three key events. One was the economy. During the early stages of the research Alberta experienced an economic boom due to oil.

> Over the last two decades, Alberta had the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in Canada, at 3.1% per year. However, in 2009 Alberta's economy declined by an estimated 5.1% (Government of Alberta 2010:2).

Towards the end of my fieldwork oil prices had 'fallen from a record high of US$147 per barrel in July 2008 to around US$35' (Economic Update February 2009) and there was a global financial crisis.

The second was the Residential School Apology which was made on 11th June 2008, during my interview fieldwork, by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper for the treatment of First Nations children in the Canadian Residential School System. The last

Residential School closed in 1996 (CBC 2011), and the impact of the system continues to affect First Nations communities today as they try to rebuild family ties, language, culture and community. The apology was an important and emotional event for many of my interviewees, a large number of whom had attended Residential Schools. The apology came as part of the Indian Residential Schools Class Action Settlement Agreement which included a Common Experience Payment to former students (Service Canada 2011). During the build up to this settlement many documents relating to the residential school experience were classified as evidence and not available to Museums or communities for research of exhibit development, this directly affect the exhibit at Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. Thirdly, towards the end of my fieldwork America elected its first African American President and changed the political horizon from republican to democrat. Interviewees reflected upon the election of a visible minority member and noted Barak Obama's pledge to honour Native American treaties.

3.7 Cultural Sensitivity

Working in a foreign country with Indigenous people it was very important that my research was culturally sensitive. A number of my research participants were Elders in Blackfoot society. Blackfoot society is based on respect and Blackfoot protocols require respect to be shown to Elders in specific ways. These include:

- being introduced by someone else who can speak on behalf of the person making the request;
- giving a traditional gift, such as loose leaf tobacco;
- giving an honorarium to cover the costs of travel and time taken to participate;
- sometimes giving further gifts (up to four, as this is a sacred number in Blackfoot culture) of cloth (black, white yellow or red, to be used as offerings), blankets, food, personal items;
- showing respect to the Elder by allowing them to speak without being interrupted;
- and providing Elders with a comfortable place to sit and food and traditional sage or mint tea.

Trust building with interviewees was essential to the research, and following Blackfoot protocols as I was advised to by the relevant gatekeeper, was a way of showing respect for Elders and Blackfoot customs. Gatekeeper's advice differed between the museums

and I followed advice as it was given to maintain consistency in the relationships between the museum gatekeepers and their community contacts and to prevent disruption or offence. As the BSA Statement of Ethical Practice notes:

> Since the relationship between the research participant and the gatekeeper may continue long after the sociologist has left the research setting, care should be taken not to compromise existing relationships within the research setting (BSA 2002:4).

I recognise tobacco is a highly addictive and carcinogenic drug, however I followed Blackfoot protocol and gave it as a gift when appropriate, because to disregard Blackfoot protocols and gatekeepers' advice would be disingenuous and culturally insensitive. In Blackfoot culture loose tobacco is used in ceremonies for pipe smoking, re-gifted to participants as a form of wealth redistribution, or used as an offering by being buried or placed under a rock.

I did not have a budget to give suitable honorariums (which are usually quite substantial) so I was advised to try to travel to where the Elders lived to reduce their travel costs; give a personalized gift that would be useful to the person to show respect and genuine desire to build a personal relationship; meet the Elder in a place where food is available and buy them lunch (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2008).

In terms of Western academic protocols the giving of money and tobacco to interviewees obviously raises some ethical concerns. Gifts could be viewed as a bribe or an incentive which could sway the results of the research. It is important to emphasise that in Blackfoot culture modesty is highly valued and gifts should be given as subtly as possible and not publicly presented or evaluated. Elders received gifts wrapped in cloth, and put them aside unopened until after the interview, often leaving with them still wrapped. Accepting a gift is a traditional Blackfoot form of consent to enter into exchange. If an Elder does not wish speak with you they will refuse the gift. As the gift is not opened before the interview, the information shared in the interview is not influenced by the value of the gift, but by my respect for protocol.

It would be unethical to behave in a way that imposes different cultural standards on another culture or to cause hurt to feelings by wilfully disrespecting traditional protocol. Furthermore, if I ignored these protocols I could have damaged the relationships built between the museum and the community as I gained access to these Elders through the museum gatekeepers. Thus I believe that following the advice of gatekeepers and

adhering to Blackfoot cultural protocols and being culturally sensitive was the right and ethically sound thing to do.

3.8 Conclusion

The combination of qualitative methods enabled the collection of rich and unique data that could be triangulated to check accuracy and validity of the findings. The methods supported and enhanced one another: participant observation helped develop rapport with gatekeepers and interviewees; archival and exhibit analysis informed participation and interviews; and interviews provided opportunities to test out information gathered through the other methods, and vice versa. Being culturally sensitive required extra time in the field and new ways of working, but resulted in richer data as Blackfoot community members appreciated the efforts I made to conduct my research in a way that was appropriate to Blackfoot protocols. While acknowledging the limitations of the data and my own influence on the material collected, triangulation indicates that the data provides a meaningful snapshot of Blackfoot and museum relations that can be used to analyse and understand engagement in practice.

Chapter 4: Theorising Power and Voice

Self-awareness and self-representation can empower people to make themselves present as agents in the struggle to expand their own possibilities and to struggle against injustice and intolerance (Ames 2006:175).

4.1 Introduction

Current museum relations with Indigenous people raise a number of questions that can be explored through the museum theory literature. The first question is: what role do museums play in society? Can museums speak for 'Others'? If museums cannot speak for 'Others' can they share power and authorship with them? If museums do this, it provokes the question: on what terms can community groups represent themselves in museums? In other words, can 'subalterns' speak? And finally, if they do, how is it received by audiences; can they be heard?

Through these questions I will analyse issues of power, identity, plurality, dissonance, agency, censorship and the role of museums. Consultation and inclusion have been presented as a solution to the difficulties museums have experienced with the communities they represent (Hill and Nicks 1992a, 1992b). I will argue that community engagement is an important step forward but is not an automatic solution to the issues and problems of representing 'Others'. Collaboration creates new relationships between museums and communities that have their own issues and dynamics that need further exploration. Recently there has been a flourish in literature on community engagement.[6] Peers and Brown argue that:

> These relationships [between museums and source communities] are the most important manifestations of the new curatorial praxis, but the process of establishing them has not received much attention in the critical literature. Nor has the concept of 'source community' and its special needs in and rights to material heritage held in museum collections been a focus in the literature (Peers and Brown 2007:531).

To begin with, I will critique what is already known in terms of theory relating to community collaboration with museums and argue that the literature so far has brought awareness of the need for community inclusion in representation and some of the challenges this creates for museums. The chapter will then consider the tendency to

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[6] To mention but a few: Hill and Nicks 1992; Karp, Kreamer and Lavine 1992; Clifford 1997; Mithlo 2004; Lewis 2005; Krmpotich and Anderson 2005; Carnegie 2006; Ames 2006; Peers and Brown 2003, 2006; Peers 2007; Crook 2007; Watson 2007; McCarthy 2007; Lynch 2010, 2011; Lynch and Alberti; Waterton And Watson 2011; Tapsell 2011; Boast 2011.

present inclusion as a solution rather than the start of a new form of relationship between museums and communities. Community perspectives on collaboration are worryingly absent. Positive accounts of successful engagement often minimises the critical analysis of the new power dynamics, and theoretical and political issues, created in the process of inclusion.

4.2 Museums' Roles in Society

> In today's age of globalisation, museums around the world retain the older powers of treasure house, place of knowledge, sanctuary and shrine, in combination with a newer role as a forum and a vital role in democracy... While this democratic exchange can spark bitter controversy, since the museum in the socio-cultural landscape of the twenty-first century can be perceived as an icon of western colonialism in particular contexts, this effect is often in contradistinction to curatorial intentions (Golding 2009:4).

4.2.1 An authority on 'truth'

Museums hold a privileged place in Western society. They are keepers of knowledge and collections about ourselves, others and the world we live in, from the past to the present. Museums are educational resources and provide platforms for representation that shape and reflect the society that created them.

> Since the eighteenth century, collections of cultural artefacts and works of art have also been closely associated with informal public education. They have become part, not simply of 'governing', but of the broader purposes of 'governmentality' – how the state indirectly and at a distance induces and solicits appropriate attitudes and forms of conduct from its citizens (Hall 2005:24).

As a state sponsored educational authority, Australian theorist Tony Bennett argues, the museum has located itself as 'an "instrument of civilization"' (2006:56). Bennett proposes that the French Revolution 'transformed the museum from a symbol of arbitrary power into an instrument which, through the education of its citizens, was to serve the collective good of the state' (Bennett 1995:89). Elizabeth Carnegie, writing from a Scottish social history perspective, echoes Bennett and argues that museums can be used 'to project ideas about culture and identity' and 'notions of responsible behaviour within society' (2006:74).

Museums have gained authority through their legacy as an educational institution of civic reform and through their association with power and government (Bennett 1995, 1998). As Carnegie argues, 'displays inevitably carry the authoritative stamp of local,

and in some cases national, government' (2006:74). Their position in society has enabled museums to present information as objective and neutral with authority. Museums are commonly viewed by the public as experts who hold truths on culture and heritage. Bennett argues that the museum is self perpetuating as it 'tells the story it needs to tell about the past in order to place itself as both an outcome of and a means of continuing the ongoing dynamics of self-transformation that the logic of culture promotes' (2006:56).

Richard Sandell 'has argued persuasively that objectivity is an elusive stance and a default position that imparts value through the invoked authority of the institution' (Marstine 2011b:5).

> Wide-ranging studies – variously arguing from theory, from history and more rarely from empirical audience research – have attempted to show that museums of all kinds, including science museums that have made some of the strongest claims to objectivity, do not constitute 'neutral sheltering places for objects' (Duncan 1995:1) but rather that they generate ideological effects by constructing and communicating a particular vision of society (Sandell 2007:3).

In short, museums are not neutral objective venues of historical truths, but political and social constructions of the world based on a particular view point.

4.2.2 Challenges to museum authority

In recent years the role of museums as state sponsored educational authorities on truths has come under criticism from an array of underrepresented groups, including women, socio-economically disadvantaged groups, and Indigenous peoples, who feel that their stories have not been told (Sandell 2002).

Hutcheon argues that the 'heritage of modernity' has made museums 'places of special authority and respect', and as such they 'have special cultural responsibilities that come with their institutional positions of cultural and educational power within the communities in which they exist' (1994:225). These responsibilities have come to include providing access and representation for all, and in particular, working to include those who are traditionally excluded and enabling minority voices to be heard. Such responsibilities come as a result of a combination of government policies, community pressure, and from within the museological field itself.

Christina Kreps contends that 'the new critical theory of museums problematicizes the museum and museum practices, illuminating their Euro-centric, epistemological biases

and assumptions' (2003:2). Laurajane Smith has also noted the epistemological biases inherent in Western heritage and has termed this the *authorised heritage discourse* (2006:299).

> There is an 'authorized heritage discourse', which takes its cue from the grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, and reinforces ideas of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics (Smith 2006:299).

Smith views heritage as a discourse that is 'concerned with the negotiation and regulation of social meanings and practices associated with the creation and recreation of 'identity'' (2006:5). Bennett argues that although museums play a role in managing society and teaching civic values which perpetuate dominant social structures, 'it is possible to develop a critical perspective *within* institutions that are habitually perceived as representing power or cultural authority' (Bennett 1995, 1998; Witcomb 2003:81). Bennett states that change comes from within the dominant institutions, rather than from outside them, because they affect all of society therefore there is no true group outside of the influence of the dominant institutions.

However, Andrea Witcomb disagrees with Bennett and argues that his 'determination to do away with romantic notions of community [revolutionary opposition has] led him to ignore dialogue between actual community and museum policy makers and curators' (2003:81). Witcomb argues that there are groups outside of the dominant institutional influence who do present genuine resistance. It is the dialogue between these groups that enables museums to change and challenge traditional notions of heritage and hegemony. In line with Witcomb, Smith has argued that:

> ...at one level heritage is about the promotion of a consensus version of history by state-sanctioned cultural institutions and elites to regulate cultural and social tensions in the present. On the other hand, heritage may also be a resource that is used to challenge and redefine received values and identities by a range of subaltern groups (Smith 2006:4).

Heritage sites and museums are important points of entry for Indigenous peoples' voices into mainstream society because they have the ability to validate identities, histories, culture and societies. 'The past validates the present by conveying an idea of timeless values and unbroken narratives that embody what are perceived as timeless values' (Ashworth and Graham 2005:9). Thus museum representation can validate a community's history and identity which in turn validates their current community

identity. In the context of colonised Indigenous peoples, recognition of their culture and heritage can help win land claims, treaty rights, and ultimately improve community life.

4.2.3 Backlash to change

It is not only the relationship between museums and communities that have come under scrutiny. Museums no-longer have the private funding that used to sustain them and with public funding comes increasingly governmental and public pressure from above and below (Lewis 2005). The extent to which museums are responsible to government and funding bodies has also provoked discussion from many critics (Lewis 2005; Gieryn 1998; Carnegie 2006; Hutcheon 1994).

For example the National Museum of Australia suffered a backlash in the media because they presented a past that people found controversial (Casey 2007:292). 'The museum came under fire from the press for vilifying white Australians and presenting distorted views of modern Australian history' (Dean and Rider 2005:37) The government issued a *Review of Exhibitions and Programs* to 'investigate whether the Museum had fulfilled its obligations under the 1980 statute and whether 'the Government's vision... has been realised'' (Dean and Rider 2005:38).

This returns us to Bennett and Carnegie's point that museums that are state sponsored are expected to meet state requirements and 'carry the authoritative stamp of… government' (Carnegie 2006:74). However, it also illustrates that museums can, as Bennett argues, change from *within* (Bennett 1995, 1998). This change was supported by the results of the *Review of Exhibitions and Programs* that actually 'congratulated the Museum for its displays on the first Australians' which had been the source of much of the controversy (Dean and Rider 2005:38).

'In general museums are now viewed as "contested terrain" where diverse communities debate what culture is, how it should be represented, and who holds the power to represent culture' (Kreps 2003:2). Hall has argued that in Britain, 'the idea of Heritage *has* had to respond to at least two major challenges' namely democratisation and cultural relativism (2005:27-28). Hall notes that 'increasingly, the lives, artefacts, houses, work-places, tools, customs and oral memories of ordinary everyday British folk have slowly taken their subordinate place alongside the hegemonic presence of the great and the good… [and this has] democratised our conception of value' although he

argues it has 'so far stopped short at the frontier defined by that great unspoken British value – 'whiteness'' (Hall 2005:27-28).

Secondly, Hall argues that 'the critique of the Enlightenment ideal of dispassionate universal knowledge' and 'rising cultural relativism which is part of a growing de-centring of the West and Western-orientated or Eurocentric grand narratives' has caused a revolution (Hall 2005:28). However, he notes that the 'exhibiting of 'other cultures' – often performed with the best of liberal intentions – has proved controversial' raising 'the questions – 'Who should control the power to represent?', 'Who has the authority to re-present the culture of others?' which has provoked a 'crisis of authority' (Hall 2005:28).

4.2.4 Mismatch between rhetoric and practice

Bennett argues that calls for museum reform come from a mismatch between 'the rhetorics which govern the stated aims of museums and… the political rationality embodied in the actual modes of their functioning – a mismatch which guarantees that the demands it generates are insatiable' (Bennett 1995:90). The unachievable aims are 'characterized by two principles: first the principle of public rights sustaining the demand that museums should be equally open and accessible to all; and second, the principle of representational adequacy sustaining the demand that museums should adequately represent cultures and values of different sections of the public' (Bennett 1995:90). The aims are embodied in the 'democratic rhetoric governing the conception of public museums as vehicles for popular education' (Bennett 1995:90). However, these aims are mismatched with museums 'actual functioning as instruments for the reform of public manners' (Bennett 1995:90). This creates contradictions because as an instrument of reform they 'functioned as a powerful means for differentiating populations' rather than addressing an undifferentiated democratic public (Bennett 1995:90-1).

> Similarly, demands based on the principle of representational adequacy are produced and sustained by the fact that, in purporting to tell that story of Man, the space of representation shaped into being in association with the formation of the public museum embodies a principle of general human universality in relation to which, whether on the basis of the gendered, racial, class or other social pattern of its exclusions and biases, any particular museum display can be held to be inadequate and therefore in need of supplementation (Bennett 1995:91).

More recently Bennett has argued that museums are 'differencing machines' that promote official government policies of multiculturalism by 'developing the museum as a facilitator of cross-cultural exchange' (Bennett 2006:57).

Bennett's argument echoes Clifford's concept of the museum as a contact zone, an idea Clifford borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991). Pratt used contact zones as a 'term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today' (1991:34). Clifford's application of Pratt's idea to museums has been useful to new museologists striving to present multiple perspectives on history, encourage dialogue between competing discourses, and challenge dominant narratives. Duncan Cameron pre-empted this idea with the concept of the museum moving from a temple to a forum (Cameron 1971).

However, Dibley has critiqued, what he argues are, redemptive narratives that still believe in the 'true democratic vocation of the museum' (2005:11). He criticises Bennett and Clifford for recognising the problem and then falling back on the narratives which he argues are ideals that will not be attained because the 'actual modes of the museum's operation' do not aim towards the same goals (Dibley 2005:11). By drawing on Foucault, Dibley turns Bennett's argument on himself, arguing that Bennett and Clifford need to identify the subjectifying mechanisms of current regimes of governmentality so that they can be refused (Dibley 2005:22,23).

> The prospect for an effective museum history is not located in a celebration of its newly acquired inter-culturalism, nor in a nostalgic return to its liberal reformism, but in the analysis of the individuating and totalizing operations of culture's governmentality. Not, however, so that its rhetorics might be better realised, but so that its subjectifying mechanisms can be refused (Dibley 2005:23).

Some communities, especially Indigenous communities, have made such refusals and have sought alternative ways to maintain and present their heritage. Indigenous communities that have maintained their traditional cultural systems often continue to use these alongside or instead of museums. The Blackfoot maintain their culture and

heritage through a ritualised process that included the opening and interpretation of Bundles[7].

Although Dibley raises important points about how recent improvements in community-museum relations have not overcome, what Smith calls, the authorised heritage discourse, Dibley fails to explore the effect communities have on museums when they are given the power to represent themselves, nor does he consider how these 'subjectifying mechanisms' are inverted when communities build their own museums or cultural centres. In this research I will argue that communities can refuse these 'subjectifying mechanisms' by both working with museums and by making their own representations using their own cultural approaches to heritage management.

4.3 Representing 'Others'

Museums have a long history of representing 'Others', be they from other times, places or cultures, or subgroups within society. Generally dominant groups have spoken for subjugated groups that the dominant group has defined as being unable to speak for themselves. For example, anthropologists have traditionally spoken for Indigenous people with whom they have been brought into contact with through colonialism and imperialism.

Indigenous peoples have been increasingly challenging dominant group's right to speak on their behalf and have begun speaking for themselves in public sphere through a range of media, from literature to film. In 1986 Clifford noted that 'gone are the days… when anthropology (conceived of as apolitical and neutral) could speak 'with automatic authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves'' (Hutcheon 1994:107 quoting Clifford 1986:10). With the rise of Indigenous identity politics, new museums have been established by Indigenous people to enable them to represent and speak for themselves.

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[7] Bundles are sacred items in Blackfoot culture and are considered to be living beings. Each bundle is unique and has a particular origin and personality (Lokensgard 2010:57). Bundles are associated with different events and sacred societies and are opened at specific times of the year according to protocol. For example the Thunder Medicine Pipe Bundle is opened during a ceremony after the first thunder in spring. As living beings bundles are cared for as though they are children. Their carers are called bundle holders and these people have specific cultural rights to handle bundles which they have gained through participation in Blackfoot sacred societies. The holders follow strict sacred protocol and act as parents to the bundle, previous bundle holders become grandparents and through this process generations of guardians protect and care for these sacred items. For further details see Lokensgard (2010).

Protests and Indigenous self-representation has begun to disrupt the traditional position of museums as privileged, naturalised authorities of 'unbiased' 'truths' as empowered minority groups, previously denied such privileges, are increasingly speaking for themselves.

As a result of social protests, internal changes within museums and new museology, the authority to represent and speak on behalf of others is no longer assumed to be an inherent right of the museum and its experts. Authority to speak is now questioned by those within the museum profession, stake holders, and those whom it seeks to represent. Writing in 1991 Linda Alcoff noted the changes taking place in the way communities felt about others, particularly those who dominated them, speaking on their behalf.

> As a type of discursive practice, speaking for others has come under increasing criticism, and in some communities it is being rejected… In anthropology there is also much discussion going on about whether it is possible to adequately or justifiably speak for others (Alcoff 1991:6).

Alcoff argues that 'when one is speaking about others, or simply trying to describe their situation or some aspect of it, one may also be speaking in place of them, that is, speaking for them' (1991:9). This is problematic for museums that represent 'others', that are now under pressure to allow communities to speak for themselves, moving from a passive voice of expertise to authored exhibits.

As Alcoff argues, passive voice 'erases agency that results in an erasure of responsibility and accountability for one's speech', and makes who is speaking for who uncertain. Knowing who is speaking is important because the speaker's location (social and personal) has an 'epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims' and 'affects the meaning and truth of what one says' (Alcoff 1991:6-7).

The questioning of the rights to speak for others has been accompanied by concepts of new museology and postmodernism which have challenged modern concepts of historical truths, curatorial expertise, and authority (Hutcheon 1994). 'Over the last few decades, museums have begun to see themselves as cultural 'texts' and have become increasingly self-reflexive about their premise, identity, and mission' (Hutcheon 1994:206).

Postmodern concepts challenge ideas of innate value and truth, and instead consider these things to be subjectively constructed (Carnegie 2006:80). Acknowledging

subjectivity poses a challenge for museums who have traditionally presented objective 'truths', and whose audiences still seek 'truth' from museum displays. For example according to Carnegie, visitors to the People's Story Museum in Edinburgh 'seemed to believe that the museum told the 'true' story of the working class people of Edinburgh and, as such, offered a view of Edinburgh not readily available elsewhere' (2006:79). Ironically this museum had embraced new museological techniques and sought to represent a diverse range of individual truths by involving community members in the representation. This illustrates that representation is an ongoing process that includes how audiences respond to and (mis)understand the displays.

4.3.1 What is a community?

The inadequacies and bias found in representation (and its readings) are unsurprising given that exhibits are made up of a collection of fragments collated to resemble complex, fluid, nuanced, and multilayered cultures and histories. Cultures are conceptual constructs, not physical entities available for collection. Cultures overlap and are ever changing, and individuals are often members of many different cultures on different scales which reflect and affect different aspects of their identity. Bennett argues that 'culture, in simultaneously articulating a sense of sameness and difference, inscribes our identities in the tension it produces between inherited and shared customs and traditions, on the one hand, and the restless striving for new and distinguishing forms of individuality on the other' (2006:52).

It is therefore difficult for museums to know who to work with when attempting to pluralise representation, as communities, like cultures, are not discrete entities that exist in specific geographical locations ready to be identified and accessed. Elizabeth Crooke, writing about how to represent difficult histories in Northern Ireland describes the complexity of communities:

> There is no single national group; rather, collectively we form a myriad of sometimes shifting communities. Communities can be identified by activity, gender, interest, ability and economics; we move between these communities and sometimes feel uncomfortable in the categories we are placed. Nevertheless, we need communities in order to build our experiences and forge our identities. Together these experiences produce 'communities of practise' [Falk and Dierking 2000:46] in which knowledge and relationships are socially constructed (Crooke 2007:302).

Shelia Watson argues that personal identities are tied to communities: 'the essential defining factor of a community is the sense of belonging that comes to those who are part of it (Kavanagh 1990:68) and that, through association with communities, individuals conceptualise identity' (Watson 2007:3). Watson, like Crooke, notes that community membership is not always selected by the individual. 'We all belong to many different communities and our membership of these will change with circumstances. Some communities are ours by choice, some are ours because of the ways others see us' (Watson 2007:4). Others are forced upon us because of happenstance, for example the community you are born into.

Mason (2005:206-7) offers six ways communities are defined:

1. 'Communities defined by shared historical or cultural experiences'

2. 'Communities defined by their specialist knowledge'

3. 'Communities defined by demographic/ socio-economic factors'

4. 'Communities defined by identities (national, regional, local or relating to sexuality, disability, age and gender)'

5. 'Communities defined by their visiting practices'

6. 'Communities defined by their exclusion from other communities'

These categories show the diversity of forms of communities. Communities also differ in the levels in which there is real interaction between members of the community and the extent to which the community is imagined (Anderson 2006). Communities based on geographical location, such as a nation, may include people who never interact or know each other, nor share anything in common other than their nationality. Anderson, writing in 1983, explains that the nation 'is *imagined* because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 2006:6). National identities are common themes of museum exhibits, yet are notoriously difficult and political to represent. Mason (2007) notes that there is a distinction between museums that are 'for' the nation, and as such represent others to the nation, and those that are 'of' the nation and represent themselves to others (2007:86-89). To complicate matters, the Blackfoot are a nation within a nation.

Thus when the Blackfoot work with museums such as the Glenbow to represent themselves they are 'others' within a nation, not fully Canadian, but not a nation state

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outside of Canadian rule. As Hedican articulates: 'Aboriginal people have always felt a certain measure of ambiguity about living in Canada and being its first residents, yet not actually part of Canadian society' (1995:192). How the Blackfoot are presented in museums is crucially important because as Witcome explains: 'museums need to be understood not as institutions which represent communities and cultures – which create a 'place for all of us' – but as institutions which actually produce the very notion of community and culture' (Witcomb 2003:80).

4.4 Sharing Power and Authorship

Since the 1990s Indigenous communities have had increasing opportunities to work with museums to refuse their 'subjectifying mechanisms' (Dibley 2005). By embracing multiple perspectives on heritage and inviting communities in, museums are making 'efforts to involve the 'subjects' themselves in the exhibiting process which objectifies them' (Hall, 2005:29). They are attempting to move away for 'modern' binary oppositions, most notably 'Us' and 'Others'. However, this can be difficult to achieve because identity, society and culture define themselves by what they are and what they are not. There are always insiders and outsiders.

Identities are complex and powerful, thus making representations of them is fraught with difficulties and social and political consequences. As museums have an ability to legitimize identity and culture through public representation they can be sites of contestation as different groups struggle to have their views represented.

> Communication always involves political interaction and thus power
> differences. It is this postmodern truism that has led museological theory to
> advocate more community consultation and dialogue in the mounting of
> exhibitions (Hutcheon 1994:224).

4.4.1 The nature of power

Before analysing the specifics of community engagement (discussed in chapter six) it is necessary to consider the very notion of power as it lies at the centre of these debates. A number of new museology studies (such as Bennett 1995, 1998, 2004, 2006) have drawn heavily on the work of French philosopher, Michel Foucault and particularly his work on power and discourse as explored in texts such as the History of Sexuality (1990) and Discipline and Punish (1995). Foucault's conceptualisation of power is useful to understanding power exchange and resistance within the unequal relations between community and museums:

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...power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society...it is produced from one moment to the next, as every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (Foucault 1990:93).

This conception of power moves away from the perception of power as unidirectional and working in binary opposition between two bodies; which is common in thinking about relations between the apparently powerful and powerless. As Foucault states: 'power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix' (1990:94). This helps to explain why people who appear to be powerless still have agency and why the so-called powerful do not always prevail. It also helps to unravel the complexities involved in community collaboration. If power can occur at any level in any place at anytime, then collaboration is not simply a power dynamic between museum and community, but between every person, in every position, at every level, at every moment.

This is not to negate the real structural inequalities that exist between museums (as cultural authorities) and Indigenous communities (as people who have only recently had their voice accepted into modern discourse and continue to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in Western society), but highlights the power of agency and resistance within dominant discourse. As Foucault contends: 'power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations' (1990:94). This understanding of power complicates the notion of power sharing.

Museums did not suddenly decided to work with communities, but have responded to power dynamics from within and outside the museum that have forced museums to consider community involvement. Communities have exercised their power and agency outside of the museum walls through actions such as protest, long before they were invited in. As such, museums have had ongoing power relations with communities since their conception; the recent change has been in the balance of power.

Like power, resistance is also more complex than it first appears. Foucault argues that:

> Points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations (1990:95-6).

Thus museums and communities are not engaged in a simple binary asymmetrical power relationship. Instead they are part of a myriad of power interactions, some spontaneous, others continuous, that place pressure and influence on museums in many different ways to different extents. To shut communities out of the museum will not prevent their influence on the museum as 'into the heart of Africa' and 'the Spirit Sings' exhibitions demonstrated (Hutcheon 1994).

4.4.2 Can power be shared?

Despite the power of communities beyond the walls of the museum to influence museology and practice, not all curators think museums can share power with communities within their walls. Catherine Lewis has written about her experiences with the Chicago Historical Society's (CHS) attempts to involve Chicago urban communities in self representation and has argued strongly against the ability of the museum to share power over representation with community groups (2005). Lewis accounts for the failures of the community involvement in *The Neighbourhoods Project*, arguing that it is neither possible nor desirable to share power over representation with communities (Lewis 2005:120).

She contends that it is impossible for community groups to change the status quo, 'unless museum professionals are prepared to question the historical consciousness that has given rise to the museum' (2005:120). Although Lewis is writing about her experiences in Chicago, America, Smith also found similar issues in aboriginal Australia and argues that museums need to be aware of what she calls the 'authorised heritage discourse' which is the underlying discourse that informs traditional Western concepts of heritage and museum practice (Smith 2006). As Simpson has explored (1996, 2006), there are many alternative cultural approaches to heritage that have the expertise to maintain and interpret culture and its materials, and have done so for hundreds and thousands of years.

As such, Lewis' argument is susceptible to charges of Eurocentrism as she argues that 'museums cannot relinquish full control over cultural capital and still consider themselves museums' (2005:120). Lewis' view of museums as an authority helps to explain her perspective that sharing power is undesirable because of the risk of 'inappropriate' information being displayed as authoritative truths. She states that 'visitors rely on the professionals' expertise, and they come to such institutions with the expectation that the staff has something to teach them and that something can be learned' (2005:120). Although censorship is a key issue (discussed below), it is worth unpicking Lewis' argument as she addresses a key problem in any attempt to share authority with communities, being that 'museum professionals still control who has the right to participate at the most basic level' (2005:120).

If the majority of power remains in the hands of the museum, they determine the form of representation that will be produced as Lewis observed:

> "In the end, wherever there's a shared authority… it's not an equal share. At best it's two-thirds CHS and one-third the neighbourhood. At its worst more like three-fourths or seven-eighths." While museum professionals believe they are collaborating with local communities, in reality they are cooperating or coordinating. Collaboration requires a transfer of authority, which is unlikely to happen at CHS [Chicago Historical Society] or any other major history museum in the near future, not because the staff is unwilling to share power but because they work in a profession that requires expertise (Lewis 2005:120).

Lewis views the role of museums as bringing 'new constituencies into the temple to participate in a forum' but not to turn the temple into a forum. She says museums will have to determine if this is enough.

Lewis' concerns tie into the current debates about expertise. Gurian (1995), Carnegie (2006), and McCarthy (2007) have all noted the irony that the recent professionalization and status of museology has coincided with new demands to share their authority and power with members of the public. Lewis's emphasis on the need for expertise is understandable, but problematic as it devalues contributions from alternative perspectives and privileges Western control of heritage.

Lewis' evaluation of CHS highlight that power sharing is often less empowering for community members than was intended. However her scepticism about the future of shared authority, based on the need for Western expertise, would be likely to cause offence to Indigenous communities that have their own cultural heritage experts. There

have been attempts to share authority at major history museum in America such as the National Museum of the American Indian which was created with the intention of sharing curatorial authority with Native American communities. 'We insist that the authentic Native voice and perspective guide all our policies, including, of course, our exhibition philosophy' (West 2000:7). This research will analyse the extent to which authority can be shared with communities at the case-studies to test out this debate.

4.4.3 Problems of sharing power and authority

In Scotland Elizabeth Carnegie's experiences with community inclusion at the People's Museum in Glasgow, address some of the concerns raised by Lewis (2005). Carnegie discusses the difficulty of sharing authority when the museum is a government representative. She notes that even when museums try to involve communities in 'various ways and stages of the development, interpretation and often management of the displays… decisions will be taken which ultimately reflect the institution', even within the people's museums (Carnegie 2006:80).

This is an important point, that echoes Lewis' (2005:120) concerns about what is displayed, because the representation the museum makes reflects the museum as much as the people in the display. Carnegie notes that 'museum displays… reflect the practices of the staff that create them' as 'staff are still taking decisions on behalf of the institution, on behalf of visiting public' to 'determine what is deemed appropriate to display' (Carnegie 2006:73). Carnegie takes the approach of the curator as facilitator and argues that 'giving 'power to the people' does not mean relinquishing responsibility (or power) but providing a knowledgeable framework from which to develop social history in partnership with communities' (2006:73). She acknowledges that this model will have problems 'when communities do not seem to prioritize the same issues, themes or concerns as curators and when decisions need to be taken which will also meet institutional requirements' (Carnegie 2006:73).

4.4.4 Censorship

The ability of museums to endorse certain perspectives on history makes them powerful mediums of communication. As Crooke (2007), Carnegie (2006), Szekeres (2007), and Lewis (2005) highlight, this makes sharing power over authorship with communities problematic, especially if that community's view are contrary to the museum's, mainstream society, or could potentially do harm to others. Presenting alternative

histories and perspectives that counter widely accepted grand narratives and challenge other people's perception of themselves and their identity could create dissonant and contentious histories that museum audiences and funders may not wish to see in the museum (as seen in the example of the National Museum of Australia Casey 2007:292).

Writing about the representation of difficult histories in Northern Ireland Elizabeth Crooke argues that museums need to 'tread carefully' in regards to representing difficult histories such as the Northern Ireland Troubles, because 'museums often hope to achieve 'neutrality' through the creations of safe and open spaces where all personal experience is valued. The notion of neutrality is, of course, highly problematic, as is the view that all versions of history command equal respect' (Crooke 2007:310). Crooke also raises concerns about the effect of individual stories when they become collective heritage 'when they move from the realm of the personal to the public' because she argues that 'their purpose changes' (2007:308).[8]

> The public dimension adds a new significance, is a form of recognition, and provides endorsement. We must, therefore, consider the impact of displaying oral testimonies that are largely partial in public spaces (Crooke 2007:308).

Elizabeth Crooke raises this concern about enabling communities to present their personal experiences on the Troubles in Northern Ireland (2007). Some subjects would be unsuitable for museum display because to include them would be to give them museum sanction and thus validity.

'Mieke Bal has written that museum professionals have come to accept 'the idea that a museum is a discourse, and an exhibition an utterance within that discourse'' (Phillips 2006:134). In this sense museums could approach community representation as one expression in an ongoing discourse, to which others could respond, and accumulatively represent a multiplicity of views in dialogue with one another. However, in practice censorship is a crucial issue for museums, because although current rhetoric states the desire to include a plurality of voices, museums only really wish to hear from some groups on certain topics. An obvious example would be the undesirability of empowering a Neo-Nazi community group to represent themselves uncensored within a museum as it would be seen to legitimise their claims and do harm to other members of society. Equally telling an Indigenous community that their culture and heritage is but

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[8] The power and transformation of personal testimonies will be discussed in chapter eight.

an utterance in a post-modern debate would devalue their history and deny their right to speak about themselves with authority as set out in 2007 by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Where to draw the line between freedom of expression and civil liberty and the potential to cause harm is an ongoing debate not just in museums, but society as a whole. For museums this is likely to be an increasing issue of concern as museums strive to involve more communities in the process of representation.

4.4.5 Consent

Carnegie's work on the People's Museum in Glasgow raises the important issue about the nature of consent in community inclusion. She analyses how people who had previously given their consent to be displayed in exhibits later changed their minds and wished to withdraw from the display (2006:70-2). This was a result of the changing context of images and memories, from when they were collected to when they were displayed. As Carnegie notes 'informants may not be fully aware of the consequences of their participation when the context is changed from the original interview situation' (Carnegie 2006:72).

When museums engage with communities it is important they consider whether permission is granted forever, or whether people have a right of return, to return images and memories from the public to the private and withdraw their consent (Carnegie 2006:72). Carnegie notes that there is no clear policy on this matter and yet it is something that could be of critical importance to an individual or even a community in the time after the community collaboration has taken place (2006:72).

It also illustrates that an engagement relationship does not end with the opening of a community exhibit, but carries on long after the community has left the museum. Maintaining such relationships can be demanding on resources[9], especially if museums wish to develop relations with all sections of their societies or all the communities represented in their collection. An example of consent dilemma will be explored later in

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[9] Resources are an important limiting factor in community involvement and will be considered in detail in chapter seven.

the thesis when considering controversial decisions made at case-study Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump.

4.4.6 Self-censorship

As museums have the power to validate identities and histories, it is not only curators who may wish to censor what is said. Communities often restrict what they share with the wider public to prevent negative aspects being shown and inscribed. As Carnegie explains 'local audiences may actively seek to protect their communities through participating in the curatorial process, by withholding participation, or by offering censored and selective views of their history or present' (2006:80). Carnegie explored self-censorship, community collusion in 'stigma management', and the role of curators in the task of community representation in her analysis of Scottish social history museums (2006:69). She explains that:

> For some local audiences the admission of poverty or an acknowledgement of the existence of domestic violence or child abuse can also be hard for them to accept as part of their public history…Thus 'stigma management' has a direct impact on the memories which people consent to share and therefore on the shaping of displays (Carnegie 2006:73).

It can be argued that this will result in elements of the past being deleted from the historical record. However there is a difference between what is displayed in museums in connection to community involvement and what is recorded in the historical record of literature and multimedia on the past.

Some communities will restrict information for other reasons. For Indigenous communities like the Blackfoot, sacred knowledge and material is culturally restricted because it is considered unsuitable for public dissemination. With the increasing participation of Indigenous people in museums, some museums are seeking to respect such restriction and protocol. Museums like Te Papa, Glenbow and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), have removed sensitive items from display and sought culturally sensitive ways to store such items in their collection (McCarthy 2007). However this has not occurred without controversy. Tiffany Jenkins vehemently critiques NMAI decisions to restrict access and limit conservation for certain sacred items in their collections, arguing that 'NMAI is more akin to a church than a place of inquiry searching for truth about human cultures' and that 'NMAI breaks down the very raison d'etre of museums' (2005). Once again this returns us to the question of what

role museums should play in society for whom, and whether counter discourses can have legitimacy within the dominant narratives museums present.

4.5 Can 'Subalterns' Speak and Be Heard?

In 1988 Indian theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raised the critical question: 'Can the subaltern speak?' (1988:271). Spivak explored the question by considering the place of women in India with consideration to the British abolition of widow sacrifice (1988:271). She criticises Foucault and Deleuze for rejecting speaking for others on the grounds that 'it assumes the oppressed can transparently represent their own true interests' (Alcoff 1991:22). She argues that subalterns cannot represent themselves authentically because their subservient position in society means that they can only speak in the terms of the dominant discourses (Spivak 1988:308).

Spivak argues that '"listening to", as opposed to speaking for, essentializes the oppressed as nonideologically constructed subjects' (Alcoff 1991:22). However Spivak recognises the dangers of speaking for others and settles on a "speaking to" approach in which 'the intellectual neither abnegates his or her discursive role nor presumes an authenticity of the oppressed but still allows for the possibility that the oppressed will produce a "countersentence" that can then suggest a new historical narrative' (Alcoff 1991:23).

For museums' engagement with communities, the power to speak is a key issue. Museums must grapple with the challenge of acknowledging their discursive role, avoiding essentializing 'Others', whilst concurrently recognising the potential limitations of peoples' abilities to speak for themselves and their potential to create new counter narratives. To do this requires critical reflexivity and careful communication between the museum staff and the community. Such engagement places heavy demands upon museum resources and staff members skills.

Researching Maori in New Zealand, Conal McCarthy (2007) presents a different perspective on subaltern agency and their ability to speak. He argues although museums have only recently undertaken official consultation, Maori have had agency and sought to influence the way they are represented since Europeans began showing their material culture in museums. McCarthy considers different forms of power and influence and explores agency throughout the history of Maori relations with museums. 'By participating in local and international fairs, Maori saw themselves as partners in

colonial development rather than as subjects of it' (McCarthy 2007:38). Spivak and McCarthy both make compelling arguments, as colonised people are both influenced by the dominant society within which they live, but also have the agency to resist, speak out, and contradict the dominant discourse, even if it is framed within the context of the times.

Mary Pratt (1991) describes this framed agency as 'autoethnography': a process 'in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them' (1991:35). Indigenous people can critically engage with, and respond to, negative stereotypes and misrepresentations and rebut widely held misinformation.

> Autoethnographic works are often addressed to both metropolitan audiences and the speaker's own community. Their reception is thus highly indeterminate… [as] it will read very differently to people in different positions in the contact zone… Such [works] often constitute a marginalized groups' point of entry into the dominant circuits of… culture (Pratt 1991:35).

Robin Boast has argued that Pratt's example of autoethnography (Pratt 1991:38) is where 'we see how the museum as contact zone operates. Reference, appropriateness, and legitimacy are always framed from the point of view of the party in authority, "regardless of what other parties might see themselves as doing" (Pratt 1991:38)' (Boast 2011:61). Boast argues that it is this autoethnography 'that has largely been left out of the post-Clifford/Pratt discussions' (2011:61).

> Autoethnography is as much a part of the contact zone as is transculturation. However, it is the forgotten part. This is very strange, though probably very telling, as both Clifford (1997:213) and Pratt (1991:34) made clear that autoethnography is one of the most significant, and most neo-colonial, aspects of all contact zones (Boast 2011:62).

Boast notes Pratt's emphasis on autoethnographic texts as not being forms of self-representations, but a point of entry into dominant discourse (2011:62). This raises key issues for collaborative engagement based on contact zone models (discussed in chapter six) and ties into the debate on the limits of self-representation within a dominant cultural form such as the museum (which will be addressed in chapter eight).

4.5.1 Essentialising selves

Representation tends to essentialise to simplify a vast array of information into a manageable and legible group of key elements. Essentialising can be a strategic and

political act to achieve a specific goal, or a by-product of the logistical inability to tell the 'whole story'. Spivak introduced the idea of strategic essentialism and argued that '[i]t is not possible to be non-essentialist... the subject is always centred' (1990:109).

> ...since it is not possible not to be an essentialist, one can self-consciously use this irreducible moment of essentialism as part of one's strategy. This can be used as part of a "good" strategy as well as a "bad" strategy and this can be used self-consciously as well as unself-consciously... no *Vertretung*, representation – can take place without essentialism (1990:109).

If essentialism is a given, then it can be useful to use it consciously and strategically to achieve certain aims. It can be a useful tool for groups who are marginalised to gain an entry point into dominant discourse, as one united voice is stronger and louder than many disparate voices. For example, Indigenous groups often initially fight for the right to have their side of colonial history heard. Once they have secured a united voice, other sub-groups within that society may voice alternative histories within that larger narrative, such as gender specific experiences or the experiences of minorities within that group. Essentialism is closely linked to authenticity. While considering the notion of 'authenticity' and how it can be conceptualised as a relational and subjective notion, James Clifford notes that 'if authenticity is relational, there can be no essence except as a political, cultural invention, a local tactic' (1988:12).

When a group essentialises its identity, even for tactical reasons, it risks drawing boundaries around authenticity that exclude people within its own community. For example, community members who have multiple cultural identities may find themselves excluded from one community as a result of their participation in another. In terms of the Blackfoot this can occur when a community member moves away from their Reserve and participates in Canadian urban life. Urban centres are far from Reserves and the distance is often prohibitive to a person fully participating in Reserve community life. There are implications for jurisdiction too, as the Reserve is governed by Chief and Council under the rule of the Canadian Federal government, where as the urban centres come under provincial jurisdiction. Thus it can be difficult for First Nations for function as full members of their urban and Reserve communities. The greatest threat essentialization poses is to fossilise a living culture into a static position and prevent normal cultural development and change.

Even if communities are not actively using essentialism as a tactic (Spivak 1990), by selecting aspects of their identity for museum display they demarcate the elements they

view as essential and freeze them in static form in an exhibit. Thus communities face difficult decisions when considering how to represent themselves, as the selections they make may end up defining who they are and who they can be. Representing living heritage in a coherent way within a static setting is not easy. Susan Ashley argues that 'the fluidity of the substantial sphere of participation, interaction and contestation is essential to respond to and overcome that fixation' (2007:492).

Empowering 'subalterns' to speak is often presented as a solution to the problem of speaking for others, however it really only moves the problem from the museum to the community. Rarely can every individual in a community speak for themselves within a museum, so representatives are required to speak on behalf (or for) others. Thus community created exhibits still have the potential to be exclusive, undemocratic and biased, only in new and different ways to traditional curator authored exhibits. As Crooke notes: 'just because more diverse histories are being made known, it does not mean they are being told in a less exclusive or partial manner' (2007:310). The value is that they can present a different, counter narrative to dominant discourse. Community control respects Indigenous agency and gives them a stake in the museum and the representation of their culture. This is the first step towards redefining museum and community relations, especially with groups museums have traditionally objectified or excluded.

4.5.2 Can subalterns be heard?

Michael Baxandall has argued that '[e]xhibitors cannot *represent* cultures. Exhibitors can be tactful and stimulating impresarios, but exhibition is a social occasion involving at least three active terms' – makers of objects, exhibitors of those objects and viewers (1991:41). How audiences view and respond to exhibits is an important part of the process of representation. Richard Sandell notes that audience interpretation of exhibits is often overlooked as a result of the focus on the process of exhibit creation. 'Exhibitions may be constructed in ways that are *intended* to communicate particular understandings of difference, but limited consideration has been given to the ways in which visitors might engage with them' (Sandell 2007:4). Sandell (2007) and Mason (2006) both contribute to filling this gap with their analysis of museum visitation theory.

Communication between a museum and its audiences is complex because visitors come to museums with their own views and experiences, and select, filter and interpret the information they receive depending on their needs, desires and abilities. This process is encapsulated in the concept of museums as dream spaces (Kavanagh 2000). 'How people experience the past within this 'dream space' is determined by their relationship to that past' (Carnegie, 2006:70). Kavanagh borrows the idea of the dream space from Sheldon Annis' (1987) paper in which he describes 'the museum as an expressive medium and the visit as a movement through three overlapping symbolic spaces: cognitive, pragmatic (social) and dream' (Kavanagh, 2000:2). The dream space is the 'field of interaction between objects and the viewer's subrational conscious' (Kavanagh, 2000:3 referencing Annis, 1987:170). It is in this space that personal and emotional memories, as well as imagination and the senses, come in to play to affect how the viewer perceives the museum experience (Kavanagh 2000:3). Such experiences are 'anarchic and unpredictable, through the dream space we can arrive at all sorts of possibilities not considered by those who make museum exhibitions' (Kavanagh, 2000:3). Thus to some extent a visitor's interaction with an exhibit is deeply personal, and the interpretations and understanding they take home with them are influenced by factors outside of both the museum and the collaborative community's control.

'The gap between the intended message and that actually received has been described as the "discursive gap" by Professor Roger Fowler' (Allen and Anson 2005:178). New museological strategies can, at times, widen this gap. A well documented example of museum-audience communication breakdown as a result of postmodern strategies, and possibly the impact of the emotional context of the dream space, occurred at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1989 during the *Into the Heart of Africa* exhibition. The curator's postmodern strategy designed to be reflexive about the history of their collections and the values they embodied, used irony to challenge the colonial notions under which the collection was complied. However, 'many viewers...missed the curators' critical intentions' (Butler 2000:82). In addition the curator 'Cannizzo did not always appreciate the way in which aspects of her exhibit reproduced colonial objectification' (Butler 2000:85). Butler argues that Cannizzo 'seemed to implicitly conceive' her audience as white, as the exhibition aimed to 'offer visitors a critical education about colonialism', overlooking the fact that some visitors had very personal experiences of colonialism (2000:86). The exhibition resulted in public protest as some audience

members read the exhibit as reinforcing colonial notions rather than challenging them (Hutcheon 1994).

The gap between the intended message (a critique of the colonial origins of the collection) and the received message (support of the colonial origins of the collection) can be blamed in part on the failure of the strategies implemented (Hutcheon 1994). However, it also highlights the potential difficulties that result when museums move outside of the traditional roles their audiences expect of them. Although museological discourse now talks in terms of post-modern new museology, old notions of museums as sites of authority remain in the public consciousness. Audience expectations of receiving 'authorised truths' makes representing multiple and conflicting perspectives challenging. Heumann Gurian proposes that 'while visitors expect to see the authors of works of art, music and fiction identified, they are not used to perceiving exhibitions as personal work of identifiable individuals' (1991:187). Visitors may simply not recognise new museological techniques.

This problem also arises when community groups wish to present aspects of their culture that require specific cultural knowledge to access. It is possible for community groups to use this strategically to enable multi-layered communication that allows access to cultural insiders and restricts what is shared with outsiders through the use of cultural coding. However, if wider dissemination is desired cultural concepts may have to be translated and mediated to be transferable between cultures. In doing so, community voice is reframed through the museum, the English language and Western culture. This can result in a loss of information which is not translatable and a loss of community control as the community can no-longer restrict the dissemination of the translated information (these issues will be addressed in chapter eight).

4.6 Conclusion

To conclude, museums are in a process of change that has been accelerated in recent years, externally, by community pressures and, internal, by changes in the museum profession and theory. Communities and concepts of new museology have challenged traditional museum to rethink their role in society and their assumed right to speak on behalf of others. The postmodern, postcolonial strategies of sharing power over representation have shown to be theoretically salient, yet in reality very complex to carry to fruition, as there are many competing discourses, power dynamics and politics

that make sharing power problematic. Sharing power and authority raises other theoretical issues, such as the community's ability to speak and the role of the museum and its curators. Community self-representation requires museums and communities to carefully consider what 'community' is, and how to represent fluid living culture and heritage.

Power sharing is not a simple solution to the history of difficult relations between museums and communities, but it is an important step in forming new relations between museums and communities. These new relations hold new potential and challenges as well as old problems in new forms. For example community involvement does not resolve the problem of speaking for others, as community representatives will still have this role. Communities can represent themselves in museums, however, these representations are not automatically more democratic, truthful, equal, or representative; this depends on whom, how, when, and why they are created. Nevertheless, self-representation is an important opportunity for communities to change the way major cultural institutions interpret their culture and enables them to present a representation of themselves that they want people to see; even if it is not always entirely on their own terms, nor necessarily received in the ways it is intended.

As Dibley argues, this is not the time for a 'celebration of [museums] newly acquired inter-culturalism' (2005:23). Instead, the new dynamics of community involvement in museums need further study. Power cannot be simply given; how it is shared depends on the role of the museum, its curators and the community. The act of sharing power with communities does not solve the dilemmas of representation because communities are not discrete entities that can democratically and objectively represent themselves. The same problems associated with speaking for others, occurs within communities, just as it did between communities and museums. The next chapter will place these debates into a Canadian context, relevant to the case-studies.

Chapter 5: Placing Community Relations with Museums in a Canadian Context

We've had systemic prejudice against First Nations in Canada since Canada began, although a lot of people don't admit it (Pers. Comm. Janes 2008).

When the white man came they called us savages, we called them... our ancestors called them crazy people...they didn't know our way of life (Pers. Comm. Kainai Elder Frank Weasel Head 2008).

In much engagement work in museums today, there seems to be little realization of what such contact actually entails, and how fraught with suppressed anger and emotion it can be (Lynch 2011:150).

5.1 Introduction

For many Indigenous peoples museums can imbue strong emotional responses, from anger and sadness to joy, because ethnographic collections are connected with the horrors of colonial conquest and yet provide a direct link to pre-colonial life. The paradoxical duality of their roles makes museums key sites of postcolonial debate, as they embody colonial narratives whilst having the potential to decolonise the history of former colonial states. For Indigenous people museums can be viewed as collaborative bodies of former colonial oppression who continue to keep cultural material beyond source community reach. Yet paradoxically they are store houses of materials that are often key to the survival and revival of cultural practices, and are desirable platforms for Indigenous voice and present opportunities to decolonise the past and present.

The idea of museums arrived with colonialism. The occupation and conquest of Indigenous peoples by colonial powers supplied museums in Europe with collections from around the globe. Newly established colonies began to sculpt their own identities and narratives, and represented them through display. Methods of collection and display were used to help justify European aggression and naturalise their dominance over the Indigenous peoples they conquered, oppressed and killed. Consequently, Indigenous engagement with museums is frequently complicated by strong emotional reactions triggered by the history of oppression that accompanies many ethnographic collections, which can result in engagement being a sensitive and complex process.

The chapter explores the history of museums relationships with colonialism, Indigenous agency and protests, and the changes to museum practice that developed. Analysis of the international scene, focusing down to local Canadian examples, places current

Albertan museum engagement with Blackfoot communities into its historical, political and geographical context.

In this chapter I will briefly explore the historical context that has brought museum to where they are today in terms of their relationships with Indigenous peoples in the English speaking former British colonies of Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia. I have selected these four countries because the Indigenous people who live there share similar experiences of being colonised by Europe, principally by Britain (and France in Canada), and becoming a culturally distinct minority within their own lands. Although there are many differences between the peoples, their cultures and their countries, an initial analysis of museums' relationships with Indigenous people in these countries in the past and present will help to set the museological events in Canada in their context. These countries are also useful for comparison as they dominate the Anglophone literature on museums, new museology, and Indigenous peoples. It is, therefore, crucial to understand these contexts in order to understand the parameters of the debates about museums in these countries today.

Current relations between museums and Indigenous communities are shaped and informed by events that have occurred between them in the past. Improvements in relations have occurred as a result of increased Indigenous involvement and activism, and ideas of multiculturalism and multi-vocality that have made mainstream society gradually more receptive to counter-narratives. The difficulties that remain are partly the result of cross-cultural misunderstanding and a failure to communicate with and comprehend one another, but more often the result of a history of unequal colonial relations and exploitation that continues in the present. This chapter will analyse these roots and ground this research in its historical context.

5.2 Contact Experience

As the 'New World' was 'discovered' and colonised European first impressions of Indigenous peoples were generally formed through the fragments brought back by explorers. Descriptions, artistic depictions, objects, human remains and even living people were collected to inform European audiences about 'new found worlds'. 'The earliest representations of Native Americans available to Europeans were rare illustrated books about the "New World"' (Maurer 2000:15). Many of these first impressions permeated collective imaginations and persist to this day despite their colonial subtext.

For example, in 1505 a German book *The People of the Islands Recently Discovered* showed images of 'Carib Indian men and women dressed in feathered headdresses' cooking a meal of human limbs (Maurer 2000:15-16). The pre-civilized, exotic, feathered Indian became the iconic image that 'remained popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' (Maurer 2000:16-17). Even today feathered headdresses are used as an icon for the diverse Indigenous communities of North America despite their specific Plains origin. The name 'Indian' is also an erroneous term, based on a European navigational miscalculation, which has perpetuated for more than five hundred years. Since contact Indigenous people have had to fight European stereotyped misconceptions that sought to render them as less-than-human, savage, and uncivilised, doomed to die out or assimilate.

The painted images of Indigenous people were brought to life through the exhibition of living people brought to Europe for display. In 1551 a number of Indigenous Brazilians were brought to Rouen, France, to demonstrate their cultural practices for the French King Henri II (Maurer 2000:18). 'In 1577, Frobisher brought a group of Baffin Island Inuits to England to promote his voyages' and demonstrated their cultural traditions and life ways (Maurer 2000:19). Initial exports of Indigenous peoples to Europe often had tragic consequences as many died from European diseases or on the long voyages they had to endure. Although some people came willingly, human display was often characterised by derogative and dehumanising frames of display. Saartjie Baartman has been cited as a key example of the display of 'Others' as 'freaks' and exotic, erotic curiosities (Wels 2004; Strother 1999; Abrahams 1998; Gilman 1985; Gould 1982). In 1810 Baartman was sold as a slave for display in London and then France and experienced considerable mistreatment, and died in 1815 at the age of 25 (Wels 2004:83). Known as the Hottentot Venus, she was a member of Khoisan peoples of South Africa, who at that time 'were considered by anthropologists to be the race closest to primate monkeys, together with Australian Aborigines' (Wels 2004:83). After her death anatomist George Cuvier examined, plaster casted, and dissected her body. Her parts, bones and casts entered museum collections and remained on display till 1980s, finally returning to her community in 2002, 192 years after her death (Wels 2004:83).

Initial relations between museums and Indigenous people were performed at a great distance, with material moving from Indigenous communities to European museums via collectors. As colonisation and settlement brought European and Indigenous cultures

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into increasing proximity, exoticizing and 'Othering' colonised people was crucial to creating conceptual distance between the two. Cultural material, sacred items, and human remains became part of public and private collections around the world as curio and exotica, and for scientific documentation; echoing and reinforcing colonial narratives of ownership of formerly free and independent Indigenous peoples.

Following the colonial discourse of the day, collections were made to 'salvage' the remains of cultures 'doomed' to extinction or assimilation as a result of colonialism. In North America, 'the dominant view was that Indian cultures were in varying stages of decay, and museums had to rush to preserve evidence of pre-contact peoples' (Hill 2000:103). In New Zealand, 'a prime motivation was to acquire the unique objects from what many Europeans believed was a dying race' (Hakiwai 2005:154).

Such items were then exhibited to reinforce colonial notions of Western superiority and Indigenous peoples' 'savage' and 'uncivilised' nature. They helped to demonstrate Western dominance whilst justifying colonial practice by dehumanising colonised Indigenous peoples. Thus museums were active participants in colonial narratives, both reflecting and building the colonial societies of their day. As Hutcheon articulates:

> The history of most European and North American ethnographic museum collections is one that cannot easily be separated from the specific history of imperialism. Not only were the objects collected often the spoils of colonial conquest (seen at the time as 'discovery' and 'exploration'), but their acquisition and retention have been legitimised by the institutionalization of an ideal (and an ideology) of apolitical, detached objectivity and a positivist commitment to science (1994:206).

The origins of many public museum collections of Indigenous cultural material continue to be contentious because of the unequal power relations of colonialism under which the items were often procured. Stolen, confiscated, unearthed, traded, gifted and bought, cultural material and human remains entered collections and were lost to their source communities. Simpson argues that '[t]o many Indigenous peoples, Western-style museums are laden with associations of colonialism, cultural repression, loss of heritage, and death' (2006:153). Richard W. Hill, Sr. notes that in the past:

> Museums felt that if they discovered an Indian body in the ground, they could claim it for science. All objects made by ancient Indians were thought to belong to the archaeologists who discovered them (Hill 2000:103).

Franz Boas, often called the 'Father of American Anthropology' (Mithlo 2004:749), facilitated the movement of cultural and human material from community to museum:

> Boas's second Northwest Coast visit in May-1888, funded by the Canadian
> government, had as its emphasis in physical anthropology – the collection of
> Native American skulls and skeletons, specifically from British Columbia…
> Boas paid $20.00 for a complete skeleton and $5.00 for a skull resulting in a
> collection of two hundred crania valued at $1,600.00. The collection was
> eventually accessioned at the Chicago Field Museum in 1894 (Mithlo 2004:749-
> 750).

The weighted power relations imposed by colonialism prevented 'fair trade' as
colonised people were under duress. In New Zealand colonialism created a new trade in
moko mokai (cured head of captured male enemy) and 'by 1830, hundreds of *moko
mokai* had been internationally traded via Sydney, Australia, finding their way into
major European and North America private collections and museums' (Tapsell
2005:156). Although the *moko mokai* were traded for, the circumstances were far from
ethical by today's standards.

> The pre-1840 dark years of Maori inter-tribal musket warfare provided
> opportunity for kin adversaries not only to settle old scores, but also to debase
> the heads of their enemies as trade items with foreigners. The better they were
> tattooed, the greater the price they fetched – measured in muskets, powder, and
> shot – thus improving the opportunity to capitalise on one's enemies even
> further (Tapsell 2005:156).

In Canada the government used laws such as the Indian Act (first enacted in the
Canadian Constitution Act of 1867, then legislated in 1876) to oppress First Nations
culture. The 1884 amendment to the Indian Act created Section 149 known as the
Potlatch Law which criminialised 'two Northwest Coast ceremonies the Potlatch and
the Tamanawas' with 'attendance and participation liable a prison sentence of six
months'(Racette 2008:58). This amendment supplied collectors with confiscated
cultural material as Racette explains:

> The first arrests under the law took place in 1921 at Alert Bay. During that
> initial arrest and subsequent raids, masks, coppers and other valuable ceremonial
> items were confiscated and disappeared into private and public collections...
> Although Section 149 was specific to the nations of the Northwest Coast, it was
> used to suppress ceremonies and confiscate items associated with ceremonial
> and cultural practice in other parts of Canada. Under this law, an enormous
> amount of cultural property was seized and sold, including wampum from the
> traditional governments of the Six Nations Confederacy and ceremonial objects
> from the nations of the Plains (Racette 2008:58).

The collections amassed through such practices are now central to problems between
museums and Indigenous communities. As Racette argues:

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of extreme disempowerment and poverty. Many collectors visited Aboriginal communities during this time and found people willing to sell possessions that they might otherwise never have parted with... Not surprisingly, these historic circumstances create an often highly charged and contentious space around museum collections (Racette 2008:59).

Thus initial relations between museums and Indigenous peoples were highly asymmetrical and ethnocentric in favour of colonisers over colonised. This has resulted in current situations where 'many museum curators find themselves entrusted with the care of material that evokes powerful emotional responses in their source or home communities' (Racette 2008:57).

As the colonies became populated and settled by European immigrants, attempts were made to present themselves as distinct from their home countries.

The "first" museum in North America was the Charleston Museum, a natural history collection established in 1770. In Canada a "Lyceum of Natural History and Fine Arts in the City of York" was proposed to the Upper Canada Assembly in 1833, and a provincial museum that would eventually become the Royal Ontario Museum was actually established in 1851 (Kaye 2003:96).

Museums were a tool new nations could use to present and define their identity. 'National museums promote national histories to generate a sense of identification and patriotism within their population' (Mason 2007:95).

In many developing nations, collections and the institutions have been established to promote unity and a national consciousness, on the pattern of Western nation-state. Nowhere is this nationalist agenda more prominent that in Canada, a country that has formidable problems defining itself as a unified whole (Gillam 2001:XXII).

These museums dramatically reduced the geographical distance between the museums and the Indigenous people they represented. However, cultural distance was maintained between settlers and first peoples through the 'Othering' of Indigenous people as distinct and inferior peoples.

By the mid-nineteenth century, museums were used as educative and ideological tools that displayed Western culture as the triumphant culmination of all life forms in the planet, especially in its superiority to other human cultures, which were seen as less developed and hence inferior (Gillam 2001:XV).

Dicks suggests that there is a continuum of difference between 'Us' and 'Other' that affect peoples' experience of heritage. Histories of other peoples and other cultures, she argues, are the furthest from self and are the 'Other' (Dicks 2003:127). The level of

'Otherness' is influenced by the distance between the two in terms of geography, culture and time. By locating Indigenous people as "uncivilised" and from a pre-historic past, colonial discourse 'Othered' and distanced colonised people from new settlers in the land.

Despite museums collecting and representing Indigenous people within their traditional territories, museums continued to distance source communities from their cultural material and interpret their cultures through Western lens for Western audiences, whilst colonial authorities suppressed indigenous cultural practice. Tony Bennett argued that in the late 19th century Aboriginal Australians were located by archaeologists and evolutionists as 'evolutionary ground zero', from which all people developed and 'civilized' (2004:9). They were presented as the most distant 'Others' to Europeans, which helped Europeans' justify their colonisation.

> Australia came to be regarded as a place where extinct, or soon-to-be extinct, forms of life survived in the separated enclaves of Aboriginal reserves where the race was supposed to live out its last days. Yet this view of Australia as a 'living museum' lasted well into the twentieth century, and certainly beyond the period of 'let die' policies directed at softening the pillow of a dying race to the 'let live' programmes of assimilation in which the goal of biological elimination, however 'passively' pursued, was transformed into one of cultural and epidermal transformation (Bennett 2004:155-6).

As colonies became formally settled, the relations with Indigenous populations changed. The colonial assumption that all Indigenous people were destined to extinction had proven false, despite the devastating effects of European diseases on Indigenous people. 'Recent studies have estimated post-contact population losses in the Americas as high as 85-90 percent' (Sundstrom 1997:306). As the people proved resilient, colonial policy focused on eliminating 'uncivilized' Indigenous cultures through the assimilation of the people to Western practices. In New Zealand, in 1880's there was a period of 'recolonisation' as policy shifted from ''smoothing the pillow' of a dying race' (Galbreath 1989:76-77 quoted in McCarthy 2007:39) to 'rehabilitation and assimilation' (McCarthy 2007:40).

Assimilation policies had devastating effects on Indigenous communities and their traditional lifestyles. Nomadic peoples such as the Blackfoot were prevented from travelling, hunting or harvesting, and communities were divided and separated by the allocation of reserves. Communities in Canada, America, Australia and New Zealand were devastated by the forceful removal of their children to residential schools, where

they were required to abandon their traditional culture in favour of European customs, English language and Christianity. Residential schools prevented the traditional intergenerational transfer of knowledge and material within communities such as the Blackfoot. Colonial laws forbade Indigenous cultural practices, including the Blackfoot sacred annual ceremony Okan (Sundance) which was outlawed in Canada from 1884 to 1951. These policies reduced First Nations peoples' ability to maintain their culture or control the representation of their culture. During this time of cultural oppression and poverty many items went into museum collections. Museums' roots in colonialism continue to be a source of anger for many Indigenous people and can make museum relationships with communities difficult.

During this time Blackfoot and other local First Nations like the Nakoda (Stoney) found ways to maintain their culture and ceremonies, both covertly and openly, somewhat ironically, in public displays. Norman Luxton founder of the Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum:

> ...was also one of the organizers of Banff Indian Days, another tourist attraction. His enterprises provided the Stoneys with cash for their craft items, and like the Calgary Stampede, with an officially sanctioned venue for ceremonies – as long as they conformed to feathered, beaded, dancing stereotypes – that had been proscribed by the government. [...] Despite their exploitation of Native peoples as spectacle, Wild West Shows, Indian Days celebrations, and stampedes were small safe havens in a time of assimilation and a market for traditional crafts, ensuring the preservation of art and craft skills during periods of extreme economic and cultural hardship (Kaye 2003:106).

As assimilation and residential schools began to affect Indigenous peoples and culture, the stereotype 'wild savages' of the contact period were re-imagined as 'noble savages', and romanticised views of the pre-contact period became popular. In New Zealand, McCarthy notes that '[i]n the late nineteenth century, the same objects [that were rejected] received a more positive response from Pakeha viewers as the image of the noble savage displaced the ignoble one in the colonial culture of display' (2007:26).

In 1851 a new mode of exhibiting began in London at the Crystal Palace with the opening of the first world fair. These fairs gave colonial countries the chance to represent their own distinct identity. Colonies often represented the Indigenous peoples and cultures within their territories as unique and iconic elements of their identity, whilst suppressing the cultures at home.

Native peoples of North America were featured in the Canadian section of the exposition. A guidebook described a selection of objects as being made by "Canadian savages" and noted their contrast to products of English civilisation. These persistent colonialist attitudes influenced the presentation of Native Americans and their cultures, showing them to be of less value than their European counterparts (Maurer 2000:21).

Despite the representation of First Nations culture as lower in status than European cultures, the involvement of living Indigenous peoples in exhibitions was important to Indigenous agency. It gave them the opportunity to voice their views and have some control over the way they were represented on a world stage. McCarthy notes that: 'by participating in local and international fairs, Maori saw themselves as partners in colonial development rather than as subjects of it' (McCarthy 2007:38). However, 'when real Maori proved to be too much of a handful or refused to live up to their ethnic stereotype, wax models were found to be a much more malleable substitute, their mortuary pallour signifying their fate in a much more acquiescent way' (McCarthy 2007:42).

Conal McCarthy's (2007) research has put forward the presence of Maori involvement in museums at many different levels from the moment museums began representing them. He argues their agency came from their control of source of the materials, knowledge and skills. Maori were called upon to carve items for exhibition, interpret customs and even perform as part of the exhibition. Although there is no denying the unequal power relations and exploitation of Maori culture, and that 'exhibiting was central to the construction of colonial discourse… it was by no means immune from Maori involvement' (McCarthy 2007:26).

The paradoxical use and oppression of Indigenous culture by colonial powers created a legacy that continues to influence relations between Indigenous peoples and museums today. Source communities often resent museums for collecting and thus removing important cultural and sacred material from their communities, which prevented certain cultural practices from being maintained. Conversely, the survival of such material in museums has enabled suppressed cultural practices to be revived, such as the Blackfoot sacred bundle openings as Elder Pam Heavy Head explained to me: 'our Medicine Pipe didn't dance for 75 years because it ended up in the hands of collectors' (Pers. Comm. 2008). As Hill notes '[c]ulture is, indeed, more than objects, but for many Native American nations, there are certain objects that are essential to manifesting that culture' (2007:313).

Thus Indigenous communities often have a complicated relationship with museums, because they are a source of anger and hope. David Penney (2000) captured this conflict in his description of responses to the 1992 exhibition *Art of the American Indian Frontier: The Collecting of Chandler and Pohrt* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.:

> Many Native visitors to the galleries could not look at the collections without being reminded of what they had lost. Some supported the museum's efforts to approximate some kind of recovery… Others, like the protesters, simply could not proceed beyond their anger (Penney 2000:61).

The anger Indigenous people feel towards museums is often linked to ongoing inequalities in society. Indigenous people tend to be at the lowest level in society, be it in socio-economic status, life expectancy, political representation, unemployment, disease, substance abuse, violence, or just in how the wider (mainly non-Indigenous) public perceives them. For example: '[s]uicide rates among First Nations youth are six times higher than the rates in the rest of Canada' (Frideres 1998:182). Indigenous people in Canada still remain largely segregated on reservations where the quality of life is considerably lower than the neighbouring non-Indigenous communities.

The traumas of the past continue to affect Indigenous peoples, and governments have shown recognition of this through public statements of apology. The Canadian government issued 'a formal expression of regret' in 1998 'for native aboriginals who suffered physical and sexual abuse [which had been] widespread in residential schools that operated across the country until the 1970s' (BBC 1998). In February 2008 the new Australian government issued an apology to the 'stolen generations' – children who were forcibly taken away from their families to be educated in white Australian culture (BBC 2008). Then on 11th June 2008 the Canadian Government made a formal apology to survivors of the Residential School Era and set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to publically address the hidden history and compensated survivors through the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (TRC 2011). Museums cannot resolve these inequalities, but they can help to address them through re-contextualising current relations and decolonising the display of Indigenous peoples.

5.3 Indigenous Oppression, Resistance, Protest, and Agency

Although colonised, Indigenous people showed their resistance, resilience and agency. In 1885 Louis Riel led the unsuccessful North-West Rebellion of Métis people in

Saskatchewan in Canada. Riel hung for his action, and colonial policy became increasingly punitive in response to the resistance (Racette 2008:58).

> Community councils and chiefs were stripped of their power. A pass system to control movement was aggressively implemented in Western Canada, and right of assembly was also restricted. The Indian Agent became the authority in First Nations communities. The list of banned ceremonial and cultural expressions continued to increase: the Sun Dance (1895), all forms of traditional dance (1906), and public appearances in traditional dress (1914). Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1913-1932, secured successive pieces of legislation that culminated in the most oppressive period of First Nations history in Canada. Most of this legislation was not formally repealed... Other oppressive sections of the Indian Act such as the permit system, which controlled what people could buy or sell (including basic needs such as groceries and clothes), remained in the act into 1995 (Racette 2008:58-59).

Despite the increasing oppression, First Nations people in Canada resisted assimilation, and continued cultural practices in secret, and publicly challenged colonial practices. When Boas visited the Northwest Coast in May 1888 to collect human remains, 'the Cowichan people hired a lawyer to press claims against Boas and his assistant for their activities and even secured a search warrant for the bones' (Mithlo 2004:751). Although their claim was unsuccessful, it demonstrates that despite biased power relations, the Cowichan people had agency and used it to oppose the collection of their ancestors' remains. The depiction of Indigenous people as passive victims of colonialism is yet another colonial narrative. Power was not simply unidirectional, and Indigenous people resisted in many different ways, some subtle, others bold.

In 1960 First Nations people were declared to be Canadian citizens by the Canadian government and 'by the late 1960s, the resurgence' that Louis Riel had prophesized in his last speech before his execution in 1885 'was emerging across the country' (Racette 2008:59). Native American people added their voice to the civil rights movements of the 60s in America. Beginning with the 'occupation of Alcatraz in 1969; the emergence of the American Indian Movement [AIM], Indians of All Tribes, and other political groups that cross tribal boundary lines; and landmark events such as the Trail of Broken Treaties march to Washington and the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1972, followed by the standoff at Wounded Knee in 1973, shaped a pan-tribal political force' (Lawlor 2006:7). Protesters and activists such as AIM spoke out against the status quo and the unequal treatment of Native Americans. They raised issues over the treaties that had not been honoured, the poor socio-economic status of Indigenous

peoples, and the government's interference in their lives. They called for the right to self-determination, to control their own lives, culture and affairs.

> For most of the long history of Canada's internal colonisation of its Aboriginal peoples the power to determine how that history is recounted has been vested in a narrow stratum of the non-native population (Phillips 2006:134).

The new wave of Indigenous activism challenged this norm. 'In the latter decades of the twentieth century, Indigenous peoples around the world challenged the right of museums to tell their stories and to hold collections obtained from their ancestors' (Nicks 2003:19). These protests catalysed a new surge of Indigenous agency and resistance to traditional museums.

> Native interests... took institutional form with the creation of the American Indian Studies programmes in universities across the country and the establishment of what are still essential organs of trans-tribal Native legal and political life, the Native American Rights Fund, the Indian Law Resource Centre, and the National Congress of American Indians (Lawlor 2006:7-8).

Political protests and concepts of self-determination began to influence Indigenous community relations with museums. In New Zealand, in the early 1980s, the Maori 'successfully challenged the "civilized" practice of placing dead on display, finally giving voice to the geographically isolated elders' (Tapsell 2005:153). The resolution of this conflict between museums and communities enabled a new relationship to develop. '*Te Maori* was born out of this era, and demonstrated a new way for museums to engage with its audiences, allowing the native voice to enter the exhibition space' (Tapsell 2005:153). In 1998 a new museum called Te Papa was opened after extensive consultation with iwi (Maori tribal groups) and sought to represent the bicultural and bilingual nature of New Zealand (Te Papa, 2008). Te Papa has been described as an 'ultimate expression' of new museology (McCarthy 2007:119). However, Conal McCarthy has persuasively illustrated that Maori participation in, and resistance to, museums dates back long before the 1980s, although it has been downplayed 'in order to emphasise recent innovations' (2007:119). He argues that this 'surprising history of adaptation... deserves to be recovered as an instructive model for our own times' (McCarthy 2007:130). Nevertheless, just as North American theory cannot be applied to Aotearoa (New Zealand), the reverse is true; unlike the Maori in McCarthy's account, the Blackfoot were not profitable members of parliament and did not have comparable power or influence over museums as their Maori counterparts at the turn of the last century.

In 1990 the American government responded to complaints and protests by Native Americans against the collection and display of their ancestors, and passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (Dubin 2001:22-23). The act requires that American museums that receive federal funding must do inventories on their Native American collections and repatriate human remains, associated funerary objects, sacred objects and cultural patrimony to linear descendants or culturally affiliated tribes or organisations (NAGPRA 1990:169). The Act requires museums to consult with the Indigenous source communities throughout the process and has resulted in human remains and sacred objects being removed from public display and returned to their source communities. Statistics from October 2007 show that the act has enabled the 'accounting for 32,706 human remains' through museum inventories, which is the first step to enable these remains to be repatriated (National, 2007). This was a crucial step in addressing community museum relations as:

> Undoubtedly the most important of the abuses from the Native point of view is the desecration of Indian burials, the display of their skeletons in museum exhibits, and the storage of an estimated 300 000 to 600 000 bodies in museum archives… No other ethnic group in the USA has been treated in this manner (Blancke 1990:125).

In Canada museum representation of First Nations reached a crisis point after there was protesting and a mass boycott of *The Sprit Sings* exhibition at the Glenbow museum in 1988 (McLoughlin 1999:3). Initially the protest was focused on a specific Lubicon-Cree land claim issue with the exhibit sponsors Shell Oil (Herle 1994:39), but it quickly escalated into a national discussion of the role museums play in settler-Indigenous relations.

> The boycott did a great deal to raise awareness of the issues, and as a result of the conflict, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) formed a task force with a mandate to "develop an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in concert with cultural institutions" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2007:1.1).

After four years of discussion, meetings, and consultation with Indigenous communities and museums, AFN and CMA published the *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* (1992a, 1992b).[10] It provided guidelines for museums working with First Nations communities and their cultural materials. 'The Task Force recommendations were based on the fundamental principle that First Peoples own or have moral claim to

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[10] Hereafter referred to as the Task Force Report

their heritage and therefore should participate equally in its preservation and presentation' (Ames 2000:74). The report encouraged museums to involve Indigenous communities they sought to represent 'in the interpretation of their culture', and to improve 'access to museum collections' for Indigenous people, and to enable the 'repatriation of artefacts and human remains' (Carter 1994:221).

In 1992 the Canadian government made it a requirement for 'museums to provide letters of support from First Nations communities being represented when applying for government grants' (Phillips 2003:159) to help support the Task Force Report. However, Canada does not have a national law like NAGRPA, as it was decided by AFN and CMA that voluntary compliance would be more effective (AFN and CMA 1992:4). As a result of lobbying by Blackfoot and Glenbow representatives, the provincial government of Alberta passed the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act (FNSCORA) in 2000. Although it only applies to collections in the Royal Alberta and Glenbow Museums, it was extremely significant to the Blackfoot peoples as it enabled the repatriation of sacred materials crucial to maintaining Blackfoot traditional life and religion.

Neither NAGPRA nor FNSCORA addressed the return of non-sacred, non-human, items and the majority of Blackfoot collections remain intact and stored in museums. Nevertheless many museums in Canada made significant changes to their museological approach to the representation of First Nations peoples and began involving them in the representation of their culture through consultation; collaboration; training programmes; inviting in guest Indigenous curators; and employing Indigenous people. Indigenous critique contributed to new discourses in museology that provided the theoretical support for many of the new ways of working with communities and sharing power over representation.

These changes have made important steps to improving museum relations with Indigenous communities, although they are not without problems. Sharing authority and authorship of museums with communities is a challenge to museum staff's professional authority (Ames, 2000:82) and as Carter has pointed out 'there is still much anger in the native community towards museums and one Task Force is not going to make it go away' (1992:4). One problem with the Task Force Report is the balance of responsibility for change. As Doxtator argues: the report 'ascrib[ed] most of the

responsibilities… to non-native museums' and gave aboriginal peoples a passive role in the changes (1996:21-22).

Although it was 'thought that voluntary compliance to recommendations mutually agreed upon by First Peoples and museum representatives would be more effective and less expensive than the legislative change brought about in the United States'...'the results so far… appear to be modest' (Ames, 2000:85). Ames attributes this to 'structural factors that inhibit change' within the museum culture and profession and the dependence of such initiatives on funding (2000:85-86). Nevertheless, the political disputes associated with the 1988 *Spirit Sings* exhibition changed the way Canadian museums viewed themselves. 'Suddenly, it seemed, we had become "political" institutions and it became necessary to open the doors to the people from whom our collections were derived' (Conaty 2006:254).

5.4 Self-representation

As museums began to 'open their doors' to Indigenous communities to co-curate representation, communities were also increasingly representing themselves through their own media, such as community centres and museums. Such self-representation is not new, but increasingly prolific.

Early forms of self-representation often occurred within bigger colonial frames, such as the Calgary Stampede in Canada. From the first Stampede in 1912 local First Nations peoples, including the Blackfoot, were encouraged to live within the grounds for ten days in an 'Indian Village' were they could represent themselves to the visiting public. Special permits were issued to allow the Blackfoot to leave the reserve to participate in Stampede. Although power relations were typically unequal and First Nations were treated as second-class compared to their white counterparts, the tradition of the Indian Village continues today, with Blackfoot Elders willingly giving up their time to participate. Despite the inequalities, the community participants still find value in participation and self-representation at Stampede.

Stampede is a classic example of colonial powers simultaneously repressing whilst celebrating Indigenous culture. At the first Stampede in 1912 traditional Blackfoot life received attention and interest, while on the reserve traditional life was suppressed, outlawed and ridiculed by mainstream society. Thus a complex paradoxical relationship developed between colonised and coloniser, as Canada wished to both claim the

'Native' as their own, whilst eradicating uncivilised Indigenous cultures. Blackfoot interviewees frequently noted this hypocrisy and expressed their bewilderment at the current interest in their culture after so much oppression.

Since the 1960s Indigenous people have been increasingly taking representation into their own hands and have built their own museums and cultural centres. 'Contrary therefore to the assumption that national museums go hand-in-hand with states wishing to impose hegemonic cultural ideologies, museums can also be enlisted by non-state groups as a means of asserting themselves in opposition to dominant powers' (Mason 2007:95). Many Indigenous nations within nations are challenging national dominant historical discourses though their own representation of their past. Such self-representation is a form of resistance and way to take back power as Cooper explains:

> Many native museum-like facilities refuse to use the word museum in the name of their facility, and often their museum-like centres operate differently than museums have typically done...This refusal to use a word that visitors would readily understand represents a subtle protest, an act caused by aversion, directed at the institution known as museum (Cooper 2008:155).

Community centres attempt to resist the hegemonic influence of Western museology, and maintain Indigenous processes and control. As Smith has argued: '[t]he export of the Western European model of heritage management around the world has been identified as part of the processes of Western colonization, and an expression of Western cultural imperialism, that has tended to result in the alienation of local communities from their cultural heritage' (2006:279). Thus resistance is both politically and strategically necessary if the community wishes to keep control of their culture.

At the same time, communities have been taking up opportunities to work with mainstream museums that wish to democratise and pluralise their displays and include community voice in interpretation.

> Some Canadian museums have stepped away from authoritative practices and have tried to initiate policies, operations and programming that integrate both formal and substantial cohesion. This has been especially successful in attempts to feature First Nations' perspectives in the national narrative (Ashely 2007:493).

Although, this is not entirely new, as Conaty highlights: '[w]orking closely with First Nations was not a truly novel concept' in the late 1980s as many Canadian museums had already been working collaboratively 'most often... quietly with little publicity'

(Conaty 2006:254,255)[11]. The Canadian Museums of Civilization (CMC) opened the First Peoples Hall in 2003 after 11 years of collaboration. 'A sharing of management and curatorial power between aboriginal and CMC participants resulted in a unique exhibition that juxtaposes standard ethnographic treatment and First Nations' perspectives on living cultures' (Ashley 2007:493).

The Indigenous challenges to museums that were initiated in the 1960s and climaxed in the 1990s have continued to spark change and development of new relationships between museums and Indigenous communities. These changes have been supported by wider change and international recognition of Indigenous rights.

> All of these activities occurred within the context of a broader social, political and economic activism which has led, at the international level, to recognition by the United Nations that indigenous people have the right to self-determination, and, in consequence, the right freely to determine their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development (Nicks 2003:19).

In 2007 the United Nations contributed to discourse on museum and Indigenous relations with the publishing of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.* It states that 'Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions' and should receive government funding to do so (UNESCO 2006).

W. Richard West, Director of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), proposes that 'if the museum community can make [a] cultural shift', to 'foster the systematic inclusion of diverse cultural elements in their interpretive process', then:

> Museums have the chance to do even more than become centres for the exchange of cultural ideas. They will have the potential to assume a role that ascends to an entirely new plane – they will become far more pivotal to the continuing evolution of culture, and genuine instruments of the cultural reconciliation the society so desperately needs (West 2000:102).

Although, as Mithlo notes, 'many may question if the museum has the power or even the right to be positioned in the role of saviour to cultures interpreted as disempowered' (Mithlo 2004:751). As Ames argues:

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[11] Conaty named some of the leaders in their field for collaborative work: The Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia; the Royal British Columbian Museum; the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre in Southern Alberta; the Wanuskewin Heritage Centre, near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Conaty 2006:254).

if they are to serve as important mechanisms for empowering local communities to define, recognise, and develop their own indigenous heritages, they should first consider a potential contradiction contained within this initiative: museums specialize in the representation of other peoples, while people have the sovereign right to represent themselves. Left unresolved, this contradiction could produce counterfeits of good intentions (Ames 2006:171).

5.5 Conclusion

Museums have a long and complicated history with Indigenous communities which continue to inform present day relations in Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia. Past wrongs are slow to be forgotten, and continue to cause pain and anger in Indigenous communities. Legislation, reports, declarations and protests have helped to change and improve relations between museums and Indigenous communities. By working with communities museums can help to develop new relations with communities that have the power to improve the present lives of Indigenous people by recognising past wrongs and enabling Indigenous self-determination over their culture and heritage. 'These relationships are the most important manifestations of the new curatorial praxis' (Peers and Brown 2007:531). However they are lined with contradictions, layered with competing historical narratives, and are creating a new discourse and set of challenges of their own.

Chapter 6. The Contested Terrain of the Museum Engagement Zone

> *So I thought the only way I know we can make change and...correct misconceptions...or at least provide truth to our people, was to start providing information. To start getting involved in publications, start getting involved in institutions, and start sharing this information. Otherwise we will continue to be told by mainstream this is what we are as people, instead of us saying what we are as people* (Pers. Comm. Piikani Elder Allan Pard 2008).

> *Developing a reflexive practice in museums would significantly help clarify the subtle nature of the power relationships and levels of participation on offer that are too often hidden within these transactions* (Lynch 2011:147).

6.1 Introduction

Traditional curator-led First Nations exhibits have, in recent years in Canada, undergone critical reconsideration (as chapter five explored). In this chapter I will compare engagement theory with practice, focusing on the initiation and negotiation of Blackfoot community engagement at four case-studies in Southern Alberta.

The chapter proposes that when museums work with communities they create *engagement zones* (a reworking of James Clifford' (1997) museums as contact zones), which are conceptual, physical and temporal spaces in which participants interact in an unpredictable process of power negotiations, which often produce results such as co-produced exhibits, museum programming, employment of community members, collection loans and/or repatriations, community inclusion on museum boards, and changes to museum practice and ethos. These products can be seen as the tangible manifestations of power negotiations between the two groups. What occurs in an *engagement zone* and what it produces depends upon the initial models of collaboration used, the participants involved, the way the process plays out in the *engagement zone* and the context in which it takes place.

Current museology presents community engagement as a positive, mutually beneficial way to improve and democratise representation. However analysing participation in practice reveals that there are many forms of engagement, each with different advantages and challenges, none of which solve the problems associated with representing complex, multifaceted communities. Despite the positive assumptions, engagement has the potential to be both beneficial and detrimental. This chapter argues that whilst being a worthy pursuit, there are limits to what engagement can achieve within current museological practice, and engagement does not automatically grant

integrity or validity to museum exhibits. Engagement has real consequences for the community and should only be entered into genuinely and with sufficient time and resources to honour community contributions. This chapter will consider four different models of engagement: consultation; partnership; delegated power; and citizen control, and explore the idea of *engagement zones*. In doing so, I aim to illuminate some of the complexities and uncertainties of initiating and negotiating community engagement.

6.2 Theorising Engagement

Community engagement has been highly theorized in development studies and more recently in museum and heritage fields. Increasingly, community engagement is becoming a common museological strategy for developing new exhibits. Popular in Western museums[12], community participation has been seen as a way to help counter traditional *authorised heritage discourse* (Smith 2006) and explore alternative narratives about the past. By sharing authorship with communities, many writers have claimed that museums can democratise and pluralise the histories they present. This can decentralise the traditional voice of museum expertise and enable counter-narratives to be heard through the representation of community voices in the museum (Peers and Brown 2003; Phillips 2003; Conaty 2003; Simpson 1996).

Despite its recent popularity, engagement is not a new phenomenon:

> Joallyn Archambault (2009) reminds us that as least since Franz Boas consulted with George Hunt and other Kwakiutl collaborators on their presentations at the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition, Native American consultants have at least occasionally informed museum interpretation (Hoerig 2010:65).

Perhaps surprisingly the term 'engagement' can conceal more than it reveals about the realities of collaborative practice. As Bernadette Lynch describes in her account of community participation at the Manchester Museum in 2007, power is a central but invisible force:

> In transactions between museums and participants, because of the challenges of different perspectives that such encounters will inevitably generate, issues of power and coercion become central. Yet, such processes remain largely invisible to all concerned, frequently due to a lack of awareness about the ethics of these relations within the museum's public engagement work. There is therefore an

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[12] In Britain the government Department for Culture, Media and Sport publically endorsed the idea of democratising museums and enabling public participation (Lammy 2006:2). In Canada, indigenous community engagement was advocated in 1992 by the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples report, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*.

imperative to make such processes visible, in order to illuminate the relational complexities within the messy and contradictory work of participation in museums (Lynch 2011:147).

The term 'engagement' is widely used to describe an array of relationships from placation and potential exploitation to so called 'empowerment' of communities. There are as many approaches to engagement as there are museums, communities and individuals to participate in them. Despite this, theorists have attempted to group engagement into categories based on the level of power sharing involved (Arnstein 1969; Farrington and Bebbington 1993; Pretty 1995; White 1996; Galla 1997).

A dated, and yet still relevant and frequently borrowed model is Sherry Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Participation* (see figure 6.1). Developed from her work with neighbourhoods in urban planning and community development in 1960s America, Arnstein's model has proved useful to disciplines from social work to museology. Arnstein divides participation into three main categorises: non-participation; tokenism; and citizen power. Using the ladder format enables ranking of each form with manipulation at the bottom and citizens' control at the top.
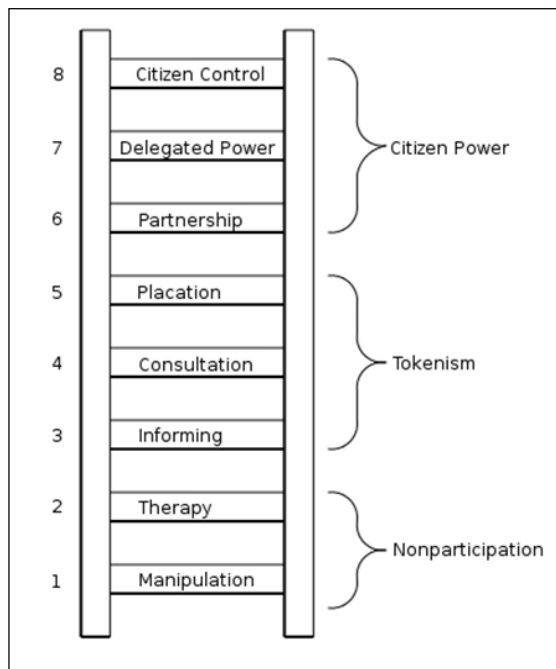
Figure 6.1 Ladder of Participation (Arnstein 1969).

Arnstein notes that each grouping is a simplification of participation in practice, yet useful because it helps show the power dynamics between groups.

The ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with the powerful in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them. In actuality, neither the have-nots nor the powerholders are homogeneous blocs. Each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups. The justification for using such simplistic abstractions is that in most cases the have-nots really do perceive the powerful as a monolithic "system," and powerholders actually do view the have-nots as a sea of "those people," with little comprehension of the class and caste differences among them (Arnstein 1969:219).

Amareswar Galla (1997:151) proposes another model in a very similar vein, which focuses on heritage engagement. He describes three levels of interaction between museums and Indigenous peoples. His first mode is participation which usually ends once sufficient information has been collected.

Heritage communication is a one-way process, where the external agency is empowered with the expertise and, with time, the indigenous community is disempowered of its authority on the relevant knowledge (Galla 1997:151).

Galla argues that it is 'a commonly practiced model that is familiar to most museums. It needs to be modified to be more participatory and less exploitative' (Galla 1997:151).

Galla terms his second mode of participation as 'strategic partnership' (1997:151). In this case 'the project is initiated either by the Indigenous community specialist or the external anthropologist' and both are co-workers on the project participating in shared decision making on the development, implementation and evaluation of the project (Galla 1997:151). Galla argues that this approach is 'mutually empowering, with heritage communication between and among all participants' (Galla 1997:152).

The third version proposed by Galla is 'characterized by Indigenous community cultural action. The project is initiated by the community cultural specialists such as Elders and other keepers of the culture and activists working for community cultural development. Indigenous people control the cultural project and its developments. It provides a voice for Indigenous community cultural leadership and cultural reclamation' (Galla 1997:152). However, he notes that these centres are 'often inadequately resourced as they decentre the mainstream control of Indigenous peoples' heritage' (Galla 1997:152).

These two models complement one another and interestingly, my four case-studies reflect four of the top categories on Arnstein's (1969) ladder and the three forms of Galla's model. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump used consultation, ranked as fourth on Arnstein's ladder, but still in the category of tokenism, and the most common and basic

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form of participation in Galla's model. Glenbow used Galla's notion of strategic partnership initiated by the external museum expert, which features on Arnstein's third highest rung, as the lowest form of citizen power. Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum represents a form of delegated power on Arnstein's ladder as it is co-owned by community and non-community members and falls somewhere between Galla's partnership and community cultural action, suffering the effects of being 'inadequately resourced' that Galla notes as common to community centres (1997:152). Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park is a community museum and is an example of citizen's control at the top of Arnstein's ladder, and Indigenous community cultural action in Galla's model. Blackfoot Crossing could also be considered an ecomuseum, a term first coined by the French museologist Hugues de Varine in 1971(Davis 1999:59-60) and developed by de Varine and Georges Henri Rivière (1985). Blackfoot Crossing features many of the classic characteristics associated with ecomuseums; it is a community museum, interpretive centre and park which promotes the survival of local knowledge, culture, language and customs within, and in relation to, the local natural environment (Davis 1999; Corsane *et al* 2007a, 2007b). However this was not a term the community used, and as this study focused upon the self-representation of the community on their own terms the application of this concept was not pursued in this research, although it may be a useful avenue for future studies.

Despite echoing the engagement models, the case-studies do not completely reflect the hierarchy implied by their placement on Galla's model or Arnstein's ladder. Five factors can help account for this: first, the realities of engagement are much more untidy and fluid than any model or category can account for. Although engagement often starts out as a 'recipe' (Ames 2001:207), designed to achieve a specific outcome, through the process of engagement it can become more of a 'stone soup' (Ames 2001:207) where participants contribute on their own terms, rather than that of the institution, and create a collaborative, but unpredictable outcome.

Secondly, during the process of engagement all the different kinds of participation listed in typologies such as Arnstein's may occur at different stages (Cornwall 2008:273-4) between different participants and outside bodies. Mapping Arnstein (1969), Pretty (1995), White (1996) and Galla's (1997) engagement theories against practice at the case-studies (see table 6.2) helps to give an indication of the spectrum of participation in any 'one' engagement, and highlights the changes in power sharing over the course of the process, and across different departments and activities. Thus it is not enough to ask

if a museum engages, but to ask how, when, why, with what frequency and longevity, and to look at the forms and layers of engagement within an institution.

Thirdly, museums and communities do not enter into engagement with a predetermined or fixed amount of power. Power is always open to negotiation, theft, gifting and change, even in unequal power relations and 'invited spaces' (Fraser 1987, 1992, later used by Cornwall 2002; Miraftab 2004; Lynch 2011:147) of engagement in museums. In engagement, at any level on the rung, power can shift and move individual participants from positions of control to manipulation or passive observation. Even the most powerful individual will experience moments of powerlessness, pressure and manipulation. The CEO of a museum is powerless to influence the outcome of a discussion held in an Indigenous language s/he cannot understand. A respected community Elder cannot influence museum practices which are enshrined in law. However, even the apparently powerless are able to resist and counter dominant power, because power must also be seen in relation to individual actor's agency, as Conal McCarthy (2007) explores in his analysis of Indigenous Maori representation. In my research interviews, Kainai Elder Frank Weasel Head expressed this idea of agency and resistance through non-participation when deciding whether to work with a museum.

> I can sense it after the first day, if they are going to tell me what to do I'll sense it the first day and I'll walk out (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Although a museum would traditionally be considered more powerful than an individual community member, Weasel Head illustrates the ability to resist and reclaim power through non-participation.

Power is not predetermined or innate, but it is situated within the context of the interaction. Thus despite the fluidity of power within engagement zones, there are structural inequalities that weight interaction between museums and Indigenous communities in Canada.

> In 2009, First Nation communities are still, on average, the most disadvantaged social/cultural group in Canada on a host of measures including income, unemployment, health, education, child welfare, housing and other forms of infrastructure (Make First Nations Poverty History Expert Advisory Committee 2009:10).

Models of participation	Theorists	Theory to real-life comparison							
	Arnstein 1969	Non-participation		Tokenism			Citizen's power		
		Manipulation	Therapy	Informing	Consultation	Placation	Partnership	Delegated Power	Citizens control
	Pretty 1995	Manipulative participation		Passive participation	Participation by consultation	Participation for material incentives	Functional participation	Interactive participation	Self-mobilization
	White 1996	Nominal				Instrumental	Representative	Transformative	
	Galla 1997			Participation			Strategic Partnership		Community Cultural Action
Case-studies	Head-Smashed-In	Provincial decisions		Gallery development			Interpretation		
	Glenbow	General museum decisions			Aboriginal board Native Liaison		Blackfoot gallery development Interpretation Community Gallery		
	Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum	Exhibition		Shop staff			Ownership		
					Board of Directors				
	Blackfoot Crossing	Wider community engagement			Gallery development				
									Ownership, development, staffing, running

Table 6.2 Table of engagement theories mapped against practice the case-studies (created by Onciul).

In addition to societal inequalities, the location of museum-community meetings has an effect of power relations. Discussions held within the museum automatically favour the museum employees as they set the ground rules for interaction within their building. During Glenbow Museum's engagement with the Blackfoot community they noticed this bias and relocated meetings to Fort McLeod. By meeting with Elders away from the museum and the Blackfoot reserves, they found 'neutral ground' to try to minimise these inbuilt power imbalances.

Fourthly, there are influences beyond the *engagement zone* which limit what is made possible by engagement, such as logistics and institutional requirements (which are addressed in chapters seven and eight).

Finally, the top rung of Arnstein's ladder 'citizens control', does not solve the problems of representation or relations between individuals within a community and an institution, such as a museum. Community control still requires methods of power sharing and consensus forming, because every individual cannot make all the decisions, and the whole community may not be engaged or even kept up to date. Some community members will be empowered at the top of the ladder and others will be involved in tokenistic ways or may not participate at all. The standard group binary approach of 'Us' and 'Them', museum and community, results in the models not addressing internal group power relations between individuals and over simplifies engagement in practice.

Thus there are a number of factors that affect the power relations within engagement, not just the model of participation used. Since current models and terminology do not fully encapsulate the complex realities of engagement in practice, I propose using the term *engagement zones* to conceptualise the space in which the unpredictable process of power sharing and negotiation plays out.

6.3 Engagement Zones

The engagement zone concept builds on James Clifford's (1997) use of Mary Pratt's (1992) concept of museums as contact zones. Pratt originally used the term to:

> invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. By using the term "contact" I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination. A "contact" perspective

emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. [It stresses] copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power (Pratt 1992:6-7).

For Pratt the contact zone was 'the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations' (2008:8).

Clifford applied the term to museums, explaining that 'the organising structure of the museum-as-collection functions like Pratt's frontier' (1997:192-3). This idea has been influential in museum practice and theory and has inspired creations such as the Manchester Museum's 'Contact Zone' (Lynch 2011:153). 'From the time that James Clifford first associated Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone with museums there has been a growing translation of the idea to fit, implicitly and explicitly, into the goals of a postmodern new museology' (Boast 2011:59). Clifford's emphasis on the potential for agency in asymmetrical power relations has been a cause for optimism in collaborative work.

However, Tony Bennett (1998) critiqued the contact zone idea, viewing it as at odds with his own discourse on museums and governmentality.

> In place of the language of education, instruction and civic reform, Clifford envisages the museum as a place in which diverse communities might enter into exchange with one another, with museums playing the role of mediator, a facilitator of multiple dialogic exchanges governed by relations of uneven reciprocity, rather than acting as an agent in its own right in pursuit of its own civic or educative programmes (Bennett 1998:211).

For Bennett collection were not frontiers, but objects to perform the work of government (1998:210). Viv Golding (2007a; 2007b; 2009) has suggested a route between these two discourses, presenting:

> a view of the museum frontiers – a spacio-temporal site for acting in collaborate effort with other institutions, which provides a creative space for respectful dialogical exchange for promoting critical thought, for questioning taken-for-granted ideas in general and for challenging racist and sexist mindsets in particular... frontier museum work can progress lifelong learning, 'intercultural understanding' and what is known in the UK as community cohesion (2009:2).

Golding shows that museums and their collections can function as places where diverse communities engage, with the museum as facilitator, whilst performing educative programmes that often meet government social objectives. Museums, Golding argues, 'can hold up a hope for challenging racist mindsets essentially through respectful

dialogical exchange' which she terms 'feminist-hermeneutics' which draws on Fanon's (1993) concept of 'authentic communication' (2009:2).[13] Golding developed ''issue-based' active learning, to develop 'critical' thought in participants at these museum frontiers' (2007b:317). Golding argues that the museum:

> ...has the potential to function as a 'frontier': a zone where learning is created, new identities are forged; new connections are made between disparate groups and their own histories (Philip 1992). In some cases, collections are shown to have a new and more positive power: to help disadvantaged groups, to raise self-esteem and even challenge racism by progressing learning (2009:4).

Nevertheless, Robin Boast argues that 'museum scholars perpetuate only a partial portrait of the contact zone' and he attempts to 'expose the dark underbelly of the contact zone and, hence, the anatomy of the museum that seems to be persistently neoloconial'. He puts forward that:

> ...the contact zone has been continually used by the museum (Bennett 1998:212-213), by "native science" (Enote, personal communication, 2008), and by governmentality of indigenous populations (Hemming and Rigney 2008) as a neocolonial genre. I am arguing here that part of the this problem, of the traditional reappropriation of the contact zone as colonial contact zone, is due to the now ignored role of autoethnography as a fundamental neocolonial rhetorical genre and even an instrument of appropriation (2011:62).

Boast argues that Clifford provides 'an almost perfect example of the successful contact zone' however he highlights 'it was not the pleasant contact zone usually assumed–contact zone of equal reciprocity and mutual benefit' (2011:63).

> Clifford was showing me that contact zones are not really sites of reciprocity. They are despite the best efforts of people...asymmetric spaces of appropriation, No matter how much we try to make the spaces accommodating, they remain sites were Others come to perform for us, not with us (Boast 2011:63).

Boast critiques the contact zone as neo-colonialism, stating that '[t]he contact zone is a *clinical collaboration*, a *consultation* that is designed from the outset to appropriate the resources necessary for the academy and to be silent about those that are not *necessary'* (emphasis original, Boast 2011:66). Instead of decentring the museum he sees 'the contact zone is a site in and for the centre' (2011:67) and rather than addressing asymmetries, 'the museum as contact zone, is and continues to be used instrumentally as a means of masking far more fundamental asymmetries, appropriations, and biases'

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[13] Although this thesis does not directly address issues of gender or feminist theory, these ideas are useful to understanding the Blackfoot community's goals to build pride and tackle racism identified in the research. In addition, the role of gender issues in the engagement process would be a useful avenue for further research, although it was not within the remit of this study.

(2011:67). His solution is for museums to 'learn to let go of their resources, even at times of the objects, for the benefit and use of communities and agendas far beyond its knowledge and control' (2011:67).

While Boast raises interesting and valid points, he is talking about a certain kind of engagement: consultation, termed tokenism by Arnstein (1969); and his solution is another form of engagement: community control, viewed as the top of the engagement ladder (Arnstein 1969). This thesis will demonstrate some of Boast's points, as my research highlights inequalities in current engagement relationships; however my work will also illustrate the potential of engagement to create critical thought, raise self-esteem and challenge racism, as Golding (2007a, 2007b, 2009) has argued. While I support the need for museums to let go of resources 'for the benefit and use of communities' (Boast 2011:67); I argue that community control is not a conclusion, but the beginning of new relations with their own challenges and dynamics that will require museum-like forms and communities to continue to engage and deal with the asymmetries of power relations.

To return to Clifford and the notion of the contact zone, from the beginning Clifford acknowledged 'the limits of the contact perspective' (1997:193). Describing Portland Museum's consultation with Tlingit Elders about the museum's Rasmussen Collection, Clifford notes that 'some of what went on in Portland was certainly not primary contact zone work', among the Tlingit 'interclan work' occurred that was 'not directed to the museum and its cameras' (1997:193). Further still he adds:

> ...it would be wrong to reduce the objects' traditional meanings, the deep feelings they still evoke, to "contact" responses. If a mask recalls a grandfather or an old story, this must include feelings of loss and struggle; but it must also include access to powerful continuity and connection. To say that (given a destructive colonial experience) all indigenous memories must be affected by contact histories is not to say that such histories determine or exhaust them (Clifford 1997:193).

Thus I propose the use of the term *engagement zones* to incorporate what *contact zones* cannot: the inter-community work that occurs in cross-cultural engagement and is prominent in community controlled grass-root community developments, such as Blackfoot Crossing. The following description can be taken as a stated definition for my term 'engagement zone'. The engagement zone includes the spectrum of engagement approaches from tokenism to community control. It emphasises the agency of participants and potential for power fluctuations, despite common inequalities of power

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relations, and allows for consideration and exploration of culture and heritage prior to and beyond the experience of colonialism. The term enables internal community engagement and indigenisation of the process, distinct from contact work. The concept is different to, but compatible with contact zones. Contact zones can occur within engagement zones and engagement zones produce outputs such as exhibits that often become public contact zones; but engagement zones can also occur without being contact zones, as the diagram below illustrates:
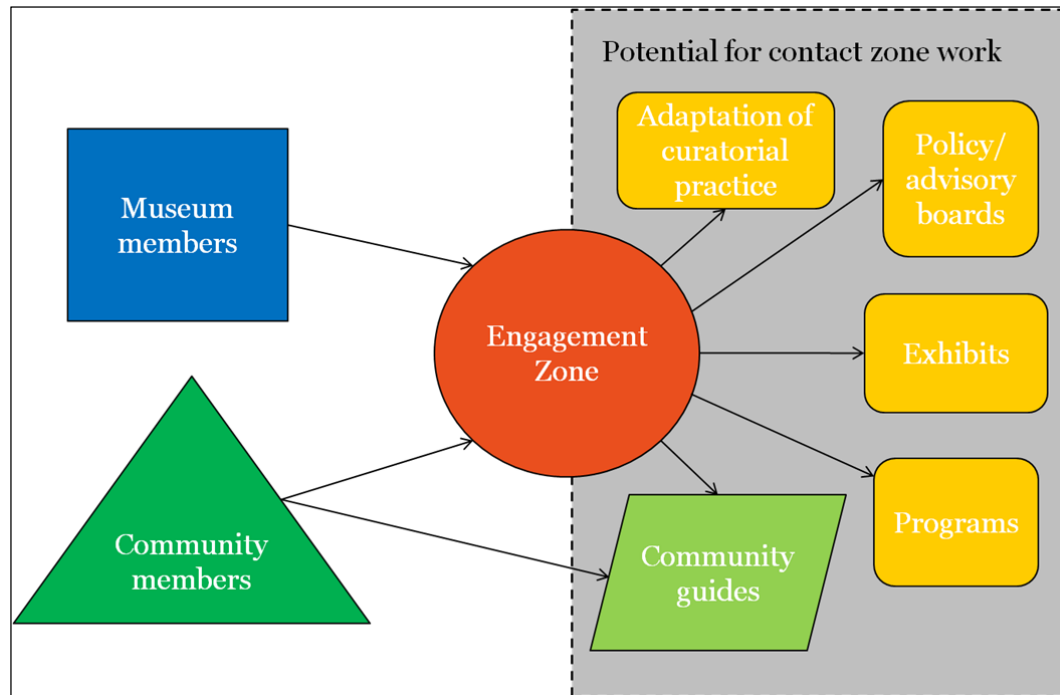
Figure 6.3 Engagement zone diagram (created by Onciul).

The module (figure 6.3) shows the in-put of individuals from the museum and community into the engagement zone and the out-put of potential products of engagement work, such as adaptation of curatorial practice, community participation or influence on policy and advisory boards, co-produced exhibits, co-produced programmes, and the employment of community members, for example in the role of guides.

Whether cross-cultural or mono-cultural, the engagement zone (depicted above) can be summarised as:

- A conceptual, physical and temporal space created through engagement;
- A location of power flux and negotiation;
- An unmapped and unpredictable terrain;

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- Spontaneous or strategically planned;

- Semi-private semi-public spaces where 'on stage and off stage' (Shryock 2004) culture can be shared and discussed;

- A space in which knowledge can be temporarily and permanently interpreted and translated;

- A place where insider/outsider boundaries blur;

- Powerful, but fragile and unique;

- A space that can be indigenised and create on its own culturally specific terms;

- A process that can produce tangible products of power sharing, such as exhibits, programming, new curatorial practice/ethos, knowledge creation and new relationships.

Engagement zones are physical and conceptual spaces in which participants interact. They are created when individuals enter into engagement and closed when those participants cease engaging. If participants change, so do the parameters of the zone and the interaction within it. It is a temporary, movable, flexible, and living sphere of exchange that can be spontaneous or strategically planned. Engagement zones can occur on frontiers, within groups, and as a result of border crossings.

Engagement zones are 'in-between' spaces (Bhabha 1994:2), semi-private semi-public, where 'on stage and off stage' (Shryock 2004) culture can be shared and discussed. Knowledge can be interpreted and translated to enable understanding for those without the necessary cultural capital. If required 'off stage' information may be disclosed to facilitate the process, although it is generally not intended to leave the engagement zone, nor for public dissemination in products such as exhibits.

Within the engagement zone power ebbs and flows, continually being claimed, negotiated and exchanged, not predetermined or innate, but situated within the context of the interaction. Conflict, compromises and consensus can occur. Participants continually negotiate the rules of exchange, challenging and debating power and authority. Cultural concepts such as expertise, customary boundaries and hierarchies, come into question and negotiation, and can change individuals' roles and status within the zone. Boundaries between insider and outsider blur, and temporary boundary crossing are enabled. Some participants described feelings of risk caused by stepping out of traditional roles and crossing boundaries in these zones, due to the fact that individual participants are judged by the action of the engagement zone group,

irrespective of internal power relations or individual contributions (developed further in chapter nine).

Despite the fluidity of power within engagement zones, there are structural inequalities that weight interaction between museums and Indigenous communities, because First Nations remain 'the most disadvantaged social/cultural group in Canada' (Make First Nations Poverty History Expert Advisory Committee 2009:10). Museums generally hold the majority of the power as cultural authorities and the host of the 'invited spaces' (Cornwall 2002) of engagement. Nevertheless, Indigenous communities still have power and agency to negotiate terms, particularly because they have the leverage of holding desperately sought after Indigenous knowledge that cannot be found beyond the private sphere of the community.

As spaces of power flux, engagement zones are an unmapped, unpredictable and inconsistent terrain, which has the capacity to produce unexpected outcomes. To borrow Lisa Chandler's expression, community engagement is a 'journey without maps' (2009:85), and what will be discovered, shared, and changed along the way can only be known through doing and experiencing the process. If temporary changes are carried beyond the *engagement zone* and incorporated into each groups' working, or the products they co-produce, the results can be transformative. However these zones do not operate in isolation, but are influenced by the wider context in which they are situated (addressed in chapter seven).

The following discussion will consider engagement in practice and how these engagement zones were initiated and negotiated at each case-study and who crossed boundaries to enter them.

6.4 Blackfoot Engagement

To engage with Blackfoot communities the case-study museums and heritage sites had to decide: how to; with whom; when; why; and what for? They also had to consider how much influence they wanted the participants to have and how much they were willing to change, in other words, how much power to share.

Communities are not discrete objects that can simply be collected, but a mass of ever changing living bodies, with their own issues, agendas and dynamics. As such,

engagement required negotiation as each participating community representative had their own expectations and requirements.

The Blackfoot community in particular, are acutely aware of their academic allure as they have been studied and documented since Western contact. Consequently members of the community, particularly Ceremonialists and Elders with traditional knowledge, are often asked to participate in studies and are experienced in deciding who to work with, and on what terms. It is within this context that the case-studies developed their engagement theory into practice.

6.5 Transforming Theory into Practice

To give this discussion tangibility it is useful to contextualise it in relation to my four southern Albertan, Canadian, case-studies: Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre; Glenbow Museum; Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum; and Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. Each case-study sought to work collaboratively with local Indigenous Blackfoot communities, in particular Blackfoot Elders and ceremonialists, and three used the engagement to create co-authored exhibits on Blackfoot culture. However, each selected a different model of engagement at a different point in time for different reasons.

Negotiation of the terms of engagement was unique to each case-study as it depended upon the actors, the context, and previous experiences of each party. This section will analyse the initiation and negotiation of each engagement to explore some of the complexities and uncertainties of engagement and the challenges of navigating the unmapped territory of engagement zones.

6.5.1 Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre

The first of the case-studies to embark on engagement was Head-Smashed-In in the early 1980s when it involved Piikani and Kainai Blackfoot Nations in the development of the interpretive centre for the archaeological buffalo kill site. At the time, the other case-studies were still developing their ideas on community work (in the case of Glenbow) or developing the ideas about establishing a museum (in the case of Buffalo Nations Cultural Society and Blackfoot Crossing).

Head-Smashed-In is an important site to Blackfoot people as the buffalo jump provided buffalo meat for the winter. The area was an important campsite, and there are

Blackfoot petroglyphs and a sacred vision quest site which is still in use. The jump is seen as a respected and sacred place by Blackfoot people.

Pre-NAGPRA (1990) and pre-Task Force (1992), Head-Smashed-In's consultation with the Blackfoot was ahead of wider reform in Canadian museum-Indigenous relations, and the archaeologists were under no legal or professional obligation to engage. Interestingly the engagement was as a result of circumstance, more than ideology. The initial stages of development went ahead without any consideration for the local Blackfoot nations, and in the beginning there was no plan to include them. The site was approved funding and status as a World Heritage Site before any Blackfoot communities had been asked their opinion on the development. However, their proximity to the Piikani Reserve and the community's connection with the site was influential on the archaeologists' decision to consult the community (Brink 2008:272-275).

> The Piikani put forward their ideas to include the Blackfoot oral histories in the interpretive centre. Their skills and knowledge made the involvement happen; it was not, by any means, a government initiative to involve them (Pers. Comm. Brink 2006).

Jack Brink, currently the curator of archaeology at the Royal Alberta Museum, was an archaeologist on the Head-Smashed-In dig was assigned the task of community consultation. Brink approached the neighbouring Piikani Nation first. The Piikani Band Council advised him to talk to the Elders and the Elders recommended Joe Crowshoe to be Brink's main consultant and assistant in the development of the interpretive centre. Crowshoe was an Elder and he conducted interviews and consulted with other Blackfoot Elders on Brink's behalf, gathering knowledge about the jump for the centre's interpretive exhibits.

The neighbouring Kainai Nation also wished to be consulted as they considered themselves stakeholders in the Jump as it was used by them and also part of their heritage. Regional Manager, Ian Clarke, explained that after initial consultation the Piikani community were not convinced about the development of the centre, so Brink and Crowshoe approached the Kainai nation:

> It is interesting that it was the . . . the Blood's acceptance of [the concept] that allowed us then to go back to the Peigan with the information that Mr. Crowshoe and the Bloods were in favour of going ahead, and on that basis they changed their position. I expect they didn't want to be left out of the process if it was

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going to go ahead anyway. So since we had the Blood's blessing, and there is...probably more rivalry among those bands than a lot of people understand, it seemed that Mr. Crowshoe, the Peigan, used the Blood band's interest to draw the Peigan back in again (Pers. Comm. Clarke 2008).

Clarke's account of the purposeful manipulation of community rivalry may account for ongoing challenges Head-Smashed-In faces today, as issues continue around the balance of Kainai and Piikani perspectives and employment. Further still, the late involvement of Kainai restricted their ability to shape the project and the Siksika and Aamsskáápipikani were not consulted at all. As Clarke states, Head-Smashed-In would have gone ahead without Piikani support, thus the building blocks of community involvement began with vast asymmetries.

Although relations were not equal, Joe Crowshoe negotiated his terms of engagement and what would and would not be shown within the exhibit. However, not all of the community was comfortable with the decisions he made on their behalf (Pers. Comm. Anonymous 2008). The decision to create replica sacred bundles and a painted Buffalo Skull for exhibition continue to be a point of contention at the Jump today. Sacred information is traditionally restricted, and Crowshoe and Brink negotiated what to include in the interpretation. Brink notes his influence on the inclusion of the controversial replicas:

> I did push them a bit on having something in that building about aboriginal religion… I was the guy that introduced replicas… I suppose that's my Western culture coming through my bias, well better to educate (the visitors) than keep them in the dark. I didn't grow up in a culture where you hide things because they're sacred or ceremonial (Per. Comm. Brink 2006).

For the Blackfoot, bundles are extremely sacred. Protocol requires that they only be handled or kept by Elders with ceremonial rights and knowledge, gained through years of participation in age graded secret societies. Crowshoe had the cultural rights to work with a bundle, but as a result some community members felt that this meant he could not make a replica. The argument being that either a person does not have the rights to work with a bundle and therefore could not produce a replica as they would lack the knowledge, or they would have the rights, but then they would make a real and active bundle. Thus the 'replica' status of the bundles is at question, and many community members feel that real bundles have no place being on display as they are believed to be powerful and restricted sacred items (Pers. Comm. Provost 2006). Curtis (2007:48-9) provides an example of Kainai Blackfoot Elders denying the replication or photography

of a Sacred Head dress repatriated in 2003 from the University of Aberdeen Marischal Museum collection.

Although Crowshoe negotiated his participation, the majority of the decision making power and authority remained with Head-Smashed-In non-Blackfoot staff. Brink wrote all the text panel copy for the interpretive boards in consultation with Crowshoe and the community guides are still required to work from an interpretive matrix developed by non-community members in consultation with the community, as the Site Manager explained:

> Ultimately the matrix was written by professional people from the ministry. In other words our scientists, our heritage people, our historians dealt with the Elders and the discussion, and they pulled all the amalgamated material together and laid it out, with a consensus that it represented the themes and discussions that had taken place. It wasn't signed off…but it essentially had the agreement of all parties (Pers. Comm. Site Manager 2006).

This quote highlights the value judgement on the Blackfoot knowledge compared to 'the professional people from the ministry', and emphasises that although Blackfoot Elders were consulted they did not have the final say. This highlights one of the problems of consultation: community consultants are often held accountable for decisions that were not necessarily within their control (discussed at length in chapter nine). Upper-management positions at Head-Smashed-In have always been non-Blackfoot and the storyline and films continue to be scripted by non-Blackfoot staff with Blackfoot input.

As a government run centre, Head-Smashed-In is often associated with ongoing conflicts between First Nations and Canadian government. Such negative associations can overshadow the community input. As a result some community members often think of it as a Western, government institution and not a necessarily a place of Blackfoot community voice. Joe Crowshoe's son, Reg Crowshoe (Piikani Chief at the time of interview) said:

> ... the provincial museum, Head-Smashed-In , and so on, those governments come from a Western perspective... museum concepts that are Western models... So when we look at the museums and Head-Smashed-In again they are really developed from a Western development initiative (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Head-Smashed-In used consultation, which is ranked as tokenism on Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Participation*. This could account for some of the negative feelings towards the centre within the community. However, in the 1980s it was still a progressive step in

museum/community relations at the time (see Slater 2006 for more discussion on the original development of Head-Smashed-In).

In 2007 Head-Smashed-In began redevelopment of their multimedia presentations and created a small new exhibit on contemporary Blackfoot life. This action was taken in response to the need to renew the three dated and worn-out films, and to community and Blackfoot interpretive staff recommendations. The need for the creation of an exhibit to interpret modern Blackfoot life was emphasised by Blackfoot employees such as the late Lorraine Good Striker. The interpreters wanted a way to address tourists' curiosity in their modern day lives (Pers. Comm. Good Striker 2006). Despite the Blackfoot desire for the development, the process was initiated by upper-management and was a top-down process with input via consultation from grassroots representatives (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008).

Thus despite the changes in museology, the centre decided to repeat their original approach to engagement and use consultation. The process involved consultation with Blackfoot staff and an outside group of four Elders: Joe Spotted Bull; Margret Plain Eagle; Rosie Day Rider**;** and Wilfred Yellow Horn. Jim Martin, the Head-Smashed-In Education Specialist and in-house Film Project Manager at the time of interview, noted that 'we tried to have two men two women, two Piikani, two Kainai to have equal representation' (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008). Similar to the original development, Head-Smashed-In relied on one primary external consultant for the film.

> Wilfred Yellow Horn, who was really our main contact after the initial meeting with Elders. We had a couple of meetings with Elders, three or four, where we brought them together here at the Jump and we walked them through the script and then we asked their opinions and asked for their commentary. And we would do all of this orally, we would read through it with them and take notes and then revise the script and then get back to them. We went through two or three revisions like that and Wilfred was our main contact that we would go back to and ask: 'is this right now?' (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008).

Consultation with the Elders was used to gain approval of the partially developed product. They were not asked to initiate ideas, but to comment on ideas developed by the non-Blackfoot film company with the non-Blackfoot Head-Smashed-In staff.

Likewise Blackfoot Head-Smashed-In staff were consulted with to gain information and approval, but were not included in the main development team. Elder and former Head of Interpretation, Lorraine Good Striker was the main internal consultant on both the

film and exhibition. She was relied upon heavily by the non-Blackfoot team to review the film and exhibits; however she was diagnosed with terminal cancer and passed away before the completion of the projects.

> What I know for a fact was she was lying there on her death bed within an hour or two of dying and she was reading through something for one of our projects we were working on... They were bringing her stuff, she was saying "no no, I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it." She was incredibly weak and riddled with drugs, but she literally read till almost the last minute she was breathing (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008).

Her dedication to the project was noted in the *Alberta Sweetgrass* news:

> The day before she died, Lorraine Good Striker was going over notes and making suggestions to improve the accuracy of a film to be shot at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre in southern Alberta. "She was dealing with little details of the script, making comments right until her last breath," said centre manager Terry Malone, who oversaw her work as head of the interpretation department over the last seven years. "It was a personal obligation of hers to ensure her culture was represented as truthfully as possible," he added (Meili 2007).

This illustrates both Good Striker's passion and commitment and Head-Smashed-In's overreliance on a few Blackfoot individuals to represent a whole community and history.

The major focus of the redevelopment was on the feature film which is shown in the centre's theatre at the start of every tour. The film aims to enable the visitor to experience a buffalo hunt. Based on the original film which was developed in the 1980s, the new film was intended to update the original with better graphics, special effects, and to correct some problems the community had identified in the original, namely the depiction of women with bare shoulders which was felt to be inaccurate and culturally inappropriate by Blackfoot Elders.

> The original film was 20 years old and many parts of the original film were actually missing. The one that people were seeing on DVD had been cobbled together from remaining bits and pieces of a number of 35mm film prints. Certain scenes were still quite good, but like the scene of the iniskim ceremony and certain shots of outside, but there were a lot of slides filling in. It was more like a multi-media piece; it had a lot of weak points, so it was felt that the centre needed to have a new showcase film (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008).

The need for a new film had been in discussion for many years, but was only initiated when funds became available providing the feature film with a $400,000 budget. The film was created by Myth Merchants, a non-Blackfoot film company, and the Director

Brian Murphy wrote the first draft of the script. The script was worked on by Head-Smashed-In's former archaeologist, Jack Brink (who had developed the original interpretive centre and its interpretation with the assistance of Elder Joe Crowshoe). The Elders and Blackfoot employees were consulted on the script only after its original development. Thus the project was not an exercise in empowering the community to represent themselves, but a method to try to ensure accuracy and community approval before finalising and publically exhibiting the film.

> Any details in the script or in the shooting we would go to Wilfred and he would consult with other Elders if he felt he needed to (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008).

The centre has two other audio-visual presentations embedded in the exhibits. The first is on the history of the return of the buffalo from near extinction, and the second is about the archaeology of the site and features the original archaeologists including the exhibit developer and archaeologist Jack Brink. They were both up-dated, but as their focus is not Blackfoot culture they did not under-go such a rigours consultation process:

> The other films were fairly straight forward. We had scripts that were reviewed in-house here by our Blackfoot staff and any kind of content that related to Blackfoot culture was reviewed generally by Quinton [Crowshoe] and to some extent Trevor [Kiitokii], but Quinton was my main contact here and if he had things he wasn't sure about he would take it to speak with Elders (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008).

Head-Smashed-In relied on the Elders they consulted with and their own Blackfoot staff members to go out and consult with others in the community on behalf of the centre to bring wider knowledge and approval into the process. Although it is not formalised in the process, this is a vital role Elders and employees play as go-betweens between the museum and the community.

Despite the awareness of the need for these individuals to consult with the wider Blackfoot community, time was limited and staff members feel the process was hindered by a lack of sufficient time to engage properly. Head-Smashed-In had to meet government set budgeting and development timelines despite staff members recognising that they were not culturally appropriate, as Jim Martin explained:

> I felt we had some fairly good representation from Elders from the beginning; however...we needed more time because the Elders did not feel they had enough time to ponder. They like to take it home and think on it for maybe weeks, maybe months. In this case we needed them to get back to us within days...That was very...stressful for them and for us. So looking at projects like this in the future, my biggest recommendation would be to find a way to allow more time

because the Elders do not react to reviews like a script committee, they can't just take it home as homework. They need to really think about it for a while and they might go and talk with other Elders, and they may start looking into the oral history and talking with people who have certain memories and that can take a long time (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008).

Thus in the time between the original and re-development of Head-Smashed-In little changed in their approach to community involvement. The main engagement occurred between the film company and Head-Smashed-In's upper non-Blackfoot management, with Blackfoot participants invited into the predominantly white engagement zone as and when information and approval was required. The centre continues to approach engagement from Arnstein's level of tokenism, despite the institutionalisation of Blackfoot Elders involvement and the employment of Blackfoot staff.

Some Elders who have not been consulted at the Jump had strong feelings about the level of community participation and the accuracy of the representation at Head-Smashed-In.

> ...here [Head-Smashed-In] they didn't do enough consultation, so there is still work that needs to be done, proper consultation (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

Pard put forward that even the Jump's name was incorrect:

> I would name it right. It is not Head-Smashed-In... it is called the Ancient Jump...So, total failure to consult appropriately way back then. What happened, they just went to the wrong people and...people must have got the wrong information. Somewhere something fell between the cracks (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

Consequently, despite leading the field in community involvement in the 1980s, Head-Smashed-In is not always positively viewed by the wider Blackfoot community or seen as a place that takes a Blackfoot perspective.

> And now even with the Head-Smashed-In they've got a bunch of these younger people there that have a Pan-Am view of all the stuff they talk about, it is from the books, but the historical parts aren't from a Blackfoot perspective (Pers. Comm. Potts 2008).

Head-Smashed-In reflects Galla's model of consultation as participation initiated by a non-Native specialist with the role of the Indigenous people restricted to that of 'informants' (Galla 1997:151). Head-Smashed-In highlights issues concerning the over-reliance on individual consultants and the potential for consultants to be tarred with decisions they did not necessarily have complete control over (discussed in chapter

nine). Importantly it helps to illustrate that the use of community members as 'informants' and not sharing significant amount of decision making power with consultants results in a hollow relationship that is readily identified by the community.

However, the situation is more complex than it first appears because Head-Smashed-In is still seen as a Blackfoot place, despite the form of consultation, because it has institutionalised Blackfoot involvement in the site through the sole employment of Blackfoot people as guides and interpreters, organising regular contact with a small number of Elders brought in for guide training and hosting an annual Elders Christmas dinner (discussed in chapter seven).

Thus the relationship between Head-Smashed-In and community is complex and the centre itself has a multifaceted identity being both government and Blackfoot. These identities overlap but are not fully integrated. There is a Blackfoot Head-Smashed-In and a government Head-Smashed-In side-by-side in communication but not one of the same, because they hold different roles and levels of power.

6.5.2 Glenbow Museum

Figure 6.4 Glenbow Museum (Photo by Onciul 2009).

In contrast, Glenbow (pictured above) has a relatively positive relationship with, and reputation in, the Blackfoot community (despite being the venue for the controversial 1988 *Spirit Sings* exhibition which catalysed First Nations protests and resulted in

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Canadian museology reform). Glenbow's Ethnology team approached community engagement as an exercise in partnership building, and developed a relationship over many years slowly negotiating the levels of power sharing and boundaries.

The development of Glenbow's relationship with the Blackfoot Nations was made possible by Glenbow staffs' willingness to reconsider their traditional approach to museology and take into account Blackfoot cultural approaches to heritage management. Beginning with the loan of sacred materials from the collection to community Elders for use in ceremonies, the relationship developed into tangible forms. Individuals from each group began crossing boundaries to participate in the other's world. Glenbow's ethnology team began attending Blackfoot ceremonies and community events.

In 1998 A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Glenbow and the Kainai Mookaakin Society to formalise a working relationship between the museum and community.

> Key among the 17 points of the M.O.U. is Glenbow's commitment to include Kainai in our process of collecting, researching, programming, and exhibiting Kainai or Blackfoot culture. The Kainai, for their part, acknowledged that final responsibility rests with Glenbow. Glenbow also agreed to assist Kainai in their efforts to repatriate sacred material from other institutions and to undertake a long-term initiative to permanently transfer spiritually sacred objects held by Glenbow to Kainai. In return, Mookaakin members agreed to provide their knowledge and expertise in assisting the museum in our development of exhibits and programs (Conaty 2008:252).

These steps facilitated the establishment of a working partnership with community Elders and the co-creation of a Blackfoot Gallery entitled *Niitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life*, 'one of the first permanent galleries in Canada to be built using a fully collaborative approach' (Krmpotich and Anderson 2005:279).

> In 1998 we invited 17 Blackfoot people to work with us in developing an exhibit that would reflect their culture and history as they know it. These individuals are ceremonial leaders and teachers and, according to Blackfoot practices, have the right to speak about the traditional ways (Conaty 2001:231).

The Blackfoot-Glenbow zone of engagement began modestly and in a loose form years before the development of a Blackfoot gallery became a possibility. Glenbow curator, Gerry Conaty, with support from Glenbow's then CEO, Bob Janes, began establishing relations with individual Blackfoot Elders to build and improve relations between the two groups.

When I came here Hugh [Dempsey, the former Assistant Director of Glenbow] had arranged the loan of the first Medicine Pipe Bundle. And the focus, at first, was on returning sacred material. That was because there was NAGPRA, it was starting to be thought about, repatriation was in everybody's mind. And we had things that people wanted, and so we started saying well, okay, we will lend things out because our Board of Governors was not ready to let them go. The government sure wasn't ready to let them go. And as we worked towards that, I got to know more and more people (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2008).

By taking steps towards repatriation, Glenbow showed the Blackfoot community that they were changing their approach to museology and were interested in engaging in more reciprocal arrangements with Elders, rather than simply seeking to collect cultural material and knowledge from the community. Committed to their objective, Glenbow, and its then CEO, Bob Janes, took steps to help change the repatriation law in Alberta, which eventually led to the Blackfoot specific *First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act* (2000), and the *First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Amendment Act* (Province of Alberta 2008). See Bell (2007) and Conaty and Janes (1997) for further discussion.

Glenbow supported Blackfoot claims for repatriation from other museums both nationally and internationally. This helped established a partnership power-sharing relationship.

Glenbow, over time... because we began returning more and more bundles on loan, and began to get into disputes with some of the provincial government people, who disagreed with our approach... I think the Blackfoot people began to see us as sort of a friend and a supporter. This all cumulated in 1998 with the signing of a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Mookaakin Society from Kainai which stated that we would support their efforts to repatriate and we would involve them in these efforts. In return, they would become involved in advising us in the care and interpretation of material from Kainai, Siksika, and Piikani... When we decided to redo our First Nations gallery, we went back to them and said "we have this agreement with you and would you like to help us?" By that time I knew a good many people, and knew who would work well together. So we put together the team we ended up with... well we began to put that together, but it grew and changed over time... But they were the group we put together to work on the Blackfoot gallery (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2007).

By developing relations over time, Conaty showed the community his personal commitment and the museum's commitment to partnership and power sharing. This helped to overcome negative feelings the community held towards museums.

Anytime on the Blood [Kainai] Tribe, you start talking about a museum, it is a dirty word... Because of what they have done in the past... And it took a little bit. For a while it took a little bit to, to accept Gerry [Conaty] because he was from a

museum, to accept Beth [Carter] and Irene [Kerr]. It took a little bit. But when they shown a genuine interest, and their help to return those objects, our sacred material, for the tribe, then people start changing. So it took a little bit. It wasn't an overnight, and even with the team, yeah they agreed to come, they'll come, but it wasn't an overnight, took two, three times, and finally everybody got to feeling at ease, you know, there was always that question: what are they going to use it for? ...But when they kept coming on and saying no it is your display, it is your story, you tell it your way. So then it start (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Glenbow's ethnology team successfully established enough trust in the community to enable individual Elders to feel they could negotiate their participation and build a partnership with the museum to develop the gallery (see the caption of the gallery poster in figure 6.5). The process of negotiation can be seen throughout the minutes from the Blackfoot Gallery meetings at Glenbow. In the first meeting Elder Frank Weasel Head negotiated the terms by which the participants would be referred to:

> **Frank** feels that the term advisory limits their roles, and indicates that they don't have much input. He likes the term team – we all participate on an equal footing – there is full participation by everyone (Glenbow 1998:3)

At the third meeting Elder Jerry Potts asked what they would gain in exchange for their participation and Glenbow curator Gerry Conaty responded:

> **Jerry:** Coming to the First Nations to request assistance for this project. Is Glenbow willing to assist, as part of the project, in repatriation of stuff back from such places as Mexico, the Vatican, East Germany? We would like to look at the possibilities of a big repatriation project down the road.

> **Gerry:** I have been talking to people, working with Mookaakin, and we can certainly help (Glenbow 1999b:2).

Working relationships grew through sharing, trust and humour, and turned into personal friendships. Frank Weasel Head recalls how the relationship with Gerry...

> ...was built through repatriation, through our ceremonies... in the '90s, mid '90s through to late '90s... and it just kept going on... we became friends and he is still my friend, lifelong friend. He's come to visit us at our house, I've travelled with him (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Conaty's close working relationship with the Kainai Nation was reflected in the makeup of the Blackfoot Gallery team. The Kainai were the largest groups out of the four Nations represented. The team's makeup changed over the course of the 4 year project as individuals' balanced other commitments, but the final Blackfoot community team named in the gallery was comprised of 13 Glenbow staff members, 8 Kainai, 4 Siksika,

4 Piikani, 3 Blackfeet. If we just look at the community membership, the Kainai represented just over 42% of the group, but only 25% of the team as a whole including Glenbow staff who make up over 40% of the group. The Blackfeet were least represented and were also added to the team after the initial meeting, and were handpicked individuals.

> When we added the team from the southern Blackfoot the group almost selected individuals, because they were not part of the original, they became, right after the first meeting and we said well who can, and Glenbow wanted to know, who can we invite?... So the group start coming up with names and we settled on names and they phoned and they got those people involved. That's how (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).
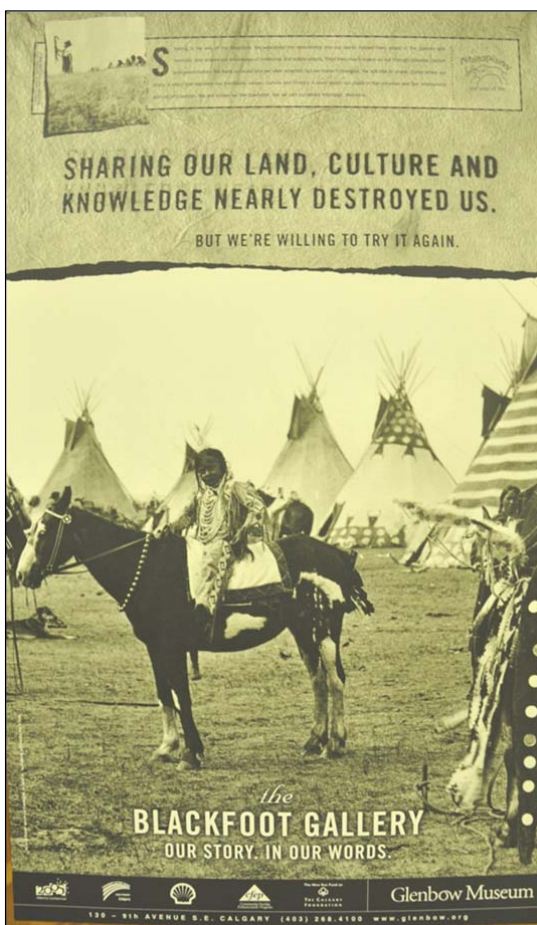
Figure 6.5 Poster for Glenbow's Blackfoot Gallery (Glenbow Museum).

Despite the small number of Piikani members, the individuals were heavily involved and it was generally felt amongst the team members and the museum that it was the Siksika Nation who were least represented because the individual members on the team changed and were not always available for every meeting.

With our group the only ones that kind of changed throughout the whole term was Siksika, start with so and so, then others come in with so and so, but we worked together (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Before work began on the gallery the Elders negotiated the terms of the partnership with the museum. Kainai Elder, Frank Weasel Head explained: 'we always had to have final say; that was the deal' (Pers. Comm. 2008). The team was almost 60% Blackfoot, giving the Blackfoot the majority of the partnership and helping to reinforce the idea that the exhibit was Blackfoot led and from a Blackfoot, rather than Glenbow, perspective. Piikani Elder Allan Pard recounted the negotiations:

> I told you about how White people were publishing and talking about our culture with their own opinions, their own conclusions. And I told Glenbow, no way was this going to happen, if they wanted our involvement it had to be done jointly, in partnership, it had to be co-operative and that it would be our story, not Glenbow's story (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

Allan Pard recalled his past experiences and observations of museum consultation and the influence this had on his approach to working with Glenbow:

> Here [at Head-Smashed-In] they didn't do enough consultation, so there is still work that needs to be done, proper consultation. I went to the new interpretive centre at Writing-on-Stone, the people down there just consulted with the Blood people. They didn't know enough to consult with other Blackfoot communities. So that was the first thing first with Glenbow we ensured, hey you don't just consult one Blackfoot Tribe, consult with all the Blackfoot Tribes (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

This meant working with the three Canadian Blackfoot Nations and the American Nation in Montana, which added an international dimension to the Niitsitapiisinni Exhibit. Glenbow participant and Kainai Elder, Frank Weasel Head explained the make-up of the team:

> So we got the team up there and some of the members, they said well if we are going to, right at the very first meeting, if we are going to do a true Blackfoot gallery we got to invite our brothers and sisters from the Montana Blackfoot, Amsskaapipikani, the southern Blackfoot. So for the next meeting we started. That's how we first started our meetings and it worked very well. Glenbow staff, they changed a little bit, different people, but the main persons that were always there was Gerry Conaty, Beth Carter and Irene Kerr. Although the CEO met a couple of times with us, Bob Janes, but he left them to his people but he supported it one hundred percent (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Another participant, Piikani Elder Jerry Potts explained that it was easy to work with Glenbow because they were willing to let the Elders tell their own story.

Glenbow's approach on that gallery is hey, we've got money here to tell a story from the Blackfoot people, we want to tell the story the way the Blackfoot people are telling it, not from a Euro, archaeological, Western concept or anything. We want to tell your story. So that made it very easy to work with (Pers. Comm. Potts 2008).

Frank Weasel Head supported this view:

Glenbow expressed the desire right from the start that they wanted this story to come from us. So we told our story from the way we saw it, from the way we felt and from the way we knew about it. So it was our story and Glenbow provided the technical aspect. Because I don't know how to put together an exhibit. So they provided... And I felt very comfortable in the way that Glenbow put it together and in Glenbow because they would say it is yours, it is your gallery. You tell us what to do and they would do it (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Glenbow's partnership approach went beyond the Task Force guidelines and was time consuming, taking almost four years, and expensive costing $1.915 million, but created a working relationship that satisfied both parties.

And yes we had difficulties, I'm not going to say we didn't... but the experience I got from there and I think Glenbow's experience that they got from there was how we worked together. That was very important. The cooperation between the two groups and Glenbow really made us feel that way, so we in turn...after that, we made sure we made them feel a part of it, a part of the story, part of it, that they were on the team. We were one. That race and language did not divide us up (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Thus partnership, ranked as the lowest form of citizen power on Arnstein's ladder, appears to have enabled successful engagement between the museum and community. Former CEO, Robert Janes explains the process as a combination of actions and words that accumulated into an effective partnership:

I suppose partnership is a bit of a formal word because it was only strictly defined as a partnership when we did the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Mookaakin. The partnership also took various other forms: Glenbow's Native Advisory Committee, my getting a Blackfoot name, going to ceremonies, having a First Nations person on the board, developing the Blackfoot exhibit, and organizing and implementing the repatriation – the largest unconditional return of sacred objects in the history of Canada. It was effective in the sense that both partners listened to each other and evolved and changed and in the process did tangible things that benefited both parties Both parties invested in the work and both parties gained from it, which I think is an ideal partnership (Pers. Comm. Janes 2008).

However, once the gallery opened the engagement zone changed shape as the group disbanded and returned to their normal lives and other Blackfoot people joined the

museum to interpret the gallery. These long term engagement relationships will be explored further in chapters seven and nine.

Nicks has noted that '[t]he first reaction of museums to challenges from Indigenous communities has often been fear that mainstream museums would lose the right to hold or exhibit Indigenous materials' (2003:23). Glenbow is an example of how sharing power and repatriating cultural material can enhance Indigenous community representation and museum/community relations, and should not be feared.

6.5.3 Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum

While Head-Smashed-In and Glenbow appear to reflect the hierarchy of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum (figure 6.6) presents an intriguing anomaly in engagement theory. Since 1992 the museum has been in the ownership of the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society, which has a mixed board of Indigenous peoples and Canadians, and represents several Indigenous groups including the Cree nations, members of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai), the Tsuu T'ina, Nakoda and Metis (Mason 2009:356). However the displays have remained almost unchanged since the 1950s when it was run by the original proprietor Norman Luxton (detailed in chapter one). Thus an anomaly appears to occur between Arnstine's model which would describe this as delegated power under the grouping of citizen's control and the reality of the power exercised by the group.

Figure 6.6 Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum (Photo by Onciul 2010).

Galla's third model helps to shed light on the situation (Galla 1997:152). Although the museum at first appears to fit Galla's model of community control, not all of the

necessary aspects are in place. Firstly, the community does control the project, but they did not initiate it. The museum was established in 1952 by local entrepreneur, Norman Luxton with the help of his friend Eric Harvie who two years later founded the Glenbow Museum. 'To a large extent the Luxton Museum served as a trial run for what would become the Glenbow-Alberta Institute' (Kaye 2003:116).

The museum was designed to resemble a fort and house Luxton's collection of taxidermy animals and First Nations artifacts. On Luxton's death in 1962, the Glenbow-Alberta Institute took over operation of the Luxton Museum. However as a satellite operation the museum became untenable in the early 1990s and being unable to finance either the continued operation of the museum or its closure, Glenbow opted to sell the museum (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008). Keen to develop relations and engage with First Nations communities, Glenbow offered the museum to First Nations in the locality (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2008).Yet interest was not expressed by the local Reserve communities, so in March 1992 the museum was sold to the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society for the nominal amount of one dollar (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2008). Former Executive Director of Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum explained what happened:

> By '91 the Alberta Government was in fairly deep debt and were cutting back significantly on funding for cultural groups and the Glenbow in particular had been hit fairly hard and they said that in light of the cut backs in funding they were going to close down the Luxton Museum in Banff and focus on what they were doing in Calgary. And they were going to close the museum and just leave everything. Well, Parks put some restrictions on that. It was going to cost a lot of money. They were either going to have to tear down the building or fix it up and fixing up the building was their main concern, the amount of money that was more than they felt they could justify. So they put the building up, they put the facility up and said if somebody wanted to take it over to put in an application and a number of groups did and the group that was selected by Glenbow to take it over was Buffalo Nations Cultural Society. And there were lots of negotiations went on, and in March of '92 the society took over the museum. And we'd gone out and raised some money to do that and from March of '92 to the present it has been operated by the Society (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008).

Thus the museum was well established by the time the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society became involved. Interestingly, Frances Kaye argues that although Norman Luxton and Eric Harvie were 'basically assimilationist' (2003:113) and their relations with First Nations were paternalistic:

> In their ongoing association with local Indians [Sic.], the Luxton and Glenbow were in the forefront of anthropological museums, most of which remained in the "Ishi" mode, preserving Native people as specimens (Kaye 2003:113).

Under the new ownership of the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society, the museum was renamed Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, but the majority of the collections remain on loan from Glenbow and displayed in the same fashion as it was in the 1950s . From the beginning the poor labelling and interpretation of the museum collection was criticised. In 1953 George Browne briefly worked as Art Director of Luxton museum and recommended the museum incorporated more descriptive labels (Kaye 2003:108). 'Despite Harvie's approval of Browne's suggestions, they were apparently not carried out, for in January 1957 University of Alberta biology professor William Rowan' also recommended better labelling (Kaye 2003:109). Rowan commented that '[v]isitors should learn that particular instances, like the configuration for harnessing sled dogs, were particular to one culture and should not be generalized to "all Indians"' (Kaye 2003:110).

The Buffalo Nations Cultural Society set up another charitable society to run the museum called the Luxton Museum Society (although the membership of each overlaps) (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008). The Buffalo Nations Cultural Society hoped that the museum would give them the opportunity to build-up a track record and enable them to go on to develop other initiatives such as a cultural park or a university of Nature (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008) as well as being a place for community voice. However, as Galla notes as a common problem, the museum is inadequately resourced (Galla 1997:152). The shortage of funds means the society struggles to maintain the building, and makes investment in exhibit redevelopment currently unfeasible (the impact of resources and logistics will be analysed in detail in chapter seven).

Interestingly, despite being part-owned by the community, there has been little community engagement beyond board membership and even this has often been somewhat tokenistic. The community board members have little direct contact with the museum and tend to act more as figure heads than active participants.

> At the time it was taken over... the president of both societies was Leo Young Man, he was Blackfoot and the vice president was Reverend Arthur A. Young Man, also Blackfoot... after Leo died Harold Healy from the Blood became the president. Arthur and Nora Ayoungman were both on the board and until Arthur's death... Nora stayed on the board but she's not been terribly active and we've been trying to get some other involvement from the Blackfoot and talking

to a couple of her relatives... but at this point nothing has happened. Now three years ago Harold wanted to retire because he was getting on. He's stayed on the board, but he's retired as President. Joe Yellow Horn, the son of Tom Yellow Horn, is the current president and has been for the last few years. He's from Peigan... Tony Starlight was on the board and stepped down this past summer too to take over and run the museum. When I retired in 2005 we'd hired one of our former staff members to run the facility and she decided to leave last year, so it had been run by a committee from the board from that time till Tony became involved (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008).

As Brewster explains, the community representation of the board has changed over the years and generally only a few individuals represent the many communities whose artifacts are on display in the museum. This is due in part to the location of the museum, far from the reserves and the lack of resources to bring people in, or redevelop or change the museum even if or when community members recommend changes. The most active members have tended to be locally based Canadians like Pete Brewster who acted as Executive Director for the museum from 1992 to 2005 and, although now retired, still has a semi-active role.

Thus this museum contravenes Arnstein's model as it should be on the second top rung of citizen power, as a form of delegated power, however a lack of resources prevent it from empowering the community. Instead the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society maintains an outdated exhibit. The society defends the museum as an artefact in itself, however they acknowledge the main issue is funding and that this prevents any development or changes to the museum (Pers. Comm. Bedford 2008).

Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum is not highly visited by First Nations communities, partly due to its location in Banff, but also because it is also not widely known about, nor considered a community museum within the Blackfoot communities. I asked Manager, Tony Starlight why current First Nations visitation is low:

> Probably because they don't know we are there. Even a lot of Banff and Canmore residents have told me I've lived here all my life and I've never been inside that museum. It's because it is an Indian museum (Pers. Comm. Starlight 2008).

Piikani Elder, Jerry Potts, has worked with many museums and dismissed Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum saying:

> I was in touch with them but they are mainly a... it's just a beads and feathers exhibit, there's nothing, it is mainly set up to appeal to tourists (Pers. Comm. Potts 2008).

There does not seem to be wider Blackfoot community recognition of ownership of the museum, despite a succession of Blackfoot presidents. This may be partly due to the fact that the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society represents many First Nations and has stronger relations with some nations than others. The local Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee) and Nakoda (Stoney) nations, provide employees, including the manager at the time of interviewing, Sarcee Elder Tony Starlight, and a number of board members. The society has links to the Indian Village at the annual Stampede in Calgary, and it is within the mixed community represented there that the museum is more widely known as the former Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum President Harold Healy is a long time participant and tipi owner at Stampede.

The lack of change since coming under Indigenous ownership can be accounted for not only as a result of lack of finances, but also differing institutional motivations (see chapter seven). Thus, not only is there a lack of resources to enable the museum to engage with Indigenous communities, but there is also a lack of motivation, as the actual aim of the project is to develop a new Indigenous tourist experience separate from the museum. Potentially, if the Native Village goal is realised, then wider engagement with the community could occur.

Thus although Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum appears to be citizen controlled (Arnstein 1969) it does not empower the community because it lacks the resources to actually do anything other than open its doors to the public. Consequently the museum appears as an anomaly presenting outdated exhibits under the banner of community control. Power appears to be there when in fact it is not, and engagement is tokenistic because there are no resources to enable changes to be made. This case-study highlights the importance of institutional ethos and the impact of resources upon engagement (discussed in chapter seven).

6.5.4 Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park

In comparison, Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park (figure 6.7) is a good example of Arnstein and Galla's top model of engagement, as it is initiated and controlled by the community.

> Our direction is dictated by our own people and by our Board members and you know they get the feedback from the community and that's where we take our direction from. There's no Government agenda, no Federal agenda, or Provincial

agenda. It's fantastic we are kind of free from those ties (Pers. Comm. Breaker 2008).

Figure 6.7 Blackfoot Crossing (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Nevertheless, Blackfoot Crossing still faces challenges common to any kind of representation as it has to engage with the wider Siksika community, and negotiate and balance Blackfoot and Western practices of heritage management.

Figure 6.8 Blackfoot Crossing park (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Like Head-Smashed-In, Blackfoot Crossing is situated within a significant heritage landscape (see figure 6.8).

> There was a lot of respect for this area because of the history that lies within this area, the Treaty, battles, and different ceremonial areas and so on. And I think

that underlying all of this, Siksika members knew this was a special place and it was protected as such (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

To develop such a significant site took many years of negotiations and planning with local people and the Siksika Band Council. Director of Blackfoot Crossing, Jack Royal explained the development:

> 1977 was when the ball really started rolling. We had had a re-enactment of the signing of Treaty number 7 because it was the 100th commemoration of the signing ... And at that point in time it was noticed that there was a lot of interest within people or from people that visited the area... there were thousands of people that attended that weekend and from then on the leadership of the day, along with the Elders set out to look at something to commemorate this area, besides just a monument, to have some sort of facility that would pay homage to this area (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

Over the years the project developed and stalled with successive Siksika Band Councils and changes in community priorities and funding. The project developed in a piecemeal fashion as funding became available. 'There was never really any one specific set of resources that we had to work with, it was kind of the resources of the day and that is why it took so long'(Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a). At different points different community members and government departments were involved, each contributing their ideas.

> The project moved between different departments within the Siksika government, at one point it was under a tourism department, and then it was under a community services department and then it was moved to another legal entity, a separate legal entity: Siksika Resource Development Limited and then I got a hold of it under my department at the time, which was major projects and council initiatives and that is where it really got rolling (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

With funding being sporadic, aspects of development occurred and were then shelved. To keep costs down, when more funding became available old reports were dusted off rather then re-issued. Consequently Blackfoot Crossing grew in a piecemeal style over generations.

A number of Elders were engaged at an early stage in the development to consider what kind of centre they wanted to create. These Elders worked with a non-Blackfoot architect Ron Goodfellow (who worked on the project for 22 years) and together designs were drawn up for the building. The Elders proposed the integration of Blackfoot concepts and symbols into the fabric of the building and the finished product is layered with meaning that can be interpreted through the architecture. Funding and

delays resulted in a long time gap between the design and creation of the centre and many of the Elders never saw their ideas come to fruition.

When the project gained momentum again the community members were left with a dilemma. The plans that had been developed with the Elders were no-longer in-date as the project had evolved. However, it was felt to be important to honour these Elders and to respect the previous consultation, so the original plans were used to develop the building as it stands today. Unfortunately the concept of the role and function of the building had changed, as had technology and museology. As a result, the building is not ideally fit for purpose as the exhibit and archive area lacks the required environmental controls needed for modern museum standards and the archive is too small to house all of the communities' documents (this will be discussed further in chapter seven).

Thus long term deep community engagement also has its problems, as the more people and time involved the more complex and confusing the project can become. Whose input should be valued and used is an ongoing question during engagement, and it is important for museums to plan for the possibility that community participants may pass away during engagement.

An exhibit storyline had not been part of the original development of the building, so as the centre was constructed a new team was created to develop the exhibits. The engagement zone was created by the Siksika government team developing the centre, who later became the museum staff, and they invited Siksika Elders to guide the direction and content of the gallery. Where local services were not available non-Siksika contractors were brought in such as the design team (Terry Gonoval and Irene Kerr) who were chosen for their previous work on Glenbow's Nitsitapiisinni Gallery. Assistant curator Michelle CrowChief explained how they engaged with the Elders, stating 'I know we couldn't do it without them, I know that!' (Pers. Comm. 2008):

> We delegated about, I think there were seven or ten Elders. We then went out and talked to the Elders and asked them if they could assist us. And just a handful would come in and say oh well we will help you out. But we had to do this project within two years; when people can do it for 10, 15 years to just design the exhibit. But it was, we were trying our hardest and we are still working through it right now, and there is still a lot to be done (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

> What we did was we went to the Elders, they have Elders meetings out here and we told them what we were all about, what we would like to do, and just certain people would get up and say stuff. And we basically got two of the main people

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in. They have a board, and one of the main board members of the Elders turned around and told us: 'well, I'll help along with some others, I will look for other people who will be good for this'. So we managed to get them to come to our meetings... but I think it was mainly Irvine's decision along with... some of the other members here too, to decide who is going to be good to help out with this... Okay, well this person knows this much, this is what they can contribute to this... See the people that we invited they have always worked in the cultural area. They all knew, they brought in some kind of, their expertise. Like they knew about the coal mining days or they knew about the signing of the Treaty, or they've worked a lot with Elders who would talk about the ancestry... would help with our storyline to develop it more, because they knew exactly what they were talking about... they were speaking on behalf of the community because they had all that knowledge... They worked in that field (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

Thus despite being a community museum they still used engagement to bring together expertise and knowledge from the wider community, staff, Elders and specialist contractors. The Elders acted as consultants and advisors, and had the power of veto. Some became museum employees, and many regularly visit the museum to contribute information or to find out things from the museum, collections or archives.

Even though Blackfoot Crossing is community controlled some community members are not involved. There are simply too many people in the Siksika nation for them all to have a say in the development and direction of the museum. As such the idea of citizens' control is misleading. Only a few people in the Siksika community have influence over the museum, and the museum still has to consult and engage with the community.

> ...obviously we can't tell our whole story in one little display downstairs. There are so many aspects...so many different things that we could communicate, that we can't possible do it in one sitting (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

> Everybody had an input on what they'd like to see and what they wanted in there. But it had to go with the story as well, you know. We're not going to put snowshoes in there if it's not even anything to do with snowshoes. It has to go in with the stories... like the animals, the transportation, the language... Certain things you could use to specifically identify something (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

An important finding in the research was the feeling amongst some staff at Blackfoot Crossing that they did not have a good relationship with their community. Darren Pietrobono, Blackfoot Crossing's VP of Finance, stressed:

> A relationship of trust needs to be developed to show that we are, that our goals and objectives meet their understanding of what we are trying to accomplish here. And so I believe that is the next step that needs to be done here with the

community, is to build their trust that we are going in the right direction. Because we are getting, I believe we are getting a lot of different conflicts of where we are heading. Some people believe we are representing out gift shop in the wrong fashion, maybe even our exhibit downstairs. But I think there needs to be more synergy... where there is a co-relationship working with them, so that we can all develop a direction for Blackfoot Crossing, so that they feel involved with the facility and it is not just a money making venture (Pers. Comm. Pietrobono 2008).

Pietrobono felt that they 'need input from the community at large and not from outside representation, but from them' (Pers. Comm. 2008). He felt there was misunderstanding within the community as to the function of the museum and there was a lack of feeling of ownership, despite its entirely grassroots community development. He noted the lack of Siksika visitation: 'that would be excellent evidence to making that claim that they don't have the ownership here, because they are not, their numbers are not showing up here' (Pers. Comm. Pietrobono 2008). Bev Wright, VP of Programming and Development at Blackfoot Crossing echoed this view:

I would like to see a lot more community inside instead of just tourists. Don't get me wrong, I love the tourists too and we need the revenue, but it's, it's the community's place and the community's not there as much as they should be I feel (Pers. Comm. Wright 2008).

As did VP of Marketing & Public Relations at Blackfoot Crossing, Shane Breaker:

...there are some critics of the [Blackfoot Crossing] centre who really don't see...the centre as representing the Siksika...Blackfoot culture. Again, you will always have critics in a community where you are trying to represent them...they see that representation as skewed or not as representative...we will always have those critics but the numbers are few (Pers. Comm. Breaker 2008).

These comments illustrate the fact that engagement and community empowerment is not simply achieved through community control. Community museums still have to engage with their community and can still experience criticisms of tokenism and non-participation. Thus Arnstein and Galla's models need to be expanded to explore the complexities of community control. Blackfoot Crossing also illustrates that the difficulties of engagement are not simply cross-cultural, but also inter-cultural, because the issue boils down to who has the power to have their voice heard.

6.6 Conclusion

Engagement is more complex than the current models can illustrate because engagement is a living, ever-changing process. The focus on community control as the best option in the models obscures the fact that community members still have to

consult with their community which will not automatically empower all community members. Some of the complexities of engagement can be explored using the idea of engagement zones with permeable boundaries and a specific set of engagement rules, enabling power to be shared and negotiated. And each case-study highlighted an important factor that influences even the best intentions of community engagement, which will be explored further in the following chapters.

To reiterate:

- Head-Smashed-In showed that even institutionalised engagement in the form of consultation and community employment does not necessarily integrate community with museum if power is not shared.
- Glenbow illustrates that power sharing in the form of partnership is a resource heavy and time consuming process, which needs to be maintained even after the exhibit opens.
- Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum demonstrates that resources are crucial to enable engagement to have any practical outcome.
- Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park highlights that community control does not automatically result in community empowerment or engagement.

This chapter has created an overview of engagement in theory and in practice at the case-studies. In doing so it has introduced many issues that will now be explored in depth in the following chapters.

Chapter 7. Institutionalising Relations and the Limits of Change

Museums, themselves a cultural artefact, are an institutional invention of the colonizing culture. That they may not be ideal for a First Nations 'museum' should not surprise us (Ross and Crowshoe 1996:253).

This asymmetry is built, literally and figuratively, into our institutions (Chakrabarty 1992; Shelton 2001). They are determined by our funding regimes, by our proscribed professional practices, and in museums, by the very roles that we fulfil – collecting, documenting, and displaying... Good intentions have little force against the power of this institutional assemblage (Boast 2011:66-67).

7.1 Introduction

Change is a common goal when museums engage with communities. Engagement is used as a way to bring community ideas and voices into the museum, to tell hidden histories, present new perspectives and to share cultural knowledge. In the process the museum must adapt to accommodate this influx; however the extent to which such institutions are willing and able to change is the crux of what can be made possible through engagement.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation model proposes that increasing community control improves participation, with the top model on her ladder being citizen control. At surface level my case-studies appear to reflect four of the top rungs of Arnstein's ladder. Following this logic one could assume that those with greater community participation would have undergone greater change, moving away from traditional museum models to include indigenised practice and other ways of working. Change can be temporary, used strategically to gain ground in the engagement zone. It can be lasting, creating new practices that continue after participants leave; and it can be deep, changing the ethos and culture of the institution. This chapter will analyse the extent of change created at the case-studies as a result of Blackfoot participation. It will identify ways in which curatorial practice has been indigenised and relations institutionalised, and the extent to which the ethos and culture of the museum has been affected by engagement by looking at the depth and longevity of change. In doing so the chapter will show that engagement cannot be defined as one single rung on the ladder according to the initial relationship entered into. During the process of engagement all the different kinds of participation listed in typologies such as Arnstein's may occur at different stages (Cornwall 2008 273-4), because there are factors that influence power beyond the

boundaries of the engagement zone which cause some community advice to be ignored and some to be institutionalised.

The chapter will begin by assessing why and in what ways Blackfoot engagement may change museological practice and ethos by comparing Blackfoot cultural heritage management with Western approaches. Drawing on Brady's (2009) analysis of the National Museums of the American Indian (NMAI), the chapter will consider the residual practices that remain even when deep change is attempted. It will analyse the influence of practical and socio-political factors on the case-studies which define the limits of engagement and cause indigenisation to be embraced or resisted by the institutions.

7.2 Indigenising Ethos and Practice

As Julie Cruikshank states '[m]useums and anthropology are undeniably part of a Western philosophical tradition' (1992:6). This idea is echoed by Christina Kreps who argues 'Western museology is rooted in the assumption that the museum idea and museological behaviour are distinctly Western and modern cultural phenomena' (2005:1). However she points out that 'many cultures keep objects of special value and have created complex structures or spaces for the objects' safekeeping as well as technologies for their curation and preservation' (Kreps 2005:1). This is true of the Blackfoot, as Piikani Chief Reg Crowshoe asserts:

> ...in our culture we have those disciplines and institutions and belief systems... we have our own principles of what we call museums... how we preserve, we have those disciplines...and institutions. But...when the...Western museum developed their guidelines they never consulted with First Nations to say do you have any such models? (Pers. Comm. Crowshoe 2008).

The consideration and incorporation of Indigenous ways of working are important to the process of engagement[14], but also to the survival of cultural heritage itself, as Kreps explains:

> The hegemony of Western museology and approaches to heritage preservation has contributed to two phenomena that pose a threat to indigenous curation: 1) the global spread and reproduction of Western-oriented models, and 2) the reliance on expert-driven, top-down, professionalized/ standardized museum training and development. Both of these forces can inadvertently undermine

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[14] Also see Viv Golding and Wayne Modest forthcoming publication *Collaborative Museums: Communities, Curators, Collections* (London: Berg)

indigenous curatorial practices and paradoxically the preservation of people's cultural heritage (2005:4).

By working with Blackfoot Elders the case-studies brought in individuals who hold 'Indigenous curation'[15] knowledge and skills. Blackfoot Elders, like Western museum professionals have complex and intricate practices and procedures which determine the way they manage cultural heritage and materials. Like their Western counterparts, they undergo extensive training with their respective educational authorities and are valued by their own communities as having particular knowledge and expertise that enable them to care for material culture and cultural knowledge on behalf of the wider community. While museum and heritage professionals tend to have professional training and university education, Blackfoot Elders train through apprenticeships in age-graded secret societies and study and participate for many years before earning the right to become a keeper of an object, song, dance, story, or ceremony, which they maintain and pass on according to strict cultural protocol. Once they transfer the item they keep to new holders they become parents, once the item is transferred again they become grandparents of that particular piece of tangible or intangible culture and are then considered an Elder. Elders continue this learning process throughout their lives and always refer questions to the most knowledgeable member even if they have training in that particular aspect of knowledge or practice. Many of my interviewees described Elders as having the equivalent of a PhD (or higher) in Blackfoot knowledge.

Blackfoot heritage management has enabled the Blackfoot people to maintain their tangible and intangible culture and heritage since time immemorial, before (and without) written accounts. Although it is difficult to date the longevity of cultural practices, it is clear that archaeological sites dating back over six thousand years (such as Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump) remain important to Blackfoot culture. At the turn of the last century anthropologists like Clark Wissler, Leslie Spier (Tovias 2010:276) and photographer Walter McClintock (McClintock 1910:125) witnessed sacred Blackfoot cultural practices such as Okan (Sundance) that continue today (despite governmental attempts to ban the practice[16] and the collection of sacred bundles by museums and private collectors). Thus it should come as little surprise that when engaging with museums Blackfoot Elders feel suitably qualified to question Western

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[15] Christina Kreps uses the expression "Indigenous curation," as 'shorthand for non-Western models of museums, curatorial methods, and concepts of cultural heritage preservation' (2005:3).

[16] 'In 1895, Section 114, an amendment to the Indian Act, prohibited certain aspects of Sun Dance ceremony (e.g., body piercing). Since 1951, Bill 79 has revoked any restriction pertaining to "mutilations of flesh"' (Deutschlander and Miller 2002:28).

practices and suggest repatriation of cultural items or the adoption of Blackfoot protocols for the caring of Blackfoot materials held in museum collections.

There are considerable differences between Blackfoot and Western or Canadian epistemologies that play-out in each group's cultural approach to heritage management. Four key areas of conflict are the differences between Blackfoot and Western conceptions of:

1. Sacred objects: Living beings vs. inanimate objects
2. Time: Cyclical vs. linear
3. Reasons for acting: Spiritualism vs. science
4. Who has the right to access: Secret and 'off stage' culture vs. freedom of information

These four issues (amongst many others) are topics for negotiation in *engagement zones* as museums and communities have to find common ground to enable co-operation and to develop museological practices that meet both Blackfoot cultural and museum professional standards and expectations.

The Blackfoot belief that sacred objects are living[17], and require care similar to that of a baby, is the opposite of the way museums have traditionally objectified items, treated them with conservation techniques ranging from poisons to freezing, and generally storing and displaying them in ways that minimise their exposure to light, air, and human contact. Consequently museums have been associated with death by many Indigenous communities whose living cultural materials have been collected and treated by museums as inanimate dead objects.

With the increasing participation of Indigenous communities in museums, changes to these practices have begun to occur. In 1998 the National Museums of the American Indian (NMAI) acknowledged that '[c]urrent standard museum treatments such as plastic bags, freezing, and low-oxygen atmospheres may be inappropriate for certain objects because they might "suffocate" a living entity', and began 'investigating traditional Native American fumigation techniques such as regular smudging and the use of certain aromatic botanical substances in sachets' (Rosoff 1998:38). Similarly the American National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) adapted practice in response

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[17] For further discussion on the living nature of sacred Blackfoot bundles and repatriation by practicing Blackfoot Elders see Todd 2003.

to Hopi protocol: '[t]he Hopi tradition stresses that Katsina friends are living, breathing entities. As such, they should not be covered in plastic nor is it appropriate to house them in airtight containers' (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001b:34).

Not only do the Blackfoot view their cultural material differently, they connect with their historic material as part of the present, as a result of their conceptualisation of time as cyclical, rather than linear. Conaty explains: '[w]hen First Nations people view artifacts at Glenbow they see their own memories' (2008:255). Conaty describes the important role sacred bundles play in Blackfoot cyclical history:

> It is a history which is cyclical and which is renewed in an ancient seasonal ceremonial cycle. As bundles play an integral role in these ceremonies, they are key elements in defining the history of Niitsitapi. Bundles which are not celebrated each year, such as those in museum collections, represent a break in the communication line; a break in the history of Niitsitapi, and a break in the spiritual and ecological balance of the Niitsitapi world (Conaty 2008:248).

While Western museum professionals may consider an item as coming from the distant past and disconnected from current culture by temporal distance on the linear line of time, Blackfoot consider these items as part of their present and future. '*Niitsitapi* epistemologies represent knowledge from an ever-present time. It is experienced in the moment, which is infinite and all-encompassing' (Bastien 2004:105). Kainai Elder Narcisse explained the concept to me:

> Because we kept our language, we kept our ceremonies, yesterday is today. When you go to these ceremonies, history is occurring today. That is the Blackfoot paradigm, the pedagogue of learning, yesterday is today because those messages have carried on. Which is quite different from a very Western linear way of thinking that the past is way there and can never happen again. Whereas for us it happens over and over again (Pers. Comm. Blood 2007).

Using historical items in ceremonies is normal practice for the Blackfoot as this helps to connect yesterday to today and tomorrow and maintains culture for future generations. This stands in direct opposition to Western museological beliefs that objects must not be touched, but instead preserved for future generations. This highlights one of the key differences in emphasis, with museums tending to focus on tangible material culture and the Blackfoot taking a more holistic approach that also incorporates intangible cultural preservation.

Such differences forced the case-studies working with Blackfoot Elders to reconsider the reasoning and beliefs behind their curatorial practice. Western museology has

developed conservation practices based on technological and scientific innovations to maintain the tangible structure of an object. In comparison, Blackfoot follow cultural protocol based in their spiritual practice to maintain both the tangible cultural material and the intangible knowledge and cultural practices that together maintain their history and heritage, and perpetuate their living culture.

Restriction and access are key areas of conflict between museum and Blackfoot protocol. While museums generally restrict direct access to handle objects, they are based on notions of freedom of information and act as an educational resource. This can be problematic when engaging with the Blackfoot who have distinct areas of their culture that are not for public dissemination, but instead are 'off stage' private practices. These are generally the sacred aspects of their culture, such as ceremonies, sacred bundles and Okan. But as George Horse Capture (Gros Ventre) Deputy Assistant Director of Cultural Resources for NMAI, explained to Kate Morris of the Repatriation Foundation in 1994:

> Sacredness in the Indian world is like the early morning dew, it falls over everything. Nothing is exempt, everything is sacred. But there are degrees of sacredness, places where the dew only lightly touched, and others where the dew heavily coated. These are the areas of intense sacredness, of power (Morris 1994:1,3).

He adds that when deciding what is acceptable to show within a museum: '[t]he bottom line is that we have to go back to our communities for these answers, to the Elders. We are going to have to deal with them. If they say we can't show it, we can't show it' (Morris 1994:3). This echoes Blackfoot beliefs that 'everything in our world is sacred' (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:33), and Elders should have the final say on whether something can be shown.

However this can be problematic, as Flynn and Hull-Walski analysed at the American NMNH where restricting access to collections contradicted freedom of information and religion and discrimination laws: '[b]ecause it is a public institution receiving federal funding, it is precluded from discriminating or supporting any particular religious point of view' (2001b:35). The anthropology department found a way around the problem by developing: 'a method to accommodate the wishes of the cultural and religious groups who request restricted access while avoiding a violation of the law. In instances where groups advised the Museum of a cultural restriction on access to certain objects, we labelled the storage units with that information, thereby allowing those who wish to

obey the restriction the opportunity to do so' (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001b:35). Whether this was considered sufficient by the source communities is unclear. Deciding who can and cannot have access to collections and information is a difficult area for engaged museums. Flynn and Hull-Walski argue that although adaptations can be complicated and not always feasible, it 'is possible if executed in a sensitive yet methodical manner' and 'if all parties are flexible and alternative options are considered' (2001b:39,33).

Museums can benefit from sharing and adapting to non-Western cultural curatorial practice, as Kreps explains: 'Indigenous museum models and curatorial practices have much to contribute to our understanding of museological behaviour cross-culturally, or rather, of how people in varying cultural contexts perceive, value, care for, and preserve cultural resources' (2003:146). Engaging with communities and adapting museum practice in response, demonstrates the museum is willing to share power and respect cultural practices, which can in turn help to strengthen relations between museums and the communities they represent. Simpson argues that: '[t]hrough the incorporation of Indigenous concepts of cultural heritage, curation, and preservation, the idea of the museum is evolving to accommodate the needs of diverse cultural groups, both as audiences for museums and as presenters of culture and custodians of tangible and intangible heritage' (2006:173). Lissant Bolton notes that even in 1978 the Indigenous Australian delegates at the UNESCO regional seminar in Adelaide were arguing for 'the important role that owners and leaders of particular cultural traditions can have in giving life to existing collections of lifeless objects (Edward and Stewart 1980:13)' (2003:44). Understanding and following cultural protocol can help museums become places that support living Indigenous cultural practice, rather than store houses for disused relics considered 'dead' or 'dormant' by their source communities.

7.3 Naturalised, Residual Practice and the Logistical and Philosophical Limits to Change

When considering the engagement of Blackfoot Elders in museums there is clearly a need for the differences between cultural practices to be discussed, negotiated, and common ground to be found, from which new museum practices can develop and potentially be institutionalised. This process is often discussed as though it is a boundless exercise: the greater the community control, the greater the horizon of possibilities. But in reality engagement zones function within the limits of the

institutions in which they occur, and museums function within the society they are located in. As such there are very real limits to what can be made possible through engagement, which are generally left out of discussions about engagement. Jack Brink argued that obscuring the parameters of engagement can be detrimental to morale and relations:

> It kills the morale in the place... because we've been told to dream as big as you can dream and then told well actually there is nothing. And I think we are doing that with Native people a lot when we say, we want you to guide us, we want your advice, and there are no limits to it... I think it is unfair and I think it is unfair to them because then you have to go back to them and say, well we didn't do that... we didn't do it because there were actually parameters but we didn't tell you about them (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008).

Even when deep change is attempted by institutions, such as the American NMAI's endeavour to be a 'museum different' (Rand 2009:130), parameters and residual practices can remain (Brady 2009). As Jacki Rand states 'resistant strains of tradition and naturalized processes...have evaded even the NMAI's "Museum Different" solution' (2009:130). Miranda Brady carefully critiqued the ways in which, despite its efforts to be 'a solution to troubled museological approaches to communication,' the NMAI embedded old ideas into new practice and even created new problems (2009:134,147). Brady identified five main residual practices in the NMAI's 'Museum Different':

1. Object orientated museology: maintaining and preserving collections (2009:144-5)
2. 'Voyeuristic treatment and commodification of Native culture by the majority' (2009:137) for a 'mostly non-Native audience', with the location of the museum far from 'constituent' communities (2009:136)
3. Failure to consider the impact of framing on self-representation (2009:137)
4. Use of the collective (and inaccurate) term 'Indian' for disparate cultural groups (2009:146)
5. 'Use of expressionless mannequins and dioramas'[18] (2009:145)

Brady (2009) also identified two new problems that engagement at NMAI created:

1. Politics of funding (2009:147)
2. Naturalisation of the need for a museum (2009:148)

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[18] Dioramas and mannequins will be addressed in chapter nine and thus will not feature in this discussion.

Although specific to the NMAI, Brady's critique is useful to consider when examining the Albertan case-studies, as they too have residual practices and naturalised assumptions that underlie and to some extent determine what is made possible through engagement.

The case-studies, like all museums and heritage sites, are also restricted by the resources available to them and the logistics of heritage and museum work. Engagement is a resource heavy practice that requires time, money, space, and personnel. Funding is always an issue in the heritage sector and there are real limits to what museums can afford to do, both in terms of the process of engagement and the product. As I highlighted in chapter six, getting funding for the process of engagement is difficult, as Conaty describes: '[t]here are several funding agencies that will support assistance from consultants; there are few that will help pay for an elder's help and these endowments are much more limited' (2006:256). Museums also tend to have set budgets for exhibits, which limit what is possible to achieve through engagement, for example Piikani Elder Allan Pard recalls:

> Well I think we had a real good opportunity to do a tremendous job, but what I didn't like about Glenbow, was Glenbow just wanted to use their artifacts. I wanted to use Blackfoot artifacts, not Glenbow artifacts but Blackfoot artifacts. I wanted to borrow the best pieces (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Pard recalled the beautiful Blackfoot material he saw on display in the *Spirit Sings* exhibit at Glenbow in 1988, borrowed from collections around the world, and was disappointed that they were not able to access these items for permanent display at Glenbow (Pers. Comm. 2008). With Blackfoot items scattered across the globe in private and public collections it would be near impossible for Glenbow to raise the funds to buy these pieces for their collection. Blackfoot Crossing has recently encountered this same issue when pursuing Siksika material for their community collection, as Jamie Komarnicki reported in the *Calgary Herald:*

> ...museum officials say scores of displaced artifacts potentially worth millions of dollars remain out of reach...Royal said..."the Nation can't afford to buy everything back."...Acquiring items through usual museum channels...comes at a staggering cost. Last winter, a Siksika buckskin shirt adorned with horsehair, beads and weasel tails went up for sale at New York's swank Sotheby's auction house. It sold for $1.1 million to a private collector, Royal said. The matching leggings went for $800,000. The museum's tight budget – funded about 70 to 80 per cent by the Siksika Nation – doesn't stack up with the big spenders (Komarnicki 2009).

In the same article Alfred Young Man comments: "I think it's a perfect example of how powerless First Nations people are in all this," (Komarnicki 2009). As Young Man notes, power is not just about participation, but also having the resources to achieve your goals. Later in this chapter I will analyse Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum's situation as it exemplifies the power of economic resources, and look at how Blackfoot Crossing has attempted to reclaim this source of power.

Funding is closely connected to time limits via funding deadlines and the general rule that longer projects become more expensive. Engagement is a time consuming process, exaggerated by the tradition in Blackfoot culture of taking the time to do things right, rather than to meet specific timescales. 'It takes time and money to travel and stay in communities, and this travel is vital if relationships are to develop' (Conaty 2008:256). Glenbow took four years to develop *Nitsitapiisinni,* but their relations began back in 1990 with the first loan of Blackfoot material to the community (Conaty 2008:250). Blackfoot Crossing took considerably longer to develop, it began in the 1970s, with momentum building after the commemoration of Treaty 7 in 1977, with the community developed centre opening in 2007. Issues of time will be explored in the analysis of Blackfoot Crossing and Head-Smashed-In later in this chapter.

A further logistical limit to engagement is the resource of people. Both the museum and the community need to have skilled individuals with knowledge and understanding of their own culture, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and the openness and willingness to consider different ways of thinking and working. Engagement depends upon the individuals involved as it is they who make up the engagement zone, not the notion of a museum or a community. These people must have the necessary time and resources to participate, which requires them to be either financially independent or supported by their respective groups. For the museum employees this means having institutional support and approval from managers to focus on engagement. This raises the issue of institutionalising relations, which will be discussed in detail below.

As chapter eight explores, when developing co-produced exhibits there are logistical limits to self-representation, in terms of gallery space and the collections available, and community message is framed by the other exhibits and the museum building itself. Brady notes that at the NMAI '[i]t was seen as self-representation without consideration of the ways in which working within such a [national] venue might frame American Indian issues or delimit the potential for deep critical engagement with past and

continuing government policy' (Brady, 2009:137). This leads us on to the socio-political limits of engagement and the representation it co-creates.

In addition to these practical and logistical limitations there are also socio-political limits to what can be made possible through engagement. As Mazel and Ritchie state: 'in the museum context, ideology is reflected not only in the displays but in all spheres of the institution' (1994:226).

The socio-political limits can be grouped under four headings:

1. Ethos, culture and direction of the institution (museum or heritage site)
2. Professional standards of museology and heritage
3. Political climate in which the institution works and engagement develops
4. Expectations of visitors who come to see the products of engagement zone work

These socio-political and logistical limitations will be explored in the analysis of each case-study below. For the moment it is enough to note that these limits help account for some of the reasons why engagement theory models are generally not reflected in practice and why community members often still have gripes with museums even after apparently successful engagement.

7.4 Changes in Practice at the Case-Studies

> When we talk about museum practices, they are a lot more flexible than the museum beliefs of curation and preservation... if they are flexible to change those practices, then they are flexible to interpret those practices into our practices, so we can build middle ground (Pers. Comm. Crowshoe 2008).

All of the case-studies have been influenced by Blackfoot approaches to cultural heritage management as a result of their engagement with the community and specifically Elders. In different ways and to differing extents each case-study has found 'middle ground' from which to build museological practices, and over the course of engagement has institutionalised aspects of the relationship to greater and lesser extents. However, each case-study has had to negotiate very real practical and socio-political limitations.

7.4.1 Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre

Head-Smashed-In interpretive centre was developed with community consultation from the Piikani and Kainai Blackfoot Nations. On Arnstein's model (1969) this is ranked as tokenism, however by the time the centre opened the notion of Blackfoot involvement had been institutionalised in the form of the storyline and the employment of Blackfoot guides. In practice, Head-Smashed-In used participatory methods that spanned the engagement spectrum at different points in the process and adapted its practice to accommodate some Blackfoot protocol. However there are clear limits to what has been made possible through engagement at Head-Smashed-In mainly based around the issues of institutional ethos and time limitations.

As an interpretive centre Head-Smashed-In does not have a dedicated curator. All of the collections are on display and items were chosen for their durability or replicated as the centre is not an environmentally controlled space. Nevertheless, non-Blackfoot management have learnt about Blackfoot protocol through consultation with Elders and employment of community members, and have sought to incorporate elements of it into practice. In an attempt to respect the sacred nature of the Buffalo jump and some of the items that are on display, like the painted buffalo skull and two replica bundles, a space has been created where smudging[19] and prayer can take place without disturbance (or fire alarms being triggered). Although an archaeological site and Government of Alberta Institution, they facilitate an annual renewal ceremony for a sacred skull they display which includes allowing the skull to be handled by appropriate Elders. They have also acknowledged cultural restrictions about photographing sacred objects and have, from time to time, requested visitors not to photograph the sacred skull.

However, these adaptations have not been practiced consistently and Head-Smashed-In has not always acted on the advice of the community. Despite acknowledging the photographic restrictions on sacred objects, images of the sacred skull are frequently used in marketing and educational material, and even merchandise, which has been a cause for controversy amongst the Blackfoot. The annual renewal ceremony has had periods of dormancy when the skull has not been renewed and the amount of prayer and smudging at Head-Smashed-In fluctuated depending on the spirituality and traditional authority of the people employed at, and involved with, Head-Smashed-In at the time.

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[19] Blackfoot people use smudging, (the burning of sweet grass, sage, tobacco or sweet pine) to spiritually cleanse people and objects.

The limited nature of these adaptations can be seen to relate to, and reflect, the level of power sharing between the centre and the community. As Arnstein's model indicates, consultation favours the consulters over the consulted. And yet Head-Smashed-In has institutionalised Blackfoot guides as the only cultural group allowed to do interpretation and they regularly involve community Elders in the in-house training of guides and host events just for the Elders such as an annual Christmas meal. Brink explained that the position of Head of Interpretation has such specific criteria that it is restricted not just to Blackfoot people, but specifically to people with knowledge equivalent to an Elder:

> What we've created is almost a situation where now we have to hire Elders to get what we want, you know. To hire somebody under-fifty would be really difficult given the criteria of what we've set out we want those staff to do. Like one of the hiring criteria is to speak Blackfoot (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008).

This mismatch between institutionalising Blackfoot participation and not following community advice can be traced back to the origins of the centre and a double thinking that has been maintained throughout its life. At its inception Head-Smashed-In was an idea envisioned by a group of non-Blackfoot archaeologists who had been working on excavations at the site. Community involvement became a part of the process only after the site had received World Heritage designation and funding for an interpretive centre had been secured. Not involving the community from the very beginning has remained a key issue for the Blackfoot communities, and was exacerbated by the way community rivalries were manipulated to gain approval for the development of the centre (explained in chapter six).

Although the Blackfoot were consulted, the non-Blackfoot staff controlled the development and operation of the site. Nevertheless, there were times when Head-Smashed-In followed Blackfoot protocol despite non-Blackfoot staff members' doubts and the bureaucratic challenges, as Brink recalls in Lorretta Sarah Todd's (2003) film *Kainayssini Imanistaisiwa: The People Go On*:

> I'm your average white guy in the sense that I'm not steeped in the ceremonial world of Blackfoot people, but I had my own experience with this... just when we opened, literally within the first two weeks we had two tourists die here, both dropped dead of a heart attack... it was pretty traumatic. We were all deeply affected by this, but the Blackfoot staff; to me it's like, well geez that's pretty bad luck...but they said this is not luck, there's something wrong. And they said we have to close this building down and do these cleansing ceremonies and it is going to be all day and we need everybody here. And that's not easy to do in a government building. This is a facility that's advertised to the public, it is open every day and there are signs all over the highway. To just shut it the doors and

say sorry no one's coming in today, you have to go way up into Edmonton government and get permission for that. Well they just insisted, and that's what we did. A lot of offerings were made, special people were brought in for that ceremony and we had smudging and face painting and we went all through the building with these offerings cleaning the spirits out. And of course I'm there as a young man not really understanding all of it, but taking part in it, and that was twenty years ago and no-one's died since, so, you tell me (Brink in Todd 2003).

Julia Harrison argues that '[a]s each source community is seen to have its own character, something which in anthropological terms could be glossed under the notion of cultural traditions, practices, or simply its way of being in the world, so do institutions such as museums (2005:197). At Head-Smashed-In they have two different layers to their character: there is the community members who are employed in interpretation who encourage the involvement of community and Elders; and then there is management who are characteristically non-Blackfoot and have tended to view the centre as primarily an archaeological site, which the Blackfoot people and their history supplement and enrich. As Brink explains 'it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of the incredible story of that jump and not because Blackfoot people work there' (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008). He explains that:

It is my perception that the Jump has evolved dramatically in the last 20 years. And one of the major revolutions is the story of the Jump has become more the story of the people... It has become more and more of a cultural centre for the Blackfoot, rather than a celebration or story about the Buffalo Jump. And I think that's controversial. There are some people who don't agree with that trend, and there are others who I think who favour it and maybe like to see more of it... I am one of the people who feels that the jump has gone too far as a Blackfoot centre and needs to go back to being more as a story about the Buffalo Jump, and it just so happens that the Blackfoot people ran the jump (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008).

Referring to the new exhibit on the Blackfoot, Brink goes on to say:

[The Blackfoot] can say this is who we are, this is our people and this is our buffalo jump... I think [visitors] should hear that story, it's important. But I also do think that we're losing our focus, which... I find it regrettable... because I think the jump is such a compelling story in and of itself that we have the potential to hold people in the palm of our hands when they walk in the door (Pers. Comm. Brink 2008).

This view is further illustrated by the Site Manager's explanation on why they involved the Blackfoot:

Well very much because A) there is a dead culture here, well a series of dead cultures, that are prehistoric, but there happens to be a living culture immediately within the area, and the Blackfoot although they are recent arrivals,

have been here for four, five hundred years. So yes they used the site. It is important to them. It was part of their territory…Were the original people 6-7000 years ago connected to the Blackfoot culture? Well the assumption of the scientists is no. There were other tribes that predate the Blackfoot tribes in this region. Could they be associated with any one of those tribes? Possibly, but we can't confirm that (Pers. Com. Site Manager 2006).

The view that the Blackfoot are 'recent' arrivals stands in direct opposition to Blackfoot oral history that records that they have been in Alberta since time immemorial, as Kainai Elder Narcisse Blood noted:

> Blackfoot have always been there. It is difficult for me to reconcile that you are going to make some conclusions or theories based on the base of [arrowhead] points in archaeology and say that these are Clovis people, these are Sandia people, they have all these phases and cultural groups that are based on a artefact. Because the technology changes it is very dangerous to say that they weren't Blackfoot. That just doesn't make sense. Then who were they? (Pers. Comm. Blood 2007).

Head-Smashed-In Blackfoot interpreter and archaeologist, Stan Knowlton, accounts for the differences in the arrowhead points found at the buffalo jump as hunting adaptations made to accommodate the shortening cliff drop, due to the increasing level of buffalo bones building up at the base of the jump (Pers. Comm. Knowlton 2008). However, this is not the official interpretation presented at Head-Smashed-In. Thus despite the embedded community involvement at Head-Smashed-In there is still a strong notion of Western science verses Blackfoot culture (see chapter eight for details), which many of the Blackfoot archaeologists who have been employed at the centre over the years have tried to bridge.

Winnel Branche has argued that museums 'presently enjoy positions of superiority and can therefore graciously afford to accommodate "the other"' but questions how much museums are really prepared to give up (1996:120). He goes on to say '[t]he true test will come when we ask ourselves if we are ready to have our Indigenous brothers and sisters giving the orders, not taking them – making the decisions and being the directors, not just the side-show "live" craft persons' (Branche 1996:121). At Head-Smashed-In, community employment has not equalised the Blackfoot-non-Blackfoot power relations because upper-management are not community members. Some, but not all, Blackfoot protocol is observed, and Blackfoot employees are expected to toe-the-line of the institutional message and practice. The Site Manager explained how he has adopted Blackfoot witnessing as an important part of his job, and always takes the time to be present for discussions between staff and community at the centre (Pers. Comm. 2006).

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However he added 'this is a government operated site and you are given three chances' if an employee does not meet the expected standards they lose their job even if they try to make amends following traditional Blackfoot protocol (Pers. Comm. Site Manager 2006). Thus from its development Head-Smashed-In made adaptations and institutionalised aspects of community involvement and protocol that in the 1980s was ahead of its time, but not to the extent that it has satisfied the expectations of all of the community, nor has it been institutionalised with consistency.

In 2007 Head-Smashed-In redeveloped their films with Blackfoot input. As discussed in chapter six, it is surprising that Head-Smashed-In chose a similar engagement approach of consulting a small group of Piikani and Kainai Elders on a script that was already written by non-Blackfoot staff members and consultants. Head-Smashed-In limited the engagement process to the government set timelines despite staff members' recognition that they were not culturally appropriate as they did not allow enough time for the Elders to reflect and consult within their communities. Thus over the twenty years (1987- 2007) Head-Smashed-In had been operating little had changed in the institutional ethos or practice of involving the community, despite the changes in museology and Head-Smashed-In's institutionalisation of community employment and Elder consultation.

The lack of change can be partly accounted for as a result of it being a government institution, primarily developed to interpret archaeology to a non-Native international tourist audience, rather than community run or focused. However, this means that despite Head-Smashed-In's institutionalisation of Blackfoot involvement and employment, many community members continue to see Head-Smashed-In as a commodification of their culture by a government institution (the consequences of this will be discussed in chapter nine). Thus what is made possible through engagement at Head-Smashed-In is limited by the lack of power sharing, the limited time allocated to such work, and the internal divisions in institutional culture. Confusion over the identity, purpose, message and ownership of the Buffalo Jump continues to prevent productive co-working that meets the expectations of the institution and the community.

7.4.2 Glenbow Museum

It would be reasonable to assume that since Glenbow used a partnership model of engagement, ranked as the lowest form of citizen power on Arnstein's model, it would

have had greater success at meeting community expectations and made greater strides to indigenise curatorial methods.

Like Head-Smashed-In, Glenbow made changes to their facility to allow space for prayers and smudging. But unlike Head-Smashed-In, Glenbow holds collections and chose to adapt its curatorial practice further to accommodate Blackfoot protocols which the ethnology team learnt through participation in Blackfoot society and with Elders. Partnership, collaboration and adaptation have helped to build a strong and respectful relationship between ethnology curators and Blackfoot Elders. This relationship was formalised in 1998 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U) with the Kainai Mookaakin Society designed to 'facilitate a cooperative working relationship' (Mookaakin and Glenbow 1998:3).

This relationship enabled the repatriation of sacred bundles: the participation of museum employees in cultural and ceremonial events; which led on to the development of the *Nitsitapiisinni* permanent gallery; temporary community exhibits; Blackfoot employment at Glenbow; cultural programming; and curatorial adaptation. Former CEO Robert Janes explained the learning process of working together to adapt practice:

> We had to learn from the Blackfoot first and they had to learn that we had certain structures, processes and requirements, as well... We had a standard conservation practice of putting loaned objects in a freezer so that they wouldn't contaminate the rest of Glenbow's collection when they came back from a loan. But then we found out that the Blackfoot view these bundles as living children. We had a choice. We could continue to uphold the museum's conservation standards. Or, with our growing awareness and our evolving respect for Blackfoot traditions, we actually listened to the Blackfoot ceremonialists and no longer put the bundles in freezers... [we] just kept them in a separate holding room (Pers. Com. Janes 2008).

Following Blackfoot protocol Glenbow removed sacred items from display, either repatriating them or keeping them in separate, designated areas in storage that are restricted from general access with clear labelling to avoid unintentional exposure. Senior curator Gerry Conaty has participated with Blackfoot ceremonial life since the 1990s and has a deep appreciation for the sacred nature of items in the collection and encourages staff members to respect the power Blackfoot people believe they hold, and keep storage areas quiet and respectful. As Conaty explains:

> I became friends with the Weasel Moccasin family and began to understand the significance of the holy bundles to people; not to a foreign culture. They, in turn, began to see me as an individual who was beginning to understand and respect

their culture and their holy bundles. They now asked that I fulfil some
obligations to their culture: I was encouraged to prepare a daily smudge for the
bundle while it resided at Glenbow; I was expected at various ceremonies, and I
was requested more and more often to lend religious objects. These requests
were made in light of my understanding of their culture, my tendency to agree to
such loans and to champion the loans within the museum bureaucracy in
conjunction with Janes' support of these efforts. As I developed similar personal
relationships with other Kainai and Piikani, I moved beyond being seen as the
representative of a faceless institution. This, in turn, personalized Glenbow and
it became regarded less as a custodian of objects and more as a steward of living
things (Conaty 2008:251).

The ethnology team follow traditional Blackfoot practice and restrict women accessing
the sacred storage areas during their menstrual cycle or when pregnant, which has
required staff members to significantly adapt their work schedules to accommodate
these protocols. Glenbow has also applied Blackfoot protocol to their archive and
restricted public access to sensitive Blackfoot material. In Australia such restrictions
have become commonplace, as Bolton describes: '[n]o museum in Australia now
displays or allows research access to Aboriginal human remains or secret or restricted
material, and significant numbers of objects in both categories have been returned to
their traditional owners' (2003:46). This practice is not yet normalised in North
America (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001a, 2001b) and resistance to these changes will be
discussed below.

Not only has Glenbow changed the way it manages its collection, it has also adapted its
collecting strategy. The ethnology team collect modern cultural material that
emphasises contemporary concerns and Blackfoot culture in the modern world. Curator
Beth Carter accessioned an exemplary piece of Blackfoot dance regalia – a beaded hide
hair piece in the shape of a *Nike* tick, the emblem of the modern sports brand. Glenbow
has also opened up its collection to Blackfoot visitors allowing object handling in
response to Blackfoot traditions of using items to maintain the tie between the tangible
object and the intangible knowledge it relates to. Items have been loaned and repatriated
to the community to be used in ceremonies and cultural practices. Some community
members come to the museum to see their ancestor's possessions and to reconnect with
and renew culture, for example by studying traditional items of dress held in storage to
inspire the creation of new regalia for cultural events (Pers. Comm. Carter 2008). Co-
operation between the museum and community helps to maintain and renew both
tangible and intangible Blackfoot culture. Knowledge sharing across the network of

engaged people has improved both the museum and the community's understanding of Blackfoot culture (Conaty 2008:255).

A key to the success of this relationship has been Ethnology team's commitment and willingness to accommodate Blackfoot approaches, including taking the time the community needed to do the project right even though this was expensive and bureaucratically challenging. Kainai Elder Frank Weasel Head explained: 'from our first initial meeting it took us three and a half years to complete... It was a drawn out process, but... the Blackfoot team felt very comfortable' (Pers. Comm. 2008). He went on to say 'sure it took a long time, but then Gerry and then Beth and Irene and whoever else came in with the Glenbow, they start realising, ah, this is their way. Sure it might take longer but we'll get a better product' (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008). The ethnology team at Glenbow successfully indigenised curatorial practice and institutionalised community engagement in their department that 'in many ways, meet First Nations' criteria rather than museum standards' (Conaty 2008:256).

The Ethnology team's willingness to commit personal time and energy to the development of community relations facilitated its success, but ironically, is one of its weaknesses because the change brought about by engagement primarily affected the ethnology department, leaving the rest of the institution relatively unchanged; perhaps understandably, given its diverse subject areas and collection in Native North America, community history, art, mineralogy, military, and world cultures.

The institutionalisation of Blackfoot protocol has therefore occurred in Glenbow not on an institutional level, but on a personal level with the Ethnology team. If the team members leave the museum then the practices may change, and certainly new relationships would have to be built between those individuals and members of the Blackfoot community. As Piikani Elder Jerry Potts notes, a new member of staff would:

> ... have some pretty big shoes to fill there...all the guys that know what is going on, that have developed this positive relationship with Gerry, none of them are going to go banging on the door to say hey, here is me, here is what I can do, here is what I can offer. None of them will do that. It is a trust friendship, like a bond (Pers. Comm. Potts 2008).

Kainai Elder Frank Weasel Head said: 'I hope if, when they do leave... that Gerry, Beth and the Blackfoot team have created an environment that future CEOs or future staff members, that can carry on the work that was done' (Pers. Comm. 2008). However

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former CEO Janes had concerns about the extent to which engagement had been institutionalised at Glenbow:

> I wouldn't be optimistic. Although Gerry Conaty, Beth Carter and I attended ceremonies, there was still an organizational vacuum... how are you going to build in the continuity and commitment? ...You would hope that the Board of Governors would be sensible enough to realise that Glenbow's work with First Nations has actually made it internationally renowned (Pers. Comm. Janes 2008).

While the Ethnology department, with the support of CEO Robert Janes and his successor Mike Robinson, adapted to Blackfoot ways of working:

> Other parts of the museum were not so open to change. The registration department, other curatorial areas, and the board of governors were all hesitant to engage in repatriation. There was a fear that the objects would find their way to the marketplace and Glenbow would be accused of neglecting its fiduciary responsibility... Although we were moving toward a new philosophy, our bureaucracy had not yet begun to change (Conaty 2008:251).

Conaty recognises that 'in 1990, this was a radical approach for a museum to take and we often felt isolated from other institutions and from colleagues within Glenbow who felt that we should not abdicate our traditional role as the arbiter of knowledge' (2008:256). The formalising of power sharing through the M.O.U caused unease among some staff who 'were concerned that the museum was relinquishing its responsibility to manage our collections and our ability to exercise our intellectual freedom when developing exhibits and programs' (Conaty 2008:252). These concerns occurred despite the M.O.U. clearly stating 'that final responsibility rests with Glenbow' (Conaty 2008:252). Similarly Janes recalled that:

> Some of the staff were looking askance - wondering if we were going to give away everything?...who are these people who get to make you change all these traditional museum practices?...I think there was a certain amount of cynicism and, as a result, we established the Native Advisory Group (with the ironic acronym of NAG), to share concerns, questions and assumptions. I think that went a long way toward diffusing the concerns about our relationship with the Blackfoot throughout the organisation. But you can appreciate in a place like Glenbow, with all of the specialist positions, that there were a lot of people who didn't care at all, or didn't have the time, energy or interest to get involved. You could talk to a lot of staff at Glenbow during that time who never had anything to do with the Blackfoot. I don't think that really matters as long as there are enough staff participating, and there is sufficiently strong leadership to keep the relationship moving in the right direction (Pers. Comm. Janes 2008).

Attempts to indigenise curatorial practices often come up against resistance. Flynn and Hull-Walski note that at the American National Museum of Natural History: '[t]he

incorporation of traditional care methods into standard museum storage and handling practices has been controversial. Conservators, with good reason, have been concerned that traditional care methods could compromise standard museum care, affecting the stability of an object or an entire collection' (Flynn and Hull-Walski 2001a:2).

> The sub-text is that in order for those things to go on, the authority and responsibility have to be devolved throughout the organization, but you also have to have a museum director who is interested in doing this kind of work, or it isn't going to happen. Without support at the top, money won't be allocated and staff won't be allowed to go to the reserves to spend time at the ceremonies. At the same time, you have to have the staff who are equally committed (Pers. Comm. Janes 2008).

At the time of interviewing a new director had been appointed to Glenbow, Jeff Spalding, to lead Glenbow in a new direction, that of Arts Renewal. This directly threatened the space and resources available to maintain engagement with the Blackfoot community. Conaty found ways to adapt and provided Blackfoot cultural awareness programming for social services such as the police (Pers. Comm. 2008).

In summary Glenbow's engagement with members of the Blackfoot community radically changed the way members of the Ethnology team approached the care and display of their collections. It brought community voice and people into the museum and it gave the museum international recognition. However it did not change the museum as a whole, nor did it institutionalise practice in a way that would guarantee the future of the relationship with the Blackfoot beyond the employment of certain members of Glenbow's ethnology staff. The engagement also did little to disrupt the naturalised practices Brady (2009) identified at NMAI. Although it has repatriated sacred items, the museum remains object orientated (Brady 2009:144), with the M.O.U clearly stating it would: 'balance Blood Tribe access to spiritually sacred materials, cultural objects and relevant data, while respecting the concerns of the Glenbow Museum regarding the care, maintenance and preservation of the Glenbow Museum's collection' (Mookaakin and Glenbow 1998:3-4). Further still, Shell Oil Company funded, co-created gallery presents to a predominantly non-Blackfoot audience and as an inner-city museum frequently sponsored by oil companies Glenbow frames the community voice in a non-community venue, with questionable funding, and naturalises the need for their existence, which is perhaps an 'unfortunate compromise' (Brady 147:2009).

7.4.3 Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum

Following the logic of Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969), one might expect a community owned museum such as Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum to have integrated 'Indigenous curation' (Kreps 2005:3) into their daily practice and institutional ethos. However, Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum is strikingly unchanged by its transfer in ownership from Glenbow to the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society, despite occurring nearly two decades ago in 1992. Four factors can help to account for this: a lack of financial resources; pressure to meet professional standards; visitor expectations; and arguably political pressure.

The continuity at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum since its opening is directly related to the unavailability of funds and resources to make change at the museum. Former Executive Director (1992-2005) and local Canadian Entrepreneur, Pete Brewster, explained that: 'it was operating at a modest surplus from the time it was taken over till, basically till 9/11 and from 9/11 it's been a real problem. It's been a little bit up and down, made a bit of money some years, most years it's been down' (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008). Finances are so restricted that the museum structure itself is beginning to fall into disrepair. 'There're major problems with the roof and leakage and because it was built out of logs, there's some deterioration there that is going to require repair very shortly' (Pers. Comm. Bedford 2008).

> The main concern since then has been to try and get the facility in a decent shape and the big problem of course... trying to raise money... that's been the big, big stumbling block from the beginning... A lot of the work that needed to be done never has been done. During the 1990s we'd spent... well over a quarter of a million dollars on work on the building. Getting it shored up...but the roof still needs a lot of work and that's been an area of concern for a few years now... a major concern...we do have some leaks in the roof (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008).

> Because of the condition of the building, the Glenbow actually took back [items]... to storage in the museum in Calgary, so that certain artifacts could not be ruined. I think it was all out of care for the artifacts that they took several back. But I do know that they are willing to loan again certain artifacts to the Luxton. One of the problems that the Luxton has building-wise too, is... the four furnaces, no environmental control, which can be very problematic for some artifacts. So everybody has to keep up standards and keep a careful watch. And so the Glenbow is wonderful, they come and check out the collection. I believe they come once a year, to make sure things are okay. And if there is a problem, for example insects in cloth... they take them back and clean them and bring it back (Pers. Comm. Bedford 2008).

With the fabric of the museum disintegrating it is little surprise that all efforts have been focused upon fund raising. **'**In the meantime we have been getting some additional donations...artefacts and things: we've had a fairly large contribution of Stoney material that came in 2006' (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008) but these collections are vulnerable to damage given the condition of the building. At the time of interviewing the global financial crisis threatened the museum's future.

Perhaps surprisingly, what efforts have been made to change curatorial practice at the museum have been focused on meeting Western museological standards. One of the museum's goals was to get the museum up to Alberta Museum Association standards (AMA:2010) (based on ICOM international standards 2007), to enable them to be officially designated as a museum (McLean 2007), which would then give them access to more funding opportunities. However, the board also recognises the need to conduct culturally sensitive conservation as Judy Bedford notes, in:

> ...First Nations... there is no such thing as an artefact. If you make it an artefact it's dead... I mean, simply in First Nations culture it has its own life and so therefore the life, you don't take that away, it can be in air and within their culture there are ways to renew them and restore them and it may very be in certain cases that its brand new, brought in through ceremony. So I think some curators are beginning to understand that there are different ways of conservation (Pers. Comm. Bedford 2008).

However, despite being community owned, curatorial practice is currently moving towards mainstream professional standards to meet funding requirements.

Visitors are a key source of revenue for the museum, whose main audience is international tourists who are drawn to Banff. They have few community visitors partly as a result of their distance from any of the communities (Pers. Comm. Starlight 2008). Starlight has been working with the Sarcee nation to encourage visitation, but notes that many First Nations probably do not know about the museum (Pers. Comm. 2008). Thus the museum is currently focusing on meeting its core audience's needs and Starlight is working on providing multi-lingual interpretation, namely in French and German, to meet the needs of their international tourist market (Pers. Comm. Starlight 2008). However this work is vulnerable to the power of finances as the museum only has a director and two members of staff who run the gift shop and do admissions, and Starlight notes 'I'm not too sure whether they can renew my contract' (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum is a clear example of the power of economic resources, but change is also prevented by visitors' expectations. The museum finds that tourists enjoy the way the museum current represents Plains peoples as Starlight explains, visitors 'always tell us, this is better than Glenbow, better then the Museum of the American Indian down States' (Pers. Comm. 2008). Nancy Mithlo argues, '[t]he economic need to garner support from a largely non-native audience often clearly results in a censoring of purpose or a muting of important narratives' (2006).

Members of the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society have begun to think of the museum as a historical artefact in itself and may choose not to change it even if funds became available. As Judy Bedford explains: 'the building in my view is actually a heritage resource that should be preserved' (Pers. Comm. Bedford 2008). This different approach can be partially explained by the history of the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society with the museum:

> The background to the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society was a group that really started from the Calgary Stampede Indian Committee and largely as a result of a tour by Walking Buffalo from the Stoneys in 1958... in a period of four months he visited four different continents, talked to over a million people... when he came back...he begin talking to various members... of the Indian Committee...about establishing a University of Nature on the banks of the Kananaskis River (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008).

Walking Buffalo, also known as Tatanga Mani in Stoney, and as George McLean in English, was born in 1871 and 'as a child attended the signing of Treaty 7' in 1877 (Whyte 2011). After Walking Buffalo passed on in 1967 the people he influenced at Stampede 'started talking about trying to revive the dream of Walking Buffalo and start a facility' (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008). The idea was to develop:

> ...native villages with all the various tribal groups represented and at first they were talking about local, and then they were talking about the rest of North America and South America and eventually they were talking about Native groups of all the world. But when they started talking to the Alberta Government about getting some land for the facility they were asked to scale things back. So they started talking about how to do something on a local level and... they weren't getting anywhere... because they were individuals, they were not representing their tribe as such, so there was no entity with which the government could deal. So they said set up the society so we can deal with you... So that eventually led to the establishment of the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society which was formalised in... '89... and then the response from Kananaskis Country was well we can't really deal with you because you don't have any kind of a track record [laughs], as a group (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008).

When the Glenbow decided to sell the Luxton Museum the society saw this as an opportunity to establish their track record: 'now, because they still wanted to try and get a cultural park or a University of Nature going they decided that they should set up a separate organisation to run the museum, but they would work in concert. So the museum is owned by the Buffalo Nations Cultural Society, but the Luxton Museum Society was set up to operate the facility' (Pers. Comm. Brewster 2008). Since 1992 Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum has been run by the society to establish themselves in order to pursue their goal of developing a native village. Thus the institutional ethos at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum is focused on fund raising to maintain the museum with the goal of developing their future project. In short, the museum is currently a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

It is possible that there are also political limitations to change at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, as Courtney Mason argues: '[i]f the Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum directors choose to overtly deconstruct ethnocentric stereotypes of 'Aboriginality', or offer politically charged representations of Aboriginal peoples, for example focusing on land claims or repatriation issues, the museum's directors may risk alienation of local politicians and the business community [in Banff]' (Mason 2009:366). Alienation could damage the museum's financial potential, and given the limited resources, could be disastrous for the museum.

Thus Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum stands as something of an anomaly on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, and illustrates the power of practical, institutional and socio-political factors on what is made possible through community engagement. Citizen control can only really be effective when a museum is in a position to act, has resources to support their plans, and most importantly, wants to change.

7.4.4 Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park

Blackfoot Crossing presents an interesting contrast to the other case-studies. As a community developed collection-holding museum, interpretive centre and park rolled into one, it ranks as the top model on Arnstein's ladder as Citizen Control (1969). Blackfoot Crossing has taken a uniquely Siksika approach and indigenised practice and unsettled residual practices, such as those identified at NMAI by Brady (2009). Blackfoot Crossing has also attempted to limit outside influence on the way they

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interpret and run the centre. A key factor has been keeping control of the funding as Director Jack Royal explains:

> The uniqueness... about BCHP is that we are not governed by any funding agreements or by the government. We are not trying to interpret somebody else's culture. This is our own culture we are talking about. We are taking about ourselves. So we are the experts on ourselves. And we are not constrained by policies of how and when, and terminology, and mediums that you should be using. And all these different things that other institutions, government institutions primarily, are limited by. So to me, that is the message that: yeah you can go anywhere else, but if you want the real story and the real experience come to BCHP (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

Figure 7.1 The 1ˢᵗ Annual World Chicken Dance Competition at Blackfoot Crossing (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Royal is wary of the demands external practical and socio-political factors could have on the centre and aims to minimise their influence to keep control in the community's hands and present the community's view of themselves without pressure to adapt to Western protocol. The feeling that out-side influences limit Blackfoot self-representation is also expressed by Piikani Chief Crowshoe, who explained:

> As a First Nations we would say in order to do anything, to show any of our culture we have to fall within this Western mechanism of guidelines. And once you do that you have automatically sold you soul to the devil, you have fallen, maybe what we might say you have recreated culture, so that is not really historical, it is modern. And recreation of culture, I think is, has been a danger all along, when you fall within Western guidelines and principles (Pers. Comm. Crowshoe 2008).

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Despite Blackfoot Crossing's efforts to indigenise and control their centre, they are not immune to the influence of practical and socio-political factors, as they must operate within the wider field of the museum community and Albertan, and Canadian politics.

From the beginning BCHP took a community approach and developed slowly over three decades of community participation, experiencing periods of activity and stagnation as priorities shifted and changed on the reserve. Over the course of the development ideas changed about the use of the building. Originally seen as an interpretive centre rather than a museum, the building was not designed with the necessary environmental controls in the gallery space to take care of the artefacts to Western museum standards (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008). As Bev Wright, VP of Programming and Development explained:

> ...we were given this building, and they were like 'K: run it. First of all its not really anything, like it's not up to museum standards in terms of the gallery, so we can't really do full museum stuff. The only thing that is environmentally controlled is the storage, so we can get stuff and store it...The archives wasn't environmentally controlled and that whole one side of the archives is windows which is a no-no, right. So we found that we were given this really, really nice building, you know 30 million dollar building, that was impractical for what people wanted to use it for, and so in hindsight, and Jack says this as well, he's like "if we had the project from the beginning we would know like: ok what do we want to use it for? Find out what you want to use it for first, before you build it." Because it had so many heads there are so many ideas patched into this one building, so, anyway. It is too late for that now, so we've got to figure out a way to run it which is what we are trying to do right now (Pers. Comm. 2008).

It is reasonable to ask why Blackfoot Crossing wishes to follow Western museum standards, considering the Blackfoot have maintained their culture and heritage for thousands of years. Why not follow traditional practice alone? The answer can be found in the museum's history and the wider context in which Blackfoot Crossing operates. Before Blackfoot Crossing, Siksika had a museum in the old residential school run by the current Blackfoot Crossing curator Irvine Scalplock and assistant curator Michelle CrowChief. CrowChief explained how they worked hard to meet standards and care for their objects: 'we also had temperature control, like what light wattage and all that stuff, you know the RH factor and all that. We made sure everything was taken care of but it was old, dusty and [laughs], but we tried our hardest to do it as much as we could there' (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

Like Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, Blackfoot Crossing must meet the Alberta Museums Association requirements to be formally recognised as a museum (AMA

2010; McLean 2007). This is important if Blackfoot Crossing wishes to be considered for loans and repatriation of Siksika material from other museums. The lack of environmental standards in the main exhibit area is a problem and Blackfoot Crossing was turned down as a venue for the exhibit *Our grandfathers have come to visit: Kaahsinooniksi Aotoksisaawooya* by the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, who brought five Blackfoot Shirts to Canada as part of a 'research project that brings together British and Canadian museums and universities with Blackfoot people in Canada and the United States' in June 2009 (Pitt Rivers 2009). Thus the apparently naturalised need for a museum on the Siksika reservation is actually a result of wider professional standards that are required to enable the community to receive repatriated or loaned cultural material. Consequently Blackfoot Crossing has hybridised its curatorial practice, blending Blackfoot protocol with Western standards.

Curatorial practice at Blackfoot Crossing is based in Blackfoot traditions balanced with Western curatorial standards. The curators at Blackfoot Crossing are Blackfoot Elders, trained in Western museology and Blackfoot traditions. They hold the rights to handle and keep sacred objects and knowledge, granted through their participation in sacred societies. Assistant curator, Michelle CrowChief described her society membership: 'I belong to the Buffalo Women's Society and the Horn Society and I help out with the Sundance, you know, wherever I am told to help out with, the cultural part of it all. So I have an understanding of what is going on in here' (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

> When we first moved here I was told by our spiritual leaders: "well maybe you should prepare the place first. Do a ceremony in here." So we had all the society members come in here and put up a Big Smoke and we did the traditional ceremonies, in order for this place to be, you know, broken into, so that it's able to have those artefacts come here...that is why they have that Elders room...So we have our meetings with all societies in there and we have some ceremonies in here too (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

CrowChief was able to deal with the sacred items as she explains:

> I'm one of the society members; I have the rights to move them over. You know I went through the proper procedures bringing them here and I knew exactly what I was going to do, but [the Elders] kind of assisted me: "this should happened, that should happen", you know. So basically I have done exactly what everybody was expecting for the sacred materials to come here, and they are here and this building is alive (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

Blackfoot Crossing keeps sacred items in a separate storage area, cared for following traditional protocol.

They've got their own area: the back room. Only certain people can go back there. There is just me and my co-worker Irvine, the only two that can actually go back there. Not everybody has access. It is only designated for certain people, and when the society members come in, they're able to come in and visit something that nobody else can visit. Yeah, so they are pretty happy (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

Photography is not allowed within the gallery and the curators are conscious of maintaining low noise levels within the museum to avoid disturbing their living sacred beings. This responsibility is taken seriously to the extent that they have attempted to restrict visitor volume to the centre through methods that have caused some upset in the community as Wright explains:

...there are four or five days throughout the year where it's free admission for community members and that was a board decision because they wanted to use the admission as a form of crowd control because otherwise, you know, it would become the next rec. centre or something like that and that's what they didn't want because there is sacred stuff in there, they didn't want people to use it just as a place to go hang out. So that was their position. I think a lot of the community, and again I don't know, I'm not a community member[20], but I think they're a little put off by the fact that they are charged admission, even though when they do go to admissions they're typically not charged (Pers. Comm. Wright 2008).

Wright notes that although there was 'kind of like a backlash in terms of the admission... I think it is starting to calm down now and people just realise that "oh, okay, we can still go"' (Pers. Comm. Wright 2008). While respecting the sacred items is vital to Blackfoot Crossing, it is also vital for them to have community support and involvement. Many of the staff express the need for the centre to get the community more involved and make sure it is seen and used as a cultural centre not just an economic venture (as discussed in chapter six).

The centre opened in 2007 and I conducted research interviews with staff in 2008, so at the time the centre was still developing its plans and programmes. Nevertheless, it was clear that Blackfoot Crossing was keen to provide a service to their community and had begun to critically consider and unsettle residual practices such as those identified by Brady (2009) at NMAI. Moving away from Western object-fetishisms, they aimed to maintain both tangible and intangible culture. Blackfoot Crossing was built by and for the community and they aim to support and enrich Siksika culture and the community.

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[20] Beverly Wright, Vice President of Programming and Development, is Cree and the only non-Blackfoot member of staff at Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park.

Blackfoot Crossing encourages their community to utilise the collection and archives to access and keep cultural items and information:

> We even have, sort of, our own internal repatriation. We have a lot of our members who come and bring artefacts or items, heirlooms, cultural heirlooms... they know it is going to be safe, it is going to be stored and they won't have to worry about it (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

While maintaining the tangible material the curators support the maintenance and revival of cultural knowledge. Assistant curator Michelle CrowChief, supports members with research, enabling the community to connect with their past and maintain and practice their culture:

> I take care of the artefacts, I assist you and if you want information on certain things I'll be there to answer your questions and help you out... They want to learn about their family history... their tipi designs... phone me up and I'll help you out and I'll research that information and give it to you... so they're learning a lot of stuff (Pers. Comm. CrowChief 2008).

Blackfoot Crossing is actively developing its archives and Colleen Sitting Eagle (at the time of interviewing) was establishing a monthly meeting with Elders to interview them and begin 'oral tradition archiving'.

Whilst maintaining cultural material and knowledge Blackfoot Crossing also supports cultural practice. They host ceremonies and provide a dedicated space for Elders to use within the building. Blackfoot Crossing has invested in reviving Siksika language, 'it is a huge undertaking' explains Royal, 'our language is in a critical stage, just like most First Nations, unfortunately, so we have realized that time is of the essence, so that is why... that is one of our priorities, because we need to do it now' (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

> We have developed a language programme... sort of a Siksika dictionary. Then we have got a language kit where we have hard copies, and we have developed a CD that you can follow along and teach yourself. We also have these little instruments that they call Phraselators... a handheld device where we have, I think, 600 words... and it will translate for you English to Siksika and vice versa. So we are utilising some of that technology... We actually got special permission from the US government to use it to preserve our language. So we are looking at utilising those in some of the classes we are planning... We are hoping to take the programmes... and have them...installed in your PC, so that people can do it online or at home' (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

The Phraselators are interactives within the museum that encourage visitors to listen to Blackfoot words then record themselves repeating the word and listen to it to encourage the proper pronunciation and use of the local language.

He goes on to add that: 'the other thing is, we are trying to designate Siksika language days throughout the year where we encourage people to speak nothing but Siksika. And we are developing a pilot project internally that I am going to be using with my staff' (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a). Alongside the language they also aim to revitalise the practice of traditional naming:

> There are a lot of our young people that do not have a Siksika name, they have an English name, and that is what they use legally, but traditionally we were all given Siksika names as children. Sometimes when you were older you were given a new name, an adult name. We are undertaking this initiative where we are going to try to ensure that all members have an Indian name or a Siksika name (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

Blackfoot Crossing is encouraging other traditional practices through their cultural programming and community days. 22nd September is *Siksika day* and Blackfoot Crossing hosts events for the community admission free to celebrate. In 2008 Blackfoot Crossing began hosting an *Annual World Chicken Dance Championship*, bringing together First Nations dancers to celebrate the Blackfoot origins of a dance that has become popular across the pan-Indian powwows of North America (see figure 7.1).

In addition to hosting large community events, Blackfoot Crossing is developing cultural programming that will offer community members a chance to perform and learn about traditional skills such as drumming, dancing, singing, traditional cooking, and skills such as tipi building and hide tanning. Visitors to Blackfoot Crossing will also benefit from this intergenerational learning, as Wright explains: **'**because that is part of the whole cultural continuity, right. You are going to have an old person teaching a young person how to do it, why not have some tourists involved in that too?' (Pers. Comm. Wright 2008).

Blackfoot Crossing also offers community support and development through mentoring programmes, programmes for community groups with disabilities (Pers. Comm. Wright and Sitting Eagle 2008), and through education as Director Jack Royal articulates:

> We have our resource library here, and that is primarily focused on the Siksika or Blackfoot history. We have schools, our local schools that come through all the time. We are working with the University of Calgary, we are partnering on,

right now it is limited to an archaeological dig, but the long term plans are to partner on other areas and we are currently setting that up. And maybe eventually acting as a satellite for the University of Calgary, and eventually becoming our own learning institution (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

Blackfoot Crossing is in a unique position to offer indigenised community programming because it is based within the community on the reserve, i.e. in situ. So although they are limited to the extent to which they can indigenise curatorial practice and still be recognised as a museum, they are successfully indigenising their programming to help sustain their intangible heritage.

Blackfoot Crossing was created for the community, as well as tourists, and by providing for the community it prevents itself from simply being a commodification of Blackfoot culture for a non-native audience. For the Siksika community to have their own museum that they control gives status and recognition to their representation of their history and culture. Blackfoot Crossing provides a way for the community to shape how others see them, and control access to Siksika cultural knowledge and material. Darren Pietrobono believes it will benefit the community's view of itself too: 'I think having a building like this will help identify with the people where they come from, with an accurate history that they can explore and analyse. Something tangible is what this place gives, as a reference point for them' (Pers. Comm. 2008). As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states, '[c]laims to the past lay the foundation for present and future claims. Having... institutions to bolster these claims, is fundamental to the politics of culture' (1998:65).

7.5 Conclusion

The four case-studies illustrate that although each took a different approach to engagement, the amount of change created and level to which the relationship was institutionalised was not only influenced by the power dynamics within the engagement zone, but by practical and cultural factors beyond its control. Greater community empowerment did not necessarily result in greater change or institutionalisation. Despite its problems, Head-Smashed-In institutionalised Blackfoot participation on a greater level than Glenbow or Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum. However, Glenbow's ethnology team incorporated Blackfoot ways of working more effectively than either Head-Smashed-In or Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum. Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum indicated that without sufficient resources the apparent level of community control is near to meaningless. And Blackfoot Crossing illustrated that even citizen

control (Arnstein 1969) does not result in total community control, because the museum has to function within the limits of time and money, and within the context of the heritage and museum profession, the socio-politics of their location and to some extent meet the needs and expectations of their visitors and stakeholders. In short, they must operate within the context and power relations of their time. Thus, currently restrictions remain in place that dictate how far a museum can indigenise without stepping outside the professional community of practice.

These limitations help account for some of the reasons why engagement theory models are not always reflected in practice and why community members often still have gripes with museums even after apparently successful engagement. Michael Ames notes that 'because museums as we know them are essentially white European inventions designed to serve the interests of mainstream or non-Aboriginal segments of society... the value of that environment is not self-evident to most First Peoples, nor is the museum's internal organizational culture entirely compatible with Aboriginal sentiments' (2000:77). Changing museums as we know them is the goal of engagement and although not always successful, each engagement brings about new practices and ideas that begin the process of greater change. As McMullen expresses: 'as anthropology has become post-colonial, so have many museum endeavours, but museums' often ponderous institutional infrastructures have been slower to change than individual researchers' (2008:54).

> ...institutional culture [is]... not something to be revolutionized over a short-time period; any fundamental change will likely be much more incremental, implicitly consensual, and sporadic, rather than directed. Fundamental to this is the recognition that in most cases core values will change only very slowly over extended periods of time (Harrison 2005:198).

Perhaps with time and the process of learning from and doing engagement, context will allow for greater indigenisation of practice than is currently possible, or perhaps new ways of thinking and working will emerge. For the moment, engagement practices could benefit from more open and honest acknowledgements of the very real restrictions placed on participation that limit what can be made possible through engagement. Knowing the boundaries of engagement will help museums and communities find ways to go beyond them with greater success.

Chapter 8. The Limits of Decolonising Representation

The stories of the continent must be told. A vacuum is impossible, and humans demand an explanation. So far, the only one that exists is the Big Movie [grand narrative]. It says with perfect consistency that we are extinct, we were never here anyway, that it is our fault because we couldn't get with the program. It says we are noble, are savage, and noble savages. There's another narrative waiting to be written (Smith 2009:52).

The issue seems not really to be one of representation and whether, or how, the addition of multiple voices reduces bias…The issue, instead, is really one of authority and control (Kahn 2000:72).

8.1 Introduction

Blackfoot engagement at the case-studies enabled community members to present their perspectives, challenge misinformation, and present hidden histories within the museums. One of the key ways this dialogue was made tangible and public was through the creation of exhibits. This chapter considers the extent to which Blackfoot culture is strategically represented (Spivak 1990), the limits of what can be said and heard within exhibits, and how these messages are framed through the museum as a cultural form.

Blackfoot self-representation at the case-studies is complex and the exhibits are layered with meaning, aimed to achieve multiple goals. Nevertheless, the ability for Blackfoot voice to be heard within the museum is limited by the audience's ability to understand what is said. When presenting to non-community members, Blackfoot self-representations have to negotiate with colonial constructs that remain in the public imagination about who 'Others' are. In this sense elements of the exhibits, such as displays on stereotyping, can be seen as autoethnographic responses to dominant societal representations (Pratt 1991:35; Boast 2011; see chapter four).

By reframing Blackfoot identity and challenging colonial narratives the Blackfoot aim to decolonise the way they are viewed. This chapter considers the decolonizing potential of 'truth telling' (a term first used by Wilson and Yellow Bird 2005:7 and applied to museums by Lonetree 2009) and analyses the extent to which difficult colonial history is explicitly addressed in the exhibits. The chapter also takes into account the challenges of discussing sensitive memories and the notion of 'on stage and off stage' (Shryock 2004) sharing.

How much to share was a key issue for Elders, who chose to withhold some information on the grounds that exhibits were not the right place to present them. Four reasons help

to account for this and will be addressed in this chapter. Firstly, sacred information is not for public dissemination according to Blackfoot cultural protocol. Secondly, the Elders wanted to improve non-Blackfoot understanding and recognition of Blackfoot culture by attracting and engaging Canadian and international audiences. This influenced how the trauma and devastation of colonisation was recounted in the exhibits, as many Canadian visitors might make connections to their own ancestry. Thirdly, the Elders wanted to present a public Blackfoot identity their youth could be proud of, and support the continuation of cultural practices. Finally, topics such as the residential school era hold very sensitive personal memories that can be hard to share and not necessarily suitable for permanent display in museum exhibits. The chapter argues that the exhibits employ, what Mary Lawlor terms, 'displayed withholding' (2006:5) to share limited aspects of sensitive and sacred culture, whilst emphasising that there is more to the story than what is being presented. The chapter explores how 'displayed withholding' enables layers of meaning to be presented to 'select witnesses' (Lawlor 2006:5) within the exhibits.

8.2 Strategic Essentialism on the Public Stage

Although each of the case-studies presents different aspects of Blackfoot culture in different ways, there are similarities in the messages they convey. In Head-Smashed-In's new exhibit, Glenbow's *Nitsitapiisinni*, and Blackfoot Crossing's gallery, a common message can be heard: we were here before the Europeans, we survived colonisation, our culture is revitalizing and we are still very much alive and culturally distinct from mainstream Canadians. It is a political message to outsiders and an empowering message of pride and strength to community members.

In Mary Lawlor's research, she highlights that: 'in the processes of displaying tribal experiences and identities in terms of distinct, unassimilated cultures, tribal public institutions often resort to modes of thought and expression that would be somewhat disparagingly termed "essentialist" in Western academic discourse' (2006:4). However, Lawlor argues that:

> Essentialism lends cultural stability where instability threatens and demarcates a place for the community at issue to stand, so to speak, in the process of negotiating with more powerful others. The presence of essentialist cultural claims in tourist venues where non-Native audiences meet the tribe can also function, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, to attract consumerist desire to the exotic and to the distinctly 'other.' Such attraction can work to the economic

advantage of the tribe and, together with the expressions of distinct cultural heritage, can also have the effect of furthering social recognition and respect in the broader public sphere beyond the reservation (Lawlor 2006:4).

At the case-studies essentialism was a tool that Elders consciously used to demarcate Blackfoot culture. The aim was not to limit natural cultural change but to protect cultural distinctiveness from forced assimilation or appropriation. It marks their history as their own, and places them as both keepers and owners of the 'true' and 'authentic' knowledge and cultural practices. At Blackfoot Crossing Director Jack Royal emphasises this point in his statement:

> If there is a single message, I think it is that [visitors] are getting true history from our perspective, through our eyes, through our language, through our own terms, our own definitions, our own experience. And not only that, that it is unique because it is living history and you are actually getting not only the true perspective, but also the living perspective of the history by the people that were involved, at the place where it happened, and the events that took place, that are still going (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

The Elders on the Glenbow *Nitsitapiisinni* team discussed ideas of essentialism and constructivism when considering what tradition is. Kainai Elder Frank Weasel Head is recorded as saying:

> What is tradition? Traditions change according to the times. 150 years ago, we had to wear buckskin. Now our traditions are a cowboy hat (his dad was never without one), shirts, jeans, sunglasses, and home-made tweezers to pull hairs off chin to stay awake at the Big Smoke [ceremony]. What is tradition? Being a Blood Indian comes from the heart as to who you are (Glenbow 1998:4).

This quote highlights the validity of cultural adaptation whilst essentialising and internalising Blackfoot identity as something that 'comes from the heart'. At the second Blackfoot Gallery meeting Elder Pat Provost emphasised that '[i]t's not about how we have changed, but how we have survived' (Glenbow 1999a:3).

Cultural distinctiveness is a political and legal necessity for Blackfoot cultural survival in modern Canada, because colonial era laws, such as the Indian Act and Treaties, remain active and control rights based on race and cultural distinctiveness. Blackfoot identity comes under racial legislation. Tom King, referring to the Indian Act prior to the C-3 amendment (see chapter one) noted that although:

> ...the French in Quebec... occupy much the same position in Canada as Native people do there has been no legislative effort to distinguish between French and non-French. No French Act... the French can go on creating more French no matter whom they marry. All they have to do is maintain their language and

culture, and they will never lose status, while Indians can disappear even with their languages and cultures intact (King 2003:149).

The institutionalisation of 'racial status' requires First Nations to use binary definitions of 'us and them' to maintain their rights and to begin to reclaim power. Yet this is a delicate business as Lawlor warns:

> The problem arises with the binary relations on which essentialism rests: a view of the world as constituted by us and them... This method of self-identification centres on positioning oneself in opposition to others is, of course, the seed of much that is most dangerous in the present global scene (2006:13).

Nevertheless, this seems to be the current situation in North America, where rights are defined by race and presenting an essentialised, united front to Indigenous culture is vital to future and current claims. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett highlights:

> Claims to the past lay the foundation for present and future claims. Having a past, a history, a "folklore" of your own, and institutions to bolster these claims, is fundamental to the politics of culture: the possession of a national folklore, particularly as legitimated by a national museum and troupe, is cited as a mark of being civilized (1998:65).

Evidence for her claim can be seen in Sandra Crazybull's description of the Blackfoot exhibit at Glenbow: 'it is a personal story... it isn't a scholarly story, it is our story *and it is in a museum*' (Pers. Comm. Crazybull 2008 my emphasis). Her comment 'and it is in a museum' highlights the power of legitimisation museums can confer. Similarly, Brian Daniels' analysis of tribal attempts to gain Federal recognition through cultural self-representation in the Klamath River region, California, emphasises the political, legal and social value of publically presenting an essentialised cultural identity.

> Culture, as set out by these legal criteria, becomes the practical means for advancing political claims about citizenship and its entitlement rights in the multicultural democracy of the United States (Daniels 2009:294-5).

The heritage institutions he researched appear to be 'engaged in incipient ethnonationalism. By seeking to transform their communities into what they want them to be, these tribes specify the boundaries of their polity, the content of their own cultures, and the grounds of their future sovereignty claims' (Daniels 2009:299).

> What became apparent to the tribes throughout the Klamath River area was the political power of cultural documentation. Culture could define communities; it could provide a legal framework for protecting sacred lands; it could offer a justification for the persevering and organizing politics... The rise of tribal museums, libraries, and archives in the Klamath River is linked to the needs of

the tribal communities to create and to control outward representations of their culture (Daniels 2009:288).

Heritage institutions such as museums were used as places to publically show culture as 'pronounced, fixed and visible' and helped to demonstrate 'continued existence', one of the criteria for federal recognition (Daniels 2009:290, 294). As Daniels explains:

> The homogenous narratives required by nation-states are upended by indigenous heritage institutions that use the same means of collection and documentation as their nationalist predecessors. In this way, the nationalist enterprise is being complicated by the very ways that were originally devised to sustain it (2009:301).

In the Blackfoot community Mrs. Margret Bad Boy, a Siksika Elder, is recognised as having been an 'invaluable resources in Siksika land claim research' as a result of her knowledge of Blackfoot traditions and history gained through her membership in many sacred societies (Blackfoot Gallery Committee 2001:22).

Strategically essentialised representation (Spivak 1990, also see chapter four) in public museum exhibits can not only promote legal causes, such as land claims, but also unite a fractured people. The Elders who worked on the *Nitsitapiisinni* Gallery at Glenbow discussed the importance of unity (recorded in note form):

- Language and beliefs are the same with some differences. If differences in stories exist then we should revise stories with everyone's input. Don't want separation in points of view.
- Government ploys to split the Blackfoot peoples.
- If there are differences then we should just present one story based on Elders
- ...Blood, Siksika, and Peigan have differences in dialect, etc. But we don't argue – we bring it together (Glenbow 1999b:6).

Presenting a united story was, for the Elders, both a strategy and a Blackfoot cultural approach base on the importance of consensus. At Glenbow issues and differences were debated amongst the Elders, often in Blackfoot. This emphasises the importance of inter-cultural engagement zone work discussed in chapter six. By speaking in Blackfoot the Elders excluded non-Blackfoot team members until consensus was reached, and presented a single narrative rather than a multi-vocality of competing community perspectives. A similar strategy was noted by Jennifer Shannon in her analysis of the National Museum of the American Indian, where 'through the process of community curating, Native voice was produced by committee and resulted in a unified, authoritative voice in each exhibit' (2009:233). Interestingly this means that rather than a 'shift from monologue to dialogue' as Bennett (1998:211) describes Clifford's (1997)

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'contact zones', engagement can actually result in the presentation of a different kind of monologue, formed through consensus.

Presenting strategically essentialised self-representation formed through consensus is important to the community because it creates a place from which to speak (Spivak 1990). It establishes Blackfoot as an official culture in the national narrative and creates a secure platform from which other Blackfoot stories can be told. As Hall states '[t]he margins could not speak up without first grounding themselves somewhere' (1997a:185). This is particularly important for Blackfoot communities that were divided by colonisation, missionaries and the residential school system. However Hall highlights that essentialism holds risks:

> Do those on the margins have to be trapped in the place from which they began to speak? Will the identities on the margins become another exclusive set of local identities? My answer to that is probably, but not necessarily so (Hall 1997a:185).

It is possible for essentialism to be conscientiously used as a temporary strategy to achieve specific goals. It is possible that once the Blackfoot gain equal power and rights in Canadian society and their culture and history is protected and respected, sub-narratives of Blackfoot culture may come forth and disrupt the strategically essentialised identity. This has begun to happen in the temporary exhibition spaces in Blackfoot Crossing and Glenbow, such as Glenbow's Community Gallery exhibit *Situation Rez: Kainai Students Take Action with Art* (December 1, 2007 to December 2008). These more daring and diverse presentations open up dialogue on Blackfoot identity, presenting sub-narratives alongside the essentialised permanent displays.

8.3 Decolonising Museum Exhibits through 'Truth Telling'

The ability of exhibits to influence public perception makes them powerful tools for societal change (Mazel and Ritchie 1994:226). In Krmpotich and Anderson's description of Glenbow's *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery they note:

> The testimonies from community team members assert that self-representation and self-determination are more than concepts to be thought about intellectually. *Nitsitapiisinni* activates these concepts by inviting the Blackfoot to record their history, to teach their own youth, to improve relations between Blackfoot and non-Blackfoot, and to *emphasize their right to live as a distinct culture* (2005:399 my emphasis).

Battiste and Henderson argue that 'reclaiming and revitalizing Indigenous heritage and knowledge is a vital part of any process of decolonization, as is reclaiming land, language, and nationhood' (2000:13). However, how to decolonise representation remains a topic of debate.

Waziyatawin Wilson argues that there is a need for public recognition and acknowledgement of the wrongs done to Indigenous peoples through colonisation to enable decolonisation. She states that '[t]he colonizers must also take responsibility for and own the injustices that they have helped directly or indirectly perpetrate' (Wilson 2005:193). She highlights the 2001 *Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada* which released a report entitled, *Hidden from History: The Canadian Holocaust,* 'which documents the crimes perpetrated against the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, such as murder, torture, and forced sterilization' (Wilson 2005:200). Wilson argues that public recognition is acutely needed given the current status of colonial amnesia and denial:

> While policies of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and ethnocide have been perpetrated against us and our lands, and resources have been threatened decade after decade, century after century, not only are we taught that we are to blame, we are taught that we should just get over it (2005:190).

To right past wrongs and end the ongoing victimisation of Indigenous peoples, she argues that '[t]he truths of these experiences need to be publically disclosed, the carriers of this suffering need a validating and supportive forum in which to tell their stories' (Wilson 2005:191).While Wilson proposes that truth commissions could act as such forums, Amy Lonetree recommends that museums should contribute to this process:

> As we look to the future, I believe it is critical that museums support Indigenous communities in our efforts towards 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 wilfully 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 (2009:334).

She terms this a 'truth telling and healing process' (Lonetree 2009:334). However, Miranda Brady notes that decolonising national narratives is not straight forward. Drawing on *The Way of the People: National Museum of the American Indian EMP, Progress Report Executive Summary*, she argues that the desired audience influenced

how difficult histories were addressed at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

> The NMAI's planning documents indicate that, while the museum will be serving Native people indirectly as "constituents," the vast majority of the "audience" for the Mall Museum will be non-Native. Several scholars have expressed concern about the abstract treatment of polemical issues within the NMAI, like genocide and repatriation; and its planning documents indicate that NMAI was well aware of its audience when determining the "tone" of the museum (Brady 2009:136-137).

This raises questions as to who museums are for and how they should deal with different audiences. Each case-study had to navigate these contentious topics with their stakeholders, the community participants, staff, funding bodies and audience. At Glenbow, Head-Smashed-In and Blackfoot Crossing the debate circled about what to display and how much should be shared. I will analyse three key areas of difficult history addressed in the exhibits: 1) colonisation; 2) stereotyping; and 3) the residential school era.

8.3.1 Decolonising colonisation and enduring stereotypes

Colonisation and its aftermath marked a dramatic change in Blackfoot life. The signing of Treaty 7 just 134 years ago is within recent living memory for Blackfoot peoples. Whilst extremely significant, it is a recent event in the long history of the Blackfoot peoples. Each of the case-studies discuss colonisation to varying extents within the exhibits, the exception being Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum where the exhibits have not been significantly redeveloped since the 1950s. Interestingly, despite avoiding discussion of colonialism, Jackson Wesley, who runs the gift shop and ticket sales at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, recalled: 'some white people, especially the older ones, they come out to me and they hug me and they say 'I'm so sorry' and they kind of apologise... I told them it's in the past; look ahead' (Pers. Comm. 2008). In Wesley's account, visitors could see the impact of colonisation simply by comparing the historic exhibits to their knowledge of current First Nations, however the lack of direct discussion or representation of modern First Nations life means that visitors have to work on prior knowledge, and do not hear the community's perspective.

At Head-Smashed-In the discussion of colonisation mainly focuses on the direct affect it had on the buffalo and the Buffalo Jump. The exhibit on the fourth level (see figure 8.1) entitled *Cultures in Contact* focuses upon the colonial greed for buffalo hides and

sports hunting that 'recklessly wasted the buffalo' leaving carcasses to rot on the plains (Head-Smashed-In text panel 2008). Within two years of signing Treaty 7 'the buffalo had been all but eradicated from Canada' (Head-Smashed-In text panel 2008). The social and cultural impact of colonisation on the Blackfoot is briefly suggested by a display on trade goods and a small case displaying a copy of the treaty. There is no mention of residential schools, or the enduring effects of colonial policy on the communities. Aside from the live interpretation by Blackfoot guides, the only account of the devastation is a winter count that recorded each year from 1764 to 1879 with a pictograph, although only a few are interpreted for non-Blackfoot visitors (see figure 8.2).

Figure 8.1 Part of the *Cultures in Contact* display at Head-Smashed-In (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Following the chronological order of the gallery, one may expect to find the final floor exhibiting displays on Blackfoot life after contact, but instead the main exhibit focuses on the archaeological process of excavating the site and 'uncovering' the buffalo jump. This leap to modern day science gives the impression that the Blackfoot people, or at least their culture, died with the buffalo and needs to be dug up to be known. The only striking evidence to the contrary is the presence of Blackfoot guides. The Blackfoot staff found that this absence in the historic record at the interpretive centre resulted in tourists asking questions to try to fill in the gap.

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So our job here as interpreters is to get it across to the visitors what our lives were all about in the past, right up to the present time. Some people still assume we live in tipis, some assume that we have uneducated people that live in communities here. But you have to carry across that you can actually live two worlds, myself, I was raised very traditionally, but I come here to work and I come out of those traditional ways in some way, but my spirituality is always with me (Pers. Comm. Good Striker 2006).

Figure 8.2 Winter Count Robe displayed at Head-Smashed-In (Photo by Onciul 2008).

To alleviate this situation a display was added to the exhibit in 2007 to address current Blackfoot life and answer some of the basic visitor questions. The small exhibit informs visitors that the Blackfoot people still live on the reserves nearby and maintain their culture, but it does not address the sensitive and controversial subjects of the colonial and postcolonial period. When questioned on this the Site Manager, Regional Manager, and Jack Brink all said that the interpretive centre was not the place to discuss politics. Yet, by not discussing these issues they were making a strong political statement; one which could account for some of their turbulent relations with the local Blackfoot community.

Perhaps surprisingly, the Blackfoot Elders who worked with Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing shared Head-Smashed-In managements' belief that the museum is not the

place for politics. Siksika Elder Clifford Crane Bear recalls that many aspects of the colonial period were not addressed in these exhibits.

> We didn't really talk much about the starving years; we didn't talk really much about the politics of that. We talked a little bit about the small pox... the second one killed two thirds of our people... The first one almost killed us off... The third one, around 1869 that's when we almost died off. 1880s when the buffalo disappear and we came in here [Siksika Reserve], 750 of us from 10,000. We are up to 6,000 now, but tell me if there are anymore true-blood Blackfoots? I doubt it...Well our Elders said that we weren't there...to talk about politics. We will explain it just a little... There are other places for that. We don't want to be... always saying to the Euro-Canadian every time they come in, take their noses and rub it in them and saying this is what you did to us. Maybe not you, but your ancestors did this to us. No...there are other places for that. If you want to hear about that then I will talk about that, I will talk about the starving years, I will talk about the people that lived here, how they lived, how they died, the discrimination and the Residential School, how they beat us. All that I can talk about, but like I said there is a place and time for that (Pers. Comm. CraneBear 2008).

Glenbow curator, Beth Carter, explained the decision not to focus on the period of colonization in the *Niitsitapiisinni* Gallery:

> In terms of the sensitive issues that are historical, they wanted to very clearly show those as only a blip in time, in their 10,000 years history. So really in the last 100 years they've had a lot of problems, but they have been around for 10,000 years, so it is really only that tiny bit at the end. They wanted people to understand the beauty and the depth and the greater significance of Blackfoot culture and not just focus on the historical controversies... they did want to celebrate the really good things about Blackfoot culture...You have to remember that the Blackfoot team members came to Glenbow and worked with us specifically to speak to their own youth... [That] was the reason they were willing to work with us (Pers. Comm. Carter 2008).

Blackfoot gallery committee members told me in interviews that there was a desire to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes, and instead present Blackfoot identity as something young Blackfoot people could be proud of, rather than ashamed. In the early discussions about the *Niitsitapiisinni* gallery the meeting notes show that there was discussion about the importance of representing the 'negative era' and how much to share:

> **Frank...**It's hard to leave out the bad times such as residential schools...**Pat:** We don't want to focus too much on the negative era. Look at the past and the present. Look at the positive side – how did we survive through that era? The young people need to look at the positive- the positive energy that brought us through that era (Glenbow 1999a:3).

These quotes from the curators and community members at Glenbow illustrate that they did not want to 'tell these hard truths of colonization – explicitly and specifically' like Lonetree recommends (2009:334). They wanted to create something that would build community pride. Lonetree recognises the difficulty of performing 'truth telling' stating:

> I greatly respect [a community's] 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 (2009:332).

Glenbow presents the difficult colonial history in limited ways, to make it known but not the entire focus of the exhibit. Alison Brown notes that in the *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery:

> Efforts have been made to avoid dwelling on the bleaker experiences of this time period, though by no means are they glossed over; direct quotations from community team members which criticize colonial policies of assimilation and their legacies are sharp reminders of the human costs involved. Instead, the focus in these sections is geared towards the strategies Blackfoot people have developed to maintain and assert their cultural identity in spite of oppression (Brown 2002:72).

Glenbow attempted to represent the emotional and physiological impact of colonisation by making the visitor physically uncomfortable in the exhibit by narrowing the space and forcing the visitor to move from the pre-contact open plains through the tight dark colonial period before re-emerging in a spacious current day Blackfoot cultural revival exhibit. Low lighting, the constriction of space, and the illusion of temperature change with the introduction of synthetic snow is used to change the mood of the gallery (see figure 8.3). The layout is effective, creating an uncomfortable feeling of pressure and claustrophobia. Exhibit designer Irene Kerr and curator Gerry Conaty explain:

> The way it works at Glenbow, where when you get post-treaty, how everything gets smaller and more confined... You know where the residential house is... we wanted to have cold air pumped in there and they wouldn't let us, so to make up for that we put a snow scene in there (Pers. Comm. Kerr 2008).

> I think what works well is the closed in area, with the coming of the Europeans. The way that the gallery space starts closing in. When you point that out, people understand it (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2008).
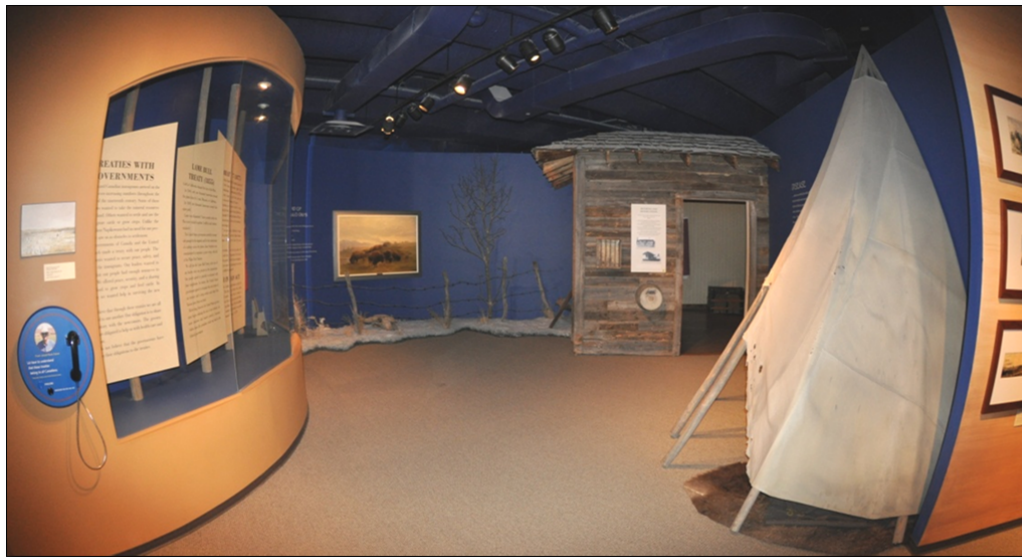
Figure 8.3 *Nitsitapiisinni* **gallery narrows during discussion of the colonial period (Photo by Onciul 2009).**

Of the four case-studies, Blackfoot Crossing tackles the impact of colonization with the most frankness, stating the purposeful destruction of Blackfoot culture and its people on a number of their text panels and addressing the on-going prejudice and misunderstanding about First Nations within Canadian society.

> [Explorers and missionaries] were the beginning of their future problems. They brought with them unfamiliar disease and other sickness the people could not control. During their attempts to kill off the culture, the buffalo once again came to the rescue by standing between the people and the aggressors. The buffalo paid a heavy price by being killed almost to the point of extinction. The massacre of so many buffalo was evidence of the white people's determination to achieve their intentions. Sadness came over the land and its people who were fed by the buffalo when all that was left of them was bleached bones everywhere. Whiskey traders appeared in the land and laced their whiskey with tobacco juice to sell to the people. The Blackfoot way of life, however partially destroyed, rose again as the buffalo and they carried on with what remnants of their past they could pick up again. They were herded onto reservations almost resembling the fate of the Buffalo in their pastures of today (Blackfoot Crossing *Napikwan* text panel 2008).

In the same text panel an 1877 *Sessional Paper* is quoted:

> It would appear that the Blackfoot, who some ten or twelve years ago numbered upwards of ten thousand souls and were then remarkable as a warlike and haughty nation, have within the last decade of years been greatly demoralized and reduced by more than one-half their number – partly in consequence of the poisoned fire-water introduced into the territory by American traders, partly by the terrible scourge of the Redman, small-pox (Blackfoot Crossing *Napikwan* text panel 2008).

In a text panel on *Indian agents* it is stated that '[t]he agents abused the system, for even through rations were supposed to be distributed fairly to those who worked, children often died of starvation from the meagre rations' (Blackfoot Crossing text panel 2008). This open treatment of the decimation of Blackfoot life by colonisation is an example of what Lonetree terms 'truth telling' (2009:334). However, the gallery does not dwell on the negative history, but emphasises survival and continuation of a vibrant living Blackfoot culture. It presents a positive message of current day cultural strength, but in doing so it underplays current difficulties.

All of the permanent case-study exhibits[21] shy away from directly discussing the current problems in Blackfoot society[22] despite the connection between the current conditions and the intergenerational trauma caused by colonisation, residential schooling and segregation on the Reserves.

In the final display in Glenbow's *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery the participating Elders each have a photo and statement about their intentions for the gallery. A common aim was to correct misinformation and share traditional knowledge with the younger generations of Blackfoot to rebuild pride. The desire to create positive self-representations is a common and natural tendency. Elizabeth Carnegie's research on community representation in Scotland has parallels with the Blackfoot representation as the community there too performed, what she terms, 'stigma management' (2006:73). Although strategic censoring of history does not perform the direct 'truth telling' Lonetree encourages, it does enable the presentation of a positive image that can build community pride, which is a crucial first step in decolonising Blackfoot identity from within and outside the community.

Pride building required challenging stereotypes about the Blackfoot that still circulate in the Canadian public imagination. Contemporary Native Writer, Professor Thomas King captures a snapshot of the stereotyping and racism First Nations people experience in Canada, when he asks his readers:

> What is it about us you don't like? Maybe the answer to the question is simply that you don't think we deserve the things we have. You don't think we've worked for them. You don't think we've earned them. You think that all we did was to sign our names to some prehistoric treaty, and ever since, we've been

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[21] Glenbow addressed some of these issues in their temporary community gallery with their 2008 exhibit *Situation Rez* which addressed the high levels of HIV on the reserves.
[22] Such as drug and alcohol addictions, domestic abuse, high rates of suicide, corruption, low life-expectancy, poor housing, and high levels of diabetes on the Blackfoot Reserves.

living in a semi-uncomfortable welfare state of trust land and periodic benefits. Maybe you believe we're lazy/drunk/belligerent/stupid. Unable to look after our own affairs. Maybe you think all we want to do is conjure up the past and crawl into it. People used to think these things, you know, and they used to say then out loud. Now they don't. Now they just think them (2003:147).

Elder Tony Starlight noted that many First Nations people are judged on the homeless people seen in urban centres:

It is a big world out there and most of them only have stereotypes of what a First Nations people should look like. And then when they go to the big city, Calgary, Edmonton, the only Indians they see are the ones downtown who are drinking, you know, who are poor and that is a poor representation of what most of us pride ourselves to be (Pers. Comm. Starlight 2008).

Pete Standing Alone also expressed concerns about how people view the Blackfoot: 'We need to change stereotypes – many people still think [we] live in tipis and run around naked, or in buckskins. US thinks Canada is all Inuit and Indians' (Glenbow 1998:4). Creating an accurate and positive image was a goal at Glenbow, as curator Beth Carter explained: 'there has been so much racism and... negative stereotypes that bombard these young people and they need to have things they can be very proud of... and things that they can hope for the future. And have a message that gives them hope for where their life can go' (Pers. Comm. 2008). Former Glenbow interpreter, Clifford CraneBear emphasised this point: 'the first thing we were doing, and we accomplished, was that people walked out of there with heads up in the air, especially the Blackfoot people, and they were very, very, very proud' (Pers. Comm. Crane Bear 2008).

The desire to build pride was also a goal at Blackfoot Crossing, as Director Jack Royal describes: '[here] you are going to get the perspective of where we've been, where we are and where we want to go. And hopefully eliminate a lot of the stereotypes that are out there' (Pers. Comm. 2008a). Blackfoot Crossing's VP of Marketing & Public Relations, Shane Breaker, explained 'our audience is the immediate public in the area and there have been years and years of prejudice within those communities against the Native population in the area' (Pers. Comm. 2008).

A lot of the views Albertans have of native people have been instilled over generations since the '40s... to the '60s. So, there's a lot of misinformation of how Native people live, how they are, so this facility, hopefully can help that and explain the history and actually talk to a Blackfoot person...because a lot of them just don't bother. That's our goal. Be able to walk away and say they're more educated about the Blackfoot people, more educated about First Nation's people in general and just have a great experience here (Pers. Comm. Breaker 2008).

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Blackfoot Crossing directly addresses the problem of stereotyping within mainstream Albertan culture in the exhibit *Eurocentric Misconceptions* (see figure 8.4). The display combines a text panel that quotes archival newspaper articles about 'savages' with a video exploring current misconceptions within the general populous of Calgary.

Figure 8.4 *Eurocentric Misconceptions* exhibit at Blackfoot Crossing (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Blackfoot Crossing's willingness to speak out and challenge visitors makes it more avant-garde than its fellow museums. Director Jack Royal argues that the freedom to speak openly on these subjects comes as a result of being self-funded, developed and run by the community, and therefore not required to toe any official government line (Pers. Comm. 2008). It is for this reason that Blackfoot Crossing is seeking to avoid reliance on government financial support as they feel that this could compromise their ability to, as they say, speak the truth about their history (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008).

8.3.2 Childhood memories of Residential School

One of the most sensitive topics for representation was the Residential School Era (1842-1996). After the devastating period of colonisation Blackfoot people continued to suffer under Canadian rule. The stolen generations of the Residential Schools Era are a particularly painful part of Canadian and Blackfoot history. On 11th June 2008 the Canadian government made a formal apology to the residential school survivors. Many of whom suffered emotional, physical and sexual abuse as children at the hands of

church and government employees. Blackfoot Crossing Director, Jack Royal, explained that residential schools were part of a hidden history:

> The whole reservation system, the whole residential school experience, those things aren't communicated because it was like a black eye on Canadian history. So because of that there was ignorance because it wasn't mentioned...You still see the effects of that. Some people have these outrageous stereotypes of First Nations people (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

At Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing the exhibits aimed to correct and inform people about the period. Glenbow's on-line *Niitsitapiisinni* gallery teacher toolkit explains the damage the schools did to Blackfoot society:

> Sexual and physical abuse by staff and students was widespread. The children were helpless. They learned institutional behaviour – how to bully the young and weak. They learned to treat each other with contempt and violence. Residential schools created many dysfunctional people with low self-esteem, and these people in turn created a dysfunctional society. This process has been going on for five or six generations. It will take a long time to heal (Glenbow 2011d).

In an interview with Piikani Chief Reg Crowshoe he stated that museums were a place to discuss this difficult history, saying that:

> ...whatever was done wrong has to be mitigated... I think museums can help with regards to mitigation and negotiation by, with supporting material and information...I think the deal with those kinds of monsters that present themselves as sensitive... I think they can shed more light... on it, than staying back and making it more mysterious (Pers. Comm. 2008).

However, discussing these topics was a challenging and emotional process for the community Elders engaged in the development of the exhibits as many of them had attended residential schools in their childhood. As Kainai Elder Rosie Day Rider recalled:

> It was so stressful when I went to residential school... I can't speak my language and I get hurt. Especially break my love, and it's very heart break. I do any miracle to get home to be with my parents... it's an entirely different feeling, just like in jail... but my dad's going to go to jail if I don't go. It was terrible rules... the government give the permission to those teachers and principles', the advice to hit us and pull our hair, ears, and banging my face on the table. [She bangs her fist on the table] see that's how. Sometimes we just get a bleeding nose by doing that. And then you get punished: scrubbing; time standing; and all kinds (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Kainai Elder Frank Weasel Head recounts the discussions about representing the schools in the Glenbow exhibit:

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...the residential school took us maybe five, six, seven meetings. It took us a long time because it was a hard subject. One person didn't even want to discuss it. Although she didn't go, but her parents and other relatives went through it. And it took a while for her husband to calm her down, you know, and say no, we have to tell the story, we have to let people know what happened to us... if everything there in those several meetings was said, put on display on the residential school they would have covered the third floor. That would have been the only exhibit (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Figure 8.5 *Niitsitapiisinni* Residential school exhibit (Photo by Onciul 2009).

Figure 8.6 *Niitsitapiisinni* display of the reclaimed residential school (Photo by Onciul 2009).

The exhibit is a small part of the gallery (see figure 8.5) and only the text panel suggests the trauma the schools caused their students (see figure 8.7). The negative history is balanced by showing a second school display opposite, where the community has turned the Old Sun Siksika Residential School building into a community college for their youth (see figure 8.6).

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Schools were supposed to give our people the skills to live among the newcomers.

Instead, schools destroyed our family structure, our sense of belonging and our identity.

Schools tried to make us ashamed of our traditional teachings and practices.

Schools told us that our grandparents were heathens.

Schools almost destroyed us.

In both Canada and the United States, the governments contracted religious organizations to educate our people. The government and church groups believed that in order to educate us they needed to destroy our community support, discredit our traditional beliefs and eliminate our language.

To accomplish this, they confined our children to residential schools for ten or eleven months each year. Some children were sent half-way across the country for up to ten years.

Boys and girls were physically separated. They did not learn how to respect one another. Without parents and grandparents there was no opportunity to learn parenting skills, love, and respect. The lessons of Makoiyi (the wolves) were forgotten.

Physical and sexual abuse by staff and students was common. We learned how to bully the younger and weaker ones. We learned to treat each other with contempt and violence. Institutional behaviour replaced our traditional values.

This process has now been going on for five or six generations.

Even though the last residential school closed in the 1960s, the results of this process are still affecting us, many generations later.

The healing will take a long time.

Figure 8.7 Text panel in *Niitsitapiisinni* (Photo by Onciul 2009).

At Blackfoot Crossing the residential school experience is represented in the *Survival Tipi* exhibit (see figure 8.8). The design team created a three-dimensional collage of buildings to represent the hard times of the residential school system, life on the reserves, the influence of Christianity, and labouring on the farms and down the mines. The exhibit uses audiovisual footage of current Elders who lived through the period telling their stories about their experience as children. The films emphasise that the trauma, which has been described as cultural genocide (Churchill 2004), is within living memory on the reserve. At the time of the exhibit development the team had difficulties gaining access to archive material as it was considered evidence in the lead up to the

court decision to give reconciliation to survivors and make the official national apology in 2008.

In the national apology by the government, M.P. Duceppe made special mention of Siksika's Old Sun Residential School for the high death toll of students:

> Nearly 150,000 people have waited their whole lives for this day of truth and reconciliation; 90,000 of them are still with us. These 90,000 are true survivors. Over 100 years ago, the Bryce report revealed that the mortality rate in residential schools was close to 25%. In the Old Sun's residential school in Alberta, the death rate was as high as 47%. That is why I consider these former students to be survivors (Duceppe 2008).

Figure 8.8 Survival Tipi at Blackfoot Crossing (Photo by Onciul 2009).

Siksika's Old Sun Residential School repeatedly appeared in government reports stating the unsanitary and poor conditions of the school and ill health of the children (Milloy 1999). Bryce condemned the school in 1907 and Cobett's survey of the schools in 1920 and 1922 'found that little had changed' (Milloy 1999:98).

> Such conditions had left their indelible and mortal mark on the children who Corbett found to be "below par in health and appearance." Seventy percent of them were infected. They had "enlarged lymphatic glands, many with scrofulous sores requiring prompt medical attention."[...] But it was the discovery that sixty percent of the children had "scabies or itch... in an aggravated form" that most

upset Corbett, for this was unnecessary and a sign of gross neglect (Milloy 1999:99).

Even by 1957 the situation was dire, as the visiting medical doctor was recorded as saying "The children are dirty. The building is dirty, dingy and is actually going backwards rather than forwards" quoted in Milloy (1999:263).

When the videos were made for the exhibit it raised difficult memories for Elders and there was debate about how much they should share. Exhibit designer, Irene Kerr, was concerned that although Elders consented to share their experiences for the audiovisuals that they may not have fully understood how the material would be used (Pers. Comm. Kerr 2008). Consequently she decided to edit the material:

> I mean there was a lot of stuff I wouldn't let [the film company] use. Especially that one...on the residential school; we had some footage there that I just said we just can't [use], we have to draw the line somewhere. But same thing, they saw the videos, they approved them all (Pers. Comm. Kerr 2008).

This highlights the dilemma between 'truth telling' (Lonetree 2009) and 'opening old sores' as Colleen Sitting Eagle explained to me:

> **CSE:** We decided to leave the negatives out, just like with the residential school...We weren't gonna show, like it goes back to that pretty picture, we want to show that: the real life, but not the real-real life. So that's what we wanted to portray...
>
> **BO:** And why is that?
>
> **CSE:** Well from what one of the Elders said was why open an old sore? That people can read about it elsewhere and if they want verification they can find it, they can personally talk to somebody, but we're not going to open an old, because it's also hurting to them, hurting to their families, and they don't want to show that... keep a balance in what you want to tell, but more on the positive side, because people have always, are, labelling our stereotype. They have already finished stereotyping us, they've already finished labelling us, so why give them some more? So why confirm their allegations of what we are? Like we've had a few tourists that have had some racist comments and even the little kids. But when they come back from that gallery downstairs, you know, they're different. The little kid that thought that we're Hollywood Indians didn't see that anymore. They came up out of there and they'd got the real story. They went in there with a fairytale image of us, but came out with reality... So they have a different concept to what they labelled us as (Pers. Comm. 2008a).

The concern about sharing but not hurting the community is echoed by interpreter Laura Sitting Eagle:

> That area is still touchy for the elderly. They say, well why did you put that in there? Again I have to explain that it comes from the Elders, ay. It's part of our history. They want our kids to know. And they would ask, well okay. The Elders are on that video, they don't really go into exactly their experience, you know, whether they went through abuse or all that experience. How come they don't? Well I tell them we're pretty private people, they're private. It's just to let them know they did go through that (Pers. Comm 2008c).

 Assistant curator Michelle CrowChief explained the decision:

> We tried not to make it a biased point... We did it so that... we'll touch base on it but not sit there and 'well this is what they did to us, this is bad'. We just kind of touched it and just kind of steered away from it. If they wanted to learn more, you know that is where the archives are; and they can do their own research in there on that topic (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Describing the Glenbow exhibit, Elder Jerry Potts, makes a similar comment: 'I think the idea was that if you can show enough, then if somebody's interested there is enough there to kind of make them want to look deeper' (Pers. Comm. Potts 2008).

The Elders who worked with Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing decided to share, but only so much. For these Elders, the exhibits were not the right forums for the explicit and specific discussion of the 'hard truths of colonization' as recommended by Lonetree (2009:334). However, as Colleen Sitting Eagle notes, what they do share appears to have the potential to transform visitors' views of Blackfoot people.[23] What has been shared and the efforts made to present a positive image of the community to engender cultural pride is, I would argue, also crucial to countering the enduring legacies of the residential schools which taught Blackfoot to be ashamed of their culture and identity.

8.4 'Displayed Withholding'

The Elders' decision to share only so much about sensitive aspects of their culture was repeated in their decisions about what aspects of sacred culture to share. However, the decision was made for very different reasons.

In Blackfoot culture sacred and spiritual life is restricted and not culturally appropriate for show. The more sacred an item, event, song, dance, ceremony, or story, the more it is restricted. Sacred information is passed on gradually through participation in seven Blackfoot sacred societies. Once a person is transferred sacred information they too are bound by the same secrecy and required to continue the process of traditional teaching.

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[23] Visitor analysis at the case studies would be a useful avenue to explore this point further, although it was not within the remit of this study.

Elders describe this process as their equivalent to Western universities, with Elders earning a level of knowledge and skill exceeding that of a Western PhD.

Similarities can be seen in the way Moira Simpson describes Australian Aboriginal cultures: 'traditional knowledge is strictly controlled and access restricted. The more sacred and significant an object, image, or story, the more it is shrouded in secrecy' (2006:155). Simpson identifies this as the crux of the cross-cultural dilemma of representing such cultures in museums because:

> ...in contrast, academic enquiry, public display, and the dissemination of knowledge are integral elements of conventional Western museum functions. In a Western museum, the more important an object, the more prominently it is displayed; it may be designated and promoted as a star item or masterpiece, a 'must-see' for museum visitors (2006:155).

Whether and how to represent restricted sacred information was a common focus of long and complex discussion during the development of the case-study exhibits and continues to be a hot topic for staff and visitors (as discussed in chapter six and seven). The challenge was to find a way to share enough information to enable visitors to understand Blackfoot spiritual life, without crossing the boundaries of protocol. To accomplish this was a complex task, as there is no separation between the secular and the sacred in Blackfoot culture, all traditional Blackfoot life is built upon Blackfoot theology, although some elements are more sacred than others. As a result, the Elders had to decide where to draw the line, what to share and what to keep hidden.

> There are some things that are public things and there are some things that are very private, just like ceremonies, you don't see that stuff unless you are invited or you can't handle or touch unless you have transferred rights. So that is what we kind of got in order to protect that, we didn't want to get into any of that. So Glenbow had a lot of public kind of stuff to put in there (Pers. Comm. Potts 2008).

In the Blackfoot Exhibit Team Meeting minutes the Elders expressed the need to only share the public information:

> Stay away from religion, spirituality, ceremonies. We can mention these but not elaborate. Talk about it as part of everyday life... part of culture – not a religion... It's alright to mention societies, and the social aspects of Okan, especially the fourth day which is public (Glenbow 1999b:6).

Interviews with the Elders who developed the exhibit reinforced this idea and illustrate the complexity and turmoil over what should and should not be shown:

> ...it was really frustrating because both sides didn't know, and still some of our people were reluctant to share information, I kept saying listen it is not for us, it is for our children, it is for our future that we share this information. If we are a people we have got to have a culture, got to have a history. We don't know our history, we don't know our culture, who are we as a people? (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

> ...it was about telling the truth and there was a fine line between telling what is ceremony and what is a way of life (Pers. Comm. Heavy Head 2008).

At the outset of the first Blackfoot Exhibit Team Meeting at Glenbow, curator Gerry Conaty said: '[t]he First Nations members of our team should not feel pressured to talk about things that are private and not for general knowledge' (Glenbow 1998:1).

Blackfoot Crossing Director Jack Royal, notes that the experience of colonialism has further limited what the community is willing to share:

> It is not a written rule, we didn't all get in one room and agree lets only tell so much (laughs). It is just kind of an underlying understanding, you know. And I grew up like that. It was because of this whole European experience. The whole relationship that evolved through history, that the trust, I guess, is not there (Pers. Comm. 2008a).

As Good Striker explained: '[w]e try to hang on to the spiritual part of our culture because it is the one last thing that hasn't been taken away from us is our spirituality' (Pers. Comm. 2006). What is not spoken about is not openly discussed, so for community outsiders such as Western museum curators it can be hard for them to know what they do not know. Within the engagement zone this information was sometimes disclosed, and at Glenbow a key strategy was to invite Glenbow staff to attend Blackfoot ceremonies to witness some of the restricted elements of their culture firsthand. This involved trusting and sharing information that enabled participants to cross boundaries and gain temporary insider access. However, even in these 'invited spaces' (Fraser 1987) access was limited by the cultural capital required to comprehend the information that is presented through the ceremonies. These private elements of Blackfoot culture were not included in the public displays. Instead the exhibits present 'displayed withholding' (Lawlor 2006).

'Displayed withholding' is 'the point where the performance or display says, "There is more, but we choose not to show you"...the gesture points towards a dimension of being and knowing that cannot or will not be shared with visitors' (Lawlor 2006:62). For Glenbow curator Beth Carter, limited sharing was a positive first step in Blackfoot self-representation:

Because they recognise they can't share the intense spiritual teachings that you would if you actually came and started to sit with the Elders, you would get much more in-depth. But they saw it as a first step to an authentic story about their past. The important stories, the relationship to the world around them, the philosophies, the guiding principles of who the Blackfoot people are (Pers. Comm. Carter 2008).

At Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing 'displayed withholding' can be seen through the Blackfoot iconography and language in the exhibits which speaks exclusively to cultural insiders with the cultural capital to unlock these meanings. Culturally encoded messages are held before the visitor, but out of reach, shown but not explained.

This presence of the visibly invisible and the audibly inaudible, ...has a great deal to do with the effective evocation of a specific tribal difference, of a discourse that is not shared which provides gravity to the lived idea of identity in difference (Lawlor 2006:5).

It also reminds non-Blackfoot visitors of their 'place' within the exhibit. The community, despite being in an unequal power relationship with dominant society, publicly asserts their power to define themselves and their 'Others', using the displays to mark the boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them'.

At Blackfoot Crossing the iconography was built into the building (see figures 8.9, 8.10 and 8.11), as architect Ron Goodfellow explained: 'the building... became a metaphor of Blackfoot culture, it was a teaching tool' (Pers. Comm. 2008). This enables the centre to share information with their community audience without tourists and outsiders gaining access to it. Nevertheless, Blackfoot Crossing consultant Linda Many Guns notes that debates still occurred over the representation of sacred symbols at the centre:

I mean it was, great debates about whether or not they could put the Motokik symbols up there. So what was there and what wasn't, part of that was a very keen discussion about what you display in that way and what you don't (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Goodfellow explains that these concerns were quelled when the community saw that the building kept the sacred meanings off stage, displaying the symbols but not openly interpreting them, a form of 'displayed withholding' (Lawlor 2006).

Even when we started to build it... there were people who were upset that we were actually showing [sacred symbols]. But they...realised after they saw it that it was actually a very respectful design. And the average tourist would not likely understand hardly any of the more sacred elements of the design. They might not even [understand] the symbolism of the roof: which represents a tipi cover laid out on the ground for painting the vision that came to its owner while

fasting... The centre piece of the roof structure represents the Sundance lodge, and it is surrounded by seven tipi skylights which represent the seven societies... So the design process integrated a whole lot of very subtle elements of their culture into the building form. There is almost nothing you could point out that doesn't have a cultural or environmental contextual reason for why it was done (Pers. Comm. Goodfellow 2008).
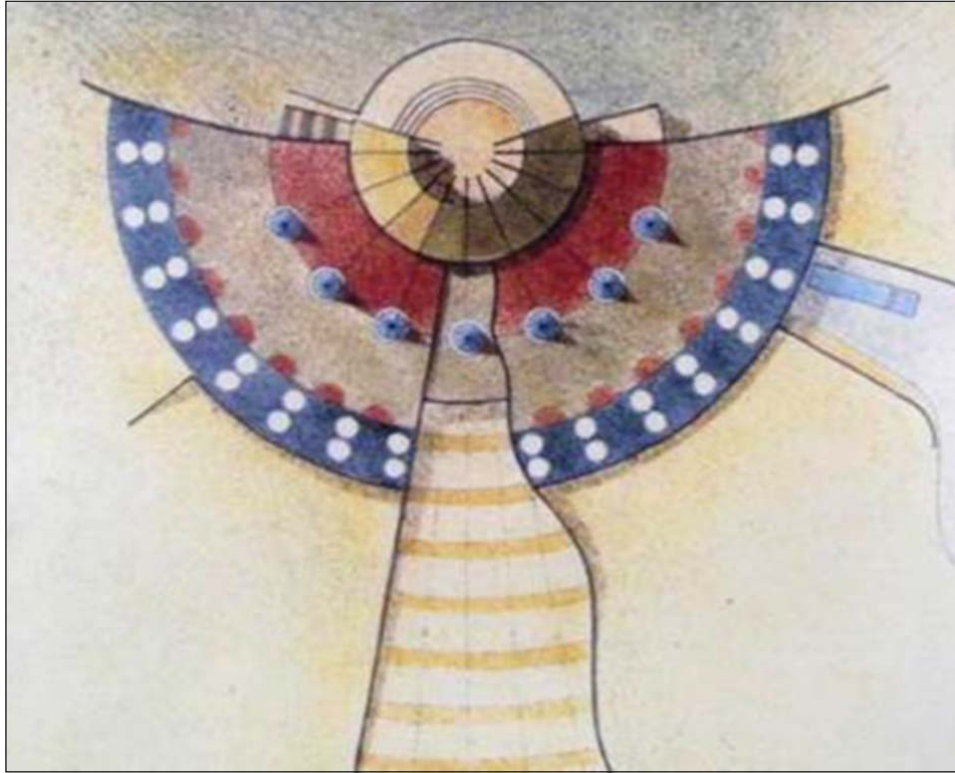

Figure 8.9 Drawing of Blackfoot Crossing from above shows the tipi cover design (Blackfoot Crossing display 2007).

Figure 8.10 Blackfoot Crossing building features a buffalo run entrance, the 7 tipis of the 7 sacred societies and the Sundance lodge in the cenre (Photo by Onciul 2009).

Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing exhibits were created for Blackfoot communities to use and so within these galleries selective sharing occurs through the use of strategies to speak to 'select witnesses' (Lawlor 2006:5). For example the use of Blackfoot language and iconography speak to community members who can interpret them. Thus, while the exhibits outwardly perform autoethography, they also speak on different terms to cultural insiders via culturally encoded means. Layers of meaning simultaneously allow insiders to access deeper knowledge, while presenting a simplified introduction to Blackfoot culture for outsiders. As Goodfellow explained:

> If you know what you are looking for there is a lot of [meaning embedded in Blackfoot Crossing]... For instance, these doors represent feathers. Anywhere you stand in that building a knowledgeable person can sit and describe what this or that means, right down to the wood panelling on the walls; which was done in different sized layers to represent the sedimentary stratum seen along the river banks (Pers. Comm. Goodfellow 2008).

Through this process the exhibits carefully control what Blackfoot knowledge is shared with whom. For those who have Blackfoot cultural capital, listening to what is not said in the gallery communicates strong messages about respect for the restricted nature of sacred Blackfoot culture.

'Displayed withholding' sends a message to visitors that Blackfoot culture is deep and complex, it continues today and is exclusive to community insiders. It draws a line between insider and outsider and what is and is not to be shared. Lawlor draws on Doris Sommer's description of being on the receiving end of 'displayed withholding':

> Sommer writes, 'We are not so much outsiders as marginals, not excluded but kept at arm's length.' 'Kept at arm's length' is a useful image of the distancing effect that displayed withholding creates. The phrase suggests that secrecy is maintained not by mounting a barricade but simply by performing a gesture, by keeping at bay that which is unavoidably near (Lawlor 2006:62).

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Despite being engaged with the museum and willing to enter into public dialogues with mainstream narratives, 'displayed withholding'(Lawlor 2006:5) fences off what is not 'for sale' and differentiates between 'on stage and off stage' (Shryock 2004) culture and controls the insider/outsider border.

Figure 8.12 Exhibit on Okan at Glenbow Museum (Photo by Onciul 2008).

In practice 'displayed withholding' at Glenbow meant that the *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery introduces Blackfoot spirituality and traditional Napi creation stories, but the more sensitive aspects of sacred culture are presented in limited ways or excluded. For example the Elders wished to include the most sacred event in the Blackfoot calendar, Okan (Sundance), but in a way that honoured its private and 'off stage' nature. This presented a challenge as Okan cannot be photographed, sketched or recorded in anyway. Elders sanctioned the use of archive photographs of Okan taken at a great distance from the ceremony. Interpretation was provided through an audio-visual display in which the Elders spoke about how Okan was almost lost when it was banned by the Canadian government, and then revived by the community and how, once again, it plays an important role in Blackfoot life (see Tovias 2010:287-288 for details on Blackfoot response to the prohibition of Okan). To emphasise the restricted nature of this

information the gallery routing is physically restricted, forcing the visitor to enter through a small triangular doorway into an enclosed circular space that represents Okan (figure 8.12).

At Blackfoot Crossing information on the sacred aspects of Blackfoot life is also presented in a small enclosed circular space with two narrow entrances/exits (see figure 8.13). They also used archive photos and audiovisual discussions of the importance of Okan. These similarities can be partly accounted for by the fact both exhibits were created by Terry Gunvordahl and Irene Kerr, *Exhibitio* Design Company. But unlike Glenbow, Blackfoot Crossing also included objects relating to the ceremonies. The curators are both Elders and have the rights to handle sacred material, and they worked with Elders to decide want was appropriate for display and what should be kept in storage away from the public gaze (see chapters six and seven).

> As we developed [Blackfoot Crossing] further and further...there was a lot of internal debate about whether they should, or should not be telling the Whiteman or non-Siksika people about their culture. This was, had always been internalised; "this is ours; not theirs". But they finally decided this was the only way, because the ancient societies were disappearing, and because their young kids were doing what all young kids do, listening to MTV, and experimenting with sex, drugs and alcohol. And so there was great concern amongst the Elders that, that theirs might be the last generation that had any of the Blackfoot traditional knowledge (Pers. Comm. Goodfellow 2008).

As the same time Blackfoot Crossing was careful not to cross the line of protocol, as Michelle CrowChief explained:

> ...even the Societies. You don't really talk about them, but you mention them... they are a big part of our culture, but we are not going to sit there and talk about that all the time. It is there, but it's not really what this whole centre is about (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Blackfoot Crossing carefully balances acknowledging ceremony with protecting restricted information. They are the only museum out of the four case-studies that does not allow photography within the exhibit. I was granted special permission to take photos of every display except for the one that addressed Okan. This restriction helps to prevent uncontrolled dissemination and misuse or misappropriation of sacred Blackfoot culture.
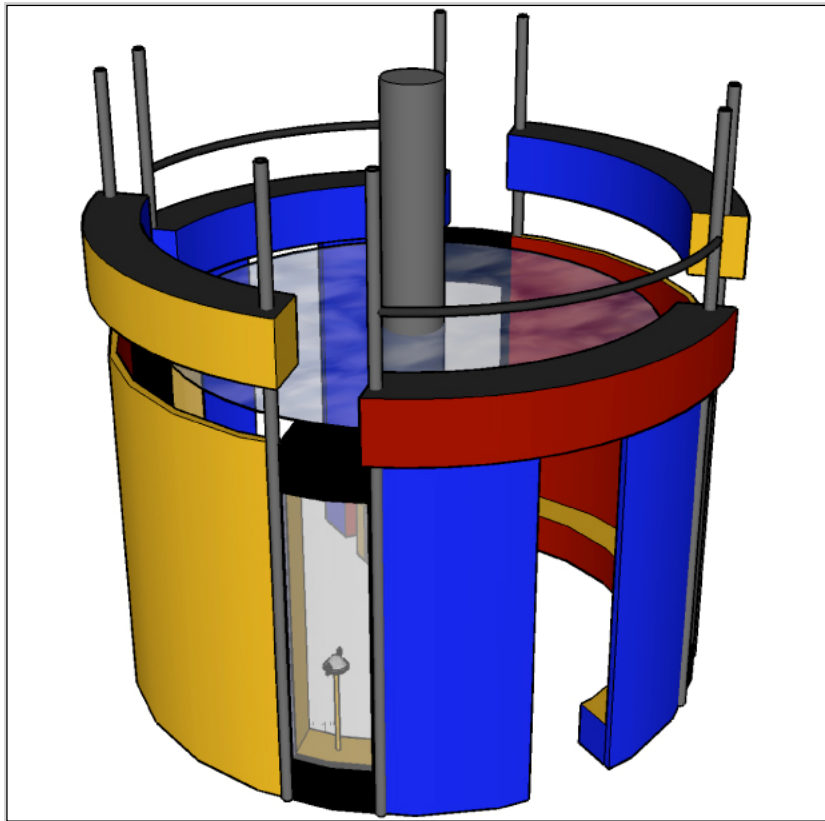
8.5 Framing Community Voice

While techniques like 'displayed withholding' can enable strategic sharing within the exhibit, the message presented is still framed within the larger context of the museum that houses it and the specifics of the museum as a cultural form. The medium of the museum influences how communities present their perspectives and the extent to which exhibits function as agents of decolonisation.

Elizabeth Bird's (2003) research on Native American developed television shows found that they created a show that 'fit the confines of the television drama and its commercial form' despite their critique of the genre (quoted in Brady 2009:146). Miranda Brady (2009) draws on this example and argues that similar occurred in the community developed exhibits at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI).

> One explanation for the persistence of the dioramas in the NMAI and other
> residual practices is that while community curators were given the opportunity
> to self-present, their understanding of such self-presentation comes from the
> traditional museum form with which they are accustomed. In such museums, the
> diorama is standard... Similarly, despite the collaboration and inclusion
> employed by the NMAI, we must ask what really changes when American

Indian people themselves are working within the confines of the cultural form (Brady 2009:145-6).

Blackfoot messages of survival and endurance at the case-studies were made tangible through the creation of exhibits. But these exhibits had to fit physically within the museum that housed them, and theoretically within the museum's overall message and professional standards (see chapter seven for discussion on practice and ethos). Consequently Blackfoot voice was framed by the museum, and its building, architecture and galleries.

Visitors' first impressions are formed on entry to the case-studies and influenced by the architectures of the building. Head-Smashed-In and Glenbow are concealed within structures, Head-Smashed-In within a cliff face, Glenbow within a high-rise convention centre. As such their content is hidden until entering. In comparison, Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum is housed in a building that resembles a trading fort. The historic design of the building conveys a message that the exhibits inside are about the past, and limits the museum's ability to locate living First Nations peoples in the present. In stark contrast Blackfoot Crossing's building is an artistic show piece on a monumental scale, infused with Blackfoot iconography, and vibrant with Siksika life. It firmly places the Siksika in the here and now. Director Jack Royal explains:

> ...some people ask me 'why should I go to Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park when I can go to downtown Glenbow museum and look at the Blackfoot exhibit?' and what I tell them is: 'well the difference is you are going to get the real experience here'. We are not in some little downtown building, surrounded by high rises where you have got filtered information that is run by the government with non-Native employees telling you about me. You know when you come here it is living history. It is where everything happened. It is by the people. By and where the people still continue to live. And you are going to get the true story. And that is the biggest difference... (Pers. Comm. 2008a).

Once inside, the visitor's understanding of the exhibit is influenced by the way in which the intangible culture has been made tangible and how the information is presented. Everything from objects, cases, displays, text panels, labels, photos, audiovisuals, colours, lighting, sounds, temperature, vistas, furnishings, to the gallery routing combine to create a tapestry through which the narrative can be read. Mazel and Ritchie argue that '[m]useums give physical expression to particular ideas. Whether audio-visual, artefactual or textual, all presentations are ideologically loaded' (Mazel and Ritchie 1994:226). They go on to explain that:

...there are a host of other subliminal messages communicated by museums that have a critical effect on the way that interpretations presented in museums are understood by the public. These are, for example:

1. The authority with which museum knowledge is presented;
2. The manner in which objects are ordered and constructed into displays; and
3. Display techniques, particularly the boundaries reinforced by glass cases (1994:235).

Exhibits are complex texts that are layered with meaning and can tell multiple, potentially contrary, stories. One of the key framing devices is the use of voice – who is speaking to the visitor. Knowing the author is very important to the message because, as Alcoff explained, the location of the speaker has an 'epistemically significant impact on that speaker's claims' (1991:6-7). The Blackfoot make explicit reference to this fact in their tradition of stating who they are, their family and their Elders, before making comment, so that listeners can review their right to speak, their sources of knowledge, and their potential for bias.
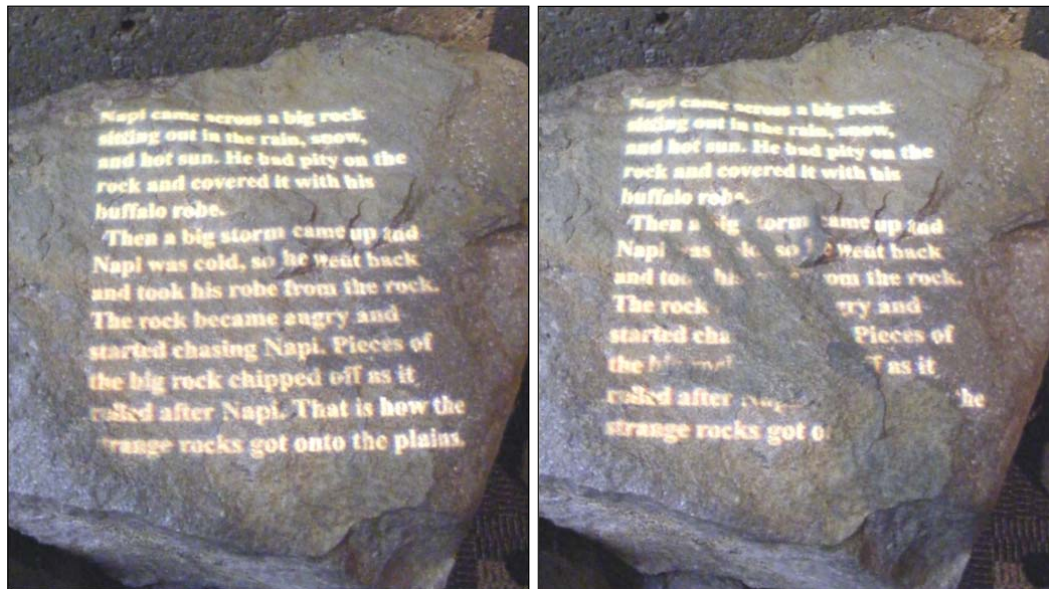
Figure 8.14 Blackfoot Napi stories projected onto rock displays at Head-Smashed-In (Photo by Onciul 2007).

At Head-Smashed-In the exhibits are narrated by a main authorised Western scientific voice, reflecting the status of the real-life author of the text panels, the Royal Alberta Museum curator and archaeologist Jack Brink. In the exhibit, Blackfoot voices appear in a temporary and ephemeral way as words made of light projected on to rocks around the exhibit. They fade and strengthen depending on the sunlight filtering into the exhibit and if you inspect them too closely they disappear as the visitor blocks the beam from the light projector (figure 8.14). Projected on to uneven rock surfaces the words blur

and bleed making reading difficult (Figure 8.15). Overall this implies to visitors that Western archaeologists have the facts which are presented in an authoritative and permanent way, whereas the Blackfoot have stories which are ethereal and temporal.

However, the narrative is complicated by the presence of Blackfoot guides who give tours from a Blackfoot perspective and at times counter and challenge the information presented in the main text panels. For example, guides will present alternative Blackfoot cultural explanations for scientific accounts, such as the movement of the glacial erratics, and highlight inaccuracies in Western depictions of the buffalo hunt.

Figure 8.15 Head-Smashed-In *Napi's People* exhibit (Photo by Onciul 2008).

At Glenbow, despite the primary audience being non-Blackfoot (Glenbow 1999c:1), the exhibit team made a conscious decision to use first person narrative and Blackfoot terms to emphasis to visitors that the exhibit comes from a Blackfoot perspective. The opening text panel of the exhibit states '[i]n order to understand who we are, it is first necessary to understand how we see the world around us' (*Nitsitapiisinni* gallery, *Our World* text panel 2008). This clearly grounds the exhibit in the Blackfoot narrative and gives Blackfoot voice museum authority. Community voice can literally be heard in the exhibit through the audio-visual presentations. Visitors have the opportunity to listen to

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Elders' pre-recorded stories in Blackfoot or English via phones placed around the gallery and Blackfoot guides provide tours of the exhibit in both languages.

Despite the prominence and emphasis of the exhibit being a Blackfoot story, Krmpotich and Anderson's research indicates audiences did not always receive this message. Krmpotich and Anderson conducted 62 face-to-face, semi-structured interviews over a four-day period with visitors to the Blackfoot Gallery (Krmpotich and Anderson 2005).

> An exploratory evaluation of visitors' responses was undertaken to investigate how effectively *Nitsitapiisinni* is communicating the four primary messages that embodied the essence of collaboration and aboriginal authorship and to determine the scope of messages visitors interpreted in the gallery. Exploratory approaches seek to determine the multiple impacts an exhibition may have, whether or not those impacts correspond with the goals expressed by the curator, exhibition team, or museum (2005:386-7).

They found that:

> Visitors rarely recognized the extent of the collaboration, and thus rarely equated *Nitsitapiisinni* with concepts of self-representation or self-determination. However, other messages were successfully communicated to museum visitors, namely the impact of colonialism, the efforts to revitalize Blackfoot culture, and the importance of Blackfoot spirituality (Krmpotich and Anderson 2005:377).

As Bird (2003) and Brady (2009) highlight, people tend to recreate what they know. It appears that visitors may read exhibits based on past experiences or assumptions about museums, i.e. museum exhibits are curator led, despite abundant evidence to the contrary.

Blackfoot Crossing also presents a Blackfoot narrative, from a Siksika perspective. Their opening text panel greets the visitor in Siksika *Oki Ka'nai'tapi'wa, Aipi'ma. Welcome, All Visitors.* The text panels use a combination of third person narrative describing Siksika and first person stories, accounts and perspectives. With a large local Siksika audience, it is unsurprising that the interpretation features Siksika dialect Blackfoot language more prominently that the other case-studies. Exhibit designer Irene Kerr noted that the primary audience was the local community, although the centre also seeks to attract tourists and off-Reserve visitors.

> We knew in the back of our minds that this obviously would have to make money one day as an interpretive centre, we knew all that, but at the same time we really had to bear in mind that it was for the community... probably a tougher audience than just about anybody (Pers. Comm. Kerr 2008).

The centre repeatedly emphasises its Siksika perspective and like the other case-studies, the message is reinforced by the Siksika staff members and interpretive guides. However, to-date, there are no visitor studies on how this message is received by visitors to Blackfoot Crossing.

8.6 Gallery Routing

Besides the direct use of language, Blackfoot messages can be conveyed through the inclusion of concepts, symbols (as discussed above) and ways of understanding. However, making Blackfoot intangible culture tangible within a Western style of museological interpretation is particularly challenging as it requires translating often untranslatable cultural concepts. A key example is translating between Western linear time and Blackfoot cyclical time concepts (mentioned in chapter seven). In the *Blackfoot Exhibit Team Meeting* minutes the following discussion is recorded:

> **Reg** [CrowShoe]...this is an oral tradition, language, and culture. The old timers were trying to relay this idea. If these ideas are taught in the Western perspective, they reflect a linear world view. How can we present what the old timers really meant it to be? Timelines and storylines take away from this. We need to consider how our young people will relate to this exhibit.
>
> **Gerry** [Conaty] commented that we need to get the two systems to work together (Glenbow 1998:2).

The gallery routing and layout was utilised by Glenbow to attempt to bridge the conceptual differences. The gallery is laid out in a linear format that comes full circle representing both world views. Allan Pard explained that it was a conscious decision to present their culture in Western terms of reference to help non-community members understand the history: 'we tailored it for you White people... Yes, it was linear thinking there. That's because we were trying to get this message across and teaching you guys' (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

The gallery routing influences the messages an exhibit conveys, as the route determines the ordering of the narrative. Western linear time is based on the idea of moving forward, with the past behind and the future ahead. Inbuilt into this concept is the idea of progress. During the colonial period 'progress' was a term for conquest and 'civilization'. As such the use of chronology can be read to imply a Western perspective and even a value judgement. Consequently the *Nitsitapiisinni* exhibit purposefully disrupts the chronology at different points emphasising culture continuity, by showing living modern-day versions of traditional events such as dancing and drumming and by

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using video of Elders discussing traditional ways that are still in practice. This helps to enforce the message of survival and endurance.

In comparison, Head-Smashed-In uses a set route which encourages visitors to follow a path which presents the information in linear chronological order. Head-Smashed-In frames their interpretation in the past by directing visitors to watch an orientation film at the beginning of their visit. Recently redeveloped, the film is set 1000 years ago and depicts a Blackfoot buffalo jump hunt. The actors are all local Blackfoot people and the dialogue is in Blackfoot with English subtitles. This firmly locates the interpretation in the pre-historic period, with the only reference to living Blackfoot culture being presented in a small side exhibit and by the presence of Blackfoot staff.

In contrast, Blackfoot Crossing directs visitors to watch an orientation film about the strength and vibrancy of Siksika life, firmly placing the culture in the present. The film emphasises how Siksika blend traditional culture with modern living by showing cultural continuity and intergenerational knowledge sharing, alongside modern developments such as industry and community schools on the reserve. As such visitors begin their visit with the knowledge that this is not an ancient forgotten culture; it is a way of life that continues today. This challenges colonial myths about dying races, assimilated Indigenous cultures, and notions that 'Indians' are either 'backwards' and/or 'failures' because they 'couldn't get with the program' (Smith 2009:52) which still abound in the public imagination.

To reinforce this message Blackfoot Crossing also breaks away from the chronological linear model of storytelling. The gallery creates a circular notion of time through free routing enabling visitors to weave through the exhibits, moving in and around the displays in circular patterns. Although some text panels and exhibits refer to certain eras, others are timeless combining the modern with tradition. The gallery allows visitors to view the exhibits in any order they choose, avoiding the concept of progression through time (see figure 8.16).
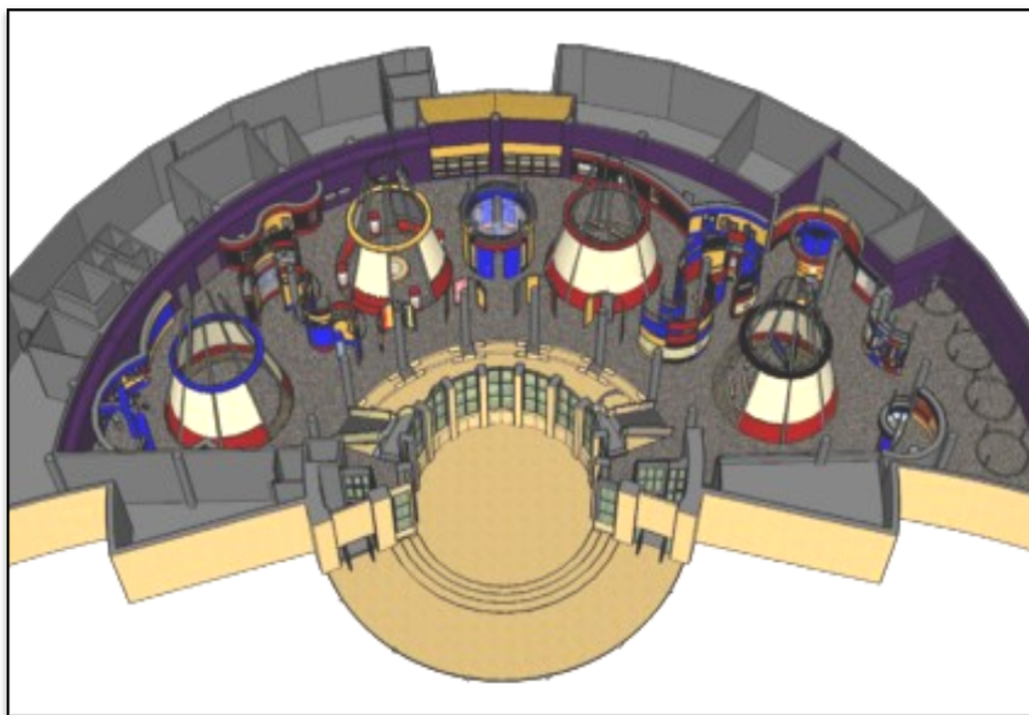
Figure 8.16 Free routing in Blackfoot Crossing's Gallery (Exhibitio 2008).

These examples show that museums can be adapted to take on different cultural concepts and convey them physically through the building structure and layout. Thus the very fabric of the museum can begin to be decolonised and adapted, even indigenised, to include other cultural forms and concepts.

8.7 Conclusion

Exhibits function as 'a public skin, a public face, for non-Indian audiences' (Lawlor 2006:5), while enabling community visitors to connect with the narrative in different ways through Blackfoot language, iconography, images and concepts. However Blackfoot voice is framed through the cultural form of the exhibit and mediated by the need to communicate cross-culturally. Consequently Blackfoot self-representation at the case-studies produced exhibits layered with meaning that speak to different audiences and strategically control cultural sharing through 'displayed withholding' (Lawlor 2006:5).

Within the exhibits the Blackfoot strategically use essentialism (Spivak 1990:109) to create a space from which the community can speak as one, to counter dominant narratives made about them. The exhibits present a public mono-narrative of Blackfoot culture, concealing 'off stage' the plurality and diversity of Blackfoot culture and

peoples. Used as tools for strategic public communication, the exhibits do not represent the reality of the community per se, but present an image and narrative that has the potential to make change, develop cultural pride and potentially help decolonise relations. The exhibits position Blackfoot people on the political and historical map and support efforts to improve Blackfoot rights and land claims. Once this public platform is secured other sub-narratives may then be presented.

While the case-study exhibits each help with the process of decolonisation by countering Eurocentric grand narratives, they are not solely focused upon telling 'hard truths of colonization' (Lonetree 2009:334). Instead they balance 'truth telling' with cultural sensitivity to restricted sacred culture and personal memory of traumatic history. The Elders wanted to make the exhibit audience aware of the difficult history of colonialism, but emphasise the long history of the Blackfoot, their survival, and current day revival, to create a positive image that can build community cohesion and self-esteem, key factors that will help the larger process of decolonisation.

Chapter 9. View From the Other Side: Empowering and Exhibiting Community

The museum enterprise, built upon a colonial heritage that demanded control of Native people, now has need of Native informants to both correctly identify objects and serve as negotiators between two parties with vested interests (Mithlo 2004:757).

When you are trying to... bridge two cultures together, you get walked on from both sides (Pers. Comm. Crane Bear 2008).

9.1 Introduction

Museums are increasingly keen to talk to Indigenous communities about collection and display, but few listen to communities' experiences of engaging with museums. This chapter will explore the view from the other side and analyse how community members experience engagement. It is in these accounts that it is possible to hear where the dilemmas remain, new challenges occur, and how these issues continue to make museum and community relations unsettled.

Engagement is generally viewed by museums as a positive process for the benefit of the museum and community involved. Community participants are seen as beneficiaries, who gain representation, a voice within the museum, and training. However, community members often view the museum as the main beneficiary. My research reveals that for community members engagement can come at great cost, and they engage knowing the risks because they believe in the importance of their work. However, this agency is often overlooked because the assumption that community members are beneficiaries obscures the potential for consideration of negative outcomes. As beneficiaries, there are expectations placed upon their behaviour. In particular, they are not paid wages, but expected to volunteer their time and knowledge in exchange for representation, training and honorariums.

In the process of creating exhibits, images, footage, names and wax mannequins of community members are collected. In addition, living community guides often accompany community voice into displays. Such inclusion creates an image of Blackfoot ownership and publically acknowledges the contributions of the individuals involved, whilst maintaining community presence in the museum through employment of Blackfoot interpreters. However, in doing so, there is a risk that community members may become part of the spectacle of the exhibit, placed on display for visitors to view,

potentially continuing a long history of human display of 'exotic others'. In addition, the individuals embedded in the display become the 'public face' of the exhibit and are both credited with the display and held accountable for it, even if they did not have (complete) control over its creation. Consequently, engagement can be challenging and risky as their insider-outsider status complicates their relationship with both the museum and their own community.

By exploring the potential for the apparently empowered to become exhibited, the chapter aims to show the power of assumptions and to highlight the complicated realities of engagement. The goal is to help find more sensitive ways of working with communities to limit the potential for negative, unwanted and unexpected consequences.

9.2 Part One: Community on Display

Figure 9.1 Visitor photographing guide at Blackfoot Crossing's Tipi Camp (Photo by Onciul 2008).

9.2.1 The role of community guides

> Well, you know, I think all museums, especially if they have Indian exhibits or materials there; they should have some sort of a First Nations Indian staff on hand (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

Employing community guides to interpret community-produced exhibits is considered a positive policy that benefits the museum and the community. The Canadian *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* stated that 'there is agreement that increased involvement of First Peoples in museum work is essential in order to improve the representation and interpretation of First Peoples' histories and cultures in museums' (15:1992). The museum gains knowledgeable staff members who bring 'authenticity' to the exhibit though their cultural identity, experience and knowledge. Community guides can draw on personal experiences when discussing Blackfoot life and culture, and act as a link to the community, providing visitors with a 'contact' experience (often tourists' and Canadians' first meeting with a Blackfoot person). Their presence also maintains the links between the Blackfoot community and the museum or heritage site.

For the community, guiding is an opportunity for employment, maintains Blackfoot presence and voice in the museum, and helps ensure the exhibit is interpreted by someone with insider cultural knowledge and lived experience of community life. At first glance it appears to be a win-win situation. However, interviews with guides at the case-studies indicates that in practice it can be a challenging experience, sometimes highly rewarding, but at times causing real difficulties for the individuals involved.

Three of the case–studies exclusively employ Blackfoot guides to interpret the exhibits. Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, is the exception, however Frances Kaye's (2003) research on the founders of the Glenbow and Luxton museum reveals that prior to its First Nations ownership, the Luxton Museum did propose community employment. 'In 1958 and 1960 Clifford Wilson, the new Director of the Glenbow Foundation, provided another series of memos on the organization of the Luxton Museum' (Kaye 2003:110). He recommended hiring a First Nations person as assistant curator:

> It seems to me that if we could get some Indian who has mingled with white men a lot, can speak well and knows a good deal of Plains Indians, it would add an attractive note to the operations of the museum. This might be a somewhat radical departure and Mr Luxton might prefer to employ a white man who knows what he is talking about, but I think the visitors would get a great kick out of having an Indian there, even though he were not in costume (Kaye 2003:111).

Although this never came to fruition, the quote is intriguing in its revelation, not only about the inferior view of First Nations and on the way in which emphasis is placed on the spectacle of employing Indigenous people for the entertainment of visitors, but because it suggests placing an Indigenous person in a higher position than any of the case-studies, bar Blackfoot Crossing and Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum, does today.

At Blackfoot Crossing all staff members are Siksika Blackfoot, with the exception of one Cree employee. Consequently all guides are local community members. At Head-Smashed-In and Glenbow, Blackfoot interpretation was a condition negotiated for during community engagement. All the interpretive staff at Head-Smashed-In must have Blackfoot cultural knowledge and speak Blackfoot, which in practice restricts employment to Blackfoot community members (see chapter seven). Glenbow agreed to have Blackfoot staff interpret the co-produced Blackfoot gallery *Nitsitapiisinni*.

> ...there was an agreement in place I believe for over fourteen years, where the Glenbow would have a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy delivered Blackfoot Gallery tours and that the only exceptions would be... Dr. Gerry Conaty... but he is adopted into some of the Nations and he has a wealth of knowledge, he has his Indian name, so it's, you know, and it's not him volunteering to Sandra, it's when I haven't been available, Sandra hasn't been available, he has been asked to do that (Pers. Comm. Wolfleg 2008).

However, the policy of restricting interpretation to First Nations people in museums like the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) has been questioned by Larry Zimmerman, who argues that non-Native interpreters can provide authentic information too:

> Museums focused on Native Americans, staff members must abandon colonial and stereotypic views about Native Americans. They also must challenge notions commonly held by Indians and non-Indians that only Indians can provide authentic information about Indians (2010:33).

Zimmerman frames his commentary in the preliminary footnote of his paper, acknowledging that he has chosen not to follow the recommendations of the reviews of his article; stating:

> I certainly do know that there is a complex history relating to the very idea of "Indian" and the relationship of Indians to museums, both too long to tell in an op-ed piece. Simply put, I am concerned about the self-perceptions of Indians and non-Indians and their views of each other within Native American-focused museums that complicate – if not mystify – notions of authenticity and truth (2010:35).

Zimmerman raises a key issue about ethnicity and authenticity. Neither skin colour nor birth endows people with innate knowledge or cultural insight. A person can speak about any topic, but for their words to be recognised as a valid source of information they must be accredited in some way. Who defines the credentials is the nub. In politics an elected member has a mandate: the authority granted by a constituency to act as its representative. In cultural terms it is not always possible or suitable to find elected representatives with clearly granted mandates to speak. In Blackfoot communities, there are two potential groups – the elected chief and council and the Elders. Blackfoot government has the mandate to speak on current issues; but the Elders, although unelected, are recognised as authorities on heritage and traditional knowledge. Elders have to earn their rights through the sacred societies and their position is dependent upon others' recognition of their knowledge. Within the community, people will refer others to appropriate Elders for information, thus Elders are authorised to speak through their community members' recognition of their knowledge, their membership of societies, and their earned cultural rights.

For a person to have what they say taken seriously, they need to be recognised as having the appropriate knowledge, particularly by those whom the individual seeks to speak about or on the behalf of. This is true in any society or profession, and is the reason people gain qualifications and build résumés, to prove their authority on a subject or practice. In Blackfoot society it is normal protocol for a speaker to state the location from which they speak before starting. As such they will name themselves, their family members, and Elders who have informed their knowledge. This allows others to judge the validity of what they say in the context of their cited references.

The authority to speak can appear to be based on race because there are relatively few non-Blackfoot people who have the gained the knowledge and rights to speak on behalf of the community. The community is relatively closed and the traditional knowledge transfer process takes many years of dedicated participation. Gerry Conaty is not Blackfoot, but he can cite the Blackfoot Elders who he has learnt from, the Blackfoot societies he is involved with, and his authority on the subject. As such he is recognised by the Blackfoot as validated to speak about, and in certain circumstances for, the aspects of Blackfoot culture he knows about.

Of course, it is possible for museums and communities to reduce these complexities to a simple matter of racial identity, and when this happens it is possible for community

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members to be employed on the basis of cultural membership rather than knowledge (which is a criticism some Elders have levelled at Head-Smashed-In). But there are also times when younger community members are employed for their dynamic interpretation skills, and then offered support to supplement their knowledge (which is one of the approaches taken at Head-Smashed-In). As cultural insiders, community members have access to Elders and other authorised sources of information that non-community members would find harder to access. Les GoForth emphasises the logic of employing community guides in terms of honouring Indigenous community contributions and knowledge:

> This First Nation involvement has to cover all areas of activity from construction, art, design, administrative, management, consultants and Elder Spiritual advisors. It would be nothing more than a mockery if when completed, the museum hired staff with little or no knowledge of the meanings and purpose of the displays (Goforth 1993:16).

The Blackfoot community has reacted negatively when someone who is not recognised or authorised by the community to speak, attempts to speak about or for the community, or shares information that is restricted. This is not because of the persons' race or community ties. Instead the reasoning is threefold. Firstly some Blackfoot information is restricted and requires cultural rights to access, and is not for public dissemination. Secondly, non-authorised representatives may present erroneous information, which could potentially harm the community, disrupt oral histories and damage future rights claims (as discussed in chapter eight). Thirdly, the Blackfoot community has experienced generations of exploitation at the hands of colonial authorities, and is acutely sensitive to potential for further cultural exploitation such as non-community members profiting from community knowledge (see chapter three), and want to maintain control over what they see as one of the last resources they have – their knowledge. Exclusive Blackfoot employment policy is a form of positive discrimination to help to return the profits and some control to communities.

A number of the issues discussed are raised in Site Manager's explanation for Blackfoot employment at Head-Smashed-In:

> It wasn't a major mental leap for the government of Alberta to look at it in terms of why shouldn't we employ Blackfoot here? Why shouldn't we have them interpret native culture as native people? It is colourful, it certainly more representative, or, accurate is perhaps the wrong term, it is certainly more of an experience for the visitor to be here and see people who are very specifically related to this locality...we employ native people in a positive way, not in menial

jobs… but in real responsible jobs that pay good wages (Pers. Comm. Site Manager 2006).

Traditionally Blackfoot history is maintained orally, through storytelling. Guides can draw on this tradition and present oral accounts of their history to visitors, supplementing and enriching the fixed displays. At Head-Smashed-In they bring in Kainai and Piikani Elders to provide oral history sessions during the guide training. Jim Martin explained the value of guides learning from Elders like Rosie Day Rider:

> Rosie again was asked to participate because she also knows a lot about the early days of the Jump and has stories from her grandmother who was told by her grandmother of actual accounts of the Jump. So there is an unbroken oral history that Rosie carries (Pers. Comm. Martin 2008).

Community guides also bring their own knowledge and expertise to the job. At Head-Smashed-In they have employed Elders like Blair First Rider and Lorraine Good Striker to work in interpretation, drawing on their deep cultural knowledge and Blackfoot language. Lorraine explained the importance of having Blackfoot guides:

> I think with this place it makes it a unique site because it has its own people telling the stories of our culture, whereas it is not going to sound natural if it is non-Natives and other cultures being the interpreters. The visitors want to hear it from the people who are the Blackfoot... Some of the interpreters come here with no knowledge of their culture, but we train them. Some come here with their own stories from their Grandmothers and Grandfathers which makes it even better, because they are including the information given to them by their family members implementing them right into their tours. We share stories here and that is what makes the place come alive (Pers. Comm. Good Striker 2006).

Siegrid Deutschlander and Leslie J. Miller's examination of First Nations guides' interactions with non-Native tourists at cultural sites and events in Southern Alberta saw Blackfoot identity as an important part of their role as interpreters. They conclude that the cross-cultural interaction is a political encounter which helps improve non-Native views of Indigenous culture and counters dominant colonial narratives that persist in modern Western society.

> In short, these sites have made openings for new ways of thinking about matters that were formerly taken for granted. History or tradition becomes political when visitors are provoked to challenge its facticity; the politicizing moment comes when visitors recognize that there are histories instead of History, and that the ways we represent a past or a people have real consequences for our lives (Deutschlander and Miller 2003:42).

In my research there was a general consensus amongst the interviewees that community employment and interpretation was a positive step in improving Blackfoot

representation and control. Blackfoot guides add to the static displays developed by the community by providing:

1. a connection to the community
2. community perspectives
3. personal stories
4. a way to continue the tradition of presenting history orally
5. a chance to interact with visitors and challenge and change stereotypes
6. drama of live interpretation
7. a real 'contact' experience

Nevertheless, these last three points raise issues about the complicated realities of guiding, and raises questions about whether it is really empowering or whether guides are exhibited through the process.

9.2.2 Exhibiting humans

Community guides tie into a long history of exhibiting Indigenous people that intertwines with the history of museums, exhibitions and colonialism. From first contact, Indigenous people were taken as prisoners and as guests to Europe to be exhibited as finds from the 'new world'. Indigenous people entered expos, freak shows, and museums. The earliest display of people as 'living rarities' was in 1501 'when live Eskimos were exhibited in Bristol' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:41). One of the most famous North American collections of a living person began in August 1911 when the University of California anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and Thomas T. Waterman identified a starving man, 'whose family and cultural group, the Yahi Indians, were murdered as part of the genocide that characterized the influx of Western settlers to California' (Scheper-Hughes 2004:66), as the last surviving member of the Yahi people and named him 'Ishi' meaning 'man' in Yana (Rockafellar 2010).

> After Ishi's 'rescue' by Kroeber, he lived out his final years (1911-1915) as a salaried assistant janitor, key informant, and 'living specimen' at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of California (Scheper-Hughes 2004:63).

Scheper-Hughes notes that Ishi experienced what would now be recognised as clinical symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder:

> Yet despite Ishi's physical and psychological vulnerability and his fear of crowds, Kroeber allowed Ishi to perform as a living exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology and at the San Francisco Panama-Pacific Trade Exhibition (2004:64).

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In March 1916 Ishi died from Tuberculosis (Scheper-Hughes 2004:63). Despite Ishi's requests to be cremated intact, his brain was collected 'for science' through autopsy and shipped to the Smithsonian (Scheper-Hughes 2004:64). Ishi's remains were repatriated to his descendants on 10 August 2000 (Repatriation Office 2011). Ishi was a museum employee, but he was also part of the display, part of the collection, in theory free to leave, but without a place to go as Thomas King describes:

> The people at the museum were inordinately fond of pointing out that Ishi was, in fact, free to return to the mountains and the lava fields of Northern California if he chose to do so. You can go home any time you wish, they told him. Which must have made him laugh and cry at the same time. For there was no home. No family. Not anymore. Ishi hadn't come out of the mountains because he had seen an advertisement in the employment section of a newspaper. "Help wanted. Museum curiosity. Apply in person." He had come to that slaughterhouse to escape the killings and the loneliness, and he would stay at the museum until his own death because he had nowhere else to go (King 2003:65).

Ishi was both an educator and a curiosity, respected and objectified, simultaneously freed and imprisoned. The spectacle of being on display has been addressed by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett who notes that:

> The inherently performative nature of live specimens veers exhibits of them strongly in the direction of spectacle, blurring still further the line between morbid curiosity and scientific interests... circus and zoological garden, theatre and living ethnographic display... cultural performance and staged re-creation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:34).

She distinguishes between *in context* and *in-situ* displays, arguing that 'at their most mimetic, in situ installations include live persons, preferably actual representations of the cultures on display' (1998:20). Although Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's work and the descriptions of Ishi refer specifically to early nineteenth century America and Britain, these histories are remembered by Indigenous communities and influence current Indigenous relations with museums. When discussing colonialism and the reserve system the Elders who worked with Glenbow said 'we felt like a zoo society' (Glenbow 1999b:7). Blackfoot culture has been stereotyped and headdresses, buffalos, and tipis have become symbols used to represent all North American 'Plains Indians'.

Today Blackfoot guides interpret their culture as paid museum and heritage site employees. Through their work guides can gain public standing as representatives of their community, gain skills, experience and income, and maintain Blackfoot voice in the exhibits. They are employed for their skills, knowledge and talent, but because this

knowledge is generally restricted to Blackfoot members their employment is also tied to their Blackfoot identity. This is where potential for problems occurs, because the history of exhibiting people as subjects creates the potential for Blackfoot guides to be viewed as objects, rather than living representatives of their culture. Like Ishi they are respected as knowledgeable, yet risk being objectified as examples of their culture. This problem is exacerbated by visitors who have never seen 'real living Indians' before, arriving with Disney-fied Hollywood notions. In this sense museum must be very careful to avoid playing into a long history of exhibiting Blackfoot guides as human 'Others', even if it is on new terms and from a more empowered position.

9.2.3 The spectacle of live interpretation

> Within the North American imagination, Native people have always been an exotic, erotic, terrifying presence (King 2003:79).

Blackfoot guides have a dual role in the museum, they are empowered to speak about their communities, but they are also symbols of themselves, performing 'Blackfootness' for the visiting audiences (see figure 9.1). Interpretation is a form of performance and as such falls into the spectacle of display. As part of the 'show', they are a draw for tourists who can make 'contact' with 'real living Indians', as 'exotic others', within the safety of the culturally familiar museum. Even at the NMAI, purpose built to change and empower Indigenous representation, they cannot escape the problem of exhibiting guides. Associate NMAI curator Paul Chaat Smith frankly states:

> The Indian floor staff have become objects, and it is safe to assume all of them knew this would happen when they signed on. They are the first living Indians many visitors have ever "seen," although Washington is home to thousands of Indians (Chaat Smith 2009:99-100).

Blackfoot guides act as 'points of contact' within the museum as 'contact zone' (Clifford 1997). Laura Peers observes that Native employment at historical reconstruction sites creates 'first encounters' between tourists and Native interpreters (2007). From conversations with visitors to one of her case-studies Peers notes that 'many visitors admitted that it was the first time they had ever spoken with a Native person' (2007:145).

As 'objects of encounter' Blackfoot guides may be interpreted by tourists as part of the museum exhibit and experience. Paradoxically this reinforces the stereotypes of Indigenous people as curiosities to be viewed, whilst simultaneously empowering

community members to challenges such stereotypes. The encounters are often used by guides to promote their culture to international audiences. However, many guides spend a substantial amount of their time countering racist stereotypes and misunderstandings about their people.

> Native interpreters have an agenda of their own which involves educating non-Native people about the important historical roles and human dignity of Native people... Marie Brunelle, a former interpreter... expressed this goal by saying, "If we can reach just one person, teach one person that we are real human beings, then it's all worth it"(Peers 2007:171).

This quote illustrates the level of racism some guides have to face in their daily encounters with visitors. This feeling was echoed by an Elder on the Blackfoot Gallery committee who wanted the exhibit to help people understand the Blackfoot: '[w]e need to be perceived as human beings' (Glenbow 1999c:10). At Head-Smashed-In, the late Lorraine Good Striker recalled:

> Some people actually come here and have never seen a native person in their life. Some of the visitors see it as such an honour to see a Native person they are just dying to touch your hair or skin, and they say 'I touched an Indian person'! Some people still have the idea that when you meet a Native person they still say 'How!' and that's real Hollywood. Some people think that there is a Buffalo jump hunt that is going to take place in a matter of hours, 'when is the next buffalo jump going to take place?' (Pers. Comm. Good Striker 2006).

Good Striker highlights a level of ignorance in visitors to Head-Smashed-In, and shows that guides have to endure and counter stereotypes before they can be heard in their own right by audiences. Community guides have to fill the voids left by inadequate education systems, biased grand narratives, and Hollywood misrepresentations of Blackfoot peoples. They are empowered to speak, but to audiences who are often unable to hear what is being said.

The line between empowerment and exhibition is especially blurred when considering the interpretation of difficult histories such as the residential schools. The residential school era (1842-1996) was a horrific government and church orchestrated multigenerational act of cultural genocide which individuals are now receiving government compensation for because of the physical, mental and sexual abuse they received as children (see chapter eight for details).

Guides at Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing give tours and run cultural awareness workshops for professional groups such as police and social workers, which include

interpretation of the residential school era. As part of the interpretation Blackfoot guides share personal stories about their residential school experience. The aim is to expose hidden histories to visitors in a powerful and compelling way and help to educate and decolonise Canadian mainstream thought by 'truth telling'(Lonetree 2009).

Guides chose when, if and how to share their personal stories. However, museums should carefully consider the real risks of placing individuals in situations where they recount personal suffering for visitors multiple times a day as part of their daily job. These memories are painful and close to the surface. Former Blackfoot Glenbow staff member states 'I hated the whites for what happened to me at the residential school' (Pers. Comm. Crane Bear 2008). The sensitive nature of the subject can be heard in Glenbow interpreter, Adrian Wolfleg's, description of when and why he shares his story:

> With the more personal stuff it depends on the group. If they're sitting there and they are nodding off then I'm not going to pour my heart out to them, but also I wouldn't necessarily pour my heart out to any group because I am there to provide some education, not there to be trying to get compassion there in any shape or form, or to validate anything that has happened to me... When we look at the comparing cultures... I share my experience that I was punished for speaking my language. And at four years old I didn't know that I knew more than one language, I just respectfully responded politely in my native tongue. I was asked to pass a slice of bread. I passed a slice of bread and said... Blackfoot for 'here you go' and was brought to the bathroom. Had my head hit against the sink. Had to chew soap. Chew it and swallow it. And they were helping me, they were putting it in my mouth. I don't use soap today. I can't stand the smell (Pers. Comm. Wolfleg 2008).

Personal accounts of the horrors of the residential school system help expose hidden narratives, described by Director of Blackfoot Crossing as a 'black eye on... Canadian history' (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a). However, it is vital museums balance the educational needs of their audiences with the emotional needs of Blackfoot guides who recount these stories. After all it is hard to imagine a museum expecting white victims of child abuse and paedophilia to represent their experiences though first-person interpretative tours for visiting tourists.

9.2.4 Dioramic representations of community participants

Community participants who engaged in the creation of exhibits are also exhibited within the museum through the inclusion of their photos, voices, videos, names and wax models (see figures 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4). Whilst such inclusion honours their contributions

and publically stakes their ownership claim on the exhibit, it also turns them into part of the spectacle for tourists to 'gaze' at.

Figure 9.2 Photos of Glenbow's Blackfoot participants (Photo by Onciul 2009).

Figure 9.3 Siksika community members featured in embedded audio-visual presentations at Blackfoot Crossing (Photos by Onciul 2008).

Such inclusions are a complex issue because it is culturally appropriate to cite your sources, namely the Elders who taught you. Thus it is appropriate to include the participants' names as Elder Pam Heavy Head explains:

> ...they should acknowledge the people that they get their information from, specific knowledge... because that way... I can only tell it the way that it was told to me and I can only give it the way it was given to me. But I have to always acknowledge that this is the person who told me (Pers. Comm. Heavy Head 2008).
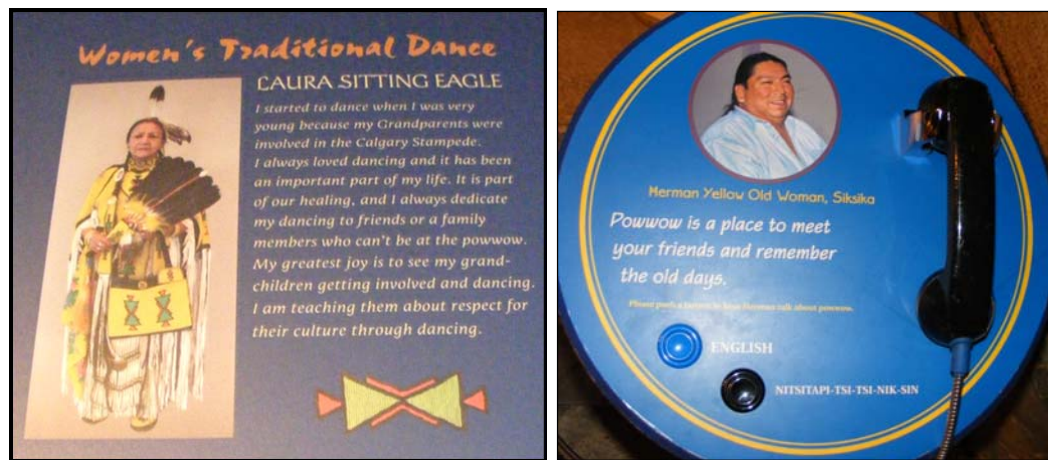
Figure 9.4 Community members represented in text panels in Blackfoot Crossing and Glenbow respectively (Photos by Onciul 2008).

The inclusion of photos, videos and wax models moves from acknowledgement to display. The inclusion of wax model replicas of community members in dioramas suspends them between the living and the dead. Conal McCarthy, on describing the representation of Maori in New Zealand, sums up the diorama's historic use:

> Wax figures have a long association with public display and with the representation of the Other (Atlick 1978: 333-49; Jacknis 2002). Suggestive of corpses, they are 'equiposed [sic] between the animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in Karp and Lavine 1991:398)… eventually appearing in New Zealand museums in the late nineteenth century. When real Maori proved to be too much of a handful or refused to live up to their ethnic stereotype, wax models were found to be a much more malleable substitute, their mortuary pallor signifying their fate in a much more acquiescent way (McCarthy 2007:42).

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes that '[h]uman displays teeter-totter on a kind of semiotic seesaw' between living and dead (1998:35) 'The semiotic complexity of exhibits of people, particularly those of an ethnographic character, may seem to be in reciprocities between exhibiting the dead as if they are alive and the living as if they are dead, reciprocities that hold for the art of the undertaker as well as the art of the museum preparator' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:35). Focusing on wax figures in dioramas, she describes Boas' objections to them:

> It is precisely the mimetic perfection of such installations, and perhaps also their preoccupation with physiognomy, that so disturbed Franz Boas, who resisted the use of realistic wax mannequins in ethnographic recreations. They were so lifelike they were deathlike. Boas objected to "the ghastly impression such as we notice in wax-figures," an effect that he thought was heightened when absolutely lifelike figures lacked motion. Furthermore, wax as a medium more nearly captured the colour and quality of dead than living flesh, and in their

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frozen pose and silence wax figures were reminiscent of the undertaker's art (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:39).

Judy Bedford recalled a story that emphasises Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's point. The artist who originally created the mannequins for Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum 'was actually also part of the undertaking office, where his headquarters were. And as the body parts were being made people thought it was dead bodies hanging up' (Pers. Comm. Bedford 2008).

Interestingly, despite the concerns within museology about the use of 'deathlike' wax figures freezing cultures in the past, each of my case-study museums uses them with general Blackfoot approval and even at the request of Blackfoot exhibit team participants. At Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum out-dated dioramas depict sacred events using a mixture of realistic and caricatured wax models. Pauline Wakeham, describes Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum's dioramas as a 'Western invention that renders a spectacle of otherness permanently paused for the fascinated surveillance of the white spectator, the diorama subordinates its object matter to a fetishistic colonial gaze' (2008:4). However her analysis has been critiqued by Aaron Glass (2010) in his review of her book *Taxidermic Signs*. Glass argues that '[b]y refusing to engage in an interpretive practice that might reveal and highlight Indigenous agency – even, or especially, in the face of colonial power – Wakeham is in effect once again silencing "the Indian" as a historical and contemporary actor in exchange for a presumably political critique of colonial domination' (2010:76).

One might assume such displays of Sundance in dioramas at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum would be disapproved of by the community given their sacred and private nature (see figure 9.5). However, Glenbow curator Gerry Conaty recalls a visit to Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum with the respected Blackfoot Weasel Moccasin family, which illustrates the layered complexities of these matters:

> ... Florence Scout, who was Dan's wife...she was in her 60s, looked at that Sundance diorama and she thought it was terrific. We were talking about the Blackfoot gallery and Allan and some of the others who had been to New York said you've got to do those things that they did in New York with the North-West Coast. Who did those? The name Franz Boaz come to mind? In 1901! So, you know, this idea that we shouldn't be representing any people, might really be mostly a concern of museum professionals. You start talking to people and they really want to create it the way it is; show people how we do things. As long as the dioramas are done carefully (Pers. Comm. Conaty, 2008).

Figure 9.5 Diorama of Sundance at Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Although the Blackfoot may choose to use wax models, it is unclear as to the extent to which they are attempting (consciously or subconsciously) to fit the confines of the museum as a cultural form. Seeing dioramas in other museums conveys a message that these are what museum audiences expect to see (as discussed in chapter eight and Brady 2009:145-6).

At Blackfoot Crossing there is an attempt to disrupt the potential for dioramas to freeze people and culture in time and space, and weight the 'semiotic seesaw' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:35) in favour of living culture. The *Creation Tipi* at Blackfoot Crossing displays a diorama of wax mannequins cast from living Siksika members who then feature in the audio-visual film projected onto the canvas above the diorama (see figure 9.6). The actors play themselves as they tell a story, in English and Blackfoot, of a grandmother teaching her granddaughter berry picking. The exhibit layers wax figure upon audio-visual upon living interpreter creating a living continuum between inanimate, animate and live.

Figure 9.6 Blackfoot Crossing *Creation Tipi* diorama and audio-visual (Photo by Onciul 2009).

However, drawing from the community to create dioramas adds yet another layer of complexity to display. Dioramas are understood differently by community members compared to tourists visiting exhibitions. For community members the exhibit speaks on a personal level about people they know. Rather than tourists gazing at 'Others', community members see neighbours, Elders, leaders, family, friends, ancestors, and possibly even themselves. Community members can draw on a vast resource of insider knowledge so that an image, object, symbol, song, word or name can evoke a whole concept of Blackfoot epistemology, or an aspect of community relations, which may not even be apparent to non-Blackfoot curators or exhibit designers.

Blackfoot guides can draw out some of this information for non-community audiences, and can use genealogy to connect community visitors to the display and help to generate pride and ownership of the exhibit.

> The pictures are there for a meaning, for a reason... we personalise it for them [community visitors]...especially for the younger ones that might not know... "Did you know that's your great uncle?"...so let them have a sense of pride in them and also let them know that they have a reason to be proud and kind of going back as reminders for them, they know this stuff, they were raised through this. They may not all have the same experiences, but pulling...from them what they actually know. "I remember that!" "Oh that's why my grandfather..!" And so...giving a bit of ownership with it and also making it relational. So they are

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learning about themselves from what they actually know and experienced, rather than from a website... Bringing it home (Pers. Comm. Wolfleg 2008).

The community-guide-to-community-visitor relationship and interaction is different to that of guide and tourist. Former Glenbow Gallery Interpreter, Sandra Crazybull, explains the difference when interpreting the residential school through her personal experiences:

> [When speaking to non-community members] I make it a connection between what I have gone through in my own personal life and how residential school affects me today and how it affects my entire family, but I don't leave it in a negative kind of mode. I kind of try to present that through the hardships that I've been through I really try to make a difference for my own children...If a native group comes then I do a similar story, but a little bit different because you have to allow for them make connections again. Because they are making connections to how, why, and they get angry sometimes too because there are social problems that are still occurring today, there is still poverty, there is still dysfunction, there is still broken marriages and all these social problems that still happen, that stem from the residential school...You have to keep in mind that it is more of a personal story to them (Pers. Comm. Crazybull 2008).

The personal connection with the history makes difficult and emotional subjects all the more sensitive, but it also makes positive, pride-building representations all the more powerful and influential.

The inclusion of community members conveys a wealth of information to community visitors who can identify individuals, know them and how they connect to other community members, history and politics. For tourists such images show examples of Blackfoot people, but for community visitors they represent individuals, and as a result it is vital that people are displayed with respect. This is easier in theory than in practice, as non-community museum employees often lack the cultural capital and insider knowledge to understand and interpret all the meaning embedded in Blackfoot cultural material. They do not have the lived experience of Blackfoot epistemology or the ability to think and speak in Blackfoot language, which renders some concepts inaccessible as they do not translate into English. Further still without knowing the community intimately interpersonal relations can be overlooked. Put simply, errors can easily occur, despite best intentions.

One such mistake exemplifies the potential for negative consequences for those community members on display. Years before becoming a Glenbow interpreter, Adrian Wolfleg posed for casting so that a wax replica could be made of him for inclusion in

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Glenbow's *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery*,* as a participant in a diorama of a ceremonial tipi transfer (see figure 9.7).

Figure 9.7 Tipi transfer ceremony diorama at Glenbow (Photo by Onciul 2008).

Wolfleg recalls the process of how he came to be involved and what went wrong, to me during our interview:

> AW: The ethnologist, had asked me if I would be captured in a cast... So I'm in the tipi and it has travelled throughout and toured Switzerland, through Germany, Manchester most recently and there is a travelling version of the gallery at the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park... I had gone out trusting them. But the way it is actually set up in there, there is a contrast between the oral and the visual. The oral, the Elder is talking about how I am another one that is supporting the song and stuff... But in the written... that lady is listed as my spouse and that is my aunt... So... there was really some challenges dealing with that because the way it is presented. And our friends come here, people know us, people know our family and it was a shock, but nothing has ever changed... The wording has not been changed and there are so many things that could have been done to have it explained. Even just to go in line with the oral, that we are supporters of that, rather than a couple, which is derogatory.

> BO: ...did you request for that to be changed?

> AW: We talked about it way back and lots of "yep, yep, yep, yep, yep" but nothing, but nothing. Directed to someone; directed to someone else. It was so

long ago. It was a shock, it was embarrassing and so I am glad that it is not listed as our names.

BO: ...could people recognise you?

AW: Yeah (Pers. Comm. Wolfleg 2008).

This example illustrates the importance of accuracy and attention to detail when creating community exhibits for community visitors. Errors that tourists will not recognise can be derogatory and cause embarrassment to community members if they are represented incorrectly to their own community. Individuals like Wolfleg have to return to their communities and live with the consequences of the way museums have represented them. This leads the discussion on to the cost and consequence of engagement for community members who are held by their community to account for the representations and interpretations they contribute to in museums.

9.3 Part Two: Costs and Consequences of Engagement for Communities

The exhibiting nature of including community members in displays starts to reveal some of the potential for negative consequences of community engagement for the individuals involved. Community members have a diversity of experiences of engagement. Some gain friendships, knowledge, access to material culture, and even improve their social standing as a result of their engagement; whilst others experience feeling of pressure, derogation, embarrassment, and being undervalued. Some even experience accusations from their own communities of being 'sell-outs' exploiting the culture for their own gains and siding with a traditional adversary, the museum (and by implication, the government and oil companies that fund some of them). Many experience a combination of both. By engaging with museums community members become vulnerable to these positive and negative outcomes as their reputations are tied to the museum for the period of engagement and the lifetime of any products they co-produce.

9.3.1 The restricting power of assumption

Museums assume engagement is good for the museum and the community, and as a result community participants and employees are automatically viewed as beneficiaries. These assumptions belie the possibility that there may also be negative consequences for community members. As such, the reality of engagement from community

members' perspectives is an area that is under-explored in current museology, both in theory and in practice (with the exception being Lynch 2011).

As beneficiaries, participants' agency and ability to challenge the museum is restricted, limiting what is made possible through engagement. The assumption is paternalistic and patronising. Museums congratulate themselves for *giving* communities an opportunity to correct mainstream (at times purposeful) misrepresentation of First Nations peoples as uncivilized, savage, barbaric and animal-like (being previously included in the natural history, rather than cultural displays). Museums retain control by generously hosting community members as invited guests. As Bernadette Lynch notes:

> Welcomed into the 'invited space', participants are deftly encouraged to assume the position of 'beneficiaries' or 'clients'. This in turn influences what they are perceived to be able to contribute or entitled to know or decide (Lynch 2011:148).

Whilst praising Head-Smashed-In for its inclusion of Blackfoot people, and Glenbow for entering into a power sharing partnership with the Blackfoot people, Kainai Elder Narcisse Blood states that:

> ...other museums are very paternalistic, very arrogant. "We are doing you a favour. This belongs to the people, and helps to educate the people." That is a nice statement, but it simply isn't true. Because if it was serving its purpose I don't think we would have the kind of racism we have, I don't think the land would be being destroyed and exploited as much (Pers. Comm. Blood 2007).

One of the clearest examples of the limiting effects of being cast as beneficiaries can be seen in the inequalities of payment. In my interviews Blackfoot participants frequently raised the issue of payment from museums. Community participants are generally expected to work voluntarily or for modest compensation in the form of honorariums, because it is assumed that they are benefiting from the participation in other ways. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, without adequate payment only those who have financial support from elsewhere can afford to participate. Secondly, payment is associated with value. All of the case-studies claim to work with community members for their cultural expertise and seek out Elders of high standing and cultural knowledge. As such, it seems contrary to then deny them the salary that would be afforded to Western experts. Part of the problem is the difference between community and Western value placed on Indigenous knowledge. Nancy Mithlo notes in Western society, 'typically, Indigenous knowledge is perceived as subjective and restricted while Western knowledge is seen as scientific, objective, and free of restrictions' (2004:743).

In Blackfoot society Elders are viewed as valued experts who keep knowledge on behalf of the community which is vital to the survival of Blackfoot culture and practice.

> These people are like walking text books of knowledge. I mean I can't ever, I could spend days, maybe months with a person like Rosie Day Rider and she will never finish telling me all the stories... that knowledge is so precious, it really is. And you can't get it anywhere else. You know you can't just Google it (Pers. Comm. Heavy Head 2008).

Elders invest in training through participation in sacred societies to gain knowledge and it is customary to exchange something of value for information they provide. They are the equivalent to Western experts who dedicate their career to research, speak with authority on their field, and who expect recognition and payment for sharing their expertise. Such customs are not always appreciated by museums, as Elder Pam Heavy Head states: 'There are still a lot of dysfunctional non-Native people on the museum side that are just "what!" "what!", "you are going to pay what?!"' (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Payment was seen as inadequate by Glenbow participants because it did not reflect the economic value the community placed upon the knowledge, and was notably lower than that paid to Western experts working on the same Blackfoot gallery as Piikani Elder Allan Pard recalls:

> ...it was frustrating working with the museum staff and then I guess the cost, we kept saying a lot of this information...didn't come to us without any payment. In our ways we still have to pay for this information; it is like a tuition fee. I go seek information from others; you just don't get it for free...So that was another thing, not that we are money mongrels, but you know, people visiting the museum pay, the museum staff are getting paid... what about the people who own the information?...So yeah, convincing them that they had to pay for this information was another matter. Uphill battle. And you know, getting paid appropriately, I am not saying to a point where people were making a killing off it, I think we were barely just getting our costs being paid for...our expenses...But we weren't compensated near what they would compensate...it would be no problem for them to pay one [designer] who was trying to do the displays, thousands and thousands of dollars...No questions asked about paying him, but it was sure questions when they were to pay some of our Elders (Pers. Comm. Pard 2008).

This was a sensitive point because the first designer was eventually replaced and yet was still felt to have been paid more than the community members, despite failing to complete the project. Even if it was not the museum's intention, the difference in payment signifies a difference in the perceived value of the individuals' contributions. Valuing Western expertise over Blackfoot knowledge is hardly the decolonising and

empowering process engagement claims to be. However, low payment is also linked to the difference in assumed role, with the Blackfoot being 'beneficiaries' they are seen as already gaining from the engagement without payment. Whereas the Western experts are 'at work', something society expects economic compensations for.

Glenbow curator Gerry Conaty addresses the inequality in payment for community participants in his 2006 commentary in *Museum Management and Curatorship*.

> Over the past 15 years we [Glenbow] have not significantly increased the honoraria we pay traditionalists for their help, advice, and knowledge. This pay is well below the rate we would pay a museum consultant, and well below the rate we charge others for our own expertise. Yet, these elders represent generations of learning and, in some cases, embody an entire culture. There are several funding agencies that will support assistance from consultants; there are few that will help pay for an elder's help and these endowments are much more limited. We in the museum community need to address this inequality if our "partnerships" are to have value (Conaty 2006:256).

Payment is a sensitive subject because there is a fine line between selling culture and honouring a person's contribution of cultural knowledge. The Blackfoot Elders do not wish to sell their information. They want their knowledge to be valued. There are many derogative colloquialisms associated with the idea of selling sacred knowledge, such as 'sell-outs' or 'plastic medicine men'. These terms refer to individuals who are accused of selling or sharing cultural information with non-natives that they either do not know, do not have the right to share, or are exploiting their knowledge for their own profit.

The concept of selling cultural knowledge is a very sensitive issue in Blackfoot communities, partly because some members feel it is the only thing they have left, as colonialism has stripped away the majority of their lands, resources, language, and way of life. Another reason is because oral cultural heritage like the Blackfoot's depends upon the process of passing on information with precision to those individuals in the community who will keep it and teach it. Increasingly Western archaeology is proving that oral history is an effective and accurate way to record history if the process is maintained (for Australian and American examples see: Taçon (1996); Makah Cultural and Research Center (2011)). Thus knowledge is very carefully guarded and only gradually shared, especially with non-Blackfoot individuals.

Consequently, rather than being beneficiaries, many of the Elders view working with museums to create exhibits as 'doing a favour' for the museum. In their view engagement privileges the museum as the main beneficiary. Glenbow curator, Gerry

Conaty, acknowledges the imbalances and reciprocities in the Blackfoot-Glenbow partnership:

> ...people bought into it partly because we asked them to participate and to tell us their story and partly because we had already been returning a lot of sacred things to them and going to... other museums with them, and... I think they felt we would actually listen to them. I also think that their participation in the gallery is a bit of their way of *doing us a favour* because no matter how much we say: "the exhibit is about all of us," people still have to come to Glenbow to see it...so it is a little bit more of a, about us, than about them, in that regard... if anybody pushes too much: why did you want to get involved? ...they wouldn't say "well because I think the Glenbow was a great place to talk about our culture to educate people," because that's not what they are interested in. They are interested in their own people, and you do that [teach culture] best at home (Pers. Comm. Conaty 2008).

With the exception of curators like Gerry Conaty, there appears to be a conflict of view with each group viewing the other as the beneficiary and themselves as the benefactor.

Issues of payment affect community employment, with Blackfoot guides voicing similar concerns about the level of pay they receive for their insider cultural knowledge and skills. At Head-Smashed-In former summer interpreter, Kyle Blood explained:

> I dropped an $18.87 job to come here to work here for $9.50. I'm not in it for the money I'm in it for the love of my culture. But in reality, me being a family man, I think the government should take over our wages instead of passing the buck on to other societies, because if they pay parks and protected areas, their summer staff $20 an hour, why can't they pay us $20 hour too… we are out there dealing with 700 people a day, speaking our heads off, we get tired, especially us boys who dance and sing here. I think they should up the wages especially with this day and age…the cost of gas…making $9.50 and having a family of four, that is pretty tough… (Pers. Comm. Blood 2006).

At Glenbow interpreter Adrian Wolfleg described a similar situation. He is dedicated to his job and credited for the way his cultural knowledge enriched the exhibits, yet is faced with job insecurity and economic hardship:

> ...it has been challenging because you get paid when you do the programmes, but if there are no programmes you don't get paid... It's feast and famine, sometimes when you need money like Christmas time there's no tours so there's no income (Pers. Comm. Wolfleg 2008).

Even at the community run Blackfoot Crossing, Clifford Crane Bear felt his pay did not reflect his expertise or contribution. 'Right now I am fighting with them... I don't work for 75 bucks a day for them... I work for 200 dollars or when I am in front of a camera it

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is 350...this is how much they have to pay... So I gave them a break, but I am just going to go and tell them my situation' (Pers. Comm. Crane Bear 2008).

Museums often suffer from underfunding which can make it difficult to pay staff members adequately. However, guides are tarred with the same beneficiary brush as community consultants. Employment of Blackfoot guides meets the requirements set out in the Task Force Report (1992) and is viewed as an inclusive approach which brings economic revenue and empowerment to the community by enabling them to speak for themselves. In addition community guides, who are often under-educated by Western standards, are trained in Western museological practice and gain skills and experience that will benefit their careers. As The Task Force Report states:

> The need for training for both First Peoples and non-Aboriginal museum personnel is critical. To work in established museums, or to develop museums in their own communities, First Peoples need training in all phases of museology (1992:16).

Nancy Mithlo critiques this approach, noting that:

> ...the policy of inclusion, anticipated by both Native and non-Natives as *the* solution to representational divides places an undue and often unworkable burden upon Native museum professionals to "bridge" broad conceptual gaps. Museums are self-perpetuating institutions that generally maintain authority, despite efforts to "give Natives a voice" (Mithlo 2004:746).

She goes on to argue that 'here is the "Red Man's Burden" of today. In an era where Native Americans are still among the nation's poorest, least educated, and most exploited peoples, yet another task is given – to take up the cause of archaeology for educating the "foreign scholars."' (Mithlo 2004:756). Elder Narcisse Blood echoes the need for Canadians, rather than the First Peoples, to be educated:

> I think the new comers are the ones who need to be educated, not us. If that could be a goal, I think we could turn things around. Like I said, if it can serve that purpose alone, to educate people, then maybe we have a chance not to destroy ourselves. Again I would like to make the point that it is not us who needs to be educated (Pers. Comm. Blood 2007).

This highlights yet another common conceptual cross-roads in museum and Blackfoot community thinking, each believing that is it the other who needs to be educated. Whilst both groups learn from each other in the process of sharing information within the engagement zone, Mithlo rightly points out that the burden is upon the Indigenous people to educate the museum about their culture. The Blackfoot already know about

Western culture as a result of being colonised and forced to live in a country where it is dominant.

9.3.2 Guides as symbols of past engagement

Michael Ames sums up the difficulties First Nations guides face in his critique of the appointment of Aboriginal people to museums in the 1990s.

> First, few positions are available during the present era of declining budgets. Second, it will take years before new appointees reach senior levels–if they bother to stay that long. Third, it exposes candidates in minority positions to allegations of tokenism. Finally, it is difficult to find Aboriginal people who are both interested and qualified to work in museums. Those who do accept museum employment are subject to criticism by other Aboriginal people, because museums as we know them are essentially white European inventions designed to serve the interests of mainstream or non-Aboriginal segments of society (Ames 2000:77).

Ames' appraisal of the potential for guides to become tokens, who are exposed to criticism from their own communities, raises two key issues for Blackfoot guides. As the heirs to exhibits they did not create, they gain the dubious honour of becoming the 'public face' of the exhibit. Through their employment they become both insiders and outsiders of the museum and community. Their identities complicated by their membership in, and representation of both. They are not equal members of staff as they have special status to interpret Blackfoot material. Equally they are not simply community representatives because they are paid and required to abide by museum rules and protocol.

Their employment can prevent them from participating in community events which can create problems when they fail to meet their community's expectations of their duties. For example, guides often complain about not being able to attend community members' funerals due to employment policies on Bereavement Leave. These pressures can account for some of the high turnover of guides at sites like Head-Smashed-In.

The expectation for them to bridge the conceptual gap between two cultures and repair a history of colonial relations is a vast burden to place on under-paid, under-valued, often temporary staff members, in entry level positions. Former Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing employee, Clifford Crane Bear eloquently summarises the situation: 'when you are trying to... bridge two cultures together, you get walked on from both sides' (Pers. Comm. 2008). As representatives of the museum and community they can be

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held to account by both groups and are associated with the positive and negative behaviours of each. Simply for working with a museum, community members can find their loyalty to their community questioned. Clifford Crane Bear explains:

> So all I am trying to say is it is very, very, hard for our people, especially for me. When I came back here I wasn't known as Clifford Crane Bear, I was known as that's that guy who works in the museum and that was it (Pers. Com. 2008).

At Head-Smashed-In former employee and Elder, Blair First Rider, highlighted the tenuous position his job placed him in:

> First Nations, when they see you working for the government automatically say you have sold out...Working for the government, working for the enemy, but sometimes it's best to get your foot in the door, you need to make those changes from within, speed things up a bit (Pers. Comm. First Rider 2006).

Another Head-Smashed-In staff member explained how his work had affected his relationship with his community and the way other Blackfoot people viewed him:

> I myself... was used as... an example [in a presentation] by one of the [University of Lethbridge Native American Studies] students... it was a native student, they got up in class and they made their remarks that I'm a sell out to the government. I make the government a lot of money... the money that I make from the tipi camp goes into government accounts. Which is not true ...I was called... a 'white man' because I work in the society... that... I don't do anything for my own community and never have... So that whole thing, just because I work here... I do get a big backlash because of the work that I do... I would say I have less than half support from my own community for being here and for doing what I like to do. That is why I am not in direct contact with my community anymore, just for that, and that's, you know, I'm fine... what I've come to understand is that people from around the world come here to learn and what a better place for me to talk to people, rather than going out there and putting a...burning car in the road protesting something... I come over here (Pers. Comm. Kiitokii 2008).

Kiitokii, like First Rider, sees his work as a form of resistance and way to educate the public for the benefit of his community; however it has been at great personal cost. In her work on best practice in Parks Canada, Kate Hassall observed that the employment of Blackfoot guides at Writing-on-stone 'must be perceived to be beneficial to the Blood Reserve members to prevent the potential segregation of the guides from the community' (2006:26).

By contrast, some Blackfoot interpreters feel their employment strengthens their position in their own communities. Sandra Crazybull worked at Glenbow and said her relationship with her community had changed:

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> ...I think for the better. I think people really look up to me. I think people, well
> they do, and this is judging from the way that I get invited to different events...
> they invite me to different gatherings and I am often called upon as a leader, like
> I am called upon to be a keynote speaker or the person that does the prayer. I am
> kind of viewed as a person that has a lot of knowledge, like somebody that is
> well respected in my community (Pers. Comm. Crazybull 2008).

Crazy Bull explains that part of the reason for these positive consequences is the fact that Glenbow is viewed positively in the Blackfoot community and ethnology curators Gerry Conaty and Beth Carter have invested time in building real relationships with the Blackfoot communities. She explained that when Blackfoot people come to the museum she describes the many ways in which the museum engages with the community, challenging the stereotype of the museum as the enemy (Pers. Comm. 2008).

These interviews illustrate that community employment in museums has direct and long lasting consequences for the individuals employed and that they can be associated with wider community/museum relations that they may not be able to influence. These individuals return home to their communities and have to live with the consequences of good or bad relations between their employer and their community, sometimes with serious consequences, some even choosing to move away as a result. Thus their positions are precarious, and without the power to influence and indigenise museum practice they can become little more than symbolic tokens of previous community engagement, rather than empowered employees.

9.3.3 Living with the consequences of representation

Community participants face similar challenges. As creators of co-produced exhibits their reputations are publically tied to the museums with which they engage. Being both credited and held responsible for the exhibit they contributed to, there are real-life consequences if things go wrong. For non-Native museum employees there is professional risk, but their personal lives are generally unaffected. For community members the distinction between professional and personal is not so clear cut because representing your own community is personal and will directly affect relations with friends and family.

Mithlo argues that the cross-purpose comparison of community and profession can account for many of the problems encountered in community/museum relations:

> A pan-Native American identity is not a profession, just as anthropologists are
> not a cultural or political group... This structural problem of comparing a

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profession with a cultural or political group may well account for the often circular thinking and cross purposes these debates entail (2004:748).

Further still, I would argue that museums approach engagement as if the community members are professionals, available to work on behalf of their community for the museum to create representation. In attempts to view community members as equals, museums often overlook the additional risks and challenges community participants face, undervaluing the significance and cost of their contributions. Again this relates back to the assumption that participants are beneficiaries. The assumption obscures analysis of the potential for negative consequences for community members and in doing so does not acknowledge the need for, and justifies not, compensating them adequately for the risks they take by participating.

The risks are not new, although with each generation and shift in museology and Indigenous-Western relations different challenges are created. Since contact community members have found benefits and costs to engaging with the new comers. Mithlo highlights the experience of George Hunt, Franz Boas' Native assistant:

> Hunt's activities with Boas... resulted in his life being threatened by his own people. He did continue to collect, playing on his position as an insider to quell community objections with gift giving and trading for needed cash (Mithlo 2004:756).

The community members I interviewed frequently voiced their concerns about working with museums and what their community would think of their actions and the exhibits they helped create. Interviewing Head-Smashed-In's Jack Brink, he recalled a common expression, the Elders stating they 'need to do it right':

> ...because they had seen so many museum type displays done totally without their involvement and done wrong, or done poorly… They said we don't want to do that again… because now our name is on this too… Other Native people are going to come here and look at this and if they see something that is all wrong, it is an insult to Native people; it is going to look bad on us (Pers. Comm. Brink 2006).

At Glenbow the Elders felt the same pressure. At the very first meeting with Glenbow about the development of the gallery Kainai Elder, Frank Weasel Head, voiced his concerns about their role in the development and how their communities would view their participation.

> How is our community and our politicians going to look at this gallery? Will they react in a positive or negative way? Do we need to go out and talk to them

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or do we just go ahead? Lots of museums have exploited people, therefore, people are leery. That's why Blackfoot need to be full partners in this gallery – or even consider that the Blackfoot are putting up the gallery with the technical staff from the museum assisting them. The MOU with Mookaakin reflects this approach. Will the people on this committee be under lots of pressure? We can commit to this gallery since we will tell it from our own perspective (Glenbow 1998:4).

At the same meeting Elder Pat Provost is recorded as responding by saying:

> Artifacts represent authority. The people on this team all have the rights to speak on the artifacts. With authority, you know how much to discuss without crossing the line. The protesters and politicians don't necessarily have the authority to protest. Elders can be recognised once authority is recognised and identified... Various people have different status. For example, Pete has training that only allows him to speak regarding certain things. If protesters protest, and we have the people with authority on the team, then there is nothing to protest about (Glenbow 1998:5).

This discussion highlights the Blackfoot teams' awareness of the politics and risks of engaging with the Glenbow Museum. By negotiating their roles, the boundaries between public and private information, the need for authority and rights to speak on certain topics, they are developing a discourse to validate and justify their participation to themselves and their community.

For the Elders working on the Glenbow *Nitsitapiisinni* exhibit they had the particular challenge of representing all four Blackfoot Nations. Although they are in a confederacy, they are distinct cultural groups. Former Glenbow employees, Clifford Crane Bear explains that his community, Siksika was least represented within the gallery because the Siksika participants wanted to respect their Elders from the other nations, 'we didn't want to be outspoken,' and because they were developing Blackfoot Crossing to tell the Siksika story (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Glenbow ethnologist and co-curator of *Nitsitapiisinni* explained that Blackfoot people have challenged what is on show in the exhibit and she has used the discourse the Elders developed to justify their right to speak on behalf of their community. She gives one such example:

> We've had some people come in from Siksika, who come into the gallery and say: "well that's not right" and "where did you get that information?"...so we say: "ok so the Siksika members on our committee were this". And they say "oh well!" They may not like them or there's political implications, but they know at least where we got the information. So they may disagree, but it's not just pulled from a book or from the stratosphere somewhere (Pers. Comm. Carter 2008).

This quote illustrates three important processes at work. Firstly, participants' contributions are honoured and credited by name, citing the source of information, as is customary in Blackfoot culture. Secondly, as is customary, other Blackfoot members respect Elder's rights to speak on their particular area of expertise. Thirdly, Blackfoot Elders are personally held to account for their contributions, individually named, which obviously could impact upon their personal relations with others in their community. As Carter states, there are personal and political implications for the individuals named and their relationship with the questioning Blackfoot visitor. While Carter acted according to cultural protocol and with good intentions, the outcome is to hold individuals to account for something that was produced through team work, consensus and power sharing. When considering the limitations the cultural form of the museum places on representation (addressed in chapters seven and eight), and the complicated nature of power sharing in the engagement zone (addressed in chapter six), it seems unfair for the community to shoulder the burden of responsibility for representation alone.

Elder Pam Heavy Head explains that they are aware of the potential for negative consequences as a result of engagement with museums, but feel it is a necessary risk to set the historical record straight. She argues that the community should focus their anger on representations that are inaccurate and done by others, rather than those created by their own community:

> I know like some of our own people might be upset about it... consider us a 'sell out' you know and stuff like that, and that is to be expected... And some people will, you know, 'why are you selling us out?' Well you know what? It is out there, and what's out there; we need to tell the truth and... be mad when it is inaccurate... and be mad when it is being represented by somebody else, because... it is out there. There is nothing we can do about it... it's like... putting a bridge over the water that is already running... you've just got to do it. So to me, you know, we are going to get flack no matter what. People are going to be angry no matter what, but... it should be done right (Pers. Comm. Heavy Head 2008).

These issues are a constant strain on community participants, even when the exhibits they create are well received by their communities. During an interview with Frank and Sylvia Weasel Head they discussed the pressure Frank felt when their own Blackfoot community came to view the *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery Frank had helped to create.

> [At the opening] I was a little bit leery because we've got other, I'm not, I won't say I'm the most knowledgeable from home, I still learn every day, my knowledge is limited. So we still have knowledgeable people at home and some of the... other Elders did come to the grand opening and they said you did a

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marvellous job, you did a wonderful job, it's good as to how you put it together (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Going on to say:

> FWH: ...in the beginning I was... on edge. But by the end of the public viewing... I was at ease because people kept saying: "gosh you guys did a good job! You told it our way. Our way!" I tell you there was only one negative remark... had an expert... in the language... He came and told me you misspelt this this way, this is the way. And I said to him: "look there was teamwork and we decided. We put so, so, so, the four persons who come up with the spelling and whatever spelling you come up with we'll back you, so we won't have arguments." He said, "Oh, gee that is a good way!" So that was that. And how long it's been there, that has been the only negative remark. But it didn't, I'm not going to say it changed my status on the reserve or anything because I don't, I don't do those things for that purpose, to gain status. So, you know it didn't change. But a lot of pressure on me for work and by that evening...about 10:30 when it ended...we were going to go to the casino, I got to the room and I flopped on the bed and I passed out. You know it was so exhausting.
>
> BO: Yeah, the pressure of everyone...?
>
> FWH: Yeah, it going right...
>
> SWH: I think they were all kind of scared that some people will disapprove
>
> FWH: Yeah...
>
> SWH: So it was a big relief (Pers. Comm. Frank and Sylvia Weasel Head 2008).

In this discussion Weasel Head gives an example of how he followed the custom of recognising the source of information for the spelling, but emphasises that is was a group decision, rather than holding an individual to account. By emphasising the consensus approach used, which is a traditional Blackfoot decision making method, he won approval for the community groups action even though a mistake had possibly been made.

The Elders recall a strong sense of being judged by their community for the exhibit they produced at Glenbow. Piikani Elder and participant, Jerry Potts, was pleased to note that: '...there were a lot of people who came policing through there just to kind of check it out, but didn't find anything. That is what the beauty was' (Pers. Comm. 2008).

Despite the Blackfoot Elder's fears the *Nitsitapiisinni* gallery was generally well received by the Blackfoot community. The potential for negative consequences was minimised and Elders received positive feedback on their work. Former Blackfoot interpreter for *Nitsitapiisinni*, Sandra Crazybull, praised the work the Elders did:

> [When] I came back to visit the museum it was totally different. It was correct. Everything was done properly. Like the way the Tipi was faced, wasn't in a wrong direction, like it was when I was a child. There was a lot of little things that people, like a museum environment might not understand or might not know, but because they had our leaders teaching them the way, then I think it really made a difference, like it really made it come alive (Pers. Comm. Crazybull 2008).

Thus engagement with mainstream museums holds the potential for both positive and negative consequences for community participants working as consultants and partners as they are both credited and accountable for the co-produced work.

If we re-contextualise the discussion and consider the community participants at Blackfoot Crossing, the literature on engagement theory (Arnstein 1969; Galla 1997) argues that community controlled representation is the most empowering form of engagement, which suggests such risks would be minimised or even removed. However, in practice, it is not so simple. Certainly the Elders were empowered to make decisions about the story, but it still was not possible to represent all the community, so some members feel left out.

Blackfoot Crossing Director, Jack Royal, states that the Elders who made up the storyline committee were chosen for their expertise and were empowered by the community to decide upon the storyline because of their traditional knowledge and training.

> ...the Elders had the final say, and I would say there was no argument there. One of the foundations of our culture is the respect... the board was all Siksika members... so we knew that we are not going to question: "Hey what story are you telling?" Or "why are you telling it?" Or "is it just the right story?" Or "is it true?" Basically they were given a blank piece of paper and said "we need a storyline, you guys tell us what is appropriate to tell, what is accurate. What kind of stories we should be telling, the whole storyline." And that was it, there was no argument. They were the bottom line, the storyline committee was. So they had the say on everything we put together. They were given the pen and a blank piece of paper (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

During the development of Blackfoot Crossing there were opportunities for 'blue sky thinking' but by the time the exhibits were designed the building was underway, so the storyline had to fit within the walls of the exhibit floor. The Elders had to make choices and were both publicly credited and held accountable for them. Exhibit designer at Blackfoot Crossing and former Glenbow employee, Irene Kerr, reflects on the process

of the storyline development and recognises the pressure placed upon community Elders.

> ...it was probably difficult for them because they were definitely sticking their necks out, having to represent this entire [history and culture], and again because of the politics. So I really give them credit for actually taking this on and doing it. And I am sure there is criticism from other people in the community, and rightly so, you are never going to make everybody happy. But we don't bear the brunt of that, they probably do. So that's another thing you have to give [them credit for], and I'm sure it was the same at Glenbow. I am sure you will get someone, probably to this day, that will go up and see, for example, Allan Pard's name there and go back down and say oh Allan why did you… you know. So again you have to give them credit for even doing it, I think. They are very brave... And it is something I've never really thought about until now. Because we just kind of think about it from our perspective, how great they are for us, and how helpful they are to us, without thinking that we are kind of hanging them out to dry in a way. By letting them tell their stories and using what they tell us, it's still kind of, probably not as great for them as we think it is (Pers. Com. Kerr 2008).

As Lawlor astutely points out:

> A common misunderstanding among reservation tourists, as often enough among academics, is to assume that tribal communities operate more or less in unison on most decisions and plans for collective, public life. This, of course, is manifestly not the case (2006:9).

Even with its singular focus on Siksika, Blackfoot Crossing cannot fully represent the whole community, culture and heritage. With approximately 6000 members (Siksika Nation 2011), the Siksika community is a diversity of different groups, identities, opinions and perspectives. Crane Bear claims that Blackfoot Crossing only represents half of the Siksika nation:

> ...you will never hear about my people [in Blackfoot Crossing]... my people down here are called the Northern Blackfoot and our chief is chief Old Sun of the Medicine Clan people. We have our own history, we have our own stories... The people you hear on this reserve, or you hear in the history books, are... about Crowfoot and his people... they're southern Blackfoots, not northern Blackfoots. They are two separate families that are there [on Siksika reserve] (Pers. Comm. Crane Bear 2008).

Blackfoot Crossing Director, Jack Royal, acknowledges the limitations of the story the exhibit tells:

> ...obviously we can't tell our whole story in one little display downstairs. There are so many aspects... so many components... so many different things that we could communicate, that we can't possible do it in one sitting. So the plan is to eventually have, keep it fresh, keep it continuing in terms of the next portion of

the story we want to tell. I anticipate that it would take, if we are changing it every two to three years, maybe twenty years to kind of tell the full story right from our existence to where we are now, and our whole view on life, language, culture, history... right now we just took flashes of different things. So we focused on the Treaty, we focused on residential school, things that really affected us (Pers. Comm. Royal 2008a).

Blackfoot Crossing employees have voiced their concerns about criticism from their community and feel a need to develop better community relations (addressed in chapter six).

The pressure placed on community participants could be considered an unfair burden if the participants do not have full control over the development of the exhibit. If we consider the fluctuating power within engagement zones (see chapter six), the limitations of the cultural form that is museum exhibits (see chapter eight) and the limits placed upon engagement by logistics, museum ethos and practices (see chapter seven) it is clear that even empowered community participants are not in full control of the creation process or life of the exhibits they contribute to. Further still, community members do not have experience developing exhibits, and it can be difficult for them to envision the finished product or know how their contributions will shape the final product. As such it can come as a surprise when they see the gallery completed. Elder Pete Standing Alone, who worked on Glenbow's *Nitsitapiisinni*, recalled that 'I was a little surprised in the end; it wasn't really what I had in mind' (Pers. Comm. 2008). He had expected to see more representation of a Blackfoot irrigation company than what was included in the final exhibit, and even after seven years passing since the exhibit opened, this was one of the key issues evoked by our discussion of the exhibit. Exhibit designer Irene Kerr recalled the development of Glenbow and Blackfoot Crossing and noted that 'when we first started meeting, the storyline committee, we had a bit of trouble getting going because they didn't, it is hard for them to, understand. It is hard for people to understand an abstract concept like putting an exhibit together' (Pers. Comm. Kerr 2008).

Acknowledging the contributions of community participants and empowering them to make decisions does give the community a (limited) voice and is an opportunity to begin changing Blackfoot representation in museums. It also values and honours their contributions. Despite the pressures, uncertainties, and risks, Elders choose to participant because they believe the work is important.

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9.4 Conclusion

Museums could greatly benefit from listening to community participants experience of engagement. Assumptions that engagement is automatically beneficial need to be reconsidered if museums wish to build relationships of reciprocal equality, and potentially empower communities. Both the positive and negative realities of community engagement and employment need to be seriously considered by museums, to minimise potential risks for community members.

Museums need to carefully consider the consequences of including participants in the exhibits, where community members can recognise them and visitors can perceive them as part of the collection on display. There needs to be greater appreciation of the challenges guides face when trying to interpret exhibits, and the fine line between showing and being on show.

Museums need to recognise the value of the contributions community members give, as well as the risks they take by participating. They should compensate them adequately and equally to non-community members, not to buy the information but to honour and value participants' expertises and the work they do for the museum.

The most important finding from my interviews with participants was the long term consequences of working with museums. As the 'public face' of museum work, participants have been credited and congratulated for their work, but have also been criticised and ostracised. Community members' reputations are put at stake through their engagement with museums and they have to live with the consequences as, after engagement ends, they have to return to the community they represented and continue to live in it. The effects are personal and potentially devastating, and seemingly unjust when the individuals do not have complete control over the museums or exhibits with which they work.

Thus engagement can be a double-edged sword for community members, and despite the theory, is not always as empowering as museums would like it to appear. Current museological discourse and practice undervalues the challenges, difficulties and risks community members face when they engage with museums to represent their communities. Greater understanding, empathy, acknowledgement and compensation for those difficulties would surely help to improve relations between museums and Blackfoot communities in Southern Alberta.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

All peoples must have equal dignity and essential worth. Their languages, heritages, and knowledge must be equally respected by public institutions and by all peoples... Equality and respect require cooperative frameworks, efforts, and innovations (Battiste and Henderson 2000:292).

Elders, are saying: "just ask us." And that's what museums failed to do in the past. I don't know how much it has changed (Pers. Comm. Weasel Head 2008).

The thesis set out to answer the question: how and why have southern Albertan museums and heritage sites engaged with Blackfoot communities, and can this engagement be improved? To do this the thesis addressed four sets of aims and objectives, detailed in the table below. The methods of in-depth semi-structured interviewing, semi-participant observation, textual analysis of the exhibits and archival analysis were selected to meet these aims and provided the data analysed in the thesis. This final chapter presents the conclusions from the research.

Aims	Conclusions
1. Analyse why the case-studies and Blackfoot communities chose to engage with each other and the context in which this occurred.	• The opportunity for Blackfoot people to influence and control how their culture is represented is very important to the community, not just to set the historical record straight, engender better cross-cultural understanding and relations, or to assist with legal claims; but to develop respect for, and pride within, a community that has been the subject of abusive colonial policies and institutionalised racism. • Museums play an important role in authorising heritage and museum representation has real social, political and legal power to influence how a community is viewed and treated. • The research at Glenbow illustrates the importance of repatriation of sacred material to building meaningful partnerships with the Blackfoot.
2. Analyse and compare the process of engagement in practice to engagement in theory.	• Current discourse on Blackfoot engagement is dominated by curatorial and academic perspectives, as such community perspectives have generally been overlooked and under-analysed. • By listening to Blackfoot perspectives the thesis highlighted key gaps in current understanding – primarily the potential and actual, short and long term risks and costs of participation. • Engagement is more fluid and unpredictable that current theory accounts for. To conceptualise these power relations the research proposed the theory of 'engagement zones' and emphasises the importance of inter-community collaboration. • Engagement is idealised as an unlimited coming together of ideas, but in practice these ideas must fit within the boundaries of museology. Naturalised residual practices continue unaffected by Blackfoot participation, even in community owned centres, because they are enshrined in dominant Western professional and social approaches to heritage management. • Although engagement encourages new ways of working and adaptation, Indigenous practices continue to be viewed by the majority

		as secondary to Western approaches.
		• Community control lacks meaning if the resources are not available to enable action.
		• The thesis has highlighted the importance of inter-community engagement, and not just cross-cultural work, especially in community controlled engagement.
3.	Analyse the products of engagement and the extent to which they met expectations of participants and the bodies they represented.	• The study indicates that the process and products of engagement are less empowering and more limited than current discourse acknowledges.
		• What is made possible by engagement is limited by external pressures such as logistics and institutional ethos, and the wider professional, social and political context in which the museum and community operate.
		• The institutionalisation of Blackfoot engagement and employment does ensure a long term commitment to a community relationship. However it does not necessarily equalise power relations.
4.	Examine the future of Blackfoot community/museum relations and if improvements or changes could be made.	• My findings indicate that Canadian museum/Blackfoot community engagements and relations can be improved.
		• Museums need to listen to communities to gain an understanding of their experiences of engagement to find better ways of working together.
		• Engagement would benefit from greater transparency about the terms of power sharing and the parameters within which the engagement takes place.
		• Understanding the current limits of engagement and restrictions to museum indigenisation will enable collaborative efforts to be strategically utilised to work within and go beyond current boundaries, and facilitate reciprocities.
		• Acknowledging the risks and costs of engagement for participants and lessening these burdens by providing adequate and culturally appropriate compensation, could improve relations.
		• If museums decentre themselves and view their action as part of a network of bodies, groups and societies, their contributions to cross-cultural understanding can be combined with other efforts to create greater change.
		• Indigenous approaches to cultural heritage practice should be supported and respected as distinct but equally valid, and potentially complementary, ways to maintain the world's cultural knowledge and material.
		• Intangible cultural heritage needs to be honoured and balanced with the traditional privileging of tangible heritage by Western museology.
		• 'Off stage' culture should be respected as such, and museums should consider returning materials to communities that can use them to maintain their intangible culture.
		• People need to remember, practice and live their culture and to share it on their own terms with others, whether this is done in museums, heritage sites, within communities, or in combination.
		• Finding ways to return the benefit to communities will be the key to the longevity and integrity of relations.

Julia Harrison has noted that many museum professionals across Canada have 'worked with great diligence—and... achieved very positive results—to ameliorate aspects of the tensions resulting from this problematic history, but the point remains that it continues to be problematic' (2005:196). Engagement is difficult, complex, unpredictable, time consuming, resource heavy, and not always successful or beneficial. But it can also be creative, inspiring, life changing, and empowering. With the proliferation of community engagement projects, museums are increasingly reflecting on their experiences and considering ways forward. The majority seek gradual improvements, while others propose innovations such as 'radical trust' (Lynch and Alberti 2010), yet there are those who are sadly choosing to abandon the practice (Chandler 2009).

Although engagement is imperfect, my findings show that engagement continues to be viewed as an extremely important and worthwhile pursuit by the Blackfoot communities. This is due in part to the important role museums play in authorising heritage, and because current power inequalities in Canada between First Nations and mainstream Canadians, mean that small gains are the current route to gaining greater societal change that could transform current relations. 'Museums are uniquely placed to foster this sense of interrelatedness, along with the deep respect required for inter-cultural understanding' (Janes and Conaty 2005:14). Phillips and Phillips have argued that 'the large questions of land and power will not, of course, be resolved within a museum. All a museum can do is to disrupt tired stereotypes and ways of thinking that lead only to dead ends and to stimulate its visitors to think critically about contemporary issues' (2005:702). However, museums can help change attitudes and provide Western validation of culture required by courts for land claims as Daniels has demonstrated (2009). As such I would argue museum representation has real social, political and legal power to influence how a community is viewed and treated. The opportunity for Blackfoot people to influence and control how their culture is represented is very important to the community, not just to set the historical record straight, engender better cross-cultural understanding and relations, or to assist with legal claims; but to develop respect for, and pride within, a community that has been the subject of abusive colonial policies and institutionalised racism. As Clifford Crane Bear states:

> [Blackfoot Crossing] tells the story of our people, it tells the history. And a lot of
> our young people need to hear that, need to go there, learn that we do have a
> history. And if you tell the right stories, tell the right thing, it will bring peoples'
> pride back (Pers. Comm. Crane Bear 2008).

Viv Golding (2009; 2007a; 2007b) has documented the importance and the ability of museums, through educational programming and community engagement, to help build self-esteem, particularly in disadvantaged youth. Efforts that support Blackfoot cultural pride and heritage are very important given the difficult circumstances they face on a daily basis. 'In 2009, First Nation communities are still, on average, the most disadvantaged social/cultural group in Canada on a host of measures including income, unemployment, health, education, child welfare, housing and other forms of infrastructure' (The Make First Nations Poverty History Expert Advisory Committee 2009:10) and First Nations people are five to seven times more likely than a Canadian to kill themselves (Health Canada 2006). As such, empowering people who have been so disempowered by dominant society has the potential to change lives.

10.1 A Gap in Current Knowledge

This research differs from current publications on Blackfoot engagement (see chapter two) and offers a comparative cross-institutional analysis of engagement theory in practice from both the museum and community perspective. Addressing different levels of power-sharing, from consultation to community control, at four museums and heritage sites, including the first museological analysis of Blackfoot Crossing, the thesis presents a unique contribution to the field and unsettles current understandings and assumptions about community engagement.

The study indicates that the process and products of engagement are less empowering and more limited than current discourse acknowledges. Extensive fieldwork, participant observation and in-depth interviews, enabled detailed analysis of the participant experience of engagement. Current discourse on Blackfoot engagement is dominated by curatorial and academic perspectives, as such community perspectives have generally been overlooked and under-analysed. By listening to Blackfoot perspectives the thesis highlighted key gaps in current understanding – primarily the potential and actual, short and long term risks and costs of participation.

Janet Marstine has argued that 'institutional bureaucracies, the demands of funding sources and allegiances to common practice have typically prescribed incremental change in the museum, rather than the kind of holistic rethinking required to instill (sic) the values of shared authority and of social understanding among diverse communities' (Marstine, 2011b:5). This research provides a holistic view of engagement from initial

negotiations, to curatorial adaptations, co-created exhibits, institutional indigenisation, community employment and on-going relations after the completion of the project. This perspective enables the tracking of engagement and highlights the way power is negotiated and renegotiated, and illustrates that although museums may set out with one engagement approach in mind, the process is fluid and unpredictable. Through the course of the relationship engagement changes and produces empowering and disempowering moments. Sharing power is neither simple nor conclusive, but a complex and unpredictable first step in building new relations between museums and communities.

To conceptualise power relations within the fluid and changeable processes of engagement, the research proposed the use of the term 'engagement zones', a reworking of Clifford's museums as contact zones (see chapter six), and emphasises the importance of inter-community collaboration. The thesis argues that what is made possible by engagement within these zones is limited by external pressures such as logistics and institutional ethos, and the wider professional, social and political context in which the museum and community operate.

Although engagement encourages new ways of working and adaptation, the underlying principles of museology remain intact and residual practices continue, even in community owned centres, because they are enshrined in dominant Western professional and social approaches to heritage management. Indigenous practices continue to be viewed by the majority as unprofessional and unscientific, and therefore secondary to Western approaches. This is a key point that urgently requires change to enable better relations between museums and Indigenous communities.

10.2 Practical Implications

In terms of the practical implications of this study, my findings indicate that Canadian museum/Blackfoot community engagements and relations can be improved. Although each engagement is unique and needs to be viewed on a case-by-case basis, changes to museological approaches to engagement, curation, and representation of Indigenous peoples, would make relations easier. As Marie Battiste and James Henderson argue 'Indigenous peoples must be actively involved in the development of any new convention or laws' because 'their participation will develop new sensitivities to what is sacred, to what is capable of being shared, and to what is fair compensation for the

sharing of information among diverse peoples' (2000:292). This can aptly be applied to museums and heritage sites.
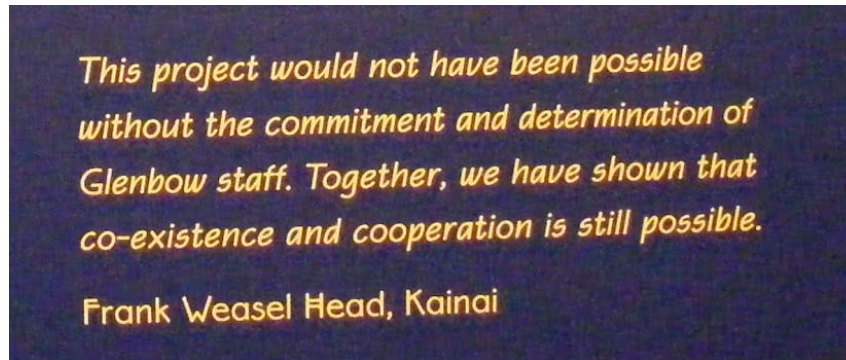

Figure 10.1 Final text panel from the Glenbow *Nitsitapiisinni* Gallery (Photo by Onciul 2008).

The research at Glenbow illustrates the importance of repatriation of sacred material to building meaningful partnerships with the Blackfoot (see figure 10.1). The ethnology team demonstrate that it is possible to adapt and indigenise museum practice. However, the lack of institutionalisation of engagement meant that other departments within the museum did not adapt, and the ethos of the museum was not changed. Engagement is idealised as an unlimited coming together of ideas, but in practice these ideas must fit within the boundaries of the museum. With the changes in staff, leadership and institutional priorities, the relationship between Glenbow and the Blackfoot is vulnerable due to the need for funds and resources to support the work. Further still, the pillars of museology – collecting and exhibiting, remain unchanged and many naturalised residual practices continue unaffected by Blackfoot participation. For example the co-created exhibit had to meet Glenbow needs (audience, funders, stakeholders), relied on Glenbow collections, and was limited to the assigned gallery space. Community experts received honorariums, while Western experts were paid for their work. Thus the change inspired by engagement at Glenbow was important, but localised and limited.

In comparison, Head-Smashed-In showed that the institutionalisation of Blackfoot engagement and employment does ensure a long term commitment to a community relationship. However it has not equalised power relations because upper-management remains non-Blackfoot and top down consultation means the agenda and veto remain with the non-Blackfoot government employees.

Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum provided an example of the external limits on community power. Although run and owned by Indigenous people, the community board members are mostly figure heads as there is a lack of funds to change the museum. Any attempts to adapt or indigenise the exhibits or practice face the debilitating problem of a lack of resources. This example shows that community control lacks meaning if the resources are not available to enable action.

The thesis has addressed the ways in which the Blackfoot have adopted and indigenised the idea of the museum for their own ends at Blackfoot Crossing. Importantly it has highlighted that although engagement models show community control as the top rung on the ladder (Arnstein 1969), at Blackfoot Crossing the community has had to consult the community emphasising the importance of thinking about inter-community engagement, and not just cross-cultural work. Blackfoot Crossing also illustrated the outside pressures on Indigenous museums to conform to Western museological standards to enable them to be recognised and participate in professional activities such as the loaning of collections. These restrictions continue to prioritise and privilege Western approaches to heritage management over Indigenous practices. Despite the efforts of theorists and practitioners to create new museology and to decentre the museum (Clifford 1997), it appears that non-Western approaches to heritage management are still viewed as secondary.

> I don't know if [Blackfoot Crossing] is ever going to gain the stature or the respectability from the academic museum community... I don't know if it will ever be taken seriously in the museum world. Just because the standards are so high... and because the museum is not really a museum because it is not climate controlled. I mean it is a beautiful building and I am sure lots of people will, academics and curators, will come here. But I don't believe they'll ever, ever think it is up to standard. Because that is just the way it is. You saw people study Native people and as hard as they tried to shed that academic approach, this isn't that kind of place, it just isn't, and it is never going to be... I don't think there is going to be museums lining up at the door to give artefacts back to this place... the [Siksika] Crowfoot Railway Pass, they wouldn't lend that to us, they lent it to Glenbow, they wouldn't lend it to us. We had to pay to get a replica done. How ironic is that!? Where did it come from!? Who did it belong to!? But I can't see that ever changing. Unless there are people like you or Alison [Brown]; unless there are more people in the museum world and the academic community, in Europe especially, [who understand this issue] then this is never going to change (Pers. Comm. Kerr 2008).

Museums need to listen to communities, not just to honour their rights to have their advice considered in the storage and display of their cultural material (UNESCO 2006), but to gain understanding of their experiences of engagement to find better ways of

working together. Understanding the current limits of engagement and restrictions to museum indigenisation will enable collaborative efforts to be strategically utilised to work within and go beyond current boundaries, and facilitate reciprocities that can begin to decolonise relations and enrich both museums and communities.

Whilst Canadian museums operate in a society where relations between Indigenous people and Canadians are far from equal, engagement relations can help minimise asymmetries by acknowledging risks and costs of engagement for participants and by lessening these burdens and providing adequate and culturally appropriate compensation. As long as Indigenous experts are continued to be paid substantially less than their Western counter parts, Indigenous knowledge is defined as less valuable by museums. Secondly, if museums decentre themselves and view their action as part of a network of bodies, groups and societies, their contributions to cross-cultural understanding can be combined with other efforts to create greater change. Viv Golding has illustrated this in the UK with her idea of 'museum frontiers – a spatio-temporal site for acting in collaborative effort with other institutions' (2009:2) such as universities and schools (see chapter 6).

Indigenous approaches to cultural heritage practice should be supported and respected as distinct but equally valid, and potentially complementary, ways to maintain the world's cultural knowledge and material. Intangible cultural heritage needs to be honoured and balanced with the traditional privileging of tangible heritage by Western museology.

The key is to enable people to remember, practice and live their culture and to share it on their own terms with others, whether this is done in museums, heritage sites, within communities, or in combination. 'Off stage' culture should be respected as such, and museums should consider returning materials to communities that can use them to maintain their intangible culture. This will build reciprocities that will enrich both the community and the museum, as demonstrated at Glenbow. Finding ways to return the benefit of engagement to communities will be the key to the longevity and integrity of relations.

10.3 Avenues for Further Research

The research inspires a number of avenues for further study. As the first museological research to address Blackfoot Crossing, there is great potential for further studies at this

important community cultural centre. Such studies could contribute to greater understanding of the process of community controlled inter-community engagement and the effects this has on the sharing of power and authority, and the representation of community voice. Further work is needed to address the ways in which relations between museums and communities can become more reciprocal, with suitable acknowledgement of and compensation for participants. Indigenous communities, such as the Blackfoot, are increasingly travelling further to assess their material culture stored in international museums. As such European museums can draw on the North American models to help create positive engagements that build lasting and reciprocal relations (like Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, is currently doing).

Although the research findings specifically address Blackfoot engagement, the areas of improvement can apply to others doing engagement elsewhere. The need for mutual respect, sufficient time and resources, open lines of communication, and clearly demarcated boundaries that can be crossed through negotiation, are concepts that have universal transferability to museum engagement anywhere. Understanding the risks and costs of engagement to participants, as well as the methods to develop meaningful and successful engagement would benefit all entering into such processes.

It is not enough just to listen; museums need to create relationships built on communication, respect, co-operative action, reflection, equality, and reciprocation. To engage superficially, makes engagement a tool for modern collection and a method to maintain the status quo which ultimately benefits neither museum nor community. To engage meaningfully takes courage, strength and commitment; but it has the potential to enrich museums and communities, and contribute to improving the lives of Indigenous people through building platforms for voice and action, and contributing to the decolonisation of cross-cultural relations.

Appendix I. Interviewees

Ordered alphabetically by last name:

1. Anonymous (19 Sept 2008) Blackfoot Crossing.
2. Anonymous (24 Sept 2008) Head-Smashed-In.
3. Anonymous (12 Nov 2008) Head-Smashed-In.
4. Bastien, Dr. Betty (19 Nov 2008) Piikani. Associate Professor University of Calgary.
5. Bedford, Judy (26 Sept 2008a; 2008b) Non-Blackfoot. Board Member Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum. Consultant for Blackfoot Crossing.
6. Blood, Narcisse (18 July 2006*, 12 Sept 2007) Kainai Elder.
7. Blood, Kyle (27 July 2006*) Kainai. Head-Smashed-In Seasonal Guide.
8. Breaker, Shane (16 Oct 2008) Siksika. Blackfoot Crossing Vice-President of Marketing & Public Relations at Blackfoot Crossing.
9. Brewster, Pete (14 Oct 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Executive Director of Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum 1992-2005.
10. Brink, Jack (19 July 2006*; 26 Sept 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Head Archaeologist and Consultant for Head-Smashed-In and Curator of Archaeology at the Royal Alberta Museum.
11. Carter, Beth (Sept 2007, 28 Aug 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Glenbow Ethnology Curator, Blackfoot Gallery Team Member and Project Manager for Nitsitapiisinni.
12. Clarke, Ian (12 Nov 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Regional Manager/Southern Operations including Head-Smashed-In.
13. Conaty, Gerald (Gerry) (26 Sept 2007; 20 Nov 2008) Non-Blackfoot, Honorary Blackfoot Chief. Blackfoot Gallery Team Member, and Curator and Director of Indigenous Studies at Glenbow.
14. Crane Bear, Clifford (8 Oct 2008) Siksika. Blackfoot Crossing Exhibit Team Member and Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member.
15. Crazybull, Sandra (23 Sept 2008) Kainai. Glenbow former Interpreter and Native Liaison.
16. CrowChief, Michelle (2 Sept 2008) Siksika. Exhibit Team Member and Assistant Curator at Blackfoot Crossing.
17. Crowshoe, Quinton (25 July 2006*) Piikani. Site Marketing/Program Coordinator at Head-Smashed-In.

18. Crowshoe, Reg (19 Aug 2008) Piikani Chief 2007-2011.

19. Day Rider, Rosie (25 Nov 2008) Kainai Elder. Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member. Head-Smashed-In consultant.

20. First Rider, Blair (24 July 2006*) Kainai Elder. Former Senior Interpreter and On-Site Archaeologist at Head-Smashed-In.

21. Good Striker, Lorraine (25 July 2006*) Late Kainai Elder. Former Head of Interpretation at Head-Smashed-In.

22. Goodfellow, Ron (18 Nov 2008) Goodfellow Architect for Blackfoot Crossing.

23. Healy, Harold (July 2009) Kainai Elder. Former President and Board Member of Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum.

24. Heavy Head, Pam (18 Sept 2008) Elder and member of Kainai. Co-created Glenbow's *Situation Rez: Kainai Students Take Action with Art* (December 1, 2007 to December 2008).

25. Houle, Terrance (22 Aug 2008) Kainai Artist. Contributed to Glenbow's *Tracing History: Presenting the Unpresentable* (February 16 - June 22, 2008).

26. Janes, Robert (Bob) (14 Oct 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Former President and CEO of Glenbow 1989-2000.

27. Kerr, Irene (20 Aug 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member. Exhibit Team Member and Exhibit Designer at Blackfoot Crossing.

28. Kiitokii, Trevor (25 July 2006*, 16th Sept 2008) Piikani. Former Revenue Generating Officer at Head-Smashed-In.

29. Knowlton, Stan (16 Sept 2008) Piikani. Head of Interpretation and On-Site Archaeologist at Head-Smashed-In

30. Many Guns, Linda (2 Dec 2008) Siksika. Blackfoot Crossing consultant.

31. Martin, James (Jim) (26 July 2006*, 24th Sept 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Education Specialist and in-house Film Project Manager at Head-Smashed-In.

32. Pard, Allan (12 Nov 2008) Piikani Elder. Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member.

33. Pietrobono, Darren (16 Oct 2008) Siksika. Vice-President of Finance and Administration Blackfoot Crossing.

34. Potts, Jerry (10 Oct 2008) Piikani Elder. Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member.

35. Robinson, Mike (2 Oct 2008) Non-Blackfoot. President and CEO of Glenbow 2000-2007.

36. Royal, Jack (19 Sept 2007; 25 Aug 2008a) Siksika. Exhibit Team Member and Director of Blackfoot Crossing.

37. Royal, Judy (27 Nov 2008b) Siksika. Exhibit Team Member Blackfoot Crossing.

38. Scalplock, Irvine (5 Sept 2008) Siksika. Exhibit Team Member and Curator at Blackfoot Crossing.

39. Site Manager (24 July 2006) Non-Blackfoot. Head-Smashed-In.

40. Sitting Eagle, Colleen (4 Sept 2008) Siksika. Exhibit Team Member and Archives Director at Blackfoot Crossing

41. Sitting Eagle, Gerald (5 Sept 2008) Siksika. Exhibit Team Member Blackfoot Crossing.

42. Sitting Eagle, Laura (16 Oct 2008) Siksika. Interpreter at Blackfoot Crossing.

43. Spalding, Jeff (28 Oct 2008) Non-Blackfoot. Glenbow CEO December 2007-January 2009

44. Standing Alone, Pete (19 Nov 2008) Kainai Elder. Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member.

45. Starlight, Anthony (Tony) (17 Oct 2008) T'suu Tina Elder. Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum Director

46. Weasel Head, Frank (13 Nov 2008) Kainai Elder. Glenbow Blackfoot Gallery Team Member.

47. Weasel Head, Sylvia (13 Nov 2008) Kainai Elder.

48. Wesley, Jackson (21 Oct 2008) Nakoda. Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum Gift shop and admissions staff member.

49. Wolfleg, Adrian (8 Sept 2008) Siksika. Glenbow *Nitsitapiisinni gallery* Interpreter and Schools Programmer.

50. Wright, Beverly (Bev) (4 Sept 2008) Cree. Exhibit Team Member and Vice-President of Programming and Development at Blackfoot Crossing.

* These interviews were originally conducted as part of my MA research (Slater 2006). All interviewees who were available in 2008 were asked to participate in a second interview as part of the PhD research.

Appendix II. Glossary of Abbreviations and Specific Terms

Aamsskáápipikani – American Blackfoot Nation called Southern Piikani or Blackfeet.

AFN – Assembly of First Nations.

AMA – Alberta Museums Association.

Blackfoot – A generic term for the people of the Blackfoot Confederacy, also the name
of the language spoken by the Blackfoot.

Blackfoot Confederacy – Siksika, Kainai Piikani and Blackfeet.

Blackfoot Crossing – Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park (BCHP).

Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum - formerly the Luxton Museum in Banff.

Buffalo Nations Cultural Society – represents several distinct Aboriginal cultural
groups, including the Cree nations, members of the Blackfoot Confederacy
(Siksika, Peigan, and Blood), the Tsuu T'ina, Nakoda, and Métis.

CMA – Canadian Museums Association.

Elder – Custodian of traditional and sacred knowledge.

Glenbow – Glenbow Museum.

Head-Smashed-In – Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre.

Kainai – Canadian Blackfoot Nation also called Bloods or Many Chiefs.

Nitsitapii – The real people (humans).

NMAI – National Museum of the American Indian.

Okan – Sundance.

Piikani – Canadian Blackfoot Nation also called (Northern) Peigan or Aapátohsipikáni.

Siksika – Canadian Blackfoot Nation also known as Blackfoot.

Appendix III. Exhibit Analysis Matrix

Site

1. Where is the site located? *(separate building, part of complex, in town, on outskirts etc)*
2. Describe the site *(size, shape, layout → a walk through tour)*
3. Describe the architecture
4. Opening hours etc
5. Social facilities *(toilets, café, education room, seating, etc)*

Exhibition Space

6. Entrance/initiation
7. Orientation
8. Route *(directed, free choice, suggested)*
9. Guiding elements *(guidebook, staff, signage)*
10. Light
11. Temperature/humidity
12. Smell
13. Sounds
14. Open space/closed space
15. Staff presence
16. Overall atmosphere/ambience
17. Exits/closure

Exhibits

18. Objects on display
19. Age of the objects on display?
20. Real/replica objects?
21. How displayed?
22. Can you touch them?
23. Oral histories?
24. Audio visual displays?
25. Walk-in, life-size environment recreations?
26. Dioramas?

27. Interactives?

28. Mass exhibition/thematic/chronological/narrative?

29. Is the focus on the objects or the interpretation?

Interpretation

30. What type(s) of interpretation are used? *(textual, visual, verbal, etc)*

31. How much textual interpretation is there?

32. Guides and tours? *(number, what is their focus)*

33. Who is the interpretation aimed at? *(children, adults, Blackfoot, non-Blackfoot, tourists)*

34. Main focus of the interpretation?

35. Does the interpretation provide context? *(social, political, cultural / local, regional, national, international)*

36. Purpose of interpretation *(narrative, description, analysis, etc)*

37. Language used in textual interpretation *(quotes, Blackfoot/English)*

38. Has the interpretation developed over time or is there a homogeneous design?

Audience

39. Rough tally of types of audience groups present *(individuals, couples, family, friends, age, sex, ethnicity, etc)*

Management

40. How is the site managed?

41. Staff? *(number, community)*

42. Are Elders involved?

Content

43. Whose stories are being told?

44. What events, people, places etc are mentioned by name?

45. Inclusion of women/men/children/teens/parents/elderly/different ethnic groups

46. Who at the margins? Who at the centre?

47. Are relationships between people or groups illustrated?

48. Are different experiences, stories or opinions addressed, or a single version focussed on?

49. Is a particular version of Blackfoot identity focussed on? *(pre-historic, exotic other, traditional, romantic, colonised, revival)*

50. How is the impact of colonialism represented at the site?

Information about the project

Plain language statement

Study title:

Relations and Representations: Museums and indigenous Blackfoot communities in Alberta

Research details:

This research will analyse different approaches to Blackfoot community participation in museums in Alberta, Canada and the exhibitions this participation produces. It will compare museums that are owned and operated by non-Blackfoot members to those that are community based. Analysis will focus on how and why communities participate with these museums. Attention will be paid to whether the process of creating the exhibition and product of the exhibition itself meet the community's expectations and how their expectations compare to that of the museum. The affect of community participation with a museum will be explored by considering the ongoing relationship the community has with the museum.

The study is a three year PhD project that is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK. Bryony Slater is a research student from the University of Newcastle, England.

What is the purpose of the study?

The research aims to help identify ways to improve community relations with museums and in doing so improve representation.

How are participants chosen?

Participants are selected for their involvement in developing Blackfoot exhibitions in the four case-studies: Glenbow Museum; Blackfoot Crossing Heritage Park; Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Museum; and Buffalo Nations Luxton Museum. Participants include members of staff from the museums, and members of the community who worked with and advised the museum or were involved in some way.

What will happen to participants?

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Interviewees will be asked to participate in an interview that will be audio-recorded. Follow-up interviews and focus group discussions may be requested at a later date. Interviewees are not obligated to participate in any follow-up interviews or focus groups.

Will participants be anonymous?

On the consent form you will indicate whether or not you wish to have your name used in relation to the comments you make in the interview. If you choose to be named your interview quotes will be followed by brackets that will include your name and the date you were interviewed. This will help place your comments in to the context of the research and identify your contributions. If you wish not to be named, your name will be replaced with the word 'anonymous'.

Data will be stored as digital audio files on CDs/DVDs and as typed transcripts on CD/DVD and in printed form. They will be kept securely and will not be accessible to the public. A copy of the interviews and transcripts will be handed in with the PhD dissertation to a panel of examiners, for the assessment of the PhD. You will receive a copy of your interview along with a transcript for your personal reference (if desired). No-one other than the researcher (Bryony Slater), my examiners and you will have access to your interview recording or full transcription. Only selected quotes will be used in public documents – referenced either with your name or as 'anonymous' depending on your selection on the consent form.

What will be the final research output?

The research findings will be presented as a PhD dissertation that will be assessed to judge the candidate's success or failure to gain her PhD. The research findings may also be presented in different forms such as, but not limited to, documents, lectures, presentations, conference papers, and publications relating to the PhD research.

Consent Form

Newcastle University

School of Arts and Culture

International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies

Title of study: *Relations and Representations: Museums and indigenous Blackfoot communities in Alberta*

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

The researcher will provide a written document for you to read before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from this, ask the researcher before you decide whether to take part. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

I confirm that I have read the statement provided for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, without needing to give a reason.

I agree to be audio recorded to enable the accurate recording of my interview.

I understand that following this interview I will receive an audio copy and a transcription of excerpts from the interview which the researcher wishes to use. I understand that if, after reviewing these copies, I have any issues or problems or wish to change anything I can contact Bryony Slater to discuss this.

Please tick one box:

*   *Yes, I agree for the interviewer, Bryony Slater, to use my name in relation to the comments I make in this interview*

*   *No, I wish to remain anonymous, and do not wish to be named in relation to the comments I make in this interview*

By signing this document I agree to the above terms.

_____ _____ _____

Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____

Researcher   Date   Signature

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