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Interpreting American Indian Cultural Heritage: Visitor's Educational Experience at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site

Abstract

The following research and analysis explore the various methods in which American Indian heritage is interpreted at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site in Colorado Springs, CO. Attention was given to the distinctive ways this space acts as an educational institution that displays and interprets Colorado's cultural heritage through object-centered learning and participatory education. The goal for this research was to discuss ahistorical biases that have existed in museums for centuries, while encouraging dialogue and discourse about the appropriate methods for interpreting American Indian cultural heritage. Through the presentation and examination of visitors' educational experiences using observations, questionnaires, and informal interviews with visitors and interpreters, I will discuss if and how the interpretational techniques at RLR influence visitor's educational experience, further the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage, and broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage.

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Interpreting American Indian Cultural Heritage: Visitor's Educational Experience at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Kara Underwood

August 2017

Advisor: Esteban M. Gómez, Ph.D.

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The following research and analysis explore the various methods in which American Indian heritage is interpreted at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site in Colorado Springs, CO. Attention was given to the distinctive ways this space acts as an educational institution that displays and interprets Colorado's cultural heritage through object-centered learning and participatory education. The goal for this research was to discuss ahistorical biases that have existed in museums for centuries, while encouraging dialogue and discourse about the appropriate methods for interpreting American Indian cultural heritage. Through the presentation and examination of visitors' educational experiences using observations, questionnaires, and informal interviews with visitors and interpreters, I will discuss if and how the interpretational techniques at RLR influence visitor's educational experience, further the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage, and broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2016, I evaluated how Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) acted as an institution that educated its visitors about American Indian cultural heritage. RLR is currently a 230-acre historic site dedicated to preserving the history and culture of the people who lived and settled in the Front Range region of Colorado between 1775 and the early 1900s. This historic site spans back to documented times in which the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes lived in and traveled through what is now considered Colorado Springs prior to colonial settlement, forcible relocation to reservations, acts of genocide, and violent assimilation practices. At RLR, there is an American Indian interpretive area which is one of the few historic sites in the United States that actively employs American Indian interpreters full-time. At this educational space, there are American Indian and historic or non-Native interpreters that navigate visitors though the culture and history of the region. This is done by depicting and recreating historic lifeways through interpretive techniques of participatory education and guided-tours.

There are roughly five hundred and sixty federally recognized tribes in the United States. The terminology used to describe the first people to live in what is now considered North America includes Indian, Native American, and American Indian. The range of nomenclature makes it difficult and complicated to know which word is preferred, which word is accepted, and which is not. While the terms American Indian and Native American are used interchangeably in academia, for this thesis, the first people to resided

in North America will be referred to as American Indian. When possible, American Indian communities will be referred to by their tribal affiliation.

Research Questions

Through the examination of visitors' educational experiences, I will discuss how the interpretational techniques at RLR further the discourse and broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage. There is no doubt that the primary role of historic sites is to engage with and educate the community, but many times they exclude topics and themes of the historically oppressed and marginalized communities leading to inaccurate and ahistorical perspectives. It is this problem that ultimately shaped the framework for this research project. The following thesis was guided by three specific questions.

First, how do the interpretational techniques at RLR influence visitor's educational experience? The goal is to assess if visitors prefer a specific interpretational technique and if it is associated with a specific representation of cultural heritage. Second, how do the interpretational techniques at RLR further the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage? Since history is viewed as significant social, political, and economic phenomenon, the discourse surrounding American Indian culture deserves significant reflection so the public can better understand events of the past while ensuring the horrific atrocities of colonial history do not occur again. Third, how do the interpretational techniques at RLR broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage?

The theme of inequity and how to resolve it has been a scholarly focus for decades. Unfortunately, many communities have typically been ignored in the presentation of colonial history, especially when the development of an area deals with the genocide of millions of people. Reaching out to those that are not included in the traditional narrative regarding the development of the United States can tie groups of once separate people more closely together through respect, education, understanding, and healing. As an American Indian who is a quarter Muskogee, I want to be the person my ancestors are proud of and my descendants are grateful for. I believe this will only occur by discussing and identifying how RLR can meaningfully contribute to presentations of American Indian cultural heritage through agency, survivance, and multivocal discourse.

Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site

Historic sites are fundamental to societal goals and values regarding visitors who encounter and learn from them. The main purpose of this thesis is to understand and evaluate how interpreters at RLR educate visitors by inquiring and assessing to what extent they present American Indian heritage. This will occur by analyzing how interpreter discourse, presentations of cultural heritage, and interactions between interpreters and visitors differ at RLR. This will also occur by assessing how specific interpretational techniques such as participation and guided-tours can increase or limit visitors' educational experiences. RLR has six interpretive sites depicting various historical and cultural time periods; the American Indian Area (1775), the Homestead Cabin (1867), the Rock Ledge House (1876), the Orchard House (1900), the Blacksmith

Shop, and the Carriage House. At all six of these sites, interpreters were present to answer visitor questions, provide cultural and historical narratives, and create meaningful experiences. The American Indian Area was the only site at RLR to employ American Indian interpreters, discuss their cultural heritage, and address aspects of their interactions with colonial settlers.

Significance of Research

Collecting data from visitors as opposed to assumptions from educators and curators is crucial in historic sites, because visitors are typically unfamiliar with the development of many educational institutions in the United States. Educational institutions have been entrenched within a Western epistemological framework for centuries, which ultimately allows their perspectives and overall mission to be strongly colonial in nature and therefore inherently biased. Recently, these spaces have been criticized for engaging in approaches that place non-Western cultures as geographically distant, inferior, primitive, and exotic others through stereotypical and ahistorical presentations of cultural heritage. This contemporary acknowledgment is significant when considering how 87% of K-12 academic standards only address American Indian history before the 1900s, much of which is from an ahistorical perspective (Shear 2015). In 2012, discourse analysis revealed that textbook portrayals of American Indian people in public schools simplified the narrative of relations based on the economic, political, and social development of the United States, as opposed to a narrative of the historical atrocities that occurred (Anderson 2012). The lack of public education and knowledge of

both historic and contemporary American Indian issues such as treaties, sovereignty, and land and water rights results in the current suppression of American Indian communities nationwide.

Debates regarding how the story of the United States is told, what content to include in the narrative, and who has the power and authority to shape these representations allows for the present marginalization of American Indian communities.
Ahistorical narratives that subsume the implication of westward expansion within the context of Manifest Destiny lend justification to colonial atrocities while minimizing or completely ignoring acts of genocide, assimilation, and institutional violence that also occurred through these policies. Recently, historic sites have developed new and unique ways to address these issues through research, education, training, and practice. This ultimately grants visitors an opportunity to form a deeper understanding of American Indian heritage and the cultural landscape in which they live. In addition, it allows American Indians to have a sense of belonging and inclusivity in a world that they have intentionally been excluded from.

Terminology

The key terms and concepts discussed in the following section are crucial to the structure and foundation of this research project. To fully understand the importance of the research conducted, historic sites, cultural heritage, interpretation, cultural landscapes, and colonization will be explained in detail and used frequently throughout the entirety of this thesis.

Historic Sites

Historic sites, which are sometimes referred to as living history museums or open-air museums, are cultural institutions that combine historical exhibitions with costumed interpreters who educate visitors within reconstructed and outdoor environments. These sites depict various historical, cultural, and folkloric time periods for their audiences. Visitors are attracted to these sites because they can engage with simulations of the past through educational experiences (Magelssen 2007). These institutions serve as important cultural and historical resources that preserve and recreate time periods of a specific region. This occurs not merely by representing the past, but by broadening visitor's worldviews and knowledge through historical truths (Magelssen 2007). Within these historic sites, interpreters are present to create a path between the object and the observer and between the past and the present through object-centered learning and guided-tours (Sullivan and McClenney 1979). Effective and accurate interpretation at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) allows visitors to grasp an understanding of American Indian cultural heritage and the founding of the Front Range as a colonial settlement through cultural objects and historical discourse associated with the time periods being represented.

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is composed of tangible and intangible properties. Tangible heritage consists of material objects such as historic buildings, landscapes, art, artifacts,

and reconstructed objects that are worthy of preservation and interpretation (McCall and Gray 2013). Intangible heritage allows the protection of cultural identities and the cultural diversity of humankind. It includes ceremonies, music, oral traditions, stories, and customs that make up the immaterial manifestations of a culture (McCall and Gray 2013). Intangible heritage is more than just safeguarded and unchanged traditions. They are practices inherited from the past and revived for the present, especially when considering the tangible creations of traditional art, jewelry, and pottery. These aspects of tangible heritage are related to the intangible heritage and oral knowledge transmitted from previous generations.

The recent desire to safeguard intangible heritage represents a paradigm shift in which museologists once focused solely on the objectivity of material culture. This distinction between tangible and intangible heritage is significant because they have cultural, historic, and traditional importance for American Indians today. Democratizing definitions of cultural heritage also allows identity to be constructed within vernacular cultural expressions, as opposed to solely within an official discourse. Thereby, allowing historically oppressed or marginalized communities an opportunity to exert agency or the ability to have a social impact over the interpretation of their cultural heritage, meaning, and use (McDowell 2008).

Interpretation

Interpreters are key to providing a voice to the past, present, and future while making it relatable and engaging to visitors through both tangible and intangible forms of

heritage. This research mainly focuses on the American Indian interpreters at RLR as their history and culture is typically ignored or glossed over in historic sites. Recently, there has been a growing desire to strengthen dialogue with the public to ensure they are informed and engaged in the issues impacting marginalized lives of people in the past and present. Dialogue plays an essential role in this process, giving voice to multiple perspectives and enabling people to develop more multifaceted views of complex histories and of each other. The gift of voice allows for a deeper engagement regarding the histories and concerns of American Indian people today through the construction and maintenance of identity, which granting source communities the power to control and represent their own and cultural heritage.

Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes can range from thousands of acres to a few hundred acres. Like historic sites, cultural landscapes reveal aspects of our country's origin and development as a nation through their physical form as well as how they are used and experienced by people today and in the past (Fowler 2001). They can reveal much about the evolving relationship between humans and the natural world. Cultural landscapes are geographic areas that include both cultural heritage and natural resources, many of which are associated with historic events, activities, people, or exhibit significant historical and aesthetic values (Aitchison 1995). These landscapes typically have historic buildings, archaeological sites, and geological structures that reveal important social and cultural perspectives of individuals, families, or communities throughout time.

Colonialization

The final and most utilized concept, colonization, discusses the unequal relationships that surrounded the development of North American. Colonization is a practice of domination, dispossession, and subjugation of a group of people due to military forces, geographical intrusions, and urban or industrial encroachments (Loomba 1998). The outcome of these colonial invasions is the dispossession of vast amounts of lands and natural resources from the original inhabitants, much of which is often legalized through laws and treaties after displacement has already occurred. The long-term results of such a massive and forcible relocation are institutionalized inequity rooted in racist notions to rationalize oppression (Young 2001). These prejudices or discriminatory practices are often based on the belief that one's group it inherently or genetically superior to the other. One of the difficulties in defining colonialism is its difficulty to distinguish it from imperialism. Frequently the two concepts are treated as synonyms, but for this thesis colonialism will be exclusively utilized.

Chapter Summaries

To fully situate the importance of this topic and contextualize the research Chapter Two provides background information. This occurs by discussing examples of the stereotypes and ways in which people have begun to challenge these perspectives. It then covers the colonial development on the Front Range and how American Indian communities have acted against the force of colonial pressures. Chapter Two concludes

with American Indian activism, the American Indian Movement, the Tribal Museum movement, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

Chapter Three explores the theoretical structures that have shaped this research design. The chapter addresses specific theoretical methods such as museums as contact zones, survivance, and decolonization. The chapter will end with a literature review discussing the educational methods and concepts that have recently been used to interpret American Indian cultural heritage. The goal for this chapter is to present how educational institutions and their perspectives have evolved from stagnant, stereotypical, and ahistorical representations of history to ones that are now contextual, dynamic, and collaborative.

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology used to frame the research questions and goals, as well as the collection and analysis of data gathered over the summer of 2016. This chapter will address the research problems, goals, and methodologies that shaped the framework of this project in detail. The chapter will also discuss the importance of how this research may pave the way to a deeper understanding of how visitors and interpreters can engage in the process of cultural affirmation and inclusivity through a variety of educational techniques.

Chapter Five discusses the data collected from my research and will be analyzed in detail. This chapters examines my field notes, observation checklists, visitor questionnaires, and informal interviews with visitors and interpreters. It provides a general introduction of Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) as an educational institution while covering interpretational stories and examples in detail. All the data

discussed focuses on visitors' educational experiences at RLR while analyzing if this space furthers the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage and if it broadens the knowledge and perspectives of its visitors. This chapter will end with a discussion about the importance of presenting American Indian tangible and intangible heritage through multivocal discourses and survivance.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

Rarely are American Indians seen as actors or agents in the shaping of Colorado or the United States' history. Instead, American Indian communities are typically presented as passive and agentless victims in the remaking of their own homelands or simply not addressed at all. The general experiences, struggles, and resiliency of their communities have remained overlooked for centuries. The invisibility of American Indian people and a lack of positive and realistic images of their culture may not register as a problem for non-Natives, but it poses a significant challenge for American Indian people today. Suicide rates, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, poverty, and health related issues for American Indians are higher than the national average (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2007). The primary feature of historical trauma is its transmission to subsequent generations through biological, psychological, environmental, and social means (Sotero 2006). For centuries, there have been derogatory and harmful stereotypes in media, film, popular culture, and sports. Unfortunately, there are many people in this world that believe these stereotypical and idealized images to represent what American Indians embody today.

To reveal the significance of this research project, this chapter will provide a background on the historical and contemporary issues American Indian communities have faced. American Indian stereotypes of the past and present, the history of colonial settlement on the Front Range, and how it impacted the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho

tribes will be addressed. I will end this chapter with a discussion about the complicated relationships between museums and American Indian communities that has occurred for centuries.

American Indian Stereotypes

Edward S. Curtis was a photographer of American Indians in the early 1900s. His fame and recognition was built on stereotypes and romanticized images of western culture, one which has now become ingrained into non-Native people's perception of American Indians (Lyman 1982). To create an idealized sense of romanticism, Curtis dressed American Indians in items he thought perpetuated American Indian identity through regalia, hairstyle, and jewelry, ultimately creating an image that has never allowed American Indians to be viewed as modern, dynamic, or distinct (Lyman 1982). Curtis's goal was to document the American Indian race, ensuring that they lived forever through his photographs and field notes (Gidley 1998).

Curtis utilized American Indian stories and similarities, creating an over-generalized sense of their unique communities and distinct traditions. Curtis exploited his privilege to witness and engage in elements that did not belong to him. He believed it was his right to take the images, stories, and videos of a culture being faced with oppression and marginalization, so he could then pervert it to his own ideals and perspectives. He claimed to be a savior and a collector of these communities' stories he had no right to document. This was founded in the ahistorical notion that American Indians were a dying

race, one that was less than human, and therefore deemed unfit or unable to tell their stories and speak for themselves (Gidley 1998).

Marketing Through Stereotypes

Representations and misrepresentations of American Indian communities pervade dominant culture and lead to inaccurate understandings of contemporary American Indian people. These portrayals are varied and often contradictory, associating American Indians with anachronism, ecology, and spirituality (Cooper 2008). Many of these stereotypes are related to a lack of historical context, discourse, and understanding nation-wide. As seen in the marketing for the *Land O Lakes* butter, everyday products found in American grocery stores present American Indian stereotypes (see Figure 2.1). The image reveals a Native woman, kneeling near a lake in the forest wearing two braids, a beaded buckskin, and a feathered warbonnet. The portrayal of nature plays off the notion that American Indians lived off the land, possibly with the intent of making the product appear fresh, natural, and wholesome.

Marketing for Land O' Lakes Butter (Figure 2.1)

Land O' Lakes was founded in Minnesota in 1921 which had and still has a large American Indian population of Sioux, Ho-Chunk, and Ojibwe tribes (Merskin 2001). Regardless, companies do not have a right to appropriate American Indian heritage for marketing purposes. None of the aforementioned American Indian communities had any association with the company or the invention of butter. This offensive portrayal conveys tribal communities as legendary images as opposed to existing people, ultimately negating the struggles American Indians have faced and the accomplishments they have made. The national imagination of American Indian communities is reductive and outdated thanks to the mythos perpetuated in ahistorical biases and inaccurate representations found in Hollywood films like the *Lone Ranger* (2013), and sports mascots like the Cleveland Indians and the Washington Redskins. One of the few things that remain is their identity. For centuries, American Indians have had their land, resources, and civil rights taken from them. In a nation where American Indian populations have largely been removed and exterminated, expressions of identity are important. Now that American Indian identity has become an imagined and marketable commodity it too is being taken from them.

Combating Stereotypes

Recently, people have begun to challenge and debunk American Indian stereotypes. Gregg Deal, a member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Nation, is an artist and performer. His goal is to reveal positive perceptions of American Indian identity by rivaling colonialization and stereotypes. In his performance art piece and Sundance film *The Last*

American Indian on Earth (2015), Deal positions himself in American cities dressed in a Halloween costume constructed out of stereotypical materials made in China. This costume embodies the stereotype and iconic image of American Indian peoples (Fine 2014). In the film, Gregg Deal posed in front of a buffalo diorama as a caricature of a Plains Indian at the Smithsonian Museum (see Figure 2.2) to address the ahistorical presentation of American Indian cultural heritage in museums.

Gregg Deal from The Last American Indian on Earth (Figure 2.2)

Like most performance art, the purpose was to challenge the conventional traditions of art while addressing and documenting the reactions Deal provoked from observers. Throughout the film he photographed and videotaped people's responses to his costumed appearance. The goal for this film was to reveal the commodification of the American Indian image and the biased perceptions people have regarding American Indians today

(Fine 2014). He exposed the prejudices and misconceptions held by non-Natives through the embodiment of stereotypical imagery. The film also reveals the microagressions American Indians face every day through insensitive comments and gestures with the intention of displaying the dehumanization and desensitization of American Indian people as it exists today.

Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs

On October 6, 2015, Colorado's Governor John Hickenlooper signed Executive Order B.2015.006, a collaborative commission to study American Indian representations in Colorado public schools. The Executive Order was inspired by the realization that Colorado currently has thirty schools that utilize names, caricatures, and mascots related to American Indians. The Executive Order was motivated by certain schools, like Colorado's Arvada High School, that previously developed constructive and collaborative methods to address and eliminate American Indian mascots (Executive Order B.2015.006). This Commission provided an opportunity for schools and universities in Colorado to better educate their students about American Indian history, culture, and identity while also bringing diverse audiences together holistically. The commission created a national model regarding the eradication of derogatory imagery.

Results of the Commission

After five months of community meetings and discussion, the final report of Governor John Hickenlooper's Commission to Study American Indian Representation in

Public Schools was released on May 8, 2016. The goal of this Commission was to emphasize respect for all cultures and people while making this ideal an educational mission for all public schools in Colorado. The report presented four guiding principles that are not yet legally binding in the state (CSAIRPS Report 2016).

1) The elimination of derogatory and offensive mascots, imagery, and names.

2) The recognition and respect of sovereignty by forming relationships with tribes.

3) An active involvement within communities to discuss American Indian mascots.

4) A strong educational focus and outreach.

The Commission led to a dialogue between four Colorado public schools with American Indian mascots; Strasburg, CO (Indians), Loveland, CO (Indians), Lamar, CO (Savages), and Eaton, CO (Reds). In each of these communities, a rich discussion and collaboration was held with community members and tribal members regarding the struggle between local traditions versus the desire to treat American Indians respectfully by honoring their history and culture appropriately (CSAIRPS Report 2016). Unfortunately, no mascots have yet to be dismantled. All four schools argued that they were 'respecting' American Indian heritage and traditions and should be allowed to keep their school names, mascots, and imagery.

In Lamar, CO, non-Native high schoolers at Lamar High School, home of the Savages, participated in a pep rally chanting the phrase "Once a Savage Always a Savage" (see Figure 2.3). The school, which does not identify with any particular tribe, uses an emblem of an American Indian in a headdress as their mascot (CSAIRPS Report 2016). At the Lamar commission meeting, community members, alumnus, faculty, and

students argued that their mascot did not communicate disrespect, because it was there way of honoring “Savage Country” by taking “Pride in their Tribe” (CSAIRPS Report 2016:19). In reality, these caricatures, stereotypes, and phrases are harmful, perpetuate negative stereotypes about America’s first peoples, and contribute to a disregard for the personhood and identity of American Indians today.

Lamar, CO High School Pep Rally (2.3)

Regardless of slow moving outcomes, the commission provided a model for states and communities throughout the nation to move forward on issues related to the representation of American Indians in schools and universities (CSAIRPS Report 2016). The Executive Order reveals clear attempts from the state government to bring Colorado residents, governmental officials, and American Indian communities together through dialogue regarding American Indian education, with the ultimate goal of eliminating

derogatory and offensive American Indian mascots, imagery, and names through a strong educational focus and outreach.

Significance of the Report

Given the documented harms that result from the use of these mascots and imagery, there is a national movement away from these depictions and uses in public schools. Colorado has provided a great model for states and local communities to use moving forward. It is incumbent upon the State of Colorado and Colorado public schools to recognize the role of American Indians in Colorado's history while ensuring that this history is taught comprehensively and accurately. In many ways, the results of the commission reflect changes that have begun to occur within the field of museums and historic sites. This Commission provided new learning opportunities for students, teachers, and community members regarding American Indian history and culture with the intention of strengthening a deeper understanding and broadening their perspective of contemporary tribal communities in Colorado through collaboration and discourse.

It is in the spirit of this Commission that I have shaped my research focus, with the goal of encouraging constructive criticism about historic sites as educational institutions for American Indian interpretation. In the following sections, a consideration and analysis of American Indian activism and the colonial history of the Front Range region will be addressed in detail. I will pay particular attention to the displacement and forceful relocation that occurred among Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes that inhabited or traveled through the area. The intent is to reveal how the colonial history of the region

reflects similar injustices, events, and practices that happened to American Indian communities nationwide.

Colonial Settlement on the Front Range

The Ute tribe are the oldest and continuous residents of the Front Range, a mountain range of the Southern Rock Mountain in North America located in the central portion of Colorado and the southeastern portion of Wyoming (Blevins et al. 2007). According to American Indian creation stories and oral histories, Ute communities have lived in the Front Range for thousands of years (Simmons 2001). The introduction of the horse allowed tribal groups to travel together over great distances, ultimately expanding their territory and population size drastically (Ubbelohde 2006). The Arapaho and Cheyenne tribes also gathered at and traveled through what is now considered Garden of the Gods, Cheyenne Canyon, and Pikes Peak for centuries which are areas in the Front Range region (Berthrong 1992). The Ute referred to this sacred area as *Ta-Wa-Ah-Gath*, which translates to Sun Mountain (Blevins et al. 2007).

Periods of Regional Development

After the western half of what is now considered North American was purchased from France in 1803, the United States doubled in size. For the most part, this drastic expansion negatively impacted the future for American Indian communities after the land became open for colonial settlement. The Louisiana Purchase stretched from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian

border. After United States Army Officer Zebulon Pike began exploring the new territory in 1806, countless colonialists began traveling to the west (Ubbelohde 2006). In great numbers, they trampled across and forcibly settled in traditional American Indian lands provoking competition over natural resources such as timber, water, fish, deer, and buffalo, drastically increasing tensions among the groups. The discovery of gold in the Pikes Peak region in the late 1850s, and the development of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad shortly after, drew even more settlers and tourists to the region (Ubbelohde 2006). The associated activities with mining, trading, settlement, and loss of resources produced tremendous social and environmental change, as well as the massive displacement and many times violent relocation of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho communities to inhabitable reservations.

Politically, the gold rush of 1858 inspired the creation of the Colorado Territory in 1861. Rather than evict white settlers or establish peaceful relations with tribes in the region, the Cheyenne and Arapaho were forced to cede most of the land in which they were inhabiting in hope of supplies and protection from the federal government (Simmons 2001). Due to a lack of resources, starvation, and fear of genocide from the federal government and colonists moving west, the majority of tribes were forced to surrender their lands and move to reservations (Berthrong 1992). This ultimately shifted the balance of power on the Front Range from American Indian communities to the United States. This also marked the federal government's intent to protect colonial interests and western expansion by stealing and profiting off of American Indian territories through a series of treaties that were always broken.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho were displaced to the Sand Creek Reservation in southeastern Colorado through the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1861 (Berthrong 1992). In the same year, President Lincoln created the Uintah Valley Reservation forcing many Ute bands to eastern Utah. Both reservations were barren, lacked natural resources, and were unsuitable for farming purposes and therefore valueless to colonial settlers (Simmons 2001). By 1879, these tribes had forcibly relinquished most of the Rocky Mountains and western Colorado to the United States. Colonial settlers increasingly traversed and occupied these areas, killing buffalo, trampling grazing grass, and cutting down timber making it difficult for tribal communities to leave their reservations to hunt and successfully find resources to sustain their communities.

The information above was a brief synopsis of American Indian displacement due to colonial migration through and settlement in the Front Range. I chose to narrow my discussion to the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes because this was the historical focus of Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site. Unfortunately, these issues happened nationwide, and by no means do I wish to discount the atrocities that other tribal communities faced. By the mid-1800s the United States had grown drastically in population and territory due to western expansion forcing many tribal communities to reservations. Colonization was rooted in notion of Manifest Destiny, or the belief that settlers had a civil and natural right to control, subdue, and mine natural lands, even when at the expense of innocent people's lives. This concept was clearly manipulated to legitimize the theft of tribally held land and resources.

American Indian Agency

The term agency appears frequently in academic writing, but the definition prescribed by scholars varies considerably. In general, agency is about the human capacity to act, many times against oppressive or controlling forces. When referencing agency, it is important to note that social actors or agents are neither determined nor free beings. Their actions influence and are influenced by larger social and political structures (Ortner 2006). Thus meaning that human action is directly related to human's ability to shape and be shaped by society. In a sense, human social actions then become social transformations that are contextualized both socially and politically. One's agency therefore relates to one's social power, or the capacity for a group or an individual to act independently of and dependently for the larger social structures surrounding them. The discourse surrounding colonization and power are therefore inextricably linked through external control, political, and economic exploitation, not merely through the distribution of resources (Prakash 1994).

The recent goal for many museologists and anthropologists is to make visible the negative histories and traces of colonialism that are many times ignored while at the same time shaping contemporary discourse and institutional epistemologies. Historically, colonization has been a presented as binary power relationship of actions. For this research project, the subjects are colonial settlers and American Indian communities. Binary representations of power are oversimplified and typically remove the agency of the oppressed actors. (Atalay 2006). Although, many of Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes did not simply submit to governmental control, nor did they victimize themselves

to the oppressive control of colonizers. Many times, they dynamically retaliated against colonial forces in acts of resiliency, resistance, and power. The goal for the following section is to demonstrate how colonial relations in the Front Range region exerted political, cultural, and economic control of American Indian communities, while also revealing their ability to act against these forms of power through resistance and agency.

Acts of Agency

The White River Agency, initially established in Meeker, CO under the Treaty of 1868 consisted of approximately one-third of western Colorado. The agency was intended to serve the White River Ute band before quickly becoming the focal point of episodes of violence, ultimately leading to the removal of many Ute bands from the state of Colorado (Utley 1984). The violent events and stories that occurred at the White River Agency epitomized the United States policy toward American Indian communities nationwide. Much of this occurred either through basic ineptitude or outright deceit from governmental agencies and an overall neglect of existing treaty terms. The Treaty of 1868 necessitated the distribution of rations and annuity goods, but they often arrived late or did not arrive at all (Blackhawk 2008).

Roughly ten years of the White River Agency was established, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Agent Nathan C. Meeker attempted to convert the Utes to agriculture and Christianity. Due to a lack of governmental rations promised in the Treaty of 1868, the Utes were in near-starving condition, yet Meeker would not allow them to leave the reservation to hunt. Meeker then angered the Utes by plowing the fields they had

previously used to graze and race horses on without their consent, filling the agency with hostility and potential violence, persuading Meeker to call out for army assistance for fear that he would be rightfully attacked (King 2012). The Utes, although outnumbered, held the strategic high ground, and managed to hold the American army forces at bay while inflicting significant losses, including the death of Major Thornburgh and thirteen others. Meanwhile, a separate band of Utes descended upon the White River Agency and killed ten male employees and Meeker (King 2012). This event is now known as the Meeker Massacre.

Scholars have noted that presentations of colonization are generally oversimplified, thereby removing the agency of those portrayed as the victim of colonized subjects (Atalay 2006). As is evident with the Meeker Massacre, American Indian communities did not always submit and remain passive to colonial actions. The Ute had already been forced off their traditional lands to live on an inhabitable landscape. Instead of submitting to agricultural and Christianity, they resisted. Once hundreds of Calvary men were deployed, they simply defended themselves and the land that was rightfully theirs. Many presentations of the event present the Utes as violent, primitive, savages who attacked innocent colonists for no reason, which in reality is not the case. The Meeker Massacre reveals how the Ute resisted against colonial practices to change their circumstances. Unfortunately, these actions provoked colonial outrage throughout Colorado and the nation, leading to a concerted round of investigations, which was never fully resolved (Blackhawk 2008). The Meeker Massacre sealed the fate of all Utes living in Colorado at

the time to be once again relocated to a new and much less inhabitable reservation north of the San Juan Mountains (Kelman 2013).

The amount of lives lost in the Meeker Massacre is nothing in comparison to the Sand Creek Massacre that happen in 1864. The cause of this event was rooted in the long conflict for control of eastern Colorado. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 guaranteed ownership of the area north of the Arkansas River to the Nebraska border. However, by the end of the decade, waves of miners flooded across the region in search of gold, placing extreme pressure on natural resources. By 1861, tensions between settlers and the Cheyenne and Arapaho were rising. On February 8 of that year, a Cheyenne delegation accepted a new settlement with the Federal government, seceding most of their land but securing a 600-square mile reservation and annuity payments. Many did not accept this new agreement, called the Treaty of Fort Wise. The new reservation and federal payments proved unable to sustain the tribes, but after negotiations of peace tribal members believed they would be safe as the men went hunting (Kelman 2013). Shortly after they left, hundreds of United States army members arrived, killing at least 150 unarmed women, children, and elderly before burning the village to the ground and carrying off human body parts as trophies (Kelman 2013).

The American Indian Movement

The continuous struggle with the federal government regarding the control of land and the right to maintain American Indian religious practices and ceremonies led to a surge of civil rights activism and group-based identity politics in the middle of the twentieth

century. As a result, the American Indian Movement (AIM) emerged in the summer of 1968 (Steinman 2012) in response to 500 years of resistance *(Figure 2.4).*

American Indian Movement Activists in Washington D.C Figure 2.4

Two hundred tribal members and American Indian communities met in Minneapolis, Minnesota to discuss the discrimination and racial injustices encountered in governmental law and policy. Activists reflected on the ways in which tribes could maintain or regain control of their own future, leading to a full-fledged movement across the United States (Steinman 2012). The goal for this activism was based on the protection of treaty rights, the reclamation of tribal lands on behalf of urban American Indians who were facing severe poverty, and the preservation and revitalization of spirituality and culture. Unlike the American civil rights movement, AIM has seen self-determination and racism

differently. Desegregation was not a goal. Instead, the goal was the preservation of Native sovereignty and self-governance (Steinman 2012).

Acts of Resistance

In 1972, AIM members developed the Trail of Broken Treaties March on Washington, D.C., where they took over the Bureau of Indian Affairs in protest. This was designed to generate media coverage by providing a new medium to articulate the goals and changes American Indians wanted to see occur in Federal Indian Law and policy (Deloria Jr. 2010). Activists left Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Rapid City, and Denver traveling east, visiting communities, reservations, and spiritual sites on the way and picking up additional people for the demonstration. An important outcome of the Trail of Broken Treaties and the other protests of the era was a surge of American Indian pride and consciousness. It was the AIM's agency and activism that eventually led to governmental reform.

In 1975, President Richard Nixon passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, which pledged federal resources to strengthen American Indians sense of autonomy without threatening tribal community and culture (Strommer and Osborne 2015). This act set the foundation for later acts that required consultation with tribal governments prior to any form of decision making regarding American Indian tribes. In addition, congress also passed the Native American Religious Freedom Act in 1978. This act recognized that many tribes' religious practices required access to sacred sites, traditional objects, medicines, and practices which had been historically forbidden

and appropriated. The act required federal agencies to manage public land and adjust their policies allowing for religious practices and ceremonies (Harjo 2004). These federal acts, which were rooted in protest and activism, led to an increased interest in the role of museums regarding American Indian representation and education.

Museums and American Indian Communities

A collective pride in Native heritage rose in response to the American Indian Movement and many American Indian communities began to question the authority and power of museums as collectors and purveyors of tribal culture and identity. Historically, museum representations typically presented American Indian communities as victims stripped of their own agency or ability to act for centuries. Which is problematic because these representations typically came from a non-Native perspective or ahistorical understanding of history. In addition, there were numerous debates surrounding issues such as ownership, access to collections, and cultural patrimony (Cooper 2008). The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provided the financial opportunity for federally recognized tribes to build museums on reservations and tribal lands (Fuller and Fabricius 1992). This was done as a vehicle to not only create museums from the tribal perspective but to create jobs and stimulate tribal economies. The oldest tribally-owned museum is the Osage Nation Museum in Pawhuska, OK thirty minutes from my home town in Skiatook, OK.

Tribal museums are crucial because they perpetuate the most accurate beliefs and histories about a specific tribal culture regarding traditions, territory, sovereignty, and

identity from an American Indian perspective. In addition, they foster education, research, and collections management from a tribal perspective which is a rare concept in the sense of traditional museological practices. The tribal museum movement exemplifies a shift in perceptions and power of authority regarding American Indian identity, representation, culture, and political positioning (Bowechop and Erikson 2005). In many ways, tribal museums can serve as important anchors to reclaim practices based upon traditional values while serving as the base for conducting research whose ethics and desires are strictly relevant to a communities' needs. There are roughly 100 American Indian tribal museums in the United States. They all successfully generate practices and representations that challenge stereotypic and anachronistic images of American Indian people from a western epistemological stance while adding to the reformation of identity and cultural heritage (Bowechop and Erikson 2005).

The Makah Cultural and Research Center

The goal for tribal museums was to create a space where American Indian values and knowledge were respected while supporting research and methodologies that were significant to American Indian community interests (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). The Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) in Neah Bay, Washington, is one of many examples of a successful tribal museum and cultural center. This space functioned both as an educational organization through art, exhibitions, and objects while conducting research and archaeological fieldwork from a tribal standpoint. Their 25th anniversary was marked by a new exhibit, *Clothing: Trends in Image and Design,* that revealed the

evolution and survivance of Makah clothing. The MCRC had large numbers of the Makah community revive and master some of the traditional technologies associated with the creation of clothing (Bowechop and Erikson 2005).

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

Another watershed moment for American Indian rights was the passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), a federal law which addressed the historical injustices created by a legacy of past museum collecting practices, as well as the disregard for American Indian religious beliefs and burial practices. This was done by giving American Indians greater control over the remains of their ancestors and cultural objects held in museum collections. When NAGPRA passed in 1990, it initiated the return of American Indian human remains, funerary, sacred, and ceremonial objects back to their cultural origins. It also radically changed the way anthropologists in the United States research, store, and represent materials of cultural patrimony, as well as how they understand and cherish the values and histories of American Indian people (Colwell-Chanthaphon and Ferguson 2006).

Unfortunately, NAGPRA and repatriation only resolves one of the many concerns American Indian communities have with archaeology and museology. For American Indians, there is little difference between an illegal exhumation of burial grounds and a scientific one. The only difference is assumed consultation and consent, a general timeframe, sunscreen, archaeological tools, and the neatness of the area when finished (Mihesuah 1996:233). Many American Indian communities have issues with the study of

their human ancestors due to the scientific appropriation of the past, the misrepresentation of past and contemporary cultures, the disconnect between archaeologists and the cultures they study, and the conflicts concerning the consent behind excavating human remains and sacred sites (Watkins 2000). Many times, archaeologists fail to adequately consider their responsibility to contemporary American Indian groups whose living cultures are the subject of scientific study and whose ancestors, materials, and landscapes are then impacted by its practice.

It is important to note that American Indian involvement in museums, be it NAGPRA consultation, repatriation, the development of tribal museums and federal laws, did not happen because of academic epiphanies. Instead they were a direct result of prolonged and committed activism of American Indian agency and resistance. American Indians protested the stereotypical displays of their culture, the collecting practices of museums and scholars, and the theft of land and natural resources by colonial settlers, miners, traders, the federal government for centuries. American Indians sought to change museums, research methodologies, anthropology, and archaeology practices from the inside by having American Indian people enter the profession by promoting the idea that audiences can no longer ignore these elements of resilience, agency, and activism as they have been ignored in the past.

Discussion

For centuries, American Indian communities have been treated and exhibited in museums, media, and sports mascots as exotic curiosities and violent warriors through

ahistorical, inaccurate, or no interpretive context. The current emergence of new museum practices and forms of understanding has given rise to more compassionate and positives perspectives, but it has not erased the ethnocentric biases held by the dominant society nor has it erased its treatment of American Indian cultural heritage as remnants of the past as opposed to living communities. Museums and historic sites influence how people understand and interpret the world around them by creating meaningful experiences for visitors. By educating visitors about American Indian cultural heritage through the use of Native voice and agency, Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site can effectively shape audience attitudes and understandings regarding the development of the United States in beneficial ways.

American Indians have always had a complicated and arduous relationship with the research and perspectives presented by museologists and anthropologists, especially since they offer significant research and bodies of knowledge that are rarely discounted by the public. Unfortunately, this knowledge has typically been developed from a western epistemological approach, one that is deeply rooted in the classifications and ideological assumptions from those who created them, work for them, and learn from them, not from the perspectives of those being represented. When applied to American Indian cultures, these spaces have often functioned in ways that are exploitive, objectifying, demeaning, and ahistorical due to colonial beliefs that are heavily founded in the destruction of cultural and religious knowledge. The concept of Manifest Destiny and the laws supporting it have innate inequalities rooted within the conquest of the cultural and physical landscape that has disproportionately impacted American Indians communities.

The effects and impacts of colonial beliefs have become steadily more documented and accurately represented over the past thirty years. Thanks to museums, historic sites, and educational institutions, governmental agencies internationally and in the United States are slowly attempting to fix the wrongs they have created. Unfortunately, no new policy can ever undo or correct what has been done to American Indian communities. While persecuted by colonization tactics, American Indians should still be viewed as resilient survivors facing centuries of colonial biases, stereotypes, exploitation, abuse, and assimilation. Movements for change and social justice are grounded primarily in ideals directly associated with education, healing, and honesty. This can only occur by addressing the voices and stories of American Indians communities while acknowledging no new act or policy can ever undo the wrongs that have been done.

To this day, American Indian sovereignty and treaties remain unrecognized. They are being disregarded for the expense of oil, industry, and development. As a result, their cultural landscapes, natural resources, culture, identities, and religious beliefs are heavily compensated as well. Educational institutions are not merely a venue where artifacts can be collected and then be preserved as a measure of safeguarding cultural heritage. They are resources that teach the public information on a variety of topics, themes, and ideological beliefs, making these spaces agents of social change.

Traditionally, museologists, educators, scholars, and anthropologists have taken on the role of interpreting the significance and meaning of cultural heritage. With the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the growth of tribal museums, heritage and research centers, an increase in Native agency and activism,

as well as the willingness to collaborate and involve American Indian communities federally has led to more respect and acceptance than ever before. With these new practices comes a new generation of scholars who are questioning the fundamental assumptions that have driven American Indian interpretation and exhibition for centuries.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Museums and historic sites play a large role in highlighting North America's cultural heritage. These institutions have the capacity to frame society's most basic and complex understandings about the past, present, and future. The following chapter will synthesize work on representations of American Indians communities carried out by museologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, since the late 1900s. The disciplinary theories that have evaluated the representation and exhibition of American Indian cultural heritage such as museums as contact zones, survivance, decolonization, and multivocality will be assessed. Specific to my research is the understanding that the interpretive nature of human assumption and understanding are inseparable from the construction of meaning. With this in mind, I will analyze how acts of learning through performance, objects, and discourse play a pivotal role in not only the reflection and identification of American Indian communities, but in their ability to link and engage visitors with new educational opportunities.

Each understanding and representation in museums are dependent on the attitudes and intentions of the interpreter, curator, or institution, therefore there is no singular or correct way to interpret American Indian cultural heritage. Although, there is a shared set theoretical standards that help museums assess and align their performance regarding the presentation of cultural heritage. To provide a sense of cohesion to this chapter, the term

museum will be used with the understanding that it includes historic sites and educational institutions that are prominent in the United States.

Museum Representation

Museums identify and question the innumerable relationships shared between culture, history, and art while exploring these concepts with the public. These spaces allow for the collection and presentation of cultural heritage and therefore guard what is most precious to our society. Unfortunately, this typically occurs through the personal choices of what a small group of museum curators and academic scholars deem as most relevant to preserve, ultimately hindering learning opportunities for visitors (Guerro and Sharon 2004). Museum collections, classifications, the display of objects, and the presentation of information have been ahistorical or biased and representationally limited for centuries. This is related to the traditional function of museums as authoritative spaces for the elite, which ultimately allowed for a limited and narrow presentation of marginalized communities through exclusivity and hierarchical structures. Holistic understandings or perspectives that take into account all dimensions of humanity link tangible and intangible heritage more closely together. As cultural practice, intangible heritage is transformed into tangible objects that are associated with new and holistic perspectives (Alivizatou 2012). Since museums are a major educational medium and platform of our nation, they can no longer be isolated and restricted from important historical events and realities (MacLeod 1998).

Stereotypical Representations in Museums

The belief that museums are void of certain historical, economic, and political pressures is founded in the western and epistemological tendency to dichotomize the world into a series of ‘us and them’ or ‘self and other’ constructs (Naquib 2004). A common element to these binary narratives is the tendency to privilege one group of people, one term, or one idea over another. This then creates an ahistorical and inaccurate hierarchy of values. To avoid allowing colonial practices of the past mobilize the present, museums can no longer reduce ideas and presentations of history to notions of difference and otherness because it leads to exclusion and marginalization (Balibar 2005). Social categorizations are perpetuated throughout museums leading to inherent biases, ethnocentrism, and prejudices in the interpretation of cultural heritage. New attitudes towards cultural negotiation and coordination on the part of museums and the cultures they represent have caused these spaces to reevaluate the role of cultural representation in collections and exhibitions (Guerro and Sharon 2004).

Since the early 1900s, museums have presented American Indians as communities that lacked the complexities of civilized or modern societies. Many times, these misrepresentations in museums occurred through inaccurate dioramas that have been displayed among exhibits of wildlife, dinosaurs, and fossils, as was the case with the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History (see Figure 3.1). Fourteen dioramas on display represented miniaturized historical scenes of American Indian lifestyle. These dioramas were created and installed in the 1950s and 1960s, based on archaeological and

ethnographic information (Silverman & Sinopoli 2011). These dioramas convey a sense of American Indians as having existed only in the past. Each of the fourteen dioramas represents an entire culture and thus reinforces stereotypes and overly simplified views of American Indian society. They also present American Indians as objectified artifacts displayed in the same context as nature's history.

Diorama at the University of Michigan Museum of Natural History (Figure 3.2)

These dioramas were removed in 2010 after an outside American Indian advisory committee was formed to address the museum's issues with representation (Silverman & Sinopoli 2011). Through the placement of the dioramas in a natural history setting, a relationship becomes posed between animals, inanimate objects, and American Indian people. This ultimately leads to a desensitization regarding the injustices American Indian communities have faced in the past and still face today. These dioramas freeze American Indian culture as elements of the past, without depicting or providing context

to the struggles they have faced and how these groups have resisted and survived into the present. These inaccurate presentations hinder past and present American Indian performance and narrative while negatively impacting the public's perception of their cultural heritage (Janes 2016).

Agency

Many times, museum narratives and exhibitions portray specifically calculated elements and relationships that ultimately ignore views scholars deem as unimportant, allowing the dominate culture to control and monopolize how American Indian cultural heritage is presented and understood publically. This has led people today to think of American Indian communities as stereotypes from the past, as opposed to modern communities thriving in the face of genocide and assimilation. In recent decades, museums have begun to challenge these binary constructs through new approaches with the intent of encouraging visitors to think more about American Indians as living communities instead of past contexts (Janes 2016). This is predominately done though American Indian voice, agency, and representational collaboration.

The concept of agency gained currency in the late 1970s as a reaction against the scholarly failure to consider the actions of individuals to resist against oppressive forces (Ortner 2009). This was also inspired by activists who challenged preconceived power structures with the intent of achieving racial and gender equality. In recent decades, museums have started to deconstruct colonial narratives by bringing untold and ignored perspectives into their representations through collaboration with marginalized

communities regarding colonial encounters (Phillips 2006). Thanks to recent understandings of the importance of agency, anthropologists and museologists are obliged to recognize that the research conducted and the information presented can no longer be blindly engaged in the collection, classification, display, and representation of historically marginalized or oppressed communities.

No matter the mission or value of a single museum, they have all made a noticeable shift in their management, incentive, and engagement with visitors by becoming a unique educational medium for the 20th century. Through participation, collaboration, and communication with American Indian communities being exhibited in museums, one can no longer distance themselves from the cultural and historical atrocities that have occurred and still do occur. These new practices in museums challenge western power and knowledge constructs as a response to self-determination, which then leads to cultural affirmation and identification for historically oppressed communities worldwide (MacLeod 1998). Museums should always address aspects of colonialism because they are facets of a nation's history that cannot and should not be ignored. If this information is disregarded, it ultimately runs the risk of stripping American Indians of their own agency, voice, and identity while continuing to present oppressed communities as passive victims.

It is in the terrain of cultural negotiation and contestation that influenced museums to no longer embrace and view their spaces for mere binary oppositions (MacDonald 2006). Nancy Proctor (2010) has discussed museums becoming conversational spaces rather than unilinear spaces that are engaging and relevant rather than didactic,

and are generative of content and open-ended rather than finite and closed. This idea of increasing agency by generating dialogue is something Philipp Schorch (2015) has also discussed. He views the museum as an embodiment of democracy, one which does not silence controversies but instead provides a platform for a multitude of voices. Colonialism has typically been presented as binary and linear, leading to oversimplified and historically inaccurate presentations of history, one which tends to remove the agency of those involved, leading to the silence, marginalization, and eradication of American Indian representation (Atalay 2006).

A representation of agency in museums reveals to visitors that American Indian communities have actively challenged and worked against colonial forces. Traditional museum theories and methods have allowed for scholarly experts to present the perspectives of all communities and cultures, even when these groups have the voice and agency to speak for themselves (Janes 2016). Recently, museums in the United States have slowly begun to recognize this issue of ahistorical representation and lack of collaboration, which has then encouraged them to evolve into spaces that utilize a variety of methods regarding the presentation of agency (MacDonald 2006). The entire context of struggle is a necessary element that allows the public to better appreciate, contextualize, and understand the survival and resistance of American Indians.

Museums as Contact Zones

Museums have shifted their representational stance and promoted their status through inclusionist programs in exhibitions, shared curatorship, and use of collections.

This has led to an increase and improvement in the empowerment of source communities and stakeholders regarding the management, presentation, and use of cultural patrimony. This change in understanding is related to anthropologist James Clifford's (1997) use of scholar Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) notion of contact zones. The argument is that certain spaces provide an arena in which cultures can meet, share, and sometimes clash with one another, "often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism" (Pratt 1991:34). Clifford used this term to rethink the museum's role as a contact zone, where cultures and communities that are often unheard or ahistorically represented can collaborate with one another through inclusivity and equity. The intention was to challenge and rework museum relationships, which are normally perceived from a one-sided colonial perspective by proposing how that these spaces can become a place for multivocality (Boast 2011).

Clifford problematized the one-way relationships between museums and American Indians through an experience he witnessed at the Portland Art Museum between staff members and American Indians elders, which was supposed to occur around the display of sacred objects in an exhibition. The museum staff wanted to discuss the objects they wanted to display with the elders while the elders wanted to talk about colonial history, the theft of American Indian objects, how these objects should not be on display, and contemporary issues with museum staff. In a turn of events, the museum basement became the space where both groups with different perspective came together and had two different conversations allowing for the first step towards mutual understanding and respect (Clifford 1997).

The Portland Art Museum unknowingly became a contact zone, a space where different cultures came into contact and conflict, where competing dialogues were heard, and reciprocity replaced one-way transmission and translation. This example reveals how museums can become spaces where collaborative interactions occur, ultimately allowing for a variety of unheard voices, perspectives, and contexts. Instead of the unidirectional and linear perspectives, the idea of contact zones offers the possibility of engagement with a variety of cultures while influencing the use of theoretical stances such as, survivance and decolonization in museum spaces.

Survivance

Survivance or self-expression tells a story about an active American Indian presence and agency in the world today. It is a crucial concept developed by Chippewa scholar Gerald Vizenor (2008), and is a frequently used theoretical approach for interpreting American Indian heritage. Presentations of survivance are more than just responses or demonstrations of survival. Instead, they promote a voice of emancipation and resistance through American Indian stories that deny passive victimization (Stromberg 2014). Survivance is a crucial element for displaying contemporary American Indian heritage, worldviews, lifestyles, practices, and identification with their land. Survival as a term conjures stark images of people clinging to the edge of existence, but survivance goes beyond this term to acknowledge a dynamic force of American Indian communities. Survivance emphasizes American Indians as active and present agents that reshaped their culture and society to survive and adapt in a rapidly changing world

(Stromberg 2014). American Indian agency, or the way in which American Indians actively worked to recreate and adapt their lives to an evolving world, is a vital element to creating a context for understanding the methodology of survivance.

Examples of Survivance in Museums

Presentations of survivance in museums are significant because they separate American Indians from other ethnic minority groups. Lumping minority groups together is dangerous because it undermines a history of the colonial conquest in the United States, which can also dismiss and represent encounters with colonialism as meaningless through a lack of context and agency (Greymorning 2005). American Indians present survivance through the utilization of oral traditions, narratives, histories, and relationship to the land. A major aspect of the colonization process was to destroy American Indian identification with their cultural landscapes, which ultimately eradicated a link to their ancestors (Venne 2005). While the framework or theories of survivance are difficult to compare, translate, and even define, they are still an active part of American Indian practice today.

The Center for Contemporary Native Arts at the Portland Art Museum has begun creating a transdisciplinary and multimedia space that reaffirms their dedication to survivance and cultural revitalization through stories, language, objects, and social engagement. In the image below, Tlingit poet and performer Ishmael Hope dances with Tlingit artist Clarissa Rizal's Resilience Robe (see Figure 3.3) during the Shx'at Kwáan dance performance in 2014. Rizal's robe was commissioned for production and collection

use by the Portland Art Museum. The robe is a demonstration of modern northwest coast art providing a clear example of survivance. It reveals how the intangible heritage of weaving is passed on through oral histories to create contemporary forms of tangible heritage. The Portland Art Museum has recently begun purchasing and commissioning contemporary works for their collections and exhibitions so visitors can see the bridge of heritage between the past and the present. The goal is to facilitate dialogue between ancestral objects and living artists and engage in conversation regarding contemporary American Indian voices in museums today.

Shx'at Kwáan Program at the Sealaska Heritage Institute (Figure 3.3)

Decolonization

Decolonizing museums is another important concept regarding the accurate and appropriate presentation of American Indian cultural heritage. This museological approach was developed by Ho-Chunk scholar Amy Lonetree (2012). Central to

Lonetree's analysis was the exploration of how museums can serve as sites of decolonization or the undoing of colonial forces and relationships. This occurs by privileging American Indian knowledge and worldviews while challenging the stereotypical representations of Native people to promote healing and understanding. Addressing this history should be an important part of the museum practice as they are viewed as forums and spaces to address difficult histories and stories. Decolonization is a concept that speaks to the legacies of "historically unresolved grief" by addressing the impact associated with colonialism and the negative consequences it had and still has towards American Indian communities today (Lonetree 2003:5).

Effectively decolonizing involves much more than moving away from museums as being elitist temples, and even more away from creating a space for community and collaborative engagement. A decolonizing museum practice must speak the truths of colonialism while creating a space to challenge potential stereotypes and ahistorical representations. Decolonization in museums is designed to share authority for the documentation and interpretation of American Indian culture. This is done by presenting the truth and filling in the gaps of colonial history through American Indian voice, authority, and agency (Lonetree 2003).

Representation in a National Museum

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is a space that has changed the practice of museology, and the role of Indigenous peoples in museums and cultural institutions on a grand scale. NMAI was the first national museum devoted solely to the

presentation of all American Indians in North America (Ronan 2014). It has become the site for a national conversation concerning the right of American Indian people to tell their own story as well as the product of new thinking among museum professionals nationally. Many believe the NMAI successfully provides a voice to American Indian people by granting them the power to control their own representation and heritage through a wide and all-encompassing platform. The NMAI plays a vital role as both a haven and hub for forms of expression (Cooper 2006). This is an especially significant feat to accomplish when considering how American Indian people have actively resisted repeated attempts at cultural, spiritual, and physical genocide while simultaneously having a profound effect and influence upon colonial populations and governments (Atalay 2006).

At the NMAI, an assembly of stories speaks to the concerns and aspirations that unite American Indian people in the land now considered North America (Cooper 2006). The wealth of knowledge provided from these accounts reveals the critical role museums play in creating a picture of the people, communities, and cultures they represent while also creating a resounding take-home message for visitors nationally and internationally (Atalay 2006). In 1989, Congress established the NMAI on the National Mall in Washington, DC to operate within the Smithsonian Institution. In 2004, the museum opened, and it not only drew record numbers of visitors, it also received an exceptional amount of criticism.

The "National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations" was one of the first scholarly examinations of the many and complex issues surrounding the

founding and development of the NMAI (Cobb and Lonetree 2008). While the book contains American Indian voices, it does not necessarily contain a unity of contingent perspectives. Instead, it presents the complex and diverse perceptions of NMAI that are both triumphant and critical. The mission for the NMAI sought not only to represent the best contemporary museum theories and practices, it also sought to change the ahistorical representations of American Indian people and their lives that marked museum presentations and exhibitions in the past. In addition, NMAI planners wanted to privilege American Indian voices over non-Native experts, so they sought extensive consultation with American Indian tribes, but most controversially did so without focusing on issues like genocide, discrimination, and American Indian agency and resistance (Cobb and Lonetree 2008).

The *Our Peoples* gallery at the NMAI offers examples of these missed opportunities to effectively decolonize the information and knowledge provided. One of the key focal points of this gallery is the large display of guns in the center of the gallery with associated text correlating the guns to Christianity and governmental relations that wove a "thread of shared experience that links Native people across the hemisphere... Native people made guns their own, using the new technology as they used all new technologies: shape their lives and future" (NMAI Our Peoples Exhibit Text). For the NMAI to be an effective space to educate its visitors, the guns should be contextualized more accurately. They should instead be presented as a technology that inflicted extreme terror on American Indian people nationwide, and how they were only adapted by these communities as an effort to protect their families, land, and communities (Atalay 2006).

This exclusion regarding the struggles and elements of active resistance has generated much discussion among scholars who argue that the NMAI does not effectively decolonize American Indian history (Atalay 2006). While the NMAI appropriately celebrates the survivance of Native American culture, it does so by leaving out key concepts such as resilience and decolonization. This information is crucial because to move further museums must acknowledge the hard truths of colonial history by addressing how American Indian peoples were subject to and are still subject to cultural genocide and violent assimilation practices.

Multivocality in Museums

In 2012, the History Colorado Center (HCC) attempted to fill in the gaps of Colorado's history by entirely reevaluating and recreating the role and function of their museum. According to then Colorado State Historian, William J. Convery, the goal of the new museum was to eliminate cultural biases through a multivocal design. The goal was to design spaces for multiple voices to be heard and understood on a local, regional, and national level through multivocal representations (Convery 2012). Any attempt to examine the multiple perspectives that make up a cultural identity can at times be problematic, as is evident in the HCC's attempt to present the complex events and perspectives associated with the Sand Creek Massacre that occurred in 1864 through the exhibit *Collision.* Exhibit developers at HCC made efforts to collaborate with members of various tribes as well as the American Indian Advisory Council. Unfortunately, several members of this collaborative committee had conflicting views and feared the museum

was endorsing too much of the colonial perspective, as opposed to American Indian viewpoints (Convery 2012).

Another example of the multivocality in museums occurred when developing the Mille Lac Indian Museum in Vineland, Minnesota. The museum was in the process of developing an exhibit that focused on the creation stories of American Indian communities when the idea emerged to include non-Native theories and origins of American Indians with that of actual American Indian creation and origin stories. This idea received stern backlash from American Indian collaborators and developers (Lonetree 2003). The idea for this exhibit was to privilege American Indian voices that are otherwise not heard in museums. The intent to show both Native and non-Native perspectives on the origins of American Indians in what is now North America potentially buries Native voices and agency in a mixture of conflicting views, marginalizing, and minimizing their voices even more (Lonetree 2003).

There are strengths to presenting a holistic and dynamic perspective in museums, especially when considering how scholars and theorists have begun to question the validity of singular and one-sided narratives (Schorch 2015). When museums are faced with presenting sensitive topics, especially those of a more controversial nature, museum practitioners should always try to privilege the voices, stories, histories, and memories of the communities that have typically been ignored throughout colonial history (Lonetree 2003). Multivocality and dynamic presentations are important ways to show how history gets constructed in the first place, but when the focus of an exhibit is on a specific

American Indian tribe like the Mille Lacs or an event like the Sand Creek Massacre, it is best to privilege those who have historically been made invisible and unheard.

American Indian Interpreters in Historic Sites

In the mid-1990s, Laura Peers (2007) did some of the most extensive research on American Indian and First Nation interpretation at historic sites. In her book, "Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions," she focused on visitor behavior at five different educational sites across the Great Lakes in Canada and the United States. Throughout Peers' decade of research, she described the interactions between visitors and interpreters while providing an analysis and critique of such encounters. All the sites evaluated in her book depicted the people, activities, and material objects associated with American Indian cultural heritage and interpretation to reflect a wide range of situations. She assessed how they revealed potentially transformative cultural performances and encounters within the context of contact zones (Peers 2009). She discovered that these spaces provided a forum from which interpreters were able to articulate their personal identity and cultural difference while also presenting their ancestors' histories by contesting stereotypes and misinformation on behalf of the visitors previously held knowledge and assumptions.

American Indian and First Nation interpreters did not always accept and accommodate the visitors' ahistorical biases as expected. In fact, these interpreters developed a manner that openly confronted visitors' incorrect comments, assumptions, and questions (Peers 2009). In turn, visitors did not treat these interpreters as mere guides

to the past whom represented walking and talking manifestations of stereotypical presentations of American Indians, instead they questioned their own preconceived notions of colonial history (Peers 1998). During the course of interaction among these contact zones, visitors became less concerned with historical details and more interested in the interpreters' real lives as members of contemporary American Indian communities, through their own stories and in their own voices. Peers succeeded in exploring and questioning the development of these sites, their goals, political inspiration, agency, and the multiple contexts of interpretation that was negotiated and presented to visitors.

Discussion

There appears to be no single model or format for interpreting American Indian heritage, which may be associated with the notion that each method of interpretation is heavily entrenched in the institutional history of a museum. The theoretical concepts and literary reviews addressed above are not easy to define, clarify, or explain. The communities, histories, and practices found in museums ultimately determine the process behind how topics or themes are introduced and to what extent they are utilized. When done properly, each institution will reflect these ideas in unique and different ways.

The lack of consistency in museological models for American Indian interpretation is a product of the complex relationships that have developed between museums and their source communities. Although, there does seem to be a substantial feature apparent in the various forms of interpreting American Indian heritage, such as the desire for museums to move away from object-based presentations and instead focus on making stronger

connections with contemporary American Indian communities. This is most often done through the use of American Indian voice, agency, interpretations, and thematic approaches. The concept focuses on presenting objects, ideas, or stories as living entities, as opposed to past contexts. Through utilizing the perspectives and interpretations of American Indian people from an insiders' perspective, museums have welcomed a new and constantly evolving contribution to the field.

In the past, museums have embraced a range of metaphors to describe their practice and function such as storehouses, temples, forums, and commons. No matter the analogy, museums contain objects, people, traditions, and relationships that are positioned as agents in the mediation of wider political change and social justice. They are both literal and figurative spaces that provide visitors with opportunities for learning, discovery, research, dialogue, and inspiration. Museums are also committed to engaging visitors and others in constructive, open dialogue about difficult issues regarding American Indian cultural sovereignty and how those issues are relevant to broader personal, social, cultural, and political issues.

As educational institutions, museums will also employ new strategies regarding the interpretation of American Indian history and culture. As these spaces have embraced a more collaborative role for American Indians, there are still varying successes and challenges of this process, especially when considering how the intention and function of many educational spaces today are anchored in historical, cultural, social, and political infrastructures of a given country, state, and city. Granting American Indians control over

the representation of their cultural heritage, remind museums how essential it is to be rooted in equity, autonomy, and identity.

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks of agency, survivance, decolonization, and multivocality provided a framework in which I could conduct a unique research project of an unstudied educational institution and a rarely addressed subject. Museums and historic sites are spaces in which society makes visible what they value. Through the selection, preservation, and interpretation of cultural heritage these spaces begin to define for their societies what is consequential, valuable, and suitable as evidence of the past. Museums convey social, economic, religious, or political meaning to visitors by displaying and interpreting an object, idea, or sense of agency.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The goal for this research project was to explore how the interpretation of American Indian cultural heritage took place at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR). This was assessed by the observation and evaluation of visitors' educational experiences. I utilized ethnographic research methods such as observation, the distribution of visitor questionnaires, and informal interviews with visitors and interpreters. Through the presentation and examination of these concepts and research methods, I assessed if interpreters at RLR furthered the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage while broadening the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors.

Research Problem

Museums and historic sites are fundamental to societal goals and values regarding visitors who encounter and learn from the variety of interpretational techniques they provide. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate how interpreters at RLR educate visitors by inquiring and assessing how they present American Indian heritage. I specifically analyze how interpreter discourse, the themes and topics presented by interpreters, and the interpretational techniques differ at RLR and how that influences and shapes visitors' educational experiences. Collecting data from visitors as opposed to data from RLR's interpreters is crucial for this analysis because visitors are generally more objective and less emotionally invested in the information being presented.

Research Goals and Objectives

The overarching problem which drove this research project was the ahistorical biases, inaccurate, and lack of representation regarding American Indian cultural heritage in historic sites. This led me to assess how American Indian interpreters at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) educated their visitors through a presentation of American Indian cultural heritage, while seeing how the interpretational techniques used and the information provided then impacted visitors' educational experiences. To answer this questions I defined three research goals.

1) How do the interpretational techniques at RLR influence visitor's educational experience?

2) How do the interpretational techniques at RLR further the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage?

3) How do the interpretational techniques at RLR broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage?

Research Methodology

To best respond to the research goals stated above, I examined three lines of data: visitor and interpreter dialogue and interactions; the themes and topics presented to visitors; and interpreter's educational techniques. To ensure that I effectively measured and addressed the research problem, I utilized observation, visitor questionnaires, and conducted informal interviews with visitors and interpreters.

I initially began with an exploratory research design as there were no earlier studies specific to RLR. After gaining insight and familiarity with how RLR acted as an educational institution for the interpretation of American Indian cultural heritage, I evolved and adapted my research design to provide a more descriptive and explanatory presentation of RLR as an educational institution. The intention was to describe the interpretational characteristics of all six sites, while examining visitors' reactions, perceptions, and experience of RLR as a historic space.

Observations

During the first eight days of my research at RLR I observed visitor and interpreter discourse and engagement to better understand how RLR functioned as an educational institution. I detailed each site, the interactions and dialogue that occurred between visitors and interpreters, how participatory visitors were with objects, how engaged visitors were with interpreters, and how long each visitor or group stayed at each site in my field journal and observation checklist.

Since I had little understanding of RLR's educational setting prior to conducting research and there was no previous research conducted at this site, observations occurred to better explore and understand the interpretational techniques at this institution. Observations at all sites were non-participatory, meaning I had limited interaction while interpreters and visitors where engaged. Since my goal was to study how interpreters and visitors communicated with one another, I noted the topics and themes being discussed,

the questions beings asked, and the details of how interpreters and visitors behaved and interacted.

I observed four full days at the American Indian Area, and two full days at the Homestead Cabin. I also observed four guided-tours at the Rock Ledge House and four guided-tours at the Orchard House. During each of these observations, the sites and tours where directed by different interpreters. This occurred so I could receive the broadest and most accurate presentation of the variety of interpretational techniques, topics, and themes addressed at RLR. After observing the variety of interpretational methods at RLR, I shaped my visitor questionnaires to correlate with what I had witnessed.

Visitor Questionnaires

Since, RLR is only open to visitors four days a week from June to August, I distributed twelve questionnaires four days a week during the second week of June and the second week of July to get an even distribution of visitor respondents. The questionnaires were distributed using a systematic sampling frame and were administered to every other visitor leaving RLR. To ensure questionnaire respondents visited every site at RLR, question one on the survey inquired which sites they had visited. For those who did not attend every site at RLR, I did not include their questionnaire in my evaluation. Overall, I received seventy-five completed questionnaires from visitors who had visited all six sites and participated in guided-tours.

The questionnaires consisted of five close-ended multiple choice questions, a space to provide gender, and a space to provide zip code. I decided to keep the questionnaire

short rendering it efficient and easy for visitors to complete. For my analysis in Chapters Five and Six, I focused on questions two, three, and four of the visitor questionnaire. Through these questionnaire responses I was able to discover a correlation between visitor's educational experience, what they enjoyed most about their experience, and what specific site at RLR they were associated with.

2) What was your favorite site at RLR?

3) How would you describe your educational experience at RLR?

4) What did you enjoy most about your educational experience at RLR?

Informal Interviews with Visitors

Regarding question four of the visitor questionnaire, "What was your favorite site at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site", I wanted to discover what led visitors to choose a specific site as their favorite. I conducted quick and informal interviews with thirty-eight visitors at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR). I found these visitors when distributing visitor questionnaires. To provide as random a population sample as possible, I asked every other visitor who agreed to fill out questionnaires if they would be willing to provide a statement regarding their response to question four on the questionnaire. Each participant was asked the same question, "What led you to choose your favorite site?" This question was asked to gauge the participants' general attitudes towards the site they chose as their favorite. I wrote the visitors' responses in my field journal with an associated time and date. I also wrote a numbered code with the responses in my field journal and on the visitors' questionnaires so I could refer to the entirety of their

questionnaire responses more efficiently. I grouped these responses by themes that were prevalent in my observations and that shaped the framework of my visitor questionnaire. The main themes were participation, hands-on learning, guided-tours, and informative conversations with interpreters.

Informal Interviews with Interpreters

During my time conducting observations at each site, I was able to connect with interpreters, ultimately developing a sense of rapport. At the start or the end of the day there were typically few visitors at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR). When this occurred, I conducted informal interviews with interpreters. These ensued with four American Indian interpreters and four historic or non-Native interpreters. I did not audio record these interviews. I simply asked “What inspired and motivated you to be an interpreter at RLR?” I then wrote their response to this question in my field journal with associated time, date, name, and what site they primarily interpreted at. For the historic interpreters, I had informal interviews with one interpreter at the Blacksmith Shop, the Homestead Cabin, the Rock Ledge House, and the Orchard House to get an even distribution of participants. My reasoning for these interviews was based on the initial assumption what that there might be a difference between American Indian and historic interpreter’s desire to work at RLR, which could then influence the information being presented, the educational experience of the visitors, and the type of interpretational methods being employed.

Limitations

Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) has a number of events and programs that occur throughout the year such as a week-long Colorado Living History School Program in the spring and fall, Earth Day events, Blacksmith Workshops, Sheep Shearing programs, the Harvest Festival, Shakespeare at the Ranch, Holiday Teas and Tours, and many more. Attendance to these events varied from fifty to three thousand. I attended three events at RLR the Family Forth, the Fiddles, Vittles & Vino, and the Annual Powwow. I chose these events because they had American Indian interpretative activities and programs.

At the three events I attended, I also distributed visitor surveys. The surveys asked visitors to describe their experience at these events. The survey had twenty-five words ranging from exciting, cultural, authentic, educational, performative, and interpretive. Visitors could only circle eight words. The intention was to assess any similarities or correlations between the events and visitors' experiences. If I had more time or needed any additional data for my analysis, I would have evaluated the responses and included them in my analysis to see if performances and events at RLR were also viewed as educational experiences.

At RLR, there is also an American Indian exhibition at the Carriage House. Initially, I had planned on doing and exhibit analysis of this space and the American Indian exhibit at Garden of the Gods, because both exhibits are on the same landscape and roughly one thousand feet from each other. After conducting observations at the Carriage House for one day, it became apparent that few visitors frequented this site.

Discussion

In sum, I spent eight days conducting observations of visitors and interpreter discourse, four days participating in guided-tours of historic houses, eight days distributing questionnaires to visitors, and three days attending events at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR). Combining participant observations, visitor questionnaires, and informal interviews shaped the focus of the research project regarding how American Indian cultural heritage was interpreted at RLR, how RLR provided a voice for historically disenfranchised communities, and how the information provided from visitors broadened the perspective of RLR visitors.

Every year millions of visitors to historic sites see natural wonders and places where history was made. They see exhibits, interact with educational objects, hear presentations, and participate in guided-tours. However, visitors rarely have an opportunity to hear teachings about the plants, animals, and special places in and around these sites from the point of view of the culture of the people who first lived there. To create accurate and culturally enriching interpretive programs American Indian cultural heritage and agency must be addressed. Throughout the United States, the stories and heritage of the first peoples that inhabited this land frequently intersect closely with geography, history, and culture. Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site is the ancestral homelands for the Ute tribe and therefore an important place for maintaining and reaffirming cultural identity. Through the inclusion of tribal members, RLR has focused on amplifying native voices within visitor experiences making historical interpretations

and cultural vitality essential to the education of the cultural landscape while at the same time showcasing tribal stories and perspectives as something intertwined in the fabric of American history.

CHAPTER FIVE: SITE INTERPRETATION

This chapter will focus on the data collected from my research at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR). I will introduce each cultural and historic site in detail based on observations of visitor and interpreter interactions. I will also evaluate responses from visitor questionnaires and informal interviews with visitors and interpreters. I will then examine the use of interpretational techniques at each site. The goal will be to evaluate if all interpretational techniques furthered the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage while broadening the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors. Since historic sites have the potential to connect visitors to the stories, histories, and cultures of the past, it is crucial that American Indian cultural heritage is addressed and accurately represented. To ensure that RLR is successfully accomplishing this goal, I will address the three following questions:

1) How do the interpretational techniques at RLR influence visitor's educational experience?

2) How do the interpretational techniques at RLR further the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage?

3) How do the interpretational techniques at RLR broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage?

Defining Visitor Experience

At Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR), I ascertained a great deal about the history, culture, and the several periods of development that took place on the Front Range from 1775 to the early-1900s. RLR had six sites depicting various historical and cultural time periods; the American Indian Area (1775), the Homestead Cabin (1867), the Rock Ledge House (1876), the Orchard House (1900), the Blacksmith Shop, and the Carriage House. At all six of these sites, interpreters were present to engage with visitors, add to visitor inquiry, provide historical narratives, and create meaningful and educational experiences. After observing visitor and interpreter interaction and participating in guided-tours, it became apparent that interpreters educated visitors using interpretational techniques that were associated with certain presentations of cultural heritage. The two most frequently observed interpretational techniques were participation and guided-tours. For this chapter, participation will be understood and interpreted as the act of visitors taking part in educational inquiry and dialogue, sensory experiences, and hands-on activities. Guided-tours will be understood and interpreted as the informative experience that utilizes storytelling through the conversation of historical contexts.

The American Indian Area utilized cultural and historic objects as educational tools in a hands-on and participatory manner. The Homestead Cabin focused on educational demonstrations and programs. The Rock Ledge House and the Orchard House provided guided-tours that addressed specific themes and contexts. The Blacksmith Shop utilized dialogue and personal narratives. The Carriage House displayed an exhibition of American Indian cultural heritage that utilized text, images, objects, and interpreters. The

historical and cultural context addressed in the following section were absorbed from observations of visitor and interpreter interactions and participation in guided-tours.

While there may be no single or best way to present, know, and understand the past, it is nevertheless crucial to become comfortable with multiple and sometimes conflicting representations regarding the history and development of the United States. Interpretation at historic sites provides a unique form of communication through the innumerable ways in which they educate visitors. Landscapes, buildings, and objects all have historical and cultural stories to tell. Visitors are therefore dependent on the interpreter to attribute meaningful messages to these stories that are presentable in thought-provoking and engaging ways. Unfortunately, RLR does not address all the sensitive and problematic issues that have occurred in Colorado. I do not wish to discount or ignore these important topics that have also shaped the cultural landscape of the Front Range. Instead, the following analysis can be used as a platform that offers guidance, provides new perspectives, and educational techniques so other historic sites can expand their interpretive goals to address these crucial topics.

American Indian Area (1775)

When visitors arrived at RLR a historic interpreter dressed in period clothing welcomed them at the Visitor Entrance. After paying admission, the interpreter encouraged visitors to begin their journey at the American Indian Area because starting chronologically provided the most “accurate walk through history” (Interpreter A, June 16, 2016). Visitors veered northwest from the entrance, followed an unmarked dirt trail,

and arrived at the American Indian Area (see Figure 5.1). At this site, RLR only employed interpreters that were federally recognized tribal members. According to the Staff Manager, this was done “to communicate a more inclusive history of the past” (Andy Morris, June 25, 2016).

Throughout this chapter I will compare the educational methods of and inspirations to become American Indian and historic interpreters. I use the term historic to present how white interpreters at RLR do not identify as closely with the information they present to visitors as do American Indian interpreters. Historic interpreters would refer to the original owners of the historic houses by name, while American Indian interpreters who refer to the authority invested in their tribal identities and cultural heritage by saying “my people,” “we would” or “our ancestors”. In addition, the distinction between American Indian and historic interpreter presents how American Indians have finally been granted the control and authority regarding the representation of their cultural heritage, which is essential to autonomy and the continuance or reformation of personal identity.

At the American Indian Area, two interpreters were present at all times. They wore handmade reproduction historic clothing such as moccasins, jewelry, hair ornaments, trade cloth leggings, skirts, or trousers. When visitors arrived, interpreters introduced themselves by stating their full name, where they were from, and what tribe or tribes they were federally affiliated with also revealing how American Indian interpreters identify more closely with the information they present to visitors by revealing a personal connection. Most visitors went straight to the tipis when they arrived. There was always a

cedar bark tipi, as well as a Ute or Cheyenne tipi depending on the day of the week. The tipis rotated to better represent the various American Indian communities that lived in and traveled throughout the Front Range. Interpreters encouraged visitors to take photos and experience the inside of the tipi. Through interpreter discourse regarding the cultural heritage of tipis a discussion about the practices, knowledge, skill, and instruments that were used to produce them occurred.

Visitors were also encouraged to engage and interact with the myriad of objects on display at the American Indian Area. These objects were carefully laid out on a textile under a ramada or a temporary shelter with a roof and no walls made of branches and brush that provided shade and protection for inclement weather. Visitors could be tactile with a variety of cultural and historical objects at this site such as traditional drums, gourd rattles, mandibles, animal furs and skins, horns, bladders, sinew, seed beads, dyed porcupine quills, and jewelry. Once a visitor chose an object to engage with, the interpreters would discuss the cultural and historical importance, significance, and use of the object in the past.

A common activity that occurred for both children and adults was the hoops and arrow game, a traditional American Indian game where participants threw a dull stick, with the intention of representing an arrow, into the center of a rolling hoop woven across with sinew. The game was designed to develop hunting skills for young men, but at RLR all visitors spent a great amount of time playing, enjoying, and perfecting this game. In general, interpreters at the American Indian Area provided personal narratives, insight, and stories on how their ancestors lived in the Front Range before colonial settlement

through the use of objects as educational tools. Interpretive activities that visitors could observe included cooking, beading, tanning hides, carving, setting up or taking down a tipi, and mending clothing. Depending on the number of guests present at RLR that day, visitors could typically engage and participate with these interpretive activities. Overall, at the American Indian Area visitor and interpreter dialogue at this site revealed a linkage between the presentation of tangible and intangible heritage.

Galloway Homestead Cabin (1867)

The Homestead Cabin was the closest site to the American Indian Area. This location represented how homesteaders encroached and impeded on American Indian territories. This was not a topic outwardly addressed by interpreters at this site, instead it was discussed on the maps and information packets handed to visitors upon arrival. Assuming visitors followed the map chronologically, they would loop around the American Indian Area heading southwest on a dirt trail and land upon a one room log cabin, a milking cow, a privy or outhouse, and a designated area to wash clothes and clean dishes (see Figure 5.1).

In 1867, Walter Galloway, a disappointed gold seeker and bachelor, built one of the first 160-acre homesteads in the Front Range. The original but recently reconstructed homestead cabin still remains. At this site, there was a reproduction adobe brick horn oven that interpreters used to cook lunch, make breads, and other baked goods. There were also 19th century games and activities such as stilts and graces. Interpreters discussed how graces was a game for young women. Opponents tossed ribboned hoops

towards each other with the hope of catching them on the tops of narrow sticks. There were two historic interpreters dressed in period clothing at the site. Typically, interpreters at this site discussed the daily chores and lifestyles that occurred on the Front Range.

Galloway's Homestead Cabin (Figure 5.1)

Rock Ledge House (1876)

After visiting the Homestead Cabin, visitors headed south towards the center of RLR. On their way, visitors passed a working farm, barn, and woodshop before arriving at the Rock Ledge House. The house was accompanied by a farm and ranch. Robert and Elsie Chambers purchased the land in 1874. The Chambers family moved to the Front Range after Elsie became ill with tuberculosis. In the late 19th century, people sought

tuberculosis treatment in Colorado Springs because of the location's dry climate, fresh mountain air, and hot springs.

The house was built in the peak of the Victorian Era in 1876, and quickly became one of the most prosperous farms and orchards on the Front Range providing the region with fresh produce (see Figure 5.2). There were typically four to five historic interpreters dressed in period clothing at the site. The interpreters provided guided-tours every hour with each guided-tour lasting roughly thirty minutes. During the guided-tour, interpreters explained the nuances of the most technologically advanced house in the 1800s. Outside was a smokehouse, root cellar, and an orchard of apples, cherry trees, asparagus, raspberry, currant and gooseberry bushes.

Rock Ledge House (Figure 5.2)

Orchard House (1900)

After visitors left the Rock Ledge House, they would head east and pass an original pond established by the Chambers family that was built to increase irrigation to the area for farming and maintaining orchards. The house was built in 1907 and has since undergone historic renovations (see Figure 5.3). There were typically five historic interpreters dressed in period clothing at the site. Interpreters at the Orchard House provided guided-tours every hour that were roughly thirty minutes long. Interpreters discussed how General William Jackson Palmer, credited as the founder of Colorado Springs, purchased Rock Ledge Ranch in 1900. Palmer was a founder of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. The railroad was a major source to the trafficking of coal, gold, and minerals. With the coming of the railroad tourism also flourished.

Orchard House (Image 5.3)

Blacksmith Shop

In addition to these cultural and historical sites, there were also educational sites. There was a 19th century working Blacksmith Shop that repaired farm implements and created hand-forged items, many of which are for sale at the General Store. The resident blacksmith, Andy Morris, was also the Staff Manager of RLR year-round and lived on site tending to the livestock, crops, and land. Prior to becoming the Staff Manager at RLR, he was a blacksmith at other historic sites for much of his adult life. He typically told personal stories and narratives of his experience as a blacksmith, as well as provided oral histories from previous blacksmiths that trained him.

Carriage House

The Carriage House was used as a meeting space for school groups year round. It also housed an exhibition regarding the American Indian history of the landscape. At the Carriage House, there was an American Indian interpreter who answered visitor questions about the exhibition and discussed the various objects on display. The exhibition examined Ute history and American Indian culture on the Front Range in detail, but predominately focused on the colonial development of the landscape. The interpreter at this site works full time at RLR all year and is present for various cultural events, private tours, school programs, and opens the Carriage House for meetings and private events.

Discussion

While the educational opportunities at the American Indian Area may have focused only on the cultural heritage of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes, the information provided and the interpretational techniques used can act as a foundation or guideline for the interpretation of cultural heritage for all American Indian communities and educational spaces nationwide. Historic sites preserve the political, cultural, and social history of a specific region. Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) focused specifically on the cultural heritage and the colonial development of the Front Range. Several distinct periods of development took place on this cultural landscape such as the forced relocation of American Indian tribes to reservations in southwestern Colorado and eastern Utah due to colonial settlement, unfortunately these topics were not addressed by American Indian or historic interpreters.

In general, historic sites provide visitors with new avenues for discussion and dialogue about various themes, topics, and contexts through engagement with interpreters and presentation of cultural heritage. Since education is a critical aspect that increases the development and knowledge of a nation and its communities, education that is devoid or lacking culture, history, and temporal context can be empty and incomplete. Historic sites are crucial to the development of our nation because they have the capacity and the ability to communicate cultural heritage effectively through historic houses, objects, materials, programs, and dialogue that then enriches the perspectives and increases the knowledge of its visitors. The following sections will assess if and how this occurred at RLR.

Based on observations of visitor and interpreter interactions, RLR utilized a variety of educational techniques. The main interpretive techniques observed were participatory education, hands-on activities, guided-tours, and informative conversations with interpreters. An interpretive technique is an educational tool or method that helps interpreters present and express the cultural heritage of a specific region or landscape effectively to its visitors. To be relevant and thought provoking an interpretive technique must cohesively develop ideas, topics, and themes that meaningfully capture, establish, and maintain the attention and interest of visitors. Interpretation is a communicative process designed to reveal meanings and relationships to an areas cultural and natural heritage through experiences with objects, landscapes, and historic sites. The interpretive techniques at RLR were all visitor-centered interpretational methods that ultimately provided me with a framework to shape my visitor questionnaire.

Responses from Visitor Questionnaires and Informal Interviews

The following section will discuss and correlate the responses from visitor questionnaires while assessing how the interpretational techniques at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) influenced visitors' educational experiences. The interpretive techniques that were selected the most while distributing visitor questionnaires were participatory education, hands-on activities, guided-tours, and informative conversations with interpreters. By focusing on the questionnaire responses selected the most, it allowed me to narrow my analysis making my argument more direct and cohesive. Based on observations of visitor and interpreter interactions, visitor questionnaires, and informal

interviews only one site at RLR furthered the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage. The remaining five sites ignored the interpretation of American Indian cultural heritage entirely, which deeply limited the knowledge and perspectives of RLR's visitors. The following evaluation will focus on questions two, three, and four of the visitor questionnaire.

2) What was your favorite site at RLR?

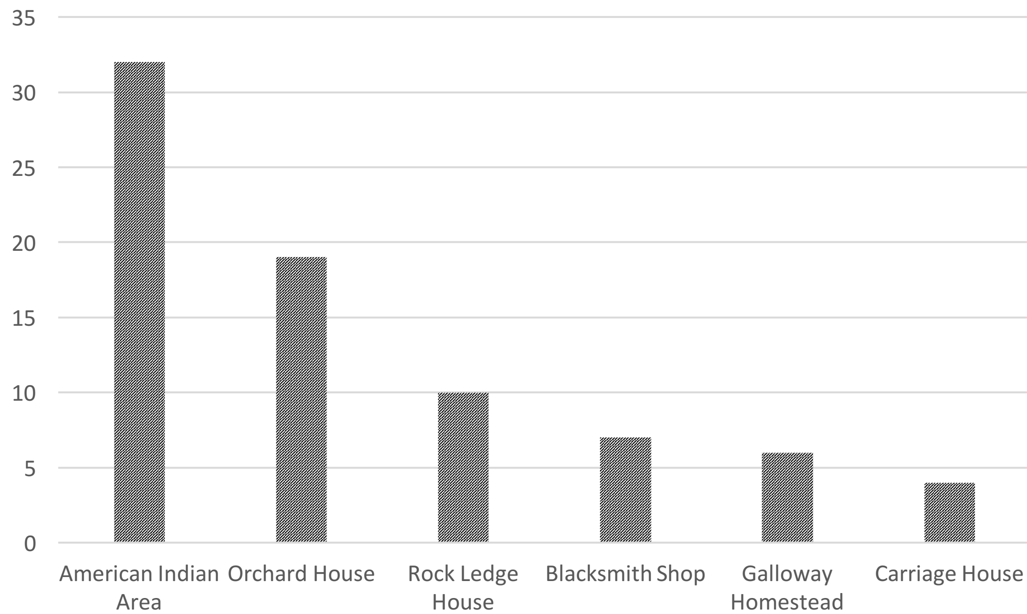
American Indian Area	Homestead Cabin	Carriage House
Rock Ledge House	Blacksmith shop	Orchard House

3) How would you describe your educational experience at RLR?

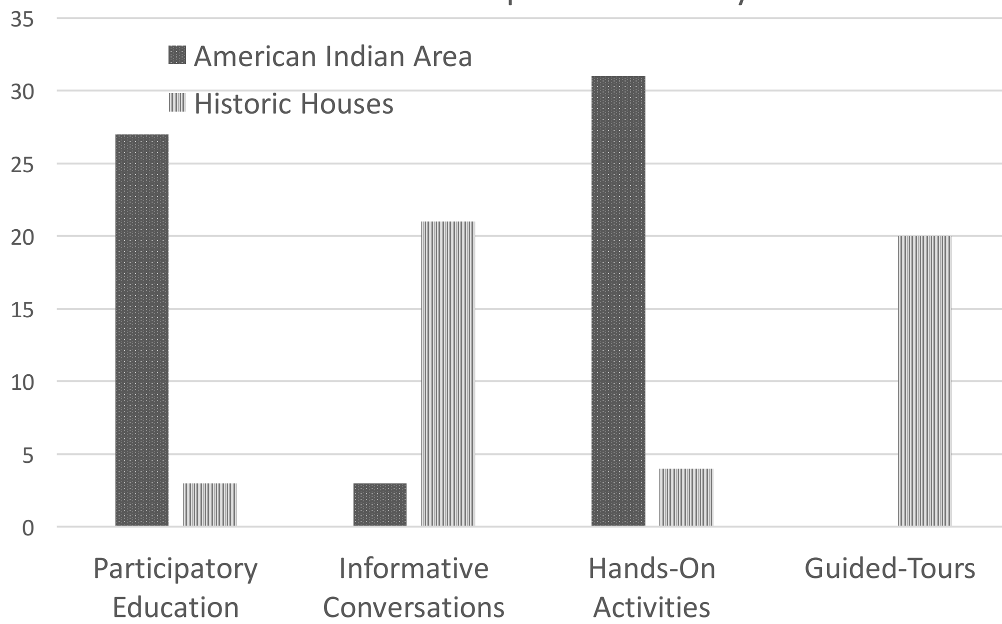
Participatory Education	Cultural	Authentic
Informative Conversation	Historical	

4) What did you enjoy most about your educational experience at RLR?

Outdoor learning	Interpreters	Authentic
Hands-on activities	Guided-tours	



Questions Two of Visitor Questionnaire (Chart 5.1)



Questions Three and Four of Visitor Questionnaire (Chart 5.2)

Thirty-two visitors selected the American Indian Area as their favorite site, while twenty-nine visitors selected one of the historic houses as their favorite site (see Chart 5.1). The majority of the visitors described their experience as participatory or informative and the majority of the visitors enjoyed hands-on activities or guided tours (see Chart 5.2). The darker bar graphs represent visitors who selected the American Indian Area as their favorite site, while the lighter bar graphs represent visitors who selected one of the historic houses as their favorite site (see Chart 5.2). The chart represents how interpretational techniques of participatory education, hands-on activities, guided-tours, and informative conversations with interpreters are associated with visitors favorite site (see Chart 5.2).

American Indian Area

The American Indian Area was the only site at RLR that focused predominately on the interpretational technique of participatory education through hands-on activities. Based on the results from the questionnaire, thirty-two visitors (43%) selected the American Indian Area as their favorite site, twenty-seven visitors (36%) described their experience as participatory, while thirty-one visitors (41%) described hands-on activities as what they enjoyed most about their experience (see Chart 5.1, Chart 5.2). The same twenty-seven visitors who described their experience as participatory also selected hands-on activities as what they enjoyed most about their experience and selected the American Indian Area as their favorite site. These questionnaires and the correlation or mutual

relationship between the three responses reveal how visitors' experience and enjoyment was based on participatory education through the facilitation of hands-on activities. The responses also reveal a heightened interest in learning about the cultural heritage of American Indian communities in a hands-on and participatory manner. The American Indian Area was the only site at RLR that connected tangible experiences with the presentation of intangible heritage, ultimately revealing how the interpretation of cultural heritage is best learned through interactive and engaging experiences. Through these interpretive techniques, RLR broadened the perspectives and educational opportunities of its visitors.

Surprisingly, only three visitors who chose the American Indian Area as their favorite site selected informative conversations as how they described their educational experience at RLR. While observing visitor and interpreter interactions at this site, I noticed extensive and informative conversations taking place between visitors and interpreters. Based on observation checklists, over half of the visitors stayed at the American Indian Area for at least thirty minutes, which is the same time range as the guided-tours at both historic houses. Even though visitors had in-depth and educational conversations with interpreters about the objects they were participating and engaging with, the majority of visitors responded that they learned more through the interaction and engagement with objects.

While distributing questionnaires, I asked every other visitor to provide a quick comment as to why this was their favorite site resulting in thirty-eight informal interviews. Nineteen visitors identified different reasons as to why the American Indian

Area was their favorite site. Fourteen responses were related to participatory and hands-on activities, while the remaining five responses were related to discussions with interpreters that occurred around the engagement of objects. A few of the randomly selected quotes are addressed below:

> "I loved having Indian interpreters as opposed to Indian exhibits, because it makes this a unique educational site that is incredibly hands-on."
>
> "I enjoyed the knowledgeable conversations with interpreters through objects that would have been difficult to learn elsewhere."

The questionnaire responses, informal interviews with visitors, and observations of visitor and interpreter engagement revealed the furthering of American Indian discourse that provides a sense of inclusivity to historically marginalized communities while broadening the perspective and knowledge of its visitors. The educational focus of this site was on the presentation of tangible and intangible aspects of American Indian cultural heritage which are vital to revealing a dynamic history of Colorado's landscape and its development as a state.

Rock Ledge House and Orchard House

The Rock Ledge House and the Orchard House were the two sites at RLR that shared the interpretational techniques of guided-tours and informative conversations with interpreters. Based on the results from the questionnaire, twenty-nine visitors (39%) selected one of the historic houses as their favorite site, twenty-one visitors (28%) described their educational experience as informative through conversations, and twenty

visitors (27%) selected guided-tours as what they enjoyed most about their educational experience (Chart 5.1). The same twenty visitors who described their educational experience as informative through conversations also selected guided-tours as what they enjoyed most about their experience and one of the historic houses as their favorite site. These questionnaires and the correlation or mutual relationship between the three responses reveal how visitors' experience and enjoyment was based on informative conversations with interpreters through the facilitation of guided-tours. Both houses addressed the daily chores and lifestyles that occurred on the Front Range such as maintaining a farm, ranch, and orchard. Through these interpretive techniques, RLR broadened the colonial perspectives and educational opportunities of its visitors.

During the informal interviews conducted while distributing visitor questionnaires, twelve visitors said one of the historic houses was their favorite site because of the guided-tour while three visitors chose this as their favorite site because of the hands-on activities that were available. All visitors claimed the interpreters were very informative and knew a lot about the house and history of the area. A few of the randomly selected quotes are addressed below:

> "I enjoyed when the interpreters asked the visitors questions as it made for a more engaging experience"
>
> "The interpreters were incredibly informative"

Both historic houses had a few participatory and hands-on elements such as stilts, graces, chalkboard slates, and kitchen instruments. The interpreters discussed how stilts, while fun and entertaining, also served a practical use for reaching the tops and trees and

branches, making it easier to tend to the orchards. Hoops can be found outside of the house. Hoops is both a sport and a game. A large hoop is rolled along the ground by means of a stick, and the aim is to keep the hoop upright for longer than the opponent. While all visitors who filled out the questionnaire participated in guided-tours of both historic houses, a handful of visitors selected either the Rock Ledge House or the Orchard House as their favorite sites because of the participatory and hands-on elements that were available.

Discussion

Based on the information addressed above, the interpretational techniques at RLR that influenced visitor's educational experience the most were participatory education and hands-on activities at the American Indian Area and informative conversations and guided-tours at the historic houses. The following section will discuss the importance of these interpretational techniques, while providing detailed stories and examples of the themes and topics presented to visitors. The goal for the following section is to discuss if all four interpretational techniques at RLR furthered the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage.

Defining Participatory Education

In today's political society it has become necessary and urgent for historic sites and similar spaces to reflect the expectations of a rapidly evolving world. According to reports released by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the number of visitors

to cultural events, heritage sites, museums, and theater has noticeably declined (NEA Research Report 54 2012). While only a third of adults in the United States attended a cultural event in person, 71% reported using the internet to watch, listen to, or download culture and history in one form or another (NEA Research Report 54 2012). It is evident that people want to actively learn and engage with cultural heritage, they just choose do so in different spaces and through different methods. Visitors have become dissatisfied with historic sites because they view them as irrelevant, unchanging, and authoritative spaces that do not provide opportunities for dialog and self-expression (Simon 2012). These challenges provide incentives to pursue participation in cultural institutions because they can then increase visitor experience while making the institution more relevant and essential to the communities it educates.

To be successful, historic sites need to mirror the development in our society while becoming instruments of progress and adaptability. This can occur through experiential and participatory measures that demonstrate the institution's value and significance in society today. The goal is to engage visitors as cultural participants, not merely passive consumers of information. Looking at things from a distance and being instructed what to think and feel about an object, idea, or performance is incredibly limiting. Research has recently shown that people learn best when they engage with multiple senses (McGee and Rosenberg 2014). This ultimately promotes engaged learning and participatory exploration that are fundamental to educational experiences. This new interest in providing educational interactivity has led to a complete re-evaluation of the senses, encouraging historic sites to move away from being viewed as the temple of aesthetic

artifacts to a place for community engagement, participatory programming, and object-centered or hands-on activities.

For historic sites to preserve their relevance and become positive educational partners, they should use their unique resources to become more responsive to the dynamics and interests of their communities. This can occur through the utilization of object-centered experiences because cultural heritage is best learned through a variety of tangible and intangible engagements. Historic sites provide a space and opportunity for visitors to connect and engage more deeply with culture and history by relating to and interacting with new people and ideas that they might not have otherwise encountered through sensory experiences. The following section will discuss how visitor encounters and the value ascribed to these encounters at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) occurs through participation with interpreters, object-centered and sensory learning at the American Indian Area.

Museums and historic sites typically focus their efforts on education and research through the care of collections. This deeply limits the ability for visitors to learn from collection objects, as their accessibility is generally limited. When these spaces do utilize their objects for exhibitions it is generally for their artistic and historical significance. One that is strictly visual and hands-off in manner. RLR does not have a typical collection, nor do they have a specific area that preserves, cares for, and houses objects behind closed doors. Instead, all the sites at RLR, but predominately the American Indian Area, utilized cultural and historical objects as educational tools. These objects bridged a gap between the visitor and the interpreters by providing an opportunity to engage in

conversation and sensory experiences over topics about the tangible and intangible heritage of these objects that otherwise might not have occurred if they were merely on display.

Participatory and Hands-on Experiences

Through sensory and object-centered education interpreters at the American Indian Area utilized tangible objects while discussing their intangible use and significance. The other sites at RLR had engaging and participatory activities such as games to play, historical crafts to create and take home, as well as kitchen and schoolroom tools to engage with, but the selection and availability was limited. Instead of being able to select whichever object interested visitors, historic interpreters typically handed visitors a specific object to engage with. What separated the American Indian Area from the other sites was the ability for visitors to pick up whichever object sparked their curiosity. This site was in a very open format that provided visitors with more flexible learning opportunities as opposed to lecture oriented and scripted conversations evident at the historic houses.

The interactions I observed typically began with a comment or question from the visitors regarding the objects that were on display: “What are these materials? Why was this object important? How do you use it? Can I play with it?”. This approach fostered dialogue and active involvement through the formation of unique and visitor-centered discussions and connections. The majority of the time these conversations differed from visitor to visitor. According to an informal interview with an American Indian interpreter

at this site, this allowed for day-to-day experiences to be diverse making “things more unique and interesting because I rarely knew what to expect.” (Interpreter D, June 11, 2016). In addition, whichever question the visitors asked generally led to a dynamic response that communicated something about the broader historical and cultural context of the object, the time period in which the object was used, and how the object it used today.

On multiple occasions at the American Indian Area, visitors were intrigued with the drums laid out under the ramada and asked if they could play them. The American Indian interpreters would agree, demonstrate rhythmic drumming techniques, and then associate the various hides, furs, sinews, and tangible materials used to make the drums. During these encounters, the interpreter responded that the rhythmic pattern and sound of the drumbeat referenced the heartbeat of Mother Earth. Visitors played the drum and touched the various elements used to make the drum, providing sensory elements of sound, sight, and touch. The interpreter also addressed the ceremonial significance of these drums, as well as the spiritual singing and dancing that are associated with the drumming of the Ute tribe today. This narrative revealed a connection between the representation of tangible and intangible heritage and elements of survivance through the transfer of knowledge regarding the creation of traditional drums.

Another conversation that frequently occurred among visitors and interpreters was the discussion of American Indian jewelry. The American Indian interpreters always wore beaded jewelry, which were generally made at RLR during interpretive demonstrations and activities. Many times, visitors were able to observe and engage with

interpreters while they were making earrings and necklaces using small glass seed beads. Occasionally, visitors were invited to participate in this demonstration of jewelry making if there were few visitors present. When this occurred, interpreters would discuss how the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes welcomed the exchange and trade of these seed beads with colonial settlers on the Front Range because it was much easier to make jewelry with seed beads rather than natural elements.

During these interactions, American Indian interpreters would discuss how thankful their ancestors where when they could trade or purchase painted seed beads and string through trade, because dying porcupine quills with natural resources was incredibly difficult and sinew was sometimes hard to acquire. This narrative revealed a multivocal presentation of history regarding trade, a connection between the presentation of tangible and intangible heritage, and elements of survivance through the transfer of knowledge regarding the creation of traditional jewelry. Unfortunately, the discussion of trade relations did not lead to a conversation regarding the negative and exploitative elements of trade that also occurred.

Discussion

In the instances addressed above, there was a participatory aspect attributed to each object. Visitors engaged in discourse with interpreters while also being hands-on with the sensory experiences each object provided such as touch, sound, and sight. Through simple acts of engagement and participatory education addressed above, interpreters allowed for in-depth conversations to occur over the objects tangible and intangible

heritage. In addition, it reveals how museums and historic sites should better understand and appreciate the interactions and experiences that occur between visitors and interpreters through objects as educational tools and sensory experiences. Through object-centered learning, hands-on activities, and participatory education interpreters were able to link tangible resources and materials to an intangible meaning.

Defining Guided-Tours

No matter the age, size, or style of the house, no matter what events, activities, and lives took place inside or outside of the house, the concept of a residence is a universally understood idea (Donnelly 2002). Guided-tours are the most common interpretational and educational tool found in historic houses. Traditionally, they are lecture oriented and focus on decorative arts and the use of rooms. According to the 2010 Cultural Consumers Report (CCR), while some visitors enjoy and prefer guided-tours, the majority do not. The report showed that overall "only 45% of respondents indicated that they enjoyed a guided tour experience" (Wands 1:2010). Many claimed that the guided-tours were too controlled, structured, insipid, monotonous, and claustrophobic (CCR 2010). To make matters even worse, these responses came from museum and historic site members and those who frequented cultural and historical institutions regularly. The respondents did not reflect the general public overall (Wands 2010). Respondents who reacted positively to guided-tours said they liked them because they provided in-depth information and the ability to ask questions. Other responses included the personal connection that a tour guide offered, such as stories, anecdotes, and little-known facts.

In response to recent studies, guided-tours and historic house museums have developed into more participatory, interactive, and engaging spaces through the use of objects and sensory experiences. Techniques for guided-tours are noticeably varied, but in general they reveal unique assets and boundaries dictated by the historic sites overall mission and sense of value they hope to instill upon the visitors. Despite the differences that exist between guided-tours in historic houses, there are some general commonalities. Guided-tours are based on an interpreter's thorough knowledge of the house, the objects it is filled with and their use and significance, and the cultural landscape of the era or eras being represented.

Guided-tours typically address specific themes to better provide structure and cohesion to the interpreter's discussion. This helps visitors learn and remember facts about the house or the people that lived in the house more effectively. Interpreters in historic houses also reference cultural and historical objects to support, illustrate, and better reinforce the themes they are addressing (Levy 2002). Many times, interpretation in historic houses is tied to important biographies. These biographies are generally based on the person or family that owned the home. Within these biographies are stories that ultimately connect visitors to the history of the site by providing additional evidence to support the themes being addressed. These stories provide historical context that allows visitors to gain a more accurate picture of the past while providing a framework to show how it relates to the present (Levy 2002).

The most common type of tour in historic houses is the third-person interpreter-led tour. In this type of tour, the interpreter leads a group of visitors through the house

while talking about the historic house without representing him or herself as an active part of that history. During these tours, visitors are not allowed to wander around the house on their own. Instead, they must stay with the tour group. Third-person interpreters do not display a historical character and do typically not wear period costumes. In some instances, third-person interpreters are costumed while giving guided-tours, as is the case with interpreters at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR). These types of tours work best when there are minimal barriers, because it is the space itself that speaks in the first person (Levy 2002). These tour guidelines are generally flexible, thereby allowing interpreters to better personalize and alter their tours to the audiences' interests. In many ways, these types of guided-tours can be viewed as a method of storytelling.

Guided-Tours and Informative Conversations in Historic Houses

Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) had frequent guided-tours throughout the day, many of which consisted of small groups thereby allowing visitors to ask questions and engage with the interpreters more easily. The small size of the tour groups allowed visitors to not only see and hear the interpreter easily, but granted them room to experience the space without being overwhelmed by a large group of people. The Rock Ledge House and the Orchard House were the two sites at RLR that shared the traditional style of guided-tours. Overall, the historic interpreters at RLR were incredibly informative. The stories they told and the knowledge they provided at both houses was based mainly on various themes that colonial families might have encountered moving to the west regarding trade, homesteading, and maintaining a farm, ranch, or orchard.

During guided-tours at both houses, visitors seemed interested and asked historic interpreters relevant questions. Based on observations during the guided-tours and informal interviews with interpreters, only one or two questions were typically asked by visitors during each tour. When compared to the American Indian Area this was a miniscule amount. Either the interpreters were so knowledgeable that visitors did not ask questions or visitors were uninterested. During one of my guided-tours at the Rock Ledge House, a couple left in the middle of the tour, which could have been related to time constraints or a lack of interest.

Instead of visitors asking questions, the historic interpreters asked visitors questions: “What do you think this was used for? Would you have liked to use this? How do you think this was used? Why do you think people used this? Are you thankful for modern kitchens/notebook paper/pens?”. While this allowed for informative conversation and an engaging experience between visitors and interpreters, it was sometimes limiting. The visitors were not as able to come up with their own form of inquiry or present natural curiosity as they did at the American Indian Area. They were also given less freedom to shape their own educational experiences. A question frequently asked by visitors at the Orchard House was the display of seashells in a landlocked state. The interpreter always responded that the display of seashells represented a sense of wealth through the ability to travel to coastal areas. The repetition of the same question is a key indicator of the visitors’ interests and should be a topic included within the guided-tour.

Occasionally, visitors were encouraged to try on hats in the Orchard House’s dressing room, wring out clothing, and hang them outside to dry. Most of the time

visitors could look at menus from nine course meals, browse a book written by about the flora and fauna of Colorado, and flip through shopping catalogs comparing prices of items in the late 1800s to prices today. These experiences could represent the visitors who chose a historic house as their favorite site at RLR but responded that they described their experience as participatory and hands-on (see Chart 5.2).

In general, these guided-tours granted visitors the ability to look at and learn about objects, relate them to the original owners through stories told by the interpreters while creating unique learning opportunities for visitors. Themes were expressed coherently and succinctly, but the themes were rarely discussed through objects, as they were at the American Indian Area, making the topics less experiential and engaging and strictly conversation and informative. In addition, the themes discussed rarely related or connected to contemporary or modern life. They mainly discussed the laborious work and types of recreation that homesteaders would have endured, much of which consisted of creating and maintaining a sustainable farm.

Discussion

According to question five of the visitor questionnaire, the majority of visitors went to every site at RLR. Which brings into question why historic interpreters did not address anything about American Indian culture or history. After leaving the American Indian Area the presentation of American Indian cultural heritage was forgotten, which presents the notion that these communities vanished or willingly left the Front Range with no apparent reason or context provided. At the American Indian Area, relationships and

interactions between colonists and tribes was frequently discussed, but during the guided-tours there was no evidence of trade or any mention of how American Indian communities once lived and traveled through this region.

On one occasion, a visitor at the Homestead Cabin asked how the population increase due to colonial settlement impacted American Indian communities in the region (Friday June 17, 2016). The historic interpreter's response focused on the various pressures tribes faced regarding the decimation of natural resources, such as the bison. The interpreter did not discuss issues such as forced relocation to reservations or acts of genocide, revealing an ahistorical presentation. This discussion could have easily mentioned how homesteaders, miners, and traders, encroached and impeded on American Indian territories. Instead, the interpreter took a limited approach to their answer, one which only provided a small segment of history while completely disregarding how bison were intentionally killed as an act of genocide and how tribes were forced to sign peace treaties and move to reservations where life was many time inhabitable due to a lack of resources and mismanagement on behalf of the government.

The example addressed above reveals a clear disconnect between the two presentations of cultural heritage, suggesting that not only are the educational styles at RLR different, but so are the interpretational themes, missions, and goals. One focuses specifically on the colonial history of the Front Range and the other addresses and utilizes American Indian voices, narratives, perspectives, tangible, and intangible heritage. The guided-tours at the Rock Ledge House and the Orchard House talked about the history of the house, its original owners, and the various objects on display in the house, but failed

to address American Indian cultural heritage. The guided-tours were ahistorical in nature and neglected to provide context regarding the displacement of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes.

Informal Interviews with Interpreters

While conducting observations, I had conservations with four of the American Indian interpreters and the four historic interpreters regarding what inspired or encouraged them to work or volunteer at RLR. For American Indian interpreters, it appeared that interpretation fulfilled two educational missions. Not only did these interpreters deeply enjoy educating visitors about American Indian cultural heritage, they also believed they were educating themselves by drawing on the cultural knowledge of other American Indian interpreters. One interpreter wanted visitors "to know that we survived, we are still here today, and we are everyday people" (Interpreter A, July 14, 2016). She felt that being an interpreter was the best way to present this idea to the public.

Out of all four of the informal interviews, American Indian interpreters deeply enjoyed reading and learning more about their cultural heritage, but most importantly they were grateful and appreciative of being able to communicate their history to visitors. The ability and desire from RLR to actively staff American Indian interpreters, and act as a space where cultural heritage can be shared with others, increased public discourse and widened visitors' knowledge, perspectives, and understandings of American Indian worldviews. It also represented a major revision in the field of history and museum

discourse through the utilization of voice and personal narratives from a source or insider community.

During informal interviews with historic interpreters regarding their interest in interpretation at RLR, their inspiration and desire was noticeably different. One of the younger interpreter used RLR to fulfill volunteer requirements to receive his high school diploma. Other interpreters decided to work at RLR to spend time outdoors and learn skills that would be of assistance for future careers. One staffed interpreter stated it was an enjoyable job to have during summer breaks, as she was a teacher. Out of the four informal interviews I had with historic interpreters, they all stated their love for history and learning about the various time periods of the Front Range from a self-centric position. In addition, no historic interpreters made a personal connection with the information they were presenting to visitors nor did they discuss the importance of increasing public discourse and understanding of the Front Range's colonial development.

Representations of Multivocality and Survivance

A story that was always communicated to visitors at the American Indian Area was the Ute creation story. Interpreters discussed how the Ute tribe had oral traditions and narratives that spanned back to the Front Range for thousands of years. The significance of the Ute story was rooted in how distinctive it was when compared to other American Indian creation stories. Cheyenne and Arapahoe stories discussed the origins of the world, the migration to present day North America, and the collision of two continents

that challenged old ideas with new ideas. The Ute creation story was inherently unique and significant because it did not discuss migration.

Instead, American Indian interpreters focused on how Ute communities possessed a set of central values and had a highly developed society. While they may not have had a written language, held livestock, maintained crops or a farm, the Ute bands spoke the same language and observed the same social and political practices which developed from inhabiting and defending a set territory from tribes, the Spanish, Mormons, and miners for centuries. Through this message and similar stories told at the American Indian Area, interpreters exhibited elements of survivance through an active sense of presence. In addition, it revealed a multivocal presentation of history. Many times, American Indians are represented at uncivilized because they did not have similar lifestyles as homesteaders or colonial settlers. By stating that Ute and other American Indian communities did in fact have social and political practices visitors witnessed a unique and often untold element to Colorado's cultural heritage.

Another presentation of survivance and multivocality occurred around the discussion of tipis. American Indian interpreters mentioned how the hide of the tipi was traditionally tanned with cow or elk brain. The brain was used to animate the hide giving it a sense of active presence, while also revealing how the intangible creation of an object was just as important if not more important than the tangible aesthetic of an object. This technique of tanning that was passed down from generations through oral histories revealing elements of survivance. By saying the brain animated the hide it presented a multivocal aspect of history. The interpreter could have simply stated that the hides were

tanned with brain to make sure they stay pliable even after getting wet. Instead, an often untold perspective occurred that addressed both tangible and intangible aspects of American Indian cultural heritage.

A separate multivocal conversation regarding tangible and intangible heritage occurred over the discussion of moccasins. One day an interpreter was mending a pair of moccasins (Interpreter D, June 18, 2016). They were plain moccasins with very little tangible aesthetic. A visitor inquired as to why they were not beaded, revealing stereotypical understandings that all American Indian clothing is elaborate. The interpreter replied that most moccasins are not intricately beaded because it makes it difficult to walk. The interpreter then went into a discussion about how important these specific moccasins were because she was mending them for her daughter's first dance at a ceremonial event. This conversation revealed that the intangible significance of an object as opposed to the mere tangible aesthetic was equally as important while also representing to visitors that American Indian men, women, and children still participate in traditional ceremonies as they did in the past.

Discussion

Rarely was the topic of a daily life of American Indians today or the struggles they still encounter ever mentioned. Instead, American Indian interpreters predominantly focused on who their ancestors were in the past. By focusing specifically on historical details and contexts while important nonetheless, Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) failed to address interpreters' real lives as members of contemporary American Indian

communities. This is problematic because it represents American Indians as non-existent in America's history while many times denying them a cultural present by addressing elements of survival and agency.

Regardless, through the employment of American Indian interpreters, RLR provided an educational space for the presentation of survivance and multivocal elements of history. Many times, historic sites focus specifically on the lives of wealthy elites or the dominant society, ultimately subjecting visitors to a biased and unbalanced presentation of history. American Indian interpreters were never given a script or format of themes and topics through which to educate visitors. Instead, they were encouraged to use their own knowledge and experience to address any theme they wanted to present to visitors. Many times, these conversations focused on the objects visitors chose to engage with, since these objects were historically oriented the themes and focus seemed to remain on past contexts. Through the representation and demonstration of American Indian lifestyles interpreters evoked personal stories and narratives through thought-provoking and meaningful messages while encouraging visitor participation and engagement through object-centered learning regarding cultural heritage.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This thesis was guided by three specific questions. First, how did the interpretational techniques at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) influence visitor's educational experience? Second, how did the interpretational techniques at RLR further the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage? Third, how do the interpretational techniques at RLR broaden the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage? The goal was to assess if visitors preferred a specific interpretational technique such as participatory education or guided-tours and if it was then associated with either American Indian cultural heritage or colonial history. Historic sites are a crucial way to engage with and educate the community, but many times they exclude topics and themes of the historically oppressed and marginalized leading to ahistorical perspectives.

Museums and historic sites provide a variety of roles for a community. Whether it be participatory education, the interpretation of cultural heritage, guided-tours, or simply a place of touristic interest and outdoor learning, the importance of these spaces to the identity of a community is increasingly being realized. This research project has focused on the interpretational techniques of American Indian cultural heritage at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR), looking specifically at what role interpreters played in

broadening visitors knowledge and understanding of the variety of communities that lived in the area. Ultimately revealing how RLR constitutes a unique educational space in which the interpretation of cultural heritage and the recognition that American Indian people have agency to shape their own identities and historical narratives, which is crucial because cultural organizations have a fundamental function to define and control expressions of major social narratives. Museums and historic sites are not neutral organizations, instead they are active social participants. They serve many social purposes, but fundamentally they define and express major social narratives. In addition, they are important collections of ideological symbols and therefore perform a special communication as well as legitimizing role.

The American Indian Area at RLR ultimately furthered the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage through recreated cultural and historical objects. By employing American Indian interpreters RLR also provided a sense of inclusion for historically disenfranchised and marginalized communities. Through an insider or source communities' perspective RLR broadened the perspectives and educational opportunities of its visitors regarding the interpretation of the Front Range's cultural heritage. Many times, interpretation, representation, and exhibition comes from curatorial and institutional authority, which deeply limits educational experiences for visitors as the perspectives presented are many times biased, inaccurate as they have come from an outsider's perspective. At RLR, American Indian interpreters were granted the power and authority to control the representation of their own cultural heritage, which is a rare occurrence in museums and similar educational spaces.

At RLR, the American Indian Area provided opportunities for visitors to speak, engage with, and learn about the histories of American Indians from an insider's perspective. This site created a space in which different people encountered each other and exchanged dialogue while also providing a forum for American Indian interpreters to articulate their voice, personal identity, agency, and cultural heritage. The American Indian Area became a location where cultures encountered one another by creating a place for intercultural dialogue, and thus, providing a platform for all stories, not merely the dominant one. Dialogue played an essential role in the process of interpretation at RLR's American Indian Area, ultimately giving voice to multiple perspectives through survivance while enabling visitors to develop more multivocal perspectives of complex histories regarding the development of the United States. Ultimately, the American Indian Area at RLR created a bridge of heritage between the past and the present by facilitating dialogue between objects, people, and engaging conversation through American Indian voices.

While the presence of American Indian interpreters at RLR allowed visitors to witness a multivocal history through the representation of holistic perspectives regarding the cultural and historical development of the Front Range, unfortunately a variety of important albeit sensitive themes and topics were ignored. Overall, the narratives and stories presented by both American Indian and historic interpreters failed to address what happened to American Indian communities' post-colonial settlement. In addition, the struggles and elements of active resistance that American Indian communities faced throughout the development of the United States were not addressed. While the American

Indian Area revealed elements of multivocality and survivance, the topics discussed among interpreters and visitors did not decolonize aspects of history. In fact, as soon as visitors left the American Indian Area, historic interpreters failed to address any aspects of American Indian cultural heritage.

Instead, historic interpreters discussed how to maintain a farm, ranch, or orchard, the lives of the original owners of the houses, the various objects on display in the houses, and life as a homesteader. After visitors left the American Indian Area the interpretation of American Indian cultural heritage was ignored and forgotten. Simply having an American Indian interpretive site with American Indian interpreters is not enough to create an inclusive experience. American Indian and historic interpreters at RLR need to collaborate and discuss ways in which new themes and topics can be incorporated into the guided-tours. In addition, RLR needs to bring in a much wider range of historical experiences American Indians faced such as being relocated to reservations and the political agendas that promoted topics of assimilation and acts of genocide.

Many visitors have become dissatisfied with historic sites because they view them as irrelevant, unchanging, and authoritative spaces that do not provide opportunities for dialog and self-expression. Both American Indian and historic interpreters at RLR provided past information through the same educational techniques and many times failed to address contemporary issues. This leads to one time visitors, not repeated visitors, because eventually the information becomes repetitive, monotonous, and irrelevant. Through the incorporation of special programming, new events, rotating

exhibits, and new interpretational themes and topics RLR can begin to showcase new ways of embracing past contexts while relating them to contemporary issues. As discussed in the introduction chapter, 87% of K-12 academic standards only address American Indian cultural heritage before the 1900s. The lack of public education and knowledge of both contemporary American Indian results in the current suppression, stereotypical understandings, and overall ignorance of American Indian communities nationwide.

RLR should incorporate frequently changing exhibits and themes that are created through the collaboration of artists, historians, and community members, where artifacts, objects, and past contexts are juxtaposed with stories about contemporary life. Interpreters should bring to life the stories they tell visitors, while encouraging and inviting visitors to share and tell their own personal stories. A limited approach to interpretation and the exhibition of information will appeal to only a limited audience. If the desire is to provide information to the widest possible range of visitors, historic sites must accommodate all types of learners.

Summary of Findings

Through this research project I explored how specific interpretational techniques at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site (RLR) influenced visitor's educational experience, furthered the discourse of American Indian cultural heritage, and broadened the perspectives and knowledge of its visitors regarding American Indian cultural heritage. Unfortunately, The American Indian Area was the only site at RLR that furthered the

discourse and broadened visitors' perspectives and knowledge. This occurred through participatory education and hands-on activities regarding the tangible and intangible heritage of cultural and historical objects.

As soon as visitors left the American Indian Area, there was zero discussion of American Indian cultural heritage which deeply limited learning opportunities for visitors. While RLR appropriately celebrated the survivance of American Indian cultural heritage through multivocality, it did so by leaving out key concepts such as resilience, agency, and decolonization. This information is crucial because to move further away from the histories and contexts of the past museums and historic sites must acknowledge the hard truths of colonial injustices by addressing how American Indian peoples were subject to cultural genocide and violent assimilation practices.

Control and authority over the representation of heritage is essential to autonomy, inclusivity, and identity. It is also essential to cultural survival and self-determination. At RLR, American Indian interpreters used their personal perspectives to replace popular master narratives found in museum representations with stories of revival and remembrance. The theme of inequity and how to resolve it has been a scholarly focus for decades. Unfortunately, many times historical marginalized or disenfranchised communities have been ignored in the presentation of colonial history and the development of the United States. Reaching out to those that have not been included in the traditional narrative can allow the reformation and maintenance of historical identity, through respect, education, understanding, and healing.

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