Cross-Institutional Collaboration and Exhibit Making: “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology

Jordan Kathleen Bennett

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Abstract
The Gold Rush, which brought many new immigrant communities to the American West, made a permanent impact on American culture by prompting the development of many Western towns. However, the Chinese immigrant mining population in the Boise, Idaho area has had little museum representation despite the more than 300,000 Chinese people who emigrated to the US between the 1840s and 1880. To rectify this, the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG), in collaboration with members of the Payette National Forest, the Asian American Comparative Collection, Boise State University/US Army Corps of Engineers, and the University of Denver, developed an exhibit on the lives, histories, and contributions of Chinese immigrant miners who lived and worked in the Boise region. The exhibit opened at the IMMG in spring 2021. This thesis is a reflection on and analysis of that museum exhibition development process. It focuses on the collaborative work necessary to curate a humanities-focused exhibit in an industrial science museum. This thesis also explores the process of creating an exhibit during the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020 and has impacted almost every aspect of this research and project.

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“On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho”

at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Jordan Kathleen Bennett

March 2024

Advisor: Dr. Nicole Herzog
The Gold Rush, which brought many new immigrant communities to the American West, made a permanent impact on American culture by prompting the development of many Western towns. However, the Chinese immigrant mining population in the Boise, Idaho area has had little museum representation despite the more than 300,000 Chinese people who emigrated to the US between the 1840s and 1880. To rectify this, the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG), in collaboration with members of the Payette National Forest, the Asian American Comparative Collection, Boise State University/US Army Corps of Engineers, and the University of Denver, developed an exhibit on the lives, histories, and contributions of Chinese immigrant miners who lived and worked in the Boise region. The exhibit opened at the IMMG in spring 2021. This thesis is a reflection on and analysis of that museum exhibition development process. It focuses on the collaborative work necessary to curate a humanities-focused exhibit in an industrial science museum. This thesis also explores the process of creating an exhibit during the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020 and has impacted almost every aspect of this research and project.

KEY TERMS: reflexive museology, collaboration, Chinese immigrant miners, industrial museum
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Gold Rush made a permanent impact on American culture by prompting the growth and development of many Western towns. Many new inhabitants in these towns were immigrants. The history of the Gold Rush has been presented in museums throughout the West for decades, but immigrant communities are often excluded from these exhibits. In particular, the Chinese immigrant mining population in the Boise, Idaho area has had little museum representation. Despite the fact that in 1870, Idaho’s Chinese population was almost equal in size to the white and non-Chinese immigrant populations combined (Zhu 1997, 155), no museum exhibit has ever been solely dedicated to telling their stories and highlighting their economic and social contributions. To address this issue and educate the public on how Chinese miners helped shaped early Idaho, the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG), located in Boise, Idaho, developed an exhibit on Chinese immigrant miners who came to the US during the American Gold Rush.

This research aims to unravel the complexities of collaborative projects within the museum context, spotlighting "On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho" as a focal point. The significance of museums as dynamic spaces for preserving and narrating diverse histories comes into sharp focus, highlighting the challenges and triumphs encountered in the pursuit of authentic representation. The collaborative team's commitment to reshaping narratives and fostering inclusivity in the
The portrayal of Chinese mining history serves as a guiding thread, weaving together themes of heritage, representation, and the evolving nature of collaborative endeavors. As the collaborators investigated the intricate layers of this research, we learned the nuances of relationship-building in virtual landscapes, the imperative to preserve minority demographic history, and the collective consciousness driving change within communities.

As the collaborators navigated the intricacies of working together, the project became a testament to the transformative potential of collective endeavors. This thesis provides a framework for expanding the reach of traditional mining museums, by broadening their scope, and shedding light on difficult heritages (both in the history of institutional practices and as experienced by individuals working in industry). By incorporating an anthropological perspective, industrial museums may be able to go beyond a chronological account of events and technological advancements, delving into the social, cultural, and human dimensions that shape the experiences of individuals within these communities (Kreps 2020). This approach recognizes the agency of individuals within these communities, acknowledging that their histories are not solely shaped by external forces but are actively co-constructed by the people themselves (Carattini 2015).

Furthermore, an anthropological lens emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and ethical representation. It prompts a critical examination of power dynamics, biases, and potential misinterpretations that may arise when portraying mining histories (Oakley 2015). This perspective encourages collaborative engagement, fostering
a more inclusive and respectful representation that resonates with the lived experiences of
diverse individuals within mining contexts.

Moreover, this thesis examines the role of museums in response to political and
social movements. For example, in 2021 Idaho Republican Legislators, “approved
legislation aimed at preventing public and charter schools and universities from teaching
critical race theory, which examines the ways in which race and racism influence
American politics, culture and the law.” (AP article – web address sent to you) The
funding cuts that emerged from this debate were squarely centered on prohibiting
inclusion initiatives at Boise State and other Idaho Universities. These actions, and other
budget threats centered on diversity and inclusion in public institutions, certainly
reverberated throughout Idaho and sent a clear message about the political agenda of
those in power. While not a direct response to the prevailing political climate, this exhibit
transcends its role as a mere repository of history, evolving into a powerful social justice
project. It not only delves into the content of Chinese mining history but also becomes a
platform where collaborators publicly address and counteract prevailing societal
challenges, demonstrating that museums can be catalysts for change in the broader socio-
political landscape. This exhibit and my research combines the past with the present,
challenging conventional practices, and summoning museums to become dynamic arenas
of intercultural dialogue and engagement.

**Purpose and Goals of the Thesis**

This thesis is a critical analysis of the cross-institutional collaboration process,
through an anthropological lens, which was necessary to create a museum exhibit on the
topic of Chinese immigrant miners and their contributions to Boise’s culture, mining practices, and economic growth. The thesis reflects on the exhibit development process, focusing on the collaborative work necessary to curate a humanities-focused exhibit in an industrial science museum. The thesis also considers how the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020, had an impact on almost every aspect of this research and exhibit project.

The following question guided my research:

What are the most effective collaborative processes for creating a people-focused, humanities-based exhibit—one meant to humanize Chinese immigrant miners in the Boise area—at the IMMG, an industrial science museum?

In what follows I will describe how an anthropological perspective embodied by a collaborative team can enrich the exploration of industrial history by providing a holistic understanding of the human aspects intertwined with industrial activities.

**Purpose and Goals of the Exhibit**

At the time we conceived this project, there were no exhibits in any US museums that focused solely on the history and contributions of Chinese immigrants in Idaho. The goal of this exhibit, then, which opened at the IMMG in spring 2021, was to highlight the seldom-told history of Chinese immigrant miners in Idaho.

The exhibit, titled “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho,” aids in dispelling stereotypes about Chinese immigrants in the US that persist to this day. One means of fighting discrimination against this population is to tell accurate and whole stories about their experiences, skills, contributions, and lives that can
replace shallow misconceptions in the public imagination. In conjunction with dispelling these stereotypes, this exhibit focuses on Chinese perseverance despite the Exclusion Act of 1882, which was the first law to prevent a specific demographic from entering the US based on their nationality and profession. This is an urgent but seldom-remembered moment in American history. According to Bronson and Ho (2015, 49–50), the Exclusion Act started a ripple effect that created the current issue of underrepresentation; before this exhibit, it was difficult for anyone to access information about the Chinese community and their contributions to the economy and cultural fabric of the Boise area. Additionally, the collaborators recognized that other ethnic communities in Idaho have spaces of representation in the Boise public sector. For example, the city of Boise and surrounding area has the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the Idaho Black History Museum, and the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho. However, Chinese history has been left out of the museum sector.

To date, this exhibit is the only permanent exhibit in the region specifically dedicated to highlighting Chinese immigrant miners. The IMMG’s mission is to inform visitors about the mining and geological history of Idaho with specific focus on what was mined in the region and by whom. The exhibit highlights the stories of the Chinese mining community in the Boise area through the display of the personal stories of miners and artifacts used for a variety of purposes, including utilitarian ceramics, traditional celebratory and ritual wares, and perhaps most importantly, Chinese mining equipment. Additionally, the exhibit touches on the societal contributions of these miners to the Boise community and mining industry.
Background Experience and Positionality

My role in producing the exhibit was to advise collaborators based on my knowledge and experience with creating exhibits and mining heritage. Additionally, I also contributed technical expertise by creating an interactive touchscreen to aid in the narrative of the exhibit. In addition to volunteering at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and Molly Brown House Museum, both located in Denver, Colorado, my credentials include experience as an archaeological field technician. As an intern at the Vernon R. Alden Library Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections in Athens, Ohio from 2015 to 2016, I cataloged the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron Company Collection and created a database on the 1930 Millfield, Ohio mine explosion.

Additionally, in the spring of 2019, I was hired as the Curator at the National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum (NMHFM) in Leadville, CO. Through this role and in utilizing critical, reflexive museology on myself, I was able to bring an insider perspective in understanding public’s desire for personal stories in museums at both the IMMG and NMHFM. The exhibit at the IMMG has continually influenced how I have worked outside of this research in collaborating with other institutions, working with community members, and thinking about industrial representation in the museum sector.

Despite my experiences in museum settings, I recognize I am an outsider to the Boise region and the Chinese community. I deferred to the other collaborators involved in this exhibit throughout this process when their expertise was more relevant than mine.
Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology and Collaborators

“On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” is the newest permanent exhibit at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG), located in Boise, Idaho. The genesis of the IMMG began in 1988. At that time, Fred Shrute, who would go on to be the museum’s first president, suggested a space to exhibit the history of mining and geology in the Boise Basin for the public. It took almost six years for the museum to officially open at its current location in the Old State Penitentiary in 1994. Shrute reportedly called the IMMG “the museum of persistence and perseverance” in the local State Fair newspaper, which is particularly relevant to the goals of this exhibit (Ewing, March 9, 2020). The IMMG celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2019. It remains devoted to improving its techniques, methodologies, collaborations, and educational goals. The Chinese immigrant miner exhibit joins a variety of other exhibits primarily dedicated to industrial aspects of mining and geology, including mining history, earthquake tracking, meteorites, and Idaho minerals and gems (Ewing, March 9, 2020). The museum takes pride in catering to all audiences, with special emphasis on school-aged children to stimulate learning at an early age.

In 2018, Dr. Pei-Lin Yu, Associate Anthropology Professor at Boise State University and Archaeologist for the US Army Corps of Engineers, and her friend, Andy Louie, a fourth-generation Chinese American, visited a local Boise museum to view a Chinese apothecary recreation on exhibit. They were disheartened to learn the exhibit had been put into storage, and what remained of the Chinese artifacts were dispersed throughout the museum with little context regarding the importance of Chinese history in
Boise and Idaho at large. Dr. Yu and Mr. Louie discussed approaching other museums about the possibility of creating a Chinese-focused exhibit. At that time, Dr. Pei-Lin Yu was an associate professor at Boise State University. After hearing about this project goals, then-graduate-student Annemarie Hasnain informed Dr. Yu that she served on the board of the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology and would be happy to connect them. Hasnain informed the board about Dr. Yu’s idea for an exhibit on Chinese immigrant miners, and the museum quickly committed to the project. At this time, the museum was interested in expanding their mining exhibits at large, so the timing worked out well. The board felt that the contributions of the Chinese immigrants to Idaho's development were little-known among their visitors, and that this history would make for an interesting and enlightening exhibit. In 2019, in the project’s preliminary stages, Dr. Nicole Herzog, then a visiting professor at Boise State University and now on the faculty in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Denver, joined the team and brought me into the project. I became involved because of my previous experience and research on coal miners in Appalachia, Ohio during my undergraduate at Ohio University. This project allowed me to combine my interests in mining heritage and museums.

To broaden institutional collaboration, individuals and institutions who were knowledgeable about Chinese mining heritage and/or had access to related objects for potential display in an exhibit were invited to join the team. These professionals included Dr. Morgan Zedalis, a Heritage Program Manager at the Payette National Forest (PNF), who had collaborated with Dr. Yu on an earlier Chinese mining project; and Renae Campbell, a Research Associate at the Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC),
a subunit of the Laboratory of Anthropology and part of the Department of Culture, Society and Justice in the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Idaho. Both Dr. Zedalis and Ms. Campbell contributed their expertise as well as resources and artifacts from their respective institutions. Dr. Yu contacted Gayle Dixon, a retired archaeologist from the Payette National Forest, because of her extensive research on individual Chinese miners from Warren, Idaho. Dixon provided her expertise on the subject matter as well as a copy of her research poster from the Payette National Forest (PNF) for use in the exhibit. She ensured accuracy in both the presentation of her poster and the general exhibit content.

**Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 2, *Historical Background of Chinese Immigrant Mining* History, contains the historical background of Chinese immigrant mining history. It begins with the political and economic climate that caused many Chinese individuals to seek better opportunities outside of their homeland. This leads into how the Chinese heard about the possible benefits of migration to US western coastal cities, then inland to areas that would eventually become Boise and Idaho. After introducing the factors that encouraged many Chinese laborers to immigrate to Idaho, I discuss the living conditions these migrants experienced upon entering and working in the Boise area. This section includes archival research and document analysis about the racism and stereotyping the Chinese experienced, along with their many contributions to society. Next, I touch on current Chinese representation in Boise museums and community sector.
Chapter 3, *Literature Review and Theoretical Concepts*, presents a review of the literature and theoretical concepts important to the study. I first reflect on the essential aspects of critical, reflexive museology, a primary framework of this research. I then delve into the nuances of cross-institutional collaboration as well as collaboration between museums and their communities. Finally, I investigate the history of industrial museums, especially regarding Sharon MacDonald’s concept of “difficult heritages” (2009). This chapter explains the rationale behind the structure of this research project.

In Chapter 4, *Research Methods and Exhibit Development*, I first restate and elaborate on my research questions, then I differentiate between the methods of my thesis research and the methods of the exhibition creation process then show are they are cyclically related. Thesis methods include archival research, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews, as well as coding and thematic analysis of research notes and the semi-structured interviews. Exhibit design methods include action research, a community questionnaire, object research, exhibit content and design development, and exhibit installation.

Chapter 5, *Findings and Analysis on the Collaborative and Cross-Institutional Approach*, includes an examination of how the previously discussed theoretical approaches influenced the exhibition creation of “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage in Idaho,” as well as how I applied these approaches. This includes my findings and analysis on a cross-institutional approach to critical and reflexive museology and how that applies to our collaboration processes. I also present my findings and analysis on the exhibit design process and community engagement.
Finally, Chapter 6, Conclusion, includes an assessment of the thesis and exhibit goals, including the exhibit opening and the continued educational programming. The chapter concludes by presenting the limitations of the project and reflections on future collaborative exhibits.
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHINESE IMMIGRANT MINING HISTORY

Chinese Immigrants and the American Gold Rush

In the nineteenth century, China endured wars, famine, and imperialism, which made living conditions for citizens difficult. These, among other factors, prompted more than 300,000 Chinese people to emigrate to the US between the 1840s and the 1880s (Zhu 1997, 52–55). Many of these individuals were in search of economic opportunities that were difficult to find in China, which they found in the thriving mining industry across the American West. Few intended to live the rest of their lives in the US, planning, instead, to stay in the US for a brief period to earn money and then return home to China (Zhu 1997). However, some stayed for many years despite the significant hardships they faced in the form of stereotyping, racism, and the Exclusion Act of 1882, which was the first law to restrict the immigration of any demographic to the US severely limiting Chinese immigration and laborers from becoming naturalized citizens. These miners contributed knowledge and skills from their homeland to their communities in the US, including their experience in mining, gardening, and traditional Chinese medicine. However, despite their significance presence and role in American society, Chinese immigrant miners are rarely recognized and remembered in public spaces like museums.
Historians have identified many factors that might have played roles in prompting Chinese men and women to leave China for the US during the second half of the nineteenth century. The Qing Dynasty, which ruled China from roughly 1636 to 1912, suffered many setbacks that made living conditions difficult for Chinese citizens (Hayes 2021). The last seventy years of the Qing Dynasty were particularly challenging and contributed to the Taiping Rebellion—an uprising that was fueled by social grievances and religious fervor, resulting in widespread death and destruction—which motivated some Chinese to sojourn to other countries. Additionally, between 1839 and 1860, China lost two “Opium Wars” against Britain. In the mid-seventeenth century, the British Empire was importing opium from colonized India to send to China, where opium had been used medicinally and recreationally for centuries (Hayes 2021). However, opium addiction among the Chinese population became so prevalent the Chinese government eventually outlawed smoking opium in 1800 (Hayes 2021).

In response, the British East India Trading Company began smuggling the illegal drug into China via private British and American traders. Lin Zexu, a Chinese government official, attempted to lead the government in combating the rising opium issue by openly questioning Britain’s political support and the morality of drug trading. He also spearheaded the arrest of over sixteen hundred Chinese opium dealers and the destruction of over 2.6 million pounds of opium held on British ships (Hayes 2021). In June of 1840, the British began attacking forts, seizing cities, and attempting negotiations with the Chinese, pressuring them reopen their ports for foreign trade. The Chinese were equipped with older weapons and only a few naval ships, which made them ill-matched
against the British. The first Opium War ended in 1842 with China signing the Treaty of Nanjing at gunpoint. The treaty gave the British control over several Chinese ports, granted protection to British citizens living at these ports, and guaranteed financial compensation to the British government and its merchants (Hayes 2021).

Then, in 1856, Chinese authorities captured a British ship operated by a Chinese crew. As a result, Britain attempted to force the Qing Dynasty into agreeing to certain demands, which included opening more ports to foreign trade and residence. Britain, joined by France, invaded Canton in 1860 and destroyed the Imperial Summer Palace, where Qing Emperors traditionally handled official court matters (Hayes 2021). The war ended with the Qing Emperor, Yizhu, fleeing China and leaving his country to re-evaluate its relationship with the outside world and modernity (Hayes 2021).

In addition to the Opium Wars, China also experienced substantial population growth between 1700 and 1850. The Chinese population grew from 150 million to roughly 430 million (Dow 1968, 141). To address this, the Chinese government accepted the importation of “New World” cultivars including grains, corn, sweet potatoes, and tobacco. This action further restricted where Chinese citizens could live because of increased need for agricultural land. Furthermore, the Chinese government was too small and poorly organized to govern such a large population (Dow 1968, 141). This led to an increase in crime with little intervention from the Qing Dynasty. Ultimately, the Chinese people suffered famine, high rates of crime, and increased imperial control over trade ports and society at large.
One response to deteriorating conditions was the Taiping rebellion (1851–1864), which resulted in the death of some seventy million people. The rebellion altered China’s social and political structures and had lasting impacts that reverberate into the present (Xu 2018). The rebellion was started by Hong Xiuquan, who became a Christian after failing the Qing Scholar examinations (Xu 2018). He believed he was the son of the Christian God and brother of Jesus Christ, who sent him to reform China. A man named Feng Yunshan believed in Xiuquan and organized a new religious group called Bai Shangdi Hui. In 1851, Xiuquan proclaimed his new dynasty, which he called the Taiping Tianguo, and gave himself the title of Tian Wang (or “Heavenly King”). In the mid-1800s, many Chinese people were attracted to the Tiaping Tianquo because it proselytized communistic values such as shared property, an effort to combat the severe famines starving large portions of China. These values were enticing to the working classes of China, including peasants, workers, and miners, who often struggled with food access (Dow 1968, 142). Taiping built their own militias and quickly gained followers who believed the Qing Dynasty was weak and the cause of their misfortunes. This movement continued to gain strength by employing the strategies of Christian missionaries, and Taiping leaders disseminated forty-four books and numerous policy proposals including *The Ten Heavenly Commandments* written by Hong Xiuquan and writings on economic platforms and social ideals (2021).

By the 1860s, the Taiping Rebellion movement began experiencing internal conflicts. Its lack of cohesion and increasingly extreme religious dogma became off-putting to many members. The rebellion collapsed in 1864 after a third battle between the
Taiping and provincial Qing armies in the city of Nanjing, where hundreds of thousands died (2021). The final death toll of the Taiping Rebellions is debated; some estimate that it ranged from twenty million to seventy million people (Dow 1968, 142; Xu 2018). Although millions died fighting on either side of the rebellion, even more perished because of the consequent famine, which led to starvation and disease (White 2014). This rebellion diminished the internal administration of China and especially impacted those living in the Guangdong province, where many Chinese immigrants to the US originated. Guangdong province was especially impacted because of a combination geographical, economic, and social factors including social unrest, economic discontent, and proximity to the Taiping stronghold of Guangxi province, which is adjacent to Guangdong (Lary 2012). Another factor that motivated peoples’ desires to leave China was pressure from imperial powers fighting to gain control of China’s coastal regions. The British took control of India, Burma, and Malaya, along with South China’s coastal city of Hong Kong. The French were in Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia, and the Portuguese in Macao (Lary 2012, 91). These colonial powers were scrambling to gain control of ports to transport goods, ideas, and people. These factors deteriorated the Chinese standard of living and encouraged people to migrate to new lands, seeking better conditions. As such, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, larger-scale migrations out of China began to occur. Some Chinese people spread to parts of Asia and Central America, but new discoveries in the US were particularly enticing to prospective immigrants.

However, for many of these individuals, Chinese culture imprinted the idea of only leaving China for a set period. This idea was both culturally and legally ingrained in
the Chinese way of life. “The Chinese government did not accept that anyone could leave China permanently; those who did go abroad were qiao, sojourners who would eventually come home” (Lary 2012, 97). Deeply embedded in Chinese culture is the duty to one’s ancestors, and for many, this served as an incentive to stay home or to eventually return. The Chinese government also encouraged those who left for another country to bring their earnings, new skills, and knowledge gained in foreign lands back to China. The common saying, “A tree may grow to a thousand feet, but the leaves fall back to its roots,” was often used to describe Chinese immigrants because of their eventual return home (Lary 2012, 98; Figure 2.1).

![Figure 2.1. A common saying used to guide Chinese immigrants. (Lary, Diana. 2012. Chinese Migrations: The Movement of People, Goods, and Ideas over Four Millennia. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).](image)

Economic and societal unrest in China, aided by imperial powers establishing ports, led to more global interaction. Western businessmen set up banks, shipping lines, and service industries on China’s southern coasts (Lary 2012, 97). The Chinese first heard of gold in the US through new businesses that were the result of increased interaction between Chinese and foreigners (Zhu 1997). These factors, in conjunction with the strong entrepreneurial traditions of the Chinese, enticed them to temporarily leave China in search of gold. Most Chinese immigrants entered the US by sailing across the Pacific with the sponsorship of the Six Companies, formally known as the Chinese
Consolidated Benevolent Association. The Six Companies was a public association in San Francisco that mediated personal and business disputes between its Chinese members and served as a representative for the growing Chinese community (Bankston and Hidalgo 2015, 200–201). The Six Companies formed out of an amalgamation of six smaller groups of Chinese immigrants in the San Francisco area, which were originally organized by clan and district associations from their hometowns in China. The first clan to form was Gangzhou Gongsi in 1849, named after the district in Guangdong from which many immigrants came. By 1954, the sixth clan formed, creating the beginnings of the Six Companies (Bankston and Hidalgo 2015, 200).

In most cases, Chinese immigrants aided each other while abroad, providing new arrivals with initial housing accommodations, job opportunities, and the security of community. Likewise, early Chinese immigrants to the US shared news of opportunities to earn money with their kin back in China. Early pioneers would not only encourage others to migrate but also assist with paying for the transport of new sojourners. These immigrants would then travel to where their clans congregated in the US, correctly assuming that residing among clansmen would increase their chances of finding work (Liu 2002, 27). According to Haiming Liu, this concept is the “chain migration” phenomenon. These kinship networks, along with more official networks facilitated by the Six Companies, paved the way for more Chinese immigrants to make a living in the US and send earnings back to China (Liu 2002, 27).

Passage from the Guangdong Province in China to the San Franciscan port took roughly six weeks and cost between forty and fifty dollars in 1865 (the equivalent of
$1,505.00 in 2023). Conditions on these ships were not ideal. Immigrants only had access to nonperishable foods, and if inclement weather prolonged the voyage and stored water ran dry, travelers were forced to rely on rainwater. In addition to the fragility of foodstuffs, issues like disease, fires, and wrecks also plagued these sojourners (Zhu 1997, 24–25).

In addition to ports in San Francisco, Portland, Victoria, and British Columbia, Chinese immigrants also arrived in North America via the Northwestern US and Canada. These settlements were well established by the 1850s because of their locations on major river systems and as a result of the Oregon Trail (Bronson and Ho 2015, 40). Additionally, these settlements’ river systems were able to provide passage for miners who sought more inland mining prospects. The earliest confirmed Chinese person arrived in Portland in 1851, and more than two hundred more landed there by 1865. Victoria’s first Chinese immigrant entered in 1858, and by 1859, thousands had passed through the growing town on their way to new prospects (Bronson and Ho 2015, 40–41). By the mid-1850s, these coastal towns were bustling with life, so much so that the US began renegotiating territory lines to accommodate population growth. In 1853, the Washington Territory included what eventually became the state of Washington, what is now Idaho’s panhandle, and a portion of what is now western Montana. In 1859, the Washington Territory shifted because of increased populations in Idaho and Oregon. It came to include what is now Washington, all of what is now Idaho, some of what is now western Montana, and western portions of what is now Wyoming (Lundin and Lundin 2012).
Between the summers of 1861 and 1863, word of profitable prospecting in this region had spread to the degree that officials in the Boise area established five mining camps in what would eventually become Idaho state. These camps included Boston, Centerville, Hogem, Placerville, and Bannock (Zhu 1997, 43). Because of rapid population growth, these camps also gained political power quickly. As such, President Lincoln renamed part of this area the Idaho Territory (Figure 2.2).

![Map of Idaho](image)

*Figure 2.2. Map created by Dr. Nicole Herzog for the “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” exhibit at the IMMG, 2021.*

These initial placer mining camps are often overlooked in the history of the development of Western towns. “The north-central Idaho camps, for example, were directly responsible for the Euromerican settlement of the region and were the principal economic market for the trade centers and surrounding farmers and ranchers for over 25 years” (Stapp 1990, 11). By the mid- to late-1860s, whites, who had already been in the
area for almost a decade, wanted to sell some of their exhausted placer mines to the incoming Chinese miners in hopes of finding better prospects for themselves. The Chinese knew this would happen because of advice from previous miners in the Six Companies in California and Oregon (Zhu 1997, 26).

Figure 2.3: Doc Lee, pictured here around 1900, worked as an independent placer miner in the Boise Basin for decades. (Courtesy of Idaho City Historical Foundation Inc., Idaho City, Idaho).

Placer mining, which was a common practice in the Boise area, occurs on a water source, typically a stream or river. Over millions of years, water erodes the surrounding rocks, and gold collects in hollows in the riverbed. These collection areas are called “placers.” This method of mining requires water to wash away sand, dirt, and other unwanted minerals (Zhu 1997, 44). The simplest form of placer mining is panning for the
desired mineral, in this case, gold (Figure 2.3). Another common mining method used in the Boise area was sluicing. A sluice is a channeled wooden box with ridges along the bottom. Sluicing involves shoveling sediment into the sluice and continually flushing it with water. The sluice is designed to catch the gold while allowing the undesirable sediment to exit the equipment. After collecting enough gold along the ridges, the miner scoops out the gold and repeats the process (Zhu 1997, 44–45). Placer mining and sluicing were beneficial for the Chinese immigrants because they often came to the US with little money, and these methods of mining required less up-front investment than other traditional mining methods did (Wegars 2001, 15). However, the Chinese immigrant miners already knew how to mine using technology from their homeland, and often, the technology they brought from China proved superior to Western methods.
Indeed, Chinese immigrants are credited with improving mining techniques in America through their water management technology. For example, many Chinese miners were trained in hydraulic mining practices in China, and they came to America ready to employ these skills (Zhu 1999, 47–48; Figure 2.4). Technology used in wet-rice agricultural production was similar to that used in placer mining. As Valentine notes, this technology was used by individuals in China to “[sort] out gold from clay, sand, gravel, and Chinese expertise in this area directly affected success in mining” (2002, 40). Hydraulic mining utilizes high pressured water propelled through a hose to excavate and wash sediment through sluices that catch and sort gold from unwanted sediment (Rohe 1994, 73). Hydraulic mining was more efficient than other methods because it required the labor of fewer men to quickly work a large area. Hydraulic water guns could displace enormous quantities of water and cut down river edges to wash down sediment and gold. This knowledge allowed the Chinese immigrants to work on exhausted mines, making them profitable even after other miners abandoned them to look for new prospects (Wegars 2001, 18).

In addition to their hydraulic expertise, Chinese immigrants brought with them knowledge of the waterwheel, which was used as an agricultural irrigation tool in China. To accommodate mining, they modified the traditional waterwheel so that it could scoop river water into buckets and dump it into troughs for easier sifting. Immigrants also brought knowledge of wing dams, which were used to displace water and expose streambeds (Couch 1996, 149). These Chinese technologies made mining more efficient and profitable in the American West, and so white miners began to adopt certain aspects
of them as they saw fit. Another example is the improvements Chinese miners made to mining rockers, which whites quickly adopted as a more efficient and less backbreaking mining method (Zhu 1997, 105).

**Discrimination and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**

The large influx of Chinese miners to the Boise area—and notably their productivity and success—caused resentment among white laborers (Zhu 1997, 53). However, merchants, landlords, and state officials counted on the Chinese laborers because of the revenue they brought into their communities, from mining and being consumers for businesses. In the 1870 US census of Boise County, Chinese people constituted 49.3 percent of the total population of 3,528 people. According to Census.gov, the Chinese population in Boise in 2020 was 3.4 percent.

At first, white communities in Boise tolerated the Chinese because they brought revenue into the local economy by working in individually owned the mines, which was considered hard labor. The Chinese were also paid less than their white counterparts, making their labor cheaper. Between 1868 and 1870, white laborers earned between $2.50 and $3.00 a day, whereas the Chinese miners earned between $1.50 to $2.00 per day, with highly skilled workers sometimes earning $2.30 per day. These wages changed little until 1900 and were comparable to those paid to other immigrant miners throughout the American West (Rohe 1994, 77).

Resentment toward the Chinese grew based on the fear of a Chinese mining takeover, but also because of white xenophobia toward traditional Chinese hairstyles and attire that went against the strong gender roles in America. At this time, Chinese men
often shaved their foreheads and wore long ponytails, symbols of loyalty to their homeland and the Qing Dynasty. They also wore loose clothing, which was common for men in China but uncommon in the US. Their hairstyles and clothing were viewed as sexually ambiguous, and Americans tended to look down on these styles. The societal norm at the time was that men wore pants and cut their hair short, and women wore dresses (Lee 2003, 27). Even though the American West was in the middle of a constant flood of new and different people, Chinese immigrants were seen as outsiders who came to work as cheap labor and upset the societal norms. Then, in 1882, the US Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act to prevent the Chinese labor class from entering the country. The Act aimed to address economic and racial concerns by severely limiting Chinese immigration and preventing Chinese laborers from becoming naturalized citizens. It was initially intended to last for ten years but was later extended and made permanent until its repeal in 1943. The Chinese Exclusion Act had a significant impact on Chinese communities in the US, leading to discrimination and hardship for Chinese immigrants. The Act had both intended and unintended consequences for the Chinese and was the first law enacted to keep a specific demographic group from coming into the country. According to Bronson and Ho (2015, 49–50), the Act had three lasting impacts:

1. Current Chinese immigrants, mainly men, in the U.S. were aging and without newer generations to replace them, created a need for miners and railway workers, thus allowing other communities of Asian labors, particularly Japanese, to fill this void.

2. Anti-Chinese groups perceived this new law as validation to legitimize
violence against the Chinese without fear of prosecution by local or federal authorities.

3. This act promoted the illegal smuggling of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. from Canada with additional contraband of opium, East Asia silk, and Chinese tobacco.

Additionally, Section 4 of the Exclusion Act required “certificates of registration” for all Chinese laborers. These certificates contained the name, age, occupation, last place of residence, and physical description of each Chinese person. These certificates were required when a Chinese person wanted to enter or re-enter the US; they had to deliver the certificate to the collector of customs in port cities. “The laborer’s return certificate was the first document of its kind issued to an immigrant group by the federal government, and it served as a passport facilitating reentry into the country” (Lee 2003, 41). The Chinese were the first immigrant group required to hold these permits. Resentment and racial stereotyping continued after the passage of the Exclusion Act of 1882, but neither the Act nor the growing racist environment stopped Chinese people from entering the country illegally; many individuals still thought American life would be superior to the hardships in China (Zhu 1997, 4).

In addition to experiencing ethnic discrimination, the Chinese also experienced spatial segregation. By the 1900s, the Chinese experienced intense segregation in the Boise area, which forced them to open their own businesses to sell their goods and services. Additionally, segregation enabled opportunities for other Chinese immigrants to earn money (Tam and Ling 2002, 125). One unplanned consequence of segregation was
that it actually promoted the development of Chinatowns in the Boise area, which allowed Chinese people to gather in permanent communities and celebrate their culture without retaliation. This also pleased other settler communities because the Chinese were segregated to certain portions of towns, usually on the outskirts. This meant Chinese people were less likely to mingle with other communities. Segregation placated other demographics who did not want to associate with the Chinese, and because racism against the Chinese was prevalent at this time, Chinese communities tended to be safer on the outskirts of town. In Idaho City, many Chinese people lived in the southwestern parts of town, where they opened most of their businesses and built homes influenced by Chinese style (Zhu 1997, 66–67).

Although this area, deemed one of Idaho’s first “Chinatown,” flourished during segregation, eventually, Chinese districts in many Idaho towns began to disappear.
Several fires decimated many structures housing Chinese businesses in Idaho City and in Centerville, and there is no evidence that Chinese communities ever tried to rebuild these structures in a traditional Chinese style. Instead, they rebuilt using saltbox houses, which were common at the time. Saltbox houses (Figure 2.5) were single-story homes, typically with a living room, kitchen, and bedroom. An extra room was sometimes added to separate the kitchen from other living quarters (Zhu 1997, 66). Because most miners came to Idaho single, leaving their families back in China, multiple men often chose to live together. This saved money and helped them form connections.

In 1870 a dwelling housed an average of 3.67 Chinese. A decade later, the number had increased to 3.77. This arrangement afforded the Chinese more room than they would have had on average in China and more space than other workers—particularly urban workers—in the United States (Zhu 1997, 69).

The US Congress passed the Geary Act in 1892, which required all Chinese immigrants living in the US to register with the collector of internal revenue. If they failed to do so, they risked deportation unless they could prove their right to stay in the country (Katz 1995, 227; 254). In 1902, Congress expanded the Geary Act’s restrictions by ordering the removal of all Chinese people found to be illegally living in the US (Katz 1995, 254). The Geary Act also stated that anyone of Chinese descent arrested under the provisions of this act had to prove they had the right to remain in the US. This meant that every Chinese US immigrant or alien had to prove their US citizenship or other allowable status (such as working as a merchant) or that they entered the US prior to 1882 (Chin 2013, 980–81).
In 1904, Congress voted to enact the Exclusion Laws in perpetuity, which officially banned the Chinese from immigrating to the US (Wong 1999, 141). Table 1.1 shows the growing Chinese population through the 1880s and the gradual decline in numbers after the Exclusion Act of 1882 through 1910. This legislation dramatically prohibited Chinese population growth in the Boise area, and it was not until the 1920s that a second generation of Chinese Americans slowly began to emerge (Tam and Ling 2002, 126).

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Table 2.1: Historical census statistics on population totals by race (Bronson and Ho, 2015, 67).

**Chinese Adapting to Life in Idaho**

Although many immigrants left China because of harsh economic and living conditions, they continued some of their cultural traditions after moving to the American West. However, they were also open to more efficient practices they learned from white communities, notably when it came to attire. In the late nineteenth century, clothing trends among working-class Chinese immigrants consisted of loose blouses, baggy trousers, cotton flat-bottomed shoes, and straw or bamboo hats (Zhu 1997, 71). Although this attire sufficed in China, these types of clothing were too delicate to withstand the...
harsh mining conditions in the US. The first type of clothing new immigrants recognized as impractical were the traditional straw hats. The adoption of Western hats was one of the first widely recognized apparel changes. Chinese people in Boise also recognized that although their cotton shoes were comfortable for leisure activities, they were not durable enough for the rugged mining environments; they wore out quickly on the hard gravel. As such, Chinese miners quickly adopted leather boots from their white counterparts. However, the Chinese realized that their loose-fitted blouses and trousers worked well for mining conditions (Zhu 1997, 72). They were comfortable to work in, economical, and provided sun protection without burdensome layers. This loose garment tradition held on the longest of all the traditional clothing preferences immigrants brought with them from China.

Chinese immigrants also often had better diets than their white counterparts in the American West did; immigrants often consumed a combination of meat proteins, vegetables, and fruits. This included “rice, beef, pork, chicken, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, potatoes, beans, onions, squashes, carrots, beets, turnips, tomatoes, melons, pickles, cucumbers, sugar, and tea” (Zhu 1997, 73). This type of diet differed greatly from the typical white diet of “bread, bacon, butter, beans, beef, sugar, coffee, and dried fruits” (Zhu 1997, 74). The Chinese were able to maintain such variety in their diet because of their skills and proficiency in gardening. They were able to harvest more crops per growing season than white farmers could, which meant they did not have to rely on the occasional and sometimes unreliable shipments of produce brought in by merchants from Boise City (Zhu 1997, 74). Garden City, a 4.2-square-mile enclave
surrounded by Boise, is named after the productive Chinese gardens that thrived there in the late nineteenth century. Nutritional and diverse diets helped Chinese immigrants avoid vitamin deficiencies and maintain a good standard of health. In terms of medical care, the Chinese knew that Western doctors would not usually discriminate as long as they paid their bills, but they typically only went to Western doctors in emergencies. Otherwise, immigrant miners often relied on traditional Chinese medicine for day-to-day ailments. Traditional Chinese herbal medicine, with its use of plants, minerals, and animal substances that created time-tested remedies, were more effective with chronic illnesses (Zhu 1997, 76).

One prominent Chinese doctor was also a miner in the Boise area. His Anglicized name was Lee Dick (Figure 2.6). He was known for treating both whites and non-whites

Figure 2.6: Dr. Lee Dick (National Archives: Pacific Northwest Region, RG 21, US District Courts – Idaho, Coeur d’Alene, and Moscow 1893–1932, Northern and Central Divisions, Criminal Case Files, Box 6, Case 165).
that needed his help. His work was well respected by everyone in the community, and on many occasions, descriptions of his skills were published in the Payette Lakes Star newspaper in McCall, Idaho. In his last year in Idaho, between May 3, 1918, and November 7, 1919, Dr. Lee Dick was referenced in this newspaper at least six times. The following is an example of a write-up regarding Dr. Lee Dick:

Lee Dick, a resident of Warren for the past 18 years, is returning to his home in China. Dr. Dick, as we call him, has saved many lives in this section owing to his knowledge of Chinese medicine. Hardly a person in this section has not come under his care and is with regret that we must bid him farewell. He was the highest type of his class we have ever met, far above the average Chinese in this country. He left here with a good fortune from placer mining. (“Warren Notes,” Payette Lake Star. November 7, 1919)

Lee Dick is an example of a successful placer miner and doctor who was rightly well loved and valued in his community (Figure 2.6). Lee Dick did eventually follow the Chinese tradition of returning to China after spending many years in Boise. He was a true embodiment of a Chinese immigrant miner, and his name should be more recognized for his contributions to the Boise area.

The combination of reliable housing—which was often provided to new arrivals by the Six Companies—well-rounded diets, and impressive medical care benefited all Boise area residents, and particularly the Chinese community there.

Frontier Idaho in 1870 had the lowest death rate in the nation at .33 percent. A total of fifty persons died among a population of 14,999. That same year, out of a total 4,274 Chinese, only seven people died. In other words, their mortality rate was only 0.16 percent—about half that of whites (Zhu 1997, 77).

A decade later, the Chinese mortality rate rose to .41 percent, which was still less than half the mortality rate of whites in the area (Zhu 1997, 77). These data are slightly
skewed, however. The highest mortality rates of any demographic are typically infants and the elderly. However, because Chinese women and children were rare in the American West because of the previously enacted Page Act, fewer infant deaths contributed to the overall mortality rate. In addition, once the Exclusion Act of 1882 passed, few younger Chinese men could enter the country, meaning the Chinese population continued to age, and people eventually died or relocated. Both factors aid in skewing the mortality rates of Chinese in the Boise area. Despite these biases, it is accepted that Chinese miners fared better than their white counterparts did due to better living conditions, medicine, and diet.

In addition to interactions while mining and in medical contexts, another occasion for Chinese and white residents to interact was through the celebration of holidays. The Chinese New Year, which typically falls in January or February, is one of the largest holidays celebrated in Chinese culture. Celebration usually includes firecrackers, parades, and small gift giving during the celebration. Chinese merchants and their families were known to give candies and cookies to all children who wanted them. Pictured in figure 2.7 is a Chinese New Year parade in Boise from about 1900. Additionally, the Chinese were officially invited to participate in the US Independence Day celebrations beginning in the 1870s. In fact, in 1875, a Chinese band led the Idaho City Fourth of July Parade through town (Zhu 1997, 163).
By the start of the 1900s, the growing popularity of lode mining made profiting from placer mining even more difficult. Placer mining, which was the dominant form of mining for over two decades prior to 1900, involved sifting soil to find gold left behind in screens. Lode mining, however, was a new method of extracting minerals that utilized the study of geology (Zhu 1997, 186). Although the Chinese were originally more efficient placer miners than their white counterparts were, the profits of placer mining steadily declined across demographics. Lode mining, which involved identifying veins of quartz or other rock to determine where gold might be located, soon became the preferred method of mining (Burns 1977, 5). Placer mining was originally attractive because it required little upfront cost to work in the profession. Conversely, lode mining required
heavy and expensive machinery that many placer miners could not afford. By the beginning of the twentieth century, larger mining corporations that could afford the upfront costs of the equipment shifted to lode mining (Zhu 1997, 188). This made it exceedingly difficult for the individual miner to compete with large companies. Some smaller lode mining companies began to form, but because Chinese miners typically sent their earnings back home to China, they were unable to compete financially.

Prior to the Exclusion Act of 1882, a constant influx of male Chinese immigrants kept Chinese populations in the US high. After 1882, immigration became much more difficult, slowing the influx of new immigrants. Simultaneously, current immigrants were aging out of mining work and either returned home or died in the US. Additionally, the drastic gender gap between new and established Chinese immigrants in the Boise area made it difficult for new male immigrants to find wives. Although the original goal of many Chinese immigrants was not to live in the US permanently, the lack of potential spouses—and the fact that they were being forced out of mining by lode miners—prompted most to return to China. By 1910, most Chinese immigrants could not earn a living in the mining industry. Those who stayed changed professions to gardeners, servants, cooks, and market merchants.

By 1910, the Chinese population in Boise County was eight (Zhu 1997, 191). Because many of the miners did not have wives back in China, and because they spent most of their adult lives in the US, some decided to live out the rest of their days in Boise. Twenty-seven years later, in 1937, the last Chinese Gold Rush miner died in the Boise Basin (Zhu 1997, 193).
Chinese Representation in Museum and Community Spaces in Idaho

Since the early twentieth century, the Chinese community in Boise often congregated in an area of town that came to be known as “Chinatown.” Boise’s first Chinatown was condemned in 1901 because of its proximity to fire-prone wooden buildings. Boise’s second Chinatown then spread east from 8th St. along Front and Grove Streets (Felton 2021), which housed many Chinese stores and several Chinese gardens and laundries. The Chinese gardens diminished in the 1970s because of a decrease in business and increased accessibility to commercialized food production. These gardens were razed in the 1970s during an era of urban renewal, and little was left of Chinese presence in Boise (Leonard 2014). Dani Carmack says it well:

Today, there are no historical markers to indicate Boise’s long-ago Chinese presence. Boise’s Chinatown is not a ghost town, but a town that has been completely subsumed by Boise’s cityscape. The last original Chinese building was removed in 1970 to make way for renovations. The presence and contributions of early Chinese immigrants to Boise merit remembrance. (Carmack 2018)

The erasure of Chinese history continues to the present. In June of 2019, twenty-eight Idaho Republican legislators signed a letter asking the new president of Boise State University to abandon the University’s inclusion initiatives, arguing that these programs segregated rather than included the diverse demographics of the community. During the curation process of our museum exhibit on this topic, collaborators often discussed the possible impacts of this letter on Boise's public spheres, and more specifically, on our work. Although the IMMG is not officially associated with Boise State University, our team worried it could impact the upcoming exhibit. At the end of the day, the exhibit team decided it was important to highlight this often-overlooked community that has
brought many benefits to Boise and Idaho. This was one of many important local contexts that bolstered the need for our exhibit. Additionally, another Idaho museum near the IMMGG had recently undergone a large renovation. Prior to the renovation, the museum housed an exhibit on Chinese heritage in the Boise area, but this exhibit was dismantled due to shifts in legislative posturing and budget policy, which likely prompted the museum to reorganize and disperse its “diversity” exhibits.

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the Chinese population constituted 49.3 percent of Boise’s population in 1870, but declined rapidly after the Exclusion Act and remained low since then (Zhu 1997, 55). Despite this once high Chinese population, Chinese immigrants do not receive equal representation in Boise’s public sphere. As we set out to curate this museum exhibit, we hoped it would provide due respect toward a community that had never enjoyed a museum space solely dedicated to their experiences. Indeed, the Chinese immigrant mining experience is directly related to the industrial museum sphere, where immigrant demographics tend to have less representation. I will examine this further in the next section.

**Humanizing Industrial Museums**

Industrial heritage tourism, according to G. Hospers, pertains to “the development of touristic activities and industries on man-made sites, buildings and landscapes that originated with industrial processes of earlier periods” (2002, 398). The expectation is that these new tourism opportunities could potentially revitalize industrial regions and stimulate economic growth in places where cultural tourism is not as prevalent. According to Hospers, industrial sites are frequently focused on the actual location where
the industry took place. Although the IMMG is not located at a former mine, it is an acting representative of Idaho’s mining heritage.

The challenge of creating a people-focused exhibit in an industrial museum involves creating pedagogical approaches to educate visitors about a history that might be unfamiliar to them. This history must recognize the humanity of individuals involved in particular industries. The history of industrial museums is relatively short compared to that of more commonly known history and natural history museums. The preservation and representation of industrial heritage first started to gain popularity in the US in the early- to mid-twentieth century. These “museums” were often site-specific—located at repurposed factories, mills, and mining sites that were no longer in use. In most cases, these sites were curated and cared for by individuals who took personal interest in their preservation without any financial gain. These “heritage sites” eventually began to be viewed by community leaders and politicians as a way to promote the idea of cultural heritage and increase tourism (Oakley 2015, 275). Edwards notes that by the 1980s, the subject of “industrial heritage” was receiving increased scholarly attention in the US for myriad reasons:

The awareness of the role of industrial heritage as a ‘niche market’ in diversifying the range of the tourism products offered; its potential for generating economic activities and employments; its roles in expanding tourism into regions and localities that might otherwise offer few attractions to tourists; and finally, the possibility of offering visitors a different vision of what is generally understood as the aesthetics of scenery and landscape. (Edwards 1996, 342)

Likewise, Oakley explains that industrial processes were not typically viewed as interesting topics for treatment in museums because they were not seen as having artistic
or architectural importance, despite industries’ roles in shaping communities (Oakley 2015). Many museum professionals and tourism officials assumed that when tourists traveled to a new region or country, they would not be interested in visiting a museum devoted to industrial heritage in comparison to large history or art museums. However, when countries, states, and cities started to realize the potential benefits of preserving industrial sites, officials began reallocating funds to preserve these underappreciated heritage sites. Cutcliffe and Lubar suggest that the initial goal of these first industrial museums was to highlight how industry has contributed to technological progress, deconstruct the knowledge of the inventors and entrepreneurs that made progress possible, and celebrate the importance of industry and its contributions to society (2000). They argue industrial museums are an essential way to see into society’s past, present, and future. They also state that industrial museums provide context for understanding how industry shapes people’s daily lives and gaining insight into the future implications of technology (Cutcliffe and Lubar 2000, 13).

The International Council on Monuments and Sites conducted a study between 1987 and 1993 that confirmed certain regions and types of sites were overrepresented on the World Heritage list. This study showed an overrepresentation of developed regions (notably Europe), historic towns, Christian monuments, and historic “elitist” architecture (Rodwell 2012, 73). To address this imbalance in representation, in 1994, the World Heritage Committee launched the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced, and Credible World Heritage List. This initiative supported the conservation of a wider range
of sites including cultural landscapes and sites that preserved industrial heritage (Rodwell 2012, 73). Despite this still-vague definition, the industrial heritage revolution began.

With the definition of what was considered “heritage” widening in the twentieth century, it became more acceptable for decommissioned mining locations to be considered “heritage sites.” The categorization of industry as heritage allows the mining industry to be viewed as more than a forgotten trade but as a source of cultural identity that helped shape economies, communities, and identities. However, the preservation of mining history at actual mining sites poses several challenges. As Oakley points out, mining complexes are often difficult to preserve and restore because of their large sizes and remote locations, maintenance and safety issues, and the massive machinery involved (2015, 51). Also, the areas surrounding industrial sites are often unkempt and on the edges of towns where tourist visitation is generally low. Thus, across the board, there might not be a lot of local or regional incentive to develop an industrial heritage site.

The concept of “industrial museums” did not gain traction in the US until the second half of the twentieth century. The Chicago Museum of Science and Industry (CMSI) was a forerunner in this field in its mission to be a center of education, entertainment, and influence (Cutcliffe and Lubar 2000). Julius Rosenwald, one of Chicago’s wealthiest retailers who would go on to found the CMSI, conceptualized the museum when he visited the Deutsches Museum in Munich with his family. The Deutsches Museum focused on industrial progress and science and encouraged visitor participation. Upon returning to Chicago, Rosenwald started soliciting support for the first US industrial museum, which would eventually open in 1933 (Keyes 2004). Almost
one hundred years after its inception, the CMSI is now 350,000 square feet and houses over 2,000 exhibits in a wide range of industrial fields including technology, agriculture, transportation, and communication. It attracts over two million visitors annually. The museum’s content now focuses roughly 10 percent on industrial achievements and 90 percent on technology (Keyes 2004).

Cutcliffe and Lubar describe the birth of the National Museum of Industrial History (NMIH) in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania as a more recent example of an industrial heritage museum. In March 1998, roughly one hundred museum professionals, academic historians, and interested members of the public convened at a conference to discuss the creation of the NMIH at an industrial site that had just closed (Cutcliffe and Lubar 2000, 13). These professionals emphasized how this museum would open a new chapter of history in an area in which this history was still in people’s living memory, and they posited that these stories could be shared in exhibitions. The goal was to create a tourist attraction that was educational and focused on the local, business, and personal interests of the public (Cutcliffe and Lubar 2000, 13). The NMIH opened its doors in 2016 with the vision to “tell the story of America’s industrial achievements and the accomplishments of our workers, innovators, and entrepreneurs […] by exploring the role of industry in America’s growth as a global power, through the stories of people, machines, and ideas” (NMIH.org, March 25, 2020).

More recently, museums of industry are recognizing that the histories they have traditionally featured typically represent majority communities. As Müller (2013) points out, this leaves out the stories, issues, and histories of immigrants; ignores integration;
and lacks cultural diversity. Ignoring these histories perpetuates the discrimination minorities often experience and has been used to keep them outside of the narratives of contemporary industrial museums (MacDonald 2009; Müller 2013). Changing these standards should prompt museums to be more collaborative, socially equitable, inclusive, and representative of the full history of the industry. The following chapter will delve into some of the complexities of representation, collaborating with source communities, and addressing “difficult histories” that have been forgotten but are still vital to a community’s history. Some industrial museums have begun to tackle underrepresentation by developing people-centered exhibits featuring diverse communities. The IMMG, for example, already featured an exhibit called “Idaho Women in Mining” that explained the notable contributions of women to the mining industry during the gold rush. This exhibit had garnered much positive feedback and visitors expressed wanting to learn even more about the featured women. As such, the IMMG was already open to highlighting the personal stories of miners. As the Chinese mining exhibit progressed, the IMMG staff drew on the collaborative process to revisit the women’s exhibit, making changes that reflected an anthropologically oriented perspective.
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The previous chapters explained the Boise community’s need for this exhibit and detailed the institutions involved with creating “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage in Idaho.” They also introduced background on the Chinese immigrant mining experience and the history of industrial heritage. In addition to expanding on these topics, this chapter delves into the literature and theoretical concepts collaborators applied to create this exhibit. This includes introducing the pertinent frameworks that informed this research: (a) critical, reflexive museology (Ames 1992; Bouquet 2012; Brown and Peers 2003; Butler 2015; Kreps 2020; Marstine 2008; Oncuïl 2013; Shelton 2013, 20); (b) collaboration (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991; Silverman 2015); and (c) museum and communities (Cameron 1972; Crooke 2006, 2016; Lavine and Karp 1991; Potter and Leone 1992; Tchen 1992; Watson 2018). Additionally, this chapter seeks to address the historical background of these concepts as they apply to this project.

Critical, Reflexive Museology

Throughout this project, I applied concepts from critical, reflexive museology to examine and analyze the collaborative creation of the Chinese mining exhibit at the IMMGG. During the initial meetings for the exhibit, the collaborators began focusing on Michael Ames’ definition of reflexive museology from *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes*:
The Anthropology of Museums: “the examination of a museum’s roles within society as a socio-cultural producer,” a framework that has “spurred changes in museum practice that have led to a critical museology, or practice of reflexivity” (Ames 1992, 5). Using these tenants, the collaborators were able to situate the concepts of this exhibit within Boise’s sociopolitical climate, address possible issues of representing a cultural group outside our own ethnic and/or cultural communities, and provide representation for a community with no former cohesive representation in Boise museums.

To explain the impact of critical, reflexive museology, one must first understand when and why a reflexive shift occurred in the field of museum studies. In the early 1900s, the fields of anthropology and museum studies were closely aligned; the primary theoretical concepts in museum studies were based on the analysis of collected artifacts and material culture. The field focused on the study and display of material culture and was heavily influenced by evolutionary theory. Over the next few decades, the field of anthropology began to become more reflexive; it shifted away from a museum-centered methodological approach and toward community engagement. Fieldwork and firsthand data collection came to dominate the field of cultural anthropology. These methods enabled anthropologists to explore new theoretical questions related to understanding various aspects of living cultures and human behavior (Kreps 2020; MacDonald 2011).

Since the 1970s, scholars and museum practitioners “have seen what some have called a paradigmatic shift in the museum away from a primary focus on acquiring, preserving, and researching objects towards a much greater concern for enabling a more diverse body of visitors to access and experience museums” (Sandell 2014, 130;
Weiglhofer, McCully, and Bates 2023). New museology emphasizes the importance of engaging a diverse audience and ensuring that museums are not just repositories of objects but vibrant, educational, and community-oriented institutions that enrich the lives of all who visit. This includes an emphasis on the social role of museums and their service to society.

Although this might seem like a contemporary priority, education and public services have been the focus of museum work since the nineteenth century (Sandell 2014, 134), but these goals gained validity and popularity when the International Council of Museums (ICOM) updated their definition of museums to include the consideration of public service in 1974 (Fuller 1992; Hein 1998). The addition of “public service” emphasized the role of museums as institutions that exist for the benefit of society. It underscores that museums have a broader purpose beyond the mere collection and display of objects. Instead, they are meant to serve the public by preserving and sharing cultural and natural heritage, fostering education, and contributing to the development and enrichment of society. Since 1974, ICOM has updated their definition of a ‘museum’ three more times, with the most recent updates occurring in 2022 reflecting a more inclusive and community-oriented approach.

By the 1980s, the field of anthropology began experiencing a reflexive shift in which museums were beginning to be critiqued for their methods, processes of collection, and forms of representation (Silverman 2015; Thomas 2016). Within this shift, it is important to distinguish between critical museology and operational museology as the latter examines established methods, protocols, and practices in the routine functioning of
a museum. Operational museology includes activities such as collection management, exhibition design, conservation, educational programming, visitor services, and administrative functions. While crucial for the smooth functioning of museums, the term is sometimes used critically to highlight a potential rigidity or lack of innovation associated with following established operational norms, often framed as “best practices”, without sufficient critical reflection (Shelton 2013). In the context of critical museology, the critique extends to conventional museological practices, questioning their implications, potential for standardization, and impact on creativity and diversity within the field (Kreps 2003; McCarthy 2015; Shelton 2013).

Simultaneously, communities whose cultural artifacts and traditions were represented in museums, such as Native Americans in the U.S., began to speak out against how and why they were represented in public institutions. Their critiques led museums, anthropologists, and the museum-going public to reexamine artifacts and objects by rediscovering how they relate to contemporary culture (Kreps 2020). Potter and Leone state that in any museum context, the relationship between past and present must be made visible to viewers (1992). Exhibits must raise awareness and promote discussion of historic, political, and economic situations within contemporary contexts to accurately represent “the museum’s story about the past” (Potter and Leone 1992, 478). This recognition motivated museums to begin questioning how they had previously been representing marginalized cultural groups, becoming institutions for intercultural dialogue and venues for cultural exchange (Iervolino 2013). This reflexive shift over the last few decades led to the possibility of multicultural engagement, particularly between
anthropologists and members of the communities they sought to represent in their institutions. The practice of consulting members of source communities, which has become a more common in recent decades, enables anthropologists to create more collaborative exhibits, update collections practices, and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of traditional museum methods, many of which perpetuated marginalization instead of combating it (Oncuil 2013, 79; Phillips 2003).

As “new” museum anthropology emerged from the tenets of critical, reflexive museology—as well as growing traction in the relationship between anthropology and museum studies—museums have become more equitable and collaborative in their practices and have further prioritized diversification and decolonization (Kreps 2020, 3). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, within the field of museum studies, there has been a “renewed interest in the potential for museums to respond, in creative ways and with their unique resources, to wide-ranging social inequalities and environmental concerns” (Janes 2009; Sandell 2014, 129). Sandell (2014) further explains this, writing that this shift in museum ethics has enabled a much deeper understanding of the ways in which visitors engage with, and learn within museums, and it has created a climate in which at least some organisations have begun to move away from a passive approach to their audiences (“the doors are open and everyone is welcome”) to one in which greater responsibility is taken for identifying and dismantling the wide-ranging barriers which have operated (with considerable effectiveness) to exclude many groups from participation (131).

Marstine underscores the importance of differentiating between ethical principles and applied ethics, recognizing that values evolve over time and are culturally defined (Marstine 2011). Museums, in their moral agency, must respect diversity, not only in
audience representation but also in their practices. Contemporary museum ethics, marked by differences of opinion and debate, focuses on active engagement and reflexive stewardship, contrasting with the conformity-driven "old" ethics (Marstine 2011). This demonstrates the ongoing and ever-deepening connection between museum studies and anthropological inquiry as it applies to a wide range of subjects and applications.

Similarly, Kreps states:

Museums and the field of anthropology share interlocking histories and have proven to be enduring institutions despite their compromising pasts. Museum studies in dialogue with anthropology can illuminate the contingencies of these histories, and what bearing they might have on current and future practice (Kreps 2020, 67).

This approach emphasizes museums' moral agency as evolving, responsive, and attentive to diverse perspectives and cultural contexts.

These shifts in museum culture toward critical analysis and theorizing have also impacted how museums are situated within larger social and political contexts (Kreps 2020; Marstine 2008). Critical museology brings to light the historical inequalities of power and demands responsibility in collections and practices. When systemic changes in collection policies, methods, and values are made, it makes room for inclusive, egalitarian, and reflexive strategies (Ames 1992; Kreps 2020; McCarthy 2015; Phillips 2011; Silverman 2015).

In Ruth Shelly Butler’s study of the 1989 “Into the Heart of Africa” exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, she addressed both the positives and negatives of critical, reflexive museology:

Reflexive museology changes the way in which we think about museums and their collections. Focusing on museum practices of collecting,
classifying, and displaying material culture, reflexive museology is informed by the premise that exhibits of other cultures are neither neutral nor tropeless, despite claims otherwise. Rather, exhibits are informed by the cultural, historical, institutional, and political contexts of the people who make them. (Butler 2008, 22)

Butler continues her analysis of the exhibit by concluding that the reflexive museum is associated with self-awareness and self-critique as well as awareness of the need for democratic participation on the part of visitors and various stakeholders. In short, reflexivity is a crucial first step toward creating collaborative models of representation and creation, but it is not the only step (Butler 2015, 167). As the exhibit development process continues, one must continually question how the public will interpret exhibit content vs how the staff thinks the content should be interpreted. This allows for a more critical examination of the visitor and their experience. Another component of implementing reflexive strategies includes creating more inclusive exhibits and educational programming, preferably through collaboration with source communities so those viewpoints are accurately represented. Reflexivity is achieved when a museum reexamines its history as an authoritative institution that previously promoted ideas and histories that oppressed or otherwise misrepresented the marginalized communities it sought to feature in its exhibits. To correct these actions and embrace a reflexive methodology, museum curators should collaborate with members of source communities who are trying to recover their stories (Kreps 2003; Simpson 1996). Doing so allows a museum to represent the authentic narratives and perspectives of the people it is trying to represent instead of relying on outside information, which often tells only partial stories and can perpetuate violent stereotypes.
New insights and museological methods have prompted anthropologists to question who holds, creates, shares, and perpetuates power and the production of knowledge for the public (MacDonald 2011, 2). Museums are no longer seen as the self-appointed keepers and voices of communities’ stories and histories. This was an emergent idea in the 1970s when Cameron was writing, and it remains a core tenet of contemporary museum studies. Museums have come to be viewed as “sites of contestation,” experimentation, and debate, instead of simply as “temples,” or institutions of prestige designed for the elite (Cameron 1972; Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine 1992, 4). The work museums do allows them to serve as “sites of contestation,” where “meaning” can be contested and debated. This role makes museums social and moral agents in society, and it also opens them to the scrutiny of the public, media, and political spheres (Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine 1992; Lavine and Karp 1991). As “forums,” museums become spaces where previously accepted representations and dominant narratives of history can be questioned, dismantled, and replaced. Under this methodology, museums can provide more accurate and inclusive portrayals of diverse communities.

In “Establishing the Roots of Historical Consciousness in Modern Annapolis, Maryland,” Parker Potter and Mark P. Leone (1992) recognize that to properly study a museum exhibition, a viewer must “know the relationship between that exhibition and its political and economic setting” (478). This work begins at the macro level; before a museum can appropriately and accurately represent anyone or anything, it must first understand itself and its positionality. “A museum,” here, is a phrase meant to represent a museum’s leadership, values, and legacy of decision-making; a museum does not have
any agency without its leaders. By critically analyzing its own political and economic context, a museum can better grasp what forms of representation it does and does not engage in its collection and curation practices. This is one step toward rectifying issues of under- and misrepresentation. When a museum can identify these gaps in relation to its immediate socioeconomic context, political climate, and cultural positionality, museums can then determine how to address these gaps in exhibitions in a way that appeases both donors and audiences. Historically, it has been difficult for museums to balance appeasing both those who fund them and those who visit them. However, it is only through working with and within their communities that conversations can be had, and progress can be made toward telling authentic and responsible stories, which ultimately serves both parties.

**Immigrant Representation in Museums**

Sociocultural awareness among museum leadership is even more important when a museum seeks to represent minority groups such as immigrants. According to John Kuo Wei Tchen (1992) and his work at the Chinese History Museum in New York, one way to mitigate a lack of immigrant representation is to create dialogic exhibitions, which involves including source communities in the exhibition-making process. This includes the sharing of opinions on important matters and engaging in meaningful and productive conversations. This dialogue-driven approach to exhibitions aims to not only establish collaboration from the start of the exhibition process but also to build a system in which this collaboration can continue, for example, in the form of museum programming after the exhibit opens. In 1980, as Tchen and his team sought to develop a Chinese history
museum in New York, they quickly realized that despite the Chinese community playing a crucial role in the early development of the US, there was a lack of primary and secondary historical resources from Chinese people in US archives. When Tchen and his team were developing their ideas, the only other formal organization in New York that focused on sharing Chinese knowledge was the China Institute, which opened in 1926. To this day, their focus is on developing the world’s understanding of China through business, art, culture, cuisine, and education. However, the China Institute focuses on explaining the complexities of China to the world, not the lived experiences of Chinese people living in the US.

Even before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Chinese perspective was not included in the canon of American historical knowledge (Tchen 1992, 300). For Tchen, this lack of archival information meant that he and his collaborators had to rely on the lived experiences and narratives of living Chinese people. By attending Chinese social gatherings, the team was able to begin the development of the Chinese History Museum Archives. In doing so, they were also able to raise awareness about the gap in research and call on institutions to preserve Chinese archival history for future research. Tchen and his team identified and addressed three needs directly related to their research. First, they recognized that reclaiming the history of New York’s Chinatown acknowledged and honored a community that had previously been ignored within New York City history at large. Second, they saw that by recognizing the Chinese community’s contributions, the team could provide the public with an opportunity to reflect on and remember the past as well as contextualize history within the present, making space for new interpretation and
deeper understanding. In doing so, the public can make conscious connections between the lived experiences of the Chinese community and their own family lives and family histories, as well as recognize the similarities between the struggles of the historic Chinese community and their own. Third, Tchen and his team understood how acts of self-discovery could aid in shaping and reshaping individual and collective identities, and they sought to create a museum space where this kind of exploration and change could occur (Tchen 1992, 291–93). Additionally, they recognized that presenting a more integrated and inclusive history of the Chinese community in a museum space could aid in mitigating the sense of marginalization that the Chinese community has been experiencing since the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Tchen 1992, 293).

As museums strive toward greater inclusivity, they must also recognize that minority communities do not live in a vacuum and are not homogeneous. This derives from anthropological theorists who have recognized that all communities are diverse and constantly evolving and interacting with others. Elizabeth Crooke asserts that “community” is a multi-layered concept that is politically charged and can change depending on context (2016, 1). Indeed, the term “community” can be problematic in that it is often vague, simplistic, and generalizing; it is commonly used to “describe positive aspects of a group,” but it can also be “exclusive, serving to divide and marginalize” (Golding and Modest 2013, 20). That said, the term “community” can certainly also provide a sense of togetherness for those on the margins of dominant society and culture. It is only by recognizing the complexities of “community” and situating this concept within the political and cultural sphere that museums can contextualize the nuances they
hope to highlight. Phillips, in “Community Collaboration in Exhibitions: Toward a Dialogic Paradigm” (2003), writes:

The paradigmatic shift being introduced through collaborative exhibit development thus raises fundamental questions not only about the ways that contemporary museums are repositioning themselves as they respond to the powerful currents of cultural pluralism, decolonization, and globalization, but also about the changing relationship between museums and the societies within which they operate. (156)

As they developed what would eventually become the Museum of Chinese in America, Tchen and the other exhibition designers were cognizant of the need to represent Chinese community members as more than just “Chinese.” Chinese people, they asserted, are also New Yorkers, immigrants, employees in various industries, family members, and friends, and they have lived in the US for almost two hundred years. The museum eventually opened to the public in 1980.

It is only by critically examining gaps in museum representation, such as immigrant communities or often-forgotten labor industries, that museums can begin to develop accurate and ethical exhibits that represent these communities. This critical, reflexive awareness allows museums to provide space—literally and figuratively—for groups who have not previously been adequately and appropriately represented in public institutions.

“Difficult Heritage” and “Historical Consciousness”

Addressing Sharon MacDonald’s concept of “difficult heritages” (2009) in museum exhibitions has been a major step in filling gaps in museum representation. MacDonald defines “difficult heritage” as “a past that is recognized as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive,
self-affirming contemporary identity” (2009, 1). MacDonald points out that it is important to pay attention to not only how a museum exhibits difficult heritage and contentious histories but also what stories, narratives, and heritages get left out, are silenced, or remain invisible (2009). It is challenging to represent difficult heritage because these stories can be uncomfortable for people, and they may be contested by those who would prefer to ignore or erase them. “Difficult heritage may also be troublesome,” MacDonald writes, “because it threatens to break through into the present in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions, perhaps by playing into imagined, even nightmarish, futures” (2009, 1).

MacDonald also discusses how the idea of “historical consciousness” informs how artifacts are described, organized, and interpreted by both exhibit creators and museum visitors (2009, 4). In her book, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (2009), she explores the challenges of commemorating the Nazi era in Nuremberg, Germany, and other locations. The book delves into the complex processes of memory, representation, and public engagement with contentious historical sites, shedding light on the difficulties of addressing painful pasts. The narrative chosen by museums directly relates to how visitors interpret content and how narrative presentation is carefully designed to engage, educate, and provoke thought. Although museums might attempt to be unbiased in their representations, the subconscious, learned, and implicit biases of curators and other leaders inevitably emerge in the process of creating exhibits. As Viv Golding and Wayne Modest write (2013, 14), museums should hope to promote the
understanding of cultural diversity and the often-shameful histories of museums, but also to forge a contemporary connection with the lived experiences of present-day audiences, most importantly to progress critical thinking and point to collaborative action that we can take as responsible communities on matters of contemporary concern.

Indeed, the “often-shameful histories of museums” is a difficult heritage in and of itself. Recognizing this allows museums to reflect on their roles and positions in the contemporary world and determine what they can do to help society break down stereotypes and embrace cultural diversity. The self-aware, self-critical, and growth-minded museum becomes a space where difficult heritages are not hidden away, white-washed, edited, or presented through rose-colored glasses. Rather, in these spaces, difficult stories and narratives are presented wholly, ethically, and unflinchingly, with attention paid to people’s lived experiences. Presenting difficult histories in museum exhibits might reveal prejudices, evils, and crimes that perpetrators and their sympathizers would rather not face, but it is only by facing the injustices of the past—by looking at them directly and understanding their causes, effects, and modern legacies—that we can ensure they are not repeated.

Through educating the public, museums can become spaces of reflection, enlightenment, and action, especially when they address topics that are marginalized, secreted away from the public eyes, or otherwise ignored by mainstream culture. However, once museums delve into difficult topics, some of which might make people feel uneasy, it makes them vulnerable to critique. That said, critical, reflexive museology demands that museums exist in the public eye and under its scrutiny. Despite the challenges it can cause, public response and criticism are necessary for any museum’s
progress. Feedback from the public—especially when it comes from source communities who are represented in exhibits—helps a museum better understand its community and the needs and desires of the people it serves. Even though it can pose difficulties, constructive public feedback often initiates productive and creative collaborative efforts between source communities and museum leaders, leading to better-informed, more effective exhibits and programming.

**Collaboration**

Collaboration in museum contexts takes many shapes and forms depending on the goals and projects of a particular institution, as well as how stakeholder groups and communities are involved and engaged in collection and curation processes. Examining collaboration as a discourse allows museums to more effectively explore collaborative ideologies that extend beyond a single institution’s walls. Broadly, collaboration allows curators and museum leaders to reshape “social processes through the transformation of the museum from a display of singular expert accounts to a site of different educational engagements” (Boast 2011, 58; Kampschulte and Hatcher 2021). Raymond Silverman defines collaboration as a “social process that brings knowledge into a common signifying space in which meanings are negotiated and articulated, and in which objects of knowledge are defined and redefined, and given new meaning” (Silverman 2015, 4).

Museum professionals convey meaning through the presentation and interpretation of artifacts, choices in narrative text, and various exhibit design aspects, all of which convey an authoritative voice. Additionally, museum visitors bring their diverse backgrounds, personal connections, subjective interpretation modes, and limited time and attention to
museums. All these aspects play a part in how exhibits are interpreted by both creators and visitors. Silverman sees collaborative museum work as a process that transforms museums into “spaces in which diverse intellectual, professional, and cultural communities meet and engage in work that yields new ways of thinking, new ways of living” (Silverman 2015, 2).

When diverse groups work together, tensions can arise; however, when collaborators openly address issues with open minds, they can create dynamic opportunities for growth and critical thinking (Kelton and Saraniero 2018). Collaboration between source communities and institutions enables the production of collaboratively designed exhibitions, updated collection management practices, and deeper examinations of museum methods (Oncuil 2013; Phillips 2003). Museums can learn and grow through collaboration by “realizing the political nature of museums, their histories, and their functions, as well as the need to acknowledge and address these dynamics when creating new relationships” (Brown and Peers 2003, 9–10).

Viewing collaboration as a process can enable flexibility in timelines, visions, goals, and the ways in which a diverse group adapts and responds to issues. Within the museum context, Bernadette Lynch recognizes an increased demand on museums for public accountability and buy-in, which effects how collaborators in the field must work together. More and more, the global museum-going public wants to participate in deliberations and in the decision-making process; museum-goers have shifted from “users and choosers” to “makers and shapers” (Lynch 2011, 441). Lynch is referring specifically to collaboration between museums and source communities, but her ideas can and should
be applied to cross-institutional collaboration as well. This might mean stronger collaborative efforts among several museums or educational institutions within one district or city, or increased engagement by museum leaders in local nonprofit organizations.

The literature regarding cross-institutional collaboration is not as extensive as that regarding museums collaborating with communities. However, the research that does exist examines both the benefits of such forms of collaboration while also delving into the challenges that can occur (Bedford 2011; Lynch 2015; McTavish and Sliwa 2019). For example, in both Bernadette Lynch’s article, “Revisiting Collaborative Practices in the Museum: Issues and Insights,” and Leslie Bedford’s article, “The Collaborative Museum: Thoughts from the Outside In,” the authors recognize that the benefits of cross-institutional collaboration include the pooling of resources, both financial and professional; the sharing of expertise; and access to wider audiences (Bedford 2011; Lynch 2015). Additionally, Lynch and Bedford, in conversation with Lianne McTavish and Katrina Sliwa’s article, “Cross-Institutional Collaboration: A Multinational Case Study of the Sackler-UNESCO Colloquium Series,” examine the challenges they have faced when engaging in collaboration. Challenges include differences in organizational structures, priorities, and cultures; communication breakdowns; logistical complexities; and power imbalances (Bedford 2011; Lynch 2015; McTavish and Sliwa 2019).

It is notable that both the benefits and challenges experienced within cross-institutional collaboration are similar to those that often occur when museums collaborate with source communities. For example, both forms of collaboration share fundamental
principles, such as the need for effective communication, mutual respect, shared goals, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Recognizing these commonalities allows museums to leverage their experiences in one type of collaboration to improve practices in the other. Additionally, the skills and strategies developed in one collaborative context can often be transferred to the other. For example, effective community engagement techniques used in collaboration with source communities can inform how museums engage with external institutions, and vice versa. Additionally, acknowledging common challenges and pitfalls can help museums anticipate and mitigate potential issues. This proactive approach can prevent misunderstandings, conflicts, and unintended consequences within both types of collaboration. It allows museums to leverage their experiences, resources, and values to create more effective and inclusive partnerships, ultimately benefiting the museum, its collaborators, and the communities it serves.

Like all tenets of critical, reflexive museology, collaboration can lead to problems and conflicts that emerge from unbalanced power dynamics among collaborators. Recognizing the often-unequal aspects of collaboration is integral to James Clifford’s (1997) well-known idea of museums as a “contact zones:” spaces of unequal power dynamics and tensions based on the history of colonial relations between museums and communities. Clifford borrows from and builds on Mary Louise Pratt’s interpretation of contact zones. To Pratt, contact zones “refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt 1991, 34). The idea of the contact zone sheds light on the possible
complications of working with diverse groups of people who can have different goals, motives, and ideas.

Robin Boast, in his often-cited article, “Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited” (2011), critiques the idea of museums as contact zones and how it has been applied in practice. He argues that in reality, interactions in contact zones can mask the neocolonial nature of many of the relationships created in “contact zone” situations. Boast further suggests that some forms of collaboration, even when the goal is empowerment for all parties, can still marginalize the communities they are trying to serve by reproducing certain power relationships and dynamics (Boast 2011). For example, indigenous artifacts might be displayed as “art objects” divorced from their cultural and spiritual significance, reducing complex cultural narratives to mere aesthetic displays. This approach can reinforce the historical legacy and contemporary ramifications of colonialism, where Western powers appropriated and controlled the narratives of colonized peoples. Clifford also emphasizes the importance of curators reaching out to source communities while also acknowledging the often drastically asymmetrical power dynamics that exist between those communities and museum staff (Clifford 1997). This can put unfair pressure on source community members to act as singular representatives—the sole providers of cultural knowledge—and put an excess burden on the source community to bridge the gap between themselves and the museum (Mithlo 2004, 746).

To achieve a more egalitarian form of collaboration, museums must learn to let go of preconceived notions of power dynamics, and, as Kreps states, learn to work with
people and their communities rather than work on them or about them (2020, 185). As this becomes a contemporary better practice, museums are embracing the shift from colonial dynamics and finding themselves in collaborative partnerships with the communities they represent. Museums must engage in dialogue, learning community perspectives, sharing curatorial authority, and fostering trust. This aids in creating exhibits that reflect cultural richness and diverse narratives. Instead of taking a top-down approach where museums dictate the narrative and interpretation of exhibits, the focus shifts to collaboration and partnership. The shift envisions museums as dynamic, inclusive spaces where collaboration with communities fosters a deeper, more meaningful understanding of cultural heritage and a more equitable representation of diverse voices and experiences. Similar to Kreps’ approach, Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T.J. Ferguson suggest that

> collaboration in practice exists on a continuum, from merely communicating research to descendant communities, to a genuine synergy where the contributions of community members and scholars create a positive result that could not be achieved without joining efforts (2008, 1).

These authors emphasize the importance of moving beyond passive communication and consultation to actively involving communities in meaningful partnerships. This approach recognizes the richness of diverse perspectives and the potential for co-creating exhibitions and interpretations that are inclusive, authentic, and impactful. Jennifer Shannon (2015, 68–69) explains why museums should engage in collaboration:

> Ethically, we want to empower […] peoples to have control over how they are represented to the public, redress past injustices, and include originating communities that have been represented and yet often silenced in the museum. We also want the museum to serve the communities whose objects they house. Finally, epistemologically we value other ways
of knowing the world around us and do not want to continue to privilege only Western ways of knowing the world.

Collaboration is about forming reciprocal relationships, which begins with understanding all collaborators’ interests, the contexts in which they are working, and their willingness to participate in a project. Likewise, the entire team must acknowledge the differing power dynamics among and capacities of the groups involved (Oncuıl 2013). These relationships become ever more integral when considering representation of communities commonly left out of museums, like immigrants and industrial workers.

Hence, this study contributes to the literature on collaboration in its focus on institutional collaboration. In the context of this project, the “community” in question was a group of museum and academic professionals, volunteers, and community members interested in Chinese history, mining history, and museums. I will address this topic, as well as the exhibition design process, in the following chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS AND EXHIBIT DEVELOPMENT

The methods I used for this research project and in approaching the exhibit creation process involved critical, reflexive museology as well as the practical methods involved in exhibit design and implementation. According to Ruth Phillips, the key features of collaborative exhibitions are “the articulation of a post-colonial museum ethic, a shift in emphasis from product to process, and a renewed affirmation of the museum as a research site” (Phillips 2003, 158). I used these concepts as guiding principles throughout the research and exhibition creation process.

Studying and practicing Ruth Phillips’ features of collaboration enabled me to implement reflexive museology. Additional research methods included archival research, document analysis, thematic analysis, and semi-structured interviews. These methods also informed the exhibition creation process, including formulating a community questionnaire, examining collaborative research notes, and performing action and object research.

The goals of this research and exhibition project were to (1) examine the collaborative process behind exhibit-making, and (2) bring to light an under-represented history, namely the contributions of the Chinese mining immigrants to the development
of the Boise area. By doing so, our team sought to address the current lack of public
museum displays highlighting this vital history from an anthropological perspective.

**Articulation of a Post-Colonial Museum Ethic**

Over the last half century, “collaborative curatorial practice in anthropology
museums” developed both morally and intellectually (Phillips 2003, 158). Today’s
museums are more reflexive regarding the objectifying traditions of material culture,
prioritizing the protection of cultural property and traditional indigenous knowledge
(Phillips 2003). Before this shift, asymmetries in institutional power dictated the exhibit
creation process, wherein museum professionals often created exhibits that portrayed
marginalized communities in stereotypical, oversimplistic ways. Today, museums
attempt to rectify this issue by incorporating the perspectives of previously excluded
groups via collaboration between source communities and the academic institutions with
the means and access to share these topics.

In the case of “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of
Idaho” at the IMMG, collaborators included diverse institutions and Idaho community
members interested in museums, mining history, and Chinese history. In addition, the
formal collaborators knew the importance of adhering to what those within and adjacent
to Chinese culture know, value, and respect (Conaty 2003). Museum collaboration
promotes community development and education, which increases cultural preservation
and boosts local tourist economies.

The following methods sub-sections pertain to Phillips’ articulation of a post-
colonial museum ethic. This is because as the project's processes were formulated, the
post-colonial museum ethic ensured that the interested members of Boise museum and Chinese heritage’s perspectives were integrated into the project's objectives and narratives, leading to a more equitable and inclusive exhibit. The concept of integrating Chinese perspectives into the exhibit would have been ideal just as Phillips is commenting on the ideals of collaboration. However, since working directly with Chinese descendants was limited because so few remained in the Boise area, the collaborators decided to utilize the perspectives of community members who were interested in museums and Chinese heritage. By adopting action research within the framework of the post-colonial museum ethic, the collaborators aimed to address the historical imbalances in representation to have a more significant say in how their cultural heritage is presented.

**Exhibit Inception**

The “On the Gold Mountain” exhibit project was initiated after Dr. Pei-Lin Yu, who recognized a gap in Boise’s museum record, namely that there were no accounts or exhibits solely dedicated to the essential role Chinese immigrant miners played in Boise’s development during the American Gold Rush. Initial meetings regarding the exhibit began in October 2019 with interested parties from the IMMG, Dr. Pei Lin Yu, Dr. Nicole Herzog of the University of Denver, and myself. These groups met in person at the IMMG to discuss the possibility of creating an exhibit there to highlight the contributions of Chinese immigrant miners who came to the Boise area during the Gold Rush.
The motivation for creating the exhibit was similar to that behind the University of Washington Burke Museum’s exhibit, “Pacific Voices,” which opened in 1997. Even though the scale of the Burke exhibit was much larger than that of the IMMG, both the Burke’s project and ours attempted to give a voice to an underrepresented community. Both museums recognized that it would be impossible to summarize a community, culture, or experience in one exhibit. At the Burke, the collaborators worked with various community groups to specifically highlight one aspect of each culture they sought to represent in their exhibit (Kahn 2000). My collaborators and I chose to narrow the scope of our project for this same reason; we sought to humanize the Chinese immigrant mining experience by focusing on three themes—everyday life, religious and ceremonial activities, and mining expertise. We also recognized that this group could not be fully represented only via their experiences in the American West.

One of the first agenda items was a discussion on our collaborative process, especially regarding decision making and the sharing of power. I was aware of the importance of Michael Ames’ and other scholars’ ideas on the redistribution of power and allowed it to inform my work throughout this project (Ames 1992). Although each collaborator had a specialty they brought to the table, we all had to fully understand our own professional dynamics while working together, especially because we were working remotely. Eventually, our process came to resemble Ruth Phillips’ ideas on power-sharing in collaboration, in that our process included the “initial identification of themes, the design of the research methodology, object selection, and the writing of text panels” (Phillips 2003, 157).
The group decided to focus on a specific date range, from 1865, when Chinese miners first arrived in the Boise area, to roughly 1930, when few Chinese people remained in Idaho. In doing so, we recognized that we would need to collaborate with at least one other institution who could loan the IMMG Chinese-mining-related artifacts for the proposed exhibit. Both the Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC) and the Payette National Forest (PNF) expressed interest in contributing their expertise and artifacts either collected at archaeological sites or purchased because of their significance. At this time, representatives from both institutions formally joined our team. As a group (Table 4.1), we proposed a timeline culminating in an exhibit opening that would coincide with the Chinese Dragon Boat festival in June 2020. With this timeline, the group committed to creating, designing, and installing the exhibit in just over seven months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collaborator</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Role at Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pei-Lin Yu</td>
<td>Boise State University; Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>Associate professor, archaeologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Cox</td>
<td>Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clint Cuzzo</td>
<td>Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology</td>
<td>Operations director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Zedalis</td>
<td>Payette National Forest</td>
<td>Anthropologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renae Campbell</td>
<td>Asian American Comparative Collection</td>
<td>Historical archaeology doctoral candidate at the University of Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayle Dixon</td>
<td>National Park Service</td>
<td>Retired historian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Nicole Herzog</td>
<td>University of Denver</td>
<td>Assistant professor of archaeology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1: Chinese Mining Heritage Exhibit Collaborators and Roles, created by Jordan Bennett, 2021.

| Jordan Bennett | University of Denver | Master’s student of anthropology with a museum and heritage studies specialization |

**Project Funding**

This collaborative project was made possible through generous support and funding from various sources. The collaborators successfully secured grants from the Idaho Humanities Council and the Osher Institute. In conjunction with these sources of funding, the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology also played a crucial role in providing financial support, demonstrating a commitment to the project's success. Furthermore, the University of Denver recognized the significance of this research and exhibition, awarding me a Student Research Award through the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Additionally, the Anthropology Department at the University of Denver contributed supplemental funding, further affirming the value and impact of the project. Gratitude is extended to all these contributors, as their support was instrumental in bringing this exhibit to fruition, underscoring the collaborative nature of this venture.

**Examining Collaborative Meeting Notes**

The collaborators participated in regular Zoom meetings, which provided insight into the relationship-building and problem-solving initiatives that developed over the course of the project. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw suggest (1995, 4), I continuously described my observations and experiences through notetaking during and after meetings, which became an essential part of my reflective research process. I also used notetaking
to log useful information. I used my field notes to conduct thematic analysis, finding and coding common topics and themes that emerged in our conversations. This allowed me to recognize patterns in collaborators’ behaviors, ideas, and teamwork styles throughout the exhibition creation process. In doing so, I was better able to start conversations and debates. Some examples include conversations about which objects would be displayed and how, how to accurately represent the Chinese mining community, how to gauge the community’s interest in the exhibit, tentative exhibit opening coordination, and post-exhibit educational outreach.

These themes aided in the formulation of my second methodological approach, the semi-structured interview. I wanted to learn collaborators’ individual opinions on these themes. The semi-structured interviews will be discussed later in the “Museum as Research Site” section. By using my meeting notes, I was able to connect meeting experiences with the individual semi-structured interview responses.

**Collaboration and Action Research**

According to Lingard et al. (2008), action research has three key features: collaboration, egalitarianism, and a focus on social action to improve an issue. This project is rooted in action research; all the collaborators followed and valued this methodology, deeming it the most appropriate manner in which to create the exhibit.

The exhibit was a collaborative project from its inception, and although each institution had a unique role, collaborators made important decisions collectively. Examples of collaboration included working together to choose the exhibit design and which objects to display. During initial conversations about exhibit design, a pertinent
question included how to display the objects. For example, the IMMG uses metal display cases throughout the museum, but because one of the exhibit’s goals was to humanize the Chinese community, some groups involved were interested in using “softer” looking display cases (i.e., those with less metal and fluorescent lighting). However, after conversations between the collaborators and the team at the IMMG, we agreed that a standard metal case would be best suited for this exhibit because it would look cohesive with the other exhibits and ensure the safety of loaned objects. At first, the group was divided on how to solve this issue, but after the IMMG explained their rationale, the rest of the collaborators began to understand the benefits of the metal display cases and eventually agreed with the decision.

With a display case chosen and the correct size ordered, the group moved on to conversations about possible objects to display. The AACC and PNF both agreed to loan objects, and continual meetings with them allowed for a smooth loaning process. The AACC shared images of the objects pertaining to Chinese mining with the group via our shared Google Drive. The Payette was able to share their collections with the group in person and over Zoom. The openness in the collaborators’ relationships with each other allowed everyone to feel comfortable when providing feedback on the objects. For example, all collaborators provided feedback and opinions on their preferred choices of artifacts and rationale for why certain objects should be included or left out.

One object in question was a replica Chinese-designed wooden mining pan. Some collaborators wanted to include this item as a way of sharing information about traditional Chinese methods of gold panning. However, the item was controversial; no
archaeological evidence exists of these types of pans because of their wooden
construction, and only a few photos exist to document their use. Because of this, some of
the collaborators were hesitant to allow the replica pan to be displayed as part of the
exhibit alongside better-documented objects. After much discussion, the collaborators
decided to include the replica because we had funds available to create it, and
background research supported its probable use. Consequently, the wooden pan was
added to the exhibit. It is displayed below a photo of it being used by a Chinese miner
panning in a streambed along with a label that explained that it was a replica.

As an example of the egalitarian aspect of Lingard and co-authors’ (2008)
approach to action research, the collaborators attempted to provide more equal
representation for Chinese immigrants in historic Boise communities. As previously
mentioned, the Boise area already housed institutions that celebrate other ethnic/cultural
groups including the Basque Museum and Cultural Center, the Idaho Black History
Museum, and the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho. The collaborators’ goal was to
provide a space for the descendants of the Chinese mining community and show the
public how important this demographic was in shaping the Boise area and Idaho pre-
statehood. In doing so, the collaborators unknowingly pursued an approach proposed by
Alfredo Aragn and Mara Castillo-Burguete, in which action research inquires

into questions that are professionally or personally developmental, socially
controversial, or require social healing’ to enable […] excluded people to
gain more control of their lives and to release […] locked up assets’
(appreciative inquiry), and to generate contextual knowledge about
specific community needs that dominant research practices ignore (2015,
2).
Because Boise institutions did not, at the time of our exhibition’s inception, have any exhibit that emphasized the importance of the Chinese community during the Gold Rush, we assumed that people without direct links to Chinese history might not be aware of this gap in representation. As such, the collaborators recognized that they would need to provide additional context to help explain the significance of Chinese contributions to the Boise community.

**Selecting Exhibit Content: Process and the Product**

The shift in focus from “process to product” emphasizes the journey of collaboration rather than only concentrating on the product. This includes redefining the scope of the exhibit, which involves more than just the physical arrangement of objects and interpretive materials. Rather, we had to consider the interrelated activities that occur prior, during, and after the exhibit opening (Phillips 2003, 161). Each of the following subsections focus on the collaborative process. Archival research and documents analysis were integral to the beginning of this exhibit because it was only through in-depth research into primary and secondary sources that the content for the exhibit could be selected. This research informed how we chose to design the exhibit to convey the topic at hand. Object selection is an important part of both the process and product because we worked closely with previously collected data on possible objects and contextualized how they could be displayed as part of the exhibit. The shift to focus on the process of exhibit development over the final product forced us to think reflexively about all our choices and how each of those choices would impact the rest of the process.
Archival Research and Document Analysis

To familiarize myself with both the local history of Boise mining and the history of industrial museums more broadly, I conducted extensive research into the history of the Boise area. I focused on Chinese immigrants who came to the American West and the role mining has played in the region’s demographic, political, and social development. This included library research, archival work, and object research.

My main method included the document analysis of situational data, followed by the gathering, synthesizing (O’Leary 2010), and interpretation of said data (Bowen 2009; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Rapley 2007). I examined articles from the Boise area newspapers, including the Payette Lakes Star, Idaho Free County Press, and the Grangeville Globe from the late 1800s to early 1900s, which I accessed via the Library of Congress’ “Chronicling America” archive. I sought to find articles written about Chinese miners in Boise and the larger Idaho that represented them both positively and negatively, hoping to attain a balanced view on how the media portrayed this community. Originally, my assumption was that all articles would be negative, given the racism of that era, but this was incorrect. I found several newspaper articles that spoke of the positive characteristics of the Chinese miners and had specific references to men who were simultaneously engaged in other professions, such as growing highly productive gardens of Chinese medicinal herbs. This example of from a 1918 publication in the Idaho Free County Press newspaper mentions a Chinese miner, Goon Dick, writing,

Many have wondered how Dick ekes out an existence during the winter and early spring months that he spends in Grangeville... Somewhere in the mountains of Idaho county is a gold vein discovered by this Chinese. For fear that someone will find it and appropriate the rich ore, Dick has not
revealed the location of the deposit. But from time to time he visits the
vein, digs out the ore, rich in gold (1918).

A portion of this text was utilized in the interactive touchscreen alongside a very positive
publication about another miner name Lee Dick. A piece in the Payette Lakes Star
newspaper said, "Mrs. Harry Pritser has been very ill the past week and Lee Dick made
two 20-mile trips to attend her. It was another case of Dick saving a life, as the South
Fork is so high it was impossible for anyone to care for her there as it was impossible to
cross with a boat" (1919). Highlighting publications like these in the interactive show that
the public perception of the Chinese was not all negative.

Other data sources included published articles from academic journals and books
about museum collaboration, ethics regarding representation in museums, and the
exhibition creation processes. I accessed these through the University of Denver’s library
and online databases and by using Google Scholar. I then used this situational data to
further investigate my research endeavors. Through my research, I hoped to gain a better
understanding of other collaborative exhibitions processes, how museums decide to
represent marginalized groups, and professional practices regarding the methods and
theoretical concepts of exhibition creation. The situational data provided both theoretical
insights and technical knowledge on how to carry out collaborative work within the
exhibition development process and effectively explain the rationale behind the decisions
we made throughout.

My specific research into Chinese mining history during the American Gold Rush
attempted to shine a spotlight on this complex subject (Phillips 2003). I used the
University of Denver’s library and online database to access multiple sources with the
intention to seek convergence and corroboration (Yin 2014). Through researching the societal contributions of Chinese immigrants, I was able to synthesize relevant journal articles that described the benefits of Chinese medicinal practices, gardening skills, and mining techniques. These findings were central to the exhibit, helping to humanize and demarginalize the Chinese experience in Boise, and, hopefully, enabling the majority of the community to understand Chinese culture’s pivotal role in the history and development of Idaho’s economy and culture.

Other data sources included published articles from academic journals and books about museum collaboration, ethics regarding representation in museums, and the exhibition creation processes. I accessed these through the University of Denver’s library and online databases and by using Google Scholar. I then used this situational data to further investigate my research endeavors. Through my research, I hoped to gain a better understanding of other collaborative exhibitions processes, how museums decide to represent marginalized groups, and professional practices regarding the methods and theoretical concepts of exhibition creation. The situational data provided both theoretical insights and technical knowledge on how to carry out collaborative work within the exhibition development process and effectively explain the rationale behind the decisions we made throughout.

In utilizing these aspects of my research, I was able to contribute to the knowledge sharing of the other collaborators. In doing so, the group was able to work effectively to make decisions about the narrative of the exhibit and how it should be designed.
Developing Exhibit Content and Design

After much research was conducted, the collaborators were ready to move on to the content development and design stage of the exhibit. The exhibit space at the IMMGI is six feet wide and eight feet tall, giving the collaborators limited space to highlight both individuals and objects related to their professions and personal lives. The collaborators wanted to utilize the space as much as possible without overwhelming the visitors with too much content.

In doing this exhibit, the IMMGI collaborators attempted to share Chinese mining expertise with the public and combat the systematic social exclusion that Chinese immigrants experienced during the Gold Rush and that has continued into the present. A.C. Walker defines social exclusion as “the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society” (Sandell 1998, 405). We attempted to combat this by “by utilizing the museum’s potential to communicate, educate, and influence social opinion” through choosing objects and narrative text that would most accurately depict the Chinese immigrant mining experience (Schultz 2011, 1).
Once we decided how the themes of the exhibit would be conveyed, we needed to work on the physical portrayal and organization of the space. When it came to the display of the narrative and objects, I made preliminary mock-ups of the exhibit space (Figures 4.1 and 4.2) to show various iterations of the design layout. Notice that the objects in the Figure 4.1 mock-up are all in one display case versus in Figure 4.2, which shows objects in different cases organized by theme. I designed multiple other mock-ups with PowerPoint and Adobe Illustrator throughout the creation process. Dr. Yu advocated that the objects chosen for the exhibit be displayed at a certain height from the ground because Chinese tradition specifies that it is bad luck for objects to be displayed under a
certain height. Coincidentally, this consideration aligned with American Disabilities Act Compliance guidelines. By acknowledging Chinese tradition, we were able to accommodate the respect due to these objects (Nicks 2003). The collaborators eventually chose a design very similar to the one depicted in figure 4.1.

Then, the collaborators began working on the interactive touchscreen content. We decided to exhibit historic photographs of Chinese miners in the Boise area and highlight individual aspects including traditional clothing and hairstyles. This is when Gayle Dixon became involved with the exhibition. Dixon is a retired archaeologist at the Payette National Forest (PNF) who had previously created an informational poster for display at

![Chinese Community of Warren, Idaho – 1896](image)

Figure 4.3: “Chinese Community of Warren, Idaho – 1896,” Payette National Forest and the John Calhoun Smith Memorial Fund.
the PNF that sought to humanize the stories of the miners who worked in Warren, Idaho in 1896 (Figure 4.3).

The collaborators believed this poster would be an appropriate starting point to provide personal stories. Figure 4.4 shows the first draft page of the interactive mock-up displaying the poster Dixon created; it displays large icons of miners that the museum visitor could click on to learn more. The men highlighted were Ah Sam, Lee Dick, and Goon Dick, immigrants who came from China and had individual experiences while attempting to make a living in the mining industry.

We designed the interactive touchscreen so that it featured relatable experiences. Once the visitor chooses a person to click on, a new page pops up with a larger photo of the miner. This new page displays additional photos, newspaper publications, and/or information about Chinese culture that is represented in the original photos. In doing so, the public would be able to learn about specific aspects of Chinese culture. For example,
aspects included traditional hairstyles and describe how some Chinese people adopted Western hairstyles. Other topics include how the Chinese were open to Western influence regarding certain aspects of work clothing, and how the Chinese chose their Americanized names (see Appendix F). These various pages provided more context about the daily lives of Chinese miners and how they chose to keep particular aspects of their heritage, like parts of their Chinese name, but also how they were open to adapting if a part of Western culture was more appropriate in a situation, like adopting the use of Western heavy work boots for work in the mines.

**Object Research, Selection, and Context**

After the display case was picked out and the design of the interactive touchscreen commenced, the collaborators began to move forward with object selection. Collaborative exhibits emphasize the creation process as being more than simply the arrangement of objects and interpretive materials but rather as a series of connected activities and decisions that begin with the exhibit creation process and extend through post-opening community programming (Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Phillips 2003). Under this paradigm, the museum and the community can form more connected relationships in which previously held power dynamics begin to evolve, and the museum space becomes more open and inviting.

As part of exhibit design, we selected a set of contemporary and archaeological objects to represent the themes of Chinese mining knowledge, comforts of daily life for Chinese immigrants, and Chinese ceremonial traditions. These combined themes assisted in the collaborators’ attempt at holistic representation of Chinese immigrant miners as
more than their profession and heritage. As I mentioned in the Chapter Two, the Chinese miners were also neighbors, pioneers, and dream-seekers, and we wanted our exhibit narrative and artifacts to reflect that.

We began our selection process by exploring the Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC) and Payette National Forest (PNF) collections to see which objects fit these themes. All objects from both locations were either excavated by the institution or an affiliated institution, donated, or purchased from antique stores because of their significance. To choose which objects would be most appropriate, I conducted research on each of the possible objects for display in the exhibit. This included gathering information from each of the loaning institutions on each object’s provenance, traditional use, and importance to the Chinese culture. The collaborators wanted to ensure they knew enough about the circumstances in which each object was found to historically contextualize the objects for display. My research contributed to this verification process.

Both loaning institutions provided the group with historic and archaeological context to better place these objects in time and space. We were aware that the contexts in which museums display artifacts as exhibitions are avenues for the communication of ideas, information, and values (McLean 2009). We followed Ambrose’s and Paine’s ideas from *Museum Basics* by including investigations into the objects intrinsic, extrinsic, and ascribed information (2012). By gathering this information, the collaborators were able to learn about the objects’ physical properties, identify their cultural uses, and recognize their historical and contemporary significance. This commitment to in-depth research not only enhanced the educational value of the exhibit but also underscored our
dedication to presenting an accurate representation of the Chinese mining community's rich heritage.

To further the idea of the importance of objects to cultures, I focused on the concept of memory work throughout this project. Memory work is the idea that immigrants often display their cultures through photographs, pictures, and artifacts in their homes to maintain connectedness to their heritage in new environments (Keld and Juul 2016). Some of the objects chosen by the collaborators signify pieces of Chinese heritage that became increasingly culturally significant in miners’ lives because of their new, unfamiliar environment and the limited accessibility to similar objects in the new location. These objects include Chinese coins and Chinese dice (Figure 4.5), items that could be relatively easily transported from China. These particular objects may have served as easily portable keepsakes that served as visual and physical reminders of where they came from and how hard they worked to get to the U.S. The objects we chose to

Figure 4.5: Go pieces and Chinese dice, photographed by Renae Campbell, Asian American Comparative Collection, 2021.
display can be viewed as emotional anchors for the Chinese immigrants because of their traditional uses in a non-traditional environment (Kahn and Younger 2005, 4). For example, if one of the Chinese immigrants were to pull out a Chinese coin in front of a non-Chinese person, they would probably not understand what they were looking at. However, if another Chinese person were to see those same coins, both individuals would be able to reminisce on a time when these coins were used as part of their daily lives. But while in the U.S., they hold no monetary value and serve as a keepsake memento.

As Gosden puts it in “What Do Objects Want?” there is an “emerging attempt to take the material world seriously in terms of how it affects human relations. Such attempts […] where links between sociability and objects are eagerly sought” (2005, 196). This idea coincides with Myers’ interpretation of materiality, that it “is not so much an issue of matter but is constituted, rather, through ideological frameworks. Thus, the formulation of materiality (or materialities) is varied and often conflicting around divergent understandings of subjects and objects” (Myers 2005, 89). As such, we acknowledged that many of the objects we selected for display might have changed in use and meaning since their first use in the area. We recognized that the objects themselves were not static entities but rather dynamic carriers of cultural narratives, evolving alongside the Boise community's changing experiences. This awareness prompted us to delve into the historical and cultural layers within each artifact, aiming to present a nuanced representation that acknowledged the variability of meaning within the selected objects. The recognition of these complexities guided our curation process, promoting a
deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between the material world, cultural heritage, and the evolving narratives encapsulated by the chosen artifacts.

Similar to Golding and Modest, we actively chose to display “contentious” artifacts with the intent of dispelling stereotypes about the Chinese community (Golding and Modest 2013, 18). One set of objects, an opium can and opium pipe fragments, led to several conversations about the implications of displaying materials involving drug use. After discussion, the group decided that with the correct narrative contextualization, we could aid in dispelling the stereotypes surrounding opium in the Chinese community. In doing so, we could also highlight the cultural significance opium played in forming and strengthening Chinese communities as well as opium’s practical medicinal uses (Conaty 2003).

In the historical context of American drug use, certain substances that are now deemed illicit were once widely accepted, reflecting a different societal attitude toward drug consumption across time. In the past, substances such as cocaine and laudanum were commonly used and socially acceptable. However, the narrative becomes more delicate when examining the historical use of opium by Chinese immigrants. Although opium was traditionally used as a cultural practice by Chinese communities, its historical association with negative stereotypes and the subsequent stigmatization of the Chinese population in the U.S. adds complexity to its representation. Displaying a broken opium pipe in a museum exhibit focusing on Chinese immigrant miners requires careful consideration. The delicate nature of this issue is accentuated by the fact that public reception may vary because of societal biases and lack of knowledge, highlighting the
need for nuanced discussions around historical representations of drug use and cultural practices.

Sharon Macdonald’s concept of "difficult heritages" is particularly pertinent in this context, as the portrayal of opium use requires navigating challenging historical legacies and addressing the potential reinforcement of stereotypes. This highlights the delicate task museums face in presenting historical narratives that involve substances with varying cultural, racial, and social implications. The collaborators decided that it was only through displaying the opium pieces that we could dispel such stereotypes and foster empathic conversations.

Table 4.2 shows a full list of the objects selected for display, the loaning institution they came from, and their associated theme. The loan agreements between the IMMG and the AACC and PNF, respectively, can be viewed in Appendices D and E. We also wanted to ensure that Chinese-speaking visitors could access the information provided in the exhibit. To provide this access, we enlisted the help of Suzen Lin to translate all the exhibit components into Chinese. We displayed each object description and narrative in Chinese characters as well as English. We also had the exhibit brochure translated so that visitors could have a hard-copy version of the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Loaning Institution</th>
<th>Theme for Display</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Scale</td>
<td>Payette National Forest</td>
<td>Mining Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Files</td>
<td>Payette National Forest</td>
<td>Mining Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw Knife Blades</td>
<td>Payette National Forest</td>
<td>Mining Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Museum as Research Site

Historically, museums have been viewed as places of authoritative knowledge, but it is only recently that museum professionals have begun developing their critical understanding of the museum as a complex research site. “The new methods of knowledge production and dissemination fostered by collaborative exhibit[s] thus have the potential to change radically the very definition of the educational mission which the
museum shares with other institutions” (Phillips 2003, 163). Instead of the traditional top-down model where museums act as sole authorities on interpretation, the collaboration model invites multiple perspectives and voices. Community members, experts, and stakeholders contribute their knowledge and experiences, enriching the exhibit with diverse narratives and insights. Inherently, collaborative exhibits gather information from different sources or groups and not only create knowledge collectively but also reimagine how it is shared. They can leverage a variety of communication channels to gather information. These methods can include community questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Through welcoming diverse voices and perspectives, the shift challenges the traditional museum paradigm, which sometimes excludes marginalized or underrepresented communities. By embracing collaboration, museums can create exhibits that resonate with a broader range of visitors, fostering a sense of belonging and relevance.

**Institutional Review Board**

This project adhered to ethical research standards and underwent the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process through the University of Denver’s IRB. The project was classified as an exempt study because any potential risk was deemed minimal. The IRBNet Protocol #: 1600133-1 guided the ethical considerations and research procedures. Collaborators who participated in semi-structured interviews provided informed consent, acknowledging that efforts would be made to maintain anonymity in collaborator conversations, and each collaborator agreed to have their names used in the thesis. An ethics statement and opt-in language were developed to accompany the online
questionnaire. However, consent forms were not required for the community questionnaire as it did not collect identifiable information, ensuring respondents' complete anonymity and aligning with ethical research practices. The commitment to ethical guidelines underscores the project's dedication to conducting research with integrity and respect for all involved parties.

Community Questionnaire

Questionnaires are an efficient way of gathering opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and suggestions about a topic in question (Pozzo and Borgobello 2019, 4). The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the exhibit opening, but the silver lining was that it gave us more time to collaborate with the broader community via surveying. We originally sought to include the voices of locals who had family ties to Chinese immigrant communities who lived and worked in Boise during the Gold Rush. However, we were only able to connect with one descendant family in the area. Thus, in lieu of their direct involvement, the collaborators recognized the need to reach out to broader communities of interest. In doing so, the collaborators were able to engage the public by forging a contemporary connection with a history that has commonly been forgotten, progressing critical thinking and collaborative action (Golding and Modest 2013). This was our attempt at empowering the community and dismantling the power and authority of museum professionals as sole decision makers when it comes to making history public (Kreps 2020; Shannon 2015).

We developed an online questionnaire that asked participants to explore their feelings and attitudes toward the representation of Chinese immigrants in public
educational spaces. We sent the questionnaire to a wide variety of people interested in Chinese heritage, mining, and museums. The groups who received the questionnaire are as follows: the AACC (250 members), the Idaho Chinese Organization (150 members), and the Idaho Chinese Association (50 members). We chose to produce an online questionnaire because they tend to have advantages over paper alternatives in that the presence of a surveyor is eliminated, thus providing the additional security of anonymity. Online materials also have the benefits of the “immediacy of data processing, reduction of field work […] and lower research costs” (Pozzo and Borgobello 2019, 4). However, because a surveyor is not present with an online questionnaire, the respondent is ultimately responsible for determining the intention of each question, which can lead to misunderstanding and unintended results. At least one of the questions in this study resulted in unintended outcomes, which I will discuss in the Analysis section.

Similar to what Miriam Kahn’s collaborative team reported in Not Really Pacific Voices: Politics of Representation in Collaborative Museum Exhibits (2000), we tailored our community questionnaire with specific multiple-choice and open-ended questions to gauge how interested community members felt about the upcoming exhibit (Appendix C).

The questionnaire included eleven questions (Appendix C), which were loosely divided into groups. The first four questions concerned the demographics of the participants. Although the questionnaire was completely anonymous, the collaborators recognized that we could still benefit from learning about who was responding to the call for feedback. These included questions about age range, gender, ethnicity, and city/town
of residence. For additional context, one question asked if the respondent had ever visited the IMM. I constructed the remaining questions to help determine the public’s concern for and interest in Chinese representation in museums, as well as what an ideal exhibit would include in terms of topics, text, and objects.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

Additionally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with select members of the organizations involved with the exhibit to enable collaborators to assess the processes of collaboration critically. I chose to restrict interviews to those who attended the greatest number of Zoom meetings and those with the most direct involvement in the project (see Appendix A). I chose the semi-structured interview method because I was able to approach each interviewee with a defined list of questions to ask. However, I also wanted to be able to follow the natural flow of the conversation and pursue interesting tangents as they arose (O’Leary 2010).

I began each interview session by introducing what the interview process would include, re-explaining what the participant agreed to, and confirming they were still comfortable with the terms of the IRB consent form. I organized my questions in a way that enabled me to construct meanings, interpretations, and associations from the responses (Schensul and LeCompte 2012). I began with broad questions about their reasons for involvement with this project and why they thought this exhibit was important, as well as asking about their goals. I then asked specific questions about their opinions on the importance of collaboration and requested that they share examples from our meetings of when collaboration was successful and when it was challenging. Finally,
I asked them about Chinese mining representation in museums and how they thought COVID-19 could impact the exhibit (Appendix B).

Through these interviews, I was better able to understand everyone’s motives for participating in the project, which I then extended to the institutions they represented. This enabled me to summarize and organize interview responses and get a holistic picture of the social situation of collaboration (Schensul and LeCompte 2012). Goals included using the information from the gathered responses to gauge if the collaboration process was successful in aiding the creation of this exhibit. Additionally, I wanted to be able to examine the responses critically to aid similar future projects.

The semi-structured interview format allowed for more open conversation about each interviewee’s interests and concerns. I also followed unexpected leads during the interviews by commenting on responses in a conversational manner (Schensul and LeCompte 2012). I had the responses transcribed, and I coded by hand to find general themes. Then, I condensed, synthesized, and coded those themes.

In the next chapter, I will continue to discuss my analysis and findings regarding the methods and theoretical concepts I applied to the research and exhibition creation process and the implications of those findings.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS ON THE COLLABORATIVE AND CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

This chapter constitutes the findings and analysis of my research regarding the creation of the exhibit, “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG). It also discusses how this exhibit was influenced by a variety of methods and theoretical approaches. The chapter begins with a thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews I conducted with the project collaborators and is followed by a synthesis of emergent themes. I focus on how, with this exhibit, the group attempted to fill a significant gap in Idaho museum records—the history, legacy, and representation of Chinese immigrant mining labor during Boise’s gold rush. I also discuss how the group addressed issues that arose throughout the project. Next, I examine the community questionnaire responses and explore how the responses influenced the direction of the exhibit. This is followed by an analysis of the questionnaire themes. Then, I delve specifically into collaboration, explaining how I analyzed and incorporated results from semi-structured interviews with collaborators and the results from the community questionnaire. My findings and analysis include a discussion of cross-institutional collaboration, the importance of humanizing industrial museums, what it means to address “difficult heritages”, and a reflection on the theories applied to the research.
Semi-Structured Interviews Thematic Analysis

As described in chapter 4, I conducted semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) with select members of the organizations involved with the exhibit. My goal was to use the information I gathered from their responses to gauge if the collaboration process was successful in aiding the creation of this exhibit thus providing a framework for future studies. By delving into the experiences, challenges, and triumphs of collaboration, future researchers can gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamics that shape collaborative projects within museum contexts. Unveiling these elements not only aids in assessing the efficacy of collaboration but also provides practical insights that can inform strategies for overcoming obstacles. The participatory nature of the research, wherein team members actively contribute their perspectives, reinforces the importance of incorporating diverse voices in the evaluation and planning of collaborative museum projects.

The semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B) explored the importance of the exhibit, definitions and examples of successful and challenging forms of collaboration, and opinions on Chinese representation in museums. In the text that follows, I offer a description of the themes that emerged from my analysis of the responses to the semi-structured questions. I coded the responses using Excel, which allowed me to create codes for each question and then add responses that referenced specific questions. Three main themes emerged from the responses: 1) balancing representation and the broader significance of the exhibit, 2) shared commitments to equality and empathy, and 3) challenges posed by the pandemic and the dynamics of
collaboration. These themes often also emerged in conversations among collaborators during the project.

The first theme, balancing representation and the broader significance of the exhibit was one that was expressed in answers to many of the questions and that all of the collaborators touched on. Each collaborator's involvement was driven by a desire to foster accurate representation, acknowledge overlooked contributions, challenge stereotypes, and confront societal issues. These motivations formed the fabric of the project.

Emphasizing accuracy was a pivotal motivation for all collaborators, highlighted by Dixon’s dedication to the precision and factual portrayal of the narrative. This priority echoed across collaborators, resonating with Campbell’s insistence on appropriate terminologies that reflected the miners’ perspectives, not solely archaeological classifications. This commitment was further underscored by Zedalis, whose scientific background made her want to authentically reconstruct narratives through artifacts, ensuring an accurate portrayal of historical events.

Recognition of overlooked contributions also emerged as a driving force across collaborators, symbolizing a collective commitment to acknowledging the Chinese immigrant miners’ societal contributions. Collaborators like Cox and Zedalis advocated for showcasing the miners beyond their occupational roles by aiming to honor their multifaceted identities within the context of Idaho's history. Additionally, Cuzzo’s personal connection to the immigrant miner story exemplified the importance of
recognizing ancestral ties and bridging personal narratives with broader historical significance.

Cox, Zedalis, and Campbell all answered similarly about representation in question 3: that they were concerned with recognizing overlooked Chinese immigrants’ societal contributions to the U.S. Campbell acknowledged we are “in a time of racial reckoning” with the current political climate. Zedalis went further in her response to reiterate the importance of this exhibit because of the rising anti-Asian sentiment due to COVID-19. These comments reminded me that racist comments about the “China-virus” across media platforms have misguided the public to associate COVID-19 with the Chinese, which is an unjust, xenophobic correlation. Many of the collaborators recognized the unjust representation of this community while also connecting personal experiences of feeling excluded.

Yu’s concern about the lack of Chinese representation was highlighted when she mentioned that other communities in the area have heritage centers and cultural celebrations. The Basque community has the Basque Museum and Cultural Center and the Basque Block, which was built over Chinatown; Boise has the Idaho Black History Museum; and the annual Return of the Valley People celebrates Native American communities in the region. Before this exhibit, the Chinese community in Idaho did not have any local space solely dedicated to their history and experiences. Another of Yu’s comments about the importance of this exhibit was that she hoped it would truly show what the Chinese mining immigrant experience was like to the non-Chinese community.
However, this quest for more complete representation intersected with the realization that one exhibit alone couldn’t encapsulate the entire history of our subject. This recognition heightened concerns about the potential limitations and the overall impact of the exhibit on visitors. Responses related to this theme were likely influenced by each collaborator’s role and work at their affiliated institutions as well as their personal experiences.

In relation to the second theme, each of the interviewees touched on the topic of shared commitments to equality and empathy in different ways. As participants engaged in thoughtful conversations, their responses offered perspectives on various aspects of equality, ranging from labor practices to social inclusion. Notably, during the interview with Yu, the question regarding the representation of Asian and Chinese groups in the community shed light on the nuanced dynamics of equity and visibility. Additionally, Campbell's insights into Chinese mining and her perspective on the question about challenges faced by the Chinese community in preserving their heritage further contributed to the exploration of equity issues.

Cuzzo recognized a gap in museum content and addressed that although he is not Chinese or Asian, he does have ancestors who came to America and worked as miners (Cuzzo 2020) and as such thought that the individual stories of these workers is important to highlight. His family history reminded me that many Americans are the descendants of immigrants, which contributed to the broad relevance of the exhibit. The fact that a lot of Americans’ families once immigrated here—with few personal belongings and in hopes for a better future—became an important part of the significance of this exhibit. Cox,
Zedalis, and Campbell all answered similarly: that they were concerned with recognizing overlooked Chinese immigrants’ societal contributions to the U.S. Zedalis went further in her response to reiterate the importance of this exhibit because of the rising anti-Asian sentiment due to COVID-19. These comments reminded me that racist comments about the “China-virus” across media platforms have misguided the public to associate COVID-19 with the Chinese, which is an unjust, xenophobic correlation. Each of the responses for Q2 touched on topics of equality and empathy.

All of the collaborators noted that the Chinese have very little representation in any Boise museums, and that where representation does exist, it is very fragmented. Cuzzo previously visited other Boise museums and took mental note of the lack of Chinese representations. Zedalis’ response was along the same vein in mentioning that what little Chinese heritage is shared with the public is very fragmented and does not show anywhere near the whole story. Yu went even further in wanting a revitalization of Boise’s Chinatown in some regard to show the impact of this community.

Empathy and equity played pivotal roles in shaping the collaborative project, as collaborators sought to address historical misrepresentations and amplify underrepresented voices. Participants expressed a shared commitment to fostering equality by challenging stereotypes and ensuring accurate portrayals of Chinese immigrant miners. Concerns about humanizing the miners and presenting a holistic history underscored the collaborators’ dedication to empathy, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of their approach. The themes of equality and empathy were woven
into various aspects of the project, influencing decisions on exhibit content, representation, and the collaborative process itself.

The third theme related to challenges posed by the pandemic and the dynamics of collaboration. Again, interviewees sentiments regarding the collaborative process emerged across several interview questions I categorized these two concerns as one dominant theme because they are intricately related: the pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges that intertwined with the dynamics of collaboration among the project team. Concerns stemming from the pandemic, particularly the inability to convene in person, posed significant hurdles that impacted communication channels and relationship-building dynamics among collaborators. Our inability to engage in-person hindered the collaborative process, affecting the fluidity of interactions and impeding the organic development of relationships among the collaborators.

As highlighted by Zedalis and Cuzzo, the absence of in-person interactions deprived the team of essential rapport-building moments, inhibiting the establishment of cohesive and organic relationships fundamental to effective collaboration. Zedalis said it perfectly: “We haven’t had face-to-face time, and we haven’t built relationships or any rapport.” This sentiment resonated with Lynch's perspective on the limitations of virtual meetings, implying a potential inequality in the voice and participation of team members (2011a). Additionally, this aligns with Boast's observations on the nuanced challenges in virtual collaboration, where the lack of physical presence diminishes the depth of interpersonal connections and shared experiences crucial for effective teamwork (Boast
2011). These aspects highlight the necessity for innovative strategies to navigate the challenges posed by remote collaboration during unprecedented times.

Another topic that came to light during these interviews was the possibility of an online exhibit opening as a response to COVID. Exhibit flexibility was part of our continual conversations at most meetings. Because of COVID restrictions and constantly changing safety protocols at the IMMG, we suggested the idea of featuring the exhibit online prior to the in-person exhibit opening. Some members of the group were open to the idea, while those at the museum seemed more hesitant. After more conversations, we eventually decided the museum would have a partial online opening that included additional interactive features and expanded narration in English and Chinese.

In regard to collaboration, Yu provided a good definition in saying each group has “buy-in and ownership,” and that each group is included and has a voice. She thought the diversity of the group’s members was a huge benefit in that each member brought their own area of expertise. Campbell said that collaboration focuses on multivocality. She said each group offers their expertise, “trying to balance sometimes competing or maybe just a diverse array of interests in a project”. She recognized that her fields, archaeology and history, are often insulated and siloed off from wider communities, so collaborating with groups they are studying or representing is important. She emphasized the need for improvement in this regard across both disciplines. She also recognized that collaboration across disciplinary fields is essential to telling a whole history. Dixon appreciated that each group had their own set of knowledge and expertise, and that one value of a diverse group was that we could always ask questions. Cox believed, similar to other
collaborators’ perspectives, that collaboration allows for a “much more balanced and comprehensive view of any project” (Cox 2020). As Silverman stresses, collaboration should allow for space to engage in new and critical ways of thinking (2015).

Yu, Dixon, and Campbell all mentioned the value of multiple perspectives and areas of expertise. This was especially important with this exhibit because none of the participant groups could have accomplished this dynamic exhibit on their own. Cox believed, similar to other collaborators’ perspectives, that collaboration allows for a “much more balanced and comprehensive view of any project”. As Silverman stresses, collaboration should allow for space to engage in new and critical ways of thinking (2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the collaborative project, introducing challenges related to remote collaboration and hindering in-person interactions critical for relationship-building among collaborators. The project team demonstrated adaptability by considering an online exhibit opening, showcasing a commitment to overcoming pandemic-related limitations. Despite these challenges, collaborators emphasized the value of diverse perspectives and areas of expertise, underscoring the collaborative spirit crucial to the project's development.

Each of the themes from the semi-structured interviews highlight connections and interdependencies among the various aspects of the project. This interconnection is especially evident in how the collaborators’ motivations and concerns interact and influence one another. The concerns about the exhibit limitations and the complexities of portraying history are not isolated; they are intricately linked to the collaborative context
and the constraints imposed by the ongoing pandemic. Similarly, the motivations driving collaborators to dispel stereotypes and recognize contributions are tightly woven with concerns about the exhibit’s overall impact and inevitable limitations. Therefore, understanding these themes in conjunction provides a holistic view of the project's complexities and the collaborative dynamics impacted by both internal motivations and external constraints.

**Community Questionnaire Descriptive Statistics and Thematic Analysis**

We sent the online community questionnaire (Appendix C) to roughly 450 people from various interested groups. Ninety-four people responded, which was just over the 20 percent expected response rate we had aimed for. After the questionnaire closed, I sorted and summarized the demographic data using Microsoft Excel, I then coded each open-ended question again using Microsoft Excel.

It should be noted that, of the 94 participants, 70 did not respond to half the questions. The first five questions were answered most of the time, while from Question 6 and on, the questions were mostly left unanswered. Perhaps this indicates that the questionnaire was flawed, but I have also speculated that a glitch may have occurred within Qualtrics because Participants 47 to 78 skipped all questions after Question 6.

I will begin this section with a quantitative overview of the responses to the demographic questions. I will then move on to explore themes that emerged in my analysis of the open-ended questions.

Table 5.1 shows the amalgamated responses to questions 1 and 3 pertaining to the gender and age ranges of participants. This shows that twice as many women filled out
the questionnaire as men, and that twenty-three people did not answer the gender question. This also shows a wide age range of people who participated with 51 percent of participants falling within the 30–59 age ranges. It is difficult to conclude why most of the participants who filled out the questionnaire were women and between the ages of 30–59. My only guess is that the majority of people who signed up to be on the mailing lists for these groups fall within these categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Ranges</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18–29</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–49</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–69</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–79</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Aggregate results for questionnaire Questions 1 and 3, 2021.

Sixty-seven percent of the participants who responded to the question on ethnicity (Figure 5.1) were of Asian/Pacific Islander ethnicity. Although none of the organizations who sent out the community questionnaire hold demographic data on their mailing lists, it was reassuring to see a high response rate from people of Asian/Pacific Islander descent who decided to participate. These results were encouraging to see because they showed
us that this community was interested in the topics covered by the questionnaire.

Although we did not specifically ask if the participants were of Chinese ethnicity, the collaborators felt the ethnic category of Asian/Pacific Islander was broad enough to gather the intended data and similar enough to gain additional perspective on the cultural expertise and historical connections between the groups.

![Ethnicity of Respondents (Q2)](image)

Figure 5.1: Aggregate results for questionnaire Question 2, 2021.

When we developed the questionnaire, we assumed it would mainly reach people in Boise and surrounding areas. Therefore, the questionnaire asked only what city the respondents lived in, not which state. However, because of the expanded reach of the questionnaire, the question should have included both city and state to better understand where the respondents were from.

In hindsight, I would have also included a question that asked how the participants heard about the questionnaire. This would have been beneficial, as we sent it out through several different organizations. It would also have been interesting to hear why each participant was involved in their respective groups. The newsletter, mailing
lists, and organizations that this questionnaire was sent to are all either involved with the IMMIG, interested in Chinese and Asian culture and heritage, or interested in museums. Those who signed up for the newsletter list at the IMMIG were most likely previous visitors to the museum.

Additionally, the collaborators were interested in the respondent’s family connections to the 19th-century Gold Rush, seeking to identify descendants of Chinese mining immigrants (Figure 5.2). Results from this question suggest that many of the respondents did not have ties to the Gold Rush, specifically.

![Figure 5.2: Aggregate results for questionnaire Question 9, 2021.](image)

This question also highlighted the long-term impacts of the Exclusion Act in limiting Chinese immigrants from becoming US citizens and establishing themselves and their families in Boise long-term.
In analyzing the non-demographic questionnaire responses, distinct patterns and themes emerged, shedding light on the collective sentiments and aspirations of the participants. The three themes that emerged from the analysis of responses included: 1) highlighting Chinese histories, 2) celebrate, preserve, and personalize Chinese heritage, and 3) the role of museums amidst social and political challenges.

The first theme of highlighting Chinese histories became apparent in the public’s desire for accurate representation. Figure 5.3 that shows the respondents recognized the then below adequate representation of Chinese immigrant history and culture in museums.

![Bar chart showing questionnaire results](image)

**Figure 5.3: Aggregate results for questionnaire Question 5, 2021.**

This theme emerged from the outside community and reinforced the collaborators’ goal of creating an exhibit that did not shy away from complicated topics such as dispelling stereotypes and commenting on racism, which challenged the
collaborators to attempt to create a holistic representation of a community in a limited physical space. Although delving into these challenging topics makes museums susceptible to public and scholarly critique, it is also instrumental in informing and enhancing exhibit creation (MacDonald 2009).

Additionally, the desire for a more encompassing depiction of Chinese heritage aligns with the principles advocated by Viv Golding and Wayne Modest, emphasizing museums’ roles in promoting cultural diversity and addressing often-shameful aspects of historical narratives (2013; MacDonald 2009). At the onset of the project, collaborators were unsure whether community members were aware of the current lack of Chinese representation in museums, but the results from Q7 (Figure 5.4) suggested that many did

![Figure 5.4: Aggregate results for questionnaire Question 7, 2021.](image)

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recognize this gap. These insights underscore the necessity for museums to engage with difficult histories, presenting them ethically and as unbiased as possible.

The collaborators allowed for respondents to express their desire for aspects to be included in the exhibit, and these results (Figure 5.5) were directly incorporated in the interactive touchscreen, the exhibit narrative, and in the objects selected for display.

Another theme that emerged was the desire to celebrate, preserve, and personalize Chinese heritage. The community’s call to celebrate and preserve historic Chinese contributions resonates with Elizabeth Crooke’s discussions on the multi-layered and politically charged nature of "community." Crooke highlights the importance of recognizing community complexities and their interactions within broader societal contexts (2016). This perspective emphasizes the significance of acknowledging historic contributions within the cultural and socio-political landscape of Boise. The question 6 responses were coded into themes of "preserve," "celebrate," and "create," highlighting a
multifaceted approach to heritage representation. Question 6 (Figure 5.6) included direct calls for more holistic teaching of Boise’s history in elementary schools and the creation of museum exhibits, as illustrated by the following response from Participant 13:

Boise has a rich cultural history that includes many ethnicities. Sadly, many of those stories are poorly represented in city museums, art institutions and the educational system. These cultures had just as an important impact on the growth and development of this vibrant city. When our kids open their textbooks or when we read about local history, it seems to always start with a brief mention of the local indigenous tribes and then, poof, Boise emerges as a shining example of colonial progress. However, many, many hands helped build this beautiful city and I hope someday, that that will be reflected in the story.

This response, in conjunction with the other responses to this question, affirmed the need for and importance of this project.

![Figure 5.6: Aggregate results for questionnaire Question 6, 2021.](image)

Additionally, the respondents expressed a need for more personalized Chinese narratives within the exhibit, which heightened the collaborators’ realization that humanizing the miners and presenting their unique stories from history was essential.
This also resonated with the community’s desire for personalized and nuanced narratives that reflect the lived experiences of Chinese immigrants in Boise.

The last theme from the open-ended questionnaire responses was an emphasis on the role of museums amidst social and political challenges. The community expressed concerns about rising Anti-Asian sentiment, the need for increased awareness of diverse histories, and the role museums play in combating ignorance. Participants emphasized the importance of museums in acknowledging and challenging stereotypes, and contributing to broader societal conversations. This theme provides insights into the evolving expectations and responsibilities of cultural institutions during challenging times.

The respondents’ discontent with Boise's oversimplified portrayal of Chinese immigrant mining history (Figure 5.7) in museums resonates with the concepts highlighted by Sharon MacDonald regarding “difficult heritages.” The majority of

![Figure 5.7: Aggregate results for questionnaire Question 5, 2021.](image)
respondents felt that representation was either downright poor or below adequate. Here, MacDonald’s stance becomes important, as she emphasizes the importance of museums critically engaging with difficult narratives, fostering deeper reflections, and providing accurate and multifaceted representations, directly influencing the exhibit's aim to break away from oversimplified historical narratives. MacDonald’s work emphasizes the challenges museums face when presenting contentious histories that often cause discomfort but are vital for understanding complex and contested narratives (MacDonald 2009). Oversimplification overlooks crucial aspects of Chinese experiences, including their societal contributions, cultural richness, challenges faced, and their enduring impact on the region.

This representation contrasts with complex realities; Chinese immigrant miners were not mere laborers but individuals with intricate stories, diverse backgrounds, and multifaceted roles in shaping the region's history. The Chinese were victims of systematic racism upon their arrival to the U.S. and even more so once the Exclusion Act of 1882 was enacted and renewed as the Geary Act until 1943. This Act worked as a motivating factor for non-Chinese, predominantly whites to feel protected to commit hate crimes against the Chinese. This history of systematic racism against the Chinese is a ‘difficult heritage’ and if museums fail to capture these complexities, it results in a portrayal that flattens their history and disregards their significance.

Simultaneously, the pandemic has underscored the pressing need for museums to challenge and confront societal stereotypes (Figure 5.8). Two of the three participants who addressed the “fear of anti-Asian sentiment” also brought up the need for
communities to expand their knowledge of more diverse communities. Breaking stereotypes is not merely about addressing misconceptions; it's a fundamental step in fostering cultural understanding and dismantling biases deeply entrenched within society. The themes gleaned from the community questionnaire reinforce the importance of museums as platforms for dispelling stereotypes. By doing so, museums become catalysts for reshaping societal perceptions, actively contributing to a more empathetic and informed society. The following quote from Participant 7 addresses not only the rise in anti-Asian sentiment, but also the lack of acknowledging diverse cultures across the U.S.:

In light of anti-Asian sentiment during the pandemic and the death of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black Americans, it is clear that racism is more alive and stronger than ever today. Crucially, to ignore or overlook the histories of an immigrant community and the racist policies that drove them out is to be on the wrong side of history, and furthermore perpetuate the idea that ignorance is acceptable. Chinese Americans have been long overdue a space and recognition of their unique contribution to
the American West, so that others can learn from the past and continue the fight toward true racial equality.

These calls for racial equality are becoming more prevalent in the field of museums. Museums, like all other cultural and public-serving institutions, are in a time of reckoning and are attempting to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in their exhibits and programming so more cultures, communities, and individuals can be being accurately represented in public spaces (Kreps 2020; MacDonald 2009; Potter and Leone 1992).

The responses gathered from the community questionnaire united into three distinctive themes, each offering nuanced insights into the community's perspectives on Chinese histories, heritage representation, and the evolving role of museums. These themes collectively form a rich tapestry of community expectations, providing valuable insights for cultural institutions and anthropologists alike. The community’s call for accurate representation of Chinese immigrant mining history, resonating with John Kuo Wei Tchen's work (1992), underscores the importance of collaborative narratives in museums. This demand emphasizes the need for a more holistic portrayal of history, fostering inclusivity and reflecting society’s diverse tapestry. Providing more accurate representation not only enriches historical understanding but also promotes inclusivity, fostering a sense of belonging within the community. It underscores the importance of representing marginalized narratives, making museums more reflective of society’s diversity. By doing so, museums become catalysts for reshaping societal perceptions, actively contributing to a more empathetic and informed society.
Collaboration

The collaborative development of “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology (IMMG) highlighted the complex nature of museum representation and collaboration. Throughout this process, the collaborators navigated relationships and evolving dynamics that significantly shaped the exhibit’s direction and impact.

The team was able to collaborate to share information with the public that was not previously accessible because these institutions had not worked together before. Because each institution was unique, had a distinctive mission, and held different knowledge and expertise, all parties were able to mutually benefit without impeding each other’s goals. The collaborators knew this exhibit would include the sharing of resources, knowledge, and exhibit objects between a community of origin and a museum in “a multivalent political, economic, social and cultural process” (Shannon 2015, 3). We acknowledged that together, we could implement “strategies for creating spaces in which local knowledges are reclaimed, resuscitated, transformed and produced, spaces in which local narratives are articulated primarily for local communities, but at times also for global audiences” (Shannon 2015, 7).

A crucial aspect of the process involved the observation and analysis of the evolving relationships among collaborators. My primary source of information for this analysis were the notes I took during and after meetings with collaborators. These notes provided valuable insights into the dynamics of the collaborative process, particularly the gradual development of a more amicable atmosphere among team members. The notes
also acted as a crucial link between the collaborative experiences and the insights gained from individual semi-structured interviews.

One noteworthy observation was the evident improvement in the collaborators’ demeanor over the course of the meetings. Initial meetings among collaborators aided in establishing reciprocal, slow-growing relationships in which we were able to identify each collaborating institution’s abilities and willingness to participate (OncuI 2013). I discerned a positive shift through observations of the collaborators’ tones, demeanor, and overall interactions, revealing a growing sense of friendliness and familiarity. The evolution of these interpersonal dynamics proved to be a pivotal factor in facilitating effective problem-solving and decision-making throughout the project.

This newfound comfort empowered collaborators to express their thoughts more freely when addressing project-related issues. This shift had a tangible impact on the nature of our discussions, fostering a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives were acknowledged and respected. The result was a series of productive conversations that propelled the project forward, ensuring a steady progression toward our shared goals. Specifically, conversations regarding the selection and display of objects, the accurate representation of the Chinese mining community, strategies to gauge community interest in the exhibit, tentative exhibit opening coordination, and post-exhibit educational outreach all developed in this collaborative atmosphere. The rest of the section will delve into each of these intricacies.

The collaborators emulated Golding and Modest’s methods by promoting the understanding of cultural diversity and attempting to form a “contemporary connection
with the lived experiences of present-day audiences” (2013, 14). By doing so, the collaborators sought “to progress critical thinking and point to collaborative action that we can take as responsible communities on matters of contemporary concern” (Golding and Modest 2013, 14). The collaborators aimed to transform the exhibit into a dynamic space that celebrates cultural diversity, promotes critical thinking, and inspires collective action. The IMMG was attempting to become a catalyst for social engagement and responsible community involvement, where visitors are encouraged to explore, question, and act on matters of contemporary concern. Likewise, we were able to “raise awareness and promote discussion within contemporary contexts” by providing the public with continued educational programming (Potter and Leone 1992, 478). The IMMG has since created accessible, interactive, and inclusive opportunities for community engagement that have received much positive public feedback.

We recognized this exhibit had the potential to bring to light historical inequalities of power and responsibility regarding the preservation of Chinese history in the Boise area. We also knew that creating an exhibit on this topic would make the collaborators and especially the IMMG vulnerable to critique from the public. In order to help mitigate possible negative feedback, we approached the project with self-awareness and self-critique (Ames 1992; Butler 2008; Kreps 2020; McCarthy 2015; Phillips 2011; Shannon 2015).

The personal significance attributed to the exhibit emerged as a common point. Whether articulated through community perspectives or internal insights, the shared belief in the exhibit’s potential to educate, diversify visitor demographics, and address
contemporary racial issues reflected a unified consensus across both community and internal collaborators. Additionally, the dynamics of collaboration resonated similarly in both sources, emphasizing the value of diverse perspectives, expertise, and the challenges encountered in fostering multivocality within the collaborative process.

Collaborative projects—especially remote projects—often take more time because of extra meetings, a myriad of opinions, and multiple methods. Because work on the project started prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, our group was already adjusted to collaborating remotely because we were geographically separated. As I previously noted, prior to the exhibit opening, some collaborators had not yet visited the IMMG, but all of us recognized that this project would need to be completed predominantly remotely because of geographical differences. Thus, our methods reflected that need from the beginning, which made the adjustment smoother when the pandemic occurred. That said, although we were already anticipating remote work, we could not anticipate everything that a long-distance, collaborative project would entail. The collaborators adapted to innovative ideas, were flexible in meeting modes and schedules, and were able to put together an effective exhibit of which each collaborator could be proud. These consistent themes underscored the shared experiences, challenges, and priorities that informed the collaborative journey, highlighting the intersectionality between community perspectives and internal dynamics within the exhibit development process.

The collaborators unknowingly followed Raymond Silverman’s (2015) idea of “slow museology,” a museum framework that represents a deliberate shift away from the fast-paced, consumer-driven nature of contemporary culture. It encourages a more
contemplative and mindful approach to museum practices. This involved taking the time to engage deeply with cultural materials and prioritizing quality over quantity. Additionally, the pandemic forced us to think more creatively to identify additional safety and inclusion accommodations for the exhibit.

The absence of direct input from the Chinese community could have potentially resulted in a skewed or incomplete portrayal, failing to convey the richness of Chinese experiences and perspectives. This gap in representation may have risked perpetuating historical silences and reinforcing stereotypes, hindering the exhibit's ability to authentically reflect the multifaceted nature of the Chinese immigrant experience during the Gold Rush era.

The convergence between community questionnaires and semi-structured interviews revealed a tapestry of consistent themes resonating through both sources. The collaborators’ reliance on targeted questionnaires to interested organizations served as a proactive response, but it also prompted considerations for how to broaden and deepen community involvement in future museum projects, ensuring that historical narratives are inclusive, nuanced, and reflective of the diverse experiences.

**Exhibit Content and Design**

In shaping the exhibit’s narrative, selection of artifacts, textual inclusions, and interactive elements, the collaborators were deeply influenced by community practices, the complexities of difficult heritages, and the context of industrial heritage. Community engagement and participatory practices were integral in guiding the exhibit’s design.
Extensive archival research and document analysis influenced the collaborators’ approach. Delving into the local history of Boise mining and the broader history of industrial museums enabled a multifaceted understanding of the pivotal roles Chinese immigrants played in the American West. This investigative process, rooted in document analysis (Bowen 2009; Corbin and Strauss 2008; O’Leary 2010; Rapley 2007), involved an extensive examination of Boise area newspapers and academic sources. The selection and contextualization of objects from the Asian American Comparative Collection (AACC) and Payette National Forest (PNF) collections also became instrumental in conveying the multifaceted nature of the Chinese immigrant miner community (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). Some collaborators noticed that while researching, it was difficult to track individual miners through their entire time in Idaho because of lacking documentation. For example, in Boise census data, the names of miners are often spelled slightly differently each decade. This is probably because of how each census-taker heard and phonetically printed each Chinese name. I also noticed contradictory ages on the census data. Perhaps this occurred because some of the immigrants came to the U.S. without documentation and simply guessed at how old they were.

In utilizing the archival research and document analysis, the industrial heritage context of Boise's mining history influenced our selection of artifacts and narratives (Appendix H and I). We chose objects representing mining knowledge, daily life comforts, and ceremonial traditions as a way of offering a multifocal view of the Chinese immigrant miners beyond their professional identities. The collaborators made sure to select objects that Chinese miners used but that were also recognizable and used by
diverse cultures, which we hoped would make them seem more familiar and understandable to museum visitors. Some of the chosen objects included aqua medicine vials that held traditional Chinese remedies, a gunpowder can with a bullet hole, a bamboo patterned rice bowl, and a gold scale (see Appendices D and E for full list). These objects, we determined, would evoke individual and collective memories. In doing so, the collaborators were able to contextualize the nuances of the community in which we hoped to highlight (Phillips 2003). This broader framework underscored the cultural, economic, and social significance of the mining industry in shaping Idaho’s history.

A key aspect was the deliberate inclusion of contentious artifacts, such as an opium can and opium pipe fragments. These items, while historically sensitive, served a crucial role in presenting a comprehensive depiction of the Chinese immigrant experience, challenging stereotypes, and prompting critical reflection on nuanced historical narratives (Golding and Modest 2013). As explained previously, the collaborators wanted to highlight that Chinese opium use was both recreational and community-centric—a way of continuing to practice traditional Chinese customs in their new American environment. By incorporating these contentious artifacts, the collaborators sought to disrupt preconceived notions, encouraging visitors to engage with the multifaceted dimensions of the Chinese mining community's history and fostering a more informed and empathetic understanding with the museum visitor. This deliberate strategy aimed to challenge stereotypes head-on, contributing to a more authentic and inclusive representation of the community's cultural practices and challenges.
In our deliberations on object selection for display, we conscientiously decided to include text addressing the Chinese Exclusion Act and its profound impacts on the Chinese community. Recognizing the significance of this historical legislation, we aimed to shed light on the challenges faced by the Chinese community and emphasize the enduring repercussions of the exclusionary policies. Incorporating this narrative into the exhibit speaks to the complexities of selecting objects for display, transforming the process into a reflection on difficult heritage. By acknowledging the difficult history shaped by the Chinese Exclusion Act, we aimed to provide a more comprehensive and empathetic understanding of the individual and collective experiences within the Chinese immigrant mining community. This decision underscores our commitment to presenting a nuanced and truthful portrayal of the community's history, navigating the challenges inherent in dealing with such sensitive subjects.

The collaborators recognized that culture is ever-changing and shaped by outside pressures, including historical, social, and political influences. Although many Chinese immigrants successfully made a living in the mining profession in Boise, they also were subjected to racist and discriminatory acts for being Chinese. As explored earlier, the U.S. outlawed certain professions held by the Chinese from entering the country and prohibited them from acquiring mining claims with as equal ease as whites and other immigrants. We attempted to convey this hardship, such as in the following narrative text from the exhibit: “Persistence, diligence, knowledge-sharing. Cooperation and networking allowed for the transfer of knowledge to help survive in a new, challenging,

Another example of the narrative text we created is as follows. This text was associated with a medicine vial on display: “Deer antler extract is a Chinese remedy for back pain. Miners would have valued this medicine after a long day. According to reports, non-Chinese Idahoans valued Chinese remedies too. Even today, Chinese deer antler extract can still be purchased” (Yu 2020). This narrative demonstrates our attempt to provide context to the artifacts that extended beyond the mining industry but still included important mining context. This text aligned with the goals of the IMMG, whose focus is on mining content, but also contextualized the artifacts in a deeper way.

Integrating an interactive touchscreen (Appendix F and G), the brochure (Appendix J), and online content into the exhibit marked a shift toward more engaging and accessible storytelling. This approach aimed to bridge the gap between physical and digital experiences, catering to diverse visitor preferences. By incorporating these additional, optional resources, collaborators worked within the physical confines of the exhibit space without overwhelming the guests with too much content. Moreover, efforts to translate exhibit components into Chinese and offer online resources acknowledged the varied linguistic and digital needs of the audience. The collaborators wanted to ensure that people who speak Mandarin Chinese—even those beyond Boise’s current, small Chinese demographic—would be able to see a portion of their history online for free, even if they are not able to visit the IMMG in person.
A Reflection on Critical, Reflexive Museology

The collaborators strategically employed critical, reflexive museology to situate the exhibit at the IMMG within Boise’s sociopolitical context, addressing potential issues of representing a cultural group outside their own. These approaches demonstrated a commitment to inclusive representation, especially for the historically marginalized and underrepresented Chinese community. Critical, reflexive museology is the process of continual self-examination throughout the exhibit creation process. This enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of how museum exhibitions have historically been constructed and question whether previously used methods and theoretical approaches are still relevant. This framework was integral to every aspect of the exhibit making process.

The collaborators first attempted to identify where the Chinese immigrant community was situated within Boise’s society as well as the current public educational programming occurring in the Boise area. Next, as we entered the planning and development phases of the exhibit, we considered the social, political, historical, and cultural contexts of our project and the museum at large. For example, Chinese immigrant mining history has largely been forgotten in Boise, and because few Chinese miners married and had children here, few descendants of these miners live in the Boise area today. By implementing critical, reflexive museology, the collaborators sought insight on the history of the Chinese community in Boise that we could go on to share with the public. Additionally, we solicited, considered, and included community voices and opinions through the community questionnaire, and the collaborators were
consistently aware of the dynamics within and among the different institutions that came together for this project (Ames 1992; Hein 1998; MacDonald 2011; Marstine 2008).
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

As I participated in the creation of the “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” exhibit at IMMG, I investigated the process of cross-institutional collaboration through the lens of critical, reflexive museology. In addition to the collaborative aspects of this project, my research also focused on addressing a “difficult heritage” through creating a humanities-based exhibit in an industrial science museum. In this project, I attempted to balance theoretical concepts and practical museum methods to create a museum exhibit. The different institutions involved with the creation of the exhibit practiced collaborative museology (Clifford 1997; Pratt 1991; Silverman 2015), which allowed me to reflect on the relationships between museums and communities (Cameron 1972; Lavine and Karp 1991; Potter and Leone 1992; Tchen 1992) while applying critical, reflexive museology (Ames 1992; Bouquet 2012; Brown and Peers 2003; Butler 2015; Kreps 2020; Marstine 2008; Oncuilm 2013; Shelton 2013).

The most significant component of critical, reflexive museology I identified and explored in my research was the sharing of collectively produced knowledge. To accomplish this, the collaborators solicited opinions and feedback from members of the public who were interested in the topic at hand. As such, we could more responsibly address a “difficult heritage” that has been historically oppressed by stereotypes and marginalization. The collaborators worked together for over two years on a project that
involved long-distance relationship building, addressing varying concerns about different aspects of the exhibit process, and reflecting on the importance of utilizing each collaborators’ expertise to create a dynamic exhibit.

The pursuit of humanizing industrial museums and navigating 'difficult heritages' has wider implications for the field of museology. The challenges faced, particularly those arising from the unprecedented global event of the COVID-19 pandemic, underscore the adaptability and resilience demanded of museum professionals. The shift to remote collaboration, while presenting challenges, has prompted a reevaluation of traditional practices, urging the field to explore innovative strategies for collaboration in virtual spaces. This shift marks not just a temporary adjustment but as a catalyst for a broader conversation on the future of collaborative museum practices. The nuanced approach to representation and the complexities of engaging with 'difficult heritages' provide valuable lessons for the field by guiding the way for museums to evolve into more inclusive, reflective, and ethically grounded institutions. It challenges the established norms of museum operations, urging a redefinition of their role as active contributors to societal discourse and understanding. The encountered limitations offer not just insights but fuel for ongoing discussions, prompting the field to continuously refine methodologies, foster collaboration, and champion authentic representation. This collaborative project's outcomes resonate as a meaningful contribution to the evolving discourse within museology, pushing museums to become not just repositories of history but dynamic spaces that actively engage with the complexities of human experiences and foster connections across diverse communities.

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The following sections of this chapter delve into the exhibit’s installation, exhibit public opening, and continued educational programming beyond the opening. Additionally, I provide my thoughts on humanizing industrial museums and addressing “difficult heritages” through the lens of critical museology and collaboration. The chapter concludes with commentary on my research’s limitations and reflections for future museum management.

**Exhibit Installation**

In March 2021, Morgan Zedalis of the Payette National Forest and Renae Campbell of the Asian American Comparative Collection brought exhibit objects to the IMMG, where they were placed in the display case as a first attempt at artifact organization. By May 2021, the collaborators decided on the final design of the exhibit (Figure 6.1) and the touchscreen (Figure 6.2). Figure 6.1 shows the final exhibit image of “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” at the IMMG, complete with the artifacts, interactive touchscreen, and narratives chosen by the collaborators. Additionally, we added an online component of the exhibit to the IMMG website (https://www.idahomuseum.org), which included artifacts that were too large for the display case, additional Chinese translations of English narrative text, and the interactive touchscreen content.
Figure 6.1: Final exhibit of “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” at the IMMG, Jordan Bennett, 2021.
Exhibit Opening and Continued Educational Programming

To date, the collaborators have been able to share Chinese heritage with the public in the Boise area through two exhibit openings, three educational programs, and several online articles. Positive feedback from these events has also encouraged more presentations on Chinese history by the collaborators and others knowledgeable on the topic. Each of the programs are mentioned below.

The exhibit had its first private opening in June 2021. All collaborators and donors were invited to the space for an intimate private viewing. Additionally, Andy Louie, descendant of a Chinese immigrant miner, and three generations of his family attended. Because Andy is one of only a few remaining descendants in the area, it was a
priority for the team, especially Dr. Yu, to complete the exhibit while Andy was still able to visit in person. The collaborators served traditional Chinese treats and herbal tea. Although this was not the opening we originally planned, the exhibit was officially complete and finally open to the public. This inaugural gathering underscored the exhibit's impact not just as a display of historical artifacts but as a living testament to the resilience, diversity, and living heritage of the Chinese mining community in the Boise area.

To promote continued interest in this topic, the collaborators recognized they needed to create additional opportunities for the public to learn more about the historic Chinese mining community. This idea was reinforced by the responses from the community questionnaire, which also asked for more educational programming.

Following the first viewing of the new exhibit, Dr. Priscilla Wegars, author of several historical books on the Chinese experience during the American Gold Rush, gave a live lecture at the Idaho State Museum in July 2021. She spoke about Polly Bemus, a Chinese immigrant supporter of the Idaho mining industry. Although Wegars was not directly involved in our exhibit, she was aware of our efforts and informed the collaborators of her event so we could cross-advertise it to communities we engaged with during the exhibit installation. Wegars’ work, in conjunction with the collaborator’s efforts at the IMMG, were filling a gap in the historical narrative that has dominated by white communities.

Shortly after, in October of 2021, project collaborator Renae Campbell gave a Zoom lecture titled, “Uncovering the Legacy of Idaho’s Chinese Pioneers: The Historical
Archaeology of Boise Basin Mining Communities.” Her lecture provided the public with a well-researched, informative, and engaging story told through archaeological fieldwork and research backed up by primary and peer-reviewed sources. The presentation served as an extension of the collaborative project's mission to offer diverse and nuanced perspectives on the historical contributions and challenges faced by the Chinese mining community. The collaborators, by promoting and supporting Campbell's lecture, further reinforced their commitment to fostering continued programming that enhances public awareness and engagement with historically marginalized narratives.

Additionally, the Boise State Public Radio hosted Terry Panhorst, Vice President of the IMMG, Dr. Pei-Lin Yu, and two others in August of 2022 to discuss and celebrate Idaho’s Chinese gold miners and discuss the experiences of Chinese people in Idaho past and present. The full version of the interview was presented on “Idaho Matters,” a program on Boise State Public Radio, shortly after. By engaging in a public discourse on a widely accessible platform like Boise State Public Radio, the collaborators not only celebrated the historical contributions of Idaho's Chinese gold miners but also facilitated a nuanced conversation about the broader experiences of the Chinese community in Idaho, both in the past and the present.

By the summer of 2022, the collaborators officially felt comfortable planning a large-scale public exhibit opening. In order to ensure everyone’s safety, the IMMG decided to host the event outside of the IMMG on the grounds surrounding the museum and the Old Penn next door with outside activities including various speakers, a gift shop,
and food offerings; and the only indoor aspect of the opening would be the actual viewing of the new exhibit.

The official public opening for the exhibit occurred on September 18, 2022, and was the culmination of a multi-year collaborative endeavor, created during a nationwide pandemic, to share historic Chinese mining experiences and expertise with the public. Most collaborators were able to attend except for Renae Campbell and I.

Since I was not in attendance, I heard firsthand accounts of the opening from Dr. Nicole Herzog, Dr. Pei-Lin Yu, and additional information from the IMMG mailing newsletter that was sent shortly after the opening. The IMMG hoped for a turnout of 90 people, and to the collaborators’ delight, 120 people attended the event with eager interest. The opening consisted of an impressive list of speakers, food provided by local community members and the IMMG, and a specially curated gift shop of custom t-shirts designed by Dr. Yu and several books about Chinese heritage including *Chinaman’s Chance* by Liping Zhu, *Polly Bemis: The Life and Time of a Chinese American Pioneer* by Priscilla Wegars, and *Chinatown: Boise, Idaho, 1870-1970* by Arthur Hart. The IMMG documented a 300% increase in gift shop sales on the day of the opening compared to a normal visitation day, including the sales of 27 custom exhibit t-shirts. These sales, in conjunction with the public turnout and interest have only solidified how important this exhibit really is.

With the guests seated under pop-up tents in the grass facing a podium for speakers, the official opening commenced. The Mayor of Boise, Lauren McLean, began the event by thanking all those who helped make the exhibit possible. Then Steve Cox,
President at the IMMG, spoke as the MC for the event and presented small medals of appreciation to key participants who helped make the exhibit possible. Morgan Zedalis, of the Payette National Forest (PNF) and a collaborator on the project, spoke about the PNF’s Chinese mining heritage program and how she was honored to assist with the advancement of sharing Chinese heritage in the Boise area. Then Boise police chief Ryan Lee spoke and moved the crowd to tears speaking about how his ancestors had ambitions to move to the U.S. but were prevented from doing so because of the Exclusion Act. Additional speakers included Dana Thorpe Patterson of the Osher Institute; Yong Gao, President of the Idaho Chinese Organization (ICO); and Dr. Nicole Herzog, collaborator from the University of Denver. Additional notable members who attended the opening but did not speak in an official capacity were Ted Ni, the Asian American Liaison Officer; Andy Louie and his family; Sam Hui, distant cousin to the Louie family; and various members of the Idaho Chinese Association (ICA).

After the event, Dr. Yu emailed all collaborators (Figure 6.3) congratulating us on the success of the exhibit and the opening. She said,

This a major step for the Chinese Idaho community to keep building connections with the pioneering spirit of the gold miner ancestors. The happiness and curiosity on the faces of visitors as they took in the exhibit, grabbed a book or T-shirt, munched delish almond cookies, learned new things, and enjoyed each other’s company, was one of a kind. Thank you all for helping to make this happen. For those who could not make it, we were with you in spirit!! (Yu 2022)

Yu’s email and the public’s continued interest affirms the importance of this exhibit– and the importance of collaboration through a critical and reflective museological lens. In conjunction with the related continued-educational programming, the exhibit has enjoyed
increased publicity via articles and news stories. These include “Daughter of Taiwan
Connects People of Different Eras and Backgrounds with Archaeology” (2022),
published by the Overseas Community Affairs Council in Taiwan; “This Gold Mining
Exhibit Helps to ‘Unerase’ Idaho’s Chinese history” (2023) on Boise State Public Radio;
and “Chinese Pioneers of the Boise Basin” (2023) on Intermountain Histories.

Humanizing Industrial Museums and “Difficult Heritages”

Humanizing industrial museums involves a paradigm shift toward making historical
narratives more relatable, inclusive, and emotionally resonant for visitors (Atkinson
This entails moving beyond mere artifact display to convey the lived experiences, stories, and multifaceted identities of communities associated with industrial histories. Likewise, addressing “difficult heritages” involves confronting histories marked by trauma, conflict, and/or injustice, acknowledging and engaging with the discomforting or controversial aspects of these narratives. Both themes of humanizing industrial museums and “difficult heritages” are deeply intertwined with critical, reflexive museology, a lens through which museums critically examine their practices, biases, and power dynamics, aiming for inclusivity, representation, and ethical storytelling.

Furthermore, these themes intersect profoundly with the dynamics of museum collaboration, where diverse stakeholders navigate complexities, engage in dialogue, and work collectively to shape exhibits that authentically represent complex histories and challenge conventional museum practices (Atkinson 2016; Edwards 1996; Keld and Juul 2016; MacDonald 2009; Müller 2013; Oakley 2018; Watson 2018). Both aspects of humanizing industrial museum and addressing “difficult heritages” require collaborators to continually question who has the right to speak for others in the realm of museums. The next section explores the interplay among these themes, emphasizing their roles in shaping the present and future of museology.

I also examined my own positionality while investigating critical, reflexive museology and collaborative methods. In doing do, I was able to situate my learned experiences from prior to the start of this exhibit by incorporating learned methods on census data collection at Ohio University. Additionally, as I was the Curator at the
National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum (NMHFM) when the IMMG exhibit officially opened, I was able to utilize what I learned from the IMMG to apply to my professional career. Not only have I been able to incorporate more personal stories into exhibits at the NMHFM, but I also learned the value of visitor data collection through the utilization of anonymous visitor evaluations in exhibits at the NMFHM. These evaluations have allowed for the collection of unbiased responses to better understand what visitors are hoping to learn when at the museum.

In regard to collaboration, I have been able to use aspects of this theoretical concept beyond the IMMG as well. This includes gaining a more full understanding of what it takes to work with community members being represented in the museum sector. This became especially prevalent when I was creating “Pioneering the Field: Women in Mining” that opened in May 2022.

**Critical, Reflexive Museology**

Historically, industrial museums have focused on the technological advancements, economic progress, and industrial triumphs of human stories. The struggles and societal impacts of the often-underrepresented workers associated with these developments are not often the main subjects of these exhibits.

The theme of "celebrate, preserve, and personalize Chinese heritage," as identified in the community questionnaire, played a crucial role in shaping the overall exhibit. The acknowledgment of Chinese immigrant history as marginalized and omitted from the dominant historical narrative was a foundational aspect of my research.
The reflexive approach adopted during the research process, driven by the desire to incorporate community opinions into the exhibit, had a profound impact on the observed themes. The community's call to celebrate Chinese culture, activities, holidays, and contributions aligned with the theme of "celebrate". The expressed desire for museums and educational exhibits to actively acknowledge and celebrate the richness of Chinese heritage became rooted in the community's desire for positive representation and intertwined with the broader goals of the project.

Furthermore, the theme of "preserve" emerged not only as a call to remember Chinese businesses and acknowledge the poor representation of Chinese history but also as a plea for a more comprehensive teaching of Boise's history in schools. The collaborators recognized the importance of preserving cultural heritage through education, emphasizing the need for a more holistic narrative that encompasses the contributions of various ethnicities, including the Chinese community. This exhibit aided in this act of preserving the often-forgotten Chinese mining community in Boise.

The desire to "personalize Chinese heritage" found resonance in the collaborative efforts to humanize the narratives within the exhibit. The emphasis on sharing personal stories, as highlighted in responses to open-ended questions, was a direct reflection of the community's wish to see individual experiences and societal contributions presented. This theme significantly shaped the outcomes of the project, as evidenced by the inclusion of interactive touchscreens featuring personal stories and experiences of Chinese miners.

The collaborative approach, driven by the community's call to celebrate, preserve, and personalize Chinese heritage, became a guiding principle throughout the research and
exhibition development. The exhibit's success was intricately linked to the authenticity achieved by incorporating community voices, questioning biases, and striving for accurate representation. This collaborative, reflexive methodology not only informed the themes but also acted as a powerful tool for challenging dominant historical narratives and fostering a more inclusive and equitable museum practice.

Viewed through Macdonald's concept of "difficult heritage," the exhibit emerges as a potent instrument for challenging prevailing stereotypes and correcting historical misrepresentations (2009). The examination of the 1882 Exclusion Act within the exhibit, and its parallels with the mistreatment of other cultures arriving in America, serves to underscore the systemic discrimination faced by the Chinese community. Notably, the forced implementation of identification cards within the exhibit draws attention to discriminatory practices that have historically targeted minority ethnic and cultural groups in the U.S., contributing significantly to the broader dialogue on the challenges inherent in preserving a difficult heritage.

Acknowledging the difficult heritage of mining museums goes beyond addressing the erasure of histories and narratives of certain groups or communities. It extends the narrative to encompass the challenging aspects of labor disputes and environmental impacts, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted difficulties faced by marginalized communities throughout history. This expansion enriches the exhibit's content, providing visitors with a nuanced perspective on the complex issues associated with mining museums' dark heritage. The inclusion of these elements not only enhances
the educational value of the exhibit but also actively contributes to rectifying historical injustices and fostering a more inclusive representation of history.

Ultimately, this exhibit offers a unique opportunity to explore the complexities of industrial heritage, challenging preconceptions and fostering a more inclusive narrative that encompasses the diverse experiences of blue-collar workers and immigrant communities. Industrial museums can humanize their narratives including the lived experiences of individuals affected by industrialization. This involves recognizing and reconciling the “difficult heritages” embedded within industrial landscapes in particular, such as labor exploitation, societal inequalities, environmental degradation, and the displacement of communities. Addressing these topics within industrial museums requires a comprehensive understanding of the societal impacts of industrialization. It involves acknowledging the complexities, controversies, and ethical considerations surrounding these legacies.

This exhibit stands as a testament to the IMMG’s commitment to delving into the complexities of industrial heritage, actively challenging preconceptions, and weaving a more inclusive narrative that embraces the diverse experiences of both blue-collar workers and immigrant communities. Unlike traditional industrial museums, IMMG takes a proactive approach by humanizing its narrative, offering a window into the lived experiences of individuals profoundly affected by industrialization. Notably, this goes beyond the examination of historical complexities; it involves a sincere recognition and reconciliation of the difficult heritages entwined within industrial landscapes, such as
labor exploitation, societal inequalities, environmental degradation, and community displacement.

The positive responses generated by IMMG's engagement with the community reflect a shared commitment to addressing these challenging aspects of industrial history. This commitment is further underscored by remarks from community leaders, including the Boise Mayor and police chief, who acknowledged the importance of recognizing and learning from these historical complexities. IMMG's approach not only educates visitors about the intricate societal impacts of industrialization but also actively contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the ethical considerations and controversies inherent in these legacies. By fostering such engagement and positive responses, IMMG exemplifies the moral agency of museums in navigating difficult histories and shaping a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of our shared heritage.

Through this lens, industrial museums can engage in a process of democratizing narratives, inviting diverse voices, including those of workers, immigrants, and marginalized communities, into the discourse. It involves collaborating with communities to co-curate exhibitions, share personal stories, and incorporate their perspectives into the museum's interpretation of industrial history.

In summary, this method enables industrial museums to evolve into spaces that not only preserve material culture but also serve as platforms for critical engagement, reflection, and dialogue about complex industrial histories.
**Collaboration**

Through robust cross-institutional collaborations, museums can transcend conventional narratives centered on industrial triumphs and technological advancements, expanding their focus to encompass the intricate tapestry of human experiences intricately woven into the fabric of industrialization. Within the realm of industrial museums, collaboration emerges as a potent catalyst, propelling the integration of diverse perspectives and narratives. This collaborative ethos goes beyond the conventional boundaries of museum practices.

Pei-Lin Yu's extensive connections with Asian and Chinese groups exemplify the collaborative spirit, providing invaluable insights and connections that enrich the exhibit's cultural depth. The IMMG played a pivotal role by not only providing the physical space for the exhibit but also contributing essential funding, highlighting the significance of institutional support. Renae Campbell's expertise in Chinese mining, coupled with the inclusion of objects from the AACC, brings an authoritative and authentic dimension to the narrative. Morgan Zedalis from the PNF contributed objects, further diversifying the exhibit's tangible elements. Gayle Dixon's commitment to ensuring accuracy aligned seamlessly with the collaborative character, emphasizing the importance of authenticity in portraying historical narratives. Additionally, my anthropological perspective adds a layer of depth, fostering a nuanced understanding of the societal and cultural dynamics at play in investigating the exhibit creation process.

This collaborative model, informed by scholarship (Colwell and Ferguson 2008; Cooke, Alba, and Frieze 2014; Crooke 2016; Lynch 2011a; Nicks 2003; Phillips 2003),
exemplifies how engagement with communities, workers, historians, and anthropologists results in co-created exhibitions that delve into the complex societal impacts of industrialization. Together, these collaborations shape a more holistic and authentic representation of history, demonstrating the power of collective efforts in museum practices.

In essence, this collaborative exhibit not only addresses the “difficult heritage” associated with Chinese immigrant miners but also becomes a microcosm reflecting broader themes in American history. By unraveling the intricacies of industrial heritage and its intersections with discrimination, migration, and societal changes, the exhibit contributes significantly to the ongoing discourse on difficult heritage and the diverse narratives that shape the American experience.

The collaborators attempted to provide avenues for inclusivity, egalitarianism, and knowledge-sharing when working together and with the public. We emphasized the importance of collaborating when gauging progress, determining what could be improved, and working together in a mutually beneficial way. The collaborators developed a network of institutions concerned with educating the public, through exhibits, programming, and dedications, to share the important Chinese story in Boise. The continued educational programming set to support the exhibit or cross-promoted by the collaborators has fueled further community and industry interest in this important topic.
Limitations

This collaborative exhibit encountered inevitable challenges that significantly influenced its trajectory and challenged us to work dynamically. As the project unfolded, including my research and the progress of the exhibit, both aspects confronted various limitations, demanding innovative solutions and adaptability. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced logistical constraints that disrupted planned timelines and compelled a rapid adaptation to permanent remote work. These unprecedented circumstances not only produced substantial delays in exhibit development but also transformed collaborative dynamics. Limitations imposed by remote collaboration were accompanied by additional challenges arising from the diverse backgrounds of the collaborators, intricacies in accurately representing a cultural group beyond immediate familiarity, navigating resource constraints, and encountering obstacles in community engagement. Each of these limitations demanded strategic maneuvering, innovative problem-solving, and persistent efforts to mitigate their impact on the project's progression and outcomes.

It is difficult to say if in-person conversations would have resulted in different outcomes for the exhibit, but it might have allowed each institution involved to better understand where they stood in regard to their positions of power (Lynch 2011b). To combat this, the group unknowingly followed Oncuil’s idea of “engagement zones,” with each group identifying their strengths and acting in accordance with them (2013, 83). As such, the collaborators were relatively well equipped to utilize each other’s expertise and form reciprocal relationships.
Transitioning the majority of project meetings to remote settings fundamentally altered the dynamics of collaborative efforts. While essential for safety, remote communication presented a series of hurdles, including difficulties in maintaining the same level of engagement, fostering personal connections, and facilitating efficient decision-making compared to face-to-face interactions. The absence of physical presence detracted from the spontaneity and organic interactions crucial for relationship-building among collaborators, hindering the seamless exchange of ideas and problem-solving inherent to in-person discussions. In a traditional in-person setting, initial meeting banter plays a vital role in fostering a sense of camaraderie and understanding among collaborators. These informal moments are integral to understanding team members’ personalities, work styles, and perspectives. The transition to virtual meetings meant that this informal interaction was significantly limited. As a result, the collaborators found themselves grappling with how to address project-related issues. The limitations of virtual communication made it challenging to broach delicate topics or navigate potential conflicts effectively, as the absence of in-person dynamics impeded the development of the trust and openness necessary for candid discussions.

The diverse backgrounds of the collaborators, spanning various institutions such as museums, archaeological firms, and historians, introduced a rich tapestry of perspectives and expertise. However, this diversity also posed a challenge in harmonizing differing methodologies, viewpoints, and communication styles. Navigating these variations while ensuring a cohesive and respectful approach to representation demanded
careful consideration and mediation to integrate diverse inputs effectively without diluting the project narrative’s overall integrity or significance.

Although the collaborators originally hoped to incorporate the perspectives of direct descendants of Chinese immigrant miners, we soon recognized that most of the original Chinese mining immigrants left Boise by the 1930s.

The inherent complexity of representing a cultural group beyond one’s immediate community surfaced as a significant challenge (Butler 2008; Kahn and Younger 2005; Lonetree 2012; Simpson 1996). This issue was heightened because I recognized gaps in the academic research that would have benefited the exhibit. These gaps included the lack of primary sources from the Chinese community during the Gold Rush, a lack of sources focusing on humanizing museum exhibits, and a lack of Chinese representation in museums in the Boise area. Accurately portraying the nuances of the Chinese mining community within the broader context of industrial heritage necessitated extensive research, consultations, and a heightened sensitivity to avoid stereotypes or inadvertent misrepresentations. Although this created hurdles during my research and throughout the exhibit creation process, the collaborators made every attempt to mitigate this issue. Striking this balance required continuous scrutiny and engagement to ensure an authentic portrayal reflective of the community’s multifaceted experiences and contributions.

Another challenge we faced had to do with limited primary sources related to our topic. The lack of archival materials that detail Chinese histories is difficult to mitigate; these histories have little surviving documentation or were never documented at all. This is often the case with marginalized demographics. However, researchers across the
country are taking action to help remedy this issue. Tchen and his team at the Museum of Chinese in America, urge researchers who come across Chinese history to save it and share it with them. Tchen’s call extends to living descendants of Chinese immigrants who might have family heirlooms or stories that have been passed down over generations (1992). It is only by capitalizing on the little-documented but nonetheless saved history—and making efforts to retrieve more of it—that researchers can interpret and share that information with the public.

It was an impossible challenge to fully summarize the Chinese community’s history within the confines of the physical space at the IMMG. With limited room for showcasing a comprehensive narrative, the collaborators risked an incomplete representation that might not fully honor the depth and diversity of the Chinese immigrant mining experience. To address this constraint, the collaborators strategically leveraged online components as supplementary resources, offering visitors the option to delve deeper into the narrative beyond the physical exhibit. This approach allowed for a more expansive portrayal of the community’s history while ensuring that the physical exhibit at the IMMG remained accessible and comprehensible.

Assessing the exhibit’s effectiveness and obtaining comprehensive feedback, especially within a collaborative context, presented a complex challenge. It was crucial to develop robust evaluation mechanisms and ensure inclusive feedback from a diverse array of stakeholders. The absence of tools such as secondary interviews, community questionnaires, and post-visit evaluations, due to COVID-related restrictions, deprived
the project of valuable insights and nuanced feedback essential for refining the exhibit's impact and relevance. I will provide recommendations for these issues in the next section.

**Reflections for Future Museum Management and Development**

This case study provides a reflection opportunity for museum management on topics such as: enhanced collaborative strategies, adaptive project planning, ethical protocol and cultural sensitivity, continuous evaluation and learning, empowering museum professionals, and education and outreach initiatives.

Future museum projects can benefit from refined collaboration strategies that acknowledge and celebrate diverse perspectives. Emphasizing inclusivity in decision-making processes and actively seeking input from various stakeholders, including community members, historians, and cultural experts, can enrich project outcomes.

Furthermore, the nuances of working with diverse institutions underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of each partner’s complex motivations, expectations, working styles, and methodologies. Future research could delve into strategies for facilitating cross-institutional collaboration, addressing potential cultural and operational disparities. Additionally, exploring how to maintain a cohesive exhibit narrative and representation that respects the perspectives of all collaborators could enhance the success of similar projects.

Given the collaborators’ experience of working through the challenges posed by the pandemic, future museum management should prioritize adaptive project planning. This involves building flexibility into project timelines, resource allocation, and strategies to navigate unforeseen circumstances.
To mitigate potential issues in future projects, future collaborative projects should establish clear communication channels, set realistic timelines accounting for unexpected delays, and implement regular check-ins to address emerging challenges promptly. Building a foundation of trust and understanding among collaborators is crucial, necessitating initiatives like team-building activities and open forums for discussing concerns. By using this collaborative exhibit as a case study, future researchers can extract valuable lessons and better practices for successful cross-institutional projects, especially when navigating the complexities introduced by global events.

Establishing robust ethical guidelines for representing cultural groups outside the museum’s own community is crucial. Ensuring sensitivity, authenticity, and avoiding stereotypes or biases should be fundamental principles in the development of museum exhibits. This involves deeper research, collaboration, and sensitivity training to ensure respectful and accurate portrayals. Additionally, early and continuous engagement with community members, as well as seeking their insights, stories, and feedback, should be integral to project planning.

Across the field of industrial history, there are gaps in documentation, but these gaps can be addressed in a similar way. Across the US, museums of industry are coming to a realization that dominant narratives feature a majority of white people, often excluding stories of immigration, integration, and cultural diversity (Müller 2013, 513). By ignoring these facets of industrial histories, we perpetuate the stereotypes experienced by minorities. Addressing these “difficult heritages” is one of many steps in combating hate, stereotyping, and ignorance. This exhibit came to fruition during turbulent times,
but it is in times like these that comprehensive exhibits become even more essential. The research for this exhibit was only successful because it involved cross-institutional collaboration with several institutions who recognized the representational gap in Boise and the larger Idaho area. I believe that if museums are open to suggestions from their communities, true change can occur in those communities.

Additionally, it is essential that collaborators institute mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and learning throughout the project lifecycle. Encouraging reflective practices, conducting regular assessments, and soliciting feedback from collaborators, stakeholders, and visitors can drive continuous improvement.

If more time was available to work on the project, I would have liked to implement a secondary community questionnaire for individuals who initially responded to the original community questionnaire. This would allow for the establishment of a longitudinal dataset, enabling the collaborators to track changes over time within the same participants. This continuity is valuable for understanding how attitudes, behaviors, or perceptions on the exhibit topic evolved since the initial survey. Additionally, by including questions specifically addressing reasons for participation or non-participation in the secondary questionnaire, we could have provided insights into the factors influencing respondents’ engagement, allowing for a more complete analysis of participant responses over time. This self-reflective aspect contributes to a more nuanced understanding of survey dynamics, shedding light on what aspects of the initial questionnaire appealed to participants or deterred potential respondents.
In terms of methodology, a secondary longitudinal questionnaire would have aided in refining survey instruments. Analyzing the responses of participants who engage consistently or disengage over time can inform adjustments to future questionnaires, contributing to the development of more effective and engaging survey tools. Overall, I would recommend utilizing the benefits of a secondary longitudinal questionnaire in future projects because it would allow for the creation of a richer, more dynamic dataset, offering insights into participant dynamics and survey impact. It would also provide valuable information for enhancing future research methodologies regarding collaborative projects.

Additionally, I hoped to conduct secondary semi-structured interviews with the collaborators to gain a more encompassing understanding of how they believed the collaborative aspects of the exhibit creation process culminated. Some tentative secondary semi-structured interview questions would have been as follows:

1. How do you perceive your contribution or influence in shaping the narrative and objectives of the exhibit? Are there any areas where you felt your input was particularly impactful or overlooked?

2. Building on the discussions regarding representation in museums, have there been any notable developments or initiatives within your organization or community to enhance the representation of underrepresented groups beyond this specific exhibit?
3. How has collaboration among the diverse group of contributors impacted your understanding of museum representation and collaborative projects in general?

4. What do you envision as potential legacies or lasting impacts of this exhibit for your organization, the collaborators, and the community at large?

These questions would have benefited each of the collaborators’ overall understanding of the collaborative process and my own research. Additionally, a secondary semi-structured interview for future cross-institutional collaborative projects is a good recommendation for future museum management.

Secondary interviews would encourage the collaborators to reflect on the various steps of the collaborative process and provide insight on what could have been improved, information that could help inform future collaborative projects. Additionally, collecting visitor data from the IMMG through visitor exit interviews and archiving the IMMG visitor guest books could have provided deeper understanding of visitors’ perspectives on the exhibit.

Each of these avenues for data collection would have helped capture visitors’ opinions on the museum and exhibit in different ways. Visitor exit interviews would have enabled researchers to capture specific information about the new exhibit rather than just the museum as a whole. This method of data collection would have also enabled visitors to provide as much detail as they wanted to the interviewer. Archiving the visitor books would have provided more quantifiable visitor data including city of residence, email
address, and museum review. Likewise, by collecting and synthesizing data from past museum visitors, researchers could have utilized their contact information to inform them of the official exhibit opening and future educational programming on related topics. This might have increased attendance and participation.

Integrating post-exhibit educational programs and community outreach efforts can extend the project’s impact beyond the physical exhibition. This outreach could include workshops, educational materials, or online resources to promote ongoing engagement and learning.

Implementing these reflections into future museum management and development endeavors can lead to more inclusive, ethical, and impactful projects that resonate with diverse audiences and communities.

**Project Outcomes**

The outcomes of the exhibit and research are both impactful and multifaceted. First, the establishment of a permanent exhibit successfully brought Chinese mining heritage to the forefront, making it visible and enduring. Second, the challenging yet rewarding nature of collaboration was highlighted, emphasizing its necessity for creating a more nuanced and comprehensive project. Third, the exhibit addressed the inherent difficulties within mining museums, which often prioritize technology over individual stories, offering a new perspective that values human experiences in industrial history. Additionally, the exhibit serves as a platform for collaborators to take a collective stance against exclusionary political actions, adding a layer of social impact to the project. Furthermore, the exhibit sheds light on the long-lasting effects of the 1882 Exclusion Act,
contributing to Boise's demographic shift. Lastly, the outcomes underscore the importance of incorporating an anthropological perspective, providing essential insights for navigating sensitive topics and promoting inclusive narratives within the museum space.

In the political and social context, this work has served as a catalyst for broader conversations about representation in cultural institutions. Aligned with the concept of "moral agency" in museums, the exhibit emphasizes the ethical responsibility of institutions to engage with challenging histories to foster empathy, understanding, and critical engagement with the past. This exhibit confronts political actions that run counter to inclusion initiatives, serving as a symbol of resistance against discriminatory narratives.

The collaboration itself stands out as a case study, shedding light on the challenges and rewards inherent in collaborative endeavors. Detailed insights from semi-structured interviews with collaborators reveal the intricacies of working together as interviewees and decision-makers. The challenges of conducting relationship-building activities in a fully remote setting also emerged as a notable aspect of this research. The shift to completely virtual collaboration altered the dynamics of interpersonal connections. Traditional in-person engagements, with casual conversations and shared moments, were replaced by digital interactions through platforms like Zoom. This transition highlighted the need for innovative strategies in cultivating collaboration and maneuvering potential conflicts within virtual environments, as the absence of physical presence impacted the development of trust and openness crucial for successful
teamwork. This comprehensive understanding of the collaborative process provides a valuable resource for museums aiming to engage communities authentically in the development of exhibits.

One critical lesson I learned from this research is the recognition that achieving a comprehensive and authentic representation of a community's history requires much effort. While the collaborative team invested significant time and energy in research, consultation, and thoughtful curation, the absence of direct participatory involvement from the Chinese community itself posed some limitations. The nuances, lived experiences, and cultural insights essential to a comprehensive portrayal could only be fully captured through active engagement with the community. And despite this, it is also important to note, that even if the collaborators have plentiful access to the Chinese community, the task of creating a fully encompassing exhibit that highlights every aspect of a culture is near impossible. This is heightened by the fact that even individuals within the same culture experience culture differently, which can lead to differing opinions on “accurate” representation. That all being said, the collaborators worked with the avenues they had access to, to the fullest of their capabilities. And it was only through working together as a team that this exhibit came to fruition.

Moreover, the research sheds light on the awareness within communities regarding gaps in representation in museums. Even when individuals may not be directly part of the demographic lacking representation, there exists a collective consciousness and sensitivity to the broader issues of underrepresentation. This awareness serves as a driving force for change, urging museums to reassess their practices, engage in critical
reflection, and actively work towards more inclusive and equitable representation. In conclusion, my research reaffirms the dynamic, evolving nature of collaborative projects in museum contexts and emphasizes the ongoing commitment needed to address challenges, adapt to unforeseen circumstances, and foster authentic and inclusive representation.

By incorporating an anthropological perspective in this study collaborators were able to bring a unique lens to curatorial practices, fostering a heightened sensitivity to the complexities of historical subjects. The success of the exhibit in delving into difficult histories underscores the importance of this anthropological approach. By acknowledging the nuanced layers of historical experiences and engaging with the perspectives of collaborators, the project exemplifies how cultural understanding can enrich the narrative and enhance authenticity. This facet of the project extends valuable insights to fellow museum professionals and academics who grapple with similar challenges. The roadmap provided by the study advocates for a more inclusive, collaborative, and culturally aware approach to museum work.

“On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” is on permanent display at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology. Throughout the process, the collaborators attempted in helping the Chinese community in Idaho reclaim their history. The collaborators sought to do this by providing space for visitors to reflect on the past from the perspective of the present, reshaping and recontextualizing individual and collective identities (Tchen 1992, 293). The collaborators’ goal was to share historic Chinese mining experiences and expertise with the public by dispelling stereotypes,
highlighting societal contributions, and revealing a more complete representation of the Chinese experience. Our efforts at inclusivity made the exhibit a place of intercultural dialogue and engagement, which will hopefully continue outside of the sphere of the museum.
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Interview Platform</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Clint Cuzzo</td>
<td>IMMGG</td>
<td>9 September 2020</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pei-Lin Yu</td>
<td>Boise State University and the US Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>9 September 2020</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Cox</td>
<td>IMMGG</td>
<td>9 September 2020</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayle Dixon</td>
<td>Retired archaeologist and historian.</td>
<td>21 September 2020</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Zedalis</td>
<td>Payette National Forest</td>
<td>22 September 2020</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renae Campbell</td>
<td>Asian American Comparative Collection</td>
<td>29 September 2020</td>
<td>Zoom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Why is your organization/you involved with this exhibit?
2. Why do you think this project is important?
3. What are your specific goals for the exhibit?
4. Do you have any concerns or worries about the project?
5. What does this exhibit mean to you?
6. What do you think collaboration means?
7. Has collaboration for this project been successful? How has it been challenging?
8. Do you have any concerns about how Covid-19 will impact this exhibit?
9. We have sent this questionnaire out to community members to gauge their feelings on Chinese mining representation in museums. How do you feel about the current representation in museums? And besides this exhibit, what are ways you would like to see Boise or Idaho enhance this representation?
10. Unrelated to this project, but as a newer museum professional, I always like to learn how professionals came into their current role or field. How did this happen for you?
a. Any recommendations for a new museum professional?

Appendix C: Community Questionnaire Questions

1. What is your age range?
   a. 18-29
   b. 30-39
   c. 40-49
   d. 50-59
   e. 60-69
   f. 70-79
   g. 80+

2. What is your ethnicity? Check all that apply.
   a. Asian/Pacific Islander
   b. White
   c. Black or African American
   d. American Indian or Alaskan Native

3. Latino/Hispanic What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Prefer not to answer

4. What city/town do you live in?

5. What do you think of the current representation of Chinese immigrant history and culture in museums?
   a. Poor
   b. Below Adequate
   c. Average
   d. More than Adequate
   e. Great

6. Is there something specific that Boise’s public art and educational exhibits could be doing to celebrate Chinese contributions to Boise’s history and culture?

7. How important is it for Chinese immigrant history and culture to have representation in museums?
   a. Not Important
   b. Slightly Important
   c. Neutral
   d. Somewhat Important
   e. Very Important

8. Have you been to the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology before?
   a. Yes
   b. No
9. Did any members of your family come to the Boise area as a part of the 19th century Gold Rush?
10. Is there anything else you would like us to know about the Chinese community of Boise, or elsewhere, past, or present? Please explain.
11. Is there any aspect of Chinese mining life that you would particularly like to see presented in this up-coming exhibit? Please explain.
12. Please describe how the pandemic has changed how you feel, if at all, about the role of museums in local communities.

Appendix D: Payette National Forest Loan Agreement with the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology

Appendix C to Part 79 - Short-Term Loan Agreement for Archeological Collections

LOAN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE USDA FOREST SERVICE, PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST AND THE IDAHO MUSEUM OF MINING AND GEOLOGY

The USDA Forest Service, Payette National Forest, Heritage Program hereinafter called the Forest, agrees to loan to the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology, hereinafter called the Borrower, certain artifacts, specimens and associated records, listed in Attachment A, hereinafter called the Collections, which were collected from various sites on National Forest System (NFS) lands. All collections were recovered in connection with Forest Service projects.

The artifacts, specimens and associated records are being loaned for the purpose of a public exhibit at the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology scheduled to open in August of 2021 or whenever pandemic conditions permit. This exhibit will celebrate the contributions of Chinese miners to the historic and cultural fabric of Idaho. The goal of the exhibit is to provide content that is engaging, dynamic, and links Chinese history and culture to the broader history of mining and geological exploration in Idaho. The exhibit additionally aims to tell the rich and varied experiences of these intrepid people and to demonstrate how Chinese miners are central to the history and fabric of Idaho life. The proposed exhibit will present their stories using interactive touchscreens that highlight the lives and activities of notable figures in the Chinese mining community, by displaying archaeological objects related to the Chinese mining experience, and contextualizing the role of these communities in supporting and structuring the experiences of all in the budding frontier-towns of pre- and post-statehood Idaho.

During the term of the loan, the Borrower agrees to handle, package and ship or transport the Collections in a manner that protects it from breakage, loss, deterioration and contamination, in conformance with the regulation 36 CFR part 79 for the curation of federally-owned and administered archeological collections and the terms and conditions stipulated in Attachment A to this loan agreement.

The Borrower agrees to assume full responsibility for providing insurance for the Collections or for providing funds for the repair or replacement of objects that are damaged or lost during transit and while in the Borrower's possession. The Borrower will use market-value to assess the value of the items in the collection. Within five (5) days of discovery, the Borrower will notify the Forest of instances and circumstances surrounding...
any loss of, deterioration and damage to, or destruction of the Collection and will, at the
direction of the Forest, take steps to conserve damaged materials.
The Borrower agrees to acknowledge and credit the U.S. Government in any exhibits or
publications resulting from the loan. The credit line shall read as follows: "Courtesy of the
Payette National Forest, Heritage Program." The Borrower agrees to provide the Payette
National Forest, Heritage Program with copies of any resulting publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Loaning Institution</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Market Value</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold scale</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>*10IH1961/142SUR PY920 3 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>15 cm wide x 15 cm long</td>
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<tr>
<td>Files</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>*10IH1961/912C *10IH1961/1122109 *10IH1961/1127C PY920 3 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>2 cm wide x 25.2 cm long</td>
<td>$59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draw knife blades</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>No # PY920 5 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>38.5 cm wide x 8 cm long</td>
<td>$39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaver</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>PY1662 Hearth 2</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>9 cm wide x 29 cm long</td>
<td>$130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunpowder can w/bullet hole</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>No # PY920 3 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>9.9 cm wide x 12 cm tall</td>
<td>$117</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hand-blown green glass bottle, whole</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>*10IH1961/1125A PY920 5 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>9 cm wide x 31 cm tall</td>
<td>$98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Various wares:</td>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>*10IH1961/93B PY920 5 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>4.5 cm wide x 2.5 cm tall</td>
<td>$104</td>
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The Forest will inspect and inventory the collection (specifically the Payette National
Forest’s property) annually with a U.S. Forest Service designated representative. The Forest
will provide the Borrower with written or electronic requests for access to the collection for
interim visits. Upon inspection and inventory of the collection, this agreement will be
renewed annually, if the collection is found to be in good condition and is cared for as
outlined in this agreement. The Forest will provide a written or an electronic inspection
report to the Borrower detailing the assessment. Upon termination of this agreement, the
Borrower agrees to properly package and ship or transport the Collections to the Forest. Any party may terminate this agreement, effective not less than thirty (30) days after receipt by the other party of written notice, without further liability to either party.

United States Forest Service

Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology

Attachment A: Inventory of the Objects Loaned & Terms and Conditions of the Loan

Appendix C to Part 79 - Short-Term Loan Agreement for

ATTACHMENT A

Inventory of the Objects Loaned & Terms and Conditions of the Loan Description of

Objects Loaned:

MORGAN ZEDALIS

Digitally signed by

MORGAN ZEDALIS

Date: 2021.04.19 08:35:17 -06'00'

Payette National Forest Archeologist

4/19/2021

Date
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Loaning Institution</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Market Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aqua medicine vial (traditional Chinese remedies)</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Rect: *PY1662 5N2E 5 of 5</td>
<td>Rect: 10IH1961/911C PY920 5 of 5</td>
<td>Payette Rect: -1.5 cm wide x 6 cm tall Round: -2 cm wide x 5.5 cm tall</td>
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<td>Opium can</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Tin: Herb McDowell #3 Cabinet Ed.</td>
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<td>Payette</td>
<td>$39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opium pipe bowl fragments</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>10IH1961/9-21-F PY-920 5 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>$78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pig mandible</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>No # PY-1662</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>9.8 cm wide x 19 cm long</td>
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<td>Liquor bottle</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>L. Kingsbury #2 Cabinet: bottles</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>Payette</td>
<td>$65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small rock hammer head</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>10IH 19C1/9-5-SUR</td>
<td>Payette</td>
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<td>$74</td>
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<td>Half wedge single bit axe head</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>10-14-1961/11-27-C PY-920 3 of 5</td>
<td>Payette</td>
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<td>Winchester broad hatchet head</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Estimated Value</strong></td>
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<td><strong>$1,362</strong></td>
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### Appendix E: Asian American Comparative Collection Loan Agreement with the Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology

**Date:** 6/2/2021


**SPECIMEN INVOICE AND TRANSMITTAL RECORD**

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<tr>
<th>To:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2455 Old Penitentiary Road</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boise, ID 83712</td>
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**Transmitted by:** Renae Campbell  
**Date:** 6/2/2021

**Shipment Method:** n/a (delivered in person)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOAN until:</th>
<th>x Long term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of boxes:</td>
<td>For identification, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance value*:</td>
<td>$200.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**EXCHANGE:** GIFT  
**For Acc. Nos:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor Signature:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**DESCRIPTION of specimens, including catalog numbers and shipping box numbers if applicable**

1. AACC-98-113, Bamboo-pattern rice bowl  
2. AACC-2015-035, gold-blowing tray  
3. AACC-95-31, Chinese Kangxi coin  
4. AACC-95-39, Chinese Jiaqing coin  
5. ACC-90-27, Chinese Daoguang coin  
6. ACC-92-085, white glass gaming piece  
7. ACC-92-082, black glass gaming piece  
8. ACC-86-11, Chinese die
Approved by:          Received the loan in good condition:

Manager/Curator     Signature:
Signature:           Date:

Received the loan return in good condition:

Returned Via:
Signature:
Date:

Appendix F: “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho”
Interactive Touchscreen Content in English
WHY WERE THESE MINERS PHOTOGRAPHED?

The photographs, signatures, and personal information about the Warren Chinese population are from 1896 federal court documents. Many of the Chinese in Warren were prosecuted in federal court for violating the Geary Act of May 5, 1892. This act required all Chinese laborers residing within the United States to apply for Certificates of Residence. If the Chinese laborers failed to obtain certificates, they could be arrested and deported. The Warren residents argued successfully in court that a government representative had failed to register them as scheduled. Winning their court cases, they were awarded Certificates which included these photographs.

Click on the photos to the left to learn more.

WHERE DID IDAHO’S CHINESE MINERS LIVE AND WORK?

Following the initial gold rush in California, Chinese miners moved where work was available, expanding throughout the west. Gold mining districts throughout Idaho attracted populations of Chinese miners.

Discriminatory laws passed by the Idaho territorial legislature and the federal government followed them, but they persisted and due to their hard work they kept Idaho mining communities alive for many years.

Click on the map to learn more.

HAIRSTYLES

Ah Lee’s traditional hairstyle, with the front half of his head shaved, was required of Chinese living in China to show allegiance to the Manchu Empire’s Qing Dynasty. This distinctive hairstyle included long braid called the bian zi (pronounced ‘byen zel’). Here, you can see Ah Lee’s long braid wrapped around his head. This helped keep it out of the way during heavy labor.

Some Chinese miners adopted Western hairstyles; however, others maintained the bian zi, which was a symbol of their identity and may suggest their intent to return to China.

CLOTHING

Note the neckline of Ah Tung’s shirt. Here he is wearing a loose-fitted men’s shirt manufactured in China.

Chinese miners in America wore a variety of clothing items, from Western hats and leather boots to Chinese-made shirts and trousers. The remains of heavy work boots have been found in Chinese mining camps on the Boise National Forest. Western items were likely worn for their durability while Chinese apparel was comfortable, provided sun protection, and was easy to clean.


WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Traditional nineteenth century Chinese names consisted of three characters. The first character was the inherited surname and the next two were given names. The immigrant Chinese in America rarely used their full names, but often used a single given name with the word “Ah” before it. The use of “Ah” before a name indicates familiarity with a person and is traditionally used in southern and central China.

This is a photograph of Charley Ah Gouey. Charley, like many other Chinese in America, chose an English name for everyday use – yet he signed his ID card with his full name (below left).

GOON DICK: THE OPTIMIST

Mining is an optimistic calling. Goon Dick, a well-known miner in Florence and Warren, appeared in the news several times during his lengthy mining career. Always of the opinion that riches lie almost within reach, and will soon be met, affording him an opportunity to retire, the optimistic Dick, aged and frail of body, set out for the mining property which he operates.

-IDaho County Free Press, April 19, 1914, no. 1

AH SAM: THE BELOVED

Ah Sam worked for many years as a miner and a packer in Idaho. He was one of the last Chinese miners in Warren.

“His Chinese name was Jung Chayo, pronounced Young Sayo. He was a familiar figure about the town, welcomed in every home, beloved by old and young. He always had a cheery laugh and a kind word for everyone, and no child was ever neglected with a treat.”

-IDaho County Free Press, December 28, 1923, pg. 2

Did you know? The term “Chinaman” was used 100 years ago, but now is considered offensive.

Did you know? Ah Sam was a lifelong friend of Polly Benja, another beloved member of the Warren community (shown in photo at right). Learn more about Polly at the Women in Mining exhibit behind you.

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LEE DICK: THE CAREGIVER

Although Lee Dick was a full-time miner, he was also very skilled in traditional Chinese medicine and helped many members of the community. He too made many appearances in local newspapers:

“Mrs. Harry Fritter has been very ill the past week and Lee Dick made two 20-mile trips to attend her. It was another case of Dick saving a life, as the South Fork is so high it was impossible for anyone to care for her there as it was impossible to cross with a boat.” - Payette Lakes Star, McCall, Idaho, May 30, 1919.

“...the oldest girl, 13, had cared for the baby which was four weeks old when the mother died. Dr. Dick had made two trips on, once staying three days, and worked nobly to save the mother.” - Payette Lakes Star, McCall, Idaho, May 30, 1919.

WHERE DID IDAHO’S CHINESE MINERS LIVE?

Early gold mining districts throughout Idaho had large Chinese populations. Some mining districts allowed Chinese miners as early as the 1860s and large populations persisted through the 1880s. Federal legislation passed in the 1890s and 1900s prohibited Chinese laborers from immigrating to the United States and restricted the ability of those here to visit their families in China. This, coupled with decreasing mining profits over time led to a decline in the number of Chinese residents in Idaho. Congress did not repeal these laws until the 1940s.

- 4,274 Chinese lived in Idaho Territory in 1870, 30% of Idaho’s total population of 14,999. By 1880 the number of Chinese dropped to 3,179 and to 2,007 by 1890.
- In mining towns like Warren and Pierce, Chinese immigrants made up to 84% of the total population during the 1880-1890s.
- In 1870, 40% of the population in the Boise Basin, 1,740 people were from China.

Appendix G: “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho”
Interactive Touchscreen Content in Chinese

為什麼礦工們拍攝了這張照片？
有關居住在 Warren 城的中國的人口、照片、簽名、以及個人資料
來自於一八九六年的聯邦法院文件。於一八九二年的Geary 法案要求
在美國的中國工人必須申請居住證明。如果沒有取得居住證明則會被
逮捕或是被驅逐出境。

在Warren 城的中國礦工在法庭上爭論當地政府代表並沒有依工人預定的日期為他們完成註冊。最後，在這張照片上的礦工們贏了這場官司並且獲得了居住證。

在愛達荷州的中國礦工們在何處居住和工作？
在一八四九年加州的淘金熱之後，中國礦工移居到美國西部任何有
淘金的地區。許多許多的中國礦工受到愛達荷州遍佈的採礦區的吸
引而來。然而，Idaho territorial立法機關以及聯邦政府通過歧視性
法律禁止中國礦工擁有土地和持有美國公民身份。儘管如此，中國
礦工仍堅持辛苦的工作並讓愛達荷州的採礦業持續了許多年。

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发型

亞Lee的傳統髮型就是前半部份剃除，表示漢族對滿州帝國的臣服表現忠誠。在這裡你可以看到當亞Lee做繁重的工作時會將他的長辮子纏繞在頭上以防礙工作。

部分的中國礦工採用西方的髮型，然而其餘的人則維持著代表文化認同的辮子髮型，同時也表示他們有意回中國。


典型的十九世紀的中國名字由三個字組成。

移民到美國的中國人鮮少使用全名，通常在單一字面前加上“亞”表示對此人的熟悉，這種稱呼方式在中國的南方和華中地區被廣泛使用。

這是Charley Ah Gouey的照片。Charley, 就如許多在美國的中國人選擇在日常生活中使用美式名字-然而在身分證上簽的卻是全名（如左下方）。

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Goon Dick: "樂天勤奮"

採礦是一個追求希望的行業！Goon Dick是一位在Florence和Warren礦區裡人人皆為熟悉的一位礦工，在他冗長的採礦生涯中多次出現在報紙上。他總是認為財富觸手可及，很快地他就能達到他的致富目標，如此一來他就能放棄退休了。年老力衰卻果敢無畏的Dick向他的採礦進發！

—Idaho County自由報，一九二四年四月十日，第一頁

Did you know? The term "Chinaman" was used 100 years ago, but now is considered offensive.

亞Sam： "人見人愛"

Sam在愛達荷州從事礦工和包裝的工作許多年。他是最後留在Warren礦區的少數中國礦工中的其中一位，居民們給他一個 "市長" 的暱稱。

他的中文名字是Jung Chayo 聲音為Young Sayo，他熟悉城中的每一處，家家戶戶都歡迎他，大人小孩都喜歡他。他總是開心的笑著，親切的話語，而且對每個小孩一視同仁。

—Idaho County自由報，一九三三年九月二十五日，第一頁

你知道嗎？在Warren城的華人中受人愛戴的Ah Sam同時也是 Polly Bemis 的畢生好友。（右方相片）
Lee Dick： “仁心仁術”

雖然Lee Dick是個全職的礦工，他對於中國的漢學也非常精通並且幫助過許多中國人與回國的人。他的特長和善良也常常被刊登在當地的報紙上：

"Harry Fritser太太已經病重了一個多星期。Lee Dick走了兩趟二十英里的路程去探望她。這是Dick又救了一條生命的故事，當時South Fork的水位太高沒有人能渡船過去照顧Fritser太太。

—一九一九年五月三十日，愛達荷州，McCall，Payette Lakes Star報導

"...當母親過世時，最大的女兒十三歲照顧著一個月大的新生嬰兒。Dick醫生前後探望了兩趟，一次停留三天盡心盡力的照護母親。"

—一九一九年五月三十日，愛達荷州，McCall，Payette Lakes Star報導

愛達荷州的中國礦工住在何處？

在淘金的早期，眾多的中國人遍布在愛達荷州的採礦區。大量的中國人口持續到一八八零年代時期，一直到二戰中禁止中國人移民到美國以及限制回中採礦的條件才改變。這些帶有偏見的法令加上來自採礦的利潤漸漸減少的因素讓定居在愛達荷州的中國人數遞減。

舉例，在一八七零年代到四千二百七十二位中國人住在Idaho Territory，佔了當時三千九百九十九位的總人口數中的百分之三十。在一八八零到一八九零年代時期，在Warren和Pierce礦區的中國移民達到了總人口數的百分之八十四。

在一八七零年代到四千一百九十一位中國人居住在Boise Basin，其中一千七百四十三人來自中國。到了一八八零年代，中國人數降低到三千三百七十九人，到了一八九零年代更降低到三千七百人。國會一直到一九四零年代才廢除這些歧視性的法令。

我們製作這一份簡報以回憶對愛達荷州的中國礦工所做貢獻以及對歷史的重要性。

Appendix H: “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho”

On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage in Idaho

"In the handling of the pen the Chinese... have acquired a skill that would excite the envy of a practised California gold digger."

-- Baron von Richthofen

Idaho’s Chinese miners were not simple laborers coming straight from the fields. In fact, Chinese mining traditions reach back at least 4,000 years, and archival research has revealed that many 19th century Chinese miners had previous experience before they came to Idaho. Professional mining societies helped individuals learn and maintain skills and find opportunities. This brought a Chinese ethos of community and collaboration to Idaho’s “Gold Mountain.”

Chinese miners were masters at recovering gold from stream deposits: placer mining. After others had removed the easily obtainable gold, Chinese miners bought or leased claims to recover smaller nuggets and gold dust using basic mechanical and hand techniques. Some specialized techniques from China were very useful for placer mining.

- Expert water management systems: To enhance the power of water, Chinese miners used the ancient Chinese water wheel (水车), which distributed water to sluice boxes and other mining devices.
- Persistence: Chinese miners often worked in a new, challenging, and sometimes dangerous environment, requiring persistence and a deep understanding of the landscape.

These techniques and skills were instrumental in the success of Chinese miners in Idaho’s gold fields.
Appendix I: “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho”
Artifact Labels and Accompanying Text

Draw knife Blade (Payette National Forest)
Used to remove surface bark & wood from tree
削刀（Payette 国家森林提供）
用来去除表面上的木材。

Gold Scale (Payette National Forest)
秤金子用的秤子（Payette 国家森林提供）

Half wedge Single bit Axe Head &
Winchester Broad Hatchet Head (Payette National Forest)
斧头（Payette 国家森林提供）

Small Rock Hammer Head (Payette National Forest)
岩锤（Payette 国家森林提供）

Files (Payette National Forest)
锉刀（Payette 国家森林提供）

Opium Pipe Bowl Fragments (Payette National Forest)
鸦片烟管的一部分（Payette 国家森林提供）

Opium Can (Payette National Forest)
装鸦片的锡罐（Payette 国家森林提供）
Gunpowder Can with Bullet Hole
(Payette National Forest)
装槍械用火藥的瓶子
(Payette 國家森林提供)

Small Tea or Wine Cup (Payette National Forest)
小茶杯或酒杯
(Payette 國家森林提供)

Ceramic Liquor Bottle (Payette National Forest)
陶製的酒瓶
(Payette 國家森林提供)

Vials for Traditional Chinese Medicine (Payette National Forest)
裝中藥的瓶子
(Payette 國家森林提供)

Hand-Blown Green Glass Bottle
(Payette National Forest)
手工做的玻璃瓶
(Payette 國家森林提供)

Cleaver (Payette National Forest)
剁肉用的刀
(Payette 國家森林提供)
Pig Mandible (Payette National Forest)
This pig jawbone was recovered near the historic townsite of Warren. Chinese miners were well-known for their skills in gardening and livestock raising, which they often used to augment their mining income. So, this pig was likely raised locally, and may have served in an ancestor worshipping ritual such as Tomb Cleaning Day in the spring.

Bamboo-pattern rice bowl
(Asian American Comparative Collection)
*A simple yet beautiful design often found in Chinese mining camps*

竹子彩繪圖樣的碗
(Asian American Comparative Collection 提供)。

Gold-blowing tray
(Asian American Comparative Collection).
*This tray was used to blow lighter soil away to reveal heavier gold pieces.*

淘金盤 (Asian American Comparative Collection 提供)。
這個盤子是用來把較輕的泥砂淘離。
讓較沉重的金子顯露出來。
Chinese Kangxi coin (Asian American Comparative Collection).  
*Emperor Kangxi reigned from 1661 to 1722. This famous emperor had a peaceful reign of 61 years, the longest ever.*

中國康熙硬幣（Asian American Comparative Collection 提供）。
康熙皇帝統治期從西元一六六一年到一七二二年。這位著名的皇帝在位期間和平統治了六十一年，是有史以來最長的。

Chinese Jiaqing coin (Asian American Comparative Collection).  
*Emperor Jiaqing reigned from 1521 to 1567. This coin was still valid currency, although already 500 years old when a Chinese miner brought it to Idaho.*

中國嘉慶硬幣（Asian American Comparative Collection 提供）。
嘉慶皇帝統治期從西元一五二一年到一五六七年。當中國礦工將這個硬幣帶到愛達荷州時雖然已經有三百年了，然而這個硬幣在當時仍是有效的貨幣。

Chinese Daoguang coin (Asian American Comparative Collection).  
*Emperor Daoguang reigned from 1820 to 1850. Most of Idaho’s Chinese miners were born during his troubled reign marked by war and famine.*

中國道光硬幣（Asian American Comparative Collection 提供）。
道光皇帝統治期從西元一八二零年到一八五零年。絕大多數來到愛達荷州的中國礦工是出生在充滿戰爭和飢荒的道光年間。
White glass gaming piece, black glass gaming piece.
(Asian American Comparative Collection).
*Gaming was a popular way for Chinese miners to relax in their precious time off.*

用玻璃製作的黑子和白子
(Asian American Comparative Collection 提供)。
下圍棋是礦工們在休息時最喜歡的放鬆方式。

Chinese dice (Asian American Comparative Collection).
* Gambling and wagering in China dates back at least 4,000 years to the earliest dynasties.*

中國的骰子（Asian American Comparative Collection 提供）。
中國對於打賭和下注可以追溯到四千多年以前最早的朝代。
Appendix J: “On the Gold Mountain: Chinese Mining History and Heritage of Idaho” Brochure

On the Gold Mountain
Chinese Mining History and Heritage in Idaho

Climbing to the gold mountain
Mid-19th century China was a turbulent place, with chaos in the climate, economy, and geopolitics. For many, it was a time to look for opportunities in new places.

- Did you know?
What Chinese came to Idaho’s gold mining country tended from Guangdong (“Swing Out”) province of southern China. And many of Boise’s Chinese families came from a village, Tienan (“T*ang Ko”) in Guangdong.

A “Chinaman’s Chance” in Idaho
The journey started with the voyage from China to San Francisco, which could take weeks, and cost a life’s savings or more. Then the endless cross-country walk or rail ride to Idaho.

Idaho Chinese Mining Artifacts:
A Closer Look

Wooden Gold Pan and Scale
Panning is essential to hand placer mining. Unlike metal gold pans, Chinese wooden pans were lightweight and floated on the water’s surface, easing back strain. Gold was found in the grain of the wood. Wooden pans have not yet been found in Idaho or anywhere. We know of Chinese examples in mines over 6,000 years old! This region was created by Degan-Muskeg forests, especially for this exhibit.

Gold scales were essential, especially for Chinese miners who had little legal immunity for the theft or fraud. This example from the Payette National Forest is a Western model, but Chinese style scales were also common in mining communities one is pictured here.

Medicine Vials and Opium Pipe
In mining life, illness and injury were common. Chinese herbal remedies were provided by local Chinese medical practitioners like Zee Hoy in Oregon and the Kung Fong family of Boise.
Opium originated in the Middle East, and by the 19th century it was used by Chinese and non-Chinese alike to soothe spirits, sleep, and pain. Although it could be addictive, many miners used

Once here, Chinese people (mostly men) faced dangers, violence, hardships, and opportunities their families had imagined back home. “A Chinaman’s Chance” was a catchphrase for “yet much chance at all”.

- Did you know?
Yet the Chinese work ethic, sense of community, and cultural traditions enabled Idaho’s Chinese miners to survive, persevere, triumph, and thrive in gold country. Most went their earnings home to their families. Some joined in building the great railroads across the nation in the 1870s.

Geometry and the Living Legacy
Yet the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and other prejudiced legislation deprived Chinese populations and Chinatowns across America. By the early 1900s, Boise had its last Chinese New Year’s parade.

- Did you know?
The legacy of these resourceful Chinese miners lives on in their families, the rich archives of photos and other documents, and in the archaeological record of gold mining corps across Idaho. Each object you see in this exhibit held value for someone, and has a story to tell. We hope you treasure these stories.

To Learn More
Look for these wonderful books about the Chinese experience in Idaho.
Poly Styrene: Life and Times of a Chinese American Pioneer by Franklin Chang
A Chinese School: Chinese at Idaho by Jun Xu

Exhibit Sponsors
The Other Institute
Idaho Humanities Council
The U.S. Forest Service, Payette and Boise National Forests
The Asian American Library Collection
See reverse for more on Chinese mining artifacts

A Mystery!
This small piece of wood covered with paper and characters for music, months, and days was found on the Payette National Forest. It is not on display, as it is quite delicate – in fact it’s a miracle that this artifact is as well preserved.

Fig. 25. Dais. Pigs are important in Chinese cuisine and culture. Pork is a favorite of most of the easterners, and root pigs were a common sight during the Chinese New Year and the Tulip Dying Festival of early spring. In this picture, a Chinese man talks with two non-Chinese Idahoans. What do you think they were discussing?

Chinese Museum of Idaho, Boise seen with Kuo Chien.

Thank you for visiting the exhibit!
Also, please visit The Idaho Museum of Mining and Geology’s Chinese mining site on the “Learn” page of www.idahomuseum.org for more information.

This brochure was printed with support from The Other Institute.

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