Language and Museums: Supporting Alaska Native Languages Through Collaborative Networking

Heather J. McClain

University of Denver

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd

Part of the Indigenous Studies Commons, Museum Studies Commons, and the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/415

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu,dig-commons@du.edu.
LANGUAGE AND MUSEUMS: SUPPORTING ALASKA NATIVE LANGUAGES THROUGH COLLABORATIVE NETWORKING

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Arts and Humanities

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Heather J. McClain

November 2014

Advisor: Christina Kreps
Author: Heather J. McClain
Title: Language and Museums: Supporting Alaska Native Languages through Collaborative Networking
Advisor: Christina Kreps
Degree Date: November 2014

Abstract

With the ever-increasing risk of language loss and possible extinction of the world’s Indigenous languages, museums are quickly becoming active supporters and valuable resources for communities engaged in revitalization initiatives. Although working with language material is inherently difficult for museums because of their traditionally object based nature, it is imperative for museums to focus on the documentation and preservation of language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) because of the vital connection between language and culture. This thesis examines how museums in Alaska, particularly the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, Alaska Office, are supporting Alaska Native language and cultural revitalization through collaborative networks and the adoption of methodologies to successfully develop and implement language-based programming.
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center (ASC), Alaska Office for their inspiration and support over the past several years. I would especially like to acknowledge Dawn Biddison and Aron Crowell for all of their help and guidance throughout my research. I am so lucky to have stumbled into your office when I did.

Many thanks to my committee members: Christina Kreps, Richard Clemmer-Smith, Jim LaVita, and Annette Stott. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from you, and your flexibility and patience throughout this process means more than you know.

And last but not least, to you, my family and friends, for your unconditional support and encouragement throughout my academic pursuits. None of this would have been possible without you. Thank you.
# Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1

Chapter Two: Background ........................................................................................................... 11
  Russia and the United States ................................................................................................. 12
  Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act .................................................................................. 19
  Alaska Native Heritage Center .............................................................................................. 25
  The Dena’ina Exhibition ........................................................................................................ 29
  Alaska Native Language Center and Alaska Native Language Archive ......................... 33
  Current Legislation .............................................................................................................. 35

Chapter Three: Literature Review .............................................................................................. 38
  Linguistic Anthropology ........................................................................................................ 39
  Language Revitalization Initiatives ...................................................................................... 49
  Revitalization and Museums .................................................................................................. 55
  New Museum Theory ............................................................................................................ 56
  Collaboration ......................................................................................................................... 61
  Intangible Cultural Heritage ................................................................................................. 73
  Indigenous Curation .............................................................................................................. 81
  Language and Material Culture ............................................................................................ 87

Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework and Methods ................................................................. 93
  Ethics .................................................................................................................................. 101
  Research Design .................................................................................................................. 104
  Participant Observation ........................................................................................................ 106
  Interviews ............................................................................................................................ 109
  Analysis of Exhibitions ......................................................................................................... 111
  Archival and Secondary Source .......................................................................................... 111

Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis ......................................................................................... 113
  Language Workshops ........................................................................................................... 128
  Athabascan Snowshoe Master Artists Residency at the Anchorage Museum .................. 146
  Recovering Voices ............................................................................................................... 152
  Breath of Life Institute ......................................................................................................... 157
  2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival ..................................................................................... 164

Chapter Six: Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 168

References ............................................................................................................................... 176

Appendix A ............................................................................................................................... 193

Appendix B ............................................................................................................................... 197

Appendix C ............................................................................................................................... 201
Chapter One: Introduction

Every language can be seen as a living museum, holding thousands of years of history and traditional knowledge that are resources for documenting and understanding the Earth’s biological and cultural diversity (Bell 2011:7). But if a language is lost, a vital piece of the culture that language comes from is lost along with it, resulting in irreversible loss in our shared cultural patrimony, our ability to comprehend the world around us, and to pass that knowledge on to future generations. And with an aging population of elders and a decreasing number of young fluent speakers, there is a global push to document as much linguistic and cultural knowledge as possible before it is lost forever.

As sites of research and documentation where linguistic recordings and material culture are housed and stored, museums can offer something to communities that are trying to maintain, restore, and revitalize their languages. And with the loss of linguistic diversity and the expected death of the majority of the world’s Indigenous languages by the end of the twenty-first century, museums are becoming an increasingly significant part of supporting revitalization through collaborative efforts. If museums have the “stuff” to create exhibitions on tribal topics, it is the source communities that hold the real content that is necessary for accurate and appropriate interpretation (Hoerig 2010) and recontextualization of museum collections. However, until recently, museums have not been significantly involved in this dimension of collaborative work.
The purpose of my research is to examine the role of museums in supporting language preservation and revitalization, which led to my findings that museums often rely on a wide network of individuals, communities, and like-minded institutions when developing and implementing language-based collaborative projects and programs. Although tribal museums, or Native museums, and cultural centers often address issues related to language and cultural heritage preservation, attention to these issues is often left out of non-Native or mainstream museums (Maxson, Colwell-Chanthaphonh, and Lomayestewa 2011). However, with the growing number of museum-community partnerships that are informed by changing practices in anthropology and museum work, including a move toward reciprocal models that emphasize shared resources and balanced authority (Chan 2013:20), these roles are being reevaluated and adapted in the twenty-first century. And even though movement toward achieving multivocality in museums has been slow, wider collaboration and involvement among cultural institutions is needed to ensure that collections, exhibitions, and programming include both academic and community perspectives in museological conscience and practice, particularly in regards to projects aimed at language revitalization.

The entry point for my research was through an internship at the Alaska Office of the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center (ASC) at the Anchorage Museum in 2011. Working with ASC staff on a number of projects and events, I was impressed by the work being done and the value that it held for everyone involved. The ASC’s established partnerships with Alaska Native communities and the emphasis on interdisciplinary and multivocal displays contribute to their ability to replace colonial discourse with Alaska Native voices and support cultural heritage efforts throughout the state. At the end of my
internship, I was inspired to continue researching how museums are approaching language by supporting the efforts of source communities to document, preserve, and revitalize their language and cultural traditions through language related programming.

Although working with language material is inherently difficult for museums because of their traditionally object based nature, it is imperative for museums to focus on language when working with Native communities because of the vital connection between language and culture. My thesis is structured around several themes and arguments that build on each other. First, I address the need for language and cultural revitalization to originate within source communities. This is because without community action and investment, revitalization efforts can be meaningless, and in order for a language to be truly secure it must be relevant to the community that is using it. Secondly, collaboration is important as both a theory and a methodology for museums in working with source communities, particularly in relation to language programming. I also emphasize the use of objects in these programs because of their power to evoke intangible culture through examination and discussion with community members. And lastly, I address the potential of collaborative networking as a methodology for museums, cultural institutions, and source communities in supporting language revitalization. What I have found is that Alaskan institutions already rely on established relationships and networks to develop and implement language-based programming, and that other cultural institutions outside of the state are looking at collaborative engagements in the state for inspiration for their own programs. By orienting my research though a museum ethnography of the ASC, Alaska Office in Anchorage, Alaska, I am able to relate what is happening at one institution to a larger network of participating institutions at the local,
state, and national levels. I use the ASC as a case study for community and social efforts to support language and cultural revitalization in relation to the wider phenomenon of collaboration with source communities.

Based on my observations during fieldwork and comparative analysis to other collaborative museum projects, in Chapter Five I will make a set of recommendations for procedures on how to do language-based collaborative projects. Although there is no one-size fits all model for collaboration with source communities, having a base model that can be adapted to fit the needs and desired outcomes of individual projects can be useful to museums when developing and implementing language programming.

As there are several terms that are used repeatedly and are prominent to this thesis, here I provide a brief definition of terms. Firstly, I use the term “Indigenous” or “Native” when focusing on Indigenous peoples of the United States, and in some instances when making a broader connection to source communities throughout the globe. I also use the term “Native American” or “American Indian” when referring specifically to tribes in the United States, and use tribally specific names of the communities and people in Alaska that I am discussing as often as possible (Lonetree 2012:xxiii).

For clarification, source communities, or communities of origin, are defined by Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown in *Museums and Source Communities* (2003) as both the groups in the past who created the material culture held in museums, as well as their descendants today. In Alaska, source communities can be identified as both remote villages and rural areas, as well as urban settlements where Alaska Natives, the Indigenous peoples of Alaska, live such as Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, or even as far
as Seattle and Portland. As with many Indigenous communities, descendants do not always live in their community of origin due to a number of factors, including forced removal from traditional lands, economic pressure, and choice. There are also those whose traditional land is situated where urban cities now stand and receive little recognition as the Indigenous people of the area. Each of these circumstances has had serious repercussions for the continuance and transmission of Indigenous language and traditional knowledge over the past several hundred years. I will discuss the history and implications of this further in Chapters Two and Three.

Secondly, I make the distinction between Native and non-Native museums. Native museums, or tribal museums and cultural centers, are usually identified as community-based museums that provide a venue for Indigenous peoples to determine how their culture is interpreted (Clifford 1991; Simpson 1996; Jacknis 2008). Non-Native museums, or mainstream museums, often represent conventional Western or non-tribal museum models that have traditionally been defined by their collections and exhibitions (Ames 1992). However, it is this traditional role as custodians for collections and cultural materials that situates museums, Native and non-Native alike, as appropriate venues to work with source communities to document and incorporate language and cultural knowledge into their institutions.

Another term that is used throughout this paper is heritage, which Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett defines as a mode of cultural production that produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past (1995:370), emphasizing that heritage is not lost and found, or stolen and reclaimed, but a living tradition that is always producing something new or “adding value” to what was already there. To the extent that it
selectively preserves and updates cultural traditions and relations to place, heritage work can be part of a social process that strengthens Indigenous identity (Clifford 2004). This concept is central for revitalization as many Indigenous peoples are working to reconcile what language and cultural traditions were in the past with what they are now and what they will be moving toward in the future. Therefore, the need to promote, protect, and revitalize cultural expressions and practices of communities, groups, and individuals throughout the world as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is gaining an increasing amount of recognition in museums, and thus, importance at international and national levels (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012:1).

Broadly defined, ICH is an immaterial and untouchable form of cultural heritage that has the power to evoke knowledge, memories, and feelings associated with the material. More specifically, cultural heritage consists of people’s material culture, as well as their collective memory, oral traditions, personal histories, and everyday experiences. These aspects of culture, or intangible heritage, are also subject to collection, documentation, study, and preservation in museums and cultural centers (Kreps 2003:10-11; Kreps 2008), including oral-historical research, cultural evocation and explanation (exhibits, festivals, publications, films, tourist sites), language description and pedagogy, community-based archaeology, art production, marketing, and criticism (Clifford 2004). ICH is important to my research for a number of reasons as it informs identity, psychological well-being, control of knowledge, and providing definitions of traditions, but language as ICH is particularly important in this thesis as a living cultural expression that is in need of safeguarding and acts as a measure of safeguarding cultural knowledge.
itself. I will provide a more thorough discussion of the definition and the implications of documenting and preserving ICH in Chapter Three.

Addressing language as ICH is also central to this research thesis in understanding how language is linked to material culture and the knowledge that is preserved in objects. For collaborative projects, objects are valuable reference points to cultures, people, stories, ceremonies, and events. Each object carries its own story and speaks to the lives of the people who made and used it (Alivizatou 2012b), and by associating language with material culture, the meaning and understanding of objects is enhanced, and breathes life in to it. And because of their complex biographies, objects, as well as museums, can function as ‘contact zones’ when working with source communities (Peers and Brown 2003). Contact zones are spaces where peoples separated by colonial hierarchies can meet and establish ongoing relationships (Clifford 1997), and through collaboration, the idea is that both the museum and the community partners can come to new understandings through mutual respectful dialogue and exchange (Phillips 2003) that will hopefully continue on past the initial project.

For this thesis, collaboration is the most important form of applied anthropology both as a theoretical framework and methodology. Collaborative relationships between museums and source communities often begin through exhibitions, which are identified as a key area of cultural production with agency in the representation of Indigenous peoples, often in association with tangible and intangible culture. I will be referencing Jennifer Shannon’s definition of “Native voice,” or the expressed thought, experience, and perspective of Indigenous peoples, as the authentic representation of Native perspectives through collaborative exhibit making (Shannon 2009:219). This term will be
particularly important in Chapter Five regarding the ASC, Alaska Office and the presence of Native voice in ongoing research and collaborative exhibition design.

The collaborative process often involves shared management and direction of a research project among anthropologists, museum staff, and the source communities they are working with (Low and Merry 2010; Kurin 1997). Therefore, relationship building is a key component of applied anthropology because without trust, a collaborative partnership is impossible (Lonetree 2012). However, collaboration is not a perfect methodology and in Chapter Three I will discuss and critique past projects, and provide my own analysis on collaborative engagements in Alaska in Chapter Five.

Based on my observations and research, I analyze the work that is being done to document, preserve, and revitalize the endangered Indigenous languages of Alaska, and how museums are supporting these efforts through collaborative projects and programming with source communities and other cultural institutions. Building off of the fields of applied anthropology, applied linguistics, and museum anthropology, I will be utilizing the idea of collaborative networking throughout my paper to explain the interconnected and interdisciplinary nature of collaborative projects and programs in Alaska. Collaborative networking is defined as:

a network consisting of a variety of entities that are largely autonomous, geographically distributed, and heterogeneous in terms of their operating environment, culture, social capital and goals, but that collaborate to better achieve common or compatible goals, and whose interactions are supported by computer networks (Camarinha-Matos and Afsarmanesh 2006:4).

Although collaborative networks are typically associated with business and social network theory, for the purposes of this thesis, I will use the concept of collaborative
networking to explain the growing complexity of relationships between museums, source communities, and other cultural organizations when working together to support and supplement language and cultural revitalization initiatives in Alaska.

Archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and linguists have worked for decades in Alaska Native communities and collected materials that are now housed in archives and museums (Crowell 2001), and are being utilized to assist Alaska Native communities in language and cultural revitalization initiatives. I have found that collaborative partnerships between source communities and museums in Alaska are unique and have developed out of unique experiences and opportunities that have arisen out of the states location and history with Alaska Native peoples. However, the success of collaborative networking in Alaska can also be a source of inspiration for other revitalization initiatives as they look toward museums for access to valuable collections and resources through mutually beneficial projects and programs. And by providing a set of recommended procedures on how to do language programming, I hope to contribute to these future efforts.

Below is brief overview of chapters in this thesis. In Chapter Two, I discuss the history of language policies in Alaska from the point of Russian contact in the seventeenth century to current state legislation, as well as relevant cultural institutions and museum exhibitions that are focused on documenting and raising awareness for Alaska Native languages. Next, in Chapter Three, I provide a review of the literature relevant to this research thesis, including the fields of linguistic and museum anthropology with successful and problematic examples of language and cultural revitalization initiatives and museum collaborations that have influenced my research.
Chapter Four lays out my Research Design and the ethical considerations of my research and collaboration when working with various stakeholders. Then in Chapter Five, I present my research findings and analysis regarding the ASC, Alaska Office and related projects/programs that influence their efforts to support Alaska Native communities in language and cultural revitalization, including the Smithsonian’s Recovering Voices program. And finally, in Chapter Six, I summarize my findings and hopes for future research.
Chapter Two: Background

Inhabited since the end of the last mass glaciation of the Northern Hemisphere more than ten thousand years ago (Haycox 2002), the physical geography of Alaska is often divided for administrative purposes into: Southeast, South Central, Southwest, the Interior, and the Far North. Living in this dramatic landscape that changes from region to region, Alaska Natives, the Indigenous, first peoples of Alaska, have adapted to the environment, developing a way of life that helps them to identify with the land and their view of themselves (Williams 2009), and is reflected in the language and culture of each respective group.

At present, there are twenty recognized Indigenous culture groups and respective languages in Alaska, which are roughly defined as those languages spoken at the time of European contact, including Tsimshian and Haida (whose traditional land is in Canada but were pushed out of their territory by settlers during the 1800s). These languages are categorized under four different language families: Eskimo-Aleut, Athabascan-Eyak-Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida (Alaska Native Language Center, Languages n.d.), and are spoken among eight broad cultural areas: Athabascan (Dena’ina, Ahtna, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Tanana, Upper Kuskokwim, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Gwitch’in, Han), Northwest Coast (Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian), Siberian Yup’ik (St. Lawrence Island), Yup’ik/Cup’ik/Yupiaq, Iñupiaq, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq (Kodiak Island, Prince William
Sound, Alaska Peninsula), Unangax^ (Aleutian Islands), and Eyak.\(^1\) Further distinctions can be made between sub-dialects and local or village dialects, but for the purpose of this thesis I will primarily be relying on the above distinctions unless I am discussing a specific example or case study that requires further identification. However, the fate of many of these languages is in question due in large part to the colonial legacy that shaped Alaska and other territories over the past 250 years or so.

All Alaska Native groups have experienced social, educational, health, and economic disparities, and today, all but two Alaskan languages (Central Alaskan Yup’ik and Central Alaskan Yup’ik on Nunivak Island) are on the UNESCO list of endangered languages (UNSECO Atlas of World’s Languages in Danger n.d.). In order to situate the present state of Alaska Native languages, it is important for me to provide a brief discussion of colonial and educational policies that have directly affected Alaska Native language, culture, and connection to the land.

**Russia and the United States**

The written history of Alaska can be divided between the Russian period (1741-1867) and the American period (1867-Present). The first documented European contact in Alaska was in 1741 when the Russian Navy expedition under the command of Vitus Bering made landfall and claimed sovereignty over the territory. At the time, the geography of the North Pacific was relatively unknown and the primary motivation for Russian exploration was to establish a presence in North America as well as to search for

---

\(^1\) Although there are more recognizable terms for Alaska Native cultural groups, such as Aleut for Unangax^ and Eskimo for Inupiaq and Yup’ik/Cup’ik/Yupiaq, I have chosen to use the preferred names these groups use to identify themselves and are employed by the Arctic Studies Center, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, and the Alaska Native Language Center.
new economic resources to exploit (Haycox 2002; Black 1988). However, unlike other colonial powers such as the Spanish, French, British, and Euro-Americans, the Russians never intended to establish self-sustaining colonies in the Americas. Established in 1799 under an imperial contract, the administration of Alaska was overseen by the Russian American Company (RAC), which had complete control over the pricing and trade of Alaska’s valuable resources, including furs (primarily marine mammals, such as the sea otter, which was hunted to the point of near extinction), timber, and fishing. Although integral to the Russian Empire, Russia’s presence in North America was purely economic, which is why it is estimated that there were never more than 800 Russians in Alaska at one time during the Russian American period (Haycox 2002). But even with limited numbers, it was enough to have a profound impact on Alaska Native languages and cultures over roughly a one hundred year period.

Experiencing the most direct and continued Western contact because of their coastal location and the nature of the Russian enterprise (and later the American), the influence of Russian occupation is reflected today in the Unangax^, Alutiiq, Yup’ik, languages with the inclusion of Russian and creole vocabulary. The degree and type of this Russian impact can be measured by the number of Russian loan words, usually names for new materials and concepts, in each. These figures can be calculated from documentation of these languages and because the diffusion from Russian mostly ceased after the sale of Alaska in 1867 (Krauss 1988). Although brutal towards Alaska Natives, the RAC administration did not formally intrude in village life. The Yup’ik of the Yukon-Kuskokwim drainage, the interior Athabascans, and the Tlingit systematically
participated in the Russian fur trade network while retaining their local autonomy and political independence. Through this contact, a relatively significant segment of the population was exposed to the concepts of Western style education and the availability of public health services (Black 1988).

According to Michael E. Krauss, a linguist whose work primarily addresses issues facing endangered Indigenous languages in Alaska, all known Alaska Native languages survived the Russian period, and some were even strengthened through the development of literature and literacy as a result of Russian Orthodox missionaries and the educational systems they implemented (Krauss 1980), including the creation of alphabets for Unangan, Alutiiq, Tlingit, and Yup’ik languages by adapting the Cyrillic alphabet to the sounds of these languages (Krauss 1988; Black 1988).

One example of such work is that of Ioann Veniaminov, a Russian Orthodox priest who is best known for his time in the Aleutian Islands and his support of bilingual education in Alaska and Eastern Siberia. Accepting an assignment to Alaska in 1823, Veniaminov began studying Unangan with the aid of a bilingual helper in Sitka (the RAC capital at the time), but was not fluent upon his arrival. Once in Unalaska, Veniaminov began observing and documenting the language, developing an Unangan alphabet with Ivan Pan’kov, an Unangax̂ leader, which was then used to translate scripture and other works into the Unangan language (Black 1996; Dauenhauer 1996; Haycox 2002).

In fact, Lydia T. Black, an Unangax̂ scholar, asserts that Pan’kov was much more than Veniaminov’s collaborator in the translation of the Unangan language. As the chief of the Island of Tigal’da (one of the most populous of the Fox Islands at the time),
Black states that there is no question that Pan’kov was an important leader among the Unangax^ community, and believes that the rapid change in the realm of ideology and spiritual culture, which occurred in less than half a century, was the direct result of support by influential Unangax^ leaders, like Pan’kov, at the time. She asserts that much of what is known about Pan’kov can be inferred from Veniaminov’s writings, including that he was bilingual and literate, participated in the design of the Unangan alphabet itself, and was knowledgeable in the tenants of the Orthodox faith through early contact with Russian *promyshleniki* (fur traders) and the RAC (Black 1996).

Later in his career, Veniaminov also devoted his attention to the Tlingit language and developed a writing system to translate works into this language as well. Promoting bilingual education, Veniaminov opened schools in Unalaska and in Sitka that taught Alaska Native languages as well as Russian, while also lobbying for support from government leaders in Saint Petersburg to support these efforts. This approach to developing Alaska Native literature and literacy in the nineteenth century can be attributed in part to the Russian Orthodox tradition of respect for the language and culture of the individual (Dauenhauer 1996). Rather than attack Indigenous cultures while substituting their own, church leaders developed programs which supported local customs and literacy, while winning converts and building up a strong Native clergy who would assure the church’s vitality in the local communities (Dauenhauer 1996).

Although true missionary activities commenced only in the 1840s when Veniaminov returned to Alaska as the first ruling bishop, today, the Orthodox Church in Alaska is considered to be a Native institution. As it was during the Russian period, the
bulk of the Russian Orthodox population in Alaska constitutes the Unangax^ of the
Aleutian Islands and the Pribilof Islands, the Alutiiq/Sugpiaq people of Kodiak Island,
the Alaska Peninsula, Prince William Sound, the Dena’ina of the Kenai Peninsula and
Lake Iliamna-Lake Clark areas, as well as a majority of the Yup’ik people of the Yukon-
Kuskokwim and Nushagak river drainages (Black 1988:81). And after the sale in 1867,
the majority of the Russian clergy left, and for many years it was the Native clergymen
who maintained the legacy of the Orthodox faith in Alaska (Black 1988; Haycox 2002).

Toward the end of the Russian period, the relationship with the Native population
followed an established pattern: since Russia did not desire Russian settlement in the
territory, diminution or displacement of the population was not the aim. The successful
arrangement of the territory, as well as the demands of profitable trade, dictated the need
for amicable relations. Alaska Natives were considered citizens of the empire, and those
groups who were under Russian dominance since the eighteenth century formed the
backbone of the Russian establishment in Alaska (Black 1988; Haycox 2002;
Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998).

After the sale of Alaska in 1867 things remained largely unchanged in the
administration of the newly acquired territory, and in fact, it took the United States
almost twenty years to establish any significant changes to the governance of Alaska,
including its educational policies. But in 1880s, the United States government and
Protestant missionaries began their work in Alaska and took a significantly different
stance towards education and the relevance of Alaska Native language and culture.
In contrast to Veniaminov and the Russian Orthodox Church, Reverend Sheldon Jackson and the vision and concepts of the American Protestant missions were focused on the conversion to Christianity and the acculturation of Alaska Natives through education and suppression of Native identity, culture, and language. Appointed as the First District General Agent of Education to Alaska in 1885, Jackson established public schools in conjunction with various missions as it was argued that missionary teachers were the only ones available; and although schools were initially designed to be integrated in mixed communities where both Natives and non-Natives lived, there was pressure early on to start separate Native public schools that created a segregated schooling system (Dauenhauer 1996; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1998).

Additionally, the Nelson Act of 1905 authorized the creation of two separate systems of education in Alaska but also allowed “children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life” to attend the non-Native schools. Under the act, the federal government assumed responsibility for the education of Alaska Natives while local governments and later the territorial government assumed responsibility for educating non-Native children. Native children were barred from attending public schools until they were integrated in 1949, which was four years after the Southeast Alaska Natives had successfully lobbied for the passage of the Anti-Discrimination Act in the Territorial Legislature (Worl 1988:320).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, American missionary work included some written use of several Alaskan languages. But unlike the Orthodox Church, bilingualism was never considered a viable option for Native American language
policies, and during most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, American educational systems excluded and suppressed the use of Native languages (Krauss 1988; Worl 1988). Even in the Aleutian Islands where Jackson himself proclaimed that half the Native population seemed to be literate in Russian and, surprisingly for him, their own language, because the spoken and written language was not English, these policies were applied with increasing force until the bilingual Orthodox school that Veniaminov had established almost one hundred years prior was closed on St. Paul Island around 1921.

What is interesting is that while Jackson’s official position was that schools enforce the speedy education and assimilation of Alaska Natives, he also encouraged students to reproduce traditional arts such as baskets, masks, bentwood boxes, bowls, and other popular art forms, to take back with him during his visits to the continental U.S. to entice potential donors while maintaining an office in Washington, D.C. (Lee 1999).

Under the U.S. Bureau of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the suppression of Alaska Native languages was effective and severely detrimental during the first half of the twentieth century (Philip 1996). However, in the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of social and political equality movements (as well as land claims and the battle for extinguishment of title which will be discussed further in the next section), American educational policies began to favor the use of Native languages. However, under the cultural pressure of English, children were no longer learning their ancestral languages as the first language from their parents or grandparents (Krauss 1988). Even so, significant changes began to occur that would shape the survival of Alaska Native languages and
culture during the last few decades of the twentieth century, and on into the twenty-first century.

**Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act**

The first major development that shaped the history of Alaska’s statehood was the discovery North America’s largest single petroleum deposit in Prudhoe Bay in 1967. At the time, the Prudhoe Bay oil lease sales brought the State of Alaska $900 million, but it was clear that no permit for a pipeline that would carry oil from the North Slope to a southern terminus could be granted until the land claims for over 330 million acres of land under contention were settled. Therefore, the discovery of oil was not only essential economically (Alaska is the only state in the union that is virtually dependent on one industry to fund government services), it also forced the settlement of land claims with the assistance of the oil companies and other business interests at a pivotal time in the state’s history.

After numerous debates and testimonials, the United States Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) in 1971 to address the aboriginal land claim of Alaska Natives and to free the land under dispute for potential economic development (Haycox 2002). Similar to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 (which will be discussed in Chapter Three), ANCSA brought critical attention to issues of Indigenous sovereignty and the ownership of cultural property in Alaska, only it came twenty years earlier and was primarily focused on land rights and economic vitality/sustainability.
To provide some context as to why the settlement of land claims is important to Alaska Native language and cultural revitalization, I will briefly discuss some of the legal history of land title in Alaska.

The transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States occurred at Sitka on October 18, 1867 with the signing of the Treaty of Cession, which guaranteed that the “uncivilized tribes,” including those groups that had remained independent from Russian domination, would have the same protection of the laws and regulations that applied to the tribes of the United States. The most critical of these protections to Alaska Native peoples was the recognition of their possessory land rights. But while the 1867 Treaty of Cession and the 1884 Organic Act recognized the land rights of Alaska Natives, Congress did little to restrict non-Native occupation of Native lands. The gold rush of the 1890s, followed by salmon fisheries, commercial whalers, trappers, and the military, brought a large population of non-Natives to the territory who began to encroach on Native land with little to no enforced restrictions by the territorial government (Worl 1988:322). It is also important to note that after the purchase of Alaska in 1867, the United States did not sign treaties with Alaska Natives and provide them with reservations in return for ceded land and rights (Philip 1996:269). Therefore, when the state began making claims for land disbursement guaranteed by the Alaska Statehood Act (1958) and tried to push for land leases for the oil companies, Alaska Natives began to submit their own claims to put a halt to the process until the issues of land title were settled.

Rights to subsistence have also been an issue for Alaska Natives in conjunction with land rights. In Alaska, the term “subsistence” has been adopted to refer to customary
hunting and gathering of natural resources (Worl 1988; Haycox 2002; Worl 2010): and in 1978, the Alaska legislature passed a statute that established subsistence as the priority use of fish and wildlife in Alaska, which is still a major point of contention in the state today (Fall 2013).

After the sale of Alaska by the Russian government to the United States in 1867, Native villages began to concentrate around trading posts and churches, but the seasonal fishing, hunting, and gathering activities and the dependence on subsistence resources persisted. However, with the arrival of commercial fishing companies along the coastal regions, the over-hunting of whales in the northern regions, and the lucrative timber industry in Southeast (all of which were unregulated until the early part of the 20th century), subsistence practices were severely harmed, leaving many Alaska Native groups with few alternatives other than to adapt and assimilate into Western economic and cultural systems (Fall 2013:39).

Throughout the 1900s, Alaska Natives adopted strategies to combine and maximize both subsistence and cash pursuits, and today subsistence-based economics continue to play a significant role in the cultural and social realm of Alaska Native societies. But under the statehood act in 1958, the State of Alaska was granted the right to select 103 million acres, while at the same time the act recognized the rights of Alaska Native to lands they used and occupied (Clifford 2004; Worl 2010). The state’s proposed selection of land initiated a series of protests by Alaska Natives who were concerned that their hunting, fishing, and trapping grounds would be taken by the state and made inaccessible for subsistence uses. Village after village began to file protests with the
federal government and by early 1963, nearly 1,000 Natives from 24 villages petitioned the Secretary of the Interior to impose a land freeze to halt all transfer of land ownership until the Alaska Native land rights had been resolved (Worl 1988; Haycox 2002).

Three important pieces of federal legislation that led up to the passage of ANCSA were: the Organic Act of 1884, which allowed Alaska Natives to remain undisturbed on the land they occupied until their title was confirmed by future legislation; the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which granted Native Americans and Alaska Natives the right to conserve and develop Native lands and resources; and the Alaska Reorganization Act (ARA) of 1936, which allowed Alaska Natives to establish village self-governments and borrow money from a federal credit union in order to combat the effects of the Great Depression (Philip 1996). Another piece of legislation that set the tone for ANCSA was the Haida and Tlingit Act of 1935, which was initiated on the basis that neither Russia nor the United States had formerly extinguished the aboriginal possessory rights to land and water used by the Haida and Tlingit peoples from time immemorial (Philip 1996). This became extremely crucial in setting precedence for ANCSA and the development of the corporation system established by the act.

Stephen Haycox, a retired professor of history at the University of Alaska Anchorage, argues that ANCSA is the most important development that shaped modern Alaska, establishing Alaska Natives as partners in the state’s economy and confirming their significance in Alaskan politics (2002). A purposeful alternative to the reservation system, ANCSA was the first settlement of its kind between Native Americans and the federal government. The basic provisions of the act were land, money, and corporations;
and under the terms of the act, Congress agreed that Alaska Natives would be compensated $962.5 million for the extinguishment of title to all but 44 million acres. Congress also authorized that corporations rather than traditional groups or clans would hold title to the land and assets, and divided the land among 12 regional and 200 village corporations² (Haycox 2002; Worl 1988:324).

After forty-three years, ANCSA indeed created a huge impact on the economic development of Alaska and the way business is done within the state. And by supporting health, education, and cultural renewal projects, ANCSA has proven to be financially and culturally empowering for Alaska Natives, which was one of the primary goals of the leaders who fought for the corporate model. However, ANCSA is not without its flaws and has also been subject to harsh criticism over the years.

For instance, although Alaska Natives were initially elated over ANCSA, it only took a few years before complete understanding of the complexities and problems associated with the settlement act sank in (Worl 1988). Corporations would have to wait up to ten years before they could receive title to their land, and the cost of implementing the settlement used most of their financial award. Alaska Natives also came to realize that perpetual ownership of their lands could not be assured under the corporate structure, and they found that the shareholder agreement did not allow for the enrollment of Alaska Natives born after 1971 (Worl 1988). In addition, ANCSA’s strict and inflexible measures of belonging such as the blood quantum required for ANCSA enrollment

² The act was later amended to allow for the formation of a 13th regional corporation for those Alaska Natives living in the lower 48 states.
(Clifford 2004), excludes future generations of those with less than one-quarter Native ancestry and those who cannot be sure of their exact ancestry.

But even with its flaws, the passage of ANCSA and the creation of Native corporations have had a significant cultural impact on revitalization efforts in Alaska as crucial donors to heritage projects and cultural institutions. Often formed under regional and sometimes larger village corporations, nonprofit organizations have been created to address the perpetuation of Alaska Native cultures, languages, and connection to the land.

The Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) is a good example of these efforts. Established in 1980 by Sealaska Corporation, the regional corporation for Southeast Alaska, SHI is a non-profit organization that administers cultural and educational programs for the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, including the development of language education materials for public schools in Southeast Alaska, and the publication of updated dictionaries, phrase books, academic papers, and visual materials for language learning. In 1997, SHI adopted language restoration as the foremost priority of the institute; and although funds were initially limited, after aggressive fund-raising campaigns over the years, SHI now sponsors and supports numerous language and cultural programs across Southeast Alaska, as well as archival projects, historical research, and new publications (Sealaska Heritage Institute 2003).

Over the years, SHI has joined with other organizations in developing a comprehensive, region-wide network of Tlingit language programs, learners, and teachers in Southeast Alaska school districts and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). Currently in its first year, SHI is also hosting a Tlingit Language Master Apprentice
Program, which supports Tlingit language immersion for six master-apprentice teams in three Tlingit communities over a three-year period. SHI also documents hundreds of hours of Tlingit language audio recordings and texts from its extensive archival collections, and recently completed a National Science Foundation project that produced transcriptions and translations of 31 Tlingit texts, adding significantly to the body of work for those studying and learning the language (Hope 2014).

SHI programs also focus on the connection between language and cultural heritage in many of their programs, including the manifestation of traditional knowledge held in heritage objects. In May 2011, a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services allowed a delegation from SHI to travel to the British Museum in London and examine the museum’s Tlingit ethnographic collection, which has stemmed into a larger research project to identify and locate all known Tlingit objects in Europe (Jones 2012:1). Although this is a somewhat daunting task, it is a good example of how an initial project can act as a springboard for further research and possible projects between museums and cultural organizations through collaborative networking. And with some of the best ethnographic collections of Alaska Native material culture housed in institutions outside of the state, collaborative engagements are necessary in making collections available to source communities.

Alaska Native Heritage Center

Community-based museums and cultural centers are good examples of how the Western museum model has been reappropriated to meet the specific needs of the people and the communities they serve. They are also demonstrate how Indigenous communities
endeavor to preserve traditional values and knowledge of their communities while adapting to the pressures of modern life. And in Alaska, the growing numbers of Alaska Native museums and cultural centers also serve as instruments for community vitality and the resurgence of language and culture (Steffian 2006; Chan 2013; Ongley 2011; Clifford 2013).

One important organization that supports and is involved in language and cultural work in Alaska is the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage. Established in 1988 by the Alaska Federation of Native and incorporated as a non-profit educational and cultural organization in 1989, ANHC is a Native institution that functions as a site for cultural exchange, celebration, and education, and draws its funds from a broad range of sources – tribal, corporate, and tourism revenues (ANHC, The Center’s History 2011).

Like many tribal museums and cultural centers, ANHC is not a collections-based institution but functions more as a performance or “gathering space” for face-to-face interactions and cultural exchanges. Opening at its present location in Anchorage in 1999, everything at ANHC is designed to facilitate conversations between different audiences. For tourists and other visitors with limited time, the center provides a clear vision of Alaska Native presence and diversity through color-coded maps and labels identifying five principal cultures/regions – Athabascan, Yup’ik/Cup’ik, Iñupiaq/St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik, Eyak/Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian, and Aleut/Alutiiq – each endowed with a stylized image or logo. For Alaskans of various backgrounds, specialized performances and educational events offer more sustained encounters with Alaska Native artists and tradition bearers (Clifford 2004:15). Thus, adhering to their mission to share, perpetuate,
and preserve Alaska Native cultures, languages, traditions, and values through celebration and education (ANHC, The Center’s History 2011); and although ANHC is located in Anchorage, its mission is not limited to those with easy access to the center.

The ANHC is also a prominent sign of the expanding awareness of Native presence and identity in Alaska, and works to collaborate with other local and state institutions such as the Anchorage Museum, the Anchorage School District, and the University of Alaska for projects, guest lectures, and marketing. One of the most recent projects began in 2012 when the ANHC received grant funds for a one-year project to address the rapid pace of language loss of Alaska Natives, the impact that migration to urban areas has on language loss, and the need to develop a plan to preserve the diverse languages of Alaska Natives who reside away from their tribes and communities in Anchorage. Beginning in the 1950s, a migration of Alaska Natives from the villages to urban centers began and continues today. However, there is a high degree of circular migration among urban Natives as many return seasonally to their village each year to participate in subsistence activities (Worl 1988:319; Clifford 2013).

Urban Natives are often forgotten because their lifestyles might be similar to many non-Native peoples in the same setting, which can be attributed to pressures to assimilate and acculturate in an urban environment. But dislocation from family and community also means that there are even fewer opportunities to speak one’s language, which is a major marker of Indigenous identity throughout the world. Indigenous people who speak a Native language are considered to be more legitimate (or authentic) than those who cannot, regardless of the reasons behind the loss of language (Crowell 2001)
Therefore, one of the goals of the ANHC language project is to develop a plan for preserving and revitalizing the diverse languages of Alaska Native peoples who are physically and culturally displaced within the Anchorage area.

Another example of heritage activity in Alaska and the different methods of cultural revival, translation, and alliance that the ANHC has been involved with was in connection with the collaborative work of Ann Fienup-Riordan, an anthropologist who has worked closely with the Nelson Island Yup’ik for nearly thirty years. The work that is addressed in Fienup-Riordan’s introductory chapter to *Ciuliamta Akluit, Things of Our Ancestors: Yup’ik Elders Explore the Jacobsen Collection at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin* (2005) came about after her first visit to the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin in 1994 to research the Johan Jacobsen collection for the *Agayuliyaraput: Our Way of Making Prayer* exhibition. After the exhibit opening in Anchorage in 1996, Fienup-Riordan began planning for a return visit with funding from the National Science Foundation’s Arctic Social Sciences program through the region’s non-profit corporation, the Association of Village Council Presidents, and other funders like the Anchorage Museum, the Rasmuson Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Calista Elders Council. After one year of preparation, Fienup-Riordan and a seven-member Yup’ik delegation spent three weeks in September 1997 at the museum in Berlin going through Jacobsen’s notes and catalog records (many of them still unpublished).

In her book, Fienup-Riordan points out that the work in Berlin is a good example of “visual repatriation” as the primary concern of the project was not the physical return of objects in the museum’s collection to Alaska, but to reown the knowledge and
experiences that the objects embodied (Fienup-Riordan 2005). The elders who traveled to Berlin were the recognized cultural experts of their regions and were chosen both for their ability and willingness to share what they knew (Fienup-Riordan 2005:xxiii).

According to Fienup-Riordan, the elders were primarily interested in the return of stories and knowledge through their encounters with the old masks, spears, and bows, and what mattered was not the reified objects, but what they could communicate for a Yup’ik future. Instead of resentment for what had been lost and taken from them, elders’ expressed profound gratitude toward both the collectors and the museum for preserving them (Fienup-Riordan 2005), exemplifying the profound benefits Native access to collections for everyone involved.

It is also important to note that Ciuliamta Akluit, Things of Our Ancestors is a bilingual book, providing first-hand accounts and commentary from the trip. During their time at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, elders spoke entirely in Yup’ik, resulting in more than 50 hours of recorded audio commentary, which was carefully transcribed and translated by Maria Meade, a translator and Yup’ik language expert. Fienup-Riordan states that the elders were adamant about the importance of their language being front and center as an expression of Yup’ik pride and recognition of the work being done to preserve the best of their past and carry vital traditions into the future (Fienup-Riordan 2005).

**The Dena’ina Exhibition**

Aside from ANHC, other museums and cultural institutions in Alaska are also working to engage with communities on collaborative projects and programs. One of the
most recent collaborative exhibitions in Alaska that focused on connecting material and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) was the 2013 exhibition *Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina Way of Living* at the Anchorage Museum. This was the first major exhibition focused specifically on Dena’ina with more than 200 objects from around the world representing Dena’ina culture, heritage, and language. At the outset of the twenty-first century, little public acknowledgment of the Dena’ina heritage of Anchorage existed; even though in 2010, 61 percent of Alaska’s population lived on traditional Dena’ina lands, including about 52,000 Alaska Native peoples from all over the state (Fall 2013). However, through the efforts of the Dena’ina community and others, this situation is changing (Fall 2009; Langdon and Leggett 2009).

Initial planning for the exhibition began in August 2006 when Anchorage Museum staff members were invited to meet with a Dena’ina advisory group gathered to explore the possibility of organizing an exhibition about the Dena’ina people of Alaska (Jones, Fall, Leggett 2013). While discussing the need to teach their children about their culture and to help make the Dena’ina visible in one of the most populous regions in the state, the hope was that bringing traditional Dena’ina material culture housed in museums outside of Alaska would be a vehicle to convey their rich history while showing how the Dena’ina people have adapted and live today. Therefore, it was the goal of *Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi: The Dena’ina Way of Living* to embrace an understanding and appreciation of this history and culture and thereby enrich the lives of all who live in or visit Dena’ina Elnena, Dena’ina country (Fall 2013:45).
The Dena’ina exhibition at the Anchorage Museum was just one of several coordinated efforts undertaken to raise public awareness and visibility of the Dena’ina people in the Southcentral Alaska region and to educate visitors about their history and culture. Other projects have included the naming of Anchorage’s new convention center and work with various agencies to post interpretive signage at historic Dena’ina sites (Jones, Fall, and Leggett 2013), including one at Chansh Kaq’Bena (Westchester Lagoon at the mouth of Chanshtnu, or “Chester Creek”) on the popular Tony Knowles Coastal Trail (Fall 2013:45).

One of the most strongly expressed desires of exhibition advisers was that the exhibition emphasize Dena’ina language (Jones, Fall, and Leggett 2013). Since the 1970s, Dena’ina communities, working together with linguists and cultural experts, have created institutions and workshops to strengthen and reintroduce the Dena’ina language. Today, the number of fluent speakers is small, with only about fifty fluent speakers of Dena’ina in the early 2000s. However, efforts to support and revitalize the Dena’ina language have remained strong.

In 2003, the Kenaitze Tribe hosted the first Dena’ina Festival, followed by a three-week Dena’ina language course at Kenai Peninsula College and the creation of the Dena’ina Language Institute. Afterwards, the Dena’ina language website, Qenaga.org, was established in 2005 through the Dena’ina Archiving, Training, and Access project of Eastern Michigan University and the Alaska Native Language Center, with funding from the National Science Foundation. The website offers a guide to learning the language along with a digital archive of more than five hundred documents and recordings relating
to the Dena’ina language (Fall 2013:44), and represents a useful resource for language learners as well as an example of institutional collaboration regarding an endangered Alaska Native language.

James Kari, a cultural anthropologist and linguist affiliated with the Alaska Native Language Center, began linguistic fieldwork on the Dena’ina language in Kenai in 1972 and has subsequently worked in all Dena’in communities with speakers of each of the four dialects. In addition to documenting the language, Kari has recorded place-names and their stories throughout Dena’ina country and has made many important collections of traditional stories, biographies, and history. Kari’s work is also significant because he has experience with and worked with most of the expert Dena’ina speakers of the late twentieth century.

As a co-curator for Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi, Fall was able to provide unique linguistic and cultural insight during the development of the exhibition, and Kari’s Dena’ina Topical Dictionary, published in 2007, was used extensively for exhibition research in Dena’ina material culture and to present object names in the Dena’ina language, both in the exhibition and the catalog (Jones, Fall, and Leggett 2013).

Another co-curator for Dena’inaq’ Huch’ulyeshi was Aaron Leggett (Dena’ina) of Eklutna, a Dena’ina cultural historian who has been actively engaged in Dena’ina revitalization and raising public awareness of the Dena’ina people, their history, and their culture. Since 2002, he has been involved in number of initiatives in the Southcentral region, including projects for Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), ANHC, ASC, and the Anchorage Museum. Leggett was also heavily involved in the naming of the Dena’ina
Civic and Convention Center in downtown Anchorage. His contributions to the Dena’ina exhibit ranged from its initial planning to speaking with community advisers and developing exhibit content, which resulted in a popular and timely exhibit about the traditional Indigenous people of Anchorage. Leggett is also learning his language and helping with revitalization effort, which will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

**Alaska Native Language Center and Alaska Native Language Archive**

Another important institution that is working to document and preserve Alaska Native languages is the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF). Founded under state legislation in 1972 (just one year after ANCSA was passed), the ANLC has become an internationally recognized institution that has contributed greatly to the knowledge of Alaska Native languages through publications, development of orthographies, dictionaries, and translations of oral histories (Alaska Native Languages Center n.d.; Williams 2009), and maintains an archival library as both a record and a resource of virtually everything written in or about Alaska Native languages (Alaska Native Language Center n.d.; Krauss 1980).

Affiliated with the ANLC, the Alaska Native Language Archive (ANLA) was established in 2009 as a separate entity to house the collection of more than 15,000 documents, including some of the earliest audio recordings of Alaska Native languages dating back to the 1940s. Created with the goal of consolidating various published and unpublished materials scattered in archives and libraries around the world, ANLA serves as a repository for educational materials being developed by Alaska Native speakers and linguists for language learning (Alaska Native Language Archive, About n.d.).
present, ANLA is in the process of digitizing its collections, making it an invaluable resource for communities and Native organizations engaged in language revitalization efforts, as well as for researchers, teachers, and students involved in the development of various forms of language planning, learning, and programming.

Similar to the language programs that have been established at the University of Hawaii (which will be discussed further in the next chapter), and relying on the resources available on campus at ANLA/ANLC, students at UAF, Native and non-Native alike, can major in an Alaska Native language, acquiring learning and teaching methods through an assortment of on-campus and distance learning courses. Although degree programs are currently limited to Yup’ik and Iñupiaq, courses, seminars, and workshops are frequently offered in other Alaska Native languages; and individuals can arrange to work with ANLC/ANLA staff in all other languages according to their website (Alaska Native Language Center, Classes n.d.).

Along with local and regional partnerships that the ANLC/ANLA have developed in Alaska, the institute is also engaged with larger initiatives including the Endangered Languages Project, which is an online resource provided by the Catalogue of Endangered Languages for more than 3,000 languages worldwide that encourages the sharing and dissemination of documented materials (Endangered Languages n.d.). In Chapter Five, I will discuss how this program is also connected to the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center and Recovering Voices initiative.
Current Legislation

As the previous description of the programs show, even with all of the problems and uncertainties facing Alaska Native languages in the twenty-first century, there are some exciting and promising developments regarding the preservation and revitalization, and the recognition of Alaska Native languages.

One of the most recent developments regarding the efforts to protect and preserve the vitality of Alaska Native languages is the signing of Alaska Senate Bill 130 in May 2012. What is significant about this legislation is that it supports the creation of an Alaska Native Language Preservation and Advisory Council to assess the state of Alaska Native languages, and to reevaluate language programs, both to make recommendations on establishing new programs and to reorganize existing ones. Although attention to language and cultural education is not uncommon at the local and regional level, this is the first piece of legislation that grants Alaska Native languages a voice statewide. The initial council members include those with professional and practical language skills, including three individuals associated with language programs at the University of Alaska (Fairbanks and Southeast) as well as the President and CEO of the ANHC. Governor Sean Parnell, who signed the bill into legislation, stated that: “Without language preservation, a cultures dies. As Alaskans, we honor and celebrate our traditional cultures. The state will join with Alaskans to make sure these languages live on” (Medred 2012).

Another piece of important legislation (and possibly the most encouraging for other Native American languages in the United States) is Alaska House Bill 216 (HB
216), also known as the Alaska Native Languages Bill, which is an act that intends to add Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup’ik, Alutiiq, Unangan, Dena’ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwitch’in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Han, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages as official languages of the state. In conjunction with SB 130, HB 216 helps build momentum for supporting Alaska Native language speakers in their efforts to preserve and revitalize their languages (Kelly 2014; Talking Alaska 2014a). In order to get the bill passed, advocates testified and lobbied for the bill, and hosted a sit-in at the Capitol building in Juneau until it passed early in the morning on April 21, 2014. And with the signing of the bill into law by Governor Sean Parnell on October 23, 2014 at the Alaska Federation of Natives conference in Anchorage, Alaska became the second state after Hawai’i to recognize Indigenous languages as official languages of the state.

Although the law is largely symbolic and will not put additional financial burden on the state, there have been voiced concerns from legislators and the public that the bill will require the use of Native languages or the production of official materials in Native languages. Another concern is that the passage of the bill will “deepen the divide” between Native and non-Native Alaskans (Talking Alaska 2014b), however, this divide already exists at least in part because the of historical treatment of and the preferential status given to the English language over Alaska Native languages. In fact, the intention of HB 216 is to add Alaska Native languages to a statute created by a 1998 voter initiative that made English the official language of Alaska (Kelly 2014). This is why even though the law is symbolic, it is important because of its official, political
recognition of Alaska Native languages, which is what many Indigenous peoples and speakers of endangered Indigenous languages are looking for. As Ishmael Hope states:

“Our world is in our language, our breath of life. We are truly equal when our particular, unique container of wisdom – *haa yoo xh’atángi*, our language, *haa khusteeyi*, our way of life – is acknowledged, honored, and respected” (Hope 2014).
Chapter Three: Literature Review

In this chapter I will discuss the main trends regarding language revitalization literature and how language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is being approached by museums, particularly though collaborative initiatives with source communities. I begin by introducing linguistic anthropology, and current concepts and terms that are relevant to language preservations and revitalization, including two examples of language and cultural revitalization initiatives. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss a brief history of museums and the development of new museology to address the changing realities of museums in the twenty-first century, which includes the incorporation of Indigenous curation and language as ICH into museum practices.

Language is an irreplaceable vehicle of cultural and intellectual heritage of peoples, encoding the whole history of many thousands of years of cultural history (Crowell 2012), and when a language dies, that knowledge is lost for good. The idea that linguistic diversity should be preserved is not a sentimental tribute to some idealized past, but part of the promotion of sustainable, appropriate, and empowering development (Nettle and Romaine 2000:153). Linguistic diversity provides unique perspectives into the mind as it reveals the many creative ways which humans organize and categorize their experiences. The benefits of increased awareness, and understanding of language endangerment and revitalization can be significant, and an understanding of language issues is key to supporting source communities in efforts to preserve and revitalize
endangered Indigenous languages. A wider appreciation of the sociocultural issues related to community language initiatives may inform the protection of materials related to linguistic and cultural knowledge (Reznowski and Joseph 2011:47). However, based on my review of the literature in the field, I argue that in order for linguistic and cultural revitalization efforts to be successful and sustainable, interest and development needs to come from within source communities.

**Linguistic Anthropology**

Through the process of empire building, industrialization, and globalization over the last five hundred years or so, Indigenous peoples around the world have come to share a history of linguistic, cultural, and physical genocide and oppression (McCarty 2008; Hinton 2003). Language loss continues to be a struggle for Indigenous people as fluent speakers become elderly and are unable to pass on their knowledge to younger generations who grow up not learning the language at home or who move out of their home communities to more urban areas where there are less opportunities to learn/speak their traditional language, often in response to the social pressures to adapt to the dominant culture. Presently it is estimated that by 2100, 90 percent of the world’s more than 6,000 languages will no longer be spoken with only a small portion of that number being documented and recorded (Hinton 2003; Krauss 2006). That is why language loss and the documentation and revitalization of the world’s endangered languages are of such concern. Because when people lose their language and their culture, they lose a fundamental tool for comprehending and coping with the world. And when a language loses its speakers, it dies (Nettle and Romaine 2000).
Linguists have long been aware of the decline of Indigenous languages, and over the past few hundred years significant work has been done by Native and non-Native scholars working with language and cultural experts to document them. Particularly in the nineteenth century, anthropologists and linguists were intent on documenting Indigenous languages to preserve them for academic and scientific purposes. Most notably, Franz Boas’ fieldwork in the Pacific Northwest yielded detailed studies of Tlingit, Haida, and other Northwest Coast languages, oral histories, and mythologies with the primary intention that they be preserved for future study (Cole 1985; Hinton 2010).

One of the most important reasons the majority of the world’s languages are known only to specialists and speakers themselves is that many linguists work on only one or sometimes a handful of related languages throughout their careers (Nettle and Romaine 2000). And with a limited number of linguists dedicated to documenting, preserving, and learning these languages, it takes time for a substantial amount of work to be done.

In addition to the documentation of Indigenous languages, Boas and other anthropologists/linguists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were also focused on the preservation and collection of material culture of Indigenous peoples and saw museums as places to preserve traces of vanishing cultures (Kreps 2003; Darnell 2004; Hoerig 2010). However, the motivation behind this work was not always for the benefit of those whose linguistic and cultural heritage was disappearing, which has created tension and mistrust between researchers and the communities where they research. Often referred to as “salva
gene ethnography”, or the extensive collecting of artifacts that were sent to various museums, universities and other institutions in the United States and
throughout Europe (Cole 1985), salvage ethnography was deemed necessary to preserve evidence or data of Indigenous cultures before it was too late and Indigenous peoples had completely assimilated into mainstream culture and society. A further discussion of the effects of salvage ethnography will be discussed later in this chapter. Below, I discuss ideas and concepts related to language loss and revitalization of Indigenous languages.

First, it is important to provide brief definitions of linguistic terms that are used repeatedly throughout this chapter. As one of the four fields of anthropology, linguistic anthropology is defined as the scientific study of human language. Linguistic anthropology straddles the fields of linguistics and sociocultural anthropology and also draws from other fields such as the philosophy of language literacy theory, developmental psychology, and folklore studies (Black 2013:274). A growing section of this field is applied linguistics, which addresses the real-world application of linguistic theory and methods. The scope of what could be termed applied linguistic anthropology is expanding outward from research on language politics, language endangerment, and minority languages as scholars work in dialogue with public institutions and discourses throughout the fieldwork, analysis, and publication process (Black 2013). And during the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, a significant part of this scholarship has been dedicated to issues related to language shift, loss, and death, particularly in regards to the world’s Indigenous languages.

Language shift refers to the gradual displacement of one language by another in the lives of the community members (Fishman 2001) manifested as a loss in the number of speakers, level of proficiency, or range of fundamental use of the language. According
to Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, language shift occurs when a community of people shifts from speaking one language to another in response to pressures of various types – social, cultural, economic, and even military – on a community (2000). Shifts can either be enforced through policy, as many Indigenous languages experienced through colonial administrations, or voluntarily as people perceive that speaking a dominant language is more beneficial than speaking in their own traditional tongue (Nettle and Romaine 2000).

For clarification, Nettle and Romaine identify three types of language loss: population loss, forced shift, and voluntary shift. Population loss occurs when the people who speak the language cease to exist, either through physical removal or death (often times through disease). Forced shift is when policies are implemented to suppress and eradicate a language, as has been the experience of most of the world’s Indigenous languages. And lastly, voluntary shift is a form of language loss that occurs when a community comes to perceive that they would be better off speaking a language other than their own (Nettle and Romaine 2000:90-91) and that language is not passed on to younger generations. Although the distinctions between these types of language loss is useful when applied to individual languages to determine the historical context and circumstances for loss, it is important to remember that for the most part, Indigenous peoples have had very little choice in whether or not to speak and transmit their languages (Johnson 2013). However, there are theories on how to address and possible rectify language shift and loss.
For example, Joshua A. Fishman’s theory on “Reversing Language Shift” (RLS), which consists of an eight-stage process for language revitalization in Indigenous communities, is regularly referenced in language revitalization literature. He argues that to counter language loss, Indigenous communities must begin revitalization by teaching the language as a second language, centering cultural events and activities in the language, and then broadening schooling to adults and elders in order to achieve intergenerational transmutation of the language, development of literacy in the language (both outside and within the state educational system when warranted), and finally culminating in media, government services, and higher education being conducted in the language (Henze and Davis 1999; Fishman 2001). According to Fishman, this model of language revival is intended to direct efforts to where they are most effective and to avoid wasting energy trying to achieve the later stages of recovery when the earlier stages have not been accomplished. However, he cautions that RLS theory does not posit any evolutionary, inescapable or obligatory sequence of functional stages: it merely suggests that there must be strategic support of linkage stages, both anticipatory to and subsequent to any crucial target function (Fishman 2001).

The criticisms of RLS also address this limitation that Fishman himself points out as some have argued that this scale of revitalization is too restrictive and rigid, and that many Indigenous peoples want to define the goals and successes of revitalization on their own terms (Henze and Davis 1999; Johnson 2013:51), often emphasizing the importance of language education.
As RLS theory points out, language education is crucial to revitalization, but due to historical government policies aimed at assimilation and the structure of state educational systems today, support for incorporating Indigenous languages into schools has been and continues to be a struggle. For Indigenous peoples of the United States, Canada, and Australia, government policies resulted in forceful legislation, which attempted to eradicate traditional languages, religious practices, and other forms of cultural expression (Simpson 1996). And as the most distinctive and recognizable form of cultural expression, language was usually the primary target.

Language education policies for Native Americans in the United States typify the role of colonial schooling and language eradication (McCarty 2008), particularly as colonial governments and missionaries commonly used their beliefs about the inferiority of Indigenous languages and cultures to justify replacing them with European languages such as French, Spanish, and English (Nettle and Romaine 2000). One of the most effective tools for these policies was through federal boarding schools where the central mission was to assimilate and “civilize” Native American peoples through English-only instruction, which enforced the suppression of culture and language and has had severe ramifications in Native American communities that still exist to this day.

Between 1850 and 1970, strict assimilation policies were enforced in Native schools (boarding schools and rural community schools) where speaking Indigenous languages was forbidden (Reinschmidt 2013) and students were physically punished if they were caught speaking their traditional or ancestral language. Even outside of the classroom, individuals heard speaking Native languages in public were punished. At
home, parents were strongly encouraged to speak only English to their children so far as they were able (Krauss 1980), and often did for fear of what would happen if their children were heard speaking their language. In turn, many Native Americans internalized the idea that their language and culture was second best to English, often resulting in voluntary language loss in favor of English. Unfortunately, the effects of such policies have been that multiple generations have lost the ability to speak or understand their language. Although this is not to say that all Native languages were completely abandoned, assimilation policies were effective to the point that many parents and community elders voluntarily chose to encourage English only policies, refusing to teach their ancestral language to their children and grandchildren for fear of future retribution both inside and outside their community. However, it is important to note that even though outside pressures are powerful influences against the use of Indigenous languages, language death can come about because people make a free choice to shift to another language out of necessity or for socioeconomic reasons (Nettle and Romaine 2000:153).

Aside from the historical traumas that Native peoples have experienced due to assimilation policies, establishing comprehensive language programs in the U.S. has been a difficult process because of government and institutional policies, political pressures, and the perceived economic benefits of assimilation (Reznowski and Joseph 2011). The history of bilingual education in the United States has also put Native Americans in direct conflict with the federal government on more than one occasion. Even when legislation such as the Native American Language Act of 1990 (revised 1992), which vows to promote and protect Native American languages, are passed (McCarty 2008), other
federal legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act create serious obstacles for communities, forcing them to come up with ways to work within the system to create effective language programming, while Native students, like immigrants, have to meet federal and state education standards while learning their Native languages.

After World War II and through the process of decolonization in countries that had been colonized by European and American empires, there was an increased recognition that Indigenous languages and the knowledge imbedded in them were in serious decline and in danger of being lost, but little was done to support and preserve them outside of academia until the 1970s and 1980s. In the United States, this period of time is often referred to as a cultural ‘renaissance’ for Native Americans, with a strong language revitalization component that has taken different forms and processes depending on the community. It is at this time that anthropologists and linguists working with endangered languages became increasingly involved in language maintenance, codification, and revitalization to serve Indigenous communities that they worked with (Hinton 2010), and not just for the benefit of their own research. Continually adding to a growing literature on the topic.

However, languages are not saved by documentation alone. Successful language revitalization is accomplished through integrated strategies that involve communities, institutions, and support networks (Reznowski and Joseph 2011). As Leanne Hinton states in her article, “Language Revitalization in North America and the New Directions of Linguistics,” the primary goal in language revitalization is the development of new speakers - whether native or second-language speakers (2010:38). Many linguists also
emphasize that language revitalization must be initiated from within the community in order for it to be truly successful. Nevertheless, the benefits of increased awareness, and an understanding of language endangerment and revitalization outside of source communities can be significant in rallying support (Reznowski 2011:48).

Nancy H. Hornberger identifies language revitalization as the attempt to add new linguistic forms of social functions to a threatened language with the aim of increasing its uses or users (Hornberger 2010:413). In this sense, language revitalization, renewal, or reversing language shift goes one step further than language maintenance (which denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful or numerically stronger language), in that it implies restoring or reconstructing something that is at least partially lost, rather than maintaining and strengthening what already exists. The changes in emphasis from language maintenance to language revitalization is at least in part a reflection of the changing and increasingly threatened circumstances of the world’s languages, in particular Indigenous languages, in the latter years of the twentieth century (Hornberger 2010:413). Circumstances such as the worldwide growth and migrations of peoples out of their communities and regions of origin and into other countries and regions has greatly contributed to the effects of language loss and spurred language preservation and revitalization initiatives.

Coming out of the social and cultural movements of the 1970s and 1980s, many Native American tribal organizations and communities developed bilingual education programs as a way to combat language loss (Hinton 2003). But due to the oral nature of most Indigenous languages of the world, the majority of these languages are unwritten,
not recognized officially, and restricted to local community and home functions (Nettle and Romaine 2000). Therefore, because most Indigenous languages throughout the world either do not have a strong literary tradition or have one of recent standing, the development of new tribal writing systems has become necessary in order to create literary materials for educational purposes and community use.

At present, the revitalization of Indigenous languages is most prevalent through school programs and cultural centers located within source communities (McCarty 2008). However, due to insufficient training for bilingual teachers and teachers’ aides, English is frequently the primary language of the classroom even in immersion programs where the local traditional language is supposed to be used. But this too is changing as more universities are working with communities and fluent language speakers/educators to develop courses and programs that allow Native peoples to be able to attain a college degree and/or advanced training in their languages, often with the intended goal that they be able to return to their home communities to teach their language to the next generation of speakers. Although all children have the capability to learn any language as long as they have adequate input from others in the community, they begin by learning the simpler aspects of their language first then move on to more complex structures. And the more complex a structure is, the longer it takes to learn (Nettle and Romaine 2000).

Fortunately for many Indigenous children growing up in the twenty-first century, choices now exist that were absent a generation ago (McCarty 2008). This includes online learning resources such as language education videos, words of the day on tribal supported websites, and the use of technological applications like Skype and Face Time.
that allow virtually simulated face-to-face interaction between language educators/speakers and students. Although this does not replace face-to-face learning, and often presents its own unique set of problems between teachers and language learners, it does provide a useful alternative for exposing younger generations to language through a medium that they are familiar and comfortable with.

In anthropology, the incorporation of digital technologies - including audio, video, and photography, as well as computer word processing programs for field-notes, electronic maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), social media, and digital archives – have become normative tools and economically viable resources for the documentation and preservation of language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and its connections to material culture, the natural environment, and social, political and economic conditions (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012:37). One of the limitations of technology is that digital heritage is shaped by systems of heritage value and subjective evaluation about what to preserve, what to make public, what to keep private, and what can be allowed to be lost.

Language Revitalization Initiatives

One of the most successful language and cultural revitalization initiatives has been in Hawai‘i. During the nineteenth century, Hawai‘i experienced a high level of Hawaiian language literacy that was attained through a Hawaiian-medium public school system and everyday use, but within a few decades of U.S. occupation after the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in 1893, the Hawaiian language went from being spoken by all generations of multiethnic Hawaiians to near extinction. Most Native
Hawaiian speakers stopped speaking Hawaiian to their children and grandchildren around the 1920s, and by the early 1980s, the Hawaiian language had reached its lowest point with fewer than 50 Native speakers under the age of 18 (Kawai‘ae’a 2007). However, during this time the cultural resurgence known as the “Hawaiian renaissance” was in full effect, with a strong focus on the revitalization of the Hawaiian language as a living language of the home, school, and community.

Inspired by the parallel realities and successful efforts of language immersion programs in New Zealand and Canada, Ka Papahana Kaiapuni (Hawaiian Language Immersion Program) was launched in 1987 with approval from the Board of Education as a pilot program for grades K-12 (Kawai‘ae’a 2007). Similar to the experiences of other Indigenous language revitalization efforts, those who supported the immersion program argued that Hawaiian could only be revitalized by learning, teaching, and using Hawaiian in a variety of environments, including home, school, work, and play. The goal of the immersion program was, and still is, to build healthy Hawaiian-speaking communities in the perpetuation of the Hawaiian language for the benefit of present and future generations. Operating on a limited budget with minimal assistance from the government, and with teachers and parents doing much of the work to develop curriculum materials and doing translation work themselves the first few years, the longevity of the program was questionable until it was changed to permanent program status in 1989, and grew to include grades K-12 by 1992 (Kawai‘ae’a 2007).

Part of what made this program so successful was the complete immersion of students in learning the Hawaiian language at school and at home. This took time,
however, as the development of the program was an ongoing process, with continuous pressure from the state and even other Hawaiians to adopt a bilingual format so that students would not be English-illiterate and face future repercussions (like not being able to go to college). But after more than twenty years with high graduation and college attendance rates, the success and individual benefits of participating in the immersion programs in Hawai‘i are well established. Numerous studies and follow-up interviews with program participants have shown that immersion programs offer the opportunity to develop multilingual fluency, which challenges the complexities of the brain, broadening perspectives, and helps to ground the child’s cultural identity (Stillman 1996: Kawai‘ae‘a 2007).

Language planning generally consists of ways to affect language use by groups of people for communicating group ideas, and involves identifying what parts of the language can be changed and what needs to be left alone (Eastman 1983). As Carol M. Eastman points out in her book, *Language Planning: An Introduction* (1983), languages evolve over time, but language change is a process that cannot be forced. Why a change takes place is closely associated with the society in which the change occurred. Particularly for Native Americans, languages suffered as the people who spoke them adapted their lives and worldviews to adjust to the demands of the dominant society (Eastman 1983). But as I stated above, this does not necessarily mean that languages and cultural traditions were completely abandoned.

Strategies for community empowerment in Hawai‘i have also included founding tribal colleges or Native American Studies programs and departments in non-Native
institutions. In 1997, the University of Hawai‘i – Hilo (UH-Hilo) established the Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language, offering the Kahuawaiola Hawaiian-Medium Teaching Certification program for those wanting to teach in language immersion programs. The following year, UH-Hilo began offering a Master of Arts in Hawaiian Language and Literature in partial support from the office of Hawaiian Affairs, making it the first degree taught entirely in a Native American language in the United States (Kawai‘ae’a 2007).

Another element of Hawaiian language revitalization has been its connection with the cultural expression of Hawaiian heritage. Even during its decline, the Hawaiian language survived through music and hula performances produced for tourist consumption and commercial popularity. Cultural performances are expressive events that create and transform cultural patterns constituted in performance, are expressive of culture beliefs and practices, and are important to sociopolitical organization. As a cultural performance of Hawaiian dance and music, the revival of hula is a creative response to the challenges of cultural survival, and the act of performing the hula is an act of situating oneself within the hula tradition. According to Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman in her article, “Hawaiian Hula Competitions: Event, Repertoire, Performance, Tradition,” hula is an elaborate cultural performance which relies heavily on music and language while emphasis is on the visual display of the performance (1996). The further act of doing so is an acknowledgment of the significance for displaying the Hawaiian cultural tradition that hula embodies (Stillman 1996).
The performative nature of contemporary heritage projects is visible across a range of occasions (Clifford 2004), particularly in the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett points out that dance teams, heritage performers, craft cooperatives, cultural centers, arts festivals, museums, exhibitions, recordings, archives, Indigenous media, and cultural curricula (including language) are not only evidence of heritage, its continuity, and its vitality in the present, but they are also instruments for adding value to the cultural forms they perform, teach, exhibit, circulate, and market (1995:373-374). And although the old/new articulations, performances, and translations of identity are not enough to bring about structural socioeconomic change, they do reflect and to a real extent create new conditions for Indigenous solidarity, activism, and participation in diverse public spheres (Clifford 2004:22). However, I would add that even though Indigenous groups identify as living cultures, because of the nature of funding for heritage projects and initiatives, many are forced to demonstrate how their cultures are endangered and the importance of preserving that heritage through grant funding institutions in order to receive funding.

The connection between hula and the Hawaiian language also demonstrates the deeper connection between language and culture. The Hawaiian language is the central link to being Hawaiian, carrying the code of Hawaiian behavior, and through it, Hawaiian thinking makes sense and the culture takes on a deeper and richer meaning (Stillman 1996: Kawai’ae’a 2007:205). Although Hawai‘i has had its own unique and challenging experiences in the revitalization of Hawaiian language and culture, much of this experience can be extended to other revitalization efforts worldwide.
Another significant language revitalization initiative has been in California. However, with over fifty different languages at varying levels of endangerment, their situation and experience has been somewhat different. According to Leanne Hinton and Jocelyn Ahlers, unlike other places like Hawai‘i or New Zealand that were faced with saving and revitalizing one language, California has more Indigenous languages than almost any other part of the world and is a key reason that language revitalization has been so difficult for California tribes (1999). But this is only part of the problem. California tribes also face the issue of too few speakers, communities that are too dispersed, and the lack of support systems in universities that are present in other places. But that has not stopped California tribes from trying. Through written, audio, and video documentation, language curriculum development, after school programs, family classes, language camps, and mentored learning, California tribes are fighting to keep their languages alive (Hinton and Ahlers 1999:59).

Part of this initiative has been through the California Native Language Restoration Workshop, which was initiated in 1996 to introduce tribes to the linguistic materials held in the University of California, Berkeley archives and to teach linguistic fundamentals to help with revitalization efforts (Hinton and Ahlers 1999:60). One of the drawbacks of this program is that anyone learning the language with no speakers and no pedagogical materials has to begin the process of learning and reintroducing the language to the community, must continue to speak English for most communication needs (Hinton and Ahlers 1999). Even so, new generations of language speakers are willing to use the language as much as possible while trying to utilize available resources to
revitalize their languages, such as the Breath of Life program and the Recovering Voices initiative that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

**Revitalization and Museums**

As communities look for resources to develop and support revitalization initiatives, many often turn to academic institutions because of the recorded and collected materials they house, but more and more communities are also turning to museums because of the wealth of material culture, and in turn the imbedded cultural knowledge, housed in their collections. Born during the age of imperialism (Ames 1992), museums represent a complex relationship with Indigenous peoples. Many collections began as ‘cabinets of curiosities’ or trophy cases of the wealthy that were then incorporated into national or public institutions to display the spoils of conquest and to present the cultures of the people under colonial control. During this time museums funded and sponsored the collecting of vast quantities of cultural material throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (and earlier), leaving many Indigenous communities with little or no material culture directly available to them (Cole 1985; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991; Simpson 1996; Crowell 2010).

It was during this time that the perceptions of the “vanishing Indian” was expanded into practices of “salvage ethnography” by which researchers entered Indigenous communities to record the “vanishing traditions” and to collect material evidence before they were lost for good (Cole 1985). Seizure of material culture was justified by claims that objects could be better analyzed and preserved in isolation from their original cultural contexts and were best academically interpreted alongside field
reports. However, within the past fifty years, the basic assumptions and practices of how museums care for and present their collections is changing. Rather than museums existing for the sole purpose of preserving and studying collections, as Boas and other early anthropologists believed, they now exist more and more for the purpose of serving the public (Ames 1992; Kreps 2003), including those cultures from whom their collections originate.

New Museum Theory

New museum theory, or new museology, is about decolonizing and giving those represented in museums control of their own cultural heritage (Marstine 2006). The goal of new museology was, and largely still is, the transformation of social practices through the transformation of the museum from a display of singular expert accounts to a site of different educational engagements (Boast 2011:58). New museum theory also holds that, though museum workers commonly naturalize their policies and procedures as professional practice, the decisions these workers make reflect underlying value systems that are encoded in institutional narratives (Marstine 2006:5).

Emphasizing a shift in practice and ideology of the museum as a cultural artifact (Hein 2000), new museology forces museums to be self-reflective when looking at their institutional history and to redefine their relationship with the public (Ames 1992; Phillips 2003; Marstine 2006). According to Janet Marstine, “new museum ethics is not merely an ideal; it is a social practice” (2011:20). In her chapter, “The Contingent Nature of the New Museum Ethics,” in *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics* (2011), Marstine emphasizes the idea of reciprocity and “shared authority” is paramount in the
ethical and social responsibility of museums and among museum professionals, particularly regarding the shared guardianship of museum collections. As Marstine points out, the question of ownership of museum collections has been problematic in the past and by approaching the issue of guardianship, museums are able to reflect on the fluidity and complexity of their relationships to the communities (especially source communities) whose cultural heritage they house. She also states that incorporating technology is another aspect of the ethics of sustainability in pooling and distributing resources in ways that promote public access to collections (Marstine 2011:19), which in turn fosters the development and expansion of these relationships through collaborative research and public outreach in the new museum.

As both a theoretical and a methodological orientation, new museology reflects a rising sentiment that acknowledges the responsibility of museums to work with local peoples, to include them in decision-making processes, and to provide them with greater opportunities for self-determination and self-representation (Schultz 2011:2). Based more on dialogue, new museology also provides a new context for thinking about museum collections and the relationship between tangible and intangible cultures, allowing for deeper meanings and associations to come forward, and to fortify the relationship between objects and people. Particularly in regards to Indigenous communities, new museology gives agency to Native voice and the preservation of cultural heritage and how cultural identity is maintained, reinforced, and constructed in museums and other cultural institutions (Ames 1992; Kreps 2003).
Although the primary concern of new museology is the development of new theories and practices to enable museums to communicate more effectively with their visitors, new museology is much more than this, and may be best defined as the radical reassessment of the role of museums within society (Ames 2010; Davis 2011:61). We also need to consider the development of new museology within a wider heritage context and whether the upsurge of interest in cultural identity, cultural property and ICH may also be categorized as part of, or a partner to, new museology (Davis 2011:62). This is particularly important when working with source communities regarding the documentation and dissemination of recorded materials from collaborative projects.

At the same time that tribal museums and cultural centers were being established, museums found themselves at the center of the wider “culture wars” over whether it was or was not possible or permissible to see some cultural products and forms of knowledge as more valuable or valid than others. Consequently, museums became sites at which some of the most contested cultural epistemological questions of the late twentieth century were fought (MacDonald 2008:4).

Calling for a new approach to preservation that goes beyond the old concept of holding objects in the name of the public (Clavir 2002:72), over the past twenty years or so, there has been a dramatic shift in the way that museums engage with source communities in the United States, particularly after the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. NAGPRA is a United States federal law that establishes a process for federal agencies and museums to return Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural
patrimony to lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations (Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010; National NAGPRA N.d.). As a monumental piece of legislation affecting museums, NAGPRA requires every repository receiving federal funds to inventory its Native American holdings and to notify tribes with a potential interest in their collections as to what they have. Tribes can then, if they choose, request that cultural objects falling within the law’s purview be repatriated to them.

Since the passage of the NAGPRA, the opportunity for museums and museum professionals in the United States to establish collaborative relationships with Native American communities has dramatically shifted the power-relations and curatorial voice between source communities and mainstream museums in the United States (Ames 1992; Cash Cash 2001; Clavir 2002). Although some tribes are content to allow contested objects to remain the possession of the museum until proper facilities can be constructed, NAGPRA has forced museums to open discussions with tribes that have led to the creation of partnerships with source communities even outside the realm of NAGPRA (Brown 2003; Cooper 2008; Nash and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2010).

Native scholars have provided significant commentary and critique on the meaning and effectiveness of the law over the past 20 years since it was enacted. In their analysis of the historical and legislative background, as well as the significance and meaning of NAGPRA, Jack F. Trope and Walter R. Echo-Hawk emphasize the law is important because it opened the door for the creation of collaborative relationships between museums and source communities, but it also represents the first time that the
U.S. government and non-Native institutions were required to consider what is sacred from the Indigenous perspective (2000:151), which can also be problematic for the tribes.

One of the biggest issues with NAGPRA, and repatriation in general, is that Native communities are now required to divulge sacred and esoteric forms of knowledge to substantiate their claim to these items to ensure appropriate disposition of such objects, often without the guarantee of the protection of that knowledge (Cash Cash 2001:144). In working with tribes and tribal representatives, museums are trying to address this by being accessible and establishing collaborative relationships with tribes in regards to specific needs/desires while going through the repatriation process, including creating safeguards for culturally sensitive materials and/or knowledge.

Using the example of medicine bundles to demonstrate this concern, Phillip E. Cash Cash describes the significance of NAGPRA and the incorporation of Indigenous curation in non-Native institutions. Although there is some criticism that non-Native institutions have not gone far enough to include Native perspectives into their institutions, Cash Cash states that:

It must be acknowledged, however, that museums have also been made important and timely contributions to the revitalization of Native cultures. Museums have been instrumental in preserving material culture in the onslaught of change, building unique collaborative partnerships in the presentation and display of objects, ensuring access to sacred materials, and even repatriating objects to tribes well before the enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 (2001:139).

This is significant because even though there are still serious critiques of the authority of museums, NAGPRA has created opportunities to establish collaborative relationships with source communities, allowing museums “to gain a deeper understanding of the
meanings and values of certain classes of objects, and to expand our knowledge of alternative methods of curation” (Kreps 2003:3-4). Museums that collaborate with source communities often find that, together, they can find solutions that meet the needs of both parties (Marstine 2006).

Collaboration

Over the past twenty years or so collaboration has become a key methodology and framework for museums working with source communities, particularly as a means of relationship building. And as with new museology, collaboration represents more than a shift in methodologies. The collaborative process involves shared management and direction of a research project among anthropologists, museum staff, and the source communities they work with (Low and Merry 2010; Kurin 1997). The growing emphasis on collaboration also demonstrates a change in the self-awareness of museums (Schultz 2011) and their relationships with diverse communities, particularly those whose cultural heritage they house.

I would like to clarify that consultation and collaboration are often used synonymously, but the latter represents a much deeper commitment with source communities (Andreassen 2011) and is not co-equivalent to the former, a term with strong legal connotations that indicates a process of information exchange in a decision making process structured through government-to-government relations (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008). This also relates to the work of James Clifford regarding the concept of museums as “contact zones”, a term he borrows from Mary Louise Pratt, who defines contact zones as, “the 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 other aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (1992:3-4). Expanding this concept to the realm of museums, Clifford refers to contact zones as the space where peoples separated by colonial hierarchies can meet and establish ongoing relationships (Clifford 1997; Peers and Brown 2003). But given the complex relationship between museums and source communities Clifford cautions that:

Until museums do more than consult (often after the curatorial vision is firmly in place), until they bring a wider range of historical experiences and political agendas into the actual planning of exhibits and the control of museum collections, they will be perceived as merely paternalistic by people whose contact history with museums has been one of exclusion and condescension (1997:207-208).

Although this theory describes museums as a space of colonial encounters, contemporary contact work in museums goes beyond consultation and cultural sensitivity as it also focuses on continuous dialogue between museums and source communities as relationships develop through collaborative processes and sharing of authority (Clifford 1997).

A key ethical principle of collaborative projects is that all participants should be able to define and gain the benefits they deem appropriate, while stressing the need to avoid harm. Although collaborative projects take longer to develop and implement, the added investment allows the projects to become a much more effective site for research, education, and invocation (Phillips 2003:159). Nevertheless, it is important to note that new interpretations and knowledge that is brought forward from collaborative exhibits do not erase the past, but represent a hybrid product of the postcolonial era. Similarly,
Indigenous community members and academically trained museum professionals are hybrid beings, and the decision to engage in collaborative projects only intensifies this process of hybridization by promoting new dialogic exchanges (Phillips 2003).

One major development in museological practice has been the shift in focus from objects to people (Westermann 2005). Museums are just beginning to address the implication of their commitment to building long-term relationships with communities, and many museums with ethnographic collections, particularly in North America, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, have had to become sensitive to multiple histories, and competing or complimentary narratives of their audiences (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: Ames 1992).

Postcolonial theory has had a significant impact on museums and museological practices (Kreps 2011; Alivizatou 2008). As part of a larger framework for the concepts of new museology and collaboration, postcolonial theory emphasizes a more reflexive form of museum practice that values multivocal and co-constructed knowledge and narrative (Low and Merry 2010; Phillips 2003). Multivocality refers to the idea that there can be more than one interpretation of an event or the meaning of an object. And as it applies to museums and cultural institutions, multivocality creates opportunities for several voices to be heard on a more equal basis. Particularly in regards to curatorial voice, the acknowledgement that museums are not the definitive authority on the representation of Indigenous cultures has opened doors for greater accessibility and openness toward different types of knowledge. By combining outsider academic perspectives with the insider academic and culture perspectives of Native peoples (Ames
museums can provide opportunities to facilitate the cultural empowerment of the less powerful, many of whom are, typically, the peoples which anthropologists have traditionally studied, collected from, and represented in the past.

Coming out of the post-colonial critique of museums, co-curation has been embraced as an opportunity to establish collaborative relations with Native American communities, to gain a deeper understanding of the meanings and values of certain classes of objects, and to expand our knowledge of alternative methods of curation (Kreps 1998:3). At the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the first and only museum dedicated to the Indigenous peoples of North and South America, the Native point of view is defined as “Native voice,” or the authentic representation of Native American perspectives through collaborative exhibit making (Shannon 2009). Created under the National Museum of the American Indian Act in 1989, NMAI is a national institution that shares similarities with smaller tribal museums in its attempt to promote Native voice as the dominant curatorial voice. However, because of the scale and magnitude of NMAI, it is also multi-tribal (Jacknis 2008) as it encompasses many interpretations and viewpoints developed through co-curation with source communities (Lonetree 2008; Shannon 2009).

Another national museum that is dedicated to the ideas of survival, renewal of cultural continuity, and pride in identity for Indigenous peoples is the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) in Wellington. Established in 1992 with the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act of Parliament, Te Papa is a post-colonial museum in a country with a complex colonial past and a divided present.
However, as a bicultural institution, Te Papa invites the involvement of the wider community, as it works to reinterpret standard Western categorizations of natural history, ethnography, history, and art through the lens of Maori traditional knowledge, or *matauranga*, and custom, or *tikanga* (Alivizatou 2012b:55). By reappropriating Maori traditions and customs to create inclusivity at Te Papa, traditional beliefs and historical events are interwoven to represent and legitimize contemporary perspectives (Alivizatou 2012b:59). Mixing modern science and Indigenous traditions, the overall goal of the institution is to tell stories, focusing on the narrative over the display of artifacts. Te Papa’s narrative is based on a mixed discourse of art, science, and social and oral history with an emphasis on multivocality: oral history, traditional knowledge, historical documents, and scientific interpretations, provide different approaches to the country’s cultural, artistic, and natural heritage (Alivizatou 2012b:66).

As evidenced at both NMAI and Te Papa, by turning to community elders as the experts for their ability and willingness to share what they know, museums can assist in the reaffirmation of cultural identity by providing means of preserving elements of culture including objects, language, and skills (Fienup-Riordan 2003; Simpson 1996; Erikson 2008). Although some traditional knowledge is still available through memories and skills, much has been lost as older members of communities passed on without being able to share their knowledge. This is one explanation for the push to self-curate and to document traditional knowledge and language before it is too late.

What all of these examples tell us is that the most valuable interpretations can only come from communities themselves (Hoerig 2010) and that the best way to
document and support this knowledge is through collaboration. For most source communities, what is important is that their culture – not the object – is transmitted through time to future generations (Marstine 2006). However, because of the emphasis on preservation of tangible culture in non-Native institutions, objects housed in museums can also function as contact zones (Peers and Brown 2003) and can be used to facilitate discussions about ICH (with elders often speaking in their language), evoking memories, emotions, and traditional knowledge embedded in them.

Non-Native museums have increasingly utilized source community knowledge through consultation and collaboration in the creation of exhibitions, but often lack reciprocity (Hoerig 2010). To provide real benefit for source communities, Karl Hoerig calls for the development of something that moves beyond the consultation model and that will provide help to communities to meet their own heritage perpetuation goals and needs, while bringing something back to the communities (2010:70).

Also critical of how the concept of contact zones has been used, Robin Boast argues in his article, “Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited” (2011), that museums have not gone far enough in creating truly collaborative experiences for all involved parties. Using Clifford’s account of the New Guinea Sculpture Garden at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California as an example of a successful contact zone, Boast (and Clifford) argue that this encounter fell short of being a truly collaborative experience for all those involved because of a lack of equal reciprocity (Boast 2011). Although the project did support Indigenous artists by bringing them into direct contact with a diverse group of people, creating meaningful engagements
and providing them with the opportunity to speak for themselves and to demonstrate their artistic abilities, Boast and Clifford state that the Papuan artists expected something more long term from the exchange (Clifford 1997; Boast 2011). The point being that contact zones are not really sites of reciprocity, but rather asymmetric spaces of appropriation (Boast 2011). They are sites where the “other” performs for us, not with us. Boast acknowledges that museum professionals often have the best of intentions and are doing what they can to find an inclusive narrative, however, he calls for further reflexivity and thoughtful consideration of who benefits from contact zones. All three, Hoerig, Boast, and Clifford, point to the fact that even though museums in the twenty-first century are becoming spaces of collaboration, they also emphasize that true collaboration comes from reciprocal dialogue between partners and many non-Native institutions have barely begun to scratch the surface of creating and fostering truly collaborative and reciprocal experiences.

As the above example demonstrates, the distinction between the real and the ideal is crucial for the continued development of collaborative models. As a global phenomenon, collaboration is increasingly seen as a way for scholars to become involved with stakeholders, moving beyond confrontational claims over who “owns” the past while maintaining the principles of scientific inquiry (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008:1). Collaboration is now seen as an explicit methodological model in anthropology programs and archaeological field schools; it is an act and a practice, but it can also be thought of as an idealized model that different forms of research seek to achieve (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008:9).
Geared towards establishing more inclusive, democratic, and reciprocal relationships with descendant communities:

Collaboration is 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. Collaboration, then, is not one uniform idea or practice but a range of strategies that seek to link the archaeological enterprise with different publics by working together (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008:1).

According to Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T.J. Ferguson, collaboration with descendant communities establishes new kinds of interpretive frameworks, or new ways to translate the patterns of material culture (2008:14). And as Native and non-Native museums and communities museums establish cooperative and responsive relationships, there is a mutual recognition of opportunities for the exchange of ideas and information on the nature and meaning of cultural objects.

Collaboration is a way for museums “to facilitate the cultural empowerment of the less powerful, many of whom are, typically, the peoples which anthropology museums have traditionally studied, collected from and represented.” (Ames 1992:162). In his article, “How to Decorate a House: The renegotiation of cultural representations at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology” (2003) Michael Ames reflects and summarizes his experiences at MOA between museum staff and community collaborators. Ames tries to explain how the collaborative process is never easy, but museums do change:

often ahead of other public institutions, that their lack of quick or unambiguous change responses to obvious needs is often a condition of multiple and conflicting demands rather than a lack of good intentions, and that their short comings in cross-cultural encounters, may be less
ignorance or lack of integrity than to their taken-for-granted embeddedness in a different paradigm of integrity – that is, their own cultural traditions – which has, however, become somewhat out of step with the times (Ames 2003:179).

The mutual benefit of cross-cultural collaboration greatly enhances the working relationship between the source community and museums (Cash Cash 2001).

The move towards collaborative curatorial practices in museums is rooted in two important intellectual and moral developments, reflexivity in the humanities and social sciences associated with post-modernism, and the evolving discourse of human rights, which have steadily grown over the past half century (Phillips 2003:158). In her work, Ruth B. Phillips distinguishes between two types of collaborative exhibits: community-based exhibits and multivocal exhibits (2003). In community-based exhibits, the role of museum professionals is defined as that of a facilitator who puts his/her disciplinary and museological expertise at the service of the community members so that their message can be distributed as clearly and effectively as possible. In multivocal exhibitions, museum staff and community advisers work to find a space of coexistence for multiple perspectives (Phillips 2003:163-164). Phillips cautions that there are no pure examples of either type of collaborative exhibit, and that both community-based and multivocal exhibits are built on layers of information, interpretation, and museological conventions that have accumulated over time (2003). However, the goal of collaborative exhibitions is to display different interpretations of the same event or text based on a negotiation of shared authority between the participants.

In collaboratively organized exhibits the intellectual, social, and political dynamics of these processes change in fundamental ways. On the one hand, the
communities that choose to partner with museums have often been marginalized and/or exoticized by the museum’s traditional state and private sponsors. On the other, by validating knowledge produced according to diverse cultural traditions, museums contribute to the erosion of the modernist, universal values, which these sponsors have invested (Phillips 2003:155).

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 powerful currents of cultural pluralism, decolonization, and globalization, but also about the changing relationship between museums and the societies within which they operate (Phillips 2003:155). The collaborative paradigm of exhibition production involves a new form of power sharing in which museums and community partners co-manage a broad range of activities that lead to the final product. This usually includes the initial identification of themes, the design of the research methodology, object selection, and the writing of text panels.

Community consultants and advisory committees have long been features of exhibition development in anthropology museums, but collective decision making in this broader array of activities requires a more radical shift within the institution (Phillips 2003:158), toward what Michael Ames calls, “a realignment of power, achieved through a redistribution of authority” (Ames 2003:172). And in this sense, the collaborative process that goes into the development of the exhibition is becoming more important than the end product itself.
The emphasis on process is also a reflection of a fundamental insight of reflexive museology that the messages of an exhibit are carried not just through objects, text, and design, but also by other aspects of its realization (Phillips 2003:161). In the past, knowledge taken from communities has been used to create exhibitions that advance the careers and status of anthropologists and curators, while those who shared this knowledge and their descendants have not benefited, often times suffering from loss of cultural property and from the use of knowledge collected (Phillips 2003:159; Ames 2010). This is why there is a push within the museum and academic communities today to help rectify the imbalance of the treatment of intellectual property through collaborative approaches.

As I stated previously, collaboration is one of the most important forms of applied or engaged museum anthropology both as a theoretical framework and methodology because of its emphasis on working with multiple stakeholders. Representing more than a shift in museological behavior, the growing emphasis on collaboration demonstrates a change in the self-awareness of museums (Schultz 2011) and their relationships with diverse communities, particularly those whose cultural heritage they house. In this sense, museums are no longer considered to own ethnographic materials, but are now recognized as stewards of material culture, having moral and ethical, and sometimes political, obligations to involve source communities (Peers and Brown 2003). The collaborative process often involves shared management and direction of a research project among anthropologists, museum staff, and the source communities they are working with (Low and Merry 2010; Kurin 1997). Such efforts have continued to grow in
the twenty-first century and have become even stronger as larger, mainstream or non-Native museums accept the value and ethical imperative of incorporating Indigenous perspectives, or Native voice, into museum representations.

Collaborative anthropology also helps to address how language as ICH is being documented and incorporated into museums, and how that information is being redistributed back to source communities. In their article, “Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas” (2010), Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry argue that engaged anthropology has always existed in the United States, from the development of theoretical methodologies to actual participation in public issues. They identify six forms of engaged or applied anthropology: sharing and support, teaching and public education, social critique, collaboration, advocacy, and activism (Low and Merry 2010). They stress that engagement often comes in the form of fieldwork with research participants who are themselves working to stem the tide of language loss. The framework of engaged or applied anthropology facilitates dialogue with sociocultural anthropologists and language oriented scholars on the epistemological and moral grounding of ethnographic research (Black 2013:278).

Due to the nature of museum collections being held in the public trust in perpetuity, museums have a vested interest in preserving their collections, but at the same time, the cultural value of ethnographic collections can be the product of a circular and self-fulfilling path in museums (Clavir 2002). In the new museum, the old artifact centered focus is abandoned in favor of the total experience, which comes from recontextualizing artifacts in environmental simulations and then animating the
environments to show people and artifacts interacting. Only in this way can the intangibles of culture – ideas, beliefs, and values – be expressed. Artifacts then become only one of several resource bases essential in museums (Clavir 2002:29).

**Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The life of an object depends on the living transmission of cultural knowledge and values. The cultural meanings of objects in museums are produced through complex and multi-layered museological processes where museum objectives, collecting policies, classification methods, display styles, artifactual groupings, and textual frameworks come together in articulation (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). The meanings of objects emerge within relationships and frameworks, and it is these elements external to the object, drawn together by a meaning-making sensibility, an active mind and body, that anchor the endless play of signification, and make provisional closure possible (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:111). What is at stake is not the vividness of a museum experience, but the vitality of those whom the objects are important to. And that largely depends on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995).

In order to protect the world’s cultural diversity, we must give equal attention to its two basic ingredients, namely tangible heritage and intangible heritage (Galla 2008). And because language is a form of ICH, documenting language is also a means for safeguarding the imbedded cultural and traditional knowledge that they are associated with. For clarification, tangible heritage is what you can see and touch, or the material culture; but ICH is the non-material culture, or the “living culture,” that is vital to understanding the meaning, function, and history of an object that is often not addressed.
in mainstream museums. Material objects distribute the primary agency of their producers and users who experience and construct them as mediators of their own desires, fears, and convictions (Svašek 2007:63; Cruikshank 1995), which ICH is a part of. Even if the knowledge and the traditions associated with objects was not recorded when they were collected or included in the object records when they were brought into a museum, it is still a fundamental part of an object’s history. Along with the danger of continued language loss in the twenty-first century, the threat of losing valuable information connected to objects extracted from source communities is also a point of major concern, and often the only way to document and preserve ICH associated with objects is by working collaboratively with present day descendants from source communities. Therefore, language as intangible culture can be seen as a form of knowledge in need of safeguarding, particularly in connection to the material culture held in museums; and in turn, documenting language is also a measure for safeguarding that knowledge.

Since it’s founding in 1945, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been concerned with the adoption of legal measures and the implementation of programs in areas of science, education, culture, and communication (Alivizatou 2012a). This includes:

- various conventions for the preservation of cultural objects, monuments, sites, oral traditions, and expressions that have largely defined cultural heritage throughout the 20th century and well into the 21st century express the international anxiety for the protection of the remains of the past and are often entangled in narratives of national identity and distinctiveness (Alivizatou 2012b:189).
Drawing on earlier Japanese and Korean legal frameworks for the protection of traditional and popular culture, UNESCO has adopted different measures, instruments, and programs to help promote the cause of ICH, including: Living Treasures Initiative (1993), Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (1997 to 2005), and the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), which is discussed below (Stefano, Davis, Corsane 2012:11). The various conventions for the preservation of cultural objects, monuments, sites, oral traditions, and expressions that have largely defined cultural heritage throughout the twentieth century and well into the twenty-first century express the international concern for the protection of the remains of past and are often entangled in narratives of national identity and distinctiveness (Alivizatou 2012b:189).

One of the most recent international efforts has been the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2003. In the 2003 Convention, ICH is defined as:

> the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003:2.1).

This definition of ICH also includes oral traditions, language, performing arts (traditional dance, music, and theatre); social practices, rituals, and festive events; as well as traditional knowledge and practices. Although ICH is a relatively new concept, museums and cultural bodies have long been concerned with the preservation of oral traditions and folk cultures (Alivizatou 2012a), particularly in connection to museum collections. In this sense, ICH is of particular interest to museums as the documentation of imbedded
knowledge related to objects in their collections can reveal more insight into how they were made, used, and represent cultural practices from the places they originate from.

Tracing its origins back to the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which was primarily focused on the preservation of tangible heritage, the 2003 Convention was intended to address the growing concern regarding the loss of traditional knowledge, languages, and performances as a result of industrialization, the movement of peoples from rural to urban settings, and the abandonment of traditional practices in the wake of rapid modernization and global mass culture (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012; Alivizatou 2012b). The 1972 Convention is significant because it laid the groundwork for the development of the concept of ICH and demonstrates the progression of international concern regarding heritage from the tangible to the intangible over a thirty-year period. And over the past ten years, the field of ICH has rapidly expanded to include a large amount of relevant literature dedicated to the strengths and weaknesses of UNESCO’s prescribed approaches. However, an understanding of what is currently unfolding at local, regional, and national levels is still very much needed in the ICH discourse (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012:2).

According to D. Fairchild Ruggles and Helaine Silverman, the 2003 Convention also introduced the term ICH to replace older terms such as “traditional culture,” “oral tradition,” and “folklore” (2009). The only observable difference is that ICH urges the preservation of cultural diversity on a global scale and promotes official recognition of those traditions that are in danger of being lost, placing them on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (UNESCO n.d.). However,
their criticism of this measure is that the Convention urges states to preserve these traditions by all means necessary and has the potential to legitimize oppressive measures to do so (Ruggles and Silverman 2009; Kurin 2004).

Calling upon nations and communities to develop action plans, the 2003 Convention identifies scholars and public servants, or museum professionals, to compose comprehensive inventories of ICH. However, museum professionals, anthropologists, and other cultural professionals take issue with this specific part of the 2003 Convention because they believe the transmission of cultural expressions should not be led by strict criteria and measures imposed by governmental institutions, but rather through the active and ongoing engagement of practitioners (Alivizatou 2012b:190).

Richard Kurin, who helped draft the Convention, calls attention to the fact that by definition intangible heritage is living, vital, and embedded in ongoing social relationships, and directly questions whether museums are capable of safeguarding ICH given their present traditions of preserving the past (2004). However, as institutions that value cultural heritage, they are probably the best equipped to do so (Kurin 2004) based on their nature as living organizations shaped by their collections, social surroundings, and diverse communities (Alivizatou 2006).

As a global policy, Kurin considers the Convention vague, unrealistic, and inadequate to preserving ICH (2004). But, he along with many other scholars and professionals, believe it is a step in the right direction (Kurin 2004). Christina Kreps sees the 2003 Convention as a tool for raising awareness and a step towards safeguarding ICH such as Indigenous curation and language as both examples of ICH and a measure for
safeguarding it (2008); and by tying ICH to material culture in museum collections could go beyond the UNESCO Convention World Heritage List of natural and cultural properties and the Urgent Safeguarding List of ICH to maintain a greater portion of cultural phenomena. That is, one can reassemble the decontextualized objects and their cultural context, rather than holding each in isolation, to preserve both the tangible and documented intangible parts of the whole system (Maxson 2010).

Not unlike the measures being taken to revitalize Indigenous languages, a significant part of ICH literature concerns partnerships with source communities and the numerous projects and beneficial outcomes that have resulted from collaborative efforts. The participation of community groups in museum work has meant that oral histories and traditional knowledge and beliefs are gradually being incorporated into official museum narratives (Alivizatou 2012a:17). Therefore, ICH can be connected to the vitality of Indigenous cultures as they exist today, through their empowerment and participation in museum work, reaching beyond the preservation of objects to the actual histories, traditions, and beliefs of communities (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane 2012; Alivizatou 2012b:129).

While preservation is a key motive defining UNESCO’s approach to intangible heritage, other negotiations emerge in local settings reflecting concerns about survival and change (Alivizatou 2012b:26), and the revival and reappropriation of ICH by contemporary generations (Stefano, Davis, Corsane 2012:18). Similar to issues related to language loss, one of the biggest threats to ICH is posed by declining numbers of practitioners of traditional craftsmanship, music, dance, or theater, and of those who are
in the position to learn from them (Stefano, Davis, Corsane 2012). Using the example of language as ICH, it is apparent that the fluctuating use of certain words, including the creation of new ones, constitutes one aspect of the evolving nature of ICH. In some cases, these changes are a result of larger societal forces, such as the introduction of new digital technologies. Thus, sustaining the connection between language as ICH and its communities, groups, and individuals, through technology can be central to its survival (Stefano, Davis, Corsane 2012:2).

Similar to Kurin, Alexandra Denes (2012) acknowledges that museums have been recognized internationally as important partners in efforts to safeguard ICH as they play a vital role in documenting and transmitting history and culture (Denes 2012), while also calling attention to the methodological challenges they face in incorporating ICH into the museum model. The first being that while most museum professionals are trained to manage collections of objects, working with ICH entails the extensive involvement and active participation of living culture bearers, who are those individuals that embody the knowledge and understanding of a culture and its traditions such as language as ICH. The second, whereas museum curators are generally accustomed to being the experts in how they curate, conserve, and interpret the collections, working with ICH calls for a very different approach to museum practice and calls for recognition of culture bearers as experts regarding their cultural knowledge, and not museum professionals. Therefore, museums must acquire the skills for learning from culture bearers and engaging with them as equal partners as co-curators, and not just informants. The third challenge is that museums have generally been defined by their buildings and the collections they house;
and in the new museum model, more and more it is the people and their relationship to the museum that is defining their purpose and identity. However, to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of ICH, museums must work outside of these confinements to build lasting relationships with the communities they engage with (Denes 2012:168). Therefore, there is a crucial need for training that combines both critical, conceptual frameworks and hands-on tools from discipline of cultural anthropology - which teaches us that researching ICH requires patience, reflexivity, respect, and a willingness to take the time to learn about living practices from the culture bearers themselves (Denes 2012:175).

As a form of ICH, these challenges also relate to the skills needed in collaborative partnerships centered on language revitalization. Unlike tangible objects, language and/or intangible cultural expressions cannot be carried away by the ethnographer except as inscribed ethnographic documents in field-notes (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991; Hennessy 2012). Although words are ephemeral, there is agreement that by recording and documenting ICH they become objects, and while diverse audiences can interpret objects in museums in very different ways, words are used to give meaning to objects and that is why documenting language as ICH is critical in connection with material culture (Alivizatou 2006; Hennessy 2012:33). But for collections that were poorly documented by collectors or museum staff when they were accessioned into museum collections, the incorporation of ICH significantly adds to their object biographies and the meanings that they hold. Therefore, by accurately contextualizing objects within the communities they originate from and referring to objects in the language of their creators, museums can
implement appropriate museology and aspects of Indigenous curation not formerly possible (Maxson, Colwell-Chanthaphonh, and Lomayestewa 2011).

As Arjun Appadurai states in his introduction to *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*:

Even if our own approach to things is conditioned necessarily by the view that things have no meanings apart from those that are endowed on them, the anthropological problem is that this formal truth does not illuminate the concrete, historical circulations of things. For that we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, and their trajectories (1986:5).

Objects in collections create a complex dialogue between classifying concerns and the self-reflective policies of communities, and the presence of objects in museums only represents one stage in the objects’ cultural biographies (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992:35). Objects become appropriated by historical agendas, by particular ideologies of preservation, by specific versions of public history, and by particular values about exhibition, design, and display. What is needed is the identification of a specific historical and cultural public, one that does not much respond to museums but is rather created, in part, through museums and other related institutions (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992:36).

Indigenous Curation

Indigenous curation refers to non-Western museum models, curatorial methods, and concepts of cultural heritage management (Kreps 2008; Tuhiwai Smith 2012) that are employed to address the issues of self-representation and traditional care methods of objects and traditional knowledge in museums (Cooper 2006; Marstine 2006). Indigenous curation also constitutes a form of “Indigenous knowledge” which has become important
for understanding the ways people order and communicate about the world (Kreps 1998:4). This term can be applied to the use of traditional names for objects because Indigenous language use in museum collections is a method for curation and collections management that incorporates the notion of ICH preservation (Maxson 2010). Whereas Indigenous peoples were once positioned by museums as objects of study, many are now positioning themselves as active agents, employing museums as tools that counter alienating and homogenizing social forces (Erikson 2002; Erikson 2008).

The postmodern challenge that calls for the inclusion of Indigenous curation practice in the museum world strikes at the very core of the museum discipline and its curatorial enterprise (Cash Cash 2001:144). Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that it is difficult, and at times inappropriate, to talk about the postmodern with Indigenous peoples because they are still experiencing the modern and the effects of colonialism; stating that, “Imperialism still hurts, still destroys, and is constantly reforming itself” (Tuhiwai Smith 2012:57). Indigenous attempts to reclaim land, language, knowledge and sovereignty have usually involved contested accounts of the past by colonizers and colonized (Tuhiwai Smith 2012:80). Indigenous groups have argued that history is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization (Tuhiwai Smith 2012:74), a process that engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. A constant reworking of our understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism is a crucial aspect of Indigenous cultural politics and forms the basis of an Indigenous language critique. However, Tuhiwai Smith cautions that decolonization does not mean and has not meant a
total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge, rather, “it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Tuhiwai Smith 2012:89). This is a critical idea for this thesis as collaborative networking involves a mixing, or creation of hybrid approaches when working on collaborative projects and programming.

In the introductory chapter of her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2012), Tuhiwai Smith poses a series of questions that are often asked in regards to the importance of Indigenous methodologies: Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? (2012:43-44). These are also important questions for museums when working with source communities on collaborative research and projects.

Tuhiwai Smith also uses the term ‘sharing knowledge’ deliberately, rather than the term ‘sharing information’ because she believes the responsibility of researchers and academics is not simply to share surface information but to share the theories and analyses that inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented (Tuhiwai Smith 2012:54). This is a distinction that is also utilized on the *Alaska Native Collection, Sharing Knowledge* website (which I will discuss in Chapter Five) for the Arctic Studies Center when attaching specific knowledge to individual objects and making that information accessible to all regardless of their presence to be in the gallery.
Outside of the conventional museum model, Indigenous curation is also present in non-Western museum models throughout the world by utilizing traditional care methods and the incorporation of traditional knowledge such as oral histories, language, and stories. Looking at how this material is cared for and organized has been a topic of recent study for museum anthropologists, especially concerning the preservation of traditional care methods. This can also be applied to museums supporting language revitalization efforts in source communities as the development of Indigenous research methodologies does not follow formulas, but rather emerges in the context of specific community needs and values (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:265).

Arising out of the community-based museum movement in the 1960s and 1970s, tribal museums and cultural centers represent a relatively new museum category (Cooper 2006) and represent a hybrid of museum practices where Indigenous worldviews are often employed through the incorporation of Native voice on Native terms. In these emerging institutions, it is significant that many Native institutions place “cultural center” before “museum” in their name because of the emphasis on community feedback, which often appears in their mission statements (Reinschmidt 2013:31). As Michael Reinschmidt explains, one of the reasons for this is that:

Native American museums are about more than just art and beauty. Our museums are collecting, preserving, and protecting material culture and archival resources for future generations … In helping to rebuild their tribal cultural commonwealths, Native museums provide resources for tribal identity and morality building, self-determined history learning, language and cultural retention, mental health, enjoyable education programs, and spontaneous creativity (2013:31).
Although they can sometimes look like conventional Western museum models, tribal museums and cultural centers are not limited to this scope and provide a venue for Indigenous peoples to determine how their culture is represented, and are often established with the expressed interest of cultural preservation and revitalization (Clifford 1991; Cruikshank 1992; Simpson 1996; Erikson 2004; Jacknis 2008). From the beginning, the goals of tribal museums and cultural centers have been slightly different from the Western museum model (Hoerig 2010:68), which has been the source of dissatisfaction and discrimination in the past. By establishing their own museums, Indigenous communities have the opportunity to counteract aspects of conventional museology (Simpson 2007).

In her book, *Liberating Culture: Cross Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation and Heritage Preservation* (2003), Christina Kreps’ addresses the topic of how museums are adapting and acknowledging non-Western (also non-Native) models of museums and curatorial practices. Expanding on the idea of new museology, Kreps identifies “appropriate museology” as a means of valuing and adapting to traditional care methods and cultural knowledge that are used in non-Western museums, instead of imposing the Western museum model. Many non-Western museums are adopting this model and adapting Western museological practices to suit their own needs. In addition to the preservation of objects, museums should also strive to support and conserve living knowledge, customs, and traditions associated with material culture (Kreps 2003:14).

In his article, “Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections” (1991), James Clifford’s review of four Northwest Coast museums includes two western style
museums (University of British Columbia Museum (UBC) of Anthropology and Royal British Columbia Museum) and two non-Western (the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre and the U’mista Cultural Center), evaluating their display of Northwest Coast objects and their overall presentation of historical narratives. He argues that all four museums display both ceremonial and traditional objects as well as work produced for the curio and art markets (Clifford 1991), but in different contexts, mixing discourses of art, culture, politics, and history in specific hierarchical ways. Whereas the UBC Museum of Anthropology and the Royal British Columbia Museum contextualize tribal objects primarily in historical and aesthetic contexts, the Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre and the U’mista Cultural Center focus primarily on the cultural functions of the objects (Clifford 1991). However, different cultural and political inflections of art and history are present at each institution.

Clifford concludes by stating that in the Northwest Coast, as elsewhere, the economies and institutions of the modern nation-state have systematically exploited, repressed, and marginalized the traditional cultures of native peoples. But at least it has become clear that many Native American populations whose cultures were declared extinct, whose cultures were “salvaged” in textual collections, and whose “authentic” objects were massively collected a century ago, have not disappeared. And although parts of their life have changed dramatically, they continue to resist, reckon with, and adapt to the claims of the dominant culture (Clifford 1991:242).
Language and Material Culture

As James Deetz explains it: “Material culture is that segment of man’s physical environment which is purposely shaped by him according to a culturally dictated plan” (Deetz 1977:7). This is to say that the whole of cultural expression, one way or another, falls within the realm of material culture. It is also true that the material culture held today in many museums falls within this broader framework, and what distinguishes the ‘discrete lumps’ from the rest is the cultural value it is given.

Museum objects represent much more than their material form: they embody particular sets of skilled action, are manifestations of ways of engaging and knowing the world, and are concretizations of knowledge about the environment (Bell 2011:8). Objects are nothing without the intangible heritage that surrounds them: songs, stories, performances, traditions, and all kinds of non-material heritage (Alivizatou 2012b:130). They are powerful agents because of their influence on people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions (Svašek 2007:62). But what happens to the intangible, ephemeral, immovable, and inanimate knowledge associated with those objects? Typically, we have inscribed what we cannot carry away in field notes, recordings, photographs, films, and drawings, creating ethnographic documents to commemorate the information (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991), but that does not always mean the information remains attached to the objects once they are taken from their original context and are then recontextualized in to a museum setting.

In her book, Marking Representations (1996), Moira Simpson argues that:

while some of the traditional knowledge was still available through memories and skills of Elders, much has been lost as older members of communities died
without having been able to pass their knowledge onto younger members of the community. Collections of material from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and earlier have preserved artifacts and documentary evidence of methods and meanings, providing a visual record of traditional art forms and their social and religious significance. In these circumstances, museum collections may offer not just the visual evidence of traditional skills and design conventions, but also documentary evidence of anthropological research, recording all aspects of life. There is no doubt that much of this material and knowledge would have been lost due to depopulation and acculturation processes if it had not been collected by anthropologists and others (1996:248).

But with the development of new museology and collaborative processes, museums are beginning to accept and adopt new practices and policies of shared authority and increased access to museum collections and archival documents. As with the creation of ethnographic documents, including the documentation of language as ICH, information is shaped by systems of cultural heritage value and subjective evaluation about what to preserve, what to make public, and what to keep in private circulation (Hennessy 2012:37).

The emergence of tribal museums and cultural centers also makes possible an effective repatriation and circulation of objects long considered to be unambiguously “property” by collectors and curators (Clifford 1991). Native Americans and Canadian First Peoples want to control the construction of their cultural identities rather than have them controlled by others; and with the development of tribal museums and cultural centers, Native American peoples have greater resources for creating more authoritative autoethnography and mediating more directly between their community and the general public (Erikson 2004). Closely working with the Makah people at the MCRC in Neah Bay, Washington, Patricia Pierce Erikson argues that Indigenous autoethnography is not new: it has taken various forms, including literary texts, artworks, and oral performances,
and the translation of Indigenous autoethnography into museums potentially enriches not only museum methodologies but also interpretive frameworks (Erikson 2002; Erikson 2004:28).

As one of the first and best-known tribal museums to emerge out of community museum movement in the 1970s, the MCRC is an example of how language as ICH has informed and been incorporated into the museum model. Located in Neah Bay, Washington, the MCRC opened in 1979 with the initial purpose of housing excavated materials from the Ozette Archaeological Site exposed by severe tidal erosion in the winter of 1970. Aware of the potential risk this presented, the Makah tribe decided to excavate the ancestral village of Ozette with archaeologists from Washington State University (WSU) before further damage could be sustained, and to protect the site from hikers in the nearby Olympic National Park. Abandoned in the early twentieth century due to economic pressures and forced assimilation policies, Ozette not only held significant cultural material but also suppressed memories that came forth when Makah elders saw objects, or family possessions, that they remembered from their childhood. Ten years of joint excavation by WSU and the Makah tribe yielded more than 55,000 artifacts, including the remains of a long house, a ceremonial whale “saddle” inlaid with hundreds of sea mammal teeth, and a fishing net (that was later used in a Washington state court case to defend the Makah’s rights to subsistence fish) (Erikson 2002).

Although the MCRC is by no means the only example of a tribal museum and/or cultural center, as there are now more than two hundred in the United States alone, it is successful in demonstrating the incorporation of language into museum practice(s).
Known for its incorporation of Indigenous methodologies, the MCRC is organized and presented according to Makah epistemologies, with the goal of promoting Makah culture and preserving the language through community outreach and educational programming (Erikson 2002; Manger and Bowechop 2006). In designing the building for MCRC, emphasis was placed on the idea that the museum needed to be more than just a warehouse for these artifacts. It also had to address who the museum was for, or rather “What it means to be Makah.” (Erikson 2002). To answer this question, it was decided to structure the exhibit galleries around the seasons, highlighting specific activities, such as whaling, fishing, basket making, and berry picking, according to the months they occurred while also trying to express the emotional and spiritual context of the material culture on display.

Another area of the museum where the MCRC commits itself to ways of feeling and remembering is in the management of its collections. Whereas conventional or non-Native museums are predominantly concerned with classifying objects under general categories, the MCRC also uses Makah linguistic categories as a method for curation and collections management that incorporates the notion of ICH preservation (Erikson 2002; Bowechop and Erikson 2005; Maxson 2010). For instance, a group of objects beginning with a barred lambda a, including adzes, chisels, wedges and canoe paddles, would be housed next to each other in the MCRC collections. In conventional classification systems, this arrangement might not make sense, but in Makah, the working surface of each object is perpendicular to the plane of action, i.e. a paddle is perpendicular to the actions of hitting the water, a chisel is perpendicular to the wood being carved, and so on.
So, even though the MCRC utilizes standard collection management systems in caring for artifacts, these systems were adapted to meet a broader set of goals to reflect and preserve a living culture (Erikson 2002).

In their article, “Forging Indigenous Methodologies on Cape Flattery: The Makah Museum as a Center of Collaborative Research” (2005), Janine Bowechop and Patricia Erikson give an account of how Native American community museums and cultural centers are among those institutions that create a space for recovering traditional knowledge and countering dominant ideologies. In this article, Bowechop and Erikson describe how tribal museums and cultural centers can serve as essential spaces for Native American communities to develop Indigenous research methodologies and forward their own self-determination objects (2005:271). Reflecting upon Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s Decolonizing Methodologies (2012), Bowechop and Erikson believe that tribal museums and cultural centers can serve as a base for conducting research whose ethics and design are relevant to community needs. Arguing that if the goal of decolonizing is to “carve a space where Indigenous values and knowledge are respected; to create an environment that supports research and methodologies useful to Indigenous nation building,” then tribal museums and cultural centers are emerging as a promising space for this work (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:263).

The authors also refer to collaborative research between Native and non-Native as joint intellectual work or coalition building, while acknowledging the need to guard against the ongoing potential for hegemonic practice to collaborative research processes and structures. Leading to the strategic selection of opportunities and institutions that
tribes choose to work with (Bowechop and Erikson 2005:264-265). Using the Makah experience to demonstrate how decolonization of research methods has intertwined with the development of intertribal and cross-cultural research ethics and methods, Bowechop and Erikson provide convincing evidence of the effectiveness and value of collaborative research that benefits all.
Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework and Methods

In practice, the complex, unfinished colonial entanglements of anthropology and Native communities are being renegotiated, and even the most severe Indigenous criticisms of anthropology recognize the potential for alliances when they are based on shared resources, repositioned Indigenous and academic authorities, and relations of genuine respect (Clifford 2004:6). Although contemporary Indigenous peoples have traditionally been thought to have little ‘hard’ data to offer that can help to provide context for materials dating back centuries or millennia, new data and understandings have resulted from collaboration between source communities and researchers/curators/museum professionals (Phillips 2003:162), highlighting the value of collaborative processes and terms of mutual learning and educating.

In museums, the collaborative paradigm of exhibition production and collections work involves a new form of power sharing in which museums and community members co-manage a broad range of activities that lead to the final product, which usually includes initial identification of themes, the design of the research methodology, object selection, and the writing of exhibit text (Phillips 2003:157); and can also include input into the other activities, such as conservation and the design of the installation. This represents a shift in authority and moving towards what source communities’ want/need out of the project.
As I stated in Chapter One, my thesis examines how museums in Alaska are supporting language and cultural revitalization initiatives through collaboration with source communities and other like-minded institutions. And in order to address how museums and cultural institutions are working collaboratively with source communities, one must examine how language as ICH is being addressed and supported by both Native and non-Native institutions. This idea is structured around several themes and arguments that build on each other: first, language and cultural revitalization initiatives need to originate in source communities or with the descendants of the community from which the language originates; second, collaboration is important as both a theory and methodology for museums in supporting these initiatives; and third, I argue that collaborative networking has the potential to be a useful methodology for all entities involved in supporting revitalization initiatives. However, even under ideal conditions, the reality of collaboration often calls for flexibility and compromise when working with various stakeholders, often leading to hybrid models which address specific needs of a given project.

Due to practical concerns explained later in this chapter, the Arctic Studies Center (ASC), Alaska Office was chosen as the primary focus my research. Although this is by no means the only institution that is dedicated to collaborative engagements with source communities in Alaska, through preliminary research, fieldwork at the ASC, and continued research, patterns began to emerge in the ways different institutions in the state were working collaboratively on projects and programs related to supporting the documentation, preservation, and revitalization of Alaska Native languages. Data is also
triangulated between research, fieldwork, and interviews to serve as sources of corroboration (LeCompte and Schensul 2010:179-180). By triangulating data from all these sources, I was able to get a picture of how effective collaborative networking can be.

In my thesis, I use the methodologies of applied linguistics, applied anthropology, and museum anthropology to explore how these fields are utilized in museum efforts to support revitalization. These three fields were chosen because of their focus on merging the theoretical with practical, real-world applications to some extent or another, which means that they all engage with their subjects of study and often must mediate between various stakeholders. Another important methodology that is essential to these fields is collaboration, which emphasizes both the emic and the etic perspectives, as a paradigm for understanding how Alaskan institutions work collaboratively with source communities in supporting language documentation and encouraging self-representation through ongoing projects and research.

The intention of mixed methods/methodologies is to both decolonize the areas of collaboration between Indigenous and Western modes of qualitative research, and re-write and re-right the boundaries between these ways of knowing (Botha 2011:314). Reflective methods are also crucial for analyzing and mixing of traditional ethnographic methods and Indigenous methods, and are adopted to serve particular theoretical, methodological, and practical purposes (Botha 2011:318).

The general methodological framework that is most associated with anthropology is ethnography, an approach that can be defined as the systematic approach to learning
about, documenting, and interpreting the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings that involve human cultures (Kedia and Van Willigen 2005; LeCompte and Schensul 2010). Similar to collaboration, ethnographic research aims to elicit insiders’ (emic) perspectives as well as those of the researcher, undertaking participant observation (etic) perspectives (Duff 2010:52). A key characteristic of ethnographic research that is central to this thesis is the goal of building rapport with subjects at research sites. This is also an important ethical consideration as applied disciplines focus on whom their research is for and how their findings affect various stakeholders. Current practice makes it the responsibility of the ethnographer to ensure that all voices in the study are included in the text of the ethnography (LeCompte and Schensul 2010).

Ethnographic research is also a way to understand the complexities of social relations and cultural meanings at a particular time and in a particular place or places (Bouquet 2012), which requires an understanding of what research participants’ behaviors mean to them rather than what meaning might be imposed on them by outsiders regarding those behaviors (LeCompte and Schensul 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, ethnography was used to understand the nature of collaborative networking in Alaska and how the relationships between museums (Native and non-Native alike), source communities, and various cultural institutions are working to support language and cultural revitalization initiative in the state. In Alaska, collaborative networking is part of a unique approach to cultural heritage work in the state that is based on
communication between institutions with common goals on projects regarding language and cultural revitalization that are being addressed in number of different ways.

To be more specific, this thesis utilizes museum ethnography, which is driven by themes, images, and issues, as opposed to a more traditional focus on a particular community or geographic region. Museum ethnography also involves conducting interviews with people involved in museum practices – museum professionals, academics, curators, members of the community, and so one – with the goal of bringing together and juxtaposing different perspectives and examining the intersection of voices (Ames 1992; Butler 1999).

According to Mary Bouquet in her book, *Museums: A Visual Anthropology*, the aim of ethnographic analysis is to explain actions and ideas that might not be explicable and to provide context and interpretation for those observations (2012:119). She states that visual methods, such as participant observation, are at the core of ethnographic research and are used in combination with conversations and interviews to extract these meanings, and argues that an anthropology of museums fits into the broader development of the discipline of anthropology over the last half of the twentieth century. Bouquet also emphasizes that museum studies developed out of practice itself: “those particularly engaged with collections, conservation, exhibitions, education and public communication had professional stake in exchanging ideas and discussing good practice – especially though national and international museum associations” (Bouquet 2012:6). And through the development of critical museum studies through the 1980s, making collections interesting and accessible for the general public became more than an exercise of
curatorial authority: democratizing the museum and the sharing of curatorial authority created new knowledge about collections and the networks they connect (Bouquet 2012).

As Bouquet points out, the development of collaborative practices in museums over the past thirty years can largely be attributed to the incorporation of applied theories and methodologies in the field of anthropology. For example, applied linguistics is the theoretical and practice-driven discipline of linguistics that addresses language-based problems in real-world contexts (Grabe 2010; Myers 2010). As a relatively new discipline that came into existence a little over sixty years ago, applied linguistics is a mediating process which explores ways in which the concerns of linguistics as a discipline can be relevantly related to those of the language subject (Widdowson 2010:16). Applied linguistics is also identified by its role mediating between theoretical knowledge from disciplines and practitioners who encounter real-world language problems.

Unlike formal linguistics and sociolinguistics, applied linguistics is driven by real-world language problems with its own emphasis on language description of social variation in language use rather than by strictly focusing on theoretical explorations and language development strategies (Kaplan 2010; Grabe 2010). This is not to say that applied linguistics does not rely on linguistic theory or principles, but in utilizing them in real-world scenarios, applied linguists are able to demonstrate how this work can be used and if it is or is not successful.

Similarly, applied anthropology is regarded as the application of anthropological knowledge, methodology, and theoretical approaches to address societal problems and
issues (Kedia and Van Willigen 2005:1), and is used as a lens for interpreting data in this thesis as well. As an interdisciplinary field, applied anthropology often involves collaboration with multiple stakeholders. Applied anthropology is also relevant because of its emphasis on advocacy to build long-term, collaborative relationships with communities (Kedia and Van Willigen 2005:2), making ethics a central characteristic of applied work. And by supporting the work of community stakeholders and other organizations, government, and professionals from other fields, they are able to more ethically serve as advocates.

Anthropologists often serve as advocates for those they work with and can bridge the gap between those in power and source communities; and can facilitate achieving the goals of the community by empowering its individual members (Kedia and Van Willigen 2005:12). This is a relatively new role for applied anthropologists, but more and more practitioners are being called on to disseminate their knowledge and expertise in the public sphere.

Applied anthropology can also be seen as a form of cultural brokering. Richard Kurin’s work is important because of his application of the idea of cultural brokering to museums. He asserts that professionals in the cultural fields who engage in the public representation of culture through exhibits, performance programs, documentary films and recordings, the creation of websites, public lectures, and the writings of ethnographies are brokering cultures (Kurin 1997:18). According to Kurin, cultural brokers study, understand, and represent someone’s culture (sometimes even their own) to nonspecialized others through various means and media (Kurin 1997:19), which is why
representations are to some degree negotiated, dialogical, and driven by a variety of interests on behalf of the involved parties. Therefore, whether an applied anthropologist, linguist, or museum professional, all are culture brokers when it comes to working collaboratively with communities, with colleagues, and with interdisciplinary fields and organizations. However, even with the application of applied methodologies, the ability to develop and execute truly collaborative experiences in museums is still a work in progress.

Back in 1997, Kurin suggested that one of the most serious challenges to the field of anthropology is the relationship between anthropologists and the people they purport to study and represent in their work: “but if anthropology is to survive and even flourish, it must engage in greater collaboration with the subjects of its inquiry and understanding” (Kurin 1997:91). And as sites of cultural encounters (whether intended or not), museums can serve as the perfect venue for brokering understandings and representations within various communities. Partnerships with other museums or cultural institutions creates another dynamic to collaborative engagements, particularly when it involves other museums and cultural institutions with similar goals or interests towards documenting and preserving cultural heritage. The involvement of museums and cultural institutions in language and cultural revitalization initiatives in Alaska provides an excellent example for cultural brokering because collaborative projects and programs must not only address the desires and expectations of various stakeholders, but also reflect on their own practices in being accessible and transparent throughout the process. However, by establishing long-term relationships and building rapport with partner institutions and
communities, museums are able to assure generation of the best and most relevant questions, instruments, interpretations, and plans for use of results (LeCompte and Schensul 2010:79).

Collaboration between stakeholders is also dependent on interpretation, which can vary greatly depending on the nature of the collaborative relationship(s) involved. The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the belief that reality is a “social construction.” That is, what people know and believe to be true about the world is constructed or created and reinforced and supported as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings (LeCompte and Schensul 2010:67), and that reality differs, depending on whose reality is considered. In Alaska, the reality of whom Alaska Natives are and what it means to support language and cultural revitalization is changing swiftly. And although there is some pushback regarding the relevancy over current legislation and community recognition for Alaska Natives, particularly in urban centers like Anchorage and Juneau, there is also overwhelming support for revitalization efforts and the work that is being done to document and preserve that knowledge as a means of safeguarding it for future generations through collaboration is seen by many involved as “doing it right.”

**Ethics**

Ethics is crucial to collaboration. In the twenty-first century museum, as well as in the applied fields within the discipline of anthropology, ethical considerations are part of the extension and integration of reflexive practice. In her article, “Research and Indigenous Participation: Critical Reflections” (2009), Ruth Nicholls argues for considering ethical demands at the personal/political level when attempting to undertake
collaborative, participatory, counter-colonial research. She also states that injunctions for participation demand methods that reify local and lived knowledge and focus on praxis to address interests and concerns of participants. Thus, building rapport is important as it extends into trusting and meaningful engagement by the researcher proving their willingness to move into a liminal, in-between space, decentering themselves by challenging traditional notions of objective control between researchers and participants (Nicholls 2009:121).

As stated previously, the move towards collaborative curatorial practices in museums is rooted in two important intellectual and moral developments, which have steadily grown during the past fifty years: reflexivity in the humanities and social sciences associated with postmodernism; and the evolving discourse of human rights which has been argued to the extent that cultural property and the protection of traditional knowledge (Phillips 2003:158). And through the incorporation of Indigenous concepts and methodologies of cultural heritage, curation, and preservation, the idea of the museum is evolving to accommodate the needs of diverse cultural groups, both as audiences for museums and as presenters of culture and custodians of tangible and intangible heritage. Museums must also consider the ethical demands at the personal/political level when attempting to undertake collaborative, participatory, counter colonial research (Nicholls 2009:118; Besterman 2011). Therefore, the successful relocation of museums into diverse cultural contexts requires flexibility in conceptualizing what the museum is, what it does, and how it does it (Simpson 2007).
Research and access to museum collections constitutes a significant part of the literature regarding collaboration, particularly in regards to the care and interpretation of cultural heritage housed outside of their communities of origin. All museum collections involve the removal of objects from one context and their recontextualization as part of a collection and/or as part of a display in which new meanings are attributed (Bouquet 2012), but until fairly recently, these meanings have not included the voices of those who made, used, and cared for the objects before coming to the museum. The passage of NAGPRA has helped to initiate these conversations, and many museums have accepted the opportunity to build relationships with source communities. And because of the amount of collected material culture that is now housed in museums and other cultural institutions, some anthropologists argue that access should be a privilege for source communities, whose members often have little or no means to travel to museums (Marstine 2006:17).

Researching the social lives of objects and images in collections has also led to the creation of new forms of knowledge through collaborative endeavors. Participatory research produces various types of knowledge, including experiential, fusing with the theoretical to produce “practical knowledge” which is deemed to generate social transformation. The genesis of collaborative, participatory research was to destabilize the control of professionals and experts in the creation of knowledge about “others.” As part of this theoretical framework and methodology, the idea is for researchers to engage with reflexive evaluation of collective and negotiated design, data collection, and data analysis to consider the interpersonal and collective dynamics during the research process, and
any effects that the research may potentially have going into the future (Nicholls 2009:118).

Ethical concerns and dilemmas that played into my research were primarily centered around the fact that I am a non-Native anthropologist conducting research on the best ways for museums to document and record language and traditional knowledge. And as I conducted my research, I had to consider who my research was for and what impact my findings would have. As the primary stakeholders and focus of my research, my greatest concerns were centered on the ASC, Alaska Office and how my research would impact them. To address this, I am offering a copy of my finished thesis to the ASC for their records. During my research, I was also conscious of the fact that as a non-Native researcher conducting research on Indigenous language and cultural revitalization, my opinions do not necessarily reflect how Native researchers and language speakers may feel about their languages being documented and preserved. I have tried to address this by including the perspectives of Native researchers in my work and emphasize that the incorporation of Native voice is crucial in collaborative work, particularly when working with and helping to preserve and revitalize language as ICH.

**Research Design**

My research began during my first internship at the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center (ASC) from February to August 2011. As an intern, I was involved with a number of projects for the *Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska* exhibition and the *Sharing Knowledge* website, including updating, editing, and checking functionality for website/gallery interactives, as well as assisting with monthly
Spotlight Lectures and a week-long artist residency, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5. I was immediately impressed at the amount of Alaska Native language content in the exhibition and on the Sharing Knowledge website, and during my time at ASC I became increasingly interested in the process the ASC goes through in working with individuals and communities to document language content and how those materials are redistributed back to the communities and presented to the public. Because of my experiences at ASC and my personal connection with Alaska, I was inspired to research how museums and cultural institutions are collaborating with source communities to document and incorporate language into collections, exhibitions, and programming.

Initially, this research project had a much broader focus on language revitalization and the relationship between the ASC and the relatively new Smithsonian Recovering Voices program based in Washington, D.C. However, due to the limited availability of literature and communication with the Recovering Voices program and findings during my fieldwork/research, I redirected my focus to examine how language revitalization is being approached through collaborative networks specifically related to the endangered Indigenous languages in Alaska.

I focus on the ASC as a case study for the purpose of analyzing and contextualizing the work being done at this one institution to the greater network of individuals, groups, and programs involved in language and cultural initiatives in Alaska. To do so, I utilized a number of ethnographic and research techniques to collect my data including participant observation, interviews, exhibition analysis, and archival research, which I will expand on below.
Participant Observation

The first phase of my research fieldwork was conducted at ASC, Alaska Office in Anchorage, Alaska during my two internships: the first between February and August 2011; and the second from June and August 2012, which also served as the field site for my research. My initial research questions were: How is language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) being documented and incorporated into museum collections, exhibitions, and public outreach programs? How is the Recovering Voices program work at the Alaska Office of the Arctic Studies Center (ASC) addressing the issues of language preservation? How is language, as used in oral histories, stories and traditional knowledge associated with objects, being redistributed back to source communities?

As an intern, my tasks varied depending on the project given and the needs of ASC staff regarding specific events and programming, such as upcoming lectures, workshops, and ongoing research. During my first internship in 2011, I was the Sharing Knowledge website and Living Our Cultures gallery interactives assistant and was responsible for checking website functionality, which included systematically going through individual object records to review what content was available while updating the website with more recent information and content. I also assisted with the monthly Spotlight Lectures, filming and photographing the events, as well as monitoring the Cultural Consultation space when objects were pulled from the gallery. It was during this internship that I was involved in the week long Athabascan Snowshoe Master Artists Residency that the ASC hosted at the Anchorage Museum, and was able to observe the
part of the organization and process that goes into ASC programs which was invaluable to my research.

My second internship at the ASC the next summer was for a period of 20 weeks for 20-25 hours a week from June to August 2012, during which time I was able to collect data on the daily operations of ASC and how projects are organized and executed. As the Public Programming intern, I worked directly with Dawn Biddison, Assistant Curator for the ASC, Alaska Office, to research and write captions for archival photographs that were then uploaded to the Sharing Knowledge website and gallery interactive kiosks. I was also responsible for transcribing audio and visual interviews that the ASC had conducted with language speakers and cultural experts both in the gallery and for research on future projects. Working in the museum also provided networking opportunities with museum practitioners and staff who were familiar with the ASC, as well as a number of guest speakers and program participants, including elders, artists, culture bearers, educators, and academics who are knowledgeable about their respective cultures and are actively involved in language and cultural revitalization throughout the state of Alaska. Although I was not able to attend any of the language workshops discussed in the next chapter, I did transcribe and edit audio and film footage from a number of these programs and was able gain insight as to how ASC staff balance their research goals with the needs and requests of participants through my work with these materials, as well as through personal communication with staff. I will discuss both internships at length in my next chapter.
Another important aspect of my research was to use comparative museology between the ASC and other language revitalization initiatives through the Smithsonian related programs and community efforts to understand how other museums and cultural centers approach language at their institutions, which provided the foundation for background research and my literature review. In this respect, comparative museology is an appropriate tool in this thesis as it entails the systematic study and comparison of museological forms and behaviors in diverse cultural settings (Kreps 2003:4). Utilizing comparative museology to analyze and contextualize the ASC, Alaska Office to other museums and cultural institutions that are involved with language related programming in my research has allowed me to understand and interpret the strengths and weaknesses of their programming. In addition to ASC, I researched and visited four other Alaskan institutions, including the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage, the Alaska Native Language Center/Alaska Native Language Archive at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the Pratt Museum in Homer. I have also done library research on other institutions in Alaska (Sealaska Heritage Institute, Iñupiaq Heritage Center, Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository, Alaska State Museum, Sheldon Jackson Museum, and others), as well as other museums known for their collaborative methods and practices (National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa), National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), and Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC), to name a few).
Interviews

Interviews were a major aspect of my data collection, and subjects included both museum professionals and past language workshop participants. My decision to interview staff at the ASC was based on their direct involvement in the curation of the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition and *Sharing Knowledge* website, conducting hours of interviews and facilitating discussions with elders and culture bearers during exhibition development from 2001 to 2010. The ASC staff is also in charge of developing, organizing, and carrying out collaborative projects and programs at the Alaska Office, and because there are only two full-time staff members, their roles are vital in making these programs happen. Therefore, they are the best sources for understanding the intentions and processes behind the work that is produced from their office.

Similarly, the intention of interviewing language workshop and residency participants was to gauge their perspectives toward the ASC programming they had been involved with, as well as to discern their opinions on language and cultural revitalization and how they feel about the role of museums in supporting these efforts.

Challenges in the field limited some aspects of data collection and research. One of the largest issues involved the unavailability of interviewees for in-person interviews while I was in Alaska over the summer. I intended to collect 10-15 semi-structured interviews with museum staff and former participants, but due to various circumstances including limited availability and difficulty in contacting potential interviewees, I modified my research goals to address how museums and cultural institutions in Alaska
are working with source communities to develop collaborative programming through comparative analysis.

Scheduling phone interviews or getting email responses also became difficult once I returned to Denver. Therefore, interviews with former workshop participants and museum professionals were limited to three semi-structured interviews (two museum professionals and one former workshop participant) and personal communication.

The three interviews focused on the subject’s experience with Alaska Native languages and working with source communities and community representatives on language related materials. In all interviews, interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, but were given the option to waive their anonymity if they so desired. Additional information was also shared through email and informal conversations along with informal interviews, but because I did not receive explicit permission to include our discussions, I will not be referencing them directly.

For interviews with museum personnel I used the same set of questions for each staff member, and included a separate set of questions for my interview with workshop participants (see Appendix D). The questions I asked were meant to evaluate how the ASC develops and facilitates collaborative projects with source communities and how participants perceive their experiences with the workshops. Each interview was recorded and transcribed with the interviewees’ permission according to Institutional Review Board protocol (see Appendix C). Completed transcripts of interviews were offered to each individual interviewed as a measure of accountability. I also tried to convey to each individual interviewed that they were welcome to make changes or corrections to the
transcripts if certain phrases appeared incorrect, or somehow out of context (Butler 1999).

Analysis of Exhibitions

Exhibition analysis in the Living Our Cultures gallery was another important component of my fieldwork at the ASC, Alaska Office. All exhibitions, whatever the subject, draw on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it (Lavine and Karp 1991:1), and through the display of objects and inclusion of specific textual and media content, implicit ideas and practices are made explicit (Bouquet 2012). In the Living Our Cultures exhibition, all of these elements were approached with the goal of creating a multivocal exhibition that presents Alaska Native voices as the first voice through the incorporation of language, oral histories, and traditional knowledge associated with historic objects that were brought to back to Alaska on long-term loan from the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Therefore, an analysis of the exhibit space was essential to my research in understanding how the exhibition played into the ASC’s programming and continued research after the initial installation in 2010. Data collection was done primarily during my second internship in summer 2012, and included analysis of exhibit design, text and media, and visitor observations in addition to speaking with staff about the exhibit development process.

Archival and Secondary Source

Additional information about language revitalization, endangered languages in Alaska, and language use in museums was gathered through library and Internet research. Scholarly literature on language loss and the efforts being made to document and
preserve this knowledge provided a greater understanding of the severity of language endangerment and how communities are approaching revitalization. Specific readings and case studies on past collaborative projects also provided great insight as to how different institutions have dealt with the shift in museum practices by allowing source communities access to collections and archival materials and how recorded materials from these experiences are being incorporated into Native and non-Native institutions. My impressions and analysis of these sources are presented in Chapter Three.
Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis

As I stated in previous chapters, this thesis examines how museums in Alaska are supporting language and cultural revitalization through collaboration with source communities and other like-minded institutions, and how the development of collaborative networks supports and strengthens these efforts. To demonstrate, in this chapter I focus on the Alaska Office of the Smithsonian’s Arctic Studies Center (ASC), which developed their own methodology for language-based programs in Alaska and are the basis for my recommended steps for working collaboratively on projects with various stakeholders. This is not to say that the ASC is the only cultural institution in Alaska currently engaged in supporting Alaska Native language and cultural revitalization initiatives, but for the purposes of this thesis the ASC is an appropriate example of how collaborative networks are being established and continue to evolve in Alaska.

I first visited the Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska exhibition in January 2011, seven months after the exhibit opened. I was there to interview for an internship and as I entered the gallery space, I was immediately struck not only by the number of heritage objects on display, but also by the presence of Alaska Native languages throughout the exhibit. Language was on the labels and text panels, and could be heard through visual and audio recordings playing on a loop on seven large monitors at one end of the cases. I also learned that additional information on Alaska Native languages and cultures could be found on the gallery website, Alaska Native
Collections: Sharing Knowledge, which was available through interactive kiosks at the end of each case and in the Media Center in the gallery. But what really caught my attention was not just the presence of language in the gallery or the website, but the emphasis on collaboration with Native elders, advisors, scholars, and artists that drove the ASC programs. And throughout my first internship, I began to understand the power that language has to breathe life into museum collections, and the importance of collaboration when working on language based projects and programs.

In this chapter, I describe my findings and analysis from the data I collected during my two internships at the ASC, Alaska Office and through library and archival research before and after my fieldwork. From this research, I have come up with a set of recommended procedures for collaborative projects, which are:

1. Establish relationships with source communities.
2. Provide an inviting and comfortable space in the museum for collaborations to take place.
3. Bring in elders, cultural advisors, educators, scholars, artists, and researchers as advisors and co-curators for exhibits and programs.
4. Provide access to museum collections (objects, archival photographs, audio/visual recordings, etc.), either physically or virtually (or both) depending on logistics.
5. Discuss the desired goals and outcomes of the project/program with participants beforehand.
6. Document the process including conversations, dialogue, monologues, oral histories, and associated vocabulary related to objects being discussed in Native languages.

7. Work with participants and educators to develop relevant and meaningful educational materials that can be used as supplemental materials for language learning.

8. Make all of this information accessible to workshop participants, communities, and researchers, with special consideration and safeguarding of culturally sensitive knowledge.

Although these recommendations are based on my observations at the ASC, Alaska Office, I believe these steps can be applied to other collaborative projects with the goal of developing and maintaining collaborative relationships and networks with source communities and other cultural institutions. Throughout this chapter, I will explain the processes the ASC has gone through to develop their methodology in working collaboratively with source communities and other cultural organization to organize and implement language-based projects and programs, and how their work is related to and involved with other language and cultural initiatives both inside and outside of Alaska.

Below I provide a brief description of the ASC and their past projects to provide some context for current and ongoing projects. To begin, the Smithsonian Institution has a long history in working with Alaska Native communities. In fact, most Alaska Native objects at the Smithsonian and in other museums, both in the United States and abroad, were purchased by scientific expeditions, museum collectors, and traders in the
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who were focused largely on collecting traditional objects and associated knowledge that could be carried away to museums (Crowell 2010). Today, pieces that left the hands of individuals and families long ago are examples of traditional craftsmanship and design, especially to the descendants of those who made them. At the Smithsonian, ancestral objects at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) evoke contemporary meaning as well as history for Alaska Native elders, artists, and scholars through their own experiences, cultural knowledge, and spiritual outlook. And despite their dislocation and recontextualization in museums around the world, these collected materials help provide valuable insight into the past, present, and future of Alaska at a time when the Arctic is undergoing rapid and profound changes (Crowell 2010:9). However, the desire to have objects return to their places of origin is strong.

To make this priceless heritage more accessible to communities in Alaska in the twenty-first century, the ASC developed the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition in partnership with the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center and Alaska Native cultural organizations. Opening in May 2010, the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition is the largest and longest long-term loan the Smithsonian has ever made (on exhibit through 2017) with more than 600 objects from NMNH and the NMAI, representing nine Alaska Native and Siberian Yup’ik culture areas with language, traditional knowledge, and contemporary voices woven into the overall display. Through extensive collaboration with Alaska Native elders, scholars, artists, teachers, and museum staff the ASC aims to give agency to Alaska Native communities and how they want to represent themselves
and their languages by documenting traditional knowledge about objects, including oral histories, language, and emotional experiences (Crowell 2010). The Living Our Cultures exhibit is also important because it focuses on the vitality of Alaska Native cultures, demonstrating cultural continuity through change by juxtaposing ancient, historical objects and contemporary images.

My research shows that the Living Our Cultures exhibition represents the culmination of all the work the ASC has produced and built on over the past twenty-six years through the development of collaborative relationships and projects with source communities in Alaska and the circumpolar North. Established in 1988, the ASC is the only U.S. government program with a special focus on the northern circumpolar region, exploring cultures, history, and environments of the northern part of the globe through cultural research and education initiatives (Crowell 2010). Emphasizing its commitment to engaging source communities in their research and future programming, all ASC programs and exhibitions are co-designed with universities, communities, and government and non-profit agencies to realize diverse scientific and educational goals.

In 1994 the ASC, in partnership with the Anchorage Museum, opened its Alaska regional office, and has worked continuously to build on its relationships with Alaska Native communities and individuals in their programs and ongoing research. As I learned during my fieldwork, these established relationships were a crucial element to the depth of Alaska Native voice and perspective in the Living Our Cultures exhibition, and continue to be important resources as the ASC develops ongoing programs and projects. And as they continue to build on their relationships with Alaska Native communities in
cultural research, exhibitions, and education (Crowell 2001), it is the museum and the facility and the resources at ASC that staff hope are being helpful in supporting community language and cultural revitalization.

I found that collaboration with source communities is particularly recognizable in the research and development of ASC exhibitions such as *Inua: Spirit World of the Bering Sea Eskimo* (1982), followed by *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska* (1988), *Agayuliyaraput (Our Way of Making Prayer)* (1996), and *Looking Both Ways: Heritage and Identity of the Alutiiq People* (2001). From what I have observed in the exhibition catalogs, these past projects also demonstrate the progression and development of ASC’s multivocal, community-based exhibitions where both Native and non-Native perspectives are present, but the emphasis on the former as the primary curatorial voice has become progressively more noticeable with each exhibit.

For instance, the most recent predecessor to the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition, *Looking Both Ways* (2001) was a community-based exhibition that involved broad collaborative efforts from a number of museums and communities, including the ASC and the Alutiiq Museum and Archeology Repository in Kodiak, with assistance from the Anchorage Museum and the Smithsonian Institution. What is unique about the *Looking Both Ways* exhibition is that it was inspired in large part by community interest in seeing and learning from Alutiiq objects that are held by NMNH in Washington, D.C., resulting in a multivocal and collaborative exhibition (Crowell 2001:5).

As a contributing author to the *Looking Both Ways* exhibition and catalog, Sven Haakanson, Jr., a Native (Alutiiq) anthropologist and former director of the Alutiiq
Museum and Archaeological Repository in Kodiak, asks why the Native anthropologist is always, in effect, required to speak from an “emic” rather than an “etic” position; stating that: “If Natives cannot write from both Native and scientific perspectives then what is the purpose of doing anthropology?” (2001:79). Haakanson asks this question not to criticize this work but to bring up larger issues about the nature of collaborative work between Natives and anthropologists, and to note that research by Native anthropologists is not often accepted in the academic community because of a prevailing belief that it is “biased” (Haakanson 2001). But in Alaska, at least, I have found that the experience and expertise of Native scholars is seen as a valuable resource for museums and cultural institutions as they develop collaborative projects and programs with source communities.

Planning for *Living Our Cultures* began in 2001 in conjunction with an expansion of the Anchorage Museum and the second-floor construction of the Arctic Studies Center encompassing 10,000 square feet of space divided into the ASC offices, Gillam Archaeology Laboratory, Gottstein Learning Center, Listening Space, Cultural Consultation Room, and central exhibit area. As I expected, in designing this space, it was important that gallery included spaces that accommodate different uses of collections, and also to create a welcoming, comfortable environment for people when working with the collections (Schultz 2011). I found this to be particularly significant in relation to the various programs and events the ASC hosted while I was there, as it is not only convenient to have a designated space where ASC staff can pull objects from the cases for public viewing and observation (usually in the Cultural Consultation Room),
but also necessary to ensure the safety of the objects when they are not mounted in their cases. I will explain the uniqueness of this situation later on when I discuss the cases and object mounts.

Between 2001 and 2009, exhibition development involved the participation of a 17-member Alaska Native advisory panel, over one hundred cultural advisors, and a large network of anthropologists and art historians, curators and museum professionals (Crowell 2010; Chan 2013). According to ASC staff, the exhibition team worked with Alaska regional organizations to coordinate study trips with almost fifty Alaska Native cultural advisers, including elders, scholars, artists, and cultural representatives from source communities, who travelled to Washington, D.C. to view and discuss a wide range of objects in the Smithsonian collections. During these trips, advisors commented on objects, discussed materials, and shared stories that were then recorded, transcribed, and implemented into the exhibition framework (Chan 2013). Objects were then chosen through extensive collaborations with advisers elders, scholars, and cultural representatives from source communities, resulting in thousands of hours of audio/visual records and more than 4,000 pages of transcripts that were then used to incorporate language and traditional knowledge into exhibit text and interactives. Therefore, the documentation of language and traditional knowledge was a crucial part of development process, and the presence of language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is an essential component to the exhibition and continued programming, which I will discuss later on.

During my interview with Dawn Biddison, the Assistant Curator at ASC (who was also part of the development and creation of the exhibition and website), she stated
that the ASC tried to emphasize Native voice as the first voice in *Living Our Cultures*, and one of the ways that they accomplished this was through the incorporation of Alaska Native languages. As I said earlier in this chapter, Alaska Native languages are present in each major element of the gallery from object labels with the traditional names of objects (down to the dialect and sub-dialect wherever possible so that the name reflects the community of origin for the object as closely as possible) to hearing the languages through ACS produced videos playing on monitors at the east end of the cases that allow visitors to hear contemporary Alaska Native voices.

According to Biddison, making the prioritization of Native voice clear for the viewers and giving people an experience of diversity of Alaska Native was also a point of emphasis during the development process. Unlike other mainstream exhibitions, planners for *Living Our Cultures* worked primarily outside the constraints of a museum hierarchy as they endeavored to create a balanced contact zone where multiple voices could be heard reaching definitive levels of multivocality from Native and non-Native participants across the exhibition framework (Chan 2013).

One observation that I made from watching visitors in the gallery was that if visitors do not read the text panels or the labels as they move throughout the exhibition, all they hear is the audio from the different stations which individually do talk about language and the importance of cultural continuity, but the idea that multivocality as a focal point for the entire exhibition may be understated. During my observations in the gallery space, some visitors did seem to focus on the historical significance of the objects rather than idea that the objects were representative of living cultures, but I think the
majority understood the importance of language in the exhibition, and many seemed to recognize that it was the voices of Alaska Natives that they heard from the interactives in the gallery. That being said, I do think the exhibit is effective in presenting Native voice in connection to the objects, and if visitors spend enough time in the gallery, the point that Alaska Native languages and cultures are living is comprehended.

As I mentioned above, all text panels and labels in the exhibition display both traditional names for objects along with English descriptions. Native voice is also reflected in the exhibit cases where the primary and secondary labels are quotes from Alaska Native scholars and artists, reflecting their connection to their cultural area and language. The see-through glass cases are organized by geographic regions in Alaska and Siberia, and were specifically designed by an outside contractor to create the cases and the custom mounting system for this exhibition. What is unique about the case design is that it allows objects to be readily removed from display for examination in a dedicated area, usually the Consultation Room in the gallery, for various ASC programs and events. Once removed from the case, objects are then remounted onto a specially designed movable rack that has the same mounting system that is in the exhibit cases for transportation and viewing. What is also fairly exceptional about this design is that the objects are never taken out of their mounts, so that there is as little handling of these valuable and often fragile pieces as possible. Once in the Consultation Room, the objects remain mounted on the rack, which allows ASC staff, program participants, and occasionally visitors to observe the objects. Although there is no formal written protocol for object handling, I must point out that there are procedures for pulling objects,
including which objects are to be pulled for a certain program and informing the Collections department in advance so they have enough time to prepare and move the objects, which are never out of the exhibit case for very long. Due to the fragile condition of many of the objects, when they are pulled for viewing the ASC and Anchorage Museum staff limit the number of people in the Consultation Room to 10-12 people at a time, including museum staff and visitors. In addition, the lighting in the gallery is kept relatively dark to ensure the safety and integrity of the objects is maintained, particularly as most of the objects are made with organic materials and are sensitive to light damage because of their age and limited use since they were collected.

The ASC also has measures for safeguarding culturally sensitive materials, including keeping a record of objects that have been identified as culturally sensitive by elders and cultural advisors, including knowledge that was shared with ASC during exhibit development but was asked not to be made available to the public or published on the Sharing Knowledge website or exhibition catalog. Although this is seen as a critical part of documenting knowledge associated with these objects, it can be a complex process, and one that might change even during the process of completing specific projects. From her experiences during exhibition development and the numerous projects/programs that she has organized, Biddison cautioned that there might also not be agreement within even the same community about what is considered culturally sensitive: “we try to honor the people who we work with, but we also try to preface information that we share about culturally sensitive objects for those who might also agree that it
might not want to reiterate or expose themselves (Dawn Biddison, in interview with author, August 20, 2012).

Museum visitors can also access more in-depth descriptions of objects (with approved information) through interactive touch screen kiosks stationed at the end of each case throughout the exhibit, including detailed information regarding the history of an object, Elder’s Discussions, archival photographs, high resolution photographs (which also allows for up close viewing of an object without physically examining it), and other information that is not included on the text panels. I think the Elder’s Discussions are a good representation of the in-depth collaborative process that went into the creation of the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition as they are pulled from transcript excerpts of conversations with elders who went on research trips to Washington, D.C. and shared knowledge about the objects and how they were used, often in their respective languages. In the transcripts, the Alaska Native languages appear first (if elders and cultural advisers spoke their language at the time), followed by an English translation. Although elders did not speak directly to the significance of each individual piece, they often related what they did know through personal experiences or through stories related to how they were used and/or made. All of this information, including the transcripts from the Washington, D.C. trips, are available through the ASC, Alaska Office and on the *Sharing Knowledge* website (http://alaska.si.edu).

Launched before the exhibit opened in 2011, some objects also have audio files attached to their individual records on the website so visitors can hear the Alaska Native names for the objects in the language from the culture they come from. Although not all
of the objects have audio files at this time due to the sheer volume of work that had to be done in order to get the website launched ahead of the gallery opening (not to mention the amount of programming that has been ongoing since its opening), the hope is that one day all of the object records will have audio recordings of the names available.

Emphasis on Native voice is also prominent in the exhibition catalog where Indigenous scholars, leaders, and educators, many who served as advisers during exhibit development, add their voices to the book essays about Alaska Native cultures and communities today. In the introductory chapter of the catalog, Aron Crowell, Director of the Alaska Office of the ASC, states that the exhibit’s primary objective involved “collaborative exchange of knowledge” (2010:12) that yielded multiple perspectives on Alaska Native objects from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Crowell also emphasizes that hosting the exhibit in Alaska represents the “coming home” of Smithsonian collections to their place of origin (Crowell 2010), where they are more accessible to Alaska Native communities. This idea was also emphasized during my time at the ASC and was expressed in a number of my readings about other collaborative engagements both inside and outside of Alaska.

In reference to the literature on the collecting and decontextualization of objects into museum terms discussed in Chapter Three, repatriation is a critical part of heritage and cultural movements, both in the United States and internationally, and the return of traditional objects from the Smithsonian, albeit on loan, offers a powerful symbolic reconnection with the past. And I believe that with the presence of language throughout
the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition and catalog, depth is added to the work and highlights the important connection it has to the objects and the people to whom they are connected.

The ASC also utilizes a variety of media, including the *Sharing Knowledge* website, to make the exhibition and their continued research accessible to the public. And although the hope is for everyone to come to the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition in Anchorage, the reality is that not everyone will be able to come to the exhibition in person. From my conversations with ASC staff, they are very aware of this limitation and have made a number of efforts to address it, including the creation of the online component of the exhibition. The *Sharing Knowledge* website is intended to act as another form of “visual repatriation,” providing accessibility for those who are unable to be physically present at the museum. Although the ASC acknowledges that this is not a best-case scenario and that they would ideally like everyone to be able to experience the exhibit in person, ASC staff say the website is the best they could do next to actually bringing the objects back to Alaska, and I agree. Travel within Alaska is almost as hard as travelling outside of the state, and unless people are coming to Anchorage for some other reason, it is unlikely that people will be able to make the trip just to come to see the exhibit. Therefore, the *Sharing Knowledge* website functions as both a virtual exhibit and an open-ended source or tool with additional information and educational resources being added as they become available.

I would also like to point out that there are only two dedicated, full-time staff members in the ASC, Alaska Office, and that aside from grants and funding from NMNH and NMAI, they rely heavily on volunteer work from interns and paid, outside
contractors (for example, translators to do transcription work and videographers for documenting specific programs) to deal with the large amount of work that accumulates over time from their continued programming. However, I believe that they do the best with what they have, and the only way for them to be able to do more programs and language related projects would be to have more staff, which ASC staff members that I have worked with and discussed this issue have said is unlikely to happen. But that does not mean they are unable to develop and create meaningful programming, it simply takes longer.

Indigenous visitors and cultural advisors to the exhibit also extend the possibility for multivocal discussions as objects on display continue to be examined in consultation with museum staff (Chan 2013). Ongoing dialogue contributes to collaborative discoveries (Crowell 2001), particularly as communities discover that valuable materials are available in museums to supplement their language and cultural projects. As Crowell explained to me during our interview in 2012, being located in Alaska, it is far less difficult to bring people to the Anchorage Museum and the Living Our Cultures gallery than it is to get to Washington, D.C., which this is one of the reasons that the ASC designed and regularly utilizes its consultation space for ongoing projects and programs. And because of the nature of their unique position in Alaska, ASC staff feel they are able to launch right in and implement collaborative programming and projects effectively both with communities and other projects (often grant funded). As I mentioned before, a key component to successful collaborations is the development of long-term relationships with source communities, and through continued research and outreach programming,
ASC staff are able to tap into their established networks and relationships with communities, with the fluent speakers, and with other language and cultural projects around the state.

Networking, therefore, is an important methodology for the ASC, Alaska-Office, and I argue, for other institutions and cultural organizations throughout the state, which is one reason why collaborative projects and programs in Alaska are successful. As I mentioned in previous chapters, collaborative networking is an ideal option for combining resources for museums working with source communities and other cultural institutions in supporting cultural programs, particularly language-based initiatives. But the reality of collaboration is much more complicated. I will explore this idea further throughout the rest of this chapter as I relate my experiences with being present at the ASC, Alaska Office through two internships and personal communication with ASC staff members, museum professionals, cultural experts, and through library research on various cultural programs in Alaska. I will also try to demonstrate why collaborative networking can be a sustainable method for projects and programs aimed at supporting language and cultural revitalization initiatives.

Language Workshops

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, a crucial part of the ASC’s mission is continued research through collaborative projects and programs with source communities in the Circumpolar North, and at the Alaska Office in Anchorage, this includes organizing and hosting language workshops as a part of their public programming. According to Biddison, the idea behind having language workshops initially arose from
the work that was done with different community members and cultural advisers during the development of *Living Our Cultures* exhibition and the realization that the communities they work with appreciate having support for existing language and cultural revitalization efforts (Dawn Biddison, in interview with author, August 20, 2012). And because of limited funding and similar goals toward preservation and revitalization, I argue that all parties involved benefit from collaboration on shared types of programming. Although I was not able to attend one of the language workshops, I am familiar with the process and planning for the programs through my time at the ASC, Alaska Office and interviews with ASC staff (see Appendix D for interview questions), as well as from my participation in the first artist residency ASC hosted, which will be discussed in the next section.

From my experiences at the ASC and through archival research, I believe that all tribal communities are communities in need when it comes to documenting, preserving, and revitalization language as ICH, and one thing that many need is help in sharing knowledge of their heritage with members of their own communities, particularly children (Hoerig 2010). To address this need, the ASC, Alaska Office has established formal partnerships with local, state, and national institutions for various projects and public programming, including the Anchorage Museum, Alaska State Council on the Arts, University of Alaska, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC) and the Alaska Native Language Archive (ANLA), NMNH, NMAI, the Recovering Voices initiative, and the Breath of Life program out of UC Berkeley, to name a few.
Planning for workshops begins with contacting the ASC’s tribal contacts to identify who are the working language experts doing language education from their respective communities, as well as other tribal leaders to determine who should be involved in the workshop. According to Crowell and Biddison, participants are usually individuals who have had prior experience doing language work, either with their own tribal members or working in schools with children and young adults (Aron Crowell, in interview with author, July 12, 2012; Dawn Biddison, in interview with author, August 20, 2012). The ASC tries to look for individuals who have had the opportunity to learn to write their language, which is not often because individuals around the age of 50 or older were not allowed to speak their language in school or to learn how to write in their own language; and those under 50 have had little exposure to their language or support in learning it. Although this is changing for younger generations as language-learning materials are being developed in a number of Alaska Native languages, many language initiatives are still creating language learning plans and the process of creating educational materials takes time. The ASC also tries to be conscious of the age of participants and the time of year when they schedule language workshops. As Biddison explained to me during our interview:

when working on a project that involves Indigenous peoples, you have to not only very, very carefully consider the time of year you do a project because of family, subsistence, and community responsibilities, but also the age group and health of the people who are involved that you are
looking to work with (Dawn Biddison, in interview with author, August 20, 2012).

This is why the ASC is very careful in choosing those who are the best all-around candidates to participate in the programs.

Although these factors may seem arbitrary, they are essential considerations given the increasing age of most language speakers and culture bearers, and because of the amount of travel involved in getting participants from their home communities to Anchorage. Availability is also important because of family commitments and subsistence practices in their village(s), which as I discussed in Chapter Two is a central part of Alaska Native communities to this day. The ASC staff stress the importance of making sure that participants are available to leave for an entire week to participate in the workshops and try to plan workshops around a time that works for everyone involved, which is usually (but not always) during the winter or early spring. However, planning for these workshops begins months in advance to allow enough time for the selection of participants and to organize the schedule for the week.

Another chief principle regarding the selection process is that ASC staff always ask community leaders or regional organizations they are working with to make recommendations on whom to invite to the programs because they are more familiar with who it is appropriate to ask and/or are best suited to participate in the workshops. One reason for this is that those located in the community may know people that ASC does not, and the ASC staff prefer not to be in a position of inviting someone just because they have worked with them before. During my fieldwork, I observed this firsthand as the ASC
staff was planning for an upcoming workshop in fall 2012. According to Biddison, “often times people who are very active in projects with museums and with outside research, end up getting a high profile that everyone knows, which means that other people who would also be great for projects can be overlooked” (Dawn Biddison, in interview with author, August 20, 2014). Although there are instances in which this is unavoidable because of the limited number of fluent speakers and/or cultural experts, asking community representatives for their opinions on whom to invite is both a sign of respect and a check against the tendency to invite the same people over and over again.

The first workshop that was initiated as a prototype for ASC public programs was in partnership with the Dena’ina Language Institute on Dena’ina Athabascan in October 2010 with some money that was left over from the exhibit budget. According to ASC staff, Dena’ina was chosen for the first workshop because the land on which the ASC gallery and the Anchorage Museum is situated in traditional Dena’ina territory. As I discussed in the Chapter Two, there has been an effort since the early 2000s to preserve and revitalize the Dena’ina language and culture, and to raise Dena’ina awareness in the Anchorage area. In the gallery space, there is also a wall installation at the primary entrance to the exhibition acknowledging and thanking the Dena’ina for the use of the land for the museum and their participation in the exhibit’s development.3 According to ASC staff, the Dena’ina workshop with the Dena’ina Language Institute included fluent speakers and advanced younger students of Dena’ina, who talked about Dena’ina and other Athabascan objects from the gallery collections while being recorded. The recorded

---

3 The ASC was also involved in the development of the Dena’ina exhibit in 2013 and past participants from this workshop continue to be involved in ASC programs.
material was then made into short films that are now used as models for other workshop materials produced by the ASC after language workshops.

As a participant in the Dena’ina workshop, Aaron Leggett, who I identified in Chapter Two as a Dena’ina cultural historian and co-curator of the recent Dena’ina exhibition, was also an important person to speak to in regards to my research because of his unique perspective as a Native anthropologist who is learning his language. During my interview with Leggett, he conveyed his experience growing up not speaking his language and what it means to him to be learning Dena’ina:

I never thought I’d be able to read and write anything in Dena’ina, or even have a remote understanding of it…I always thought language was just kind of this unattainable thing that I wouldn’t be able to do…I realize that Dena’ina is not going to be a conversational language, everyday kind of thing. But what I do see, and one of the things that I really worked hard on trying to do, is be able to read and write in my language because I am more concerned about that than I am about having perfect pronunciation (Aaron Leggett, in interview with author, August 9, 2012).

As a curator at the Anchorage Museum, Leggett is also trying to make the museum accessible and welcoming for Alaska Natives by providing a Dena’ina voice and presence in exhibitions and programming. Growing up, Leggett says the Anchorage Museum was referred to as “not our place”, meaning that it is a place for non-Native peoples living and visiting Anchorage, and not for those whose culture and heritage is on display, especially those who are Indigenous to the area and never left. Rectifying this
notion has been one of his goals in participating in a number of programs with the ASC including advising staff during the development of the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition and the Dena’ina language workshop.

In regards to his language, Leggett estimates that out of the Dena’ina population of approximately 1,500 people, there are probably less than 25 fluent speakers, but there are a number of individuals under the age of 50 who are actively trying to learn and revitalize the language (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History 2011). One of the questions that I asked during our interview was how he learned his language, to which he answered that he never really intended to, it was just one of those things that sort of happened once he became involved in raising Dena’ina awareness in the Anchorage area. But as he became more invested, he realized all of the previous opportunities that he missed to learn from fluent speakers and was immediately faced with some of the realities of learning an endangered language.

Another question that I asked during our interview was if there was any concern about museums documenting and preserving Native languages and the knowledge they hold. He responded that theoretically there is some concern that it may become exploitative, but that for the most part, museums that do collaborative work are approaching it from the viewpoint that to have Indigenous languages, or the language of the people from which the object comes from, only adds to strengthen the pieces, and cautioned that each should be approached on a case-by-case basis. And for Leggett, the benefits outweigh the concerns because it allows exposure to the language, and that is key when identifying objects and working with the language in museums:
People always ask me why it is so important that you have language in these kinds of exhibits and things… What I always tell them is, you know, this language has been spoken in this area for well over a thousand years; and I say when English is spoken in this area for a thousand years, I’ll stop. We’ll stop. [But] we have nine hundred more years to go (Aaron Leggett, in interview with author, August 8, 2012).

The real concern for him is that it is in vogue in museum practice today to include the traditional name for an object and to call it good. But for Leggett, just including the name is doing a disservice to the object as well as the language that it comes from. In fact, he says the best way to go about incorporating language into museums is through extensive consultation and collaboration with language speakers and community members who can speak to the linguistic and cultural relevance of objects. Even though it takes money and time to make collaborative projects truly successful, it’s worth it. And often times, he said, people are just happy to be asked.

Leggett is not alone in this and throughout my research I have found that this sentiment is expressed repeatedly by Native and non-Native scholars alike. From the Yup’ik delegation Ann Fienup-Riordan worked with at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin to the curatorial practices at the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and NMAI, collaboration is considered a key methodology in raising awareness, encouraging pride in Native identity, and providing access to collections.

Other language workshops and meetings that the ASC has hosted have included Iñupiaq, St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik, and Eyak. It is important to note that there is no
particular order to the workshops aside from funding and existing language revitalization projects. For example, the Iñupiaq Language and Cultural Seminar that was held in January 2011 and the St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik Language Workshop that was held in January 2012 were made priorities because of grant funding the ASC received from the National Park Service’s Shared Beringian Heritage Program. Under the grant, the ASC is hosting workshops to record Alaska Native languages and the knowledge they embody from the Bering Straits region (I will discuss the specifics of these two workshops later on in this section). And although it was not a formal workshop, in spring 2012, the ASC hosted the Eyak Preservation Council because of an existing partnership with some of the participants and the availability of the ASC consultation space.

Although Eyak is technically a dead language as its last fluent speaker, Chief Mary Smith Jones, passed in 2008, there is recognition that languages can be brought back even when on the brink of extinction. At present, the language is in the process of being revived and revitalized, and because of thorough documentation, linguistic study, and recordings of fluent speakers that have been made (and are available through ANLC/ANLA in Fairbanks), there is a good foundation for developing language-learning materials. Similar to other workshops, the Eyak Preservation Council was provided with space to work and hold language-teaching workshops, as well as access to relevant objects on display in the Living Our Cultures exhibition as stimuli for discussions. Although the ASC is not directly involved in the revitalization of Eyak or any other Alaska Native language, by providing space for groups to work, the ASC is upholding its
mission to provide access to the collections and to be a resource for language and cultural revitalization initiatives.

For the workshops (and for other community exhibit-collections based research), objects are chosen during the planning stages when a list of objects for discussion are made available to the participants so they can choose what they want to talk about before they arrive. As Biddison explained during our interview, the discussion of historic objects from the collections is a key component of language workshops as they, “are all things that people remember using or remember hearing about using, and very often they use the same kind of object with different kinds of contemporary elements that have been applied to them, most often with more contemporary materials or just a contemporary variation for utilizing the same kind of tool” (Dawn Biddison, in interview with author, August 20, 2012). The inclusion of objects is also a crucial point for the ASC, as they believe centering the discussions on objects opens up a wide topical range, including historical, cultural, spiritual, and social concepts that arise because of the objects. Therefore, Biddison says that looking at these historic objects in a museum setting is just as pertinent to the contemporary cultural practices and support revitalization of contemporary cultural practices and language.

From my research and observations at the ASC, I agree that the incorporation of objects helps to begin conversations and evoke knowledge that might otherwise be left out of museum records. Objects work as an anchor, securing all the stories and discourses it has generated (Bouquet 2012:179). Further more, orienting discussions around objects allows for recontextualization as participants often use vocabulary associated with an
object that may no longer be in common use and through the workshops, a record is made
that documents knowledge from the people who are familiar with the objects (or
remember hearing about them from their elders) and are fluent and/or learning the
language. I would also say that this method is key to why collaboration is imperative in
programs focused on community-based knowledge and involvement. As I discussed in
Chapter Three, museum objects may regain their lost meaning and functions and be
valued once again for their expression of old values and traditions; or they may acquire
new significance, which is not without political relevance (Simpson 1996:191). Thus,
even though ASC does not directly refer to language as intangible heritage, the
documentation of language as ICH and as a measure for safeguarding it is a primary
outcome of hosting language workshops and related exhibit-collections based programs.

The format of the language workshops is based on group discussions as well as
individual presentations. The group discussion occurs when participants are talking about
the objects, going back and forth, in a conversational context. During the week, ASC staff
also ask individuals to talk for two to three minutes separately, to make a summary of
what the discussion was about and to say what they feel are the key characteristics about
the object or the topic that came up in the discussion.

Before the workshop, ASC staff meet with educational and tribal representatives
to decide what the goals of the workshop are and what kind of language learning
materials are wanted to come out of the workshop at the end. Because, “the workshop not
only seeks to document fluent language speakers having conversations, but it also seeks
to create, at the end, supplemental education materials for existing language programs in
the communities” (Aron Crowell, in interview with author, July 12, 2012).

The ASC has arrived at this model through numerous discussions with language
teachers and cultural educators who like the model and its adaptability to create
supplemental language-learning materials that they need and feel will be the most
successful for their students, including language introductory videos and summaries of
workshop initiatives and outcomes. Aside from the workshops themselves, the materials
produced at the end of the workshops demonstrate the collaborative nature of these
projects. After a number of successful collaborations, the ASC does plan to take a
developing model of how to do language workshops and then to seek funding for other
projects. I think it is also important that the ASC staff is always looking for advice from
the communities about what to do in the workshops and how to improve on what they are
doing, and they are very happy with the design of asking what communities want.

As an intern, I worked with the end product of these collaborations, transcribing
workshop films and audio recordings in preparation for them to be uploaded and posted
online. During his interview, Crowell explained that when students watch the films the
first time, the discussions are presented in both translation and transcription, with the
camera angled for an interview shot so the viewers can see and hear how the speaker is
pronouncing the words. The second time through, there is only the Alaska Native
language transcription; and the third time, it is just listening to the discussions without
any aid from subtitles or transcription. According to Crowell, these short films create an
opportunity for students to watch and listen to truly fluent speakers of the language that
they are trying to learn, with reinforcement from their teacher who would be emphasizing particular vocabulary or sentence constructions that are being used (Aron Crowell, in interview with author, July 12, 2012). Archival images and film footage are also included to add context for what the participants are discussing. These short films are, therefore, cultural lessons as well as general introductions to the language, and help to reinforce the importance of documenting language as a form of ICH and a means of safeguarding the knowledge associated with objects.

However, the point must be stressed that these materials are not meant to be language lessons or basic introductions to grammar and sentence structure. Rather, they are intended more as an introduction to the work that was done in the language workshops and as supplemental materials for teachers in the classroom. As Crowell stated in our interview, these are speech samples that the ASC is trying to make accessible to language educators and those learning the language, and although these lessons are developed specifically for the communities they are intended for, they are also available to the wider public both in the ASC gallery (Living Our Cultures exhibition interactives, media players, and Sharing Knowledge website) and online through YouTube (Living Our Cultures playlist on the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History channel, http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL33278BF298794573 accessed July 27, 2014) and on iTunes through the Smithsonian Channel under the Recovering Voices station. ASC language videos and language learning materials will also be available on the Alaska Native Knowledge Network website, but the site has not yet gone live.
Although I am unaware of any evaluations to assess how these films are being utilized by language learners and teachers in Alaska Native communities, on YouTube, the “Sharing the Dena’ina Language” film has been viewed 2,610 times and the “Sharing the Iñupiaq Language” film 1,699 times as of July 2014. And even though it is impossible to tell how many of these views are for educational purposes and how many are from the general public, I believe the idea behind producing the films has as much to do with raising awareness about Alaska Native languages as it does with demonstrating the different types of ASC programming that has been done.

That being said, the reason for these workshops being focused on identifying and supporting existing language initiatives is that the ASC and other institutions involved, Native and non-Native alike, simply do not have the time, resources, and funding to dedicate themselves to fully develop language-learning plans and curriculum materials for revitalizing all twenty Alaska Native languages (as well as numerous regional and village dialects). And this is the primary reason why museums and cultural institutions rely so heavily on supporting existing initiatives. However, what the ASC and other cultural institutions are able to do is to identify communities that are actively engaged in language and cultural revitalization, and to offer them support and assistance by providing access to collections and available resources, including the space for collaborative programming and outreach.

As I mentioned above, during my two internships the ASC was working under a grant received in 2010 from the Shared Beringian Heritage program at the National Park Service that is being implemented with a focus on two languages of the Bering Strait
region, St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik and Iñupiaq from mainland Alaska, which includes three dialects (Bering Straits, the Northwest or Kotzebue dialect, and North Slope Iñupiaq). Although St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik is slightly better off, both languages are considered highly endangered due to an aging population of fluent speakers and a decrease in the language use at home and in the communities. Unfortunately, this is the position of almost all Alaska Native languages, as well as many of the world’s Indigenous languages where there is severe language loss, and there is a great deal of concern regarding the transfer of languages to younger generations.

There are several objectives of the Shared Beringian Heritage Program grant, including inviting and recording fluent speakers, most of whom are elderly, to come to the museum and build discussions around some of the heritage objects that are in the exhibit collection. As with the other language workshops, the ASC is seeking to assist community-based educational efforts to revitalize Bering Strait languages as part of the Smithsonian’s Recovering Voices initiative (which will be discussed at length later in this chapter). Under the grant, the ASC is hosting language workshops to record Indigenous languages and the knowledge they embody.

One of the workshops that was conducted through the Shared Beringian Heritage Program was for the St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik language. Similar to the Dena’ina and Iñupiaq language workshops, the St. Lawrence Island workshop participants included language educators and cultural experts from the region. During the workshop in January 2012, sessions were held in the Cultural Consultation Room in the Living Our Cultures exhibition gallery at the Anchorage Museum. Objects were taken from display to
stimulate in-depth Yup’ik language commentaries that were recorded both as group
discussions and as individual on-camera presentations. The workshop yielded over 20
hours of fluent Yup’ik discussion on a wide range of cultural and historical topics,
providing rich content for the edited teaching videos and accompanying teacher’s guides
(Crowell 2012). Although St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik, or Siberian Yupik, is one of the
more secure Alaska Native languages, with a population of approximately 1,100 and
about 1,050 speaks according to the Alaska Native Language Center website
(http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/languages/sy/), it is the goal of the ASC to work with and raise
awareness for all Alaska Native languages, and funding from this grant enables them to
do so for this region.

As I discussed in previous chapters, many factors contribute to language loss,
from the history of forced acculturation and repression of Alaska Native languages to the
influence of the standard Western schooling model that applies all over Alaska, including
the absence of these languages in the classroom and the influence of English language
media. All of this and more influence parents, grandparents, and relatives decisions on
what to teach their children, and impact the opportunities they have to learn their
language, either at home or in school.

Growing up in Alaska, we learned about Alaska Native cultures, traditional art
forms, and the historical importance of Alaska Native heritage in school. But what was
barely touched on, and rarely reinforced outside of the classroom, was that Alaska Native
people are still living their heritage and speaking their language, even in urban
communities like Anchorage. In fact, the only time that I heard someone speaking an
Alaskan language was on school field trips or at a friend’s house where her grandmother spoke Tlingit when she was telling us about her sewing and beadwork. However, I believe this reality has slowly been changing over the past ten to fifteen years in large part because of increased awareness and activism in urban areas. And even though I think you are still more likely to hear Alaska Native languages in smaller communities and in regions where there is strong support for language revitalization, such as in Northwest, Southwest, and Southeast Alaska, urban revitalization is also becoming more visible through the presence and active outreach of institutions like the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage and ANLC/ANLA in Fairbanks, as well as through the support of institutions like the ASC; and with the recent passage of Alaska State Senate Bill 130 and House Bill 216, support for Alaska Native languages will continue to grow.

Another key characteristic of ASC language workshops is that no two are exactly the same. Although they do follow a basic model for collaboration in planning for all programming, the ASC staff tailors each project to what the participants and community representatives want to get out of the experience. When collaborating with source communities and individuals, each project or program must be handled on a case-by-case basis because each community and language/cultural situation is different. What worked for one project might not necessarily translate to the next, which is why Crowell and Biddison both emphasize that base models may be appropriate to present an initial format that can be adapted, creating a hybrid that meets the needs and desires of the community or individual(s) in a given project.
Again, I argue that the documentation of ICH in these workshops is vital to the initiatives of ASC and its community partners because of issues related to language loss, but also because of the threat of losing the wealth of traditional knowledge imbedded in language that is associated with objects held in museum collections. As I discussed earlier in Chapter Three, documenting of language as ICH is not only a form of Indigenous curation, but also a safeguarding measure for preserving the knowledge imbedded in the tangible, material culture housed in museums (Kreps 2008; Maxson 2010). Although working with language material can be difficult for museums because of their traditionally object based nature, it is imperative for museums to focus on language when working with Native communities because language is vital to preserving and revitalization culture. Just as culture informs language, language is imbedded with valuable cultural and traditional knowledge; and if one is lost, they both suffer. As languages vanish, communities lose a wealth of knowledge about history, culture, the natural environment, and the human mind (Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2013). And since the vast majority of Alaska Native material culture is now held in museums across the world due to extensive collecting during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I believe it is up to museums and cultural institutions to make themselves available to communities so they have access to these invaluable pieces of cultural heritage, and the knowledge that they hold.

In addition, sharing findings of collection-based research with the originating communities can in itself be seen as a form of repatriation (Phillips 2005:94). In an effort to be accessible and transparent, the ASC staff tries to make it very clear to current and
past participants as often as possible that all of the content that has been recorded and produced as a result of the workshop is available to them. There is even a section on the release forms that participants sign prior to the workshop that indicates they have complete access to all of the archival and recorded materials held at ASC, and includes office and staff contact information so they can get in touch with them to do so. The only issue is that because of the amount of information that the ASC has recorded as well as budgetary limitations, currently it is not possible for them to send individuals or communities everything they have upon request. But they still want to maintain access. So when materials are requested, the ASC tries to narrow down what content is desired and asks that a hard drive be provided so that they can send as much of the materials as they can to honor their policy and ethical standpoint as a resource for source communities.

**Athabascan Snowshoe Master Artists Residency at the Anchorage Museum**

As I stated earlier in this chapter, the ASC, Alaska Office often partners with other institutions, such as universities, communities, government, and non-profit agencies, for research and programming initiatives. In May 2011, the ASC, Alaska Office hosted its first artist residency at the Anchorage Museum, the Athabascan Snowshoe Master Artists Residency, with funding from the Smithsonian Recovering Voices program (which I will discuss in the next section), the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA), and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The artist residencies are a part of the ASCA’s Alaska Living Cultural Treasures program, which was developed in response to urgent recommendations from Alaska
Native communities to connect older and younger generations of artists through apprenticeships and hands-on training. The residency program was designed to strengthen the infrastructure for ASCA’s Alaska’s Folk and Traditional Arts and Artists and included in depth documentation of the cultural knowledge of recognized individuals about endangered Indigenous art forms. Over the years, there has been strong support for Alaska Native artists and art in the state, including sponsored apprenticeship programs through the State Arts Council in the 1980s and the Silver Hand program, which is now administered through ASCA. The mission of the Alaska’s Living Cultural Treasures program is to seek out and identify individuals who embody unique, endangered traditional knowledge and skills, and to connect them with younger generations of artists to reinforce the serious study, acquisition, and perpetuation of traditional Alaskan arts and cultural practices (ASCA newsletter, April 2012).

As an intern during the Athabascan Snowshoe residency from May 6-11, 2011, I was responsible for taking unofficial photographs and assisting the ASC staff throughout the week, which included monitoring the Gillam Archaeology Lab and handing out surveys to visitors for program evaluation by the Education department at the Anchorage Museum, which were then used by the ASC, ASCA, and the Anchorage Museum to determine what visitors learned and to help with planning for future programs.

Operating a little differently than the language workshops, the ASC works with ASCA priorities when organizing and planning for residencies as it is the ASCA’s program and they already have a working list of identified endangered art forms and practicing artists. The ASCA also has a statewide advisory council for their Native arts
program, and as Crowel conveyed, “one thing that we’ll be taking place in the future for future workshops is a priority setting for what are the truly endangered arts and what should be done first” (Aron Crowell, in interview with author, July 12, 2012). The initial purpose of the artist residencies was to document and preserve endangered, traditional arts by pairing elder master artists with younger apprentices during museum-based residencies to teach and build continuity between the past, present, and future. Beginning with the Athabascan region, ASCA had already gone through a process of identifying artists who were carrying on traditions that are endangered and in need of documentation, which is how ASC became involved. Other partners in this program have similar goals and programs that work together to preserve, teach, and celebrate significant and endangered forms of traditional Indigenous art (ASCA newsletter, June 2011), and working collaboratively on projects helps all to meet their individual objectives.

From my understanding in speaking with ASC staff at the time of the residency and during my second internship in 2012, snowshoe making was chosen as the first residency because it is considered one of the most endangered art forms with only a handful of artists still making traditional style snowshoes at present. The purpose of the workshop was to document the process of snowshoe construction, provide hands on training to younger artists, and engage students and the public with a traditional art that has been central to Athabascan peoples for hundreds of years. The residency was also a valuable learning experience for me as it was the first ASC program that I was able to observe and be involved with aside from the monthly Spotlight Lectures.
Master artists came from three different villages from the northern interior part of Alaska, each accompanied by an apprentice who was learning the art of snowshoe making and carrying on the tradition. However, not all of the master/apprentice pairings lived in the same community. One of the apprentices, for instance, lived in Anchorage at the time of the residency. But he said that even though it was hard learning how to make snowshoes from a distance, he felt it was important for him to learn this skill to carry on the tradition and he was excited to be participating in the residency with other snowshoe makers.

With their work area set up in the Gillam Archaeology Lab, the master artists demonstrated techniques to the apprentices while the terminology of their craft was recorded in the Gwich’in and Koyukon languages through story telling, traditional knowledge, and vocabulary associated with the art of snowshoe making. Demonstrating each step of the process from bending, carving, and smoothing of the birch frames, to stringing them with tough moose and caribou hide strips called babiche, or with heavy twine, master artists shared their lifelong skills (both in Koyukon and Gwitch’in languages, as well as in English) with their apprentices, museum staff, and visitors throughout the week (ASCA newsletter, June 2011). During the week, the artists were also able to examine and interpret nineteenth century snowshoes on display in the Living Our Cultures gallery, and gave extended interviews with ASC staff and filmmakers to document the cultural practices and beliefs that surround this endangered art form. The ASC staff worked with a professional videographer to record throughout the week, which was then produced into a short film, “The Athabascan Snowshoe Makers Residency,”
that is also available on the Smithsonian YouTube and iTunes channels I mentioned in the last section.

In addition, as part of the educational component of the residency, more than 250 middle-school students from the Anchorage School District (who had just completed a science unit on snowshoe physics) came to the museum to tour the *Living Our Cultures* exhibition, meet the artists and apprentices, and learn about snowshoes and Athabascan traditions from the artists. Residency participants also gave a presentation to the public and answered questions from visitors as part of the ASC Smithsonian Spotlight Series toward the end of the week, which was also recorded and transcribed as part of the residency. Although visitors often asked the same questions, the master artists and apprentices were always happy to answer them and share something about what they were doing.

I will point out that because of the logistics of hosting the residencies in a museum setting, some of the initial processes of creating the works are done prior to the artists’ arrival. For instance, the birch snowshoe frames were steamed, bent, and clamped before the master artists and apprentices arrived at the museum, using some as examples during demonstrations to visitors, while others were used to show techniques for weaving the webbing. One master artist, George “Butch” Carlton Yaska, Sr., even brought a completed pair of snowshoes (that he donated to the Anchorage Museum at the end of the residency) to demonstrate how they were worn and encouraged visitors to try them on. Most visitors were reluctant and somewhat shy about this, but some did try (including myself) and seemed to walk away with more appreciation for the art of wearing and using
snowshoes as it was hard enough trying to walk around in them in the lab, many commented on what it would be like to try walking in them on snow.

The snowshoe workshop was a pilot project to test the concept of the artist residencies as a format for documenting endangered Indigenous languages and knowledge, and I believe it was successful in fulfilling its goals. Other workshops/residencies held at ASC have included documenting the arts of Aleutian Islands bentwood hats, sewing salmon skin, and Dene quill work, and although I was only able to attend one of these residencies, these programs are an excellent example of collaborative networking between the ASC, ASCA, the Anchorage Museum, their funders, and the program participants. These workshops are also opportunities for documenting language as ICH in relation to the knowledge and skill that goes into learning and mastering these endangered traditional art forms, and that it would be extremely difficult for these collaborative projects to be successful without established relationships between the participating partners. However, similar to UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, there is a risk that individuals identified as “cultural treasures” could be pressured to maintain these art forms out of necessity rather than a hope for preserving the art form in the future. But I think it is unlikely in this situation as the artists and apprentices in the snowshoe residency (and I assume participants in the other residencies as well) all seemed genuinely concerned with carrying on the art form.

Next, I will discuss the significance of the Smithsonian’s Recovering Voices initiative as the artist residencies, along with other ASC cultural and arts programs in Alaska, are one dimension of their global initiative for documenting, preserving, and
revitalizing Indigenous languages and knowledge (Crowell 2013); and it is the partnerships with other institutions with similar missions and funding that make these types of programs sustainable.

**Recovering Voices**

Outside of Alaska, the ASC also has connections to national and global initiatives both in the Smithsonian and with outside cultural organizations. One such program is the relatively new Recovering Voices (RV) program which is a collaborative initiative between the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), and the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH) to promote the documentation and revitalization of the world’s endangered languages and the knowledge preserved in them (Smithsonian Recovering Voices 2014). Similar to other programs, the purpose of the RV initiative is to promote the documentation and revitalization of the world’s endangered languages and knowledge by inviting source communities to reconnect with relevant Smithsonian collections (Andreassen 2011; Andreassen n.d.).

As a partner in RV, the ASC, Alaska Office works extensively with Alaska Native peoples in documenting language materials for the Smithsonian collections as well as redistributing their research back to the communities with which they work. My information about the RV initiative was obtained from the program’s website (http://recoveringvoices.si.edu), my interviews with ASC staff, and from the work of Smithsonian Fellow Olaug Andreassen who conducted her research at both the ASC, Alaska Office and in Washington, D.C. in summer 2011 when I was an intern. I did try
several times to get in contact with the main office in Washington, D.C. but never heard back from them, so my research is limited to what resources I mentioned above.

According to their website, the role of cultural knowledge as manifested by cultural practices and objects is a major factor in the development of the RV methodology. Working with communities eager to sustain and revitalize their language and cultural traditions, RV is aiming to gather collective strengths of NMNH, NMAI, and CFCH to address the issues surrounding language and knowledge loss (Bell 2011). As Joshua A. Bell, RV researcher and Curator of Globalization in the Anthropology Department at NMNH, says:

The Recovering Voices Project is interested not only in academic understanding of these phenomena, but also in the ways in which the Smithsonian’s diverse collections of audio recordings, ethnographic artifacts, natural history specimens, film, photographs, and texts can be used to help communities around the world continue and foster language and cultural programs (Bell 2011:7).

As a multidisciplinary project, RV is trying to establish new connections not only between the museums and source communities, but also between different disciplines (Andreassen 2011) and cultural institutions.

According to the sources I mentioned above, outreach is an important component to the RV’s mission as well as raising awareness among the general public about the dangers of language loss taking place globally and to encourage revitalization through renewed understanding and pride of Smithsonian collections. The hope is that these efforts will spark public interest in the issues surrounding linguistic and cultural diversity, and, in turn, prompt that public to value different perspectives and aspects of our global heritages (Bell 2011:9). In addition to documenting and revitalizing languages, the RV
program is concerned with how knowledge and language sustainability is influenced by intergenerational dynamics and with how to ensure that collaboration will be useful to both the museum and communities (Andreassen 2011).

Since its establishment in 2009, RV has been working to develop innovative strategies to conduct interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research in order to effectively collaborate with communities that are working to reduce language and knowledge loss. Three key principles direct this work: 1) developing new collections-based methodologies for advancing research in language/knowledge studies and documentation; 2) strengthening partnerships and building new lines of collaboration; and 3) engaging the public through providing access to speakers of endangered languages, cultural experts, researchers, and collections (Smithsonian Recovering Voices 2014). The website states the initiative is accomplishing this through collaborations among anthropologists, biologists, folklorists, geographers, linguists, mineral scientist, and museum professionals, as well as through its community partners. But it is hard to tell if there is any data besides what is posted on the website to support the work that has been done to this point.

According to the website, RV research is guided by four themes: interdisciplinary research methods, multi-sited and comparative ethnography, intergenerational knowledge and intergenerational dynamics, and generating knowledge through Smithsonian collections (Smithsonian Recovering Voices 2014). The intention is that these methodologies enable RV researchers to interpret differences between institutional and informal approaches to revitalizing languages and the creation of knowledge, and provide
an ideal for the effective return of research to benefit all partners involved in proposed collaborations. Shared agency is a critical component to this initiative as relationships are forged with communities, identifying strategic areas of mutual interest and focus resources on shared goals.

In 2010, RV was awarded a Grand Challenges grant from the Smithsonian Institution to collaborate initially with five communities around the world, including: Hopi Pueblo in Northern Arizona; I’ai communities in Purai Delta, Papua New Guinea; San Lucas Quiaxíní Zapotec communities in Los Angeles and Oaxaca, Mexico; Meskwaki and Sauk communities in Iowa and Oklahoma; and Athabascan communities in Alaska. These communities were chosen on the basis of personal relations and collection strengths of the Smithsonian (Bell 2011) and brief summaries of the work that has been done in these initial five communities is available on the website.

With the goal of counteracting language and knowledge loss through this intentional diverse and interdisciplinary mixture of scholars, RV marks a critical and holistic approach in producing collaborations with communities and broad-reaching public programs (Bell 2011). Sensitive to the politics and histories between museums and communities, RV is being carried out with interested communities but only after lengthy negotiations as to the nature of the collaboration, being sensitive to the needs and concerns of the communities regarding collaboration and issues surrounding heritage documentation and revitalization. Through public programs, scholarly and artist fellowships, consultation with Indigenous experts, exhibitions, and symposia, RV intends to help communities and scholars address aspects of the loss of endangered languages.
and knowledge, while promoting public awareness and support. On the website, there are new updates on projects under the Research tab, including results, research products, and publications for ASC programming from the Athabascan snowshoe residency, the Aleutian Islanders Bentwood Hat workshop, the Sewing Salmon workshop, and the St. Lawrence Island Yup’ik language workshop (Smithsonian Recovering Voices 2014).

Similar to how the ASC approaches language workshops, artist residencies, and other programs, RV is trying to provide assistance to existing projects and to be a resource for communities that have their own momentum on the ground, particularly as they cannot work independently at the community level to get language projects going. Structurally, that is what they are in a position to do given limited time and resources. Although the RV initiative is still relatively new, I believe its focus on language has the potential to be a model for other institutions working with source communities to incorporate Indigenous language and traditional knowledge because of its focus on utilizing museum collections, including objects and other archival materials such as language recordings. The fact the RV initiative is also part of an internationally respected and recognized institution like the Smithsonian, as well as its affiliated programs like the ASC and the Folklife Festival, may help to establish trust with communities that are looking to the initiative for support and access to the Smithsonian’s collections and resources during the revitalization process. I also think it is interesting to note that RV considers the ASC, Alaska Office as a model for successful collaboration with source communities and related cultural institutions in the state, and is using their long-term collaboration with Alaska Native communities for the Living Our Cultures exhibition as a
model to replicate in other project areas in the future (Bell 2011). However, my concern is that if I have had limited success in getting in touch with and getting information from the RV initiative outside of my field site, how successful are the communities seeking support from this program?

The Smithsonian and RV initiative have also partnered with UNESCO’s Endangered Languages program in conjunction with the Atlas of World Language’s in Danger (UNESCO n.d.). Similar to the RV initiative, the Atlas is intended to raise awareness about language endangerment and the need to safeguard the world’s linguistic diversity. Additionally it is also a tool to monitor the status of endangered languages and the trends in linguistic diversity at the global level. Both a print and online version of the atlas is available that provides the name of each language, the degree of endangerment, and the country or countries where it is spoken, and the online version has the number of speakers, relevant policies and projects, sources, ISO codes, and geographic coordinates (Endangered Languages n.d.). Like the ASC’s Sharing Knowledge website, the atlas permits wide accessibility and allows for interactivity and timely updating of information, based on feedback provided by users. The ANLC/ANLA in Fairbanks also have connections with the UNESCO Atlas, demonstrating how Alaskan based language programs are connected to wider efforts of preserving and promoting the world’s endangered Indigenous languages.

Breath of Life Institute

Aside from objects, archival materials, as well as linguists who are familiar with valuable cultural material housed in museums, libraries and archives, universities, and
other institutions, are also important resources for language and cultural preservation/revitalization. Another program that the ASC and the RV initiative are connected to is the Breath of Life Institute, a biennial, two-week workshop that is intended to help Native Americans involved in language revitalization find and make use of materials on their languages that are in the National Anthropological Archives and the Library of Congress (Endangered Language Fund n.d.).

Based on the model developed at UC Berkeley under the leadership of Lisa Conathan and Leanne Hinton, participants create language projects based on available materials, and report on publicly at the end of the week. Initially, the program was created for California tribes but has grown in scope to include other Native American languages that are engaged in language revitalization efforts. During the workshop, each language group is assisted by a faculty member or graduate student linguistic mentor who guides them through the process of doing archival research on their language and finding relevant materials for the development of their language project. This concept – letting the research serve the people from whom the material was collected – has spread widely and lies at the core of RV (Gugliotta 2014).

Recently, the RV initiative also organized a biennial workshop with the Breath of Life Institute for around 60 Native American delegates to learn about the archives and attend seminars on how to use linguistics as a teaching aid and to promote the National Anthropological Archives as a tool in restoring and revitalizing Native languages. For over 150 years, the archives has been accumulating the findings of scholars, explorers, soldiers, and travellers, including linguistic materials on approximately 200 Native
American languages, many of them endangered with no remaining Native speakers (Gugliotta 2014: Andreassen 2011). These materials include recorded voices, dictionaries, word lists, field notes, journals, manuscripts, correspondence, reports, maps, catalogue cards, and printed memorabilia.

According to Crowell, “the idea is that the Smithsonian, or museums in general, can offer something to communities that are trying to maintain, restore, and revitalize languages” (Aron Crowell, in interview with author, July 12, 2012), because as sites of research and documentation, they already house a significant amount of the linguistic materials and recordings that communities are looking for to revitalize their languages. What is interesting about this program is that it has many similarities to the ASC’s language-based programming in emphasizing the value of museum collections, in this case archival documents, and making them accessible to communities, but because of the involvement of linguistic experts to help interpret and guide the communities, they are able to assist in the process of language planning.

At the 2013 Breath of Life Institute from June 10 to June 21 (just a few weeks before the 2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival), participants were paired with linguists to explore the language resources available in archives in the Washington, D.C. area. Visits to the archives were supplemented by lectures and workshops on linguistics, language teaching and learning, and related topics. The visit was supported by funds from the National Science Foundation with a number of partnering institutions, including NMNH, NMAI, the Library of Congress, the Endangered Language Fund, and Yale University. Although this program has a much wider focus on language revitalization efforts
nationwide, the involvement of various entities in the support of language based programming demonstrates a much wider collaborative network that is not necessarily separate from the ASC, but operates in a slightly different capacity. That being said, my experience with the Breath of Life program is limited to archival research, but as it is related to the RV initiative and the ASC, I use it as a comparative example.

Other examples of language revitalization initiatives outside of Alaska that have participated in this program also help to demonstrate the different realities each community faces in attempting to preserve and revitalization their language. For instance, California has more Indigenous languages than almost any other part of the United States, and even though some fifty different languages still have speakers, there are at least thirty, maybe more, with no speakers left (Hinton and Ahlers 1999:58). According to Leanne Hinton and Jocelyn Ahlers, there are tribal members who are fighting to keep their languages alive by learning the language and developing teaching programs for most of the California languages, including participating in outside workshops such as the Breath of Life program. However, they argue that the diversity of California languages poses a number of significant challenges to revitalization, including having too few speakers, widely dispersed communities, limited funding, and the lack of support systems in universities that are present in places like Hawai’i, New Zealand, Ireland, and Wales (Hinton and Ahlers 1999). There are opportunities to foster language learning and develop language learning materials through master-apprentice programs and the Breath of Life workshop for California tribes, but Hinton and Ahlers acknowledge the limitations of the programs producing truly fluent speakers due to the fact that English is
still used for most communication needs, especially for those languages with no living fluent speakers (Hinton and Ahlers 1999).

Another example is Miami, an Algonquian language of the Miami Indian communities originally from the Lower Great Lakes, which became moribund in the 1880s, and with the passing of the last fluent speaker in 1963, is technically a dead language. Similar to the California languages, there has been a continuous effort to revitalize Miami through various programs such as language camps and classes in Miami communities, including Peru, Indiana and Miami, Oklahoma (Rinehart 2011). But, according to Melissa A. Rinehart who spent three years investigating the present state of the Miami language, there are conflicting ideologies and expectations of learning and preserving the Miami language, particularly among adult students. She argues that one of the strongest contributing factors is the geographic separation between Miami communities through dispossession and removal, which contributes greatly to the uses of the language. Another factor that Rinehart emphasizes is that it is much harder for adults to learn the language than younger language learners, which led to the development of immersion camps, but planning for adult language learning continues to be difficult. Because of these issues, Rinehart’s point is that until language programmers can develop a clear plan for revitalization, Miami will continue to mean different things to different people (Rinehart 2011).

I believe many Alaska Native languages face similar problems to the two examples above, particularly in regards to linguistic diversity and widely dispersed communities. I would also add that urban migration in Alaska has had a significant
impact on the availability of language teachers and limited opportunities to speak Alaska Native languages outside of the home community. However, this is changing as institutions like the Alaska Native Heritage Center (ANHC) are working to develop urban revitalization initiatives that provide access to language learning opportunities and resources to those living in the Anchorage area. According to the ANHC website, Anchorage is now home to the fourth largest Native American population in the United States, growing from 29,730 in 2000 to 36,062 in 2010, and over 26% of Alaska’s Natives now live in Anchorage (ANHC Education and Programs, Language Project 2011).

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, ANHC received a grant in 2012 to assess how many language learners and resources are in Alaska and to develop a language-learning plan that addresses the language needs of Alaska Natives in Anchorage. Cultural and heritage centers are museums that often do language-related programming, but they are not necessarily documenting it because it takes staff resources, money, and time to do so. But with this grant, ANHC was able to expand on their existing programming to address the rapid pace of language loss among Alaska Natives, particularly in Anchorage.

After receiving the grant, ANHC conducted an initial survey, open November 2012 to May 2013, to determine what language needs were and where to focus their energies in addressing urban revitalization. In review, the ANHC received 1,124 responses from all over the state with the most responses from those interested in learning Yup’ik, Iñupiaq, and Tlingit (which are also the three largest populations of fluent speakers of Alaska Native languages). From their survey data, ANHC found that 80%
percent of parents said they are interested in enrolling their children in language immersion programs, and 85% said they wanted to learn with their children; 68.1% of Anchorage residents stated that the greatest obstacle to learning their language was their schedule, but 86.9% responded that their employer would give them time off to take language classes; the most preferred method for language learning was listening/learning, followed by learning from relatives/elders, informal classes/workshops, computer programs, formal classes, immersion, books/written materials, watching videos and listening to CDs; but almost 100% of respondents agreed that language opportunities should be available over the internet (ANHC Education and Programs, Language Project 2011; ANHC Language Survey Results 2013). After the results were analyzed, ANHC began to develop a number of classes and workshops focused on what was found in the survey, including language-learning trainings for teachers and language workshops in Anchorage (ANHC Education and Programs, Language Project 2011).

Similar to the ASC, Alaska Office, ANHC is also partnering with local and regional organizations, including Alaska Native corporations, for sponsorship and funding of these programs, but instead of playing a strictly supporting role in the revitalization process, ANHC is focused on being both a resource and an active agent in the revitalization process. As I mentioned throughout this chapter, time and funding are major factors in how cultural institutions are able to approach language programming, and because the ANHC has dedicated staff and grant funding specifically toward a language revitalization project, they are able to engaged and develop language-learning plans more readily than the ASC, Alaska Office. I must also point out that many ANHC
staff members are Alaska Native and speak their languages, whereas the ASC in Anchorage does not have a staff member who is Native or fluent in an Alaska Native language. This may contribute to the emphasis on the ASC, Alaska Office in supporting language revitalization without being active agents in the revitalization process, but the ASC staff do rely heavily on their established relationships or collaborative networks, especially on fluent speakers and cultural experts, to develop and implement their language based programming.

2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Another partner in the RV initiative is the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH), which has played an important role in the development of the intangible heritage preservation movement (Alivizatou 2012b), and serves as an invaluable resource for communities looking to access recorded language and traditional knowledge. In fact, RV was a partner in the 2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, an annual event for CFCH, which included a language component as one of the three major themes. The intention of One World, Many Voices: Endangered Languages and Cultural Heritage was to explore the critical ways in which languages embody cultural knowledge, identity, values, and creative expressions and the role that language documentation and revitalization plays in sustaining cultural heritage and tradition (Biddison 2013). In addition to the RV initiative, One World, Many Voices was also sponsored and produced by UNESCO and the National Geographic Society’s Enduring Voices Project in collaboration with CFCH. Once again, large scale collaborative networks were essential in developing this event to highlight language diversity as a vital
part of human heritage, hosting cultural experts from communities around the world, including highly skilled musicians, storytellers, singers, dancers, craftspeople, language educator, and other cultural practitioners who gave performances, craft demonstrations, interactive discussion sessions, community celebrations, and hands on educational activities (Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2013).

During the initial planning for the 2013 Festival, the ASC, Alaska Office was contacted regarding research for an Alaska Native case study component for the program and to help identify potential participants for an Alaskan delegation in addition to the other cultural representatives. For the 2013 Festival, Dawn Biddison conducted research on thirty-one potential participants and recorded nineteen interviews, representing the generations of Alaska Native elders, scholars and artists, including language speakers and translators. Research documentation included interview reports, photographs, edited interviews – fifteen videos and four audio recordings – and selected quotes from all interviews. She also developed recommendations for Festival signage, displays, presentation materials, and cultural learning content. Unfortunately, an Alaskan delegation was not included in the festival, but the interviews that Biddison conducted allowed her to spend time with individuals she has known for years and those she met for the first time, and to learn from their insights regarding the role of Indigenous language in their lives and communities (Biddison 2013).

One thing that I have noticed throughout the course of my research is that Alaska Native delegations are not often included in larger events or gatherings. This is partially due to the financial and logistic difficulties of getting a group to the Lower 48. But what
is interesting is that at the same festival that it was deemed too expensive to send an Alaskan delegation, there were representatives from language communities in Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Hawai’i, India, Russia, and Siberia. These delegations may have been chosen for the 2013 Folklife Festival for a number of reasons, including participation in past festivals or because of established relationships with Smithsonian researchers. This is not to say that Alaskan delegations are never chosen, however, it seems to be a rare occurrence, which is somewhat disheartening to think of the potential benefits of meeting with other communities and organizations that are engaged in similar revitalization projects that language and cultural experts from Alaska are missing out on.

Unfortunately, this finding also casts a shadow on the idea of collaboration being multivocal and including as many voices as possible to create a well-balanced product, particularly in regards to collaborative networking. From this point of view, the ideal of collaboration being truly collaborative is somewhat questionable given the realities of resources, namely time and funding. Similar to the critiques Boast (2011) and Hoerig (2010), I argue that in order for collaborative experiences to be about more than just the immediate outcome of a program or project, there has to be more intention as to what the long term effects and experiences of collaboration will be.

I believe that what is happening in Alaska is a good example of how collaborative networks are being utilized to support successful collaborations and build on museum-community relationships as well as with other cultural institutions. Although museums in the Lower 48 tend to network between themselves, and do maintain relationships with tribes and other cultural institutions on an individual basis, I have not found that it is done
at the same level as I have seen in Alaska. I do attribute this in some part to the
uniqueness of Alaska, including relative isolation and a reliance on your neighbors (or in
this case, fellow museums, communities, cultural organizations, and individuals involved
in the preservation of cultural heritage) for support and help in times of need. But as the
ASC, Alaska Office demonstrates, outside support for collaborative projects is possible
and often essential in achieving long-term goals for language-based programming.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

For many Indigenous peoples around the world language is like breathing. As a uniquely human attribute that is deeply imbedded in culture, language represents not only the way that peoples communicate with one another, expressing their thoughts, feelings, and observations, but it also acts as a window into a particular worldview and provides a means for understanding various peoples (Nettle and Romaine 2000; Williams 2009). Yet the fight to save endangered Indigenous languages is ongoing, and more often than not it is becoming a race against time to document and preserve valuable cultural knowledge, including language as intangible cultural heritage (ICH), before it is too late. Historically, intangible forms of knowledge have been the hardest to capture when objects, the tangible forms of cultural heritage, are collected and removed from their cultural context. But with the vast amount of material culture held in museums and cultural institutions throughout the globe, museums have the potential to be a key resource for source communities as they try to raise awareness about language and cultural endangerment through language preservation and revitalization initiatives. And through collaborative networking, these entities are able to partner together to document endangered Indigenous languages and support revitalization initiatives through the use of museum collections.
Through my research and time spent at the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center (ASC), Alaska Office, I was able to answer my initial research questions on: how language as ICH is being documented and recorded in museum collections, exhibitions, and programming; how the Recovering Voices program is involved at the ASC regarding issues of language preservation; and how the information documented during language programming is redistributed back to source communities. I also found that language and cultural revitalization initiatives are supported through a much wider network of communities and cultural institutions in Alaska than I initially thought, and this realization has driven my emphasis on the importance of collaboration in language-based programming. If museums have the stuff and source communities have the knowledge, then through collaborative networking museums, source communities, and other institutions have the opportunity to build successful and sustainable relationships as they work on projects that are mutually beneficial and support language and cultural revitalization efforts.

To conduct language-based collaborative work in museums, I recommend this set of procedures that I introduced at the beginning of the last chapter: 1) establish relationships with source communities; 2) provide an inviting and comfortable space in the museum for collaborations to take place; 3) bring in elders, cultural advisors, educators, scholars, artists, and researchers as advisors and co-curators for exhibits and programs; 4) provide access to museum collections (objects, archival photographs, audio/visual recordings, etc.), either physically or virtually (or both) depending on logistics; 5) discuss the desired goals and outcomes of the project/program with
participants beforehand; 6) document the process including conversations, dialogue, monologues, oral histories, and associated vocabulary related to objects being discussed in Native languages; 7) work with participants and educators to develop relevant and meaningful educational materials that can be used as supplemental materials for language-learning; and 8) make all of this information accessible to workshop participants, communities, and researchers, with special consideration and safeguarding of cultural sensitive knowledge.

Again, I reiterate that although these recommendations are based on the principles and methodologies used in programming at the ASC, Alaska Office, I believe these steps can be applied to other collaborative projects with the goal of developing and maintaining collaborative relationships and networks with source communities and other cultural institutions, particularly when working with language-based programs.

The incorporation of objects in language-based programs is also an important component of these recommendations. As I discussed in Chapters Two and Three, museum collections are often the result of purposeful activities, which are informed by ideas about what is significant and what is not at the time they were brought into the museum. In the past, one of the primary functions of the public museum was to preserve material culture in perpetuity for scientific and academic purposes (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991; Simpson 1996), however, museums are changing to address the shift in global culture regarding interpretation of museum collections (Macdonald 1996) and are working toward making collections accessible resources to the public, especially to the descendant communities from where ethnographic collections originate.
Language is the gateway to understanding how ethnographic materials were used and created, but language also reveals the knowledge that is imbedded in objects through oral histories, stories, and personal experiences that are often left out of object biographies in non-Native institutions. This is why it makes sense for museums to provide access to collections and to partner with source communities and other cultural institutions to reappropriate and recontextualize collections through collaborative partnerships. As Bruce Bernstein explains: “Seeing something that is from your community, no matter how many years it has been separated from it, can be a profound experience, which no amount of study or involvement can replicate” (Bernstein 2010:196). Objects hold imbedded, intangible knowledge of the cultures that created them that can be reawakened through community access to collections, while also documenting associated language and traditional knowledge from community elders and cultural experts. Therefore, physical access to objects and associated documentation is relevant to researchers, whether academic, community, or other (Schultz 2011:5).

Relationship building between museums and source communities through access to collections has paved the way for working in new and innovative ways (Galla 2008:18). In museums, these partnerships often begin around the discussion and development of exhibitions, and over the past twenty-five years, this has led to the creation of multivocal, collaborative projects and relationships. Coming directly out of the post-colonial critique, museums are no longer the sole voices of authority in displaying and interpreting ethnographic (as well as art) collections, and in the twenty-first century must now acknowledge a moral and ethical (and sometimes political)
obligation to involve source communities in decisions affecting their material heritage (Svašek 2007:146). As Phillip Cash-Cash points out, the interactions taking place between Native communities and non-Native museums supports the assertion that cultural objects are embedded in social systems of meaning that transcend time, space, and the hierarchy of the institution (Cash Cash 2001:142).

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that documenting and incorporating language as ICH is an important step for museums in recontextualizing museum objects and that adding this knowledge in to museum collections and exhibitions strengthens the objects as well as the museum’s relationship with source communities. By incorporating oral histories and contemporary discussions about the objects, museums are able to emphasize the deeper connection between the language/culture and the object, while demonstrating the continued significance of the objects within the descendant communities. Although there is some concern about museums holding records of traditional knowledge and language as ICH, in essence becoming objects themselves once they are recorded or written down, there are benefits to museums having this information documented in the process of recontextualizing and reinterpreting their collections. And from my research, I have found that museums working with Indigenous communities seem to approach these concerns from the viewpoint that to have the language of the people from which the objects come from does more to strengthen them than anything, particularly when this exchange comes in the form of collaboration.

I have also found that using objects in exhibit-collections based collaborations can create opportunities for in depth discussions on how the objects are connected to the
language and reflect their greater connection to the people and the culture they come from, adding to their biographies and raising awareness for the power of language has to convey that knowledge. Documenting language in museums may not necessarily lead to successful language revitalization, particularly as there are no examples to date, but the recontextualizing of museum collections through the documentation of language as ICH does lead to the safeguarding of that knowledge for future generations and has the potential to provide source communities with another resource as they endeavor to document and preserve their languages. And even though collaborative projects require compromise on all sides, patient listening, careful consultation, and equality and respect (Clifford 2004), it has become an influential theoretical and methodological tool for museums and source communities as they strive towards “doing it right.”

I observed this repeatedly at the ASC, and I believe collaboration is and will continue to be an important methodology for museums in regards to language based programs and projects. However, as I discussed at the end of the last chapter, there may be a limit to how far collaboration can go when the ideal does not live up to the reality of collaborative engagements. And although this is can be attributed in part to limited staff and availability of funds/time, it is worth questioning whether or not collaboration as a theory and a method is truly meeting its ideal of inclusivity when some are excluded, or simply not included.

To address this, I suggest that museums adopt a set of procedures similar to the steps I recommended as a base model that can be used when developing and planning collaborative projects and programs, but are flexible enough that they can be adapted to
meet the specific needs and goals of those involved, particularly when working with multiple partners on language-based programs. As in other places, language and cultural revitalization efforts in Alaska are being supported and funded through unique partnerships and collaborations with source communities that are strengthened through collaborative networks inside and outside of the state. Relations of trust and respect between ASC and Alaska Native communities have been sustained over the past twenty-six years by individual scholars at ASC working in long-term, reciprocal relations with communities (Crowell 2010; Clifford 2004). To demonstrate how these networks support and build on existing relationships, the ASC has been an invaluable case study for my thesis and as they continue their work with Alaska Native communities and other cultural institutions, they will further develop their model for language-based programs.

As my primary field site and the inspiration for my research, I will distribute my findings by giving a copy of my thesis to the ASC, Alaska Office. I will also offer a copy to the Recovering Voices program as their initiative was an additional focus of this research thesis and my findings may be useful to them as they continue to support global language revitalization.

I hope that my study of collaborative programming and networking in Alaska will address how museums and cultural institutions can support language preservation and revitalization through the development of sustainable networks and the adoption of procedures to guide their efforts. There is power in language, and as museums and source communities work collaboratively to preserve and revitalize language as ICH, networks will continue to develop and grow, hopefully creating a sustainable base model for all.
Although there is no one-size fits all model for language and cultural preservation and revitalization, successful collaborations are valuable examples for others in similar situations with shared experiences; and the adoption of a set of procedures on how to organize and implement collaborative projects and programs will aid museums as they endeavor to do so.
REFERENCES

Alaska Native Collections: Sharing Knowledge

Alaska Native Heritage Center


Alaska Native Language Archive

Alaska Native Language Center


Alaska State Council on the Arts


Alivizatou, Marilena


Ames, Michael M.


Andreassen, Olau


Appadurai, Arjun

Appadurai, Arjun and Carol A. Breckenridge

Bell, Joshua
Bernstein, Bruce

Besterman, Tristram

Biddison, Dawn

Black, Lydia T.


Black, Steven P.

Boast, Robin

Botha, Louis

Bouquet, Mary

Bowechop, Janine and Patricia Pierce Erikson

Brown, Michael F.
Butler, Shelly Ruth

Camarinha-Matos, Luis M. and Hamideh Afsarmanesh

Cash Cash, Phillip E.

Chan, Amy E.

Clavir, Miriam

Clifford, James


Cole, Douglas
Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Chip and T.J. Ferguson

Cooper, Karen Coody


Crowell, Aron L.


Cruikshank, Julie


Darnell, Regina

Dauenhauer, Nora Marks and Richard Dauenhauer
1998 Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: examples from Southeast Alaska. In Endangered Languages: Language Loss and

Dauenhauer, Richard L.

Davis, Peter

Deetz, James

Denes, Alexandra

Duff, Patricia A.

Eastman, Carol M.

Endangered Language Fund

Endangered Languages

Erikson, Patricia P., with Helma Ward and Kirk Wachendorf
Erikson, Patricia P.


Fall, James A.


Fienup-Riordan, Ann

Fienup-Riordan, Ann, ed. Marie Meade, translator

Fishman, Joshua A.

Galla, Amareswar

Grabe, William
Gugliotta, Guy

Haakanson, Jr., Sven

Haycox, Stephen W.

Hein, Hilde S.

Hennessy, Kate

Henze, Rosemary C., and Kathryn Anne Davis (eds.)

Hinton, Leanne


Hinton, Leanne and Jocelyn Ahlers

Hoerig, Karl A.

Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean
Hope, Ishmael
2014 The Moment Has Come for Us to Save Our Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian Languages.

Hornberger, Nancy H.

Jacknis, Ira

Johnson, Kylie N.

Jones, Suzi, James A. Fall. Aaron Leggett, ed.

Jones, Zachary R.
2012 Clan At.óowu in Distant Lands: An Overview of Tlingit Art in European and Russian Museums. Box of Knowledge 1, April 2012.

Kaplan, Robert B.

Kawaiʻaeʻa, Keiki K.C., Alohalani Kaluhiokalani (Kaina) Housman, Makalapna (Kaʻawa)
Kedia, Satish and John van Willigen


Kelly, Casey


Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara


Krauss, Michael E.


Kreps, Christina


Kurin, Richard

2004 Museums and Intangible Heritage: Culture Dead or Alive?. ICOM News No. 4:7-9.

Langdon, Stephen J. and Aaron Leggett

Lavine, Steven D. and Ivan Karp

LeCompte, Margaret D. and Jean J. Schensul

Lee, Molly

Lonetree, Amy


Low, Setha M. and Sally Engle Merry

Macdonald, Sharon

Manger, Jeffery E. and Janine Bowechop

Marstine, Janet


Maxson, Rachel E.
2010 A Kachina By Any Other Name: Linguistically Contextualizing Native American Collections. M.A. Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Denver.

Maxson, Rachel E., Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Lee Wayne Lomayestewa

McCarty, Teresa L.

Medred, Katie

Myers, Greg
Nash, Stephen E. Nash and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh

National NAGPRA
N.d. Frequently Asked Questions.

Nettle, Daniel and Suzanne Romaine
2000 Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World’s Languages. New York:
Oxford University Press.

Nicholls, Ruth
2009 Research and Indigenous Participation: Critical reflections. International

Ongley, David
2011 Alaska Native Village Libraries: Picking Up the Pieces. In Tribal Libraries,
Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Languages, Memory, and Lifeways.
Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Peers, Laura and Alison K. Brown, eds.
2003 Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader. London:
Routledge.

Philip, Kenneth R.

Phillips, Ruth B.
2003 Introduction, Part 3 Community Collaboration in Exhibitions: Towards a
Dialogic Paradigm. In Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader.
Routledge.

Canadian Historical Review 86(1):83-110.

Pratt, Mary Louise
Reinschmidt, Michael

Reznowski, Gabriella and Norma A. Joseph

Rinehart, Melissa A.

Ruggles, D. Fairchild and Helaine Silverman

Schultz, Laine

Sealaska Heritage Institute

Shannon, Jennifer

Simpson, Moira G.


Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History: Department of Anthropology


Smithsonian Recovering Voices

Stefano, Michelle L. Peter Davis, and Gerard Corsane

Steffian, Amy F.

Stillman, Amy Ku’uleialoha

Svašek, Maruška

Talking Alaska: Reflections on the Native languages of Alaska
2014b Pushback against Alaska Native Languages Bill.  

Trope, Jack F. and Walter R. Echo-Hawk  

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda  

UNESCO  


Westermann, Mariet  

Widdowson, Henry  

Williams, Maria Shaa Tláa  

Worl, Rosita  

APPENDIX A

Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, Alaska Office
Living Our Cultures, Sharing Our Heritage: The First Peoples of Alaska gallery

ASC, Alaska Office space and one of seven video screens. Photo taken by author 2013.

Gillam Archaeology Lab and entrance to Listening Space. Photo taken by author 2013.
Listening Space. Photo taken by author 2013.

Cultural Consultation Room. Photo taken by author 2013.
Media area. Photo taken by author 2013.

Living Our Cultures gallery. Photo taken by author 2013.
Touchscreen interactive. Photo taken by author 2013.
APPENDIX B

The Athabascan Snowshoe Master Artists Residency, May 2011

Master artists and apprentices working in the Gillam Archaeology Lab. Photo taken by author 2011.

Koyukon master artist George “Butch” Carlton Yaska, Sr. and a museum visitor. Photo taken by author 2011.
Apprentice Daniel Tritt working in the Gillam Archaeology Lab. Photo taken by author 2011.

Snowshoe making materials, including caribou hide babiche. Photo taken by author 2011.
Museum visitors and ASC, Alaska Office Director Aron Crowell watch as an apprentice works. Photo taken by author 2011.

Apprentice William McCarty, IV working on webbing. Photo taken by author 2011.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

“Recovering Voices”: Language Preservation and Revitalization in Museums

You are invited to participate in a study that will seek to understand how issues of language preservation and revitalization are being approached in museums, specifically regarding the Smithsonian’s Recovering Voices program. The study is conducted by Heather McClain. Results will be used to complete a Master’s thesis regarding the processes of language documentation and revitalization in a museum setting. Heather McClain can be reached at 907-242-0456 or at heather.mcclain@du.edu. This project is supervised by Dr. Christina Kreps, Department of Anthropology, University of Denver, (303-871-2688, ckreps@du.edu).

Participation in this study should take about 30 minutes of your time. Participation will involve responding to 5 questions about the Recovering Voices program and the presence of language in museums. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.

You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.
I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called Heather McClain. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________

(If appropriate, the following must be added.)

___ I agree to be audiotaped.
___ I do not agree to be audiotaped.
___ I agree to be photographed during the workshop.
___ I do not agree to photographed during the workshop.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________

___________ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions for Museum Staff:

• How is documented language material incorporated into museum collections and exhibitions?

• How are the language and traditional craftsmanship workshops organized?

• Who participates in the workshops?

• How are participants chosen?

• How is documented language material redistributed back to the source community?

• How is it accessible to the wider public?

• What are the protocols for safeguarding culturally sensitive materials?

• What is the purpose of the Recovering Voices program?

• How does the Recovering Voices program fit into the ASC?

Interview Questions for Workshop Participants:

• How did you learn the language?

• What role does the museum play in language documentation and revitalization?

• Are there any concerns about the museum preserving this information?