

CONTESTED SPACES, SHARED PLACES:

*The Museum of Anthropology at UBC, Aboriginal Peoples, and Postcolonial Criticism*¹

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The pattern in Canada, as in the United States, has been to assume our imminent demise, take our sacred objects and lock them up in mausoleums for dead birds and dinosaurs ... It is not surprising then that the cultural professionals – anthropologists, archaeologists, museum directors – have often been the handmaidens of colonialism and assimilation.

- Christopher McCormick, spokesperson for
the Native Council of Canada²

THIS STATEMENT EPITOMIZES three decades of criticism from scholars and Aboriginal peoples in what has become known as the postcolonial vein, charging museums with the appropriation of Indigenous cultural objects and identities. These critics have rightly pointed out that museums purchased stolen objects, restricted Aboriginal people within museum spaces, and constructed Aboriginal identities according to European-derived ordering schemes that contradictorily portrayed Indigenous cultures as both static and vanishing.³ But such

¹ I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for *BC Studies* and Graeme Wynn, who provided thoughtful comments on an earlier version of this article. I also wish to thank my MA supervisor, John Lutz; the members of my MA thesis committee, including Elizabeth Vibert and Lorne Hammond; the staff at the Stó:lō Nation Office, especially Sonny McHalsie, David Schaepe, and Tia Halstadt; all the former and current staff at MOA, especially Ann Stevenson and Michael Ames; and Linnea Battel at the Xa:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre. Thanks also to Carol Mayer for providing me with biographical information on Frank Burnett. Finally, thank you to Keith Carlson, Jim Miller, and Heather Stanley, among many others, for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

² Quoted in Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 146.

³ For examples in the Canadian context, see: Gloria Jean Frank, “That’s My Dinner on Display?: A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture,” *BC Studies* 125/6 (Spring/Summer 2000): 163-78; Wendy Wickwire, “A Response to Alan Hoover “That’s My Dinner on Display”:

critiques of museum essentialization and repression have, in their well intentioned enthusiasm, used an essentializing brush to paint museums.⁴ Museum practices have always been diverse and changing, and Indigenous peoples were not passive in, ignorant of, or universally opposed to the museum-creation process. In fact, many Aboriginal individuals have exercised a great deal of agency – agency absent or minimized in many postcolonial critiques – in helping to lay the foundations for and/or maintaining the very institutions that are the subjects of ongoing

A First Nations Reflection on Museum Culture by Gloria Jean Frank," *BC Studies* 128 (Winter 2000/01): 74; Anne Whitelaw, "Placing Aboriginal Art in the National Gallery," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31 (2006): 197–214; Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 74–76, 150–55; Julia Harrison, "Museums as Agencies of Neocolonialism in a Postmodern World," *Studies in Cultures, Organizations, and Societies* 3 (1997): 41–65; Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums during the Late Nineteenth Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); Eileen Diana Mak, "Patterns of Change, Sources of Influence: An Historical Study of the Canadian Museum and the Middle Class, 1850–1950," (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1996); Douglas A. West, "Why I Don't Like Museums: A Reply to the Commentary 'Personal, Academic and Institutional Perspectives on Museums and First Nations' by Robert R. Janes," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 15, 2 (1995): 363–68; E. Richard Atleo, "Policy Development for Museums: A First Nations Perspective," *BC Studies* 89 (1991): 49–61; Linda Lawson and Susan Baxter, "Taking Charge of Their Destiny," *Fraser Valley Magazine*, June–July 1989, 16–23; and Gloria Cramner Webster, "The 'R' Word," *Muse* 6, 3 (1988): 43–44. This criticism is certainly not limited to Canada. Examples include: Roger Anyon, Deborah L. Nichols, and Anthony L. Klesert, "Ancestral Sites, Shrines, and Graves: Native American Perspectives on the Ethics of Collecting Cultural Properties," in *Whose Culture? Whose Property? The Ethics of Collecting Cultural Property*, 2nd Edition, ed. Phyllis Mauch Messenger (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999) 27–38; Bruce Bernstein, "Repatriation and Collaboration: The Museum of New Mexico," *Museum Anthropology* 15, 3 (1991): 19–21; Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Christina Kreps, "Museum-Making and Indigenous Curation in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia," *Museum Anthropology* 22, 1 (1998): 5–17; Mieke Bal, "Telling, Showing, Showing Off," *Critical Inquiry* 18, 3 (1992): 556–94; and Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

⁴ For example, Julia Harrison argues in her 1997 article, "Museums as Agencies of Neocolonialism in a Postmodern World," that many museum practices have been quite consistent throughout their history and that museums have assumed that they have changed, but they have not enacted such change and so neutralize the plurality that they intend to effect. Gloria Jean Frank, reflecting on First Nations exhibits at the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM) in Victoria, British Columbia, argues that the museum's First Nations exhibits have remained largely unchanged for decades. More recently, however, Harrison, using the Glenbow Museum and the RBCM as case studies, highlights the "layered and nuanced nature of any relationships that play out in the 'contact zone' of the museum," an observation that leads her to argue that critics of museums should avoid "sweeping assumptions about what determines the value or impact of such undertakings." Despite the complexity of collaborative exhibitions, she continues, the "generation of this multiplicity of meanings is reason enough to continue to promote and further foster [collaborative exhibitions]." See Julia Harrison, "What Matters: Seeing the Museum Differently," *Museum Anthropology* 28, 2 (2005): 32.

controversy and condemnation. Further, in many instances museum staff have also assisted Aboriginal peoples, much to their mutual benefit. Responding to postcolonial criticism, Julia Harrison has argued that academics should be mindful of the “unique culture of the individual museum” when it comes to appraising Aboriginal-museum conflicts and collaborations. The following is a response to this request, and it draws its substantive detail from the history of the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia (UBC).⁵

MOA opened officially in 1949, and its operating philosophy was firmly rooted in colonial and salvage anthropological ideals.⁶ Nonetheless, MOA staff believed (and believe) that their enterprise was beneficial to Aboriginal peoples, that they were (and are) active in First Nations communities, and, in turn, that Aboriginal individuals and communities have been increasingly present within the museum. In order to ensure a degree of manageability, I privilege the Stó:lō’s historical relationship with MOA over that of other First Nations’, though this still requires discussion of the broader context of MOA-First Nations relationships as these influence MOA-Stó:lō interactions.⁷ Moreover, it was after participating in the joint UVic-USask/Stó:lō Nation Ethnohistory Graduate Fieldschool as an MA student at the University of Victoria that I first studied Stó:lō relationships with museums and interpretive

⁵ Julia Harrison, “Shaping Collaboration: Considering Institutional Culture,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 20, 3 (2005): 196. Other postcolonial-inspired scholars have argued for subaltern agency along similar lines. See Ian Fairweather, “Missionaries and Colonialism in a Postcolonial Museum: Or, How a Finnish Peasant Can Become an African Folk Hero,” *Social Analysis* 48, 1 (2004): 16–32; Gerard Corsane, “Transforming Museums and Heritage in Postcolonial and Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Impact of Processes of Policy Formation and New Legislation,” *Social Analysis* 48, 1 (2004): 5–15; and Roy MacLeod, “Postcolonialism and Museum Knowledge: Revisiting Museums of the Pacific,” *Pacific Science* 52, 4 (1998): 308–18.

⁶ I use James Clifford’s definition of salvage anthropology as the “desire to rescue something ‘authentic’ out of destructive historical changes.” See James Clifford, “The Others: Beyond the Salvage Paradigm,” in *The Third Text Reader: Art, Culture, and Theory* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 160. It is important to point out that one does not need to be an anthropologist to practise salvage anthropology or to contribute to the perpetuation of the salvage paradigm. Marcia Crosby, for example, shows how the salvage paradigm operates concerning the Aboriginal art industry in British Columbia. See Marcia Crosby, “Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Vancouver*, ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991) 267–91.

⁷ The Stó:lō are a Coast Salish group whose traditional territory comprises most of the lower Fraser River drainage basin. The Stó:lō bands are: Aitchelitz, Chawathil, Cheam, Kwantlen, Kwaw-kwaw-a-pilt, Leq’ a: mel (also Lakahahmen), Matsqui, Popkum, Scowlitz, Seabird Island, Shxwhá:y (also Skway), Shxw’ow’hamel, Skawahlook, Skowkale, Soowahlie, Squiala, Sumas, Tzeachten, and Yakweakwoose. Many of the Stó:lō bands were, at one time, part of the same administrative body. Today they are part of either the Stó:lō Tribal Council or the Stó:lō Nation.

centres.⁸ This article builds on that project and primarily seeks to address the tension between the significant postcolonial-inspired critique of museums and the empirical, “archival” evidence showing that First Nations were heavily involved in, and took great pride in their contributions to, MOA.⁹ I argue that First Nations political and administrative organizations as well as Aboriginal individuals have been integral to the continuous reformation of MOA, creating opportunities for themselves and helping shape MOA’s institutional structure and public image. As the ethnographic contents of the discipline of anthropology and of museums have become the subject of contestation, MOA staff have made a conscious effort to distance their institution from the colonialism inherent in early museum object-collecting practices and representational techniques. They have, to varying degrees, succeeded.

MOA began with Frank Burnett (1852–1930), long-time collector of Aboriginal objects. Burnett, born in Scotland, moved to Canada in 1870 where he worked before buying a yacht and sailing throughout the Pacific beginning in 1901, collecting ethnographic objects as he travelled.¹⁰ Burnett donated his collection to UBC in 1927, but with no one to manage it, it was placed in storage until 1943, when Dr. Ian McTaggart-Cowan became responsible for the university’s ethnographic collections.¹¹ McTaggart-Cowan directed the cataloguing of these materials and opened them for public viewing. At the same time, UBC, in the process of adding courses in anthropology, saw the collection as a teaching resource for what would then be the only anthropology program in Canada other than the one at the University of Toronto.¹² Audrey Hawthorn has described this early period of MOA’s existence, recalling how UBC hired her husband Harry in 1947 to teach anthropology and how she accepted an honorary curator position at MOA the same

⁸ Jonathan Clapperton, “Presenting and Representing Culture: A History of Stó:lō Interpretive Centres, Museums and Cross-Cultural Relationships, 1949–2006,” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2006).

⁹ I refer to the archive in its broadest sense to include all traces of the past, from oral history to documentary records. I argue that doing so allows both dominant and subaltern voices to be heard, either through autoethnographic expression or through reading against the grain.

¹⁰ By 1924, Burnett had made ten trips of eight to eighteen months throughout the Pacific, though he began sailing at age fourteen. He admitted in his published works that he stole many of the objects he collected from their Indigenous owners, sometimes narrowly escaping alive. See Frank Burnett, *Summer Isles of Eden* (London: Sifton, Praed and Co., 1923).

¹¹ University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology Archives (hereafter MOAA), Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 34, file 5, “Information on UBC’s New Museum of Anthropology,” 25 May 1976, p. 1.

¹² MOAA, David H. Scott Consultants Ltd., “The UBC Museum of Anthropology,” February 1979, p. 4.

year.¹³ Both were trained in the tradition of material anthropology at Yale and both sought to continue this practice using the collections at MOA, housed in the basement of the UBC library, to “illustrate the life of primitive, peasant, and early cultures” through the use of material objects.¹⁴ They feared that such materials were limited and immediately set forth to expand MOA’s collection of regional objects.

MOA’s collection, like those of other museums, was a product of salvage anthropological and ethnographical ideologies. Anthropologists and other object collectors, often working for museums, sought to amass “authentic” Aboriginal objects and information before the cultures that produced them “vanished,” either through depopulation or cultural assimilation or both.¹⁵ Artefact collecting reached its height in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when many collectors deceived Aboriginals about their intentions or simply stole items from them or their gravesites.¹⁶ MOA employees, however, chose to foster honest relations with First Nations communities and individuals in order to acquire new objects. The Hawthorns based these relationships on respect and genuine interest. During their first summer in British Columbia in 1947, they visited Aboriginal communities to learn about their circumstances, sought out carvers and weavers, attended ceremonial dances, and talked with residential school pupils. Audrey Hawthorn even learned how to weave baskets, and she and Harry were welcomed into each community to which they travelled.¹⁷ Harry Hawthorn also organized the Conference of Indian Affairs, held at UBC in April 1948, to “examine the needs and programmes in Native

¹³ Audrey Hawthorn, *A Labour of Love: The Making of the Museum of Anthropology, UBC, the First Three Decades, 1946-1976* (Vancouver: UBC Museum of Anthropology, 1993), 3-4. For additional reading on MOA’s early years and biographical information on the Hawthorns, see G.B. Inglis, “Harry and Audrey Hawthorn: An Appreciation,” in *Papers in Honour of Harry Hawthorn*, ed. Vernon C. Serl and Herbert C. Taylor (Bellingham: Western Washington State College, 1975) 1-9.

¹⁴ MOAA, Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 1-6, “Functions of the Museum of Anthropology,” in *The Committee on Museum, 1942-1949*, n.p.

¹⁵ Clifford, “The Others,” 160-65.

¹⁶ For an account of the process by which artefacts were collected and the motivations behind the collectors, see Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1985). See also Brian Thom’s case study of Harlan I. Smith: Brian Thom, “Harlan I. Smith’s Jesup Fieldwork on the Northwest Coast,” in *Gateways: Exploring the Legacy of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, 1897-1902*, ed. Igor Krupnik and William W. Fitzhugh (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001) 139-80. For a theoretical discussion of the collection of Aboriginal items, see Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 5-6.

life, livelihood, schooling, art, and welfare,” while Audrey worked with UBC’s Native Indian Teaching Education Program.¹⁸

Nonetheless, the Hawthorns, working on behalf of UBC and MOA, had their own agenda. As much as they wanted to assist Natives, the couple believed (much as every generation of anthropologists and ethnographers did from Franz Boas’s day to the 1960s) that they had arrived in British Columbia at a “crucial moment in Northwest Coast life.”¹⁹ As Canada’s assimilationist policies towards Aboriginal peoples became more entrenched, they felt they had less time to gather traditional materials and knowledge “a half-century after,” as Audrey put it, “the full flowering of the [Northwest] cultures.”²⁰ The Hawthorns shared the dominant belief that the hourglass of Northwest Coast material culture was nearly out of sand. Uninterested in objects that they believed to be corrupted by “white” material culture, MOA personnel worried that, according to their estimates, only “a few craftsmen still living [were] able to reproduce traditional [Aboriginal] arts with complete integrity.”²¹ While more recent MOA staff have often hired First Nations craftspeople to reproduce traditional First Nations artistry, at mid-century they were much more interested in having existing items restored to their original state. This also required hiring Aboriginal individuals. As early as 1949, the Hawthorns commissioned Kwakwaka’wakw carvers to restore some of the relocated totem poles at UBC. Mungo Martin, a seventy-year-old Kwakwaka’wakw hereditary chief and artist, was hired, with others, for the job.²²

¹⁸ Ibid, 6; and MOAA, David H. Scott Consultants Ltd., 72. Harry Hawthorn would also work on a controversial provincial examination of First Nations in British Columbia that was eventually published. See H.B. Hawthorn, C.S. Belshaw, and S.M. Jamieson, *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958). Byron Plant analyzes the history of this publication in “‘A Relationship and Interchange of Experience’: H.B. Hawthorn, Indian Affairs, and the 1955 BC Indian Research Project,” *BC Studies* 163 (Autumn 2009): 5–31. Hawthorn also directed a massive federal survey on the condition of First Nations that drew extensively from oral interviews with Aboriginal people. The survey’s conclusions were eventually published in two volumes in 1966, entitled *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political and Educational Needs and Policies* (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1966).

¹⁹ Hawthorn, “A History of the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia,” in *Papers in Honour of Harry Hawthorn*, ed. Vernon Serl and Herbert C. Taylor (Bellingham: Western Washington State College, 1975), 95.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ MOAA, Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 1-6, “Notes re collection of Northwest Coast Materials,” in *The Committee on Museums, 1942–1949*, n.p.

²² Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 9–11. For more information on Martin’s biography and artistic style, as well as information on other First Nations carvers who worked at MOA during its early history, see Ira Jacknis, *The Storage Box of Tradition: Kwakiutl Art, Anthropologists, and Museums, 1881–1981* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 11–14.

Hiring artists such as Martin and, later, Bill Reid allowed MOA to receive additional publicity. In 1956, for example, Audrey Hawthorn used the Vancouver Art Gallery for an exhibit entitled “The People of the Potlatch” to showcase the continuing “artistic strength of the material culture of the Northwest Coast.”²³ The best opportunity for MOA to showcase Aboriginal art came in the late 1960s when the museum loaned its collection of Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka’wakw) art to Montreal for two summers, during which time “Northwest Coast Art” gained important national and international exposure.²⁴ Montreal provided perfect placement for the display, as it was part of the “Man and His World” exhibit, first unveiled for the 1967 Montreal Exposition (Expo ’67).²⁵ The exhibition drew the art world’s attention to the First Nations living on British Columbia’s coast, and MOA was not the only beneficiary. Artists such as Martin and Reid built their reputations on the publicity gained while working at MOA and other institutions. Art, though, only made up a part of the MOA collection.

Cultural “artefacts” were important, and, under Audrey Hawthorn’s leadership, MOA developed a complex relationship with Northwest Coast First Nations in order to obtain these items.²⁶ In large part, this early relationship was economic. “Indians as owners of traditional material,” one memo noted, “are sometimes relieved and pleased to have the Museum as the repository for heirlooms which they value. Some of them still have a number of family treasures they would sell.”²⁷ Furthermore, while some other museums had acquired objects through disreputable means, MOA tried to acquire pieces properly and to pay for what it received. Audrey Hawthorn recalls that “a Native owner might bring a piece to a dealer but the price offered was far from rewarding, and the families that had no further use for ceremonial possessions had little incentive to offer them on an almost non-existent market.”²⁸ Aboriginal individuals

²³ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 61-63; and Inglis, “Harry and Audrey Hawthorn,” 6. See also Vancouver Art Gallery, *People of the Potlatch* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and the University of British Columbia, n.d.).

²⁴ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 66-67; and Audrey Hawthorn, “A History of the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia,” in *Papers in Honour of Harry Hawthorn*, ed. Vernon Serl and Herbert C. Taylor (Bellingham: Western Washington State College, 1975) 97.

²⁵ Leslie Dawn discusses the revival of Aboriginal arts in Canada and, in particular, Mungo Martin’s totem pole carvings for the 1939 New York World’s Fair, in “Cross-Border Trading: Mungo Martin Carves for the World of Tomorrow,” *BC Studies* 159 (Autumn 2008): 7-44.

²⁶ Audrey Hawthorn remained at MOA as a curator until 1976. Dr. Michael Ames was MOA’s director from 1976 to 1997. Dr. Ruth Phillips replaced him in 1997, but Ames came back as acting director in 2002 for two years. He died in 2006. Dr. Anthony Shelton, MOA’s current director, was hired in 2004.

²⁷ MOAA, Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 1-6, “Notes re collection of Northwest Coast Materials,” n.p.

²⁸ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 15.

were certainly not passive victims in the collection process either. Many Aboriginal people were well aware of the cultural damage being wrought by Canada's assimilationist policies, and some individuals, "desirous of maintaining fast disappearing traditions and having vestiges of their great art permanently and safely housed," regarded MOA as a safe storage box for their traditions.²⁹ Much more often, though, they saw MOA as a profitable opportunity, albeit one to which they were forced to respond by the dire economic straits in which they found themselves. Indeed, many Aboriginal people became expert art and artefact marketers once Northwest Coast art became fashionable. Many Aboriginal individuals also actively sought to sell their objects to MOA in addition to tourists and other institutions.³⁰ At first, recalled Audrey Hawthorn, MOA was able to get items cheaply because there was not much of a local market for Aboriginal objects in Vancouver, but sellers quickly adjusted their prices according to demand.³¹

The matter is further complicated because many of the carvers working at the museum, particularly Mungo Martin, were instrumental in helping to locate people who were willing to part with their collections. Indeed, Martin and others, as cultural insiders, had connections with their own and other Aboriginal communities that non-Aboriginal museum professionals could rarely, if ever, match. Material objects were not the only trade good; as members of a research institution, MOA staff valued knowledge about the objects as much as the objects themselves. Hawthorn notes, for example, how Dan Cranmer, whose potlatch had been raided by police enforcing the potlatch ban, visited MOA and dined with the Hawthorns on many occasions, telling them about the importance of certain objects and other cultural matters.³² Without such friendships, it is doubtful that MOA's staff would have been as successful as they were at locating and obtaining many of the materials as well as at gaining an understanding of the cultural and historical value of objects.

The Stó:lō's relationship with MOA developed indirectly, through a non-Aboriginal collector. Dr. George H. Raley, a Methodist minister and principal of the Coqualeetza Residential School in Sardis, col-

²⁹ MOAA, Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 34, file 1, "UBC Indian Art Collection Enlarged by Carvings, Marks," p. 1, in the *Vancouver Province*, 20 July 1958.

³⁰ Paige Raibmon shows how Aboriginal peoples along the length of the Pacific Northwest Coast were, even in the late nineteenth century, apt dealers in collectibles made specifically for non-Aboriginals. See Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

³¹ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 16. Martin began working for MOA in 1950, where he was given accommodations.

lected items from various First Nations communities throughout his career.³³ Audrey Hawthorn recalls that some friends in Vancouver told her and Harry that they should try to acquire Raley's collection for MOA.³⁴ The museum lacked funds, and UBC turned down requests for financial assistance, so lumber baron H.R. MacMillan offered to finance the purchase of the collection in 1948. Raley, recently retired after Coqualeetza Residential School closed, agreed to sell some six hundred items, so long as the "museum was a responsible one and would make good use of the pieces he had spent so much of his life securing and guarding."³⁵

Thus, the museum's earliest relations with Stó:lō objects were complex. Raley was employed in a paternalistic role at the residential school, but he was less interested in erasing Aboriginal culture than in providing Aboriginal peoples with access to complementary "white culture," and he was devoted to encouraging Aboriginal art, crafts, and language. He also hoped to preserve Aboriginal culture in the objects he collected.³⁶ MOA staff members, in turn, were willing to work with people like Raley, MacMillan, and institutions such as the Canadian and BC governments (which partially funded MOA), all of whom took part in Canada's colonial dispossession of Aboriginal peoples. Furthermore, the assimilationist goal of extinguishing Aboriginal culture by banning ceremonies like the potlatch (a ban that lasted until 1951) benefited MOA. Many Aboriginal individuals sold meaningful ceremonial objects to MOA because they had become unnecessary or illegal. While Aboriginal people made opportunities for themselves within the museum and the general object-collecting culture, it was ultimately museum directors and curators who decided what objects to display, what objects were important to collect, and what type of art or artefact – and the distinction between the two – would best represent First Nations cultures. This pattern persisted in many ways through the museum's first four decades.

³³ Paige Raibmon, "A New Understanding of Things Indian': George Raley's Negotiation of the Residential School Experience," *BC Studies* 110 (Summer 1996): 69-96.

³⁴ MOAA, Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 1-6, "Notes re collection of Northwest Coast Materials," n.p.

³⁵ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 22-25. This was certainly a large collection when compared to the sixty Northwest Coast objects from the Burnett collection. In fact, at the time, Raley's collection would have been the largest collection of Northwest Coast objects from any one person. However, it would be superseded in 1962 by the Edith Bevan Cross collection. For further information, see Museum of Anthropology, "First Nations Collections: The History of Collecting BC First Nations Materials at MOA," *Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia* http://www.moa.ubc.ca/collections/fn_collections.php (viewed 15 July 2009).

³⁶ Of the Museum of Anthropology's roughly 125 Stó:lō objects, thirty-six were acquired from George Raley. A complete list of all Stó:lō objects at MOA is available at the museum.

As MOA expanded both the number and geographical scope of its collections, it needed more space. In July 1971, the federal government promised \$2.5 million to construct a new building.³⁷ Museum staff wanted the new building to serve First Nations by providing educational and cultural programs at the museum as well as space in which Aboriginal carvers could work. As one memo stated, any new building would have to include “various considerations of the public function of the Museum, including educational activities relating to the Indian population of the Province.”³⁸ Yet, MOA staff and the building’s celebrated Vancouver-based architect, Arthur Erickson, did not consult First Nations either on how they would like items stored or on how the new building should be designed. Most of the museum’s collections were placed in “glass-fronted storage cases and Plexiglass-topped drawers in the public area of the museum, accessible to everyone.”³⁹ This new, revolutionary system of visible storage was seen as more democratic in that it provided the general public greater access to collections than was typical of other institutions, where most of the collections were hidden from public view.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Ruth Phillips, director of MOA in the 1990s, observed that visible storage allowed only partial views of objects and conformed to standard anthropological classifications according to culture, area, and type, practices now considered “artifacts of Eurocentric and cultural evolutionist premises.”⁴¹ Furthermore, museum staff did not limit access to certain sacred objects not meant for public viewing, and some First Nations individuals have since criticized the building itself for its “cold, abstract features,” which reflect the European construction styles of the time.⁴² Indeed, this juxtaposition of modern architecture with historic artefacts reflects the modern/traditional dichotomy of European/Aboriginal and present/past.

Significant changes in relationships between the First Nations and MOA were sparked by a dispute in Alberta involving the Lubicon Cree, the Canadian government, Shell Oil, and the Glenbow Museum. In 1988, Calgary’s Glenbow Museum launched an exhibit entitled “The

³⁷ Hawthorn, *Labour of Love*, 78.

³⁸ MOAA, Audrey Hawthorn Fonds, box 1-1, p. 1, Cyril S. Belshaw, “Memorandum to Members of the Department of Graduate Students,” 2 July 1971.

³⁹ Hawthorn, “A History of the Museum of Anthropology,” 98-99; and Ruth Phillips, “Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age,” *Canadian Historical Review* 86, 1 (2005): 104.

⁴⁰ Canadian museum professionals such as Duncan Cameron have written about the “democratization of the museum.” See Duncan Cameron, “Museums and Public Access: The Glenbow Approach,” *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* 1 (1982): 177-96.

⁴¹ Phillips, “Re-placing Objects,” 105.

⁴² Michael Ames, personal interview, 11 January 2006.



Figure 1: Exterior view of the Great Hall at the Museum of Anthropology, UBC. Photograph by Milton Stanley.

Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples” to coincide with the Winter Olympics in that city.⁴³ Shell Oil, one of the Glenbow’s major sponsors, was drilling for oil on lands that the Canadian federal government, also a Glenbow sponsor, had seized from the Lubicon Cree.⁴⁴ Engaged in a stagnant, decades-old legal battle with the federal government, the Lubicon Cree decided to protest the museum’s exhibit, deftly turning it into a spectacle about the Canadian government’s ill-treatment of First Nations as well as a critique of the “power relations and representational practices that had been common to Western

⁴³ For details of the exhibit, see Julia Harrison et al., eds., *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples. A Catalogue of the Exhibition* (Toronto/Calgary: McClelland and Stewart/Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1987); Julia Harrison, “Completing a Circle: The Spirit Sings,” in *Anthropology, Public Policy and Native Peoples in Canada*, ed. Noel Dyck and James B. Waldram (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993) 334-57; Frances W. Kaye, *Hiding the Audience: Viewing Arts and Institutions on the Prairies* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003); M.L. Vanessa Vogel, “The Glenbow Controversy and the Exhibition of North American Art,” *Museum Anthropology* 14, 4 (1990): 7-11; and Alfred Young Man, “Review of ‘The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples,’ by the Glenbow Museum,” *American Indian Quarterly* 14, 1 (1990): 71-73.

⁴⁴ Anna Laura Jones, “Exploding Cannons: The Anthropology of Museums,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22 (1993): 209.

museums for much of the twentieth century.”⁴⁵ Widespread media coverage of the controversy and national and international support for the Lubicon Cree rocked the ideological foundations upon which much of the museum world operated.

Many museum directors and curators feared that their museums would become sites of protest. While museum academics had debated issues of cultural authenticity, repatriation, and other aspects of colonial imbalances within museums, museum practices had not kept up with the theory or the debate. Only after the Glenbow controversy did these issues come to a head, resulting in the 1990 Task Force on Museums and First Peoples.⁴⁶ The Task Force consisted of various members of the museum community and many First Nations representatives who sought to resolve the tensions between museums and First Nations. After countrywide consultation, the Task Force released its 1992 report, *Turning the Page: Developing New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples*.⁴⁷ *Turning the Page* recommended a number of protocols that would help museums develop “relationships and partnerships with First Nations concerning the research, preservation, and interpretation of their artifacts, culture, and history.”⁴⁸ While these standards were voluntary, most museum directors agreed to follow the guidelines when displaying First Nations objects, which included accepting the onus to contact those First Nations whose culture and history were being represented.⁴⁹ Frances W. Kaye, a Native American studies specialist, argues that these protocols represented “a paradigm shift” in the way that museums related to Aboriginal peoples.⁵⁰

Some staff at MOA wanted to implement the new protocols when developing two exhibits in the early 1990s, and First Nations, too, were eager to be involved. The Stó:lō, in particular, recognized the new political and cultural opportunities that would be available to them in

⁴⁵ Phillips, “Re-placing Objects,” 87.

⁴⁶ For differing views of the results of the controversy and the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, see George Erasmus, David W. Penny, and Thomas H. Wilson, “Museums and First Peoples in Canada,” *Museum Anthropology* 16, 2 (1992): 6-11; and Trudy Nicks, “Partnerships in Developing Cultural Resources: Lessons from the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples,” *Culture* 12, 1 (1992): 87-94.

⁴⁷ See: The Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, “Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples,” *Museum Anthropology* 16, 2 (1992): 12-20.

⁴⁸ Kevin Neary, *First Nations: Developing Relationships and Partnerships* (Victoria: British Columbia Museums Association, 2005), 2.

⁴⁹ Neary, *First Nations*, 5.

⁵⁰ Kaye, *Hiding the Audience*, 148.

partnering with MOA.⁵¹ The first of these exhibits, “From Under the Delta,” was meant to “raise the awareness of the fragility of [archaeological] material” by displaying archaeological materials found in the Fraser Delta.⁵² Ann Stevenson, who had worked on the Museums and First Peoples Task Force, was the project manager for this exhibit. She explained that, following the “principles of the Task Force ... meant [that museum staff] would do [their work] in stages by going out to the communities to see, first of all, did [First Nations] want to participate, how did they want to participate, and try to follow along with those things.”⁵³ Museum staff reached out to the seven Aboriginal partners whose objects were involved in the exhibit. They sent faxes to Stó:lō Tribal Council staff – in particular to Gordon Mohs (a non-Aboriginal archaeologist) and Sonny McHalsie (a Stó:lō cultural researcher) – in order to get the correct spelling for the names of objects and places. MOA also requested information on how to present certain objects as well as what sort of signage to display and what its content should be.⁵⁴ This collaborative process – the first time that cooperation on such a scale was attempted – encountered many unexpected impediments.

While MOA staff made efforts to follow the Task Force’s protocols, they still tried to control the exhibit-creation process in many of the same ways as they had before. As Stevenson recalls, “[We] prescribed the material that we were going to work with ... [and that made it] hard to move in certain areas easily.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, MOA’s collaborative initiatives did not always align with First Nations priorities, including those of Stó:lō Tribal Council staff. When, for example, MOA sent documents to the Stó:lō Tribal Council to be edited, the work was sometimes done at the last minute. Stó:lō staff, already overcommitted to work on other matters such as treaty negotiations, sometimes found it difficult to respond to tight deadlines.⁵⁶ Stevenson noted that these differences in scheduling conceptions were the biggest hurdle to overcome. Though MOA had set a timeline to secure federal funding, she and the other MOA staff working on the project came to realize that it was completely un-

⁵¹ The Stó:lō Tribal Council, in the 1980s under Chief Clarence Pennier, provided the impetus to establish research networks to academic institutions. For additional information on this new prerogative, see Fortney, “Forging New Partnerships,” 242.

⁵² Ann Stevenson, personal interview, 11 January 2006.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Stó:lō Nation Archives (hereafter SNA), “Correspondence to/from Stó:lō Nation/Museum of Anthropology Regarding ‘From Under the Delta’ Exhibit,” February–March 1995, n.p.

⁵⁵ Stevenson, personal interview, 11 January 2006.

⁵⁶ SNA, “Correspondence to/from Stó:lō Nation/Museum of Anthropology,” n.p.

realistic.⁵⁷ Margaret Holm and David Pokotylo, archaeologists working on the project, also recalled that loan agreements, production deadlines, and travel schedules should not have been finalized until protocols with First Nations partners had been signed. Continuing conflicts between MOA and the Aboriginal communities made the project intensely frustrating for many of those involved. Stevenson took a six-month leave and accepted a temporary full-time job working on heritage issues for the Stó:lō Nation. While there, Stevenson said that her eyes were opened by “what [the Stó:lō] were up against” as well as “[by] what they were dealing with in terms of heritage threat in one of the most developing [via new construction] places in Canada.”⁵⁸ After her contract with the Stó:lō ended, Stevenson returned to finish the exhibit, which took more than five years (1990 to 1996) to complete. In the end, MOA staff reached a consensus with the seven different Aboriginal partners involved. This success was largely due to First Nations willingness to continue collaborating on something they felt was important and staff who were, as then-MOA director Michael Ames suggests, “willing to bend over backwards to work with First Nations communities.”⁵⁹ This experience helped to improve MOA’s image among the Stó:lō and other First Nations.⁶⁰

While “From Under the Delta” was being developed, some MOA staff were also working on “Written in the Earth.”⁶¹ This exhibit dealt with five hundred to forty-five-hundred-year-old materials excavated from the Greater Vancouver region. Staff also had to deal with traditional views of the exhibit-construction process, which overwhelmingly privileged curatorial decision making. MOA staff realized First Nations representatives needed to be consulted, and they communicated regularly with archaeologists and community intellectuals working for the Stó:lō Nation. Yet Ames observed, voicing his own opinion, that “some museum staff expressed discomfort and uncertainty about

⁵⁷ Stevenson, personal interview, 11 January 2006. Margaret Holm and David Pokotylo also point out that, because of everything a band office has to deal with, it was hard to find First Nations staff who could devote the immense amount of time required to work on a museum project. See Margaret Holm and David Pokotylo, “From Policy to Practice: A Case Study in Collaborative Exhibits with First Nations,” *Journal of Canadian Archaeology* 21, 1 (1997): 36, 40.

⁵⁸ Stevenson, personal interview, 11 January 2006.

⁵⁹ Michael Ames, personal interview, 11 January 2006.

⁶⁰ In two reviews of “From Under the Delta,” First Nations’ right to interpret their histories within museums and the political nature of heritage conservation was emphasized. See Michael Scott, “Ancient Artifacts the Preserve of the Delta,” *Vancouver Sun*, 25 July 1996; Michael Scott, “Collaboration Brings Ancient History to Life in Museum Exhibit,” *Vancouver Sun*, 27 July 1996.

⁶¹ Deborah Sparrow, of the Musqueam First Nation, came up with this title.

the directions in which they appeared to be heading.”⁶² He continued that these same staff were concerned about “potential risks to research opportunities, academic freedom, and curatorial prerogatives.”⁶³ As the construction of the exhibits proceeded, those same curators who were wary of the new standards eventually realized that they needed to work within a new paradigm in which they could no longer hold on to traditional structures of curatorial authority.⁶⁴ Ruth Phillips writes that the above two exhibits “involved the most radical and the most difficult negotiations of curatorial authority and museological practice in the Museum’s history.”⁶⁵ While the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples was convened out of apprehension, the level of collaboration in the creation of these two exhibits flowed from a shared realization that traditional museum practices no longer worked in an increasingly pluralist society.

When both exhibits were unveiled to the public, the local media paid particular attention to First Nations collaboration, the role of urbanization in artefact destruction, and First Nations cultural diversity – exactly what both the project developers and First Nations participants wanted.⁶⁶ Furthermore, those First Nations communities, including the Stó:lō, ensured that there was an equal emphasis placed on the contemporary political relevance of the materials. For example, one text in the exhibit read: “First Nations advocates assert that nothing should come out of the ground until all parties – developers, archaeologists, government, repositories and First Nations – agree on a full management plan. Funds to cover all aspects of recovery must be committed prior to land alteration.”⁶⁷ First Nations thus used MOA’s space and its exhibits as a venue to discursively contest claims on their traditional lands made by developers, governments, and the larger settler society.

Four years after “Written in the Earth” and “From Under the Delta” were unveiled in 1996, graduate student Sharon Fortney, of Aboriginal

⁶² Michael M. Ames, “How to Decorate a House: The Re-Negotiation of Cultural Representations at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology,” *Museum Anthropology* 22, 3 (1999): 42. Holm and Pokotylo mention the same concern in their article “From Policy to Practice,” 41.

⁶³ Holm and Pokotylo, “From Policy to Practice,” 42.

⁶⁴ Sharon Fortney describes this negotiated process over curatorial authority in greater detail. See Sharon Fortney, “Forging New Partnerships: Coast Salish Communities and Museums” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2009), 141-43.

⁶⁵ Ruth Phillips, “APEC at the Museum of Anthropology: The Politics of Site and the Poetics of Sight Bite,” *Ethnos* 65, 2 (2000): 176.

⁶⁶ Michael Scott, “Unearthed Treasures: The Latest Collaboration between UBC and the First Nations Has Dug Up Striking Details of a Past Culture,” *Vancouver Sun*, 1 February 1997.

⁶⁷ Ames, “How to Decorate a House,” 47.

descent, wanted to collaborate with the Stó:lō and other First Nations for her research on MOA's Coast Salish Basket Documentation Project. This project sought to identify the family or individual names associated with the roughly twelve hundred baskets MOA possesses and to situate them geographically. Fortney's project, which benefited from the advice of Stevenson and other veteran MOA staff, was a great success, and her experience reflected the smoothing out of the First Nations-museum collaborative research process. Lessons learned in the preparation of the previous exhibits meant that there was less conflict and less vying for control among the parties involved. MOA paid Stó:lō elders and weavers to travel to MOA – something that had been a source of some criticism in the earlier stages of previous exhibit preparations.⁶⁸ Fortney also travelled to many Stó:lō communities to seek their assistance, direction, and knowledge – something that had occurred only sporadically during the creation of the "From Under the Delta" exhibit.⁶⁹ In return, Stó:lō individuals interviewed for Fortney's project shared their cultural knowledge with her and other MOA members, much as Aboriginal individuals had with Audrey and Harry Hawthorn decades earlier. After asking about various items during one visit, Fortney learned that a particular item was not a basket at all but, rather, a spiritual sash. Fortney was informed that it should never have been displayed.⁷⁰ Betsy Johnson, MOA's curator of ethnology and textiles, then assured the Stó:lō that the sashes would be stored out of view.⁷¹ Thus, the exhibit was a knowledge and relationship-building experience for staff at MOA, who were prepared to allow Stó:lō individuals control over many of the project's details.

"A Partnership of Peoples," begun in 2001, is MOA's most recent, large-scale collaborative venture and, from its inception, has included many First Nations collaborators, including the Stó:lō.⁷² Then-MOA director Ruth Phillips, writing about the project, proclaimed that the museum world had entered a "second museum age," wherein museums must combine theory and practice rather than focus on grand spectacles

⁶⁸ SNA, "Coast Salish Basket Documentation Project: Museum of Anthropology," June–August 2000, n.p.

⁶⁹ SNA, "Correspondence to/from Stó:lō Nation/Museum of Anthropology," n.p.

⁷⁰ SNA, "Transcript Number Seven: Stó:lō Nation Elders August 25, 2000 Visit (Edited Version)," 25 August 2000, p. 21.

⁷¹ Ibid. While MOA had removed a full set of spirit dance regalia back in 1987 after complaints from the Musqueam, it was not until the later 1990s that it implemented a policy of removing sacred or culturally sensitive items from public view. For example, MOA removed some Swxaiwxwe masks after receiving complaints from the Stó:lō, Katzie, and Saanich First Nations. See Fortney, "Forging New Partnerships," 141–42.

⁷² "Museum of Anthropology Steps Boldly into the Future," *Vancouver Sun*, 9 June 2006.

or else risk a “dangerous disconnect between current academic and museological theory and practice and museum practice.”⁷³ Phillips went on to say that MOA staff, well aware of such dangers, prioritized Aboriginal-MOA collaboration and that “A Partnership of Peoples” was evidence of MOA’s commitment to First Nations. MOA hosted a community advisory committee composed of academics as well as representatives from First Nations and other ethnic communities. The project was designed specifically to allow for different First Nations research and cultural needs.⁷⁴ As approved by the granting agency, the project consists of two parts: (1) an additional research floor designed for First Nations research and (2) the Reciprocal Research Network (RRN). The latter is expected to support collaborative research in four broadly defined areas: material and visual culture; language and oral history; museology and repatriation; and museums, new technology, and intellectual property.⁷⁵ The RRN is designed to link MOA, First Nations in British Columbia, and other major institutions and museums in order to provide internet access to research collections in North America and Europe and to support virtual knowledge and development.⁷⁶

Linnea Battel, director of the Stó:lō-run Xa:ytem Longhouse Interpretive Centre in Mission, British Columbia, explains that, in the process of setting up the RRN, museum staff asked her, along with other First Nations researchers and elders, what they needed in order to feel comfortable coming to MOA and conducting research there as well as online.⁷⁷ The result, she continues, is a genuine attempt to accommodate all of the First Nations’ demands. For example, while, in 1976, Arthur Erickson did not contemplate research by people of First Nations background, MOA’s new wing is being built by an architect who is working with “academics, museum professionals, and community users to create research and storage spaces that are welcoming and adapted to their [i.e., First Nations’] diverse needs.”⁷⁸ The project, with many of its components already implemented, was opened in January 2010 in order to coincide with the Cultural Olympiad associated with the Vancouver-Whistler Winter Olympic Games.

⁷³ Phillips, “Re-Placing Objects,” 83, 85.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 106-7.

⁷⁵ Museum of Anthropology, “RRN Overview,” Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia <http://www.moa.ubc.ca/renewal/rnoverview.php> (viewed 5 February 2006).

⁷⁶ Museum of Anthropology, “Reciprocal Research Network Overview,” Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia http://www.moa.ubc.ca/RRN/about_overview.html (viewed 24 July 2009).

⁷⁷ Linnea Battel, personal interview, 16 January 2006.

⁷⁸ Phillips, “Re-Placing Objects,” 107.



Figure 2: A Coast Salish drummer performs in the Museum of Anthropology's Great Hall during "A Partnership of Peoples" press conference on 5 June 2006. Photograph by Milton Stanley.

One of the most important outcomes of this long history of MOA-First Nations collaboration is that First Nations have developed a sense of ownership over MOA's physical and ideological space as well as its contents. This has directly influenced how MOA has developed over the past few decades. MOA staff, in turn, have fostered that sense, even when First Nations have used the museum as a protest site. For example, on 19 November 1981, approximately 250 Aboriginal people occupied MOA as part of the National Indian Brotherhood's "National Indian Solidarity Day" to draw attention to Aboriginal peoples' objections to their treatment during the development of the Canadian Constitution. Rather than confront these protestors, however, then director Michael Ames encouraged their use of MOA as a shared space. The *Globe and Mail* reported that Ames "welcomed them and ordered coffee and food for them. 'I have no objection to this at all,' he told them. 'I believe that the message you have is important and that it is important that the Canadian people hear what you have to say.'"⁷⁹

In another instance, the local Musqueam joined protestors in opposing the 1997 APEC meeting that was being hosted at the UBC. UBC had pledged MOA's space to the Canadian government for use during the meeting, and MOA director Ruth Phillips had ensured that, as per established protocol, the Musqueam chief would be permitted to give an opening speech for the event since MOA is on traditional Musqueam territory. After government representatives listened to part of Chief Gail Sparrow's speech while she was rehearsing it prior to the APEC meeting, however, they reversed their decision, fearing visiting diplomats and the Canadian government would be embarrassed at Sparrow's call for action on redressing human rights violations and colonial injustices.⁸⁰ In response, the Musqueam arrived to protest the APEC event and their exclusion from it. Reflecting on the protest afterwards, Phillips completely sympathized with the Musqueam's decision, and she was very critical of how UBC and the Canadian government had handled the situation.⁸¹

⁷⁹ "Protestors Urge Indians to Fight for their Rights," *Globe and Mail*, 20 November 1981; and Douglas E. Sanders, "The Indian Lobby and the Canadian Constitution, 1978-82," in *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State: Fourth World Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway*, ed. Noel Dyck (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research Memorial University, 1985), 151-89.

⁸⁰ Phillips, "APEC at the Museum of Anthropology," 172-94.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* First Nation's protest actions at MOA have been few and far between. Much more often, they have used MOA's space for their own cultural and political events. Honouring ceremonies, such as the one the Stó:lō held for one of their chiefs shortly before the APEC fiasco, have taken place at MOA. The Stó:lō also used MOA as one of the sites for a large book launch following the publication of the *Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* in 2001.

Behind-the-scenes discussions between First Nations and MOA staff, less publicized but as important as the protests, have also contributed to a First Nations' mentality that is possessive of MOA's physical contents and the messages told using those objects. Aboriginal people have explicitly told MOA's staff that the objects they possess do not belong to the museum even though they are MOA's legal property. Ames recalled an incident when some First Nations (he could not remember who) intervened during the production of an exhibit designed solely with the general public in mind, arguing that the exhibit could not proceed until its target audience was reframed to include those whom the objects were most about. Ames agreed with them, and so, before the exhibit opened, there was a reception for all of the Aboriginal communities involved so that they could visit, review the exhibit, and suggest changes.⁸² In other instances, First Nations have actually sought to repatriate objects from MOA, though Ames only recalls MOA agreeing to this once, when a Songhees family visited the museum to recover a number of objects that their grandmother had sold to a private collector and that MOA had subsequently purchased.⁸³

Though MOA has returned fewer items from its collections than have some other museums, Aboriginal peoples have succeeded in changing the views of those working at MOA regarding the ideological ownership of the objects therein. Elizabeth Johnson, curator of ethnology and documentation, has certainly noticed the impact of this shift in thinking about objects at the museum. Presenting at the annual conference of the Archives Association for British Columbia, she stated:

During the time that I have worked in the area [of anthropological museums] I have seen our relationships with these materials [created by other peoples] change from one in which the materials were seen to be in our custody to be managed according to the rules and ethics of our professions, to one in which our role is seen increasingly as one of trusteeship.⁸⁴

As this mentality has become prevalent among MOA staff, First Nations have, in turn, felt increasingly comfortable using and altering MOA's space to add new objects to its collections or displays, either permanently or temporarily. For a time in 2009, for example, the Stó:lō used MOA to

⁸² Ames, personal interview, 11 January 2006.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Lominska Johnson, "Equal Partners?: How Can We Implement this Principle?" *AABC Newsletter Feature 7*, 4 (1997) <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/articles/nlv7n4a.html> (viewed 20 March 2010).

house one of their “artefacts,” T’xwelatse, an ancient stone ancestor that they repatriated from the Burke Museum in 2006, in order to teach people about the importance of repatriation and the benefits to museums supportive of repatriation.⁸⁵

As different First Nations have become aware of the power of representation and of the benefits of working with MOA, they have often competed for the opportunity to work with the museum; these interactions have also shaped MOA’s character. Some First Nations are more capable than others of taking advantage of these opportunities and of influencing or controlling MOA’s multifaceted space. The Stó:lō Nation and the Stó:lō Tribal Council (representing, as they do, numerous First Nations) are privileged in that they already have a research infrastructure and a history of conducting research work. As Ann Stevenson points out, it is often easier to work with the Stó:lō Nation than with other Aboriginal communities because:

They have people working there with certain expertise. They have an archivist, an archaeologist, they have what Tracey Joe does [meaning that] they have someone who understands technology already and can support [the RRN], and it’s working. Whereas in other communities they don’t have the infrastructure, so it’s more challenging.⁸⁶

Sonny McHalsie also noted that part of the reason MOA has responded to the Stó:lō’s demands in the past has to do with the fact that the wife of one of their non-Aboriginal archaeologists worked at MOA.⁸⁷ Additionally, MOA has partnered with anthropologists and archaeologists at UBC and with the Stó:lō to run anthropology and archaeology field schools. The Stó:lō have, in turn, used these field schools as opportunities to further their own research into issues that have political and historical relevance – such as heritage destruction in their traditional territory, treaty negotiations, or other social or cultural issues – and that the Stó:lō leadership deems important but lacks the resources to investigate. Finally, MOA has developed an internship program with the Stó:lō Nation to facilitate more Aboriginal people working at the museum and to create synergies between the two organizations.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ann Cameron, “Welcoming T’xwelatse to the Museum of Anthropology,” *The Beat* 2, 3 (2008): 1.

⁸⁶ Stevenson, personal interview, 11 January 2006.

⁸⁷ Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, in Fortney, “Forging New Partnerships,” 242.

⁸⁸ One of the major critiques of museums in general has concerned their lack of full-time Aboriginal staff. At MOA, this has certainly been an issue. However, over time MOA has come up with a variety of solutions to this problem, of which its directors have been quite cognizant. Michael Ames, for example, recalled at one point creating a position to fit the

Significantly, MOA also has a history of working especially closely with the local Musqueam community – on whose traditional territory MOA is situated – and, to a lesser extent, with those Northwest Coast First Nations that the Hawthorns first visited when they arrived in British Columbia. This has, however, caused some frustration for some Stó:lō individuals and others.⁸⁹ When MOA highlights one First Nation, others inevitably feel left out or diminished. Stevenson mentioned that some of the problems that occurred during collaborative efforts in the 1990s arose because one Aboriginal community had Ames’s “ear,” and so it was allowed a disproportionate amount of input into the “Written in the Earth” and “From Under the Delta” exhibits. This angered other First Nations who felt doubly colonized, once by MOA and once by that particular Aboriginal community.⁹⁰

Having more representational power at MOA can help a particular First Nation by affording it public and political influence, cultural visibility and status, increased employment, and project funding. This is especially the case when First Nations are able to use MOA for contemporary political goals, such as treaty negotiations, or to reinforce a particular discourse that includes claiming a certain traditional territory that is contested by other First Nations who are also negotiating land claims with the provincial government. The above tensions thus reveal how relevant many First Nations feel museums – or at least MOA – are in terms of the political and cultural opportunities they offer, even if there is disagreement regarding some museum practices. More important, the history of these tensions provides evidence of the significance of personal connections and relationships in enabling certain Aboriginal communities to co-opt museum space.

available applicants. Until certain barriers to having more Aboriginal people work at museums are overcome – such as the stigma of museums as “evil institutions” (which Ames identified), the relatively low number of Aboriginal people enrolled in anthropology, and the demand for Aboriginal people with specialized skills to work at First Nations offices – it is likely that this issue will remain a point of contention among postcolonial museum critics.

⁸⁹ This type of unintentional favouritism can also be discerned in MOA publications. In the book *Objects and Expressions: Celebrating the Collections of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia*, the objects featured tend to be from the Musqueam, Kwakwaka’wakw, and the Haida, whereas the Stó:lō are not represented at all. Keith Carlson, a historian working for the Stó:lō, also mentioned that, in the 1990s, despite the logic of physical proximity, there was “a sense among certain Stó:lō people that MOA consulted . . . heavily and regularly with Musqueam to the detriment of other First Nations in the region” (Keith Carlson, personal interview, 24 February 2006).

⁹⁰ Stevenson, personal interview, 11 January 2006. Sharon Fortney’s recent PhD dissertation also provides ample evidence of MOA-Musqueam collaboration that goes far beyond the amount of participation the Stó:lō or other Coast Salish groups were receiving from MOA in the late 1980s and throughout much of the 1990s.

Despite the many ways in which MOA has changed because of Aboriginal input and postcolonial dialogue, there remains one specific colonial practice that MOA has done little to address. Anthropologist Anna Laura Jones insists that representations in museums are often “primitive” and that they place First Nations objects in a “‘before/after’ scenario that privileges pre-colonial objects in major exhibitions ... and the persistent notion of tribal styles.”⁹¹ Keith Carlson, former Stó:lō Nation historian, would agree:

MOA does a great job of representing “traditional” culture, but is weak on the historical dynamics of the post-contact era. You go into [MOA] and what you find are all these things that are pre-contact or representational of pre-contact cultural artifacts. And then contemporary artists doing traditional style stuff. And so it’s a salvage paradigm sort of model of anthropology ... Try to find anything in there that talks about the gold rush or the canneries or the fisheries or Aboriginal agriculture. There’s no hand-carved wooden ploughs in there that Native people made, right? Why not? That’s what carvers were doing 120 years ago. But you don’t see it.⁹²

Although many archaeologists and art historians as well as anthropologists work at MOA, the salvage paradigm is nonetheless “alive and well.” Anthropologist James Clifford explains that works of culture or art are only considered authentic if they predate “tainting” by the “modern” world. Authenticity is lost once an object crosses a “modern” temporal and/or geographical line.⁹³ Regardless, First Nations have not pressed MOA on the issue; instead, they have largely continued to value their relationship with MOA, despite its complexities, as they have since Audrey and Harry Hawthorn began working there in the late 1940s.

MOA’s ability to display and obtain Northwest Coast First Nations objects has been historically contingent on its staff’s ability to develop positive working relationships with First Nations communities and individuals. Just as the Hawthorns once built positive relationships with First Nations in order to collect, repair, and gain knowledge about certain objects, so MOA staff are doing the same today in order to continue displaying these objects and to learn more about them. In fact, with the rise of postcolonial studies in the last few decades, MOA staff have faced considerably more pressure to work with First Nations than ever before. No doubt, some of the same processes that have been

⁹¹ Jones, “Exploding Cannons,” 204, 208.

⁹² Keith Thor Carlson, personal interview, 24 February 2006.

⁹³ Clifford, “The Others,” 160–61.

harmful to First Nations in the past, and that museum critics condemn, are still present in museums today, but the balance of power has shifted considerably towards a more equitable weight. Curatorial attitudes have changed, and new partnerships have been formed to ensure that museum collections are appropriately handled. Furthermore, it must be recognized that First Nations have been increasingly active in the exhibit creation processes and that they have always sought to utilize MOA for their own purposes.

Julia Harrison points out that places are always layered with multiple meanings and numerous voices that lead to many tensions. MOA is no different. The Stó:lō, in particular, have garnered a significant amount of control over the museum, especially after the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples. They have been able to redeploy MOA's space for their own purposes and, while not gaining complete control over it, occasionally possess veto power. This control has been unequally shared with many other First Nations, who have also been involved in MOA to various degrees and who sometimes resent those able to make more use of the museum than they. Consequently, First Nations are engaged in both a collaborative and a competitive process in which MOA staff sometimes get entangled and in which they sometimes entangle themselves. Most important, though, has been the ever-present dialogue between First Nations and MOA staff at the individual level – a dialogue extending back to the Hawthorns. No cross-cultural relationship exists without stress, but the conversation among these First Nations and relative newcomers, situated within a broad context of Aboriginal and postcolonial activism, continues.