Looking Forward Rather Than Backward: Cultural Revitalization at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum

Kaila Cogdill

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LOOKING FORWARD RATHER THAN BACKWARD: CULTURAL REVITALIZATION AT THE POEH CULTURAL CENTER AND MUSEUM

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

For Mitch, Marsha, and Mika
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LOOKING FORWARD RATHER THAN BACKWARD: CULTURAL REVITALIZATION AT THE POEH CULTURAL CENTER AND MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates how the Pueblo of Pojoaque went from near
desertion to a community that in contemporary times (and with the assistance of nearby
Tewa communities) has worked to retain its culture and art, in an important example of
cultural revitalization. Pojoaque Pueblo’s Poeh Cultural Center and Museum provides a
unique perspective on cultural revitalization in the 21st century. The Poeh Center has
been used by Pojoaque Pueblo to strengthen its identity and its economic and social status
in the area, and as a result is considered one of the most progressive Pueblos in the
Southwest. I address the role the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum plays within the
Pueblo of Pojoaque’s attempt to recover and strengthen its identity as an indigenous or
Indian Pueblo through a contemporary lens.

As part of that effort, I examine “Pueblo” culture as opposed to “Hispano” culture
in order to define “Pojoaque Pueblo” culture and identity in contemporary times.
Through participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, archival research, and visitor questionnaires, I explore and identify how exhibits, programs, and art classes contribute to the revival of the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s culture and traditions. Furthermore, I look at how the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum is used and viewed by community members, tourists, museum staff, art students, and local artists. For comparative purposes I also examine regional and national museums in the United States and Mexico, including two tribal museums located within the state of New Mexico, Acoma and Zuni. I compare these two last museums to Pojoaque’s cultural center and museum as well as to non-tribal museums in terms of heritage, tourism, and representation.

The basic contribution of this research is to show how an indigenous identity, (more specifically a Tewa Pueblo identity) is expressed in a tribal museum in contemporary times. This research also serves as an example of a federally recognized Native American tribe that is taking advantage of technological advances to be seen as a progressive Pueblo by tribal members, other Pueblos, and outside visitors.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... xii

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................... xiii

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1
  Cultural Revitalization, Identities, and Museum Representation .......................... 3
  Cultural Revitalization ............................................................................................... 4
  Pueblo and non-Pueblo Identity .............................................................................. 8
  Modifying Museum Practice ..................................................................................... 18
  Tribal Museums ......................................................................................................... 22
  Preliminary Studies and Training .............................................................................. 25
  Methodology and Relevance ...................................................................................... 26

## CHAPTER 2 THE STUDY AREA: NORTHERN NEW MEXICO AND PUEBLO OF POJOAQUE HISTORY ................................................................. 33
  History of New Mexico ............................................................................................. 36
  The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 ....................................................................................... 45
  The Pueblo of Pojoaque: Background of the Research ........................................... 50
  History of the Pueblo of Pojoaque .......................................................................... 53
  Re-establishment of the Pueblo of Pojoaque ............................................................ 58
  Cultural Revitalization at Pojoaque ....................................................................... 59

## CHAPTER 3 ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY, PUEBLO OF POJOAQUE IDENTITY AND IDENTITIES IN NORTHERN NEW MEXICO ......................................................................................................................... 70
  Implications for Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity .......................................................... 75
  Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity: Land and Identity. Your “Pueblo identity is an individual identification because your blood line stems from that place” .......................................................................................................................... 86
  Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity: Tradition and Progression ......................................... 90
  Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity: Outside Views versus Pojoaque Pueblo’s “Private Reality” ............................................................................................................................................................................. 95
Summary and Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 102

CHAPTER 4 MUSEUM REPRESENTATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO AND NATIONAL MUSEUMS AS INSTRUMENTS OF COLONIZATION ......................................................................................................................... 106

History of Museums in the United States ............................................................................. 106
A Brief Historical Sketch of Museums .................................................................................. 107
National Museums: The Smithsonian Institution ................................................................. 113
Overview of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) ............................... 115
The NMAIA and NAGPRA ..................................................................................................... 119
The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico .............................................................. 122

CHAPTER 5 STATE-OWNED AND COMMUNITY MUSEUMS IN MEXICO AND NEW MEXICO ........................................................................................................................................ 130

The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC) ................................................................. 130
The Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany in Oaxaca, Mexico..................................................... 143
Museums in the 21st Century ................................................................................................. 149

CHAPTER 6 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNITY MUSEUMS AT ACOMA AND ZUNI PUEBLO ........................................................................................................................................ 154

Acoma Pueblo, Tourism, and The Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum .......... 155
My Tour of Acoma Pueblo and the Mesa Top ..................................................................... 166
Zuni A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center ............................................................. 169
Conclusions ............................................................................................................................... 180

CHAPTER 7 REVITALIZATION AND PRESERVATION OF ART AND CULTURE AT THE POEH LIFE CYCLE CULTURAL CENTER AND MUSEUM .................................................................................................................................. 181

History of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum ............................................................... 183
The Multifunctional Poeh Cultural Center and Museum and Reactions to the Santa Fe Fiesta .............................................................................................................................................................................. 196
Tourism and Visitor Encounters at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum .................... 203
Stereotypes about Pueblo peoples and Native Americans .................................................. 206
Visitor Responses from the Questionnaires/Surveys ............................................................. 214

CHAPTER 8 CULTURAL REVITALIZATION AT THE POEH CULTURAL CENTER AND MUSEUM .................................................................................................................. 220
Museum Representation through the Exhibits: Nah Poeh Meng and the Temporary Exhibit Gallery ......................................................................................................................... 234
Fostering Innovation through the Temporary Exhibit Gallery ........................................ 241
Heritage and Its Role at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum ........................................ 245
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 252

CHAPTER 9 PERSPECTIVES ON THREE VERY DIFFERENT TRIBAL MUSEUMS IN NEW MEXICO .................................................................................................................. 253

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................... 268
Future Suggestions for the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum ...................................... 277
Future Research, Significance, and the Ecomuseum Concept ......................................... 280

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................... 285
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Map of New Mexico Pueblos ................................................................. 35
Figure 2 Pojoaque Pueblo Mission Church, 1899 ............................................. 55
Figure 3 The Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino at the Pueblo of Pojoaque .... 64
Figure 4 National Museum of the American Indian ......................................... 116
Figure 5 Pojoaque Governor George Rivera’s “Buffalo Dancer II” at the NMAI ... 118
Figure 6 Museum of Indian Arts and Culture .................................................... 131
Figure 7 Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany ......................................................... 143
Figure 8 Weaving Exhibit at the Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany .................... 144
Figure 9 San José Mogote Museo Comunitario .................................................. 146
Figure 10 “Balaa Xtee Guech Gulal” Teotitlán del Valle Museo Comunitario ... 148
Figure 11 Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum .................................. 162
Figure 12 Poeh Cultural Center and Museum ..................................................... 182
Figure 13 Tower Complex at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum ................ 188
Figure 14 Artist Demonstrations at the Poeh Museum ......................................... 195
Figure 15 Santa Fe Fiesta 2011 ........................................................................... 200
Figure 16 An artist working on a sculpture at the Poeh Museum ....................... 202
Figure 17 Exhibit opening night at the Poeh Museum ........................................ 215
Figure 18 Visitors at exhibit opening night at the Poeh Museum ....................... 222
Figure 19 Traditional pottery firing at the Poeh Museum ................................... 231
Figure 20 “Juxtaposition” Exhibit, featuring traditional pottery and glass pottery ... 241
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Pojoaque’s neighboring Tewa-speaking Pueblos ........................................ 50

Table 2 Visitor Survey .................................................................................................. 216

Table 3 Visitor Survey Demographics........................................................................ 216

Table 4 Visitor Survey Reason for Visit...................................................................... 216
Chapter 1

Introduction

This Center…will represent a veritable showcase of Tewa culture and history, with replicas from ancient structures ranging from kivas to pit-houses finding modern uses. It is the centerpiece of an impressive and ambitious program of cultural revitalization currently underway.


The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) estimates that there are about 236 tribal museums in the United States (Abrams 2004:3). The emergence of “native-controlled cultural institutions” created opportunities for indigenous peoples to collect, display, and interpret their own histories and objects. According to Carla Roberts (Director of ATLATL Inc., a Phoenix-based Native American arts service organization),

[Indigenous peoples] will not re-create the types of museums that have made the untimely announcement of their demise; instead they are creating living, dynamic, community-based organisms often modeled on the EcoMuseum concept…It looks forward rather than backward. Program decisions come from community members who are the staff and the board [Roberts 1994:27].

The EcoMuseum concept is derived from museum practices that foster community-focused cultural and environmental heritage activities of a particular region. In France, where the concept is considered to have emerged, the EcoMuseum enables local people to take a meaningful role in the research, documentation, and interpretation and presentation of the history, culture and environment of their area.¹ The *Poeh* Cultural

Center and Museum,² which was opened by the Pueblo of Pojoaque in 1988, resonates with the EcoMuseum concept in that its mission is “to support the future of Pueblo people by teaching the arts, collecting great works of art, and promoting public understanding of, and respect for, Pueblo history and culture.”³ According to museum staff, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was also created to provide employment opportunities for tribal members. The museum is open to the public and also functions as a cultural learning center for Native American arts. Community members from Pojoaque Pueblo also welcome and collaborate with members from surrounding Pueblos and other Native American communities.

This dissertation explores the use of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum by the Pueblo of Pojoaque to revitalize and enhance its cultural legacy. I do not view the Pueblo of Pojoaque in isolation but through the lens of other Pueblos that operate and manage cultural centers or museums. This approach involves a spectrum of people whom I met and interviewed as part of my fieldwork. It also provided me with a perspective on how Pojoaque is regarded by its own tribal members as well as by other Pueblos and by non-Pueblo peoples.

I sought to investigate how the Pueblo of Pojoaque recovered from two episodes of near-abandonment (leading to the near-loss of its culture, beliefs and art) to a thriving Pueblo that has rebuilt itself. I examine three areas of cultural revitalization that include

² The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) funded four Native American tribes nationally (the Pueblo of Pojoaque being one of them) to develop cultural centers that would lead to economic development and cultural preservation (Guyette 1996:xiii). George Rivera, then Lieutenant Governor and now Governor of the Pueblo, played a key role in this development and was instrumental in the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum becoming a reality (Guyette 1996:xv). The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was established in 1988 and opened to the public in 1991. A new building and new location for the museum and cultural center was completed in 2003 and the permanent public exhibit opened in 2005.

contemporary Pueblo identity, economic development leading to the construction of the museum and cultural center, and the role of culture among Pueblo of Pojoaque members. I began my study with a question: What role does the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum play within the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s attempt to recover and strengthen its identity as an indigenous or Indian Pueblo?

The Pueblo of Pojoaque is 17 miles (27 kilometers) north of Santa Fe, at the junction of U.S. 285 (the highway from Santa Fe to Taos) and New Mexico Route 4 (the highway to Los Alamos), thus at a major crossroads that could be viewed as an entry point to Northern New Mexico. Pojoaque Pueblo has the lowest population and smallest land base of the six Tewa-speaking, Northern Rio Grande Pueblos. Pojoaque’s location was historically significant, at the geographical center of several major Indian and Spanish settlements (Guyette 1996:83; Lambert 1979:327–328). The name Pojoaque was derived by the Spanish perceived sound in their Tewa name Po'suwae-geh, named so for being the “water-drinking” place (Guyette 1996:83; Lambert 1979:327–328).

Cultural Revitalization, Identities, and Museum Representation

In the following section, I first investigate how cultural revitalization has been employed in anthropology, especially how it is being applied to contemporary Native American communities and how this concept aligns with the Pueblo of Pojoaque. Next, I look at how identity, names and labels become “markers” and how identity is described in Northern New Mexico—with a specific focus on Pueblo and Hispano identity and how issues of identity are contextual and have been studied by native and non-native scholars in anthropological literature.
Finally, I explore museums as a category and look at museums in the 21st century and how museums—which once served only goals defined by members of the dominant society—are changing. The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum constitutes a locus for exhibiting Tewa culture as tribal members define it and also as a means for Pojoaque Pueblo people to revive their Tewa language, cultural production (arts and crafts, ceremonies, and traditions), and heritage. Pojoaque Pueblo can be viewed as a “revitalization movement” that began in the 1900s and continues today (Field 2008; Field et al. 1992; Harkin 2004). Pojoaque Pueblo’s ongoing cultural revitalization can be seen as an example of Pueblo peoples’ survival and persistence despite Pojoaque’s near abandonment following several centuries of colonization including war, population decimation by disease, land encroachment and land loss resulting in few economic opportunities for survival (Demallie 1994:17; Guyette 1996:83–84).

Cultural Revitalization

Anthony F. C. Wallace’s essay, “Revitalization Movements” (1956) is frequently cited for presenting an ethnohistorical approach to the study of cultural movements among Native Americans (Grumet 2003; Harkin 2004:xviii; Kehoe 2006). For Wallace, revitalization movements were “a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture” (Wallace 1956:265).

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4 Some scholars—in particular, Thomas Guthrie—critically examine the ways that heritage is utilized. In his 2005 dissertation on heritage development in New Mexico, Guthrie (2005:38) states, “Heritage is a remarkably elastic category that can be expanded and contracted to suit different political agendas.” It is important to be aware of heritage as a highly politicized concept linked to identity, tourism and “the context of colonialism, capitalism, and institutionalized power relations” (Guthrie 2005:xi) in New Mexico. Heritage is a concept that has a myriad of meanings; when I discuss the heritage concept I define it as a cultural connection to the past whether it is tied to culture, land, kinship, artifacts, or local traditions. I am more interested in looking at how heritage relates to Pueblo identity and how it fits into the developments at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum.
The persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture, or some major areas of it, as a system (whether accurately or not); they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate not merely discrete items, but a new cultural system, specifying new relationships as well as, in some cases, new traits [Wallace 2003:10].

Wallace’s concept of cultural revitalization is not without criticism. Harkin faults the concept for its assumption that “a people must have an unchanging culture” (Harkin 2004:xviii) and “its reliance on a linear, stochastic model of social process” (Harkin 2004:xxx). Such assumption affix cultures to an essentialist idea and is based on a definition of culture that implies (for example) moving from an undeveloped culture to a developed culture. Despite his criticisms, Harkin maintains that the concept still has relevance and can be used in cross-cultural studies.

Recent use of the concept of cultural revitalization in the anthropological literature focuses on the resurgence of Native American communities and the ways they identify themselves (Field 2008; Field et al. 1992; Harkin 2004). Language preservation is part of revitalizing cultural traditions (Battiste 2000; Field 2008; Field et al. 1992; Hall 2003). As indigenous peoples resist outside values imposed on them and seek to assert their indigenous identity, they often relearn their indigenous languages (Field et al. 1992; Garroutte 2003; Gorman 1981:47; Jolivette 2006; McMullen 2004).

Ann McMullen, a founding curator for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, disagrees with Wallace’s idea that revitalization movements occur because individuals are seeking “a more satisfying culture” (McMullen 2004:273) and argues that Native Americans are seeking an identity that is unique and not part of mainstream American society. This identity is more in the form of “who they are not,
especially in defining Indians as the antithesis of Americans” (McMullen 2004:268; emphasis in original).

Field (2008; Field et al. 1992) likewise explores resistance to Anglo-American definitions of Indian identity by examining a Northern California tribe’s struggle to maintain its identity in the face of being declared extinct. Field (2008:9) states, “For unrecognized tribes, the goal of the struggle for federal acknowledgement is precisely attaining the space and claims to resources that will make possible the exploration of cultural revitalization.”

For my study, McMullen (2004) and Field’s (1992; 2008) contemporary use of the concept of cultural revitalization as a form of resistance to Anglo-American definitions of indigenous identity are most useful. Native Americans have become more visible agents in the interpretation of their culture, identity, and history with the advent of tribally operated museums. Contrary to popular belief, however, Pueblo Indians were never passive participants in the history of New Mexico (Gutiérrez 1991; Sanchez 2010).

The concept of cultural revitalization (Castile and Kushner 1981; Field et al. 1992; Harkin 2004; McMullen 2004; Ranford 1998; Wallace 2003) creates a lens for examining how complex historical circumstances can lead to revitalization in the 21st century. Like Harkin (2004), I view cultural revitalization as a non-linear process yet follow arguments that revitalization often occurs when a group has faced intense adversity and faces contemporary struggles that stem from historical circumstances (Castile and Kushner 1981; Field et al. 1992; Ranford 1998). Castile and Kushner suggest that people persist on the basis of a common identity through the unique historical experience they have been through—“those who have developed some
successful mechanisms to resist the efforts of the larger society to incorporate them, and their special characteristics are directly related to this boundary maintenance or oppositional process” (Castile and Kushner 1981:xix).

Ranford’s (1998) study of the revival of traditional healing practices among one of the First Nations in Canada examines the role of cultural revitalization and how it contributes to Native self-determination and self-government. Ranford argues for a cultural and historical component to cultural revitalization, stating, “Knowledge, understanding and practice of traditional healing can enhance community and cultural strength by rooting people to a history, culture, and identity that has historically been denied” (Ranford 1998:63).

For one Pueblo of Pojoaque member, cultural identity is constantly in flux shifting with the times: “The Pueblo of Pojoaque is a community that has learned to adapt to modern times and has also made a strong effort to gain and retain traditional Pueblo cultural values” (59, interview). Cultural revitalization and the negotiation of identity at the Pueblo of Pojoaque are seen as a continuous process, never fully complete. It is up to future generations to continue the path or poeh they are on. Ranford’s modern use of cultural revitalization as it “concerns the need for Native people to return and reconnect to their language, values, spirituality and traditions” (Ranford 1998:65) is reflected in my explorations about the Pueblo of Pojoaque. Cultural revitalization involves a thorough re-examination of history for the individual or group seeking this revitalization in order to

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5 Please see explanation regarding interview citations in the methodology section of this chapter

6 Poeh is a term meaning path or life cycle in the Tewa language and refers to “the two migration paths the moieties followed after emergence (Ortiz 1972a:57).
find out what happened in the past and how this can be applied in contemporary times (Ranford 1998:65).

The Pueblo of Pojoaque’s own publication, Thunder (intended to showcase their Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino enterprise), states the notion of cultural revitalization: “the Poeh Center opened as the first permanent tribally owned and operated mechanism for cultural preservation and revitalization within the Pueblo communities of the northern Rio Grande Valley” (Pleshaw 2009:9). Cultural revitalization as an idea has been around for some time, as when Alfonso Ortiz wrote:

That the Pueblos, most of them, have survived is obvious to anyone who knows them. That they can revitalize is also obvious, for revitalization is a way of life for them. It is not just a challenge of the present or recent past, but something that they have had to do regularly for as long as we can trace their presence on the peculiar landscape we know today as the American Southwest [Ortiz 1994:304].

Pueblo and non-Pueblo Identity

Identity labels have become associated with Pueblo peoples in the Southwest, leading to discussions about what is appropriate and what is politically correct terminology. Anasazi was long used to identify and label early Pueblo peoples, but went out of favor and the term Ancestral Puebloan is now used instead. This term too, has been controversial and raises additional questions regarding non-Pueblos’ right to name them. Personally, I had never heard the word Anglo used to refer to “white” people until I arrived in New Mexico. Labeling an individual or a group of people is a risky proposition, often contested, and divisive.

7 “English-speaking citizens who were neither Indian nor Hispanic could no longer simply be called ‘Americans’ since the rhetoric of ‘triculturalism’ recognized by all New Mexicans as inherently (though differently American)” (Guthrie 2005:31).
The study of “identity” is what piqued my interest in anthropology. It is important to situate oneself in one’s study (Kondo 1990). Like many anthropologists who have come before me, I am not a native of my study area—I am not from New Mexico nor I am Native American. Still, I believe that due to my ethnicity as an Asian American and my experiences in dealing with both overt and subtle racism and stereotypes, I have a practical background in the topic of identity.\footnote{A section of this dissertation will be devoted to non-natives’ perceptions of the Pueblo peoples today.} I have been confronted with issues of identity and the often curious, but sometimes ignorant, questions that arise when someone notices my perceived “differentness.” While I do not mind talking about my identity, I have never felt it was anyone’s right to ask directly what someone else’s identity is whether it was for a Census report, for scholarly research, or in daily conversation. Stating who you are (ethnically) is never a substitute for understanding the complex life history of a person, an individual’s belief system, and how a person situates himself or herself in the world. Having said this, I tread on the identity issue very carefully. I realize that the issue of identity and its terms is a sensitive subject and it should never be treated as absolute.

Throughout this dissertation my use of identity terms such as Pueblo, Native American, Indian, Pueblo of Pojoaque, Mestizo, Anglo, white, Spanish-American, Hispanic, and Hispano, follow Meyers’ critique for using labels cautiously. “[A]pplying and using cultural nomenclature is a tricky business, as identity labels both unite and divide people, often arbitrarily so...[we] should be cognizant that identity labels not only serve as analytical devices, but also shape analyses” (Meyers 2009:403). Guthrie echoes this sentiment by arguing that concepts such as Pueblo, Indian, and Native American tend
to lump heterogeneous groups and that no terms are universally accepted (Guthrie 2005:28).

When I broached the subject of identity among members from the Pueblo of Pojoaque, the most illuminating response I received was “it depends on whom you talk to.” This led me to view my research participants as having differing experiences and life situations even as they provided me with what could be conceived of as Pojoaque Pueblo identity. Many research participants from other Pueblos stated that each of the 19 Pueblos in New Mexico was unique and preferred to be viewed as an independent community. The “politics of representation” outlined in postmodernist theory (e.g., Abu Lughod 1991; Clifford 1983; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Kondo 1990) became relevant to understanding Pueblo identity as different viewpoints based on centuries of identification within and among the Pueblos but mostly by outsiders. As Hilary Weaver says,

How an indigenous cultural identity is defined by Natives and nonnatives has been complex in both contemporary and historical times. It is misleading to assume that all indigenous people experience a Native cultural identity in the same way just because they are born into a Native community. This glosses over the multifaceted and evolving nature of identity as well as cultural differences among and within Native nations [Weaver 2001:243].

Representation and identity became especially problematic in defining and describing modern-day indigenous people. Turning my attention to the idea of a “lived” identity (Hervik 2002) I found that many categories created by society are those that serve “the interests of dominant social groups (males, whites, Westerners)” (Spiro 1996:759). The resulting categories do not reflect the daily realities or concerns of the people so labeled (Hervik 2002; Wanhalla 2010).

Western society’s “right” to name is one of the lingering effects of colonization, which are at the heart of indigenous peoples’ fight for self-determination (see
Muehlebach 2003). This fight plays out in tribal efforts to exercise self-governance and autonomy regarding its own peoples’ welfare and tribal affairs without the direct interference of outside institutions like the U.S. government. Allen notes that indigenous peoples questioned assimilationist policies practiced not only in the United States, but also worldwide, and “prepared the way for the more explosive tactics of the indigenous minority renaissance” (Allen 2002:42). In the 1960s and 1970s, these indigenous activists began to question the dominant culture’s “conversion of their nations’ political identities into generic political interests and to expose the dominant culture’s attempts to homogenize their distinctiveness out of existence” (Allen 2002:113), in part by attaching the common perception “that tribal identity is ‘dying out’ if not already lost’” (Lawlor 2006:3). The 1970s also became a crucial decade where the indigenous movement started in North America, Australia, and in the Nordic countries of Europe (Stamatopoulou 1994:67). The right to control their own narrative (history, culture, traditions, songs, dances, names, and other things) are considered among indigenous groups in North America and worldwide to be most important in maintaining their distinct identities in contemporary times.

The Southwest probably has received more anthropological attention than any other culture area (Dozier 1964:79). Three key anthropologists who wrote extensively about the Pueblo Southwest were Fred Eggan, who looked at the social organization of the Western Pueblos, Eastern Keresan, and Tanoan Pueblos (1950); Edward Dozier of Santa Clara Pueblo, who studied Pueblo peoples in New Mexico and Hano in Arizona (1964, 1983, 2002); and Alfonso Ortiz of San Juan Pueblo, who published a seminal study about his people titled The Tewa World (Ortiz 1969). In the book, Ortiz examined
the dual social organization among the Tewa, specifically using his own village of San Juan (known today as Ohkay Owingeh) to explore how kinship, ceremonial practice, and place function in Tewa cosmology. Ortiz provided a Tewa worldview specific to Tewa comprehension. Since its publication no further investigations about Pueblo peoples from this insider anthropological lens have been produced.

While anthropologists influenced identity construction in the Southwest, the tourism industry—especially New Mexico’s Territorial Bureau of Immigration (Weigle 2010:16)—helped shape the analyses of local peoples. In The Tourist Gaze, Urry (2002:1) argues that “we gaze at what we encounter,” so there is no single tourist “gaze.” Instead, the “gaze” depends on the intent of the individual or groups in charge that have historically set an agenda for tourism involving a selective interpretation of an event or historical situation. The gaze is, however, central to tourism because tourists want something out of the ordinary to experience (e.g., Bruner 2005; Desmond 1999; Harrison 2003; MacCannell 1999; Urry 2002). These “gazes cannot be left to chance. People have to learn how, when and where to ‘gaze.’ Clear markers have to be provided and in some cases the object of the gaze is merely the marker that indicates some event or experience which previously happened at that spot” (Urry 2002:10). The New Mexico tourism industry was conveniently able to draw upon Westward Expansion through Manifest Destiny setting prior expectations highlighted in brochures, books, postcards, and guides identifying historic places before any visitor arrived in the “Land of Enchantment.” My observation of visitors at the Poeh Museum reinforced Urry’s (2002) conclusions about tourist expectations, especially as I noted how visitors related to “real Indian Pueblos” such as Pojoaque. Visitors arrived with preconceived ideas of what
they hoped to do or “gaze at” while touring New Mexico, including in relation to Indian art and crafts.

Many tourists have become more sophisticated in their expectations of the travel experience: simply getting away from home for a break is not enough. Tourists want intellectual, physical, even spiritual stimulation from their travels. The last twenty years in particular have therefore seen a rapid segmentation of the tourism market, which now offers a broad variety of experiences and opportunities [Harrison 2003:27–28].

For this type of visitor, experiences “must be out of the ordinary. People must experience particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses of are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life” (Urry 2002:12). The Pueblo of Pojoaque appeared to satisfy the “tourist” experience as a place of other (Deloria 1998) and exotic due in large part to the packaging of New Mexico as representing three different cultural experiences—Indian, Spanish and Anglo.

The development of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area (NRGNHA Inc.), of which the Pueblo of Pojoaque is a part, is a nonprofit organization established through federal legislation in 2006 (Public Law 109-338). The NRGHNA coordinates activities designed to develop and sustain the unique history and heritage of the Heritage Area, in this case, the northern New Mexico. It is concerned with sustaining and reinforcing how certain “markers” are deemed important by the State of New Mexico creating a “selective” interpretation of history and leads to the commodification of culture through heritage and tourism (Guthrie 2005:7).

Key to the discussion of tourist “markers” includes identifying place names and associated events. I begin my discussion with terminology for identities in the Southwest. Pueblos was the term used by the Spanish when entering the region in the sixteenth century on their quest for new riches for Spain, and which, according to Ortiz,
has been perpetuated by anthropologists and non-Indians to serve their own purposes (Ortiz 1994:296). The word Pueblos became widely accepted as referring to people who lived in village communities despite the fact that “Native peoples often prefer to identify themselves more specifically by their particular pueblo, tribe, nation, language family, or clan, or by some other affiliation” (Guthrie 2005:28). Use of “Pueblo” continues into the present day and is widely accepted by both Native American and non-native peoples in New Mexico (Guthrie 2005:28).

Ortiz’s perception of Pueblo identity was interconnected with environment and place, a relationship that he found to be at the heart of their survival and persistence. Ortiz contended that “Differences among the Pueblos can be ascribed to historical processes, but they all share the fact that they have never moved from their homelands, giving a strong sense of place that is important to their enduring identity” (Demallie 1994:17).9

The “identity of place” or the “significance of place” (Davis 2007) has been summarized and analyzed by contemporary anthropologists (Abram 1996; Basso 2002; Relph 1976) identifying the importance that places and landscapes have on individual and group identity. “To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place” (Relph 1976:1). This argument by Relph places the idea of “home” as the “foundation of our identity” (Relph 1976:39) to the extent that “it is the point of departure from which we orient ourselves and take possession of the world” (Relph 1976:40). Ortiz believed that a sense of place has been

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9 The idea of an enduring homeland is important because the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s history does not follow this path and Pojoaque’s customs have been borrowed from neighboring Pueblos. However, these cultural traditions have been modified and elaborated on by Pojoaque. Traditions such as the feast day dances become part of an “invented tradition” (Lambert 2007) and a “cultural performance” (Allen 2002). I will elaborate more on these terms and how they relate to Pojoaque Pueblo in Chapter 3.
at the foundation of the survival of Pueblo peoples since before the arrival of the Spanish, reflecting, “the role a well-established sense of place, of belonging to a space, can play in a people’s will to endure” (Ortiz 1994:298). The importance of place is tied up with rights, as in *Aamodt*, recent legal battle over water rights involving the Pueblos of Nambé, Pojoaque, Tesuque and San Ildefonso as well as non-Pueblos. Earlier, the Sandoval decision of 1913 created a historical change in status for Pueblo peoples, who were recognized as Native Americans with inalienable rights (Sando 1998a:192). The Pueblo Lands Act of 1924 also played a significant part in the *Aamodt* settlement. The importance of the Pueblo Lands Act of 1924 and the issue of water rights will be discussed in the following chapter focused on the Pueblo of Pojoaque.

In traditional history books the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 is described from the Spanish perspective. Yet many to whom I spoke during my studies refer to the Pueblo Revolt as a key component of Pueblo identity. According to Gregory Cajete, Director of Native American Studies at the University of New Mexico:

> The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 represents the story of Pueblo people’s restoration of their commitment to their beginnings. It is, therefore, to be understood first and foremost as a religious restoration. All of the events of 1680 and in the subsequent relations in New Mexico are better understood in relationship to this fact. The Pueblo people suffered political and economic exploitation from the time the Spaniards settled among them in 1598, true, but these they had been able to endure. What they could not endure any longer were the unrelenting attempts on the part of the Spaniards in power, at times clergy and at other times civil authorities, to stamp out their ancient religious practices [Cajete 2010:29–30].

Ortiz called the Pueblo Revolt the first act of *cultural revitalization* (italics mine) among the Pueblo peoples (Ortiz 1994:300).

No study of Pueblo identity is complete without looking at *Hispano* influence and identity in what became New Mexico. The first wave of Spanish efforts to influence
Pueblo religion, land ownership, and commerce led to racial and cultural intermixing. Based on both force and necessity, the process “continued to blur the distinction between Indian and Spanish populations throughout the colonial period” (Guthrie 2005:29). Even though “symbolic ethnic boundaries have been vigorously maintained to the present day through a range of social practices” (Guthrie 2005:29), the eight Northern Pueblos in New Mexico were deeply impacted by the Spanish. One Pojoaque tribal member commented, “the Rio Grande tribes are all Hispanicized. We were Hispanicized first and Americanized second” (59, interview).

Hispano as an identity is a term used by many in northern New Mexico and referred to in the literature as unique to this region. Horton defines Hispano as a regional subgrouping of Spanish speakers concentrated in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. These Hispanics some of whom also refer to themselves as “Spanish Americans,” trace their descent from the colonists sent north from New Spain to the new colony of Nuevo Mexico beginning in the sixteenth century [Horton 2005:114].

It will be this definition that I will be applying throughout my analysis when I refer to Hispano identity.10

Popular literature on New Mexico often promotes a tri-cultural model of harmony in spite of intergroup contact, intermarriage, and conflict (Gonzales 1997; Guthrie 2005; Horton 2010; Nieto-Phillips 2004; Rodriguez 1992,1996). In When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away, Gutiérrez (1991) studied the impact of Spanish influence on Pueblo Indians from 1500 to 1846, by looking at marriage, sexuality, and power. He contends that the conquest was about power dynamics between different cultures and depicts a

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10 Hispano, Spanish-American, Hispanic, and Latino/a identity is not the focus of this dissertation, so I did not spend a great deal of study on this topic. Many other researchers have focused on this topic (e.g., Horton 2010; Gonzales 1997; Gutiérrez 1991; Rodriguez 1992, 1996; Trujillo 2009).
complex matrix of relationships between the Spaniards and Native Americans (Gutiérrez 1991). He argues it has been the point of scholarly literature “to project backward the modern reality of autonomous, fixed, and relatively permanent pueblos as if they had stolidly withstood the ravages of time without change” (Gutiérrez 1991:xxvii). 

According to Pueblo historian Joe Sando (1998a:61), contested relationships were not just between Spaniards and the Pueblo Indians, but also among Spaniards themselves. Nieto-Phillips (2004) presents the idea of symbolic ethnicity, identifying "nuevomexicano" as another identity marker which functions as a boundary that has been maintained into the present. Studying the formation of Spanish-American identity in New Mexico from the 1880s to the 1930s, Nieto-Phillips found some "Hispanos" who prefer to distance themselves from people from Mexico, who are considered not of the “pure white” (European Spanish) race. He documented how claimed ties to “blood purity” stemmed from a desire to enter United States’ Anglo society. As a consequence, New Mexico tourism led to a distinction of emphasizing Spanish roots of ancestry that dates to the earliest Conquistadors from Spain. He notes in his introduction that despite this desire for ethnic distinctions and a denial of intermixing, his family may have an Indian ancestor. The inclusion of Nieto-Phillips’ study illustrates one of the concerns of my dissertation research: Pojoaque is part of a complex set of New Mexican identities.

*The Santa Fe Fiesta, Reinvented* (Horton 2010) describes ethnic boundary maintenance among people who identify as Spanish Americans. Hispano fiesta

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11 Ted Jojola, Alison Freese, et.al. “Commentary: When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sex and Power in New Mexico 1550–1846,” by Ramon Gutiérrez. Compiled by the Native American Studies Center, University of New Mexico, UCLA American Indian Cultural and Research Journal 17, no. 3 (1993):141–177. The acceptance and acclaim Gutiérrez (1991) received for his social history of the Spanish and Pueblo story, paled in comparison to Pueblo reaction, especially among scholars. Gutiérrez was discredited for having based his historical claims of Pueblo analysis using only archival Spanish documents with no fact checking regarding the Pueblo historical record and for his dismissive perspective.
organizers rely on “key symbols and events with ethno-nationalist sentiment” (Horton 2010:3), including an emphasis on the royalty of the Spanish court and on coats of arms that “prove” the Hispanos’ ties to Spain. Horton also sought to examine those who claimed both Pueblo and Hispano identity, many of whom found it difficult to have a foot in each world. This particular issue frequently came during my studies. Although many to whom I spoke in Northern New Mexico claimed to be of mixed ancestry (mostly Indian and Spanish) and experienced Horton’s idea of a “privately lived reality” (2010), they had to choose one ethnic affiliation over the other, one outcome of long-standing debate about what it means to be Native American (Allen 2002), including in the tricultural image promoted for New Mexico, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

**Modifying Museum Practice**

In looking at cultural revitalization through the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum, I had to consider museum practices in general. Museum curatorial practice is one focus of the changes sought by indigenous-based community museums (Mithlo 2004:745).\(^\text{12}\) Numerous critiques (Ames 1986, 1992; Bennett 2005; Casey 2003; Clavir 2002; Clifford 1997; Collins 1981; Davis 1999; Fine-Dare 2002; Force 1999; Gurian 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Jacknis 2002; Karp 1992; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Kreps 2005; McLoughlin 1999; Stocking 1985; Watson 2007; among others) investigate the role of museums in the United States, Mexico, Canada, England, and Australia. Accepted as science-based, western European-derived colonial institutions, many museums acquire, maintain, and analyze artifacts through an

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\(^\text{12}\) Scholar Nancy Marie Mithlo looks at what she calls “Indigenous museum curation methods,” which inserts traditional Native American belief systems into the curation model of museums (Mithlo 2004:744). I will return to this discussion in a later chapter.
established set of “museum cultural values” and “value-based choices” that determine collection criteria (Clavir 2002). Museum curatorial interpretation of collections has historically involved little or no indigenous input (Jones 1997; Trigger 2003). My particular concern is the role of museums as agents of civil society.13 Ivan Karp considers how museums have played a role establishing (cultural) identity:

If Gramsci were writing in the 1990s, I believe that he would think of civil society both as a site for the production of hegemony, that is, as an intellectual and moral commitment to the way a society is ordered and governed, and as a site for contesting assertions about who has the right to rule and to define the different identities in society...[museums act] as places for defining who people are and how they should act and as places for challenging those definitions [Karp 1992:4].

Arguments abound concerning what Gramsci intended by his use of the concept of hegemony (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Crehan 2002; Williams 1978; Wolf 1999).14 Two definitions that proved useful for my analysis come from the works of Kate Crehan and Raymond Williams. According to Crehan, hegemony is a “highly fluid and flexible” term “rather than being a precisely bounded theoretical concept, hegemony for Gramsci simply names the problem—that of how the power relations underpinning various forms of inequality are produced and reproduced” (2002:104). For Williams,

Hegemony is always an active process, but this does not mean that it is simply a complex of dominant features and elements. On the contrary, it is always a more or less adequate organization and interconnection of otherwise separated and even disparate meanings, values, and practices, which it specifically incorporates in a significant culture and an effective social order [Williams 1978:115].

13 “Civil society” can include “such diverse forms of organization as families, voluntary associations, ethnic groups and associations, educational organizations, and professional societies” (Karp 1992:4–5). “The best recent discussions of civil society have been inspired by the way Antonio Gramsci defines the functional differences between civil society and political society. For Gramsci the institutions of political society exercise coercion and control, while civil society creates hegemony through the production of cultural and moral systems that legitimize the existing order” [Karp 1992:4].

14 Williams notes, “The traditional definition of ‘hegemony’ is political rule or domination, especially in relations between states. Marxism extended the definition of rule or domination to relations between social classes, and especially to definitions of a ruling class. ‘Hegemony’ then acquired a further significant sense in the work of Antonio Gramsci... Much is still uncertain in Gramsci’s use of the concept, but his work is one of the major turning-points in Marxist cultural theory’” (Williams 1978:108).
Crehan’s and Williams’ interpretations do not equate hegemony with total domination, suggesting that such power is never absolute. Instead, hegemony functions as part of organizational structures based on hierarchy. It also represents consensus among groups within that system. A consensus around dominant ideas creates legitimacy for those ideas. In this context, museums and exhibits follow such a consensus model and are not passive agents, but instead emphasize powerful ideas that are meant to serve as purveyors of truth to the public it serves and the museum patrons.

Given these strong critiques of museums in general, a curator of archeology at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology notes:

In the past decades, most museums that deal with human culture have worked hard to re-think their assumptions [and] involve subject communities...while cultural museums are doing a better job of interacting with, and providing the perspectives of, subject communities, than they once did, long-established museums nonetheless have agendas, which while legitimate (e.g., presentation of scientific data on prehistory), are not the agendas of the subject communities. Hence those communities do well to have spaces (temporary = exhibits, permanent = whole museums) where they set the agenda...it’s better to have multiple institutions with multiple voices [personal communication, 2012].

All museum visitors bring their own cultural perspectives and preconceived expectations as they step into a museum and most visitors seldom respond indifferently to the exhibits they view. They are most often engaged members of society who interpret these museum displays through their prior “experiences and through the culturally learned beliefs, values, and perceptual skills that they gain through membership in multiple communities” (Karp 1992:3). Gramsci also said, “For his own conception of the world a man always belongs to a certain grouping, and precisely to that of all the social elements who share the same ways of thinking and working. He is a conformist to some conformity, he is always man-mass or man-collective” (Gramsci 1980:58–59).
Under the guise of civil society, certain messages in a museum setting convey a wide array of ideas including past history, traditions, and current cultural events. Karp calls these messages “social ideas:”

Social ideas often set up hierarchies of moral values in which communities and institutions are interpreted. Social ideas embody notions people have about their differences and similarities. These are organized in terms of which is good and which is bad, which superior and which inferior. As significant elements in civil society, museums articulate social ideas [Karp 1992:6].

Erikson contends that the general public “can be socialized to dominant ideas through the museum such that these ideas or sentiments become ‘natural,’ unquestioned, or hegemonic elements of collective consciousness or memory” (Erikson 2002:26). Therefore, my approach to the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum involved challenging my own preconceived ideas by moving away from dominant hegemonic museum ideology. To accomplish this I chose to give special attention to the Poeh Center’s permanent exhibit, Nah Poeh Meng (“Our Continuous Path”). The presentation begins with the Pueblo emergence as a people and then moves through their migration, which serves as a retelling of key events including Spanish colonization. This section of the exhibit depicts the Spanish arrival as an invasion—a Pueblo point of view that has been selectively dismissed in the popular literature on New Mexico and Southwest history.

Based on my observations, the portrayal of the Spanish conquest at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum also received the most comment from visitors, equally negative and positive. As part of my analysis of the history of the American Southwest I include the idea of “alternative” exhibits that rewrite history, and examine how these ideas get incorporated (or not) into mainstream American education (see Nieto-Phillips 2004).
**Tribal Museums**

The rationale for establishing community museums, tribal museums, and ecomuseums has been to help local communities establish and strengthen community identity. I provide two examples of tribal museums as a context for the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum. The museums are described in two ethnographies that ask how museums in tribal hands become a symbol of cultural heritage.

The Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) in Washington State is an example of a contact zone, defined as “the space of colonial encounters … [where] peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations” (Clifford 1997:192). A study of the Makah Center by Erikson investigates how past encounters and present interactions have influenced what is being interpreted and who is doing the interpretation. Based on her work at the MCRC, Erikson suggests, “[the] control over objects becomes synonymous with control over identity of ‘the people’” (Erikson 1996b:16). She states, “to fully understand how the MCRC grows out of colonial-era struggles over ways of knowing [this study] will explore the Makah experience with American colonization” (Erikson 2002:67).

The ethnography about the *A:shiwi A:wan* (Belonging to the People) Museum and Heritage Center at Zuni is said to have been the result of several failed attempts by the tribal government to establish a tourist-oriented museum at Zuni, leading to the call for a

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15 Ecomuseums, which are based on an all-encompassing interpretation of heritage rather than being object and artifact centered (Davis 1999), were established as places that would allow local people, not museum professionals, with control over past history and contemporary issues. Therefore, “the motivation behind the Ecomuseum movement was to give the community a voice and a sense of pride in itself and its environment. Its aim was to interpret the social history, landscape and archaeology of the region and its community in situ” (Blockley 1999:24). The ecomuseum was a place built essentially for the community and focused on the identity of place. It was a museum that housed the local artifacts, interpreted historical objects for community members and visitors, explained the area’s antiquity, and focused on contemporary issues.
“community-controlled and community-based museum” (Isaac 2007:99). Isaac’s ethnography of A:shiwi A:wan outlines Zuni concerns regarding the general public’s access to knowledge reserved for Zunis and how the Zunis’ decision to control knowledge influences exhibitions and displays (Isaac 2007:5). Often what is considered sacred knowledge at Zuni is not depicted in A:shiwi A:wan exhibits because of their concern that “tourists will gain unscreened access to historic and sacred sites, as well as to religious practices and associated knowledge” (Isaac 2007:121). Nor do they want to reinforce tourist stereotypes about Zuni, which is often perpetuated when sensitive information is shared with outsiders.

Isaac also compared different studies that examine the community museum model and offers this summary: “The majority of studies make the assertion that a local museum is representative of the community. Not only was I faced with having to expose the reification of local history, but also the reification of the concept of community” (Isaac 2007:14). A study of the Santa Ana del Valle indigenous-based community museum in Oaxaca, Mexico by Cohen (2001) found similar disagreement between what is depicted at the museum; some members of the local community believe what gets displayed and described in their museum is a selective interpretation by a particular member of the community. Thus, the concept of “community” appears to be a central issue in the community museum literature (Camarena and Morales 2006; Clifford 1997; Karp 1992; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). The idea of a “single” community identity or a particular local narrative in tribal museums becomes obsolete when multiple people become involved in the interpretation of exhibits and selecting their content. Isaac
suggests the need for studies to examine the internal dynamics that take place in community museums (Isaac 2007:10).

Although it is important to look at how outside agencies, such as other museums, influence tribal museums, my emphasis will be on the local aspects of creating and maintaining a museum. I consider what the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum means to museum employees, to students who take art classes at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, and to Pojoaque Pueblo members. This kind of investigation was lacking in Erikson’s (2002) work, because she chose to focus on the Makah Cultural Research Center’s external relationships. Also, Erikson’s study emphasizes archaeological artifacts on exhibit at the MCRC, and those objects contributed to the Makah nation’s cultural revitalization, but at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum there are no archaeological pieces on exhibit (such cultural objects are housed in Poeh’s museum collection storage room). If ancestral collections have played a tremendous role in the cultural revitalization of many indigenous communities, why does the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum choose not to display its collections?

Many museums (especially those focused on culture and history) have been, and still are, regarded by many Native Americans and indigenous peoples worldwide as Western institutions that appropriated their culture and their artifacts and have denied them a voice in deciding how their culture is interpreted to native and non-native peoples. My research investigates how the Pueblo of Pojoaque is working to modify ideologies that have persisted at many national museums by taking an approach that allows

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16 I will be looking at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum’s affiliation with other museums, including the MIAC and other tribal museums in the state of New Mexico, in Chapters 5 and 6. This will allow me to place Pojoaque in context of what is happening at other Pueblos in New Mexico and how it fits into their developments, both politically and culturally.
community members, and non-traditional scholars, and outsiders to present their history
and culture in their own terms. The Poeh Center is one example of how Native
Americans are redefining their relationship to anthropology (see Barkan and Bush 2002;
Bray 2001; De la Cadena and Starn 2007; Deloria and Harjo 2007; Ferguson 1996;
Mihesuah 2000; Singer 2001; Watkins 2005; Zimmerman 1997) and ethics (Meskell and
Pels 2006; Messenger 1999).

Preliminary Studies and Training

Prior to my interest in tribal museums in New Mexico, I had always been
fascinated with exhibits featuring Native American tribes. Growing up in the Pacific
Northwest, I cultivated this interest with visits to anthropological and tribal museums
such as the Burke Museum (on the University of Washington campus in Seattle,
Washington) and the Cultural Resource Center of the Confederated Tribes of the
Umatilla Indian Reservation in Pendleton, Oregon. As an undergraduate I majored in
anthropology with a minor in sociology at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon.
controversy surrounding the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
(NAGPRA) and how it was applied in the Kennewick Man controversy over ownership
of the remains. Upon graduation, I spent a year abroad in Oaxaca, Mexico researching
indigenous-based community museums as a Fulbright Award recipient. Under the
guidance of Dr. Jack Corbett and Dr. Nelly Robles Garcia, I explored how indigenous
groups chose to represent themselves to locals and outsiders through community
museums. I began to recognize the role of community museums as sites of cultural
patrimony and indigenous identity. In looking at these two central issues, I investigated the history and purpose of these community museums, and how local people sought to participate in curatorial activities by making decisions about how to display objects, cataloging collections, and interpreting items. During this time I also worked at the archaeological site of Monte Albán, where I assisted with drawing sketches of an archaeological tomb. I was also assigned to enter information regarding previous archaeological work from the archives into a database for the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH). My undergraduate experiences, coupled with my desire to learn more about indigenous groups (not only in Mexico, but also around the world), led to my decision to advance my study in anthropology at the University of New Mexico. I began learning about the 19 Pueblos and about tribal museums in the region, including the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and the Institute of American Indian Arts’ Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, which led to my decision to carry out a study at the museum owned and operated by the Pueblo of Pojoaque.

Methodology and Relevance

I began my “field” research as an intern at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum on Saturdays, from the summer of 2009 through the summer of 2010. This gave me access to information about the museum exhibits and about the art classes offered to tribal people at the Center. I chatted with the staff, noting that the majority were Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members. Museum employees share Saturday duties so no one has to work every weekend (with the exception of the store manager), so my work put me in

\[\text{Cultural patrimony includes objects, knowledge, beliefs, and ceremonies that embody collective identities that can be national, ethnic or racial. Patricia Pierce Erikson (1996a) argues that cultural patrimony connotes values that assert that the ownership and possession of objects and histories should remain inside the community. Who owns these objects and possesses these artifacts remains a contentious issue for indigenous peoples and governments worldwide.}\]
direct contact with the entire staff of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. My primary job was to welcome visitors at the front desk, which led to my answering questions mostly about the Center. During these interactions I explained the layout of the museum and pointed out descriptions of the rotating art gallery and the permanent exhibit in the exhibit guides. This interaction with museum visitors provided extended opportunities to observe outsider perceptions of “Indians” and about the Poeh Center as a community museum.

On occasion, I helped install exhibits in the rotating art gallery and attended the gallery openings. During other days at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum I observed the art classes at the Center, which covered feather work for making dance regalia (or what they referred to as a “war bonnet”), stone and wood sculpture, jewelry and pottery classes. I enjoyed talking to the art instructors and students and watched as students fired their pottery outside, and learned how much work it took to create contemporary and traditional works of art. I was invited by several members of the Pueblo to attend and share a meal at their annual Pojoaque Feast Day celebration on December 12.

The use of Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviews allowed for two different ways of asking questions relating to identity, cultural revitalization and community museum practices. The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum felt that I needed to be formally introduced to everyone as a graduate student conducting research by a representative or employee of the Center, before I conducted any interviews on site. Although that step felt limiting at first, eventually I was able to interview 50 people at the Poeh Center including museum staff, art instructors, and art students. I also conducted numerous interviews outside and apart from the Poeh Center as a way to balance my
research. Interviews with several artists and advisors who had helped with the conception and early construction of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum were extremely useful. I also interviewed a staff member from the Oñate Monument and Visitor’s Center, professors from Northern New Mexico College in Española, Pueblo of Pojoaque elected officials, and Pueblo of Pojoaque community members. In seeking to compare institutions and provide a regional perspective on museums, I interviewed museum professionals at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico, the Ashiwi:Awan at Zuni, and Haak’u at Acoma.

The general theme and topics of my interviews related to (1) Pueblo and Hispano identities in Northern New Mexico; (2) historical and contemporary Pueblo of Pojoaque identity; (3) thoughts on cultural revitalization within the community as related to community museums; (4) the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum (looking at five subcategories: (a) history, (b) function, (c) influence on tourism in the area, (d) arts and the artist community, and (e) the meaning of heritage); and (5) relationships with or influence of other museums. The interviews were not tape-recorded and no personal names were allowed, to protect privacy of the research subjects as required by the University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (IRB). In compliance with the IRB, I assigned random numbers to my 50 interviewees. In this dissertation, the interviews are cited as follows: (random number, interview).

Another method for my data collection was the use of a Museum Visitor Survey. I conducted 154 such surveys in 2010 and 2011. As visitors signed in at the front desk and received a museum guide, I approached them and explained that I was doing dissertation
research and asked if they would participate by taking the survey. If they agreed, I gave them a consent form and asked them to answer the questionnaire after they concluded their visit. They dropped their forms in a box as they left the museum. Most visitors were happy to complete the survey in spite of the fact that they had to stay a while longer. One interview, with a local tourist/education agency in Santa Fe named Road Scholar, was very interested in my study based on their work, which led to my being allowed to place surveys at their office. As I described, I was able to get more questionnaires filled out and returned to me by Road Scholar.

Historical documents about the Pueblo of Pojoaque are notoriously difficult to obtain, even at the Poeh Center and at the Tribal government’s offices. Therefore, archival research took me to the Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture Library and the Archaeological Resources Management Section (ARMS) of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, and the New Mexico State Archives and Records Center. At the last location I looked at census records on microfilm to obtain population statistics for the New Mexico Pueblos between 1885 and 1940. I also had the opportunity to spend some time with the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s tribal archivist-historian. He, too, had an interest in gathering earlier historical records about the Pueblo, and we collaborated on our respective projects. I also attended the 1610 Pueblo Colloquium sponsored by the Santa Fe 400th Committee (see Chapter 2), which provided me with a different and unexpected portrayal of New Mexico history.

As I write this dissertation, some Pojoaque tribal members are re-examining their history and creating a more accurate historical narrative for Pueblo members and for
visitors to the Poeh Center. A lawyer and judge who has a long and trusting relationship with the Pueblo of Pojoaque has been instrumental in helping them investigate and research portions of the Pueblo’s forgotten history. Given Pojoaque Pueblo’s brush with near desertions, the community’s interest in revitalization is as significant today as it has ever been. My dissertation research is therefore a timely examination of Pueblo identity in the 21st century during a time of cultural revitalization. It is, however, one small step in a process that involves economic development, enlisting the help of other Pueblos to bring back ceremonial singing and dancing, and legal battles over land and water rights, the use of the Tewa language and, finally, celebrating and promoting traditional and non-traditional arts through the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum.

The next chapter explores the history of the study area through an overview of the eight Northern Pueblos (besides Pojoaque, Taos Pueblo, Picuris Pueblo, Ohkay Owingeh [formerly known as San Juan Pueblo], Santa Clara Pueblo, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Nambé Pueblo, and Tesuque Pueblo). I provide a broad historical background on the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s early history to contemporary times. I then focus on how Pueblo of Pojoaque members and outsiders perceive Pojoaque identity today. Particular attention is given to the historical and cultural influences that shaped indigenous settlements in the Southwest. I also explore the tri-cultural model of harmony that is supposed to exist among Pueblos, Hispanics, and Anglos. For peoples living in the Southwest, identity is complex and I will explore this issue in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 considers how identity is shaped and influenced in a museum setting (paying particular attention to how museums, both local and national, affect representation and identity). Two national museums, the Smithsonian Institution in the United States and the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico,
provide examples of purveyors of cultural interpretation. In Chapter 5, I discuss how contemporary museums are responding to past museum critiques by highlighting changes in their exhibits. The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC) permanent exhibit, *Here, Now, and Always*, was considered a model exhibit about the 19 Pueblos when it opened. I position the MIAC in relation to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. and tribal museums such as the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum. I then provide a cross-cultural example, the Museo Comunitario *Shan-Dany*, which was the first indigenous-based museum in Mexico. Chapter 6 centers on how tribal museums represent indigenous peoples, with specific emphasis on the museums at Zuni and at Acoma. I investigate how each of these cultural institutions operates within the confines of their mission statements and how that influences interactions with intended audiences and local communities. In Chapters 7 and 8 I focus on the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum’s internal dynamics, its history, mission, and purpose; how it functions as a museum engaged in cultural revitalization, heritage, and promoting tourism (including a discussion regarding visitors’ perceptions of Pueblo Indians and their comments regarding their visit to a “tribal museum”). In Chapter 9, I compare and contrast the *Poeh* Museum to the Zuni and Acoma tribal museums. I conclude with my analysis of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum as a space for expressing contemporary Pueblo culture and why identity issues remains at the forefront of cultural revitalization—but do not necessarily resolve competing conceptions of Native American identity in the 21st century. My studies of tribal museums required having to “locate them (and the critiques) within their social, political, and economic
contexts” (Ames 1992:5) while finding ways to include multiple perspectives, especially alternative indigenous viewpoints (Kreps 2005:4).
Chapter 2

The Study Area: Northern New Mexico and Pueblo of Pojoaque History

New Mexico’s place in the United States has been a tenuous one. Issues of identity, land tenure, and rights remain unresolved in this region that was colonized first by Spain and then by the United States and where numerous Indian nations continue to assert their sovereignty. New Mexico did not become a state until 1912, mostly due to concerns about its large Mexican population [Guthrie 2005:7].

On a winter morning in February 2011, I attended the 1610 Pueblo Colloquium sponsored by the Santa Fe 400th Committee at the Santa Fe Convention Center. A small group of anthropologists, scientists, historians, and interested public had gathered to hear about recent work by Southwest scholars to coincide with the city’s 400th anniversary. The attendees concluded that the region’s history is complex, incomplete, and still being uncovered. The Spanish perspective’s “overwhelming dominance in the surviving documentary record” (Kessell 2008:xii) has presented a lopsided view of history to the exclusion of minority viewpoints, particularly the Pueblo Indian standpoint (Cajete 2010; Sando 1998a, Sando and Agoyo 2005; Sanchez 2010:15). Native American conference attendees voiced their frustration regarding this oversight, but also acknowledged the tremendous impact on Southwest Native American history by Pueblo Indian scholars such as Alfonso Ortiz, Edward Dozier, and Joe Sando. They agreed that their opinions must be included in narratives and that it is paramount for the cultural survival of indigenous communities that the younger generation be apprised of their history.18

“Of all the regions of the contiguous United States, it is the Southwest that holds the largest number of indigenous peoples who continue to occupy their original

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18 I return to this discussion regarding the lack of awareness of Pueblo history and relations with the Spaniards in Chapter 7.
homelands, retaining their languages, customs, beliefs, and values” (Cordell 1997:6).

The 19 Pueblos in New Mexico comprise three language groups, Keres, Tanoan, and Zuni. The Tanoans are further differentiated into Tiwa, Tewa, and Towa. The western Pueblos of Acoma and Laguna and Cochiti, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santo Domingo, and Zia speak Keresan. The Zuni language is spoken by Zuni Pueblo and Jemez Pueblo speaks the Towa language. The Tewa speaking Pueblos include Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Nambé, and Ohkay Owingeh. The Tiwa speaking Pueblos are Isleta, Sandia to the south, and Picuris and Taos, located in the northern part of the state.

Sando discusses how Pueblos should be understood in modern times:

It is important to understand that the Pueblos are not one unified group; rather they are separate nations. They share a common traditional native religion, although rituals and observances may vary; a similar lifestyle and philosophy; and a common economy based on the same geographical region occupied by them for thousands of years. However, the Pueblos also have an independence similar to that of nations; although they are in close proximity to one another, and subject to the same natural forces, each maintains a unique identity [Sando 2005a:xv–xvi].

Realizing that history is always still being written, this chapter provides an abbreviated version of New Mexico history with attention to the northern part of the state, where the eight Northern Pueblos reside. Consisting of the two Tiwa Pueblos (Taos and Picuris) and the six Tewa Pueblos (Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Nambé, Tesuque, and Pojoaque), these Pueblos continue to attract significant attention and ongoing interest. The Pueblos play a key role in the cultural identity and imagery of the Southwest (Guthrie 2005:23), but the role of conflict and cultural disruption in Pueblo history is often overlooked. Instead, the narratives—which come from the predominantly Anglo and Spanish or Hispano perspective—tell a rather different story of a “peaceful reconquest” (Horton 2010; Nieto-Phillips 2004). Moreover, popular belief often
promotes the perception of Pueblo Indians and other indigenous groups as untouched by civilization. But as Linda Cordell noted,

none of the Pueblo communities have remained static for the last 400 years of interaction with outsiders of European descent and for considerably longer with other non-Pueblo Native Americans. The various Pueblo peoples have reached different accommodations with the changing human and political landscape they inhabit [Cordell 1997:18].

The Pueblo of Pojoaque is an example of a modern Pueblo that has not remained unchanged; instead it is considered the most acculturated Pueblo in the Southwest (Simmons 1979:220). Pojoaque has had to adjust to the outside world while retaining
and relearning Pueblo values and accommodating these traditional beliefs into contemporary life. As one Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member offered,

> Many Pueblos do not consider us a traditional Pueblo. Bringing back our culture has been a slow process [from the] 70s to now—[the] really big thing [has been] with the dances, [there are] more dances. But there is a gap of what happened in those years prior when we were not dancing and all that was lost [77, interview].

The Pueblo of Pojoaque’s history does not follow a neat linear trajectory. Instead its existence was threatened and disrupted by outsiders as well as by major political and social events such as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 (Anschuetz 1986; Lambert 1979:325). By the 1970s, the Pueblo “had experienced something of a native revival as an outgrowth of both the new prestige accorded Indian culture and government housing and community action programs that spurred a renewed sense of identity among village members” (Simmons 1979:220).

Anthropologist Valerie Lambert asserts that Native American identity and history are closely connected: “To understand what we do today, how and why we do it, and who and why we are the way we are today, one must learn about and understand our history” (Lambert 2007:20).

Later, I supply a historical sketch of Pojoaque to show how its history has greatly affected what it is today and how that history is a major reason for continual cultural revitalization and renewal efforts in the community. An understanding about Pojoaque’s history is necessary to comprehend Pueblo of Pojoaque identity in contemporary times.

**History of New Mexico**

University of New Mexico anthropologist David Stuart writes,

> No one knows precisely when the ancient Indian people who would one day be called Anasazi first arrived in the Four Corners. To determine that, one would
have to know much more about the early peopling of the Americas...What we do know is that several waves of early hunters and gatherers crossed the strait that connects Siberia to Alaska at a time when it was dry land. Archaeologists refer to this land bridge as Beringia. Now it is shallowly submerged under the Bering Sea, as it has been for nearly 10,000 years [Stuart 2004:13].

Stuart’s explanation supports what many scholars of the First Peopling of the Americas have come to conclude that “[t]he latest research shows that the New World probably underwent multiple colonizations: instead of originating in a small area of northeast Siberia, as predicted by the Clovis-first model, the first Americans probably came from many parts of Eurasia” (Bonnichsen and Schneider 2000:3).19 “Paleo-Indian” is a term used to describe the first inhabitants of the Americas who are presumed to be very early versions of today’s Native Americans (Chatters 2001:21). Most archaeologists believe that Paleo-Indians came to this continent by way of Beringia (the Bering Strait land bridge) during the Pleistocene, which ended 11,700 years ago.20 The timeline for the earliest evidence of human occupation in New Mexico has been dated toward the end of the last major Pleistocene glaciation (Cordell 1997:22). However, Dennis Stanford and Bruce Bradley have proposed an alternative theory in Across the Atlantic Ice. The Origin of America’s Clovis Culture (2012). In this book, Stanford and Bradley claim that the earliest peoples came from northern Spain and traveled to the New World by boat, navigating along the edge of the sea ice of the North Sea.

19 However, other authors, such as Jablonski (2002:3) argue, “Not all populations survived, nor did they all give rise to modern Native Americans.”

20 The mechanisms of the First Peopling of the New World remains debatable among scholars with the Clovis site in New Mexico remaining one of the oldest sites found and “dated between 12,000 and 11,000 yr BP...Since then, literally dozens of allegedly pre-Clovis sites have been paraded through the literature” i.e. Monte Verde site by Dillehay (Jablonski 2002:3). There is also controversy with how the First peoples arrived to America. Some theorize they came by boat (see Erlandson 2002). For a good summary surrounding the First Peopling of the New World see The First Americans. The Pleistocene Colonization of the New World (2002) edited by Nina G. Jablonski.
Despite the differing theories and hypotheses being put forth by the scientific community regarding the initial peopling of the New World, these earlier artifacts were left behind by hunters and gatherers during “a time before agriculture was practiced anywhere in the world” (Cordell 1997:22). So-called big game hunters “followed herds of deer, elk and even mastodons along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains as far south as the Santa Fe basin. This discovery is evidenced by various Paleo-Indian hunter campsites found along the foothills of the western side of the Rockies” (Cajete 2010:21).

From the early Holocene until about the first century A.D., during the Archaic period, “[P]eople living in the Southwest continued to pursue a hunting and gathering way of life but one into which they integrated the cultivation of domestic crops” (Cordell 1997:22). Use of domestic crops such as corn (maize) began about 2000 B.C. in the Southwest (Van West 2005:43.6). This “Archaic” culture was a broadly adaptive culture (namely the ability to adapt to different circumstances such as climatic change and diverse environments) upon which later social and technical innovations were added.

Archaeologists utilize three major traditions to describe southwestern archaeological cultures considered to be ancestral to modern indigenous populations: the “Anasazi” (Ancestral Puebloan), “Hohokam,” and “Mogollon” (Cordell 1997:23). Scholars once contended that Pueblo culture descended from two cultural traditions, the Mogollon and the Anasazi. However, Pueblo peoples disagree with scholars’ use of the term Anasazi. Stuart explains, “‘Anasazi’ is a Navajo name that is usually, and romantically, translated as ‘the ancient ones.’ A better translation would be ‘ancestors of our enemies,’ a frank description of the social relationships that once prevailed between local Navajo bands and the village-dwelling farmers of the late pre-historic Southwest”
“Anasazi” is thus no longer a term used by many archaeologists, anthropologists, and Southwest scholars to describe the ancestors of the Pueblo peoples; instead “Ancestral Pueblo” is more common (Griffin-Pierce 2000:15). The Ancestral Pueblo peoples occupied areas in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada (Stuart 2004:9).

Beginning about 300 B.C. the Ancestral Puebloan people lived in sedentary villages and grew maize, beans, and squash. They had always made baskets, but soon started making pottery (using the coil and scrape method). Their architecture went from semisubterreanean structures called pit houses to multiple story dwellings with special ceremonial buildings (kivas) for religious purposes (Cordell 1997:23). The Pueblos also utilized flood-farming techniques as well as extensive systems of ditches and trenches to move water from rivers and streambeds into nearby fields (Dozier 1970:1).

The Tewa, according to Cajete, “have a long and historically dynamic history with Santa Fe (Po’oge). Before the founding of Santa Fe by the Spanish, ancestors of the Northern and now extinct Southern Tewa (Tanos) settled in villages in and around the area dating back thousands of years” (Cajete 2010:19; italics in the original). Chaco Canyon (A.D. 850 to 1250) in the northwestern region of the state was considered one of the great centers of political power in the Southwest (Lekson 1999) and was settled by the Ancestral Puebloan people along with the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde (Cordell 1997:25). Between A.D. 1200 and 1500 people migrating from these areas to locations along the Rio Grande led to the establishment of new villages. Gutiérrez (1991) discusses this mass migration to other areas of the region during this timeframe. He states that

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21 Even this term is problematic and raises additional issues regarding non-Pueblo peoples’ right to name them. Please refer to Linda Cordell’s book, *Archaeology of the Southwest* (1997) for further insight into this terminology problem.
about A.D. 1250, Ancestral Puebloan occupied sites were deserted in large part due to soil erosion. Since the land the Ancestral Puebloan people had previously occupied no longer sustained their populations, they migrated to other regions. “Some moved south and regrouped at Acoma. Others formed the Zuñi and Hopi Pueblos of western New Mexico and eastern Arizona. The remainder traveled southeast across the Continental Divide and established villages on the banks of the upper Rio Grande” (Gutiérrez 1991:xxi).

Historian John Kessell (2008) describes the Pueblo Indians homeland at the time the Spanish arrived. The area they inhabited was “[s]ituated within present-day north-central New Mexico and the northeastern corner of Arizona, [and] sixty to eighty thousand people lived in a hundred multistoried towns (or pueblos to Spanish eyes)” (Kessell 2008:9; italics in the original). The term “Pueblo” is a Spanish word for “village” and was the name given to Native American communities in the Southwest region by Spanish explorers in what is present-day New Mexico (Demolli 2010:10).

In 1536, four survivors of the “La Florida” expedition (1527) including Cabeza de Vaca and Esteban the Moor, reached Culiacán, Mexico. Along the way they met indigenous peoples who told them about riches to the north and the Seven Cities of Cibola. Intrigued by the reports, in 1539, the viceroy of New Spain selected Fray Marcos de Niza to lead an expedition into New Mexico. Instead of finding riches and gold, De Niza and his men reached the Zuni village of Hawikuh. New Mexican historian and

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22 Not everyone accepts the historical narrative and analysis provided by archaeologists through the use of scientific methods and theory. The Pueblo peoples also have an explanation through oral history for this mass migration to other areas of the region. The Ancestral Puebloan peoples left their cliff dwellings because Avanyu, the rain and fertility god, left one night. In search of their deity, they decided to leave and locate Avanyu’s trail where they followed his path to the river. There they settled and built their homes once again (Gutiérrez 1991:xxi).
Pueblo scholar Joe Sando describes the first meeting among Spaniards and Pueblo peoples:

It was at Zuni Pueblo on a May day in 1539 that a black man ‘unlocked for the world the gateway to the Southwest for the future United States.’ This man, named Estevanico, was the first non-native to make contact with the Pueblo people of what is now New Mexico. Yet, because he was a Moor, a black man from Morocco, his feat was credited to Fray Marcos de Niza, who was not present at the encounter. De Niza failed to make contact with the natives, merely observing Hawikuh (now Zuni)—supposedly one of the Seven Cities of Cibola—from a distance. [Sando 2005:7].

As the Zuni story of this first encounter goes: “When Estevan reached Zuni and demanded Zuni women and turquoises, he was executed. Marcos then fled back to Mexico, telling exaggerated stories of the ‘Seven Cities of Cibola.’” De Niza’s reports of Cibola’s wealth led to another expedition to find the cities of gold in New Mexico.

On January 6, 1540, the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza sent Francisco Vásquez de Coronado to lead another expedition north (Gutiérrez 1991:42). This expedition “reported about sixty-four pueblos in the Rio Grande drainage (excluding Hopi, Zuni, at least a dozen Piro, perhaps another dozen Tompiro, and several others such as Picuris)” (Schroeder 1972:47). The conquistadores’ contempt for the local indigenous peoples is telling. Coronado considered them to be of “an inferior breed close to savages” and demonstrating little intelligence, yet he marveled at the houses at Zuni Pueblo saying: “I do not think that they have the judgment and intelligence needed to be able to build these houses in the way in which they are built, for most of them are entirely naked” (cf. Gutiérrez 1991:44). However, after two years of exploring, the Spaniards found no riches and no gold on their journey and returned to New Spain empty handed (Sando 2005:7–8). After this failed expedition, interest in the region subsided (Sando 2005:8).

About 1581 the Spanish Crown fully backed and supported the idea of a permanent settlement to the north. Spanish explorer Antonio de Espejo’s mission was justified as a journey to rescue Fray Agustin Rodriguez and Fray Francisco Lopez, but it was in actuality a prospecting enterprise. Espejo led an expedition to the Rio Grande Pueblos in 1582 and helped renew interest in establishing a Spanish colony in New Mexico.

Don Juan de Oñate led a major expedition into New Mexico and established the first Spanish capital of San Gabriel in 1598, located at what is today the Tewa Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh (north of Española). This Pueblo has had a tremendous impact on the Northern New Mexico region from the time of colonization into the present. In modern times, Ohkay Owingeh remains the headquarters of the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Northern Pueblos Agency. Agoyo affirms the importance of this location for the Spaniards: “Ohkay Owingeh’s characteristics as a political and economic center were recognized by the Spaniards, who proclaimed it the first capital of Northern Mexico” (Agoyo 2005:xii). Since this time “for over four hundred years, Pueblos and Spaniards have coexisted vigorously. They have also, from time to time, tried to exterminate each other and failed. Circumstances largely beyond their control, combined with notable resilience on the part of both, dictated mutual survival” (Kessell 2008:5).

When the Spanish moved into Santa Fe, the Pueblos suffered considerably and were forced to pay tribute to the Spaniards by providing them produce from the fields.

pottery, labor, and other cultural possessions through the *encomienda* and *repartimiento* systems (Sando 1998b:5). These systems originated and were practiced in Spain during feudal times. The *encomienda* system was first used over the conquered Moors in Spain and then later was brought over to the New World. This system gave the crown unlimited authority over indigenous populations by requiring them to pay tribute from their lands and sometimes personal servitude. The *repartimiento* system involved the recruitment of Indians for forced labor in fields, plantations, and ranches with the rationale that this work would provide colonial Spanish America with essential food, goods, and services.

The *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum *Nah Poeh Meng* guide talks about forced labor and how the Spanish “killed our relatives during raids intended to bring us to submission; they tortured us, killed our holy people and made us work for them in the fields and in their homes.” The *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit guide continues to explain the upheaval indigenous groups of the Southwest had to endure:

their lives were turned upside down with the entry of people who were so unlike them, foreigners who came across deep waters, came to be known by the Tewa people as ‘kweku’ because of their coats of armor…There have been many books written about the Spanish invasion into Pueblo land. These Spaniards were representatives of the Spanish crown and believed they had the right and the authority to force Pueblo people to adopt their ways and to pay tribute to Spanish authorities.

This harsh treatment and religious intolerance and persecution inflicted on the Pueblo Indians by the Spaniards continued unabated.

In 1598, upon hearing reports that Oñate planned to colonize the area near the Pueblo of Acoma, Acoma Pueblo peoples ambushed and killed 11 of Oñate’s men. For this act, the Spaniards burned most of the Pueblo, killing over 600 people. The local
people that survived became prisoners of war and men who were 25 years or older had their right foot amputated. The aftermath of the battle at Acoma between Pueblo Indians and the Spaniards was one of the many cruelties Pueblo peoples endured under Spanish authorities. This act of rebellion and the aftermath of the battle at Acoma along with other events laid the groundwork and foundations for “the first American Revolution,” the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 (Sando 1998a:63).

Albert H. Schroeder (1972) mentions that by 1643 there were only 43 Pueblos remaining, as opposed to over 90 in 1600—a reduction of one Pueblo a year on average (1972:55). In the 1670s, Spanish attempts to eradicate native religious practices were at an all time high. Raids of Spanish settlements and Pueblos for corn, animals (especially horses), and material objects by Apaches became a growing issue and concern (Schroeder 1972:54), and a period of significantly dry weather caused major droughts in the area (Sando 2005:17). During this time in 1675, Governor Juan de Treviño arrested 47 religious leaders from the Pueblos, including the leader of the future Pueblo Revolt, Po’Pay (also spelled “Popé”), accusing them of practicing sorcery.25 Most of these men were Tewas, but Tiwa and Keresan speakers were also among them (Sando 2005:17). The Spaniards hanged four men, three in their own Pueblos in front of their people to set an example (Sando 2005:18).

After the killing of the four men, the forty-three remaining prisoners were condemned to life imprisonment as well as public floggings (Sando 1998a:63). Upon learning the fate of the forty-three remaining prisoners, Tewa leaders interceded on the

imprisoned men’s behalf demanding their release. Governor Treviño, possibly sensing the growing resentment among the local indigenous population due to the public executions, released the forty-three prisoners including Po’Pay, to the Tewa leaders under the condition that these men renounce their traditional religious practices (Sando 2005:18).

**The Pueblo Revolt of 1680**

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was intended to expel the Spaniards from Pueblo lands due in large part to ongoing religious persecution and intolerance as well as an unprecedented drought (Kessell 2008:4–5). The Pueblo Indians interpreted the drought “as a clear sign of the disruption of the natural order brought about by Spanish attempts to destroy their religion” (Sando 2005:19). Sando details the growing unrest, conflict, and the beginning phases of the Pueblo Revolt, writing

> The recent mass arrests of religious leaders and execution of several of them had made it clear that Spanish oppression of their religion had, if anything, intensified over the years. They agreed collectively that they faced the gravest threat that they had ever, or could ever, encounter. The Spanish were still determined to stamp out every vestige of the religious framework of their lives and culture, and the other forms of oppression had become a threat to their physical survival. It would also have been clear that, at a time when the Spanish were weakened by internal strife, a revolt would stand a better chance of success [Sando 2005:23].

A group of Pueblo Indians, under the leadership and direction of Po’pay, met secretly at Taos Pueblo with leaders (Sando 2005:21) from various Pueblos (Stuart 2004:166) to plan a revolt against the Spaniards. However, some Pueblos remained friendly to the Spanish although many Pueblos had witnessed the growing internal dissonance as well as infighting among Franciscan padres and government officials on how they should govern (Nieto-Phillips 2004; Sando 2005:20). As Cajete indicates,
The decision to go to war to the extent required by the Revolt was not taken lightly. It certainly required a coordinated effort which was unprecedented among the Pueblos. The level of secrecy required was equally daunting since Pueblo people sympathetic to the Franciscan Friars and the Spanish Colonial authority existed in every Pueblo. For almost three years careful plans were laid out for the Revolt…Much deliberation among numerous leaders had to have been conducted before a final consensus was reached regarding the date of the revolt and how it was to be conducted [Cajete 2010:27].

At the final meetings, it was decided that two men (runners) from Tesuque would go to each Pueblo sympathetic to their cause and alert the Pueblos to the planned uprising (Sando 2005:29). At Taos Pueblo, in the spring of 1680, Po’pay instructed messengers to take deerskin pictographs to the Pueblos and inform the people of the planned uprising. In August, Po’pay gave the messengers or runners a knotted cord instructing them to deliver the cords to the Pueblos. The cord symbolized a calendar with the knots signaling the number of days before the revolt. However, Christian Indians alerted Fray Fernando de Velasco, who notified and warned Governor Antonio de Otermín of the planned uprising (Sando 2005:29). Although the Spanish had heard rumors of an impending Pueblo revolt, they could not pinpoint the plan or date for it until “two young men from Tesuque…were apprehended bearing a rope with two knots” (Sando 1998a:63). Fearing that Po’pay’s plan would backfire if the leaders of the planned rebellion waited any longer, Tesuque Pueblo was the first to act (Hackett and Shelby 1942:xxxii). Tesuque Pueblo dispatched runners to notify the other Pueblos to revolt the


27 Theodore Jojola reports that Otermín saw little reason for immediate action due to his militia of 170 trained soldiers and because rebellions in the past had been very localized. He also underestimated the fact that the Pueblos would unite to expel the Spanish and that the communities of mixed Indian and Spanish descent would also join the revolt (Jojola 2005:63).
The revolt led to the death of 21 of the 33 Franciscan friars in the territory and about 400 Spanish colonists (Jojola 2005:63; Sando 1979:196). The remaining Spaniards (about 2,000) were driven south away from Santa Fe; as they moved south, other Spaniards joined them. After resting near Isleta, the Spanish colonists retreated to the El Paso area (Stuart 2004:166). Governor Otermín re-entered Pueblo territory in 1681 and while he failed to recapture this area, the information he obtained proved to be crucial (Dozier 1970:60). The Spaniards would have to wait another 12 years until Diego de Vargas retook the city of Santa Fe for good on September 14, 1692.

The Pueblo Revolt is believed to be the first act of cultural revitalization among the Pueblo peoples (Ortiz 1994:300) and is “perhaps the most successful revolt by natives of the New World” (Sando 1979:196). It is also considered “one of the most important and successful indigenous uprisings in North American history, and Pueblo peoples today consider it an essential first step towards their cultural survival” (Guthrie 2005:23–24).

Unfortunately, even in modern times, the Pueblo Revolt remains largely unknown to the outside world (Agoyo 2005:xii).

The eighteenth century was characterized by a Spanish agricultural and ranching lifestyle, more lenient policies toward Pueblo Indians, and even an alliance between Spaniards and Pueblo Indians against neighboring indigenous groups like the Navajos and Apaches (Guthrie 2005:24). However, major events affecting all New Mexicans were about to take place. In 1821 Mexico declared independence from Spain and New Mexico became part of Mexico. During this time, the Santa Fe Trail (1821–1880), a

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29 There was a second Pueblo Revolt in 1696, but Governor De Vargas squelched the uprising.
trading route, opened and increased international trade between Mexico and the United States. The Army of the West utilized this trail during its invasion of New Mexico, and Colonel Stephen Watts Kearney annexed New Mexico for the United States during the Mexican-American War in 1846. The Mexican-American War lasted two years and ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

In 1850 New Mexico territory included present day Arizona, Colorado, southern Utah, and southern Nevada. In 1854 the Gadsden Purchase involved the U.S. paying Mexico 10 million dollars for 29,670 additional square miles of land. New Mexico lost some of this territory in subsequent years with the creation of the territory of Colorado in 1861 and the territory of Arizona in 1863.

In 1878 the railroad arrived in New Mexico and significantly changed the movement to and from New Mexico and also resulted in more Anglos settling in the area. However, due to the large Hispanic (primarily considered “Mexicans” by the rest of the United States) and Native American population, the United States remained ambivalent about accepting New Mexico as a state (Guthrie 2005:25; Nieto-Phillips 2004). In 1910 the New Mexico Constitution was created and drafted in preparation for statehood. In 1912 New Mexico was admitted as the 47th state of the United States.

In the 1920s Hispano and Anglo settlers increasingly encroached on Pueblo Indian lands. The United States government drafted the 1922 Bursum Bill, which attempted to expropriate Pueblo land without compensation and recognize the legitimacy

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30 A resident from one of the eight Northern Pueblos said when the railroad came to New Mexico it changed traditional Pueblo arts. Many people, Pueblo artists included, began to rethink the purpose of art (such as selling art for profit) and what is considered functional art. She said, “women [and] men would come down and anthropologists, too. Anthropologists would buy pottery and take pieces to museums. Pueblo people would sell trinkets to people on the train like salt and pepper shakers...Pottery would sell for 25 cents, 50 cents, sometimes even 1.50 for their art pieces...[from a] community point of view, women were able to finally have some power” (2, interview).
of individual land claims of white settlers and Hispano individuals. However, local protests by the Pueblos grew into a national issue, and Congress, feeling pressure from the Pueblos, other indigenous groups, and non-natives, defeated the bill in 1923, passing a modified version as the Pueblo Lands Act of 1924.

The twentieth century brought with it continued cultural changes for the Hispano and Indian communities as more outsiders and Anglos continued to settle in the region (Guthrie 2005:25). Guthrie states, “One of the most significant changes in New Mexico has been the shift from subsistence agriculture to an economy based on wage labor, government, and tourism” (2005:25). Since employment opportunities were scarce in smaller Pueblo and Hispano communities, many people left their towns, villages, and pueblos for better job prospects in larger cities like Santa Fe and Albuquerque, and also in the neighboring states of Arizona, Colorado, and Texas.

Yet despite these economic and cultural hardships in the face of rapid urban growth, land encroachment by settlers, and the pressures wrought by colonization, the Pueblos have been able to maintain their sense of autonomy and are considered sovereign nations. From the early 1800s and onward,

the federal government of the United States has recognized the unique sovereign nature of Indian tribes. For nearly two centuries, federal courts have reaffirmed that Indian tribes are ‘distinct political communities, having territorial boundaries within which their authority is exclusive, and having a right to all lands within those boundaries, which is not only acknowledged but guaranteed by the United States’ (c.f. Worcester v. Georgia, 6 Pet. 515, 557, 8L. Ed 483, 499, 1832) [Pueblo of Pojoaque n.d.:16].
The Pueblo of Pojoaque: Background of the Research

While the two Tiwa speaking Pueblos of Taos and Picuris are included among the eight Northern Pueblos, the Pueblo of Pojoaque maintains similar traditions and language to its neighboring Tewa speaking Pueblos:

Table 1. Pojoaque’s neighboring Tewa-speaking Pueblos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pueblo</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ohkay Owingeh (previously known as San Juan; changed back to its original Pueblo Indian name in 2005)</td>
<td>This Pueblo remains the headquarters of the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council (ENIPC) and owns and operates a casino called the OhKay Casino. Ohkay Owingeh is one of the largest Tewa speaking Pueblos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>Located not far from Pojoaque, but north of it, operates Puye Cliffs and until the Las Conchas fire in 2011 was offering tours of this ancient site. This Pueblo is also a member of the National Register of Historic Places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nambé Pueblo</td>
<td>This Pueblo was described by the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center as a largely “Hispanicized” Pueblo surrounded by non-Indian neighbors, has recently showed a resurgence in bringing back some of their cultural traditions. This Pueblo also manages the scenic site of Nambé Falls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tesuque Pueblo</td>
<td>Located just north of Santa Fe, is also a member of the eight Northern Pueblos. It is considered one of the most traditional Tewa Pueblos even though it has been in contact with outside cultures for a good part of its history (IPCC 2007). This Pueblo played an important role during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Tesuque is listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in the 1970s and owns Camel Rock Casino.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Ildefonso</td>
<td>Another Tewa Pueblo located close to Pojoaque Pueblo. Some of the original buildings still stand and because of this aspect, Poeh Museum staff would often direct museumgoers to San Ildefonso, especially for those visitors wishing to see a more “traditional” Pueblo with older sites. This Pueblo also offers a self-guided walking tour of the Pueblo with artists opening up their homes along the tour route for visitors wishing to buy their artwork. San Ildefonso is also home to internally renowned artist, Maria Martinez, who was a famous black ware potter from the Pueblo. There is a museum, near the tribal administrative offices, dedicated to showcasing her work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From time to time, Pojoaque has asked nearby Tewa Pueblos to assist them in bringing back some of their cultural traditions and religious ceremonies. The inclusion of Pueblo voices from nearby tribal communities was modeled after the framework...
undertaken during the development of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. This approach has enabled Pojoaque tribal members to feel stronger connections to community in their quest for the revitalization of their culture, language, and traditions. Yet Pojoaque, like other Pueblos in New Mexico, maintains a distinct identity and remarkable history.

Few documents are specifically about Pojoaque. The only seemingly thorough and detailed historical reports that do exist came from archaeological sources such as that derived by Florence Hawley Ellis who conducted excavation work in the area. Another source I used was a segment by Marjorie Lambert in the Handbook of Native American Indians: Southwest (1979) under “Pojoaque Pueblo.” Because literature on the Pueblo of Pojoaque is not readily available, I realize that the historical sources I refer to may be biased. My goal is to prioritize Pojoaque community voices by describing the history as it has been presented to me. I acknowledge that the accuracy of these records has come under scrutiny by some Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal officials (71, interview). One Pojoaque tribal member reiterated the challenge of getting a complete history of the Pueblo explaining: “If you talk to different families from Pojoaque they will give you their interpretation of the history and they are different accounts” (76, interview).

Richard Ellis remarked on this during his study of the Pueblo: “The dearth of documentation on Pojoaque, and the small size of the population of the Pueblo, make the writing of a complete history of the Pueblo and its land a very difficult task” (Ellis n.d.:1). Archaeologist Stephen Lentz also mentioned the lack of a thorough prehistory on

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31 As the tribal historian and I discovered during our research on Pojoaque history, there are many different variants over the years for the spelling of Pojoaque—Pojuaque, Pujuaque, Pujuaiqui, Posoaque, Posuwageh, Posuwaegh, Soxuaque among others.
the Pueblo during his archaeological investigations (Lentz 2004:9). Many of the
documents that do exist contradict each other.

In summarizing the history I cite from testimony from the Pueblo of Pojoaque
Governor’s Office (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007) as the principal authority on this subject. I
also utilize material prepared for the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum’s “Then and
Now” exhibit which focused on Pojoaque history and presented photographs of the
Pueblo demonstrating its “tenacity” and “sheer will to endure as a free people” (Ortiz
1991:5). Other archival materials included materials at the Pueblo of Pojoaque, the
Center for Southwest Research (Zimmerman Library) at the University of New Mexico,
and the New Mexico State Records and Archives Center, and the Museum of Indian Arts
and Culture (MIAC) Laboratory of Anthropology Library, and Archaeological Records
Management Section (ARMS) of the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of
Cultural Affairs.

There will always be questions concerning historical accuracy of the Pueblo.
Even some Pueblo of Pojoaque pamphlets, especially one on the history of Indian
gaming, had inaccurate information regarding a smallpox epidemic in 1890. These sorts
of incongruities about the Pueblo of Pojoaque have, in part, led to other Pueblos not
viewing it as a traditional Pueblo. While it is not my intent to debate whether or not
Pojoaque is a Pueblo, I will allude to other Pueblos’ attitudes toward Pojoaque in Chapter
3 because it has influenced peoples’ ideas about Pojoaque identity. Some of these points
of view were shared with me during my interviews.

I hope that my review of the history of the Pueblo will demonstrate the long way
the Pueblo of Pojoaque has come since its re-establishment. As a tribal member
characterized it, “Pojoaque has been the most knocked down—poorest and yet we came up and made ourselves more of an efficient Pueblo” (27, interview). As a member of the eight Northern Pueblos said, “They were a little group of people whose village was abandoned and they have come a long way since then” (78, interview).

**History of the Pueblo of Pojoaque**

The Pueblo of Pojoaque has been occupied since at least A.D. 1150 (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:1) during the Developmental Period (600–1200) with Lambert (1979) citing an earlier date of A.D. 900.\(^{32}\) The Pueblo origin story tells a different account that “these small communities along and near the Rio Grande have existed since time immemorial” (Demolli 2010:10–11) and that for thousands of years the Tewa peoples “lived in age-old ways, working and living from within their communities, following the seasons” (Anonymous, Poeh Center). Ortiz notes

> It is likely that the ancestors of the Pojoaque people migrated into the general vicinity of the present Pueblo from the Four Corners region late in the first millennium A.D. Their ancestors may have built and occupied some of the cliff dwellings of the Mesa Verde area, or one or more of the large villages of the Montezuma Valley in southwestern Colorado. If such was the case, the Pojoaque people confronted many threats to their survival long before we are able to discern their presence in the Rio Grande Valley [Ortiz 1991:4].

Much of the archaeological work done at Pojoaque (Anschuetz 1986; Ellis 1979; Lent 1978; Lentz 2004) corroborates the evidence of a very large Pueblo population with extensive farming practices (Johnson and Yenne 2004:40). Two early sites ancestral to the Pueblo revealed ceramic types consisting of “Chaco II Black-on-white (probably

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\(^{32}\) Many dates have been reported for the earliest occupation of the Pueblo. Lambert (1979) reports A.D. 900 as the earliest date of inhabitance at the Pueblo of Pojoaque and the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (2007) cites a date as early as A.D. 500. Archaeological work conducted at Pojoaque in the 1980s unearthed the remnants of an old village that was dated to A.D. 950. (Anschuetz 1986:40). Lentz (2004:7) also confirms a date of occupation for the Pueblo around A.D. 950.
local or imported Red Mesa Black-on-white), Pueblo II-III corrugated and Tewa Polychrome” (cf. Ellis 1979; Lentz 2004:9). Lentz reports that these sites “tend to be located near intermittent tributaries of the Rio Grande, presumably for access to water and arable land” (2004:7). Ortiz supports the theory of Pojoaque playing a significant role among the Tewa Pueblos and its importance as a central place in ancient times: “In one account of general Tewa origins, all of the known Tewa people dispersed to their present villages from Pojoaque, thereby making Pojoaque the ‘mother’ village for all of the historic Tewa people”’ (Ortiz 1991:4).

From 1598 until 1846, the Pueblo of Pojoaque was subjected to Spanish and then Mexican rule (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:1).33 Antonio de Espejo is credited with the first known mention in writing of the Pueblo in 1582 (Lentz 2004:9). During the early 1600s the first Spanish mission, San Francisco de Pojoaque, was founded.34 In 1620 the King of Spain decreed that Pueblos should elect a governor, lieutenant governor, and other officials by popular vote to carry out Pueblo affairs.35 Ortiz contends the Pueblos took what they considered “good” from the Spaniards and they rejected what was a threat to their culture and traditions (Ortiz 1991:5).

33 Under Spanish colonization, Pueblo Indians became wards of the Crown: “The intent of Spanish law and administration was both to protect the Indians in their personal and communal water-rights, and to convert them to the Christian religion so they would be loyal vassals to the Crown” (Jenkins 1972:113). During this time, Pueblo Indians were required to pay tribute to the European ruling class in the form of labor for mining, industry, and agriculture in the area (Jenkins 1972:113).


The Pueblo Revolt of 1680, in which Pojoaque played an active role (Anschuetz 1986:16; Lambert 1979), “resulted in the gradual lifting of most repressive measures against the native religions in the first decades of the 18th century…The Catholicism they eventually accepted had to coexist with their native religion, but the Catholic church has been a permanent part of Pojoaque life since the end of the 17th century” (Ortiz 1991:5). During the revolt, the holy temples or religious structures were demolished and burned and the church records were completely destroyed (Christmas 2010:ix). The Pueblo of Pojoaque was held responsible for the deaths of more than 12 Spanish colonists who had resided near the Pueblo (c.f. Anschuetz 1986:16; Hackett 1942, vol. 1:10).

Figure 2. Pojoaque Pueblo Mission Church, 1899. (Photo by Adam Clark Vroman. Source: Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection, Santa Fe, New Mexico.)

In the aftermath of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Pojoaque’s population shrank: “Fearing Spanish reprisals, Pojoaque Pueblo was largely vacated following the revolt, with many inhabitants fleeing to fortified enclaves in the Jemez Mountains and elsewhere” (Anschuetz 1986:16). Also, the introduction of foreign diseases reduced the
Pueblo population dramatically after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 (Pueblo of Pojoaque n.d.:12).

During the “Little Rebellion” of 1696, Jacona (which used to be a Tewa Pueblo) and Cuyamungue were abandoned (Schroeder 1979:250). During this time “Indians from Pojoaque deserted their village and sought refuge with other Tewas or among the Navajos” (Baxter 1984:14). The Pueblo of Pojoaque was unoccupied in 1700 and New Mexico Governor Pedro Rodriguez Cubero gave the land to two Spaniards (Sando 1998b:247). In 1707, New Mexico Governor Francisco Cuervo y Valdés re-founded the Pueblo of Pojoaque with some families (Baxter 1984:14; Christmas 2010:xii) and they bought back their land “paying for it with corn, tanned buckskins, woolen blankets, chickens, and the loan of two horses” (Sando 1998b:247). In 1712 the Pueblo had only 79 residents (Johnson and Yenne 2004:40).

In the aftermath of the Mexican-American War of 1846–1848, Mexico surrendered much of its land (which included Nuevo México) to the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1848, Pojoaque became part of the United States (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:1). After this, Pojoaque’s Spanish land grant “was confirmed by Congress in 1858 and patented by the United States on November 1, 1864. The confirmation was in the form of a quitclaim deed. The Pueblo of Pojoaque has always owned its land in communal title—the Pueblo has never been a federal reservation” (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:1). According to the Pueblo of Pojoaque, the original land grant consisted of 13,438.15 acres. From 1848 to 1913, the federal government did not protect Pojoaque from land encroachment and as a result the Pueblo “lost 1,845.64 acres of its best lands, located near the waterways” (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:1).
In the 1880s United States Army Captain John G. Bourke, who served as an aide to General George Crook, wrote several entries about the American West, especially taking note of the Pueblos along the Rio Grande. In 1881 while traveling through Pojoaque, Captain Bourke found a very “dilapidated” Pueblo that could “hardly be called a pueblo at all” (Bloom 1937:69). Only four families resided there at the time. Bourke noted the Pueblo “is built of adobe as Santa Clara and San Ildefonso are. The few Indians and half-breeds still living in Pojoaque raise very good crops of corn and vegetables…A couple of hundred yards to the west are the ruins of the old pueblo, covering a great deal of ground and once, evidently, thickly populated” (Bloom 1937:71).

According to some reports, an 1890 smallpox epidemic at Pojoaque and nearby Pueblos accounted for the population decrease (Warren 1991:4). In fact, the population at Pojoaque shrank because some members of the Tapia family moved over to Nambé Pueblo (71, interview). I also found a reference to the movement of the Tapia family when looking up the population statistics at the New Mexico State Archives and Records Center.

According to a Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member, “part of it was what happened in 1912—area here was not economically sustainable—a lot of them scattered and moved out of the Pueblo” (32, interview). The Governor’s Office Testimony notes: “By 1913, due to the encroachment and loss of its irrigable lands, most of the Pueblo of Pojoaque members had left the Pueblo to live and work in neighboring Pueblos and surrounding communities” (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:1–2).

In *U.S. v. Sandoval* (1913), the Supreme Court ruled that Pueblo peoples were in fact Indians in “race, customs, and domestic government” reversing the *U.S. v. Joseph*
(1876) ruling that deemed Pueblo peoples non-Indians. It also reinstated federal protection over Pueblo land grants.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1915, however, the remaining tribal members left Pojoaque Pueblo and the Pueblo stopped functioning as a community (Demolli 2010:11). During 1913–1915, Pojoaque lost its native religious societies and ceremonies when its population dropped so low that even marriage within the pueblo became impossible because too few individuals existed. This was before the remaining people separated for a time to seek jobs which would bring in cash, or went to live temporarily with others of the same family who married into other pueblos [Ellis 1979:5].

**Re-establishment of the Pueblo of Pojoaque**

Beginning in 1924, “the federal government, through the Pueblo Lands Act,\textsuperscript{37} authorized payments to the Pueblo for lands lost due to federal negligence” (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2). A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member indicated that, through the Pueblo Lands Act, the “Government was trying to save the area for the tribe, but needed someone to come back. José Antonio Tapia came back and established the Pueblo” (32, interview).

In 1932 an advertisement or call appeared in a local New Mexican newspaper inviting Pojoaque tribal members to come back and reclaim their land (Pojoaque Pueblo n.d.:2; Sando 1998b). According to a Pojoaque Pueblo tribal government handout:


\textsuperscript{37} The Bursum Bill of 1922, which led to the 1924 Pueblo Lands Act, was a thinly veiled attempt to “seize Pueblo land” and give that land to Hispanos and Anglos without compensation to the Pueblos. After a coalition of Indians and non-Indians put pressure on Congress, the Bill was defeated in 1923 (Martinez 2004–2013). The Pueblo Lands Act of 1924 was passed to settle land claims over Pueblo lands in New Mexico, which led to the creation of a Pueblo Lands Board. The Pueblo Lands Board was tasked to investigate non-Indians claims to land that were located within the boundaries of the New Mexico Pueblo Land Grants (Bowden 2004–2013). The Pueblo Lands Act of 1933 furthered the 1924 Act by increasing the compensation to each Pueblo.
In 1932, Fermin and Feliciana (Tapia) Viarrial traveled from Colorado to Santa Fe in search of a school for their eldest daughter. Upon their return to Colorado, they stopped to visit a friend in Abiquiú, who told them he read in the local newspaper, The New Mexican, that Feliciana and her father, José Antonio Tapia, along with Feliciana’s brother, Juan, were being sought to reclaim Pojoaque Pueblo land. The friend gave the newspaper to Fermin and Feliciana to take to her father. Together with their four children they returned to Pojoaque Pueblo and thus Mr. Tapia began the process of reestablishing the Pueblo of Pojoaque [Pojoaque Pueblo n.d.:2].

Even though “[L]ess than forty descendants of the original families were found living in other pueblos and the neighboring states of Texas and Colorado” (Sando 1998a:259), “five Pueblo of Pojoaque families returned to their traditional homelands (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2). In 1933 Pueblo land was given back to Pojoaque Pueblo by an order of the Pueblo Lands Board and the federal court. Tribal members “organized the community according to its traditional government. The traditional government has declined to adopt a Constitution” (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2).

Lambert notes that a large proportion of “the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century population was lost or absorbed by other Pueblos. Those who lived in the Pueblo since the resettlement in the early 1930’s are an admixture of Tewas, Tiwas, and some Spanish-Americans” (1979:326). With a land base of 11,603 acres, the territory of the Pueblo of Pojoaque was federally recognized as an Indian reservation by the United States government in 1936 (Guyette 1996:84).

**Cultural Revitalization at Pojoaque**

A First Nations art student who took classes from the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum offered this analysis on cultural revitalization. She said,

Revitalization is necessary because if you don’t have a culture, you don’t have a people. Land base, language, and lifestyle play a significant part and you need this. This is something I have seen in a lot of different communities. I do see it in
Pojoaque that is what they are building [is] what you hold sacred. It is the ceremonies you practice, feast food you bring to that, and spiritual beliefs, land you live off of and this is tied to day-to-day practices. You need to take hold of that and still honor it today. That doesn’t mean you have to still live in the past as no one wants to live without electricity or running water, but it is important to honor what symbolic meanings of what you used to do particularly with language. Without these things, you have lost your way as a people [14, interview].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member shared this perspective:

I would define it as bringing back culture that was lost and language that is lost. Some stuff we couldn’t bring back and so we get looked at differently and some consider us ‘not Pueblo enough.’ But it is important to get traditions back and some Pueblos don’t want to help us and some do. Our history was lost and it was gone for so long. We need to have it back for the future. We trace back our ancestry through lineage. It is through lineage to be a member here. A lot is getting lost and we need to teach future generations the ceremonies and Tewa language [98, interview].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member explained the initial cultural revitalization process at the Pueblo:

My grandparents told me that the Pueblo was abandoned…my great grandparents came back to reclaim it and little by little they brought back the culture. And I think this is when it kind of started to take off…my grandma and my grandpa helped with different aspect to keep it going—traditions. My grandma who was Hispanic made the mantas and she spoke Tewa and my grandpa was from the Pueblo [11, interview].

One of the traditional aspects brought back to the Pueblo during the 1970s were the Pueblo dances such as the buffalo dance, eagle dance, and butterfly dance, as the “dances were a huge part” (89, interview). A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member related, during this time

Governor Betty Duran38 and several other people asked [for] help from Santa Clara Pueblo. They brought back the dances in 1973. Peter Garcia (San Juan) worked for us for many years. There were three Pueblos [that helped out] San Juan, Santa Clara, and Nambé [59, interview].

38 Governor Duran was the first female Governor of any Pueblo. Thelma Talachy, who was Governor from 1982–1984, was the second (Ortiz 1991:5).
The Pueblo of Pojoaque danced for the first time in more than a hundred years in 1973. It has continued this tradition and now celebrates the Feast of Our Lady Guadalupe, which honors their patron saint on December 12. The Pueblo of Pojoaque along with other Pueblos hold feasts and dances on January 6 to commemorate “Three Kings Day,” a Christian religious holiday honoring the arrival of the wise men in Bethlehem.

What occurred in the 1970s was not unique to the Pueblo of Pojoaque. In fact it happened in indigenous communities around the United States, due in part to changes in the U.S. laws and policies for Native Americans and the influence of the American Indian Movement (AIM). For example, during the time frame when Pojoaque was rebuilding its community traditions, members of the Choctaw nation were also undergoing efforts to reconstruct of their cultural identity. Anthropologist Valerie Lambert (who is a member of the Choctaw nation and did her dissertation research in the Choctaw community) explains:

[T]he Choctaws rebuilt their tribe derived from the historical reality that social, political, and economic rearrangements that were taking place in the Choctaw Nation during the late twentieth century were occurring at a time when tribes all over the United States were also undertaking intensive institution building, hardening the boundaries around their membership, and vigorously pursuing tribal economic development [Lambert 2007:9].

In the 1980s, the Pueblo adopted W.C. Kruger and Associates’ Community Development Plan, which was followed by a period of economic activity and growth including the construction of a golf course, gas stations, stores, hotels, and a tourist information center (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2). Prior to developing an economic sustainability program for the Pueblo the unemployment rate at the Pueblo was at about 80 percent, with many tribal members leaving the community to work in nearby Pueblos
and communities in New Mexico and out of state (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2). Former Governor Jacob Viarrial believes “that there cannot really be lasting cultural revitalization unless there is economic self-sufficiency as well” (Ortiz 1991:6).

In order to grasp Governor Viarrial’s philosophy that economics and culture cannot exist without the other, it is vital to appreciate how the concept of cultural revitalization is understood at the Pueblo. As a tribal member explains,

[I]n order to understand it, you need to do an analysis of what exists and this is different for each group. First step you need to look at what culture is and what it has been and the vision for it to go where it goes. It depends on people who are revitalizing it to think about what is the most important to focus on and what will work for that group of people for that space and time whether it be the arts, language, and economics. A lot of different ways that cultural revitalization plays a role in a community…I think any well-rounded culture needs to look at everything. Identity is something unique to the Pueblos. In order to continue what our ancestors thought important includes land, culture and the promise of a future [59, interview].

Another Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member offered her opinion on cultural revitalization at the Pueblo, saying that, while the Pueblo has made great strides in its economic self-sufficiency as envisioned by tribal leaders like past Governor Viarrial, there remains much that has yet to be done, especially on the cultural side. She says,

Cultural revitalization is a lost civilization trying to find its purpose and identity with the help of other cultural surroundings and support. At Pojoaque, at one time, we only had 100 members…Nambé and us were considered as one Pueblo. At Pojoaque we are still finishing process of revitalization. We need tribal and spiritual officials to take responsibility for revitalization doings behind the door ceremonies. It is very necessary (the heart of it) to do the ceremonial side and enforce it. The heart of the Pueblo is finding out who we are, but before we do anything else, I think, we need to look at the ceremonial side of it [89, interview].

In 1990 the Pueblo was awarded a grant from the Chamiza Foundation, which has “permitted the Pueblo to continue not only the dance lessons, but lessons in the learning of religious chants and in the making of ceremonial costumes as well” (Ortiz 1991:5). In
keeping with the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s philosophy of more economic self-sufficiency, the Pueblo “embarked on a $5,000,000 business development plan for its commercial property along the main highway leading from Santa Fe to both Los Alamos and Taos” (Ortiz 1991:6) and began to construct a new industrial/business development plaza in 1996. This business development plan along US 84/285 included the creation and building of restaurants, a hardware store, a local grocery store, an RV Park, a tourist center, a bowling alley, Pueblo of Pojoaque Butterfly Springs apartments, and other businesses and enterprises.

The Pueblo also operates the Cities of Gold Casino and Hotel and the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino (in partnership with Hilton Hotels and Resorts). Pojoaque “is the second largest single non-governmental employer in Northern New Mexico” (Pueblo of Pojoaque n.d.:14) and, prior to the above mentioned business development plan, employed more than 100 Pueblo members (Ortiz 1991:6). According to a Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member, currently there are “over 90 percent [of Pojoaque Pueblo peoples] in tribal government and tribal businesses…We do a good job of getting our tribal members employed here…it is easy as long as they are reliable…that seems to be the number one issue is showing up and maintaining [a] job here” (59, interview).

39 While gaming was not the focus of this dissertation or the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino (BTR), some research participants offered their perspective on the BTR with many concluding it was planned too grandly and took away from the cultural revitalization emphasis of the Pueblo with the cultural center and museum. An individual who identified as being from one of the eight Northern Pueblos said, “Change is inevitable…changes are a bit too much like the BTR. With cultural revitalization it is about adaptation, too. Don’t have a problem with it…the problem is when money becomes the focus. Try to revitalize the games, foods, laws—try to cultural revitalize any of these aspects is very good but the outcome can be problematic—overly focused as a means to get money out of it” (2, interview). A Pojoaque tribal member acknowledged both the positive and negative aspects about the casino and resort. She said that it had helped the Pueblo, “it has kind of put us on the map [and it is] a place to display art and this has been a benefit to the community. Also people from the community, I have heard them say that it is not a comfortable place because they like the idea of their little community and small things. They don’t like to go there because it is too overwhelming” (11, interview).

40 In the sense of not being part of the federal, state, county, and municipal government structure found in most of the United States.
The emergence of casinos (gaming) and other entrepreneurial pursuits on tribal lands has provided some indigenous communities with a source of income to foster economic growth, cultural revitalization, and educational programs.\textsuperscript{41} However, bringing gaming to the state of New Mexico has been a long and arduous process for many Pueblos including Pojoaque.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures/buffalo-thunder-casino.png}
\caption{The Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino at the Pueblo of Pojoaque. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)}
\end{figure}

In 1991 former New Mexico Governor Bruce King refused to sign gaming compacts with two tribes. Gary Johnson pledged his support for the gaming compacts and he defeated Governor King in the gubernatorial election of 1972. However, the New Mexico Supreme Court (\textit{State ex. Rel Clark v. Johnson}) ruled that Governor Johnson was not authorized to sign gaming compact agreements with the Pueblos in 1995. In 2000 the Attorney General sued the gaming tribes for non-payment of “revenue-sharing.” As part

\textsuperscript{41}The U.S. Supreme court case of \textit{California v. Cabazon}, set the precedent in the U.S. in regard to Indian gaming policies. The court ruled that if state law prohibits any form of gaming, then tribes in that state may not take part; however, if state law regulates any form of gaming, then the tribes in the state may engage in gaming free of state control. The court ruling led to the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988 that sets forth an economic rationale for Indian gaming on Indian reservations as the primary goal and established a National Indian Gaming Commission to review and approve gaming programs on reservations. It also categorized gaming into three classes I, II, and III.
of this court case, the New Mexico State Legislature reviewed new gaming compacts with the tribes and they were approved in 2001. All tribes settled their dispute with the state with the exception of the Mescalero Apache tribe and Pojoaque Pueblo. Pojoaque cited the unfairness of the “revenue-sharing” requirement for 16 percent gaming profits that were to be given to the state.

In 2004 the Mescalero Apache settled their dispute with the state of New Mexico and signed the 2001 gaming compact. The Pueblo of Pojoaque was the last gaming tribal community that settled its dispute with the state; it signed the 2001 gaming compact in 2005. In 2007, the New Mexico State Legislature approved amendments to the 2001 gaming compact. Nine tribes—the Pueblos of Laguna, Sandia, Isleta, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Ohkay Owingeh, Taos, and Tesuque as well as the non-gaming Pueblos of Nambé and Picuris—signed the 2007 amendment.42

The gaming enterprise at Pojoaque and other Pueblos have helped them pay for government services and social service needs for tribal members.43 Some Pueblos in New Mexico have also experienced a decrease in unemployment numbers and an increase in per capita income due to gaming. Gaming income represents 60 percent of Pojoaque’s annual tribal budget, allowing it to finance social programs such as the expansion of law enforcement, a major sewer and water project, land acquisition, monetary contributions to the Pojoaque Senior Citizens Center, Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, and the Boys and Girls Club, as well as academic scholarships for tribal members wishing to pursue higher education (Pueblo of Pojoaque n.d.:15).


43 Through these annual gaming revenues, the Santa Ana Star Casino was voted one of the top ten best places to work in New Mexico in 2008 and 2009 by the New Mexico Business Weekly.
Along with this economic revitalization project, Pojoaque Pueblo’s tribal council decided to build a cultural center and museum in 1988 where the tribes’ people could reconnect to their arts, Tewa language, and culture. According to the Pueblo’s own documents, the development of and plan for the cultural center and museum at Pojoaque Pueblo came from a need to preserve Pueblo history, artistic and cultural work, and material culture.44

The Poeh Center moved to a different location at the Pueblo and opened to the public in a new, much larger space in 2005. The current museum has classrooms and studios, and offers art workshops for Pojoaque Pueblo Tribal members and other indigenous peoples. The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum provides a venue for the display and sale of this traditional indigenous artwork (Ortiz 1991:6). From Memorial Day to Labor Day, visitors can watch artists make baskets, pottery, and jewelry along with other artwork. Visitors come from all over the United States as well as from other countries such as Australia, Germany, Japan, and England.

Contemporary Pojoaque Pueblo people are of “mixed ancestry” (Lambert 1979:326). In 1970 there were 46 residents in Pojoaque (Johnson and Yenne 2004:40). The 1985 Census through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) counted 83 enrolled tribal members. The 1990 Census from the BIA counted 177 enrolled tribal members; in 1995 there were 162 enrolled tribal members (BIA). In 2005 the total tribal enrollment was 367 (BIA) and in 2007 there were 373 Pojoaque Pueblo tribal members (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2). The Pueblo’s population includes many children: “According to the New Mexico Voices for Children-Kids Count Special Report of 2005, the 2000 Census

reported that of the 311 Native Americans living on the Pueblo, 123, or 40 percent of the population, were under 18 years old” (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:2–3). In 2011 I was told there were about 426 enrolled tribal members (59, interview), and that, in 2012, there were more than 430 Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members (47, interview).  

The Pueblo of Pojoaque rebuilt its kiva in the 1990s. This has been a source of tremendous pride for community members who view it as the “focal point of the community’s spiritual and community rebirth” (Pojoaque Pueblo n.d.).

In addition to a public library that is open to both tribal members and the general public, the Pueblo also has a boys and girls club, a wellness center, and tribal housing (also known as White Sands) for Pueblo of Pojoaque members. In addition, the Pueblo of Pojoaque Learning Center focuses on promoting healthy and organic eating as well as offering traditional Pueblo art classes.

Language revitalization is an important part of Pojoaque Pueblo’s cultural revitalization. In 2012, U.S. Representatives Martin Heinrich, Ben Ray Lujan, and Steve Pearce introduced legislation to reauthorize the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act for five additional years. This act would support language immersion programs. Many of the Pueblos in New Mexico have prioritized learning their native language and this has primarily been addressed through Pueblo Indian language retention programs that specifically focus on the younger generation, including at Acoma Pueblo, Zuni Pueblo, and Pojoaque Pueblo. At the Pueblo of Pojoaque, language is

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45 The Pueblo of Pojoaque determines tribal membership by lineage, not by blood quantum.

46 The Pueblo has not used casino funds, but instead relies on funding from the federal and state governments for the housing project with Pojoaque providing the land, labor, and staff (Pueblo of Pojoaque 2007:3).

47 This act was named after Esther Martinez (Ohkay Owingeh), an educator and avid Pueblo storyteller, who made it her life’s mission to preserve the Tewa language. In 2006 the act was signed by President George W. Bush, which authorized funding for tribal programs that work to retain Native American languages.
viewed as crucial in maintaining cultural identity. A tribal member said, “revitalization of language is extremely important. Many at the Pueblo do not speak Tewa” (77, interview). During the period of my research, the Pueblo of Pojoaque was working on creating a Tewa language dictionary for their Pueblo and the daycare program was offering Tewa language instruction to youngsters. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member told me that from kindergarten through high school students have the option of taking Spanish or Tewa. She said that the “programs are ongoing—with [the] language program…but there is a lot left to revitalize” (98, interview). University of New Mexico anthropologist Erin Debenport brought her team of linguistic students to Pojoaque to offer workshops in the Tewa language in 2011. In 2012, a Tewa language class was offered to tribal members and other Pueblos underway at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. The tribal historian was also working with a committee on creating “Tewa Talk,” a mobile phone application that would be available to tribal members as another way to learn the language.

The history, culture, and traditions at Pojoaque are gradually being recovered. The Pueblo’s tribal sovereignty is inseparable from their economic and cultural revitalization plans and projects. Yet the path to reclaiming tribal sovereignty for the Pueblo’s tribal members has not been an easy task.

In 1995, due to the dispute between the state of New Mexico and the Pueblo of Pojoaque over the state’s attempt to collect revenue from Pojoaque’s gambling enterprise, the state threatened to shut down Pojoaque’s Cities of Gold Casino. In return, former Governor Viarrial threatened to shut down US 285/84 through the Pueblo and install tollbooths along the route.
In addition to issues over gaming revenues, Pojoaque tribal members have also been embroiled in protecting their water rights. In 2002, for example, the state tried to block Pojoaque Pueblo from irrigating its golf course and from using water for the planned Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino. Pojoaque was also a plaintiff (along with three other tribes) in the *Aamodt* water rights case.\(^{48}\)

Pojoaque Pueblo has also reclaimed some of its original land as part of its cultural revitalization. In 2008, the Pueblo purchased La Mesita Ranch in Pojoaque Valley, and thus reclaimed 139 acres of former tribal land. Since its purchase in 2008, the Pueblo has requested that this property be exempt from property taxes, citing that it was part of the original Pueblo of Pojoaque land grant. In 2010, the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department ordered Santa Fe County to exempt this land from property taxes.

Pojoaque and other nearby Pueblos will continue to confront challenges especially in regard to land and water rights in the future. A failure to tackle these modern day issues would threaten the Pueblo’s sovereignty and cultural survival. Having supplied a brief account of New Mexico history and Pueblo of Pojoaque history, I now turn my attention to identity issues in Northern New Mexico.

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\(^{48}\) *State of New Mexico v. Aamodt* was the longest running federal court case relating to the issue of water rights pertaining to the Rio Pojoaque Basin in Northern New Mexico. In 1966, State Engineer Steve Reynolds filed a lawsuit against more than 900 people and four Pueblos with irrigation rights on the Tesuque, Nambé and Pojoaque river systems. For a good timeline of the case see *Santa Fe New Mexican*, “Aamodt Chronology” posted January 8, 2011. After years of litigation, the parties finally reached a settlement with the building of a regional water system as a significant component of this settlement agreement (Bushnell 2010:1). President Barack Obama signed the *Aamodt* water rights settlement legislation in 2011.
Chapter 3

Anthropological Conceptions of Identity, Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity and Identities in Northern New Mexico

Identity continues to be a complex issue worldwide. A major development in contemporary anthropology\(^\text{49}\) has been a shift from viewing culture as a structure to conceptualizing culture as something “not fixed,” due to history, politics, globalization, nationalism,\(^\text{50}\) economics, race, gender, class, and power. This new anthropological framework examines how culture is negotiated by a broad worldview of entities from corporations to the worldview of cultural minorities in western nation-states. As such, culture has acquired a range of different meanings that require reflection and analysis...because the significance of contemporary culture, or rather: cultures, has enormous implications for everyone’s conception of self [Van Meijl 2008:165].

Keeping this anthropological construct in mind, identity is sometimes fraught with disagreement, can be contested and is an individualized, often private, personal experience.

I have created an account of Pojoaque Pueblo that “is partial and located” (Kondo 1990:8) and intended to emphasize the “complex individual identities of the people” (Kondo 1990:9). To make some interviewees feel more comfortable when discussing identity, I was open to questions they had regarding my race and ethnicity. One research participant said that he expected to see a “stout, Anglo woman,” and was caught off

\(^{49}\) I consider the history of anthropology and the discipline’s treatment of indigenous peoples as “specimens” of scientific study in Chapter 4 on museum history.

\(^{50}\) Lynn Meskell (2002) traces archaeology’s relationship with national and state identity formation. She argues that archaeology’s relationship with nation building cannot be ignored and that the “[i]ssues of nationalism and archaeology cannot be separated from larger global processes such as colonialism and exploitation” (Meskell 2002:289).
guard when he saw me arrive for our meeting. He assumed my appearance would match my “Caucasian sounding” name.

Erving Goffman (1959) noted that public life is like a theatrical stage, and people are constantly changing or fixing their identity depending on the setting and circumstance. Goffman’s analyses have contributed to the ever-expanding literature of symbolic interaction in the social sciences. A participant spoke of his participation at Native American national conferences and the various roles or identities at work. He said that when he attends national meetings with indigenous groups from across the United States, he forefronts his overall Pueblo identity and he notices that other meeting participants from other Pueblos will sometimes seek out attendees from the other Pueblo communities in New Mexico. However, when he goes to local seminars and gatherings in New Mexico, he feels pride for his specific community identity and draws a distinction at times between the eight northern Pueblos and the southern Pueblos. Another individual spoke in similar terms:

In class [during a] lecture, I say, sometimes outsiders ask me, “What kind of Indian are you?” I usually tell them my Pueblo identity…that I am Pueblo Indian. Then if pressed further, I might get more specific and say “Santa Clara Pueblo.” This is my overall identity when speaking to other people [44, interview].

Indigenous identity is neither self-evident nor intrinsic. Instead “self-representation…is never simple or straightforward—and even less so when that ‘self’ is a group that has always been internally differentiated culturally, politically, and economically” (De La Cadena and Starn 2007:23).

Anthropologist Dorinne K. Kondo also employs Goffman’s terminology and theory in her ethnography, *Crafting Selves, Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (1990). During her fieldwork, Kondo underwent multiple
conceptions and phases of self-hood and identity based on her interactions at work (public sphere) and at home (private sphere). Like Kondo, I also place my identity and myself in this dissertation study in Chapter 7 regarding a face-to-face incident with a non-native visitor at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum.

Being raised by non-Hispanic white (labeled as such on the U.S. Census form) parents who encouraged me to participate in multi-cultural activities and to think critically about the world, I am certainly not a novice when it comes to examining and discussing the identity topic. In truth, it really bothers me as an ethnic minority woman when I come across studies laden with old, theoretically recycled concepts that lump peoples of the same race and ethnicity because of their supposedly analogous characteristics. These studies tend to highlight differences between, rather than focusing on similarities to, the rest of the human population, thereby creating unwanted stereotypes of peoples by portraying them as “other” or “exotic.”

In Playing Indian (1998), Philip Deloria explains the role of the Other in American society through the centuries, especially during nation building. Deloria argues that indigenous groups have been something that Americans (non-natives) have compared themselves to in order to experience both national and personal identities. He says, “We construct identity by finding ourselves in relation to an array of people and objects who are not ourselves. Every person and thing is Other to us. We situate some Others quite closely to the Selves we are calling into being; others, we place so far away as to make them utterly inhuman” (Deloria 1998:21). Deloria claims that categorizing is part of human nature and it helps us as individuals make sense of the world around us.
He writes by “situating ourselves, we define our identities as individuals and as members of various groups” (Deloria 1998:21).

The construction of American Indian identity has mainly been through a European, white, and male cultural lens (Deloria 1998:20) and has often depicted Native Americans groups as “uncivilized” in relation to the rest of the nation. These racist depictions linger today. I witnessed the use of ongoing stereotypes of Native Americans and other minority groups in America during encounters between museum staff and visitors at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. Othering is so prevalent that it excludes many people from membership in mainstream society. People constantly compare themselves and others based on a certain set of criteria, which become a standard for the cultural group. Failure to fit these particular standards results in exclusion from the group.

In this regard, Kondo’s postmodernist line of thought that “the liveliness and complexity of everyday life cannot be encompassed by theoretical models which rely on organizational structures, ‘typical’ individuals, referential meanings, or invocations of collective nouns like ‘the Japanese’” (Kondo 1990:8) is especially meaningful. Such generalizations do not contribute to the direct dialogue we (anthropologists included) ought to be having about the diversity of ethnic and racial minorities even within the same community, and generates ridiculous, and often dangerous caricatures about a group of people.\(^5\) Whenever possible, the “voice” of the research participants is

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\(^5\) I re-visit my argument in Chapter 1 about visitors’ preconceived ideas and tourist expectations (Urry 2002) regarding what constitutes a real “Indian” Pueblo and where these assumptions originate in a later chapter on the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum.
emphasized (see Sturm 2010) rather than an outside observer dominating the ethnographic text.

The U.S. Census Bureau is considering adding Latino and Hispanic to the list of government-defined races, instead of having it specified as an ethnicity. In the 2010 census more than 21.7 million people “went beyond the standard labels and wrote in such terms as ‘Arab,’ ‘Haitian,’ ‘Mexican’ and ‘multiracial.’” The unpublished data, the broadest tally to date of such write-in responses, are a sign of a diversifying America that’s wrestling with changing notions of race.”

The U.S. Census has been given free reign and authority over the categorization of peoples and has been influential in shaping the perceptions of identity for more than two centuries. Angela Wanfalla’s (2010) research on the census in New Zealand found that “while these categories were used to define a population, the census statistics that emerged did not reflect the everyday reality of the people concerned” (Wanhalla 2010:107); that conclusion could also be applied here in the United States.

Pojoaque Pueblo, Pueblos in New Mexico, and other Native American groups are not immune to changing notions of ethnic and racial boundaries, especially with respect to who should be counted as a tribal member (Allen 2002; Deloria 1998; Lambert 2007; Sturm 2010; among others). When talking about Pueblo identity, I rely on local concepts, perspectives, and the “lived identity” (Hervik 1999) or “locally defined

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53 For example, the Cherokee tribe recently moved to ban 2,800 descendants of black slaves also known as “Cherokee Freedmen” from their citizenship rolls. Some wealthy Cherokee tribal peoples had slaves in the 1800s who worked on their plantations in the South. After the Civil War, in which the Cherokee fought for the South or the Confederate States (slave states), a treaty was signed that guaranteed the freed slaves tribal citizenship and they were considered to be tribal citizens with the right to vote in tribal elections under the 1866 treaty between the Cherokee tribe and the U.S. Government.
identity” (Allen 2002:3) disclosed to me by those who participated in this research study and whom I deem to be the experts on this issue.

In *Blood Narrative, Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* (2002), Chadwick Allen writes that “American Indians and Maori share much in their responses to settler colonialism and in their assertions of indigenous identity” (Allen 2002:2). “Like American Indians,” Allen contends, “Maori did not conceive of themselves as a single cultural or ethnic group until Europeans described them as such, and their locally defined identities have persisted into contemporary times” (Allen 2002:3). These “locally defined identities”—how people perceive and present themselves to others—that are the most important when talking about Pueblo identity in New Mexico. As Guthrie notes, these local identities pertain to “their particular pueblo, tribe, nation, language family, or clan, or by some other affiliation” (Guthrie 2005:28). I now consider how anthropological concepts of identity informed my research and how these concepts relate to contemporary Pueblo of Pojoaque identity.

**Implications for Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity**

Some tribal members and non-tribal members believe the Pueblo of Pojoaque does not follow the path (*poeh*) of a traditional Pueblo. Members of other Pueblos often see identity as tied to ceremony and deep-rooted cultural traditions based on a life-long learning process in which tribal elders play a significant role. I was told that past cultural ceremonies and traditions were lost when the Pueblo of Pojoaque stopped functioning as an organized tribal community and its members left. Current Pojoaque tribal members have relearned ceremonies and traditions from nearby Tewa Pueblos.
Due to long-standing controversies over what it means to be “recognized” as American Indian (based on land, blood, race, kinship, long-standing cultural traditions, language, etc.), many members of other Pueblos do not feel that Pojoaque is a “traditional” Pueblo. However, as literary scholar (and Cherokee National member) Chadwick Allen points out,

Government officials, social scientists, and indigenous minority peoples themselves have disagreed over whether biological kinship, language, culture, group consciousness, community endorsement, personal declaration, or some combination of these “objective” and “subjective” criteria should be used to recognize “authentic” indigenous status [Allen 2002:15].

Whether or not Pojoaque is a “legitimate Pueblo” or authentic indigenous community is not the focus of this research. However, since the federal government recognizes the Pueblo’s members as Pueblo Indians, at least in one sense their legitimacy is beyond question.

By asking the other Pueblos for help in re-establishing elements of a “traditional” Pueblo identity, Pojoaque Pueblo members have reinvented their identity. I will examine the internal (Pueblo leaders, individuals in the community, other Pueblos) and external (state, government, nationalism) influences in shaping identity (Allen 2002; Deloria 1998; Horton 2010:4; Lambert 2007; Weaver 2001) as both “real and imagined” identities (Allen 2002) in Northern New Mexico.

I use the plural form “identities” in that there is more than one identity at work here, as evidenced by the varied descriptions and opinions about Pojoaque. Hilary Weaver contends that “identity” is multifaceted and is constantly developing. She believes that identity is “a composite of many things such as race, class, education,
region, religion, and gender…Identities are always fragmented, multiply constructed, and intersected in a constantly changing, sometimes conflicting array” (Weaver 2001:240).

Because several people commented to me that Pojoaque is considered the most modern and progressive of the northern Pueblos in New Mexico, I will examine the paradox between tradition and progression, since shifting demographics, ethnic and racial mixture, and changing times create issues among contemporary tribes. This issue was so important that the exhibit planners for the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum chose to highlight and feature the ongoing struggle between embracing community cultural traditions and being open to change and transformation in modern times.54

My examination of identity would not be complete without further discussion about the effect a sense of place (Basso 2002; Ortiz 1994; Relph 1976) has on an individual’s and a group’s identity. My analysis of the “identity of place” or the “significance of place” will focus on how it performs a vital role in establishing community identity (Davis 2007:70), especially as it pertains to the Pueblo communities such as Pojoaque.

I give specific attention to Pueblo and Hispano identity issues in Northern New Mexico because of Pojoaque’s perceived status as being a “mixed Pueblo.” The tricultural harmony model of Indian, Hispanic, and Anglo (as mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter) is continuously promoted by the New Mexico state tourism industry and has been largely accepted as a valid account regarding the ethnic make-up in the

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54 Furthering this community statement on identity is the blending of both tradition and modernization to Native American arts and crafts, which is embodied in the mission at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum, (this aspect will be analyzed in Chapter 8).
Southwest. Others, however, see it as “an Anglo American invention that came to define the Southwest as an American region” (Guthrie 2005:22). This portrayal does not reflect an accurate reality of racial and ethnic admixture that has been in existence for centuries among Pueblo and Hispano communities. As a result, this rhetoric of the tri-culturalism in New Mexico “silences a tense history of intermixture between Hispanics and Pueblos, instead portraying each group as static, homogenous, and bounded” (Horton 2010:8).

Because cultural identity and representation are conditional, disputable, and certainly not ahistorical (Clifford and Marcus 1986), labeling an individual or a group is risky and can often be divisive. Weaver’s terms for indigenous group identity construction seem most useful for this study. To her, “self-identification or self-perception” refers to an enduring learning process of cultural awareness and understanding (Weaver 2001:244) that fits well with Pueblo understandings of identity as a lifetime process. For example, communities such as Acoma and Zuni have certain steps or rites of initiation that an individual must complete in order to pass on to the next phase or level of life. Weaver (2001:246) also employs the concepts “community identification” (a sense of belonging having to do with traditions, customs, shared histories, and homeland) and “external identification” (identity that is constructed through non-native perspectives).

While non-natives (academics, politicians, governments) have played a large role in forming indigenous identities, there can also be arguments and grievances among indigenous groups so that one’s tribal affiliation is put into question; tribal members from Pojoaque Pueblo are not strangers to this. As Weaver argues, “[t]he roots for this type of
behavior probably lie deep in the accusers’ own insecurities about identity and racism learned as part of the colonization process” (2001:251).

Identity cannot be separated from power, class, and race (Bourdieu 1986; McGuire 1997; Thomas 2000). Those who can effectively classify people based on “race” tend to be those who hold power (in the U.S., primarily white males). In colonial New Mexico, racial classification was based on a strict system developed by the Spanish elite for all of New Spain (Horton 2010:165).

In contemporary times the so-called “descendants” of the Spanish colonists have promoted a particular story about New Mexico settlement as official state history (Horton 2010:3). External influences, such as past historical circumstances and nationalist projects aimed at uniformity (Lambert 2007), help to aid identity formation as well as notions of race and ethnicity among Pueblos like Pojoaque.

Scholar David Hurst Thomas evokes the power to name and thus to control history in his book, Skull Wars (2000), where he writes, “the power to name reflected an underlying power to control the land, its indigenous people, and its history” (Thomas 2000:4). Symbolic capital was brought into general use by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Harker et al. 1990). Capital can be either cultural capital or symbolic capital. Cultural capital consists of education, knowledge, social networks, connections, and so forth, while symbolic capital comes from the recognition by others that a particular person or group is a legitimate voice in the field. According to Bourdieu, the field can be defined

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Note 55: Field, capital and habitus are key terms in Bourdieu’s theory of practice. Theory of practice brings back the use of agency into practice (focusing on social construction whereby actors perceive, think about, construct structures, and proceed to act on that basis [subjective knowledge] c.f. Bourdieu 1986). Habitus is located inside the individual and consists of the cognitive and mental structure, whereas field lies outside the mind and is the external structure where individuals interact and compete with one another (Swartz 1998:95). “Fields denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle
as individuals or groups struggling for positions. Positions are determined by having capital. It is capital that determines power, because capital brings with it “the power to name (activities, groups), the power to represent commonsense and above all the power to create the ‘official version of the social world’” (Harker et al. 1990:13). It is through the use of this capital that the “power to produce and impose a vision of the legitimate world” (Bourdieu 1986:134) occurs. This sort of power can be seen in situations such as those where “[m]useums, collectors, nation states, and archaeologists alike are implicated in structures of power by claiming cultural and scientific authority over the object” (Lyons 2002:129).

European influences on indigenous identity in North America began with their conquest and control of Native American people. In early encounters with European colonists, Native peoples were immediately deemed inferior and became something for comparison. As historian Philip Deloria writes, “Nationalism links land, subsistence, political identity, and group destiny together, creating a clear-cut boundary between insiders and outsiders” (Deloria 1998:21). In Deloria’s opinion, the colonists “(mis)perceived real Indian people through a variety of European cultural lenses. Religion, gender relations, subsistence technology—these and many other perspectives defined and distorted the ways Europeans saw Indians” (Deloria 1998:20).

David Hurst Thomas agrees, writing about how American Indian language, customs, and religious beliefs led to the twin imagery of Noble and Bloodthirsty Savage [that] became a tool by which generations of Euroamericans would define and control Indian people. From the
time of Columbus onward, the stereotypes created by newcomers led to a near-universal failure to appreciate the intricacies and textures of actual Native American life [Thomas 2000:10].

An interviewee who identified as being of “mixed blood” or “mestizo” brought up the controversy with names and naming people, saying “there is no politically correct term for describing the indigenous peoples of North America because they refer to their tribal identity (using own terms and language)...any other description is for the convenience of the oppressors” (91, interview). In Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision, Graham Hingangaroa Smith suggests,

> We need to be careful about how we label ourselves. The critical point here is the way in which labels can become self-fulfilling prophecies—labels can contribute to perpetuating our subordination and may both produce and reproduce our cultural oppression and economic exploitation [Smith 2000:212].

In spite of this, Native Americans have not remained passive bystanders when it comes to identity construction and presentation. As Valerie Lambert (2007) argues with regard to Choctaw nationhood, Choctaw conceptions of identity also came from within their community of origin:

> Recent Choctaw history suggests, among other things, that the materials out of which leaders produce the ideas and icons that legitimize and express the nation are sufficiently flexible and polysemous that they can be selected, assembled, and deployed in different ways and with different meanings at different points in time [Lambert 2007:10].

Lambert’s argument is that community leaders have power over the narrative, symbols, and images put forth. These are not fixed, but change over time as different individuals take over the leadership roles.

The power of leaders has certainly affected the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s present vision and philosophy. The current Pueblo of Pojoaque Governor, George Rivera, has remade the Pueblo’s image to include strong support of traditional Native American arts.
Art from the Governor’s personal collection, spanning Pojoaque Pueblo, other Pueblos, and other Native American communities, is exhibited and stored at Pojoaque. Many people think of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum or the Buffalo Thunder Resort and Casino, where this artwork is on display, when they think of Pojoaque Pueblo. A tribal member from Pojoaque Pueblo offered her opinion that Pojoaque identity was expressed primarily through showcasing Pueblo arts, often from nearby Pueblos, and with less of an emphasis on other aspects of local culture. She alleges,

> It is like come here and see the art even if it is not from the Pueblo…and this can be from the smallest details, structures of the Pueblo—it is like a masterpiece. With the other Pueblos it is more of their culture—I base this off of the different experiences I have had with the others [11, interview].

Many research participants considered Pojoaque Pueblo as consisting of individuals with mixed cultural heritage and ancestry. Horton (2010) discusses the dilemma of people claiming a mixed cultural heritage in the Southwest. She talks about “public rhetoric versus private realities”—the reality is that there has been intermixture, but the rhetoric of bounded, discrete cultures has persisted into present times (Horton 2010:165). As Horton claims, this “private reality” refers to mestizaje (Horton 2010:166–167) and the public rhetoric separates Indian and Spanish people.

Pojoaque is a good example of this “private reality.” Its members are all of mixed heritage (in some cases, mestizo). In order to revive and maintain their feast day dances and community customs, the people of Pojoaque Pueblo have had to involve people from neighboring Pueblos as well as tribal members who are perceived as having mixed ancestry. But these cultural traditions, so strongly rooted in Pueblo communities and needed for Pojoaque to reaffirm and re-establish indigenous cultural identity, have also
become an aspect of a “cultural performance” (Allen 2002) and an “invented tradition” (Lambert 2007).  

Allen utilizes the term “cultural performance” to discuss traditional indigenous public performances on display for both native and non-native audiences. He states that there is often “more than one text in play during public performances of indigenous minority identities and often more than one audience to interpret the markers of indigeneity in contemporary texts” (Allen 2002:12). Lambert says that these invented traditions become symbols and markers of a continuity and link to the past for helping to “naturalize and legitimize the group not only for group members but also those located outside group boundaries” (Lambert 2007:8).

One illustration of “cultural performance” and “invented tradition” on display is the feast day dances at Pojoaque Pueblo in December. Feast days involve members of the community, other Pueblos, and the general public—this day is meaningful for participants and for the spectators. The celebration brings many people from different cultural backgrounds, traditions, customs, and socio-political beliefs together in one setting. Allen (2002) likens these cultural events and cultural performances to Mary Louise Platt’s term, “contact zones” (as was discussed in Chapter 1).

While each feast day is distinct, I borrow a description of the Tewa feast day dances from anthropologist Jill Sweet:

The dancers file out of the kiva and more slowly into the village plaza to perform. Sounds of deep male voices singing, the clatter of deer hoof rattles, and the steady, resonant beat of the drum draw the Tewa people from their homes. Parrot feathers, embroidered dance kilts, striped blankets, and fringed shawls color the

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56 Lambert makes the argument that in forming group identities they are often reconstructed as “timeless” and group members and leaders may claim them to be older “traditions” when they are in fact “new or invented traditions.” The rationale for this is to establish some continuity with the past (Lambert 2007:7–8).
event. The people have come together for dancing, singing, and feasting; they will leave with a sense of renewal [Sweet 2004:1].

For the people at the Pueblo, it is a time to feel “refreshed” and “rejuvenated” for the coming new year. “The Tewa Pueblo Indians say that they dance and sing to ‘find new life,’ to ‘regain life,’ or to ‘seek life’” (Sweet 2004:1). A tribal member who has danced in many feast days at Pojoaque explains that the dances celebrate the community’s cultural revival, but he also feels a personal sense of renewal. This particular community member also feels pride for his people and the fact that they have come so far since the village was re-established. The feast day dances become a united expression of the continuance of their Pueblo identity and culture.

Those not familiar with Pojoaque’s history may think that they are witnessing a tradition that has continued unbroken for centuries—a connection between today and the deep past they have gazed at in places such as Chaco Canyon. To some degree, however, the correct message has been received. Pojoaque’s dancers wish to assert their identity as Pueblo persons—which as a group have an undeniably deep past in the area—and the non-Pueblo visitors, at least, tend to view the dancers in terms of that identity. However, from a both a cultural and historical point of view, Pojoaque’s dances were recently implemented cultural traditions brought in from other Tewa Pueblos (in the 1970s).

Pojoaque’s lost cultural history makes forming an identity in the present even more necessary. Establishment of political and cultural identity is linked with the idea that identity can adapt and change in modern times, to become something future generations can build upon. Lambert (2007) argues that attempts to connect to a past history are common in indigenous communities that seek to reclaim something that was perceived to be lost. All cultures and peoples will “invent and re-invent” traditions from
time to time in order to have a continuous coherent narrative. Some people may view these traditions and customs as ancient (from the past) when in fact they are relatively recent, but in the end, does it really matter? Lambert argues that in a constantly changing and adapting modern world, community members find “constructions of their group identity in terms of continuity and timelessness attractive” because this adds legitimacy to beliefs, rituals, and practices (Lambert 2007:8).

Even though these feast day dances were recently reinstated at the Pueblo of Pojoaque, tribal members reaffirmed their support for demonstrating the continuance of Tewa Pueblo Indian traditions. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member who had not grown up in the Pueblo says that her community identity was strengthened through participation in Pueblo events and activities. She claims,

For me, I was not raised here...so for me strengthening identity is participating in feast days and taking part in things that are happening during the year—openings at the Poeh, and getting to know people that live here. Getting to know people that live here is really big for me. I have been treated like an outsider when I first got here and people also asked me first ‘who’s your family?’ and ‘who are you related to?’ [32, interview].

Through the acceptance of norms, decisions are made regarding who is inside or outside the group—Deloria’s Other. Lambert calls Choctaw “a political affiliation, specifically a nationality. It is not race. A Choctaw can thus assert a racial identity as white (or black) and Choctaw as overlapping and compatible” (Lambert 2007:201). Nevertheless, Lambert concludes, “Indian nations have become sites for the complex articulation of different constructions of race and identity, constructions that find their origins in the larger, non-Indian society, as well as in Indian societies themselves” (Lambert 2007:202). Some of the people interviewed provided me with instances where they were not perceived to be Indian enough—either among their own indigenous
community (internal) or in the general public (external) due to long-standing notions of what it means to be Native American in America. Some research participants recounted stories about Pueblo people from the nearby communities who had a pale complexion or light colored hair, and who were excluded from feast day dances or traditional societies due to their appearance by Pueblo leaders. Horton (2010) recounts a similar situation: in the annual Santa Fe Fiesta, who is allowed to serve in roles such as Fiesta Princess or Don Diego Vargas is often determined by whether or not one looks “Indian” or “Spanish” enough.

Literary scholar Chadwick Allen also talks about the complex struggle over control of defining who should be counted as a tribal member. He states,

The same complex struggle has motivated politically and militarily dominant settlers either to invalidate claims of native status through acts of legislation (for example, requirements of blood quantum, endogamous marriage, or patrilineal descent, or the granting/imposition of national citizenship) [Allen 2002:9–10].

In the following sections I discuss aspects of identity formation that have contributed to the formation of Pojoaque identity/identities in the 21st century: land and “blood,” contemporary influences (tradition and progression), and ideas about intermixture between Pueblos and Hispanics.

Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity: Land and Identity. Your “Pueblo identity is an individual identification because your blood line stems from that place”

Pueblo identity is closely connected to place (Demallie 1994; Ortiz 1994). In the PBS movie Surviving Columbus (1993), Alfonso Ortiz articulates,

For the Pueblo peoples—way back then as now—saw themselves as a part of the earth, as belonging to the earth rather than, you know, the earth belonging to them. They tried their best in every way to blend into the earth, to blend their lives into the surrounding environment where they lived.
This aspect of Pueblo identity has to do with a sense of connection to the land—something that was continuously brought up during my interviews. Rivers, mountains, mesas, and hills are central to a people who never were uprooted or removed from their land as other Native American tribes had been. A member of Santa Clara Pueblo relates how her identity is bound with the surrounding landscape. She claims she is an enrolled at Santa Clara Pueblo, but that she has relatives who are not members (due to the Pueblo’s strict tribal membership rules) but who consider themselves to be a Pueblo person because of their ties to the land and the Pueblo teachings they have received from their elders and their parents. She says: “Pueblo identity is an individual identification because your blood line stems from that place” (2, interview).

Chadwick Allen (2002:16) expands upon author N. Scott Momaday’s concept of blood memory. Allen argues that blood memory “makes explicit the central role that land plays both in the specific project of defining indigenous minority personal, familial, and communal identities (blood) and in the larger project of reclaiming and reimagining indigenous minority histories (memory)” (Allen 2002:16). “Blood/land/memory” should not be viewed as separate entities or distinct tropes, but must be looked at together in order to understand how race and land are intertwined and play a distinct role in the formation of contemporary indigenous identity (Allen 2002:16). Allen’s point is that these interrelated discourses of blood, land, and memory add to the struggle over defining indigenous minority identities in the 21st century and have been utilized by indigenous people to “counter and, potentially, to subvert dominant settler discourses” (Allen 2002:15) while at the same time revealing the underlying disparities that still exist between indigenous and invading peoples’ conceptions of history, as well as the underlying unequal power relations
that determine whose version of history and whose methods of historiography are considered “legitimate” and “authentic” in various popular, academic, and legal contexts [Allen 2002:15–16].

Land is a tremendous source of pride for some of the people I talked to about their tribal sovereignty and the history (memory) of their survival as a people. Basso (2002) affirms,

for what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth, and while the two activities may be separable in principle, they are deeply joined in practice. If place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of doing human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We are, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine [Basso 2002:7; emphasis in original].

The emphasis on place is not only crucial to understanding the Pueblo peoples’ relationship to their surrounding landscape, but it is also deeply embedded in how they identify as individuals being strongly rooted to their environment. A local Native American artist who identifies with both his Pueblo heritage and his Apache heritage says,

Pueblo identity is extremely strong based on the fact that we have been in the same location for hundreds and hundreds of years. We were not disrupted and destroyed. We were not scattered to the wind. Spanish people respected us as having souls, we respect our land and our location. Majority of our people speak our language. Culture and ceremonies continue to this day. We are still Indian and we still exist...We Pueblo people have a large percentage that speak language [and] identity is really strong [63, interview].

One of the differences that separates Pueblo of Pojoaque identity from that of other Pueblos is the notion the other Pueblos did not leave their community like Pojoaque did, and other Pueblos did not have to re-establish themselves from the ground up.

At the same time, the fact that Pojoaque’s members left their homeland has contributed to how other people perceive the Pueblo as having an identity that is very
different from the other Pueblos: “In the eyes of many people the moment they Pojoaque left they lost legitimacy [however], Pojoaque becoming federally recognized gave them power” (4, interview). An individual who identifies as being from one of the eight Northern Pueblos offers his assessment: the Pueblo was

re-established in the 20th century (abandoned and reestablished) while they, Pojoaque, don’t consider themselves abandoning their Pueblo, other Pueblos consider them (Pojoaque) gone. I think Pojoaque has been criticized unfairly…as I grew older and looked more into the history of the Pueblos I found there is a tradition of being able to go and seeking help to re-establish aspects of community [44, interview].

However, he acknowledged that the main difference between the other Pueblos was that with the “other Pueblos [it was only a] certain aspect that had to be re-established and with Pojoaque it is different because it re-established entire community on a village wide level” (44, interview).

Land also plays a role in if you are accepted as a tribal member and how you situate yourself in the world. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member who did not grow up on Pojoaque land said that she had lived in Santa Fe with her grandfather for many years, then moved back when Pojoaque offered new housing for tribal members. Tribal members treated her suspiciously at first, asking her who her family was, and she was treated like an outsider because she had not grown up there (32, interview).

Lambert (2007) found the insider and outsider predicament to be an important identity marker when she returned to her Choctaw community to do her research. Her status as an enrolled tribal member gave her access to privileged cultural information and a certain status as a legitimate presence. She certainly would not have been granted this status had she not been a tribal member. Lambert alleges that the Choctaw nation was preoccupied “with the boundaries that define Choctaw citizenship” (Lambert 2007:2) and
she was constantly asked if she was an enrolled tribal member. Because she was, she “shared with them formal ties of tribal citizenship that bound [them] together in a seemingly inextricable way. It also meant that there was a point at which [her] claims to being Choctaw were unassailable” (Lambert 2007:1–2). Lambert’s experiences echo that of the Pojoaque tribal member who was asked about her family identity. In general, membership in this Pueblo community is by lineage, not by blood quantum, so relatives become a “marker” for belonging. Another Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member supplied this story to provide an example of ways that residence ties to identity:

Pueblos themselves see it as three separate groups and they see it that way as well-bounded cultures. My husband is part white and part Pueblo…but I think living here has made him identify with more of his Pueblo side and I know in his artwork…he comes from that perspective—Pueblo. It is where you live and you proclaim that…you really have to choose your side here [62, interview].

**Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity: Tradition and Progression**

A common response to my query about Pueblo of Pojoaque identity was to note how Pojoaque is being identified as the most modern and progressive of all the Pueblos. The Pueblo was constantly referred to as “a business driven Pueblo” (47, interview), “self-sufficient” (27, interview), and as having a “very aggressive” economic approach compared to other, “traditional” Pueblos. The perception of Pojoaque as being the most progressive and modern Pueblo bears some analysis.

The community’s economic advancement required adapting to contemporary times by becoming business and technologically oriented. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member and Poeh Museum employee shares this perspective regarding community identity:
We are different structurally and architecturally. Our Government is different…rules are enforced and it is by the book. We are a progressive/advanced Pueblo than any other…as we have our own lawyers, own tribal courts, police, programs for other tribal members, wellness center, influential networking [89, interview].

While the Pueblo is more advanced in her opinion, Pojoaque is “still in process” of finding its identity in the 21st century. This individual acknowledges the help and support Pojoaque received from other Pueblos, but she also is adamant that even though Pojoaque identity, in her opinion, is not clearly defined, the Pueblo still has a unique identity. She continues, “We do a good job of protecting ourselves from other Pueblos’ opinions on us and on how to run things…our identity does not include other Pueblos” (89, interview).

Another tribal member reiterates this as well, saying, “We were never looking for standing or recognition among the other Pueblos. We do what we do” (59, interview).

These responses highlight the notion of the desire to establish an “authentic” identity that is separate from other Pueblos, even though the reality is that certain cultural traditions such as the songs and dances were brought over from other Pueblos.

One research participant situated herself a bit differently from other fellow tribal members. Identifying herself as being from three Tewa Pueblos, she shares this perspective on identity at Pojoaque:

I don’t perceive it to be socially distinct. But that is because I am of mixed Pueblo. I am San Juan, Santa Clara, and Pojoaque. I see myself as Pueblo and I see Pojoaque Pueblo as Pueblo…it is a Pueblo that does not have strong roots as other Pueblos and has business and technological side to it as well. With Pueblo of Pojoaque identity—I know they identify themselves as Pueblo, but not just as one Pueblo, but multiple Pueblos as they got help from multiple Pueblos and not just one to make sure everything was being included that needed to be [62, interview].

This individual saw Pojoaque as a mixture of all the Pueblos.
A Poeh Arts student from Ohkay Owingeh, who did not grow up in her Pueblo and was not raised traditionally; she moved back when she realized she needed to educate herself in her culture. This person offers this perspective on Pojoaque identity as a political one:

Their identity in the 21st century is one that is standing up for what is rightfully theirs and showing a strong Pueblo identity—everything has a price and you need to start giving and not taking…standing up for what is right to prosper as a community. I think it is socially distinct because other Pueblos started following suit, making better business decisions and willing to stand up for things that should have been done from the beginning like easements and water rights…I think in the past the perception was that Pojoaque was Hispanic, but I think the perception is changing when the people started speaking (cultural revitalization, standing up for roads, water rights). It was a quiet Pueblo before, but something changed…It was a way of reclaiming their Pueblo by taking a stand and not regarding it as just Pojoaque, but Pojoaque Pueblo [54, interview].

Some people worried about being considered “too” modern, incorporating too many aspects of Western society into their community. One tribal member who has lived in the Pueblo for most of her life identified Pojoaque as being “more modern,” but went on to say,

I think we have lost our sense of community as a people. It seems everybody is for themselves. We try to keep our traditions alive. The hard part—other people take community and people’s attitudes toward that—people don’t have the unity type attitude. It would be nice to see more strengthening of identity. But I think we have become victims to westernized civilization with modern technology like cell phones, computers, people lost that touch because of modern technology. As we go into western ways of living there is still a hint of our past identity [98, interview].

This individual alluded to the persistent struggle that all communities encounter between adopting modern elements into the community yet also being true to the traditions and cultural origins. In fact, lack of community involvement in Pueblo cultural activities (with the exception of holidays and traditional gatherings) was an oft cited response by research participants (11, interview) and some Pueblo of Pojoaque members had a
difficult time stating how they were strengthening their individual Pueblo of Pojoaque identity in the community. Some tribal members quietly acknowledged that they did not participate much in community activities.

A research participant who associated herself with one of the Tewa Pueblos felt that Pojoaque had lost its way (in large part due to its previous history) and was “less culturally rooted” than the others, but was nevertheless “a Pueblo because of its land base” and “our familiarity of it from earlier on” (2, interview). She stated,

Pojoaque is entrepreneurial and it is more so than any other Pueblo. This Pueblo does not have cultural depth and knowledge. It is western in thought and they seek the path of being entrepreneurial. This is more so than any other community. The Pueblo put itself on the map with the cultural center and museum. It was a good thing because many individuals can come here to learn and would not have the opportunity if the cultural center and museum were not here. It also probably engendered more funds because of what it has established. But it is about entrepreneurship [2, interview].

The notion that the Pueblo had newer origins (community re-establishment period in the 1930s) causes others to consider Pojoaque as having less “cultural depth and knowledge.” However, it seemed that for Pojoaque it was easier to embrace modernization and technology since tribal members had been forced to adapt and assimilate earlier. A tribal member spoke about the difficulty of going back to past traditions and discusses his viewpoint of the Pueblo embracing both the Tewa world and the outside world. He says,

I would define it as a Pueblo that has embraced both the Tewa world and outside world. I view it as a Pueblo that has tried to truly balance it and they learned to balance both sides of which world to live in…Tewa world is the hardest to live in and the outside is the easiest. In order to sustain ourselves we must live outside culture and try to keep balance with outside and Tewa world…and this is both good and bad. I think with other villages, they live in the Tewa world and very little of the outside world. And this is their choice. [49, interview].
Therefore he expressed the opinion that it would be up to the younger generation who would have this “cultural depth and knowledge” that they could pass onto future generations.

Other people mentioned the revitalization of the arts and crafts as contributing in part to strengthening traditional Pueblo identity. This is important because the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum views art as assisting in identity formation. A Pojoaque Pueblo member asserts,

The Pueblo is a trendsetter when it comes to Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. We came from nothing to something. Center and resort put us on the map. The idea around all of them (center and resort) was the revitalization of Tewa culture. Kept it going. Having respect for art and crafts of Tewa culture is what helped Pojoaque to get where it is now [77, interview].

Another tribal member described how taking art classes at the cultural center helped increase her understanding of history and culture and in turn strengthened her identity as a tribal member from the Pueblo of Pojoaque. She maintains,

I have gained an understanding not only of a part of our culture, but history as well because it all ties to one another. Certain beliefs from our Pueblo are reflected in the classes and from the classes I learn something about that like greater respect for mother earth and the four divisions. Even with pottery designs I am finding that being in class they actually have meaning and symbolism in art and they are not just designs [54, interview].

Some Pojoaque tribal members do not view being both a traditional and a progressive Pueblo as a conflict. The people I spoke with hoped that the general public begins to see that Pueblo people are living in the present, can adapt to ever-changing circumstances as they did at the time of Spanish colonization, and are innovative.
Pueblo of Pojoaque Identity: Outside Views versus Pojoaque Pueblo’s “Private Reality”

As Pueblo Indian scholar and director of the Northern Pueblos Institute, Matthew Martinez, contends in *White Shell Water Place* (2010),

American Indians have always been central to the imagining of the Southwest. To visitors over the last century, Pueblos, Navajos, and Apaches seemed to be “exotic, primitive people” who lived sufficiently in a harsh but beautiful and captivating landscape. This image making in the Southwest was promulgated by social scientists, in the fields of anthropology and history to capture the experiences of a vanishing race, as well as by entrepreneurs of the tourism industry [Martinez 2010:109].

According to a 2013 article in *Condé Nast Traveler*, Santa Fe ranks number four in the top ten cities to visit in the United States.57 A local tour guide, who works for an international educational agency based in Santa Fe (“Road Scholar”) mentions that tourists “come for the diversity and culture [with the] strong point [being the] landscape and Native Americans, too” (85, interview).

The Road Scholar guide reveals that some visitors have asked him if they will need to change their money in New Mexico, not realizing the state is part of the United States. And they hold onto stereotypes that Native Americans (and Pueblo people in particular) are still living in the past (85, interview). A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member talks about the stereotypes: “[It is] marketing working against us, not wanting to represent us right…we are all mixed culture, majority here have Hispanic last names…it is prevalent in this area because of the history of Spanish invasion” (69, interview).

A member of one of the eight Northern Pueblos characterized the Spanish impact as being long-lasting and having immense implications for the Pueblos and Hispano

communities. However, he acknowledged that most people perceive them as being two very distinct and separate groups. He addressed this “private reality” by stating,

[This] brings us back to 1540. Spaniards come and stayed and influenced our culture tremendously, socially and in every way. A lot of Hispanic people consider some of the Pueblos as being an amalgamation of the two people [due to the] intermarriage that occurred. For many Pueblo people there is Spanish blood among our people and vice versa. There is a lot of Pueblo blood among Spanish people. It is an ethnocentric view and a big denial of the fact that there was no mixture between the two groups. Due to the ancestral history that occurred in the area, there are a lot of Pueblo families that do have Spanish blood. People identify more with dominant culture for whatever reasons. Although without our identity as Pueblo people we stand to lose a lot. There is a total separation. Hispanic and Pueblo—two distinct groups of people. It is fine, but again all based on identity; peoples’ perceptions and how they choose to identify themselves define their communities [78, interview].

Some of my research participants recognized and acknowledged that there was mixture and intermarriage between the two peoples, but strongly held onto to their Pueblo identity, citing cultural factors such as land, language, and traditional customs. A research participant mentioned the cultural aspect and that where one resides plays a huge role:

There is no doubt, no question that certainly we are a mixed race. But it (the identification of three distinct groups in New Mexico) is culturally, not biologically determined...there is a divide—we live in communities and we hug the land and this occurred way back when [with the] land grants—that helps with your identity and you guard it religiously [2, interview].

In her assessment, racial mixture between the two groups is far less important than the sacred customs and traditions that Native Americans and Hispanos simply do not share.

Nevertheless, race still plays a role in identity formation and one’s physical appearance becomes the first marker of identity. In *Becoming Indian, The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (2010), anthropologist Circe Sturm focuses on how social meanings and values become part of determining racial and
cultural differences between groups. She makes the argument that the notion of indigenous blood is a powerful one in contemporary American society. Sturm alleges,

Among American Indians, one of the more potent idioms of racial and cultural difference is that of blood. More than just a metaphor for lineage, descent, or kinship, blood is often imagined as a shared biogenetic substance that links all the people of a tribe to one another. Relatives and, by extension, tribal members share common blood in both the past and the present, and it is believed that tribal descendants literally have some of the same blood substance as their forebears [Sturm 2010:7].

Some research participants also acknowledged that how they are perceived and how they view others is also determined by race. It is not so much how much indigenous blood they possess, but if they do not look “Indian” enough they are often discriminated against. An artist who identifies as being from Acoma Pueblo but also acknowledges mixed ancestry told me that he was not permitted to participate in Feast Day dances at Acoma due to his Hispanic (Mexican and Spanish) heritage. He identifies as Mexican and Apache on his father’s side, but people kept calling him Spanish and he was treated differently than his half-brother (whose father was from Acoma and who can trace his direct lineage to war chiefs and important religious leaders from the Pueblo). His brother has been initiated into a clan, but he has a difficult time participating in certain ceremonies because he is not considered full Acoma (29, interview).

In spite of the reality of racial mixture among the Pueblos, Hispanos, and Anglos, some research participants are still upset about what the Spaniards did during colonization. These strong sentiments flared up during the opening of the Oñate Center\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{58} An individual who worked at the Oñate Center and whom I interviewed for this research project said the Center was the vision of Emilio Naranjo, who was the political boss of the county at the time and patron of the area. His vision was that the Center would rival Carlsbad Caverns to drawing tourists. Shortly after the Center was built, he was dethroned. The Center opened in 1994 and took about a year and a half to build. This individual said he believes there needs to be more of a dialogue between Hispanos and Pueblos and that there is much hostility to the Oñate Center from the Pueblo communities. For example, he related a story to me about when he was sitting at a ceremony at the Pueblo of Picuris and was next to some tribal members and they asked him where he worked and he said the Oñate Center and
(see Guthrie 2005 for a history of the Center) and many of the research participants, those who identified as Pueblo, have never stepped foot in the Oñate Center. An individual who says she is from one of the eight Northern Pueblos avows, “I will never go to the Oñate Center or Zozobra because my Pueblo identity does not allow me to merge the activities” (2, interview).

Many people expressed the viewpoint that they were “okay with three kinds of people (Spanish, Anglo, Pueblo)” (63, interview) being represented in New Mexico and this was of absolute necessity for their own Pueblo’s cultural survival. A tribal member from a Tewa Pueblo states that she views Pueblo and Hispanos\(^{59}\) and separate and distinct:

For a very long time there has been a struggle with how they are called. Are they Spanish, Mexican, Chicano? I think the older generation here still have that struggle. But there is a distinct Pueblo and Hispano identity here. There has been a blending, but there is a distinct identity…with the language—I took three Spanish courses, but I could never get it down…I think it was a subconscious resistance on my part because of what they did and so I will never be able to speak Spanish [2, interview].

Native New Mexican Diane Reyna, in her chapter in *White Shell Water Place*, states, “based on my life experience in New Mexico and because I was raised within a

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\(^{59}\) The individual I spoke to at the Oñate Center also mentioned that from his perspective Hispano identity was “in transition.” He says,

There still is a romanticism of how people connected to land and there is actually under the concepts of sustainability, local dealing with food…to purchase locally beginning to take hold [and] in turn encouraging more agricultural involvement than in the past. The drain of Hispanos moving out of area is slowing down now—people [are] looking to reconnect with their roots and all that entails a “romanticized” way of life. I am just talking about Northern New Mexico as I have lived in a rural setting for forty-five years [90, interview].

This is very similar to Horton’s study of the Santa Fe Fiesta, where she finds that Fiesta organizers, who identify themselves as Hispanics,

even as they have become both economically marginalized and a demographic minority…have refashioned the event in symbolic opposition to Anglo control of what was once a former homeland site…all have been invented and re-created over the course of the twentieth century. These hallmarks lend Fiesta its new significance—not only as a claim to ‘tradition’ but also as a veiled protest against contemporary circumstances [Horton 2010:2].
Pueblo community, I have an allegiance to a Pueblo worldview” (Reyna 2010:126). Despite identifying more with her Pueblo culture, Reyna acknowledges her mixed ancestry, believing the public and popular opinion of Hispanics and Pueblos being separate and pure as ceremonies like the Santa Fe Fiesta depict is an injustice to the reality on the ground. She argues the need for a shift toward recognizing the complex historical narrative in New Mexico and having an honest dialogue about this diversity. She maintains that the “mixed ethnicity and ancestry of northern Nuevomexicanos reflects a more realistic and authentic history that is worthy of a public celebration” (Reyna 2010:131; emphasis in original).

Horton’s chapter cites Pueblo-Hispano relations “both as public ideal and as private, lived reality” with the “private, lived reality” pertaining to the histories in the southwest of mestizaje and intermarriage (Horton 2010:160). The Pueblo of Pojoaque fits the description of Horton’s notion of “private, lived reality” and most Pojoaque tribal members were frank about where they came from and their “mixed” heritage. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member who was raised in the Pueblo identified more with the native culture captured the idea of not straying initially too far from the public ideal of three separate cultural and ethnic groups unless pressed to be more specific:

I am Native…but I am not all Pueblo. I am one half Hispanic and one half Pueblo…I do more with it, the Pueblo part—my traditions and my way of life, but there is no preference to say I am either Native or Hispanic. For the most part, people here say I am Native…[however,] in the beginning, when pressed for a response, might go deeper into their identity…but it depends on who you talk to [27, interview].

Another Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member claims she had both Hispanic and Pueblo blood and was having to identify with both: “I lived a more Pueblo way of life (belief system, traditions) than the Hispano way. My mother and my sister are more
opposite…my sister used to be married to a Mexican and she identifies more with that.

In New Mexico it is like there are two different—two people that are here” (98, interview).

In regard to Pojoaque’s perceived status of having a mixed identity, a Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said,

I will admit that we are mixed…but I think there are certain cultural stereotypes, cultural prejudice from just being from Pojoaque. In the last ten years I think the whole cultural aspect has changed, some views have changed, there is more involvement from the Pueblo through traditional aspect to help with the culture. The economic side has enabled us to help other villages themselves through programs that they need. We are promoting issues and promoting unity within the villages. When I grew up, I was picked on, and always told that I was not Pueblo and I didn’t know anything…and I really didn’t know anything at that time. With mentality of tribe (raise kids) it is still Pueblo despite being mixed and having people of different races. The mentality is to be one with identity (Pueblo) even though may not have one hundred percent blood, same quantum, still fighting to preserve quantity, mentality…mental state to use it or lose it [49, interview].

While non-natives had preconceived ideas about what constituted an Indian Pueblo, native people also held traditional views of what comprised a Pueblo. Pojoaque did not fit the usual Pueblo definition for various reasons—the history of previous near abandonments, too few people in the community speaking the Tewa language, 60 Westernized culture, thought, and lifestyle (too entrepreneurial and businesslike), and the non-continuance of some traditional ceremonies, among other things. A woman from one of the eight Northern Pueblos captured the overall sentiment in the area regarding Pojoaque, but also revealed that she was not considered a “real Indian” either due to her mixed ancestry:

60 In my interviews, language was cited as one of the most important elements in understanding one’s own traditional culture. I discussed in Chapter 2 how the Pueblo of Pojoaque was trying to revitalize the Tewa language.
People used to tell me that they are not real Indians (the people of Pojoaque) and that I was hanging out with Pojoaques that they were “wannabe Indians” and I was only hanging out with them because I was not a real Indian. I am half. My dad is white. I think tribal membership and certificate of blood is genocide. These are created by the Government to show us that we are special and different...this is really helping to eliminate the Indian population as fewer and fewer people will be able to fit into these categories [4, interview].

At Pojoaque, identity is much like cultural revitalization—ongoing and continuous. As Sturm says,

Questions of race, identity, and political power are critical for Indian country, as they are for indigenous peoples around the world. Because Native Americans in the United States are defined not only by federal and tribal policy but also by public and scholarly discourse, competing definitions of indigenous identity spark conflicts between federally recognized, state-recognized, and self-identified Indians. All of these groups are forced to wrestle with controversial questions concerning who is really Indian and who should have the power to decide [Sturm 2010:9].

But it is these “real stories” that provide a better reality of how people make sense of their world. Identity matters in the 21st century, not just to anthropologists, but as Sturm (2010) maintains, to Native Americans (those federally recognized and those not federally recognized), the government, and ethnic minority groups. Identity is also personal, since it matters to the people who at a certain point in their lives felt excluded due to a specific set of criteria and laws that have been in place. Identity issues and disputes will continue to have a great impact on public opinions, policies, and laws as evidenced by the changes underway at the U.S. Census.

61 “Wannabe” is a “derisive term that usually refers to white people. For some Native Americans, however, the term also includes Indian descendants with a radically white physical appearance who do not have community or cultural ties” (Sturm 2010:9).
Summary and Conclusion

No one can offer a complete and accurate narrative of identity because it derives from individual responses based on individual experiences. If anything, identity is a personal and sensitive matter. Many research participants expressed this viewpoint, which made the subject of identity much easier to talk about. Their stories of preconceived ideas and assumptions that had been made about them, as well as their feeling of sometimes being caught between two cultures, were not very far off from the ones I have faced.

While identity depends on life history and social norms, and is “constantly in flux” adapting with changes in the environment (4, interview), I found enough shared ideas to suggest an outline of contemporary Pojoaque Pueblo identity. A tribal member talked about how she would define the Pueblo’s identity in contemporary times, once more evoking both tradition and progression:

Probably evolving, probably more accessible to the modern world than some of the other ones that are steeped in traditional rites of passage. [Being] modern doesn’t mean we have to let go of traditional values as we tend to embrace those as much as evolving into the water concept of what it means to live here…evolving into the water—more open to change, more able to like adapt (the way that things do change). Some of them [Pueblos] are very, very traditional—don’t like change, there are others like us that adapt and can change. Each one has an identity and way of looking at things [32, interview].

Also, water (Pojoaque’s place name as the “water-drinking” place—c.f. Guyette 1996:83; Lambert 1979:327–328) is closely tied to Pojoaque’s identity as a people. I therefore find similarities with Pueblo of Pojoaque identity to Davis’ definition of the connection between cultural identity and place:

it is a web of understanding between people and the environment, between people and their neighbours, between people and their history. And it has to change, and be permeable to new ideas, new practices and new people. Cultural identity
demands that in a changing world we try and hold on to what is important from the past and adopt the best features of the new [Davis 2007:70].

When I was talking to people (tribal members and others) about what sets Pojoaque apart from surrounding Pueblos, I was struck by how often my research participants would describe Pojoaque as the most modern of all the Pueblos and the most progressive and economically advanced Pueblo in the Southwest. One Pojoaque community member shares this perspective:

It is not just revitalization, cultural maintenance [is] needed because time change is so quick…technology is at your fingertips and progress is on one front…culture is in the forefront which is integrated with technology…[we] teach arts, photography, video as much as we can [because] culture can be used in a technological form in the future for tribal members if they needed it [59, interview].

Culture and technology go hand in hand at Pojoaque, and this combination was a key to strengthening group identity. There seems to be less of an emphasis about what Pueblo of Pojoaque identity was traditionally. As a Pojoaque tribal member noted:

“Traditionally members of Pojoaque have lived the non-Indian way and have had to make themselves learn it” (47, interview).

Yet learning the culture takes time and it takes people who are “competent” enough to perform and to understand these traditions. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member reflected on this life-long learning process of understanding his culture. He said he is still learning about the responsibility of being Tewa, which was something he did not necessarily grow up with or fully appreciate until now. He says, with the Tewa world there is

a lot more responsibility. [It is] not all about you, but community and all of the family and outside world. When I grew older, I learned that I was responsible for the young kids and elders, not just me…my son is learning he has responsibilities
to the elders and taking care of the younger ones as well. It is about reinforcing the mentality of being Tewa [49, interview].

According to research participants from Acoma and Zuni Pueblo, their history and traditions are very much remembered and incorporated into their daily existence. In fact, a few people from some of these communities mentioned what clan they belonged to and how this played a part in their identity overall as a people, as well as their traditional role in their Pueblo. Nancy Mithlo’s discussion regarding Native American artists mentions how they are often considered to be the cultural spokespeople for their tribe among non-native people but their own people may not deem them competent for this role. In many indigenous communities, “[c]ompetency in this regard is defined by wisdom, age, and cultural rights, not economic or social success in the mainstream” (Mithlo 2008:72).

Since the Pueblo of Pojoaque is still trying to come to terms with its past history and cultural traditions, it becomes a difficult task to pinpoint what exactly is Pojoaque identity without prior knowledge of the local history and culture (Lambert 2007:20). The considerable gaps in Pojoaque’s history (and all that was lost as result of those gaps) were reconfirmed during my interviews with tribal members. “Learning who you are will take many, many years at the Pueblo. But we may finally be seen as a traditional Pueblo. Other villages [are] more traditional than us and they learned to preserve culture, where we are educating and preserving ourselves now” [49, interview].

As a result of Pojoaque’s emphasis on economic sustainability and cultural revitalization projects, their identity as a modern Pueblo in the 21st century continues to evolve, adapt, and change. A Pojoaque tribal member believes that Cultural revitalization is necessary because of Pojoaque history. We were cut off due to the loss of members and we had no one to pass it on to and we had to start over. At Pojoaque, the goal is to get or be confident in who we are and why we
are and know our history and the traditions behind that before back in the
day…but it will take generations of revitalization…it keeps getting more intense,
but revitalization never stops…every Pueblo goes through revitalization [47,
interview].

One reason why Alfonso Ortiz’s book, *The Tewa World* (1969), is well respected
in social science circles is because it presents an insider’s view of Pueblo culture,
identity, and history. I was raised outside the Southwest, which presented problems both
during and after my research. My lack of local knowledge limits my analysis of
underlying issues that an insider (such as a member of a Pueblo), would know from
personal experience. As an outsider, I did not want to bring up issues that were
considered culturally sensitive material. I did not discuss religion, for example, and a
few of my interviewees reminded me of this as well.

As Smith states in his chapter on “Protecting and Respecting Indigenous
Knowledge” in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (2000), scholars need to be
more cognizant of academic accountability:

I think that an important point that has been missed in the postmodern critique is
the level of accountability in regard to developing transformative outcomes for
the Indigenous communities they purport to be serving. If a person is genuinely
working on behalf of the community, then the community will also be part of the
whole process, not simply be passive recipients of a grand “plan” developed
outside themselves [Smith 2000:213].

In the next chapter, I shift my discussion from the topics of history and identities
to an investigation of the history of museums. This examination will consider the origins
of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and the
emergence of tribal museums in New Mexico and other countries like Mexico.
Chapter 4

Museum Representation in the United States and Mexico and National Museums as Instruments of Colonization

History of Museums in the United States

Prior colonialist practices, whether conscious or unconscious, are embedded into the fabric of many modern day museums, often influencing the exhibit content and the interpretation of material culture. They are, as Ames notes, “about cannibals and glass boxes, a fate they cannot seem to escape no matter how hard they try” (Ames 1992:3).

In this chapter, I look at the Smithsonian Institution in the United States and the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico, in order to understand how identity and representation are shaped in a museum setting. Reactions to past and present museum practices in national museums have led to the international emergence of “ecomuseums,” tribal museums, and community cultural centers that present individual cultures through “their perspective.” This discussion will include a brief overview of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), considered the first museum to provide a “multitribal” (Jacknis 2008:31) approach to exhibition and representation by including a broad range of indigenous groups from the Western Hemisphere.

I also discuss how some contemporary museums counter critiques of previous museum practices and are moving forward into the 21st century by listening more closely to local community concerns and creating exhibits more relevant to indigenous peoples. These modern exhibits strive to present indigenous culture not as an “artifact” or something “locked back in time” (14, interview). In particular, I compare two museums that are responding to criticism about excluding indigenous voices in exhibits: The
Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany, the first indigenous owned and operated community museum in Mexico. “Museums,” as scholar Ira Jacknis notes, “come in many varieties of size, subject, and mission, and they change and evolve over time. They also have multiple functions” (Jacknis 2008:3).

A Brief Historical Sketch of Museums

Museums originated in Europe, with the very earliest collections residing there (Jacknis 2008:4). However, the new European public museums were based on elite tastes and continued to be guided by high-society interests. Since then, these “[e]lite world views [would] underlie the collection and display of objects and symbols of wealth, knowledge and power in society” (Kaplan 1994:3). Individuals within the ruling class owned the collections and granted a select few the opportunity to view these possessions. Because access to the collections was limited, scholarly work was minimal (Ames 1986:2). In time, this changed:

The eighteenth century concerned itself with discovering the basic natural laws that formed a framework for the universe and humanity, and intellectuals of the day wished to preserve in museums natural specimens as well as human artistic and scientific creations [Alexander 1979:8].

During the French Revolution (Bennett 2005:89), museums became “collections in the name of the people…the Revolution transformed the museum from a symbol of arbitrary power into an instrument which, through the education of its citizens, was to serve the collective good of the state” (Bennett 2005:89). Museums contributed to the wider dissemination of knowledge, functioning as institutions where people could further their learning and cultural education. Access to collections was eased compared to earlier times and the educated classes “came to believe that they had the right to expect that the
collections would present and interpret the world in some way consistent with the values they held to be good” (Ames 1986:7). Jacknis ties the development of anthropology with museums: “It was also at about this time that anthropology became a specialized scholarly profession, in Europe as well as America. Among the earliest homes for the discipline were the university museums of anthropology” (Jacknis 2008:5). Museum displays and exhibits were dedicated to the study of the “primitive races of mankind” (Baker 1998:27).

Anthropologist Kathleen S. Fine-Dare claims that museums “have always featured displays of power: great men, great wealth, or great deeds. They have always been sites of controversy and cultural struggle, and they have always been about displaying, demonstrating, and ‘ratif[y]ing claims of superiority’” (Fine-Dare 2002:21).

Museums of this era intersected with colonial conquests of indigenous groups by becoming official institutions to spread the importance of science to the educated classes of society. For James Smithson (see page 113), the new U.S. national museum should advance science and the acquisition of knowledge. The vast “spread of museums in the 19th century was apparently spurred by burgeoning science and capitalism in the West” (Kaplan 1994:1). There was also the promise of bringing dead specimens to life in museum exhibits, which included not just of objects, but also the representations of actual people (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:165).

The underlying assumption of superiority through academic pursuits permeated disciplines and many museums at this time. Anthropologists’ view of Native Americans as a vanishing culture helped establish a viewpoint that survives today. Thomas writes: “Native Americans, seen as fragile and unable to coexist with civilization, became a
heroic yet sadly vanishing species, victims of their incompatibility with an advancing, superior form of humanity” (Thomas 2000:xxix). The idea that Native Americans were a vanishing race gave Western society and culture the task of salvaging what remained of indigenous peoples’ culture, an emphasis on collecting and cataloguing cultural items, artifacts, and objects.

American cultural anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, who studied under Franz Boas, subscribed to a similar philosophy. Kroeber wanted to document everything about Native Americans before they disappeared, seeking the “‘uncontaminated’ Indian, free of Euroamerican influences” (Thomas 2000:84). He studied Ishi, who Kroeber believed to be the last living descendent of the Yana Indians. Ishi lived in Kroeber’s Museum of Anthropology (the Phoebe Hearst Museum) in Berkeley, California, where he was “surrounded by the artifacts and bones of Indians who had died out” (Thomas 2000:85).

At the time, an exhibit featuring Ishi was immensely popular and large crowds would come to see it. Ishi’s life became a public exhibition; he gave live demonstrations to the public on things deemed “Indian,” such as fire making and creating arrowheads (Thomas 2000:86). However well intentioned, researchers such as Kroeber viewed Ishi as the last “Indian” of his time and place, and promoted this impression to attract visitors to the museum.

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62 A curator from the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology notes that Franz Boas was influential in shaping changing perceptions of Native Americans with the Kwakiutl exhibit he was helping to create. He maintains, during an age where the dominant position was that Native peoples were of no importance, and deserved to be swept away by the industrialization of the world, he led the effort in this country (including through museums) to claim that Native peoples were worth being interested in. Given his own background, he knew a thing or two about racism, and consciously fought it his whole life. He and his colleagues may not have pushed museums as far as some people would like today, but the fact remains that they pushed museums as far as they could imagine and get away with [personal communication, 2012]. Scholar Cressida Fforde also discusses Franz Boas’ concerted effort in trying to combat Nazi racism in the 1930s. He went to considerable efforts to mobilize British and American researchers to thwart Nazi propaganda on race. However, due to the times, this campaign was largely unsuccessful for Boas (Fforde 2004:37).
Another way museums of anthropology and history became closely connected with colonization was through the concept of “progress.” It was thought that museums “would help educate humankind and abet its steady progress toward perfection” (Alexander 1979:8). However, “humankind” included only those who were white, educated, upwardly mobile, and who supported this 19th century philosophy.

Scholar Tony Bennett maintains that the central purpose of earlier natural history, science, and anthropology museums was to help people understand the evolution from simple to complex societies by promoting an idea of progress. Bennett calls this from “chaos to order” and from “error to truth” (Bennett 2005:2). Museums showed the progression of tools from simple to complex: the digging stick and the spear, the bow and arrow, the sword, and the pistol and the rifle. The idea of progress was to glorify the technological accomplishments of modern day humans and explain why progress was necessary. Progress was not extended to indigenous or minority communities who were interpreted as being “primitive, backward, and uncivilized.”

Instead, “The value of the primitive—signaled by objects of spiritual or ritual use, hand-made by people in ecological harmony with nature—was a romantic vestige of the same conceptual opposition that saw indigenous people as fundamentally different: pre-rational, pre-capitalist, prehistoric” (Glass 2002:97). Yet this value helped define American identity. Exhibit symbols and ideas became incorporated into the national framework of what it meant to be both non-Indian and Indian.

Philip Deloria (1998) argues that the appropriation of Native symbols and objects is based on an unfinished American identity, a concept that he borrows from D. H. Lawrence, who claimed Americans faced an identity crisis. Deloria states, “First,
Americans had an awkward tendency to define themselves by what they were not…Second, Americans…want[ed] to savor both civilized order and savage freedom at the same time” (Deloria 1998:3). Americans embraced the notion of progress through economic advancement and infrastructure, yet yearned for previous times where everyday life seemed less hectic (an idealized past) and where people were at one with nature and the environment. Indigenous groups, perceived to embody these characteristics, were romantically seen as children of nature. Images of Native Americans living in peace and harmony with the natural world were assembled through displays at natural history and science museums, often depicting indigenous peoples with flora and fauna.

National museums also connected with colonial conquests of indigenous peoples by presenting them as objects for curiosity and entertainment. World fairs, museums, and public exhibitions emerged during the same time at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Bennett 2005:4).63

The activities of fairs, museums and exhibitions interacted with one another…nineteenth-century natural history museums through Europe and North America owed many of their specimens to the network of animal collecting agencies through which P.T. Barnum64 provided live species for his various circuses, menageries and dime museums [Bennett 2005:5].

The exhibits featured exotic objects such as “shells, fish, animals, minerals, and geological specimens” (Alexander 1979:50). Barnum also exhibited living people including “General Tom Thumb and assorted midgets, giants, and bearded ladies”

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63 Anthropologist Weigle discusses tourism in New Mexico and how the Indian Department in 1901 established a museum at the Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico with support from Fred Harvey. It was supposed to be the premier ethnological museum in the United States and was “modeled after exhibitions and sales at world’s fairs” (Weigle 2010:79).

64 Additionally, Barnum had a fond interest in natural history and science museums. He made gifts from his collection to the Smithsonian Institution, American Museum of Natural History, and Tufts College (Alexander 1979:50).
Barnum’s goal for all of his exhibits was to entertain by creating wonder, shock, and spectacle.

Following Barnum’s lead other entertainers at the time were also instrumental in the creative and popular culture side of society. The 1893 Chicago World’s Fair was modeled on a similar ideology, depicting the ascendancy of the United States among the world powers and the self-confidence and optimism of the country, which its White citizens believed to be the most advanced in history. Ideas of racial and cultural superiority and inferiority were reified by the architecture and physical layout of the expansive exposition. The White City, as the fair was designated, was the crowning achievement of this civilization [Baker 1998:56].

At the World Fair, living ethnological exhibits were segregated from the White City’s architecture and rides that were meant to represent progress. The ethnological exhibits “were arranged in an obvious evolutionary hierarchy that resonated with many White Americans’ seemingly intuitive understanding of racial inferiority. The darker races were at the bottom of the midway and the lighter races at the top—closer to the White City” (Baker 1998:57). Categorizing peoples, especially indigenous groups, became official anthropology in the United States as well as a mantra of science and Social Darwinism of the time: “the U.S. nation-state has used classificatory and categorizing schemes derived from academic anthropology as well as other sources to demarcate identities” (Field 2002:6). This “official” anthropology was practiced by the Smithsonian Institution to capture and catalogue Native Americans before they vanished and “included material

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65 Social Darwinism proponents “believed it was morally wrong for the government and charity organizations to provide public education, public health, or a minimum wage because these efforts only contributed to the artificial preservation of the weak” (Baker 1998:28). In addition, Social Darwinism created a racial hierarchy “beginning with the inferior savage and culminating with the civilized citizen” (Baker 1998:29). Scholar Herbert Spencer was a major proponent of this philosophy and gave Social Darwinism is scientific credibility.
culture, languages, and antiquities: in short, all the traits that made Indians ‘Indians’” (Field 2002:9–10).

Museums moved from “objectification” to “subjectification” where collections were mainly scientific and empirical (Roberts 1994:24). Subjectification signified “the interpretation of native cultures on the basis of Eurocentric standards and methodologies” (Roberts 1994:24–25) where art was “separated from life, and a collection of objects was often chosen to represent an entire people” (Roberts 1994:25). Object centered collections were dominant and the museum going public began to associate the objects with the particular ethnic or minority group on display.

National Museums: The Smithsonian Institution

I resume my discussion regarding museums as “colonial instruments” by investigating national museums such as the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City and how these museums are utilized “as formers of a national identity.” After my discussion about national museums, I then focus on how contemporary museums are responding to past criticisms. I look at a regional museum in New Mexico and later provide a cross-cultural example of an indigenous based museum in Mexico, which presents an introduction to these local community museums as well as a comparison for my subsequent chapters on the tribal museums in the Southwest.

Museums are influential establishments because “they serve to remind us of who we are and what our place is in the world. Their power is due to their ability to operate at a variety of levels: they are significant to us as individuals, as a member of a community,
even as a statement of nationhood” (Davis 1999:24). This idea offers a perfect starting point to discuss the early years of the Smithsonian Institution.

The Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846 with funds from English scientist James Smithson. Smithson was a well-traveled researcher who wanted to advance science for the benefit of society. Smithson’s dream was “the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men” (Alexander 1979:50). The Smithsonian today is the world’s largest museum complex, covering diverse topics such as natural and cultural history, American history, air and space, and the fine and decorative arts.

Smithson was not the only one to contribute to the Smithsonian Institution’s enduring legacy. Expeditions to collect scientific specimens and cultural objects began under the Smithsonian’s programs and research. The National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), which is part of the Smithsonian Institution, opened to the general public in 1910. Much of its collection came from the United States Exploring Expedition (1838–1842) as well as subsequent journeys. From explorations such as these the “materials from all branches of science, including more than five thousand artifacts, were transported back to the United States. They were first exhibited for public view in the Great Hall of the Patent Office…and later transferred to the Smithsonian.”

Private collectors also contributed to today’s Smithsonian. George Gustav Heye (1874–1957) became an avid collector of Native American artifacts and “[b]y 1914,
collecting became his prime occupation. Nothing took priority over his quest for things Indian” (Force 1999:6). By 1916, Heye had amassed a huge collection of some 400,000 objects from North, South, and Central America (Force 1999:9). Ultimately, he used his inheritance to establish the Museum of the American Indian (MAI) in New York City, the foundation for the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian.

**Overview of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)**

Ronald W. Force, a former director and president of the MAI, states,

> The Museum, which began as the hobby of a wealthy New Yorker, ha[d] become a beleaguered entity by the late 1970s. Its new Trustees sought a new home and a new potential for the old MAI. Most importantly, they sought a new role for the relationship of the MAI with Native Americans. In attempting to find a solution to the Museum’s needs, this last factor never was forgotten [Force 1999:xx].

The MAI trustees initially felt a union with the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) would be beneficial. However, negotiations broke down and political leaders took different positions. Vine Deloria, an American Indian historian and activist, clearly stated his position about the AMNH matter:

> We do not intend that this valuable collection simply be stored in warehouses in New York City to be hidden from the public for the sake of a few museum keepers and collectors [c.f. Force 1999:277].

Deloria felt the “posture of the American Museum of Natural History toward American Indians is degrading and derogatory. It conceives of Indians as part of the fauna and flora of North America and therefore destined to be exhibited between the fish and birds” (c.f. Force 1999:277).

During this time of mediation for the museum’s new site, businessman H. Ross Perot and Senator Daniel K. Inouye offered their services. Perot wanted the museum to be moved to Dallas, Texas, and was willing to donate several million dollars for the new
Due to political infighting, delicate negotiations, and the museum’s uncertain future, the MAI went to court over the AMNH matter with the judge’s decision indicating that the merger with the AMNH would violate Heye’s intentions (Force 1999:341). As a compromise, Senator Inouye, acclaimed the need for a memorial, a commemorative icon, for Indians. Inouye and other congressional leaders’ sensitivity to Native American issues was essential to the establishment of the new institution, the National Museum of the American Indian. The Smithsonian played its own crucial part, for which it will long be remembered [Force 1999:xx].

This narrative regarding how the NMAI came into existence demonstrates how politics, money, and the media play a role in museums (Force 1999:319). Fortunately, all this jockeying led to a philosophy of “creating materials dealing not only with traditional Indian cultures, but also with current Native Americans and their modern society” (Force 1999:97).

Heye’s collections were moved to the Smithsonian Institution and are housed at three locations: the George G. Heye Center, which opened in lower Manhattan in 1994;
the Cultural Resources Center\textsuperscript{70} in Suitland, Maryland (completed in 1998 and fully opened in 2003); and the main exhibit building on the Mall in Washington D.C., opened in September 2004. The National Museum of the American Indian was “the first national museum dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition of the life, languages, literature, history, and arts of Native Americans” of the Western hemisphere.\textsuperscript{71} Its “collections span all major culture areas of the Americas, representing virtually all tribes of the United States, most of those of Canada, and a significant number of cultures from Central and South America as well as the Caribbean.”\textsuperscript{72} A First Nations person and Poeh Arts student said the NMAI “went to a great effort to see people, as living and breathing but all those things are still evolving, still moving, and not static. This is not lost in the past” (14, interview).

The NMAI was the first national museum in the United States dedicated to serving Native American constituencies and interests. The opening of the NMAI led to the acknowledgement by the United States government that indigenous people are still active participants in the creation of their past and future, and also continue to shape United States history. The museum features a theater, a café featuring foods from indigenous groups worldwide, a museum store, three permanent exhibit galleries, and rooms for seminars and meetings. Despite the museum’s vast holdings of artifacts, “it is focused on culture, not objects” (Jacknis 2008:33).

\textsuperscript{70} According to Erikson, the Cultural Resources Center in Maryland, would come to “embody the final component of the NMAI: the Fourth Museum concept. The Fourth Museum concept was an effort to institutionalize collaboration with and openness to communities; the intention was to share responsibility of research development and collections use and interpretation with Native American communities through a variety of architectural, programmatic, and technological strategies” (Erikson 2008:65).


While the NMAI has been criticized for the content and presentation of its exhibits, this museum was the first to pay tribute to indigenous peoples’ impact on American society and history as well as to “recontextualize” and reframe representations of Native American cultural objects, artifacts, and material through the use of “[c]ollaboration among Native American community members, scholars, artists, anthropologists, and museologists” (Erikson 2008:71). A tribal member from one of the

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73 In particular, some critics viewed the *Our Peoples* exhibit at the NMAI negatively and some museumgoers did not know how to respond to it. According to a museum professional, it was “not [considered] a traditional museum model [and] this confused people [as a result] this exhibit got a lot of criticism” (44, interview). See also Lonetree and Cobb (2008).
Eight Northern Pueblos and a staff member at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum said,

The NMAI [was] long overdue. [They] should have had a museum a long time ago. [I] think they did a good job. [They did a] good job representing our people. Yet we are so distinct. There are some Native American groups that aren’t even federally recognized and it is a lot of people to represent because we are all unique and distinct. [There are currently] 565 Federally recognized tribes in the U.S. I think it is admirable of them and they have done an exemplary job in raising funds and keeping it open [with the] exhibits and programs in these budget-restricted times [78, interview].

**The NMAIA and NAGPRA**

The National Museum of the American Indian was established through the National Museum of the American Indian Act of 1989. The act went further than merely establishing the Museum, however. The NMAI Act governs the repatriation process for the Smithsonian museums and requires further oversight and outreach to indigenous communities. An example of this outreach is the formation of the repatriation office (in the National Museum of Natural History building in Washington, D.C.). The law also required the establishment of a repatriation review committee consisting of seven members, two of whom must be from Native American Tribes. The external oversight committee assists in repatriation matters and is required to offer fair and objective monitoring and supervision.

The NMAIA, as amended in 1996 (Watkins 2006:21), and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 “acknowledged for the first time that American Indians and Native Hawaiians are entitled to their ancestors’ remains and objects that were buried with them” (Falk 1998:42).\(^{74}\) NAGPRA protects Native

\(^{74}\) Erikson contends that the NMAI Act was crucial in evolving relationships between museums and Native American groups. The NMAI Act “mandated that the entire Smithsonian Institution, not just the new museum, had to inventory
American ancient burial sites that contain artifacts and often human remains and “affirms the rights of lineal descendants, Indian tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to custody of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred items, and objects of cultural patrimony held in federal museums or agencies, or in museums that receive federal funds” (Watkins 2006:24). NAGPRA required all federal departments, agencies, or instrumentalities of the United States (except the Smithsonian Institution) to complete summaries and inventories of Native American materials in their control (including those held by nongovernmental repositories). The affected organizations were also ordered to ensure compliance regarding inadvertent discoveries and intentional excavations of human remains conducted as part of activities on federal or tribal lands [Watkins 2006 24–25].

The NMAI Act was amended to be very similar to NAGPRA regarding the repatriation process of covered materials, but specifically applies to the Smithsonian Institution museums. I direct the reader to the NMAI website that discusses the NMAI Act in more detail (http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/repatriation/) and to the book, Contemporary Native American Issues: Sacred Sites and Repatriation (2006) by Joe E. Watkins.

In particular, NAGRPA forces museum professionals and curators to have an open dialogue with Native Americans. NAGPRA allows federally recognized tribes to...

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75 Many controversies still surround the interpretation and implementation of the NAGRPA. Native American scholar James Riding In has critically examined NAGPRA’s role in museums and Native American communities (Riding In 2000). At the 2012 Indigenous Book Fair, a conference that was hosted and held at the University of New Mexico, he contended that repatriation is still an ongoing struggle for many indigenous communities and less than 1/3 of culturally affiliated objects have been returned. It also should be mentioned that the NAGRPA does not apply to the Smithsonian Institution and that the Institution does not have to comply with the law. Additionally, if a Native American group can claim cultural affiliation to an object, some of them opt out of taking the material out of the museum collections due to various reasons such as inadequate storage space in their communities and therefore it is under the custodianship of the museum. However, tribal members are allowed unlimited access to these culturally affiliated items.
reclaim human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects from museum collections, excluding the Smithsonian Institution, if they can prove cultural affiliation (Fine-Dare 2002:144). NAGPRA defines cultural affiliation as a “relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present day Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization and an identifiable earlier group” (Trobe and Echo-Hawk 2000:141). While the law was intended to give Native Americans rights to reclaim their ancestors’ remains and cultural objects long held in museum collections and to improve relations between anthropologists and Native Americans, the law has been under constant scrutiny since its passage.

Many indigenous peoples, such as the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (who claim a cultural affiliation to Kennewick Man or the Ancient One) and the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe (who similarly claim Spirit Cave Man), regard the fight for repatriation as closely connected to issues of sovereignty. These Native American peoples claim a cultural affiliation to ancient remains through oral history, close proximity to the land where the remains were found, and cultural traditions, and believe that any study of the remains would be detrimental to their traditions and disrespects their ancestors.

Nevertheless, the passage of NAGRPA opened up more opportunities for Native Americans and resulted in the need for a place to house these collections, many of which were previously held by museums. More important, alternative museums like tribal museums have become a form of empowerment for indigenous groups (Clifford 1997;
Erikson 2002; Isaac 2007; Lonetree and Cobb 2008) and serve as a past reminder of how far Native Americans have come in their fight for sovereignty and representation. As Nahwoosky (1994) notes, indigenous groups are unwilling to be defined by anthropologists and others as subjects of academic study. Indian people offer explanations on Indian terms and present culture directly from tradition bearers, so that it cannot be misinterpreted by outside scholars. This is a strategy for eliminating stereotypes, validating the beliefs and practices of native groups, and retaining intellectual property rights to cultural patrimony [Nahwoosky 1994:88].

The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico

In Mexico, as in many other countries discovering and taking pride in their cultural patrimony became a top governmental priority and remains so in modern times. Museums in the major cities of Mexico, Veracruz, and Oaxaca “are the ceremonial headquarters of the patrimony, the place where it is kept and celebrated” (Canclini 2005:115).

In the nineteenth century international researchers who visited Mexico emphasized the importance of preserving historic monuments and finding a building to house the nation’s artifacts from pre-Columbian times. Scholars in Mexico, many who had a European style education, “began to record their experiences, write grammars and vocabularies for the various languages spoken in Mesoamerica, as well as the history of the ancestors” (Bernal et al. 1972:7). The National Museum in Mexico opened in 1825 and “marked a longstanding institutional commitment in the public life of the newly formed nation” (Arroyo 2004:1). Its collections were first amassed during the time of the

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76 Cultural patrimony can include artifacts, ceremonial objects, remains from burials, and oral testimonials.

Spaniards, who were fascinated with indigenous artifacts and objects. From the time of colonization, “in the eyes of the medieval Christian conquerors from Spain, the physical remains of the conquered civilizations—Aztec, Maya, Zapotec, and others—were converted into exotic examples of idolatry” (Morales-Moreno 1994:171).

Fortuitous discoveries also led to a sense of need to safeguard the country’s patrimony. In 1790, the Aztec Calendar Stone was unearthed in the Main Plaza of Mexico City (Caso 1938:9). Dated to pre-Hispanic times, it is considered “the most notable archaeological relic preserved in the Museo Nacional, and is the most widely known and commented upon” (Caso 1938:9). It was set up for public viewing in the Cathedral, where it remained until 1885, then was transferred to the National Museum (Caso 1938:9). Since that time, it has “heralded the Mexican tradition of safeguarding and exhibiting archaeological objects for the country’s history and regarding them as prized cultural property” (Solís 2004:60).

In 1910, the National Museum of Archaeology, History, and Ethnography in Mexico City, opened to the general public. However, this museum was short-lived and its collections were moved under presidential decree to the Castillo de Chapultepec, which became the National Museum of Anthropology. In the 1960s the museum finally received its own building. Today,

The National Museum of Anthropology houses the most important archaeological and ethnographic collection worldwide, representing the Pre-Hispanic past and the multicultural panorama of Mexico…The collections lodged, Ethnographic and Archaeological, are important worldwide, as the fame of its building, designed to house 120,000 works of great artistic and cultural relevance


Mexican President Porfirio Diaz was instrumental in the formation of the then National Museum of Archaeology, History, and Ethnology in Mexico City. Diaz ruled Mexico for 35 years (1876–1911) with the goal of “modernizing” the country. This included bringing economic prosperity to the region through overseas investments and bringing in foreign capital. In part, this was accomplished by taking part in museum exhibits in countries such as France, Italy, Spain, and the United States (Morales-Moreno 1994:179). Diaz not only sought to educate the Mexican citizens and the rest of the world about the “treasures” Mexico had inherited, but also “used the display of archaeological pieces to open up international frontiers of trade and development outside Mexico” (Morales-Moreno 1994:181). He believed it essential to display this ancient material to prove the country’s independent patrimony (i.e., to reject the image of Mexico as a byproduct of Spain, and to create a new “Mexican” identity based on its native roots) and encouraged the exploration of pre-Columbian sites.

Diaz’s regime had lasting influences on the link between nationalism and museums in Mexico—“the ways in which nation and state are constructed and the manner in which those constructions enter into social knowledge have to do with consensus about what is and what is not legitimate” (Nagengast 1994:109). Diaz was the first museum visitor during the National Museum’s opening in 1910 (Morales-Moreno 1994:181). He made subsequent visits to the museum and “approved or disapproved the content of the exhibit halls, particularly those displaying the history of the fatherland” (Morales-Moreno 1994:182). The state, through its own ideological, social, and political apparatus determined what organizations and institutions should be given legitimacy and priority. In the era of Diaz and subsequent regimes, the museum served to “legitimize the
practice of successive Mexican governments’ gathering together all objects considered of ‘use and national glory’” (Morales-Moreno 1994:177).

The National Museum of Anthropology embodied the nationalistic ideology of promoting Mexico’s past history through its indigenous groups (Canclini 2005:267). All over the world, “Nationalism increased as spreading industrialization heightened competition for markets and resources. Towards the end of the century it was encouraged by intellectuals who sought to promote solidarity with their own countries in the face of growing social unrest by blaming economic and social problems on neighbouring states” (Trigger 2003:148). The promotion of nationalism became a matter of pride for individual countries, like Mexico, to showcase both the talents and downfall of ancient civilizations.

The nationalistic use of ancient objects continued after the Revolution of 1910, as “the quest for a national identity embraced the idea that Mexicans could be united by the same cultural patrimony” (Kaplan 1993:103). “The Revolution of 1910 has accorded to the image of the Indian a special privilege, that of serving as one of the major, official symbols of nationalism” (Batalla 1996:53). Through mestizaje, a focus on continuities among the Mexican peoples denied the diversity of the peoples of Mexico and thus the legitimacy of indigenous groups. This ideology of homogeneity, not uniqueness, has continued to define the Mexican state in contemporary times where “[d]ifference is suffocated and dissolved in all encompassing embrace of national and revolutionary fraternity” (Alonso 1988:43). The nation learned to embrace this interpretation of mestizaje, a blending of Euroamerican and indigenous influences. “One nation could be

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80 Although mestizaje (which is a political ideology based on progress and national unity) has been attributed to Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, who wrote La Raza Cósmica (1925), it was also part of anthropologist Manuel
welded by engendering respect and love for a common cultural patrimony, guided various efforts to preserve Mexico’s ancient and indigenous past. This past and its presentation were given a major role in Mexico’s museums” (Kaplan 1993:119; see also Chorba 2007:12). The goal was a perfect society under one flag, in one country, with tradition and modernity blending into “continuity without conflict” (Canclini 2005:138).

While nationalism and public education remained top priorities for the national museum, it also contributed to further silence indigenous peoples’ voices about their own identity. The museum showcased the glory of the ancient past of indigenous groups, but scant attention was given to the contemporary issues these groups faced. The exhibits “separate[d] ancient culture—the pre-Columbian indigenous—from contemporary culture” (Canclini 2005:129). These museum displays chose to emphasize artifacts, objects, and histories that indigenous groups were said to have left behind. Their culture was interpreted by outsiders (namely the government) and incorporated into the grand historical narrative of Mexico, but they were left without a voice.

The appropriation of archaeological and ethnographic objects from indigenous communities for national museums in Mexico City, Oaxaca City, and Veracruz still contributes to the colonization of native peoples. La Ley Federal of 1972 states that anything found below the ground that is of historic, cultural, artistic and/or archaeological value falls under the jurisdiction of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) (Breglia 2006:46). Thus, INAH can come into indigenous communities and take away archaeological artifacts to be stored or displayed at government-run museums. In essence, the government has seized indigenous peoples’ cultural patrimony for the

Gamio’s agenda for incorporating indigenous groups into the national culture. Mestizo identity refers to those people of mixed Indian and Spanish descent. Gamio believed in a “fusion of the races” (Kaplan 1993:103).
purposes of the Mexican state: “The Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City conceives of the originary patrimonies as something essentially linked to the nation” (Canclini 2005:267).

Since the museum’s founding, the national museum has displayed the great cultures of Mexico, with each hall or exhibit dedicated to a particular indigenous group. In the Hall of Preclassic Cultures, ceramic figurines, monoliths, and vessels—the objects people left behind—were conspicuously displayed. The hall dedicated to the Oaxaca region depicts Mixtec culture as “exemplified by polychrome ceramics, reproductions of codices, and extraordinary specimens of metallurgy, mainly gold” (Solís 2004:81). Rather than seeing these indigenous peoples as living and alive, the exhibits depicted them as deceased and long gone. As one famous Mexican archaeologist said regarding the collections in the national museum of anthropology:

To sum up, the Zapotecs were great potters, architects, astronomers, and mathematicians intellectually advanced and with a profound feeling for religion, while the Mixtecs were great painters of codices, ceramists, lapidaries, and gold—and silversmiths, whose meticulous works of art were the expression of an acute sensibility [Bernal et al. 1972:101].

Unfortunately, these national museums, while they purportedly serve both indigenous and non-indigenous audiences, have served to justify the latter and exploit the former. As part of the government apparatus in Mexico, museums served elite interests and the dominant society in shaping the history of the state. “Latin American nation-states adopted modernization and national culture as their project. Their attempt to be both modern and culturally pure led to metaphysical versions of the nation’s historical patrimony that did more to justify present domination than they did to describe the past” (Canclini 2005:xiii).
What was happening at the national museum in Mexico was echoed in the United States. The power to educate the nation about indigenous cultural history was granted to scholars and academics creating stereotypes that have continued beyond the nineteenth century. Deloria provides an excellent summary of this, writing

As the United States has enshrined a multiculturalism that emphasizes culture more than multi-, simply knowing about Indians, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Latino/as has become a satisfactory form of social and political engagement. As a result, the ways in which white Americans have used Indianness in creative self-shaping have continued to be pried apart from questions about inequality, the uneven workings of power, and the social settings in which Indians and non-Indians might actually meet [Deloria 1998:189–90].

The colonial legacy of subjugating indigenous peoples is definitely embodied in the history of the Smithsonian Institution and Mexico’s National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. These national museums contributed to the detrimental effects of colonization for indigenous groups in the United States, Mexico, and worldwide. Many critics such as minority rights activists and scholars would argue that some museums continue to do so in contemporary times. While museum practices (especially in many anthropology, science, and history museums) have changed and continue to evolve over time as new laws require and new times permit, the colonial legacy of museums is enshrined in the nationhood of countries such as the United States and Mexico. The origins and histories of these larger government run museums reflect their creators. While these national museums can never erase the legacy of past museum practices nor the sentiment of the time of regarding indigenous peoples as backward and uncivilized, they can learn from the past to move forward into the future and better serve their constituencies (native and non-native). In the next chapter, I provide examples of
two contemporary museums, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in New Mexico and
the Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany in Mexico, that represent such trends.
Chapter 5

State-owned and Community Museums in Mexico and New Mexico

In the previous chapter I discussed how national museums in the United States and Mexico served nationalistic goals. I described ways that the museums appropriated indigenous pasts for a national agenda and how at the time, it never occurred to museums to present Native American points of view. It is also true that at the time, it never occurred to many Native Americans to try to present their side of the anthropological story through museums. They were too busy fighting other battles—land, water, and self-determination—to worry about something as trivial (relative to those issues) as how they were being represented by museums. That is a struggle that only began to make sense once more basic battles were won.

In this chapter I will describe the ways that community and regional museums currently serve as mediating influences between national museums and local communities.

The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC)

From its opening in 1987, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has been conscious of indigenous concerns, especially as they pertain to peoples of the Southwest. The belief that Native Americans ought to be active participants in museums is reflected in the diversity of museum personnel as well as the level of participation and input from outside communities regarding exhibits and programs at this state-run institution. MIAC strives to attract a broad audience and is cognizant that its visitors and constituencies come from diverse backgrounds. As the museum’s introductory statement says: “It is especially important that MIAC serve the
Indian communities in our state and throughout the Southwest whose contemporary and ancestral cultures are being represented in the museum’s collections. This museum features archaeological artifacts, ethnological objects, and artwork from the Southwest as well as other regions.

![Figure 6. Museum of Indian Arts and Culture. (Photo By Kaila Cogdill.)](image)

Located in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, next to three other museums (the Museum of Spanish Colonial Art, the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian, and the Museum of International Folk Art), this museum has an ancestry dating to the early 1900s. Edgar Lee Hewitt founded the Museum of New Mexico in 1909, while John D. Rockefeller established the Laboratory of Anthropology in 1927. These institutes merged in 1947 with the specific purpose of housing collections from the Southwest. Since the Lab did not contain any adequate exhibition

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82 For a good summary of the foundations of the MIAC and its role in depicting indigenous peoples of the Southwest see Hewett and Friends: A Biography of Santa Fe’s Vibrant Era (1982) by Beatrice Chauvenet and Don D. Fowler’s A Laboratory for Anthropology (2000).
facilities, in 1977 the New Mexico Legislature funded construction of a building to store and display the collections. MIAC opened to the public in 1987.

MIAC includes exhibition space, an educational center for visitors, a multi-purpose event center, a classroom, hands-on center, library, resource center, a museum studies center, and a museum retail store. MIAC’s collection is an integral part of its overall program. The collections storage areas in the museum’s basement and elsewhere house ethnological and archaeological artifacts from the Southwest.

During my visit to this museum, it was explained to me that MIAC serves two groups—its audience and its constituency. The audience is “any visitor who physically comes to the museum” and the constituency “is native groups of the Southwest” (44, interview). According to the MIAC website, about 65,000 visitors frequent the museum annually.

The MIAC’s primary function is to serve as a place of education, basically to help educate the visitor who has no background on Southwest Indian people. Also to serve as an educational piece for local communities whose local cultures make up the exhibits in the museum—in turn the museum—MIAC is willing to be educated by the indigenous communities by taking care of these collections, using them for exhibitions, publishing, access, etc. [44, interview].

The MIAC website is the primary portal for museum advertisement and information dissemination, but people find out about the museum, its exhibits, and its collections by word of mouth (44, interview). Thirty percent of the visitors come from New Mexico; 50 percent come from other states, and 20 percent from other countries.  

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83 Researchers have access to the basement’s collections as well as to the Laboratory of Anthropology, which is where the researcher’s library and the Archaeological Resource Management Section is located, and is also the site for accommodating professional meetings and the offices of museum staff. Recently, a new storage facility for the museum’s archaeological collections opened on Santa Fe’s west side.

Many people who visit this museum reside in New Mexico and nearby states such as Texas, Colorado, Arizona, and California. Urry (2002) reminds us that museums rank number four out of the five most popular destinations for tourists. August is reportedly the busiest time of year for MIAC.

However, few visitors come from the Pueblos. One contributing factor is that they generally come to the MIAC “if there are special organized tours, but [admission] is not free for Natives at the MIAC…[and] this is in part due to the museum administration system…[who have been] really worried about the drop in attendance [and want to] focus on outside markets” (44, interview).

The lack of Native American attendance at MIAC was also confirmed in my interviews with research participants; some had never heard of the MIAC and did not even know where it is located. Some individuals had heard about the museum, but had not had an opportunity to visit it.85 There were also those who had visited the museum previously, but felt they needed to go back for a more complete understanding of how MIAC relates to them. A Poeh Arts student from one of the Pueblos shared this with me:

The only museums I have been to are the ones on Museum Hill with pottery class. I think they do an adequate job…but I would like to go back to them to see how my perception has changed since I am involved much more emotionally and I want to see things differently as I was naïve when I first went and maybe did not appreciate it as much seeing it as a display before, but I think it would be more inspirational now. This again goes back to making people more educated, with a greater appreciation and understanding and my perspective is a lot different than it was three years ago [54, interview].

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85 The MIAC and other state museums were working on attracting more visitor interest within the state, especially during the summer months, by offering free admission Friday evenings from 5 pm until 8 pm. These museums already offer free admission to museum members and children 16 years or younger, and it is also free of charge to New Mexico residents on Sundays and free to seniors with valid identification on Wednesdays. The admission fee is $6 dollars for residents of New Mexico and for non-residents it is $9. You can also purchase a four-day pass that gets you admission into four museums in the Museums of New Mexico system or a one-day pass to two museums.
State funds and the Museum of New Mexico Foundation help pay museum staff salaries and costs of basic maintenance. Funding for anything else is privately raised and involves grants and donations, with the latter including targeted fundraising. Monies for storage and exhibit fees are raised independently via support groups such as the Friends of Indian Arts.

The museum features a permanent exhibit called, *Here, Now and Always*, in which a myriad of voices and stories from Native Americans are presented via exhibit board text, listening devices or video, cultural objects, artifacts, contemporary artwork, and a vast collection of historic pieces from the Southwest. The exhibit “was conceived to redress the flawed perspective of the past by allowing the Native peoples of the Southwest to be accessible through their own words and viewpoints…and to demonstrate the active role of Native peoples in shaping their own cultures and lives” (Bernstein 2001:10). Rather than existing for the mere purpose of displaying artifacts and translating them in a supposedly value-neutral way, “museums have been urged to adopt a political stance in their exhibitions that explore contemporary social problems and to accept that they cannot be impartial observers in clashes over contested identities” (Sandell 2002:20).

Preparation of the *Here, Now, and Always* exhibit involved extensive consultation with indigenous community members in the Southwest, most of them from the Pueblos, but also with some Navajo (Diné), Ute, Apache, Mojave, Tohono O’odham, and other native groups in the area (44, interview). It was the first large-scale exhibit in the United States incorporating the Native voice in contemporary times:

This sense of the continuity of tradition, and the knowledge that tradition also involves change, is at the core of *Here, Now, and Always*. Native People at any
one moment stand inside their history, and that history is continuous because the Creation is ongoing. Given this, it is unremarkable, not dissonant, for an Indian elder to speak English or Tewa, Spanish or Navajo, for an Indian teenager to dance the Corn Dance and to drink Coca-Cola, for an Indian woman to weave a blanket of handspun wools and to sell it through her website on the Internet [Bernstein 2001:11; emphasis in original].

As happened with the exhibit consultation phase at the Smithsonian’s NMAI, “There was this evolution of using Native consultants at the MIAC—while it is still a museum curated exhibit, it is also community curated in that Native consultants were very much in the planning and process of the exhibit…the MIAC paved way for that to happen” (44, interview).

Here, Now, and Always had been planned since the museum opening in 1987. “It involved the entire staff initially with regular staff meetings, then the director switched it to the core curatorial committee meetings which included 10 museum staff members and community consultants” (44, interview). The planning took nearly a decade and the construction of the exhibit took a year of non-stop work (44, interview). The central message of the exhibit, featuring the 19 Pueblos and other tribes of the Southwest, is that the Southwest has “been their home for as long as people remember since before recorded times…[they] lived and survived and thrived at times and hope they will always continue to be here” (44, interview). The exhibit features 200 individual voices (Bernstein 2001:10). For the most part, the public—both native and non-native peoples—has responded positively to Here, Now, and Always. This exhibition was considered a model exhibit, and the Smithsonian Institution and Carnegie Institute visited the MIAC to view the permanent exhibit (44, interview).

The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture further collaborated with outside constituencies and emphasized a multivocal approach in the 2008 exhibit titled, A River
Apart, which featured Southwest pottery from the Cochiti and Santo Domingo Pueblos. A Native American from one of the eight Northern Pueblos curated this exhibit, and the goals of the exhibit included educating visitors on how the museum acceded partial authority by trying to allow multiple perspectives. The multiple voice approach includes addressing questions such as, how would a local potter interpret this exhibit? How would an archaeologist interpret this exhibit? And how would a historian interpret this exhibit? As museum staff explained to me, it was not an easy task for MIAC to cede its authority because a museum’s past operations still affects its current politics and practice (Bennett 2005:5).

Whenever collaboration between local communities, constituencies, museum curators, and museum boards becomes part of the process in an exhibit, questions will arise. Who is in charge of the telling? What message gets depicted? What objects will be on display? Despite these tensions, the curators I interviewed hope that visitors will understand there are many approaches to interpreting and displaying objects.

This sentiment is very similar to what museologist Michael Ames (1986) states regarding any museum exhibit’s main message: “There are many voices, many stories. They do not add up to one consistent view, nor should they, because they represent different people with different interests and experiences…No one museum can say it all, nor should it pretend that it can” (Ames 1986:46–47). Even so, the emphasis of MIAC exhibits such as the Here, Now, and Always and A River Apart is that indigenous peoples are not only not dead today they take an active part in museum exhibiting and interpreting objects from their culture. It is hoped that museum visitors understand that
indigenous peoples care deeply about how their culture and heritage are depicted to outsiders.

In surveys, museum visitors, viewed museums in general as a trustworthy source of information (Abram 2002:131). “Rather than museums existing for the purpose of preserving and studying collections, museums and collections, especially in North America, at least, now exist more and more for the purpose of serving the public” (Ames 1986:11). Therefore museums cannot be viewed as separate from the tourism industry. In turn, New Mexico’s tourism industry is especially dependent on the cultural sector.

A secondary goal for exhibits and cultural displays at the MIAC is to create a pleasurable experience for visitors. Interviews, surveys, and questionnaires provide information on what museumgoers gain from their museum experience. Museums such as MIAC, want to know what exhibits and programs visitors enjoy the most. Museum scholar Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) asks, “What are the preconditions for creating interest in what audiences do not understand? Or, more specifically, how has the avant-garde prepared us for watching and valuing what we don’t know how to react to?” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:203). The difficulty is in determining what message is being conveyed to the general public and how museums can work to correct problems of interpretation. Bruner summarizes this well: “This privileging of the specific leads to a consideration of the complexity of forces and the multiplicity of voices and meanings at work. Audiences are not passive recipients of received wisdom and of official views; the challenge is to understand the interpretations of the audience in particular instances” (Bruner 2005:128).
One way interest is created is through the display of objects because, as MacCannell tell us, “the function of museums is not entirely determined by what is shown; the way in which the objects are shown is also important” (1999:78). The visual emphasis is supposed to create memorable experiences. Urry warns us in *The Tourist Gaze* (2002) that there is no single tourist gaze; rather it varies by society and historical period. MIAC understands that getting its messages across requires providing a visually stimulating and even pleasing experience for visitors. The museum’s website says the museum provides

> an excellent introduction to the complexity and diversity of the Native American cultures of the region. Here, one can listen to the stories and songs that tell of origins and the long history of the Native people of the Southwest, witness the development of new forms of art, or learn about the contemporary lives and life ways of the Southwest’s indigenous population.  

Presenting ideas about what the Southwest has to offer for outsiders can create an incentive for travel. The MIAC website continues, “We hope you will have an opportunity to visit the museum and experience the beauty and balance of the cultures of the Southwest in this spectacular setting three miles from downtown Santa Fe.” This website creates a sense of the untouched wilderness of the desert and the coexistence of Indian, Hispano, and Anglo in tri-cultural New Mexico.

Another way museums aim to provide a memorable experience for visitors is through the featured exhibits. In the *A River Apart* exhibit, for example, an attempt was made to present pottery pieces from Santo Domingo and Cochiti Pueblos in innovative ways. The museum professional I spoke to stated that sometimes an object can be

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displayed with only its face showing, or its back end showing, yet it still communicates something about the piece that they want visitors to be able to decipher. Object placement communicates ideas to the visitor. A museum curator pointed out a very large bowl. If it were to be tilted with its face up it would emphasize the design of the piece. If it were to be laid face down, the design would disappear and the bowl would become a plain half-sphere. Such a change “adds and subtracts, reveals and obscures” (Bennett 2005:161). More important, it challenges visitors and curators alike about the different ways objects can be displayed and interpreted: “Curators want to ‘wake people up,’ ‘grab them,’ and be sure that ‘information will stick’” (Perin 1992:193). By creating different ways of displaying objects, an aesthetically pleasing, less mundane exhibit is created and with luck, visitors will return home and tell family and friends about their wonderful experience at MIAC.

Nevertheless it is important to be cognizant that “[m]useums are also bureaucracies and cultural institutions that are embedded in a social order…they tend not to be monolithic; rather, they embody competing interests of different stakeholders…In this sense, museums become arenas for debate” (Erikson 2008:49).

The museum is there to serve the public, to make visitors want to come back for return visits, and to create an educational environment for locals and tourists. It has the ability to do so because it has already been established as an agent of civil society: “Museums have long epitomized a product-driven ethos, reserving for themselves the prerogative (in the public interest) to determine what they want to say and show” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:137).
Part museums’ role as an institution of civil society is derived from the communication of authoritative scientific knowledge through exhibits. Museums and exhibits “are collective assemblies of power and the expressive effects of knowledge” (Luke 2002:101). The ideas presented by museums have a degree of power since museumgoers tend to digest information as fact even when it comes from a single curator. In a museum setting, social ideas often include what should be displayed and collected. Museum scholar Miriam Clavir states that “The social history of museums repeatedly shows that value-based choices have been made concerning what to collect, how to collect, what to do with what has been collected, and for whom and for what purposes the collections are kept” (Clavir 2002:27).

Value-based choices about collection directly relate to museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s discussion of museum professionals’ decisions on what constitutes good or bad taste. She claims, “Bad taste is associated with the ephemeral, good taste with endurance, but before objects find a final resting place—will it be the garbage dump or the museum?—they pass through many circuits of exchange. Their value fluctuates with each transaction” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:259). An object that is valued as a scientific treasure will be labeled as being in good taste and is likely to be utilized in museums. If an object is scarce, it will be considered of greater worth to the museum.

The emphasis on objects deemed to hold scientific value has been one of the central criticisms of museums by indigenous and minority communities. Many indigenous groups view museums as Westernized institutions with the specific agenda of advancing science based on object rather than concepts (Roberts 1994).
Clifford (1997) calls anthropology museums such as MIAC “contact zones.” He states, “When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull” (Clifford 1997:192). In such “contact zones,” individuals from diverse backgrounds come together and establish contact, which often involves “conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (Clifford 1997:192). Erikson adds, “the subjectivity of any museum is nearly always shaped by many diverse and often conflicting voices, those of the founders, collectors, donors, staff members, board members, visitors, and surrounding community members” (Erikson 2002:144).

Questions more than likely arise regarding how to “accurately” represent the culture that is being depicted and how to project it to an audience that might not be familiar with the particular group on display. Clifford feels that such issues are difficult to resolve even after curators have consulted with indigenous groups. Different histories (Western versus non-Western) and values (e.g. science versus traditional belief) will inevitably arise and come into conflict. Clifford states, “Power and reciprocity are articulated together in specific ways. Who calls the shots? When? Do structural and interpersonal power relations reinforce or complicate each other? How are differing agendas accommodated in the same project?” (Clifford 1997:200).

The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture does not have the luxury of being one dimensional due to its proximity to many indigenous groups as well as its ongoing mission of outreach to native populations. Moreover, as museums operate in the public arena, they have an obligation to educate the public in the best manner possible. The
MIAC curator I talked with agreed with this notion and acknowledged that exhibit interpretation and display can be challenging. Yet he hopes that visitors who have viewed the exhibits at the MIAC

learn a nugget that they didn’t know before about Indian people. That through showing a uniqueness that they see a similarity to their own heritage…see they have their own traditions (family, community)...there are different cultural viewpoints and traditions, but by having them, there is a common bond between peoples [44, interview].

In addition to my observations at MIAC, I gained some insight as to what some local Native Americans in the region think of the *Here, Now, and Always* exhibit.

According to one individual who is from Santa Clara Pueblo: “there is a lot of storytelling and I think it is good. When I first visited, I thought it was too busy that was my first impression. But as I go back, I come back with more appreciation. [It is] strong [there is] real intensity to the story [they] tell there” (2, interview). Another Native American (who identifies herself from one of the eight Northern Pueblos) said, “When I go into these museums I think ‘we are not dead yet.’ What you choose to represent of us is one perspective and it is not always honest. Museums have power’” (4, interview).

Another Native American said he tries “Not [to be] overly critical...[it is a] difficult task to capture—this is who these people are...[for the] educated person, cultures evolve, they blend constantly in a state of flux, snapshot of that particular time—really represents only a portion of reality” (63, interview). And a Poeh Museum staff member and part of the advisory board for the MIAC said,

When they first established MIAC as a state institution, the Indian advisory board was established and that was the smartest thing they did. We, on the advisory board, feel a responsibility to have the museum accurately portray Native Americans respectfully. They have done a decent job. While there are non-native curators and it means they are coming from a non-native perspective, they are
more and more listening to us and hiring more Native Americans on their staff [78, interview].

The Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany in Oaxaca, Mexico

Santa Ana del Valle is a Zapotec community and a municipality located about fifty minutes by car from Oaxaca City. In 1985, during a renovation project in the community, a tomb was discovered beneath the plaza. After having lost so many sacred and irreplaceable pieces from Santa Ana del Valle and nearby communities to metropolitan museums, the indigenous residents petitioned that the artifacts remain in the village. Due to a resurgence of indigenous identity in these communities and a demand for better communication between government anthropologists and indigenous peoples, INAH allowed the residents to retain the archaeological pieces provided that they create a place to house these artifacts. Santa Ana del Valle’s Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany opened to the public in 1986 and was the first community museum in all of Mexico.

Figure 7. Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)
The museum thus became emblematic of indigenous groups’ right to retain and interpret a village’s ancient artifacts, history and traditions. Feeling an emotional and moral responsibility to protect their heritage, many village leaders and community members supported the building of additional local museums. As a result, today there are several community museums in the state of Oaxaca and other parts of Mexico. Indigenous communities are demanding that artifacts be repatriated to their communities, and also that their culture be safeguarded against future government appropriation (Morales et al. 1994).

Figure 8. Weaving Exhibit at the Museo Comunitario Shan-Dany. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)

Each community chooses what to display in its museum. During my visits to these museums, I noticed that many community members felt the need to emphasize not only past history (through the display of archaeological artifacts) but also issues that matter in the present—contemporary arts and crafts, and local community traditions such as annual dances and wedding customs. Ecomuseums, cultural research centers, and community museums are avenues that allow indigenous groups to reconnect with and
retain their cultural patrimony, in order to maintain or revitalize their cultural identity in the 21st century. The “community development approach aims to create or enhance a sense of place of individuals and to establish what is significant and valued in the environment or heritage of a community” (Blockley 1999:25).

Community museums are utilized in indigenous communities as places where people can safeguard their culture for future generations. Subjugation by the dominant society, the relative isolation due to the community’s remote location, and the lack of employment opportunities all have resulted in a high rate of migration for community members to other states in Mexico and other countries including the United States. Men and women migrate to heavily populated urban areas and larger cities, thus earning wages that are sufficient to support themselves and their dependents (Clarke 2000:143). It is only when indigenous groups leave their communities of origin that different constructions of ethnicity emerge. As Nagengast and Kearny state regarding an indigenous village in the Mixteca,

> The most salient identity in the Mixteca—that of the village—is negated as individuals leave their communes, especially as they leave Oaxaca for the north and find themselves collectively identified by the predominantly mestizo population in Mexico as “other,” members of a minority and a despised one at that [1990:469–470; emphasis in original].

Feeling marginalized in this new society and discriminated against because of their indigenous heritage, many individuals band together to form a more collective ethnic identity. As Barth (1969:12) states, “The same group of people, with unchanged values and ideas, would surely pursue different forms of behavior when faced with the different opportunities offered in different environments.” It becomes a matter of survival to form close ties and alliances with other indigenous groups that are in a similar predicament.
Once these indigenous community members return to their communities, it can be often difficult for them to readjust to community life and traditions. The museum helps to sustain the roots and traditions of the community and creates a place for returning members to reconnect with their heritage.

The community museums are run on a volunteer basis with occasional assistance from anthropologists, historians, and other people who have donated their expertise to interpret ancient artifacts or assist local people with ongoing exhibits and current excavation projects. For instance, archaeologist Kent V. Flannery helped San José Mogote set up a place to house its artifacts during local excavations in the 1970s and 1980s. Anthropologist Ronald Spores also provided assistance to various museums in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca with the exhibit content.

Figure 9. San José Mogote Museo Comunitario. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)

To view these museums without taking into account contact with colonizers, the mobility of residents in capitalist societies, or the struggle for cultural patrimony, is to see
these communities as static, unchanging, and unaffected by globalization. Kratz captures
the notion of the complex interrelations between the local community and global
community well in her photographic exhibit called *The Ones That Are Wanted*. Kratz
showcased her photographic work of the Okiek People of Kenya at several museum
that are wanted’ highlights the different people, expectations, and meanings that come
together in an exhibition and the complicated interrelations among them’” (Kratz 2002:1;
emphasis in original).

The goal of Kratz’s exhibit was to show multiple viewpoints, yet the common
assumption is that people who belong to the same community share similar ideas about
their history and express a like-minded ideology. Kratz finds this not to be the case and
that community representation is never homogenous, but varied and complex. With her
exhibit, Kratz hopes to challenge her audience to think critically about “how their
depictions are formed and interpreted, and the social relations and inequalities reproduced
through representational practices, including their institutional settings” (Kratz

Indigenous people have been given greater latitude in the interpretation of their
cultural artifacts and objects. This was the original incentive in the creation of a
community museum. As James Clifford states, “The emergence of tribal museums and
cultural centers makes possible an effective repatriation and circulation of objects long
considered to be unambiguously ‘property’ by metropolitan collectors and curators”
(Clifford 1997:139). San José Mogote and Teotítlán del Valle are two indigenous
communities that did not allow archaeologists or anthropologists from the INAH into
their museums. San José Mogote banned archaeologists entirely, as an INAH archaeologist told me in 2004. Teotitlán del Valle had museum guidebooks or pamphlets supplied by the museum committee, with interpretations of the exhibits in English, Spanish, and their native Zapotec. Teotitlán del Valle also chose not to participate in the annual community museum conference in 2003 and instead relied heavily on community support to keep the museum going.

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Figure 10. “Balaa Xtee Guech Gulal” Teotitlán del Valle Museo Comunitario. (Photo By Kaila Cogdill.)

While some communities choose not to seek outside guidance, the relationships between indigenous community inhabitants and outside groups must be taken into consideration when examining community museums and the impact of outside establishments (Cohen 2001). The Unión de Museos Comunitarios de Oaxaca and the Unión Nacional de Museos Comunitarios were founded in 1991 to help indigenous communities with support and funding issues. These two groups have assisted community museums since 1993. The National Institute of Anthropology and History
(INAH) also provides community museums with aid. Each year these organizations host an annual conference that includes all the community museums in Mexico. The one that I attended took place for three days in the Mixteca region of San Miguel Tequixtepec, Coixtlahuaca, Oaxaca, in November 2003. The purpose of the conference was to bring all the community museums together so that they could talk about successes and failures they have encountered, as well as common goals they have for the year.

More importantly, the conference allows indigenous groups to talk about problems they have encountered, and about finding and retaining funding. It helps them reaffirm their goal of having a museum in their villages and helps them keep faith that they can maintain their museum for years to come, thus enabling them to retain and revitalize their traditions for the benefit of future generations. Ultimately this meeting is about a blending of multiple perspectives and an exchange of ideas about having a locally based museum in the community.

Visits to other community museums in Mexico offered me a unique perspective on the diversity of indigenous museums, their common purpose in the repatriation and protection of objects, their desire to involve local community members in the curatorial endeavor, and their strong international influence. It reaffirmed for me the tribal and locally based museums’ commitment to bringing “community” back into museums, as reflected in the purpose of the ecomuseum.

**Museums in the 21st Century**

The relevancy of museums in the 21st century will be measured by what they are doing to address criticisms from indigenous and minority groups who feel their culture, objects, artwork, and artifacts are not adequately portrayed in exhibits or communicated
sensitively and accurately to a broad museum audience. The goal for museums in the 21st century is collaboration with these interested groups. Many museums have already begun the process.

Museologist Moira G. Simpson explores what institutions are doing today to address a diverse audience of academics, indigenous groups, minorities, and other visitors. Criticisms leveled at past museum practices have led many “museums to adopt more inclusive working practices and allow communities to participate in the process of cultural representation in museums” (Simpson 1996:3).

While many museums such as MIAC and the NMAI, work collaboratively with indigenous groups and other peoples and challenge museumgoers to think more critically about exhibits, another thing that is needed is for museum professionals to be honest with visitors about how objects and artifacts are being interpreted. Simpson (1996) argues there must be critique and dialogue in exhibits. She believes controversial exhibits and material are inevitable and dialogue should be encouraged rather than discouraged. Curators and staff must be willing to work with local groups and other interested parties in the planning and implementation process. People who work in museums must be conscious about what they do and why, and they should inform the public that what it sees is not material that ‘speaks for itself’ but material filtered through the tastes, interests, politics, and state of knowledge of particular presenters at a frame through which the art and culture of the world can be inspected, but a tightly focused lens that shows the visitor a particular point of view [Perin 1992:201].

Thus, there needs to be more transparency about how an exhibit is created. This could include a brief introduction about the background of the person in charge of the exhibit, how the material is collected, who is interpreting the exhibit, and why the exhibit should
be pertinent to both the peoples being depicted and the people who visit. Maintaining honesty with museumgoers is crucial if museums are to have credibility in the future.

Ames mentions that anthropology museums need to make their collections more accessible to the public. He states, “One way to increase the relevance of museums is to increase public access to the collections and information they contain, so that people can become more familiar with the full range of their heritage” (Ames 1992: 94). He does realize that providing access can be difficult for museum professionals. He discusses the predicament of museum anthropologists who have little time to do their own research, while collections remain in the basement under lock and key where it is difficult for the public to have access. Nevertheless, he says the public and other interested parties should be encouraged to visit museum collections.

Despite criticisms leveled at anthropology museums, such museums have made great strides to include a diverse audience to work and offer insight on exhibits. As I mentioned earlier, museums in the past and their collections were available to a select few including the wealthy and well educated. In the 21st century, we are privileged to have access to these museums whether they are national museums or local community oriented ones. While museums are not without their flaws, Ames (1992) argues that we must not group all museums and treat them the same; instead we need to be aware of a particular institution’s history, philosophy, and the personnel. Every museum has a unique history and way of displaying and interpreting objects and artifacts. However, interpreting a culture or group represented in an exhibit can be challenging since there is a need for museum curators to remain culturally sensitive to different traditions and
customs yet also show the people depicted as relevant in modern times and equal citizens in society. The MIAC curator I spoke to added

Minorities are still in museums [shown] as exotic, as different and that is sometimes the intent. [This can] still be a dangerous element [in that] they are [interpreted as] different, not part of this overall society…therefore interpretation is a balancing area…[We] want to educate people on uniqueness of different cultures yet at the same time that they are part of 21st century [44, interview].

In this discussion of the history of national museums and their influence on museum practices worldwide and their role as agents of colonization, it is important to be mindful that some of these institutions have modified their practices. The MIAC serves as an example of this by, hiring Native American curators and involving indigenous peoples in the interpretation of objects and exhibit content. In this way, it is listening to past criticisms and engaging more with constituencies. The emergence of the NMAI in the 21st century commemorates the great strides Native Americans and indigenous groups worldwide have made to protect their sovereignty through involvement in the presentation of objects and artifacts. The NMAI remains the first of its kind in representing a vast group of indigenous groups from the Western Hemisphere. It has also challenged museums to rethink their practices and policies:

Given the inherent possibilities of the Native American museum movement—for reshaping how the public thinks about Native American history, identity, and humanity and for reconfiguring Native Americans as participants in a self-defining process rather than as subjects of study—the importance of these accomplishments should not be underestimated [Erikson 2008:77].

But the process does not stop with reversing practices and attitudes at state and federal museums. Many indigenous people feel strongly that indigenous groups should have a place where tribal members can reconnect with their culture and traditions. These locally based museums, whether referred to as “tribal museums,” “community museums,”
“cultural centers,” or “heritage centers,” have emerged repeatedly in the United States since the 1960s (Jacknis 2008:31).

In the subsequent chapter, I continue my discussion on tribal museums in New Mexico by investigating the origins and history of two tribal museums in New Mexico—the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum, and the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center. I also examine how these museums represent their local communities and constituencies.
Chapter 6

A Comparative Analysis of the Community Museums at Acoma and Zuni Pueblo

In order to create comparative material for my research (see Clifford 1997), I visited museums at the Pueblos of Acoma and Zuni. In this way, I can compare the cultural context of the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s museum to those of similar institutions in New Mexico. I sought to bear witness to the internal dynamics in museum settings at Acoma and Zuni by using as my compass how “The museum is now a place for attempting to understand how identity is formed and represented, how social inequalities are established, reproduced, and disrupted” (Erikson 2002:26).

I begin by looking at how tribal museums and cultural centers function as places that allow indigenous communities to interpret their histories, cultural possessions, and objects. Often based on the ecomuseum concept (Roberts 1994:27), these community-based organizations are a product of postmodernity, a “new museology” (Davis 2007:53) and postcolonialism as part of a global movement in “democratizing or decolonizing museums” (Erikson 2008:47). More important, tribal museums and cultural centers allow Native Americans to take an active role in the museum process. This last point, according to Isaac, is of the utmost importance, because “the ownership of knowledge is an issue that cuts to the core of community and curatorial authority when defining the role of a public space or resource, such as a museum” (Isaac 2007:4).

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88 Isaac argues we need to move beyond the idea that the tribal museum is a response to colonialism and instead look to how “the nation or community developing a museum [can] be seen as an agent in its own interpretation of its history” (Isaac 2007:13). This argument follows along the lines of what a Maxwell Museum curator says about current museum ideological critiques and the failure to “understand the potential disconnect between ideology and action” (personal communication, 2013).
I examine how the *Haak’u* and *A:shiwi A:wan* museums are different or similar and how each fits its mission statements, which directly influences their intended museum audience and their local community.

The Sky City Cultural Center and *Haak’u* Museum at Acoma and the *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center at Zuni each have their own origins and can be referred to as community museums, ecomuseums, cultural centers, or tribal museums. The roles these museums play in their communities vary with regard to community interaction. Through visits and interviews with people knowledgeable about these two museums, I was able to grasp how Pueblo peoples view themselves as active agents in the founding, ongoing development, and maintenance of these community museums: Native Americans “have taken substantial control over the production of images and narrative of tribal pasts and contemporary experience in complex styles of public self-representations” (Lawlor 2006:2). As I established in the preceding chapter, no two museums are alike and the same is also true for tribal museums; all are unique. No museum can respond to all social matters and contemporary issues effectively and because of this it is important to have a wide array of museums that serve “different purposes or tackl[e] challenges from different approaches” (MacDonald 1992:159).

**Acoma Pueblo, Tourism, and The Sky City Cultural Center and *Haak’u* Museum**

The Pueblo of Acoma (“People of the White Rock”) is 60 miles (96 km) west of Albuquerque along Interstate 40, off Exit 108, with the nearest city being Grants, New Mexico. The Pueblo is popularly referred to as “Sky City” due to being built on a mesa
top. Because of its founding about A.D. 1200 or possibly earlier, this federally recognized Indian tribe is considered by some to be the oldest continuously inhabited community in the United States. Towering over a land base that spans 431,664 acres, Acoma Pueblo has more than 250 dwellings that are not equipped with electricity, running water, or a sewer system. Most Acomas also have other houses, elsewhere, with modern amenities. The traditional Pueblo territory comprised 5 million acres, but, this size has been greatly reduced until only 10 percent remains (Pritzker 2000:6). There are approximately 4,800 enrolled tribal members and only tribal members are allowed to “hold residency or property claims to the Acoma land held in trust by the federal government” (Garcia-Mason 1979:451).

Acoma is considered one of the western Pueblos not only based on geography, but because it shares social characteristics with the Hopi, Hano, and Zuni (Dozier 1970:134). The language spoken at Acoma is Acoma Keresan or Acoma Keres, a western Keresan dialect. People here, especially among the older generation, speak their native language as well as English, and some speak Spanish.

The Pueblo of Acoma is based on a matrilineal clan system with an extended family kinship system (Garcia-Mason 1979:452) consisting of a matrilocal residence

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89 Pueblo of Acoma Haaku, “About the Acoma Pueblo.” [www.puebloofacoma.org/About_Acoma.aspx](http://www.puebloofacoma.org/About_Acoma.aspx). Viewed 8.30.2012. Not everyone is in agreement with this date put forth by archaeologists and First Peopling of the New World scholars. Traditional Acoma oral history suggests that from the very beginning of time and creation, Acoma Pueblo people have lived on these lands.


92 Language retention was not something that was reserved only for the Pueblo of Acoma; many research participants mentioned that among the younger generation the retention of the traditional Pueblo language was an ongoing struggle. One of my research participants said his grandmother speaks her native tongue, but since he cannot speak the language it is sometimes difficult for him to communicate with her. However, he has the desire to learn the language of his Pueblo and looks forward to his conversations with her.
(giving women the right to own land, houses, etc.) and an emphasis on the Katcina cult (Dozier 1970:135). As Dozier explains, “The Rio Grande Keresan pueblos (including the Towa pueblo of Jemez) occupy a somewhat intermediate position. Yet in terms of basic social organization, these pueblos lean more closely to the Tanoans; hence the dichotomy: Western versus Eastern (or Rio Grande) Pueblos” (Dozier 1970:135). What also sets Acoma Pueblo apart from the Northern New Mexico Pueblos is that it “lacks certain Spanish influences present among the Eastern Pueblos, a difference attributable to its southernmost location and its unique historical experiences” (Garcia-Mason 1979:452).

Three main settlements make up Acoma Pueblo: Sky City (Old Acoma), McCartys, and Acomita. Today, most residents live in the two last villages. An Acoma Pueblo tour guide mentioned that tribal members who hold office are required to live in Sky City on top of the mesa, which is considered an honor. Through tours conducted by the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum, the Pueblo allows outside visitors a chance to tour the mesa top; however, this is only permitted during specific hours of the day and access is restricted during religious ceremonies and other traditional community observances.

Religious rituals and Pueblo Indian belief systems are closely guarded at Acoma, even from other Pueblos, and when I visited this Pueblo there seemed to be a marked distinction drawn between Acoma and non-Acoma Pueblo peoples. The Pueblo of Acoma strictly adheres to this philosophy: “Traditionally and culturally, Acoma like all other Keresan groups remains a closed system and maintains the right to keep the knowledge of the culture within” (Garcia-Mason 1979:451).
In 1540 Francisco Vásquez Coronado y Luján enlisted the aid of captain of artillery Hernando de Alvarado to explore the western Pueblos of Acoma, Zuni, and the Hopi. For the most part, these early encounters were described in Spanish documents as friendly (Damico 2004–2012), with Pueblos and Spaniards engaging in violence only in exceptional cases (Kessell 2008:5). However, Spanish desire for conquest and colonization in the region, as well as the demand that the local indigenous peoples eradicate their native religious practices and adopt Catholicism and Spanish ways of life (Dozier 1970:3) created animosity, strained relations, and conflict. Don Juan de Oñate y Salazar’s clear intent under the auspices of the Spanish crown was to convert the indigenous peoples in New Mexico.

Historical accounts (Garcia-Mason 1979; Simmons 2003; Lovato 2004; Nieto-Phillips 2004; Sando and Agoyo 2005; Kessell 2008) state that in 1598, after hearing reports that Oñate planned to colonize the area in and around the Pueblo of Acoma, the Acoma Pueblo Indians ambushed a group of Oñate’s men, killing Oñate’s nephew. The Spanish sought revenge for these killings in 1599, when Oñate and his men invaded the Pueblo of Acoma. The Pueblo was burned and Acomas who survived were severely punished. Women between the ages of 12 and 25 had to work for the Spaniards and men over the age of 25 had half of their foot cut off. This act and subsequent cruelties under the Spanish crown contributed to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 (Sando and Agoyo 2005).

From 1599–1620 Acoma Pueblo was rebuilt and repopulated. In 1620 each Pueblo was required to have set up a civil office with a Governor (Garcia-Mason 1979:457). In 1629, under the direction of Fray Juan Ramirez, construction began on the
massive San Esteban del Rey Catholic mission.\textsuperscript{93} The wooden beams or \textit{vigas} for the church came from Mount Taylor. Cornerstones Community Partnerships, a statewide organization working in partnership with communities to restore historic structures, notes that in the 1600s, in order to build “the church, convent, and cemetery, [the Pueblo peoples] moved approximately 20,000 tons of earth and stone from the canyon floor up the precipitous sides of the mesa.”\textsuperscript{94} My Acoma Pueblo tour guide also recounted how the Spanish made the Pueblo people carry logs from Mount Taylor to construct the church roof.

Until the 1780s, Acoma was considered by the other Pueblos “to be a mother settlement” showing the largest population concentration during this time (Garcia-Mason 1979:458). However, this growth was curtailed due to a smallpox epidemic in 1781, causing Commanding General Teodoro de Croix to determine that “in view of the high number of deaths that occurred during the epidemic, missions at Santa Ana, Acoma, Nambé, Tesuque, Pecos, San Felipe, and San Ildefonso needed to be reduced to \textit{visita} status and be incorporated into larger communities” (Pearcy 1997:32; italics in the original).

In 1863, the Governor of Acoma, along with the leaders of the other Pueblos, was presented a silver-headed cane by President Abraham Lincoln: “To each Pueblo this represents United States recognition of each tribe as an independent seat of Pueblo traditional government” (Garcia-Mason 1979:459). The construction of the railroad in


the late 1800s allowed for easier movement in the region, and helped Pueblos like Acoma become involved with a new industry, tourism (Weigle 2010).

In 2007 Acoma Pueblo was named the 28th National Trust Historic Site; it is the only Native American site in the nation to hold this title. In addition to the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum, the Pueblo established a Historic Preservation Office in 1999 to combat the loss of culture and history in the Pueblo. The Acoma Language Retention Program, a non-profit, community-based program, was established in 2000 and is currently supported by the Acoma Tribal Administration and Tribal Council. The Pueblo also maintains a public library and computer center, as well as a higher education program. In addition to all programs that are maintained in a city (such as an administration department, human resources department, a police and public safety office, among others), Acoma also has a casino and hotel, which are maintained and managed by the Acoma Business Enterprise (ABE).

During my visit to the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum, I talked at length with people familiar with the history of the museum and the genesis of tourism at Acoma Pueblo. According to an Acoma tribal member and former museum staff employee, tourism and the creation of the museum are interconnected. Tourism has a long history at Acoma.

From the 1900s onward Acoma has maintained its tourist base. Tourism was the only real economic development occurring at the Pueblo at that time and it developed informally at first, but the Bureau of Ethnology (BAE) reports (1940s) that were published on the Southwest and the respective cultures in the area generated great interest in the American public to travel to the Southwest and

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experience Native American culture firsthand. Visitors from around the world would venture here on a yearly basis [70, interview].

In the 1950s a road was built to the mesa top where Acoma Pueblo is located. This occurred during the filming of a Hollywood movie titled *African Sunset* starring actor John Wayne (Gilbert and Muller et al. n.d.). After the road’s construction visitation increased and locals also had easier access to the top of the mesa.

In 1968 the tribal council approved money to develop a visitor center at the base of the mesa. However, there was no planning in terms of building design and programming for this center. There was a snack service to accommodate visitors, but even this was low key. In the 1980s there were 140,000 visitors a year and tourism peaked at Acoma. During this time, it was felt among the tribal council and community members that there was a strong need to build a structure to accommodate visitors. Income from tourism supported federal programs and created economic developments and employment for tribal members. The tribe engaged in a community based programming initiative for development of a museum with the National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH) supplying some of the funding. In the 1990s additional federal monies and state sponsorship allowed for the expansion of the facility to 18,000 square feet. During this time, the tribe added a restaurant, office space, and expanded the gift shop. However, three months after its completion, everything was lost in a fire. All the collections and exhibit contents were damaged and destroyed. Fortunately the tourism operation was not halted and the Pueblo continued this enterprise in trailers [70 interview].

After the museum fire, some members of the community were appointed by the Pueblo at-large to take charge of planning a new museum facility. As a former museum staff member who was directly involved in the planning for the new museum facility remembered, the

travel operation continued in trailers…and I was appointed to spearhead the rebuilding of that facility. We needed money to rebuild—but I had no experience in museum planning so I engaged/invited others in the community and experts in the field in the rebuilding process [70, interview].

This Acoma community member who was directly involved with discussions involving a new museum facility furthered described the planning:
Through several museum meetings, it became apparent that we wanted the opportunity to do something different; we wanted the opportunity to engage the community so we embarked on cultural preservation initiatives and language and cultural revitalization programs. We felt it was important to ask the tribal council for support in planning for something far greater than what was originally intended. We wanted an operation and service with the community and the general public in mind. We sold the tribal council on the idea and we were charged with developing and planning for a new facility. I wrote a couple of grants (market study based plan and museum plan) and the tribe matched that grant to develop other components. What evolved from this was twelve community based focus group meetings for a cultural center and museum that directly served the community [70, interview].

Acoma received inquiries from about sixty-seven architecture firms and of those agencies twenty-nine submitted plans and seven firms were interviewed (70, interview). The Barbara Felix architecture firm based in Santa Fe, New Mexico was selected.

The Pueblo’s museum planning committee consulted with a host of established museums including the Heard Museum, the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (MIAC), the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center, the Jemez Visitor Center, the Museum of Man, and the
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. Members of the Acoma Museum team made visits to these museums seeking technical guidance on all aspects of museum practice, such as lighting, climate control for collections, collections and repatriation management, and exhibit design.

While I was visiting the Haak’u Museum it became evident that the museum was in transition. Other museum professionals in New Mexico who were familiar with the Acoma Museum mentioned it was facing challenges. These curators had assisted the Haak’u Museum in the past and were being consulted during ongoing exhibits planning. One worked with Acoma museum collections and acted as a liaison with museum conservators at the Smithsonian, and mentioned a high staff turnover at Haak’u. In May 2011 when I made my visit, a very small staff (the museum director, the curator of exhibits, and a part-time tourism coordinator) was maintaining the museum. In the spring of 2011, I learned from the museum curator that things were gradually improving but they were still short-staffed. The curator was literally a one-man team, developing and installing exhibits, caring for collections, and conducting museum gallery tours; in addition he “does whatever and whenever he is needed since they are short staffed” (64, interview).

The curator expressed a desire to bring in more community-oriented programs such as arts and crafts classes especially geared for children and young adults. An Acoma artist mentioned, “The museum was originally supposed to have rooms for painting and other artwork, but they are having a difficult time finding teachers because it would be on a volunteer basis and funding has also been a problem” (29, interview). The museum curator acknowledged that while these local programs would be beneficial to the
local community, they have not really started because of time devoted to curatorial tasks and tending to ongoing exhibit projects. Nevertheless, he believes that in the future locally oriented programs will be beneficial for Acoma because this will bring more “community” involvement into the museum.

Outside the museum gift shop are doors that lead to a hallway with rooms and beyond that is an auditorium/theater. I asked what the rooms were for and was told that sewing and other art classes were once held in these rooms. The theatre was used for talks and lectures “given by local people,” but not often.

_Haak’u_ Museum provides an ongoing vending space for local artists and is also reserved for graduation and other private receptions. Exhibit openings are said to be public with some local participation, and at the last museum exhibit opening fifty people participated—a combination of tourists, artists, tribal members including Hopi and Acoma descendants, and employees from Acoma Business Enterprises.

Community involvement in the museum is a challenge, especially with regard to exhibit openings, and require innovative ways to get the community aware of what is happening at their own museum. The Acoma museum curator said, “Since we live in a rural community not everyone has the Internet. We used the solid waste guys to distribute the museum fliers to doors. One of the hardest things is getting the word out” (64, interview). His goal was to bring in more Acoma tribal members. For the community youth project he hoped to bring in exhibits that are educational, beneficial, and encourage Acoma tribal members, especially those who want careers in a museum setting or have a desire to get a higher degree in education. He wanted his exhibits to relate to Acoma life with topics that related to Native People. He envisioned the museum
as serving tribal members since it is hard for some local people to travel to Albuquerque or Santa Fe to visit museums.

With increased visitation despite the economic recession, the museum staff member was strongly motivated to bringing interesting and unique exhibits to the Sky City Cultural Center and *Haak’u Museum*. He stated,

I like bringing other things in…shared concepts dealing with land and people and that honor and respect Acoma people. I have ideas like a running exhibit, a mission church exhibit, a cattle exhibit, a railroad exhibit, and even one exhibit on dry farming, but something that shows Acoma way of life, practices, and livelihood…this is all part of Acoma history even though it is not cultural history [64, interview].

One exhibit I viewed called *Beloved People and Beloved Land* featured the contemporary artwork of Acoma artists. The exhibit (through March 2012) included a diverse array of sculpture, paintings, and jewelry. The point of the art exhibit was to offer a glimpse into other artwork that Acoma artists are known for besides the traditional Pueblo pottery. An Acoma artist who was part of this particular exhibit said,

with my artwork I try to show people that we are not just Acoma anymore. Showing your artwork and this is where you come from (trying to produce Acoma artwork other than pottery). Trying to show what else we can do with our hands and our minds. I also want to give kids another alternative than to drugs and suicide and show them there are better ways to live [29, interview].

It was also important to show museumgoers about the blending of traditional and contemporary approaches to art. A local artist explained, “I try to use abstract images to the modern images of Katsinas and pottery. One piece, Acoma, [which was] pottery [carved] out of stone…had this flowing abstract thing. I use my mind to create balance for those ways of life and what you did are based on prayers” (29, interview).

The museum staff also hopes to include exhibits that are not directly related to the Pueblo, but relate to the larger community. An exhibit titled *Ghost Ranch* was a traveling
exhibit on display at the museum until July 2011. It presented forty black and white photographs of the northern New Mexican landscape by renowned photographer Craig Varjabedian.

**My Tour of Acoma Pueblo and the Mesa Top**

With a museum staff person as my host I ate lunch at the museum restaurant, *Y’aa’ka*, which means “corn” in Acoma Keres. Afterwards, I got into the tour bus for a ride to the top of the mesa, a five-minute drive from the museum parking lot. Once inside the tribal community, tourists’ movements are regulated by “No Trespassing” signs that are clearly posted throughout the Pueblo, warning tourists not to venture up to the mesa without a guide from Acoma. It was dry and sunny outside, making it difficult to see the expanse of the mesa landscape as we ascended the mesa. Once on top, it was very windy and I overheard the Acoma guides describing this tour as the last of the day due to the weather and low visibility.

Only four people took the tour: an out-of-state couple, their daughter (who was recently hired by the National Park Service in Albuquerque), and myself. Our tour guide had lived at Acoma his entire life and appeared to enjoy his work. I recalled the website statement regarding how the Pueblo strives to preserve its traditions and protect its religious customs from non-Acoma Pueblo members, however, they are happy to provide some insights into their unique history. In addition to being given background information on Acoma culture and traditions, we were told about the history of Spanish colonization and how contemporary Acoma religion consists of both Spanish and indigenous Acoma beliefs. Visitors are “given lectures that tell them not only about the
pueblo itself, but about the role of Europe and European America in Acoma’s development” (Lawlor 2006:135).

We were told about the San Esteban del Rey Church and Convent, which has sat atop the mesa since 1630 and was one of the few missions to survive the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. The church, a classic example of Spanish colonial frontier architecture, is regarded as sacred. Photography is not allowed in the church but photos may be taken of its exterior. While daily tours of the church are given to the general public, our guide also mentioned that the church is open for worship only open on important holidays and feast days. Church attendance is restricted to tribal members. Year round dances and celebrations occur at Acoma. San Pedro’s Day is in June, St. James is celebrated and Corn Dances are held on Santa Ana’s Day in July, and Acoma’s annual feast day of San Esteban is in September.97

On leaving the church, I noticed a sign nearby commemorating the naming of the Pueblo of Acoma as a National Trust Historic Site in 2007. A cemetery in front of the church entrance, which faces east, is reserved for military veterans and Pueblo elders.

It was so windy on the day of my visit that gusts sent debris flying through the area and the sun was blotted out by dust. At times I almost lost my footing, and I could feel dirt and grit sticking to my face and teeth. I found that if I planted my feet firmly on the ground and faced my back to the wind this stopped me from toppling over. One local man mentioned that someone had clocked the wind going 75 mph; I did not doubt that.

Nevertheless some local artists braved the wind and sand storm and were present outside their homes selling Acoma pottery. Some of the pottery was traditional, while

other pieces had modern shapes. Pottery pieces of different colors and shapes lined artists’ tables in orderly rows. As we approached the tables and gazed at the artwork, the artists invited us to hold the pots. They told us about each of the pieces as we turned them over and examined how they were made. I picked up some pottery that looked like you could use it on a daily basis. One of the potters noticed me examining her mug and told me that it was for household use and that was why the lip on the cup was so thin. There were also many pottery animals such as turtles, cats, and dogs as well as some pieces that resembled jewelry or trinket boxes. I recall numerous owl-shaped pottery jars, vessels, and vases that Acoma is famous for. Many of the potters thanked us for visiting as some purchases were made of their artwork. Upon leaving we were invited to “come back” to the Pueblo.

Toward the end of the tour, our guide suggested we wait on his family’s porch until the wind subsided. It was here that he invited all of us to a feast day in September. After the wind had eased a little, we walked back to the tour bus stop. The bus took us back to the cultural center and museum, and I thanked the tour guide for his time as I walked back inside the tribal museum. I watched the two introductory films shown to guests of the cultural center and museum about Acoma Pueblo history. One video was titled “Visit with Respect” and the other movie was called “A Place Prepared,” both which were highly recommended by my host earlier in the day. My camera was damaged from the sandstorm I experienced on the mesa top, but my pictures could be downloaded intact.
Zuni: *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center

The *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center at the Pueblo of Zuni is modeled after the ecomuseum concept. Ecomuseums have “become part of the evolution of the movement to protect the environment, preserve cultural ways of life, and provide programs for cultural revitalization” (Isaac 2007:99). Zunis view the ecomuseum as something that enables them to leave Western points of view behind in favor of a community based approach through the “exploration of one’s own culture” (Isaac 2007:99). One of the founders of the museum, a current museum staff member, explained how it functions as an ecomuseum in that “it is by and for the Zuni people” (92, interview). He stated,

> We try to be the finest for Zuni. It is nice we have these things, history, and a sanctuary for people to relax and talk. [It is a] place that mirrors the way Zuni knowledge is organized and shared. It is similar, but not the same as other Pueblo communities. Zunis do not have access to all information. There are six kivas and you must be initiated into it first. There are many different medicine societies as well. Some students will come into the museum and are working on their student reports and there will be some things they cannot get [information about] because they are not initiated [92, interview].

Ironically the question of who is granted access to information at the *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center is how I first became acquainted with this particular museum. Gwyneira Isaac, in *Mediating Knowledges: Origins of a Zuni Tribal Museum*

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98 French museologists George Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine developed the concept in 1971. Ecomuseums originated in France circa late 1960s and early 1970s. How ecomuseums are defined remains controversial in museological literature, but ecomuseums have been opened around the world. There are hundreds of ecomuseums in operation today. While community museums were developing in Europe, small, locally based museums began to form in the United States. As Isaac says, “The establishment of tribal museums as vehicles for empowerment and governmental autonomy has also been linked to the civil rights movement that gained momentum in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s” (2007:10). This motivated indigenous groups to safeguard their heritage, retain their traditions, and revitalize parts of their culture for the sake of future generations. The movement to protect their customs and to become the official custodians of their religious and cultural artifacts and human remains, led for the need to house this material. As a response to this necessity, many community museums, cultural research centers, and ecomuseums emerged. These museums act as a place “concerned about collecting, conserving and displaying what is important to the people of their geographical area: in other words, acting on behalf of their immediate local community” (Davis 1999:29).
(2007), examined the development and origins of the *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center. She critically explored some of the dilemmas of imparting sacred Zuni knowledge in a museum setting. She asked,

If tribal museums are vehicles for self-empowerment, however, we need to know the following: Who develops and directs them? What facets of culture and history do they emphasize? Which individuals do they seek to recognize as tribal historians, and who receives this knowledge? In short, who empowers whom within the community? Until now these particular questions have largely been ignored, yet there is considerable need to look at how people experience these institutions and, more important, to address the political relationships that affect how these institutions empower particular people or groups [Isaac 2007:10].

My own questions about the internal workings museums, in particular tribal ones, emerged as I conducted my field work and research at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum in Pojoaque Pueblo.

Located in west central New Mexico about 150 miles west of Albuquerque and approximately an hour from Gallup, New Mexico, the Zuni people call themselves *A’shiwi*—“the flesh.” Zuni Pueblo is often referred by locals as *Itiwana*, the “middle place,” and is the largest (in terms of both land and population) of the New Mexican Pueblos. Zuni Pueblo consists of about 12,000 enrolled tribal members. Zuni’s official website identifies the Pueblo as follows: “The main reservation, is located in the McKinley and Cibola counties in the western part of New Mexico. The estimated number of acres encompasses about 450,000 acres. The tribe has land holdings in Catron County, Arizona, which are not adjoining to the main reservation.”

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For more than 2,000 years, the Zunis have occupied their current geographical location, although scholars have had some difficulty with detailing the process due to the original settlement being built over (Ferguson and Mills 1987:243). According to excavation work done in the area, the historic village of Hawikuh was occupied and settled by the ancestors of the modern day Zuni about A.D. 1300 (Woodbury 1979:467). This was after a change from small residences to large, plaza-oriented villages from A.D. 1100 to 1300. Rather than consisting of one village as appears to be the case in the early phases of Acoma Pueblo, the Zuni began with multiple villages (Dozier 1970:37). About A.D. 1300 to 1500, additional prehistoric villages were founded in Zuni. Tree ring dating and ceramic analysis indicate that major occupation of the Pueblo began around A.D. 1450 (Ferguson and Mills 1987:244).

After the Pueblo Revolt, the Spaniards were not allowed to return to Zuni: “For a time there was anti-Spanish sentiment here [and] very clearly there was no interest in bringing the two cultures together…people did not want to integrate. We do show in our museum that during the Spanish period, Zuni ceramic style changed and then after the Spanish left it changed back to Zuni convention and design” (92, interview). This is

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101 Anthropologists have always been fascinated with the Pueblos, especially the Pueblo of Zuni. Some groundbreaking research in the early field of anthropology occurred at this Pueblo through looking at cultural artifacts, material possessions, studying the social organization of the Pueblo and religious ceremonies (i.e. Matilda Coxe Stevenson), examining the link between personality and culture (i.e. Ruth Benedict), understanding the cultural link and the artistic processes of local female potters (i.e. Ruth Bunzel) and conducting extensive excavations in the Pueblo (i.e. Frederick Webb Hodge). In 1879 Col. James Stevenson led a Bureau of Ethnology expedition to the Pueblo of Zuni. During this time, anthropologist Frank Cushing lived in the Pueblo for almost five years, later writing about his life among the Zuni peoples. Because of his time spent in the Pueblo, he was adopted by the Zuni people and learned some of their religious traditions. More important for the field of anthropology, he helped establish the use of participant observation as a worthy research methodology.


103 For the purposes of not being repetitive, I will not be discussing the history of Zuni Pueblo’s first encounter with the Spaniards since this was already addressed in chapter 2 as well as in the Acoma history section of this chapter.
what sets Zuni apart from the other New Mexico Pueblos: “everything Spanish was practically destroyed” (92, interview). Since there are no feast days that honor a Spanish saint, what is observed at Zuni is a traditional religious ceremony and katsina dance called Sha’lak’o. This community observance pays homage to the emergence and creation of the Zuni Pueblo peoples and their migration to the center of the world (Isaac 2007:29) and is held every December. The Zuni also hold other dances, such as the “Rain Dance” in June.104

The Zuni people105 base their kinship on matrilineal clans, and maintain a traditional Pueblo ceremonial system. The language spoken is Zuni, a linguistic isolate (Sando 1998a:8). According to the Pueblo of Zuni’s official website, language is incredibly important to the Zuni people and is the primary means to express their culture and heritage.

Traditionally the Zuni language was passed on from the older generation to the younger generation. Today, retaining the language is problematic and has become a top priority, being “incorporated into teaching methods in public schools and other cultural resource programs, such as the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center.”106 Because tribal members have identified the Zuni language as a precious cultural resource, there is also an ongoing project to make audio recordings of Pueblo elders speaking the Zuni language for the benefit of future generations.


105 Isaac observes that Zuni Pueblo does not consist of “a small, homogenous, or easily defined group of people…the Pueblo of Zuni comprises a growing and diverse population with varied interests and ideas” (Isaac 2007:21). This contention of the complex make-up and diversity of Pueblo peoples within the same communities was reinforced during my interviews.

As is the case at the other Pueblos, art is viewed as a means to express one’s culture, identity, and heritage to locals and outsiders alike. Many people in the community are known for their artwork including pottery (the most common design being white with reddish brown), painting, beadwork, carved fetishes, and jewelry made out of silver, turquoise, and shell.

In 2007, Isaac described the contemporary Pueblo that she lived and worked in for several months:

With the rapid growth of the population following World War II and the move of residents from farming villages to the central Pueblo, the construction of buildings has steadily expanded out from the village. In the 1970s, the tribal council introduced a development project to build individual family homes, and these homes now thread together an expansive community of more than six thousand residents. Most of what can be seen in Zuni today is this outward growth of the central village—subdivisions, family homes, trailers, schools, grocery and gas stores, and tribal government buildings. No single house is the result of a particular period of Zuni architecture. All family dwellings in Zuni have expanded and changed with each generation’s needs and resources [Isaac 2007:21].

Most tribal members reside in the main Pueblo village or in the suburb of Blackrock. The main pueblo includes the old church—the mission church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (featuring Zuni architecture), a tourist information center, a local restaurant, and a long row of art and craft shops,107 along the main road into the Pueblo, as I noticed during my visit to Zuni. The stores cater to tourists who come to buy some cultural and artistic item from Zuni. The Pueblo’s official website lists tribal enterprises such as the museum and heritage center, an enterprise specializing in forest products and services, a

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107 Something that was mentioned to me during my visit to Zuni Pueblo was that the art and tourist shops were mostly run by non-Zuni Pueblo members. Even the tourist center, down the road from the museum, was managed and operated by a non-Zuni tribal member.
In May 2011, with a friend from Pojoaque Pueblo, I traveled to Zuni to visit the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center and to interview one of its founders. Established in 1991, the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center was incorporated as a non-profit organization. It is not a tribal program and does not receive tribal funds (92, interview). Zuni Pueblo was interested in creating a museum for Zuni people and according to Isaac (2007) began thinking about a museum in the 1960s when the tribe was focusing on cultural resource management projects at the Pueblo. The tribal council wanted a museum that would be used to preserve Zuni heritage and for economic interests that would bring non-Zunis to the Pueblo. The museum staff member further explained,

The Zuni tribe was attempting to have economic development in the area in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1970s and 1980s there were efforts to establish a museum. Funds were raised through the ANA Grant and through these monies, the tribe hired architects and committees were formed. They talked about design elements, talked about the character of the building and the architect provided drawings and design plans. However, this planning process stalled at phase one. In the 1980s Zuni Pueblo tried again and it was the same process and plans for building a museum were halted [92, interview].

As a result of the meetings and community discussions, the museum staff discovered the need to maintain the museum’s autonomy and keep it separate from tribal government

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108 Isaac states that the Zuni government has made significant policy shifts in the last decade. Isaac claims that Zuni Pueblo along with other tribes became involved in self-determination issues. The Zuni tribal government and religious leaders had to make decisions regarding external matters (Isaac 2007:27–28). For example, there were two separate lawsuits (Zuni I and Zuni II). Zuni Pueblo sued the U.S government and won damages from the land mismanagement cases (Isaac 2007:28). In 1990 an out of court settlement was reached between the Pueblo of Zuni and the U.S. government and Zuni was awarded 25 million dollars for lost land. These lawsuits, which required members of the community to give expert testimony as well as the use of legal consultations, established a partnership between religious leaders and external agents to the Pueblo who have a common belief in the protection of sacred sites, the continuance of cultural resource programs on tribal lands and this partnership has continued to this day.

109 The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) provided a grant in 1990 to help Zuni establish a tribal museum.
(92, interview). The museum staff member offered this perspective about the role of a museum:

There were several people who were thinking that maybe tribal government was not the right place based on governance and other circumstances to develop a museum. There simply was not enough critical thinking about what a museum was supposed to be about. The Tribe was looking at the museum as an economic venture (primary) there was some thought to the culture and heritage that was folded in there somewhere. I became disenchanted by this approach and I started looking at the possibility of a museum and I thought about the baggage that goes into a museum. We looked at the idea of a museum and heritage center not in terms of needs, but in terms of opportunities there might be. [These opportunities included] a group of people, only citizens of Zuni who were willing to work without pay (volunteering), willing to work on this because it was something we believed in and there was also interest by artists to expand their understanding of Zuni art history, not just contemporary [92, interview].

According to Isaac, there was an ideological split between the Zuni tribal council and the museum planning committee,

the [museum] committee’s main concern following its creation was to develop a museum sensitive to Zuni ways of interpreting culture and history. In this manner, it shifted the focus away from founding a research museum that would attract non-Zuni visitors, as envisioned by the council, and toward developing a center with local concerns [Isaac 2007:90].

About this same time, the Smithsonian Institution was also interested in Zuni collections and museum staff began making connections with foundations and donors. A group of five people (the founders of the museum) worked outside of the tribal government and prepared by-laws, articles of incorporation, and federal and state tax documents, and went about to establish the museum as a non-profit organization (92, interview). “We wanted it to be more than just a pretty building; it is what is inside of it that matters, learning and representing Zuni knowledge” (92, interview).

The museum founders, as members of the Zuni community, came up with the name *A:shiwi A:wan*, meaning ‘Belonging to the People,’ to describe an institution that was specifically for Zunis” (Isaac 2007:104). They chose the term “heritage center”
because it refers to their own history. They also felt that to call the museum a “cultural center” would have been confusing because, in their view, “culture means several words that are implied and obvious” (92, interview). They were also worried the museum might be mistaken for a visitor center with the words “cultural center” in its name. Besides, Zuni already had a visitor center and tourist shop geared to answering the public’s questions about Zuni culture and history.

The A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center underwent a series of transitions. A key museum staff member left to pursue other interests. However, he came back to work in the Center in 2005 and was dismayed to learn that it was operating more like a tourist center than a museum and heritage center for Zuni people. He found that there were more outside visitors at the museum than community members. There were eight to 10 people working there at this time. He eliminated the gift shop, considering it as not a good use of time. Three people are on staff today and they “run the museum almost like a business, which is about being efficient” (92, interview).

Today, A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center does not serve outsiders as “a place to learn about Zuni culture. It is more about teaching our culture for Zunis” (92, interview). It is a place to “provide a forum of discussion and conversations about Zuni history, about the future, and circumstances at Zuni. This museum serves the Zuni community and it is a space for people to have a conversation” (92, interview). Zunis had “no place to go to talk about this in the community except at the museum. We talk about complex stuff like the failure of social media, interracial marriage, human rights, astronomy, comparative science, etc. We have critical conversations around complex issues” (92, interview). It is the hope of the staff member that
Zunis who visit here take away an appreciation for Zuni’s capacity for innovation, resilience, unique artistic sensibility, very particular identity, particular history, and art sensibility. We are not like Acoma or Laguna…we are unique to Zuni and they will know why [through] access to resources through art, film, media, exhibitions and that through coming to the museum they will understand what makes them different from other Pueblo groups [92, interview].

It is also a place that provides for ongoing programs in the community. There are short-term projects for Zunis to learn about history and culture as well as educational programs for local schools. There is no set schedule at the museum: “We try to be flexible. It is fluid because we work with schools and the next day we could be working with jails, and then the next day be at the recovery center, or at the University of New Mexico (UNM) branch” (92, interview).

Zuni museum staff members have been to the University of New Mexico’s Maxwell Museum of Anthropology and have collaborated with curators on projects that specifically benefit the Pueblo. For instance, Zuni people went through the Maxwell collection on Zuni material and took some of the collection back to Zuni in order to allow Zuni artists to study and relearn specific types of basket weaving. Through the museums collections, Zuni people are learning conservation of cultural heritage and revitalization (92, interview).^110^  

The director of the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center makes the final decision on exhibits, but it is based on group conversations that include museum staff members and community curators (92, interview). In many cases, decision to proceed with the exhibit will be based on opportunity and practicality. The museum weighs the costs and benefits of doing a particular project stating: “For example, doing an exhibit on

^110^ The Zuni Museum collaborated with the Smithsonian Museum on its collection of Zuni objects. Zuni museum staff assisted Smithsonian curators with the cataloguing of Zuni artifacts helping them make a distinction between sacred objects and everyday objects (Isaac 2007:95).
Zuni autos would take a lot of research, costs, and materials and probably would not be
good of the museum due to time and money” (92, interview). The Zuni Museum had a
Veteran’s exhibit, farming exhibit, food exhibit, firefighter exhibit, and a map art exhibit
that became a traveling exhibit and in 2011 was on display in Northern Arizona.

The exhibit being planned when I visited was to open on June 24, 2011. It was an
exhibit about Zuni Day School from the 1800s to early 1960s, featuring an
intergenerational theme. This museum staff member also wanted to have a Miss Zuni
exhibit, but “there was difficulty with Zuni concept of appreciation and beauty versus
gender issues” (92, interview). He remembered asking women why they chose to enter
Miss Zuni and they would say because my family wanted me to and then not get much
else in response. He believed the exhibit would have not been very successful based on
his experience noting how many of the women were uncomfortable with being asked
about their participation and unable or not wanting to respond. As a result, the exhibit
never materialized. When asked to name their successful exhibit, the answer was the
map art exhibit:

Number one it was art and number two it was relevant to them. Art speaks to
Zuni sensibility about Zuni place history. Some have questions about
places…many Zunis do not think about important sites like Chaco Canyon, etc.
Exhibit filled a space that needed to be filled…many felt very proud to be
associated with these places [92, interview].

I was told that the community does not always come to see the exhibits since many have
already seen them.

In addition to having complex conversations at the museum, Zuni tribal members
also do research on families and can see old photos of the Pueblo. The Center also has
public talks as well as feature films, especially motion pictures from the 1920s. The
Center has a room set up for that purpose and the community can come in anytime to view the films.

Unlike at the other museums I visited during my research, the Zuni museum staff members spend 20 to 30 percent of their time in the museum, with the remainder spent in outreach work with communities and schools. The *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center is sometimes closed during the day because museum staff are out participating in community programs. The staff members go to the jails and do posters. We also give presentations on Zuni history. They like to watch films and many have not been exposed to Zuni heritage, art, and culture. So this is a place we can offer them. Some have asked to volunteer at the museum when they get out like painting the building. Some tell us that they did not grow up with male role models. This is also similar at the recovery center. We like to promote community health [92, interview].

The collections at the *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center have been purchased or donated and include Zuni ceramics, jewelry, carvings, seeds, a collection of 5,000 photographs, and an art collection with sketches, prints, oils on canvas, and watercolors featuring Zuni by Zunis. Since the museum is not set up for collections management, museum staff move the objects around the museum and some are in traveling exhibits (92, interview).

While outside visitors are not the primary audience, the *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center does welcome them. The Zuni museum member said that he would like people to see our continuous capacity and ability to innovate and to embellish and embroider our beautiful world and make it even more beautiful. We want them to understand that we are not just making a stone, but we are making it pretty. [I want them to see] how we always have had a capacity of innovation...we have always been a brilliant people and this just shows the continuance of it [92, interview].
He also hopes that outsiders see the differences among the 19 Pueblos, as he wants “outside visitors take home an appreciation for how different we are from other Pueblo groups for particular reasons like intellectual perspectives, art, and history.” He wants them to see how “Zuni individuals and families fit within the Zuni world...how they don’t leave anyone behind, how they are a collective peoples, who all contribute to maintain ‘Zuni-ness’ and in the cosmological process they have a role” (92, interview). More important, he said, visitors are left on their own to reflect on the history and objects that are depicted through a local perspective, using exhibit text in both Zuni and English to accommodate Zunis and non-Zunis.

**Conclusions**

The two museums I visited at Acoma and Zuni both serve their communities, but in entirely different ways and with entirely different audiences in mind. While both the Acoma and Zuni centers provide information and support to their specific communities, they have very different purposes in regard to outside visitors. The Acoma Center welcomes outside tourists and serves as a mechanism for explaining Acoma culture and history to those outsiders. The *A:shiwi A:wan* Museum and Heritage Center is not intended to provide explanations to outsiders, but serves as a place where Zuni people can come together to share their ideas and questions.

In the following chapter I will introduce the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum of Pojoaque Pueblo as another example of a tribal museum that is being used to support Pueblo goals, specifically the reaffirmation of Pojoaque identity.
Chapter 7

Revitalization and Preservation of Art and Culture at the Poeh Life Cycle Cultural Center and Museum

The ‘Poeh’, Life Cycle Cultural Center/Museum is bringing to the Pojoaque Pueblo peoples a lasting reinforcement of all aspects of their heritage which through generations of displacement and migration have been lost. It will stand as a visual symbol of a Pueblo rebuilt from nearly total extinction to a community for 219 members in a span of 56 years. Working together, the people of Pojoaque Pueblo are using resources native to their region to build architectural and sculptural structures unlike any to be found elsewhere. This project not only involves the members of the Pojoaque Pueblo but is also involving the neighboring Tewa speaking peoples. Additionally, this project is a model for cultural revitalization and inter-tribal cooperation.

Poeh Cultural Center and Museum
Master Plan

This chapter examines the central focus of the study, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, a community project established to revitalize and preserve the art and culture of the Pueblo of Pojoaque and the Northern New Mexico Pueblos. I investigate the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum’s history, mission, and purpose, and the way it functions as a museum engaged in cultural revitalization, heritage, and tourism.

During my studies at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, I concentrated on an often-neglected source of inquiry. Isaac states, “Although numerous studies have looked at locally operated museums, few have incorporated the local population’s reactions to their museum” (Isaac 2007:14). Part of my analysis therefore consisted of talking to the local population, including Poeh Museum staff (many of who are from the Pueblo of Pojoaque), and other self-identified tribal members. I expanded my research to include individuals who participated in the museum planning process, Poeh Arts teachers and students, and featured artists. In addition to these semi-structured interviews with the local population, I solicited comments from museum visitors via questionnaires. While
some of these comments will appear throughout this chapter, most of the feedback I received from the surveys is discussed in the tourism section.

The Poeh Center serves two purposes: (1) as a museum with an emphasis on traditional and contemporary Native American artwork and the history of the Tewa Pueblo peoples, and (2) as an educational program that encompasses indigenous arts and crafts classes. The mixed viewpoints of a broad range of research participants allowed me to see multiple perspectives about how the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum contributes to cultural revitalization, and how it represents the Pueblo of Pojoaque and the larger community. The varied assessments did not cause me angst because a curator from the MIAC commented that for museums, “there is no primary function…it really varies” (44, interview).

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111 I define the larger community as encompassing the eight Northern New Mexico Pueblos, other Pueblos, various indigenous groups in the United States and worldwide, and the general, non-native public.
In this section on the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum, I first examine the history of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum. Then I look at the museum’s multiple functions. I conclude this chapter by investigating visitor encounters at this museum based on my observations and visitor questionnaires. I seek to address the central question posed earlier: What role does the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum play within the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s attempt to recover and strengthen its identity as an indigenous or Indian Pueblo through a contemporary lens? I propose that the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum has become a reflection of the Pueblo of Pojoaque itself.

**History of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum**

The Administration for Native Americans (ANA),\(^{112}\) working in conjunction with a new funding program called “Developing a Model Cultural Center” (Warren 1991), funded four Native American tribes nationally in 1990, the Pueblo of Pojoaque being one of them, to develop cultural centers that would lead to economic development and cultural preservation (Guyette 1996:xiii). Pojoaque Governor George Rivera\(^ {113}\) played a key role in this development by designing the building (4, interview) and was instrumental in making the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum a reality (Guyette 1996:xv).

The *Poeh* Museum was established in 1988, opening its doors to the public in 1991. This museum was situated where the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s Visitor’s Center was located.

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\(^{112}\) The ANA funded the *Poeh* Center twice, in 1990 and in 2000.

\(^{113}\) George Rivera was appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Pueblo of Pojoaque in 1992 and was elected Governor of the Pueblo in 2004. Governor Rivera is an accomplished artist and sculptor and was also a part-time instructor at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum. He served as founding director of the museum. One of his sculptures is located at the entrance of the National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington, D.C.
currently resides and the *Poeh Arts*\textsuperscript{114} program was where the Nambé shop is now located (77, interview). The “*Poeh Arts and the Poeh Museum* were separate then and they combined when the new location was built” (77, interview). The current building, which is considerably larger than the previous one, is farther down the Cities of Gold Road from the tourist center.\textsuperscript{115} This street is considered one of the main thoroughfares into the Pueblo and is visible from the highway. The newly built *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum was inaugurated in 2005.

For one Pueblo of Pojoaque member who remembers the creation of the cultural center and museum, the inspiration behind the *Poeh Cultural Center and Museum* involved traveling to major museums in Europe and around the world.

> What I was drawn to was the individual beautiful art made centuries ago…I also was interested in public works…the path I went on was not just creating individual art, but to have my art and my talent to have an impact on the community. Since I am from the Pueblo of Pojoaque, it was the most appropriate place to return and practice my art and have an impact on the community. [It was a] way for me to give back to the community I am from [59, interview].

As is the case with the community museum movement in Mexico, from the very beginning residents must support having a museum in their town, village, or Pueblo for it to survive (Morales et al. 1994). A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member and *Poeh Museum* staff member remembered that during a tribal council meeting to discuss the plans for the *Poeh Center*, the “vote was unanimous for having a cultural center and museum although there was a concern with funding. However, when we were told we would get funding

\textsuperscript{114} In 1990 the Pueblo created *Poeh Arts* to teach traditional Pueblo Arts to students and to also teach students how to market their art for economic self-sufficiency. The *Poeh Cultural Center and Museum* was viewed as a center for cultural preservation and revitalization. I was also told that *Poeh Arts* was called in the Pueblo of Pojoaque vocational education program and it was open to all six Tewa Pueblos (21, interview).

\textsuperscript{115} “This site used to house a police station, which they eventually knocked down. There was also a two or three story building, which was office space and that got torn down, too. There was a Blake’s Lotaburger near the site as well” (21, interview).
for this project with the government through grants, everyone was on board” (69, interview).

While the museum is very much geared toward the arts, the intent of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum has much to do with the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s history. According to the museum’s master plan: “Due to the Pueblo’s near extinction two times in its history, the Pueblo of Pojoaque recognizes the dire importance of creating a center to support the ongoing traditions.” The museum was also a way for the Pueblo to bring back traditional arts lost during Pojoaque’s previous near abandonments. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member attested to the importance of bringing back arts and crafts to the community: “There were only a few families doing art and speaking the language and I think the Governor at the time realized it was important to bring all of that back. I think it has brought the Pueblo together and there is more sharing being done” (62, interview).

Unlike the planning for other tribal museums and cultural centers that focused on the tribes’ own people, the Pueblo of Pojoaque consulted with other Pueblos, relying “heavily on cooperation and assistance of the other five Tewa Pueblos” (78, interview). In particular, opinions from tribal members from the Tewa Pueblos of Santa Clara and Ohkay Owingeh were solicited “because some people in Pojoaque are related to people in these Pueblos” (4, interview). A Poeh Museum staff person (a member of one of the eight Northern Pueblos, and knowledgeable about the origins of this tribal museum) stated,

They felt an obligation to the other Pueblos to include them. Especially among Pueblos that speak a certain language there is an inherent camaraderie…there is so much interaction, intermarriage, language, and traditions that evolved…it is like peas and a pod, you cannot think of one Tewa village like Pojoaque without association of the other five. This is all due to geography, their language, shared
traditions, and that they have been in place for centuries or millennia. It is something that is inherent [78, interview].

Similarly, a Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member told me that in his opinion, the reason for including other Pueblos was because “there were not enough people in Pojoaque—we had to borrow from our sister Pueblos” (77, interview). Another Pojoaque Pueblo tribal member said it had much to do with Pojoaque’s earlier history. He claimed, “At one point when the Pueblo was abandoned and we came back and we didn’t know what to do—museum brings in all of the Pueblos…it is like sharing information between Pueblos” (69, interview). During this time, “there was collaboration with other Pueblos and cultural programming and ideas were incorporated” (59, interview).

The museum planning committee for the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was a diverse group. According to a member of the Poeh Museum staff, “There was a small group of artists and cultural leaders from various Pueblos [who] were brought in by the Governor of the Pueblo” (78, interview). Constructing the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was also partly a community effort: “There was a tribal works program that included tribal members and high school teens…all were from Pojoaque” (89, interview). It also involved the tribal Conservation Corps and included tribal youth and others from nearby Pueblos such as Nambe and San Ildefonso since the priority was to employ tribal people (4, interview).

Joel McHorse, from Taos Pueblo, was the general contractor for Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. McHorse specializes in traditional building techniques such as adobe brickmaking. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member involved in the museum’s construction noted that “Everything [in the Pueblo and nearby] was looking too
modern—we brought on generic traditional builders. It has now become a model for everything we build now” (59, interview).

Part of the funding for the museum came from the Pueblo of Pojoaque, which also provides some of the general operating funds. Tribal funding was supplemented with grants from charitable foundations including the Chamiza Foundation (a local private family foundation dedicated to preserving and supporting Pueblo Indian Tribes in New Mexico) (78, interview). The Rockefeller Foundation and other organizations funded the planning and consultation phase for the building in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

After three years of planning, in November of 1993, the Pueblo of Pojoaque Construction Services Corporation (PPCSC)\(^\text{116}\) started construction of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum. A Pueblo of Pojoaque member who was involved in the construction phase said,

I helped build it from the beginning. We hired about 15 people [some from the] Valley, [a] few were from the Pueblo, maybe 3 to 4 people, and some were non-native. [The] first adobe was shipped in from [the] other side of Espanola (North of it). We started with the foundation. We did the basement first, but because it was monsoon season we had difficulty and it was a lot of work [57, interview].

Construction of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum took place in phases. The first phase extended from the Tower Complex east to the sculpture studio (78, interview). A member from a nearby Pueblo and local artist who helped build the cultural center and museum and described the process to me: “They did the Tower first as well as the long strip with the Tower, then did the main building, sculpture studio, pottery studio, and then

\(^{116}\) The Pojoaque Pueblo Construction Services Corporation is a tribally owned for-profit enterprise created in 1993 to assist in economic development and cultural revitalization. Some of the funds and revenue from the PPCSC have gone to construction and maintenance of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum.
last the jewelry studio” (4, interview). A National Endowment Challenge Grant helped fund the first phase of the project.

In 1999 Phase Two was completed; it consisted of the administrative offices and the new museum with its exhibit space. In 2001, the National Endowment for the Arts provided support to fund a database for the permanent collection and photo archive and a National Endowment for the Humanities awarded funds for the collections/storage area of the museum. In 2003, Congress appropriated $630,000 toward completion of the permanent exhibit, rotating exhibit space, artist demonstration room, and gift shop. The New Mexico State Legislature provided an additional $250,000, which included the “flooring, plastering, masonry, and standardized museum lighting in all exhibit areas.”

The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum Development Plan also incorporated many additional features (such as a Children’s Museum, a Museum Collections research

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Figure 13. Tower Complex at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)

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area, a library and archive center, a theatre, and additional offices and classrooms), but they were never built due to funding issues. I was told that additional construction could take place in the future. A Pueblo of Pojoaque member foresees such expansion, and would like to see another collections area or exhibit built for the purpose of “meaningful art being produced” (59, interview).

The name for the community museum required tribal council approval (89, interview). *Poeh* means “path” in Tewa and is a term used for the Tewa life cycle (Ortiz 1972:57). The concept came from *The Tewa World* (1969) by Alfonso Ortiz (59, interview). Ortiz disclosed that the Tewa people begin and end life as one people; the *Poeh* represents

the two different migration paths the moieties followed after emergence. Thus, at the beginning of life there is a single path for all Tewa. At water giving it divides into two parallel paths and continues in that way until the end of life. At death the paths rejoin again and become one, just as the moieties rejoined in the myth of origin [Ortiz 1972a:57].

A member of one of the Eight Northern Pueblos elaborated further on the view,

*Poeh*—road—implies the road we live on—individual lives—path, your life’s path, which I think has more meaning than the continuous path [which was the name for the Permanent Exhibit] and I think they took liberty with the word continuous, but the literal translation is your life’s path. Pueblos will never cease to exist [2, interview].

A tribal member explained the importance this concept has in modern times. He said the *Poeh* represents for the Pueblo the transition between traditional and modern life (57, interview). Another Pojoaque Pueblo member echoed a similar sentiment. The *Poeh* refers to a cultural path, lifestyle. The cultural lifestyle part [seemed the] appropriate thing [as it] just covered everything you are doing [in the] Pueblo [from] housing, ancestor style housing [that is] integrated with tradition and business development…our government gives our people enough time for traditional ceremonies and assists in that…the *Poeh* Center [should not] have any
limits to it in terms of what could be done...[it is] revitalization of the culture and the arts [59, interview].

The purpose of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, according to a museum staff person, “is to have great works of art (Pueblo and Native American art), educate the public about Tewa Pueblos and other Native American people and cultures, [and] to preserve the cultural artistic traditions of the Tewa Pueblo people” (78, interview). In addition, “the intent of the museum is to educate the public as to what native culture is and for native people to participate in it...location alone is a major step in the right direction for a community museum location—easy access, admission is free” (59, interview).

The museum has over 1,000 objects in its collections room. These artifacts, works of art, and cultural materials come from the eight Northern Pueblos and other tribes, not just in New Mexico (27, interview). A tribal museum employee from the Pueblo said, “it is basically a cultural center...[the] majority of them are purchased, we do have donations...people come bring their stuff to [the] Governor and he will purchase them” (27, interview). Acquisitions of artwork also occur during exhibit openings, when the Governor will often hand select an object that will go into the collections room. During earlier phases of the museum planning process, as a former museum employee from the tribal community said, “NAGPRA was happening and a lot of tribes did not have places to store repatriated objects...so this museum also serves as a place or a warehouse to store repatriated objects as well” (62, interview).

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118 While the museum entrance fee is free, the Poeh Center welcomes donations. The only requirement is that museum visitors sign in at the welcome desk, as an accurate visitor count helps with funding.
The 18,966 square foot building features two exhibits. The permanent exhibit, *Nah Poeh Meng*—“the Continuous Path,” retells the origin story of the Pueblo peoples and the resilience of their culture in the face of Spanish colonization and American domination. According to an exhibit designer, the theme of this exhibit is the migration of the Tewa Pueblo peoples from the North. The exhibit relates to this migration path to the seasons; for example, the winter scene depicts “the harsh reality of winter time during the migration of the people” (72, interview).

During the planning for the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit, museum staff also reached out to the Hopi Tewa tribe\(^\text{119}\) for input (27, interview). According to a museum staff member from Pojoaque Pueblo who was involved in the exhibit planning process,

> [We] talked to elders and asked about their story of emergence to contemporary days...we asked them questions such as where they believed everything started...[we] collected this information over a three year period. Had to go to tribal council and ask for permission to tape record the information and to interview the elders [27, interview].

Roxanne Swentzell (Santa Clara Pueblo) sculpted the figurines in the permanent exhibit and her daughter Rose Simpson assisted with the artistic elements. Marcellus Medina, who is the Governor of Zia Pueblo, and his wife painted the murals for the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit installation. Governor Rivera approached him during an art show for the Eight Northern Pueblos about participating in the exhibit design (72, interview).

The exhibit designers and planners went through a series of meetings. As an exhibit artist explained,

> When I was first contacted it was to inform me about what the buildings looked like (walls) and the concept, the structure (buildings), and the rooms. So it was more about the structural site and the dimensions. [The] second meeting was more detailed about what or who was going to be working there...and that there were to be four rooms—winter, fall, spring, and summer. And it was to show the

\(^{119}\) Specifically, a village of Tewa-speaking people on First Mesa, and part of the Hopi Tribe of northeast Arizona.
emergence of the people (Pojoaque) and then we had two or three more meetings [72, interview].

A non-native company called Iron Orca was commissioned to build the rocks, water feature, and church scene for the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit. The *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum planning committee found out about this small company, owned and operated by a couple on Whidbey Island in Washington State, through an Internet search (68, interview). Iron Orca started in 2002 and its founders had previous experience in landscape design architecture, including artificial rocks around pools. Their work has also encompassed offering assistance and providing expertise on major projects including the Biosphere in Tucson, Arizona as well as major zoos and habitats worldwide (68, interview).

Prior to the exhibit installation, Iron Orca met with the *Poeh* Museum planning committee and gathered information on the goals of the exhibit. This is how the process was described to me:

> We didn’t start at the beginning as they already had an idea of what they wanted and had a four room layout already…We created the stream and waterfall in the Immersion Room and the design of it (enough to create a circulation)…with the immersion concept we wanted it to be a more integrated space…the floor and dirt banks all one piece…we wanted to make it flow as one [68, interview].

It took Iron Orca about 10 months to complete the project (68, interview).

A second gallery houses temporary exhibits that change every three months and, in the past, usually featured contemporary artwork from the Pueblos. Recently, the museum has expanded the scope of its temporary exhibits to include other Native American groups, including from outside New Mexico. “[They] have made the requirement more flexible and opened up the criteria” (78, interview). Examples of the expanded scope include shows by Navajo artists such as Fritz Casuse and Ryan Benally,
and an exhibit of beadwork and other regalia by Jerry Ingram’s (Cherokee-Choctaw). A museum staff person said that the exhibit artists are often determined by

mak[ing] the rounds to craft shows and annual art markets like Native Treasures and we keep our eye open for artists, especially the more well known artists as well as up and coming artists. The rotating exhibit runs the whole gamut for those who are well known to up and coming [78, interview].

Although the director, collections manager, and museum staff curate these exhibits, the artists can become co-curators. Some were very involved with the exhibit from the beginning stages to the final touches on opening day. An exhibit artist remembered, it was

really important to do what we wanted, we were given free reign…[the] environment conducts the piece; makes it a whole entire piece…[we were allowed to use] any kind of materials we wanted to [and] any materials to express ourselves openly…we have done exhibits in the past so we know what works and what doesn’t [66, interview].

Others were less involved in the process. An artist from one of the Eight Northern Pueblos claimed that he “really left it up to the museum staff who picked out all the spots…I may have told them what masks to hang where like which one goes on top and which one on the bottom” (67, interview).

The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum is also a learning center for traditional indigenous arts. Poeh Arts has classrooms and workshops for Native Americans. Interested students only need to show a certificate of blood to enroll. A student from Canada told me that she “just had to show them a First Nation Status card and they even knew what that was” (14, interview). A Poeh Arts teacher said about 30 students enroll in his class. Some come from within the state, while other students come from places such as Alaska, California, and Washington; they find out about the classes primarily through word of mouth (171, interview). The main course offerings are jewelry, Pueblo
pottery, micaceous pottery, stone sculpture, woodworking, Computer—Desktop
Publishing (offered in the summer of 2012), AutoCAD (offered in fall of 2012),
Photoshop, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), among other computer software
programs, and lost wax casting. Classes are offered in the fall beginning in August
through December and then from January through May for the spring semester and then a
summer session from June until July.

Every year, in December, a Christmas show features Poeh Arts instructors and
students. The show is juried and allows students to showcase their traditional and
contemporary artwork. As a Poeh Arts teacher claimed, part of the instructor’s job is
“getting students ready [and making sure their artwork is] clean from start to finish. [It is
like] entering an art competition [and] it is like gearing them for Indian Market” (171,
interview). Also the museum becomes a venue to sell their artwork, if they choose to do
so. According to a Poeh Arts student, “the student shows [are a] good opportunity to get
your stuff exposed and possible sales” (33, interview). I was also told by some students
and teachers that the December show is also a chance for “other museums and people
who sponsor art shows to come and see the exhibit and invite our students [to shows]”
(171, interview).

One of the shows hosted by MIAC that features emerging artists is called the
Native Treasures Show in May. I was told that 10 students from the Poeh Cultural
Center and Museum were selected in 2011 and 10 students were picked in 2010 (171,
interview). Another show in April is for up and coming artists. Another show, for better-

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120 GIS, computer mapping, which is different from the traditional arts classes at the museum, is being offered as a way
to promote the use of technology in modern day society. This is again an example of keeping up with new technology
and the Pueblo of Pojoaque being considered one of the most progressive Pueblos in New Mexico. A Pueblo tribal
member said she took GIS and was able to map her house and it provided her with a useful skill.
known artists, coincides with Indian Market in August and is intended to entice “Indian Market tourists to come here” (89, interview). The August exhibit is also an opportunity for the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum to expand its “mailing and contact list and become more noticeable by other people from different states” (89, interview).^{121}

![Figure 14. Artist Demonstrations at the Poeh Museum. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)](image)

Artist demonstrations are offered in the museum from Memorial Day until Labor Day, on Fridays and Saturdays. Local artists bring in their pottery, jewelry, sculpture, paintings, beadwork, and other media, and work on their pieces. Poeh artists encourage museumgoers to see what they are doing (and to purchase some of their work, if it is for sale).

Unlike the Zuni tribal museum, the Poeh Museum heavily advertises its exhibits, classes, and programs. This is accomplished through multiple media such as the Internet, fliers, newspaper ads, billboards, radio spots, and advertisements in magazines such as

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^{121} Museum exhibit openings, which occur in the evening and last a few hours, involve meeting the featured artists, previewing the pieces in the exhibit, and possibly buying one or more of the pieces. Meanwhile, traditional Native American dancing and singing takes place outside the museum’s front entrance. Exhibit openings are open to everyone and usually attract some non-native people.
Native Peoples, Smithsonian, and local magazines that publicize the major galleries in the Santa Fe area. Poeh Museum staff sends out thousands of invitations for exhibit openings. They also rely on former and present faculty members and students from the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum to get the word out (78, interview). Despite all the advertisements, museum staff told me that the most effective way of communication seems to be the Poeh Arts students and word of mouth (78, interview).

The Multifunctional Poeh Cultural Center and Museum and Reactions to the Santa Fe Fiesta

A Pueblo artist from Santa Clara asserted, “the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum is multifunctional” and serves many constituencies whether it provides [the] opportunity for Indian people to learn how to create art in various media, provides a focal point for art and creation and display of art and history in Northern New Mexico for Northern New Mexicans, [and] creates employment for Pojoaque and others. It [also] serves visitors…people that come to see the art and experience the culture [in a] nice informal way [as well as] local people. [For] participants in the program [it is an] opportunity to learn various art forms [63, interview].

Many people I interviewed expressed similar opinions regarding the countless roles of this tribal museum. These responses were individualized, personal accounts regarding how the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum had in some way impacted their lives.

Some believed the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum functions as a place of remembrance, as a place for learning about history, and as a place to reconnect with traditions. The museum as a tool for cultural remembering is an aspect Erikson noted during her Makah tribal museum ethnographic research. She stated, “I realized how important the museum is as a place for remembering, for retelling oral histories, and for teaching anew those who are unfamiliar with Makah history and culture” (Erikson
One Pueblo artist observed, “I think the function culturally is basically that it is cultural remembrance and looking forward into the future. We can’t move forward without knowing our history and identity and the Poeh Museum functions also to educate the public” (72, interview).

For Native Americans (especially those who come from the Pueblos) the Poeh Museum is also a chance to know one’s history as told from a Tewa Pueblo perspective. A Pueblo of Pojoaque member claimed, the “first part is to revitalize the arts and to show the history [of the] Eight Northern Pueblos [and] all Pueblos” (27, interview). A local artist from Santa Clara Pueblo believed, it is a push by a tribe who is losing culture to revitalize it—[the] culture due to necessity and importance…I think it is valiant of them to do this. Having a school there is important and having a museum there is important for outsiders. Some native people don’t know [their] own history and go over there and find out something that they didn’t know about before [4, interview].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said he felt “the primary function is a place where non-native and native people can come together to appreciate the heritage that the eight Northern Pueblos have to offer…[it is a] place of learning [and] preservation of our culture that was almost lost” (69, interview).

While ignorance of Tewa and the Tewa emergence story is mostly confined to non-native peoples, I did encounter some Pueblo peoples and indigenous peoples (as well as those who identified as having a mixed heritage, and also referred to as “mestizo” or “coyotes” (Horton 2010:167), who were unaware of the extent of their history.

The need to become educated about New Mexico culture, heritage, and history told from the Tewa Pueblo perspective is an example of why counter-narratives (alternative stories or different theories and points of view usually coming from the
minority perspective) are important, and how tribal museums like the Poeh are essential. For a tribal museum, presenting a narrative opposed to the dominant narratives (and in ways that differ from those at large museums) is necessary for non-dominant populations to understand their role in local and regional history.

A perfect example of regional issues is illustrated by Native American reactions to the Santa Fe Fiesta. The Santa Fe Festival celebrates the Reconquista, the time when the Pueblos supposedly freely resubmitted to Spanish rule after the Revolt of 1680. Many Pueblo people had attended the Santa Fe Fiesta without fully understanding what they were participating in. It was only later, when they were older, that they realized what really happened historically and the significance of the Santa Fe Fiesta. Sarah Horton studied the Santa Fe Fiesta for her doctoral dissertation and states,

> the Fiesta is not only an invented tradition but also an origin myth that enshrines a very particular story about New Mexico’s settlement as the official history. The Fiesta claims De Vargas’s ‘peaceful resettlement’ as the birth of a modern multicultural nation, establishing a legacy of tri-cultural harmony among the region’s Hispanos, Pueblos, and Anglos. In upholding De Vargas’s 1962 resettlement as the official founding of Santa Fe, this rhetoric obscures the fact that his reoccupation of the city the following year involved the execution of seventy Pueblo men and the enslavement of roughly four hundred Pueblo women and children [Horton 2010:3].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member expressed this sentiment,

> I went when I was little, but I have not been back since as I don’t have an interest. I didn’t understand the concept of Fiesta until I got older…and the concept bothers me. As I got older…here I was thinking one way and that it was acceptable and when I went to IAIA I realized I was so brainwashed into that history, and thought it was that way…I was taught something totally wrong [98, interview].

Another Pueblo tribal member from Pojoaque disclosed, “With the Santa Fe Fiesta, I know that when I was younger, it was a fun thing to do…getting together with friends, but as I grew older I realized what was taking place…so we don’t celebrate it, and we
don’t go down there” (62, interview). Native American individuals who had been to the Santa Fe Fiesta in the past explained to me that as part of their assimilation into Western society, they were presented with textbooks that viewed the *Reconquista* from the dominant society’s point of view, making only slight mention of its impact on the 19 Pueblos in New Mexico. After learning a more complete history of the Spanish and Pueblo peoples (by taking classes that focused on Native Americans, by taking a more active interest in their own communities’ histories, by talking to tribal elders, or by similar means) some refused to attend another Santa Fe Fiesta.

This realization that the Santa Fe Fiesta is a narrative told through the Hispano point of view is reminiscent of the film, *Gathering Up Again: Fiesta in Santa Fe* (1992), which follows the history of the Fiesta and traces the story of a Pueblo man who plays the role of Cacique Domingo in the reenactment of the “peaceful reconquest” in 1692. Through his participation in the reenacted event, he comes to understand the significance of that event to contemporary Hispano and Pueblo peoples. He also experiences the cultural ignorance on the part of the Fiesta organizers and participants, especially Anglos and Hispanics who dress up as Pueblo Indians, engage in stereotypical character portrayals—essentially “Playing Indian” (Deloria 1998). As everything begins to sink in, the man can be seen wiping tears from his eyes.

A member of one of the 19 Pueblos who had never been to the Fiesta summed up what the event meant to him: “I avoid it. They are calling it reconquering—they actually have the Conqueress of Love—it is the reconquering of us Pueblo peoples…celebrating
reconquering of homeland is an insult to me…brings back to the subjection, torturing, etc.” (82, interview).

For someone who has been absent from a community for a long time, a museum can be a place to reconnect to one’s culture and traditions. A Pueblo of Pojoaque member who did not live in Pojoaque in her earlier years reasoned that the Poeh Museum “can strengthen identity because it provides access for someone that did not grow up here. I moved here as an adult and it is a great place to work to understand where I came from…I am not artistically inclined, but I think for those who are artistically inclined, it is a huge benefit” (32, interview). Another Pueblo of Pojoaque member who was a longtime resident said, for a “Pueblo person who maybe did not grow up here and [for a] non-native [they can] see it and can learn from it. [It is] educational, [it is] our story from

Some research participants who identified themselves as Pueblo peoples knew about the negative history attached to the Santa Fe Fiesta, but also wanted to look at some of the positive aspects of this annual celebration. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said, “Fiesta [is an] idealized version of what happened…I am sure if they got the Pueblo’s version it wouldn’t be a tourist draw. But history is made by those who win. There are some people who look at in a negative way because it has caused a lot of hurt. But if you look at the positive side, it celebrates traditions that have lasted” (32, interview).
our point of view, and it is not in history books and there are people who have been here from the beginning” (98, interview).

The *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum also acts to reinforce and strengthen general Pueblo identity. A Pueblo of Pojoaque member argued that, “Our traditional identity we culturally get it from our families...because (like me) for instance, however, I grew up the non-traditional way and the *Poeh* Cultural Center is one of the places where we can get it from here” (47, interview).

Many people are cognizant that the museum serves two constituencies: the native audience and the non-native visitors. A *Poeh* Arts teacher said the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum functions as a place for educating both native and non-native people with the retention of traditional arts as the ultimate goal: Its function is “to pass on our traditional art forms to new people, to our own people, and to give the outside audience a better view of what we are doing here, place to retain the arts that we make so it will be in a permanent collection for the next generation to study” (21, interview). Another Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member, who grew up in Santa Fe rather than Pojoaque, claimed the museum’s function was two-fold:

It is a place where in particular tribal communities come and learn old arts that perhaps are kept within families and it gives opportunities for other tribes to learn from them, those who are willing to teach. For the public, it is for them to see [the] arts and crafts part of the traditional pueblo and other pueblos. I know the intent of the center was built for Native Americans and it is one of the few museums in New Mexico built by Native Americans for Native Americans [32, interview].
Other research participants were of the opinion that the art classes, Poeh Arts students, and teachers who make up the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum play a tremendous role. According to a Poeh Arts student, the function of the classes is “maintaining the traditional art forms, expanding on them [whether it is through the] pottery class [and] expanding on new creations…different aspects of pushing artists to different levels” (82, interview). A museum employee from the Pueblo said he believed the function was “to educate and expose the Pueblo culture about the Pueblo way of life. With the cultural center it is to enrich and strengthen the culture [through the] classes and artwork. The classes are a big part and they are active in helping maintain culture” (47, interview).
Others (such as a *Poeh* Arts student) expressed the idea that the *Poeh* Museum functioned as a space where they could market and sell their work. The purpose is “giving people an opportunity to develop a career [and] making a living for themselves through traditional arts” (33, interview).

**Tourism and Visitor Encounters at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum**

The *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum attracts roughly 5,000 visitors annually.\(^{123}\) This museum serves the community of Pojoaque, Santa Fe and the communities around that, and the tourists. But first and foremost, this tribal museum favors a local approach “serv[ing] the Tewa Pueblo peoples and other Native American tribes (other Pueblos, Navajos, Apaches, etc.)” (78, interview).

Location plays a major role in the influx of visitors, especially those individuals who live near the area, drive by, and are curious about the museum. A *Poeh* Museum staff member said, “Many [museums] are geographically isolated like Zuni and Jemez. With our museum, we have a big highway, which is a major thoroughfare and that helps with attendance” (78, interview). Another Pojoaque tribal member claimed,

As far as a community identity…we don’t stand out that much, especially when it comes to attracting tourists to the Pueblo. It is easily passed by because people don’t know what it is…the cultural center is already part of the community, it doesn’t need an identity. I think the museum shows we…help strengthen identity [such as] allowing *Poeh* Arts students to showcase their work and it attracts people from all audiences [89, interview].

Some research participants said the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum made the Pueblo of Pojoaque even more legitimate by creating awareness among the visiting

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\(^{123}\) This total is based on counting the number of visitors from 2010–2011 in the visitor sign in sheet/log that was supplied to me by *Poeh* Museum staff and also from my daily fieldwork observations. It does include participants in special events such as exhibit openings.
public about the Pueblo as well as stimulating public interest about current projects and continuing Pueblo art traditions. A Poeh Arts teacher offered,

I think the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum put them on the map. [Also] letting public know that they do exist and are still there [and] haven’t fallen off [the] map. [The] people [from the Pueblo] are thriving and [they are] revitalizing language and culture with what they have available. [For the] Pueblos that are connected [they are] using them as sources to revive their culture, language [40, interview].

Another Poeh Arts instructor agreed that the tribal museum made the local community more relevant. He believed,

Most definitely…[they are] not in it for themselves [by] letting in other artists; it put them on the map. I have students that take classes from me that are from Nambe and students from Albuquerque. [I have to give] credit to Pojoaque since no other Pueblo is doing this…this is a Center that is supporting Native American art [with the] educational facilities and a museum [66, interview].

A few participants were not even aware of Pojoaque until the construction of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. A Pueblo of Pojoaque member alluded to this by saying, “Before the museum needed to be revitalized everything was desolate it was like visiting Mexico…good that they have it. Pojoaque is real and is a Pueblo…before all of this; people thought it was just a little town. There was a truck stop and [the] Roadrunner Café was part of [the] truck stop” (17, interview). A Poeh Arts student from one of the 19 Pueblos said she did not even know Pojoaque was a Pueblo until she took the art classes at the cultural center and museum. She explained, “I had never been in Pojoaque…even though I have lived near Pojoaque and I pass through here, but I never knew where the Pueblo was or had seen their dances. Yes, I visited the Pueblo and have gone to their feast days, gone to visit recreations and other stuff in the area” (80, interview). She only became aware of what Pojoaque had to offer once she started taking classes at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. This artist said it was “through
businesses, through museums, through casinos, through recreation” that Pojoaque gained recognition as a Pueblo in contemporary times (80, interview). Therefore the tribal museum is not only a cultural attraction for tourists, but also a gathering place for indigenous peoples from all over to work on their traditional arts or learn a new aspect of Native American art.

Museums take an active interest in visitor demographics, as outside visitors are one of its key constituencies. A significant portion of my time was spent at the museum’s welcome desk, greeting visitors, handing out my questionnaires, and thereby trying to reach an understanding as to what brought museumgoers to this particular location. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said the museum is intended to serve “the white people [those] visitors and tourists coming to the gift shop and donating to the money jar” (17, interview). Another tribal member from Pojoaque said, “I think it is intended to serve the Pueblo first and Indians…although the primary audience seems to be non-natives. I do think this is a good thing because non-Indians are being exposed to things they might otherwise not know about” (47, interview).

I had the opportunity to witness how visitors, primarily non-natives, conducted themselves at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum and interacted with museum staff. While most of the museumgoers were very pleasant and polite to the staff and respected the rules in this establishment, there were, unfortunately, others who were rude and often disrespectful toward the museum staff and the museum’s rules. They took pictures of the interior, despite clearly posted signs that prohibit photography. They also asked inappropriate and often insensitive questions, and allowed their children to roam unsupervised in the permanent exhibit displays.
Stereotypes about Pueblo peoples and Native Americans

I was also subjected to unpleasant behavior and at times was singled out by museumgoers. One day when I was watching the front desk with another Poeh Museum staff member, a white male in a Texas Longhorn baseball cap, white T-shirt with a logo, and khaki shorts, abruptly walked in through the museum’s front door, saw us, and asked, if there were “any Indians working here?” The museum staff member next to me replied that he was from the local community. The man then turned to me and inquired as to what Native American tribe I belonged to. The shocked and rather annoyed look on my face showed that I was bothered by the man’s belief that he had an inherent right to ask someone he had just met about her ethnicity.

Such behavior is not exclusive to white people. Individuals of many ethnic backgrounds have felt they are entitled to ask rather personal and pressing questions about my personal identity. However, my irritated look and brief response to his inquiry prompted the man to add, quickly, “I was just joking.” The man briefly gazed around the museum looking at the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit for two minutes and left. The museum staff member’s smirk said it all. We both just shook our heads at that interesting encounter.

Due to my ethnic make-up (as mentioned in Chapter 1), this was not my first experience with people like the man in the Texas Longhorn cap. I was therefore very curious about how my research participants dealt with these kinds of comments and whether they thought that non-natives who visit the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum completely understand what they are looking at.
When I asked research participants about this issue, some respondents said that visitors come with preconceived notions and stereotypes about Pueblo peoples and Native Americans in general. Many Pueblo peoples I spoke to thought some visitors were only getting a token view of Pueblo history from the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit. Some visitors even commented to the museum staff that more labels and “cultural” guidance in the exhibit would have been helpful. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said, “Some people are and some aren’t [getting the overall message]…I think the ones that see us and talk to us—this is good. But the ones that just walk through I think they are still lost” (57, interview). Working at the welcome desk I did observe visitors who walked through the exhibit very quickly. However, other museumgoers paused in each room and some walked up to the museum staff afterwards to engage them in a conversation about the exhibit themes and layout. These visitors wanted to know more about the history of the museum as well as the artists who constructed the permanent exhibit. Many people commented about the overall ambience and aesthetics of the exhibit layout.

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said, “I would say 90 percent of the people still view native culture with stereotypes like we live in teepees, wear buckskin and hunt the buffalo with bow and arrow, and we wear feathers in our hair” (49, interview). A *Poeh* Arts student acknowledged that some people are not even aware that indigenous peoples exist in contemporary times. He explained “I was at an art show one day and a little boy looked at me and said, ‘all Indians are dead.’ He was with his parents and they didn’t even correct him. I told him I was Indian and that my relatives were Navajo. So there are people who believe that kind of stuff” (8, interview). Other people resorted to
asking ridiculous questions such as how they get the deer to dance since during feast day celebrations they have a dance called the deer dance (17, interview).

While most of the comments from the visitor questionnaires and from oral interviews regarding the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit were positive, I often wondered if the permanent exhibit reinforced some stereotypes about Native American peoples by showing them in harmony with the seasons and nature, seemingly carefree going about their chores in the spring. The clay figurines often wearing minimal clothing, and the sound of trickling water gives it all a serene, peaceful feeling. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member and Poeh Museum staff member related to me a conversation she had with a tourist about the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit regarding Roxanne Swentzell’s figurines.

[The] real tourists, [the] fearful and non-educated, actually think we lived like that…[I think we need to] make figurines [in exhibit] more personable. They make us look harsh, not approachable…[we are] trying not to be like the Indians that killed all the cowboys, but it doesn’t help any. Some think we were like pygmies—short little midgets. [A] Tourist, a man, once asked me, “Were Pueblo Indians small like that?” [I replied:] “At that time, we ran out of clay…us pygmies do grow!” [And the man’s] wife just laughed [17, interview].

A past exhibit artist maintained,

I think the message is a good one, story of their Pueblo from their story…[it is] cute with the caricatures, Swentzell did the animated stuff, cuteness, but it reminds me of [Disneyland’s] “It’s A Small World”…[I] think it is too cute…have talked to other curators who say it needs to be a real museum, needs to have real serious exhibits and step it up [66, interview].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member agreed that some changes need to be made and concurred with earlier visitor comments about needing more cultural guidance (if not for non-natives, then definitely for local Pueblo peoples). He said,

It is to show what our interpretation of emergence of coming to be is about…I think the message or reason for the exhibit is to show people what our beliefs are…however, sometimes I don’t understand it. I think they need to do a better job of understanding how to get the message across better…story of
emergence…I learned it a few years ago and I know there is folklore that surrounds it. So they are only telling half the story in the emergence room. I think it needs to be explained to our people even more [41, interview].

An individual from Santa Clara Pueblo agreed with the assessment that non-Pueblo peoples were not getting the real meaning behind the permanent exhibit and the history of Spanish and American colonization practices in the Southwest. She believed that non-natives needed more cultural guides and historical explanation. She argued,

I am disappointed there is no labeling and it becomes no story at all without those machines.¹²⁴ A person can stand in the exhibit and there is no room for contemplation…there are the seasons—summer, winter, fall, spring—all the seasons together is the heart…but it needs to be a meaningful, informative, educational experience for all that come. For a Pueblo person they are more likely to understand the seasons, but for someone from Texas or California [they more than likely] don’t know how important it is to live cyclically, to live communally and the Pueblo things we take for granted [2, interview].

The *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit was intended to focus on people with all different learning capacities through the use of diverse mediums of communication like technology and the emphasis on the sensory experiences, especially with water flowing throughout the exhibit. The *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum is utilizing “New technology [as a way] to fragment the meaning of the artifact and to introduce many perspectives, many points of view” (Hooper-Greenhill 1992:204). As a museum staff member explained, we believe that people learn in different ways whether it is visual, listening, touching, etc. [We] tried to create in the museum ways that can be adapted to people learning whether you are a person that likes to read (exhibit guide), auditory thing (walk through and listen), fold out (lay out of exhibit), or using no guides at all. Both the Governor and I had been to other museums and we felt that labeling stuff takes away from the aesthetics and creates distractions because you don’t look at [the] exhibit, [instead you are] looking at labels. We wanted people to have the

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¹²⁴ The machines referred to here are the audio machines provided at the front desk for each visitor to take through the Permanent Exhibit. As of 2012, these devices were no longer working. Some visitors who previously had used the audio devices inquired at the front desk if these machines were still available for use.
freedom to draw own conclusions and experience exhibit on their own terms. I find that museum labels are concise and contrite [and you are] forc[ed] to leave things out [78, interview].

A museumgoer noted this aspect on my questionnaire and wrote “I liked having no descriptions on the walls—forcing me to observe/feel/think rather than get lost in the facts.”

Nonetheless, part of the purpose of any exhibit (whether it is in a large city museum or a local community museum) is to provide some kind of learning experience for locals and outsiders alike. This is what visitors have expected since museums came into existence. They prefer guidance about what they are looking at and want to understand the importance of the exhibit’s theme and content. These “last few years have seen a major shifting and reorganization of museums. Change has been extreme and rapid, and, to many people who loved museums as they were, this change has seemed unprecedented, unexpected, and unacceptable” (Hooper-Greenhill 1992:1).

While museumgoers may not fully understand the exhibit, the primary point of the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit, according to Poeh Museum staff, was allowing visitors to arrive at their own conclusions. They felt that too many labels create an unpleasant distraction, and that this was also going against what the “typical” museum usually displays of having labels with unusually long descriptions as well as being very object oriented. Part of the critique on the larger museums that were often regarded in the past as agents of civil society has been on correcting how museum descriptions are presented to the general public and how the lengthy descriptions and scholarly interpretations present these social ideas as fact. Changes in museums especially with the emergence of
indigenous based community museums, “prevent us from continuing to talk about these institutions as simple warehouses of the past” (Canclini 2005:116).

Despite these significant changes in the practices of both large and small museums, the museum is still associated as being “the ceremonial headquarters of the patrimony, the place where it is kept and celebrated, where the semiotic regime with which hegemonic groups organized it is reproduced. To enter a museum is not simply to go into a building and look at works; rather, it is a ritualized system of social action” (Canclini 2005:115). The museum acts as both a cultural, social, and political arena where a diverse array of social practices and behavior occurs (Bennett 2005).

Even before a museumgoer steps foot inside a museum, these social institutions also regulate visitor conduct. Signs posted near the entrances remind visitors of the museums’ expectations and rules. Guidebooks and guided tours demonstrate the proper way to behave inside the museum such as where to direct their gaze (Urry 2002). Museums and exhibits are not neutral entities, yet judging from visitor observations and feedback, they are presented that way to the public and often are accepted as such. Exhibits emphasize powerful ideas that are meant to serve as “truth” to museum visitors. Erikson contends that these social ideas in a museum can become “natural,’ unquestioned, or hegemonic elements of collective consciousness or memory’” (Erikson 2002:26).

Nevertheless, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum is challenging hegemonic social ideas and in the process is calling into question past museum ideology that often cast Native Americans and indigenous peoples in an inaccurate, unfavorable light. The point of this tribal museum and many others (like the ones at Zuni and Acoma) is to
explain history from the indigenous and community point of view, with no need to
display and present exhibits like larger museums. Museologist Hooper-Greenhill states,
it is a mistake to assume that there is only one form of reality for museums, only
one fixed mode of operating. Looking back into the history of museums, the
realities of museums have changed many times. Museums have always had to
modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays
of power, and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surrounded
them [Hooper-Greenhill 1992:1].

As Clifford writes in *Routes* (1997), in the larger government run museums,
“something is missed: a density of local meanings, memories, reinvented histories”
(Clifford 1997:129). In contrast, the Pueblo of Pojoaque Poeh Cultural Center and
Museum places an emphasis on exhibits curated by local indigenous peoples.125 The
museum becomes a way to “empower” local groups and enable them to “portray the
identity they wish to display to the world” (Hoobler 2006:6). These “community
museums allow the towns not only to preserve and reinforce their past but to write their
own history, therefore influencing their present and shaping their future” (Hoobler
2006:8). A Pueblo of Pojoaque member said he definitely regards the Poeh Museum as a
community museum since the “majority of people work here and contribute here
locally…I like it better like that because we know more because we live it…better than
hiring an outsider like a professional because it would take them years [to understand the
culture]…I think we have done a stellar job of doing it” (69, interview). Another Pueblo
of Pojoaque member said it was an “Opportunity for the Pueblo of Pojoaque to exhibit
from their perspective and what was determined was that vision would be an individual

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125 Some of the participants I spoke to were critical about the lack of community voice coming out through the exhibits
and expressed their thoughts that there needed to be more local people involved in the planning and interpretation of
the exhibits.
experience for each person (no labeling) and not dictating how you interpret, but that you experience with the four seasons message and historical timeline” (59, interview).

During my time at locally based museums I rarely saw an explanation of how the community museum started or why locals felt it was necessary to build one. Yet some visitors were very curious as to how the cultural center and museum was established and whether Pueblo members were active participants.

A museum staff member discussed the overall message of the permanent exhibit:

I hope that they [native and non-native visitors] learn we’ve been where we are for a long, long time and we have intimate knowledge of our environment. So much so that we are able to have a livelihood, raise families, be able to feed them and build communities and to have language, culture, and traditions that make us unique and that define us as a sophisticated people (even though Spain and America didn’t view us as sophisticated). Because of our adaptability and sophistication we have endured this long. And it is through our resiliency that we will be able to go into the future [78, interview].

A statement like this one at the end of the permanent exhibit would be most helpful. As museologist Hooper-Greenhill reminds us, “Museums, in common with all other social institutions, serve many masters, and must play many tunes accordingly. Perhaps success can be defined by the ability to balance all the tunes that must be played and still make a sound worth listening to” (Hooper-Greenhill 1992:1).

Regardless of the preconceived notions people had about Pueblo peoples before they stepped foot in the cultural center and museum, a Poeh Museum staff member said he still hopes to educate museumgoers through the exhibits. He states,

We were here at the beginning of this earth (history of this place), living in caves and hunting big game like in Europe (history is parallel to theirs if not earlier). Our sophistication was earlier than Spain and the United States in terms of technology and cultural development. Archaeologists and anthropologists have documented our sophistication in Chaco and elsewhere. These were large communities with complex systems, economic, religious systems that were just as
sophisticated as in medieval Europe. But there is a strong denial of this so we want to get this message across to people [78, interview].

Not all interactions between native and non-native peoples were negative experiences. Some tourists appreciated seeing the artwork at the museum and one visitor from Santa Fe, New Mexico, but originally from England, wrote about experiencing the “wonderful art [and] [s]eeing the development of the art and the contemporary interpretations.” Another museumgoer from Scotland, but who now resides in Alfred, New York, said she would remember “the use of tradition and traditional skills and culture to present a modern version of the art.” In fact, some Native Americans drew their inspiration for some art pieces from visitor comments and feedback. As one Pueblo artist said,

Tourist interest does and does not shape my artwork. [I] gather inspiration for everything whether it comes from tourists or not. Feedback from tourists is genuine…usually questions that they are puzzled about something or they can be ignorant, but not in a bad way, they do not know, not used to Native Americans being modern [66, interview].

Visitor Responses from the Questionnaires/Surveys

Many museumgoers took the time to fill out my questionnaires and think seriously about the questions, writing considerate, reflective, and often thought provoking responses. I have included some of their responses in this section as well as the visitor survey results (refer to Tables 2, 3, and 4 on page 215). These visitors visited museums regularly, were well traveled, and wanted to experience some cultural aspect while either touring or living in New Mexico. A visitor said that she is “interested in increasing my knowledge of Pueblo culture, which is very little.” Some visitors had been to numerous museums worldwide. These people either noted that fact on the questionnaire or
commented to me that there were too many to list. They mainly found out about *Poeh* through word of mouth, guidebooks and advertisements in local magazines, or by just driving by.

![Figure 17. Exhibit opening night at the *Poeh* Museum. (Photo By Kaila Cogdill.)](image)

Some visitors were in awe of the museum and were aware that local Pueblo people built it. A few museumgoers seemed appreciative of the fact that it was built and run by native people. One visitor from (Troy, New York) wrote, “I will remember most that this museum arises out of the elaborate efforts of the community to which it belongs, the collaboration of the people in expressing their unique culture and values. Bravo!!” Another museumgoer from the village of Ashby (in Massachusetts) said that after visiting this tribal museum he experienced some cultural loss. He claimed, “The feeling of loss I have—the Native Americans on the East Coast where I live do not have as intact a culture left. There are no museums, galleries or Pueblos where they may show who they are and relish their culture. What is here is precious.”
Table 2. Visitor Survey.

| Questionnaires/Surveys Total: | 154 |
| First time visitor to *Poeh* Museum | 126 |
| Not a first time visitor to *Poeh* Museum | 28 |

Table 3. Visitor Survey Demographics.

| Resident of New Mexico | 39 |
| Nonresident of New Mexico | 109 |
| Pueblo Indian | 6 |

Table 4. Visitor Survey Reason for Visit.

| Reason for Visit | Total |
| Passing through/curiosity | 32 |
| Media | 30 |
| Word of mouth | 48 |
| Specific interest—Roxanne Swentzell artwork/Tower Gallery | 7 |
| Road Scholar tour | 36 |
| Worked at *Poeh* Museum | 1 |

The permanent exhibit was a featured attraction for visitors and for the tour guides who brought in large tourist groups. Judging from the questionnaire responses and daily observations, this exhibit left a lasting impression on museumgoers. One called it a “small masterpiece; down to the smallest details.” Many tourists pointed to the running water, the footprints in the exhibit, the overall story of the Pueblo people’s emergence and history, the “fall” room on the contact period, and Swentzell’s figurines
as the highlight of the exhibit. In fact, some visitors had come to the museum to see the Swentzell art pieces and to visit the Tower Gallery. As a visitor from Hays, Kansas, who had been to this museum previously noted he would remember “the Priest beating the native. [And] Roxanne Swentzell’s Sculptures and the Tower Gallery.”

Some visitors seemed to focus on one aspect of the exhibit. A visitor who lived in Pojoaque and brought her nephew for a visit said she would remember “the teaching of ‘the intruders’ forcing change and religion.’” A tourist from La Mesa, California, commented that she “loved the walkway depicting the creation and evolution of the people.” And another museumgoer (originally from Florida, but now from Albuquerque) said she would remember “the rock entry into journey through time and history. That entry is such a dramatic shifting of atmosphere.”

Others focused on the overall exhibit. A tribal member from San Ildefonso Pueblo said “the permanent display is remarkable, serene and peaceful until the end. The juxtaposition of the old ways…the burning of the church and the modern room with child watching TV was striking.” One museumgoer from Hampton, Virginia commented, “It is beautifully done. Repeats the story of ancient Puebloans as we have heard in other southwestern sites. Adds to the beauty of art to figurines and structures and the sound of water. So well done and such a terrific statement.” A visitor from the northern Philippines wrote that she could identify with the exhibit. She said, “It reminds me a lot of my cultural background that I’ve grown up. It has similarity, my ancestors live in caves and huts and were happy until the Spaniards came to introduce Catholicism but still the practices is going on.”
In assessing responses from museumgoers, I must return to the earlier discussion regarding critical assessments of the permanent exhibit by native research participants. Their consensus that more cultural guidance is needed and their comments regarding the exhibit’s simplicity were reinforced by some of the museum visitors’ remarks. The peace and harmony implied for Pueblo peoples before Spanish colonization was an oft-stated response to the query regarding what they would remember most about this tribal museum. A visitor from Minnesota wrote that the feature he would remember the most was “the interpretation of peace and calm.” Some visitors mentioned the “simplicity” of life before colonization. These visitors were missing the reality that strife with neighboring Pueblos and other Native American groups took place before the Spanish arrived. The Poeh Museum exhibit guide briefly mentions that Pueblo peoples “lived experiencing the joys and sorrows of everyday life, being in relationship with each other and to all things, all the while striving to live in balance.” However, this guide fails to mention what those “sorrows of everyday life” were. Instead, the exhibit seems to focus on the serenity of Pueblo life prior to contact—a message reinforced by “the seasons of our lives—Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall and back again. We live best within the cycles of our seasons. It is in this way that we have survived” (Poeh Museum exhibit guide).

The opening to the exhibit guide states,

For thousands of years our Tewa ancestors lived in age-old ways, working and living from within their communities, following the seasons…The guide for living was to use the natural world as a model for structuring their Tewa world. They had a belief system that helped guide their lives. But their lives were turned upside down with the entry of people who were so unlike them, foreigners who came into their land in the Fall of their lives, in 1540.

Therefore one cannot fault tourists for going away with a flawed historical perspective, as this is the interpretation being put forth to the museum audience. A visitor from
Arkansas alluded to the simplicity of the permanent exhibit and lack of mature cultural content for adults in an otherwise positive statement: “I will remember the way this history was presented so a young child could understand their heritage.”

In the next chapter, I continue my discussion of community museum’s wide-ranging functions by looking at cultural revitalization, museum representation (by investigating cultural identity as expressed through the Poeh’s permanent and temporary exhibits as well as the classes), and analyzing how the tribal museum promotes heritage.
Chapter 8

Cultural Revitalization at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum

In this chapter I discuss how the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum functions to promote cultural revitalization, museum representation, and heritage. Construction of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum acted as a catalyst for other cultural revitalization efforts in the community. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member related,

Governor Rivera started the idea. [I know] Governor Viarrial [was] supportive of Governor Rivera for taking on this project [who] pushed idea of cultural revitalization in peoples minds and during this time other projects started happening—construction type projects [like the] tribal council room and chapel. [These] projects happened because Construction Company doing [the] *Poeh* Center had blueprints already and it became a model for other buildings and it was a blending of [the] old world with new modern things [32, interview].

Part of the revitalization process has been bringing back traditional structures and construction techniques. Indigenous communities such as Pojoaque facing rapid social change and perceived culture loss often turn to cultural objectification as a way to maintain their sense of identity. They preserve historic structures, build cultural centers and museums, create written records of their languages, document oral and visual traditions, record songs and stories, and so forth [Guthrie 2005:361].

According to a member of Santa Clara Pueblo, “When people have to work so hard at learning the language or maintain their traditions, when their efforts are so deliberate and self-conscious, their culture has been reduced to something intellectual and theoretical” (Guthrie 2005:361). However, many research participants would not view relearning dances and the songs, preserving the Tewa language, building a tribal museum, and rediscovering lost aspects of their history as cultural objectification. All communities such as Pojoaque, whether they face rapid or slow cultural change, must continuously
revitalize some aspect of their traditions. Tribal museums and cultural centers are not reserved for those communities that feel they are facing absolute cultural loss.

Much planning goes into the layout and construction of tribal museums relative to their environment. The Acoma museum was shaped in a way that does not detract from the environment, whereas the purpose of the Poeh Museum’s building was to bring back traditional building techniques and showcase this aspect. This has increased visitorship to the Pueblo of Pojoaque, as many tourists are on a mission to find what they perceive to be ancient Pueblo edifices.

Many visitors who came to the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum think that the building is one of the original structures from the Pueblo. A museumgoer from San Mateo, California noted (on one of my questionnaires), “I actually thought it is the remnants of old adobe architecture.” A first time visitor from Oakland, California, to the Poeh Museum wrote that the “interesting exterior drew us in.” Tourists would comment to museum staff about the architecture and ask questions about the museum’s age. Upon realizing that there were no more old, traditional buildings left in the Pueblo, some visitors felt confused as they had their preconceived ideas of what a Pueblo should embody—and disappointed that they were not getting the “ultimate Pueblo cultural experience.” Museum staff members would direct visitors looking for such edifices to either Taos Pueblo or San Ildefonso Pueblo. The lack of traditional buildings in the Pueblo led a tribal member to comment, “the sad thing is that the traditional building here is considered the Poeh Center” (77, interview).
Tourists want to experience something different from their everyday lives (Bruner 2005; Desmond 1999; Harrison 2003; MacCannell 1999; Urry 2002). A tour guide in New Mexico told me that visitors on his excursions “come for the diversity and culture [with the] strong point [being the] landscape, and Native Americans, too” (85, interview). However, this is to be expected. “Tourists tend to have high expectations of what they should receive since ‘going away’ is an event endowed with particular significance. People are looking for the extraordinary and hence will be exceptionally critical of services provided that appear to undermine such a quality”” (Urry 2002:38).

Landscapes and identity become closely tied, becoming spectacles for tourist consumption (Guthrie 2005). Guthrie asserts, “The pueblos have attracted so much attention—and achieved such a central place in the imagery of the Southwest—for a number of reasons, including their longevity, multi-story architecture, and rich cultural and ceremonial life” (Guthrie 2005:23). Ancient sites and ruins are as central to the modern image of the Southwest as are its mountains and deserts. Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, Bandelier, Hovenweep, Casa Grande, Montezuma Castle, and other relics of the past appear on calendars and coffee
mugs and are major tourist destinations. The combination of stark landscapes and tangible reminders of a prehistoric past form visual touchstones of great power [Weigle 2010:28].

Ironically, it is not just tourists who visit archaeological sites and ancient ruins. Locals venture there as well, but for a different purpose. Some of the Poeh Arts classes such as those on pottery, visit the Ancestral Puebloan sites such as Chaco Canyon as a way of seeking inspiration for their artwork ideas and designs (21, interview).

Nevertheless, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum building reflects the Pueblo’s efforts to be a modern and progressive Pueblo in the 21st century. A Pojoaque tribal member admitted, “It has been tough to be recognized as a legitimate Pueblo by other Pueblos. The kiva was a big part of who we are…it is who we are and have always been…Poeh Museum [signifies] what has been historically and what will be into the future…it does mimic the environment of the kiva” (41, interview). Another Pueblo of Pojoaque community member commented that

the Poeh Museum has adobe walls and is traditional yet [there is a] modern side of it…and [the] building itself has modern techniques. We are trying to combine them both…[we have the] traditional side [and] we would like to learn more but we must keep up with the times [57, interview].

Despite the Pueblo’s deliberate use of traditional building techniques, some research participants claimed that the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum did not contribute in a direct way to cultural revitalization at the Pueblo. I definitely paid attention to these comments as I, too, had noticed the near-absence of Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members in the exhibit areas and art classes. In fact, during my time at the Poeh Museum, only a handful of art students from the Pueblo participated in the classes on a regular basis. In one jewelry class, only two out of the thirty students were from Pojoaque; in a traditional pottery class there was only one tribal member; there were no
community members in the micaceous pottery class. This caused a Poeh Arts instructor to comment, “I think it should be at least half of them—half of them from Pojoaque [and this is due to the] proximity and where it is…I have heard many students say that if this was at my Pueblo, I would be there every day” (171, interview).

When I inquired about the lack of Pojoaque tribal participation in the classes, a Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member alluded to the cultural impact of the Pueblo’s earlier history. He replied,

I think it is bad in that it is not being taken advantage of by tribal members…I think because Pojoaque is behind the other Pueblos culturally as far as being culturally aware. Other Pueblos take the art classes because they think of it as something they should do…the people from the other Pueblos that take the classes are already into it (the art)...they grew up with it in their families and they learned about art through their parents, etc. At Pojoaque, we were not exposed to it (traditional arts) in our homes [47, interview].

One Pueblo of Pojoaque member did take the hide tanning class offered in 2011 and three members from Pojoaque took the war bonnet class. However, all were Poeh Museum staff. A few Pojoaque tribal members I spoke to were not involved at the cultural center and museum but had taken art classes in earlier years. A Poeh Museum staff member said,

[We are] cognizant of the fact that there are very few Pojoaque community member representation in classes…we are encouraging participation through children’s programs and boys and girls club and family learning center. [We] inform community about class offerings and invite them to exhibits [and] invitations [are] always hand delivered…to tribal officials [78, interview].

Another individual who identified as being from one of the eight Northern Pueblos was harsher in her critique: “I don’t think the people here at Pojoaque care too much about cultural revitalization…they need cultural revitalization. But the challenge is if they don’t take [the] opportunity than the cultural revitalization does not happen” (2,
She also cited the lack of community involvement in the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum events and programs.

In spite of these assessments, it is important to look at the “big picture” of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum—being aware of the origins of the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum, how it serves its constituencies, and its future possibilities for the local community.

The *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum is only one example of the Pueblo’s ongoing cultural revitalization efforts. I previously mentioned the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s earlier history of cultural revitalization and the programs currently underway in the community (see Chapter 2). It is also important to bear in mind that revitalization is an ongoing struggle. As one Pueblo of Pojoaque member described it, “cultural revitalization has been a continuous and long process” (89, interview). This is crucial because the Pueblo of Pojoaque is still rediscovering its lost heritage and history. A *Poeh* Arts student, who identifies as Navajo, affirmed,

> if people are aware of where they came from—than they can better understand who they are now and make better choices of where they want to go and find their passion (live a much longer life)...live a good life with less stress...this is the spiritual part of our culture—a meaning, symbols, sight along that path and this comes through cultural awareness [8, interview].

As a result, some Pueblo community members have begun the long, difficult process of bringing culture, art, traditions, and language back to Pojoaque. A local artist from Santa Clara Pueblo said she thought the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum was a bold statement and an “interesting approach to cultural honesty—this is where we are at and here is what we are doing because of this” (4, interview). But perhaps cultural revitalization at Pojoaque was best described as a Zia Pueblo tribal member characterized
it. He avowed that cultural revitalization was not something unique to the Pueblo of Pojoaque. In fact,

all the Pueblos revitalize culture, language, and their identity. If we need to survive in [the] modern world today, we need to accept and define ourselves in the future with technology and new laws. Culturally we adapt, [but the] secret to revitalization is to renew—go back to who we are, we move forward to understand ourselves in the past [72, interview].

Much of the literature written about the Pueblo’s earlier history is not entirely accurate and a comprehensive tribal history was described to me as a top priority, since to know one’s history is crucial to the continuing revitalization, cultural maintenance, and identity of the Pueblo. According to a Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member who in his earlier youth felt lost because he did not know his own identity,

My goal with the Poeh Center is to first create [an] environment where tribal people go and research history—research it and look at documents and old photographs to help satisfy that curiosity they may have. It is important we do show our history to the community and make people understand our cultural identity [41, interview].

Some community members talked about the Pueblo’s cultural revitalization programs as a gradual process, but that as a community they had come a long way. In support of this assertion, one Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member described the dance programs (and that the dance outfits came from what was taught a the workshop at the tribal museum), and the building of the kiva and the tribal council room (59, interview). Poeh exhibits have featured Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members’ art (77, interview). There was also a past exhibit that featured Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members who were taking art classes at the Learning Center: “The majority of the people who participated in the Learning Center art program did not come from a family of artists and it was the first time for them. It
involved all Pojoaque tribal members and no outside members” (77, interview). An individual who helped organize this show alleged,

One of [the] stipulations was that it could not be a juried show. It was a family show and everybody who submitted objects; all of them would be going into the show. [This] met some initial resistance, but I had to think of the people taking [the] classes, especially the kids. [The art in the show was] all traditional arts and crafts—red, black micaceous pottery, stone, red willow baskets, Pueblo regalia, and drums—art that was taught included everything that was traditionally Pueblo [77, interview].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member discussed the Poeh Museum’s overall impact in the community:

At the time when the museum was being built, there were very few families doing art in the community. The whole cultural revitalization in [the] tribe itself was to bring back baskets, drum making, pottery, and get back these traditions and get back what was lost. I do consider myself part of this identity. As a result of this I see a lot more people making pottery and art. I think there were only 3–4 families who were doing art and now everybody has participated in the classes. I know at the Family Learning Center that is only for tribal members they also have art classes there [62, interview].

Another tribal member who did take advantage of the classes early on described discovering some of this lost history through the art classes:

During class time we talk about history and learn more and more about what [the] Pueblo used to be…I remember in my pottery class that some of the elders that take classes used to say ‘I remember when’…students will talk amongst themselves…I find my identity through these classes and I found a relative through my pottery class. You can learn a lot about your relatives, your Pueblo, and your history through these classes [89, interview].

As the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum’s mission statement notes, one goal is to support the continuation of the cultural traditions and art of all the Tewa Pueblos, not just of the Pueblo of Pojoaque. The museum may have been built on Pojoaque Pueblo land, but planning, construction, and subsequent development involved the nearby Pueblos and the art classes are open to all indigenous groups. The concern with serving
all the Tewa Pueblos goes back to the emergence story in the permanent exhibit. A
Pueblo of Pojoaque member reminded me that “with Pueblo people we are all related and
it is somehow like we all came from the same language and it is almost like one. The
Pueblos broke up and it is not necessarily that we were separated [because] at one
time…we were one” (98, interview). Additionally the need to involve all the Tewa
Pueblos has much to do with the earlier history of the Pueblo. Another Pueblo of
Pojoaque tribal member stated,

with the time away many of the traditions were lost and the tribe was so small so
we needed help from other Pueblos to get some of the stuff back. When the
Governor opened the Center he incorporated the help from many of the other
Pueblos and I think it was a way of saying thank you to the other Pueblos. This
makes sense as there really is no one in the area that could accommodate
everyone…it is so centrally located to all of them…and it [was] important to get
their opinion when the center was being constructed because they were going to
use [the] Center, too, and it wasn’t just for us [32, interview].

Once a museum grows old, its novelty subsides. It will take work to keep
building interest (within the Pueblo as well as nearby communities) in the programs,
classes, events, and exhibits at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. I liken this to the
definition of cultural revitalization, in that it is ongoing and continuous and requires a
real effort. It is also clear that not everyone in the community will support such ongoing
projects. Community support is highly fluid and diverse: the fact that people come from
a particular community or village does not mean that they all have similar viewpoints and
opinions. As I heard from many of my research participants, there exist deep divisions
between particular families as happens in all the Pueblos, and it makes politics in the
Pueblos a tricky subject.

In practice, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum appears to have lost some of its
luster. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member stated, “my goals for the Poeh Center would
be to re-energize the battery over there. I would like to do documentation on the history, as this is essential in the Pueblo. I know it was there before, but with the business oriented focus, we turned back from that” (41, interview). Poeh Cultural Center and Museum staff, art students, teachers, and some Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members were not only aware of this, but many had comments and suggestions for the future. I will include their suggestions in the concluding chapter because such input is necessary if this tribal museum wishes to maintain its relevance for future generations.

Besides talking to individuals who claimed that the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum did or did not contribute to the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s overall revitalization efforts, I met students (and a few teachers) from neighboring Pueblos (and other indigenous groups) who directly benefited from the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum’s programs and claimed that it contributed to the revitalization of traditional arts and crafts. An art student and a member of one of the eight Northern Pueblos said that the museum “contributes not only to Pojoaque, but other Pueblos (northernmost and southernmost). We, Pueblo people, have an opportunity to learn and try things that we didn’t have the opportunity at home…it helps them (Pojoaque) and it helps us” (82, interview). A First Nations Poeh Arts student attested to the importance of revitalizing a lost art form. She maintained,

what I think it provided me with was a traditional skill that was shared by another tribe so I could revitalize that art form in my tribe and the opportunity to do so by sharing traditional practices that can’t be found anywhere else that I know of…There is a calling for me, which are reasons beyond my personal interests. I have a desire to show people [from my tribe in Canada] what probably was done 600 years ago and is not done anymore [14, interview].
More important, the *Poeh* Arts classes functioned as a place to strengthen identity through sharing of similar languages, ceremonies, songs, dances, foods, and traditions. A member from Santa Clara Pueblo expressed this sentiment:

It can strengthen identity through vocation—art training that is received here through pottery, jewelry, sculpture, weaving, drum making, and computer mapping. With identity—many of these individuals are from the community and have community centeredness and there are some that come from Santa Fe and other places. They are collecting cultural knowledge and can be knowledgeable to those that are not knowledgeable. It is a good family learning center—good way to strengthen identity…prior to getting like this establishment—you learned about art making was in the home around the kitchen table…this is a similar setting where you sit around, there is camaraderie, joy, and community, and all that stuff about community building [2, interview].

For students who had lost some of their culture and heritage as a result of not growing up on the reservation or Pueblo, the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum provided an opportunity to reconnect with their culture. A Navajo art student who lived on the reservation until he was eight, then moved away, claimed,

the connection to the *Poeh* is a cultural connection and it is critical to how a person expresses their art…it is just your culture…but with culture what images does it give you? [The] whole process of my art is relearning my culture…I have been doing research into my culture while doing art…my study of my culture stays close to the art…[it] blends together in what I want to learn in my expression of my stone art [and] I think it will always be Native oriented [8, interview].

Another aspect of the cultural revitalization process at the *Poeh* Museum is its benefits to the art instructors. According to a *Poeh* Arts teacher,

I couldn’t get this back home—center of the art world here in Santa Fe. Heard about the program and took the classes. Given opportunity to teach here, took it on, big responsibility…I learn from the students as well…it opened a lot of doors for me and to give back to the community. [It] balances everything [171, interview].
The instructors also felt it was their duty to pass along cultural information to their students. A long-time instructor of Pueblo pottery and a former teacher at Poeh Arts said that his goal is the “revitalization and revival of traditional Pueblo pottery:”

I am teaching the technique of pottery making for students at the Poeh Center who are searching for that information. They tell me that their potters from their Pueblos are not willing to share knowledge and techniques of pottery making. So it is by word of mouth that they find me and it is also how my name got out there. My aunties and grandmothers who use to do pottery have passed on. So I want to keep it alive in the family and the community and so I am teaching it and passing it on. When I was young, my aunties and grandmothers told me that if I don’t share what you know then it goes with you and no one will know. It is kind of like that with language [40, interview].

A Poeh Arts student insisted,
the instructors here are phenomenal…They do not mind sharing their expertise with me and have made a long career out of finding things to be true in terms of what works with their artwork and what doesn’t. They are just following the creator’s path and they are humble and willing to help. They are open with their knowledge [8, interview].

As a result of some of the positive associations that other Pueblo members cited regarding the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, there are plans in the works for other tribal museums in New Mexico. Some of my research participants cited the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum as a model for other Pueblos to follow. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member and Poeh Museum employee claimed, “There is curiosity of other Pueblos doing own cultural centers…There are other Native American tribes building own cultural centers because of us” (89, interview).

As one example, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo is in the early planning stage for the Ohkay Owingeh First Capital Heritage Center and Museum. According to an individual who was involved in the museum planning sessions:

There were regular consultants for the Pueblo relating to land, water, and language…so there was a vested interest in the outcome. During the meetings there were elders, anthropologists, archaeologists who all agreed that it was a good idea. The tribal council had to sign off on an application for the funding. Planning money is through the government [through the] libraries and museums grant…therefore because it is government funded [it] must be open to the public…the decision [is] not yet resolved as far as the holdings and what kind of stuff the museum will have. They have many stuff stored and many museums and universities and independent collectors have holdings that the Pueblo will ask for back…[but the] focus [will be] Ohkay Owingeh [86, interview].

The museum will focus on the integration of the Pueblo and Hispanic cultures that have been living together for generations. When I asked this particular individual if she 

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126 Although not a focus of this research, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (IPCC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico is an indigenous cultural center and museum. It was established prior to the other tribal museums mentioned in this dissertation. The IPCC is a non-profit organization that is owned and operated by the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico. It opened to the public in 1976. The museum’s mission is to “preserve and perpetuate Pueblo culture and to advance understanding by presenting with dignity and respect, the accomplishments and evolving history of the Pueblo people of New Mexico” (IPCC 2007–2012).
thought it was a novel approach by looking at both Pueblo and Hispanic cultures in this planned heritage center she replied,

people intermarried for so long and the Spanish kept stealing the land around them. When I first came here, I had a negative viewpoint of the Spanish…but Esther Martinez (humanist) \(^{127}\) told me that we gave them opportunities to come in and we rescued them. She believed that eventually everyone would come together through language and stories and she taught me to be more kind of Spaniards because it was taken care of in 1680. Although one time she did comment to me that the fence was over there and now it is here [referring to the Spanish moving closer and closer to the Pueblo]. The past 10–15 years [the community has been] determined to be collaborative for sake of growth (neighborly ways and sharing information when other Pueblos barely do). So I think it is a novel and realistic approach [86, interview].

This individual also mentioned that there are other controversies in the region such as land and water rights (Rodriguez 2006), especially a new controversy regarding water rights in Española (86, interview).

The Pueblo of Zia has seen some of their art traditions fade and feels a need to maintain these art forms before they are completely lost. Zia has utilized the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s Cultural Center and Museum as a model. As a Zia tribal member said,

Our ancestors used to make it (jewelry), but…because our people were almost annihilated from this land…a lot of people passed on and did not pass it on to others and we lost the art…we are trying to revitalize it. With the cultural center, the main emphasis is education for our people to reinvent artwork. We would like to be able to make real fine arrowheads and the stone ax. We used to be geniuses in making these things. We would like to hire other Pueblos to teach the craft. Pojoaque is doing the same thing [72, interview].

This Zia Pueblo member also said that it is common practice for Pueblos to ask each other for help in maintaining culture and traditions (72, interview).

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\(^{127}\) A Pueblo linguist and storyteller from Ohkay Owingeh who helped preserve the Tewa language. She has received many awards and recognition for her work.
Museum Representation through the Exhibits: *Nah Poeh Meng* and the Temporary Exhibit Gallery

Besides attempting to reach an understanding of cultural revitalization through the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum, I also sought opinions regarding the exhibits and their content. In particular, I paid close attention to the water feature in the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit. Water is precious to New Mexico, as a life-giving resource. It is also a contentious issue, leading to water rights litigation cases (such as *Aamodt*) and is a major worldwide issue in the 21st century (Rodriguez 2006). Anthropologist Sylvia Rodriguez (a former University of New Mexico Professor of Anthropology) who has extensively studied the use of “capturing, storing, and distributing water” in New Mexico, writes,

> Water scarcity and the legal status and ownership of water and water rights are major world issues in the 21st century...Every society, whether hunting, foraging, agricultural, pastoral, or industrial, must have a system for capturing, storing, and distributing water. This requires some form of technology and associated practices, rules, and meanings. The larger and more complex the society, the larger and more complex the waterworks. Archaeologists have long recognized canal irrigation as a cornerstone of human civilization in both the Old World and New World [Rodriguez 2006:1–2].

Paying attention to the importance of water in the arid Southwest, I wanted to understand the significance of what the *Poeh* Center was trying to communicate by having water flow throughout the exhibit and its symbolism. Water has a special relationship to the Pueblo of Pojoaque and the surrounding Pueblos and the Tewa name for Pojoaque, *Posuwageh* means “water drinking place.” A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member stated, “water is [an] important aspect of life, [it is] continuous, having water from [the] beginning flowing into the next generation and it is always there and moving; always there throughout the emergence (beginning) to now” (98, interview).
Water is also an important symbol in Tewa Pueblo culture. The paper guide for the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit mentions the importance of water in the Tewa belief system:

“Our poeh travels along that of avanyu, the water serpent. We welcome the return of avanyu who nourishes our fields by its meanderings.” An individual from Santa Clara Pueblo explained the importance of water to the Tewa people:

Avanyu [is a] symbolic figure [and] really important, supernatural force in our Tewa belief system...he comes from a period where we were agriculturalists and would help in its activities to help the crops grow (aridity of the land) delicate seeds can pop and stems can start moving up. Comes from that agricultural time period when we did farming. I remember as a child being afraid of Avanyu because it was such a powerful force. When I drive near my homeland, I know where he lives, [his] being comes into mind, and I hear him making his sounds as he moves about. [It] help[s] to remind you about the relation between idea of fertilization, which is crucial to our survival...Avanyu helping with fertilization so human beings can survive through harvest of its crops [it is a] potent demonstration of who we are as Pueblo people [2, interview].

Not only does the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit represent the Pueblo peoples emergence into this world, and embodies the resilience of their people, but it also represents survival through the use of water. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member attested to the importance of water not only in this region, but everywhere. He said, “It is a lifeline (water). Without water, no culture can survive. Most ancient cities were created because of water. Water is a constant flow and you can’t have crops or society without it, can’t have a culture without it’” (49, interview). A member of one of the 19 Pueblos said,

Here in the Southwest…and I think this was the impression Governor Rivera had about water in the Southwest. We live in an arid area and we live in the desert. Water is precious, it is like gold, [and] it is more valuable than currency. Without it we cease to exist. And this was a theme with the water going through all the rooms [72, interview].
Nah Poeh Meng was the first exhibit I had come across that had a live feature, water, running throughout. As a museum professional noted, “running water was a gusty move because many people [during the exhibit planning process] said you couldn’t have water in the exhibit. [I] wonder what that moisture will do to the pieces in the exhibit now and over time?” (44, interview). Prior to beginning full-time fieldwork, I had been told by some museum staff that bringing water into the exhibit was a contentious issue and that some people were against it. A tribal member said, “people who did the scenery for the permanent exhibit said it wouldn’t work…but [the] Governor said we are going to do it…fake water would not be profound and wanted to bring exhibit to life” (69, interview).

Despite the warnings about having water in an exhibit, it increased the exhibits sensory impact and created continuity. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said, It is the effect it has…it is different on anybody…water—some people have no regard for it…it is the essence of life especially in this region since there is not a lot of water, water is precious—and we represent this in the museum, we could have painted in the water—but we needed to have that feel—humidity, sound of it…look at it and watch it moving…there is a certain relationship of water to people depending on who you are and where you are from and how they may interpret water…it is really an individual interpretation and experience. Felt like it would feel artificial if there was no real water [59, interview].

While water was an important exhibit feature and drew many comments from visitors, the main points of view that drove the permanent exhibit was that it was an opportunity for Native Americans to present “our side of the story—our side—other Pueblos” (98, interview). Museologist Hooper-Greenhill states, “Effective history teaches us that, because meanings and interpretations are endlessly rewritten, we too can seize the opportunity to make our own meaning, and find our own relevance and
significance” (1992:215). The Pueblo of Pojoaque and the neighboring Tewa Pueblos have done just that. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member elaborated,

This museum was not really one made from one Pueblo point of view like Pojoaque, but was done by all Pueblos. I know in the meetings that took place that we really wanted to place special emphasis on the Pueblo Revolt and show that it was not just a pretty picture and to not sugar coat it [62, interview].

The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum cannot be understood without taking into consideration the coloniast legacy of mainstream museums (as I discussed in Chapter 4) and the ways that legacy has influenced the content and display in the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit. This exhibit is an example of a contact zone—“the space of colonial encounters … [where] peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations” (Clifford 1997:192).

The portrayal of Spanish colonization and the Pueblo Revolt at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum received the most comments of visitors, both negative and positive. The dominant ideology of American Southwest history (Nieto-Phillips 2004) continues to influence visitors and locals; the Tewa Pueblo point of view has been neglected in published accounts especially with regard to the Pueblo Revolt and the determination of the Pueblos to resist Spanish attempts to assimilate them completely.

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 “is one of the most important and successful indigenous uprisings in North American history, and Pueblo peoples today consider it an

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128 While the “fall” (contact) room was created from a Tewa point of view, not all peoples who identify as Tewa Pueblo peoples view it in the same manner. A study of the Zuni tribal museum found disagreements over what to display and how to interpret a certain piece or a particular community narrative or story (Isaac 2007:14). Cohen (2001) also encountered similar situations at the Santa Ana del Valle indigenous-based museum in Oaxaca, Mexico. Disagreements among community members is a reminder that perfectly harmonious communities do not exist. In fact there will be tension and conflict as well as differing opinions. What gets displayed and depicted in the museum is a selective interpretation of an event or a narrative about an object from particular members of the community (Cohen 2001; Isaac 2007).
essential first step towards their cultural survival” (Guthrie 2005:23–24). Yet as a
member from one of the eight Northern Pueblos stated,

New Mexico history texts don’t talk about Pueblo history in New Mexico. Perhaps there are one or two books with a chapter, but often a paragraph or two or a sentence or two…this is a total injustice to our people, state, and country. We want to educate about the history of our people with our exhibit [78, interview].

A Pueblo of Pojoaque member applauded the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit and explained that more often a selective interpretation of history has remained a mainstay especially as it pertains to “the way history is written. For Native people a lot [of] our history is oral. However, the written history is what is taught in schools and it is not always correct as it is told from one perspective” (98, interview). Often authentic, but different perspectives of American history can leave visitors surprised by the blunt point of view espoused in the contact room. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member alluded to the fact that all of them [the exhibit rooms] have strong points…[the] Pueblo Revolt [is a] major thing [with the] figures in there at the church. History always gets told from [the] other side. [It is] [r]ealistic and [shows] how native people were being treated; people never expect it…you always want to see the pretty pictures [where] everything [is] peaceful and harmonious. I think it shows how people lived [a] peaceful life and then had this controversy and it is from the point of view of the people who suffered [98, interview].

A member of Santa Clara Pueblo said “I feel sad when I go through the exhibit. [It is a] true story of what really happened [with the] permanent exhibit and I leave without hope” (4, interview). A Poeh Arts student from one of the 19 Pueblos commented, that a particular feature from the exhibit that she would remember the most was the “Priest holding the whip” (80, interview). While this narrative deeply resonated with her, she also felt a bit conflicted. She stated, “[I remembered] how we were forced to believe in the Saints, how they forced Christianity to the Natives and this was shocking to me…It got [to] me because when I first saw the museum I was taking catechism
classes and it made me question it and made me ask myself why I should be doing this.

Up to now, I still have that question” (80, interview).

However, deep and critical reflections regarding the colonization scene were not restricted to natives. A non-native, long-time resident of New Mexico who identifies himself as Hispanic said,

[I] thought it was bold, frank in that they didn’t make any bones about things…it is said without any words as to what took place…Last piece in it, kid with remote, [I]…responded to it equally as I did the church scene—revealing of true aspect of culture, look outside and look inside—both contained a lot…serious—church burning, yet whimsical in that it conveyed an aspect of what is going on…thought it was great, too! I took a friend who is Chicano, but is not a practicing Catholic and he was real upset and was negative about the church scene…he said that the Native Americans also killed Spaniards, and that it wasn’t just the Spanish [90, interview].

This individual commented to his friend that he was okay with it because it was from the native perspective and it is often a point of view that is not expressed, but his friend told him it was not right and left the permanent exhibit abruptly.

During my time at the museum I did meet visitors who seemed a bit uncomfortable with the church scene and asked if anyone had responded negatively to it. As historian Andrew Gulliford (2005:46) reminds us, “Historians feel compelled to rewrite history with each generation, but the public wants the past they learned in school.” Gulliford thus also makes the point that history is tied up with nationalism, especially in natural science and history museums. Heritage museums such as civil war memorial museums glorify America’s fallen heroes: “More often than not, artifacts, sites, and buildings were preserved and restored because of their association with great men or with great events participated in by great men” (Van West 2005:58). Because the general public is not often exposed to exhibits (such as Nah Poeh Meng) that offer an
unfamiliar historical perspective, such exhibits can leave visitors feeling uneasy. Clifford states on viewing exhibits that deal with colonialism and exploitation in indigenous museums,

> We encounter an informing and shaming discourse. Any purely contemplative stance is challenged by the unsettling mélange of aesthetic, cultural, political, and historical messages. This history forces a sense of location on those who engage with it, contributing to the white person’s feeling of being looked at [Clifford 1997:137].

After going through the exhibit, some visitors commented how sad they felt regarding the colonization of Native Americans. These particular visitors spent a considerable amount of time studying the church scene and wanted to know more about what happened and how museum staff interpreted it. One woman, a non-native, was crying after she left the exhibit and wanted to engage the museum staff in a discussion about what had happened.

Unlike the Makah tribal museum and the community museums in Mexico (where “All but one of Oaxaca’s currently operating museums have chosen archaeology as one of the themes of their museum” [Hoobler 2006:1]), the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum chose not to display archaeological pieces. I was curious about this aspect since archaeological displays are a major theme in many indigenous museums and an incentive for locals and tourists to visit these museums. In Mexico, for example, “[a]rchaeological remains can be seen as the physical manifestation of an Indigenous past that these communities strive to preserve, protect, and, in some cases, resurrect after the era of colonialism” (Hoobler 2006:2). For Pueblos in New Mexico, however, especially Pojoaque, it was explained to me “culturally repatriated items do not go on display” (62, interview). A museum employee and Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member added
a lot our archaeological stuff is sacred…[it is] all we have to connect to our ancestors. [When I took a class in] repatriation studies [we learned that] some things are not meant to be on display. One of the big problems with archaeology is the temptation to fix something when it is broken and it is meant to stay broken [98, interview].

It was also explained to me that this particular museum, unlike other museums, is “more focused on the future…the past is covered so often and so well in other museums and they chose to showcase what the future holds” (32, interview).

**Fostering Innovation through the Temporary Exhibit Gallery**

At Poeh, the temporary (rotating) exhibit features talented up-and-coming artists as well as well-known artists. Many contemporary indigenous artists would like natives and non-natives to see how they are creating traditional yet innovative art. Many are finding alternative ways to express aspects of their cultural heritage and identity to the public.

![Figure 20. “Juxtaposition” Exhibit, featuring traditional pottery and glass pottery. (Photo by Kaila Cogdill.)](image-url)
Richard Hill explores this topic in his article, “The Old and the New: Different Forms of the Same Message” (1994), on the blending of Native and Euro-American art. Hill states that scholars and “traditional artists” have called art that incorporates both traditional and modern techniques into question. While this art is often “considered a break from tradition, [Hill] suggest[s] that there is a deeper tradition at work, a tradition of storytelling and creativity that has always allowed art to change, even before contact with other art traditions” (Hill 1994:76). He therefore believes it important to investigate the sacred origins of art. Hill uses the example of his own father, Stanley Hill, Sr., who revived antler carving among the Iroquois (Hill 1994:78). His father was hesitant about carving the combs since the tools had been borrowed from another tradition, but he soon found his own style and “carves hair combs to show a companionship with the thinking of the old-timers. In this way, he is not replicating the past through his art; he is creating a symbiotic expression of his ties to the ideas behind the older hair combs” (Hill 1994:78).

It is not unusual for artists to borrow from other traditions; I have met (and heard stories about) many Native American artists who were trained in Europe and elsewhere, in different media, and the various techniques they were taught only enhanced their artwork. “Art, therefore, is another form of storytelling by which each succeeding generation adds to its experiences to the collective consciousness” (Hill 1994:78).

A Poeh Arts instructor attested to art as a form of storytelling and maintaining history. He claimed it is who my pieces represent (my people and where I come from) if it wasn’t for them—community (my ancestors)—we wouldn’t be here today…I am living and giving something back like a history—we are not just artists and potters but we are historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, [and] storytellers. We are out there
doing all of this—we are learning and in the process of learning all of this we are 
understanding all of this and our family histories. We are understanding what 
designs mean because if you look at regalia on dancers [the] sashes, belts, all the 
imagery is on the pottery as well. We are retelling that part as some people may 
not get all of that during the ceremonies and dances—we are retelling that part 
and the meaning behind it all—songs being sung and what do they really mean 
[40, interview].

Similar to the way Hill’s father had to innovate using different techniques to 
traditional Native American art, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum embraces forms 
of art that involve cross-cultural borrowing. A bicultural artist (his mother was from 
Santa Clara Pueblo and his father was Apache) who exhibited at the Poeh Museum 
claimed that he drew on both sides of his cultural heritage. He used marble to represent 
the Pueblo peoples and bronze to show the “strength and mystery of spirituality of 
Apache people” (63, interview). An artist from Ohkay Owingeh who had a show 
featuring non-traditional pieces said,

I think visitors have a specific idea of what Native American art is…I want to 
show them there is a new medium and a new idea that comes from it…the process 
and techniques I am using push different things—like experimentation…[with my 
art] I feel you can do a lot of that as well as passing along that knowledge. [My] 
heritage [comes from the] patterns I use—incise pots—I saw my grandma do it 
and her mom made them…there is a direct correlation with the designs today and 
what I saw in the past [67, interview].

Fred Nahwoosky writes, “Native American traditional arts reflect cultural values. 
Culture is understood as an ongoing dynamic process that shows continuity of form, use, 
and practice” (Nahwoosky 1994:85). Rather than seeing a piece in a linear, static 
moment in time, particular pieces speak to the past, present, and future. A Pueblo of 
Pojoaque artist who had a past exhibit at the museum said that the featured art was a 
“reinterpretation of traditional designs…Pueblo art is still changing while it is still 
traditionally based, ideas are changing, but that does not make it any less
traditional…message was to show the evolution of Pueblo pottery and artwork” (62, interview). A group of local Native American artists who exhibited at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum stated,

[We] don’t need to follow rules, putting out our work of art to show our true thoughts and feelings; we have everything in this exhibit painting, sculpture, clothing, jewelry, photos, etc. to show we do other things not just jewelry…we have had people tell us they were expecting to see jewelry and it is shocking for your type of work to see this…since we are known for that…we wanted to showcase how we work with other mediums. Even Pueblo people who were expecting to see traditional Indian Art—pottery…found it very different and it made them question a lot of things. The stuff that is on exhibit are things people usually don’t talk about [like] Indians and drinking [66, interview].

The central theme of the exhibit was “Innovation is our Tradition” and its purpose was to challenge “traditional Native American museum exhibits” [which show the] same old thing—all stagnant [and instead show something] exciting and different…there is something for everyone in this exhibit, not everything is shocking stuff, still conservative stuff” (66, interview).

In addition to hosting Pueblo artists who are expanding their work beyond the traditional Pueblo arts, the museum’s exhibits contribute to the same message. This is similar to the “A River Apart” exhibit at the MIAC, where innovation was explored and encouraged (see Chapter 5). A couple of past exhibit artists said that having free reign over how the exhibit was organized was crucial. As one of them stated, “[the] environment conducts the piece; makes it a whole entire piece…[we wanted to] display things freely on the floor, hanging [and not like] a regular display…objects are placed in certain places for a purpose” (66, interview). This past exhibit artist mentioned to me that one of his students commented to him “she had been through the exhibit and it was like an Easter Egg hunt finding the objects on the sheet of paper since they were not all
clearly visible, especially the things that hung from the ceiling…she had to look for the stuff…and said ‘you really did utilize that space’” (66, interview).

This artist alleged that the environment was also very important to the overall message. He wanted the visitor to feel as though they were “stepping in a different world [with] stuff hanging on cables and objects on the floor…we don’t want to tell a story, but…the way art pieces will be displayed [will] give it that warm welcome to this is who we are” (66, interview).

Heritage and Its Role at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum

I also looked at how heritage plays a role in the ongoing cultural revitalization developments at the tribal museum. Some scholars (Graham et al. 2005; Gulliford 2005; Guthrie 2005; Lumley 2005; among others) critically examine the utilization of heritage. While it is important to be conscious of heritage as a highly politicized concept (Gulliford 2005; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:149) linked to identity, tourism (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Prentice 2005), “colonialism, capitalism, and institutionalized power relations” (Guthrie 2005), and nationalistic sentiments (Gulliford 2005), I was most interested in how the concept serves as a cultural connection to the past (whether linked to culture, land, kinship, material objects, artifacts, art, and local customs and traditions) in a museum. Heritage is an important aspect of this study because it is integrated into the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum’s mission statement, but also because the Pueblo of Pojoaque is part of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area (NRGNHA Inc.). Such national heritage areas

are designated by Congress and represent nationally significant, living cultural landscapes. They provide a way for local communities to partner with the federal government in order to protect natural and cultural resources, conserve cultural
traditions, manage tourism, and foster sustainable economic development [Guthrie 2005:1].

Congress designated the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area in 2006. According to the National Park Service, the locale encompasses Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos counties and stretches from Albuquerque to the Colorado border. This vicinity includes the Eight Northern Pueblos as well as many Hispano communities.129

I examined how “heritage, museums and galleries are vital cultural, social and economic resources within society. They are immensely useful in lifelong learning and they can have the capacity to empower” (Corsane 2005:xiv). Many people whom I spoke to alluded to the earlier purpose of the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum and its role in preserving the cultural heritage of the Pueblos. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said that he views heritage as encompassing the entire cultural center and museum and playing a vital role in its ongoing development. He maintained,

I would define cultural heritage as a cultural tie. The Poeh Center from the ground up and implementation of programs [are] all reflective of Pueblo culture. Incorporating new ideas, some Pueblo and some Indian and non-Indian. The base philosophy is Pueblo. Poeh Center is a facility that is very much representative of Pueblo heritage—the ongoing of the education of the arts and other cultural learning is an evolving representation of the heritage—collection and exhibits are a reflection for the public of Pueblo heritage…[there is] a lot more detail to each of those especially in the classes [59, interview].

A Poeh Museum employee and Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member said that where she observes heritage the most is in the contemporary room of the Nah Poeh Meng exhibit. The room holds special meaning to this individual because it pertains to what the houses now look like and I can relate because that’s what it is to me…culture is displayed where we live and it looks like one of our homes…there are pictures of Pueblo of Pojoaque families. It looks like what would be in my

grandparents’ home where I would see pictures of us on the walls. And this is all incorporated with a TV and video and remote and it is like meshing the two worlds together – the traditional stuff but modern as well [98, interview].

This individual believes that “heritage and culture go hand in hand. [It is] what is passed down to generation to generation and which belief systems and traditions are passed down.” The contemporary room “shows families that are here, founding families, it is the people that are here and tried to re-establish and get Pueblo strong again” (98, interview). The beliefs, customs, and life lessons that are passed down through each succeeding generation defined what heritage meant to a Poeh Arts student. He said,

Heritage [is a] type of living, similar to culture more along with what you pass onto descendants (information, legacy, opinions). Kids, grandkids, and great grandkids—what kind of legacy am I giving them? [I hope] with that [kind of] knowledge will help them know who they are. Need that solid base. [With] Heritage [I] want them to be able to stand up strong and be accounted for…my dad taught me to work hard [8, interview].

Others experienced a sense of cultural heritage through the art classes at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. One Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member stated, the “museum [was] built on [that] concept. [There are] various instructors to teach art, teach different facets of Pueblo life in an effort to preserve it. [It is] part of Pueblo heritage—teaching next generation—interacting, hands on, why you do it” (69, interview). Yet this community member did not see the Pueblo as having a heritage due to the fact they had to consult with other Pueblos for dances and had to have religious leaders from other Pueblos come to bless the place. Still, he found the cultural center and museum was “appropriate [for] displaying unified heritage from other Pueblos” (69, interview).

Some artists I spoke to also said that heritage is integral to creating traditional art. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member and past exhibit artist said, “heritage is my culture…art and crafts come from heritage, need to express both. If you don’t experience
a part of you, then it isn’t art. You need to reflect some part of your heritage in your art, in my opinion” (77, interview). According to a Poeh Arts instructor,

Heritage does play a role—my pieces are very contemporary, but it is the meaning behind it, my work and I always say this—it is how a medicine man/healing man/doctor has his tools to do what he does—they are laid out in a certain place…For me, art is done the same way, very meditating and clear mind, a lot of things going in the world today (i.e. Japan earthquake)—what can I do? Always think good thoughts, creating a jewelry piece is like a prayer, release those words and prayer with a mountain smoke and that is what I do…release and create something beautiful to clear my mind from that [171, interview].

A past exhibit artist said the concept of heritage has a

strong impact on the work I do. [I] draw on both sides of heritage…[my mother was from] Santa Clara Pueblo and [my] father [was] Apache. In doing that there is a cultural reinforcement for we artists as we translate the reality of the dances into different mediums of stone and pottery…it reinforces our culture. When I am carving a buffalo, I am singing these songs and I approach it the same way as if I were doing the dance [63, interview].

Another community member from one of the Eight Northern Pueblos saw heritage as closely linked to language preservation. He claimed,

Heritage is and has been a vital concept to our people (especially with language that has not been written down). The preservation of those languages key to preservation of our heritage and identity as Tewa or Tiwa people and even people who still have their language (Spanish, Italian, etc.). Major part of heritage is to keep language intact—basis of community, philosophy of life, traditional ceremonies, identity, songs, way of life. Heritage is everything that identifies a group of people and makes them distinct. The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was founded to preserve heritage of Tewa Pueblo people through any and all means (art, language, exhibitions, dances) [78, interview].

These diverse viewpoints regarding heritage and its uses are similar to the expanding scholarly definition of heritage, especially with regard to non-Western cultures. Heritage scholar Gerard Corsane states,

Traditionally in Western models, heritage, museums and galleries have tended to concentrate their collection and preservation activities on material culture. Heritage has focused on the preservation and conservation of immovable tangible heritage, and museums and galleries on movable tangible heritage. However,
more recently the heritage, museum and gallery sector is being encouraged to expand its notion of what heritage is, in order to take account of intangible cultural heritage [Corsane 2005:4–5].

In 2003, UNESCO recognized this aspect of cultural heritage by addressing intangible cultural heritage at its annual conference. The goal of the convention was to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, raise awareness and create respect for intangible cultural heritage, and also provide for international assistance. According to UNESCO:

The ‘intangible cultural heritage’ means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instrument, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development. The ‘intangible cultural heritage’, as defined in paragraph 1 above, is manifested inter alia in the following domains: (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship [UNESCO 2003:2].

While much of the museum literature depicts museums as Westernized institutions spreading a particular ideology, some essays (Ames 1992; Kreps 2005) also discuss indigenous curatorial practices in maintaining cultural heritage. Christina Kreps (an anthropologist and director of Museum Studies at the University of Denver), who participated in a Fellowship Program at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, looks at indigenous curatorial practices.

Indigenous models of museums, curatorial practices, and concepts of cultural heritage preservation did not attract the attention of scholars and museologists until relatively recently. This lack of attention has been largely due to the
pervasive view (or ideology) of the museum concept and a preservation ethos as uniquely Western and modern phenomena, as well as an inherent belief in the superiority of scientifically based, Western museology [Kreps 2005:4].

Indigenous curation is defined by Kreps as “shorthand for non-Western models of museums, curatorial methods, and concepts of cultural heritage preservation” (Kreps 2005:3). However, it does qualify as intangible indigenous cultural heritage as recognized by UNESCO (Kreps 2005:3).

As I have discussed, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum favors alternative curation practices and places the display and interpretation of objects in the hands of local community members. Museum practices expressed through other forms and other means (Kreps 2005:4) by the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum reveal “how different cultures have had their own curatorial traditions and ways of preserving aspects of their culture, which, in themselves, are part of their cultural heritage” (Kreps 2005:4).

When I was discussing the use of heritage with research participants, a few individuals were critical of the concept. Some did not know how to define it and a handful of individuals preferred not to use the term. A museum professional from one of the Eight Northern Pueblos critically examined the use of heritage in museums and provided some helpful insights into its association in this region. He said,

Heritage [is] related to tradition…descendant[s] and the tradition of a people in a certain area. In a museum setting that is what outside visitors are looking to find…with anthropology it is [viewed as] exotic…same idea with heritage that they have a popular cultural understanding of…search for a history that they don’t always feel in the United States…but they think they can feel this through Indian people…feel a deeper connection. They, visitors, have a way of looking at heritage and viewing it as only “traditional” art and not contemporary art…heritage [is viewed as] only the older looking pottery, traditional art. However, there is a continuance—Indian people are not in the 1880s and don’t look like the people in a Curtis photograph. Tradition is heritage [and with] heritage tradition [is] strongly rooted here, not in a census book [44, interview].
Thus, heritage is difficult to identify or even define and as a result the heritage concept is often not utilized in tribal museums. A *Poeh* Arts student did not think the use of heritage fit “all that well with the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum.” She stated, “heritage is more like…well that’s my heritage, that’s what my forbearers did, but that doesn’t mean that is what I embrace…heritage is not a commitment. I don’t practice my heritage that is not right…I practice my cultural traditions” (14, interview). Another *Poeh* Arts student said the concept of heritage was puzzling and he viewed it as an Anglo-American construct. He claimed,

someone once called it my “native heritage” but I don’t agree with that. If it is who I am then that goes way back, way back [in terms of] heritage. I could see people (natives) who were relocated talking about their heritage, where they originally came from. But we, Pueblos, weren’t really relocated…others brought to new land [like the] Cherokees, but not [the] Pueblos [82, interview].

Another Native American, from one of the Eight Northern Pueblos, believed that heritage is something that is inherent, hidden in an individual’s personal identity and it is an unspoken entity. She maintained,

heritage is my lineage, my past, my grandparents, ancestral people, my biology, land, community…I usually say I am from Santa Clara or I am Pueblo. But I don’t say my heritage, but that’s just me. [With the] seasonal exhibit [there is a] sense of community, scenes of little kids playing, man fishing and woman weaving and that is community and heritage…but it is unspoken. And I am not sure how much of that sense of community the visitor gets and understands [2, interview].

Despite the many uses and ambiguous meanings of the heritage concept, a museum staff member hopes that visitors understand the importance of heritage at the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum and for vitality of the Pueblos. “We are unique, we are a people with a distinct heritage and traditions and that we’ve been in this location for
as long as we can remember. It is with our efforts to preserve and keep uniqueness and heritage intact through Poeh Center that we will be here in the future” (78, interview).

Conclusion

In this and the previous chapter, I looked inside an indigenous museum that exhibits and teaches traditional and contemporary Native American art and crafts and serves as an active agent in cultural revitalization, identity, and heritage. Through my daily observations and by talking to local people, I learned that building the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was “the Pueblo way of doing things” and that revitalization at the Pueblo of Pojoaque includes bringing people from various Pueblos together at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. The congregation of people from all the New Mexico Pueblos and other indigenous groups continues the philosophy of the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s ancient origins as the “gathering place.”

Examining why tribal museums are built is a central concern of this dissertation. I found that the thoughts and ideas behind a new project are the most important precept in Pueblo Indian communities such as Pojoaque. It is not necessarily the end product that is the most significant. As one of my committee members (who is from one of the eight Northern Pueblos) said, the planning for a tribal museum and cultural center is like preparing for a feast day event. It is the coming together of people and ideas through prayers, dances, and songs. The release for Pueblo peoples is in the final construction—the end product (personal communication, 2012). In the following chapter I conclude my dissertation by comparing the three tribal museums in this study.
Chapter 9

Perspectives On Three Very Different Tribal Museums in New Mexico

The tribal museums at Zuni and Acoma provide a strong contrast with the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. My fieldwork and interviews allowed me to be able to witness firsthand how these museums interact with their communities and how they each fit their missions. This allows me to understand how tribal museums construct an alternative museum ideology in which community members (not traditional scholars) present their culture, heritage, and history on their own terms. Like the Pueblos in New Mexico, community museums are unique and that is how they ought to be viewed.

The A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center, which considers itself an ecomuseum, is focused on serving Zuni people and considers the Pueblo of Zuni its primary constituent. This tribal museum does not court outside visitors, whereas the museums at Acoma and Pojoaque are heavily dependent on tourists and other non-tribal visitors. In particular, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum staff emphasizes advertising exhibits and art programs in magazines and newspapers as well as by sending out invitations to exhibit openings.

Although the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum was built with the interest in serving Acoma people, it became a tourist destination for visitors and features paid tours of the original village of Acoma atop the mesa. The Acoma shuttle bus system is the only way to get visitors to the mesa top, while other shuttle systems in nearby Pueblos are geared more toward casinos (44, interview). Providing tours of the community is something that I did not witness when visiting the other Pueblos, especially...
the Pueblo of Zuni. In fact, at Zuni there are many signs alerting visitors about areas they are not allowed to enter. Acoma’s tourist-friendly environment is based on tourist dollars spent on entrance fees and purchases of pottery. As scholar Mary Lawlor states, “Acoma Pueblo has stepped outside the somber walls of its ancient redoubt to make a strategic entry into the marketplace of America for the sake of restoring tribal economic strength and political sovereignty” (Lawlor 2006:2).

One Acoma artist specifically commented to me that tourism has been a mainstay in his community:

I think for the most part tourism in the Pueblo has not changed, but if it were any different it would be the adding of things to bring people in like casinos, gaming, [and] fishing in the lake. There is even a restaurant where you can see the different foods that we made and different tribal foods from the Spaniards and the Mayas [29, interview].

This artist and community member viewed tourism as having both positive and negative sides for the Pueblo, as he shared with me:

Culture change is good and it is better, but sometimes it can be good and bad…tourists bring in money, but they also ask a lot of questions that they aren’t permitted to ask about religion and ceremonies. As an artist, I use our stories and our dances, but I do it in an abstract form and use different wording and also ask tribal elders if this is something I can make or put on as a design. But as an artist I am finding a way to mediate information between what I can do and what I can’t do…it allows me to create new stuff and inspire people to do something better with innovation [29, interview].

Because the tribal museum at Acoma, like the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, concentrates on serving outside visitors, one question I struggled with as I wrote this dissertation was this: If the Acoma and Pojoaque museums are oriented toward tourists, 

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130 During my time researching the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, I talked to local people who said they used to give tours of the Pueblo and perform dances in front of the Visitor’s Center for tourists. The Pueblo of Pojoaque does have a visitor’s center that is located down the street from the museum. Since I was curious about the tourism aspect at other Pueblos, I also ventured into nearby San Ildefonso Pueblo, which welcomes visitors, provides a self-guided walking tour of the Pueblo, and encourages visitors to go into the houses of artists who are selling their work.
do these museums fit the needs of the community by telling the story of the people? This question directly relates to my earlier discussion (in Chapter 1) of the “reification of the community concept” (Isaac 2007), namely, the assumption “that a local museum is representative of the community” (Isaac 2007:14; italics in the original).

Following Isaac’s suggestion of focusing on how a museum began and its current mission statement allowed me to see the intricate relationships that take place in such settings. I did not view “Indigenous knowledge as subjective and restricted and Western knowledge as scientific, objective, and free of restrictions” (Mithlo 2004:743). Any museum, whether tribal or non-tribal, is not a simple entity nor is it one-sided; it evolves with its social and political circumstances and with the times. I found that while the initial intent of a tribal museum may be centered on community involvement, tribal museums change due to a variety of reasons. It might be a high staff turn-over rate as happened at the Acoma museum, or a complete change in emphasis as was seen at Zuni.

Many issues facing state- and government-run museums (such as funding, bureaucracy, and politics) are problems for tribal museums as well. And such challenges often dictate the direction a community based museum will take regarding exhibit content and programs. In turn this determines who will be coming to the museum, hence the audience.

I also discovered that tribal museums often incorporate what can be considered a Western framework into their exhibits, whether consciously or not. The Zuni Museum seemed to be highly aware of this issue, as illustrated by Isaac’s discussion on “mediating
knowledge” (Isaac 2007) and by the museum’s emphasis on the Pueblo visitors rather than non-natives.131

While some might argue such limitations disqualify tribal museums from being considered apart from mainstream museums, this is far from the actual reality. My research participants acknowledged that the Native American institutions I studied were, in fact, museums; they did not hide from this terminology and they recognized that they were using Western forms of curation techniques (learned at a university, through conferences or lectures, or from a museum professional). The critical aspect was that instead of an outside curator dictating the story that would be told, the tribal museum enabled local people to create their own set of rules to balance traditional techniques and Western methods in rethinking the ideology of museums. This individually defined “contemporary Indigenous museum curation method” (Mithlo 2004:745)132 is a key reason to have a museum in their communities. From talking to community members and indigenous peoples who were actively involved in tribal museums and cultural centers, I gained a sense of how these museums functioned both for the local community and for outside visitors, and how they contributed to the ongoing debate on increased Native American involvement in the museum process (Mithlo 2004:743).

131 The staff at the Zuni museum seemed very aware of the past history of museums and their treatment toward indigenous peoples. Mithlo states that the Zuni Pueblo were one of the first Native American communities to have their own archaeology program in 1975. The program today also known as the Zuni Heritage and Historic Preservation Office was established and it enabled local people to take “control of their cultural resources [which included] cultural artifacts, intellectual property, and the currency inherent in public display and interpretation” (Mithlo 2004:746).

132 Museologist Nancy Marie Mithlo investigates contemporary indigenous museum curation methods, which she describes as a newly emerging professional field. Mithlo talks about the use of an alternative ideology or an indigenous knowledge base that forms different interpretations for words like “curate” to fit more into a particular Native American tribe’s belief system. She argues that this indigenous knowledge should not be discounted as unscientific but rather that it does fit into the existing scientific paradigm. This form of indigenous knowledge is the use of “appropriat[ing] existing systems of interpretation for alternative ends.” (Mithlo 2004:745).
I return to the important questions that Isaac posed in her research on the Zuni Museum: “Who develops and directs them? What facets of culture and history do they emphasize? Which individuals do they seek to recognize as tribal historians, and who receives this knowledge? In short, who empowers whom within the community?” (Isaac 2007:10).

At the Acoma Museum, the curator, who has an educational background in museum studies and holds a degree from the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), is in charge of the exhibits. As the only curator at the museum, he largely determines what exhibits will be presented. He may work with outside consultants, especially with regard to traveling exhibits from another museum. He mentioned that if anything were considered culturally sensitive to the Pueblo, he would go to the tribal council and seek its advice. He acknowledged to me that keeping local people engaged in their museum was an ongoing challenge (and this seemed to be an issue at all three tribal museums as well as a challenge for most museums). Perhaps the most informative response I received was that funding was his main problem. It was the reason he was so short staffed and could not have more exhibits featuring the local Pueblo community.

Despite such frustrations of funding issues and maintaining visitor interest, I realized that these museums do far more than offer exhibits. Such museums succeed in providing communities with direct control over the public presentation of their identities. The locals are able to claim some sort of ownership of the museums by being close enough to attend events, to see artwork created by themselves or other community members, to access material objects obtained through repatriation and donations, and to exercise some control over the interpretation and display of objects via the tribal council.
or other community channels. The Acoma Museum curator I spoke to is conscious that people in the community are not able to travel to the museums outside the Pueblo on a regular basis, and is using this tribal museum to show things that the community might otherwise not be exposed to.

Aside from being a center for promotion of Native American arts, the Poeh Museum has also met its mission of giving back to Pueblo communities. In 2010, for example, an exhibit called “Where Dreams Take Flight” focused on tribal libraries. According to a local librarian who partook in the exhibit,

There was a fundraising community [with] 6–7 libraries to do…independent fundraising. These libraries needed money (i.e. pay a phone bill or electricity) and we needed the funding to be unrestricted…however, the state libraries have revised the no restrictions money that they could spend. We had two dinner auctions and we were looking at Pojoaque as a site. I have a gallery background, so I talked to [the director of the museum] about having a reception and silent auction. But he told me that I could take one of the slots for the exhibit shows and he told me that you will get all the benefits of having a show like ads and be automatically in connection with all the other shows. [The] Poeh Museum only took 10 percent of the profit. I am told that our show sold more pieces than other shows. We divided the money back with the participating libraries as needed. One of the libraries that asked for money, ran out of money previously and were using it to pay for electricity and to pay their staff…it was on the verge of closing and if it had not been for the fundraiser, it would have closed [16, interview].

One of the librarians involved said, “It was up to each library to get artwork and we posted fliers for the thing…it was a call to artists. Money was the goal of the exhibit and also a chance to make people aware of tribal libraries” (16, interview). The participating libraries got 50 percent of the proceeds; New Mexico Library Foundation, the non-profit sponsor, got a percentage as well. The Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal library, which is open

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133 There are plans to build a new library in the Pueblo of Pojoaque. There are plans to put it down by the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum so it is more visible. It was explained to me that this newer library would be three to four times as large as the current library. Building a larger space will allow library staff to be involved in more activities with the general public and surrounding community. This future library will feature interactive programs and more programming (16, interview).
to the general public, was one of the participating libraries and was able to bring in about a dozen donated pieces of art. In addition, the Pojoaque tribal library also worked with the Poeh Museum to create Saturday programs for children at the cultural center and museum in the summer of 2010.

I mentioned earlier that staff members at the Zuni Museum often work outside the museum, on community outreach programs. The Acoma Museum also strives to involve members from the community in arts and craft classes, often taught by Acoma artists, and to encourage community members to attend exhibit openings at the museum. Community outreach is one of the main reasons why tribal museums get built in the first place.

Native Americans and indigenous groups worldwide have often been left out of the museum interpretation process. Their artifacts were housed and displayed in science-based, Western European-derived, colonialist institutions. As part of civil society, museums established social ideas on how cultural and religious items would be interpreted to the general public. Awareness of this history of museums is built into tribal museums’ mission statements; they wish to tell their side of the story to non-native peoples and to do so in a way that honors and respects their traditions and beliefs.

One of the central questions I posed to research participants was this: “There has been much written in anthropological and museum literature about community based museums using local community members as curators instead of outsiders to interpret their histories, artwork, and artifacts. Would you call the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum a community museum? Or how would you define it?” Most participants responded that they did view the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum as a community
museum based on the facts that it was planned and built by local Pueblo people, after being conceived by a tribal member; that most people who worked there were from the community; that local people contributed to the artwork in the exhibits; and that the Poeh Arts was designed specifically for indigenous peoples.

However, some of my respondents also alluded to the fact that the local community did not play a huge role in the exhibit content and interpretation. Delving more into the internal dynamics of this particular museum, I realized that tribal museums and cultural centers are not always representative of the community as a whole (see Isaac 2007). Poeh is run by select few and therefore does not invariably reflect local concerns, but instead offers a selective interpretation in response to perceived concerns (see Cohen 2001). Yet this is the reality at both large and small museums. A few museum professionals usually determine what will be on display with perhaps a small group of outside consultants or the governing museum board left to provide input.

At the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, the director of the museum (and occasionally the Governor of the Pueblo) determines the theme and content of the rotating exhibit. Some exhibit artists that I interviewed mentioned that they approached the director or Governor (or both) about having an exhibit, and some of these artists took an active role in the exhibit layout (others claimed they left the part of the process to the museum staff). The collections manager and other museum staff participate in the setup of the exhibit, but they are largely absent from meetings on the exhibit’s theme and content. While the permanent exhibit, Nah Poeh Meng, did involve collaboration with many people from other Pueblos, not just from Pojoaque, the temporary exhibit involve a few individuals who are in charge of the showing and telling. This aspect was surprising
to me since I had anticipated more regular museum meetings with the Poeh Museum staff regarding exhibit ideas. I also expected to see the collections manager and other staff members attending museum conferences, especially ones focused on tribal museums, to gain fresh perspectives into contemporary museum issues and practices. The reasons given as to why they were not participating in such events had to do with time, location, and money. Many of these conferences include a fee to participate and are located outside of New Mexico, so travel becomes expensive.

Still, because of New Mexico’s multi-cultural history, annual historical and cultural conferences take place in the surrounding communities of Española and Santa Fe. For example, the School for Advanced Research (SAR) often invites staff from tribal museums and cultural centers to discuss their projects (a museum staff member from the Umatilla Tamástslikt Cultural Institute spoke there in 2010 and the director of the Zuni A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center spoke in 2011 and 2013). These events are usually free; and one just has to register for the event. If there is a cost for participating, it tends to be minimal.

Some Poeh Museum staff members commented that they would like to participate in museum meetings and had suggested ideas for future exhibits. Some even expressed hope that more community involvement would become the norm at this museum and commented how the museum had shifted to include more contemporary art. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member and Poeh Museum employee said that she would like to see “our stuff—Pojoaque Pueblo…pictures of the past, pottery and jewelry…we have really gone contemporary, I think old school is good, too. Would like to see an exhibit showing transition of it…old school pottery, contemporary and modern” (17, interview).
Because museums such as Poeh are about controlling narratives about identity, showing visitors contemporary Native American art work does serve a purpose. I discussed earlier how the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum functions as a place that promotes Native American innovation and creativity in the Pueblo arts. This was a main topic of conversation throughout my research at the three tribal museums.

In part, showing modern arts (as opposed to the common practice of showing “typical” or “expected” and “tradition-bound” Native American art works, in other New Mexico museums) fights stereotypes of indigenous peoples living in a timeless past. This strategy undermines what Clifford has called a Western temporality…[which] is a Western sense of time and civilization that expects progress and modernization to move human civilization “forward,” leaving indigenous life-ways “behind,” stuck perpetually in a timeless past. This linear framework has largely shaped the representations of Native peoples [Erikson 2002:16; italics in the original].

I remember one particular Acoma artist whose comments were especially germane to the subject of Western temporality. He spoke of people learning about the Pueblo Indians only through reading journals, books, and what is taught in school, typically filled with a “long ago past” ideology that has little to do with Acoma’s way of life (past and contemporary) and traditions. He said, “My stepdaughter has a book where it talks about Acoma, but it says we still live on top of a rock and makes us seem like we haven’t changed with the times” (29, interview). He was eager to show visitors that indigenous peoples are very alive in the 21st century by showing their ability to create new art forms, not just the traditional Pueblo pottery that people have grown accustomed to seeing in tourist brochures, post cards, and advertisements. He believes that moving forward is beneficial to Acoma. In part, that can be achieved (in his opinion), through
different or unique art. He considers this aspect of his culture as especially crucial to younger generations. At the Sky City Cultural Center and Haak’u Museum he taught an art workshop to fifth and sixth graders and “this is to show we can do other things besides pottery such as stone making, metal making, jewelry making and abstract art” (29, interview).

At the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center, staff members also hope that outsiders will accept Zuni culture and traditions on Zuni’s terms. The hope is that if non-Zunis visit the museum, they will leave with an appreciation for Zuni culture and will think more critically about how Zunis have impacted their own lives. The aim is to have people ponder how Zuni fits into and has shaped their history (92, interview). A staff member said that he wants them “to see that Zuni is also a place for critical thinking…Zuni is a place where there are smart people and they are making a contribution to the world as a whole and to museums” (92, interview).

While non-Zuni visitors are welcome at the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center, this tribal museum’s target audience is very different from that of the Acoma and Pojoaque museums. It is not part of the mission of this particular museum to teach non-tribal members about tribal history and culture. This goal is often misunderstood by outside visitors, who do not understand that it is a tribal museum working outside accepted Western frames of reference. This misunderstanding can create unpleasant encounters for visitors and museum staff, as the latter have the right to dismiss requests for specific information about Zuni. A museum staff member said, “Many outsiders see this as a bad thing” that the primary audience is not outside visitors (92, interview). He recounted a story to me about a museum visitor who was asking some questions about
Zuni life, culture, and heritage.

When the museum employee would not answer these questions, the visitor wrote in the register “You are a racist!” There is this assumption that knowledge is free and accessible to everybody and the reality is that it is not. There is the idea from the visitors that people should be there to answer questions. But there is a paradigm in that they come to learn about us, but that is not how the museum is set up. [The] come learn about us mission is misunderstood. However, visitors who come do not know much about Zuni. They come through and look at exhibits, gives them a glimpse of what Zuni is about – set record straight for them…and if they want to learn basic things we direct them to the Visitor’s Center [92, interview].

Nevertheless, because museums are so common globally and because the general public has established expectations about them, it is easy to understand why an outside visitor who sees a sign advertising a “museum” might be confused. Most members of the museum-going public visit museums because they want to expand their knowledge, including about the featured exhibit(s).

Studies document that museum-goers are individuals who value learning. They believe that they and their children should be continually learning, continually searching for new information, continually stretching intellectually. The primary reason most people attend museums, whether by themselves or with their children, is to learn. That is a major reason why museum-going correlates so highly to level of education [Falk 1998:40].

Museums are not only regarded as sanctuaries for objects, but repositories for learning and a place to interact with others, especially museum curators and exhibitors. Despite scholarly controversies about museum display and interpretation, the public regards museums as trustworthy sources of information. Surveys cite the museum as a source of invaluable information and facts (Abram 2002:131; Doering et al. 1999). This is one reason that museums continue to be tourist attractions. Scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to “destination museums,” in that people will travel to visit them. She adds that museums are “surrogates for travel” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett
1998:132), meaning that museums can be a marketing ploy to attract tourists to specific locations. “Museums need visitors and the tourism industry, more than any sector of the economy, can deliver the hordes to museum doors” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:136).

Tribal museums, in a place such as Zuni, must redouble its efforts to inform the museum-going public that they have entered a different kind of museum space—one focused on one group of people but which welcomes other groups to visit with respect. That said, the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center has not failed to be a museum nor has it failed to live up to its promises if it does not actively meet outsiders’ needs. This goes back to the earlier argument about there being multiple functions for museums and about the myriad roles performed by these institutions.

I argued earlier that it is important for local peoples such as the tribal members at Zuni, to be engaged not only in ongoing maintenance and interpretation of exhibits at their museum, but also in discussing what a museum is about and how it best serves the interests of the local community. This comment about the role of the tribal museum in the community goes beyond postcolonialism and strengthens the role of the local community in the interpretation of its own history (Isaac 2007:13). In the end, it is the local peoples’ definition of a museum that is the most important, as part of deciding who control access to and dissemination of cultural and historical knowledge and material (Isaac 2007:4).

Even names matter. Haak’u, A:shiwi A:wan, and Poeh are examples of how local people begin to take ownership of their museums through the simple act of naming them. Much thought and reflection went into the naming of these tribal museums, with the goal that the names would reflect the community in contemporary times. Archaeologist David
Hurst Thomas attests to the importance of definitional control: “Naming is central to the writing of history, and history is a primary way we define ourselves. The power to name becomes the power to define one’s identity and very existence” (Thomas 2000:xl). A museum professional I know stated that by referring to a peoples’ identity, a name helps strengthen that identity (44, interview).

In the previous chapters on the Poeh, A:shiwi A:wan, and Haak’u Museums, I sought to demonstrate how very different approaches to exhibition and education reflect themes of heritage, identity, cultural revitalization, and very pragmatic challenges of staying in business. Richard West Jr., former director of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, reiterates the importance of understanding indigenous heritage:

we are empathetic about the notion that Native cultures and peoples exist across a long continuum—one that has great depth and a great past, one that antedates the arrival of Europeans in this hemisphere by thousands of years, and one that encompasses the emergence of significant and complex societies and civilizations. And we absolutely need to realize this, because it means that Native peoples, as the originating elements of civilization and cultures, are the original source of the national cultural heritage of every citizen of the Western hemisphere, whether Native or non-Native [West 2005:9].

The mission statements from the museums at Acoma, Zuni, and Pojoaque directly influence their exhibit decisions and content, and while all three claim to have museum programs that focus on “community,” they are working within independent traditions that represent a very long past and an unknown future.

Thus, the very definition “museum” involves multiple meanings and is dependent on the individual or group in charge of exhibits and museum programs. In talking to community members and learning directly from them, I made great strides toward one of the original goals of this study, which was to conceptualize tribal museums within their
environments. All of my research interviewees were in some way involved with planning, building, or maintaining these tribal museums (if not all three). These individuals felt very strongly about the need for tribal museums in their Pueblos in order to preserve and revitalize their culture, identity, history, and heritage. The people I spoke to possessed a vast knowledge about their Pueblo’s history and about the impact these museums have had on their local economy.

It is the hope of both museum staff and community leaders that these museums will continue to allow the voices of the Pueblo people to be heard. Museums, heritage centers, and ecomuseums can also demonstrate how to turn interpretation “inward” so that objects and exhibits are meaningful to local constituents and (sometimes) to outside visitors as well. Like the indigenous museums in Mexico, the community museum “emerges because there are people in the community who propose to create it: municipal authorities, neighbors who took part in an excavation, teachers, emigrants who return to the pueblo, people who are concerned with protecting its cultural heritage and recognizing its value” (Morales et al. 1994:8). It is clear that without support from the whole community, these museums would not exist today. In fact, they continue to have meaning for tribal members, who want to pass them on to future generations.
Chapter 10

Conclusions

My research explored how the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum is utilized by the Pueblo of Pojoaque to revitalize its Tewa cultural traditions and life ways. In my opinion, tribal museums are essential aspects of the cultural revitalization process for many indigenous communities. The concept of cultural revitalization (Castile and Kushner 1981; Field et al. 1992; Harkin 2004; McMullen 2004; Ranford 1998; Wallace 2003) created a means for investigating how many indigenous people worldwide have become more visible agents in the interpretation of culture, identity, and history with the advent of these tribally operated museums, ecomuseums, and community cultural centers. More indigenous communities are using tribal museums in order to relay identity to outsiders.

Looking at history, identities, and museum representation allowed me to see how Pojoaque Pueblo (which is considered to be a modern Pueblo) has established itself as one of the most economically advanced tribal communities in the 21st century. I discovered that the Poeh Center was not built with the intent of solely serving local tribal members, but also with the purpose of involving other communities. A Pojoaque tribal member explained the philosophy behind including nearby Pueblos: “Our culture is about giving from the community. Pojoaque is a community and it is Tewa, but it is a community of Tewas. We all have the same beliefs and language and we all give to one another. Museum promotes our village and Tewa culture, too” (49, interview).

I examined how significant historical events have impacted New Mexico (particularly the northern part of the state) such as the effects of Spanish colonization, the
Pueblo Revolt, and tribal sovereignty concerns such as gaming, land, and water rights. This brief investigation allowed me to place Pojoaque Pueblo in a historical context where I explored Pojoaque history (past and present). This history provided me with insights into the major influences shaping contemporary Pojoaque identity. Pojoaque Pueblo’s history has had tremendous implications on the need for full-scale cultural revitalization efforts. I also looked at shifting attitudes and perceptions relating to Pojoaque identity based on this history and the relationship among the other New Mexico Pueblos.

In order to study identity issues in Northern New Mexico as well as representation at the three tribal museums, I investigated anthropological conceptions of identity, primarily through contemporary post-modernist theoretical approaches. Post-modernism views culture as inextricably connected to local (internal community issues) and global influences (capitalism, nationalism, and contemporary cross-cultural issues) looking at unequal power relations based on things such as race, class, and gender on both a societal (macro) and local (micro) wide level. This theoretical perspective also critically analyses anthropologists’ own position in the field and how a researcher’s very presence in a particular community changes the power dynamics, often influencing the local community’s perceptions of race and identity, and the internal relationships formed while doing fieldwork.

I also examined local peoples’ concept of identity construction based on the interviews, Pueblo identity and Hispano identity in Northern New Mexico as a “privately lived reality” (Horton 2010), and how this identity related to Pueblo of Pojoaque identity as a whole.
I studied the impact sense of place (Basso 2002; Ortiz 1994; Relph 1976) had on an individual’s and a groups’ identity. This analysis of the “identity of place” or the “significance of place” focused on the Pueblo of Pojoaque. I found that race, language, and culture (Kondo 1990:11) should not be viewed in isolation. Allen termed this the “blood/land/memory” complex in which land and blood are imagined as “‘real’ and ‘imagined’ genealogies which helps individuals situate themselves “within a particular indigenous family’s or nation’s ‘racial memory’ of its relationship with specific lands”” (Allen 2002:16).

I observed the dilemma of embracing cultural traditions in contemporary times, as this was something that distinguished Pojoaque from the other, more “traditional” Pueblo communities. Because Pojoaque was considered to be a more modern Pueblo, some people in the community felt that it was easier for Pojoaque to adapt to contemporary times. Due to long-standing cultural customs that have been strongly rooted in Pueblo communities, adopting new Tewa traditions for Pojoaque has been an ongoing challenge. Nevertheless these traditions become something of a necessity in order for Pojoaque Pueblo tribal members to reaffirm and re-establish their cultural ties despite the fact that these practices do not go as far back as the other Pueblos. The Pueblo traditions become part of the larger historical narrative of the Southwest and have also become an aspect of a “cultural performance” (Allen 2002) and an “invented tradition” (Lambert 2007).

Due to the upheaval from the time of Spanish colonization, land encroachment by both Anglos and Hispanics, and previous near desertions of the Pueblo, Pojoaque identity (historically and culturally) is still not fully defined. This particular Pueblo’s history is poorly known as is evidenced by the scant literature. A tribal member agrees with this
overall assessment of Pueblo of Pojoaque identity being incomplete in regard to history and culture. He states,

> I think historically we have been underrated; our identity was smeared off face of the planet. But the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was such a major thing and we have evolved at a faster pace than other Pueblos. We lost our identity/culture. So we had to seek out other areas. I come from both Santa Clara and San Juan culture as well as Pojoaque culture. And I found that Pojoaque is like any other Pueblos, we all have the same struggles, and same society struggles and the personalities are the same. I think the huge difference would be language and culture—because of that—it is what separates us. Our lack of understanding our culture and our language makes us different from other Pueblos [41, interview].

Despite this unfinished cultural history, it was clear from talking to tribal members that Pueblo of Pojoaque’s identity has survived. This remains a tremendous source of community pride. I argued previously that identity is an open-ended journey, even for those groups and individuals who claim to have a deep-rooted sense of identity. A research participant from Santa Clara Pueblo maintains that she will still be learning about her identity and Tewa culture and that this cultural education never stops and is constant.

Identity, as I found out, is deeply personal, and can often be a source of conflict, in particular for individuals who find themselves having multiple identities and not sure which culture or society they belong. When talking about identity issues, I paid a considerable amount of attention to racism and notions of *othering* (Deloria 1998) that pervade society and that greatly informed this research. Some ethnographies, when discussing the identity concept, pay lip service to how people create categories of *othering* that are used for exclusionary purposes, and the subtle and overt racism that *still* exists in contemporary times (even within anthropology and some modern day museums). These academic studies, in my opinion, perform a disservice to the racial and
ethnic tensions that exist within and between minority communities. This notion was expressed to me by some of my research participants who hoped I would examine these issues more carefully and use more of their local perspectives on the identity topic because they have lived it.

I explored both regional and national museums as westernized institutions through the context of looking at past historical circumstances. I examined how this history has impacted the practices at many contemporary museums in the 21st century and how the original museum’s role was as an agent of the dominant society, promoting hegemony through the interpretation of museum collections. In contrast, the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum not only constituted a locus for exhibiting Tewa culture as the community defined it, but also served as a means for Pojoaque Pueblo people’s own interpretive approach.

One of the main themes I came across through my investigation of museums was making people more aware that Native Americans are living in modern times as well as the opportunity for them to present history and culture from their point of view (primarily in the context of a tribal museum). This was not missed during the development of the Zuni museum. This museum was planned to be less object focused, but more community centered (focusing on issues that mattered to community members in the present), which is the ethos of the ecomuseum.

In addition this research also looked at other Pueblos (in Chapter 6), which have cultural centers and museums. I examined how the Haak’u and A:shiwi A:wan Museums differ or resemble each other, and how each fits the needs of its mission statements (which directly influences the intended museum audience and its interaction with the
local community). I discovered a commonality among these museums was the goal to present an overall local perspective regarding history, culture, heritage, and identity.

Many museums (both tribal and government run museums) in the modern era are attempting to break down stereotypes by having people think critically about what they are gazing at in exhibits—as evidenced by the Museum of Indian Art and Culture’s emphasis on not just focusing on ancient pieces, but contemporary Native American artwork along with artist statements, and the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum’s display of the Spanish invasion through a Tewa Pueblo perspective.

Cultural identity and heritage manifested itself in various ways at the Pueblo of Pojoaque’s Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum became another means to gain an additional understanding about how identity is reflected in a museum setting through the exhibits and the art program. In Chapters 7 and 8 I examined the internal workings inside an indigenous museum that exhibits and teaches traditional and contemporary Native American art and crafts. This was an area of interest that Isaac (2007) suggested in her ethnography on the Zuni museum, and one that needed to be taken up by more researchers. I looked at the museum’s multiple functions in that it served as an active agent in cultural revitalization, identity, and heritage. Through everyday observations at the museum, I learned that building the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum was one aspect of cultural revitalization at the Pueblo of Pojoaque, which includes bringing people from various Pueblos together at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. Examining why tribal museums are built was this study’s central focus. I found that the thoughts and ideas behind a new project were the most important precept
in Pueblo Indian communities like Pojoaque. Therefore I examined the origins behind each of these tribal museums in New Mexico.

It was the tribal museum staffs’ contention, at the three community museums, that they should focus on what Native Americans were doing in contemporary times thereby showing how indigenous peoples were active participants in the present. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member believed the overall exhibit message at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum “is the beginning of time and we as Native people have come into our existence to modern day and it is a timeline of how things have changed and how we have adapted as time has moved on” (98, interview).

Tribal museums are therefore a good example of the attempt to contest dominant-society narratives. I elaborated on this in a previous chapter about the “fall” contact room, which is a counter-narrative that depicts the effects of Spanish colonization seen through the Tewa Pueblo perspective. With both overt and subtle overtones identity is continuously expressed and reflected in the words, images, objects, and interpretations in these modern day exhibits.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I discussed the role of the classes and programs at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. I argued how these art programs taught by “traditional” arts teachers helped instill camaraderie among the people who enrolled in the classes. It was the sense of people coming together for a common cause whether it was through making art through the revitalization and maintenance of traditional Native American arts and crafts, speaking the Tewa language in class, and exchanging historical stories. I gave an example of this earlier on from the perspective of a First Nations Poeh Arts student.
She expressed a desire to bring back the art skills and knowledge gained from the classes to her local community in Canada.

Once again cultural revitalization and identity at the Pueblo of Pojoaque are seen as incessant. It is up to future generations to continue the path or poeh they are on and this is reflected in both the name and the mission statement at the Poeh Museum. A member from one of the eight northern Pueblos speaks of the poeh concept, which is embodied in the arts and crafts courses, on-going exhibits and programs at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. She states,

I hope they are informed, educated and they are appreciative of that culture of a time past that was about survival, and community, and tension. [The] core values [which] construct guiding principles to live out lives and care for each other, share, and work hard and to be the best Tewa male/female that you can become. It is about walking that path (Po’eh) to become best you can be. [I would like] to see a continuance of the Tewa language [this is my] hope for the future. Would like us to go back on ourselves and see what made us strong as communities. It is those core values—guiding principles to move forward, to walk more carefully on our Poeh, and be considerate of who we were, more interested in idea of becoming individuals—to think about our becoming [2, interview].

Another issue that was very important was that cultural revitalization at the Pueblo of Pojoaque was generational. It was very important at Pojoaque whose culture and traditions do not go that far back as other Pueblos, that these cultural customs and traditions be taught and maintained by the next generation. A Pojoaque tribal member relayed to me a story about his son who was learning the Tewa language. This tribal member said that he did not speak much Tewa and his parents did not speak the language at all, but his son was now learning it. He implied that revitalization is generational and it is the reverse for Pojoaque because usually you think of the older generation teaching the younger generation the language, culture, and traditions, but at Pojoaque it is the
future generation that will be more knowledgeable about some cultural aspects than the previous generation.

As more cultural centers and tribal museums begin to emerge they are constantly faced with the mounting pressures of maintaining the establishment as well as the original intent and purpose. This was something that was continuously brought up by museum staff from all three tribal museums and it was therefore not unique to the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. A museum professional that had worked with all three tribal museums in New Mexico previously said the primary challenge faced by these cultural museums are its “own identity—who they are? If [these] museums [are] not a priority of [the] tribe then funding collapses…staff attrition increases, and [it is] harder to establish itself and [the] identity of whole institution can suffer” (44, interview). I had mentioned earlier that the Acoma Museum had a high staff turnover rate and its mission and purpose were still evolving due to new staff taking over central roles that were once occupied by the museum’s original founders. The Zuni Museum also underwent a complete shift in its target audience and focused more on local community members rather than outsiders. The Poeh Museum seemed slower to change, although many people I spoke to thought it needed to emphasize more of the local community.

I now conclude this chapter by way of a discussion regarding future suggestions provided to me by this study’s research participants for the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. This seemed to be a growing area of interest expressed among the people I spoke to who had ideas for this museum.
Future Suggestions for the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum

Research participants had recommendations for the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. While some of these critiques were critical of the current programs and exhibits, the general consensus was that the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum had much potential. Some of the people I spoke to expressed a desire to see a blend of both contemporary and older pieces on display. These individuals mentioned that the Poeh Museum had really gone contemporary and wanted to see a return of the older pieces from the Pueblo. A Poeh Museum employee said that there had been previous discussions about having an archaeological exhibit, “but [it] never [had] been a sure thing…I would like to see] different types and different eras because they change so much…kind of like the permanent exhibit where you have a path that shows how it was way back when to now…and that shows all the changes” (27, interview). The Acoma Museum had an exhibit that featured pottery pieces from Acoma’s past as well as contemporary times. This former art exhibit was very successful and had been well received by community members.

Some research participants expressed a desire of bringing in more history and culture from the Pueblo of Pojoaque perspective. A tribal member who works at the Poeh Museum says, “I would like to see the history of the Pueblo of Pojoaque, near the front of building…would like to see elder based description of Pueblo history—essay or paper. People ask where is the exhibit for the Pueblo itself and do you have a book?” (17, interview). Another Pojoaque tribal member “would like to see a timeline and the Then and Now (1991) book displayed in the museum” (57, interview).
Many museums I had traveled to both in the United States and Mexico would have a section of the particular community’s history and cultural customs displayed on a wall. It struck me as rather unusual that this museum did not have a small portion devoted specifically to Pojoaque Pueblo history. Numerous visitors would inquire about the history of Pojoaque and the featured pictures in the contemporary room of the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit. Unfortunately, these old Pueblo photographs did not have captions on them so it was difficult for an outsider (visitor to the museum) to determine whom these pictures were of and why they were relevant to the exhibit.

A tribal member from one of the eight Northern Pueblos acknowledged this lack of insight into Pojoaque’s unique history and felt there needed to be more in depth knowledge from the community’s standpoint. She claimed,

> There is a wonderful history here. There are remnants of the Pueblo and old church. I know they have photos from the mid to late 1800s…but where in the *Poeh* Cultural Center and Museum could they allow for these to be placed and displayed? The old history with photos could be so informative. They could help answer questions such as how many people were living here? When did the people come back? Who was the first individual family in Pojoaque? And it could feature the whole Pueblo. I think this would be a teachable moment…[they] could show photos of ancestral communities. I would like to know the relationship between Pojoaque and the neighboring village near the Gabriel’s restaurant (old village site) as well as the relationship between Nambe and Tesuque [2, interview].

Some also expressed a desire to see the temporary exhibit feature more people from the Pueblo of Pojoaque. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member stated, “I don’t think the permanent exhibit will change…[with the] temporary exhibit—I would like to see more local artists—some from the Pueblo. Also rugs/weaving exhibit…hasn’t been one here” (69, interview). A local artist who identified herself from Santa Clara Pueblo said the *Nah Poeh Meng* exhibit needed additional work. She believed “They could do more
with the TV [in the contemporary room of the permanent exhibit]—I would have
monthly documentaries to talk about honest current issues…what is really happening in
Pojoaque” (4, interview).

The lack of guidance in the exhibit for museumgoers was also something gathered from visitor feedback via the questionnaires as well as visitors who left the museum and commented about their thoughts to museum stuff. This assessment on exhibit content and labeling goes back to my earlier discussion regarding museum signs from the previous chapter. A visitor from New York, New York, wrote on one of the questionnaires that “[t]he first gallery had some lovely pieces but it would have been more enjoyable had there been legends on the pieces explaining their provenance and/or reasons for juxtapositions.”

An individual who was from one of the eight Northern Pueblos was critical of the current museum layout and content. This research participant maintained,

Front Intro video [of the] Governor [they] need to take out…it is about a communal way of expression, not an individual expression…there needs to be an expression of communal Pueblo sensitivity [2, interview].

She would like to see more people in the video perhaps even people who helped with the cultural center and museum and even Poeh Arts students. Additionally this individual added that

With the temporary exhibit it’s there. Space doesn’t feature the art [and it] needs to draw you in. It is like an empty void and there is no humanity. I want to know who is the artist—show me some humanity…with the rotating exhibit it is all about mechanics and I want to see who that person is…I think it is a good thing…but for now they need to work on refining it and giving energy to it…it is a sweet project but it needs someone who would give energy to it. And then after that they can think about expansion…but they stopped thinking about it and that is too bad [2, interview].
There were some people whose suggestions related specifically to the class content at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. A Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal member who works at the museum stated he would like to see “more variety of classes” (47, interview). Another Pueblo of Pojoaque community member and Poeh Museum employee reasoned she would like to see a “tablita making class, kilt making class and traditional ware classes” (89, interview). A Pueblo artist contended she would like “to bring more theory and philosophy into it.” She wanted to see “a class at the Poeh where students learn why this particular clay is used and why archaeologists find it significant…she would like to take students to art galleries to see pieces of work—so a more theoretical class” (4, interview).

The general consensus from these comments was that the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum needed to try new things and focus on programs that bring the local community to the museum’s front doors. Unfortunately while museum staff was aware of Pojoaque Pueblo’s lack of involvement in the classes and programs at the Poeh Center, during my time at the museum, there seemed to be less of an emphasis on fixing this problem. However, this was not an isolated dilemma but was something that was shared as a current struggle at the museums at Acoma and even Zuni. It was the issue of trying to create continued interest in the museum so people keep coming back.

Future Research, Significance, and the Ecomuseum Concept

I began this dissertation at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum having traveled to numerous museums in the United States, Mexico, and other countries. My earlier thinking about these indigenous museums is influenced in part by this previous foray abroad.
Prior to my fieldwork at the Poeh Museum, two ethnographies (Erikson 2002; Isaac 2007) on indigenous museums were crucial for conceptualizing a more general understanding about how Native Americans are using tribal museums as an apparatus to convey identity and culture to outsiders. This includes the ability to be able maintain a space for community members to gather and have a place to store their sacred objects and artifacts. The struggle for the interpretation over these cultural and often religious oriented objects at the tribal museums was something that I not only witnessed during my time at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, but was also very evident in Mexico where there is a sense of pride that these valued objects remain in the possession of community members and not with an outside governmental entity such as INAH.

Similar to the indigenous community museums I visited in southern Mexico, these tribal museums, ecomuseums, and cultural centers are absolutely crucial as gathering spots to be visited by local residents where they can be used to strengthen both their culture and identity and reaffirm for community members a sense of purpose to pass on traditional knowledge to the next generation. And this latter aspect is especially imperative where some Pueblo of Pojoaque tribal members felt community members were losing and not fully appreciating some of these sacred traditions. A Pojoaque tribal member spoke of the cultural revitalization efforts at the Pueblo:

Teaching the younger generation the ways of the past through the arts and language and understanding the traditions that people have held to are the traditions, beliefs, and ways of doing things—history. This is not something you can learn in a book, but when you participate, listen to the cadence of speech, and rhythm of dances it is the whole experience with body, mind, and soul. It was necessary because we have always been smallest of the Pueblos. During a particular time—families scattered. Other Pueblos taught us because things got lost. Revitalization began in the 80’s it was necessary because people had to go elsewhere to find work. Some returned to the Pueblo, and some did not return. It was necessary to help re-establish the connection for the people [32, interview].
Most museums are still regarded by many indigenous peoples as elitist establishments and a byproduct of colonialism that have been used as a means in the past to appropriate their culture and their artifacts (often without their consent), denying them a voice in the interpretation of their past and contemporary identity. Some of the research participants in this study also view these institutions as having a philosophy of cataloguing Native Americans and their artifacts, which contribute to dangerous stereotypes that “categorize and characterize people as types, whether focused on ethnicity, gender, class, race, or other social groups and identities” (Kratz 2002:105). These sorts of exhibitions have created stereotypes that continue to this day.

Pojoaque Pueblo, Acoma Pueblo, and Zuni Pueblo favor a locally based approach that allows community members and not traditional scholars with control over the historical narrative and culture (objects and artifacts) of the Pueblo. Museum staff at these tribal museums also do not favor the object-centered approach that views objects and artifacts as a way to retain culture, which focuses on the “past meaning of these objects rather than in how they related to current practices of their use today” (Isaac 2007:95).

Based on my travels to indigenous museums and the growing realization that more community type museums continue to be built and are important aspects in the process of self-determination for many tribal communities, I discovered the need for more in-depth research, particularly from a local community standpoint. In particular anthropological studies documenting how community museums can both strengthen cultural identity and also contribute to ongoing cultural revitalization efforts. Studies relating to the way indigenous people choose to articulate their cultural identity through
museum display to fellow residents and visitors is significant due to the changing nature of many former museum practices. In part, the strengthening of international indigenous rights and the passage of crucial pieces of U.S. legislation such as NAGRPA and NMAIA has influenced this development.

Isaac’s (2007) very thorough and unique insight into the Zuni Museum, also called for additional studies examining the internal dynamics inside tribally based museums. This research is significant because I have examined from a locally based context (talking to local community members and individuals directly involved with the museum) how tribal museums such as the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum can contribute to cultural revitalization. Through my analysis of other tribal museums in the area, I have established that tribal museums, ecomuseums, and cultural centers are not declining, but are seen as useful and necessary in these communities. I have also shown through the various examples of other cultural centers and museums the diversity of these institutions and that these museums are not static, but change over time.

While it remains to be seen how Pueblo of Pojoaque identity expresses itself in the years ahead what is clear is that it has survived and this is evident with the rebuilding of the kiva, the revitalization of the traditional Pueblo dances since 1973, and continuous economic and cultural revitalization efforts into the present era. It is important to add that just like museums come in many diverse forms and sizes that within museums there is not always a “general” consensus on how to do things. Identity mirrors this pattern seen in museums as well and demonstrates the complexity of everyday life since “it really depends on whom you talk to.”
I started out my graduate studies in anthropology with a strong emphasis on studying community based indigenous museums. While the classroom instruction (lectures and seminars) at the University of New Mexico were influential and instructive, I obtained much insight into both cultural and identity issues from time spent at the Poeh Museum that I could not have gained inside a classroom. The fieldwork portion as that of a participant observer proved to be an invaluable methodology. I would like to thank the individuals who participated in this research study who made me feel welcome and encouraged me during the fieldwork phase.

I opened this dissertation by talking about the significance of the ecomuseum concept and how this principal model is an aspect that all tribal museums and community centers share. I will therefore end my research by mentioning once more how the ecomuseum is embedded in the exhibits and programs at the Poeh Cultural Center and Museum. The Poeh Cultural Center and Museum resonates with the ecomuseum concept in that its mission is “to support the future of Pueblo people by teaching the arts, collecting great works of art, and promoting public understanding of, and respect for, Pueblo history and culture.” One thing is clear in focusing on the present, the Pueblo of Pojoaque is “looking forward rather than backward,” which again is reflected in the purpose of the ecomuseum.

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