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**UNCOVERING AND RECOVERING IDENTITY: AN HISTORICAL
ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF MUSEUM BUILDING
AT AK-CHIN HIM-DAK**

by

JOHANNA GORELICK

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2005

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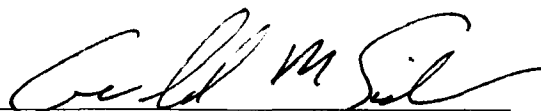
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Uncovering and Recovering Identity: An Historical Ethnography of the Cultural Politics
of Museum Building at Ak-Chin Him-Dak

by

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Adviser: Professor Gerald Sider

This dissertation focuses attention on a Native American tribe, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, which opened a museum in an effort to "conserve" and "share" its cultural heritage with tribal members. In 1984, the Ak-Chin Indian Community, located approximately 35 miles southwest of Phoenix, Arizona, uncovered an archaeological site on their reservation that dated as far back as 300 A.D. The discovery activated an interest among community members in the tribe's history and cultural traditions, some of which had not been practiced for at least two generations. The Bureau of Reclamation, responsible for overseeing the archaeological excavation, agreed to repatriate the community's material culture on the condition that it be housed in "proper" facilities. The Ak-Chin Indian Community acceded to these conditions and opened Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives in 1991.

This dissertation focuses on the Ak-Chin Indian Community's efforts to reclaim and revivify its traditions while simultaneously confronting contemporary conditions, including a diabetes epidemic that impacts nearly every member of the community, and unprecedented wealth from the establishment of the Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort in 1994. The name the community selected for its museum is *Him Dak*, an O'odham word which translates to "way of life." The staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak adheres to cultural

protocols and assertions of cultural alterity in developing strategies to generate the community's interest in its past. The hope of those involved with Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives is to revitalize *Him Dak* among the youth of the community. The museum staff, by collecting oral histories, teaching language and basket-making classes and mounting exhibitions, serves to symbolically represent components of Ak-Chin cultural identity. Yet, these expressions of identity, their production, re-production and adaptations are tightly bound to external political and economic forces; the creation of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives was itself the result of circumstances and pressures beyond the scope of the internal community. My overarching agenda in this dissertation is to understand how members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community "own" their history - understand it, claim it, and present it in ways that largely filter out the imprint of the dominant society.

Acknowledgements

In the creation of this document I am fortunate to have benefited from the support of three communities - the Graduate Center, City University of New York, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian and the Ak-Chin Indian Community. Gaetana De Gennaro at the National Museum of the American Indian is largely responsible for my having undertaken a study of an O'odham community. At one point she suggested that I conduct research in southern Arizona, closer to the location of her own family in Sells. Gaetana joined me on my initial visit to the Ak-Chin Indian Community in 1997 and again in 2004. She has enthusiastically encouraged me throughout my years at graduate school. She contributed many of the photographs contained within these pages.

Shawn Termin, another colleague at the National Museum of the American Indian, has been among my biggest champions in this endeavor. She generously agreed to read the dissertation, start to finish, after having read several drafts of earlier chapters. Each time she provided incisive comments. Her intellectual approach to my work and Native studies generally has had a profound impact on my own thinking and focus. In many ways, Shawn's concerns for the infusion of "Native perspective" in her work at the museum has further enhanced my own work. Her support and friendship was a lifeline during much of the writing.

Doug Evelyn and Bruce Bernstein provided constant encouragement, both also having obtained their degrees while working full-time. They bolstered my hope more

than they realize. Finally, John Haworth generously approved hours and sometimes weeks of leave for me to conduct fieldwork, research or to write.

At the Graduate Center, I have made a few solid friends. Wendy Darby is someone with whom I always wish to share ideas. Her thoughtfulness and love of anthropology is a gift to be around. Suzanne Scheld has provided friendship and support throughout the years.

I have benefited greatly from my advisor and mentor, Gerald Sider. More than anyone I have known in my adult life, Dr. Sider has changed the way I view the world and myself. Though I studied with him while I was still doing coursework, it was a fateful event that enabled me to be so fortunate as to be taken under his wing. I accidentally ran into Dr. Sider at an annual American Anthropological Association meeting where he immediately admonished me for my evasiveness. He followed his scold by telling me that if I were determined to obtain my degree, he would advise me. His condition was that I work, truly work. From that point forward, I purposely read every reference he cited and wrote, rewrote and rewrote again drafts of papers, including this work. Each time, as he so presciently understood, the work improved.

Much of getting through the dissertation is an emotional struggle. Dr. Sider's regular calls to me to check in on my progress always involved discussions of my well being. I believe that without his presence in my academic career up to this point, I would not have achieved all that I've accomplished.

I owe sincere thanks to my Dissertation Committee members, Shirley Lindenbaum, Peter Whiteley and Kathleen Fine-Dare, all of whom provided me with

keen feedback which greatly deepened my thinking on the material contained within these pages. I am indebted to Ellen DeRiso for her assistance at the Graduate Center.

I owe a very special thanks to the Ak-Chin Indian Community, most particularly to the Ak-Chin Indian Community tribal council, which, on three separate occasions, approved my visits to conduct research. Several people in the community generously took time to visit and talk with me about their lives. Deborah Baptisto, Sally Antone, Johnny Lopez and Carole Lopez stand out as people who shared with me their thoughts, hopes and aspirations. I owe a very special thanks to Wendy Aviles and Lerline Peters, who always made me feel welcomed into the community. Elaine Peters continues to amaze me. She cares more than anyone I've met about the work in which she is engaged and its connection to her life, the life of her children and the lives of people in her community. She is largely responsible for creating the vision that is Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives.

Shayne del Cohen, Richard Effland and Nancy Fuller shared with me their experiences with the Ak-Chin Indian Community during the planning stages of the ecomuseum. Each of them conveyed to me their palpable excitement and hope they and the community shared during the time of its development. Nancy Fuller, at the Smithsonian's Center for Education and Museum Studies, continues to wax enthusiastic about the ecomuseum concept and is committed to imparting her vast knowledge on the topic to anyone with a scholarly interest. I am always delighted to receive emails from her about new websites or articles on the subject.

My life outside of work and school also offers me a substantial support system. Kathy Leichter and Cadence Giersbach provided good companionship throughout the

years. Diana Linden and Devorah Romanek, whose intellectual input was always helpful, served as great sounding boards.

Matthew Marshall provided unfailing support and encouragement during the writing stage. He came to Ak-Chin with me in 2004 and provided me with his insights as well as some of the images contained within these pages.

My parents, Ben and Pegi Gorelick, have been ever vigilant about my progress. My mother's far-reaching intelligence continues to astound me. She has read at least two versions of this dissertation and has engaged me in discussions about issues of particular interest to her. It has been a pleasure to be able to share that which has consumed me with a member of my own family. My father has been planning a celebration in my honor for a few years and I am delighted that he will finally have his party. They have also assisted me in financing several semesters at the Graduate Center as well as one trip to Ak-Chin. For that I am most grateful. My sister, Claudia, has been one of my biggest cheerleaders.

This work is, in part, about the efforts individuals and groups make to define and stay connected to their past while simultaneously contending with the future. I would be remiss if I did not apply those same considerations to my own life. In doing so, I have thought often of my grandparents, all of whom immigrated to the United States from Russia. Though none achieved academic success, they imparted the belief that their voyages were made to create possibility for their children and their children's children. To them I am most indebted. It is their sense of imagining that lives in this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | iv |
| Acknowledgements | vi |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Part One - Historical Ethnography | 26 |
| Chapter One: The History of Ak-Chin to 1984 | 27 |
| Chapter Two: The Founding of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum | 57 |
| Chapter Three: Remembering the Future | 110 |
| Part Two - Museums, Cultures, Histories | 145 |
| Chapter Four: Ak-Chin Him-Dak | 146 |
| Chapter Five: The Institutionalization of Culture | 185 |
| Conclusion | 213 |
| Bibliography | 223 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1 - Map of American Indian Reservations in Arizona | 39 |
| Figure 2 - Ak-Chin Farms, watering crops | 52 |
| Figure 3 - Ak-Chin Farms | 52 |
| Figure 4 - Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives | 105 |
| Figure 5 - Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives | 105 |
| Figure 6 - Ak-Chin Indian Community sign | 148 |
| Figure 7 - Houses in the Ak-Chin Indian Community | 148 |
| Figure 8 - Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort, poolside | 149 |
| Figure 9 - Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort | 149 |
| Figure 10 - Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance group, rehearsal | 176 |
| Figure 11 - Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance group, public performance | 176 |

Introduction

The current membership of the Ak-Chin Indian Community is just over 700, approximately 500 of whom live on the reservation.¹ The population figures represent a sixty-percent growth since 1990 when the community was nearly 450 people; membership has more than tripled since 1972, when the population hovered around 200 members². The current membership and rate of growth is due, in large part, to the opening and success of Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort in 1994. The revenues generated from this business venture have enabled the community to provide jobs and free housing to its adult members and most significantly, to bring people home from outlying areas such as Phoenix where they were able to find work, and be with their families, friends and traditions.

Until the 1980s, Ak-Chin residents occupied one road on the reservation. Presently, this area is colloquially known as the "old village" or the "traditional village." It was formerly an unpaved road dotted with one-room mud walled houses. Electricity did not enter the village until the 1960s, when the community first constructed homes with indoor plumbing for its members. With the establishment of the casino, the residential area has expanded and the reservation's main artery now

¹ According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, the total population of the Ak-Chin reservation was 742.

² In order to be a member of the Ak-Chin Indian Community one must be directly related to someone whose name appeared on the official census roll of 1940; or possess at least one quarter degree Indian blood and be related to someone on the 1940 tribal rolls; or possess at least one quarter degree Indian blood and have been adopted by the community (Ak-Chin Indian Community Articles of Association).

proudly displays a host of new two, three and four bedroom homes, and its most recent addition, a recreation center. A new elder center opened on June 4, 2004. This 7,900 square foot building features a television lounge, laundry room, men's and women's showers and dining areas where lunch is provided daily to community members age 55 and older. The community counts sixty members as part of the elder program. The new buildings give the appearance of a moderately affluent community.

The community's growth coexists with the fast-paced sprawl of Phoenix into outlying suburbs such as Maricopa, the location of the Ak-Chin Indian Community. In the fall of 2003, elementary-aged students from Ak-Chin formed a portion of the inaugural class of the Santa Rosa Elementary School, relieving some of the attendance pressure experienced by Maricopa Elementary. This new school is embedded within one of the new housing developments that line 347 South, the road that connects the Ak-Chin Indian Community to outlying areas such as Maricopa, Phoenix, Casa Grande. During my most recent visit in April 2004, I was stunned by the rate of development I witnessed. Though the several phone calls and conversations I had had since my last extended stay, during the summer of 2001, should have prepared me for what I saw, the changed landscape was striking. Rancho El Dorado is a thriving new community, in which the new elementary school is housed, but others such as Province, which entices potential residents with the slogan "55 and Better," and Acacia Crossings are sprawling at a rapid pace. A Walmart, Fry's, CVS and Home Depot are slated to open in the near future. When the supermarket chain Basha's opened a store in Maricopa on July 13, 2004, the Ak-Chin

O'dham Runner, the bi-weekly community newspaper noted, "'going to town' may be a thing of the past..." (Vol. XVIII No. 13). A friend of mine who lives in Maricopa told me that she has no excuse to leave her kids with her husband to get a breath by shopping in Phoenix ("town" to Ak-Chin residents) now that stores are located in such close proximity. "I'll have to come up with another reason to disappear for a few hours. There's not a Target here yet so maybe I'll tell my husband I need things at Target." Ak-Chin has become a community of people who live on prime real estate, in the heart of a Phoenix suburb.

These changes and the Ak-Chin Indian Community's attempts to form strategic alliances that serve to develop it's economic base while also retaining autonomy, are all too familiar for the people who welcomed me into their company over the course of two summers, 1997 and 2001 and during a brief visit in April 2004. The delicate dance the community has done, historically and presently, to simultaneously maintain full access to the institutions of the larger society (i.e. send their children to local public schools) and difference (make claims for and retain rights to archaeological materials dug on reservation land and own and operate a casino) is the focus of this work.

The dissertation I have written centers on three underlying issues, all of which overlap in significant and complicated ways. Very briefly, and only by way of orientation, these issues are: 1) How the Ak-Chin Indian Community maintains relationships with the dominant society while simultaneously privileging its Native identity; 2) How the community negotiates to both protect what it regards as its cultural heritage (language, dances, songs, oral histories) and meet the challenges

brought about by the large number of its members affected by a diabetes epidemic. Many of those impacted by the disease are the community elders who know the traditions that the community is trying to save. 3) How the conflicts and uncertainties of negotiating with the outside world while claiming and asserting Native identity, and while holding onto traditional practices only known by those who are dying, are handled in an effort to teach the community's youth Ak-Chin *Him Dak*, the Ak-Chin "way of life." My overarching agenda in this dissertation is to understand how members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community "own" their history - understand it, claim it, and present it in ways that largely filter out the imprint of the dominant society.

The first concern of both the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and more specifically of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, is how its members can have on-going social, economic and political relationships with the outside society and still profess cultural separateness and indigeneity. Perhaps this issue, more than the other two outlined below, are universal concerns among Native peoples in the Western Hemisphere and beyond.

For example, the strategic balance necessary to protect cultural heritage while engaging with the society at large is evident among the Zapotec of Mexico. In 1985, after the discovery of a pre-Columbian tomb in Santa Ana, the Zapotec community petitioned the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) to maintain the objects in the pueblo. INAH acceded and *Museo Shan Dany* was born. The economy of Santa Ana is based on agriculture and animal husbandry, wage labor and craftsmanship, specifically weaving. The diminishing returns from the cash crops force many residents to migrate for work impacting "Fluency in Zapotec and respect

for pueblo traditions..." (Erickson1996: 42). The residents of Santa Ana del Valle, Oaxaca, Mexico founded *Museo Shan Dany* in part, to keep residents from moving outside the community for work in order to protect Zapotec identity. The museo is viewed by them as a place where traditions can be retained and expressed and weavings can be sold to visiting tourists. However, the faltering attendance at *Museo Shan Dany*, and the Santa Ana region has forced the doors to remain closed all but one day a week. As a result "Santa Ana del Valle continues to struggles for economic and cultural self-determination" (Erickson1996: 42).

James Clifford's example of the Mashpee Wampanoag's attempt to gain federal recognition as an "Indian tribe" and regain its former territory offers a striking look into how a colonized group of individuals must utilize the criteria and ideological notions of the dominant society in order to claim indigeneity. The Mashpee who participate in the land claim are asked to testify about their "difference" as Indian people. One person speaks about how he "teaches beadwork, leatherwork and basketry..." (Clifford 1988: 282). One woman is asked "You don't eat much Indian food, do you?" "You use regular doctors, don't you?" (Clifford 1988: 286). Clearly, these preconceptions about Indian identity delimit Indianness utilizing a framework of non-Native design. That the Mashpee did not record their history according to EuroAmerican principles to delineate their cultural distinctiveness was to their disadvantage in asserting their land claim.

The history of most indigenous peoples, including those at Ak-Chin, is a history of dispossession - of land, water rights, forms of leadership, language, and most significantly, of forms of social and cultural reproduction. For members of the

Ak-Chin Indian Community, the dismantling of the traditional economy led to the fundamentally changed basis for cultural distinctiveness.

In an effort to reconstruct their identity and autonomy, the Ak-Chin Indian Community made the accommodation to abandon traditional forms of leadership and consolidated their political power under the provisions of the Indian Reorganization Act. It was at this time, in 1961, that they formed their first tribal council, consisting of five members - a Chair, Vice-Chair and three members. This political consolidation assisted the community in founding AK-Chin Farms Enterprise and for the first time since the establishment of the reservation, the Ak-Chin Indian Community created relative self-sufficiency for its members. In 1968, just seven years after its establishment, AK-Chin Farms netted one million dollars, half of which went to support the community's infrastructure - housing and social services. The other portion was reinvested in the farm. This was not the first or last time that the community has had to work "within and against" systems, pressures, and processes created and enacted beyond the limits of the reservation (Sider 1993: xx).

On a methodological level, it is also this particular issue, how the community sustains on-going relations with the world beyond Ak-Chin and still protect its cultural distinctiveness, which impacted me most when I conducted fieldwork in the Ak-Chin Indian Community. The framework in which I conducted my research attended to the ways in which the community made itself accessible for my research project yet delineated clear (and sometimes not so clear) controls past which I could not proceed. Though my research proposal was submitted to the tribal council following the appropriate cultural protocols prior to each of my visits, upon my

arrival, during the summers of 1997 and 2001 and again in the spring 2004, I was immediately made aware that the community would circumscribe the scope of my research in deliberate ways. In a very real sense, the community was asserting its power over me, making me attentive to the ways in which it wished me to study and understand Ak-Chin history - the community's approach to defining and preserving collective memory and discourse regarding internal divisions. My fondness for and friendship with the people who hosted me grew deeper the more time I spent with them; yet I remained conscious of the potential I presented of becoming meddlesome. I was also informed that though I was granted permission to visit and study in the community, I could not be housed there. At the time of my first visit, the community and the town of Maricopa did not have a motel. I, therefore, spent the better part of that first summer living in a motel room in Chandler, Arizona, commuting 25 miles to Ak-Chin Him-Dak each day. By the time of my second visit, Harrah's had opened and I resided at the motel attached to the casino resort for just over a month. I stayed there again in 2004.

Assuming the role the community ascribed to me taught me more than I reveal in the following pages about the impact of power and more specifically, of powerlessness. I was confronted with the "change in the social relations of scholarly production" and attempts by my hosts to control the ways in which I represented their community (Bilosi and Zimmerman 1997: 17). Perhaps here was my most valuable lesson about conducting and undergoing field research, for I was made keenly aware that I could and would leave, while my hosts would not. It was their history, culture and traditions, which I attempted to study and learn from; it was theirs to have, claim

and shape for my consumption. Therefore, it must be stated at the outset that my understanding of the history contained within the pages that follow are from a Western, non-Native perspective, as I am unable to write or ascertain from any other vantage point.

It should also be noted that assuming the space delineated for me by my hosts necessitated that I modify the ways in which I obtained information and the type and scope of data I realized. While I had familiarity with some issues I encountered, others surprised me. Though I was granted full access to the library that lined the walls of Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the Tribal Council was routinely consulted whenever I wished to make photocopies. When I interviewed informants, I learned that interviewees became reticent on topics which could be deemed sensitive. Specifically, I recognized early in my stay that there are internal divisions regarding the practices of Ak-Chin Him-Dak - how programs are planned and enacted, how archaeological materials are stored, analyzed and cared for, and which members of the community are consulted for their cultural expertise and how. These topics were openly discussed outside of an interview setting, and thus I altered my analytic approach and decided to glean most of the information contained within the following pages utilizing participant observation in lieu of formal, taped interviews. I believe that this course of action was decidedly a good one, as it enabled me to participate more fully in the activities of the ecomuseum, and thus explore more of my applied interests as a researcher.

My interest in and subsequent anthropological study of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives grew out of my full-time work at the Smithsonian National

Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in New York City. As the Manager of the Education Department I am keenly aware of Native Americans' ambivalent relationships to museums, specifically to those that collect and display Native-produced objects and teach about Native peoples. However, my work also alerted me to the ways in which museums such as the National Museum of the American Indian can serve as an arena for identity politics - a place for changing presentations of Native Americans to be put on display and interpreted. The NMAI's mandate, that Native American involvement is "necessary to understanding, interpreting, managing, conserving and exhibition" is a departure from former museological practices (West 2000: 99). The NMAI has influenced a shift that impacts the ways in which museums with Native American holdings curate and display presentations, public programs, as well as handle and store objects. At the NMAI I oversee a set of programs that enact the museum's mandate to work in consultation with Native peoples and provide visitors to the museum the opportunity to learn about the objects on display and cultural presentations and practices first-hand from the people who create and live them. Among my roles is to host workshops for educators. Recently, I was speaking to a group of teachers alongside one of my colleagues, a Lakota woman. A teacher pulled me aside and in a loud whisper said, "it used to be the winners who told history. Now it's the losers!" Disappointed, she stormed out of the program.

Some of the people with whom I work had never visited a museum prior to being hired at the NMAI. This is certainly true for people who come as visiting artists or speakers. Rather, their interest in the museum is as a vehicle for presenting perspectives largely ignored until recently. Those Native staff who do not get

discouraged and leave must endure visitors wanting to touch their hair, asking them to "say something in Indian," and commenting on their surprising ability to "speak so articulately." The hopes of the Native American staff members, particularly those who engage with the public daily, are that they might challenge some of the many misperceptions they encounter each day. My fifteen years at the National Museum of the American Indian taught me that the role of the museum in society has evolved to a place where while Native people actively participate in the direction of its discourse, the struggle to understand displays - and to produce them - has, if anything, intensified.

My involvement with these issues at a national institution made me curious to learn what occurs at the local level, and whether a similar ambivalence towards museums is evident in a tribal setting. My reading informed me about the evolution of museums in tribal communities in general. Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives was chosen for several reasons.

*

The reasons for choosing Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives as the site of study emerge from the recent history of the discussion about museums and Native people. James Clifford's visit to four museums on the North West Coast, near Vancouver, British Columbia, became mandatory reading in the early 1990s. In "Four Northwest Coast Museums: Travel Reflections" (1991) he describes the different and, at times, contested approaches to museum display in Native communities. Two of the museums he wrote about, the U'mista Cultural Centre and The Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre resulted when confiscated potlatch

paraphernalia was returned to the descendents of the original owners. Though not an ethnographic study of either site, Clifford provides the reader with insight into the distinct methods for presenting the repatriated items. At the Kwagiulth Museum the centrality of family ownership is articulated, whereas at the U'mista Cultural Centre the potlatch materials are presented as belonging to a collective.

Clifford's essay was featured in a collection edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, which emerged from a conference held in 1988. The conference, "The Poetics and Politics of Representation" attended to "the presentation and interpretation of cultural diversity in museums" (1991: ix). The resulting book, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (1991), was not specifically focused on the florescence of museums in Native communities; it touched on smaller museums "identified with...minority populations" (1991: 6). The essays in the book highlight the concept of "voice," which became a specific concern to the museum community just waking up to the notion that museums needed to create space for members of the communities represented in the exhibits they were planning.

Karp, Lavine and Kreamer edited a follow-up volume of essays in 1992 based on a conference entitled "Museums and Communities." The collection of papers, *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, investigates "how museums accommodate communities" formerly excluded from museum planning, and consider them active agents in the museum experience.

Museums and the Making of 'Ourselves': The Role of Objects in National Identity, edited by Flora E.S. Kaplan (1994), provided insight into the perspective that museums are social institutions, constructed within specific historical contexts.

Drawing from diverse geographical regions, the essays contained within this collection provide case studies of how various populations consider museums, their collections and exhibits as "products and agents of social and political change" (1994: 5).

A conference held at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in 1995 focused on the "changing presentation of the American Indian" in museums. The volume of papers that emerged from the day-long conference, *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native American Cultures* (2000) includes two essays by Native Americans intimately engaged in the initiative to create Indian-run museums in their communities. Jocelyn Wedll, director of the Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Minnesota, and Janice Clements, board member of the Museum at Warm Springs in Oregon, both discuss the cultural ruptures their communities experienced as a result of colonial policies imposed on their members, and the creation of museums as ways to display and educate their own community members about their tribal histories using first person voice.

Moira G. Simpson's *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* (2001) and Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown's *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (2003) present essays about the dynamic and ever-evolving relationship between local communities and mainstream museums. Peers and Brown write..."source communities have legitimate moral and cultural stakes or forms of ownership in museum collections and that they may have special claims, needs or rights of access to material heritage held by museums" (2003: 2).

Christina F. Kreps challenges assertions that indigenous peoples did not collect, conserve and display material culture prior to European contact. *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation and Heritage Preservation* (2003) focuses attention on indigenous models of cultural heritage preservation. Specifically she regards, "...museum-like structures [that] have been present in many societies since ancient times" as "falling along a continuum of variation in the degree to which they function as structures for the collection, storage, and display of valued objects" (2003: 147). Kreps' work is significant for attending to the ways in which "...indigenous concepts of and approaches to cultural heritage interpretation, representation, and preservation are increasingly taking their place beside western approaches" and impacting "a shift from a 'colonial' to a 'cooperative' museology" (2003: 152).

The volume noted above, *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, includes Nancy J. Fuller's article about Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum's foundation and opening. Fuller, from the Smithsonian's Museum Studies program, was contacted by members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community in the late 1980s. The Ak-Chin were interested in establishing a tribal facility and asked that Fuller consult with them. Her essay spurred my interest in further investigating the endeavor she discusses. As more fully described in chapter two, the Ak-Chin Indian Community decided, at Fuller's suggestion, to establish the first ecomuseum in the United States.

An ecomuseum is premised on the notion that the community - the land and its residents - replace a museum building and assume the role of both curators and public. Ecomuseum programs and exhibitions are "inspired by an integrated approach

to the national and cultural history of their surroundings and foster an awareness of locality" (Weil 1997: 24). In theory, since the constituency is one and the same as those who have "representational authority," ecomuseums are oriented to the communities, their heritage and identities, in which they are housed (Weil 1997: 35). As such, they are spaces where the exhibits, programs and activities produced attend to the specific history of the host community and its political, economic and cultural directives.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community's willingness to work with outsiders, specifically members of my own institution, the Smithsonian, and establish a wholly unique type of complex seemed to be an ideologically perfect fit. I wrote a letter of interest to the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak in 1996 who responded affirmatively to my request to visit. By the time of my initial visit, in 1997, the ecomuseum was in its sixth year of operation.

The relationship between American Indians and scholars, particularly anthropologists, has been written about extensively (Bilosi and Zimmerman 1997; Clifford 1996; Deloria 1997; Fixico 1997; Whiteley 1998). This literature identified three main issues: 1) The historical relationship between mainstream museums and Native Americans; 2) The ideological disconnect between scientific knowledge and the primacy given to it in the academic canon and indigenous ways of knowing and; 3) the impact of non-Native social scientists on Native communities and their disregard for the social, political and economic concerns of the people they "study."

Of particular relevance in regard to the first issue are studies that focus attention on historic museum collection practices and institutions' ethical

responsibilities to specific groups, tribes and nations, in some cases requiring them to repatriate materials illegally appropriated (Coombe 1998; Dubin 2001; Greenfield 1995; Merrill and Ahborn 1997; Messenger 1992; Rosenbaum 1996; Zamora 1993).

The relationship between scientific knowledge and Native ways of knowing has been addressed in great depth. Native American perspectives regarding archaeological practices - how excavations were conducted and how the finds were handled - has been written about from the vantage points of those who were both sympathetic and antagonistic to the changes afoot. Robert Layton (1989) and Phyllis Mauch Messenger's (1992) edited volumes and later Devon A. Mihesuah's work (2000) provide excellent historical and contextual background to the discourse surrounding archaeology as a scientific practice and the repatriation of Native American materials. Vine Deloria, Jr. fulminates on the "essential foolishness" of "scientific writing" in *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (1997). David Hurst Thomas (2000) and Joe Watkins (2000) offer non-Native and Native examinations respectively of the conflict around the practice of archaeology. Other studies address the ways in which archaeological practices are mediated in different situations (Greenfield 1995; Merrill and Ahborn 1997). Kathleen Fine-Dare (2002) provides a critical decade-long reflection of the history that brought about the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and its consequences.

The final issue of interest to this work is found in those writings that discuss the ambivalent relationship between social scientists and Native Americans. This work focuses attention on the more recently defined demarcations between

researcher, specifically those who practice "fieldwork," and community. Extreme reproach was directed towards anthropologists, who, until recently, were trained to "hatch...a theoretical 'problem' in a university setting, underwritten by an exogenous granting agency... without internal consultation..." (Whiteley 1998: 1). Scholars of American Indian history, often relying on the methodological practices of ethnohistorians, utilized specific forms of documentation, rarely produced by Native peoples themselves and usually produced from a male-centric perspective (Fixico 1997; Klein and Ackerman 1995; Leacock and Lurie 1971; Shoemaker 1995; Shoemaker 2002; Thornton 1998). Indians were rarely depicted as individuals; "Tribes" were comprised of one-dimensional caricatures, most especially Native women whose roles were significantly devalued, if they were attended to at all. Nomenclature changed and scholars granted Native people agency and action in the early 1970s, but the study of Native Americans remained largely devoid of Native perspectives, interpretations and methodologies until the late 1980s.³

Today's scholarship about Native America paints a different picture. The revised focus is due, in part, to an attention to new sources of data, giving wider vista to the complex and complicated realities of Native American histories and cultural understandings. Vine Deloria Jr.'s book *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969) charged anthropologists with overlooking often desperate conditions in Native communities for the benefit of obtaining academic credentials. The shift in approach in current studies of Native Americans emerges from new theories, scholarship and

³ There are of course multiple Native perspectives on any one issue. The notion that scholarship about Native Americans was without input from Native people themselves is fraught with its own contradictions since it is apparent that scholars can identify Native people sympathetic to their academic interests.

methodologies, signaled early on by Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. who explained how one must look "to the history of White values and ideas...for basic conceptual categories, classificatory schema, explanatory frameworks, and moral criteria by which past and present Whites perceived, observed, evaluated and interpreted Native Americans..." (1978: xvi). Most significantly, however, today's studies of Native histories, cultures and communities are responsive to present-day points of contact, concerns and interests of the people and situations being studied.

There has been a spate of research on tribal and ethnically-specific museums. Several of these works reveal these museums to be loci of self-empowerment (Kurin 1997; Oxendine 1992; Broyles 1989; Simpson 2001; Weil 1997). While museums such as Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives are certainly "empowering," who is empowered and who does the empowering are essential questions that are largely absent in the works noted above. More recent studies probe more deeply into questions regarding the circulation of knowledge - who in the community is granted permission to particular ways of understanding that in turn confer status and who are denied access to that knowledge; what protocols are upheld in these practices and which are renounced; and most significantly, how are these processes negotiated and by whom (Tweedie 2003; Isaac n.d., Macdonald 1996).

Recent anthropological studies of Native Americans are concerned with

...drawing out the shifting political and economic contexts over time...to show both the contingency of the conventional anthropological subject (i.e. how specific cultures emerged under specific historical conditions, at particular times, in particular places) and, consequently, how the stuff of culture (the ceremonies, customs, relations and patterns of ideas) comes to be caught up with, and become part of, the political and social changes people faced at the time (Dombrowski 2001: 4).

*

This dissertation falls within this framework. The works cited above largely omit discussions of contexts which helped to create community museums and the pressures, social, political and economic, communities experience that serve to influence the direction and course of their museums. I seek, in this study, to understand the dynamics of exchange between members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community and non-Native outsiders that helped to produce Ak-Chin Him-Dak, an ecouseum founded and managed by community members. My study of Ak-Chin Him-Dak reveals particular social influences that created and sustain it and the ways in which the ecomuseum acts as mediator between internal and external interests.

The second pressing concern of this dissertation is how the community negotiates both to protect its cultural holdings (language, dance, songs, oral histories) and to maintain a healthy population in the face of the diabetes epidemic that has touched all members of the community. The diabetes epidemic is, in part, understood as situated in the tensions between the past and present. Since diabetes is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Ak-Chin community, proponents of cultural revitalization efforts believe that returning to indigenous practices can alleviate and possibly combat its scourge.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is asserting, framing and manifesting its culture as both traditional and living. Largely, this cultural "work," the renewal of *Him Dak*, takes place within the ecomuseum context by staff who, by collecting oral histories, teaching language classes and mounting exhibitions, serve to symbolically represent components of Ak-Chin cultural identity. These expressions of identity,

their production, re-production and adaptations are tightly bound to external political and economic forces; the creation of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives was itself the result of circumstances and pressures beyond the scope of the internal community.

In the recent past, the staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives took an active interest in focusing attention on diabetes, the history of which mirrors the history of the community at large. Ak-Chin Him-Dak, by giving attention to a disease borne out of contact with non-Natives, made efforts to claim diabetes as a condition which can be controlled, recast and hopefully, turned around. Presenting diabetes in public exhibitions is one strategy for confronting the friction and gap between the past and the present. Ak-Chin Him-Dak attempts to successfully reinvigorate an interest in the past (i.e. when the community was more "traditional") by casting it as a time of greater cultural autonomy (though also a time of pressing poverty). The reanimation of tradition is presented by the ecomuseum as an opportunity for renewed cultural autonomy free of disease, among other social ills.

The cultural reinvigoration process in which Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives is engaged necessarily presents unresolvable conflicts. The members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community must negotiate not only their present but also their past and future. As the community attempts to bring back cultural expressions of the past by depending upon an ever-aging segment of the Ak-Chin population, they must also attend to the health and wellbeing of its members. One of the co-directors of the community's traditional dance troupe, the Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group works with the community's elders. I was visiting her mother's house one afternoon when

she entered and sighed with exhaustion. She told us that she had spent the entire day shuttling elders to and from dialysis at the community's renal care center. The rapid decline in health among community members means that those involved with cultural renewal must capture as much information and knowledge as they can before they lose the generation that holds its signification.

The third concern I attend to in this dissertation is how internal divisions concerning the diversity of thoughts, uncertainties and alliances, emerge over issues of how to handle formulating ways to teach "traditional" culture to younger members of the community. As Sider notes, "Native American peoples have been forced to claim and to continually negotiate not only their public identity but also their public 'presence,' and they have done so, from colonial times to the present, in ways that create substantial internal struggles" (1993: 8). This was revealed to me in the course of my research in the Ak-Chin Indian Community. While all of the adult members of the community with whom I came into contact conceded that the work of the ecomuseum was essential in claiming their specific identity as Ak-Chin people and in teaching youth about Ak-Chin values and social relations, known as *Him Dak*, they did not agree as to how this work should be accomplished and by whom. The internal divisions that emerged as a result of the unearthing of the community's cultural heritage attended to the notions that people in the community have about their different interpretations of Ak-Chin history, cultural traditions and how they should be taught. The production of history and tradition, thus, are processes for Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, which have assumed the role of defining,

shaping and maintaining the community's partially self-chosen cultural history.⁴

A word must be stated about the role of women at Ak-Chin Him-Dak and the central part they play in the work of protecting and revitalizing cultural expressions in the community. Predominantly, women staff Ak-Chin Him-Dak. At the time of my most recent visit, all were either married or single mothers. Their children and grandchildren participated in the summer programs and visited them at work, either when school let out and they had time in the afternoon, or when they happened to be in the area. The staff's involvement with their children seemed to be encouraged. My experience at Ak-Chin Him-Dak led to me to believe that the experience and skills the staff acquired as mothers extended to the work they undertake at the ecomuseum. Furthermore, more than other job opportunities on the reservation, working at Ak-Chin Him-Dak enabled these women to earn an income while staying close to their children.

The women who staff Ak-Chin Him-Dak fall between the ages of 35 and late fifties. It was their parents who had grown up speaking only O'odham, the Ak-Chin language, but their education, largely spent in boarding schools, had instilled in their parents shame about speaking it or articulating any form of cultural expression. Though many of the Ak-Chin staff at the ecomuseum understand the language, and many speak it fluently, they recognize that the increased contact and experience with

⁴ The issue of cultural history is very complex, especially in regards to museums. To illustrate, Ak-Chin Him-Dak has mounted exhibits that focus on the development of the Ak-Chin Farms, the impact of diabetes on the community and the continuing tradition of basket making. They have not, however, displayed items relating to the establishment of the casino or broached topics relating to the high drop-out rate among community members or the widespread use of alcohol.

the dominant society has deprived their children of the same opportunity. For staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak it is the potential and responsibility to reverse the trend of cultural loss and take control of the future course of their history that impels them. The women who comprise the staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak desire re-connectedness with their cultural heritage, from which their parents were alienated. This is particularly fragile at present because they hope for great success with their children whose integration to the world at large is greater than prior generations and whose prosperity is largely contingent on this integration. Yet success for the Ak-Chin Indian Community and specifically for those at Ak-Chin Him-Dak simultaneously encompasses embracing and presenting an "Indian" identity - Ak-Chin distinctiveness. The mothers who make up the staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak have a very special relationship to the project of cultural renewal, as it is their own children whom they hope to inculcate through this enterprise.

The women who comprise the staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak served as my primary informants. Following current anthropological protocol, I have attempted to disguise their identities and preserve their anonymity when I reference them. Though I imagine the readership of this work will be limited, I am well aware that should members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community wish to delve into the pages that follow, they will undoubtedly recognize the identity of those I mention. As noted earlier, I refrained from conducting "formal" interviews and therefore, the conversations I cite are reflections from my notes, which I made dutifully each day, and my memory. I hope that I have adequately expressed their concerns, ambivalences, hopes and dreams fairly.

My dissertation is divided into two parts. Part One provides readers with the ethnographic and socio-economic context under which the Ak-Chin Indian Community founded its museum, and the present-day concerns with which members of the community and more specifically, staff of the museum must contend. Chapter One describes the group of people now known as Ak-Chin as an itinerant subgroup of O'odham people. With the establishment of the railroad and subsequent Anglo settlement, the Ak-Chin became increasingly dependent on non-Native provisions, thereby integrating them into the Anglo socio-economy. The creation of a reservation for the Ak-Chin in 1912 solidified them as a membership, denying them rights and privileges to life as individual citizens but simultaneously providing them with grounds on which to fight for rights as a federally recognized tribe. Upon the establishment of the Ak-Chin Indian Community water rights were assured to them. As discussed in Chapter Two, the struggle to obtain the promised water rights is intimately connected with the foundation of the community's museum, Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives. Chapter Two defines the struggles the Ak-Chin Indian Community has had to combat both historically and at present in efforts to harness their power and franchise as a sovereign political entity and reinvigorate *Him Dak*. These struggles are increasingly complex and elaborate as Ak-Chin sovereign status is contingent upon the rights and guarantees both proffered and successfully claimed against by the dominant society.

Among those present-day struggles and interests of the community is the need to remain vital in the face of a diabetes epidemic that touches all members of the community, and the newfound wealth that has accrued as a result of the Harrah's

casino that the Ak-Chin Indian Community operates. The community museum's attempts to focus attention on the disease in an effort to re-integrate traditional foods into the Ak-Chin diet and reverse the prevailing trend of the disease in the community. This contrasts with the ways in which the community manages the casino, where outsiders and their influences are welcomed and encouraged. This is more fully discussed in Chapter Three.

Part Two describes and analyzes on-going work at Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the community's ecomuseum, and reveals that the efforts to protect and renew the community's heritage is an uneasy and often fraught process that is inclusive of some ideological perspectives but absent of others. However, even for those community members who do not completely embrace the museum's programmatic focus, they support the *idea* of the museum. The museum, for Ak-Chin community members, represents something that is of the community in contrast with the casino, for example, which is from outside the community. However, my research has made me well aware that the tension between that which is *of the community* and that which is *from outside the community* cannot be easily resolved, since they are so tightly interwoven and interdependent.

Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives is a lens through which I was able to view the intricate complexities of the ways in which Native people, in this case the members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, shape and reshape their struggles, histories and political and cultural claims for consumption and acceptance by their own population. The expressed renewal of *Him Dak* is of critical importance to the community's elders and for those who work at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. However,

staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak and others who work towards cultural revitalization also define their efforts to achieve recognition of their indigeneity by the dominant society. The on-going dynamics are the subject of the final two chapters in this work.

Part One

Historical Ethnography

Chapter One

The History of Ak-Chin to 1984

The O'odham term *Him Dag* or *Him Dak* is used to describe the social organizing principle of the O'odham people. It translates into English as "way of life" but its truer meaning characterizes the ways in which O'odham people attended to each other so that balance was maintained among their people. (This same term was given to the ecomuseum, which will be discussed later). The northern end of the Sonora desert in the states of Arizona on the United States side and Sonora on the Mexican side, is where the O'odham people have made their home. Within this vast region there are sub-environments to which the O'odham have adapted. The southern portion of this region, the home of the Tohono O'odham (which translates to "desert people" and were formerly known as the Papago) is characterized by less than 5 inches of annual rainfall; though there are ephemeral water flows, farming is virtually impossible. Upland of the Tohono O'odham are the Akimel O'odham ("river people"). This region averages five to ten inches of rainfall annually. Perennial and dependable seasonal streams enabled them to rely on summer agriculture. Among the Akimel O'odham there were one-village communities who lived alongside permanent sources of water and two-villagers who lived in farming settlements in the summer and near mountain water sources in the winter. The O'odham practiced akchin farming.

Akchin is an O'odham term which translates as "the place where the water spreads out" (White 1990: 146). Akchin farming relied on the torrential summer rains to flood fields, creating "natural irrigation for a richly productive agriculture" (Hackenberg 1983: 162; McGuire 1988: 204). Akchin farmers made ditches or temporary dams that

channeled the floodwater to the cultivated areas. The farmers who practiced floodwater agriculture undertook seasonal migrations from the “ephemeral desert washes” (McGuire 1990: 7.6) that provided them both with their agricultural staples and opportunities for hunting and gathering. Three main sources provided natural flows of surface water suitable for Akchin farming for the O’odham: the Santa Cruz river, the Vekol wash and the Santa Rosa wash. When flowing, these washes merged with the Gila River.

O’odham villages consisted of settlements of families living together who had communal rights to defined areas of land. Though there was a leader of sorts, his authority rested on his abilities to achieve group coherence and consensus when decisions needed to be made. There seem to have been two primary functions of a leader: he made decisions about farming (dam construction and maintenance, water allotment, and land subjugation) and about extra-village interactions. Though villages seem to have one man who was considered a head man, there might also have been a council forum in which decisions were ultimately decided. No one person had absolute authority. Lacking a formal political structure, leaders were influential men who could be depended upon to make important decisions about village issues.

The villages were generally small, adjusting to the environmental conditions in which they lived. Food resources were shared reciprocally with members of other villages. *Him Dak* functioned when relationships within and between communities engaged and harnessed resources to satisfy their own purposes. The O’odham social organization and settlement pattern promoted, but did not ensure, cooperation. It did assure relative economic parity amongst co-villagers, but not between villages.

The Akimel O'odham cultivated maize as their primary subsistence crop. Annual harvests also included squash, pumpkins, melons, tepary and other beans (Brody 1991: C10; Ezell 1961: 32; Gasser 1990: 4.22; Griffin-Pierce 2000: 195). The maize that was grown by the Akimel O'odham was planted in the spring and harvested in the late summer or early fall. They are considered to have "developed some of the most drought-resistant, heat-tolerant and alkali-adapted crops in the world," enabling them to supplement their diet of wild plant foods. Tohono O'odham traveled north seasonally to assist the Akimel O'odham with the harvesting of their fields in exchange for a portion of the crops (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 195). The aboriginal diet of the O'odham people, including ancestors of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, was supplemented largely by mesquite beans and cactus (saguaro) fruit, which grew abundantly in the Sonora region of the southwestern United States. Mesquite beans were ground into flour and which was then baked into bread. Small game and fish comprised approximately one-eighth of the total diet of the Akimel O'odham (Ezell 1961: 43).

Utilizing the river flood plains, Akimel O'odham were also able to grow cotton which was cultivated to weave into clothing and blankets (Fontana 1989: 46). Akimel O'odham harvests generally yielded surpluses that fed their own communities as well as Tohono O'odham travelers from the south, who passed through the region.

The Tohono O'odham people in the south traded both labor, regional wild foods and syrup made from cactus fruit with the Akimel O'odham in the north for their surplus of cultivated crops (Fryman 1990: 5.12; Hackenberg 1983: 163; Webb 1959: 64 - 68; see also Underhill 1985[1979]). In turn, the Tohono O'odham traded goods from their local neighbors in northern Mexico (chili, salt, shells, and mescal) with those items (mostly

corn and cotton) they obtained from the Akimel O'odham. According to Bahr, "In addition to its own fields, each household held options on the fields of friends and relatives. If its own field paid off handsomely, much of the harvest went to others; if the field failed, its storage bins were filled from others' harvests" (1983: 190). Ak Chin farmers cultivated "perhaps a fifth of the food they ate" (Fontana 1989: 43). This reciprocity manifested *Him Dak*.

The Spaniards first encountered the O'odham at the end of the 17th century. They called the Tohono O'odham "Papago" which loosely translates to "bean eaters." In the 18th century, the Spaniards introduced wheat to the Akimel O'odham. According to Ezell, "wheat [was] probably acquired by the Gila Pimas between 1697 and 1744" (1961: 34). Planted in the fall and harvested in the spring, wheat augmented but did not interfere with summer maize crops. However, the incorporation of wheat into the growing season generated greater emphasis on agriculture. Written accounts indicate that wheat was produced at all Akimel O'odham villages in the late 1700's rivaling maize as the primary crop. Production of surplus wheat crops was realized in the late 1800's as Americans were arriving in the region. Wheat was quickly integrated into the food items traded. O'odham people also adopted Spanish livestock and farming technologies, including irrigation agriculture. Archaeologists note a population increase during this time and suggest that this resulted from the intensification in agricultural production, new technologies and increased cooperative effort necessary to maintain that level of agricultural success (Fryman 1990: 5.13).

However, given the harshness and unpredictability of the desert, there were still periods of feast and famine to which Tohono O'odham bodies had acclimated (Brody

1991: C1; Griffin-Pierce 2000: 194; Harvey and Harjo 1994: 283; Savage & Bennett 1992: 96). This will be developed in the chapter three.

The adoption of horse and cattle, and the ability to create an agricultural surplus attracted the attention of the Apache who subsisted on hunting, gathering and raiding. Though the alliance between the Spaniards and O'odham was not always temperate, they sought each other's protection against the Apache who, after the Spanish entrada, targeted both groups. Though those Apaches who resided close to the Pueblos practiced "casual agriculture," Apaches subsisted primarily on wild plants and animals (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 368). As the Apache developed "an equestrian hunting economy," they defined a new subsistence pattern through raiding for horses, cattle and agricultural surplus (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 19). As early as the mid-eighteenth century, there are episodes of Apache raids described by the Spanish in the region (Fontana 1989: 66). O'odham reliance on new tools, technologies and foodstuffs introduced by the Spaniards enabled them to engage with introduced relations and technologies in ways that met their desired ends. The roots of dependency can clearly be traced to these initial interactions, yet it is important to note the ability of the O'odham to flourish, literally, under new conditions not of their own design.

With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Mexico transferred much of the American southwest to the United States. The Gadsden Purchase in 1853 further enlarged this region which was made into a separate territory ten years later. American settlement into these regions was swift as gold and silver rushes were in full swing throughout the West (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 20). The primary purpose of the Gadsden Purchase was economic, as it would provide gold seekers a land bridge to California. Anglo-Americans

moving westward sought protection from Indians, most notably the Apache, and entreated the United States government to oversee their safekeeping. Miners, in particular, viewed the Apaches as obstacles to progress and advocated their extermination.

The United States government sent peacetime soldiers west to newly established army posts in the regions requesting most protection. Like their coalitions with Spaniards and later Mexicans, the O'odham established symbiotic relationships with Anglo settlers against the Apache. The alliance between the newly arrived Anglo settlers and the O'odham resulted in extensive cooperation regarding defense and trade and induced the United States to label them "friendly" Indians (as opposed to those considered "unfriendly" or "hostiles" and targeted for submission by the federal government, often in the form of imprisonment or death).

Western territories were promoted for settlement. The Homestead Act, passed by Congress in 1862, provided settlers with 160 acres of "unappropriated public land" for the purpose of "settlement and cultivation" after payment of a nominal filing fee and five years of continuous residence. Under this act, 270 million acres of land was claimed and settled. Though most pioneers settled in the Western Plains, the push westward was spurred.

The population of Arizona grew considerably after the Civil War when miners, Mormons, farmers, traders, fortune hunters and homeseekers flooded into the region. By 1870, 40,000 Anglos resided in Arizona (Hall 1989: 209). The arrival of Anglo-Americans into the region was coincident with an agricultural "golden age" that lasted from 1850 until 1875 (Bahr 1983: 187). The Akimel O'odham became inextricably

linked to the cash economy by initially providing food supplies to soldiers for trade goods and also to miners in exchange for gold and silver (Hackenberg 1983: 170; Ezell 1983: 156). The success of the incorporation of wheat into the agricultural cycle of the Akimel O'odham and their far-reaching ability to cohere O'odham as a labor force enabled them to produce very large quantities. In 1858 they sold 100,000 pounds of wheat to American troops in the area. Two years later that amount quadrupled and in 1862, "they fed a thousand federal soldiers for a month...[and] still managed to sell a million pounds of wheat" (Fontana 1976: 51). Prosperity accrued to the Akimel O'odham (then called the "agricultural lords of Arizona") who, for the first time, amassed substantial personal wealth as they traded with Anglos. Communities began to evince social stratification (Hackenberg 1983: 170).

The effects of the Civil War on the Akimel O'odham, in particular, but on the Tohono O'odham as well, provided them with newfound disposable income. Sheridan contends that "By 1870, Akimel O'odham along the Gila River were selling or trading several millions pounds of wheat a year" (1996: 134). Though this figure may be somewhat inflated, it is clear that the agricultural production level and yields were very high. However, the conclusion of the war brought white expansion into the area in unprecedented numbers and resulted in Anglo intervention in their farming. Most notably, newly arrived settlers tried to control the highly resistant landscape of the Sonora region of Arizona by constructing water diversions to irrigate their own fields and provide them with permanent sources of potable water, and thus depriving the Akimel O'odham and Tohono O'odham of both the surface flows and groundwater on which the Indians had relied. The severity of the situation prompted a delegation of Akimel

O'odham to travel Washington, DC in 1873 to demonstrate against this situation. They were urged to move to Oklahoma, "Indian Country," where they would be undisturbed. Instead, they relocated north, still within Akimel O'odham territory.

The struggle of the O'odham to retain independence was further challenged by the establishment of the railroad in their territory. The completion of the transcontinental railway in 1869 and the creation of the Maricopa Wells station in 1878 more deeply integrated the O'odham into the political economy of the dominant society as tracks were laid across a portion of the Akchin wash. This station stop was the main stop-over for passengers travelling between Phoenix and Tucson and further encouraged Anglo migration into the area. The establishment of the railway station also created the need on the part of the government and railroad companies to accommodate the appetite for land. In 1879, the population of Maricopa Wells exceeded that of Phoenix (Jackson 1990: 6.29). White settlement into the southwest and the rest of the country meant displacing Indians from their homelands and exploiting resources at the expense of local communities.

With the construction of the Southern Pacific, what is now the Ak-Chin Indian Community became a full-time residence for those who formerly utilized the area as a summer harvesting camp. Maricopa Wells provided a "ready market" for the Akimel O'odham who serviced railroad passengers, personnel and residents with food, wood supplies and goods, including curios such as baskets, cotton blankets and small pottery. The O'odham also provided labor as construction workers.

A series of droughts between 1870 and 1880 ended a period of self-sufficiency among the O'odham and for many, brought starvation and disease (Innis 1994: 452).

Indian farming became further decimated as a result of water diversions and consumption by the newcomers (Jackson 1990: 6.30; McGuire 1990: 7.6). By the 1880s, the Akimel O'odham lost nearly all of the surface water in their immediate vicinity. The gravity of the situation induced the federal government to issue food rations to the Akimel O'odham. By 1900, the impact of the decline in the water table and thus in harvesting, required the O'odham to rely solely on wage labor. The O'odham, who in 1870 had been prosperous, maintaining and asserting control over their social, political and economic distinctiveness, by the onset of the twentieth century had become dependent upon the government in ways entirely beyond their control.

The O'odham's increased reliance on the government for basic provisions expressed, in its effect, the impact of Anglo settlement on other Native communities throughout the United States. With the collapse of the subsistence system and lacking economic free will, the O'odham were primed for the federal government's assimilationist policies which went hand-in-glove with Anglo settlement. One of the most far-reaching policies enacted in an attempt to assimilate Native Americans into the American fabric was the General Allotment Act. Enacted in 1887, the General Allotment Act, was also known as the Dawes Severalty Act after its main proponent, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts. Dawes paid particular focus on "civilizing" Indians and advocated removing young children from their reservation families and placing them in remote boarding schools where they would be educated in the habits of Anglo-Americans; He further advocated withholding promised rations to parents or guardians who resisted sending their children to school (Shown Harjo 1994: 579).

Indian children were sent, voluntarily or forcibly, to boarding school where they were stripped of their native identity. Upon entering a boarding school, children's hair would be shorn, they would be issued school uniforms, often military in style, and punished routinely for speaking any language other than English. The government opened the Phoenix Indian School in 1891. O'odham students made up a large segment of the student body through they were also sent to schools in Colorado and Oklahoma (Fontana 1989: 76). The Phoenix School was one of many Indian boarding schools that instituted the "outing program" in which older students were placed in the homes of Anglo middle-class households to serve as maids and domestics (girls) and farm hands (boys). The premise was to show Indian students, first hand, the qualities esteemed by assimilationists. Christian religious morals were stressed along with fluency in English. Church and government funded day schools were founded on or near O'odham communities in the early twentieth century.

The ostensible rationale behind the passage of the Dawes Act was to accelerate the assimilation process of Indians who, on reservations, continued to live communally, defying the ideological principles guiding American society at the time. However, at the heart of most assimilation policies was the desire for Indian land. In the *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* Felix Cohen writes, somewhat facetiously, "If the Indian would only adopt the habits of civilized life he would not need so much land, and the surplus would be available for white settlers. The process of allotment and civilization was deemed as important for Indian welfare and for the welfare of non-Indians" (1945: 78). The Act instituted the parceling of reservation lands to individuals for the purpose of making them into private landowners. Allotments were made in 160-acre parcels for heads of

households; 80-acre parcels were provided for single people over eighteen years of age and orphans. Remaining lands were available for sale to non-Native homesteaders.

The Indian residents of the Ak Chin wash were not subjected to the Allotment Act as they had not yet been granted a reservation. Instead, they were induced to apply for homesteads on land considered public domain, as permissible through the 4th section of the Allotment Act, which enabled surveyed non-reservation lands to be allotted in the same apportioned parcels to Indians. Ak-Chin Indians competed with railroad personnel who were also encouraged to apply for these lands. Despite objections from Southern Pacific railroad personnel, 105 homestead applications for 160 acres each were made for Indian applicants (Water Settlement Celebration 1988; Statement of Maricopa Ak-Chin Indian Community 1975: 5).¹ All O'odham applicants were eventually rejected; some ran counter to prior appeals, others were denied by Indian Service who maintained that the land should not be owned by individual Indians as the community worked the lands collectively. Whatever the rationale, both clearly defined Native applicants as either lacking the capability or inclination to become individual homesteaders. Native Americans were thus placed in an unmitigated quandary - their communal lifestyle was excoriated and subjected to programs aimed at its termination yet they were not permitted to assume the role of individual land owner since it was perceived to contradict aboriginal cultural tendencies. McGuire proposes another reason for the rejection of Ak-Chin applications. He contends that the "Most persuasive argument for revoking allotments was an economic one...The Irrigation Department candidly admitted that it was

¹ McGuire maintains that 63 applications were made on behalf of the Indian residents (1990: 7.9).

financially unable to develop waters for the allotted lands” (1990: 7.10).

The government established reservations among the O’odham in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By bounding Indians to limited portions of land, held in trust by the federal government, aboriginal social organization was undermined. *Him Dak* could no longer be enacted as it had been. However, the establishment of reservations ensured some possibility of preserving or extending aspects of community autonomy by providing a legal land-base that protected in part against colonialist appropriation. In 1912 the reservation for the Ak-Chin Indian Community was established by Executive order by President Taft. Executive Order 1538 provided the 120 member Ak-Chin Indian Community with 47,600 acres. Four months later the reservation was reduced to 21,840 acres, its present size. Their relatives, the Akimel O’odham had been established on two nearby reservations in 1879 (The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community) and in 1895 (The Gila River Indian Community). The Tohono O’odham were granted three reservations: San Xavier, southwest of Tucson, was established in 1874; Gila Bend was established in 1882. The Tohono O’odham reservation, the second largest reservation in the United States, is located in Sells, Arizona and was established in 1917. (see map)

*

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is a reservation comprised of Tohono and Akimel O’odham people. Located approximately 35 miles southwest of Phoenix, Arizona, in Pinal County, urban sprawl is quickly absorbing what was formerly a relatively isolated region. Little is written about this particular segment of O’odham people before 1879 when the Southern Pacific Railroad laid tracks nears the settlement of

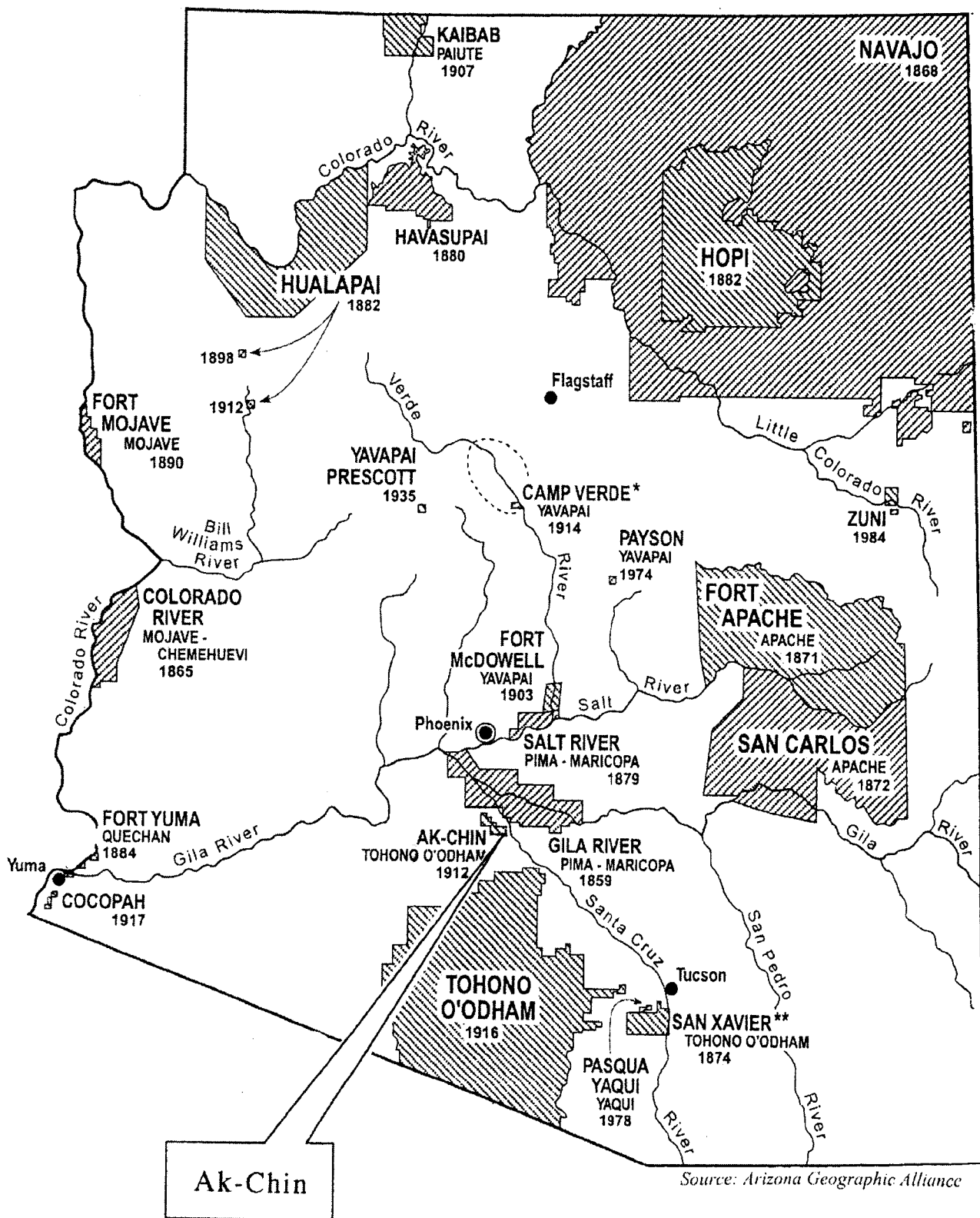


Figure 1 – Map of American Indian reservations in Arizona

the Ak Chin wash (water flow) in Maricopa, Arizona. It is believed that the people who make up the community of Ak-Chin were former residents of Maricopa Wells and before that of Kaka, now located on the Tohono O'odham reservation, southwest of Ak-Chin Indian Community (McGuire 1988:205).

The Ak-Chin Indian Community, whose original membership consisted of approximately 120 people, practiced akchin farming, after which the community and its residents are named. As noted earlier, akchin farming relied on floodwaters that resulted from the summer rains. The name for this type of farming encompasses diverse techniques for channeling water to fields; akchin farmers had to modify methods of water diversion depending on the rainfall.

Initial encampment by the Ak Chin wash is dated to around 1875 though it is believed that this area was used prior to this date as a seasonal farming area by O'odham people (Jackson 1990: 6.5; McGuire 1988: 205). Inferences regarding residence patterns, division of labor, subsistence patterns, interpersonal relations and modes of production of the ancestors of present day Ak Chin are limited by the dearth of references to this specific community. Substantial references, however, have been written about the Sonoran region generally and about the O'odham people who inhabited the area since initial European contact.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is approximately three miles from Maricopa. The reservation's physical shape can be divided into two segments, nearly equal in size. The west side of the reservation, triangular in shape, is where the Ak Chin village was

initially established and where it remains today. The east side of the reservation is rectangular and is dedicate to farmland.

Upon the establishment of the reservation, the Ak-Chin Indian Community immediately filed claims for water rights. On June 8, 1912 the United States government filed two “Notices of Water Appropriation” on behalf of the Ak-Chin. The first one inscribed the community’s right to 10,000 acre-feet² per annum of water from the Ak-Chin (also known as the Vekol) wash. The second claimed 60,000 acre-feet per annum from the Santa Cruz River (McGuire 1990: 7.12; Statement 1975: 13; Water Settlement Celebration). The U.S. Indian Service agents explored ways to provide the Ak-Chin Indian Community with a permanent water source for farming. Asserting that wells would provide greater reliability than the washes, they devised plans to construct wells from which underground water could be pumped to the reservation.

Four wells were built, one of which immediately failed to operate. The water, which was approximately 40 feet below the surface, would be pumped into ditches, which would transport the water to the Ak-Chin Community (Gasser and Jackson 1990: 2.14; Jackson 1990: 6.37). In 1916, Indian agents allotted irrigated plots of 2.5 acres to each member of the community, disregarding traditional residential and land use patterns. However, families continued to employ pre-contact modes of production; they farmed communally and did not farm all of the allotted plots. The planned irrigation system delivered water to between 400 and 600 acres. Plans for the wells were ill-conceived as

² An acre-foot of water equals one acre of water twelve (12) inches deep, or 32,500 gallons.

they were often flooded by the washes. The government drilled new wells as old ones failed and supported a full-time engineer who was stationed on the reservation. He oversaw the maintenance of the pumps and irrigation ditches, distributed seed and assisted farmers (Jackson 1990: 6.34).

By the 1910's agriculture was fast becoming big business in the state; in the 1930s cotton had become the mainstay of Arizona's irrigated agriculture (Hackenberg 1983: 173). By the 1920s the O'odham people supported themselves as seasonal farm laborers for non-Indian farmers and were able to remain on their reservations and in their communities and cultivate small crops to maintain their self-sufficiency. Increasingly, non-Indians farmers played a significant economic and political role in the Phoenix region. Whatever water could be harnessed would flow directly to these farmers' fields. Dams were constructed which completely obstructed water from flowing into canals near the Ak-Chin Indian Community. What little water did flow to Native communities was brackish.

The Coolidge Dam, completed in 1930, was designed to hold 1.3 million-acre feet of water to provide to the Pima Indians and White farmers living near Florence and Coolidge, Arizona. A severe drought after its inauguration precluded the dam from collecting the intended amount of water. After attending the dam's dedication, Will Rogers quipped, "If this were my lake I'd mow it!" The dam had the effect, however, of hindering the floodwaters necessary for the alluvial plains, resulting in a barren landscape that could only be irrigated through mechanized means. Akchin farming had become a thing of the past.

In the 1940s, "the [Ak-Chin] reservation was still served by only four wells..."

(Marmaduke et al. 1983: 39). The water table continued to drop significantly as agribusiness in the state of Arizona grew. Wage work off the reservation had become the key to economic survival. Ak Chin and other O'odham men provided the necessary hand labor for cotton farmers until the late 1950s when cotton harvesting became mechanized. The Ak-Chin Indian Community was slowly losing what little autonomy it retained; children from the community now attended the public school in Maricopa where they were educated alongside their non-Native neighbors.

The Ak-Chin's decision to maintain subsistence farming over market crop production disgruntled the Indian agents who felt that this choice did not yield the income required to keep the irrigation system operational (McGuire 1990: 7.17). The cost of upkeep for the wells and pumps was exorbitant and there was a huge market demand for cotton from the farmers in the Ak Chin region. Two thirds of the cultivated land around the Ak-Chin Indian Community produced cotton and one third produced alfalfa for livestock feed. What little cultivated acreage remained supported the growth of barley, carrots, flax, lettuce, sorghum and wheat (McGuire 1990: 7.20).

World War II had a major impact on American Indians generally and specifically, on the O'odham in the southwest. According to Griffin-Pierce, "World War II did more to expose the Southwest Indians to the dominant culture than any other, previous event" (2000: 27; see also Bernstein 1994: 341). Nation-wide, approximately, 25,000 Indians participated in the war either as soldiers or in related industries. This produced newfound wealth for Indians who returned to their communities with consumer goods that they were previously unable to afford, including refrigerators and radios. Indians worked alongside non-Native people in ways that intensified the inability to avoid the judgmental

encounters and face the deep inequities to which they were subjected as Indians. Radios provided them access to information of which they otherwise were unaware. One of the most famous Native American soldiers from World War II was Ira Hayes, Akimel O'odham, who gained renown for landing on Iwo Jima and raising the American flag on Mount Suribachi. The famed photograph of Hayes and his fellow marines made him the poster boy for American assimilation, a status that may have contributed to his untimely death at 33 from alcoholism (Bernstein 1994: 342).

In the mid-1940s the Bureau of Indian Affairs deemed that the Ak-Chin did not fully exploit their land's farming potential and that the community's land should be leased to non-Indians for development. In 1946, just over 2,000 acres of the Ak-Chin Indian Community's 21,840 acres were leased to non-Native farmers. Ten years later, over 12,000 acres, more than half of the community's land, was leased to non-Native farmers who held 10-year contracts with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The BIA intended for the land to be developed with adequate water supplies (wells, canal construction and field preparation) and returned in usable condition to the Indians who would then maintain its production. Essentially, however, this arrangement mitigated the BIA's responsibility to provide a steady water supply to the Ak-Chin Indian Community as stipulated in the Executive Order establishing the reservation. There is no evidence to suggest that the members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community were consulted in the decision to lease reservation lands. Nor is it clear to what entity the lease fees accrued.

McGuire writes that “[t]he mechanical cotton harvester was first tried in Arizona in 1946, the same year, by coincidence, that Ak Chin's lands were leased out” (1990: 7.24). However, O'odham hand pickers continued to be hired by the lessors until the late

1950's when mechanization prevailed. The Ak-Chin community's annual income was approximately \$10,000 during this decade and community residents continued to live without running water or electricity (Fuller 1992: 335). By the early 1960s, seasonal farm work was available to only 10 percent of the farm hands who had worked ten years earlier (McGuire 1990: 7.24 – 7.25). The bottom had fallen out on the mode of self-sufficiency utilized by the men at Ak Chin Indian Community since the late 1870s.

In 1961-62, as land leases expired, the Ak-Chin community refused to renew them, opting instead to regain their self-sufficiency through the development of a community owned and operated farm. It took five years for the Ak-Chin Indian Community to retrieve all of the leased lands (White 1990: 156). In 1961, the Ak-Chin Indian Community adopted a constitution and a formal governmental structure under the Articles of Association of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 "for the sole purpose of creating an economic base to remedy the literal starvation of the people occurring at that time" (Flyer from Ak-Chin Him-Dak). A five-member community council was established as the form of the government. Council members, including a chairperson, a vice-chair and three council members, are democratically elected for three-year staggered terms. In 1962, the council founded Ak-Chin Community Farms Enterprise (also called AK-Chin Farms, Inc.).

The Wheeler-Howard Act, also known as the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), was ratified in 1934. This piece of legislation was the pivot on which the New Deal era of Indian-White relations hinged. It emerged from a 1928 document entitled "The Problem of Indian Administration" more commonly known as the "Meriam Report" after Lewis Meriam, who oversaw the study. Initiated in 1926, the conditions of Native

Americans and the handling of Indian affairs by the BIA were investigated. The Meriam Report was intensely critical of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and made pointed recommendations, include the end to allotment.

Ostensibly aimed to shift the government's policy from assimilating Indians into mainstream American society to promoting the perpetuation of indigenous cultures, the federal government pushed for federally recognized tribes to adopt formal constitutions and bylaws by which they would be governed. John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, drafted the bill, which was greatly modified when it became the IRA. Collier's intention was to focus attention on and empower Native traditional modes of self-governance. Rather than pushing for Indians to recast themselves into individual property owners as was encouraged with prior assimilationist policies, the IRA pushed for Indian communities to adopt a centralized form of government.

Though supposedly a counterpoint to the pressures of assimilation, under the provisions of the IRA, a federally recognized tribe could organize itself in ways that were wholly inconsistent with indigenous modes of governance, which, among other things, enabled it to engage in business enterprises as corporations. The most positive aspect of the IRA was the provision ending further allotments of Indian land, as stipulated in the Dawes Act. Though the goal was towards Indian self-determination, the new tribal governments established through the adoption of the act "aroused little support among the people they were supposed to represent. There was intratribal factionalism and rivalry, and the political structures that were established were foreign to Indian societies" (Hirschfelder & De Montano 1993: 24). Among the stipulations in the IRA was that

reservation land held in trust by the government could not be mortgaged or leased for more than ten years.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community adopted the provisions of the IRA in 1961, one year prior to founding Ak-Chin Farms, Inc. Deloria and Lytle argue that,

Indians who adopted the IRA and attempted to work within its confines were not the traditional Indians who had intimate knowledge of their own past and the social customs that had bound them together. Generally these Indians of the New Deal were familiar enough with the modern world to realize that they had to adopt new organization and ways if they were to preserve anything of the reservation life they had known (1984: 169- 170).

This will be discussed below.

In order to set up Ak Chin Farms Inc. the council requested start up funds from the revolving credit plans established as part of the IRA. Their appeal was denied. Instead, the farm was financed by a local cotton gin. The community put the use of their land up as collateral; if repayment of the loan was delinquent, the community promised the harvest and the ability to work the farm (McGuire 1990: 7.26; White 1990: 157; Villegas 1974: 12). As early as 1963, the Farm's books were in the green and the Farm netted a \$21,000 profit (McGuire 1990: 7.26; White 1990: 159). Approximately five years later, in 1968, it netted \$1 million (White 1990:159). In the early 1970s the Ak-Chin Indian Community was farming 11,000 acres, nearly the entire land mass farmed by the non-Native lessees less than twenty years earlier. Half of the profits were reinvested in the Farm and the other half provided housing and services to the community (White 1990: 160). For the first time, the community was able to provide jobs for its members. (McGuire 1990: 7.26; White 1990: 160). The AK-Chin Farms, Inc. enabled the community to finance a community center, a pre-school and head start programs. Tribal

members were provided with new homes with their utilities paid for by the community's coffers.

Realities of managing and operating a farm in the desert set in quickly as costs to pump water into fields mounted rapidly. Population growth in Phoenix and Tucson in the 1970s resulted in greater water consumption, affecting "the water in the remaining wells on the Ak-Chin reservation" (Simpson 2001: 158). An increasingly large underground depression formed under the Ak-Chin reservation as a result of pumping groundwater. This hole, called the Maricopa-Stanfield Depression, had the effect of reversing groundwater flow in the region. By 1970, groundwater was more than 400 feet below land surface (Congressional Oversight Hearings 1975: 12). In the Statement of Maricopa-Ak-Chin Indian Community before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, the Congressional Oversight Hearings, community chairman, Wilbert (Buddy) Carlyle maintained that the "cost of pumping water on the Reservation approximates \$10.00 per acre foot." (1975: 24).

The community, cognizant that their newfound wealth might be short lived due to the water shortage, decided to assert their rights as promised to them with the establishment of their reservation in 1912 and under the terms of the Winters doctrine of 1908. The Winters doctrine asserts that the federal government will supply "enough water for Indians to irrigate their land" (Simpson 2001: 158). Rather than suing the government for their rights, potentially resulting in drawn out, costly lawsuits, the Ak-Chin Indian Community opted to negotiate a water settlement. In doing so, the Ak-Chin Indian Community "waived its claims against the United States for failing to assert and protect the community's water rights" (Water Settlement Celebration). In testimony

before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, the tribal chairman made a plea for water:

The people of the Reservation are not asking for gifts. When the Reservation was created in 1912...enough water was reserved to make the land liveable. Aside from two abortive attempts in 1912 on the part of the Government to appropriate water for the Reservation, nothing has been done by the Government to provide any water whatsoever for the Reservation. ...It is now imperative that the water to which the Reservation is entitled be given to it...If Ak-Chin is to live, it must have water soon. (Congressional Oversight Hearings 1975).

The Department of the Interior filed a litigation report to the United States Justice Department in 1977. A bill was introduced authorizing the Department of the Interior to provide water to the Ak-Chin community by drilling on federal land (White 1990: 163). Public Law 95-328, The Ak-Chin Water Rights Settlement Act, passed in 1978. Through passage of the act, Congress mandated the Department of the Interior to identify a permanent water supply of 85,000-acre feet for the community and to provide them with water in the interim, pumped from nearby federal lands. If water could not be delivered in the allocated time, the community would be fiscally compensated.

Though the act had passed, the conditions on Ak-Chin Farms were dire. In 1979, the water supply could only irrigate 5,000 acres. In 1982, that number dropped to 4,000 acres. The Department of the Interior spent \$29 million exploring the region for a viable, permanent water source in the region, but their search was in vain (White 1990: 165). Drilling threatened to further reduce the water table and escalating costs and conflicting water rights made water supplies uncertain. The sources that were identified would only provide water for the short term.

In 1983, the Department of the Interior devised an alternate, more viable option to the Ak-Chin Indian Community. The Central Arizona Project (CAP), began in 1982, was

a “water-delivery system” that draws water from the Colorado River. This was a permanent water source and could be conveyed to the Ak-Chin community en route to Tucson. In 1984, Leona Kakar, Chairman of the Ak-Chin Indian Community Council, negotiated the amended law (Public Law 98-530) which guaranteed the delivery of 75,000-acre feet of water per annum in perpetuity. Though it was 10,000-acre feet less than the original negotiation, it offered greater assurances than those if the water was drilled for in the vicinity of Ak-Chin. Water delivery was promised by January 1, 1988.

This amendment also provided the Ak-Chin Indian Community with \$15 million for the purchase of water before the date of delivery under this revision. An additional \$3.5 million grant was proffered for economic development. The cost of construction of a delivery system was \$25 million dollars and was provided by the federal government. The Ak-Chin Indian Community received its “first water” in June 1987, six months ahead of schedule.

The settlement would enable Ak-Chin Farms, Inc. to expand considerably. The proposed irrigation project was to be implemented on the west half of the reservation. In 1980, of the approximately 10,000 acres on the west half of the reservation, “little more than 7,000 acres [were] either minimally developed, or totally untouched by modern activity” (Marmaduke et al. 1983: 2). The planned development would transform a significantly greater portion of the reservation into “irrigation farmlands” (Marmaduke et al. 1983: 5). The village of Ak-Chin, the farm headquarters and land set aside for future community housing would be withheld from this development. Presently, the Ak-Chin Water Supply Project, authorized under P.L. 95-328, supplies irrigation water for 16,725 acres on the Ak-Chin Indian reservation. Today, 15,220 acres of the Ak-Chin Farms are

cultivated. The primary crop is cotton (4550 acres). Alfalfa and barley are each cultivated on 3550 acres. The Farm has a business relationship with the nearby Frito-Lay plant and supplies them with 1370 acres worth of potatoes. Watermelon, pecans and milo (sorghum) comprise the remaining acreage of the farms. AK-Chin Farm Inc. employs sixty workers, only twenty of whom are community members.

*

Though the severe desert environment of Ak-Chin placed environmental constraints on the community, the people acted upon these limits and were able to create self-sufficiency for themselves. The shift from subsistence agriculture to agribusiness had the effect of not only altering the physical landscape of the community but also affected its social structure. The creation of the farm, while enabling the Ak-Chin Indian Community to reconstitute itself in order to be self-sufficient - to govern itself, produce a livelihood and to care for members - embedded the community more deeply in economic relations with the dominant society. Governed by market forces, Ak-Chin Indian Community's strategy for achieving relative independence, motivated them to act in ways that contradicted indigenous relationships. On a superficial level, one witnesses the physical change in the landscape, the employment of new technologies and the enhancement of tribal members' business acumen. The farm, however, exacted a greater toll on the Ak-Chin Indian Community. It altered the social environment, and impelled the Ak-Chin to integrate more deeply with society-at-large; the Ak-Chin Indian Community loosened their focus on *Him Dak* as an organizing principle of community life.



Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 2 – Ak-Chin Farms, watering crops

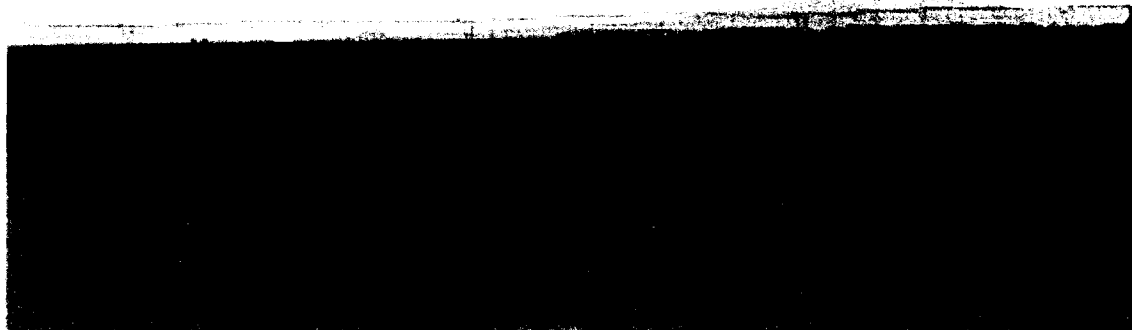


Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 3 – Ak-Chin Farms

While Ak-Chin Farms, Inc. simultaneously rooted the Ak-Chin Indian Community to their reservation and served to enhance the community's self-sufficiency, it also served to alienate them from their land. This ambivalent relationship remains evident today and has impacted community member's connection to their traditions and sense of *Him Dak*.

*

Louisa is a basketweaver who works at Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the community's museum. In one conversation she and I were having, I asked her questions about her relationship to her art: how did she learn to weave? How long it takes to make a basket? She told me that as a child she was able to collect the materials necessary to create a basket just outside her door. Where the farm is now, used to be a field of wild, indigenous plants. The Ak-Chin used the plants for medicine, food, and for basket weaving. Clearing the land for the farm has literally distanced Louisa, as well as other basketweavers in the community, from their own traditions. Though basket making remains a revered art form, only a few women in the community continue to practice it. Few young people learn to weave as Louisa did, by watching her older female relatives. Louisa teaches basketweaving to community members at Ak-Chin Him-Dak but Ak-Chin women no longer spend the time necessary to gather the materials necessary to construct a basket. Most people under 40 do not know what season is best for gathering yucca, beargrass or wild banana root, and many of the gathering songs are lost.

Though some basketweavers make efforts to gather their own materials, getting the supplies needed for basket making is an all day activity. Most weavers today purchase their materials from gatherers "down south" (the Tohono O'odham Nation). In

2003, Ak-Chin Him-Dak's Cultural Resources office organized a trip for the community's elder basketweavers to Coronado National Forest in Tucson, Arizona where they were led by a Forest Ranger to locate beargrass. The plan is to expand the program and invite both elders and younger basketweavers on gathering expeditions.

Though the change in landscape was articulated to me on numerous occasions, it was not clear to me until the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak showed me a photograph from the early 1960s. It depicted a view of the community looking west down Farrel road, the village's main artery. I was told that the road had not yet been paved at the time the photo was taken, but that was not apparent in the image since the road was completely flooded. Young children waded in knee deep water. What was most striking, however, was the flora that abounded on either side of the road. There were the tall cotton wood trees I had heard so much about but had not seen in the region. The establishment of Ak-Chin Farms, Inc., concomitant with the development of the Ak-Chin Articles of Association and Tribal council and the overarching decision to assert greater leverage over their own community, necessitated greater integration with the dominant society in an effort to maintain distance from it. The Ak-Chin Indian Community opted to alter their social, physical and economic landscape in order to achieve relative self-sufficiency. This decision compromised practices that had been long-standing and firmly rooted the community in a particular identity, that which people refer to as *Him Dak*.

One of the concessions resulted in the disuse of the O'odham language in public transactions. As already noted, the incorporation of the Farms and the community were coterminous. With the development of a constitution and the formalization of a tribal council, English became the lingua franca among the Ak-Chin. English was not only

used in matters germane to the business of AK-Chin Farms, Inc., it was also spoken at tribal council meetings. Today, small-scale attempts are being made by the ecomuseum, Ak-Chin Him-Dak, to revive the O'odham language. A language curriculum was developed to promote language acquisition in ways familiar to young people today – in textbook form. Though many adults over the age of forty speak the O'odham language, most children are not exposed to it on a regular basis.

The agribusiness of AK-Chin Farms, Inc. necessarily made the Ak-Chin embrace some of the social organization of the society with which they were negotiating. This process is not unique to the Ak-Chin. The ways in which indigenous communities around the world assert their difference and sovereignty often attaches them to arrangements they wish to challenge (Shoemaker 2002: x). Unquestionably, the Ak-Chin Indian Community was motivated to establish a farm as a result of the pressures – social, political and economic - foisted upon them. Farming and the creation of Ak-Chin Farms Enterprise for the Ak-Chin Indian Community today is more than a means to make a living or to achieve relative self-sufficiency. The creation of AK-Chin Farms Inc. is laden with social significance as it served the purpose of anchoring the community to its own land and enabled the Ak-Chin Indian Community to retain relative independence.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community, in an effort to regain political, economic and social autonomy³, made choices that increasingly impact on the community. The accommodations necessary to achieve economic independence seemed to require the Ak-Chin Indian Community to subordinate cultural elements. For example, the effects of

³ The autonomy the Ak-Chin Indian Community wishes to regain is a deeply ambiguous autonomy for as they further enhance their economic well-being they distance themselves from their history and from fellow O'odham communities.

accommodation are evident today in the loss of cultural practices that now mark their traditional culture, such as the ability to step outside one's home and collect basket-making materials, or the inability of the younger generations to speak their language and communicate with the elder members of the community who speak exclusively O'odham.

In one sense the museum seems to enhance the possibility of reconnecting with these cultural practices, at least indirectly. But in other ways, it does not; as we shall see in the chapters that follow, there is opposition by some elders in the community to the museum and some substantial indifference by youth to the revitalization efforts of the Ak-Chin Him-Dak staff.

Chapter Two

The Founding of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum

In order to effect the removal of Ak-Chin artifacts [from Federal possession, if not from Federal control], the Federal agencies require of any tribal group that they have not only appropriate storage space, but professional staff to inventory, accession, curate, and exhibit their collections. A well known fact of life within tribal America is that Indian individuals may possess all the cultural knowledge, historical knowledge, administrative and artistic ability to do this, but for socio-economic reasons lack a formal education and thus lack certification. Certification makes it easy for the rest of the world to deny a tribe access and ultimately possession of their artifacts for lack of “qualified staff” (Charles Carlyle, quoted in Parker 1990: 41).

During the late 1970’s the community was netting over \$1 million annually from the Ak-Chin Farms Enterprise. Half of these earnings were invested in community projects such as the installation of electricity, sewer lines and the provision of housing for all community members. The other half was reinvested in the company. New businesses were established with farm profits including a lumber company, commissary and cotton gin (Fuller 1992: 336). However, the farm’s on-going success required expansion and the concomitant need to secure a dependable water source.

The water settlement of 1978 (Public Law 95-328), which provided the Ak-Chin Indian Community with a steady supply of water, and its amendment in 1984 (PL 95-530) providing for a supply of water in perpetuity, altered the community’s relationship to its own history in ways that will be developed in this chapter. A boon to the community in its far reaching achievement, the water settlement disrupted the marginality, relative self-sufficiency and autonomy experienced by the Ak-Chin Indian

Community prior to its resolution. The planned expansion of Ak-Chin Farms, Inc. in the 1980s necessitated the installation of a new irrigation system which, in turn, necessitated that the land be excavated before pipes could be laid. The requisite land survey was co-sponsored by Ak-Chin Farms, Inc. and the Bureau of Reclamation, which was "taking the first steps towards environmental compliance for its planned expansion of farmlands" and "the secondary impacts of...water to the reservation respectively" (Marmaduke, et. al. 1983: 3). Less than one and one half feet below the surface yielded a stunning archaeological discovery: "more than three hundred pit houses, enough implements of daily life to fill seven hundred boxes, and the skeletal remains of twenty-one Indians" were revealed (Fuller 1992: 338). One of the archaeologists who worked on the Ak-Chin excavation informed me how rare it is to uncover a site of the physical magnitude and historical depth as the one unearthed on the Ak-Chin Indian Community (Effland, personal communication, 2004).

The site was determined to have been inhabited by the Hohokam (alternatively called Hu-hu-gam) culture, whom present-day O'odham claim as their ancestors. The Hohokam are believed to have existed in the region between 2100 B.P. and the fifteenth century. The most significant Hohokam site is Snaketown, also located in the Gila River Valley. Upon the Ak-Chin discovery, members of the community proclaimed the site their own Snaketown (Effland, personal communication, 2004). The Ak-Chin discovery was from two separate periods, one dating from as far back as 300 A.D. (Fuller 1992; White 1990: 183). The other was dated 800 - 1100 A.D. The objects that were revealed in these excavations formed the basis of the museum that is the focus of this study.

In compliance with the Bureau of Reclamation requirement, archaeologists working on the site removed the finds to the National Park Service's Western Archaeological and Conservation Center in Tucson. Human remains were returned to the community for reburial but cultural objects were kept in an archaeology lab under the auspices of the Arizona State Museum. Access to the objects and the attendant data was available to members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community "upon request" (Breternitz 1990: 1.25). Immediately upon the removal of the objects to the conservation center, community members advocated for the excavated objects' return. Members of the community valued the objects as tangible reinforcements of oral histories they had learned and wanted to be in possession of them. Elders of the community, in particular, saw themselves as custodians of the land and therefore, responsible for the well being of the objects that were excavated from it. For the members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the archaeological material evidenced a continuum with both history and place.

An annotation in the Northland report, one of the archaeological publications, asserts that despite the cultural value identified in the wealth of the archaeological finds, many in the Ak-Chin Indian Community and members of the tribal government, believed rather than preserving the excavated items, the archaeological sites be re-covered (Marmaduke et al. 1983:232). The Ak-Chin Indian Community's request for the return of the excavated material stemmed from a self-determinationist orientation and from deeply ingrained attitudes about the dead and burial goods. Some members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, primarily elders, expressed disquiet about having their ancestors and associated funerary materials removed from the earth and taken from their community.

The push for the return of the materials, which community members presumed were rightfully theirs for safe keeping, underpinned an activist stance that was both political and spiritual.

This ideological disconnect between the work and agenda of the archaeologists and some community members conveys the Ak-Chin's apprehensiveness about the rationale for archaeological methodologies and practices, particularly invasive archaeology. Ak-Chin community members' sentiments mirror those of other indigenous communities throughout the United States and the world.

Recent scholarship has focused attention on the relationship between Native Americans and archaeologists. What emerges from this discussion are the different ways of viewing history, identity and, particularly, the treatment of the dead. These different perspectives came to the fore during the time of Native activism in the 1960s when Native Americans began to assert national sovereignty. In this struggle, Native peoples sought the rights of their national, sovereign status - cultural autonomy and rights to land and self-government - as defined through treaty relations they had with the United States government until 1871 when treaty making officially ended. Native peoples' quest for recognition of tribal sovereignty closely accorded with their pursuit and affirmation of Native ideologies.

Native Americans engaged in dialogue with archaeologists maintained that their perspectives, beliefs, tribal traditions and political structures had been denied by the dominant society. They asserted that primacy was placed on non-Native, secular ways of knowing. In 1969, Vine Deloria Jr., a member of the Standing Rock Sioux nation and a then student of law at the University of Colorado, published *Custer Died for Your Sins*:

An Indian Manifesto. One of the chapters, “Anthropologists and Other Friends” charged the discipline with willfully neglecting Native peoples’, the subjects of their studies, doctrines and engaging in “self-confirming, self-referential, and self-reproducing” systems of knowledge (Bilosi and Zimmerman 1997: 3). Nearly thirty years after the book’s original publication, Deloria wrote, “The conflict between Indians and anthropologists in the last two decades has been, at its core, a dead struggle over the control of definitions. Who is to define what an Indian *really* is?” (1997: 215).¹

In the development of the United States’ legal framework, Indians have not received the same protections or rights as non-Natives. This is made evident with regard to the disposition of Native American human remains and archaeological material. The hegemony of the dominant society denies Native peoples their “cultural and semiotic sovereignty” (Crawford 2000: 229). Privileging non-Native understandings of history and identity (including attitudes about life and death) has enabled racist theories to prevail in scientific practices, notably archaeology, and political policies. These practices

¹ Ironically, Deloria's aunt, Ella Deloria, was an anthropologist who worked closely with Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, two of the most prominent anthropologists of their day. Ella Deloria focused her scholarly attention on her own people, the Dakota, and conducted research on the Standing Rock, Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations. With Boas she co-authored *Dakota Grammar* in 1941. Beatrice Medicine writes of Deloria's work in the discipline,

In many ways, Ella Deloria stood within and outside her own culture. Insiders are those persons who are socialized from an early age as participants in a particular culture, as Deloria was. Many native ethnographers of her era and earlier, such as Francis and Bright Eyes La Flesche of the Omaha, were primarily viewed as informants or assistants to ethnographers from outside the culture...Deloria did not experience alienation from her Dakota identity as do some native people who become professional ethnographers through university training (1989: 47).

In fact, Deloria was one of several Native anthropologists who tried to straddle the divide between Native ways of knowing and anthropological understandings of culture.

and policies served to oppress Indian people. What follows is a brief digression in an effort to contextualize the experience of the Ak-Chin Indian Community concerning their relationship with archaeology.

The dispute between archaeologists, who seek physical, historical evidence, and Native Americans, whose history is often transmitted orally and generally cannot be scientifically “proven” utilizing scientific methods of documentary evidence, is largely one of perspective (see Clifford 1988; Hurst Thomas 2000; Mihesuah 2000; Zimmerman 1994). Native people often resent the ways their identities have been used to meet the needs and goals of non-Natives, most particularly those bureaucrats who enforce policies that alienate Native people from their tribal histories by enacting often violent assimilationist policies. Historically, American Indian policy makers and enforcers have been buoyed by “scientific” theories that asserted Native inferiority. Recently, Native Americans and archaeologists have made concerted efforts to breach these differences of perspective. Deloria’s reveille impacted anthropologists and archaeologists who are increasingly utilizing their degreed statuses to petition on behalf of Native people. In turn, Native people “have come to rely on anthropologists once they are satisfied that the individual is competent and understands the nature of what they are trying to do” (Deloria 1997: 210).²

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The United States was founded in the wake of the Enlightenment. In 18th century

² This “they” turns out often to be illusory on both sides, which is a source of some of the crucial complexities this dissertation addresses.

Europe, reason and science, which emphasized empirical and positivist approaches took precedence over religion as a way to understand the natural world. Lewis Henry Morgan, a New York based lawyer turned ethnographer, initiated a study of the Iroquois in the mid-1800s. Morgan advanced a theory of cultural evolution in which stages of evolutionary progress were delineated and cultures of peoples were classified into three categories: Savagery, Barbarism and Civilization. Practitioners of craniometry, such as Samuel G. Morton, asserted that intelligence could be assessed through measuring crania, deemed physical manifestations of race. Intelligence, Morton believed, was determined by one's race. Widely influential in the mid-nineteenth century and aided by Indian agents and members of the medical profession, he was allowed to collect Indian crania for measurement. He believed his findings substantiated his theory that Indians were intellectually inferior and biologically deficient in relation to Euroamericans and were, therefore, doomed to extinction. Morton's conclusions were widely embraced, most notably by politicians and policy-makers of the day, who used them in part to justify Manifest Destiny and the removal of Indians onto reservations.

A proponent of evolutionist thinking, John Wesley Powell, an anthropologist and head of the Bureau of American Ethnology convinced the United States Congress that "anthropology would be useful in getting Indians peacefully allocated to reservations" (Kreps 2003: 87). Developed from colonial times onward, narratives were constructed to justify encroachment on Native land and were based on the notion that Native Americans would disappear. Most led settlers to believe that they were divinely mandated to appropriate the land and tame its former inhabitants. Settlers wanting to possess land,

much of it inhabited by Native people, coerced Indians to cede not just their land and with it their rights, but also their beliefs (see Moore 1989).

From the 1870s through the early part of the twentieth century, the government shifted its focus from segregating Indians onto reservations to assimilating them into mainstream American society. As part of these efforts boarding schools were established. Indian children who were sent to boarding schools suffered corporal punishment for speaking their languages and often did not return home for years at a stretch. The founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Richard Henry Pratt was a former captain in the civil war. He notoriously remarked "Kill the Indian...and save the man." Indian children who attended his school had before-and-after photographs taken which made visible the impact of his assimilationist endeavors: "long hair was shorn and tribal dress discarded, the after-image revealing students with neat haircuts and dressed in military school uniforms" (Iverson 1998: 21).

Assimilationist policies were also enacted on adult members of Native communities. In 1883, in the *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, the Secretary, Henry M. Teller, directed the commissioner of Indian Affairs to compel "Indians...to desist from the savage and barbarous practices that are calculated to continue them in savagery." Through his injunction, the commissioner of was prompted to take "Active measures...to discourage all feasts and dances" and to forbid the practices of "medicine men" (quoted in Prucha 1990: 160 - 161). The Religious Crimes Code of 1900 outlawed participation "in ceremonials deemed 'offensive' to Christian standards" (Dilworth 1996: 62). With the publication of *Regulations of the Indian Office* in 1904, the

Secretary of the Interior placed a ban on all Native American "traditional" activities including "religious" ceremonies and dancing (Kreps 2003: 85).³

Native Americans were punished for pursuing their indigenous religious practices; those who continued ritual practices saw the expropriation of their ceremonial regalia by Indian agents, missionaries and police. Anthropologists were inspired to collect the ceremonial regalia and accoutrements Natives relinquished as a consequence of the disintegrative impact of these bans. Thus, "salvage ethnography" became the dominant anthropological paradigm in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among anthropologists studying Native American cultures. Salvage ethnography had "political implications" as these regalia were often then transferred to collectors who assigned economic and social values to them; anthropologists aided collectors by assigning specific "scientific" signification to Native objects (Kreps 2003: 87). Salvaged objects formed the basis of early museum collections where they could be "preserved" from their inevitable disuse and be further studied by future generations (Kreps 2003: 79). As well, Native graves such as burial mounds, were exhumed or pillaged in the name of scientific research or converted into tourist attractions. Fine-Dare observes that even

The German-born anthropologist Franz Boas, known widely as the 'father of American anthropology' and an adamant opponent of the misuses of science to prove the alleged inferiority of non-European peoples, himself ordered the excavation of grave sites in order to get the proof he needed for his crusade against scientific racism and took part in the sale of Native American remains (2002: 41).

³ Though prohibitions were enacted they were only loosely enforced and dances and other "ceremonials" that were open to the public continued to attract ethnographers, artists, tourists and members of high society. Theodore Roosevelt attended a "banned" Hopi Snake dance in 1913 (Dilworth 1996: 63). Franz Boas both attended and hosted Potlatch feasts subsequent to the passage of Canada's 1885 Indian Act outlawing them.

The imperialistic framework in which scientific endeavors were supported meant that even the most socially conscious heeded it.

There was a frenzied effort to accumulate collections of Native American human remains and cultural objects for museums throughout the United States, Canada and Europe as there was a widespread belief that Indians would disappear in the face of progress. American archaeology and anthropology emerged as esteemed scientific pursuits at the same moment as museum-building in the mid to late nineteenth century. Museums played instrumental roles in collecting, preserving and doing what they called "studying" Native American material culture. The idea that a culture can be preserved when removed from interaction is at best peculiar, at worst self-aggrandizing. Yet, these activities clearly accorded with the interest in and fundamental assumptions about evolutionary theory, which placed European culture at the apex and Native cultures in the position of imminent destruction. The collection of crania was undertaken by the Army Medical Museum, founded in 1862, and the Surgeon General, who in 1868 ordered army personnel to collect Indian body parts to be studied.

The European and American colonial systems and spheres of economic, political, scientific and social influence promoted world travel and the collection of "things American" (Maurer 2000: 18, 21). Collections of Native objects and human remains were garnered by explorers (including Lewis and Clark), professional and amateur scientists, missionaries, Indian agents and other governmental personnel and other collectors of "curiosities." The Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), created in 1879 by the Smithsonian Institution, was tasked with gathering systematic, thorough data about Native Americans. Particular attention was paid to Native languages and political

organization. Research data for the BAE included the collection of material culture from communities, often without their knowledge or consent. In the southwest, these ventures resulted in the Bureau of American Ethnology having "...removed thousands of objects of material culture from the pueblos, especially Zuni and Hopi villages – an average of more than five artifacts per person at Zuni between 1879 and 1884" (Hinsley quoted in Fine-Dare 2002: 33).

In the late 19th century, evolutionary thinking influenced social and physical scientists as well as those involved with museum building by exploring the notions art and culture. These terms, still in use today, are generally used oppositionally. Until the 19th century, the definition of art was closely linked with the notion of industry; an artist being a skilled individual (Williams 1983: 41). Culture had a scientific definition meaning "tending of natural growth" (Williams 1983: 87). Art began to be used more abstractly to mean an individual's expressive competency as the change in meaning signaled a transformation in the ways in which the imagination was considered separate from industry. Culture, also abstracted, was used to describe "a general process...of development," a particular life style or manifestation of "intellectual and especially artistic activity" (Williams 1983: 90). Among the many perspectives in the concept of culture, this is the most relevant because at its root is the potential separation of objects from their making and using contexts. Culture became focal in the study of anthropology as it represented "both 'way of life' and 'source of identity' ...[and] was understood as referring to local forms of expressions" (Strathern 1995: 157).

In 1906, "the first preservation law" was enacted (Goldstein 1994: 53). The Antiquities Act established the protection of human remains on public land. Anyone

wishing to conduct an excavation would require a license and it would be considered a crime to harm or steal federally owned antiquities. Anything found on federal land, including American Indian reservations, which are held in trust by the Federal government, was subject to this law. However, this act incorporated American Indian remains into the definition of "archaeological resources" and therefore enabled archaeologists to excavate the unmarked graves of Native peoples for study and preservation. It further bolstered the notion that objects of Native American antiquity were vested interests of science, and by extension the federal government that issued the permits to excavate, and not of Native American people themselves. The Antiquities Act of 1906 was the first of many acts to validate archaeology as a "scientific" means of understanding the past. That archaeology was an objective approach to unearthed physical data, including human remains, was assumed and relied on current classification theories.

The study of art and the study of culture became distinct intellectual exercises in the mid-nineteenth century. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anthropology's center of gravity was museums. The "great era of collecting" emerged with the founding of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846, Harvard's Peabody Museum in 1856 and the American Museum of Natural History in 1869 (Berlo 1992: 2- 3). Wade notes that

By the 1890s...museums were becoming major consumers of both antiquities and ethnographic objects. By the turn of the century archaeological expeditions organized around excavations would become common, but prior to that most museum-sponsored collecting expeditions were directed to purchase representative tribal study collections (1985: 170).

The trophies of anthropologists' visits with Native peoples often became foundational collections of esteemed natural history museums. Believing the imminent

disappearance of Indian, in the interest of science the museums became places where their cultures could be stored and "preserved" for future generations. Ironically, those who were involved with the museums' collection policies pursued objects they deemed "authentic" representation of an unacculturated past.⁴ The era of collection, 1860-1930, coincided with an intensely turbulent time in many Native American communities throughout the United States and Canada yet the overriding ideological approach to collecting at that time meant that those in the field disregarded contemporary concerns, interests and artistic trends of the Indians whose work they were salvaging (Berlo 1992: 5; Jonaitis 1992: 27).

Where art (defined as Western paintings and sculptures, predominantly) was collected for and viewed in the hallowed halls of art academies and museums, ethnographic objects were collected and displayed ahistorically in Natural History museums. A common exhibition technique included life-size mannequins of Native Americans and other non-Western peoples, which were featured in dioramas showing scenes of Native peoples in their natural habitats, utilizing the objects collected by ethnographers. They were presented as cultures fixed in time. These arrangements conveyed "not the story of the peoples represented, not of nature, but of knowledge, power, and colonization...The story the exhibits tell is that of their own construction" (Bal 1992: 590-591). The hegemonic interests of the cultural institutions were upheld in these ahistorical displays as they revealed nothing of the social, economic and political changes that brought these groups together. Human motivations, conflicts and interests

⁴ These museum collections are now viewed as "the standards by which traditionalism in Indian art is judged" (Berlo 1992: 4).

were wholly absent from these displays. Museum displays dismissed American Indians as people with present day concerns and disregarded the significance they placed on sacred materials such as medicine bundles, pipes or human remains, which were frequently placed on public display.

The collection and display of "ethnographic" objects produced a distance "both in spatial and temporal terms through the act of physically removing objects from their cultures of origin and their consignment to a 'traditional' past, and a conceptual distancing through the imposition of western systems of cultural interpretation and representation" (Kreps 2003: 150). Museum displays of these collections revealed the pervasiveness of white supremacy more than they revealed anything about the objects themselves (Blakey 1991: 20). Museums have long been acknowledged and studied as sites where national heritage is produced. The profusion of museums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries coincided with scientific and capitalistic developments in the west. The collection and display of objects proved the power of the elites who oversaw and set the criteria for them⁵. Specimens of the natural world or hand made objects formed the basis of most museum collections. Disciplines were created to facilitate the collection, preservation and exhibition of these things. Collections and displays were powerful

⁵ Brockway writes of a similar set of principles at work in the naturalist movement in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like museums of this era, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew operated to "convert knowledge into power..." (1977: 277). The influence and prestige accorded to botanists, and specifically to the director at Kew, enabled them to contribute to the empire-building of Britain. For example, by selecting plants from one continent and transferring them to another, Kew Garden thereby extended the plantation system. Of this Brockway writes "This extraction of energy from the colonial areas of the world and its transfer to the metropolitan... had been one of the sources of the capital accumulation necessary to underwrite the budgets of such great scientific institutions as the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew" (1977).

symbols of prestige that were admired by a populace who acceded to the standards which informed them. Foster describes the function of displaying collected objects by elites as placing the "embodiments of the nation" on view (1991: 249).

Native-produced objects were recognized for their assigned values as objective representations of the cultural groups from which they derived. Part of their appeal was their putative implication of an earlier stage of evolution, a source of intense fascination. Objects were also sought as representations of "otherness." Unlike the artists who produced the work on view in art museums, Native arts were not presented as expressions of living people, but as representations of people uncorrupted by modernization (Jonaitis 1992: 27). In their foundational days, museum displays did not make space for articulations of Native self-identity by denying Native voice and by enabling non-Natives to "classif[y], name, and designate...Native cultural identity" (Coombe 1998: 233). Ranking objects into qualitative categories such as "art" and "ethnographic" obfuscated "the unequal power relations that structure the evaluation process" (Dubin 2001: 6).

Franz Boas took exception to this manner of museum display and when he was appointed to the role of Assistant Curator of Ethnology and Somatology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in 1896, he set about to alter the tribal and typological arrangements typical of the time. In contrast to placing like-seeming objects together, Boas propounded "a transfer of anthropological interest from the external form to an artifact's *meaning*, which was not easily accessible to psychological interpretation in utilitarian terms, because the same object might carry a number of different meanings" (Jacknis 1988: 79). Thus, he advocated that museum exhibits delineate cultural specificities by displaying cases "organized by a 'tribal arrangement of collections'" so

that objects would only be positioned next to other objects from the same ethnic group (Jacknis 1988: 79). Boas made further attempts to contextualize his method of museum display and his position "that our people are not the only carriers of civilization, but that the human mind has been creative everywhere" by providing visitors with extensive written ephemera such as expanded label text and monographs (Jacknis 1988: 107).

Ironically, however, though Boas sought to utilize the museum galleries as spaces in which to assert his antievolutionist principles, in his collecting endeavors he sought to locate "older" objects that did not reveal the contemporaneity of the peoples from whom he purchased and/or commissioned work. In his pursuit to "rescue" Native produced work from what he believed was their inevitable demise, he also pursued data about past practices that could elucidate "the desired and authentic ethnographic information" (Jonaitis 1992: 39).

In the early twentieth century, post-bellum Americans grappled with defining a coherent national identity. With growing urban sprawl and industrialization came nostalgic reflections on an idealized past. Native Americans played a critical role in this reimagining. Hobbyist groups such as the Boy Scouts, the Sons of Daniel Boone and Woodcraft Indians emerged at this time. Contact with the natural world was an essential characteristic of "modern American man." Philip Deloria writes, "Nature study...emphasiz[ed] holistic experience over the fragmentation of the city and insisting that the feel nature one had to journey back in time to a simpler life, grasp the experience and then return richer..." (1998: 102). Though there is no room here to engage in discussions of the contradictions and ambivalence inherent in these practices, Rogin, among others, notes how imagining Indians as living "in an undifferentiated relation to

nature" served to justify and fuel the manifold "civilization" projects endorsed and undertaken by the United States Government (1975: 117). Both Roy Harvey Pearce (1988 [1953]) and later Robert F. Berkhoer, Jr. (1978) wrote about how the creation of the category "Indian," notably lacking in cultural diversity, played a crucial role in defining that which was the antithesis of progressive Euro-American society. Pearce writes of this symbolic conception:

The Indian who was important to Americans setting out to make their new society was not the person but the type, not the tribesman but the savage, not the individual but the symbol. The American conscience was troubled about the death of the individual. But it could make sense of his death only when it understood it as the death of the symbol (1988 [1953]: 73).

Ever malleable, the same fantasy about Native Americans was again nurtured by the "primitivists" of the mid-nineteenth, early twentieth century to promote "civilized men to have that integrity...found in savages" and pursuits such as tanning one's skin for the urbanized was encouraged as it signified contact with the outdoors (Pearce 1988 [1953]: 149).

Where the past helped to reconcile the present and future among hobbyists, art collectors and dealers capitalized on the anti-industrial movement by encouraging the procurement of Native ("more simple") work (Dubin 2001: 18). Purchasing Native works were promoted as symbolically connecting the buyer to the natural world. The Arts and Crafts movement at the end of the nineteenth century created a demand for Native-produced objects. Dealers attuned to purchasing trends arbitrated the type of work produced. They specified to artists, predominantly Navajo weavers, colors, designs and materials, which would be most salable to their clientele (Howard and Pardue 1996: chapter 4).

In 1876, the Fred Harvey Company and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad joined forces to capitalize on the emerging urban middle classes and their whim to travel and seek “authentic” experiences. Harvey, a restaurateur in Topeka, Kansas provided food service for train passengers. Westward expansion’s impact on Native Americans impeded their ability to be self-sufficient. Needing to participate more fully in the cash economy to satisfy their basic needs, many Indians congregated near railway stops to sell their artwork. Harvey established the Indian Building at the Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Modeled after world’s fairs of the recent past (Chicago in 1893 and St Louis in 1904), visitors had the opportunity to meet artist-demonstrators. Specific artists were identified by name and image in the company’s advertising, manufacturing their iconic status. The interest in collecting Native produced work had the effect of “aestheticizing” Native American art; Native artists whose work was sought by Anglo collectors began to sign their work in the fashion of non-Native artists (Berlo 1992: 13)

Ironically, it was during this period that the Wild West Shows emerged. Like the ahistorical museum depictions of Native Americans, the Wild West Shows, the most famous of which was Buffalo Bill’s, established in 1883, portrayed Native Americans as uncultivated or uncivilized. Their “naturalness” is defeated by white settlers mastery – understood by viewers as both physical and intellectual. Though assimilation policies such as boarding schools remained largely hidden from public view, pitched battles between American Indians and the American Army captured the imagination of most citizens. It seemed apparent that Native Americans were soon to disappear from the public landscape either through their invisible absorption into the dominant society or

through a deserved barbarous death. Through the entertainment of Wild West Shows Americans could view staged reenactments of Anglo-Native American battles. Some of those considered most "hostile" to the United States Government, including the Lakota leader Sitting Bull, participated in Wild West Shows. In Sitting Bull's case, the Secretary of the Interior believed that his participation in the Wild West Show would serve to remove the resistant force from the Standing Rock reservation on which he lived and fought federal policies detrimental to Indian welfare (Brown 1970: 427).

In 1910, the Brooklyn Museum challenged the presentation of Native American produced objects as part and parcel of culture and was the first American museum to display them as "art." When displaying non-Western objects as art rather than anthropological artifacts, museums tended to display "the unique object, valuing originality and invention - the qualities that separate art from craftsmanship in Western definitions" (Vogel 1988: 13). Curator Stuart Culin's exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum contextualized the work on view by presenting densely descriptive label copy, photographs and murals all designed to provide the visitor with a deeper understanding of the "natural and social environment in which the people lived" (Maurer 2000: 23). Though the exhibit intended to "present American Indians in a full sense by looking at as many aspects of their traditional lives as possible" it sustained the familiar museum practice of depicting Native Americans without a present (Maurer 2000: 24).

In the early twentieth century the work of Native American artists was incorporated into art history encyclopedias (Berlo 1992: 14). Modern artists studied and collected Native produced work. Taos, New Mexico developed into a colony of artists interested in Native American art and culture. Though these artists valued Native

American artwork for its aesthetic interest, their interactions with Native people revealed a different set of values. The artists who flocked to Taos hired Native Americans "to sit as models for paintings and to perform domestic labor - two jobs which often went hand in hand" (Rodriquez 1989: 80). Taos artists perpetuated the myth of the romantic Indian by having their models don "prototypical costume" producing them "in romantic compositions" (Rodriquez 1989: 83).

Back in New York, Indian art was put on view in a groundbreaking exhibit entitled *Indian Art of the United States* at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in 1941. The exhibition featured recently created work as well as archaeological pieces lent from other institutions. Though "primitive art" had been displayed previously at MoMA and other art museums, this exhibition was significant in its mission to show Native art as "art" and to reveal "the potential contribution of Native arts and crafts to modern decorative arts" (Rushing 1992:195). MoMA's General Manager, Rene d'Harnoncourt, had familiar knowledge and concern for contemporary Native Americans and hoped, in part, that the show would stimulate interest in and consumption of Native art. D'Harnoncourt's exhibit did in fact impact the avant-garde art world. However, *Indian Art in the United States* maintained the power relations, which excluded Indians from defining their own role(s) as artists and adhered to the notion of Native art as a manifestation of primitivism in part because the artists of the works on view were not identified by name and remained largely anonymous.

Both exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum and at MoMA served, once again, to underscore that "Museums are the creatures of the communities that created them, and, in their own turn, they serve to create that community" (Nason 2000: 40). The values and

articulations put forth in museum displays reinforced the "Western scientific categories of knowledge" in which the curators were trained and ignored the ways in which Native Americans regard objects (Nason 2000: 40). Clifford calls the limited ways in which non-Western objects have generally been classified and displayed the "anthropological-aesthetic object system" and following Susan Stewart cites that in this formulation "a scheme of classification is elaborated for storing and displaying the object so that the reality of the collection itself...overrides specific histories of the objects production and appropriation" (Clifford 1988: 231, 220). Twenty years later, Native people asserted their voices in an attempt to reverse this trend.

For indigenous peoples the collection and display of objects, most particularly those items used in ceremonial practices, became the focus of discontent. The methods by which objects were collected, studied and exhibited were questioned for the ways in which they reinforced the influence and power of those who oversaw them. In the 1970s, mainstream museums were targeted for their inaccurate portrayal of Indian history, culture and artistic traditions. Native people were rarely consulted for their perspectives on the collection, preservation or display of these materials.

Though these dichotomous terms, art and culture, have been deconstructed in academic communities these representations continue to circulate among the visiting publics to art and natural history museums. In 2002, America Meredith, co-curator of *Ayvdaqualosgi Unali'I Friends of Thunder: A Celebration of Cherokee Culture*, wrote in the catalogue's introduction,

Mainstream Western art cannot seem to shake the baggage from the academies of Europe and draws a strict division between so-called "fine arts" – the easel arts and sculpture – and "craft" – anything with a function beyond the purely

decorative. Great efforts have been made to overcome this prejudice in the last century and longer, with limited success (2002).

As part of the American Indian activism that was sparked in the 1950s, in the late 1960s and 1970s, Native Americans disrupted archaeological excavations taking place on reservations without the prior approval of those communities located on the reservations (Watkins 2000: 45; Zimmerman 1997: 92). Members of the American Indian Movement, American Indians Against Desecration and members of the Red Power Movement employed at times disruptive tactics to prevent further grave disturbances and ensure the return of human remains to their nations for “appropriate disposition” (Hammil and Cruz 1989: 195; Riding In 2000: 110). Riding In describes one such disturbance that took place in 1972 in Minnesota in which archaeologists’ notebooks and tools were confiscated and their film was exposed (2000: 110). The Red Power movement targeted mainstream museums for their inaccurate portrayal of Indian people and their diverse histories. Indian agitators began to call for the repatriation of their cultural property, including human remains.

In the 1960s and 1970s, American Indians were entering a period of political self-determination. Though several Indian communities had relationships with archaeologists, such as Zuni Pueblo, which founded the Zuni Archaeology Program in 1978 (Goldstein 1994: 52; Watkins 2000: 10), many queried the role and importance of archaeology in their lives. For those activists, the relationship of archaeologists to Native Americans reinforced the many dichotomous and often antagonistic viewpoints between Indians and Euro-Americans and disregarded their belief in the sanctity of the graves of their ancestors (Crawford 2000: 229). Where museum proponents and scientists asserted the significance of their collections as serving educational purposes and thus worthy of

preservation, Indians maintained that their perspectives about the past were not legitimized and the discipline of archaeology did not assist Native communities in ways Native people considered important (Mihesuah 2000). Deloria, chief among the critics, fulminated: "I don't believe...that an observational science can be a valid science if the person observing is not intimately tied in with the community that he's observing and shares some of the burdens and responsibilities from what is happening in that community" (1973: 101).

Also of issue for Native Americans was the premise of collecting as a scientific endeavor, namely that which was ostensibly for the purpose of public edification. Peter Jemison (Seneca) illuminated this inconsistency with Native ideology by claiming:

The concept in the white world is that "everyone's culture is everyone else's." That's not really our concept. Our concept is there were certain things given to us that we have to take care of and that you are either part of it or you are not a part of it. If you are not a part of it, then you don't have to worry about it. But if you are a part of it, then you have got to be actively taking care of it...(quoted in Parker 1990: 37).

The museum, archaeological and anthropological communities responded to Indians' concerns by hosting conferences and initiating dialogues with Indians. Conferences addressed such concerns as unknown or illegal provenance and acquisitions, the significance of material culture in contemporary Native peoples' lives and repatriation. In 1970 several Native American anthropologists participated in a symposium on "Anthropology and the American Indian" at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association. Dr. Alfonso Ortiz, a member of the San Juan Pueblo, responded directly to Deloria's excoriation of the discipline of anthropology in *Custer Died for Your Sins*. He stated, "In condemning anthropologists as a professional

category...there is the danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, for most Indian tribes know of anthropologists who have and would happily interrupt their own activities to help out a tribe, and on the tribe's terms" (Ortiz 1973: 88). He asserted that Deloria magnified the impact of anthropologists who hold little power in comparison with "the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the proselytizing churches, and new bureaucracies such as the Office of Economic Opportunity" (Ortiz 1973: 89). His comments were upheld by Agnes Savilla, a Mohave Indian from the Colorado River reservation, who claimed to have worked with several anthropologists as an informant. Her fondness for those with whom she worked was evidenced in her final remark, "all those anthropologists I have worked with have treated us like human beings and I can't say that of everybody that comes onto the reservation" (1973: 104-105).⁶

In 1974, the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) hosted seminars that focused on the future course of the discipline. One of the seminars, "Archaeology and Native Americans," was ostensibly organized to promote dialogue between archaeologists and American Indians to better mutually understand their respective

⁶ In fact, several Native people worked closely with anthropologists in varying capacities. Most notably Eli S. Parker, Seneca, who served as an assistant to Lewis Henry Morgan in the production of *The League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee or Iroquois* (1881). Morgan made a "special tribute" to Parker in the monograph's preface (Hallowell 1960: 49-50). Charles Edenshaw, Haida, provided Franz Boas with much information about Haida art and cultural history. Boas further utilized Edenshaw's expertise as an artist and commissioned numerous works from him for the American Museum of Natural History's collections (Jonaitis 1992). George Hunt was hired by Boas to collect objects and gather texts. Hunt, descended from a Tlingit mother and English father, was raised in Fort Rupert, a Kwakiutl town where he learned their language and culture. For his services Hunt was paid "a salary and expenses which covered travel and usually board, as well as all shipping costs and payment for the artifacts" (Jacknis 1991: 188). The training he received under Boas served him to be sought "as a 'consultant' to review and correct museum exhibits" throughout North America (Jacknis 1991: 222). Boas further trained other Native anthropologists, including Ella Deloria, noted earlier.

perspectives. A decade later, SAA published transcripts from a meeting which included archaeologists, anthropologists, Native American community leaders, museum personnel and lawyers (Watkins 2000: 14). The document enumerated agreed-upon strategies for challenging the way archaeology had been practiced and institutionalized in the United States. These included the protection of archaeological material from destruction, regard for Native American remains and “the need for cooperation between anthropologists and American Indian.” By the mid-1970s, it had become impossible for practicing archaeologists and anthropologists working in the United States to ignore Native American views on their chosen discipline.

In the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, provisions were made for the issuance of digging permits for excavations on public or reservation lands only. This act marks the first instance congress acknowledged “the rights of Indian tribes to regulate the excavation or removal of archaeological resources on Indian land...” (Watkins 2000: 41). No longer would archaeologists be able to ignore tribal concerns regarding excavations on their lands. They were, for the first time, legislated to initiate direct contact with the affected communities and adhere to the terms and conditions of the excavation permit.⁷

Passage of this act closely corresponded with the movement among Native peoples in the United States to reconstruct and repatriate their pasts. In accordance with

⁷ Concern for the physical destruction caused by invasive excavations has also paved the way for the development of non-invasive navigational tools for surveying archaeological sites. These techniques, based on remote sensing, are able to measure objects without direct contact with them. They are increasingly used by archaeologists as the technologies are perceived to provide visual accuracy, and save time and costs associated with invasive excavation (www.archaeologymapping.com).

efforts at decolonization and attempts towards self-definition and self-empowerment, Native peoples asserted themselves as partially separated from the dominant cultures in which they were integrated through processes that were both coercive and selective. A rhetoric of cultural and historical “preservation” was utilized by indigenous peoples to push for “self-centered autonomy” (Friedman 1992: 845).

The art world too, enlarged its ideological vista and discussed the ways in which “primitive” artists influenced modernists. The argument, in essence, asserted that non-Western artists were not simply working within their cultural norms but that their work indicated genuine artistry that benefited study and imitation. Vogel explicates the difference in presentation and approach between art museum and natural history presentations of non-Western art: Whereas anthropologists "use their collections as sources of information about culture...[a]rt museums have tended to view their collections from the opposite perspective using information about the cultural setting to understand the work of art" (Vogel 1989: 13). Non-Western work presented in an art context was often referred to as “primitive” and was believed to "contain culture." Clifford writes rather cynically of the trend in the art world to embrace non-Western objects as art: "the scope and underlying logic of the 'discovery' of tribal art reproduces hegemonic Western assumptions rooted in the colonial and neocolonial epoch" (1988: 197).

Natural history and ethnographic museums, which featured objects as works of culture rather than art, began to host discussions about the “retention of culture” and identified living artists still practicing "traditional" arts. These artists were presented as though they were members of an unruptured collectivity; their art was represented as

unchanging through time, indicating “authenticity.” Still, both these perspectives ignored the cultural contexts in which the objects would be produced, their ethnographic meaning and narratives from the living Native artists themselves. The art community defined creative artists as those who portray universal themes in their work and contrasted them with those who lived embedded within a unified culture, considered craftspeople or artisans.⁸ Native positions on this framework were completely absent from this dichotomy. According to Rosemary Coombe, “The European art/culture system and the legal categories that support and sustain it constitute a limited vision of human expressive possibility and a limited understanding of our various modes of cultural attachment to the phenomena that give meaning to our lives.” (Coombe 1998: 222 & 226). Indeed, Vogel describes how Africans perceived art:

In Africa the experience of any given work of art varied from person to person, and was closely tied to the circumstances in which it appeared. When an African artist created a sculpture, he almost always made it for a particular purpose, a specific audience, and often for a single location (1989: 14)

In the struggle against granting primacy to science and Euro-American categorization that flourished in the 1960s, Native people foregrounded their inability to define their own identity, ways of knowing, and the history of political powerlessness they bore. They decried the desecration of Native American graves as a violation of religious freedom. Native struggles continued to reference “the experience of having Native cultural identity extinguished, denied, suppressed and/or classified, named and designated by others” (Coombe 1998: 233). Some who wrote about the conflict viewed the opposition as “between scientific and nonscientific values” (Watkins 2000: 44). In

⁸ Clifford asserts that “an ignorance of cultural context seems almost a precondition for artistic appreciation” (1988: 200).

relation to archaeology, Goldstein describes the questions elicited by these differing perspectives as ones that specifically deal with rights: who has the right to determine if a site can be excavated? If rights are granted, who is allowed to conduct the survey? What happens to the materials that have been excavated and studied? Who controls access to them? Who determines whether they are preserved or reinterred? Particularly for questions that delve into a spiritual realm, both methodologies and results revolve around who controls history and its rendering (Goldstein 1994: 50 –51).

One of the most far-reaching questions posed by Native Americans in the 1970s was why conduct excavations at all? The history gleaned from archaeological digs gave primacy to scientific interests denying Native religious tenets and practices and not assisting living Indians in any overt, tangible way. Native American protests against archaeological excavations were thus both about the care and/or dispossession of the objects and human remains recovered, and about the ways in which Native understanding of history had been disregarded by archaeologists despite the many excavations that took place on Indian reservations. One student of this dispute wrote, “The fact that scientific narratives gain precedence over Native narratives about their own history is indicative of the power differential inherent in colonial relationships” (Crawford 2000: 229).

Tribes agitated for the repatriation of their objects for cultural reasons (the objects were not being properly tended) as well as as an acknowledgment that they were often illegally appropriated. Native people asserted that the removal of materials essential to the ceremonial, traditional and quotidian practices deprived communities of the cultural effects necessary to retain cultural mores. As a result, they contended, communities were in disarray - young people were succumbing to alcoholism at an extraordinarily high rate,

lives were cut short by rampant addiction, poor health and suicide. Many believed that the repatriation of cultural materials to Native communities would enable cultural maintenance and a return to indigenous modes of social reproduction where the socio-political and economic facets of life are rooted to the spiritual and ceremonial.

Archaeological study was viewed by Native activists as divorced from the oral traditions and histories of Native Americans, the continuing problems with alcoholism, suicide, diabetes, and other contemporary concerns. The disassociation between the past and present propounded by archaeologists had to be redressed.

In the late 1980s, two members of American Indians Against Desecration met with elders of the Tohono O'odham nation. The elders were asked if they wished to convey a message to the World Archaeological Congress about their sentiments on the impact of archaeology in their community. The elders asked that the following be communicated:

...Tell them that we do not treat our bones with such disrespect. Those bones are our ancestors and they are sacred. By disturbing the ancestors' graves and spirits, they have caused many problems and hard times for our people and this makes us very sad. You tell them that the bones of our ancestors must be returned. They are sacred and we do not treat our ancestors with such disrespect. (Hammil and Cruz 1989: 200).

The focus on repatriation galvanized Indian activists, young and old alike.

Central concerns of Indians involved at this stage of the discussions and protests were about the questionable provenances of Indian material housed in museums, the improper care of these objects, the content and design of exhibits which largely ignored Native perspectives about the material presented, the limited types of presentations about Native people and the dearth of Indian personnel in museums. Finally, Indians exerted very

substantial efforts to have objects returned to their communities where they could be appropriately tended.

The stance of Native Americans engaged in these protests focused on their estrangement from their own cultural property and cultural knowledge that inhered in the objects and the continuing colonialist policies enacted against them. In the movement of the 1960s, they attempted to rid themselves of the colonialist hold over the production of knowledge. Dell Hymes employs a Marxian framework for exploring and defining this rupture and Native peoples' attempts at reconnection. Hymes extended Marx's concept of alienation in which the "product of labor" is alienated from the producer to describe the relationship between American Indians and anthropologists, archaeologists and museum curators. The ways in which Native peoples became distanced from their "products" (objects) reflected their social, political and economic powerlessness and the ways in which their placement in the museum context culturally decontextualizes and estranges them (Hymes 1991).

On the other hand, some Native Americans have expressed appreciation for the concern and maintenance by museums for American Indian artifacts during particularly difficult times and acknowledged that without their preservation in museums they may have been lost (Zimmerman 1994). In the continuing dialog, some archaeologists, museums, collectors and Native Americans arrived at mutual agreements regarding the repatriation of objects to Indian communities (such as with the Ak-Chin Indian Community in the 1980s). Generally, however, discourse between archaeologists and Native peoples was not actively pursued.

As noted earlier, the struggle for the return of material objects closely meshes with the struggle over sovereign status for Native nations and all that implies. Sovereignty, ultimately, means the ability of Indian people to exert control over their lives. Indian activism of the 1960s and 1970s centered on Indians' desire to challenge the erosion of their sovereignty and to assert their sovereign status established in treaties granted and then undermined by the United States government. In 1970, President Nixon addressed Congress with a message about American Indian self-determination, implicitly acknowledging Indian sovereignty. His public address altered the official federal policy towards American Indians from an over-arching paternalism to one that emphasized tribal self-sufficiency. He urged congress to enact laws that would enable tribal governments to select and manage federally funded programs themselves, without the oversight of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Nixon hoped that federally recognized tribes would move away from being economically dependent on the federal government and become more independent and self-supporting. This was a pivotal change in government policy toward Native Americans. Self-determination legislation pumped money into Native communities wishing to encourage tourism, improve health services, and stimulate reservation economies. These programs identified museums on reservations as potential loci of tourism.

Among the myriad acts that were passed in the 1970s and early 1980s in the interest of Native American self-determination was the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978. The act asserted the protection and preservation of American Indian religions and affirmed Native peoples' rights and cultural practices. The ostensible goal of the act was to enable Native Americans to practice their

ceremonies without interference or reproach. The freedoms associated with the goals of AIRFA signaled sensitivity to Native people's concerns about the care and display of human remains and sacred objects and recognized the continuance of cultural traditions.

AIRFA called for

...the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the[ir] traditional religions...including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites (American Indian Religious Freedom Act).

Though the act indicated a change in orientation from the protection of objects to the protection of cultures and the peoples who control them, it did not prevent subsequent arrests of Native people engaged in indigenous religious practices.

The "new museology" movement gained momentum in the 1980s. Rooted to the social movements of the previous two decades, "new museology" reflected emerging questions and concerns about museums' justifications for collecting, conserving and displaying indigenous people's cultural heritage. According to Kreps,

The "new" museum of the new museology is a democratic, educational institution in the service of social development. The new museum differs from the traditional museum not only in the recognition of the museum's educational potential, but also in its potential for promoting social change. Conventional museums are seen as object-centered whereas the new museum is people-centered and action-oriented (2003: 9 - 10).

As will be discussed, the ecomuseum concept is linked to the new museology paradigm.

In the 1980s, museum professionals began to increasingly invite Indians to collaborate on museum exhibitions, inform curators about collections and engage in dialogue about the return of objects and remains. The role of the curator started to change from "modernist/authoritative to postmodernist/interrogative...and, as a result, the museum's position of authority has begun to erode" (Dubin 2001: 84). The injunction

to which mainstream museums reacted propelled museums and those closely associated with the museum-project to revisit history with a critical lens on the interests and effects of collectors of non-Western material culture. They forged more avenues for greater communication with Native American communities. Initially, the primary beneficiaries of these interactions were the museums who extended the invitations and controlled the meetings. Consultations were "structured to provide outside support for the maintenance of institutional practices" (Peers and Brown 2003: 2).

Failure to collaborate also meant that institutions were subject to protests and lawsuits. One very public example of this is the incident at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary in 1988 after the opening of the exhibit "The Spirit Sings: Artist Traditions of Canada's First Peoples." The exhibit was part of the Arts Festival that corresponded with the Winter Olympics. The ostensible purpose of the exhibit was to make visible to the museum-going public the rich cultural heritage of Native Canadians. The Glenbow sought, and received, sponsorship from Shell Oil Canada Limited, which was coincidentally drilling on territory under negotiation in an unresolved land claim by the Lubicon Lake Cree. Sponsorship by Shell was viewed by the Lubicon as "an attempt to make [Shell] appear supportive of native peoples whereas they were actually destroying their very existence with drilling activities and taking a hard line stance on the Lubicon land claim negotiations" (Harrison 1988: 7). The museum maintained its position that "they wished to...concentrate on the cultural dimensions of native lives" and refused to address the politics of the situation in its programming or public discourse (Harrison 1988: 8). Bruce Trigger resigned his position as Honorary Curator of Ethnology at McGill University's McCord Museum, which loaned objects to the Glenbow for display

in "The Spirit Sings" to illustrate his support for the Lubicon and as a demonstrable response by an academic "to ethnic inequality and exploitation in Canadian society" (Trigger 1988: 6).

Written about extensively, the Glenbow and other institutions engaged in the presentation of Native American material culture, recognize the impact of Native Americans demonstrations. Mainstream museums are beginning to redress their legacy with Native peoples and identify modes of inclusiveness. Increasingly, museums that have collections of Native produced materials are consulting with members of those communities to "devise more culturally sensitive and appropriate methods for the storage, conservation, and display of indigenous materials" (Kreps 2003: 153). This is more readily regarded in accessing collections. As a result of consultations with Native communities, museums have implemented "restricted access" areas where cultural protocols are heeded to limit viewing and handling of specific objects.

Still on-going, consultations between museum professionals and Native peoples, contributed to some museum professionals gaining a deepening sense of responsibility and respect for Native American produced objects, and for the people and communities who made them and continue to hold them in great esteem. Moreover, those who work with Native American material culture are increasingly cognizant of the "priority of cultural concerns" (Nicks 2003: 22).

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The florescence of tribal museums emerged from the struggles of Native people to reclaim possession of their history and come with their own tensions and complex social/cultural issues. Efforts to revive cultural traditions and enhance cultural identity

resulted in the establishment of Native owned and operated museums and cultural centers. Largely, these facilities collect and display objects from their own communities. Coincident with "changes in government policies towards the Native population which encouraged economic self-sufficiency" Native peoples, engaged in struggles to regain past histories and traditions, began to view the museum as a locus for reconstitution and started cultural "preservation" programs in communities. The coalescence of several factors enabled Indian communities to open museums and community centers: 1) To start, they were prompted by the self-determination legislation of the 1970s, which encouraged Native tribes to become self-sufficient and identified federal grants for those communities wishing to bolster tourism. Community museums were specified as potential loci of tourism. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) created the opportunity for federally recognized tribes to erect buildings in their communities that would provide jobs for members and derive "profitable programs to raise the[ir] living standards...Among the options that were available were projects such as motels and tribal museums that would work in cooperation with the growing national tourism industry" (Abrams n.d.: 4). 2) Non-Native people and organizations involved with repatriation stipulated that returned objects be housed in environmentally sound storage facilities. 3) Native activists ignited efforts to control the telling of history in self-defining ways.

Tribal museums⁹ with widely varying agendas opened in large numbers in the

⁹ Though many Native communities have begun to open sites where their own collections are housed and displayed, some refuse to use the term "museum" to describe their facility, finding it too historically loaded. For example, the director of the U'mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, British Columbia asserted, "We don't want museums. The word museum has a negative connotation signifying the place where dead things lie and where native people don't go" (quoted in Kreps 2003: 106).

1970s and 1980s. In 1977, the North American Indian Museum Association (NAIMA), a national organization representing the interests of tribal museums, was created by a small group of Native people involved with community based museums (Abrams n.d.: 4). The struggles for repatriation and enhanced dialogue with museums that held Native material culture served as a catalyst for communities to open their own facilities. Nearly 40 Native communities in the United States and Canada owned and operated museums and cultural centers in 1981. That number quadrupled in a decade, after the passage of NAGPRA (Fuller & Fabricus 1994: 655). Liberation from the hegemonic rendering of history in a effort at self-definition and to regain power over the telling of their histories which they believe have been inaccurately defined by non-Natives is cited as a primary factor in opening a community museum.

Within these spaces, Native people can claim autonomy from the dominant society, define themselves utilizing "traditional" ways of understanding, foreground first person narratives, and regain some small power over the telling of history in ways that demarcate cultural and historical distance from the larger society. Central to this project and to its problems is the perception that the present and future hold a specific and fundamental connection with the past.

Native struggles that enabled Indian communities to open museums and cultural centers were fought on the steps of mainstream museums, on the sites of archaeological digs and most impactfully in the courts. With the passage of the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989) and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, two of a series of laws aimed to safeguard cultural resources, discourse between federally recognized tribes and museums, archaeologists and others

involved in the study and trade of Native human remains and cultural patrimony¹⁰ was legally sanctioned. These laws, which "came about largely as a result of the perception that the American professional museum community had not gone far enough in recognizing and respecting the rights of Native peoples," have achieved the goal of creating regular face-to-face negotiation and dialogue between Indians and archaeologists, anthropologists, museums and universities (Kreps 2003: 83). No longer can archaeologists assert what appear to be self-serving regulations on the disposition of archeological evidence; they are bound by law to interact with Native claimants demanding the return of their cultural patrimony.

Though there has been substantial progress made in the relationship of Native Americans and members of the archaeological community, the debate continues to reveal entrenched positions on the part of the scientists who fear the undermining of their training. The belief by some archaeologists that granting "all belief systems...equal legitimacy" means "an increasing loss to American archaeology and of course to the Indians whose history is dependent on it" (Meighan 2000:191 & 196) continues to hamper the dialogue between Indians and archaeologists. The ever-growing communication between archaeologists and Native Americans does not always indicate shared perspective. Whereas archaeological material provides clues to understanding

¹⁰ The term "cultural patrimony" has gained currency as a result of the 1990 legislation, the Native American Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The definition of "cultural patrimony" describes a type of object. According to the law, the definition is "an object having ongoing historical, traditional, or cultural importance central to the Native American group or culture itself, rather than property owned by an individual Native American, and which, therefore, cannot be alienated, appropriated, or conveyed by any individual..."

cultural discontinuities for many archaeologists who study it, for Native people it is a often source of “evidence” of cultural continuity (Ucko 1989: xiii).

All this is background to understanding crucial divisions among Native peoples in issues of representation. Two sorts of divisions are salient and important to grasp sympathetically. These have both been evidenced at Ak-Chin Him-Dak: 1) divisions over repatriation and display of archaeological material versus the cessation of all excavation; 2) divisions over a presentation /representation of the people via archaeological objects and the magnitude of current concerns: e.g. diabetes, loss of language, etc. The study of Ak-Chin Him-Dak will be viewed to describe and analyze these issues. However, before we begin to address these issues, we need to look more closely at how the objects that now form the basis of Ak-Chin Him-Dak were “found” and what happened to them subsequently.

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As part of the mandated land survey requisite for installing a new irrigation system, the archaeological firm, Northland Research, Inc. surveyed 10,000 acres of land on the west half of the Ak-Chin reservation between October 1980 and February 1981. Fifty-one archaeological sites were identified. The archaeological finds were remnants of the immediate ancestors of present-day Ak-Chin Indian Community members and prehistoric Hohokam people, considered ancestors by Ak-Chin people. Northland Research, Inc. was hired jointly by AK Chin Farms and the Bureau of Reclamation utilizing funds from a Federal Small Loan under the Reclamation Loans Act. As noted in Chapter One, AK Chin Farms, Inc, and the Bureau of Reclamation approached this project with different agendas (Marmaduke et al. 1983: 3, 5). AK Chin Farms was

initiating the requisite environmental compliance for the planned farm expansion. The Ak-Chin Indian Community would be responsible for the cost of compliance only if the project took place. The Bureau of Reclamation wished to undertake a study of potential secondary impacts of water delivery to the site and required this data regardless of whether the farm expansion occurred. The halt of federal loan programs in the 1980s and the high cost of “impact mitigation” further restricted the excavation.

The relationship between the Ak-Chin Indian Community and Northland Research, Inc. was often contentious as ideological differences surfaced in the course of the data recovery process. The research report generated by Northland acknowledges, “the Ak Chin Community has gone on record as respectfully disagreeing with our interpretations...” (Marmaduke et. al. 1983: 5). Though the archaeologists concurred with Ak-Chin community members about the significance of the discovery, they sought to further study the material. For them an excavation of this magnitude was unusual and most exciting. It was also made clear that the scientists' notions about the dispossession of archaeological material did not accord with the desires of community members. The contested meanings about the objects are articulated in the archaeological documentation. In one report, the archaeologists wrote, “Things did not always go smoothly...because the goals of the participants [archaeology team and the Ak-Chin Indian Community] were not entirely coincident” (Marmaduke et al. 1983: 3). Though the disagreement is not elaborated in the report, there is an allusion made to the desire on the part of the tribal government to halt all excavations, leading the report to conclude that

The idea that the descendants or presumed descendants of the peoples who left archaeological sites should be given the extraordinary right to ruin those sites has an ambiguous legal status...Archaeological knowledge transcends race [sic]and culture...And this knowledge cannot be anything but beneficial, for it helps us to

see each other not as Indian or Anglo, but as human beings (Marmaduke et. al. 1983: 233).¹¹

In 1985, Soil Systems, Inc. (SSI) took up where Northland Research left off. Of the original 51 archaeological sites identified, 31 were examined. In part, the reduction in number of sites investigated was due to the inability of SSI to locate the sites noted by Northland. Largely, however, it was due to a decision by the Ak-Chin Indian Community to redefine the boundaries and withdraw 190.7 acres from the project "to preserve [them] for further study" and demonstrate "the premium that the community places on its cultural heritage as well as preserving this history for future generations" (SSI 1990: 1.4). This portion of land was, therefore, removed from the farm expansion.

SSI and the Ak-Chin Indian Community had a more congenial working relationship than that noted by Northland Research, Inc. However, ideological and cultural differences in perspective did surface in their association. According to Fuller, one of consultants who worked with the community to plan a museum,

Archaeological experts had emphasized scientific and historical perspectives when interpreting the artifacts of the Ak-Chin's past. In direct contrast, members of the community found that, for them, the core meaning actually resided in the objects themselves. The experience of appreciating the present's continuity with the past and recognizing the object's connection with their self-identity is what gave value to the objects for the Ak-Chin (1992: 346).

¹¹ As noted above, many Native Americans involved in the discourse about the relationship between the role of archaeology and the lives of indigenous peoples would argue that archaeology produces race (and racism) and culture, albeit differently for each "side."

The Ak-Chin Indian Community's members' interest in having the excavated objects returned prompted Bureau of Reclamation officials to accede to the return "when they had proper facilities to house the collections and a trained staff to curate them" (Fuller 1992: 346; see also Simpson 2001: 159). By 1986, enough interest had already been sparked among a few members of the community who developed a temporary museum – a room in the community center. They reconstructed, in miniature, what the excavation site looked like and what had been unearthed in the digs. In an attempt to engage community members visiting this display, they made illustrations of how the found objects functioned originally (Fuller 1992: 346). Furthermore, they queried community members about their interests should a museum to be established. The issues most critical to the community were those that revolved around concerns of cultural maintenance – language fluency, knowledge of traditional ceremonies and oral history, native plant preservation, and arts and crafts instruction– and not directly about the objects revealed in the archaeological discovery (Fuller 1992: 347).

In 1987, Ak-Chin tribal representatives contacted the Smithsonian Institution's Office of Museum Programs to consult with the community and assist in formulating a plan for a new facility (Simpson 2001: 159). After explicating their desires and revealing the results of the survey, Nancy Fuller, who had just returned from a professional conference, proposed the idea of opening an "ecomuseum" in the community; it would be the first in the United States. Rene Rivard, considered one of the fathers of the ecomuseum concept, had presented a paper at the conference Fuller attended. His presentation transformed Fuller's thinking about museums. As the director of the Native American Museums Program at the Smithsonian Institution, Fuller trusted that the

ecomuseum concept would cohere with Native American communities and their perspectives about cultural management. The Ak-Chin Indian Community seemed prime for enacting this concept (Fuller, personal communication, 11/22/02).

The idea of the “ecomuseum” emerged from the critique of museums generated in the late 1960s which noted the lack of community input in museums and the disconnection between museums, their staff and the communities in which they existed. Protests in France in May, 1968 targeted institutions for their lack of responsiveness to current social concerns (Rivard 1984: 2). Similar protests extended beyond France and into other nations, including the United States. In the United States they often reflected the concerns of colonized peoples asserting their sovereignty and invoking their rights to their own cultural heritage and the ways in which it is presented, preserved and acted upon. They agitated for the repatriation of material cultural removed from their nations, access to significant sites and basic rights as sovereign peoples (Rivard 1984: 3). The notion of the ecomuseums accorded with other means of achieving social meaning within communities. The ecomuseum concept, initially articulated by Georges Henry Riviere in the 1970s, was an attempt to “reform traditional museums” by designing museums that achieved social meaning for the communities in which they existed (Rivard 1983: 31). The ecomuseum concept is one that attempts to democratize the museum experience by accommodating programs, collections and exhibitions to the community’s interests.

In her doctoral dissertation, Hauenschild contrasts traditional museums with “new” museums, or ecomuseums. The traditional model of a museum is built upon a collection, which is housed in a building and put on display for a visiting public. Alternatively, in the “new” museum framework: "1. The collection is the totality of the

heritage. 2. The building is the totality of the territory. 3. The public is the totality of the population” (Hauenschild 1988: 14). A central premise of ecomuseums is their relationship to a specific population. That population is both reflected in the museum and, in turn, “the museum constantly adapts itself to changing conditions and needs of the population” (Hauenschild 1988: 11).

In reading the literature about ecomuseums, it becomes evident that theoreticians who write about this concept presume cultural homogeneity and collective memory to inform the collection and programmatic aspects of the ecomuseum. Furthermore, there is a presumption that heritage is objectifiable and can be "collected" as objects or things. The notion of heritage as detached from "historically situated, politically motivated" conditions and representative of a collective identity indicates one of the bigger theoretical problems of conceptualizing ecomuseums (Whiteley 2003: 720). Doucet makes a similar assumption as Hauenschild when he writes that the ecomuseum's intention is to “mobilize individuals and groups in safeguarding what they consider their heritage, and communicating the issues, process and consequences within their community” (1999: 9).

The simplicity of the presumption of community homogeneity is brought to bear in two cases: in planning ecomuseums at Zuni, New Mexico and San Vicente, Costa Rica. Isaac and Weil respectively write about the deep ambivalence both communities have regarding visitors to their communities, the primary source of income and justification for opening facilities in both regions. Among the Zuni, Isaac notes "new policies regarding tourism reflected the community's desire to restrict visitors to the Pueblo, rather than to encourage the growth of tourism" (n.d.: 13). In part, these

concerns reflected how "culture" could and should be institutionalized, what elements are appropriate for display and which are not. In other part, Weil asserts that residents of San Vicente recognize that tourism often has a negative impact on the "natural environment" and denies "dignified human interaction" with those being represented and promoted as "keepers of traditions" (1997: 35). Both describe contentious planning processes that aimed to negotiate the manifold concerns by all involved. Ironically, if the ecomuseum ideal had been truly embraced, these interactions would not be made invisible but rather would be integrated into the context of both projects.

The model of the ecomuseum had resonance for the Ak-Chin museum planning board because it "provides a way to replace traditional hierarchical patterns of decisionmaking [sic] with a framework for developing shared motivation and parity among members of a group. The strategy links generations, professions, and cultures through policies of inclusion" (Fuller 1992: 362). Ak-Chin community members appreciated that the ecomuseum paradigm "differ[s] from...most museums. Instead of taking sole responsibility for content and interpretation, [ecomuseum staff] help the community fulfill its own agenda" (Fuller 1992: 331).

The Ak-Chin Indian Community's tribal council liked the concept of the ecomuseum because it cohered with their perspective of the excavated objects as esteemed in culturally-specific ways and belonging to the community, as a collectivity. Members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, not highly trained experts, would be responsible for identifying what would be presented in the museum and how. The Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum flyer reads: "land and territory replace the museum building, the residents of the area take on the roles of curator and public, and the decentralized

nature of organization encourages each and every family to create, maintain, and enjoy exhibits of their own self development.”

A founding museum board was created which included members of the tribal council, Ak-Chin members who demonstrated an interest in the project, along with outside technical and professional experts. Funded with a grant from the Administration for Native Americans of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the board had two years to train potential staff, design a structure in which to house the recovered objects and inform the community about the objectives of the museum and elicit their interest. Training was designed to play mutually beneficial roles for new staff: Staff would learn new, transferable skills which could be applied to other arenas of community life, but, should they wish to leave their positions at the ecomuseum they would possess an understanding of the role of a museum and potentially become outside advocates (Fuller, personal communication, 11/22/02).

Nancy Fuller and the museum board visited “over a hundred museums, historical societies, archives, and related cultural organizations of all sizes and forms of governance” (Fuller 1992: 349) in order to conceive plans for their own museum. They traveled across the United States, and into Canada and Mexico to make connections with managers and staff of community museums (Simpson 2001: 159). In Quebec, they saw, first-hand, ecomuseums and met with their staff members. Six community members engaged in a training program that would assist future Ak-Chin Him-Dak staff members in learning skills necessary to create exhibitions, plan public programs and develop systems for research and documentation. Central Arizona College tailored a program specifically for Ak-Chin members that would introduce them to the world of museology

and the socially constructed disciplines associated with museum work. They began taking classes in 1989 that would teach them "transferable skills" (Del Cohen, personal communication, 1/8/03). The students' commitment to the new museum was in addition to their other jobs and family responsibilities.

The course of study included classes in archaeology, anthropology, science and history (Fuller 1992: 354). Museum studies courses included methodology in oral history, collection, preservation, and exhibition planning. The curriculum also incorporated internships at other museums, including the Heard Museum in Phoenix and the Arizona State Archives. It was during the training period that community members involved with the early phases of the tribal museum began teaching Ak-Chin youth about their history and culture. Children were taught about the pottery that was made by their ancestors and unearthed in the excavations and about the traditional adobe homes of the Ak-Chin people and how they were built mechanically. The information gleaned during this experience remains evident in current programs at Ak-Chin Him-Dak.

The first of the two-year grant period was devoted to learning about museums and archives to gain a comprehensive understanding of what would work best for the Ak-Chin Indian Community. The museum board spent the second year conceptualizing the space required for the proposed exhibition and program plans. They determined that their primary audience would be Ak-Chin youth for whom teaching activities through exhibits and programs would have most cultural relevance. The farm enterprise signaled the modernity of the community and its integration into the wider economic and political sector. Cultural traditions – those things that gave significance to the past – were changing swiftly. It was important to conceptually reduce the "loss" by accessing the

past (see Appell 1980; Appell 1993). The museum served as the venue for creating and making manifest this bridge.¹²

The museum staff surveyed the adult members of the community to get his/her approval for the building plan. The proposed building included an area for the storage of artifacts and archives, a gallery for exhibitions and activities, a darkroom, kitchen and classroom. The tribal council approved the plan and committed funds to begin construction and groundbreaking took place in November 1990. The museum was named Ak-Chin Him-Dak. *Him Dak*, which as noted, translates to "way of life" became the chosen name given the building, "because it is intended as a place to serve as a bridge between the generations." The brochure from Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives describes its mission as

a place where things of our past are conserved and shared with the community. It is a place where children can learn from the Elders, and where Elders can reflect on what was shared with them...The entire Community is part of the Ak-Chin EcoMuseum concept...EcoMuseums are distinguished from traditional museum in that land and territory replace the building. Residents of the community are the curators and the audience. Each family is encouraged to create, maintain, and enjoy exhibits of their self development. Thus our EcoMuseum is a reflection of ourselves as we define our values and identities and attempt to share our spirit.

The ecomuseum is also an archive and as such houses the community's records including council minutes and resolutions, departmental and office records and community photographs.

¹² The cultural "loss" experienced by Ak-Chin stems from the dislocation foisted upon the community by the creation of the reservation system, the processes of assimilation and other attempts to alienate community members from their own culture. It also results, in part, from the failure of the community to deal effectively with present-day conditions such as the high drop-out rate among high school students.

Ak-Chin Him-Dak opened on June 29th, 1991. The opening ceremony included speeches, a traditional feast, dance presentations and a “community dance” that lasted until early in the morning. That day more than 500 people entered the museum building to see the new exhibits.

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Utilizing the archaeology discovery as a catalyst for fostering the community's children's and young adult's interest in the history and culture of the Ak-Chin Indian Community discloses several contradictions and tensions. Primary among them is the community's deepening incorporation with the dominant society, which in turn has led to an increased attempt to reestablish cultural traditions. The cultural and historical identification of the Ak-Chin Indian Community with the unearthed objects reflects both the rooted history of the community and the interactions with the larger society to which the community is increasingly connected. The conditions that gave rise to the discovery was brought about by the necessity of the community to expand its farming enterprise, requiring it, in turn, to negotiate for water from the state of Arizona and the federal government. Though the process of unearthing the archeological evidence was at times fraught, from it emerged historical evidence that could be claimed as “primordial,” existing prior to the incorporation of the community into the dominant society.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community's reunion with their objects promoted and impelled a project that at once aimed to cohere the community around a unified history and culture and at the same time distance itself from the very history that led to their unearthing. That is, the project of Ak-Chin Him-Dak as one that reveals a “found” history (as opposed to a “made” history) defines the community as a social order that

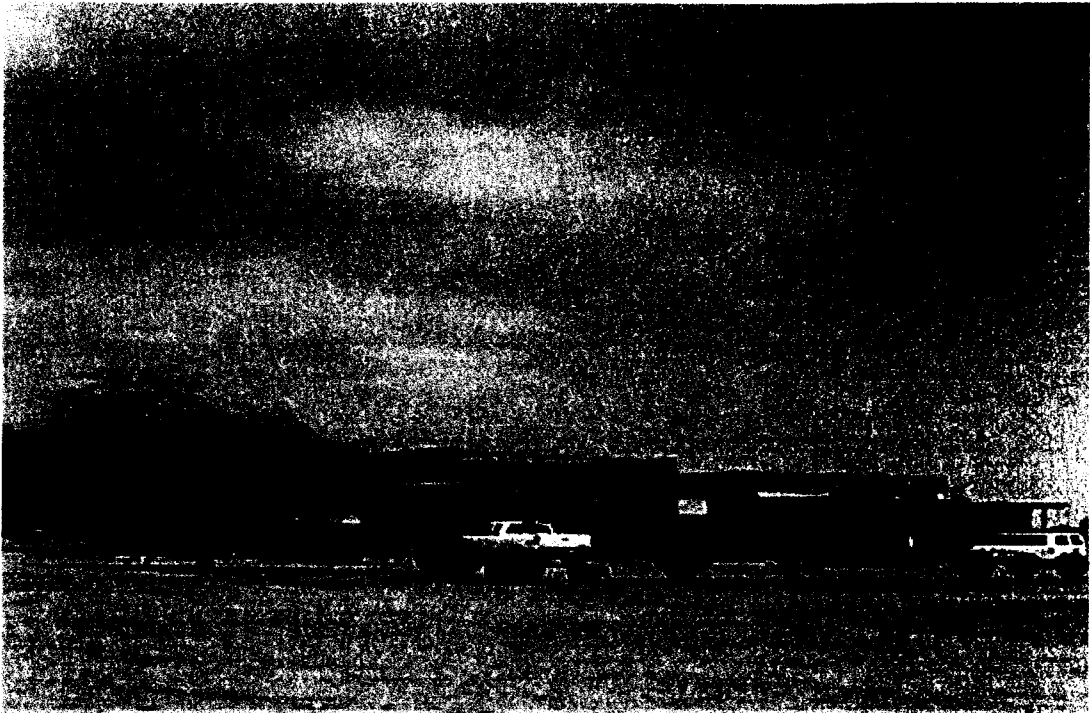


Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 4 – Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives (side view)



Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 5 – Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives (front view)

existed prior to European contact, yet is borne out of the community's present socio-economic condition and its integration to the market place beyond the boundaries of the reservation. The socioeconomic concerns that guided the archaeological recovery reveal the incorporated and dependent relationship of the community to the United States government, the state of Arizona and the agents and organizations involved with the water settlement, the farm expansion and the archaeological excavation, among others.

The tensions that exist between the attraction of modernity and its potential benefits for the Ak-Chin Indian Community and the attention and focus on the past are integral to the foundation of Ak-Chin Him-Dak. Whereas the expansion of the farm can be viewed as an enhancement of "traditional" practices, the establishment of the casino, whose proceeds have far exceeded those of the farm, cannot. In fact, when I remarked to the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak how impressed I was by the physical growth of the community since the opening of the casino, she replied that though she was one of the most vocal dissenters when it came up for vote in the early 1990s because it challenged what she understood *Him Dak* to be, she did witness what she deemed to be its benefits. Namely, the attention to community members in the form of new houses, job opportunities, an elder center and recreation complex and the fiscal support of the ecomuseum are some of the compensations of opening a gaming facility on the reservation. That the person responsible for the reinvigoration of Ak-Chin *Him Dak* was lured by "made" history as much as "found" history, points to the seductiveness of modernity and its offerings. Perhaps she realizes that without the casino, the Ak-Chin Indian Community would succumb to the vagaries of the farm economy and on-going

negotiations with the local and federal governments to get the community's material needs met.

Earlier I described in brief the complicated and often uneasy relationship between archaeologists and American Indians. What is essential to recognize is how Indian people, in this case the Ak-Chin Indian Community, utilize the scientific validation of the archaeological finds to make claims of historical and temporal depth. The unearthed objects reveal a distinct ethnic community to which the community of Ak-Chin draws a direct connection. Essentialized features of Ak-Chin culture can be extrapolated from the excavated items leading them to claim a collectively owned identity, dislocated from any association with societies outside its boundaries. The claim of cultural continuity with the excavated objects is central to the Ak-Chin Indian Community's assertions about their history.

The fact that the very stuff – both physically and metaphorically – that establishes Ak-Chin continuity with a particular place for generations (and most importantly before any agreed upon covenant with the United States government) is also that which connects the community, albeit tenuously at times, to outside structures and is yet another contraction with which they must live.

Native people, in the era of the Red Power movement, sought their political autonomy and to assert their sovereign rights. Museums were targeted for the ways in which they crafted Native peoples' identities with little or no input from Native people themselves. The decision of Native Americans to open museums, which historically have alienated Native people from their own objects and the cultural functions of those objects, is worthy of study. In the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the establishment of a tribal

museum was created both as an accommodation to the Bureau of Reclamation as well as a way to reconnect the community with their ancestors' objects. Native people have historically utilized forms of accommodation for purposes of cultural continuity. By strategically accommodating the dominant society, Native Americans such as the member of Ak-Chin Indian Community, reveal a clear and important distinction between accommodation and assimilation.

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Many Native people assert that the chronic dispossession they suffered at the hands of the dominant society can only be assuaged by a reconnection with their cultural legacy including the repatriation of material culture and through the maintenance of cultural heritage. However, the dispossession the Ak-Chin Indian Community suffered caused information about its care, purpose and significance to be lost. It is likely that among the objects currently housed at Ak-Chin Him-Dak are those that were not intended to endure. The role of museum curation does not typically account for indigenous methods of handling objects, thereby at times unduly prolonging an object's life. Since the staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak view themselves as caretakers of the past, the paradox of cultural preservation is apparent; they are at once conserving the community's history and modifying it.

As the experiences and relationships of members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community were reshaped by modern realities due to deeper integration with the larger economic and political structures, their notions, reflections and claims about their own culture shifted. As older models of maintaining continuity with the past were no longer available to the Ak-Chin Indian Community, they opted to make more deliberate attempts

to hold on to their "traditions" through programs at the ecomuseum. Though there is an inherent contradiction in this endeavor, Native Americans have existed with similar contradictions since their first encounters with Europeans. The ecomuseum thus is situated within the contradictions that fostered its establishment, an understood reality for the founders and staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak.

Chapter Three

Remembering the Future

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is presently home to approximately 700 members, who are now between newfound wealth and serious demographic trouble. The population may be expanding but simultaneously the O'odham have the highest rate of type II diabetes in the nation (Harvey and Harjo 1994: 283; Olson 2001: 164). In the midst of this tension between well-being and decline lie the issue of tradition - how it is defined and how it is retained - and an intensified focus on culture. One of the community sites for articulating local understandings of tradition is the community's EcoMuseum, Ak-Chin Him-Dak. Largely, the EcoMuseum is responsible for creating interest in the community's heritage and defining how it is reflected, shaped and presented. The Ak-Chin Indian Community's heritage has particular urgency for members of the community who experience estrangement from practices that were commonplace in their youth and young adulthood. The rapidity of change in Ak-Chin cultural life reflects the nexus of relations into which the community is increasingly woven.

In the mid 1980s, when Ak-Chin's ancient past was materially revealed to the community, type II diabetes on the reservation and in neighboring communities became epidemic. The inauguration of Harrah's casino in 1994, three years after the EcoMuseum opened, provided the revenues that enabled the community to open a renal care center¹

¹ Renal Care Group provides dialysis care to patients with kidney disease. The company's headquarters are located in Nashville, Tennessee but they own more than 380 outpatient facilities throughout the United States (www.renalcaregroup.com).

and provide dialysis treatments to community members on the reservation rather than requiring them to travel to Phoenix for medical attention. For the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the ability to manage a health facility on their reservation was an assertion of the community's self-determination. However, for the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the fact that the community needed to expend its resources to build such a facility announced both the severity of illness among its members and the community's inability to adequately care for its population. That the diabetes problem and associated health issues had become so grave that the community warranted a place in which to obtain treatment close to home made manifest the complex web of political, social, cultural and economic relations that shaped the community's history.

The impact of diabetes among the Ak-Chin crystallizes a profound transformation in the community. Since the 1960s, when diabetes was newly identified among O'odham communities, the Ak-Chin Indian Community was incorporated under the Indian Reorganization Act and began using English as the lingua franca in council meetings and business transactions. Largely, the decision to use English was rendered in an effort to found AK-Chin Farms Enterprise. However, it also reflected the community's increasing incorporation into the world outside the reservation, which extended beyond the political and economic associations necessary to create a successful business. The change in diet and surge in diabetes in the 1960s illustrated the cultural and social incorporation of the Ak-Chin Indian Community into non-Native mainstream society as the traditional food systems were destroyed and the regular consumption of non-indigenous foods, particularly foods high in fat, sugar and starch content, became the norm. This chapter focuses on the struggles of the Ak-Chin Indian Community to enhance its self-sufficiency

in the face of a diabetes epidemic that profoundly touches the lives of so many of its members presently.

In 1993, the prevalence of diabetes in O'odham males and females over 45 was 67% and 73% respectively (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 194). The community continues to experience an annual surge in the number of diagnosed cases of diabetes. This is reflected in the figure statewide for American Indians. In Arizona, diabetes accounts for 19 out of 100,000 deaths; among Native Americans in the state, the figure is 74.6 per 100,000 (McClain 2004). Particularly troubling is the increasingly younger population diagnosed with the form for diabetes known as "adult onset." According to Tohono O'odham Community Action (TOCA), over fifty percent of Tohono O'odham adults are afflicted with adult onset diabetes. This figures is ten times that of the rest of the country (McClain 2004) and is the highest in the world (Woods et al. 2002). Type II Diabetes, also called "adult onset" diabetes because it was once thought only to afflict adults over the age of 40, is now being diagnosed in children as young as seven-years of age in O'odham communities (see Lopez et.al. 2002: 4). In all of the O'odham communities there are efforts to educate members about the causes and impacts of the disease, and most urgently, to develop ways that community-based organizations can become instrumental in reducing the incidence of the disease. Central to these efforts is the notion that "diabetes is a side effect of losing touch with the O'odham way of life [*Him Dak*]" (quoted in Woods et. al. 2002). As the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and most particularly, as Ak-Chin Him-Dak moves away from identifying ways to treat diabetes and towards ways to aid in its prevention, their focus shifts to the reintegration of *Him Dak* as a means to "balance the mental, physical and spiritual health" of the community

(quoted in Woods et. al. 2002). Communities such as Ak-Chin are shifting attention from treatment centers and health clinics to educational programs, cultural centers and tribal museums. In the face of the diabetes epidemic, the Ak-Chin Indian Community opened a casino in 1994, Harrah's Ak-Chin, from which the generated revenues have enabled the community to provide jobs and free housing to adult members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community. This pull and push tension between the casino as a vehicle for self-sufficiency and self-determination and diabetes wrought by colonial contact is the focus of this chapter.

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Diabetes is characterized by elevated levels of glucose in the blood caused by failure of insulin secretion and/or action. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas, which controls the level of sugar in the body. Most American Indians who have diabetes are afflicted with type II diabetes. In type II diabetes insulin is produced by the body, which either resists the “action of insulin” or insulin secretion is “impaired,” leading to sugar remaining in the blood instead of going into cells where it becomes energy (National Diabetes Information Clearing House; McClain 2004). American Indians have epidemic proportions of type II diabetes, also known as non-insulin dependent diabetes (NIDDM). Unlike, type 1 diabetes in which the pancreas no longer produces insulin, those who have type II diabetes produce insulin that fails to perform its metabolic function normally.

In 2001, Dr. Frank Vinicor, the Diabetes Program Director of the Center for Disease Control’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion testified before the United States Senate about the far-reaching condition of diabetes

among American Indians. He acknowledged the severity of the problem in the American population at large but testified that among American Indians “the increase in prevalence for those under age forty-five was ten times greater than for the same group in the general U.S. population” (Centers of Disease Control and Prevention 2001). Most alarming were the percentages of youth who were afflicted: Forty-one percent of Native Americans between the ages of fifteen and nineteen and thirty-six percent of Native Americans between the ages of twenty and twenty-four were diagnosed with type II diabetes between the years 1990 and 1997. In Arizona, American Indians are 292% more likely to die of diabetes than other non-Native state residents (Mrela 2002: 17).

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Without going into the medical and biological detail about the situations that provoke and exacerbate diabetes, it should be noted at the outset that the epidemic among Native Americans and specifically among the Ak-Chin is not simply a medical imperative but is also a cultural construct. Its urgency in the medical community is being addressed and written about by professionals who study the biological components of diabetes and related illnesses. This work, instead, focuses on diabetes as related it relates to Ak-Chin cultural revitalization efforts.

The immediate impact of diabetes in the Ak-Chin Indian Community is situated in a nexus of political, social and economic forces in the region. Anglo settlement into Arizona after it became a state in 1863 was swift. The land was sought for its rich mineral deposits and the mining opportunities they afforded, cattle grazing and other types of economic developments. In order to achieve its goal of economic growth, the government established reservation lands for Indian tribes in Arizona.

The O'odham communities were settled onto reservations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries subsequent to a notable loss of Native peoples from the Gila River due to a measles outbreak that struck the region in 1871-72 and again in 1898- 99. Between 1882-83 tuberculosis consumed a portion of the population and in 1896 a smallpox epidemic touched the area. The losses illustrate quite literally the pernicious impact of White American contact on the O'odham people². Ak-Chin was founded in 1912. The surviving members of the O'odham populations – those settled onto reservations - probably had a high level of what is widely referred to as the “Thrifty Gene.”

The “Thrifty Gene” is considered a form of “natural selection” created by populations, among them American Indians, who lived in “feast or famine” environments. The “Thrifty Gene” allowed people the physical capability to store calories during times of plenty for use during times of famine. Though the O'odham were capable agriculturists and hunter-gatherers, they were unable to control the harshness and unpredictability of the desert environment in which they existed. This unpredictability heightened as their lands were circumscribed and their populations declined. However, their bodies had acclimated to the fluctuating periods of plenty by developing a “Thrifty Gene” (Brody 1991: C1; Griffin-Pierce 2000: 194; Harvey and Harjo 1994: 283; Knowler, et al. 1983: 113; Savage and Bennett 1992: 96). In periods

² Hirschfelder and de Montano describe the impact of introduced European diseases on the indigenous populations of the Americans as a “Native-American holocaust” (1993:36). Native peoples fell victim to infectious diseases common to Europeans because they lacked immunities to fight them. Introduced diseases included smallpox, influenza, measles, common colds and mumps (see also Mancall and Merrell 2000).

when food is plentiful, an individual with the “thrifty” genotype will “hypersecrete” insulin, allowing for efficient storage of the excess calories for leaner times.

The same trait that aided the O’odham in times of famine is believed to have led to their current elevated rate of diabetes. As discussed earlier, as EuroAmericans settled the southwest they diverted the water supply which fed O’odham flood plains. The method of farming practiced by the O’odham people of this region is called akchin farming, after which the community and its residents are named. Akchin farming relies on the torrential summer rains to flood fields, creating “natural irrigation for a richly productive agriculture” (Hackenberg 1983: 162). The O’odham “cultivated corn, tepary beans, and striped cushaw squash, crops that would produce during the brief torrential summer rains” (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 195). The Tohono O’odham people in the south traded wild foods that grew more abundantly in their regions with the Akimel O’odham in the north for their cultivated crops (Hackenberg 1983: 163). The O’odham who resided in present-day Ak-Chin were seasonal farmers who supplemented their agricultural staples with wild foods they harvested - saguaro fruits, cholla buds and mesquite - small game they hunted, as well as items they traded.

The completion of the first trans-continental railway in 1869 and the concomitant settlement in the region by Anglos gave impetus to the government to place southwestern Indians on reservations. The socio-economic and political changes imposed upon the O’odham people in the last century, namely confining them to reservations and limiting their ability to maintain traditional modes of food production and distribution, meant that they had to modify their cultural subsistence practices considerably. The reservation

system ended a period of self-sufficiency for the O'odham and for many, brought episodic starvation and disease, among other ills (Innis 1994: 452).

On reservations, Indians were introduced to a diet increasingly comprised of foods high in starch including white flour, macaroni, and cereals, lard and other forms of fat, sugar and processed food such as "lunch meats." Evermore reliant on a non-indigenous diet, by the 1940s, the O'odham were no longer growing tepary beans, high in protein, iron and calcium; they were replaced by government issued pinto beans (Brody 1991: C1). Populations that had adapted to periods of famine now had ready supplies of food, albeit rations high in carbohydrates, sugar and fat. The change from a diet based on "nutritious wild and once-cultivated plants" (Brody 1991: C10) to one reliant on "cheap and stable food" (Savage and Bennett 1992: 98) are contributing factors to the elevated rates of obesity, insulin resistance and diabetes among Native Americans, particularly the O'odham populations.

The correlation between obesity and diabetes is very strong (Knowler 1983: 112; Olson 2001: 166; Savage and Bennett 1992). Excess fat is believed to create fatty cells and hormones that "impose resistance" to insulin. Dr. Vinicor, Diabetes Program Director of the CDC, attributed the increase in obesity as a significant factor in the increase in diabetes among Native Americans. The fat intake among the O'odham people in 1990 was more than twice what it was in 1890 (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 194). At least forty percent of the O'odham population is deemed obese (Jackson 1986: 1563). Dr. Vinicor testified, "One study suggested that the increase in weight and the frequency of exposure to diabetes in utero among Pima Indian children...account for most of the recent increase in diabetes prevalence in this population" (CDC 2001). Diabetes is a

genetically linked disease. Family members who have parents and grandparents that have or have had type II diabetes are themselves predisposed to become diabetic (St. Pierre 2002: 36).³ Children are deemed "at risk if a close family member - mother, father, sibling, aunt, uncle - has diabetes..." (Weil 2005: 36). In 1993, the Indian Health Service asserted "that the O'odham had the 'most diabetic pregnancies per capita'" (Woods et. al. 2002). Given the current rate of morbidity among Native Americans it is estimated that 75 percent of children born to Indians in 2000 will develop diabetes (McClain 2004).

Diabetes was first reported among the O'odham people after the Second World War (Brody 1991: Section C1; Harvey and Harjo 1994: 283; Marchand 1995; Savage and Bennett 1992: 98; Roubideaux 1999: 55; Young 1994: 158). The disease among Native Americans, and the O'odham in particular, is largely attributed to the introduction of new foods and the "destruction of traditional food systems and diet" (Lopez et. al. 2002: 5)

³ St. Pierre contends that Native Americans' forced need to redefine cultural ascription is one key to understanding the surge in diabetes. As traditions were renegotiated and reformulated to accommodate American policies, specifically those that limited Native peoples' mobility making them unable to obtain aboriginal food sources, Native people redefined cultural membership. Federal Indian policies defined tribal membership by ascribing artificial physical and cultural boundaries around particular groups of people. Tribal identity came to supersede the ancestral distinctions that had formerly been the overriding method of cultural ascription among American Indians.

Prior to being confined to reservations, Native people sought marriage partners from outside their own groups, but from within a larger social structure. As Native people were unable to engage in more widespread social arenas, the pool of potential marriage partners became evermore restricted. Limiting a group's genetic stock typically results in increased genetic and auto-immune diseases among the group's offspring (St. Pierre 2002: 34). Native people who marry from within their tribe or a neighboring, related community have unwittingly created an epidemiological crisis of epic proportions. St. Pierre writes, "What is not understood by many Indian people is that by manipulating populations, you can actually cause recessive traits like the one that causes diabetes to act like dominant traits. This is especially true if people with the tendency for diabetes marry people who also carry this tendency, perpetuating this process through multiple generations" (2002: 34).

and a comparatively sedentary existence (Savage and Bennett 1992: 99; King 2000: 4).

By the mid-1960s the O'odham "suddenly faced a nearly tenfold higher risk of getting diabetes than the rest of the country" (McClain 2004).

Left untreated, diabetes is a degenerative disease that has the potential to cause kidney and circulatory problems. When blood stops flowing to the feet and legs, the skin, nerves and muscles may die. In O'odham communities it is not unusual to see amputees, diabetics whose limbs could not be saved due to the ravages of the disease. According to a report generated by Tohono O'odham Community Action and Tohono O'odham Community College, one in ten Tohono O'odham diabetics receive dialysis. Dialysis of the blood, technically called hemodialysis, is process in which blood from the diabetic patient is pumped into a system where the impurities are filtered out. The process takes four to eight hours and typically, three sessions are required a week.

The Renal Care Group, Ak-Chin Dialysis Center has the capacity to conduct twelve dialysis treatments at a time. The center is open six days a week and hosts two shifts a day. Doctors based in Phoenix refer patients who utilize the facilities at the Ak-Chin center. The doctors design individual treatment plans for each patient and visit the community once or twice a month. Treatments at the Ak-Chin facility last between three and five hours. When I visited the center in 2004, one caregiver informed me that some "lucky" patients have received kidney transplants, and as a result no longer had to undergo dialysis treatments three times a week.

The diabetes epidemic now occurring on the Ak-Chin reservation is the result of "profound alterations" in the "social and biological...modes of life" of the O'odham caused by contact with Anglos (Lindenbaum 1979: 32). The spread of diabetes is most

specifically related to the confinement of the O'odham onto their reservation. As will be discussed later in this chapter, though most members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community concur about the causes that created the current epidemic, collective action that may lead towards its decline is only now emerging, largely through the work of Ak-Chin Him-Dak.

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The Ak-Chin Indian Community, in the past ten years, has undergone a major transition in the source of its revenue since the opening of Harrah's Ak-Chin in 1994. Most of the profits from the casino go to the tribe as whole, not individual members, though elders (those over fifty-five years of age) receive a monthly stipend of three hundred dollars⁴. With casino generated funds, the tribe has been able to support basic public needs in the community such as the establishment of a renal care center, noted above, the construction of new homes for community members, and the creation and enhancement of educational and welfare programs. Groundbreaking for a recreational facility took place on September 12, 2002 and was nearly completed by my visit in April, 2004. The complex, which will consist of a gymnasium, outdoor swimming pool, weight and aerobic rooms, office space and conference rooms cost close to \$2.3 million dollars to construct, nearly \$350,000 of which came from the community's coffers. Just over one million was funded by Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) and \$800,000 was funded by Intertribal Trust Council of Arizona (ITCA), an organization established to "promote Indian self-reliance through development."

⁴ Though this may seem paltry, the community provides all adults with free housing and free utilities. Elders who attend the Elder Center are also provided with lunch on a daily basis.

This facility was the result of two years of meetings held by the Recreational Working Group. The project was part of a larger strategic plan for the community that ties together the goal of expanding and enhancing community traditions, creating and maximizing opportunities for community members and the community, and more fully engaging the community in its governance (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner*, Vol. XVI, No. 18, 2002: 1, 3). The recreational facility was deemed a way to keep youth at home, under the watchful eyes of friends and families, and to promote self-esteem and a healthy lifestyle. Most importantly, this project manifested the self-determination and self-governance of the community and its ability to plan and oversee its own course for the future.

Gaming has provided the Ak-Chin Indian Community, and many Native communities throughout the United States, monies to secure and enhance their infrastructure and further develop their goals of self-sufficiency. Casino gaming among American Indian tribes began officially in 1988 after the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA). In the 1970s and early 1980s it was not uncommon to find tribes hosting high-stakes bingo or poker games on their reservations. In part, Native communities were trying to compensate for the decrease in federal funding of Indian programs under President Reagan and his efforts to further erode American Indian economic and political rights - rights primarily attached to Native American's remaining sovereignty. The poverty and high unemployment on many reservations prompted Native Americans to view gaming as an integral part of tribal economies, tied to their fight for and assertion of sovereign rights.

Though the early United States governments viewed Indian tribes as sovereign nations and negotiated treaties with them as such, there has been a steady diminution of

Native sovereignty since 1831 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* that tribes were "domestic, dependent nations." This reduction in the scope of jurisdiction held by tribes was the first time the United States changed the frame of its relationship with Indian nations. States, too, have threatened tribal sovereignty by vying for jurisdictional control over land use within the states borders, taxation, natural resource development, gaming and state services.

The federal government currently has criminal jurisdiction over Indians and in Indian country. Civil jurisdiction prevails among Indians for claims arising in or on Indian Territory (i.e. on a reservation) or involving a tribal member. States do not intervene unless a tribe has agreed to transfer jurisdiction to the state. Though the jurisdictional roles of the state and federal governments have enlarged since the late twentieth century, tribes are accorded the right to open and run casinos because United States' political hegemony has not extended to this arena of Native life. This "residual" sovereignty is granted because any sovereignty that has not been denied remains the jurisdiction of Indians.

President Reagan's budget cuts dealt a powerful blow to Indian communities. Funding for job-training programs and new housing was shaved. In 1982, 60,000 Native Americans were put on welfare and 18,000 lost their jobs when the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, a program which provided jobs for the unemployed, including Native Americans, was ended (Iverson 1998: 191). In total, the Reagan administration cut one billion from the \$3.5 billion allocated to Indian affairs (Iverson: 1998: 190; Wilkins 2002: 165). The impact of these cuts was readily evident. Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, James Watt claimed, "If you want an example of the failures of

socialism, don't go to Russia, Come to America and go to the Indian reservations” (quoted in Iverson 1998: 190). Reagan's own principles of Indian policy were articulated in a statement he made in 1983 in which he deemed Federal assistance an obstacle to Indian self-determination:

It is important to the concept of self-government that tribes reduce their dependence on Federal funds by providing a greater percentage of the cost of the self-government... This administration pledges to assist tribes in strengthening their government by removing the Federal impediments to tribal self-government and tribal resource development (quoted in Prucha 1990: 302).

Gaming assured a brighter future for Native communities after it was ruled in 1987 in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* that states' regulatory laws regarding gambling could not be applied on Indian reservations. The court's ruling upheld the principles articulated by Reagan by stressing that Native “self-sufficiency and economic development... outweighed California's interest in regulating Indian gaming...” (Wilkins 2002: 166). Furthermore, the court ruled that the statute restricting bingo games “...was civil and regulatory in nature, rather than criminal and prohibitive in nature, and thus the state had no authority to enforce the statute on the reservation” (McNeil 1994: 107). The following year, Congress passed the IGRA, permitting specific types of gambling activities to occur on federally recognized reservations. The IGRA specified regulations to protect Indian gaming facilities from crime and to ensure that tribes are the primary beneficiaries of the revenues generated from these ventures. Under the guidelines of the act, the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) was founded as an independent overseer of the ordinances laid out in the law.

The IGRA requires states to negotiate compacts with tribes that seek to open a gaming facility on reservation lands, spelling out the extent of state regulation. The

IGRA defines three classes of gaming and the regulatory jurisdiction over each class. Indian gaming is regulated on three levels: the tribe, state and Federal government. Tribes oversee all regulations pertaining to Class I gaming, which includes games of “minimal value” and traditional games played during social occasions. Class II games include bingo, lotto, pull-tabs. Tribes regulate jurisdiction over these games with “extensive oversight” by the NIGC. Class III gaming includes casino-style gaming and is subject to regulation by the state and Federal agencies, including NIGC, the Interior Department and FBI (Newton and Frank 1994: 206).

The IGRA stipulates that the revenues from tribal gaming must be used for the following purposes only: to fund tribal operations or programs; to provide for the general welfare of the tribe; to promote economic development within the community; to donate to charitable causes; to fund local government. The development of gaming operations on reservations has extricated many tribes from economic hardship and enabled communities to supplement or create programs that had been under-financed, terminated or nonexistent. Revenues from gaming facilities have endowed communities to build new homes and facilities on tribal lands, acquire new operations or land and provide employment opportunities for tribal members and local area residents. According to the National Indian Gaming Association, in 2001 of the 300,000 jobs provided by the 321 Indian gaming facilities in the United States, non-Natives held 225,000, or seventy-five percent. That year, “nearly two hundred tribes generated...\$12.7 billion in revenues from gaming” (Abrams n.d.: 11) and 57% of casino and tribal gaming jobs in Arizona were held by non-Natives (*Ak-Chin O’odham Runner*, Volume XV, No. 13, Page 10). When I stayed at the Harrah's Ak-Chin Resort in 2001 and again in 2004, the hotel staff was

curious about my research. I told them that I was working with the community's museum and they expressed surprise. None were aware that the community had a museum; several members of the staff, including two people who have worked at the resort since it opened, told me that they had never ventured into the community.⁵

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Throughout Native America, there are casino detractors who believe that operating a gaming facility is antithetical to the cultural traditions of their communities. They cite the detrimental influence of gambling and its associated social ills, including the potential for organized crime. Another issue often articulated by those opposed to gambling is the potential for corruption among those in power and the lure of the dollar over the integrity of community interests. Finally, some Indian detractors disagree with the premise of negotiating with states for the rights to own and operate gaming facilities as their sovereign status implies that they deal directly with the Federal government. They assert that passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act undermines their treaty arrangements with the government. It is non-Native detractors that can have the most pernicious impact on Native communities wishing to benefit from IGRA.

Despite the passage of IGRA in 1988, the state of Arizona initially refused to negotiate gaming contracts with tribes within its borders. In response to this noncompliance, several tribes filed suit against the state. While the suit was being decided, the FBI raided casinos located on five Arizona reservations where gaming operations were taking place without requisite compacts. Compact disputes remained

⁵ Though some staff "look Native" they did not identify as members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community.

unresolved until Interior Secretary Babbitt orchestrated the "Great Compromise" in 1993. The compromise stipulated that tribes could operate a specific number of authorized gaming devices and gaming facilities in proportion to the number of enrolled tribal members. The maximum number of slot machines a reservation can operate is 1,400 but no single casino can hold more than 500. The maximum number of gaming facilities a reservation can operate is four; a distance of at least 1.5 miles must separate each. The Great Compromise mandated that tribes pay a per machine fee to the state to regulate gaming operations (McNeil 1994).

Just after the Great Compromise was reached, of the twenty-one federally recognized tribes in the state of Arizona, fifteen negotiated compacts with the state to open gaming facilities. Prior to 1993, no state had ever signed compacts with so many tribes at once.

The Ak-Chin Indian Community formed a joint venture with Harrah's division of Promus Companies, Inc. to open a casino. The Ak-Chin Indian Community negotiated a "management contract with incentive" with Harrah's. Management contracts can provide the management company a flat fee for its service or provide additional commission (incentive) above the flat fee. The contract between Ak-Chin and Harrah's "provides Harrah's with a fee as a percentage of the casino's revenues" (Timeche 1994: 91). Though the terms of the relationship between Ak-Chin and Harrah's is concealed, the "Federal rules that regulate contracts between management companies and Indian tribes [allows] a company that invests substantially in a reservation casino [to] receive up to 40 percent of its profits for seven years" (Meier 1994: D7). On December 28, 1994, Harrah's Ak-Chin opened. The 70,000 square foot casino featured 38,000 square-feet of

gaming space, which included 475 slot machines, a poker room and 500 bingo seats as well as a steakhouse, buffet, deli, snack bar, gift shop and Oasis Lounge where live entertainment is performed.

Harrah's Ak-Chin Resort sits close to the Route 347 South. The complex is visible from a distance since the surrounding area is flat. As one drives into the vast parking lot, one confronts a giant bronze saguaro cactus with an outstretched eagle perched atop it. The sculpture, entitled "The Desert Oasis," reaches fifty-one feet in height and weighs ten tons. The wingspan of the eagle measures thirty-three feet. Water rushes from the base of the massive cactus and cascades down a small mountain of rocks. Standing among the rocks are four larger-than-life bronze figures, presumably Ak-Chin. Dressed in traditional clothes - the women in one-piece camp dresses and the man in a loincloth - they each engage in separate activities. The woman facing the casino's entrance/exit sits with a basket in her lap. It is filled with husked corn and squash. One woman stands at the base of the cactus and reaches for its fruit with a long pole, made to resemble a kuipad, the rib of a dead saguaro used to harvest the saguaro fruit. Another female figure walks with a basket filled with the cactus fruit on her head. The fourth figure is a man who dances, his left foot raised, with a gourd rattle in his right hand and three feathers in his left. The drama of this scene is heightened in the evening when it is lit from below. A plaque to the side of this display reads:

A silent, towering symbol of the Sonoran Desert, the saguaro cactus has provided food and shelter for both the animals and the Ak-Chin O'odham who have lived here since the beginning of time. The saguaro fruit harvest depicted here remains an important tradition and also represents a direct link with "Those Who Have Gone Before," the Hu-Hu-Kam. The Ak-Chin Indian Community continues to remember and honor its traditional way of life while adapting to an ever-changing world. Ak-Chin wishes to share its rich cultural heritage with all in the spirit of

friendship, and to continue to live and work in harmony with people of all cultures and all generations.

On either side of the casino door are two life-sized bronzes. One is a woman weaving a basket. She does not look up at the passerby. On the other side is a woman playing with a young girl who holds a stick with a hummingbird on its tip.

Upon entering the casino, one is confronted by paintings depicting Native people, again presumably Ak-Chin. One of these highly stylized images show women picking cotton. They smile as they bend over to fill the sacks that are slung across their shoulders and hang by their hips. The sun's rays shine through the saguaro cacti in the distance. The cotton field is dotted with colorful flowers. Another panel depicts a saguaro fruit harvest. Cacti are more plentiful in this image and again the sun's rays spill through casting a glow on the scene. The women shown in these images are svelte and dressed in flowing dresses, clearly depicting a time period later than that depicted in the outdoor sculpture. The figures in the paintings have raven black hair and broad, beaming smiles. A friend visiting the casino with me described the scenes as romance novel covers.

The fantastic imagery on view in the casino, where most outsiders have their only glimpse of the community, powerfully reveals the disconnect between Harrah's and the work and mandate of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives. While the EcoMuseum attends to promoting *Him Dak* as a driving principal in its programming, Harrah's utilizes stereotypic depictions, with some minor attempt at cultural relativism, to engage gamblers in an illusion. For one, the painted and sculpted images of Ak-Chin members do not disclose the impact diabetes has on their lives.

On March 21, 2001, the facility expanded. Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort was the first casino hotel established in the metropolitan Phoenix area when a 113,000 square-

foot, two-story hotel was constructed to adjoin the casino. The 146-room resort features a fitness center, an outdoor pool with a swim-up bar, a restaurant and ballroom. During the opening ceremony Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort general manager, Janet Beronio, boasted,

With the addition of the new 146-room hotel, we have significantly expanded the market of potential visitors who will be attracted to the area. This will increase the benefits to both the Ak-Chin people and to the state economy. The increased revenue generation will create capital, which can be used to develop infrastructure, expand services, and provide new jobs. With the completion of our luxury hotel, 100 new jobs have been added, bringing the total number of employees at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort to more than 750 (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner*, Vol. XV, No. 6, March 16 – April 5, 2001).

The revenues generated by Harrah's Ak-Chin eclipse those from AK-Chin Farms, Inc. In 1990, the farm generated \$1.5 million in revenue (Wilkins 2002: 174; DiGiulio 1994: 51). By contrast, in 2002, the 17 Arizona tribes housing gaming facilities earned an estimated \$1 billion a year.⁶ Though tribes do not pay federal or state taxes on income earned on federally recognized tribal land, they do contribute to the state coffers and non-tribal members who work at tribally owned and operated gaming facilities must pay both federal and state taxes on their earnings (Anders 1999: 165). Tribes contribute between one and eight percent of their profits to the state annually, or between \$89 and \$102 million (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner* Volume XVI, No. 24, page 1), used, in part, to fill state budget gaps (Abrams n.d.: 11).

With the passage of Proposition 202 in the fall of 2002, non-gaming tribes can transfer their "slot rights" to gaming communities. The Ak-Chin Indian Community,

⁶ According to the provisions of IGRA, tribes that house gaming facilities are exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. Without tribal consent, federal and state regulators cannot release fiscal information (Anders 1999: 165).

conceivably, can increase the number of slot machines it houses to 998, nearly doubling what it currently operates (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner* Volume XVI, No. 24, page 1; Proposition 202). Exercising their recently won entitlement, Ak-Chin leased the rights to 475 gaming machines from the Kaibab-Paiute, in northern Arizona (Shaffer 2004).

An important provision of this initiative allows tribes to retain a portion (12 percent) of gaming revenues to distribute on their own. In 2004, Ak-Chin Indian Community exercised this option and made contributions to education, transportation, health care services, public safety and economic development within Pinal County. One check in the amount of \$107,297.84 was given to the Pinal County superintendent. These funds are slated to fund parental support programs, the development of a countywide math curriculum and staff training. A second check was provided to the superintendent of Maricopa schools. A third check will be written to support the Arizona State Museum's (ASM) pottery project. This project offers an opportunity for tribal members from communities whose pottery is part of the museum's collection to consult with ASM staff regarding appropriate cultural protocols for handling, storing and displaying ceramics.

Indian owned and operated casinos have provided Native communities with a much needed revenue stream which, in turn, has enabled Native Americans to provide for the exigencies of their communities. Most significantly, however, is the degree of social capital awarded to casino Indians. As tribes engender social and economic leverage in society at large, they are endowed with the powers to mobilize for common purposes. Largely, these purposes target limitations placed on sovereign powers and struggles for self-determination. For example, the unprecedented wealth from gaming has enabled

some tribes to employ lobbyists and public relations firms to advocate on their behalf. Tribes have also made campaign contributions to political candidates and parties that support invigorating Native sovereignty.

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In 2003, the Ak-Chin Indian Community exists within a particularly challenging dichotomy. As the community becomes more deeply embedded in relations with the dominant society, and in turn, more affluent, they are confronted with an epidemic proportion of their members becoming ill with diabetes and succumbing to its ravages. It is in this juncture that the community's ecomuseum, Ak-Chin Him-Dak, is located.

Him Dak is an abstract notion that loosely translates to "way of life" but has a culturally contingent application. *Him Dak* is a strategy the O'odham employ to maintain Native existence "within and beyond domination and exploitation" (Sider and Dombrowski 2001: 204). As a response to the impact of the political economy in which the Ak-Chin Indian Community is embedded, the community has identified *Him Dak* as a locus of difference and separateness where members can assert cultural and political agency. *Him Dak* serves as a claim to cultural distinctiveness, a particular form of indigeneity.

Like the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the related Tohono O'odham community hopes to draw on their heritage and cultural traditions to identify solutions in order to "become stronger." The report on "Community Attitudes Toward Traditional Tohono O'odham Foods" contends that the "destruction of the traditional food system has contributed to the significant loss of many elements of the *O'odham Himdag- Desert People's Way*" (Lopez et. al. 2002: 11). For the O'odham *Himdag* (spelled *Him Dak* in

the Ak-Chin Indian Community) is both a point of entry for illuminating the scope of the communities' needs, a strategy for social mobilization and a means of boundary making and maintenance. *Him Dak* in these ways, becomes a symbolic cultural reference that represents the integrity of O'odham heritage; that which is *Him Dak* is considered to be that which is beyond the reach of outside influences.

In a conversation I had with a staff member at Ak-Chin Him-Dak (here called Ms. Gomez), she described her efforts to reinsert *Him Dak* into her daughter's life. She told me how as a child her family and all of the neighboring families had gardens. Family gardens started to disappear in the mid-1970s when the water table lowered due to misguided government efforts to control flooding in the region and to the poorly conceived wells, which did not yield a sufficient water supply. Many Ak-Chin women started to work outside of the community to help their families make ends meet. Ms. Gomez and her siblings learned English in the first grade of Maricopa Elementary School where teachers would strike Ak-Chin students for speaking "the language" in school. Her family spoke only O'odham at home until she and her siblings returned home from school with welts they received from being hit with a rubber hose. Ms. Gomez's youngest sister benefited from having older siblings teach her some English words and phrases necessary to avoid the hose. Though her parents continued to speak O'odham, many parents in the community decided to only speak English in the presence of their children.

In the 1970s, most men in the community worked for Ak-Chin Farms Enterprise. However, Ms. Gomez told me that by the time the Ak-Chin Harrah's was founded, the Ak-Chin Indian Community "had nothing." Prior to working at Ak-Chin Him-Dak, Ms. Gomez worked at the casino (she held a position in human resources when the casino

first opened). The rules and regulations of working for an Anglo company gave her "culture shock." Harrah's code of behavior was anathema to working for a community member or tribal office, where Ak-Chin cultural mores prevailed. Though she was able to adhere to the strict rules by which she was managed, many other community members could not. As an assistant personnel manager, she held the dubious task of having to discipline her neighbors, fellow Ak-Chin Indian Community members. She was glad to leave her job there and though she believes that the casino's presence in the community is partly responsible for spurring an interest in reinvigorating Ak-Chin *Him Dak*. As visitors to the casino started to ask her questions about the community, she started to realize how much of the community's heritage was lost - songs, stories, the language, ceremonies, etc. Among other members of the community, she began to assume responsibility for teaching the younger generations in the community "who they are."

The changes in the community - notably the loss of the language, the loss of traditional foods and ceremonies - have given urgency for members of her generation, those who still speak or understand the language and remember some of the older traditions, to rejuvenate interest in younger generations. Ms. Gomez told me that her daughter was going to have a "coming out" ceremony, which traditionally took place when a girl had her first menses.⁷ She wants to teach her daughter to become a "whole person," one who "knows and understands" the community's traditions. The "coming out" ceremony has not been practiced at Ak-Chin Indian Community for at least two generations. The "coming out" ceremony announced to the community that the woman

⁷ Shaw calls it a "puberty ceremonial" (1994[1974]: 120)

was ready for the social relations that lead to marriage and to take care of a home. It signaled that she was prepared to take her place in the community. When Anglo people started to infiltrate the community, traditions such as the "coming out" ceremony ended.

Both Shawn and Underhill outline slightly varying accounts of what transpired when a Pima and Papago girl respectively had their first menses. Both Shaw and Chona, the subject of Underhill's ethnography, were sent to a "menstruation hut" where they remained isolated due to the overwhelming power they were believed to possess during that time. Chona describes the diet her mother brought to her as lacking in meat and salt. When both women emerged from their isolation (when they were no longer "dangerous") they were ritually bathed and danced. The dance publicly acknowledged and signified a girl's coming of age to their communities and shortly after, both women were married.

Shawn and Chona contextualize their participation in this ritual as fitting neatly within the social relations of their respective communities. Prior to becoming "maidens" both girls assumed the roles of their mothers' and grandmothers' assistants - waking before dawn to grind cornmeal, fetch water, firewood and prepare meals. Both women's elders instructed them daily to "work hard." Upon coming into their womanhood, Chona and Anna Moore Shaw had been groomed for their roles and responsibilities as O'odham wives and mothers.

Ms. Gomez, like her daughter, did not grow up adhering to the cultural and social mandates that either Shaw or Chona reveal. Reservation life notably altered the social relations within and between the O'odham communities and the social proscriptions that formerly cohered them had been largely replaced by Anglo organizations including religious institutions, modern homes and government-funded schools. Gomez's efforts to

reassert an older practice indicates the ways in which those involved with cultural revitalization in the Ak-Chin Indian Community are responding to conceptions of tradition as detached "from an assemblage of cultural codes and practices" (Whiteley 2003: 715).

I asked Ms. Gomez about her daughter's response to participating in an older ceremony, one that had not been practiced in her lifetime. She told me that in teaching her daughter the "traditions,"⁸ she is trying to teach her daughter to "survive" because it is "difficult." "To live as an Indian person in a non-Native world?" I asked. "Yes," she replied. I sensed from this exchange that perhaps Ak-Chin *Him Dak* was a form of cultural reproduction that had greater meaning for Ms. Gomez and people of her generation than her daughter and other community youth, in large part because the younger generations do not experience the loss of community traditions and practices in the same ways as Ms. Gomez and people of her age group (community members in their late 40s, early 50s).

Ms. Gomez and other staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak are quick to acknowledge that teaching cultural traditions are different from living them. Furthermore, they recognize that the promotion of *Him Dak* will not necessarily alter community members' relationship to it, especially in the face of the current prosperity in the community, which is creating a level of comfort for members affording them opportunities previously denied to them. Yet, alongside this newfound affluence is diabetes, which consumes the energy and attention of many community members'. The responsibilities associated with

⁸ While some practices are still carried on in other O'odham communities, others, such as the "coming out" ceremony is a semi-abandoned practice that is now being reconstituted as "tradition."

overseeing and managing both concerns - the economic and physical well-being of the community - leaves little space for learning about and integrating *Him Dak* into one's understanding of Ak-Chin identity. In our conversation, Ms. Gomez told me how she speaks with her daughter about the foods Ak-Chin used to eat when she was a child. She hopes her daughter can develop a taste for them and perhaps, be part of the growing movement to reintegrate "slow release foods"⁹ into the Ak-Chin diet. In the same breath she stated that her daughter's love of McDonald's cannot be easily shaken and she doubts that she will ever eat the aboriginal diet, even if she understands its health benefits and how it connects her to her history, Ak-Chin *Him Dak*.

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Paradoxically, the protection of cultural integrity from outside interests and the enhancement of distinctive cultural elements are often achieved through relations that enmesh a community in the entanglements with the larger society. Historically, the Ak-Chin Indian Community's strategic political and economic embeddedness in the broader society has simultaneously assisted it in achieving degrees of cultural self-assertion. Presently, the Ak-Chin are fostering *Him Dak* by rendering increased economic self-sufficiency into social, health and education services that attend to cultural traditions and the enhancement of Ak-Chin identity.

⁹ The push to reintegrate "slow release foods" into their diet is one of many efforts by Native Americans to curb the epidemic rate of diabetes. The "slow release" food movement among the O'odham is closely tied with their efforts to reassert *Him Dak* into daily life practices. The diet formerly eaten by O'odham people was comprised primarily of "slow release foods." Most slow release foods consist of complex carbohydrates rich in soluble fiber, such as legumes, which are slowly digested and absorbed into the blood stream.

Since the mid-1980s when the Farm began its irrigation upgrade and the land survey revealed Ak-Chin's material heritage, the community's struggle to balance its interest in development with the intensifying social and physical conditions that impact the population, such as diabetes, have made the renewal of *Him Dak* focal. Most recently, the struggles of the community against the political and economic hegemony of the dominant society - including those that have ensued in efforts to repatriate the excavated objects to the Ak-Chin Indian Community and to open a casino - reveal how Indian sovereignty is "harnessed...to corporate and state interests..." (Sider and Dombrowski 2001: 203). Central to the efforts of the community to reintegrate principles of *Him Dak* and reflect on the self-conscious achievements of the community's forebears is the need to identify specific cultural values and keep them beyond the scope and power of the political economy that controls much of the rest of their lives.

Richard Salisbury asserts that affluence is one of the "factors tending to produce 'ethnicization.'" Looking cross-culturally he reveals how many groups that obtain resources may use them to "enhance aspects of its culture..." (1984: 8-9). Though the excavation described in the previous chapter served as the catalyst for cultural revitalization in the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the casino revenue further activated an interest in cultivating *Him Dak*.

Him Dak for O'odham people engaged in cultural resurgence, including staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak and those involved with the "slow food" movement, are those social aspects that denote a "way of life" that is unique and marginal to mainstream society. *Him Dak* is rooted in Ak-Chin's control of and access to social relations, practices and ideologies that exist outside the political economic sphere in which much of the rest of

their lives is entrenched. Simultaneously, *Him Dak* illuminates the struggle integral to maintaining marginality. Members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, like most Native Americans, recognize the ever-shifting ground on which *Him Dak* stands, and their role in maintaining cultural distance from the dominant culture while supporting and fostering economic and political validation within and by the dominant culture. *Him Dak*, like history, is a construction that must constantly be refashioned. It is formulated with recourse to the past; specifically valorized historic (traditional) elements are selected, shaped and celebrated to hallmark difference and, more accurately, indigeneity (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 149).

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In 2001, Ak-Chin Him-Dak featured two consecutive exhibits about diabetes. Each focused on its causes, effects and potential methods for curtailing its symptoms. The exhibits addressed the historical relationship the community has had with the disease. Specifically, the exhibits identified how changes in diet over time altered the ways in which the O'odham produced, processed and consumed foods. I did not have an opportunity to see the first of the two exhibits. The second exhibit opened in time for the EcoMuseum's annual celebration so that all those who attended the festivities could view the display. The exhibit featured plexiglass cases containing items of the aboriginal diet - "slow release foods" - including tepary and mesquite beans. Though the label copy did not advocate a return to the aboriginal diet, the exhibit informed visitors that limiting refined sugars, explained as a fairly recent addition to the O'odham diet, and exercising regularly could alleviate symptoms of diabetes.

The pair of exhibits can be considered "Act 3" in what Lindenbaum describes as the "dramaturgic form" of epidemics. In this phase "a sense of crisis that elicits individual and collective action" is played out (Lindenbaum 2001: 367). Though diabetes among the O'odham, has been written about extensively by non-O'odham (Brody 1991; Griffin-Pierce 2000; Young 1994; Savage and Bennett 1992), it is only recently that people are activating at the community level. In the Ak-Chin Indian Community the bi-monthly newspaper, the *Ak-Chin O'odham Runner*, features articles regularly about diabetes. Most often, these articles focus on "strategies to normalize blood sugar" and not on ways to reverse the epidemiological trend the Community is undergoing. Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum used the exhibits as an opportunity to act on and against the knowledge and understanding Community members have about the disease in an effort to alter its course and potential change behaviors.

To this end, the exhibit presented a photo display of community members, mostly elders. The captions were excerpted from interviews conducted by a member of the Ak-Chin Him-Dak staff. Each photo subject related his or her personal experience with the disease - all either had diabetes or had relatives with it. Each acknowledged the change in diet from foods commonly eaten by many of them as children to those items more prevalent in the community today as the primary cause of diabetes in the community.

The staff member who produced the exhibit explained to me that she wanted to create a display to which the entire community could relate. Furthermore, she believed that community members would appreciate the EcoMuseum's effort to visit community members to conduct first hand interviews and concretized their concerns into an exhibit. The exhibit gave voice to the community's complicated relationship with diabetes and

indirectly, acquainted visitors with the impact and result of non-Native contact and the incorporation of non-indigenous foods into their lives. By explicating to visitors how the traditional O'odham diet and lifestyle precluded the incidence of diabetes among its members, the exhibits indirectly assert the wisdom of the old ways, *Him Dak*.

The pair of diabetes exhibits illuminated the degree of interaction the EcoMuseum has with the Community and how the staff takes seriously their role to be responsive to the interests and concerns of their primary constituents and integrate them into exhibits and programs. By decentering authority from the museum's staff and endeavoring to prioritize the voices of community members, Ak-Chin Him-Dak attempts to engage with the community in an effort to express common social and cultural concerns. The staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak wishes to shape and reflect a view of the community without objectifying it. In the diabetes exhibit, for example, people are identified by name and quoted, privileging the voices of those featured in the exhibit. The display illuminated how the EcoMuseum is driven, in part, by the notion that the process of planning the exhibition is as important as the product of the exhibit itself. In articulating and presenting cultural issues that are of pressing concern to the community at large, Ak-Chin Him-Dak distinguishes itself as "a process as well as a structure" (Macdonald 1996: 4).

Ak-Chin Him-Dak selected predominantly elders in the community to participate in the exhibit on diabetes. Their participation was critical for several reasons. When Ak-Chin Him-Dak officially opened in 1991, elder members of the community expressed concern about entering a space where the material remnants of their ancestors were housed and displayed. Their concerns prompted the director to shift the programmatic course of Ak-Chin Him-Dak and to recognize the strategic role community elders could

play in revitalizing Ak-Chin culture, *Him Dak*. Though community participation in Ak-Chin Him-Dak's activities may not be affected by the EcoMuseum's methods of engagement, the staff is motivated by the community members' acknowledgment of Ak-Chin Him-Dak's overt efforts to incorporate community voice, literally and ideologically into its endeavors.

As the keepers and framers of *Him Dak*, the EcoMuseum bears the responsibility of garnering, identifying and ascribing cultural and historical significance to elements of Ak-Chin cultural life. Ak-Chin Him-Dak has carefully developed an overarching methodology for achieving these goals; they invest power and authority in the elders of the community who are acknowledged to possess greater historical knowledge and experience than some of the staff members. Though this methodology enables the staff to achieve its desired museological goals, it also serves the purpose of creating transparency. In order to accomplish the objective of the ecomuseum concept, in which the "residents of the community are the curators and the audience," the EcoMuseum has a tacitly defined responsibility to reveal its methods and practices back to the community and to honor community values in doing so (Ak-Chin Him-Dak brochure).

As important as the presentation of community voice is to staff of the EcoMuseum, the audience's response is equally central to any type of presentation. The primary audience at Ak-Chin Him-Dak is the descendants of the staff and the people featured in the photographs; there is limited visitation by non-Native, non-Community members. As an example, featuring a pair of exhibitions on a disease that is epidemic in the region was a way for the EcoMuseum to act responsively to the social and cultural concerns of its main constituency, but also the displays can be viewed as means to

transfer knowledge and information to those genealogically linked to the subjects of the exhibit. Displaying diabetes in a way that connects elder generations with their descendents within the museum walls, makes understanding the disease as a "colonially fuelled issue" more salient and culturally meaningful (Tapsell 2003: 246).

By championing and presenting community members' understandings and modes of framing diabetes, Ak-Chin Him-Dak reaffirmed the principles of cultural identity within the community and also revealed itself as a locus of social reciprocity and political action. These endeavors extend beyond the EcoMuseum's acknowledgement of the community members as the custodians of culture, *Him Dak*. Though the EcoMuseum seeks to bridge a connection between generations, represent modes of self-identification and grant agency to community voices, it is further held responsible for identifying elements of cultural life that have resonance in the present. Ak-Chin Him-Dak, thus both shapes and reflects social relations in the community and assumes the role of negotiator in the nexus between cultural production and consumption (Macdonald 1996: 4).

Of greater interest to the staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak and its constituency alike, however, is the creation and scaffolding of trust in the institution that collects, archives and houses the symbols of the community's culture, *Him Dak*. An unresolvable and underlying tension in Ak-Chin Him-Dak's challenge of revitalizing it's culture is the realization that *Him Dak* is in active decline at the same time that it is being economically and politically rescued and rejuvenated. *Him Dak*, therefore refers to those things that are constantly modified to give meaning to Ak-Chin existence and connect members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community as a group of people who share, to one degree or another, a similar ideological framework and history.

In some sense, the cooperation between the community and the EcoMuseum, which holds as its aim the illumination and revitalization of *Him Dak*, attests to the ways in which the EcoMuseum also evades culture and the multiple ways in which notions about culture are perceived and practiced in the Ak-Chin Indian Community. For example, the rifts that exist within the community around the EcoMuseum's formation and existence, and the role the casino plays in the community have not been explored as subjects for exhibit or programs.

As much as the museum building endeavor is infused with the politics of cultural and historical memory - whose recollections get selected for display, how the past is "constructed in and through the present," and how those memories are portrayed - the meanings people in the community ascribe to their understandings of their history and culture are integral to the creation of the museum (Urry 1996: 48). Though the EcoMuseum focuses on presenting concerns of immediate importance to its audience, in essence reflecting concerns back to the community, it, like most museums, morphs the ordinary into the exotic by its means of display. Merely constructing a case around an item (such as tepary or mesquite beans) or mounting an image on a wall creates distance between the visitor and that which is on view, even if the visitor is related to the subject of the photograph. However, the displays at Ak-Chin Him-Dak are designed not to be contested by its visiting public. Specifically, the EcoMuseum's staff is careful to attend to the ways in which *Him Dak* is conveyed to its audience and constituency, the community. How visitors conceptualize their experiences at the Ak-Chin Him-Dak, what meanings they construct about the exhibits they view, and how those experiences

articulate with conceptions of their own history, identity and connection to place, is of overt concern to the EcoMuseum's staff.

In the fall, 2003, the EcoMuseum hosted the First Annual Diabetes Prevention and Awareness Day. The program illuminated how "the media and food industries cater to our flavors for fat, sweets and carbohydrates..." Visitors were asked to take a quiz that had them identify foods high in sugar, fat and salt and the detrimental impact of eating such foods in large amounts. Rez Robics, an exercise class to Native American music, was held in the classroom. That Ak-Chin Him-Dak provided the venue for this event illustrates how the EcoMuseum has emerged as a social force in an effort to manage and resolve contemporary Community concerns, including diabetes. Though Rez Robics is not exactly a manifestation of *Him Dak*, Ak-Chin Him-Dak is viewed as instrumental in community attempts to alter member's diets and lifestyle habits to promote both a return to healthier eating habits and the revivification of "traditional" ways. In the director's view, *Him Dak* can only be revitalized if the population is healthy enough to engage in it.

Part Two

Museums, Cultures, Histories

Chapter Four

Ak-Chin Him-Dak

We see history where many would like to see only timeless beauty; and we see beauty where some would like us to see only injustice. (White 1997: 216 (16): 34)

The road to Ak-Chin Him-Dak is just off Route 347, a four-lane highway. At the Ak-Chin fire department one makes a right onto Farrell Road, speed limit twenty-five miles per hour. Farrell Road is a long road that stretches nearly a mile to the end of the village. It is not uncommon to see dogs walking or lolling about in the middle of the road. After school and on weekends, if the weather permits, children can be seen walking along the side of the road. The village, until recently, existed solely on this road. To get to the ecomuseum, one must drive through the village, past members' houses on the right and left, the Ak-Chin Bible Church, the newly constructed Recreation Center, the Milton Antone Memorial Park where softball games are held nearly every weekend and the commissary/gas station on the left and tribal offices, including the tribal jail, on the right. One must look for the sign¹ to the ecomuseum to find it; the museum is intended for community members, not tourists. On my first visits to the ecomuseum, I drove past the turnoff several times before I noticed the sign. Ak-Chin Him-Dak has a road named after it – EcoMuseum Road. The ecomuseum is at the end of this road.

¹ When I asked one of the staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum about public (i.e. non Ak-Chin) visitation to the museum, I was told that many people are not aware that the reservation has museum. Though there is a sign for it, the public does not know what *Him-Dak* means and therefore, do not make the turnoff (Aviles, personal communication, 1997).

Like the road sign directing one to it, Ak-Chin Him-Dak does not call attention to itself. Though it may be one of the biggest buildings on the road, it is hardly conspicuous. Architecturally it conforms to the other buildings in the community, which seem to blend into the landscape. The building is conceived to be connected to the community both in its physical design and in its programmatic intent.

The Ak-Chin Harrah's Casino Resort, featuring a 146-room hotel and an amoeba shaped pool with a swim-up bar, abuts the highway. It is conspicuous not only because of its location but because of its pseudo-Moorish architectural design. At night its lights illuminate the highway for at least a half a mile. My initial stay in the resort was during the summer of 2001, just a few months after the hotel opened. I stayed there again in 2004. Though summer weekdays seemed slow, on Friday afternoon, the parking lot filled to capacity and by Saturday morning every chair around the pool was occupied and there was a wait to be seated at the hotel's restaurant. Though Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives recently expanded its hours to open on Saturdays, weekend revelers rarely visit it. Nor is it really intended for them. As much as the Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort is for visitors to the community, Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives is for and about the community.

Though at first glance these two structures seem wholly unrelated to one another, they co-exist in interrelated and significant ways. Harrah's presence in the Ak-Chin Indian Community, in part, serves to provide non-Native visitors to the community an opportunity to fulfill historically residual fantasies about American Indian people. The social, economic and political forces that entitle Native Americans to open a casino on tribal lands simultaneously bank on, quite literally in many cases, the distinctiveness of

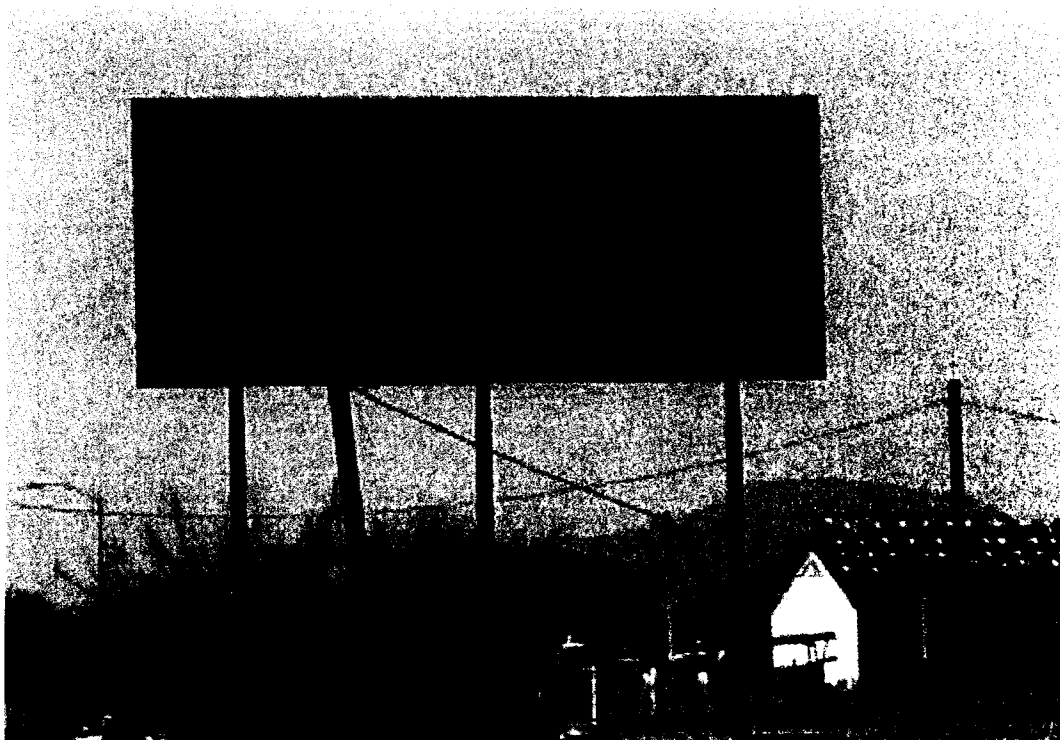


Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 6– Ak-Chin Indian Community sign

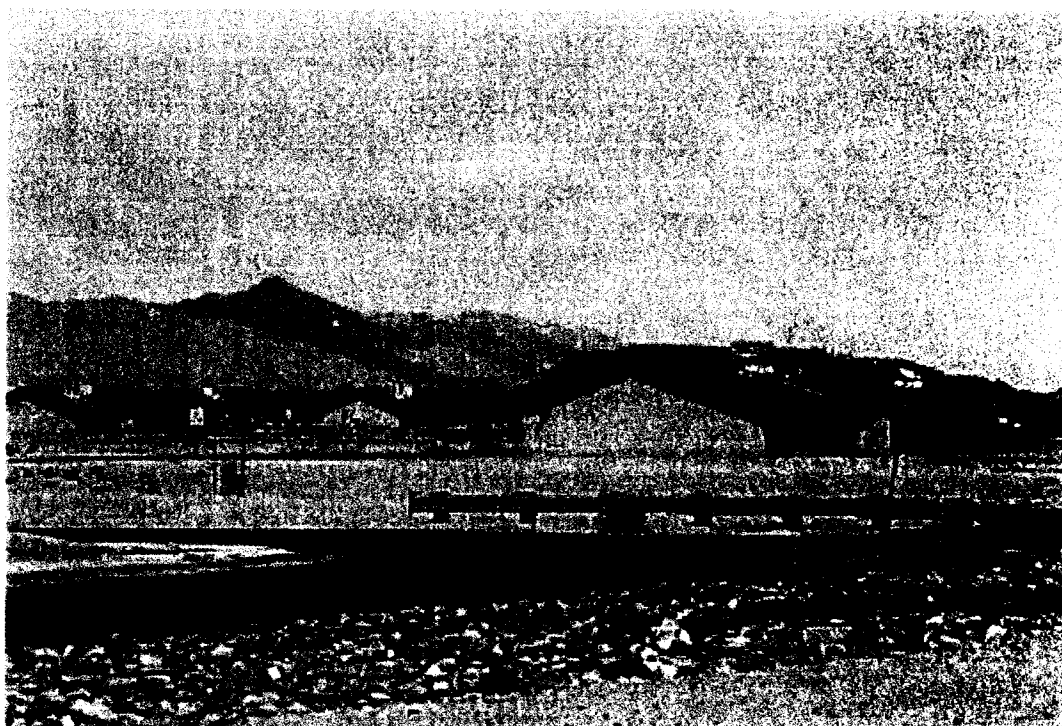


Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 7 – Houses in the Ak-Chin Indian Community

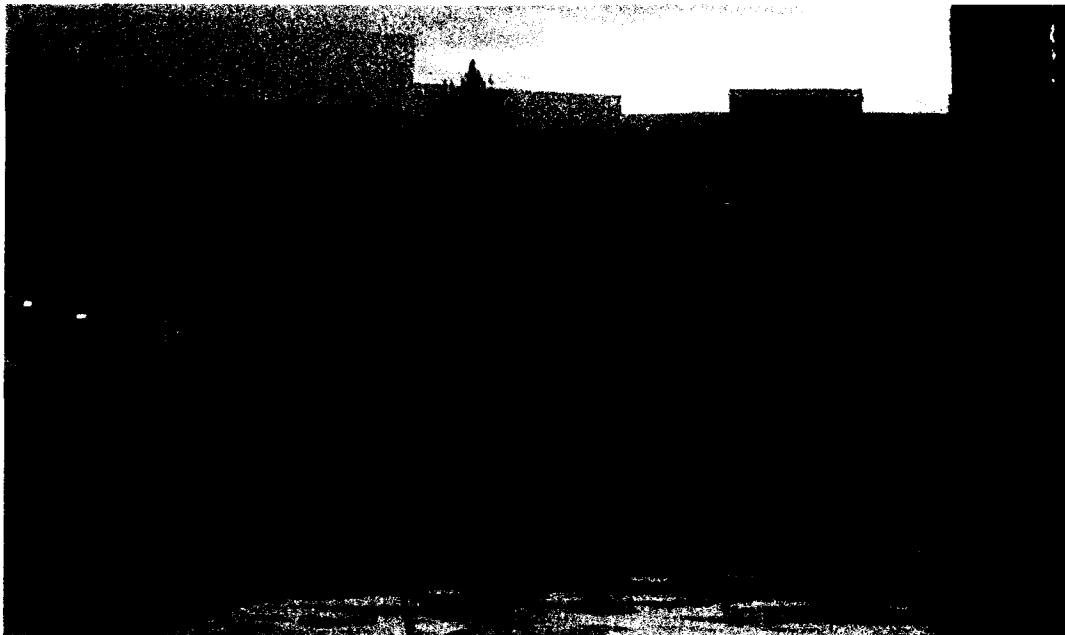


Photo: Gaetanna De Gennaro

Figure 8 – Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort, poolside

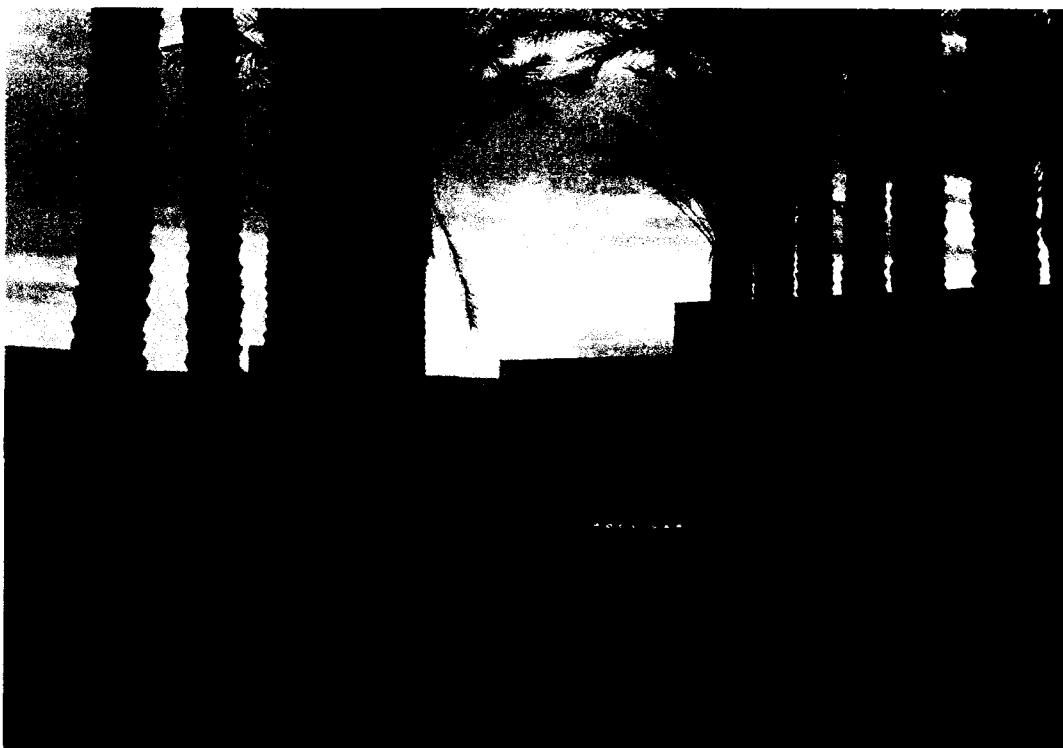


Photo: Gaetanna De Gennaro

Figure 9 – Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort

Indianness from the dominant society. Casinos on tribal lands, at once incorporate Indian communities into the larger society, undermining and destroying their particularity, and simultaneously “depend upon and create” Native distinctiveness (Sider 1993: 280).

Though few visitors to Indian casinos overtly support Native politics – if indeed, they even fully recognize contemporary struggles among Native people – they economically enrich Indian communities. Few visitors to Indian operated casinos discern the effects of economic prosperity within these communities. Rather, casinos, such as the one in the Ak-Chin Indian Community, can serve to maintain social division between the dominant society and the social and cultural realities of life for Indian people.

The proximity of the Ak-Chin Indian Community to Phoenix makes Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino Resort a lucrative venture and attracts people from outside the reservation to work there. During my stays at the resort I asked most of the hotel lobby staff if they were from the community – none were. Though several staff were community members few seemed to work in public view at the hotel. Ak-Chin Community members who did work in the resort mostly worked in the casino, behind the scenes and as hotel maids.

In a recent issue of the *Ak-Chin O’odham Runner*, Harrah’s Development System (HDS) Program was featured (Vol. XVIII, No. 6, March 19 - April 1, 2004). HDS Program is directed at “high potential” Ak-Chin Indian Community members to “assume supervisory/management positions in the Casino.” The program is intended to “provide participants with an overall understanding of the Casino business, while developing a foundation for leadership, management and business skills.” The program “lasts approximately 2 - 3 years” at which point the program participant “applies for a position...and is both qualified and accepted.” Alongside this program description was

an advertisement listing the "Job Fair" planned to recruit candidates for the HDS Program.

In direct contrast to Harrah's, all of the staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives are members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community or are culturally committed to the community's cultural interests. Cultural distinctiveness is an operating principle in the foundation of Ak-Chin Him-Dak. As noted earlier, the museum was created at a point when the Ak-Chin community became more deeply integrated into that from which they were asserting their difference. As the social processes that could ensure the continued production of "intangible cultural heritage" became more corrupted by other social processes, namely economic development and engagement with the dominant society, Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives became focal as a site where cultural heritage was valued and protected. Ak-Chin Him-Dak clearly attests to the community's incorporation into the dominant social system, yet it stands as a testament to efforts to retain Ak-Chin cultural, political and economic distinctiveness. The museum was erected, both physically and socially, as a means to understand and envision the past, the present and the future in ways that permit or encourage the community to maintain authority over its history (Sider 1993: 279).

*

In Chapter Two, I provided an abbreviated history of legislation enacted to protect tangible cultural heritage, objects and sites. The focus of this legislation was on the protection of these forms of heritage for their significant "historic and scientific value" and not for their "cultural and spiritual values" (Puri 2001: 101). This legislation is in opposition to widespread Native views about values that extend beyond the material and

into arenas of intangible heritage - songs, stories, dance, rituals, languages and "other arts that reflects the cultural and social identity of a community" (Pratt 2001: 104). One of the many tensions that exist for those who aim to protect intangible cultural heritage is negotiating the social processes, which formerly ensured their continuation. The tensions are not uniform: language issues, for example, exist in a different field of tensions from those associated with the slow food movement. As a community, such as the Ak-Chin Indian Community, attends to the protection and revitalization of its past heritage, it must also recognize the need to maintain living heritage and the social protocols by which a community presently lives.²

Language is considered central to the revitalization of Native cultures largely because it is through oral transmission that social values are conveyed and that histories and ceremonial knowledge are passed down through the generations (Reyhner 1997: 5; St. Clair 1982: 6). For Native people, oral histories root communities to particular places and explicate changes; they provide moral compasses for people to follow and they convey culturally sanctioned behaviors; they connect listeners and tellers to a common identity, often asserting particular perspectives within the tribal heritage (Wilson 1997: 111). Dashka Slater writes, "language...[c]onstructed over successive generations...embodies the cumulative memory of a people's beliefs and knowledge, their stories, their names for things, the conventions that they use to tell each other about the world" (2004: 77). Native stories differ from non-Native oral traditions in that they are "grounded in material circumstances of everyday life and capable of addressing large questions about the consequences of historical events" (Cruikshank 2002: 5). Narratives

² For a fuller discussion of Cultural Conservation see Seitel 2001.

recount events that are connected to identifiable, physical locations (Howe 2002). The central importance of language retention is its role in upholding the autonomy and identity of the community so that the oral transmission of cultural histories can be passed down through the generations. St. Clair epitomizes this notion by writing, "when the language goes, so does the culture..." (1982:6). It is for these reasons that cultural renewal projects, like that undertaken by Ak-Chin Him-Dak, have devoted considerable energy on language renewal.

The language program at Ak-Chin Him-Dak is one of the only codified programs at the ecomuseum. The staff of the museum in the mid-1990s developed a language curriculum with the assistance of a Tohono O'odham linguist. The challenge of the project was multifold. The community recognized that the number of speakers of "the language" was declining and that, therefore, it was threatened (Crawford 1997: 51). Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives focused on "restoring" and "revitalizing" the use of O'odham through the development of a curriculum, intended for the community's youth.

A youth language program was designed not only to introduce and teach the language, which is spoken primarily by adults over the age of 35, but also to build self-esteem and further awareness of and pride in Ak-Chin identity among the youth of the Ak-Chin Indian Community. The study of language is often closely associated with other forms of cultural revitalization by Native communities, including the re-introduction of traditional arts and crafts and the recounting of oral histories. Many Native people assert that the chronic dispossession they suffered through colonization can only be assuaged through a reconnection with their cultural property and languages.

In 1989, The National Park Service was directed to ascertain the needs of Indian communities to manage, research, interpret, protect and develop "sites of historical significance on Indian lands" (Parker 1990). To that end, the National Park Service surveyed tribes in the United States. Their findings were published in a report, submitted to Congress in 1990, entitled *Keepers of the Treasures: Protecting Historic Properties and Cultural Traditions on Indian Lands* which noted that, tribes seek to preserve their cultural heritage as a living part of contemporary life.

This means preserving not only historic properties but languages, traditions and lifeways. Preservation of heritage is seen as a key to fighting such contemporary problems as alcoholism and drug abuse, which flourish where society is in stress. Preservation can help to restore structure and pride to tribal society, providing direction from the past that is vital to the future (Parker 1990: i).

These sentiments were reinforced in the Native American Language Act of 1990, which affirms that, "There is convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity is clearly and directly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child or student" (PL 101-477 Sec. 102 (60)).

Similarly, Gorton and Guglielmo assert that the impetus to establish Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives was part of their struggle "to preserve the integrity of its identity" resulting from greater integration with the dominant culture (1992: 37). They allege that the displacement of the O'odham language by English, the preclusion of traditional activities such as aboriginal food production, basket weaving by modern technology and the ever-greater proximity to non-Native society have eroded markers of Ak-Chin cultural heritage. As a means to enhance cultural pride, the reintegration of

O'odham language into the community is also closely tied to efforts to combat diabetes. A recent article in the New York Times cited a study published in the British Medical Journal which "suggested that building self-esteem actually helped a group of Native Americans manage their obesity and diabetes better than did conventional counseling about diet and exercise" (Epstein 2003: 81). As a result, Ak-Chin expressed "an urgency to reconnect the community, especially the younger generations, with their land, customs, history and language" (Gorton and Guglielmo 1992: 37).

Museum staff, therefore, initiated a plan to develop a language program. In many ways, the Ak-Chin Indian Community is fortunate to have more than a handful of people who speak the language fluently. According to Michael Krauss's formulation on language viability, the Ak-Chin Indian Community falls into Category C, consisting of "languages spoken by the middle-aged or grandparental generation and up only" (1996: 17). Though some Ak-Chin youth hear the O'odham language spoken at home on a daily basis, few speak it fluently or even proficiently. According to Krauss, the fact that it is not spoken by the younger Ak-Chin generations nearly assures that the language will not survive.

Those over the age of thirty-five learned the Ak-Chin language as their first language³. Most of them did not learn to speak English until they entered the first grade. Many members of the generation of community members over the age of forty attended boarding schools off the reservation where they were punished for speaking O'odham. A direct result of their attendance was the disuse of the Ak-Chin language by that

³ The results of a recent language survey taken in the community indicated that "those Community members who were above the age of 35, said that their first language was O'odham" (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner* Vol. XVIII No. 17, p. 4).

generation who were induced to experience shame about their culture and intellectual capacities (Crawford 1997: 56).

One woman, now in her fifties, described how as a young girl her parents relocated to Los Angeles as part of the Voluntary Relocation Program.⁴ Her first language was O'odham and she had great difficulty learning English. In her new school in California, the teacher made each student stand up in class and introduce him/herself. She conveyed to me how humiliated she was doing this and she vowed not to make her own children suffer in this way. She, therefore, did not speak O'odham to them. Her children, now grown, ask her why she only spoke English to them. She said that she could not have anticipated a time during her life when their language would be valued.

Further erosion of the use of O'odham was propelled with the adoption of a tribal constitution in 1961 when the community made the decision to conduct all tribal business, including council meetings, in English. Motivated by the opportunity for economic development, the Ak-Chin Indian Community activated an internal language shift.

In an effort to develop a language program, the ecomuseum staff contacted elders in the community so that audio recordings could be made of them speaking. The tapes were transcribed and from that an orthography was developed so that a written

⁴ Due to the lack of economic opportunities on reservations, the Voluntary Relocation Program was launched following the Second World War. Hardly "voluntary," the program was utilized by those who were unable to find work in their communities. The program provided reservation Indians with one-way bus tickets to urban areas, low-cost housing and clothing. Cities included in the program were Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, San Jose, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dallas. One-third of the program participants became dissatisfied with urban life and returned to reservations.

curriculum could be developed. It was explained to me that the pronunciation at Ak-Chin differs subtly from the ways in which the Tohono O'odham and the Akimel O'odham (Pima) pronounce words. It was important to the staff of the ecomuseum, following their elders' lead, that in the formation of this system of writing the dialect be specific to the Ak-Chin. Elders were also instrumental in directing the content of the curriculum. Elders signed consent forms and were informed about the development of a curriculum and how it would be used in the community. I was told that they were wary at first because their notions of museums were not positive. However, after the staff explained that the museum was an ecomuseum and more of a center for the community (as opposed to a traditional, hierarchically structured museum), and that the role of the staff is to "help the community" and "to take care of what's here" (Aviles, personal communication, 1997), elders willingly acquiesced.

*

Community elders play very significant roles in regard to the activities that take place at Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, informing the staff as to the appropriateness of programs. Though the excavation on the farm impelled the museum project, it became apparent to the museum committee that many members of the community lacked substantial cultural understanding. As part of the inaugural exhibit, when the museum opened in 1991, archaeological material was on view. However, some elder members of the community who had been taught to maintain distance from grave goods, expressed discomfort entering a building that housed and displayed objects that had been unearthed. The director of the museum told me that one community member attended a program at Ak-Chin Him-Dak when it first opened but refused to return

knowing that archaeological objects resided in the museum.⁵ The elders' response coupled with the understanding that a portion of the objects was grave goods, prompted the director of the museum to mandate the removal of archaeological objects from public display. Only those objects that were collected by the museum subsequent to the excavation are sanctioned to be placed on view – baskets, sewing machines, quilts, paintings, photographs, both contemporary and from the ecomuseum's archives, and other art produced by the community. The elders readily welcomed the change in programmatic focus to language and the museum staff was charged with creating a language curriculum for children. Their participation was deemed essential to the success of the program; the elders lent a legitimacy among the community members "on whose cooperation the success of the program depended" (Cooley and Ballinger 1982: 95).

The curriculum was intended to be taught, start to finish, over a five-week period, when the Ak-Chin Him-Dak summer youth program was in session. It was organized to be cumulative and increasingly abstract, starting with greetings and moving to relationships, currency, colors, time, days of the week, anatomy, body parts, personal hygiene, choices, emotions, values and responsibilities. The scope and sanctioned lexicography and lesson plans were directed by conversations with elders. The museum staff identified the specific sections for inclusion, divided them up and went out to interview elders about words that correlated to those sections. Conversations with community elders revealed that the curriculum would not be comprehensive, as there

⁵ The director of the ecomuseum told me that one elder in the community called Ak-Chin Him-Dak the "House of Bones."

were things that the elders believed should not be taught formally. While they agreed that "preserving" the language as a form of traditional knowledge is essential, they acknowledged that social processes in which language is transmitted could not be conveyed in written form, which dissociates a language from its "context of usage" (St. Clair 1982: 8).⁶ Implicit in oral traditions is how the stories change over time as different tellers and listeners convey different perspectives. Cruikshank explains, "oral tradition [is] less evidence about the past than... a window on the ways the past is culturally constituted and discussed" (2002: 13).

Methodologies employed today to record orally transmitted stories and information often do not comply with indigenous traditions. Though many communities, including the Ak-Chin Indian Community, have decided to record languages and stories, they must decide how recordings will be made available to future generations. Traditionally, some stories could only be recounted at certain times in the year and to particular age groups. Some were to be heard only by men or women, or by specific kin groups. In some communities, specific people or families had the sole "rights" to stories and were considered "owners" of that information.⁷

⁶ As early as 1978, Underhill wrote about the "furor...about Indian languages dying out" and suggested at the O'odham's hesitancy to linguistic inscription. Specifically, she noted that though a lexicon was being developed "by 'Anglos' with Papago oversight...the People [Papago] prefer a tape recorder, which does away with writing" (1985 [1979]: 96)

⁷ Staff at the Makah Cultural and Research Center (MCRC) also recorded the community's elders. To honor the mode of traditional communication, MCRC determined that the archives in which the recording were held would not be accessible by "the general public, researchers, or even certain tribal members unless the contributing elder expressly gives permission" (Kreps 2003: 108).

Given the cultural nuances of devising new methodologies for teaching the language via a written curriculum, its framers realized that the language would need to be modified to fit the new means of transmission. One example that was highlighted for me several times was in the anatomy section, “private parts” were not included. I inquired about the possible (probable) loss of words if they were not included and was told that that was okay and understood. The codification of a language curriculum based on an oral tradition divorces the student from the teacher and the cultural and social embeddedness of the mode of communication. Furthermore, systematizing a language system to be studied in this way governs what is learned and how and what is not to be explored. Whiteley writes about inscribing a formerly non-literate language: "In the transition to literacy...language is often flattened, secularized, and further relativized: It is reduced to a symbolic code largely lacking in constitutive agency, except... metaphorically" (2003: 718).

Before the curriculum was instituted, the museum staff was tasked with teaching classes using lessons they developed. Though some staff members were familiar with the language, others were not. One staff member used audio tapes, to learn Ak-Chin words, their definitions and proper pronunciations. Through the process of developing a curriculum, even those who spoke the language as children and young adults were introduced to words with which they were unfamiliar.

The focus of the curriculum was on developing a lexicon, though older and more advanced students learn to speak and write sentences. Most O'dham words could not be directly translated from Ak-Chin to English; numbers, animals, and colors were the exception. Some words describe the function of the thing it describes, others represent

traditional roles people played in the community and traditionally esteemed values. In practice teaching the curriculum, instructors needed to understand the role of the words, not simply how to pronounce and translate them. For example, words for the months of the year translate to activities that were specific to those times of year. The month May translates to “mesquite bean ripening,” September is called the month of “dry grass.” For some words, an understanding of Ak-Chin culture is requisite.

For many members of the staff, practice teaching was their first experience with public speaking. Staff expressed to me the swell in confidence they experienced as a result of practice teaching. One person described her discomfort in leading tours and getting up in front of a group of people. The training she underwent has enabled her to teach with confidence.

The curriculum was initially implemented in 1996 as part of the summer school program instituted at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. The program is open and free to any child living on the reservation between the first and twelfth grades. The program begins each year in early June. At the beginning of the summer session, the rooms are filled with kids - nearly 30 in total. The day begins at 8:30 in the morning. For nearly four hours they, divided into two sections based on their age, meet with the museum staff to learn about their community's history. I learned that one of the tacit overarching agendas of the program is to cultivate comfort of young people in the museum. On many days, the only visitors to the museum were the children who participated in this summer program. Initially discouraged by the lack of visitation to the museum, I realized that I wore my non-Native lens when viewing the museum in this way. My sentiments were further endorsed by research I had conducted on the role of tribal museums which acknowledged

that many tribal museums are “marginal to the societies they profess to serve and represent” (Fuller and Fabricius 1994: 657). The distance – both physical and intellectual – I have had since my last visit has provided me with an entirely new, different perspective on this circumstance. I presently view the visitation to the museum solely by young community members as an endorsement of the ecomuseum’s success in meeting its intended mission.

Little hands of Ak-Chin children imprint the concrete circumference of the building. The decorative element serves multiple purposes. In planning the facility, the community determined that the facility would serve the needs and desires of the community. It was not intended to be a tourist destination. The primary audience would be young children of the community, who lacked personal understanding of Ak-Chin cultural heritage, which the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak believed impacted their lives beyond the confines of the reservation.⁸ The imprinted hands, therefore, represent the primary constituency of Ak-Chin Him-Dak, those for whom programs are designed and intended. The connection of the young people whose hands graced the foundation of the building is both a literal one – they are physically connected to the ecomuseum – and a metaphoric one. Children, as future culture bearers, are tied to learning about their heritage in an institution, though one of the community’s own creation.

⁸ In 2001, the community's educational liaison informed me that students from Ak-Chin Indian Community comprise 10 to 15 percent of the Maricopa elementary school population. That figure drops to 3 percent in the high school. In 2000, the community had less than 5 students graduated from high school. The director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives told me that many students from the community remain partially illiterate.

In April 2001, the ecomuseum celebrated its tenth year anniversary. As part of the commemoration, the museum exhibited photographs of community teenagers next to images of them as 5 or 6 year olds, when they were in Head Start. The photographs of the young children were taken just after they had left their hands marks in the concrete ledge in front of the museum. Images of those same children were recaptured ten years later. Without any label copy other than the names of the children, the portraits spoke for themselves. Community visitors to the museum could identify the kids by name and their relations. Many of them had attended or were still attending the Ak-Chin Him-Dak summer program.

For five weeks each summer, students from the community attend morning programs at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. The group of children age eight to twelve is larger than that of older children. For them, the day begins with language review. "Sight words" are reviewed with the younger children. For those students who have participated in the Ak-Chin summer program previously, many of the words are recognized and easily repeated. For others in the class, the words can be tongue twisters. New lessons are then introduced.

Some language lessons are contextualized for students, providing them with cultural understandings of historical meanings for expressions, words or values. When one instructor began teaching the words that describe articles of clothing, she introduced her lesson by explaining that "a long time ago" O'odham men wore breechcloths and women wore wrap-around skirts without tops. Non-Natives frowned upon O'odham aboriginal clothing. The instructor described how Europeans passed an ordinance forbidding O'odham people from dressing in their indigenous attire when visiting town,

presumably Maricopa. They were only permitted to enter predominantly non-Native spaces wearing European-style clothing. The instructor told the class that the elders still speak of a tree just outside the town where they'd change from their own "Indian" clothes into European clothes before they went any further. They left their clothes at the foot of the tree and would return to the same tree to change back on their way home.⁹ She then proceeded to teach the words for those items forbidden by non-Native society: breechcloth, wrap-around dress and sandals. She explained O'odham words were added to the Ak-Chin lexicon to describe non-Native items such as new types of clothing. She related some of these words to the students: tie, socks, hat, shirt, jacket, underwear, sweater, and pants.

⁹ Anna Moore Shaw, in her autobiography, *A Pima Past*, tells a version of the story recounted by the language instructor at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. She writes,

"Back in the old days when Phoenix was just a small town, the Pimas [Akimel O'odham] would go there to sell their artifacts and buy a few groceries for their families. But the pioneer settlers could not stand the sight of naked Indians. Oh no! Too obnoxious!

"Finally a city ordinance was made. Hereafter, the Indians must wear trousers or be thrown in jail for indecent exposure. An interpreter told the Pimas about their misfortune: 'You must wear white man's clothes or be arrested and thrown in jail.'

"*Tt has wo t-juh?* (What shall we do?)' cried the men, for money was scarce. They needed to seel their handicrafts to buy food.

"Then a young brave had a bright idea. 'I know! Let's buy one or two overalls. Then we'll take turns wearing them into town!' A basket was passed around and each person threw in his few coins. Soon there was enough for the purchase of two pairs of overalls.

"It so happened that there was a mesquite thicket nearby, not chopped down by the white man's ax. This chaparral was near the city, and it was just the right spot for the Indians to change their clothes....When it was evening and all had bought their groceries, they rolled up their overalls and safely hid them in the thorny branches of the mesquite, Then they mounted their ponies and started for home, loaded down with good food for their families...

"The Pima braves were laughing at jokes, yelling, and singing, breaking the evening stillness, If the whites only knew of the trick they had used! It was a red letter day when the Pimas solves their problem with their ingenuity" (1994 [1974]:113-144).

Though the ostensible purpose of this lesson was to teach students that the Ak-Chin Indian Community has changed since the time of their elders, the instructor revealed the ways in which the generation of people who witnessed and participated in this form of cultural modification also found ways to subvert it and that, by extension, Ak-Chin people have historically found ways to maintain their identity despite the rules and restrictions placed upon them by Euro-Americans. Her lesson imparted methods of resistance recognized and utilized by elders in the community to assert their distinctiveness from the dominant society and maintain the community's boundedness. The language lesson concluded by showing students that members of Ak-Chin were able to incorporate outside effects into their community (and into their vocabulary).

The conclusion one could draw from this lesson is that wearing someone else's clothes is not a denial of one's own cultural identity nor does it necessarily generate assimilation. The story imparts that though the Ak-Chin acquiesced to the mandate to cover up their bare chests and legs they did so in ways of their own creation and choosing, by hiding specific cultural idioms, they were able to preserve them. In the story, the Ak-Chin claim their privacy by going behind the tree to change to change. The tree acted as a shield, which kept the non-Native gaze at bay. Within the confines of their own community, they held onto their identity, in part, by maintaining their indigenous (pre-European) dress code. That the tree existed outside both the Ak-Chin Indian Community and Anglo town is important; the story reveals the Ak-Chin's capacity for demarcating boundaries that both claim privacy necessary for cultural maintenance and assert distance from non-Native society.

The story was presented ahistorically - dates, places and names were not identified by the instructor – and thus became parabolic, serving as a way to connect students to a set of meanings, practices and morals. The lesson conveyed, in part, requisites for membership into the Ak-Chin Indian community, and ways to attend to the maintenance of marginality, distance and distinctiveness. The fact that modifying one's fashion is no longer necessary to maintain marginality is irrelevant. The story serves as a marker for cultural identity and belonging.

Though the museum was envisioned to hold material culture, stories (narratives) play an important role in the formation of culturally specific museums and the communities in which they reside. Benedict Anderson discusses the role of museums as part of nation building. Their role, in part, is to guard local tradition. Anderson's work pays close attention to those things that are collectable and replicable and does not attend to written narratives or programs produced and practiced by and within museums. Though stories are not collected in the same fashion as material culture, they can be used, revealed and archived with similar purpose. Using Anderson's formulation, stories can serve to "illuminate...[a community's] thinking about its domain" and impart the "bounded" and "determinate" qualities specific to the community from which they emanate (1983: 184).

Staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak are cognizant that codifying literacy with their formerly orally transmitted language is a political action that serves to simultaneously aid in the continuance of traditional practice and impede it by modifying the mode of communication. By embracing a more formal pedagogical approach to the renewal of language, Ak-Chin Him-Dak chose to "intervene in the course of their cultural history" in

an effort to maintain "a body of knowledge that, although it is changed in significant ways, can still serve as an anchor point for identity and a sense of belongs..." (Cooley and Ballenger 1982: 92 & 101).

During my most recent visit to the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the spring 2004, the "Cultural Resources" arm of Ak-Chin Him-Dak was conducting surveys in the community on language use among the adults. The community's newspaper ran a quarter page announcement about the survey noting,

Our Elders (the wise ones) have shown great concern on the possibility of losing our O'odham Him-Dak and Neok [lanugage] and because of this concern, the...Him-Dak Museum [is] working with the Elders to try and find some solutions to preserving our O'odham Him-Dak and Neok (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner* Vol. XVIII, No. 9, May 9 - 20, 2004).

The language survey results indicated that "a third of the Community [are] fluent in the O'odham language, a third [are] somewhat fluent and a third [do not] know the language" (*Ak-Chin O'odham Runner* Volume XVIII No. 17, p.4). Ninety percent of the community members who took the survey "agreed strongly" that the community teach the O'odham language to those who do not know it. To that end, the Cultural Resources Language Survey team presented a proposed budget to start a language program to the tribal council. They are also applying for a grant from the Administration of Native American (ANA)¹⁰ to develop a year-round program in language instruction. The director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak was particularly excited about the possibilities of a permanent language division in the community, one that is fully funded and has a dedicated staff.

¹⁰ The Administration for Native American administers funding under the Native American Languages Act of 1992. The Native American Languages Act of 1992 established a program of grants to tribes and Native American organizations to support a range of activities aimed at ensuring the survival and continued vitality of Native American languages.

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As central as language education is to the mission of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, the staff continues to produce exhibitions. A new exhibition is generally planned to open in conjunction with a community celebration, Ak-Chin Him-Dak's annual anniversary celebration in April being the most significant one.¹¹ The inaugural exhibitions featured at Ak-Chin Him-Dak's opening in 1991 contained items donated or loaned by community members, displays highlighting various tribal departments and their roles in the community and some objects from the archaeological excavation that prompted the foundation of the ecomuseum. As noted earlier, the director of the museum became sensitized to concerns of elders' views about the display of archaeological materials after this initial display. Heeding these community members' concerns and interests, the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak altered the focus of the museum's exhibits to look to contemporary conditions in the community.

In 2000 – 2001, Ak-Chin Him-Dak took a reflexive look at diabetes and the pervasive role it currently plays in the community. To do this, the staff interviewed and photographed elders in the community about their impressions of diabetes, which has become epidemic. The photographic portraits lined two walls of the museum. Quotes from their interviews formed the label copy, placed just below the images. Two of the respondents did not have the disease. Both ascribed their health to the fact that they favor "traditional foods" over foods commonly eaten by the community, most notably fast food.

¹¹ This annual event differs greatly from a ceremonial occasion, such as the "coming out" ceremony described in the previous chapter.

In the summer of 2001, a group visiting from the Tempe YMCA was taken through the exhibit by one of the staff members. She began her program by informing the visitors that the exhibits are mainly intended for community people and that the exhibit was designed to provide them with information about diabetes. She noted the severity of the illness in the community by citing the example of a seven-year-old community member who was recently diagnosed with type II diabetes, also called adult onset diabetes.

The staff member giving the tour was primarily responsible for creating the ecomuseum's exhibits. For this display, she identified plants and foods that were common to the Ak-Chin prior to European contact, including mesquite and tepary beans. She told the group that though some people still eat aboriginal foods as part of their diet, most do not. She concluded this segment of the tour by noting that the museum in particular is interested in having the tribal council focus more directly on this problem.

The display, which communicated information about how the disease functions in the body, ways to assist in lessening its effects should one become afflicted by it, and direct quotes from members of the community, was part of the ecomuseum's strategic focus to make itself more accessible to community visitors. Through the gallery exhibits, programmatic initiatives (such as the language program) and research efforts including collecting oral histories and community photographs, Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives has sought to create an environment that encourages community members to develop personal responses to the ecomuseum's dealings.

Visiting groups to the museum typically do not participate in the museum's programs. If they call in advance for a guided tour, they are provided with an explanation

of the exhibits on display in the museum's building. On occasion, the tour extends to a look and discussion of the surrounding grounds including a reconstructed mud house. One of the staff members might provide visitors with a basketmaking demonstration. Some tours extend to the St. Francis Church, constructed in the early 1920s. Built by members of the community, its exterior was fabricated from adobe bricks, the interior, including a frescoed ceiling, was fashioned from dried ribs of saguaro cactus. The church functioned both as a house of worship and a one-room schoolhouse for the youth of the community. Classes were taught in the mission chapel. In 1939, a schoolhouse was build adjacent to the church. Shortly after the teacher, who hailed from the Gila River Indian Community, became ill and returned home, the school closed. The building became a community meeting place until it went into disuse. Catholic services are currently held in it each Sunday and on holy days and special occasions, such as weddings. Efforts to restore the structures are now underway.

The basket weaving demonstrations organized for non-community members visiting Ak-Chin Him-Dak illuminate techniques that were passed from generation to generation. The basketweaver who is now on staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak transferred to the ecomuseum from the casino where she was employed as a cleaning woman. She now works in cultural resources, developing an adult language program. She informed me that she had been waiting for a "long time" to transfer to a position at the museum. When a job finally opened at the museum, she was delighted. She grew up in the community, speaks her language fluently, and is one of the few practicing basketweavers in the community. In our daily conversations, she expressed her belief that Ak-Chin Him-Dak was a place where her talents, skills and expertise would be recognized and could be

utilized. Her experience in the casino lacked the same community sensibility she speaks of when she discusses her role at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. Several members of the community expressed similar sentiments. They acknowledged that the casino alleviated the financial strain imposed on the community in the 1970s and 1980s but that it introduced an unfamiliar ethic. Though no one ever articulated anything overtly antagonistic about the casino, I was told that the expectations the casino management has of its staff do not conform to community values¹².

During her demonstrations, the basketweaver, Louisa, would lay out her materials on a table for visitors to view – beargrass, yucca, devil’s claw and a bowl of water in which she soaked her fibers. Baskets were on display in different stages of completion. She demonstrated the process of weaving a basket and described the method for collecting and cleaning the materials laid in front of them. On several occasions, she discussed with visitors the increasing difficulty that weavers in the area have obtaining materials. Much of the land in the immediate area is privately owned or government land. In order to gather basket materials from government land, one must apply for a permit. The reduction in raw materials, however, is largely due to the declining water table in the region. Several of the fibers used to construct baskets proliferate near water sources. Terrol Johnson, a Tohono O’odham weaver noted

until the 1930s, willow and cattail were the primary materials used in our baskets. Then [non-Native] farming surrounded the reservations and the water table dropped. The willow trees and cattails that were once abundant...are no longer

¹² A community member who had worked at Harrah's told me that the casino was planning a "sensitivity training course" for its staff. Whether the course was intended to assist non-Native personnel in identifying better ways to manage (i.e. retain) Ak-Chin staff or to instruct staff about the community in which they worked was not made explicit to me.

there. So weavers moved on to an alternative material, the yucca, which you now often see in O'odham baskets (Bernstein 2003: 29).

Devil's claw, formerly so plentiful in the region, is now cultivated by weavers (Shaw 1994 [1974]: 207).

For me, Louisa's basket weaving demonstrations were among the highlights of the time I spent at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. I was eminently drawn to the attention she paid to preparing her materials for demonstrations and how she impassively described the hours it took to secure them and the time it takes her to weave a basket. I was curious as to why she put all this effort into demonstrations for non-Native groups while this experience was not part of the daily routine for the Ak-Chin students who attended the summer program. Her rationale was understated. She replied that non-Native people would never learn the "cultural rules," the essence of O'odham basket production – the gathering process, the songs sung during gathering the materials and those stories and songs recounted during the actual weaving (Bernstein 2003: 10). Furthermore, she informed me that due to the difficulties in obtaining materials, much of what she displayed were materials she purchased. She did not gather the materials she so carefully presented to visitors. She told me that she demonstrated only weaving; basketmaking - gathering and preparing the raw materials and the cultural protocols requisite to make a basket - that which reveals and enacts history, is carefully guarded. I understood this to mean that should she decide to teach Ak-Chin youth basketweaving, she would want to follow cultural protocol and present not simply the mechanics of weaving but also those elements that make it culturally meaningful - how, where and when to gather the various fibers, the significance of particular designs, etc. Kreps writes that similar sentiments

were expressed by some Native Californian Indian basket weavers for whom "a basket is not just a utilitarian object made of plant fibers or an example of fine craftsmanship. It is also a song made visible" (2003: 155).

What is revealed at Ak-Chin Him-Dak is a version of culture that shields as much as it reveals. The concealment of the potentially dangerous archaeological material and the selective presentation of material culture offers visitors to the museum a multilayered approach to the exhibits. For members of the community, the absences are just as significant, if not more significant, than those items that are exposed.

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Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives applied for and was awarded a grant in 1996 from the Arizona State Council on the Arts. Monies were granted to the ecomuseum to resuscitate historical songs and dances and start a youth dance group in the community. The few members who remembered this aspect of the community's intangible cultural heritage were members of the oldest generation currently living on the reservation. There were also some elders from other O'odham communities who still knew the songs and dances. It was viewed as imperative to seek them out since their cultural knowledge was essential to revive these traditions. The ecomuseum ran an advertisement in the community's newspaper, the *Ak-Chin O'odham Runner* asking for people who were interested in being part of a burgeoning dance group. An initial meeting was held at Ak-Chin Him-Dak. The process of revival and starting a community dance group was in itself very ritualized. Elders were contacted and informed of the project. Only with their approval could cultural revitalization begin. They agreed to show and then, in the *Him Dak* way, give the songs and dances to the newly forming

group. Children who wished to participate had to come to the initial meeting with their parents and could only join with their parents' consent. The revival of this cultural form necessitated an inter-generational commitment and though the dancers were all Ak-Chin youth, their parents and guardians had to accede to their participation.

The first meeting was packed. The ecomuseum was filled with community youth and their parents/guardians. For some of the adults, the songs they heard elders sing sounded familiar because they had heard them as children. The initial dance group consisted of twenty girls, six boys and their parents. They were taught the proper ways to sing the songs and the correct dance steps. Their interest was piqued. When monies for the grant expired, the group was encouraged to continue on their own. After nearly a year of rehearsals, they agreed to perform for the community and the elders. Only with the elders' blessing, would the group be permitted to dance for people outside the Ak-Chin Indian Community. The dance group performed at the annual Christmas party in 1996. I was told that when the dancers went into the audience to encourage participation in the final dance, a round dance, they knew that they had been met with approval when elders stood up to join them.

The dance group, Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group, has existed with different rosters of members since its founding. Two of the adults, sisters, have been with the group since its inception. They provide leadership, music and determine the regulations of the group. For the adults, joining the group means a commitment to abstinence from drugs and alcohol. The rehearsals continue to be regular and rigorous. A series of dances are performed in a sequential order. The same dances are rehearsed at least twice a week. When publicly performing, the group adheres to cultural traditions: the dancers are

barefoot and the group does not charge a fee for their presentations, though they do accept donations, which is often in the form of food. They presently dance regularly for both traditional social and ceremonial occasions such as wedding ceremonies, funerals, and repatriation reburials. The group has been widely lauded in the region and won several awards.

I was invited to attend several rehearsals of the dance group. They meet in the late afternoons after the adults get off work. The group of young girls (though boys are permitted to participate, none currently do) from the community meets several (two or three) evenings a week. The adults, who also produce the music in the form of a rattle (there was also a drum player, who since left the group) and vocals, correct the dancers' movements. Dancers were told to slow down or pick up the pace. They were told to keep a certain distance between each other and which direction to turn or move. One adult would yell out "put the basket over your head when you turn," or "lift up your feet!" Strict discipline and absolute attention on the part of the dancers was expected and given. This was not an endeavor for a young girl afraid of criticism. This education focused on the details. One step too fast, too slow, out of synch with the others', in the wrong direction, with the wrong foot or arm positioning was loudly acknowledged by the adults.

At the conclusion of one of the rehearsals I attended, the girls enacted protocol and went to all adult members, myself included, and shook hands. They then ran and played loudly. They were transformed back into the children they were outside of this social interaction. One of the older girls (approximately 13 or 14) approached the area where the adults were seated and confronted them. She told them that she wanted to speak with them to convey her distress about the way other members of the group and



Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 10 – Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group, rehearsal



Photo: Matthew Marshall

Figure 11 – The Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group, public performance

some of the adults were treating her. She complained of the “back stabbing” that she experienced from the older members of the group. She was also disquieted to have learned that one of the adults told one of the dancers that their group was “not recognized” by the community. The dancer interpreted this to mean that the community at large did not acknowledge the group’s hard work when in fact she believed that the community thought highly of the dancers. (At this point, she was choking back sobs). She also expressed anger at the way in which one of the adults corrected and critiqued the younger girls’ dancing. This attitude, she said, was not supportive of the hard work they were doing. Rather than faulting them for their mistakes, she suggested that they be rewarded for their good efforts. Furthermore, she said that she was deeply upset by the fact that the adults often discuss their personal problems in front of the dancers. The young girl believed that the adults were not upholding the standards to which they held the dancers themselves. Sobbing at times, she expressed the fact that she was so unhappy and wanted to quit the group.

The adults listened quietly to her complaint. When the girl finished speaking, one of the adults addressed her. Her approach, similar to the way in which she disciplined the girls while they were dancing, was direct. She responded to the girl’s point about the group not being “recognized” by telling the young dancer that in fact the community did not formally recognize the dance group; official recognition was portrayed in her response as a seemingly complex process. She spoke to the fact that there were not standards and procedures for group membership, a (seeming?) requisite for recognition by the tribal government. Though the adults had discussed the offer on the part of the community to reside under a particular department (one which is officially recognized by

the tribal government), they had decided against it. The elder members of the group preferred their autonomous status.

One by one she addressed the dancer's other concerns. She told her that the girls were corrected so that they would learn the proper ways to do things and that criticism should not be taken personally, but in order to do the dances correctly, one must learn the proper steps. She explained that one of the women who provided criticism has a loud voice and her tone should not be interpreted as yelling. (All adults reiterated that the adult spoken of has a preternaturally loud voice). Another one of the adults chimed in and stated that just because they are being told what to do, the dancers need to learn to hear and recognize the difference between verbalizing disapproval and instruction.

The woman agreed with the girl that the adults needed to be less overt with their personal problems at rehearsals and asserted that they should be models of behavior for the dancers. However, the girl should know that adults have problems too. The rest of her response was a discourse on politics and membership in political life and how adults can act in inappropriate and sometimes contradictory ways. She peppered her response with, "you will learn this as you get older," and "you'll see." She then spoke to the dancer of the adults' concerns about traveling to other communities as many of the girls are entering adolescence. She worried that the dancers might become distracted by boys and not dance "for the right reasons." It was important that the adult members of the group mind the girls more vigilantly and focus more attentively on the reasons for the group's existence in the community. She wanted the dancer to know that the adults involved with the group were there by choice. She acknowledged that many children do

not have adequate parenting and discipline at home and therefore they might misconstrue the criticism of the adults as punitive, which it is not.

The mentorship role this woman assumed with this young dancer was unmistakable. She presumed and presented herself as the dancers' cultural guardian, superceding her position as dance instructor. Membership into the dance group was evidently more than learning about traditional dances. There had not been a dance group in the Ak-Chin Indian Community until the formation of Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group in 1996. Resuscitating the songs and dances was part of a greater movement in the community to reinvigorate traditions into everyday community life.

Formation of the group provided young members of the group the opportunity to meet regularly with their elders to learn cultural etiquette that extended beyond memorizing steps, songs and meanings of dances. The young dancers were instructed in the complexities and protocols of Ak-Chin social interaction, the skills required to maintain group cohesion, and perhaps, most painfully, the recognition that working with, among and becoming adults is often fraught. The dance group, like the community itself, grappled with means for maintaining cohesion and cohesiveness. Their identity as a group required that they hold solidly together. The expressions of the young dancer evidenced her own struggles with group participation in which one's self expression is subsumed by group interests. Yet, it was in this setting where she witnessed the contradictions of the participating adults who she viewed as, at times, more consumed with their own interests.

The strict discipline required at dance rehearsals was a lesson in cultural maintenance and the need to assert and reassert the boundaries that define it. Yet, my

exposure to the dance rehearsal also revealed the struggles in which one engages in order to express Nativeness. Those struggles unveil the complex and at times contradictory ways the Ak-Chin Indian Community and Native people generally resist and challenge the dominant culture in order to maintain community cultural expressions. They also can press harshly on their own young, upon whom they impose their own tenet, that there is one correct way to perform culture, a notion that comes to life when the practice in question is no longer widely performed.

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The three stories I have described - the story revealed in the language class, Louisa's desire only to teach basketweaving to members of her own community, and the event at the dance rehearsal - pivot around women whose roles in the Ak-Chin Indian Community demand theoretical attention. The intersection of gender in the creation and maintenance of social relations of power have been widely analyzed and discussed in anthropological literature, yet the signification of the stories I briefly described is complicated beyond the scope of my research. However, it would be remiss not to notice and identify several conceptual underpinnings that can be elaborated summarily. Recent anthropological writing on gender impels analyses of power as a "concept that can be discussed apart from a formal political structure" (Klein and Ackerman 1995: 12). The challenge in this type of study is to recognize the ways in which women's roles in societies maintain power and autonomy. Formal authority and political power are, in this model, distinguished from the "indirect or behind-the-scenes power" women possess (Maltz and Archambault 1995: 233; see also Rosaldo and Lamphere 1973). Women, as social actors, act upon their gendered roles, they do not merely enact them.

The significance of this analytic framework in relation to Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives is the ways in which women in the community retain their roles as caretakers and, by extension, educators of the young. In the face of the loss of intangible cultural heritage women in the community imbue young people with a self-conscious otherness. The strategy of distancing from and positioning oneself outside of the gaze of outsiders and society at large prevails in multiple ways by Native people. Friedman describes how cultures deny the past defined by outsiders in efforts to establish self-centered autonomous societies. He labels this “a politics of disintegration” (Friedman 1992: 845) and notes that the production of national or ethnic identity formation often engages in these methods. The necessity of any group asserting identification as a bounded entity entails the exclusion of 'others' and the aboriginality of its members. In the case of the Ak-Chin Indian Community men and women are involved in this project yet in distinct ways and realms.

The expectations about the roles that men and women assume changed over time. Historically, the conventional determinations were measured by cultural understandings about age, gender, kinship among other constructs. Notions about work were culturally shaped and shared by members of the community. Shift in the types of work women did and do presently corresponded with the increasing depth of engagement with the dominant society. Albers writes, “Colonization created grounds of innovation and change but also resistance and continuity in the way American Indian people labored” (2002: 116 – 117).

At Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the positions available and assumed by women are those that involve reviving aspects of the community’s culture that are not presently widely

practiced. The seriousness with which they take their own history and the responsibility they shoulder as culture bearers grants these women authority and embeds them in their own history in specific ways. There has been some focus on the roles Native American women played as negotiators of change as their societies became more fully integrated with the dominant culture (Klein and Ackerman 1995; Perdue 1997; Joe and Miller 1994; Jaimés and Halsey 1992; Shoemaker 1995; Shoemaker 2002). When their roles were subsumed under male dominated productions of labor, they tended to cleave to sectors of production in which they could maintain autonomy (Albers 1989: 144; Shoemaker 1995). Accordingly, many women turned inwards and started to work in those sectors of the community that support and define tribal identity. The women who work at Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives place great importance on and participate in the community's cultural revitalization and, in turn, accrue benefits and powers in the community. However, as their stories demonstrate, cultural engagement is characterized by tensions that define their status both as individuals and in their relation to the community. It is within this space that gender roles are enacted and acted upon. These women's power enables them to locate and play out strategies for obscuring as much as they reveal in order to define, protect and shape the boundaries of their culture.

Positioning the tourist gaze in a physical and conceptual space at a distance from locations where culture is practiced and portrayed creates a literal and ideological buffer between cultural practitioners and outsiders. It enables communities such as Ak-Chin Him-Dak to retain dichotomous positions - marginalized and incorporated, independent and dependent - as these poles are not mutually exclusive. The ability to demarcate separate spaces for insiders and outsiders in one's own community enables one to assert

authority over potentially threatening and cultural undermining situations. Trudy Nicks write of this experience, "Indigenous peoples have become museum-literate both in the sense of learning to negotiate with colonial institutions...and in the sense of adapting museums to their own purposes of cultural revitalization, self-identification and self-determination in a complex, increasingly urban and global world (2003: 24 -25).

Recently, I met an Anglo woman at the National Museum of the American Indian, where I work. She had just returned from a trip to the Southwest where she witnessed a dance at an Indian community. She relayed to me that she was disappointed to learn that what she believed was a "ceremony" was a social dance performed largely for tourists. The presentation she witnessed was made all the more "real" for her because visitors were asked not to document it – a sure sign of its sacredness in her mind. However, the revelation came when she was informed that the community does not practice ceremonies publicly, in the presence of non-community members. The community she visited orchestrates several dances for the purpose of inviting visitors to see their "traditional" clothing, hear their music and ultimately, leave them alone.

Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, too, provides a way for the Ak-Chin Indian Community to maintain distance from societies with which they are inextricably linked. The methods negotiated by staff members of the ecomuseum to strategically conceal elements of social production, effect the retention and the authority to self-define. Within the context of the museum, members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community are able to reinscribe (or renarrate, as the case may be) the past in order to define their own culture and history in the present. Among other things, the establishment of a museum on tribal lands effects the ability for Indian people to assert

autonomy by creating spaces for this purpose. The presentation of culture at the Ak-Chin Him-Dak is thus, not one mediated by outside institutional or cultural forces.

The success of the museum project and the effort to protect intangible cultural heritage is subjective. The overarching mission of Ak-Chin Him-Dak and tribal museums in general, do not necessarily result in perceptible changes. Dawn, a staff member from the museum, shared with me a moment of great pride. One of the mothers in the community conveyed to Dawn that while she was driving down the road with her son, he kept saying “has:an, has:an,” the O’odham word for saguaro cactus. The mother did not know what her son was saying, though she knew it was a word in the Ak-Chin language, which she does not speak. The woman had to ask her mother, the boy’s grandmother, what the word meant. For, Dawn, a language instructor at Ak-Chin Him-Dak it was a clear indication that one of her students retained his lesson and integrated it into his memory - a small victory.

Chapter Five

The Institutionalization of Culture

Each year in April, Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives celebrates its anniversary. I was able to attend the festivities in 2004, when it celebrated its thirteenth anniversary. However, I was unable to attend the ten-year anniversary festivities celebrated in 2001, when the festivities lasted until morning the following day. Sly smiles emerged on the faces of staff when they told me about it. The tribal council had given them license to have a party beyond the midnight "lights out/noises off" policy. The Ak-Chin Indian Community is very proud of its museum and this was deemed an important enough event to warrant a waiver of the community's rules and regulations. As part of each year's celebration, the community hosts a *waila*, or chicken scratch. These terms refer to both the form of dance and the music played. Today, *waila* can encompass electric instruments (guitar, bass, accordion, and drum kits) or can be acoustic. Sometimes horns such as saxophones are included. Acoustic *waila* bands were formerly comprised of violins, guitars, an accordion and a man playing a single drum. Whatever the instrumentation, the tunes are derived from polkas and mazurkas. Folklorists date *waila* to the mid nineteenth century when Euro-Americans moved westward through Arizona. The word *waila* derives from *baile*, the Spanish word for "dance" (Kealiinohomoku 1994: 165). Though they also note the musical connections to Mexican *norteno* music, which was influenced by polkas of the German railroad workers who were in Mexico in the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is not uncommon now to hear musical influences from rock, reggae, or other popular genres. *Waila* is a social

dance and can last twelve hours. It is presented at events ranging from community-organized celebrations to individual's birthday parties (Griffin-Pierce 2000: 182-183).

As well as having an all-night dance, the Ak-Chin Him-Dak anniversary celebration includes a performance by the Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group. Performing for the community can exact a bigger toll on the group than dancing for outsiders. As noted in the previous chapter, without the community's approbation, most especially that of the elders, the group would not exist. The dance they enact reveals a long legacy that has been practiced over the course of generations with regular adherence to cultural rules. Children who agree to participate in the group must demonstrate not only their ability to learn the movements of the dances but to a deeper engagement with the dances' cultural significance. Conceptually, the dance is a window into other facets of Ak-Chin cultural practices. On one hand, the dance illuminates the cultural revitalization of dormant cultural practices that emerged from the reconnection of the community with its cultural patrimony, on the other, it illuminates the contemporaneity of the dance and its connection to the present-day Ak-Chin Indian Community.

For the children and their families who came out to watch and support the girls dance, it is this presentation that holds most consequence. For community members, the dancers manifest the continuity of cultural traditions. Dancing for the community demonstrates the pivot around which Ak-Chin culture hinges for children, the targeted generation for enculturation of these revived traditions. The youth's engagement with the dance and other facets of cultural revitalization is seen as critical to the maintenance and perpetuation of the community's Indian identity. At the conclusion of the dance

presentation, the children change out of their dance regalia and participate in the other celebratory events. In the evening, they dance at the chicken scratch.

As discussed earlier, the dance group emerged out of a project set forth by Ak-Chin Him-Dak. Its formation cohered closely with the mission and mandate of the ecomuseum to preserve, resuscitate and protect the community's culture for future generations. The Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group participates in an activity that was revived according to proscribed rules and specific mores and is more ceremonial in its intention. *Waila*, on the other hand, is a cultural experience that is constantly being remade and independent of any cultural oversight by the community. Its purpose is more social. These two versions of cultural expression, creation and reproduction form critical points of analysis and can be extrapolated to an understanding of some of the tensions that underlie Ak-Chin Him-Dak's formation and its current programming.

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In founding Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, the community willingly accommodated the Bureau of Reclamation in an effort to recover the material culture that was excavated during a land survey and then removed off community lands. As noted earlier, the archaeological survey in the mid-1980s ignited both concerns about the further loss of components of their culture and pride in the community's history and legacy revealed in the objects from the land survey. Retrieving the excavated objects and preventing any further potential loss became critical points of interest worth struggling over. To this end, the community expended significant resources to establish an institution in which to house the objects recovered from the excavation.

Though the project was widely agreed upon, the historically contingent processes that pushed the Ak-Chin Indian Community to develop a museum inherently pressed them to confront notions of Ak-Chin cultural identity. The assemblage of artifacts recovered from the excavation became a representation of the community's deeply rooted spiritual and physical attachment to their land. The ancientness of the uncovered artifacts unveiled to non-Natives the historical depth believed and spoken about by Ak-Chin members. The land now both conceptually and literally proved to be directly tied to the community's history and identity. This affirmed cohesion to place led a contingent of the community to frame Ak-Chin's identity as shared and objectifiable. Symbolically constituted, these ideas give rise to the belief that a group can possess and apparently lose its culture.¹

The unearthed objects became a source of pride and the catalyst for political interest for the Ak-Chin Indian Community. Once revealed, the community asserted its sovereignty over their management, care, and most importantly, permanent residence. For the purposes of founding Ak-Chin Him-Dak, it was important for the community to position itself as a cohesive tribal group with an objective history as revealed materially in the excavated objects. That the Ak-Chin Indian Community accented its continuum with the past denotes a self-conscious awareness of both what the dominant culture expected of the community in order to establish connections and rights to the ownership of its cultural patrimony (and, by extension, culture) and what was required to create a

¹ See Handler for a more in-depth discussion of this premise. Handler views many proponents of nationalist movements in the post-colonial era as asserting "an essential identity, a core of fixed characteristics that makes its existence analogous to that of a bounded natural object" (1984: 279).

space which would be completely controlled internally. Rosemary Coombe, professor of law, aptly points out that “assertions of sovereignty and cultural survival necessarily stand apart from the dominant culture yet exist because of it” (1998: 241-242).

The structural forces that resulted in the Ak-Chin Indian Community planning a museum facility further pushed them to consider the irresolvable tensions between historic cultural practices, identified for revitalization, and culture change. Though the excavation served as the catalyst for protection and resurgence of dormant cultural features, it also unveiled tensions between “tradition and change and static and fluid identity” (Nagel 1993: 221). The community, dynamic and evolving, and at the time of the ecomuseum’s foundation on the cusp of extraordinary fiscal success with the opening of the Harrah’s casino, confronted these tensions in an effort to define a space in which self-determining objectives could be asserted. The ecomuseum project, from its outset, was concerned with contesting how the dominant society asserts authority over the community as a political, social and cultural entity. This was evidenced early on in the efforts to repatriate the community’s cultural patrimony and the work necessary to establish a facility that met the stipulations set forth by the Bureau of Reclamation yet was unlike other museum paradigms. The ecomuseum project is also located in other historic and contemporary struggles such as how it openly addresses the concern the community has with diabetes but omits any discussion of the impact of the casino in the community or the high rate of school drop-outs.

Viewing their cultural evolution in relation to past traditions inspired an ideological and cultural repositioning that recast the community’s identity as both emerging from and challenging their relationship with non-Native society. Ak-Chin

Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, in its programmatic undertakings, both assimilates colonizing constructs and “refigures...them for indigenous political purposes” (Bruyneel 2000: 87). The production of meaning articulated in acts of reviving or protecting components of cultural identity within the museum context combines frameworks that reflect colonial forms and that include inventions from present, internal concerns.

For the staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives and those who participated in its creation, the challenge was to identify a model of museum-building that acknowledged these tensions and enabled self-determining strategies for cultural maintenance. Of particular interest was identifying ways to repatriate cultural knowledge in order to utilize it, act upon it and reassert it into contemporary Ak-Chin lives. Cultural knowledge was defined as past, sometimes nearly forgotten, histories and practices that asserted cultural distinction and were essential for the community's cultural enhancement. Reconnecting with cultural knowledge and reviving cultural practices is at once a form of cultural assertion and empowerment and a reframing (or to use a more museological term, curation) of the past in specific ways.

Though the predominant initial concern for those involved with the establishment of Ak-Chin Him-Dak was the repatriation of the community's cultural patrimony, the focus quickly shifted to how cultural knowledge could be more widely shared within the community, paying particular attention to exciting an interest in younger generations. This change in focus inherently altered ways of thinking about the repatriated objects from cultural objects to resources from which community history could be learned, stories could be told and which could encourage practices to be revived. How and which

things were retained, reassigned significance and reframed was and continues to be actively engineered.

There have been some studies that illuminate how the “traditional” past is selectively revived and interpreted by ethnically-specific communities (Clifford 1988; Nagel 1993). These studies address the ways in which the presentation of “old cultural motivations” (Wolf 2001: 97) serve to both form the basis of meaning for people who are increasingly integrated into non-Native society and as a strategy for asserting heritage in a way that “power understands”(Coombe 1998: 241-242). By affirming an “objective relation to the past” (Handler 1984: 286), a community achieves significance to those outside the community. This self-conscious identification created the basis on which Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives was founded.

The establishment of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives became a locus for cultural revitalization² in the community and resulted in an ideological cultural reorganization that was simultaneously reactive and proactive. The collective action that spurred cultural revivalism clearly reflected contemporary concerns of the community and most evidently reflected the authoritative role Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and

² Cultural revitalization in the context of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives is defined as highlighted those practices that have fallen into disuse since the 1960s, when the community incorporated. The methodologies employed for revivifying language and dance, in particular, are clearly not "traditional;" they reveal the influence and impact of non-Native pedagogy. It is widely acknowledged that the best, and possibly only, way for children to really learn their Native tongue is to have them spend more time with their elders, or other fluent speakers in their communities (Cantoni 1996). Though members of the staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak articulated to me their knowledge that the summer language program would not bring back the language to the community's youth, they also recognize that the community does not have the infrastructure yet to provide more traditional modes of teaching.

Archives played within the community. Ak-Chin Him-Dak quickly emerged as the institution to organize and orchestrate the ways in which cultural practices were to be re-inserted into the community. Yet, those who presently work at the ecomuseum and oversee the programming of these endeavors, view their roles as having emerged from negotiations and interests with people from outside the community. In this push and pull mode, staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak places particular emphasis on relearning and reintegrating traditional skills into the community.

Those involved with revitalization efforts acknowledge that several of the cultural components identified for revitalization conceal dynamic and emergent cultural components. One man involved with the development of the language curriculum told me that he and many of the elders with whom he consulted agreed that much of the language would be lost if it was only to be learned from a written curriculum since certain ribald words and expressions could not be put into written form. Some words, expressions or ideas should only be conveyed in very specific contexts and ways, the written form not being one of them. Like bringing back "traditional" dances to the community, the emphasis placed on attending to the re-integration of the language into the lives of community members, particularly the youth, was not done out of a sense of nostalgia but as part of the effort to reinscribe *Him Dak* in the community. That the methodology in teaching cultural practices was not aboriginal was not nearly as important as that these practices were being done at all. In one conversation I had with the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, she described for me how the men used to be the song keepers and singers in the community. I asked her how she felt knowing that only girls and women currently participated in the Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance

Group as singers and dancers. She responded "we do what we have to do to keep them [the songs and dances] alive." The revitalization efforts are part of the community's strategy and struggle for protecting sovereignty and asserting cultural survival.

Ak-Chin Him-Dak's focus on cultural revitalization begs the highly charged question: can a museum simultaneously reflect culture and "preserve" and "protect" culture? The response is both yes and no. The ecomuseum attempts to reflect backwards on Ak-Chin "culture" though this reflection is evidently fragmentary and dislocated as much of what is the focus of revitalization is no longer practiced or in use by an ever declining number of people within the community. The cultural production of revitalization also must be recognized as one defined in the present "that has recourse to the past" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 7). Ak-Chin is a living culture, one that continues to evolve. The ecomuseum concept, however, is one that embraces the present in that the entire community theoretically participates as both cultural specialists and audience, thereby enabling a more engaged consideration and presentation of present-day concerns and interests. This is most readily experienced in the ways in which the museum approaches exhibit planning, design and content development. An example of this in practice was the two-part exhibition about diabetes and its impact on the community, which reflected the community in several ways. Several members of the staff expressed grave concern over the epidemic that is sweeping through their village and felt that hanging an exhibit to which community members could feel connected and in turn learn something was not only reflective of current conditions on the reservation but was inherently their responsibility. The museum staff member responsible for the exhibit conducted her research within the confines of the community. She interviewed

community members about their experiences with diabetes and excerpts of their discussions with her became the label copy. Images of the interviewees were taken and hung above their quotes. Aboriginal foodstuff was collected from the area. The exhibit was intended to serve as both a reflection of current issues and a wake-up signal for the community members who viewed the exhibit and participated in it.

A greater challenge for the staff of the ecomuseum is how best to handle the different sentiments about the foundational collection, the archaeological materials excavated from the community's farm, which still remain in the boxes in which they were placed by the scientists who catalogued them. The director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak explained to me that when the ecomuseum first opened, several objects from the excavation were placed on display. Some elders in the community believed the objects hold certain powers to which visitors should not be privy and decided not to enter the museum. Billy, a former staff member, however, believes that the archeological objects are potential vehicles from which community members could learn their history. He informed me that he believed that displaying the excavated objects was essential to the success of the facility, and that the plans for their display had been extensively vetted with the community before construction on the ecomuseum began. Billy wanted to form a deeper relationship with the objects on a personal level and he wanted community members to have opportunities to learn from the objects and about the care and oversight they require. This sentiment was echoed by the ecomuseum's non-Native archaeologist who noted that what Ak-Chin Him-Dak has decided to do with their collection is what many Native people accused non-Native institutions of doing - not attending to the objects, physically or spiritually.

Both community members cited above, despite their differing interests in the archaeological material, understand the objects retain inherent power still relevant today, though little is known about the function of some of the objects. The staff of the ecomuseum resolved to continue to house (and "protect") the objects for future generations and not to attend to the multiple ways in which they could be utilized either by the institution in which they are housed or by the community-at large. Until recently, no overt effort was being made to study them. Recently, however, the ecomuseum hired new staff to handle issues of cultural resource management concern and now there is a plan to meet with community elders to discuss their disposition. Out of these discussions can emerge further information about specific objects and proper ways to handle their care. Among the staff involved with the collection, there is openness to the possibility of reburying some of the objects.

Against features identified for revival are those more dynamic and emergent facets of the community. Nagel probes into the relationship between cultural dynamism and a group's survival and asks if change undermines a group's identity or if it is a mechanism of persistence (Nagel 1993: 221). In the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the task of creating a space where culture could be housed, recounted and practiced was intended to both reinscribe the community's history and reflect it. Created from the present day concerns of members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, Ak-Chin Him-Dak reveals a version of heritage that is made, not found (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). That elements of "culture" are denied or omitted from this project is inherent in the museum-building undertaking, and done so with great but limited deliberation. Present cultural conditions clearly play an active and defining role in determining the boundaries of group

identity. The director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak told me that the children who participate in the ecomuseum's activities today might develop an interest in working there in the future. In their imagined capacity, she acknowledged that they might also want to take a different approach with the archaeological material still in boxes. If and when this occurs, the relationship and attitudes towards the objects may shift, enabling greater openness on the part of the community to see them on display or to be "studied".

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Although the galvanizing impetus to create Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives was to function as a repository for cultural materials recovered from the excavation and to establish methods for oversight and care of those materials, many of which had been dormant for at least one generation, the primary importance of the ecomuseum is the development and implementation of programs designed to reintegrate *Him Dak* into the community. These cultural practices were precariously close to being lost and their revitalization became the focus of projects undertaken by the ecomuseum, clearly taking precedence over dealings with people and interests from outside the community. The staff defers to community elders who serve as bearers of knowledge for engaging in cultural practices. Tweedie describes how the Makah employ non-Native forms of ownership in managing the community's natural resources but relies on indigenous arrangements when applied to "[t]he utilization and inheritance of songs, dances, stories, artistic designs, and regalia." (2002: 124). A similar pattern emerges on the Ak-Chin Indian Community, revealing complex underlying tensions that permeate the museum project.

The formal, institutional facility in which the recovered objects are housed and in which cultural programming takes place contrasts with the deepening interconnections between the Ak-Chin Indian Community and the world at large. That the (re)collection of material culture played a central role in the foundation of Ak-Chin Him-Dak and the cultural revitalization movement on the Ak-Chin Indian Community is unquestionable. However, the process of bringing the objects home and constructing an environmentally stable structure in which to store them as mandated by the Bureau of Reclamation, compelled the community to render a new understanding of their past and a framework in which it could be developed in the present.

Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives attempts to straddle the space that exists between the agenda to adhere to cultural ways of knowing and engaging in traditional practices and the ministrations necessary to maintain a contemporary indigenous population in the face of expansive economic and political resources, the crippling effects of a diabetes epidemic and the pressures of government regulations. These counterbalances are fragile and irresolvable and they must be constantly renegotiated both on a structural level and in practical ways. They are also closely tied to the community's relationship with the dominant culture, which must also be continually renegotiated.

The efforts to be "democratic" in its reach opens Ak-Chin Him-Dak up to a segment of society that participates in the ecomuseum's activities in a limited fashion and those who are deeply committed to its cultural endeavors. The ecomuseum's role in resource gathering – accumulating the community's archival photographic images and documents, conducting interviews with community elders, and housing the contents of

archaeological surveys, among other activities – resource care-taking, and producing educational programs requires mindful responsibility to “traditional” mores and practices. I am careful here to put the word traditional in quotation marks as it became evident to me that the adequacy of cultural knowledge that formed the framework around which the ecomuseum operated was questioned by some members of the community. I perceived a disconnect between traditions that were still practiced and had been continuously maintained by the community and their extended relations in neighboring communities and those that are being revitalized. For example, outlying communities, those considerably more rural than the Ak-Chin Indian Community, continue to speak O'odham routinely and young children are raised hearing the language spoken at home.

At Ak-Chin Him-Dak's anniversary event in 2004, a music group "from the south" (the Tohono O'odham reservation) performed for the celebrants. The songs were sung exclusively in O'odham and the instruments played were unembellished rattles. One of the staff members from Ak-Chin Him-Dak grabbed my hand and brought me into the dance arena where we danced in a circle around the singers who were seated in folding chairs. We moved counter clockwise, one-by-one, holding hands. As we snaked around the singers, young children would run up to join the dances. I was visiting the community with some colleagues from the National Museum of the American Indian who were videotaping the dances. As we revolved around the musicians, one of them periodically yelled out something in O'odham. My friend from the ecomuseum leaned over to me after laughing at one of his outbursts and said to me, "he told the crowd to join in the dances so they can get on television!"

His comment was clearly intended for the adults in the crowd who understand O'odham. Few of the children probably comprehended what was said and those of us from outside the community (though two of the four of us were Native, one from the O'odham Nation, although not raised there) were not meant to know its meaning. I point to this story because it makes manifest an overt reality in the Ak-Chin Indian Community and perhaps in other Native communities facing similar cultural shifts. Namely, there are degrees of knowing and comprehension.

As I noted in the introduction of this dissertation, my place vis-à-vis the community was evidenced on a daily basis. There were arenas of knowledge from which I was deliberately kept out. My status as "outsider" was overtly maintained, specifically by those who authorized by visit and by those engaged with the production of cultural revitalization. Once again, in the dance arena, this was asserted, though I was welcomed, even invited, into it.

At the conclusion of the dance, I asked several of the adults (in their late 40s, early 50s) about it: was it something that they did as children? What types of songs were they? From where did the group hail? The responses surprised me. The dances, they said, were "our traditional dances, what we did as children." Apparently, they are still practiced in some O'odham communities. Those who still sing these songs are invited to participate in cultural events such as the annual Ak-Chin Him-Dak celebration. When I asked about the dance group from Ak-Chin, I was told that the dances the members of the dance group learned were even older than the round dance and had not been seen or practiced in several generations. One woman told me that though she was very pleased that Ak-Chin has organized a group of dancers to do the "old dances," she wished that the

community would also have a group of social singers like those to whose songs we danced. I inferred that like *waila*, these songs and dances, still practiced, did not demand the same urgency as those studied by Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group.

Contemporary traditions are acknowledged to have changed through the course of time. Practices identified for revitalization, on the other hand, are being renewed with great adherence to stringent rules, as they are largely reflections of practices that took place when the eldest members of the community were younger.

It is taken for granted by everyone who works at Ak-Chin Him-Dak that formal learning, such as learning language in a classroom setting, cannot replace the role of families or individuals for cultural reproduction. I was reminded several times by staff members that it is important to impress upon the student's parents and their extended family the value of their own community's traditions. One of their primary responsibilities, they informed me, was to link the study of past community practices with the present and the future. This reality comes into sharp focus when considering the efforts made to bring back the language to the community.

The impact of boarding schools and later, mainstream public education on the community cannot be understated. The people I met, who either personally attended these schools or had parents who went, told me matter-of-factly that they were discouraged from speaking any language other than English – in public, at home and among family and friends. Though I often expressed my sense of grief and condolence to people who revealed such sad personal histories to me, they responded in a way I perceived to be indifferent. On one occasion, a woman nervously giggled when I noted how upsetting it was for me to hear her story. I have thought about these responses a lot

because they unsettled me. However, I realized that Ak-Chin Indian Community, like many Native communities, has lost an enormous amount of their aboriginal culture yet its citizens live fully in the present and look toward their youth to reclaim aspects of the past. The director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives and others, say repeatedly that they must work with what they have. The reconstituted version of "culture" that is in production is something to which they are very attached.

Earlier, I explained how one of the language teachers alluded to the ways in which cultural practices were concealed from the Anglo gaze in order to retain them. Other forms of resistance and cultural concealment were certain to have taken place as well. Native people understood that in these acts of resistance, they needed to make careful choices, choices that could impact future generations positively, similar to the accommodations made by the community in establishing the ecomuseum. There was an acceptance of the fact that segments of their culture would be lost. One of the most painfully irresolvable issues for this community was how to live with loss in order to prevent further loss. The effort now is to "draw back culture" to renew those aspects of culture which are still remembered or being practiced by some members of the community and their relatives (Tweedie 2002).

Richard Effland, the non-Native archaeologist who oversaw the land survey in the 1980s, iterated several times how the excavation was vitally critical to how the Ak-Chin Indian Community defines itself today. When the land survey occurred, the community's farmland was virtually unusable due to its aridity and though they wished to expand, community members did not desire the land survey, required by the Bureau of Reclamation. However, the revelation of ancient villages just below their current

community not only instilled a sense of pride but also re-invigorated an interest in the community's history, rejuvenating latent cultural practices. Without the excavation, Effland asserted, the community would not have attended to its cultural heritage as it has.

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I have tried to extrapolate the contradictions with which Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives, and probably many other tribal museums, are confronted. The staff have assumed responsibility as culture guardians and bearers, roles which are not mediated by outside institutional or cultural forces but that must be responsive to the internal divisiveness and antagonisms that exist in the community. Which facets of culture are selected for revitalization and how revitalization is enacted are challenging and often fraught processes. My experience at Ak-Chin Him-Dak exposed me to a model of museum-building that is equally concerned with process and product. I am particularly struck by the contrast as compared with my experiences at non-Native (mainstream) museums, where far greater attention and focus is paid, on the external level, to the development of mounted exhibitions, the production of educational materials, websites, etc., and on an internal level, to policy planning and development. Largely, this distinction points to the ways in which Ak-Chin Him-Dak responds to the expectations of its primary constituency, the Ak-Chin Indian Community. As the community represents multiple voices, opinions and perspectives, acknowledging these manifold views can be intricate and require Ak-Chin Him-Dak to straddle unbridgeable gaps.

Recent scholarship about community museums has questioned why controversies and multi-vocal articulations about cultural objects and historical events are not

adequately represented in tribal museums (Dubin 2001: 97-98). As already noted, the staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak is very careful to follow cultural protocols when designing and enacting programs, planning and hanging exhibits and collecting, handling and caring for artifacts. Ak-Chin Him-Dak's function as a repository for community-owned objects and possessions and as an educational facility that foremost serves the community but is also open to the general public, requires museum staff to be particularly selective in how exhibitions and programs are planned and designed. The central role of the ecomuseum is, and has always been, to maintain community participation in the decision-making process (Puri 2001: 101) in order to protect sovereignty, cultural independence and distance from the dominant culture. Strategies for realizing this role are undergirded by assertions of alterity and the recognition of the tenuousness of Ak-Chin cultural status. The way in which Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives expresses cultural identity reveals the staffs' understanding that recognition and legitimization granted to their community by the dominant society is temporary and must be constantly renewed, often in new formulations not of indigenous design. The ecomuseum therefore serves to cohere the community against external pressures and obscures internal differences largely, I believe, to safeguard Ak-Chin *Him Dak* from further alienation.

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In the last two decades, as anthropology began to view culture “as both the medium and the consequence of social differences, inequalities, dominations and exploitations...” (Coombe 1998: 24). Native people have invoked intellectual property laws in order to “freeze the play of signification by legitimating authorship, deeming meaning to be value properly redounding to those who ‘own’ the signature of proper

name, without regard to the contributions or interests of those others in whose lives it figures” (Coombe 1998: 8). Utilizing legal frameworks in this way has enabled Native people to assert Native authority and to extend their sovereignty by making some effective claims against hegemonic powers over them.

Gaining standing over legitimating standards in the United States, Native people adopted officially acknowledged means to act and assert social meaning of intellectual property in ways that prioritized their interests. Utilizing these systems necessarily requires Native people to make connections and alliances with the judicial establishment and to employ strategies and categories defined and designated by non-Natives. This engagement necessitates that Native people be able to provide that their customs and social identity has been maintained in an unbroken chain from which political, social and cultural interests can be positioned. In the case of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, in the community’s efforts toward self-determination, the excavated objects were granted salience as proof of native title claims and as private property. Though community elders and other more "traditional" members expressed discomfort at disturbing the buried treasures which they viewed as sacred, reinscribing the objects as property resonated with the non-Native scientists and attended to the political and social conditions and struggles of the day. Dr. Effland, one of the site's archaeologists, informed me that though the Bureau of Reclamation was resistant to the idea of repatriating the excavated objects to the Ak-Chin Indian Community, several archaeologists were sympathetic to the notion that the objects rightfully “belonged” to the nation.

Reauthoring meaning for cultural objects and practices directly resulted from the new context in which the community found itself in the mid-1980s. The Ak-Chin Indian

Community's attention to contemporary political and social discourses beyond the boundaries of their reservation compelled them to assert possessiveness over their culture and by extension, over their sovereign rights. Adopting mainstream discourses both legitimated their entitlement to repossess their objects and operated to assist the community in framing a culturally identifiable representation.

In order to transform social meanings, cultural articulations have been self-consciously defined, and in the case of tribal museums, institutionally inscribed. Coombe writes, "Situations of subordination are transformed into spaces for articulation through identification with specific signifiers that hold promise of new forms of political recognition" (1998: 28). As noted in the introduction in reference to the Mashpee land claim described by James Clifford, cultural "signifiers," those manifestations of "Indian" identity, must be recognized and articulated by members of a community in order for them to adhere to legal stipulations. Those facets deemed cultural signifiers do not allow for divided interpretations or articulations of conflict; they privilege the perspectives and articulations of some at the expense of others. The strategic adoption of forms of cultural expressions serves to simultaneously cohere and rend, enable and constrain a community. The inherent contradictions of tribal museums – accommodations to mainstream society that simultaneously serve to separate the communities in which they are established from the dominant culture – create loci of cultural engagement and social analysis. As a point of study Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives reveals how these contradictions are ultimately irresolvable.

Staff at Ak-Chin Him-Dak is impelled "...into new readings of their past to capitalize on opportunities in the present" and in this way must negotiate issues of self-

representation and cultural renewal and maintenance “in the face of rapid change” (Tweedie 2002: 137). Like the distinction between the dances presented by the Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group and the “dance” (*waila*) that lasts into the wee hours of the morning, Ak-Chin Him-Dak represents, on the surface, an institution that is formal, well-positioned, and bounded. Yet, a closer examination of its internal workings reveals that there are consequences for the ecomuseum if it does not meet the expectations of the constituent community at large and those who assert greater authority over the community's cultural legacy and its care.

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When the Ak-Chin Indian Community knew that the establishment of the ecomuseum was imminent, they collectively chose the name Him-Dak, which translates to “way of life.” The term was chosen by the community to represent the sense of purpose of the ecomuseum for passing on cultural knowledge to future generations. This charge becomes increasingly weighty as the physical health of community members declines due to the impact of diabetes and as casino money continues to infiltrate the community. Ak-Chin culture – those shared, identifiable meanings claimed by the community including the O’odham language, its history and relationship to land – have increasingly less salience for today’s children.

During the summer of 2001, the Ak-Chin Him-Dak summer camp took students on two outings. The first one was to Ball One Ball Park, in Phoenix, Arizona, home of the baseball team, the Diamondbacks. Three vans were filled with campers, Ak-Chin Him-Dak staff and community parents. After touring the stadium, the caravan drove to Peter Piper’s, a pizza place and arcade. Extricating the campers from the video games

took effort on the part of all adults, myself included. On the return trip to the reservation, the radio played the latest “No Doubt” song. “Turn it up!” the children screamed from the back of the van. As the radio blared, the young campers sang along. When it ended, the children moaned and giggled. “I *love* that song,” “me, too,” “I do too!”

The second trip was scheduled only for the older group, approximately 5th grade and up; the younger campers remained at Ak-Chin Him-Dak and were scheduled to watch cartoons on a VCR. Approximately eight teenage girls, the director of the ecomuseum, another staff member and myself drove in one van. Driving in a car in front of us was Joe Joaquin, the Tohono O’odham tribal chairman. The day began at 8:30 am. Our first stop was to a neighboring community, Cockleburr, located in the northern reaches of the O’odham reservation. Houses were scattered along a dirt road. The van and car parked under a ramada made of metal tubing and saguaro fibers. Mr. Joaquin introduced the community leader who described for the group how greatly the physical environment of the area had been altered since his childhood. He told the story of the village, a history about water – formerly when it rained the village used to flood to the point where kids could swim in the puddles, the land was lush – and its disappearance. The implementation of dams in the region made the land into what it is presently, an arid, fallow open space. When the elder man finished his presentation a younger man was introduced to the group. He oversees the youth programs for the entire district, which consists of seven local villages. Together they play volleyball, baseball and do arts and crafts.

We drove ahead to the village of Ka-Ka. Again, there were no paved roads in this village. We waited in front of an adobe church for our hosts who arrived a half-hour later.

We were introduced to two adults and four community children. We sat on benches as we listened to them describe how the community, which consists of approximately 100 families, recently got plumbing and electricity; some of the elders still lived without it. The only question asked by one of the youth from Ak-Chin was asked here - she wanted to know how people in Ka-Ka get their food. The youth from Ka-Ka giggled as though it was the funniest thing they had ever heard. They responded that they drove to the store – nearly an hour away. The children from Ak-Chin were dumb-founded that people could exist in such a remote location. In both locations, Cockleburr and Ka-Ka, no mention was made of efforts to culturally revive traditions - language, dances and songs. It seemed evident that the villages' remoteness enabled them to protect their culture³. However, both communities were notably poorer than Ak-Chin Indian Community.

At one point, we stopped by the side of the road where Joe Jaquin described the significance of the place to the group. Called the “Children’s Shrine” it is a place of great importance to O’odham people. He described how as a child, he attended annual ceremonies that took place here. However, there is a cultural prohibition against practicing a ceremony if it is “done the wrong way.” Detriment can come to the Nation if protocol is not followed exactly. Since no one presently knows how to conduct the ceremony according to its strictures, it is no longer practiced.

³ At the 2004 annual celebration for Ak-Chin Him-Dak a dance group from the Tohono O’odham reservation performed songs to which we danced. The songs that were sung were entirely in O’odham and considered more "traditional" (i.e. older) than *waila*. There are several groups from the Tohono O’odham reservation that continue to sing and perform this musical tradition. Evidently, the O’odham language is more widely heard and spoken in more remote regions of the Tohono O’odham reservation.

The trip took us to several more communities where Mr. Joaquin introduced community members and told the campers about its specific history and the relationship those histories played in their lives. In some locations, he would look at one of the campers and say “your father’s father is from here,” or “your mother’s sister’s husband’s family is from here” or “these are your people.” In all of the places we visited we heard stories about the recent denuding of the land by the ever-lowering water table. The children from Ak-Chin listened quietly and with the exception of the one question asked in Ka-Ka, no one made any comments.

On the return trip, after dinner at McDonald's⁴ in San Lucy, I spoke with the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak. She told me that the villages we visited reminded her of how the Ak-Chin Indian Community used to look when she was young. The trees of her youth and in the villages we visited were larger and more plentiful. The vegetation appeared lush to her eyes. It was important for her that the campers see these outlying regions. She trusted that the day’s experience would have a profound impact on the children who would remember it as they get older and form deeper attachments to their cultural history and legacy. She acknowledged that the children riding in the back of the van experienced a sense of disconnection from the people and places we just visited. She told me that when she was a child the Ak-Chin Indian Community and the communities we just visited were much more connected – many men came to work on the Ak-Chin Farms on an annual basis and related families visited, played and participated in ceremonies together. The children of today’s Ak-Chin Indian Community are much

⁴ It was perversely ironic that a day-long trip dedicated to teaching Ak-Chin youth about their heritage would conclude at McDonald's, the very type of foods in part responsible for the surge of diabetes in the community.

more connected to the cultural goings-on of Maricopa and Phoenix than to those of the remote locales we visited. She acknowledged that Ak-Chin Him-Dak campers were clearly more engaged in the trip to Ball One Ball Park than they were on the trip to villages on the O'odham reservation.

She takes her role as director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak very seriously as she hopes to re-infuse a sense of cultural identity into the children who participate in the summer program, her own children among them. She and her staff want Ak-Chin Him-Dak to function as a stage on which to assert cultural difference and distance from the mainstream society. The ecomuseum's deliberate focus on children is closely linked with the dominating impact the world outside the Ak-Chin Indian Community has on the community's members, particularly its youth. Cultural renewal and revitalization efforts, touring neighboring communities that represent Ak-Chin's past, and garnering resource materials about the community's past is all part of the ecomuseum's interest in setting the community, its history and people, apart from the dominant society. The programs initiated by Ak-Chin Him-Dak including those that involve the revitalization of cultural practices, are entirely oriented to achieve cultural autonomy and self-determination - *Him Dak*.

On our ride back to the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak expressed her disappointment in the middle-age members of the community, her peers. She stated that the youth she works with are not responsible for their lack of knowledge about their history nor are the elders, who were largely impacted by assimilationist policies they endured as children. Their reluctance to engage in cultural revitalization is understandable. However, community members in their thirties, forties

and fifties have wittingly succumbed to a non-Native system of leadership and cultural knowledge. She was disappointed that more parents did not play an active role in reinforcing the work of Ak-Chin *Him Dak* in their homes. She assailed the tribal council for its lack of focused attention on the plague of diabetes that is now affecting young children in the community and the lack of attention paid to the low education standards of the community's youth.

The theme of Ak-Chin Him-Dak's 2004 summer program is "Heritage and Health." The community newspaper, the Ak-Chin O'dham Runner featured a half-page notice about the program, open and free to all children, grades one through twelve, living in the community. The 2004 program is co-sponsored by the Ak-Chin Diabetes Prevention Program. Parents who chose to have their children participate must sign an authorization form, which acknowledges that the program includes "health assessment, nutrition classes, and exercise classes...cardiovascular activity, strength activity and flexibility assessment."

The language curriculum will continue to be taught in conjunction with these newly designed program activities. The director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak views both the "heritage and health" components of the summer program as ways to act on a situation that is deemed a cultural crisis. By tying culture and health together in one program aimed at community youth, the ecomuseum's director hopes to impede the epidemic that is currently sweeping the community - the erosion of *Him Dak*. She would like to extend the summer's programming into the rest of the year so that there is not a ten month rupture each year and language proficiency as well as the principles associated with *Him Dak* could become more firmly entrenched in Ak-Chin youth's impressionable minds.

In her leadership role at Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the director underscores the ideological salience of *Him Dak*, Ak-Chin “way of life.” *Him Dak* pivots on the notion of alterity and cultural indigeneity. I sensed from our discussions that more importantly, *Him Dak* is separate and distinct from the Ak-Chin Indian Community tribal polity and its adoption of non-Native forms of leadership and political and cultural markers of identity. Most importantly, however, is the recognition that *Him Dak* can only return if the community is socially as well as physically capable of retrieving it.

Conclusion

Tribal museums are rather recent developments in Native American communities. They emerged from the social, cultural and political activism that swept the United States in the last half of the twentieth century and from specific concerns Native peoples had about the depth of cultural privation they had suffered at the hand of colonialism. In some cases, such as in that of Ak-Chin Indian Community, the decision to open a museum was tied to the community's ambivalent connection with the dominant society and to the "institutional realities" within which they were thrust to reassert "claims to power" (Keesing 2000: 235). As described in the second chapter, in an effort to expand their once-thriving farms, the Ak-Chin Indian Community required an up-to-date irrigation system. In conducting the requisite land survey to install the new pipes, two impressive archaeological sites were uncovered. Ak-Chin community members immediately began to agitate for the return of what they deemed to be their cultural heritage, which was removed to and held in a repository in Tucson. The Bureau of Reclamation agreed to return the archaeological materials to the community if they heeded the requirement to house them in a facility that met collection management guidelines of the day.

Museum building is an intensely conflicted, complicated and political endeavor. In the specific case of Ak-Chin Him-Dak, the ecomuseum concept was selected as a both an ideological paradigm as well as a practical approach for negotiating potential internal divisions. The ecomuseum concept, premised on "its use of community members as its central resource, rather than focusing on collections and the display of material culture" seemed to challenge the mainstream notion of a museum, which has a loaded history for

many Native people (Isaac n.d.: 14). However, the ecomuseum concept presumes the homogeneity of the community who are both presented in the exhibition displays and have "representational authority" and does not make allowances for the integration of the types of internal divisions and tensions that emerged immediately following its inauguration in 1991. This denial of multivocal perspectives continues to play out in the undertakings at Ak-Chin Him-Dak EcoMuseum and Archives.

As I have argued, the community's interest and struggles to repatriate the archaeological materials that formed the basis of Ak-Chin Him-Dak cohered the community's members and quelled a portion of the anxieties that some held and continue to hold about unearthing materials from the past. The archaeological discovery validated the community's claim to their land and materially asserted their historicity. The discovery's significance was made meaningful to community members who presumed the found objects to metonymically represent their history and affirm their ancestry. In the struggle for the return of the archaeological objects the community asserted museological and legal discourse, including the reification and categorization of material culture into objects deemed for reburial and those suited for preservation (Keesing 2000). The community furthered their claims by defining Ak-Chin as having an objective and discreet cultural identity, thus employing the frame of ethnic group identification created and utilized by the dominant society.

However, upon the material's return, coincident with the opening of Ak-Chin Him-Dak, questions arose about how to best serve as their cultural custodians. Elders in the community expressed discomfort about housing and, more pointedly, displaying and viewing materials about which little is known or understood yet are deemed potentially

sensitive. Others, however, their interests piqued, wanted the museum to pursue further study of the archaeological treasures. For them, this type of investigation could assist in gleaning the "facts" of the past.

Cultural protocol esteems the wishes and desires of elder members of the community and accordingly, the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak and her staff agreed to attend to mounting displays about the community's history without referencing or exhibiting many of the archaeological finds. To this day, the archaeological material remains in the boxes in which they were returned by those involved with their excavation. They are held in a small room in the back of the museum. The ambivalent relationship the members of the community, and specifically staff of Ak-Chin Him-Dak, have towards these objects is one of the unresolvable tensions outlined in this dissertation.

Tensions are also evident in the relationship members have with their identity as Native people and as a people inextricably connected to outside society. This is manifest in how community members discuss diabetes and the role it plays in each and every member's life and how Ak-Chin Him-Dak defines and shapes "traditional" culture (i.e. language and dance) and cultural loss. The fact of modernity and the community's connection to it has necessitated Ak-Chin's integration with the dominant society. This integration has had the impact of altering economic relations, social organization and the types and ways in which "traditional" culture is practiced. Most significantly, perhaps, are the ways in which *Him Dak* is being defined and enacted at present.

As noted in Part I, *Him Dak* was principled on the reciprocity of a network of O'odham communities. This was evident annually when the Akimel O'odham were

assisted with their harvests by the Tohono O'odham who in turn shared what was reaped and provided the northern communities with goods more readily accessible in the more southern reaches of the state. Thus, *Him Dak* functioned and was evidenced in the ways in which the O'odham viewed themselves as people whose reach extended far beyond reservation boundaries. The whole thrust of the establishment of both casino and the ecomuseum has been to focus boundaries on one small community, the Ak-Chin Indian Community.

Present day efforts at cultural revitalization are tied to and utilize the tropes formulated by "Western liberal traditions" in defining "the language and logic of political claims to cultural autonomy and legal claims to cultural property" (Coombe 1998: 223). This situation is further compounded with issues of language and cultural property rights. As Whiteley shows, the persistence and prosperity of indigenous languages rests "to some extent...[on their becoming] reified, essentialized and objectified" (2003: 720). Coombe, likewise, comments that "those who have culture speak only on behalf of a cultural tradition that must be unified and homogeneous before we will accord it any respect" (1998: 243). This, then "silence[s] and delegitimate[s] particularly unwelcome Native voices" (Coombe 1998: 244). In essence, subaltern groups, such as the Ak-Chin, who wish to reassert cultural claims and be supported in their endeavors are increasingly appropriating metaphors from the dominant society from which they are also attempting to distance themselves. For, as Sahlins notes, the assertion of cultural and identity and the "preservation "of identifiable markers of a distinct culture are imperative if a community such as Ak-Chin wishes to "mobilize and organize themselves" against external conditions (1993: 18).

In 2002, the director of Ak-Chin Him-Dak was elected to the Ak-Chin Indian Community's five-member tribal council.¹ In a recent email to me, she wrote that she had been so consumed with the work associated with her membership that she has increasingly less time to attend to other duties, including those at the ecomuseum. Given our past conversations about her on-going disagreements with the tribal council and its approaches to community issues she felt needed greater attention, I was surprised to learn that she ran for position. However, in my most recent visit to the community I learned that the co-director of the Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina Dance Group is also a tribal council member. It struck me that two members of the council are actively dedicated to cultural renewal in the community. In my mind, the work of the council was primarily to attend to external (i.e. business) concerns, most particularly to the interests relating to the casino and farm. The focus of these two women's lives has been on what I considered internal interests. My presumption was that these two agendas ran counter to each other.

However, as I reflected on their work to revitalize Ak-Chin *Him Dak*, I realized that since early post-contact many Native Americans have negotiated means to maintain their culture in the face of often opposing interests connected to a changing integration with the dominant political economy. The roles of these two women have been to reassert Native identity and make it important to the community, specifically to youth. This task has become increasingly more difficult as younger children are no longer exposed to their language at home, aboriginal foods are nearly absent from their diets and "traditional" activities are primarily learned or instigated by an institution, the

¹ To qualify for a position on the tribal council one must be a member of the Community, be at least 25 years of age and living on the reservation at least one year preceding the election (Articles of Association).

ecomuseum. Both women's involvement in the tribal council and by extension the community's engagement with the political and economic context in which it exists at present, allows them to better understand the "conceptual structures and premises of colonial discourse" in their efforts to shape representation of Ak-Chin identity that both incorporates and runs counter to Western hegemonic notions of Indianness (Keesing 2000: 241).

The collective imagining central to the museum project - creating a community identity and seeking to get young people to cleave to it and enact it - and the cultural claims asserted by Ak-Chin Him-Dak are very much in line with those that embed the community in the political, economic and social arena of the dominant society. This is evident in the relationship between Harrah's Ak-Chin and the ecomuseum. The community's qualification to manage a casino, in part, rests on the success of Ak-Chin Him-Dak in inculcating the community's youth into its social and cultural agenda in order to meet the criteria by which Native American identity is determined. In turn, for those involved with cultural reproduction and the reassertion of Ak-Chin *Him Dak* there is tacit acknowledgement that the casino revenues support much of their work. The Ak-Chin must continue to assert their difference - rooted to a large degree on language and the continuation and perpetuation of "traditional" culture. As the community becomes more deeply integrated into the dominant society and particularly, the business associated with gaming, they simultaneously assert their "Indianness" and undermine it. The reassertion of "tradition" for the Ak-Chin Indian Community has become as much "a resource...necessary to progressivist projects of nonconformity as it is to those of cultural affirmation and preservation" (Thomas 1992: 227). This contradiction shapes how

Indians including members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community construct their identity and its overt expressions.

For, as I have argued, not only is the work of cultural renewal intensely political, but the negotiations of Native people to maintain their identity as Native people are intensely political. Being "political" necessitates that one be connected to and work within the framework of an organized legislative power, its policies and principles. Participating successfully in politics also necessitates that one is adept at maneuvering actors in specific "plays" in order to achieve intended agendas. Who better to engage in these types of ambiguous strategic alliances than two women whose adult lives have attended to the competing interests that exist within the Ak-Chin Indian Community in efforts to revitalize *Ak-Chin Him Dak*? The work of cultural revivalism "demands that we recognize that all knowledge is situated in a particular historical and political context" (Linnekin 2000: 268). These two women, among others, are engaged in "an intense self-awareness about culture" which has been largely impelled by present day economic and political concerns (Jolly 2000: 286; see also Handler and Gable 1997; Handler and Linnekin 1984; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). Their daily work has taught them that they must continually re-shape expressions of indigeneity as external and internal structures change. This accords with Strathern's assertion that "cultural difference provides a new platform for an essentialist sense of identity" (1995: 156).

In the introduction I posited that cultural autonomy and political engagement are inextricably interwoven. Native Americans, since colonialism, have devised strategic means of asserting and articulating cultural separateness while fostering strategic political, social and economic alliances that serve to bolster the interests of both parties.

The delicate balance required to maneuver an equilibrium can mean that Native people are forced to accede to fantasies of themselves, such as present stereotypical images of themselves in the paintings and sculptures on display in the casino, and at once confront them.

During one visit to Ak-Chin, I was speaking with one of the adult members of the Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina dance group. I asked her what it was that kept her so interested in working with the young girls and teaching them the old songs and dances. She replied that she wanted to quit many times - her life was busy and complicated and the dance group took up a lot of her time and energy that she felt could be better spent. During the days she works with the community elders; some days are solely devoted to transporting them to and from their dialysis treatments, leaving her emotionally and physically exhausted at the end of the day. However, every time she made the decision to quit the group "something bad would happen."

In Chapter Three I discussed the lure of modernity and the ways in which it can offer Native people opportunities to participate more fully in the society at large, to work close to home and to make money. However, modernity is also precarious because while it offers material rewards, it can be spiritually deficient and, in the case illuminated here, even punitive. Her day job, working with the sick elders of the community, is a creation of modernity in the sense that diabetes and the fracturing of traditional ways to care for elders has been brought about by the establishment and institutionalization of reservations and the deprivation of indigenous modes of production. While her work affords her certain comforts, it also pains her deeply to the point where she is drained at the end of the day. The penalty of participating in the modern world is mollified by her

participation in Ak-Chin Ba:ban Keina dance group. She conveyed to me how singing the songs and participating in the group gave her life meaning and provided her with strength that no other aspect of her life offered her. She told me that she "needed" the group. Other adults involved with the renewal of Ak-Chin Him-Dak articulated similar sentiments. For them the work of *Him Dak* built connections with the past, Ak-Chin history, in ways that enabled them to confront the precarious present and future with greater grounding. Sahlins points out that present day assertions of cultural identity are endowed with "the people's attempt to control their relationship with the dominant society" (1993: 4).

The future for American Indian people and for members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community is filled with uncertainty. Though the casino profits have exceeded expectations and provided the community with the physical appearance of moderate affluence, given the profusion of casinos in the region and the precarious legal ground on which their foundation is based, its long-term profitability is questionable. The Ak-Chin Indian Community's population group manifests a new set of concerns as some people who have not been part of the community for a while are returning with the expectation of new homes and job opportunities, among other interests. Furthermore, though there is community pressure to address the diabetes epidemic in the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the trend towards obesity and younger people becoming diabetic is advancing, not declining. The ecomuseum seeks to minimize this uncertainty, if not now then in the long range when the present children take over. However, the future generation of Ak-Chin Him-Dak staff may have different set of goals for the museum, for they are being raised to understand that their affluence rests on their "Indianness" and the demarcations

of that identity are largely "tied up with nationalist politics, with restrictive law, and with contested encodings of past and future" (Clifford 1988: 218). In fact, assertions of cultural autonomy and difference can "assume the dual appearance of assimilation and differentiation" (Sahlins 1993: 19). As such *Him Dak*, how it is framed, manifest and practiced is an on-going process. At present, the shaping of Ak-Chin *Him Dak* is the purview of the community's ecomuseum.

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