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A Present of their Past? Anthropologists, Native People, and their Heritage

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Article abstract

Most ethnology collections were made by anthropologists at a time when Native People were believed to be dying out. These collections were intended to allow future generations of anthropologists to study traditional Native cultures. Since then anthropologists have become interested in how Native People currently live. At present Native People are alienated both from the material vestiges of their past that are kept in museums and from anthropology, which remains the study of Native People by EuroCanadians. This alienation can in part be overcome by a program of affirmative action designed to secure employment for Native People as professional anthropologists and museum curators.

A Present of their Past?

Anthropologists, Native People, and their Heritage

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Most ethnology collections were made by anthropologists at a time when Native People were believed to be dying out. These collections were intended to allow future generations of anthropologists to study traditional Native cultures. Since then anthropologists have become interested in how Native People currently live. At present Native People are alienated both from the material vestiges of their past that are kept in museums and from anthropology, which remains the study of Native People by EuroCanadians. This alienation can in part be overcome by a program of affirmative action designed to secure employment for Native People as professional anthropologists and museum curators.

La plupart des collections ethnologiques ont été assemblées par des anthropologues à une époque où l'on croyait à l'extinction imminente des Amérindiens. La raison d'être de telles collections était de permettre aux futures générations d'anthropologues d'étudier la culture traditionnelle des Amérindiens. Depuis lors, c'est davantage à l'étude de leur vie contemporaine que se sont intéressés les anthropologues. Aujourd'hui, les Amérindiens sont aliénés à la fois des vestiges matériels de leur passé qui sont conservés dans les musées et de l'anthropologie qui demeure l'étude des Amérindiens par des Euro-canadiens. Cette aliénation pourrait en partie être supprimée grâce à un programme d'action positive qui assurerait aux Amérindiens des positions professionnelles comme anthropologues et comme conservateurs de musée.

Today the winds of change are blowing more strongly than ever before through every part of anthropology. There is also growing factionalism within the ranks of the profession. For the first time anthropologists are beginning to wonder if they have constructed their house strongly enough to withstand the gales. The widely publicized split between the World Archaeological Congress, held in Southampton, England, in 1986, and the venerable, but Eurocentric, International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences now appears to have become a permanent division between rival organizations representing "progressive" and "conservative" archaeologists (Ucko, 1988). The disagreement over whether archaeologists from South Africa should be allowed to attend that conference overshadowed Professor Peter Ucko's highly successful efforts to involve representatives of Native groups from around the world in discussions of the goals and ethics of archaeology (Ucko, 1987). The presence of these delegates, and in particular of Mrs. Jan Hammil on behalf of American Indians Against Desecration and the International Treaty Council, angered many American archaeologists. A leading scholar is rumoured to have dismissed these participants with the observation that "If the Third World can't face

'science' they should stay home in the mealie fields" (Ucko, 1987: 62). These developments, which have convulsed the apparently phlegmatic international archaeological community, suggest the extent to which the whole of anthropology may be an academic tinder box.

Today in Canada and the United States Native People are increasing rapidly in numbers and learning to fight ever more effectively for their rights. As their power grows, their criticisms of anthropologists are drawn to public attention. Many Native groups now routinely regulate the anthropological research that can be done in their communities and are quick to take issue with conclusions that they find objectionable (Ames, 1986a: 42-7). Criticisms of anthropologists, that once were muted and confined to reserves, are now widely publicized, as Native People acquire greater skills in communicating their views to the mass media. These opinions have begun to influence the public image of anthropology. This development is fraught with danger for the discipline, given its small numbers and widespread ambivalence about the implications of its cultural relativist orientation for Western societies.

In the United States it has proved relatively easy for Native People to secure the passage of legislation giving them control over sacred sites, as well as the excavation and handling of Indian skeletal remains and the cultural material associated with them (Rosen, 1980; Fowler, 1982: 33; Bard, 1984). In some cases it is objected that traditional Indian religion forbids any disturbance of the remains of their ancestors. At other times it is protested that White archaeologists do not treat the physical remains of Native People with the same respect as they do White skeletons. Politicians find it more expedient and economical to acknowledge the rights of Native People in the cultural than in the economic spheres. Anthropologists who oppose such restrictive legislation are finding it increasingly difficult to avoid appearing insensitive or even ghoulish in the opinion of a public that has grown increasingly sympathetic to these Native claims. Finally there are increasingly frequent legal confrontations between Native People and museums, such as the action taken by the Mohawks of Kahnawake which forced a brief withdrawal from display of an Iroquois mask at "The Spirit Sings" exhibition in Calgary. All of this sadly contradicts the ideal relationship that anthropologists would like to have between themselves and the people they study. It also calls into question what anthropologists are doing. As Michael Ames (1986b: 64) has appropriately put it: "When even the Indians no

longer want us [anthropologists] around, then we are in serious trouble."

The public response of most anthropologists has been to try to carry on as if nothing were happening. In private their responses are more vocal. Many anthropologists reject Native criticism as unfair. They complain that it reflects a lack of gratitude to scholars who over the years have been friendly to Native People and have supported them in their struggles against injustice. Some warn that they will not be held to ransom by Native activists trying to score political points against easy targets. Other anthropologists fear that Native People perceive real contradictions and shortcomings in the discipline about which anthropologists themselves are unaware; while still others believe that Natives perceive what anthropologists already know about themselves, but are unwilling to admit. As a Montrealer I can attest that this spectrum of opinions is characteristic of privileged minorities in situations where decolonization is in progress; although the inequalities between French and English Canadians were always less marked than those that still prevail between White and Native Canadians. Is what we are witnessing the beginning of the decolonization of anthropology, or at least of a growing awareness of the colonial relationship that has existed between anthropologists and the Native People they are studying and whom they have often claimed to represent to the world at large (Ames, 1986b: 62)?

It is impossible in a brief space to consider all aspects of relations between anthropologists and Native Canadians. I will therefore discuss their common relationship to that part of the Native cultural heritage that is preserved in museums. While not all curators of Native archaeological and ethnological collections are anthropologists, growing disputes which centre on these collections starkly raise the question: who owns the Native past — Native People, anthropologists, or the Canadian people as a whole? More specifically, Native People on the one hand and a growing number of anthropologists and museum curators on the other are debating who should control the Native material kept in Canadian museums. This issue has been dramatized and drawn to the attention of the public by the call made by the Lubicon Indian band for museums to refuse to loan material for the exhibition "The Spirit Sings", which was organized by the Glenbow Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization as a cultural event to be held in connection with the 1988 Winter Olympic Games. This demand was supported by organizations representing Indian and Metis groups across Canada. While the boycott originally was intended to increase political pres-

sure to force the federal government to negotiate the Lubicon's long-standing land claim, Native feelings were also outraged that an exhibition which was advertised as glorifying the creativity of Native Peoples at the time of European contact should be sponsored by one of the oil companies that was actively engaged in destroying the economy and way of life of the Lubicon band (Goddard, 1988). Many museums around the world, including prestigious university museums, supported this boycott. Despite allegations to the contrary in the public media, most of these museums made it clear that they were refusing to loan material, despite political pressure to do so from Canadian embassies, not because they feared for the safety of their artifacts, but because they wished to demonstrate their support for the Lubicon Indians. They also believed that a refusal to loan conformed with the spirit as well as the letter of resolution 11 (1987) of the International Council of Museums, which calls upon museums to consult with Native groups and to refuse to support exhibitions which such groups judge to be detrimental to their interests (Leyton, 1987: 1-4). Despite this resolution, no museum in Canada that is known to have been asked to loan material for this exhibition refused to do so.

While most Canadian museums have assiduously avoided commenting publicly about this issue, various justifications have been offered for their stand. One argument, that was advanced publicly by the Board of Governors of the McCord Museum to justify its loan is that museums are cultural institutions and public trusts which should not "take political stands on specific disagreements or among various groups, governments or specific segments of society" (McCord Museum, 1987). There are, however, serious difficulties with this stand. Few anthropologists would today agree with the claim that culture exists independently of politics. There is growing acceptance for the view that officially sponsored culture is one of the means by which dominant elites seek to reinforce and naturalize their political and economic power (Dexter, 1983; Lord and Lord, 1986). The recent protest by Aborigines about the official ceremonies designed to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the British colonization of Australia and the Black avoidance of White South Africa's celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Bartolomeu Dias' "discovery" of the Cape of Good Hope once again have drawn world attention to the political biases inherent in cultural events.

Public museums began to be established in the nineteenth century as part of a self-interested effort by the dominant upper-middle classes to educate and reshape the values of working class people.

From the beginning what was collected and how it was displayed largely reflected the concerns and values of the creators and sponsors of these institutions. Collections of Indian artifacts may have been deposited in natural history rather than in fine arts museums across North America as the result of evolutionary theorizing and unconscious prejudices rather than as a conscious effort to denigrate Native People. Yet such behaviour constituted a political statement which helped to reinforce negative stereotypes about Native People in the minds of successive generations of museum visitors. Today, in order to maintain government grants, museums must attract ever larger numbers of visitors, which means that their display and general management policies become ever more "user driven" (Ames, 1986a: 1-25). As a result most of them conform ever more closely to the advertising, and hence ultimately private enterprise, dominated mass ideology of the day. To claim that such institutions are autonomous is no more realistic than to believe that the fine arts exist independently of political considerations (Lord, 1974). Furthermore a decision to loan material to "The Spirit Sings" was no less a political act than a decision not to loan would have been. To argue otherwise suggests a peculiar view of the world in which it is not seen as political to serve the interests of the rich, the powerful, and the well-placed but it is seen as political to yield to the requests of the weak and oppressed. This is a contradiction that cannot be squared by claims that the mandate of a museum is to make its collections impartially "available to the general public and specialized researchers" (McCord Museum, 1987).

A second line of argument is that museums must resist demands that they respond to political activities in order to preserve their academic freedom and integrity (Ames, 1986a: 47). It has been suggested that if Canadian museums had supported the Lubicon boycott, all sorts of ethnic and special interest groups would have been incited to try to influence the content of exhibitions, what can or cannot be kept in museums, and what artifacts kept in museums can be studied and by whom. I take the issue of academic freedom very seriously. For example, I strongly support the concept of academic tenure. Despite exaggerated claims that tenure is used to protect lazy and incompetent academics, the history of Canadian universities has repeatedly shown that this status is vital to protect the rights of established scholars to speak out freely about political and academic issues (Shore, 1987). I further believe that ethnological collections should be made freely available to researchers through publication, data files, and easy access to artifacts.

Yet I also recognize that no academic freedom can be absolute. Bitter experience has demonstrated that social scientists, no less than medical researchers, must subscribe to carefully administered codes of ethics for dealing with human subjects if horrendous abuses are not to result. Today no anthropologist can claim to have an absolute right to study a Native community. Public archives have had to develop policies restricting access to recent documents in order to respect the confidentiality of those who produced them (and in many cases to ensure the survival of the documents). Finally, strict controls limit rights to carry out research on treasures such as the Turin shroud. Subject to such normal limitations, I do not see increasing input into the management of museum collections by Native People as threatening the freedom of scholars to carry out and publish research on these collections.

We already have noted that public exhibitions and displays are not determined solely by scientific concerns but also relate to the educational and recreational roles of museums. As such they are bound to arouse, and should welcome and respond to, public debate. The downgrading of Sir Francis Drake's role in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in a recent exhibition in Plymouth, England was widely criticized. Some vociferous supporters of the local hero have claimed that he has fallen victim to European Common Market solidarity. Yet it is widely acknowledged that this exhibition's challenge to traditional stereotypes has generated an interesting and informative discussion. In other situations museum curators may decide not to challenge popular stereotypes because they fear that a public backlash or apathy would be too costly for them in terms of securing ongoing funding and donations. Because museum displays are at least partly recreational in nature and therefore public responses are a significant element in their planning, curators mounting such displays cannot claim the same level of immunity from external constraints that is offered to original scholarly research. In designing public displays, curators must combine intellectual integrity and moral responsibility with a sense of showmanship. Theirs is a risky and honourable undertaking but not one that can demand the full sacrosanct protection of academic freedom.

Lastly it is argued that museums conserve a national heritage that belongs to the Canadian people or to provincial and federal governments. The primary duty of museums is therefore to ensure the survival of these collections. It is further suggested (usually off the record) that, if Native groups

were to gain control of ethnographic collections, they might disperse this material, damage it by returning religious objects to their original use, or even decide to destroy some of it. The few objects, often obtained in flagrantly improper ways, that have been returned to their Native owners, are held up as examples of the dispersal awaiting all ethnographic collections.

Arguments of this sort reveal a wagon-train mentality. If they are untrue, they are an unfortunate impediment to White-Indian relations. If they are true, why are things so and what can be done about them? Is the only solution to keep ethnographic collections out of the hands of Native People? In espousing one or the other of these arguments, curators fail to come to grips with relations among anthropologists, Native People and ethnological collections in a holistic fashion. It might better be asked on what ground is it being suggested that Native People would do a poorer job of making collections available to researchers than do existing decision-makers? They might do a better job, given similar resources. This argument is not really over academic freedom at all, but about who has the authority to grant access for research and educational purposes.

In the long run professional and legal concerns are bound to pale into insignificance beside the cultural, ethical, and political issues that are being raised with respect to the rights of Native People in relation to the material remains of their past. While some anthropologists vigorously defend their own academic freedom, the rights of Native People with respect to their cultural heritage have long been ignored. These rights are, however, now an issue that is becoming of increasing importance in many parts of the world. They are also a fundamental problem that Canadian anthropologists and museum curators eventually must address. To do that properly, however, they must first consider how museum collections have been built up and what they have meant to Native People and anthropologists over the years. They must also consider the political and social realities of current Indian-White relations.

For the past 500 years Native People have had to cope with a chronic, and often a matter of life and death, White People problem. They have struggled valiantly and tenaciously to defend and more recently to restore their rights and cultural heritage. While Native groups vary considerably in their standard of living and the success of individual members, as a whole they remain the most deprived people in Canadian society. They are seven times

more likely to go to prison than are non-Natives, six times more prone to suicide, twice as likely to die in infancy, and only one-half as likely to graduate from high school (Siggner, 1986). Their recent exclusion from the Meech Lake Agreement and the failure of successive administrations to settle legitimate land claims hang like millstones around the necks of the Canadian people and cast doubts on either the sincerity of Canadian demands for social and political justice abroad or the integrity of mainstream Canadian institutions. These social injustices are accompanied and reinforced by serious shortcomings in popular concepts about Native People. In our history books (which generally have improved in the way they represent Native People) and in the rhetoric of our two "Founding Nations", they are all too often treated as if they existed apart from the Canadian mosaic rather than as an integral part of it. Like beavers and pine forests, they are still regarded as something that was here before Canada began and that had to make way for the creation of the Canadian nation. As a result of such thinking, the most recently naturalized immigrant is a more integral part of the Canadian nation than are the descendants of Canada's first human inhabitants and the former sole possessors of the entire country. The role of museums as depositories of Native cultural heritage must be rethought in the light of such harsh and unpalatable realities. How can museums which are run by EuroCanadians claim to be the custodians of Native heritage on behalf of the entire Canadian nation so long as Native People are excluded from proper membership in that nation and have not even received full recognition of their inalienable aboriginal and treaty rights?

Most museums amassed their major ethnographic collections in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at a time when Native People were declining rapidly in numbers and anthropologists and the general public believed they would soon die out. Ethnologists, such as Henry Schoolcraft, romantically justified such collecting by stating that it was desirable that European settlers should preserve some mementos of the indigenous peoples they were supplanting (Hinsley, 1981: 20). Evolutionary anthropologists argued that these collections would serve to document what the earliest stages of the development of culture had been like in Europe. Many anthropologists thought that both objectives could be pursued at the same time. Nor did the situation change significantly with the development of Boasian anthropology. Although Franz Boas advocated cultural relativism, which in theory made it unacceptable to judge one culture to

be more advanced than another, he believed that the primary duty of anthropologists was to document the diversity in traditional Native American cultures before these cultures vanished. Boas, like the evolutionary anthropologists that he supplanted, regarded changes in Native cultures as a result of European contact primarily as obstacles that anthropologists had to overcome in carrying out ethnographic research.

It is now being realized that the evolutionary orientation of nineteenth-century anthropologists and their later concern to record traditional Native cultures played an important role in reinforcing popular negative stereotypes about Native People as primitive and inconsequential survivals of the past (Trigger, 1985). For most anthropologists the collection of traditional items of material culture was an integral and important part of ethnological research. Most of this collecting was viewed as a race against time before these goods disappeared as a result of the disintegration of Native cultures. Recent studies by Douglas Cole (1985) and William N. Fenton (1987) reveal much about the nature of collecting as North American museums rivalled each other in their efforts to amass ever larger and more comprehensive ethnographic holdings. Considerable amounts of material were no doubt rescued from destruction as Native People abandoned traditional technologies and beliefs, or became too impoverished and too few in number to maintain their heritage. Yet all too often the very act of collecting was injurious and destructive to Native cultures. On the West Coast ritual objects were confiscated by the police as part of a suppression of Native religious rituals; while even cemeteries that were still in use were looted in order to collect skulls and artifacts buried with the dead. Despite objections from local Indians and Whites, Boas justified this "repugnant work" as being essential for the progress of anthropological research (Cole, 1985:119-21).

The growing impoverishment of Native People was exploited to induce them to part with their traditional material culture. Collectors observed that following a poor fishing season the Indians of the West Coast were prepared to sell ceremonial artifacts that they had previously refused to surrender. Goods were also purchased by collectors who asked few questions of Indians who claimed, sometimes without warrant, to be their owners or custodians. Fenton records that masks were borrowed from their owners by other Iroquois, who then illegally sold them to White collectors. At the same time religious traditions became diluted, if not debased, as Native craftsmen were persuaded to mass pro-

duce copies of ritual objects for the art market. In many instances missionaries collaborated with collectors. They saw the sale of traditional objects as a means for disposing of religious paraphernalia of which they did not approve and for converts to earn needed money. There is evidence of prolonged resistance to the alienation of Native culture even where Native People appeared to be adopting a EuroCanadian style of life. Collectors discovered that in many areas they had considered to be "cleaned-out" traditional goods had been hidden away. These were gradually surrendered as successive economic crises required their owners to raise sums of money.

The inevitable result of such activities was a steady flow of traditional material culture out of the hands of Native People into the possession of EuroAmerican collectors. The acquisition of this material by museums was justified by the need to preserve traditional culture for future generations of anthropologists to study. For the most part museums and individuals had purchased these collections and regarded them as their own property. In a few instances Native People were permitted to visit museum storerooms to perform traditional rituals, such as the feeding of Iroquois masks (Fenton, 1987: 455). Yet, for the most part, little thought was given to the significance that these collections might have for future generations of Native People, since it was generally assumed that either Native People would soon die out completely or the survivors would be totally absorbed into EuroCanadian society. Equally little consideration was paid to Native sensibilities in the display of religious objects. Masks that for religious reasons had been kept carefully covered when not in use were exposed to public view in museums (Fenton, 1987: 171). There were few public complaints by Native People because not many of them visited museums and even fewer felt themselves to be in a position to criticize openly what White people were doing. In this way the traditional material culture of Native People was alienated from them and passed into the custody of anthropologists. T.F. McIlwraith was one of the few anthropologists who expressed concern at that time about the impact that collecting was having upon Native cultures and who was reluctant to remove the few ritual objects that remained. "Practically no new ceremonial objects are being made", he wrote in 1924, "and any losses curtail the already too much curtailed sacred life to that extent" (Cole, 1985: 279).

Ironically the material that curators collected so assiduously for future study has received little scholarly attention from anthropologists in recent

decades. Instead, most of them turned away from studying traditional cultures and began to pay more attention to how Native People have adjusted to the modern world, a topic that Daniel Wilson had found to be of interest as early as 1862. *The North American Indian Today*, edited by C.T. Loram and T.F. McIlwraith (1943), was part of a growing effort by anthropologists to prove that their discipline could be useful in formulating more humane and effective policies for dealing with Native People. About the same time, A.G. Bailey (1939) began the development of ethnohistory with his pioneering study of changing French-Indian relations in eastern Canada. In the early 1960s, Harry Hawthorn directed his massive survey of the conditions of Native life in Canada for Indian Affairs. This project brought together an interdisciplinary team of 52 researchers. Its two-volume report, which recommended greater self-determination for Native People as well as the importance of improving their standard of living, marked a turning point in relations between anthropologists and Native People (Hawthorn, 1966-67). Since that time anthropologists have gone on to study relations between Native People and White administrators (Vallee, 1967; Paine, 1971, 1977); to make their findings more accessible to Native People (Salisbury, 1987); to carry out research for them; and finally to investigate their own relations with Native People (Paine, 1985). Such developments do not necessarily result in perfect objectivity or a complete transcending of self-interest. It seems, for example, that anthropologists have left it to novelists to portray the levels of frustration, anger, and potential violence that characterize Native attitudes towards Whites (Kelly, 1987). Yet they do make anthropologists more aware of the historically unequal relationship between themselves and Native People and of the presumptuousness of their former conviction that they were able to represent Native People to the world at large. There is now a growing realization that only Native People can speak for Native People and that only Native People have the right to decide what is in their own best interest. These developments have led most anthropologists far away from the museum collections that were once believed to be central to their research.

While this has been happening to anthropology, Native People have not been disappearing. Despite poverty and poor medical care they are increasing faster than any other sector of the Canadian population, and for this reason alone they cannot be treated with indifference by governments or the general public. There is also a growing insis-

tence by Native People on their right to relate on their own terms to their past and to their cultural heritage. In part this involves a repudiation, often in violent terms, of EuroCanadian interpretations of Native life, which are denounced as self-serving and denigrating colonial myths. As Native People become more active politically, they no longer consent to an important segment of their cultural heritage being controlled by EuroCanadian anthropologists and curators. Objections that were once confined to Indian communities are now being directed to the general public and, at least to some extent, are being received sympathetically by EuroCanadian audiences. Museums cannot rely forever on legal judgements to protect their custody of collections. These judgements may change as the public accepts the argument that the past silence by Native People about how Native artifacts were collected or displayed resulted from their lack of knowledge of what was happening in museums and their sense of inability to change things. Judges may decide that such behaviour is not an indication that they accepted or approved of what was being done. Finally, governments will find acquiescing in such judgements one of the "cheaper" concessions that they can make to Native demands for self-determination.

Ethically, as well as strategically, it is vital to acknowledge that collections acquired in the belief that Native People were becoming extinct must once again become part of the cultural heritage of their creators' descendants. Museums must take action to liquidate their colonial legacy, as part of a broader national effort to liquidate this legacy in Canada's social, political, and economic life. Because politicians currently are providing such ineffective leadership in the broader endeavour, it is all the more important that anthropologists, who over the years have had close, and sometimes effective, contact with Native People, should assume the lead in doing so.

In recent years museums have attempted to deal constructively with this issue by consulting with Native People and trying to involve them in their activities. In the planning of exhibitions there is growing consultation with Native People and increasing openness to the idea of involving Native experts as co-curators and members of project teams. Traditional Native craftsmen are invited to display their skills and works of art in museums. Even where Native People are not directly involved, curators are paying much more attention to Native feelings when they design exhibitions (Ames, 1986a: 48-58). Yet "The Spirit Sings" has shown that muse-

ums across Canada are still prepared to cooperate in mounting a major exhibition in the face of protests from associations representing most Native groups. Canadian curators who were asked to loan material for this exhibition did not even, as some European curators did, insist that these loans be conditional upon the Glenbow Museum inviting Native participation in setting up a display that might have resulted in their lifting of the boycott. I understand that such proposals by Europeans were rejected because they were seen as threatening to introduce an unacceptable level of politics into a cultural activity. The failure of Canadian museums to respect Native feelings in this important matter has seriously impaired their relations with Native People and called into question their goodwill towards them. This incident has also given rise to controversy among anthropologists, in particular between those who work in museums and those who do not. It would be very regrettable if this split were to widen, since it distracts attention from fundamental issues with which not only ethnology collections but all anthropologists eventually must deal.

If museums are to overcome this setback and truly begin to end their role in the colonial treatment of Native People, far more vigorous action is required than has been seen in the past. At the same time, similar action is required from anthropologists as a whole if they are to profit from their growing insights into what has been and remains the social significance of their own discipline. Until recently anthropologists tended to underrate and undercredit the contributions that Native informants have made to anthropology. Only now is the role that literate Native collaborators, such as George Hunt and Henry Tate, played in Boas's research being adequately appreciated (Maud, 1982). Yet very few Native People have ever become professional anthropologists, while university programmes dealing with Native issues are now generally labelled Native Studies (Hall, 1987). Do Native People not wish to be identified as professional anthropologists? Or do they sense that they are still not welcome as equals in the White Man's occupation? Whatever the reason, the continuing absence of substantial numbers of Native People in a discipline primarily devoted to studying them stands as a black mark against anthropology and Canadian society.

What is needed is a program, hopefully government funded in order to speed it up, of affirmative action that will seek to attract, train, and provide full-time employment for Native People as museum curators and anthropologists across Canada. At the

very least this should involve Native People being appointed to fill as many available positions as possible in museums, with on-the-job as well as university training being provided to ensure their advancement to all levels of museum administration. That would allow Native People to assume primary responsibility for determining how Native collections are used. In universities active support services and remedial training should be expanded to ensure that more Native students complete undergraduate programs, and scholarships and other inducements should be provided to encourage them to do graduate work in anthropology. Preference should also be given to Native People in making academic appointments.

In this way Canada's Native People can be provided with an opportunity to regain control of an important segment of their cultural heritage and anthropology can cease to be the relic of its colonialist past. If charges of tokenism and cooptation are to be avoided, opportunities must be provided for Native People, if they wish, to assume a majority position in these fields. In this way Native professional anthropologists would be in a position to imprint their own values and interests firmly on the discipline. It is one thing for EuroCanadian anthropologists to say that they must not impose their own cultural values on Native People or try to decide what is and what is not good for them. The most effective way to ensure that this does not happen is to make certain that such anthropologists are no longer in a position to dominate the discipline.

I do not doubt that an anthropology in which Native People played a significant, and perhaps a dominant, role would be radically different from what anthropology is like today. There is not even any assurance that in the long run Native scholars would wish to remain anthropologists. The repudiation of anthropology as a discipline has been a common feature of decolonization in many parts of the Third World; its substance being incorporated into either history or sociology. Native anthropologists who chose to study Native cultures might wish to see their research made part of an expanded, independent discipline of Native Studies, leaving anthropology to study other subjects, including EuroCanadian society. The matter of disciplinary labels does not greatly concern me, although I believe that there is an urgent need for the social sciences to maintain disciplines that adopt a holistic, comparative view of human behaviour rather than the more specialized and partial views of economics, political science, sociology, psychology, and even regional studies (Manicas, 1987). I would personally prefer to see anthropology transformed and

revitalized rather than dismembered in this fashion.

Nor do I doubt that the transformations that would occur in anthropology as a result of it becoming a study by, as well as of, Native People would be personally very painful for many professional anthropologists, myself included. Yet I believe that anthropology could become an even more creative and interesting discipline as a result of these transformations. I also believe that museum ethnology departments curated by Native People would have a more engaged understanding of collections and mount exhibitions that were informative and interesting to EuroCanadians as well as Native People. Purging the legacy of our discipline's colonial past would prove salutary for Native Canadians, museums, anthropology, and Canadian society generally.

All of this may sound wildly utopian, if not nihilistic. Moreover, it can be suggested that once again a EuroCanadian is trying to impose his vision of how things should be done upon Native People. We will not know the answer to the latter objection until a significant number of Native People can seriously consider whether they wish to become anthropologists and museum curators. Despite the significant role that they have already played as informants and research assistants and the important contributions that have been made by the handful who have become professional anthropologists, a free choice has never been open to them in the past. Anthropology and museum work remain cozy fields for EuroCanadians and EuroAmericans who desire to study the exotic. A lot of inertia is going to have to be overcome before there is any substantial change in how things are managed. It is all too easy to substitute hopes and words for deeds and to seek token solutions for real problems. Until they are willing to make radical changes, EuroCanadian and EuroAmerican anthropologists will remain the masters of their discipline but prisoners of their own past. Only by returning their discipline and the borrowed heritage they study to its true owners can anthropologists hope themselves to be free.

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