

SECTION III

MUSEUM AND ON-SITE
CONSIDERATIONS



Repatriated *Northern Cheyenne* remains awaiting reburial. Photo by John Warner, St. Labre Indian School, courtesy of Repatriation Office, NMNH, Smithsonian Institution.

SECTION III

Chapter 1. MUSEUM PERSPECTIVES FROM WITHIN: A NATIVE VIEW

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MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH in those collections can be daunting, overwhelming and confusing, for no two museums are exactly alike. The normal difficulties of working with museum collections are compounded by enormous emotional and spiritual issues for Native American researchers. In attempting to address these problems, comprehensive inclusion of the spiritual concerns of Native people and comprehensive knowledge of museums are both needed, and must be pursued as extensively as possible within the limits of time and space.

In this section I will attempt to give the reader a guide to the basic practices common to most museums. I will also explore some approaches to repatriation based on cultural context and protocol, while identifying and addressing potential problems and conflicts. “Museum” is used throughout this section as a blanket term covering the following entities: federal and federally assisted museums, educational institutions, agencies, public collections, historical societies, archives and organizations subject to NAGPRA and bound by professional ethics to address concerns of Native Peoples. “Native Nations” is used in reference to the indigenous people of the Americas and includes Native Nations, Tribes, Pueblos, Alaska Native Villages and Corporations, Rancherias, the Native Hawaiian Nation, and other sovereign groups concerned with repatriation.

Opinions expressed here are the author’s responsibility and are given in the spirit of cooperation with and concern for the success of the repatriation process.

REPATRIATION CLAIMS AND NATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Native Nations are responsible for repatriation. Since traditional concerns are their motivating force, all repatriation efforts should be undertaken with the advice of traditional leaders who are knowledgeable in the cultural traditions relevant to materials in museum collections.

Statements by Native Nations defining their groups through oral history, anthropological and historical records and land claims might prove useful in the repatriation process. Establishing geographic distinctions can help to define cultural affiliation with pre-contact cultures of that area. Significant occurrences in tribal history such as removal, stockade and prison confinement, battles and massacres should be noted; affiliated villages, clans, families, ceremonial sites and other meaningful entities should be described. It might also be useful to stress Native sovereignty over and traditional responsibility for the archaeological and ceremonial materials under dispute, as well as for all human remains of the group.

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Native groups should identify and contact others who have an interest in specific cultural materials and who might make claims or counter-claims to repatriated materials. Museums are not required to resolve competing or conflicting claims. It is therefore in the best interest of the Native Nations interested in repatriation to foresee competing claims and to attempt to resolve these issues prior to making formal repatriation requests.

Repatriation to one group does not restrict use of materials by other groups. The Native Nation which successfully repatriates ceremonial or cultural materials is under no obligation to limit access to materials.

Requests for repatriation of human remains should be linked to a specifically named individual, cultural affiliation, geographic affiliation or suspected affiliation. The Native Nation will be faced with decisions regarding the disposition of human remains, the appropriate disposition of those remains, and the financial resources available for repatriation. The tribal perspective toward repatriation is of vital importance to the Museum.

DETERMINING SCOPE OF WORK

Native Nations will determine their own priorities regarding repatriation. The disposition of, community ability to care for, and proposed uses of repatriated materials are all important issues which should be resolved before repatriation is requested.

The bottom line is financial support for repatriation work and research. Many tribes will be unable to accomplish all desired repatriation of materials and reburial of all remains; the more information gathered and the better its organization, the better able the Native group will be to determine just what is feasible.

Museums are responsible for paving the way for repatriation by preparing **SUMMARIES** and **INVENTORIES** as required by NAGPRA. A summary states whether or not the museum holds materials specifically related to the Native Nation. Research begins for the Native group with a review of these summaries as to accuracy and detail (specifically numbers and types of objects.) **INVENTORY** or **CATALOGUE** are terms used to describe the official museum documentation of collections. These can be detailed or very sketchy and vary from museum to museum and from object to object. If the inventory/catalog is computerized, the researcher can obtain an **INVENTORY CODE** as well as a copy of the museum's **COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY** and **REPATRIATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**, two indispensable tools for deciphering catalog references and museum policy. Other factors to consider when assessing individual museums include previous work with the museum, relevance of materials to repatriation concerns, and access to financial support available for undertaking repatriation research.

Information should be organized by museum location and cross-referenced by type of materials. Research on collections which hold a variety of materials will probably prove useful when investigating smaller claims, so it might pay to begin with the larger collections.

REPATRIATION: COMMUNITY ISSUES

Cultural affiliation is an important determining factor and is essential in the repatriation process. Cultural affiliation can be established through museum documentation and through the traditional history and land claims outlined by the Native group. A museum's official documentation of collections is the first level of information to be relied upon when seeking human remains of named individuals or from specific sites; names of collectors, anthropolo-

gists and archaeologists and others who gathered and studied such materials are often listed in the museum's documents. A file should be maintained to demonstrate a particular individual's interaction with a native community. The same individual may have deposited materials in other institutions. Elders should be consulted regarding significant collectors who may be remembered not only by name but also in the context of the disappearance of specific objects.

The human remains of named individuals listed on inventories or summaries should be verified by Native tradition and history. This is best accomplished by reviewing museum documentation, establishing family histories, (both oral and written), and reviewing tribal, B.I.A., military and other governmental archival records.

After cultural affiliation is established the community must decide whether or not the remains should return to the community. The process of decision making must take into account the community or family financial situation, appropriate reburial, and spiritual concerns regarding the return.

Requests for the return of the remains of named individuals are best made by living descendants or family members, or on their behalf, at their recommendation and under their direction. Families who do not wish to participate in repatriation of those remains should be requested to sign a waiver of familial rights which outlines preferences for final disposition should there be any concerns or questions. To prevent counter-claims, these rights should be held by the designated representative until final disposition.

ASSOCIATED FUNERARY MATERIALS

This category consists of material which relates to the burial, interment or funerary practice including those which were buried directly with remains, those used in place of actual human physical remains (including cremation urns), grave markers, burial scaffolds, and other interment materials and ceremonial markers. Since these materials are often associated with specific burials, documentation may be contained in field notes or original cataloging information.

Materials which are not directly associated with physical remains are eligible for repatriation. Tribal groups should be prepared to answer questions regarding the exhibition, study and final disposition of materials which can be considered funerary materials and are culturally sensitive.

ORGANIZING RESEARCH

The use of NAGPRA-required summaries and inventories can be daunting and overwhelming. A defined system of conducting research based on access to resources facilitates research. Computer databases are the most effective method for organizing information but old fashioned catalog cards still work well. A systematic search of summaries for named individuals and known and suspected culturally-affiliated human remains is essential before beginning any repatriation work.

MUSEUMS

The primary goal of most museums is to preserve and exhibit the materials and information about those materials in their collections. This mission is considered more important than other responsibilities and is often the justification for most collections activities. Storage and retrieval, environmental management, conservation and research are all procedures used to accomplish this goal. Museums operate under a complex system of records management, professional protocol

and cultural interpretation; they are now also challenged with the responsibility of reaching a common ground with Native communities regarding the very heart of those responsibilities.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

The Registrar and the registration department of the museum are responsible for maintaining the intellectual integrity of the collections. This office maintains its own records, which are not part of the official archival record of the museum; these records include current working files regarding the ACQUISITION or ACCESSION of objects and information regarding LOANS, exhibitions and other internal museum-object movement. It is also responsible for clarifying inconsistent documentation.

The primary responsibility of the Registrar is to maintain the official catalog of collections. This office is therefore very important in terms of official information regarding the status of collections, research on the collections and background information on the history of objects. This is the office to approach for access to these materials when questions arise or when the native researcher wants to see lists of culturally related materials which are on LOAN to other museums.

RECORDS OF THE MUSEUM

A museum generally has documentation regarding the origin of the materials it holds and the process by which the materials were ACCESSIONED. It is important to note collectors' names as well as such aids to identification as archaeological site names and numbers, collecting or scientific expedition names, and exhibition interpretation history found in this documentation, even if the relevance of this information is not immediately apparent. The collections management policy outlines the museum's process for accepting materials into and removing materials from its collections. The ACCESSION NUMBER is given to the object upon acceptance into the collection; it can also be the object's catalog number, but if these numbers differ, both should be used when referring to an object. The term "de-accession" is used to indicate the process whereby an object is removed from a museum collection.

Museums often maintain several types of collections. The PERMANENT COLLECTION is the material accepted for long term care because it is compatible with the mission of the museum. Less valuable and more transitory objects such as educational tools and exhibition props will not be found in the permanent collection catalogue, as they have not gone through the formal accession process.

Official records documenting the work of the museum are maintained by the ARCHIVES. The names of donors, archaeologists and other professionals involved in collecting, analyzing or interpreting museum materials will be included in these records. Museums also maintain documents pertaining to archaeological or other scientific expeditions' fieldnotes and expenditures, museum purchases and gifts to it, museum publications, employment records, maps and official correspondence of the museum. Cataloging and cross referencing of materials, as well as their storage, care and handling are included in "maintenance." Archives research is essential and appointments for access to archives should be scheduled well in advance. Archives allow only pencils and paper and often have restrictions regarding the photocopying of sensitive records or fragile materials.

Collectors information can be also be found in professional societies' publications. Directories and registers contain biographical information on individual anthropologists, ethnographers, archaeologists and other academicians and should be consulted to determine the

archive most likely to contain the appropriate professional papers. Many of these publications also contain information relating to museum collections.

CONSERVATION

Conservation focuses on preserving the physical object. However for Native Peoples physical care is balanced with spiritual concerns and practices. This difference in viewpoint may create problems for museum staff. Conflicts with the professional training of most conservators arise, for example, when Native precepts encourage the natural deterioration process or when those precepts call for materials to return to the earth. Many practices of the Native community can be beneficial to the conservation of collections, and meetings with the conservation and collections staff should be held to determine a method of care that accommodates both Native and museum practice.

Conservation can offer solutions to concerns over storage and transportation of repatriated materials; it might also present potential long-term problems. Museums often use plastic bags and air tight enclosures for materials, a practice which can be seen as unacceptable. Freezing, treating with insecticides and cleaning with chemicals are also common museum procedures. Native researchers should protect themselves from potential hazards by using vinyl gloves while handling collections. ALL REPATRIATED MATERIALS SHOULD BE CHECKED FOR SURFACE CONTAMINENTS PRIOR TO REPATRIATION.

REPATRIATION/COLLECTIONS RESEARCH

Scheduling for repatriation research is done through the repatriation coordinator for the museum. If the museum does not have a repatriation coordinator, the COLLECTIONS MANAGER should be consulted to schedule an appointment. Collections research is most important work and is therefore of the highest concern to the museum. Museums usually need several days of preparation for an effective research visit, so advance appointments are strongly recommended if you want to see everything.

Tribal research should begin with a physical survey of the museum collection to determine what can reasonably be accomplished and to develop a work schedule. Next, images of objects and such information as their catalog, accession and lot number should be noted. Often the description of an object as stated in a museum catalog is inaccurate according to traditional beliefs and concepts (the Native group is not obligated to divulge sensitive information). In such cases the museum's information should be used to reference the object in repatriation claims. The Native researcher should provide a way to record images of collections for the tribe's own use. Cameras and video recorders provide images accurate enough for identification but not suitable for publication. The researcher should inspect the equipment prior to travel and be proficient in its use prior to the trip to the museum. Adequate supplies of film, batteries, pencils, paper, and money for copies should be taken and replenished as necessary.

WORK WITH COLLECTIONS

Working with collections is time consuming, dirty, and often uncomfortable, especially when conducted in poorly lit, crowded spaces. Collections are often stored in cramped, awkward conditions. Typical storage techniques include bagging fragile materials in plastic, boxing sets of materials (such as regalia, clothing, pottery shards, fragmented objects, etc.), and rolling textiles,

robes and other large pieces in storage drawers or on open shelving. The Native researcher should allow the museum staff to handle objects while he or she records information and images, except in the case of ceremonial or sacred materials, which must be directed by the appropriate spiritual leader. The museum should be appraised of sensitive materials and the Native researcher should request that access to these materials be restricted until repatriation is resolved.

The EXHIBITION DEPARTMENT is responsible for designing, developing and maintaining the museum's exhibitions and can provide a schedule of current and upcoming exhibitions. The Native researcher should note whether tribal materials are being considered for or are already on view; if such materials are considered inappropriate for exhibit, the researcher should request that they not be exhibited until repatriation is resolved.

The PHOTOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT maintains collections and historic photos. The researcher, having obtained an inventory of these photos, should review them for detail and accuracy. Research in historic photos is time consuming, and the cost of reproductions is high. The Native researcher should request restrictions on exhibition of photographs that are inappropriate for public viewing.

TRADITIONAL CARE AND HANDLING ISSUES

Human Remains

Issues regarding burial safety and solitude after reburial

Among the issues to consider in the choice of sites for burial or reburial of human remains are proximity to the community, safety, security, relative solitude, cultural protocol, and costs. Community cemeteries are obvious choices for reburial if use of those areas is considered appropriate by the community members concerned. Other options include state and national parks with historic cemeteries, county historic cemeteries and remote locations on tribal lands. Materials which might attract the attention of pothunters should remain confidential and those burials with large amounts of funerary material should not be included in public information sources.

Issues of access to information

Information regarding arrangements for transportation of repatriated human remains should remain confidential. Tribal officials should however prepare written statements giving information regarding press access to tribal individuals, ceremonial undertakings during repatriation proceedings, and photographs of repatriated materials. Press releases including tribal statements should be prepared by the museum's office of public relations for distribution prior to repatriation.

Issues of transportation of human remains

The transportation of human remains is a sensitive issue; the advice of traditional spiritual leaders and others knowledgeable in ceremonial practice should be sought before decisions regarding the issue are made.

Budget is a determining factor in most repatriation transportation. Options include air, train, commercial freight, fine art, and rental truck transportation. Air transportation usually necessitates individual(s) escorting the remains from the museum. Crated remains must often be checked-in at the airport several hours before the flight. Costs vary among airlines. Trucks, vans or professional moving companies must also be secured to transport remains from museum to airport and from airport to home. Museum registration staff can usually recommend the best moving service in the area.

Railroad transportation is less costly than air and in some areas much more convenient. Amtrak offers car rentals, coach accommodations, freight shipping and individual tickets. Transportation from the museum is still necessary and overnight accommodations are usually required for the Native escort(s). The lower cost of this option offers the possibility of participation by several people.

Commercial fine-art transportation of remains and materials may save money because no one need go to the museum to facilitate such moves. Contract fine-art couriers, who can usually be secured through the museum's registration staff, will pack and crate as per tribal specifications and then provide door-to-door transportation. Nevertheless, if the budget allows, common practice dictates that someone escort the materials from origin to final destination.

Rental trucks offer the best opportunity for several members of the Native community to escort materials; they also allow maximum freedom in the handling and care of remains, free from the external concerns of other commercial options. Rental trucks come in a variety of sizes and can be secured in most locations for round-trip or one-way returns. Individuals escorting rental trucks should travel in separate vehicles to carry personal effects, support materials, (food, water, blankets, etc.) and to provide security and backup in case of emergencies or unforeseen problems. In the event of automotive trouble or accidents the "chase car" can go for help without leaving materials unattended. Round trips give the escorts an opportunity to secure appropriate accommodations for the return trip and to assess travel conditions.

Materials For Use In Reburial

Materials used by museums usually contain plastics and metals which do not decompose naturally and which are easily acquired. Native teams can use natural materials such as acid-free tissue, cardboard and paper, instead of plastic and metal. They can also use glue as a substitute for metal screws and nails (easily located with metal detectors). Blankets or cotton muslin can replace plastic bags or sheeting. More economical alternatives for packing ceremonial materials include standard cardboard boxes from moving companies and re-usable footlockers from an army surplus store.

The Native group's crating and packing plan depends on the final disposition of associated funerary materials. The less intact and the more difficult to recover the reburied materials are, the less attractive they will be to pot-hunters.

NATIVE CONCERNS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Spiritual Needs

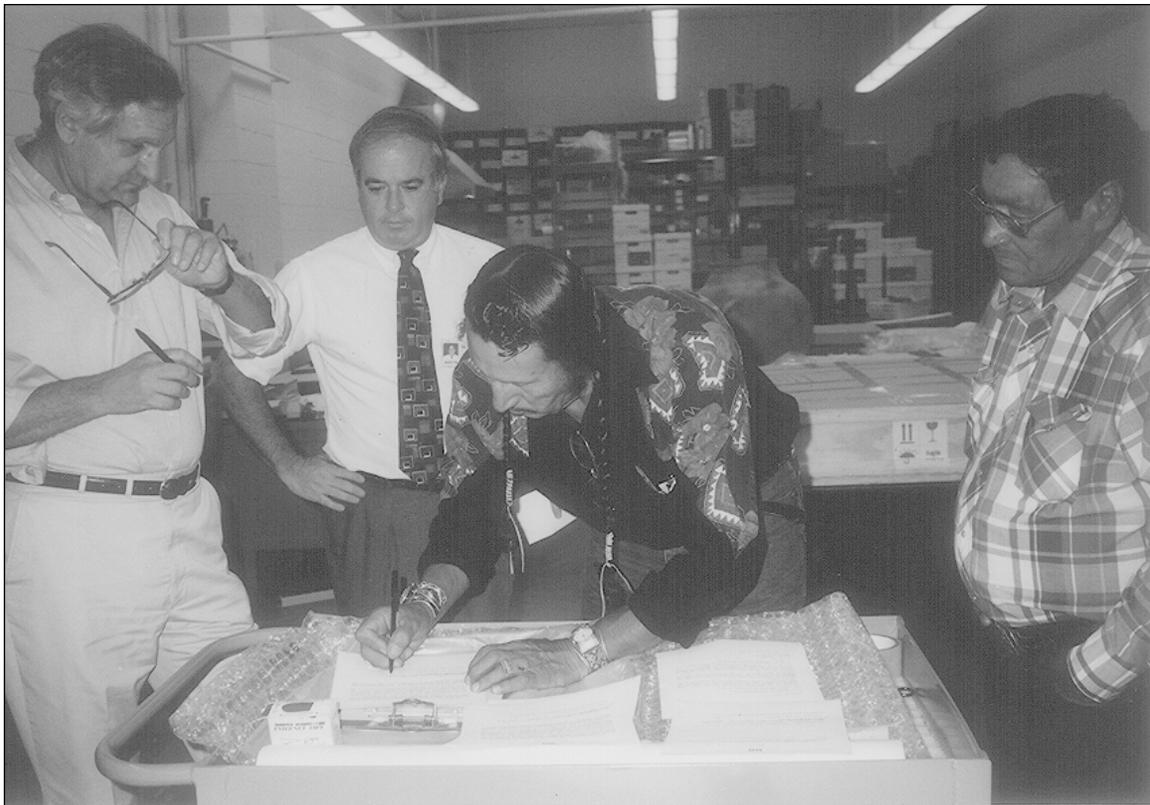
Good planning can help to accommodate the spiritual needs of Native Peoples. Even though all ceremonial needs may not be known until the collections have been viewed and identified, preplanning will certainly make on-site decisions easier.

The use of vegetal materials in collections

Many museums have strict regulations concerning the security and physical protections of objects. For example, the use of herbal, vegetal and other organic materials is forbidden in most collections storage areas because of potential hazards such as pests and mold. Nevertheless, a variety of methods such as the use of jars or other containers which can be covered by fine brass wire mesh and sealed to prevent pests, and the freezing of materials to kill pests can make the use of such materials acceptable to the museum. Removal of those materials in a

timely fashion would allow the museum staff to monitor the materials and participate vicariously in the Native community's observance of a tribal visitation. The use of smoke or smudge causes many levels of concern. Fire is always undesirable in collections storage and smoke discolors collections. Nevertheless, smoke can be used in collections storage areas if the building maintenance staff is notified and smoke detection and suppression systems are overridden. Ash collection and extinction of fire must also be guaranteed. Individual collections can be aerated through archival quality materials such as blueboard, tissue and cotton muslin which provide protection from surface staining. If fire detection systems do not allow for this activity, alternatives include theatrical or auditorium facilities designed to accommodate similar practice in performances. These areas can be closed to the public during tribal use. Staff offices or lounge facilities, patios or balconies, or other museum facilities can serve these purposes and also provide security. Removal of objects from their usual museum facilities raises the concern that outside hazards might be introduced to general collections storage areas upon the return of the objects. Security of the collections from theft or damage in uncontrolled areas and the need for privacy are also issues for consideration.

The Native researcher has a daunting but worthy task; a task best achieved through careful planning. Not all museum experiences are positive, but all afford the opportunity to regain our collective traditions and to lay claim to our future.



Paul Bender and Martin Sullivan of The Heard Museum and John PrettyOnTop and Norman Dawes TwoLeggings of the *Crow* Tribe, signing a transfer agreement to enable repatriation of a *Crow* medicine hoop from the museum to the tribe, August 11, 1993, Phoenix, Arizona. Photo by Gloria A. Lomahaftewa, courtesy of The Heard Museum.

GUIDE TO “OBJECT WORKSHEET”

The “Object Worksheet” pertains to individual items or groups of items held in museums. It is designed to help researchers organize and record information obtained from museum archives, registrars, or other sources. It may also serve as a convenient summary for the researcher’s own records.

- 1. Museum address:** Correspondence must go to the museum’s correspondence address which may not be the same as its street address. It will be helpful to note both addresses if indeed there are two.
- 2. Contact name and title:** Correspondence is most effective when addressed to a particular individual by name and title (Registrar, Head Archivist, Collections Manager, Repatriation Coordinator, etc.).
- 3. Catalogue number and accession number:** In most museums, information about a particular object will be coded with that object’s unique “Catalog Number.” This inventory number is assigned to an object when it enters the museum collection, and is sometimes called an “Accession Number.” Occasionally the Accession Number is not the same as the Catalog Number; this form provides two blanks for that reason. The Native researcher can request information from the registrar using Catalog Numbers as listed on a NAGPRA summary or inventory, or he/she might ask to review museum holdings related to a particular tribe or geographical area, noting Catalog Numbers of items of interest as he/she goes along.
- 4. Photographs:** Museum records files often include photographs of cataloged objects. These photographs and their negative numbers should be noted. The Native researcher’s own photographs of the materials can be cross-referenced here as well.
- 5. Object description:** The description of the object should include a brief title (moccasin, headdress, drum, etc.) and a short list of the distinguishing features of that object (color, design). Materials, especially sensitive or fragile ones such as feathers should also be noted.
- 6. Materials and dimensions:** Measurements of each object can be useful for identification purposes, and are especially important in repatriation work when planning for the return of an object. Packing crate dimensions and subsequent storage space requirements are considerations.
- 7. Insecticides and other hazardous materials:** Before handling materials in museum storage areas, and certainly before repatriating those materials, it is important to know whether they have been treated with pesticides, arsenic, or other substances potentially harmful to people or to nearby objects.
- 8. Collector information:** Information about how an item came to be in the museum’s collection is usually found in the accession records. Individuals identified as the “donor” or the “collector” should be noted, and cross-checked in the museum’s archives whenever possible.

OBJECT WORKSHEET

Museum: _____

Address: _____

Contact Name/Title: _____

Telephone/Fax: _____

Collections Information compiled by: _____ Date: _____

Catalog/Object Number: _____

Accession Number (if different): _____

Other: _____

Photograph Number: _____

Negative Number: _____

Object Description: _____

Materials: _____

Dimensions: _____

Treated with Pesticides or other Hazardous Materials? _____

Collector Information: _____

Other Information: _____

GUIDE TO “COLLECTOR INFORMATION WORKSHEET”

Names of and biographical information pertaining to individual collectors or donors listed in museum records may provide leads for locating other prospects for repatriation. For example, a donor or collector listed in the archives of one museum might very well have collected for or given to other institutions. It is also possible that he or she might still have a private collection or might know the whereabouts of other objects of interest to the researcher. Knowing something of the collector's biography can help a Native group locate materials gathered in one area but subsequently scattered.

- 1. Collector's name:** Include all names, relevant titles, aliases and nicknames.
- 2. Collector's association with Native Peoples:** Collector's past or present titles or positions (Reservation Agent, Missionary, Anthropologist, U.S. Army Scout, etc.) and dates of service in that capacity.
- 3. Records indicating collecting activity:** The kinds and locations of museum or archival records consulted by the Native researcher should be noted, as well as references for further research.
- 4. Collector's association with museums or institutions:** List all other museums, universities, etc. with which the collector associated. The records of these institutions might be investigated by the researcher at a later date.

COLLECTOR INFORMATION WORKSHEET

Collector's Name: _____

Collector's Association with Native Peoples: _____

Dates of Collecting: _____

Records Indicating Collecting Activity: _____

Collector's Association with Museum(s) or Institution(s): _____

Other Information: _____

