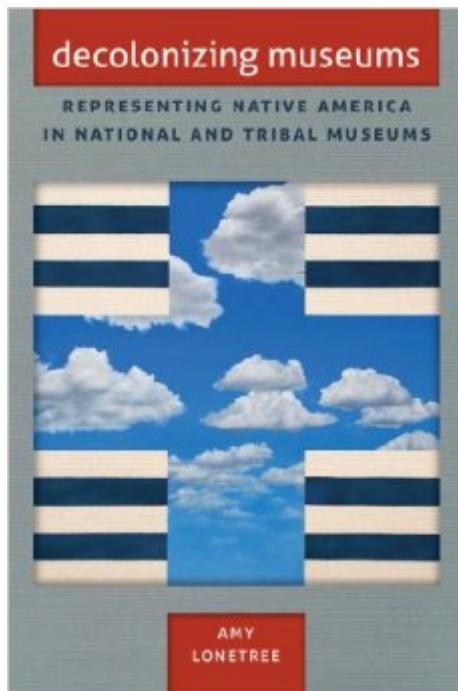


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Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America In National And Tribal Museums (First Peoples: New Directions In Indigenous Studies (University Of North Carolina Press Paperback))



Synopsis

Museum exhibitions focusing on Native American history have long been curator controlled. However, a shift is occurring, giving Indigenous people a larger role in determining exhibition content. In Decolonizing Museums, Amy Lonetree examines the complexities of these new relationships with an eye toward exploring how museums can grapple with centuries of unresolved trauma as they tell the stories of Native peoples. She investigates how museums can honor an Indigenous worldview and way of knowing, challenge stereotypical representations, and speak the hard truths of colonization within exhibition spaces to address the persistent legacies of historical unresolved grief in Native communities. Lonetree focuses on the representation of Native Americans in exhibitions at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, the Mille Lacs Indian Museum in Minnesota, and the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan. Drawing on her experiences as an Indigenous scholar and museum professional, Lonetree analyzes exhibition texts and images, records of exhibition development, and interviews with staff members. She addresses historical and contemporary museum practices and charts possible paths for the future curation and presentation of Native lifeways.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Historically, museums and Native American communities have been at contentious cross-purposes

with each other. Native American artifacts were looted to museums with the notion that these were "artifacts" of a "vanishing race" with no relevance to modern people. Prominent academics routinely robbed Indian graves. Thankfully, this state of affairs has been much altered- though not totally remedied- by NAGPRA and other legal decisions recently made in favor of American Indians. As a Native person trained in the academy and museology, Amy Lonetree has plenty to say about these topics, and may well have added a key piece to the bridge-building conversation between museums and Native communities. Lonetree visits several tribal museums around the country, examining how well they present Native history. Most notably, she criticizes the National Museum of the American Indian, saying that the post-modern ideas informing its construction will render its experiences opaque to the average museum goer, that it makes a political statement merely by attempting to be non-political, and that it shies away from discussing the "hard truths" of colonization. For Lonetree, successful Native museums must engage native communities, give equal validity to Native systems of knowledge, acknowledge "hard truths" and Native feelings of trauma, and most importantly, provide cultural training to their communities that turns museums from sites of colonization and trauma to sites of healing, cultural revitalization and pride, and socioeconomic uplift. These things were important for me to read as a non-Native person who hopes to work with Native American collections. I hope I can be of service and contribute healing in the way Lonetree describes.

Very good explanation of what "decolonizing" means for museum professionals. Also how museums are listening, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, to their Native American partners.

Great book. Thank you.

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