

Lena Freeman

Cultural Museum Winter 2015

Exhibit Analysis and Recommendations

The Museum of Cultural and Natural History

Purpose

The purpose of the Museum of Cultural and Natural History is to engage museum visitors in Oregon's cultural and geological past, present, and future through the use of extensive collections and interactive exhibits. According to MNCH's *Building on our Momentum: Institutional Strategic Plan (2015-2020)* drafted by Patricia Krier, Alice Parman, and David Piercy, the mission of the Museum is as follows:

The University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History enhances knowledge of Earth's environment and cultures, inspiring stewardship of our collective past, present, and future (p. 12).

Aside from the visitor focused purpose, the museum is also a leading research institution. The Museum has a wide variety of collections specializing in anthropological and environmental sciences. These collections include osteology, geology, fossils, zoological, archaeological, and ethnographic artifacts.

One of the other inherent purposes of the Museum is also to be a third space learning environment encouraging the engagement and further educational development of its visitors and constituents. The purpose of this exhibit analysis is to take an in-depth look at how the *Oregon: Where Past is Present* (OWPIP) exhibit functions, and to offer recommendations and strategies to improve upon the existing exhibit through the lens of creating a higher level of participatory engagement.

Targeted Audiences

The Museum of Cultural and Natural History states that the Museum is for everyone (Krier, et al., 2013, p. 12). Although the Museum is open to all who walk through the door, MNCH does state that they do have valued constituents. The constituents of the Museum include students, faculty and staff of the University of Oregon, Native People who contribute content and information to the Museum, community members, researching scholars, lifelong learners, and other museum professionals (pp. 12-13). Within these constituents, there are various participant identities present.

According to John Falk (2009), the museum visitor can be classified in specific categories based on the behavior of the visitor during their visit at the museum. Although visitors can assume different identities based on the purpose of their individual visits, the identity of the visitor can be classified as being either an Explorer, Facilitator, Experience Seeker, Professional/Hobbyist, or Recharger. (pp. 190-206).

MNCH offers a uniquely developed visitor experience for each of these identities. Falk (2009) argues that “Explorers are individuals who say they are visiting the museum because of a curiosity or a general interest in discovering more about the topic or subject matter of the institution” (p. 198). The Explorer may be attracted to the Museum by its offerings as a third-space learning environment, geared toward the cultural and environmental history of Oregon. Since MNCH is open to all, Explorers have valuable access to the message developed and promoted by the Museum.

Falk (2009) also addresses that “Facilitators are visiting in order to satisfy the needs and desires of someone they care about rather than just themselves” (p. 192). Visitors in this category might be drawn to MNCH for its engagement opportunities for their pre-K thru 12 programming. Often times, these visitors might be parents with small children, or teachers bringing their classes to the Museum for exposure opportunities for the content presented by the Museum. Furthermore, Experience Seekers are considered often to be “...tourists, [and] are typically motivated to visit primarily in order to ‘collect’ an experience, so that they can feel like they’ve ‘been there, done that’” (p. 196). This type of visitor might be interested in visiting the Museum to see the world’s oldest shoes on display in the *Oregon: Where Past is Present* exhibit.

Professionals and Hobbyists are described as Falk (2009) as “their primary motivation in visiting is not some generalized goal but typically something quite specific... These visitors are typically on a mission... The typical museum professional is looking critically at how an exhibition is put together, how labels are written, whether certain objects are on display or not... and all of the details that any professional would be concerned about when viewing a competitor’s work” (p. 200). Since MNCH is located on the University of Oregon’s campus, there are several disciplines and opportunities for learning nearby. Students learning about archaeology, anthropology, geology and other environmental sciences may be drawn to the Museum to visit the variety of exhibits housed there.

Specifically, the Professionals and Hobbyists might be interested in visiting the Museum to see the variety of collections housed at the Museum including the *Condon Fossil Collection*, or the *Highlights of the Jensen Arctic Collection*. Furthermore, in addressing the content of the exhibits, the *Oregon: Where Past is Present* exhibit may also draw in people from the Native cultures represented in the exhibit. These Professionals and Hobbyists may be part of the cultures represented in this exhibit. Since, their culture, story, past and present is on display at the Museum, they will have a vested interest in the representation of their people. They are the authorities on their culture, and as a result will view this exhibit through a specific and critical lens.

Rechargers, according to Falk (2009), “...are individuals who visit in order to reflect, rejuvenate, or generally just bask in the wonder of the place” (p. 204). The Rechargers may be drawn to the Museum to be

able to relax, or to have a break from their day. These visitors may feel compelled to visit MNCH to be able to be stimulated visually, academically or even emotionally through engaging with the space and/or content.

The Museum strives to be open and accessible to all visitors, both at their physical site and through the use of their website. The Museum offers community engagement opportunities through their events and educational programs for students in grades pre-K to 12th. In accordance to the Museum's guiding principles, MNCH also strives to engage with the surrounding population of Eugene and Springfield to gain further exposure, and to develop a more diverse group of constituents (Krier, et al., 13). MNCH also strives to gain further exposure through the gaining of accreditation, which would offer a wider learning span across a multitude of varied demographics in addition to existing constituents.

Methodology and Data Collection

The Museum uses a wide variety of methods to track the success of their exhibitions. During this term, various methodologies were used by graduate and undergraduate students attending the AAD 550 Cultural Museum course to collect data on the visitor experience within the OWPIP exhibit. One of the methods for data collection was the observational tracking of visitors. Data collected included charting the path that visitors took through the exhibition, timing how long visitors stayed within OWPIP, if and where visitors stopped, if the visitors stopped for more than 30 seconds, if the visitors interacted with an Exhibit Interpreter, and if the visitor discussed any of the content with any other visitors.

Data collected by the graduate students also included notes taken during four separate focus groups. These focus groups were comprised of constituents to the Museum, including members, students, staff and faculty of the University of Oregon, and other community members who have a vested interest in the success of the Museum. During these focus groups, a series of questions were asked that were geared specifically towards the OWPIP exhibit, although not all questions were asked at each focus group meeting. Questions that were omitted were done so on a case by case basis and were done so due to time restrictions, or the subsequent questions were inadvertently answered during the answer session of other questions.

Students also collected data for the OWPIP exhibit by participating in their own *Judging Exhibitions Framework* exercise. This was done by each student walking through the OWPIP exhibit alone and recording of things that caught the individual's attention, which are referred to as Call-Outs. Students also judged the exhibition on four separate categories. These categories include the evaluation of the exhibit, asking if the exhibit is physically and psychologically comfortable; reinforcing; engaging; and meaningful. Data from this exercise were then compiled into groups, where individual assessment ratings are compared against each other. From this, we are able see where there are differences or similarities in opinion across the four categories.

Data collection methods for the OWPIP exhibit can be considered a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to Zina O’Leary (2014), quantitative data is “...based on the belief that the study of society is no different than the scientific study of any other element of our world --- from particles to animals... Quantitative social scientists also call on existing data and survey techniques in their quest to study and capture the reality of human populations” (p. 122). This quantitative approach is used within the data collection in the form of observational tracking. We can see how many participants visited the Museum, how long they stayed within the exhibit, and if they stopped at any given point. This information can then be quantified and calculated into statistical data, giving us an opportunity to determine what parts of the OWPIP exhibit are successful, and what areas lack visitor engagement opportunities.

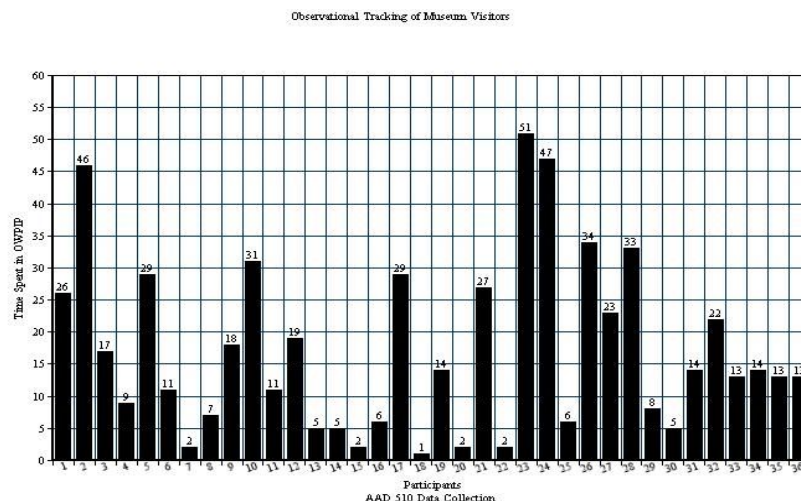
In addition to this quantitative approach, the remaining data collected can be viewed as having come from a qualitative approach. O’Leary (2014) states that “...the qualitative tradition... calls on inductive as well as deductive logic; appreciates subjectivities; accepts multiple perspectives and realities... and does not shy away from political agendas” (p. 130). The use of the individual *Judging Exhibitions Framework* exercise, and the information collected through the four focus groups offer us a collection of data from the qualitative approach. Individual opinions, interests, and suggestions have been recorded and taken into account through a qualitative approach.

Although, there is more qualitative data than quantitative, the data can be understood as having a fluid mixture between the two methodologies.

Data Analysis

Observational Tracking

During the observational trackings conducted by graduate students of the AAD 510 Cultural Museum course, 36 visitor groups were observed. Visitor groups varied in size from one visitor to seven



visitors. On average, visitor(s) spent 17.375 minutes in the OWPIP exhibit, with the longest visit clocking at 51 minutes, and the shortest visit clocking in at only 1 minute (note: values were rounded up to the nearest minute). Although observers also collected notes on some of the visitor groups, it is not possible to fully determine which

visitor identities (as described by Falk in Part 1) each of the visitor groups would fall under. However, it can be interpreted that visitors of groups containing youth visitors have the possibility of being categorized as both the Explorer and Facilitator categories. Youths could be considered as participating in the Explorer category, while accompanying adults could be considered as being in the Facilitator category. There are varying reasons as to why, how, and for how long visitors interact with exhibits. Although, there may be statistical reasoning behind the varying exhibition visit times, it is impossible to determine why visitors interact in the ways that they have been observed without an additional qualitative perspective.

Judging Exhibitions Framework and Focus Groups

Students from the AAD 510 class collected data through the use of the Judging Exhibitions Framework exercise, as aforementioned in Part 1 under the Methodology and Data Collection. Data from this exercise were compiled and compared collectively as a class to see where students had similarities in opinion, or where opinions differed. Opinions varied to some degree on the comfort level of the exhibit, noting that the space was dark, the amount of text was overwhelming, and that there were few places to be able to sit and reflect. In terms of the level of engagement, OWPIP is only moderately engaging to the visitor, and only moderately reinforcing. The meaningfulness of OWPIP was a point of contention between the student groups. Answers varied on both sides of the scale. It was later determined through facilitated classroom discussion that the content of the exhibition was meaningful, but the presentation of the content could be improved upon.

During the four focus groups, participants were asked several questions about their impression of the OWPIP exhibit. Questions varied from asking what the participant's overall experience within the exhibit was, to what could use more work. Participants had a general consensus that the OWPIP exhibit was very text heavy, but that the information within the exhibit was valuable to the understanding of Oregon's past. However, timelines were also noted as being inconsistent from text panel to text panel, thus interrupting the overall flow of the content exhibited. There was also a general consensus that the artifacts in the exhibit were interesting, however, the lighting in the artifact cases was rather dim, thus making it difficult to see any of the detailing. It was also noted within Focus Group 1 that there was a disconnect between the dioramas and the artifact cases. It was unclear to one participant as to what the significance of the artifacts were in terms of what they were supposed to be learning from this content.

There were many notes made on the fact that OWPIP has very few visitor engagement opportunities, and that there is a very low level of visitor participation. Black (2005) writes that "...the primary role of exhibitions and associated activities is to engage audiences directly with collections - to gain visitor attention, to hold it and to encourage reflection" (p. 271). The high levels of text were noted to being

off-putting to some visitors, while others expressed that they felt engaged through the high levels of information. Nina Simon (2010) argues that “[j]ust as there are visitors who will never pull the lever on an interactive and those who prefer to ignore the labels, there are many visitors who will not choose to share their story, talk with a stranger, or consume visitor-generated content. There will always be visitors who enjoy static exhibitions conferring authoritative knowledge.” (Principles of Participation, para. 11)

Opinions were bifurcated on the use of the dioramas, some stating that the dioramas were interesting and engaging, while others determined that they were outdated and lifeless. The content of the exhibition was deemed as still being relevant, but according to Schreiber, et. al., (2013), “[p]art of the issue in museum learning is conceptual change. Many exhibits are created not just for visitors to peruse but rather for a schematic readjustment of understanding of a time period, theory, or culture” (p. 463). OWPIP offers an important content in the understanding of Oregon’s cultural history, but at this point, needs an update to be able to offer a more refined exhibit to be able to deliver the content of its message in a clearer, and updated fashion.

Redesign Recommendations

As it currently stands, in the *Oregon: Where Past is Present*, the exhibit lacks visitor participation opportunities. OWPIP has a sense of staticness and an unchanging view on the histories and cultures of Native Oregon. Nina Simon (2010) expresses that “The goal of participatory techniques is both to meet visitors’ expectations for active engagement and to do so in a way that furthers the mission and core values of the institution. Rather than delivering the same content to everyone, a participatory institution collects and shares diverse, personalized, and changing content co-produced with visitors” (Preface, para. 6).

Currently, the design of OWPIP does not offer many opportunities that allow the visitor to interact with the content. The information presented has an air of academic jurisdiction. Although the information and message of the exhibit are presented from a thoroughly researched and academic standpoint, it also has an undercurrent of an traditionally authoritative and institutionalized presentation. This highly academic presentation can be intimidating and off-putting to some visitors, especially if engagement and participation opportunities aren’t present. As Nina Simon (2010) states, “The chief difference between traditional and participatory design techniques is the way that information flows between institutions and users. In traditional exhibits and programs, the institution provides content for visitors to consume...In contrast, in participatory projects, the institution supports multi-directional content experiences” (Principles of Participation, para. 4). Visitors could benefit from higher levels of

participatory exhibits, which would allow the visitors to engage with the content of the exhibit on multiple levels, best suited for each visitor's learning styles.

Currently, there are four main dioramas in OWPIP (the Great Basin, the Columbia Plateau, the Coastal Region, and the Western Valley), artifact cases, and multiple text-heavy text panels. Although it should be noted that within OWPIP, there has been an attempt at engaging a sensory experience through the use of sound, the impactfulness of these sensory elements falls short of creating an engaging experience. The use of sounds within the exhibit has been a topic that has been debated within the AAD 510 Cultural Museum class, as well as within the focus groups. Some visitors view the sounds as being distracting to the overall experience, while others enjoy the sounds and wish that there was an even wider variety of sounds present. In hopes of creating a more dynamic and sensory engaging atmosphere, I recommend that OWPIP change their use of the ambient sounds, and focus on offering more engagement opportunities for the other senses.

The importance of touch cannot be denied. There is a satisfaction in being able to touch, feel and explore our environment, and can offer a sense of physical connectivity that the other senses are unable to offer. I recommend that selected objects and artifacts undergo the process of being recreated through the use of 3D printing. Although there are conservation and safety concerns when it comes to exhibiting artifacts to the public, I feel as though the way that the artifacts that are currently displayed creates a barrier between the visitor and the institution. With new technologies such as 3D printing, it would be a beneficial addition to the exhibit to include selected recreated artifacts so that the visitors could interact with the content on a physical level.

. When we are allowed to touch, we can connect with the objects or artifacts on a fundamental level. Our imaginations are engaged as we imagine what it would be like to use these objects for their intended purposes, or what it would feel like to hold ownership over the object. Although there are challenges and safety concerns with allowing the public to touch and handle actual artifacts, there is validity in the exchange of trust between the institution and the visitor. If the institution instills a sense of trust to the visitor with handling an artifact (even a replica), then the visitor may feel more inclined to have a stronger and more engaging participatory experience within the museum, thus creating a more memorable learning experience.

In addition to the use of 3D printed objects, I also recommend that the overall flow of the exhibit be changed, allowing the Coastal Region to move to where the Great Basin and the Columbia Plateau Regions are now currently represented. In the Coastal Region's new area, I would recommend building a larger plank house that visitors would physically be able to enter. It has been noted on several occasions in discussion within the AAD 510 Cultural Museum Class that the plank house is a magnet to visitors

both young and old. However, the current diorama does not allow for the visitor to be able to physically enter the space. Children have often observed trying to climb up into the house. Creating a larger version of the plank house would have to allow for children to be able to interact with the content, and to also learn through the act of play and amusement. The size of the plank house would have to be able to accommodate multiple children at once, as well as adults. Visitors would have to be able to enter the space safely, and the accessibility to the plank house would also have to be compliant with ADA requirements. Although the use of a plank house to represent the Coastal Region would not necessarily be a new element to the OWPIP design, the size and scale of the plank house would allow for a different experiential visit.

The plank house could serve to engage each type of Falk's Museum Visitors. The Explorers may find that becoming fully immersed in a traditional setting will allow for imaginative and critical thinking about how the Native peoples of the Coastal Regions lived. They may find themselves pondering or imagining what it would be like to live in such an environment, which could then in turn inspire thought-provoking questions and discussions. Facilitators would also find themselves engaged, especially parents or grandparents of small children. The new plank house would be one that is inviting and safe to explore, unlike the current representation. Facilitators may also find a bench right outside the plank house directly facing the entrance, which can allow them to sit at a close distance while the others in their group seek out their participatory experience.

The Experience Seeker may also find that the ability to move within a simulated space will offer them a chance for critical thinking and observation. The immersion within this environment may become part of the experience that they are attempting to find during their museum visit. The Professionals and Hobbyists may enter the space attempting to figure out or understand how these plank houses were originally constructed, critically analyzing the execution of the design, while the Rechargers may find the plank house a quiet place for a moment of solitude and reflection.

The Columbia Plateau Region would stay relatively in the same space as it is now, however the space needed to represent this area would be decreased. The dip net from the current diorama would still be represented in this space, however the magnitude of this Region would be scaled back to allow room for the plank house. The Western Valley Region would be represented next to the Columbia Plateau Region. A strong delineation between the two regions would have to be made for informational clarity. However, it could be useful to add an informational section on the diets of the Native cultures between these two diorama spaces. The current Western Valley Region highlights the use of the Camas plant as a nutritional source, while the Columbia Plateau Region highlights the necessity of fishing. Both of these elements of each region could be interesting if developed together in a shared text panel.

In addition to changing the flow of Regional layouts, I would also recommend dramatically changing the layout and use of the artifact cases. Currently, the main artifact case only allows visitors to view objects from a limited perspective. Issues with lighting have also been noted within the focus group meetings, and class discussions. I would recommend creating artifact cases that would allow visitors to move 360° around the case. This would allow visitors to be able to view the artifacts from multiple angles. These cases could be used to house basketry, the sandal collection, or any other artifacts that would have visually interesting points from varied angles. The height of the case would also be an important factor to take into consideration. It would be advised that the height of the case be low enough for those with height restrictions (notably those in wheelchairs and small children), to be able to see the artifacts clearly. Although these new artifact cases would be implemented into this new design, the older style of cases would still be used for artifacts such as tapestries, or other objects that only require limited perspective view points.

Currently, there is little content on the Hard Truths of the degradation of the Native Cultures. I propose that the OWPIP create an entire section on the Hard Truths of the history of the how the Westward Expansion movement affected Native Cultures. Cooper (2008) argues that “[t]here is need for more Native voices in museums and for greater scrutiny of museum policies and practices by American Indian advisors. It is the responsibility of the museum world to foster such interactions because many minority people will be reticent about offering their opinions to those they deem as remote and uncaring” (p. 18). It is our inherent job as educators and museum professionals not to shy away from the difficult truths of our collective past. It would do a great disservice to the represented cultures within OWPIP to continue to share only a brief, “half-history” of the events, trials and tribulations that these cultures were and still are faced with. I would also recommend placing a bench in front of this area of the exhibit, allowing visitors to sit and reflect on the message presented in this area of the exhibition.

In addition to the Hard Truths section, I would recommend adding an entire section titled “We Are Still Here,” devoted to acknowledging the Native Cultures that are still very much alive and present. Currently, OWPIP does lightly address the fact that these Native tribes and cultures still exist, however, I feel as though this exhibit can do a stronger job at representing the tribes of today. As previously mentioned, the current OWPIP design uses ambient sounds to create an auditory engagement opportunity. As mentioned previously, the current overarching use of sounds within OWPIP can be distracting to some visitors, but I do believe that the use of auditory engagement should remain within the exhibit. Rather than using sounds as ambient noise, I recommend that the auditory component be reworked into using audio/video recordings of current Native People. These recordings would highlight some of the oral traditions and folklore of the Native People represented in OWPIP, show dances or rituals (with given

sensitivities to religious, sensitive, and spiritual content), interviews with tribe members, or even current tribe members speaking their Native dialects. I strongly believe that representing these cultures in a current context within OWPIP is pertinent to the overall success of the redesign.

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As it currently stands, in the *Oregon: Where Past is Present*, the exhibit lacks visitor participation opportunities. OWPIP has a sense of staticness and an unchanging view on the histories and cultures of Native Oregon. Nina Simon (2010) expresses that “The goal of participatory techniques is both to meet visitors’ expectations for active engagement and to do so in a way that furthers the mission and core values of the institution. Rather than delivering the same content to everyone, a participatory institution collects and shares diverse, personalized, and changing content co-produced with visitors” (Preface, para. 6).

Currently, the design of OWPIP does not offer opportunities to allow the visitor to interact with the content. The information presented has an air of academic jurisdiction, and while presented from a thoroughly researched and academic standpoint, it also has an undercurrent of an traditionally authoritative and institutionalized presentation. As Nina Simon (2010) states, “The chief difference between traditional and participatory design techniques is the way that information flows between institutions and users. In traditional exhibits and programs, the institution provides content for visitors to consume...In contrast, in participatory projects, the institution supports multi-directional content experiences” (Principles of Participation, para. 4).

Currently, there are four main dioramas in OWPIP (the Great Basin, the Columbia Plateau, the Coastal Region, and the Western Valley), artifact cases, and multiple text-heavy text panels. Although it should be noted that there has been an attempt at engaging a sensory experience through the use of sound, the impactfulness of these sensory elements falls short of creating an engaging experience. The use of sounds within the OWPIP exhibit has been debated within our class, and within the focus groups. The topic seems to have bifurcated opinions. Some museum visitors view the sounds as distracting to the overall experience, while others enjoy the sounds, and wish that there was an even wider variety of sounds present. In creating a more dynamic and sensory engaging atmosphere, I recommend that OWPIP offer more engagement opportunities for the other senses, most noticeably touch.

The importance of touch cannot be denied. There is a satisfaction in being able to touch, feel and explore things through this sense. I recommend that selected objects and artifacts undergo the process of being recreated through the use of 3D printing. Although there are conservation concerns when it comes to exhibiting artifacts to the public, I feel as though the way that the artifacts that are on displayed right

now tend to create a barrier between the visitor and the institution. With new technologies such as 3D printing, it would be a beneficial addition to the exhibit to include selected recreated artifacts so that the visitors could interact on a physical level.

Tactile engagement is an important element in our learning process. In general, we use touch as an exploratory sensory experience. When we are allowed to interact with an object or artifact on a physical level, it can stimulate a different kind of engagement that simply viewing an artifact through an artifact case will ever allow us to experience. When we are allowed to touch, we can connect with the object on a fundamental level. Our imaginations are engaged as we imagine what it would be like to use this piece of history for its intended purpose, or what it would feel like to hold ownership over the object. Although there are challenges and safety concerns with allowing the public to touch and handle the actual artifacts, there is validity in the exchange of trust between the institution and the visitor. If the institution instills a sense of trust to the visitor with handling an artifact (even a replica), then the visitor may feel more inclined to have a stronger and more engaging participatory experience within the museum, thus creating a more memorable learning experience.

In addition to the use of 3D printed objects, I would also recommend that the overall flow of the exhibit be changed, allowing the Coastal Region to move to where the Great Basin and the Columbia Plateau Regions are now currently represented. In the Coastal Region's new area, I would recommend building a larger plank house that visitors would physically be able to enter. It has been noted on several occasions that the plank house is a magnet to visitors both young and old, but the current diorama does not allow for the visitor to be able to become fully immersed in the space. Children are often observed trying to climb up into the house, as well as some adults. Scaling of the new plank house would have to allow for multiple children, or adults to be able to enter the space safely, as well as be compliant with ADA requirements. Although the use of a plank house to represent the Coastal Region would not necessarily be a new element to the OWPIP design, the size of the plank house would allow for a different experiential visit.

The plank house could serve to engage each type of Falk's museum visitors. The Explorers may find that becoming fully immersed in a traditional setting will allow for imaginative and critical thinking about how the Native peoples of the Coastal Regions lived. They may find themselves pondering or imagining what it would be like to live in such an environment, which could then in turn inspire thought-provoking questions and discussions. Facilitators would also find themselves engaged, especially parents or grandparents of small children. The new plank house would be one that is inviting and safe to explore, unlike the current representation. Facilitators may also find a bench right outside the plank house

directly facing the entrance, which can allow them to sit at a close distance while the others in their group seek out their participatory experience.

The Experience Seeker may also find that the ability to move within a simulated space will offer them a chance for critical thinking and observation. The immersion within this environment may become part of the experience that they are attempting to find during their museum visit. The Professionals and Hobbyists may enter the space attempting to figure out or understand how these plank houses were originally constructed, critically analyzing the execution of the design, while the Rechargers may find the plank house a quiet place for a moment of solitude.

The Columbia Plateau Region would stay relatively in the same space as it is now, however the space needed to represent this area would be decreased. The dip net from the current diorama would still be represented in this space, however the magnitude of this Region would be scaled back to allow room for the plank house. The Western Valley Region would be represented next to the Columbia Plateau Region. A strong delineation between the two regions would have to be made for informational clarity. However, it could be useful to add an informational section on the diets of the Native cultures between these two diorama spaces. The current Western Valley Region highlights the use of the Camas plant as a nutritional source, while the Columbia Plateau Region highlights the necessity of fishing. Both of these elements of each region could be interesting if developed together in a shared text panel.

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Currently, there is little content on the Hard Truths of the degradation of the Native cultures. I propose that the OWPIP create an entire section on the Hard Truths of the history of the how the Westward Expansion movement affected the Native cultures. It is our inherent job as educators and museum professionals not to shy away from the difficult truths of our collective past. It would do a great disservice to the represented cultures within OWPIP to continue to share only a brief, “half-history” of the events, trials and tribulations that these cultures were, and in many cases, still are faced with. I would also

recommend placing a bench in front of this area of the exhibit, allowing visitors to sit and reflect on the message presented in this area of the exhibition.

In addition to the Hard Truths section, I would recommend adding an entire section devoted to addressing the fact that these Native cultures are still very much alive and present. Currently, OWPIP does lightly address the fact that these Native tribes and cultures still exist, however, I feel as though this exhibit can do a stronger job at representing the tribes of today. I recommend that an audio/visual section be added to this section of the exhibit. Though this audio/visual component, a wide variety of information can be shared. Videos and audio tapes may include ceremonial dances or rituals, storytelling and folklore, interviews with tribe members, or even current tribe members speaking their Native dialects. I strongly believe that representing these cultures in a current context within OWPIP is pertinent to the overall success of the redesign.

Resources

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