

Expectations & Experiences

A Study of Winter Visitors
to the National Museum
of the American Indian



Smithsonian Institution
Office of Policy and Analysis
July 2008

CONTENTS

Preface.....	iii
Executive Summary.....	v
Background.....	1
The Issues.....	2
Study Design.....	3
The Survey.....	3
Analysis Approach.....	3
Analysis.....	4
Visitors.....	4
Attitudes.....	5
Message.....	5
Rating.....	6
Experiences.....	7
Time and Activities.....	8
Change Suggestions.....	10
Further Analysis.....	12
Entrance Responses.....	12
Exit Responses.....	13
Discussion.....	17
References.....	20
Appendix A: Survey Instruments.....	21
Appendix B: Survey Responses.....	25
Appendix C: Museum Messages.....	36
Appendix D: Suggested Changes.....	37

PREFACE

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) was pleased to conduct this study of visitors to the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The goal of the study was to understand the characteristics and expectations of winter visitors as they entered the museum and their experiences during their visits as they exited. The study was timed so that data would be available for the Potomac project team as they began re-thinking the entry area of the museum.

The data for the study came from almost 800 visitors. We appreciate visitors' willing participation and cooperation. The time they provided reflects their affection for the Smithsonian and interest in improving the visitor experience.

I would like to thank the NMAI staff for their assistance and guidance in the course of the study. Carolyn Rapkivian, Assistant Director For Education and Museum Programs, initiated the study. Potomac project team members, Gabrielle Tayac and Elizabeth Gordon assisted with questionnaire development. NMAI Museum Programs staff helped with data collection. It was a pleasure to work with them.

Within OP&A, Zahava D. Doering and Andrew Pekarik were responsible for the survey design, data collection, analysis, and report preparation; Kathleen M. Ernst and James Smith ably assisted them. Staff members Samantha Grauberger and Whitney Watriss helped with the interviewing. This study would not have been possible without our dedicated interns – Josh Brown, Justin Cason, Allison Butts and Yuko Ichikawa. Lance Costello was responsible for report production. I thank all of them for their hard work.

Carole M. P. Neves
Director, Office of Policy and Analysis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This study is part of planning for changes in the Potomac Atrium of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). It was undertaken as a baseline study of visitors' expectations and experiences before any changes to the Atrium are made; the effect of any changes can be measured against this baseline in future studies. In addition, this study could inform deliberations of other project and exhibition teams at NMAI.

The Survey

A sample of visitors entering NMAI and a separate sample of visitors exiting the museum were surveyed February 12-17, 2008 (Tuesday through Sunday). The response rate was very good: 80% on Entrance (412 completed) and 71% on Exit (365 completed). Overall, of 1,030 eligible visitors intercepted, 777 completed questionnaires (75%).

Analysis Approach

The focus of this report is on changes between Entrance and Exit. The analysis is restricted to Non-Native visitors – 90% of the visitor population. There are indications that behavioral differences exist between Non-Native and Native visitors. However, the number of Native visitors intercepted was too small for meaningful analysis.

Visitors

One in ten visitors lived outside the U.S., and about one in five lived locally. The age distribution peaks at two points – around age 27 and around age 52.¹ In the whole sample (including those not interviewed) 13% of visitors were under age 18 (7% under 12; 6% between 12 and 18). One in five visitors came alone; two in five came with one other person age 18 or older, two in five were in a group with three or more persons ages 18 or older. One in four was a repeat visitor to NMAI.

Attitudes

Non-Native visitors' entrance narratives include positive orientations towards Indians that basically remained unchanged by the end of their visit to NMAI. This includes recognition and strong agreement with the following four statements:

- *Indian cultures are very different from one another.*
- *Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds.*

¹ Only visitors age 12 and over were interviewed.

- *Traditional Indian attitudes towards nature can help solve environmental problems.*
- *I expect to learn something about myself when I learn about Indians.*

Message

The majority of both entering and exiting Non-Native visitors believe that NMAI has a message. The percentage increases between Entrance (70%) and Exit (86%). The phrases visitors gave as messages can be classified as:²

- *Learn about Indians*
- *Learn about Indian beliefs, beauty, continuity, culture, diversity, food, similarity*
- *Relations with Non-Indians: challenges, change, conflict, independence, peace, sadness, self-expression, stereotypes, words*
- *Value Indians*
- *Value Indian contributions: connectedness, harmony, importance, nature, relevance, spirituality, tradition*

Rating

Although a few Non-Native visitors were disappointed in NMAI, more had their expectations met or exceeded. The rating that exiting visitors gave NMAI was very close to the Smithsonian museum average measured in 2004 and better than ratings given to NMAI in March 2005.

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior	Total	
(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
0	2	34	52	12	100	2008 NMAI Entrance
1	6	27	47	19	100	2008 NMAI Exit
2	8	30	39	21	100	2005 NMAI Exit
0	3	29	49	19	100	2004 All SI museum exiting visitors

Experiences

At Entrance, visitors indicated which experiences they were especially looking forward to. At Exit, they indicated which experiences they had found especially satisfying. The list is given below. Each statement is preceded by the percent of visitors that marked this experience at Entrance as one they were especially looking forward to, and the percent at Exit that found it especially satisfying.

²List in alphabetical order and does not reflect frequency.

Entrance	Exit	
%	%	
60	49	Enriching my understanding
57	52	Gaining information
40	40	Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things
38	41	Feeling a connection to Indian history and culture
34	28	Appreciating the natural world and our place in it
31	27	Imagining other times or places
28	40	Being moved by beauty
22	19	Reflecting on the meaning of what I will see/saw
18	14	Feeling a spiritual connection
18	16	Relating what I will see/saw to my everyday life

Only two experiences in the list above differed significantly between Entrance and Exit:

- *Enriching my understanding*, the most anticipated experience of them all, decreased significantly from 60% at Entrance to 49% at Exit
- *Being moved by beauty* increased significantly from 28% at Entrance to 40% at Exit

Time and Activities

A comparison of time planned with estimates of time spent in NMAI shows visitors spent longer periods of time in the museum than they expected.

At Entrance, visitors were asked to indicate the types of activities that were important reasons for their visit. At Exit, they were asked to indicate their actual activities during their visit. In comparing anticipated with actual activities, the data show that visitors carried out their plans to visit exhibitions about Indian history and culture (e.g., Our Peoples, Our Universes), to see displays of Indian crafts, art, and objects (e.g., Windows on Collections), and to get specific information. However, visitors went to an exhibition about contemporary Indian life (Our Lives), the Mitsitam Café, and a museum store more frequently than anticipated.

<i>Actual Activities</i> (in decreasing order)	
%	
62	Went to a museum store
61	Saw <i>Our Peoples</i>
60	Saw <i>Our Universes</i>
54	Saw <i>Identity by Design</i>
52	Saw <i>Our Lives</i>
49	Went to the Mitsitam Café
46	Saw displays of Indian dolls, beadwork, animal objects, arrowheads, or peace medals (<i>Windows on Collections</i>)
44	Stopped at the Welcome Desk
33	Read about the landscaping outside the building
29	Used computer screens to get information
25	Saw <i>Return to an Indian Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake</i>
24	Went to <i>Lelawi</i> Theater
10	Spoke with an Indian staff member/took a guided tour
9	Went to the Resource Center

Change Suggestions

Upon exiting, two-fifths of visitors wrote suggestions for changes they would like to see implemented. Visitors who gave lower ratings were more likely to suggest improvements or changes.

Further Analysis

Analysis of the data revealed significant associations among some key variables.

Visitors who reported that they had enriched their understanding were more likely than other visitors to give the highest rating to the museum (26% of those who indicated that they had enriched their understanding rated the museum Superior, compared to 12% of all other visitors.)

Enriching my understanding was also closely associated with two activities: *Visiting Our Lives* and *Visiting the Lelawi multi-media presentation*. More specifically, 34% of those who saw neither *Our Lives* nor *Lelawi* reported enriched understanding, compared to 57% of those who saw one of the two, and 63% of those who saw both. This suggests

that something may be happening in these locations that provides visitors with a new perspective.

Being moved by beauty was closely associated with two activities: *Reading about landscaping outside the building* and *NOT seeing the displays of dolls, beadwork, etc.* This pattern suggests that they were moved by the beauty of the building rather than the beauty of the exhibits.

Discussion

The survey results indicate Non-Indian visitors in the winter season are coming to NMAI with considerable goodwill, interest, and positive orientation towards Indians. A major motivating force for a majority is to enrich their understanding of the diverse people represented in NMAI.

For the most part, visitors found what they were looking for in the museum and rated their experiences very positively. Although enriched understanding was the top expectation of entering visitors, it was not found as often as anticipated. The study found that those who saw the *Lelawi* presentation or the *Our Lives* exhibition were much more likely to have enriched their understanding compared to other visitors. Since the *Lelawi* Theater has such a positive impact on understanding, but is seen by only one in four visitors, it seems reasonable to conclude that leading more visitors to the *Lelawi* Theater could have a very positive impact.

This study also demonstrated that the experience of beauty is an unanticipated aspect of the visit to NMAI for a substantial number of visitors. The fact that being moved by beauty was most closely associated with reading about landscaping and with NOT seeing the object displays in *Windows on Collections*, suggests that an aesthetic response to the building (rather than to the objects on display) may have been a key factor in this experience.

The relatively low percentage of visitors that went to some activities (e.g., used computer screens, saw *Return to an Indian Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake*, went to the *Lelawi* Theater, or visited the Resource Center suggests that NMAI may want to examine the physical orientation that is provided to visitors.

BACKGROUND

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) has a long-standing commitment to listening to its varied constituents. As far back as 1991, NMAI undertook a series of consultations with Indian communities aimed at defining and refining the museum's architectural design and programmatic offerings. Prior to the opening of the Mall museum, the perceptions of non-Indian potential visitors were sought in studies undertaken at the George Gustav Heye Center at the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in New York, as well as at various locations on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.¹

Since the museum opened on the National Mall on September 21, 2004, assessments, surveys, and observations have regularly taken the pulse of visitors and examined the relationships between the expectations and perceptions of visitors and those of the museum staff as expressed in exhibitions and programs. With the exception of a survey of visitors as they exited the museum in early March 2005, these studies have focused on specific museum offerings (e.g., studies of temporary exhibitions).²

This study is part of planning for changes in the Potomac Atrium, the space just inside the main doors. It was undertaken as a baseline study that examines the expectations and experiences of visitors before any changes are made to the Potomac. Since



visitors encounter the Potomac both as they enter and as they leave, the effect of any changes can be measured against this baseline in future studies. In addition, both the Potomac project team and the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) recognized that this study could inform deliberations of other project and exhibition teams at NMAI.

¹ See References on p. 26

² For report copies, contact the Assistant Director for Education and Museum Programs at NMAI.



THE ISSUES

Attitudes

A primary goal of the study was to determine the basic attitudes towards Indians that non-Indian visitors bring to the Museum.

Message

Linked to entering attitudes are perceptions of the main ideas promoted by NMAI. Do entering visitors think that the museum has a message? What are those messages? Are these messages different at the end of the visit?

Rating

While a relatively new museum, NMAI has been the subject of considerable national and local press coverage and attracted many visits since it opened. How would entering visitors rate their expectation of the museum? How would exiting visitors rate the visit? How would the ratings of exiting visitors compare to those of entering visitors? Higher? The same? Lower?

Experiences

As they enter, what kinds of experiences are visitors looking forward to?³ At the end of their visits, which of those experiences were especially satisfying? Did exiting visitors have more or fewer experiences than were anticipated by entering visitors?

Time and Activities

What activities and exhibitions attracted visitors? What did they do in the museum? How much time did they spend in the museum in relation to what they expected? The relationships between expectations and actual activities are critical to understanding the dynamics of visits.

Change Suggestions

Visitors interviewed informally and those who stop at the Welcome Desk often offer suggestions for changes. The team wanted to solicit ideas from visitors to see if any of these issues could be addressed by the Potomac revisions.

³Visitors in school groups or organized groups entering or exiting NMAI as a group were excluded.

STUDY DESIGN

The Survey

In order to collect data for the issues noted, the study used complementary entrance and exit surveys. A sample of visitors entering NMAI and a separate sample of visitors exiting the museum were surveyed. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to visitors over the age of 12. Data collection took place February 12-17, 2008 (Tuesday through Sunday). The response rate was very good: 80% on Entrance (412 completed) and 71% on Exit (365 completed). Overall, of 1,030 eligible visitors intercepted, 777 completed questionnaires (75%). The questionnaires are in Appendix A; responses to all survey questions are in Appendix B, Table 1.

Analysis Approach

The focus of this report is on differences between Entrance and Exit. The analysis is restricted to Non-Indian visitors – 90% of the visitor population. There are indications that behavioral differences exist between Non-Indian and Indian visitors. However, the number of Indian visitors intercepted was too small for meaningful analysis.

The results represent all Non-Indian visitors present on the survey dates. Provided the visitors surveyed did not differ in systematic ways from visitors on other winter days, results can be used to represent the NMAI Non-Indian visitors during the winter season (December, January, February) more generally.



ANALYSIS

Visitors

More than one in four were repeat visitors to NMAI, which is a higher percentage than for the Smithsonian overall or for a Smithsonian history museum (about 13%), but about the same as Smithsonian art museums (27%).⁴ Among repeat visitors, the average number of previous visits was five. Repeat visitors were more likely to be local (38% lived within 20 miles, compared to 16% of all visitors).

Women comprised slightly more than half of the visitors (52%), which is about the same as in 2005. The average age of all visitors was 41 (median age 40). Current visitors are younger than those surveyed in 2005 at NMAI (average 46, median age 47).

The age distribution peaks at two points – around age 27 and around age 52.⁵ In the whole sample (including those who were too young to complete questionnaires) 13% of visitors were under age 18 (7% under 12; 6% between 12 and 18). One in five visitors came alone; two in five came with one other person age 18 or older; two in five were in a group with three or more people ages 18 or older. One in five came with a child under age 18, the same as in 2005.



NMAI visitors have significantly higher levels of education than typical Smithsonian museum visitors. As in 2005, about eight of ten have at least a Bachelor's degree and more than half have professional or graduate degrees. NMAI visitor education levels are similar to those of Smithsonian art museum visitors.

One-fifth of the visitors (19%) came from the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area; one-half lived more than 150 miles from NMAI (in the United States); one-tenth (10%) came from outside the United States.

⁴ Data for the Smithsonian overall in this report are from the *2004 Smithsonian-wide Survey of Museum Visitors* conducted from June 14 to August 15. Some differences noted here may reflect seasonal differences. Data for NMAI not from this study are from *A Comparison of Visitors to the National Museum of the American Indian to General Smithsonian Museum Visitors* conducted in early March 2005. (See References.)

⁵ Only visitors age 12 and over were asked to complete questionnaires, but the ages of all visitors in the sample were recorded.

There were no statistically significant differences between entering visitors and exiting visitors in any of their demographic characteristics, except for group composition,⁶ but not group size. OP&A believes that this anomaly does not affect the results in any way.

Attitudes

Visitors were asked to indicate their level of agreement (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree) with four statements:

Indian cultures are very different from one another.

I expect to learn something about myself when I learn about Indians.

Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds.

Traditional Indian attitudes towards nature can help solve environmental problems.

Less than one in five visitors disagreed with the first two statements. Less than one in twenty disagreed with the second two. Rarely did visitors strongly disagree with any of the statements (1%-2% at most). The results clearly show that Non-Indian visitors' entrance narratives, i.e., their attitudes, experiences, and cultural or philosophical frameworks include positive orientations towards Indians and that they basically remain unchanged by the end of their visit to NMAI. We found no significant differences in responses between entering and exiting visitors.⁷

The data also show that the strongest agreement is with attitudes related to the contributions of Indian people.

Message

The majority of both entering and exiting Non-Indian visitors believe that NMAI has a message. The percentage increases significantly between Entrance (70%) and Exit (86%). The phrases visitors wrote in as messages can be classified as:⁸

Learn about Indians

Learn about Indian beliefs, beauty, continuity, culture, diversity, food, similarity

⁶The analysis in this report applies a 0.05 standard for statistical significance. In other words, there is less than a one in twenty chance that a difference observed in this data will be an accident of the sample. Only statistically significant differences are reported here as differences.

⁷Disagree and Strongly Disagree are combined, as a maximum of 2% of visitors selected Strongly Disagree on any item.

⁸List in alphabetical order and does not reflect frequency.

Relations with Non-Indians: challenges, change, conflict, independence, peace, sadness, self-expression, stereotypes, words

Value Indians

Value Indian contributions: connectedness, harmony, importance, nature, relevance, spirituality, tradition

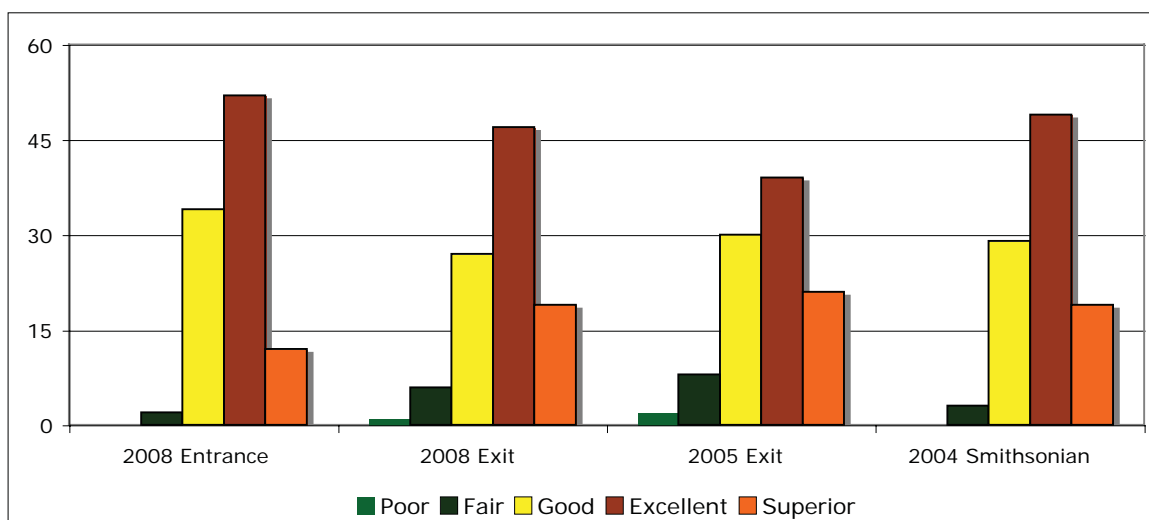
Examples of messages are found in Appendix C. A comparison of all the messages shows that there is no substantive difference between the types written at the Entrance and those at Exit.

Rating

Entering visitors were asked *How do you think you will rate your overall experience at this museum when you leave?* Upon leaving, they were asked *Based on your visit today, please rate your overall experience at this museum.* The response categories were *Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, and Superior.* The data show that although a few Non-Indian visitors were disappointed in NMAI as they left, more had their expectations met or exceeded (Figure 1). Note the increases at both ends of the scale.

A comparison to the 2005 Exit data, collected at about the same time as the 2008 survey, shows an improvement. The rating that exiting visitors gave NMAI in the 2008 survey was very close to the Smithsonian museum average measured in 2004.

Figure 1. Overall Ratings: NMAI and Smithsonian
(In Percent)



Experiences

Expectations

Entering visitors were asked which museum experiences, among a list of ten, they were especially looking forward to at NMAI. Two of these experiences were selected by three out of five visitors, indicating that visitors came mostly

to learn⁹

- *Enriching my understanding (60%)*
- *Gaining information/knowledge (57%)*

A second group, selected by about between one-third and two-fifths of visitors, points to the importance visitors placed on a desire

to see things and connect

- *Seeing rare/valuable/uncommon things (40%)*
- *Feeling a connection to Indian history & culture (38%)*
- *Appreciating the natural world and our place in it (34%)*

The remaining group of items, selected by less than one-third of visitors, points to their interest in

aesthetic and introspective experiences

- *Imagining other times or places (31%)*
- *Being moved by beauty (28%)*
- *Reflecting on the meaning of what I see (22%)*
- *Feeling a spiritual connection (18%)*
- *Relating what I see to my everyday life (18%)*

On average, entering visitors selected 3.5 of these ten experiences. And, as the data show, entering visitors were clearly most interested in educational experiences.



⁹One way to differentiate between these two items is to say that *Gaining information* is about learning facts, getting tidbits, etc., while *Enriching understanding* is getting a grasp of the bigger picture, or adding a new perspective on facts one already knows.

Actual

Only two experiences in the list above, *Enriching my understanding* and *Being moved by beauty* differed significantly between Entrance and Exit. Visitors exiting the museum selected the other eight experiences at the same level as they were selected on Entrance.¹⁰ In other words, NMAI provided visitors what they were looking for with respect to these eight experiences.

In the case of *Enriching my understanding*, significantly fewer visitors selected this as an experience they found especially satisfying during their visits (a decrease from 60% to 49%). In other words, at least one of six visitors who came seeking enriched understanding did not find it during their visit.

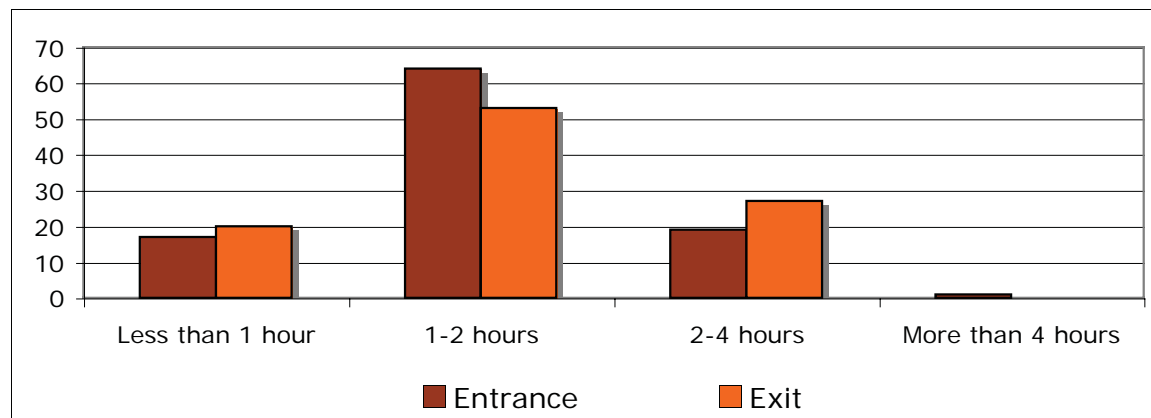
Conversely, the percentage of visitors who reported *Being moved by beauty* increased significantly over the percentage who came to the museum looking for that experience (an increase from 28% to 40%). In other words, one in six visitors who were not expecting an aesthetic experience found one in the course of their visit.

Time and Activities

Time

Inevitably visitors to the Smithsonian have to make decisions about allocating their time. A comparison of time planned with estimates of time spent in NMAI shows a definite increase between entrance and exit (with fewer visitors spending 1-2 hours and more spending 2-4 hours compared to Entrance) (Figure 2). In other words, visitors were spending longer periods of time in the museum than they expected.

Figure 2. Time in the Museum: Anticipated and Actual (In Percent)



¹⁰All were within 6 percentage points of the Entrance data. See details in Appendix A.

Activities

At Entrance, visitors were also asked to indicate the types of activities that were important reasons for their visit, while at Exit they indicated their actual activities. Below, expected activities are shown in descending order, from the most frequently marked to the least. Consistent with an emphasis on enriching their understanding, exhibitions about Indian history and culture were selected most frequently.

Expected Activities

- %
- 70 See exhibitions about Indian history
- 63 See exhibitions about Indian culture
- 48 See the building
- 45 See Indian crafts, art, and objects
(e.g., masks, clothing)
- 35 See exhibitions about contemporary Indian life
- 30 Eat Indian foods
- 9 Get answers to specific questions about Indians
- 8 Buy Indian crafts and art in the store
- 6 Talk to Indian museum staff/take a guided tour
- 6 Other.



The Exit data shows that three out of five visitors reported all three activities: the shops and two exhibitions (*Our Universes* and *Our Peoples*). About half the visitors saw two other exhibitions (*Identity by Design* and *Our Lives*) and went to the Mitsitam Café.

*Actual (in decreasing order)*¹¹

- %
- 62 Went to a museum store
- 61 Saw *Our Peoples*
- 60 Saw *Our Universes*

- 54 Saw *Identity by Design*
- 52 Saw *Our Lives*
- 49 Went to the Mitsitam Café

¹¹To facilitate identification, short descriptions of areas were provided in the questionnaire. See Appendix A for exact wording of the items.

- 46 Saw displays of Indian dolls, beadwork, animal objects, arrowheads, or peace medals (*Windows on Collections*)
- 44 Stopped at the Welcome Desk

- 33 Read about the landscaping outside the building
- 29 Used computer screens to get information
- 25 Saw *Return to an Indian Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake*
- 24 Went to *Lelawi* Theater
- 10 Spoke with an Indian staff member/took a guided tour
- 9 Went to the Resource Center

In comparing anticipated with actual activities, the data show that visitors carried out their plans to visit exhibitions about Indian history and culture (e.g., *Our Peoples, Our Universes*), to see displays of Indian crafts, art, and objects (e.g., *Windows on Collections*), and to get specific information. However, visitors went to an exhibition about contemporary Indian life (*Our Lives*), the Mitsitam Café, and a museum store more frequently than anticipated.¹²

On average, visitors saw 2.7 of the six major exhibitions (2.0 for repeat visitors; 3.0 for new visitors).¹³ Nearly one in five (18%) see none of the six, while only one in twenty (5%) see all six. The rest of the visitors are fairly evenly distributed across one to five exhibitions.

Judging by the location of the exhibitions they reported seeing (as well as the Resource Center and *Lelawi* Theater), at least one in five visitors (19%) visited all four floors of the museum. Using this same method, we estimated that 16%, at most, did not go beyond the first floor.

More than three out of four visitors (78%) eat and/or shop in the museum.

Change Suggestions

Upon exiting, two-fifths of visitors wrote suggestions for changes they would like to see implemented. Categories and examples are given below:¹⁴

¹² At the Entrance, the store question was asked in terms of buying in the store; at Exit, it was going to the store, thus the comparison should be made with caution.

¹³ *Our Lives, Our Peoples, Our Universes, Identity by Design, Return to an Indian Place*, and the *Lelawi* presentation

¹⁴ Sub-lists in alphabetical order and do not reflect frequency. See Appendix D for visitor precise words.

Collections (more architectural displays, more art, more artifacts, more things)
Content (more history, more information, less information, more on contact, more on today, more tribes)
Exhibits (better level 2, better entrance, better introduction, integration of the landscape, *Universes*, variety)
Interpretation (less political, more clarity, more detail, more flow, more introduction, more music)
Amenities (baby carriers, coatroom, food costs, food court, cheaper store)
Facilities (More blowers, more water, more light, signs, electrical)
Media (better media, more audio, more interactives, noise level)
Visitor Services (more events, more for kids, more staff, staff, more tours, visits)
Other (outreach, problems)



Visitors who gave lower ratings were more likely to suggest improvements or changes. Changes were suggested by 55% of those who rated the museum Poor, Fair, or Good, by 30% of those who rated it Excellent, and by 32% of those who rated it Superior.

FURTHER ANALYSIS

Aside from comparisons between Entrance and Exit, the associations among different responses can be analyzed to provide deeper insights into the expectations and experiences of visitors.

Entrance Responses

New and Repeat Visitors

In considering the patterns of expectations among entering visitors, it is important to recognize the differences between those who are new to the museum (about 75%) and those who are making a repeat visit (about 25%).

Time

A sizable percentage of repeat visitors were anticipating brief visits.

Many more repeat visitors, compared to new visitors, expected to spend less than one hour in the museum (Entrance: 29% repeat vs. 13% new).

Experiences

Compared to new visitors, repeat visitors on entrance were:

- More likely to be looking forward to *feeling a spiritual connection* (28% vs. 15%)
- Twice as likely to be planning to eat in the café (50% vs. 24%)
- More likely to *strongly agree* that *Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds* (65% vs. 47%)

Activities

On the other hand, compared to repeat visitors, new visitors on entrance were:

- More likely to want to see exhibitions about Indian history (75% vs. 53%)

Ratings and Experiences

New visitors and repeat visitors were essentially the same in how they expected to rate the museum. Some other categories of visitors, however, were expecting more of their visit than others.

Those looking forward to *feeling a connection to Indian history and culture* and those looking forward to *feeling a spiritual connection* were each three times more likely than

other visitors to anticipate a Superior rating (19% vs. 6% for history and culture; 24% vs. 8% for spiritual connection).

Activities

Entering visitors' indications of anticipated activities were analyzed to determine patterns. Three distinct patterns of anticipated activities emerge:

Seeing exhibitions

Seeing the building, shopping and eating

Getting answers to questions

Exit Responses

New and Repeat Visitors

Time

Many repeat visitors carried through on their plans for brief visits of less than one hour (Exit: 32% repeat vs. 15% new).

Even though repeat visitors were less likely than new visitors to expect a long visit in the museum (i.e., two to four hours), both groups ended up spending longer than they expected. At Entrance 14% of repeat visitors expected to spend 2-4 hours, compared to 20% of new visitors. On Exit 22% of repeat visitors spent 2-4 hours, compared to 29% of new visitors. In other words, nearly identical percentages of new and repeat visitors spent longer than they had anticipated.

Attitudes

Compared to exiting repeat visitors, exiting new visitors were much more likely to *strongly agree* that *Indian cultures are very different from one another* (42% vs. 13%).

Activities

New and repeat visitors differed substantially in what they did during their visit.

- Repeat visitors were much more likely to have eaten in the Mitsitam (66% vs. 42%).
- New visitors were more likely to have stopped at the Welcome Desk (49% vs. 30%)



- New visitors were more likely to have looked at exhibitions and displays:
 - » *Our Peoples* (68% vs. 43%)
 - » *Our Universes* (67% vs. 43%)
 - » *Identity by Design* (60% vs. 41%)
 - » *Our Lives* (58% vs. 38%)
 - » *Displays of dolls, beadwork, etc.* (53% vs. 30%)

Ratings and Experiences

Although new and repeat visitors did not differ in the ratings they gave the museum when they exited, one experience is closely associated with high ratings.

Those who said that they had found *Enriching my understanding* especially satisfying were twice as likely as other visitors to have given the museum a Superior rating (26% vs. 12%).

As noted earlier, two experiences stood out on Exit: *Being moved by beauty* (which was significantly higher) and *Enriching my understanding* (which was significantly lower).

Enriching my understanding was closely associated with two activities:

- Visiting *Our Lives* (58% of those who visited *Our Lives* reported enriched understanding, compared to 38% of other visitors)
- Visiting the *Lelawi* multi-media presentation (61% of those who visited the *Lelawi* theater reported enriched understanding, compared to 45% of other visitors)

More specifically, 34% of those who saw neither *Our Lives* nor *Lelawi* reported enriched understanding, compared to 57% of those who saw one of the two, and 63% of those who saw both.

Being moved by beauty was closely associated with two activities:

- Reading about landscaping outside the building (48% of those who read outside reported being moved by beauty, compared to 36% of those who did not).
- NOT seeing the displays of dolls, beadwork, etc. (31% of those who saw the displays reported being moved by beauty compared to 48% of those who did not see the displays).

Some other experiences reported on Exit were also associated with particular activities:

Reflecting on the meaning of what I see was significantly associated with:

- Seeing *Identity by Design*
- Visiting alone

Appreciating the natural world and our place in it was significantly associated with:

- Visiting a museum store
- Seeing the *Lelawi* presentation

Relating what I see to my everyday life was significantly associated with:

- Reading about the outside landscaping
- Seeing *Identity by Design*

Activity Patterns

Among exiting visitors there were four patterns of actual activities:

Seeing Exhibitions

Reading the landscaping texts and taking tours

Shopping and Eating

Visiting the Resource Center

This is very similar to the pattern of anticipated activities seen at the entrance, except that shopping and eating are more prominent as activity patterns of their own.

Most of those who did not visit any exhibitions were repeat visitors. In particular, 38% of exiting repeat visitors did not see any of the six exhibitions compared to 9% of new visitors.

Object-Oriented Visitors

Among entering visitors, less than half (40%) said that they were looking forward to *Seeing rare, valuable or uncommon things* (40%), and roughly the same number (45%) said that seeing Indian crafts, art, and objects was an important reason for the visit. Combining these two variables identifies a group comprising one fourth (26%) of the entering visitors who are both looking forward to seeing rare things and came to see Indian objects.

These entering object-oriented visitors differed from other visitors interviewed at the Entrance in the following ways:

- They were looking forward **more** to gaining information (75% vs. 52%).

- They were looking forward **more** to imagining other times or places (46% vs. 26%).
- They were looking forward **less** to relating what I see to my everyday life (38% vs. 62%).
- They were more likely to **disagree** that *Indian cultures are very different from one another* (20% vs. 10%).
- They were more likely to **disagree** that *I am likely to learn more about myself when I learn about Indians* (29% vs. 17%).

Similarly, exiting object-oriented visitors can be identified as those who both reported seeing rare objects as satisfying and who stopped at the *Windows on Collections* display. This group comprises one-fifth of the exiting visitors (21%).

These exiting object-oriented visitors differed from other exiting visitors in the following ways:

- They were **more** likely to report the experience of relating what I see to my everyday life (30% vs. 12%).
- They were more likely to **disagree** that *I am likely to learn more about myself when I learn about Indians* (33% vs. 15%).
- They were **more** likely to have spent from two to four hours in the museum (47% vs. 23%).

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey can be interpreted from the perspective of the Potomac project as well as from a broader NMAI orientation. Here, both are attempted. The major caveat to this discussion is that the data pertain only to Winter visitors. Studies have shown that the characteristics of visitors vary during different seasons and there is likelihood that attitudes and expectations may vary as well.

Potomac Project

The survey results indicate Non-Indian visitors are coming to NMAI with considerable goodwill, interest, and positive orientation towards Indians, and varying levels of familiarity with the cultures, traditions and philosophies presented in the Museum. A major motivating force for a majority is to expand their horizons and enrich their understanding of the diverse people represented in NMAI. They have high educational levels and make a time commitment to see exhibitions and enjoy some of the museum's commercial offerings (e.g., the Mitsitam Café). These visitors appreciate past contributions of Indian people to the global society in which we live and recognize that there are future contributions to be made. At a personal level, visitors also see their experiences in NMAI as opportunities for self-awareness, learning about themselves.

For the most part, visitors found what they were looking for in the Museum and rated their experiences very positively. Visitors saw exhibitions they anticipated (Indian history, culture) and found an increased interest in contemporary Indian life. Aside from major exhibitions, they found objects of interest and beauty, and more of them enjoyed eating in the Mitsitam Café and browsing in the shops than had anticipated these activities.

At the same time, the data suggest that NMAI could take its visitors to a higher level of experience and enhance their visits through changes in the Potomac area. For example, the fact that more than two out of five visitors (44%) stop at the information desk can be interpreted as suggesting that visitors are uncertain what to expect in the museum and do not get an intuitive, clear picture of the possibilities. Certainly the location of galleries, their contents, the route to them, etc., are not immediately obvious to the entering visitor.

Enriched understanding was the top expectation of entering visitors and the one experience that was not found as often as anticipated. Since the *Lelawi* Theater has such a positive impact on understanding, but is seen by only one in four visitors, it seems reasonable to conclude that leading more visitors to the *Lelawi* Theater could have a very positive impact. In addition, the power of *Lelawi* and *Our Lives* to affect visitor

understanding challenges the Potomac project team to find ways to communicate something similar at the entry to the Museum.

Understanding

In comparing the results of this study of NMAI to studies of other Smithsonian museums, especially the overall ratings of the museum, this study showed that about half of the visitors have a generally satisfying experience (Excellent rating) – which is the norm at Smithsonian museums. One third are critical of the museum to some degree (Poor, Fair, or Good ratings) and one in five place the museum at the top of the scale (Superior).

Assuming that the museum would like to provide an extraordinary, superior visit experience for more of its visitors, the data presented here contain clues to creating such an experience.

We have already indicated the criticality of enriching understanding. This was the experience most sought after by entering visitors, and the one most strongly associated with Superior ratings. At the same time it was the one experience that was found less often than it was anticipated. Perhaps making this experience more easily available would positively affect ratings.

The study found that those who saw the *Lelawi* presentation or the *Our Lives* exhibition were much more likely to have enriched their understanding compared to other visitors. The museum may want to investigate the attributes of those experiences that resonate with visitors. How is understanding enhanced in these settings?

Based on fragmentary data,¹⁵ we believe that visitors may find unique and unexpected insights in both settings. The *Lelawi* presentation, aside from its visual impact, may be providing a holistic view of Native life and philosophy and showing how it is still present today. *Our Lives*, with its portrayal of a vibrant and creative Native contemporary presence may be an unexpected surprise for visitors initially seeking history rather than stories of contemporary life. In both cases visitors may be appreciating the continuity of Indian traditions.

A better sense of the nature of these expanded understandings may make it possible to create other options for satisfying this need that visitors appear to be bringing with them.

¹⁵After the survey results were analyzed, a small number of interviews were conducted with visitors leaving *Our Lives* and the *Lelawi* presentation to begin looking at how they were affected.

Beauty

This study also demonstrated that the experience of beauty is an unanticipated aspect of the visit to NMAI for a substantial number of visitors. Where did visitors find these unexpected aesthetic experiences?

The fact that being moved by beauty was most closely associated with reading about landscaping and with NOT seeing the object displays in *Windows on Collections*, suggests that the aesthetic response to the building (rather than to the objects) may have been a key factor.

Way-Finding

The relatively low percentage of visitors that went to some activities (e.g., used computer screens, saw *Return to an Indian Place: Algonquian Peoples of the Chesapeake*, went to the *Lelawi* Theater, or visited the Resource Center suggests that NMAI may want to examine the physical orientation that is provided to visitors. Experimentation with signage, information in elevators, the stores, or in the Mitsitam Café, may help direct visitors to locations they might otherwise miss and provide them with a richer experience.

REFERENCES

Institutional Studies Office. 1996. *Connecting with Native Voices: Visitor Impressions of the Gustav Heye Center*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Institutional Studies Office.

Institutional Studies Office. 1998. *Images of Native Americans: A Background Visitor Study for the National Museum of the American Indian*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Institutional Studies Office.

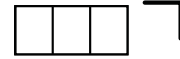
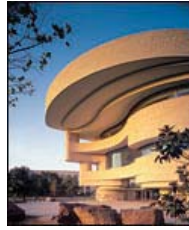
Office of Design and Construction. 1991. *The Way of the People: National Museum of the American Indian*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, ODC

Office of Policy and Analysis. 2004. *Results of the 2004 Smithsonian-wide Survey of Visitors*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Office of Policy and Analysis.

Office of Policy and Analysis. 2005. *A Comparison of Visitors to the National Museum of the American Indian to General Smithsonian Museum Visitors*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Office of Policy and Analysis.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

3981570339



National Museum of the American Indian Winter Survey of Entering Visitors

1. Is this your first visit to this museum, the National Museum of the American Indian?

Yes
 No, I have visited times before today

2. How do you think you will rate your overall experience at this museum when you leave?

Poor Fair Good Excellent Superior

3. Which of the following experiences are you especially looking forward to in this Indian museum today? (Mark one or more)

Being moved by beauty
 Enriching my understanding
 Feeling a connection to Indian history and culture
 Gaining information
 Imagining other times or places
 Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things
 Reflecting on the meaning of what I see
 Appreciating the natural world and our place in it
 Feeling a spiritual connection
 Relating what I see to my everyday life

4. Below are statements that people have made about American Indians. Please indicate if you *Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree* with each statement.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Indian cultures are very different from one another.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect to learn something about myself when I learn about Indians.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traditional Indian attitudes towards nature can help solve environmental problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Which of the following are important reasons for today's visit to this Indian Museum? (Mark one or more)

See the building
 Buy Indian crafts or art
 Eat Indian foods
 See exhibitions about Indian history
 See exhibitions about contemporary Indian life
 See exhibitions about Indian culture
 Get answers to specific questions about Indians
 See Indian crafts, art, and objects (e.g., masks, clothing)
 Talk to Indian museum staff / take a guided tour
 Other. Please specify: _____

Please Continue On The Back

--	--	--

6. Are you of Hispanic descent? No Yes

7. What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? (Mark one or more)

African American / Black

American Indian / Native American / Alaskan Native

Nation/Tribe: _____

Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)

Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander

White

*8. With whom are you visiting? (Mark one or more.)

I am alone

Youth under 18.

Number of youth other than you:

--	--

Adults 18 and over.

Number of adults other than you:

--	--

*9. What is your age?

--	--

*10. Where do you live?

United States. Please specify zip code:

--	--	--	--	--	--

Other country. Please specify: _____

*11. What is your sex? Male Female

12. Do you currently live on or within about 50 miles of an Indian reservation?

No

Yes. Place name: _____

Don't know.

13. Have you ever visited an Indian reservation? (Mark one or more)

No

Yes. Drove through without stopping

Yes. Visited casino or bingo game

Yes. Bought crafts, art, or tax-free goods (e.g., tobacco)

IF you marked YES to any above:

When was your most recent visit? (Year)

--	--	--	--

14. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (Mark only one)

High school graduate or less

One or more years of college, no degree

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree

15. How much time do you plan to spend in this museum today?

Less than one hour

1 - 2 hours

2 - 4 hours

More than 4 hours

16. Overall, do you expect this museum to have a message? No Yes. What do you think it is? _____

Int	Ses	Seg	Stat				
<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>			<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>			<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> R <input type="radio"/> L <input type="radio"/> I

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

2129281443



□ □ □

National Museum of the American Indian Winter Survey of Exiting Visitors

1. Is this your first visit to this museum, the National Museum of the American Indian? Yes No, I have visited times before today

2. Based on your visit today, please rate your overall experience at this museum. Poor Fair Good Excellent Superior

3. Which of the following experiences were especially satisfying to you in this Indian museum today? (Mark one or more)

- Being moved by beauty
- Enriching my understanding
- Feeling a connection to Indian history and culture
- Gaining information
- Imagining other times or places
- Seeing rare, valuable, or uncommon things
- Reflecting on the meaning of what I saw
- Appreciating the natural world and our place in it
- Feeling a spiritual connection
- Relating what I saw to my everyday life

4. Below are statements that people have made about American Indians. Please indicate if you *Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree* with each statement.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Indian cultures are very different from one another.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I expect to learn something about myself when I learn about Indians.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traditional Indian attitudes towards nature can help solve environmental problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. On your visit today, which of the following did you do? (Mark one or more)

- Outside the building, read about the landscaping (plantings, rocks, etc.)
- Stopped at the Welcome Desk
- Went to a museum store
- Went to the food court (Mitsitam Cafe)
- Went to the Resource Center (library)
- Saw "Our Universes," an exhibition about Indian beliefs
- Saw "Our Peoples," an exhibition about Indian history
- Saw "Our Lives," an exhibition about Indian contemporary life
- Saw "Identity by Design," an exhibition about Indian dresses
- Saw an exhibition about Indian cultures of the Maryland/Virginia/DC region
- Saw displays of Indian dolls, beadwork, animal objects, arrowheads, or peace medals
- Watched a multi-media film about Indian life and beliefs (Lelawi Theater)
- Used computer screens to get information about objects on display
- Spoke with Indian staff member / took a guided tour

Please Continue On The Back

8745281443

□ □ □

6. Are you of Hispanic descent? No Yes

7. What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? (Mark one or more)

- African American / Black
- American Indian / Native American / Alaskan Native
Nation/Tribe: _____
- Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- White

*8. With whom are you visiting? (Mark one or more)

- I am alone
- Youth under 18. Number of youth other than you: □ □
- Adults 18 and over. Number of adults other than you: □ □

*9. What is your age?

□ □

*10. Where do you live?

- United States. Please specify zip code: □ □ □ □ □ □
- Other country. Please specify: _____

*11. What is your sex?

- Male Female

12. Do you currently live on or within about 50 miles of an Indian reservation?

- No
- Yes. Place name: _____
- Don't know.

13. Have you ever visited an Indian reservation? (Mark one or more)

- No
- Yes. Drove through without stopping
- Yes. Visited casino or bingo game
- Yes. Bought crafts, art, or tax-free goods (e.g., tobacco)

IF you marked YES to any above:
When was your most recent visit? (Year) □ □ □ □

14. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (Mark only one)

- High school graduate or less
- One or more years of college, no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate or professional degree

15. How much time did you spend in this museum today?

- Less than one hour
- 1 - 2 hours
- 2 - 4 hours
- More than 4 hours

16. Overall, do you think this museum has a message?

- No
- Yes. What do you think it is? _____

17. If you were the Director of this museum, would you make changes?

- No
- Yes. What changes? _____

Int Ses Seg Stat
 □ □ □ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 1 2 3 C R L I

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESPONSES

Table 1: Survey Responses: Non-Indians Only, Entrance and Exit

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
Is this your first visit to this museum?		
Yes	75	71
No	25	29
Total	100	100
For repeat visitors, previous number of visits [median]	2	2
For repeat visitors, previous number of visits [mean]	5	5
How do you think you will rate your overall experience at this museum when you leave?		
Based on your visit today, please rate your overall experience at this museum.		
Poor	0	1
Fair	2	6
Good	34	27
Excellent	52	47
Superior	12	19
Total	100	100
Overall, do you expect this museum to have a message?		
Overall, does this museum have a message?		
Yes	70	86
No	30	14
Total	100	100

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
Which of the following experiences are you especially looking forward to in this museum today?		
Which of the following experiences were especially satisfying to you in this museum today?		
Enriching my understanding	60	49
Gaining information	57	52
Seeing rare, valuable or uncommon things	40	40
Feeling a connection to Indian history and culture	38	41
Appreciating the natural world and our place in it	34	28
Imagining other times or places	31	27
Being moved by beauty	28	40
Reflecting on the meaning of what I see	22	19
Feeling a spiritual connection	18	14
Relating what I see to my everyday life	18	16
Indian cultures are very different from one another		
Strongly Agree	23	21
Agree	65	60
Disagree	12	18
Strongly Disagree	0	1
Total	100	100
Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds		
Strongly Agree	51	57
Agree	47	41
Disagree	1	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	99	100

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
I expect to learn something about myself when I learn about Indians		
Strongly Agree	27	30
Agree	53	50
Disagree	18	18
Strongly Disagree	2	2
Total	100	100
Traditional Indian attitudes towards nature can help solve environmental problems		
Strongly Agree	42	47
Agree	50	48
Disagree	6	5
Strongly Disagree	2	0
Total	100	100
How much time do you plan to spend in this museum today?		
How much time did you spend in this museum today?		
Less than 1 hour	17	20
1-2 hours	64	53
2-4 hours	19	27
More than 4 hours	1	0
Total	101	100
What is your sex?		
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
Total	100	100
What is your age? (Age 12 and older only)		
Average age	40	42
Median age	38	42

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
Ages 12 to 29	31	29
Ages 30 to 54	47	47
Ages 55 and older	22	24
Total	100	100
Ages 12 to 19	8	9
Ages 20 to 24	10	8
Ages 25 to 29	14	12
Ages 30 to 34	11	7
Ages 35 to 39	10	11
Ages 40 to 44	11	7
Ages 45 to 49	5	11
Ages 50 to 54	11	12
Ages 55 to 59	9	10
Ages 60 to 64	5	8
Ages 65 to 69	4	2
Ages 70 or older	3	4
Total	101	101
WWII Generation (Born 1901-1924)	0	0
Postwar Generation (Born 1925-1945)	10	10
Leading Edge Boomers (Born 1946-1955)	17	21
Trailing Edge Boomers (Born 1956-1964)	16	17
Generation X (Born 1965-1981)	37	32
Generation Y (Born 1982-2001)	20	20
Total	100	100
Are you of Hispanic descent?		
Yes	10	13
No	90	87
Total	100	100

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
What race/ethnicity do you consider yourself to be?		
African American/Black	4	7
Asian (Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.)	7	8
White	78	79
With whom are you visiting?		
I am alone	16	17
With youth under 18	18	24
With adult(s) 18 and over	77	88
Group composition		
Alone	17	17
Pair	43	46
Group of three	15	17
Group of four or more	25	20
Total	100	100
Where do you live?		
United States	90	90
Other country	10	10
Total	100	100
Within 5 miles of the museum	8	8
Within 5 to 10 miles	7	6
Within 10 to 20 miles	7	7
Within 20 to 40 miles	4	6
Within 40 to 100 miles	3	4
Within 100 to 250 miles	4	5
More than 150 miles (U.S.)	57	55
International	10	10
Total	100	101

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
Do you currently live on or within 50 miles of an Indian reservation?		
Yes	15	15
No	70	68
I don't know	15	17
Total	100	100
Have you ever visited an Indian reservation?		
No	63	78
Yes	37	22
Total	100	100
Yes, most recent visit was [median]	2004	2005
Yes, drove through without stopping	37	22
Yes - bought crafts, art, or tax-free goods (e.g., tobacco)	36	35
Yes - visited casino or bingo game	18	14
What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (Age 25 or older only)		
High school graduate or less	5	4
One or more years of college, no degree	8	8
Associate degree	4	6
Bachelors degree	37	26
Graduate or professional degree	47	57
Total	101	101

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
Which of the following are important reasons for today's visit to this Indian Museum? (Entrance only)		
See exhibitions about Indian history	70	
See exhibitions about Indian culture	63	
See the building	48	
See Indian crafts, art, and objects (e.g., masks, clothing)	45	
See exhibitions about contemporary Indian Life	35	
Eat Indian foods	30	
Get answers to specific questions about Indians	9	
Buy Indian crafts or art	8	
Talk to Indian staff/take a guided tour	6	
Other	6	
On your visit today, which of the following did you do? (Exit only)		
Went to a museum store		62
Saw Our Peoples, an exhibition about Indian history		61
Saw Our Universes, an exhibition about Indian beliefs		60
Saw Identity by Design, an exhibition about Indian dresses		54
Saw Our Lives, an exhibition about Indian contemporary life		52
Went to the food court (Mitsitam Café)		49
Saw displays of Indian dolls, beadwork, animal objects, arrowheads, or peace medals		46
Stopped at the Welcome Desk		44
Outside the building, read about the landscaping (plantings, rocks, etc.)		33
Used computer screens to get information about objects on display		29
Watched a multi-media film about Indian life and beliefs (Lelawi Theater)		24
Saw an exhibition about Indian cultures of the Maryland/Virginia/DC region		23
Spoke with Indian staff member/took a guided tour		10
Went to the Resource Center (library)		9

	Entrance	Exit
	Percent	Percent
If you were the director of this museum, would you make changes? (Exit only)		
Yes		39
No		61
Total		100



Table 2: Survey Responses: Non-Indians Only, Entrance and Exit, New and Repeat Visitors, Significant Differences Only

	Entrance		Exit	
	Percent		Percent	
	New	Repeat	New	Repeat
Which of the following experiences are you especially looking forward to in this museum today?				
Feeling a spiritual connection	15	28		
Indian cultures are very different from one another				
Strongly Agree			13	42
Agree			66	43
Disagree			20	15
Strongly Disagree			1	0
Total			100	100
Indian cultures have important ideas to share with people of all backgrounds				
Strongly Agree	47	65		
Agree	51	34		
Disagree	2	1		
Strongly Disagree	0	0		
Total	100	100		

	Entrance		Exit	
	Percent		Percent	
	New	Repeat	New	Repeat
How much time do you plan to spend in this museum today?				
How much time did you spend in this museum today?				
Less than 1 hour	13	29	15	32
1-2 hours	66	57	56	44
2-4 hours	20	14	29	22
More than 4 hours	1	0	1	1
Total	100	100	101	99
Where do you live?				
Within 5 miles of the museum	7	13	5	15
Within 5 to 10 miles	4	15	3	13
Within 10 to 20 miles	7	10	4	13
Within 20 to 40 miles	4	5	5	7
Within 40 to 100 miles	4	2	3	4
Within 100 to 250 miles	5	0	6	1
More than 250 miles (U.S.)	59	51	59	46
International	12	5	14	1
Total	102	101	99	100
Do you currently live on or within 50 miles of an Indian reservation?				
Yes	12	24	16	10
No	74	57	71	60
I don't know	14	19	13	31
Total	100	100	100	101

	Entrance		Exit	
	Percent		Percent	
	New	Repeat	New	Repeat
Which of the following are important reasons for today's visit to this Indian Museum? (Entrance only)				
See exhibitions about Indian history	75	53		
See exhibitions about contemporary Indian Life	37	27		
Eat Indian foods	24	50		
On your visit today, which of the following did you do? (Exit only)				
Saw Our Peoples, an exhibition about Indian history			68	43
Saw Our Universes, an exhibition about Indian beliefs			67	43
Saw Identity by Design, an exhibition about Indian dresses			60	41
Saw Our Lives, an exhibition about Indian contemporary life			58	38
Went to the food court (Mitsitam Café)			42	66
Saw displays of Indian dolls, beadwork, animal objects, arrowheads, or peace medals			53	30
Stopped at the Welcome Desk			49	30
*Sums may not equal 100 due to rounding				

APPENDIX C: MUSEUM MESSAGES

Learn about Indians

Learn about Indian culture
Opens your eyes to forgotten history and sometimes people
Raise awareness + appreciation + responsibility
This country has a deeper history than it seems
To see what Indians have to offer from their knowledge

Learn what? Learn about Indian beliefs, beauty, continuity, culture, diversity, food, similarity ...

A political, ethno cultural anthropological resource that is growing and changing
How Indians exist/live today
Indians are still here and they endure
The beauty of Native American culture
There are many diverse and rich Native American cultures.

Relations with Non-Indians: challenges, change, conflict, independence, peace, sadness, self-expression, stereotypes, words ...

Challenge common historical thought
I am embarrassed as an American with our treatment of Native Americans.
Sadness for lost past, but hope in the future through understanding
That Indians should speak for themselves
To disrupt stereotypes of Native people and to claim and tell their own histories

Value Indians

Appreciation of the first Americans
Honoring the Native Americans as our ancestors and our peers.
Indian culture is important to preserve
Preserving Native American culture
Respect for Native cultures

Value what? Value Indian contributions: connectedness, harmony, importance, nature, relevance, spirituality, tradition ...

Contributing to American culture
Harmony with one another and nature
Sense of connectedness of nature and people
Spirituality for today
Tolerance and enrichment

APPENDIX D: SUGGESTED CHANGES

Collections

- More architecture displays
- More art and less commercialism i.e. 2 stores
- More artifacts and tools
- More photos and artifacts. I don't know - "uninspired and bored"
- More real things rather than the modern way it looks...in other words its supposed to look old

Content

- Add more nations. I miss Plains exhibits and Southwest, too. Only had books to buy, not artifacts to see.
- Increase the historical element, not just programs of modern reenactment
- More about history pre-Columbus, more artifacts, visiting exhibits
- More info on European presence and destruction of Indian culture
- Why not have more about the history of the encounters with the Europeans

Exhibits

- Exhibit displays lacking.
- Integrate the landscaping, plants, and trees into the museum experience
- Present eye-catching display in the entrance
- Re-purpose the main foyer and include more exhibit items
- The exhibition level two is not very good in terms of visuals. Too small. Too dark.

Interpretation

- Guidance and introduction to the museum experience
- Integrate the landscaping, plants, and trees into the museum experience
- More coherent exhibitions and clearer narratives
- More educational without political agenda
- Organize exhibits chronologically and geographically

Amenities

- Cheaper store prices
- Expand food court seating.
- Make food prices cheaper
- More things that are inexpensive to remember the trip
- Rent Native American baby carriers

Facilities

- All cases should have lighting; some exhibits feel cluttered and frantic
- Better directional signs
- Better lighting in the 2nd floor gift shop

Cannot read many explanations/more light is needed
More blowers and turn water on

Media

Louder Indian music
More audio aides by display
More up-to-date media
Tone down the graphics and media overload. All message of culture and spirituality and primitive living are lost.
Use of more up-to-date multimedia tools

Visitor Services

I would dedicate just a little more space to exhibits for younger children
If possible, add a tour guide with info on specific tribes, available every day.
More Indian staff members at the exhibits
More interactive exhibits for children
More live events

Other

Alternative scenery
Many displays appear dormant
Planned visits to tribes
Stronger outreach to schools, teachers, and non-Indian families
The drawers are dangerous for kids.



Smithsonian Institution
Office of Policy and Analysis
Washington, DC 20560-0502
www.si.edu/opanda