

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF CONSULTATION WITH COMMUNITIES

JESSICA S. JOHNSON, SUSAN HEALD, KELLY MCHUGH,
ELIZABETH BROWN, AND MARIAN KAMINITZ

ABSTRACT—In preparation for the 2004 opening of the new Mall museum of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), the conservation department held conservation consultations with representatives of nineteen Native communities. These consultations were a practical response by the conservation department to NMAI's Mission Statement which states that we are "...committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere, past, present and future, through partnership with Native people and others..." During this experience, a number of practical techniques for hosting consultations, developing relationships, discussing treatment strategies, recording information and carrying out treatments were developed. While there is no standard methodology for holding a consultation that can be applied in all situations, the techniques developed by NMAI conservators during this process may assist others who are developing their own consultation program.

TITRE—Aspects pratiques des consultations avec les communautés. **RÉSUMÉ**—En préparation pour l'ouverture en 2004 du nouvel édifice pour le *National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)* (musée national des cultures amérindiennes), sur la promenade où se trouvent les autres musées du Smithsonian Institution à Washington D.C., les services de conservation de ce musée ont entrepris une série de consultations avec les représentants de 19 communautés autochtones. Ces consultations étaient le fruit et la mise en pratique de façon concrète de l'énoncé de mission du musée, selon lequel nous devons être "...engagés vers l'avancement des connaissances et de la compréhension des cultures autochtones de l'hémisphère occidentale, de leur histoire passée, présente et future et ce en tant que partenaire avec les peuples autochtones et autres..." Cette expérience a permis d'élaborer plusieurs techniques pratiques concernant le rôle du musée en tant qu'hôte lors de la tenue de ces consultations, le développement des relations entre le musée et les communautés, les discussions des stratégies de traitement, la consignation de l'information et la réalisation des traitements. Bien qu'il n'y ait pas de méthodologie standard pour la tenue de consultations qui puisse s'appliquer à tous les cas, les techniques développées par les restaurateurs du *NMAI* durant ce

processus pourront aider d'autres musées qui sont en train de développer leur propre programme de consultations.

TITULO—Aspectos prácticos de consultar con las comunidades. **RESUMEN**—Durante la preparación para la apertura en el 2004 del nuevo *National Museum of the American Indian* - NMAI (Museo Nacional del indígena Americano) en el Mall, el departamento de conservación realizó consultas de conservación con representantes de diecinueve comunidades indígenas. Estas consultas fueron una respuesta práctica del departamento de conservación a la Declaración de Misión del NMAI, la cual establece que nosotros "...estamos comprometidos al avance del conocimiento y al entendimiento de las culturas indígenas pasadas, presentes y futuras del Hemisferio Occidental, por medio de asociaciones con indígenas y otros..." Durante esta experiencia fueron desarrolladas un número de técnicas prácticas para llevar a cabo consultas, desarrollar vínculos, discutir estrategias de tratamiento, registrar información y llevar a cabo tratamientos. Aunque no existen metodologías estándar para realizar una consulta que puedan ser aplicadas a todas las situaciones, las técnicas desarrolladas por los conservadores del NMAI durante este proceso podrían ayudar a otros que se encuentran desarrollando sus propios programas de consulta.

TÍTULO—Aspectos práticos da consulta com as comunidades. **RESUMO**—Na preparação para a abertura em 2004 do novo Museu no *Mall* (*N.T. - região de Washington, D.C. onde se localizam os museus*) do *National Museum of the American Indian* (Museu Nacional do Índio Americano) (NMAI), o departamento de conservação realizou consultas com representantes das dezenove comunidades nativas. Estas consultas foram uma resposta prática do departamento de conservação à declaração de missão do NMAI: "...comprometer-se com o conhecimento vindouro e com o entendimento das culturas nativas do Hemisfério Ocidental, passado, presente e futuro, através da colaboração com o povo nativo e outros...". Durante esta experiência, foram desenvolvidas várias técnicas práticas para manter as consultas, desenvolver vínculos, discutir estratégias para tratamentos, registrar informações e efectuar tratamentos. Enquanto não

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existe uma metodologia padrão a ser aplicada em todas as situações que envolvam consultas, as técnicas desenvolvidas pelos conservadores do NMAI durante este processo, podem auxiliar outros profissionais que estão desenvolvendo o seu próprio programa de consultas.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) opened its doors on the National Mall on September 21, 2004. Much of the conservation work for three of the major inaugural exhibits was guided by the direction of Native individuals representing their communities to inform the conservators on approaches to treatments. The three exhibits, "Our Universes," "Our Peoples," and "Our Lives," illustrate NMAI's principle that Native communities are the authorities of their own philosophies, histories, and identities, respectively. These exhibitions were prepared through partnerships with representatives from twenty-four Native communities. In all stages from curatorial concept, through design to conservation treatment, NMAI staff members worked directly with Native people to develop and prepare these exhibits, and learned the history, usage, and proper care of the artifacts. The challenge for conservators (as throughout the museum) for this multi-year project was to balance institutional practices with the concerns of Native communities.

At NMAI programming is consistently driven by its mission statement: "The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere, past, present and future, through partnership with Native people and others. The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values and transitions in contemporary Native life." (National Museum of the American Indian 2005).

These ideas are not limited to indigenous collections. Museums and many other kinds of cultural resources management entities are currently developing methods and approaches that incorporate the ideas and concerns of local or descendent communities who have a stake in the preservation and use of the resources.

The community consultation work of the NMAI Conservation Unit fits within the continuum of change moving throughout conservation and museums and has been actively addressed at conservation

conferences (e.g. Barclay et al. 1988, Spirydowicz 1992, AIC 1992, Roy and Smith 1994, Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property 1998) and in a number of publications (e.g. Smith 1993; Drumheller and Kaminitz 1994; Heikell et al. 1995; Odegaard 1996, 2000; Clavir 2002). In *Reviews in Conservation*, one author discusses how conservation theory has shifted from an idea of Truth (or one right way or ideal), towards the notion that the function, use or value of an object is what is being preserved (Viñas 2002).

Throughout conservation there is growing agreement that the people most directly affected by a conservation process, the stakeholders, should be part of the process used to make the decisions about care. NMAI very specifically identifies its primary constituency, the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, as its major stakeholders. Native communities who hold the knowledge and expertise are seen as the authorities to properly identify how objects should be cared for and conserved and are identified as the Museum's first-person voice (fig. 1) (Online Newshour 2004). Consultations with Native communities have been used to design and develop museum buildings, museum exhibits and interpretative programs, as well as to identify appropriate collections care methods in storage and to develop conservation treatment approaches and techniques (Bernstein 1992; West 1999).

The intent of this paper is to share the experience of the NMAI conservation department in executing nineteen conservation consultations for the inaugural exhibitions that opened NMAI's new museum on the National Mall in September 2004. Although NMAI's conservation department had collaborated with several Native communities in the past, the museum's opening provided a unique opportunity to hold a number of consultations in a short period of time. Through this experience a number of practical techniques were developed that can be shared. However, the goal of this paper is not to present a recipe for how to hold a successful conservation consultation, or to provide numerous treatment details learned in the process, but to explain some of the logistics and provide practical information regarding what was learned through the specific experiences of preparing for the opening of the museum.

Through this experience, perhaps the most important learning is that the consultations cannot be forced to conform to a methodology that can be used by all institutions hosting conservation consultations. A loose

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Fig. 1. Nilda Callañaupa and Nazario Turpo (both Quechua) examine a qero selected for their exhibit. Photo by Emil Her Many Horses.

structure for the consultations was developed, which is shared here, but the experiences varied greatly depending on the Native people involved, what they wanted to share with NMAI, and what their own goals and ideas were for their participation with the museum. The consultation processes have been continually modified and refined from early experiences beginning in the mid-1990s; the process will be adapted and modified with each future collaboration.

Finally, this paper will supply few specific treatment and exhibit details from the consultations. While it is understood that it would be helpful to other conservators to provide detailed treatment methodologies, the information shared by consultants was generally provided only for use in this specific exhibition and would not be applicable in another situation. In some cases, conservation consultants signed a release that stated that the information they provided would only be used for the Mall exhibits. Some consultants did not provide full explanations for information they provided, because they felt it was not appropriate for conservators or other museum staff to know these details. What can be shared, however, is how the conservation department

responded to the museum's implementation of its mission statement in the exhibit development process. It is hoped that other conservators can benefit from these experiences as they develop their own relationships with Native communities through a consultation process.

2. EARLIER NMAI CONSERVATION CONSULTATION EXPERIENCES

Prior to the conservation consultations that are the focus of this paper, NMAI conservators collaborated with Native community groups or individuals on a number of situation-specific projects for treatment. Three of these consultations are discussed below to illustrate projects that involved requests by the Native community for use of NMAI's collections. Two others, treatments of a Haida totem pole (Williamson 1999) and a Passamaquoddy birch bark canoe (Kaminitz and Poiss 1999) were museum-initiated for stabilization of objects prior to their relocation to NMAI's new collections facility. Though none of the earlier collaborations involved the systematic planning and documentation that is the focus of this paper,

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NMAI curators and conservators worked to identify appropriate individuals in the communities, and then thoroughly documented in the report for each object the treatment process, techniques, and treatment rationale that resulted from the collaboration.

2.1 TUSCARORA BEADED CLOTH STABILIZATION/RESTORATION

One of the first collaborations for treatment between NMAI conservation and a Native community was initiated in spring 1996, when Rick Hill, Tuscarora guest curator, selected a late 19th-century finely beaded Tuscarora textile to be the centerpiece of the Tuscarora section in the NMAI *Stories of the People* exhibition. The textile had significant areas of bead loss and was actively losing beads. Lack of lead time and available staff for an in-house stabilization treatment gave rise to an alternative solution suggested by Rick Hill: Tuscarora beadworkers could be contracted to treat the textile. With the consent of the NMAI's registration, curatorial, and conservation departments, an NMAI conservator traveled with the textile to the Buffalo-Niagara area near the Tuscarora reservation. The Tuscarora council selected five women with beadwork expertise to work on the project.

Over the week-long project, the original treatment goal shifted from stabilization to compensation for loss. The beadworkers felt uncomfortable stabilizing only the extant beads and leaving the gaps in the pattern. They felt the piece would not represent their community well, if displayed with so many losses, and that it would be just as easy to replace missing beads as the stabilization progressed. After intense theoretical debate within the conservation department the restoration was pursued using the following rationale: (1) Bead loss resulted from previous storage and display methodology at the museum. (2) Losses were well-documented through photography, drawings, and written reports. (3) The stitching thread and stitching method chosen for the restoration would be distinguishable from the original. (4) Experienced beadworkers who were descendants of the artisans who originally created the blanket were best suited to carry out this restoration (Heald 1997).

2.2 SILETZ DANCE REGALIA LOAN

Another consultation experience began in the spring of 1996, when Robert Kentta, Cultural

Resources Protection Specialist for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, inquired during a repatriation visit if several pieces of Siletz regalia in good condition could be loaned for use in their upcoming ceremonial dance house dedication and Nay Dosh ceremony. For the Siletz community this was an important event—it was the first dance house built by Siletz people since the 1870s and was a landmark in the resurgence of Siletz culture. The temporary loan for ceremonial purposes was unanimously approved by NMAI's curatorial council.

Conservation staff first reviewed the regalia to see what items might need stabilization for dancing, then in consultation with Kentta, determined which regalia should be stabilized in the lab prior to the loan, and which should be stabilized at the Siletz Cultural Center in collaboration with the Siletz experts known as Dance Makers who make traditional dance regalia and coordinate the ceremony.

The pieces were couriered to Siletz by an NMAI conservator who documented all stabilization methods and materials used by the Dance Maker to make the regalia secure for dancing. Generally, only the most experienced dancers wear older regalia, including those items borrowed from museum collections. After every round of dancing, the floor was inspected to collect bits of shell or feather that might have fallen off the regalia, whether old or new, to be re-associated and repaired after the ceremony (Heald 1996).

The Siletz community was excited to have older regalia return home temporarily from NMAI and from some Oregon museums for this important occasion. This experience helped to strengthen the conservation department's resolve to follow the museum's mission of collaboration and consultation. The Nay Dosh ceremonies continue annually at Siletz with more and more young people participating in the dances (Kaminitz et al. 2005).

2.3 HOLLOW WATER ANISHINAABE BIRCH BARK SCROLLS

In a third example, in March 2000, the conservation department received a request to assess the condition of eleven birch bark scrolls, originally collected by the museum from the Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) of the Lake Winnipeg region (Harter et al. 2001). A delegation from the Anishinaabe Hollow Water First Nation wished to view the scrolls as part of their research program to strengthen jurisdiction over their lands. Birch bark scrolls are primarily asso-

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ciated with the Midewiwin or Grand Medicine Society of the Anishinaabe. Pictographs are incised on the bark and are not visible unless the scrolls are unrolled. The conservation department was asked by the delegation to assist in opening the scrolls due to the brittle condition of the bark. After examination, NMAI conservators determined that unrolling the scrolls would cause damage in the short allotted time available to the community.

At this point, a decision was made by NMAI staff, following the mandate of the museum, to recognize the Hollow Water community as the authority or decision-makers regarding the treatment to unroll the scrolls. Traditionally, a strict protocol is followed when opening and viewing the scrolls; this is typically done by a medicine person from the Midewiwin. Only the community can decide if the social and political importance of the scrolls outweighs the risk of damaging them. Conservators presented various treatment options to the community liaison, who discussed these with the elders. Following this discussion the Hollow Water community requested that treatment be suspended until their visit to NMAI.

Their visit revealed that the elders believed the community was not ready to comprehend what the scrolls contained and so it was decided the appropriate action at that time was to leave them rolled and carefully stored at the museum. Through this experience, the conservation department developed an understanding that one of our responsibilities is to provide information to the communities, which can assist them in making decisions appropriate for the care of their cultural material. It is not necessary for us to know why decisions are made, but simply to realize and acknowledge that appropriate knowledge resulted in appropriate action for all parties involved.

It was these first collaborations that paved the way for an overall shift in the way NMAI conservators do their work. The processes described in this paper reflect how the approach became more systematized during the development of the Mall exhibits. Our methods will continue to evolve with experience as we adapt and develop strategies for different projects.

3. CONSERVATION CONSULTATIONS FOR THE MUSEUM ON THE NATIONAL MALL

The conservation consultation was an integral piece of the bigger exhibition development project. Conservators worked very closely with curators who

had previously established a working partnership with members of the Native communities who collaborated with the museum on exhibits. Each exhibit is developed by working with community curators who were either identified by the tribal government, or identified as religious knowledge holders, depending on the topic of the exhibit. The conservation consultation process is a natural extension and outgrowth of these relationships. Curators at the NMAI contacted Native community curators with whom they had already been working and asked them to recommend community members who would be appropriate for the conservation consultations. Often the Native conservation consultants were artisans such as mask makers, beadworkers, or quillworkers, but sometimes they were elders, tribal leaders, or a community curator. In most cases, the NMAI curator made the initial phone or email contact to potential conservation consultants for specific projects. The NMAI conservator overseeing the project then contacted the consultant and, in the course of making arrangements for consultation meetings, began to establish a relationship with the consulting Native individuals. Usually two or three people were invited from a community. Each conservation consultant was paid a standard honorarium and all travel expenses were paid. Consultants were asked to sign a waiver form allowing NMAI to use the information that they provided for the development of the Mall exhibits. Any other use of this information requires a separate agreement with the consultant.

3.1 AWARENESS, SENSITIVITY AND COMMUNICATION

The overall premise behind the consultations is to develop a level of comfort and trust to facilitate the sharing of information. At NMAI the following items were found to be useful to keep in mind during the visit:

- Hospitable gestures such as picking up visitors at the airport and hotel helps to establish a rapport early on.
- Consultants often perform a prayer or ceremony before beginning work with the collection, and before meals. Consultants are asked ahead of time if they plan to smudge, a purification ceremony that involves smoke, so that alarms can be turned off.
- Native colleagues and interns at NMAI have impressed upon us the importance of sharing

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Fig. 2. Serving breakfast to Yup'ik elders during a conservation consultation. Photo by Emil Her Many Horses.

meals as a way of showing respect and hospitality (fig 2). Members of the conservation staff not participating directly in the consultation are invited to share lunch with the consultation team. On the last day of the consultation, a potluck is held in honor of the guests.

- The consultation team (usually the curator and three conservators) is kept small to facilitate the information sharing, record keeping, and to avoid imposing an overwhelming institutional presence.

Effective communication is very important in the consultations. As with any human interaction there are layers of history, experience, and personality that go into a discussion filled as much with non-verbal communication as with words. Setting aside two to three days for the consultation allows everyone to become more comfortable and facilitates the exchange of information. It also allows individuals time to think things over and revisit questions and decisions if necessary. Many of the post-consultation, internal lab discussions have centered on how the conservators understand all the layers of interaction and how personal interpretations affect the ability to communicate.

Coinciding with the museum's mission, the individual curators and conservators involved in these exhibits felt that they fully support Native peoples. However, the conservators are also representatives of the Smithsonian Institution, which has a long and troubled history with Native peoples. All the conservators live and work in the Washington, DC area, center of the United States federal government, which is viewed with distrust by some Native people. Most of the conservators who worked on this project are women. This created some difficulties as some communities have traditional knowledge and care requirements that can only be shared with or carried out by individuals of the same gender. Out of nine-

teen conservators who worked on the Mall projects only three preprogram interns were Native. Identifying these differences and similarities and being aware that they may affect the consultants' interactions with conservation staff (despite NMAI staff members' good intentions) is important.

Rose (1988) observed that conservation training in the United States was rooted in a Eurocentric aesthetics-based tradition that did not consider or emphasize the cultural use or importance of an object. However, despite changes in the conservation training programs that have sought to address this imbalance, each conservator found that his or her conservation training did not prepare us for the interaction. Initially, the NMAI curators (both Native individuals and non-Native anthropologists who had experience interacting with Native communities) were relied upon heavily for guidance in appropriate behavior. Eventually, successes and mistakes taught each conservator a great deal.

One of the most helpful concepts the conservators learned from NMAI curators as well as from experiences on this project is that individuals must be aware of how they listen (fig. 3). NMAI participants have learned to say very little in the beginning of the consultation, when objects are first being discussed, in order to reinforce that the power to make decisions about their cultural material in the Museum resides with the consultants. Most importantly, individuals have learned to be flexible; consultations have had a loose structure with room for variability depending on the personalities involved. For example, Juan Antonio Panecura, a Mapuche consultant who teaches Mapuche culture, structured the consultation like a lecture; whereas a Kiowa consultant, Marcie Davilla, who makes traditional hide dresses, led an impromptu workshop on cleaning hide (fig. 4). Furthermore, conservators learned to allow Native consultants to handle objects as they wished, as these artifacts are very personal components of their lives with value beyond their physical condition.

In the course of consulting about specific treatments, questions arose that needed to be posed in such a way as to elicit detailed thoughts from the consultant regarding the way their community would want the object to appear. "Yes" and "No" questions were constricting and not useful, and specialized professional vocabulary (such as treat, consolidate, and adhere) generally had little meaning to non-conservators. The conservators' modes of questioning in the beginning resulted in some answers that were difficult

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Fig. 3. Wendy George (Hupa) shares her knowledge with conservator Liz Brown. Photo by Emil Her Many Horses.



Fig. 4. Marcie Davilla (Kiowa) showing traditional cleaning methods for hide.

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to carry out. For example, when asked what should be done with a large, cracked, though currently stable, wooden bowl, one of the Mapuche consultants recommended that it be covered with horse fat. A better way to ask the question is, "Does it matter that this bowl is cracked?"

One of the greatest difficulties throughout the developing consultation program has been for each conservator to find his or her own comfort level in communicating with Native consultants, and accepting and carrying out treatments that are outside of the Eurocentric experience. Careful and sensitive consideration is required when a consultant asks the conservators to do something that is outside of regular conservation methodology or uses unconventional materials. Occasionally, the consultants recommend a cleaning method or material that, from the perspective of a western-trained conservator, is believed to cause damage in the long term. In other instances, the consultants have requested restorations that NMAI conservators were not prepared to carry out.

In the case of controversial cleaning methods or materials, the NMAI conservators continue discussions to ascertain whether the material used to do the cleaning or consolidating is important, or if it is the appearance or effect of the material that is important. If the latter, the conservators suggest materials that can be used to achieve the same visual effects and discuss the relative merits of this approach with the consultants.

When the NMAI conservators felt they lacked the skills required to carry out the restorations to the extent requested by the consultant, consultants have been asked to carry out the treatments. One example, a project with Lakota consultants, is discussed in detail below. All these treatments were carefully documented and include a description of how the treatment choices relate to the consultation as well as a rationale for carrying out the treatment.

3.2 COLLABORATION WITH LAKOTA CONSULTANTS

During their conservation consultation, Lakota consultants Cecilia Fire Thunder, Fedelia Cross, and Matilda Montileaux expressed their desire to improve the appearance of a water-damaged beaded pipe bag by removing discolored, stiff fringe and replacing it with new brain-tanned fringe (fig. 5). They wanted it to look its best on exhibit because it is a reflection of their culture. Through the discussions at the consulta-

tion it became clear that the best way for the bag to be repaired was through a second collaboration visit between the Lakota women (who know the importance of a pipe bag from the Lakota cultural perspective as well as understanding the technology) and NMAI conservators (who would provide materials, carry out some processes, and document the project).

Before the second visit from the Lakota consultants, conservator Elizabeth Brown prepared the bag through photographic and written documentation, cleaning the surface with a soft brush and vacuum, humidification and flattening of fringe at the upper edge of the bag, and stabilizing loose quill wrappings with Tyvek bridges and Acryloid B-72 in acetone.

On their return, the consultants first tested the original water-damaged fringe using scrapers to break up stiffened collagen fibers and a soot removal sponge to clean the surface. When the results proved to be unsatisfactory because the fringe was too damaged and weak, there was further consultation between the consultants, the NMAI Curator Emil Her Many Horses (who is also Lakota), and NMAI conservators to decide on the details of the fringe removal and replacement. The treatment was done with Fire Thunder, Her Many Horses, and Brown working together and doing practical work according to their own expertise.

The old fringe was cut off close to its attachment through the ends of the upper quill wrapped strips and placed into storage with the NMAI treatment records. Local humidification of the area was then used to soften the rawhide so the fringe remnants could be pulled from the holes with tweezers. New fringe was cut from a piece of brain-tanned deerskin provided by Emil Her Many Horses. To strengthen the area around the puncture holes at the end of the rawhide strips, a heavy-weight Reemay toned with acrylic paint was used to face and back the holes. The new fringe strips were then pulled through the original puncture holes. In order to more thoroughly clean the bag, white corn meal was rubbed into the exterior of the bag by hand and then the surface was scraped with the edge of a micro-spatula. This pulled out embedded dirt and appeared to resoften the collagen fibers. Excess corn meal was removed by vacuuming. Next, dry pigments were used to tone the fringe to make it visually similar to the rest of the hide on the bag and the fringe was cut to an appropriate length. Quillwork was cleaned with deionized water to remove flyspecks and grime. The whole process was

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documented through standard conservation methods of photography and written reports.

This project was one of the most in-depth and extensive collaborations that took place during the preparation for the Mall exhibits; however, all the consultations provided information and practical details that led to desired changes in the objects that reflected the wishes of the community. Joint efforts, like the work on the Lakota pipe bag, help develop deeper museum/community partnerships.

Consultants and conservators often share a common interest in the materials and techniques used to make the items they are examining. Consultants were generous in sharing their knowledge on topics such as weaving techniques, dyeing, carving, silversmithing, or how to make rolled fringe (fig. 6). These consultations presented rare opportunities for NMAI conservators and curators to understand firsthand some of the technologies and philosophies that engendered the objects in the collection.

3.3 DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of the conservation process, including the consultations with community representatives, is integral to NMAI's procedures (Chang and Heald 2005). Various documentation techniques contribute to the record of each project. First, every consultation is audiotaped. After the consultants have departed, the information is compiled into three-ring binders with notes, digital images, and background material such as maps, bibliographies, and information about the exhibition concepts. Conservators who did not directly participate in the consultations are also involved in the treatment of the objects, so these binders are vital to ensuring the treatments follow the consultants' wishes. The audiotapes are also reviewed to clarify gaps in the notes, and tape indexes are created. Conservators have found it useful to return to the original tapes as small nuances and subtleties can be lost in rapid note-taking. The images taken during the consultation are also extremely



Fig. 5. Cecilia Fire Thunder and Fedelia Cross (both Lakota) examining pipe bag before treatment.

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Fig. 6. MacArthur Silverhorn (Kiowa) showing how to make rolled fringe.

useful both for treatment as well as display design and mountmaking as they often illustrate how a community uses or wears an object (fig. 7).

Occasionally treatment questions have arisen after the consultants have left. For some of these cases, documented information obtained from similar objects was used to gain a sense of the group's approach to repair or cleaning. Some issues were also

resolved through discussions with the NMAI staff who participated in the original consultation. In a few instances where the appropriate treatment was still not clear, the community representatives were contacted for clarification or additional information.

While the process of consulting with Native community representatives may seem very time-consuming, in fact it often saves time during the treatment phase. Much less time is spent studying the literature for the essential cultural and material identities of specific objects. In many cases, consultants have asked us not to perform treatment that conservators would routinely do otherwise, such as filling cracks, cleaning, or repairing tears. In a few cases, the consultants have requested that the conservators refrain from treating certain objects at all because the conservators are not members of the culture that produced them.

3.4 CONTINUING PARTNERSHIPS

At the end of the consultation each consultant is given a commemorative gift as well as a packet of



Fig. 7. Paulo Tapirape demonstrates how an object is used.

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printed digital photos taken during the consultation. These gifts express gratitude and respect for the consultants' willingness to travel far from their homes and share their knowledge. In addition, the consultants are kept apprised of the progress of their objects through the exhibit, for example when all the objects have been treated, or when mount-making has begun. Personal contact over time has been maintained by sending greeting cards and other information through email and mail, but as of yet, there is no standardized way of continuing contact over the long term.

By maintaining partnerships with the consultants, the NMAI conservators hope to ensure that the source communities maintain an active and guiding voice in the care of their objects in the Museum's collection in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

NMAI's approach to treatment and display has evolved substantially since conservation consultations with Native communities and individuals began in 2001 for the Mall exhibits. This paper presented procedures that were developed and adapted at NMAI for these essential interactions during preparation for the opening of the new Mall museum. As all circumstances are unique, these approaches are not meant as a blueprint for how it should be done, but are simply presented as a set of techniques developed within the framework of our parameters. Several specific projects undertaken at the NMAI with the assistance of Native community representatives are presented in the paper to illustrate the variety of experiences.

For NMAI staff, it has been a great honor and pleasure to work with the many people who have provided advice during the preparation of the Mall exhibits. It is the hope of the NMAI that the consultation process is a step toward a more active role of Native communities in the conservation and preservation of their cultural material in the museum. At this point in the process, much of the involvement of Native consultants is project-driven and initiated by the Museum. The goal for the future is to build on these relationships to a point where the NMAI and Native communities can achieve a balanced partnership in the overall care and treatment of the collections.

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SOURCES OF MATERIALS

Acryloid B-72 and Reemay
Talas
568 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

Tyvek
Avery Dennison, Fasson Division
Corporate Communications Department
Avery Dennison Corporate Center
150 North Orange Grove Boulevard
Pasadena, California 91103-3596

JESSICA S. JOHNSON (Fellow, AIC) is the Senior Objects Conservator for the National Museum of the American Indian. She received an MA in Anthropology with a Certificate in Museum Studies from the University of Arizona in 1986 and a BSc in Archaeological Conservation from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London in 1990. Previously she held the position of Conservator for the Museum Management Program of the National Park Service. From 1989 to 2001, she was the Head of the Gordion Objects Conservation Program for the Gordion Project in Turkey, sponsored by the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania. She served as Chair of the Objects Specialty Group, 2000-01, and is currently a co-owner of the OSG-L listserv. Address: National Museum of the American Indian, Cultural Resources Center, 4220 Silver Hill Road, Suitland, MD 20470

SUSAN HEALD is the Senior Textile Conservator for the National Museum of the American Indian. She received a BA in Chemistry and Anthropology from the George Washington University in 1985 and an MSc in Conservation from the Winterthur Museum/University of Delaware in 1990. Prior to joining the conservation laboratory at NMAI she was textile conservator at the Minnesota Historical Society. She served as chair and vice-chair for the AIC Textile Specialty Group in 1997-98, and is on the board for the North American Textile Conservation Conference. Address: As for Johnson

KELLY MCHUGH is presently a conservator in private practice with Asteya Preservation Group. She was employed as an Objects Conservator for the National Museum of the American Indian since 1998. She received an MA in Art History and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Art Conservation from New York University in 1999. While in graduate school she worked at the Arizona State Museum and at the Mayan site of Copan on a project associated with the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education. She spent three years in the Object Conservation Laboratory of the National Gallery of Art prior to entering graduate school. Address: 305 Greenwich Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910

ELIZABETH BROWN is currently a conservator at the Seattle Art Museum. She was an Objects Conservator for the National Museum of the American Indian in Suitland, Maryland from 2000 to 2004. She received an MA and Certificate of Advanced Studies in Art Conservation from Buffalo State College in 1997. Prior to working at NMAI she was the staff conservator at Mount Vernon from 1998 to 2000. She has also worked in NMAI's New York storage facility and as a fellow at the National Park Service Harpers Ferry Center. Before graduate school she was an intern at the Smithsonian Conservation Analytical Laboratories (now SCMRE) in the furniture department. Address: Conservation Department, Seattle Art Museum, 100 University St., Seattle, WA 98101

MARIAN A. KAMINITZ has held the position of Head of Conservation at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, since 1991. She received an MS in the Conservation of Artistic and Historic Works from the University of Delaware/Winterthur Museum Program in Art Conservation in 1984. From 1988 to 1998 she was also Adjunct Professor of Conservation at the New York University's Conservation Center. She served as Assistant Conservator in the Anthropology Department at the American Museum of Natural History, New York from 1985 to 1991 and as an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at the Pacific Regional Conservation Center, Bishop Museum in Honolulu from 1984 to 1985. She is the Coordinator for the Ethnographic Working Group of ICOM-CC. Address: As for Johnson