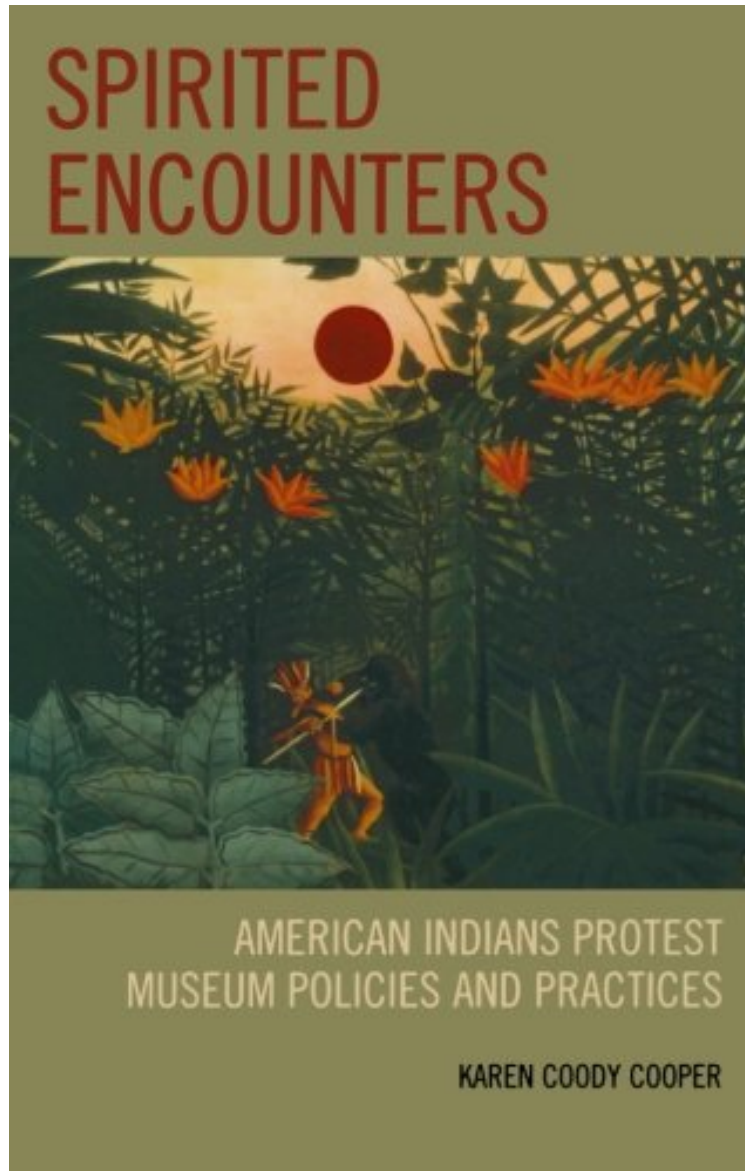


(Download free ebook) Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices

## Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices

*Karen Coody Cooper*

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**Karen Coody Cooper : Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Cooper fails to discuss the good that museums have doneBy Lexi

*Spirited Encounters* is one of those texts that makes you stop and think about what's moral and ethical within the world of a museum. Well written and engaging, Karen Coody Cooper outlines the main issues that involve Native American tribes and museums. This involves discussing a variety of controversial issues, ranging from the changes that need to take place within institutions regarding how artifacts are stored and cared for, and who should have access to them, to NAGPRA and repatriation policies that are, seemingly, desperately needed. It is a well-rounded text that discusses the Native American side of artifacts housed within a museum setting. This, however, is where the text is lacking. It is a recent publication, by many standards, and was written well after the passing of NAGPRA. As such, while it is an interesting read, Cooper fails to discuss the good that museums have done. Except for a few short cases, she uses old examples and paints the world of museums to be harsh and uncompromising places when it comes to repatriation and the relationship between institution and Native culture. While this may have once been the case up until recently, from personal experience many museums have made great strides in improving their relationship with Native tribes. And while there is still much work to be done in this regard, I do not believe it to be as difficult as Cooper makes it out to be.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book "*Spirited Encounters*" is a sad but true history of the struggle and challenges faced ...

By William Moss This book "*Spirited Encounters*" is a sad but true history of the struggle and challenges faced by Native Americans since the coming of the Europeans into their various tribal lands in what is now called North America, or the United States of America, (Canada). Karen Coody Cooper writes about the history of Native protests for the repatriation and the demand for return of material objects and human remains to tribes. And how such protests culminated in legislation such as NAGPRA in 1990. This book is an indelible resource of information for those interested in American and Native American history and law, this book should be required reading for many students at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Review by William J. Moss 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Spirited Encounters* Good Text for Review of Native American Relationship With Museums Through 2000

By Christopher Brown This is a review written by Amy Oliver. Karen Coody Cooper's "*Spirited Encounters*" provides a brief, compelling and understandable review of the tumultuous relationship between museums and Native American communities since the 1960s, and that peaked in the 1980s. The text provides full background on the struggles of Native Americans to repatriate ceremonial objects, cultural property and human remains prior to the 1990 enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), in the years immediately following and through to the year 2000. In Part II, Coody Cooper reveals the intriguing and somewhat disheartening truth about pre-NAGPRA museums: purchasing power drove museums to collect whatever they could, wherever they wanted, at any price, with little regard for resulting human suffering. Coody Cooper reveals what professionals and students in the field know to be true and also reveals somewhat of a secret: that some museums did return select objects, albeit objects of little importance and only when provenance was questioned, prior to NAGPRA. Part II of the text also revisits several serious faux pas on the part of American culture and how these faux pas affect Native American communities and their relationships with non-Native peoples. These faux pas include Columbus Day and Thanksgiving Day, which are both viewed with disdain by Native peoples. Many students and researchers alike can benefit from understanding this disdain as it relates to cultural issues and how museums utilize these holidays and the non-Native history built around these days as a means for communicating Native lifestyles both in and out of the museum. One of the highlights of the text is Coody Cooper's attention to specific objects involved in the repatriation struggles, some of which are well-known and others which have long since been forgotten, or that are rarely taught to students in the industry. These objects include, and much-deservedly so, the Kwakwaka'wakw Potlack materials, which were displayed at the Royal Ontario Museum; the Sacred Pole of the Omaha, and the Stockbridge Munsee Bible and two additional items. Nearly two pages a piece are devoted to the struggles surrounding these items, and Coody Cooper provides excellent background into the importance of the objects to the cultures from which they were taken, as well as to the demands for repatriation made by those cultures, and the results, both positive and negative. Chapter 6 provides an excellent summation of the struggles faced by Native American cultures to repatriate the remains of more than 600,000 indigenous bodies held by museums and research institutions in struggles that commenced with full force in the 1970s. This section of the text, while a short summation, provides a thorough overview of the collection of Native American remains, particularly skulls, as far back as the 1800s. Multiple examples of these collections including the purpose to prove White supremacy over Native Americans and to study these "savages" are provided, giving students and museums professionals alike an excellent starting point for their own research. The last section of the text concerning changes and transformations in the museum industry is also an excellent resource for museum professionals and students seeking information about tribal-run museums and cultural sites. Multiple direct examples such as the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, the National Museum of the American Indian and Petroglyph National Monument receive multiple paragraphs of attention, indicating the importance of these institutions and monuments to cultural heritage and to the everchanging landscape of the relationship between museums and Native American communities. However, the text also has its pitfalls. The text was published in 2008 and is viewed as professional literature that highlights both ongoing issues and resolutions through that same year. The usefulness of the text in this regard ends at the year 2000. Many changes occurred in museums and their relationships to Native cultures in the 8 remaining years of research and writing, but Coody Cooper

failed to update research and writing done in the 1990s and thus additionally failed to provide appropriate information regarding museum cooperation and successes in building new relationships with Native peoples. The main issue in viewing this text as an updated record of the most recent relationship between museums and Native cultures is that the text took nearly 15 years to research, produce and publish. This is apparent in much of the text. In the opening of the first section, entitled "Protesting Exhibitions," Coody Cooper indicates that most Native Americans have never been asked their opinions on Native American exhibits in non-Native run museums. However the practice became much more common between the years 2000 and 2008, the last eight years when the book was in research and writing phases. Additionally, this same assertion suggests that museums should be asking hundreds of Native Americans for their opinions on exhibitions prior to development, and asserts that Native Americans cannot afford to visit most museums, but fails to provide the full spectrum for why this type of involvement is not a possibility. Coody Cooper fails to relay to readers that many Native Americans do not respond well to outsiders and would be unlikely to participate in surveys or focus groups conducted by the non-Natives that are working to develop new exhibitions. One of the key points of Coody Cooper's argument in the text is that non-Natives frequently misunderstand and mislabel Native Americans, and also make snap judgments. One of the chief complaints Coody Cooper asserts that Native Americans have about exhibits is that visitors do not read revelatory labels or that they misinterpret information. The author asserts that this is a failing of museums and fails to explain to the reader that museums cannot control individual thought and interpretation. Coody Cooper also does not provide a solution for this problem from the Native American side. Through this same train of thought and argument Coody Cooper also applies the same stereotype in her argument to non-Native visitors. The author's assertion that most non-Natives believe that American Indians were and remain a warring people is an opinion posing as fact and is unsubstantiated by evidence in her argument. This makes the text difficult to accept as professional literature published in 2008, as this notion of American Indians is held by fewer and fewer non-Natives with each passing year. This assertion and opinion seems only to be valid if the book is examined as a professional text relating to the mid-1990s. It seems likely that these opinions and assertions were written during that timeframe and that Coody Cooper did not update the text to reflect changes that were seen in the industry and in non-Native culture over the 15 year period that the text was in production. Coody Cooper's writing fails to account for myriad changes and it causes a number of inconsistencies in the text. The last section of the text, while an excellent reference concerning Native American protected monuments and tribal run museums, fails to provide any overview of the major changes that began occurring in non-Native museums beginning in the early 1990s. These changes picked up pace in the mid-1990s and continued to gain popularity throughout the early 2000s. It is disappointing that Coody Cooper references none of the non-Native museums which made significant changes in full detail. Since the entire text focused on the failings of non-Native museums to meet the needs of Native communities and to recognize the importance of involving Native communities in the development process, I was surprised and disappointed to see that Coody Cooper made no effort to point out these significant changes. The text leaves readers with the belief that non-Native museums have done nothing to alter their policy and that there have been no significant alterations to business as usual. In fact, most museums throughout the United States have adopted serious provenance and repatriation policies and are willing to work in tandem with Native tribes to make things right. Coody Cooper should have highlighted this ongoing process and where non-Native museums are making headway. Additionally, Coody Cooper failed to recognize the significant strides many non-Native museums have made in involving Native tribes in the development process and how many major and even small museums since the 1990s have redeveloped their Native American exhibits to focus on thriving and changing cultures as opposed to ancient and extinct ones. Despite the obvious problems with the text and the lack of highlight on non-Native museum changes, Coody Cooper's "Spirited Encounters" provides a well-thought-out and well-arranged historical reference text highlighting some of the most significant struggles and successes of Native American tribes in making their voices heard, enacting protective legislation, building their own museums, protecting their historical sites and regaining control of their cultural property. The text can easily replace multiple other texts that must be used together to accomplish the same, as long as readers pair it with a strong text highlighting the changes made in non-Native museums. The text is succinct, easy to understand and can be used by undergrads through professionals for any type of research as either a starting point or as a bibliographical reference. I would recommend the text to anyone seeking a summation of the relationship between museums and Native cultures between the 1800s and the year 2000.

During the twentieth century, American Indians across North America organized protests against traditional museum treatment of Native materials and the Native community. In response, museums began to change their methods. Spirited Encounters provides a foundation for understanding museums, examines how museums collect Native materials, and explores protest as a fully American process of addressing grievances. Now that museums and American Indians are working together in the processes of repatriation, this book can help each side understand the other more fully.

This monograph raises significant questions and reveals numerous debates surrounding such issues as ownership and

access to museum collections and archives; the repatriation of human remains, funerary items, and cultural patrimony; Native American traditional and modern art and art museums; the need for consultation and collaboration with Indigenous peoples and communities; and the importance of sacred sites. (Majel Boxer, 2010 Great Plains Research) A straightforward account that touches on the major issues confronting museums in any multicultural society. Appropriate for anyone interested in cultural heritage issues. Highly recommended. (CHOICE, November 2008) About the Author Karen Coody Cooper was recently the Museum Training Program Coordinator at the National Museum of the American Indian, and was formerly Training Programs Manager at the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies. She holds a Master of Liberal Studies degree, with a museum and anthropology emphasis, from the University of Oklahoma and is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma.