

RE-THINKING THE PORTRAYAL OF AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURES & HISTORIES IN NATIVE MUSEUMS



Stephen Fadden

OCTOBER 14, DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY

Museums have long followed a static approach to exhibiting Native culture and history. Now that Native people are filling the role of curator in their own museums and cultural centers, how do Native people set new museology standards? Stephen Fadden, faculty member the Institute of American Indian Arts, will explore this topic at the October 14th presentation. Mr. Fadden is a Native American (Mohawk) educator, musician, storyteller, and actor.

The Oklahoma Native American Museum Professionals Standing Professional Committee (OKNAMPA) of the Oklahoma Museums Association will present the workshop, *Re-thinking the Portrayal of American Indian Cultures and Histories in Native Museums*, on Wednesday, October 14 from 10:00am to 3:00pm at the Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library Oklahoma City. The cost is \$30 for OMA and/or OKNAMPA members and \$40 for non-members, which includes lunch. As more and more Native American communities are developing cultural centers, it has become increasingly important to re-think the dominant methodologies of portraying culture histories. Many museums still follow the older modes of culture display, modes which foster one-dimensional views of cultures and objects. Indeed, many museums still utilize the object name, media, dimensions and date formula in their labels, and naïve visitors leave with no more cultural knowledge or empathy for the peoples portrayed than they possessed when they entered. In addition, the very term “Native American” seems to suggest monoculture, although the Americas were, and still are, occupied by hundreds of culturally distinct indigenous cultures. Yet, the various culture groups did not necessarily identify with each other as culturally similar peoples until the advent of assimilationist United States policies required tribes to do so, particularly after the Indian Citizenship Act and the Indian Reorganization Act . However, this does not mean that groups were not in contact with each other or that they were unaware of the existence of other peoples. This presentation suggests that in much the same way that ideas flowed between the far East and Europe, ideas flowed throughout the Americas. With this in mind, culture centers can begin to investigate ways to show the distinctness of the tribal groups they represent, and yet portray those intercultural connections in realistic manners.

A partner in the presentation is the American Indian Cultural Center and Museum. This is an Oklahoma Native American Museum Professionals Association (OKNAMPA) workshop. OKNAMPA is a standing professional committee of the Oklahoma Museums Association.

The registration deadline is October 7, 2009. Register online at www.okmuseums.org or complete the form below. Scholarships are available for OMA members. The deadline to apply for a scholarship is October 5. The scholarship application also can be found on the Web site www.okmuseums.org.

Oklahoma Native American Museum Professionals Association Presentation – Deadline October 7, 2009

- OMA and/or OKNAMPA Member Registration \$30 Non-member registration \$40
 Already a member of OMA, join OKNAMPA for \$10 I am requesting a vegetarian lunch

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Send completed form with payment to: **Oklahoma Museums Association • 2100 NE 52 Street • OKC, OK 73111**

If paying by credit card, register online at www.okmuseums.org or fax form to 405.427.5068.
For more information, contact the OMA office at 405.424.7757.
The OMA registration policy and cancellation/refund policy is available on the OMA Web site.