

WHY SHOULD WE HAVE TO BUY OUR OWN THINGS BACK? THE
STRUGGLE OVER THE SPALDING-ALLEN COLLECTION

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of History

MAY 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a great debt to Dr. Tabitha (Beth) Erdey and Robert (Bob) Chenoweth at the Nez Perce National Historic Park. Beth Erdey processed the bulk of archival records that made this research possible. She also provided access to images and put me in touch with many of my interviewees. Bob Chenoweth recorded a wonderful interview regarding the Spalding-Allen Collection and also preserved boxes of valuable documents. Linda Paisano kindly recorded an interview and she also provide me with catalog records and other information on the Plateau baskets that Marcus Whitman collected and sent to Dr. Dudley Allen. I am thankful to Dean Jay Starratt for his support in trusting me to balance my research and other responsibilities while working full time.

This project would not have been possible without Nez Perce voices. Thanks to Nakia Williamson and Josiah Pinkham for steering me through the Nez Perce research permit process and for recording expansive interviews. I am also deeply indebted to Bill Picard and Kevin Peters who shared their knowledge in oral histories.

Thanks also to Lesley Poling, Registrar, at the Ohio Historical Society, Amos Loveday former curator of collections at the Ohio Historical Society, Bob Carroll, retired OHS board member, Ken Grossi, Archivist at Oberlin College and Ashley Morton, at the Fort Walla Walla Museum. Leah Pepin at the Burke Museum assisted with several details. Frank Walker and Susan Buchel, now retired from the National Park Service, graciously recorded interviews.

Melissa Sarlin and Bill Huntington at Whitman College sent the Spalding and Allen correspondence. I was fortunate to have a patient and stellar committee Robert McCoy (chair), Jeff Sanders, Jennifer Thigpen, and Bob Bauman. I am grateful for Robert McCoy's expert guidance through many petitions. Noriko Kawamura read an early draft as part of a History 525 writing seminar.

I am fortunate to be a part of a community of scholars, Will Hamlin, Cheryl Gunselman, Kimberley Christen, Debbie Lee, and Nicole Tonkovitch. I am also grateful for Steven Grafe's scholarship on the Spalding-Allen Collection. Thanks to the Pettyjohn fund in history committee chaired by Professor Orlan Svingen for covering the costs of the excellent transcriptions created by Teresa Bergen. I appreciate the beautiful photographs of the Spalding-Allen Collection taken by Zac Mazur and the assistance of NEPE staff including Bob Chenoweth, Beth Erdey, Linda Paisano, Kevin Peters, and Lynn Pinkham who took the collection temporarily off display and handled the items so that we could photograph them.

My parents, James and Nancy Bond, remain a constant source of support patiently encouraging me through all of my educational endeavors. Most importantly my wonderful wife, Robin Bond, encouraged me at every step, listened to my minute progress along the way, and continues to inspire me to be a better person.

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Abstract

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May 2017

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In 1836, Henry Spalding and his wife Eliza joined Marcus and Narcissa Whitman on a mission to bring Christianity to the Indians of the Oregon Country. In 1846, Spalding acquired Nez Perce clothing, artifacts, and horse gear which he shipped to his friend and supporter, Dr. Dudley Allen, in Ohio. In exchange for these Native American goods, Dr. Allen, a benefactor to the Presbyterian mission sent needed commodities to Spalding. After Allen's death, his son, Dudley, donated the Spalding-Allen Collection to Oberlin College in 1893. Oberlin College in turn loaned most, but not all, of the collection to the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) for safe keeping where it languished for decades.

In 1976, curators at Nez Perce National Historic Park (NEPE) rediscovered the collection. After negotiations, OHS loaned most of the Spalding-Allen artifacts to the National Park Service in 1980 on renewable one-year loans. However, in 1993 OHS abruptly demanded the return of the collection. In negotiations with OHS, the National Park Service learned that OHS would sell the collection, but only at its full appraised value of \$608,100 with a six-month deadline to provide the money. The Nez Perce Tribe raised the money within six months with help from thousands of donors and purchased the collection where it is now on loan to NPS.

This project explores the attempted dispossession of Nez Perce cultural heritage. In his barter of Nez Perce goods, Spalding sought to end traditional Nez Perce culture, by advocating that the Nez Perce adopt western dress, agriculture, and a stern version of Christianity. Ironically, at the same time Spalding worked to “civilize” the Nez Perce, he also created an archive of their earliest documented material culture. The ethics of acquiring, bartering, owning, and selling Native cultural history will be explored. This research is important for it demonstrates that collections are never impartial or neutral, instead archives reflect the interests of their creators resulting in a complex, and often problematic, historical record. The origins of collections—their provenance—is critical for the future ethical curation of indigenous collections held in museums and archives.

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INTRODUCTION

On April 27, 1846, writing from Lapwai —Nez Perce for the place of the butterflies— on the Clear Water River, the missionary Henry Harmon Spalding addressed a letter to his “Dear Brother” and former Western Reserve classmate, Dr. Dudley Allen. Spalding wrote, “after many promises & a long delay I have started the boxes containing a small collection of articles of Indian manufacture with some specimens of stone &c, all designed for yourself.”¹ Spalding regretted that the two “Grey Bear skins & a pack saddle” were not shipped because “it was thought they would be destroyed on Board ship by rats.” Who knew that bear skins are a rat delicacy? Fortunately, the boxes that Spalding did send to Allen stuffed with priceless Nez Perce and Plateau Indian artifacts down the Columbia River survived the journey to Ohio. It was a long trip: some 465 miles west down the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver. From there, they travelled across the Pacific to the Sandwich Islands (Hawai‘i), then south around the cape of South American to Boston followed by an overland journey west to Ohio.

Roughly 150 years later, in an ironic turn, this collection that Spalding assembled became the focus of a major struggle over ownership between the Nez Perce Tribe and the National Park Service on one side, and the Ohio Historical Society on the other. The Spalding-Allen Collection, the context of its creation, its subsequent survival, and the prolonged efforts of the Nez Perce and the National Park Service to acquire and keep the objects in the Nez Perce homeland will be the focus of this dissertation, the first scholarly treatment of this story.

The act of collecting is a topic of increasing scholarly interest. As the scholar Curtis Hinsley observed, collecting is “an expression of desire through the exercise of power over

¹ Steven Grafe, “‘Our Private Affairs in Way Of Barter’: Correspondence Between Dudley Allen and Henry Harmon Spalding, 1838-1848.” *Idaho Yesterdays* Volume 40 No. 3 (Fall, 1996), 3.

others.”² This “exercise of power” includes both the acquisition of items and the act of describing the items in new ways. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact details of how Spalding acquired his collection or from whom, but there are clues to the context present in Spalding’s surviving correspondence, the judgement of scholars, and importantly, Nez Perce oral traditions. These issues comprise the first chapter.

Connected to the notions of power and description, collecting is also associated with place. The curator and scholar, Christian Feest defined collecting as “a process by which samples of a complex whole are removed from their meaningful and functional context in order to be preserved under artificial conditions and within a new frame of reference.”³ When Spalding shipped the collection around the world to Allen and Allen’s descendants in turn donated the collection to Oberlin College, this Nez Perce material culture was far removed from its “meaningful and functional context.” I argue that place and context matters when interpreting material culture. The shirts and dresses in the Spalding-Allen Collection, for example, come from a specific place, were created from resources present there, and made by peoples whose decedents still live there. These objects therefore inform a specific place and way of life. These powerful connections are lost when the items are stored away from public view in a far distant repository. The story of the “lost” years Spalding-Allen Collection during its residence in Ohio will be the subject of chapter two.

² Curtis M. Hinsley, “Collecting Cultures and Cultures of Collecting: The Lure of the American Southwest, 1880-1915,” *Museum Anthropology* 16 (1992), 12.

³ Christian F. Feest, “American Indians and Ethnographic Collecting in Europe,” *Museum Anthropology* 16 (1992), 7.

Henry Spalding's collecting was also closely linked to colonialism, westward expansion, and the American domination of the Oregon Country. Spalding sought to change the Nez Perce so that they could assimilate into the dominant culture. In this way, he was at the vanguard of more than a century of concerted efforts by the United States government to seize resources and change Nez Perce culture and the cultures of Native peoples across the United States.

This is a tale of power, the power of a missionary to influence an Indian community and dispossess it of its cultural heritage. It is also an example of the control and the contested ownership by an institution, the Ohio Historical Society, of the material culture of a far distant people, the Nez Perce. However, it is also a story of agency, of the Nez Perce and their supporters a century and a half later reclaiming a collection of cultural heritage. Their success drew upon a close collaboration with the National Park Service, persuasion, and a sophisticated media campaign. In the end, the Nez Perce Tribe repatriated the earliest documented collection of artifacts of their people and the largest and best documented surviving collection of Plateau material culture.⁴

While the roots of this story—the origins of the collection and the activities of Henry Spalding—date to the nineteenth century, much of the story, including the contested ownership of the Spalding-Allen Collection and its eventual return to the Nez Perce homeland, takes place during the later twentieth century. This is the subject of chapters three and four. With few

⁴ Plateau or Columbia Plateau refers to a geologic and geographic region that spans portions of the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The Plateau is bordered on the west by the Cascade Mountain Range and on the east by the Rocky Mountains. The Columbia River cuts through the region. Plateau Indians refers to the Indigenous Tribes who inhabit the region.

exceptions, historians have largely ignored contemporary Nez Perce history and instead continue to write primarily about nineteenth-century topics, such as Chief Joseph and the war of 1877.⁵

Stepping back, this research also centers on the very enterprise of history: how primary sources are created, preserved, and ultimately made available for researchers. For the survival and accessibility of primary sources is never neutral. Their preservation among collectors and families, and over time in institutions, is never assured. This dissertation explores the making of an archive; an archive whose ownership was contested, tangled in the legacy of colonialism.

Archivists refer to the origins of collections, their creation and the history of their care as

⁵ Lucullus V. McWhorter, *Yellow Wolf His Own Story* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940) was the first account of the 1877 war to include Nez Perce voices. His *Hear Me, My Chiefs! Nez Perce Legend & History* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1952) published posthumously is an expansive work that includes early Nez Perce history and legend, but ends with the aftermath of the 1877 conflict. See also Merrill D. Beal, *"I Will Fight No More Forever" Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963). Alvin Josephy devotes only two pages of his magisterial *The Nez Perce Indians And The Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965) to Nez Perce history after the death of Chief Joseph. Robert R McCoy, *Chief Joseph, Yellow Wolf, and the Creation of Nez Perce History in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Routledge, 2004) analyzes the narratives of the 1877 war in the popular and scholarly press prior to Lucullus McWhorter. For recent treatments of the conflict, see Elliott West, *The Last Indian War The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Kevin Carson, *The Long Journey of the Nez Perce: A Battle History from Cottonwood to the Bear Paw* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishers, 2011). Allen Pinkham and Steven Evans, *Lewis and Clark Among the Nez Perce; Strangers in the Land of the Nimiipuu* (Washburn; The Dakota Institute, 2015). For the aftermath of the war: J. Diane Pearson, *The Nez Percés in the Indian Territory: Nimiipuu Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); and three more recent works on the Nez Perce Reservation allotment Nicole Tonkovich. *The Allotment Plot Alice C. Fletcher, E. Jane Gay, and Nez Perce Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012) and *Dividing the Reservation Alice C. Fletcher's Nez Perce Allotment Diaries and Letters 1889-1892* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2016), and Emily Greenwald's *Reconfiguring the Reservation: The Nez Percés, Jicarilla Apaches, and the Dawes Act* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002.).

“provenance.” Provenance is critical to all historical research because it informs the interpretation of all primary sources.

However, many scholars do not ask basic questions regarding of the provenance of the collections they rely upon for their research. Why is this collection located in Washington D.C. or New Haven or London? How was it acquired and under what circumstances? Do other communities have a vested interest or a claim to it? For curators at museums, libraries, and other cultural institutions, the provenance of their collections is often murky. Generally, the names of the collectors are known, but not how they acquired their collections. The circumstances of their collecting are often unrecorded. My research seeks to answer these and other questions related to the provenance of the Spalding-Allen Collection.

This story is much broader than one tribe’s efforts to reclaim a portion of their cultural heritage. The ultimate success of the Nez Perce to reclaim the Spalding-Allen Collection is one example in a larger struggle of indigenous communities around the world to reclaim their cultural heritage; a heritage that was in many cases extracted and shipped great distances from their source communities.

On another level, these events mark the start of a shift in relationship between collecting institutions (museums, archives, and libraries) and native peoples. The passage of the Native American Graves Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 mandated that any institution in the United States which received federal funds must report to the federal government their holdings of Native American (and Native Hawaiian) remains, funeral, and sacred objects. NAGPRA also compelled repositories to contact representatives of the native communities regarding these materials, the descendants of the peoples whose bones, funeral and sacred objects were collected by non-natives. These affected communities would then determine the final disposition of these

objects based on a “reasonable” conclusion derived from a “preponderance” of available evidence. The spirit of NAGPRA that native communities should have legal protections over categories of their material culture, led to discussions in 2006 among museum officials to define what constituted “sacred” objects and conversations in archives community over Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.⁶

NAGPRA marked a major change in the relationship between institutions, such as a museums, and native communities. However, in the years after the passage of NAGPRA not all curators, anthropologists, collectors, scientists embraced the law. The most controversial case of NAPGRA centered on the disposition of the remains of Kennewick Man or the Ancient One whose skeleton two college students found in 1996 in the shallows of the Columbia River near the city of Kennewick, Washington. Local police initially opened a murder investigation, but after further investigation scientists determined that the bones were old, very old: over 8,500 years old.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and four other tribes sued the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (who managed the land where the skeleton was found) to repatriate Kennewick man and rebury him. Before the bones were returned, a group of scientists led by Doug Owsley, a forensic anthropologist at the Smithsonian Institution, filed another lawsuit to halt the repatriation so that the remains could be studied. The scientists argued in court that the bones were so old they could not be linked to living Native Americans. Owsley based his opinion on evidence that Kennewick Man consumed a marine diet indicating that he lived near the coast, but had only travelled up the Columbia River to hunt. Some scientists drawing on skull

⁶ Rand Jimerson *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009), 355-358.

measurements reminiscent of nineteenth-century methodologies claimed that Kennewick Man's skull had "Caucasoid" features and that he was European. Others joined the fray, including a group in California, modern day pagans who sued for the bones to bury them in a Pre-Christian Norse Ceremony.

Recent evidence bolstered the arguments of the Native groups that Kennewick man was indeed a distant relative. In 2015, a group of Danish scientists published a paper in *Nature* proving that Kennewick Man's DNA did not belong to a European, but rather most closely resembled the DNA of members of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.⁷ Other Plateau Tribes objected to the Colville participation in the study as it required further samples taken from the "ancient one." After the publication of the DNA findings and proof of the close connection with Plateau Indians, which came as no surprise to Native American groups, powerful political allies sought to repatriate the remains.

In August 2015, Senator Patty Murray, of Washington State, introduced legislation to return Kennewick Man's skeleton to the Colville and the coalition of Columbia Basin tribes. Washington Governor Jay Inslee and Representative Dan Newhouse lent public support to Murray's legislation. Murray's legislation, attached the 2016 Water Resources Act, a bill that had strong bipartisan support. President Obama signed the bill on December 16, 2016. After the passage of her amendment, Senator Murray said, "After more than 20 years of debate, it's time to return the Ancient One to his rightful resting place."⁸

⁷ Carol Zimmer, "New Study Links Kennewick Man to Native Americans," *The New York Times*, 19 June 2015.

⁸ Rob Hotakainen, "Skeleton of Kennewick Man could soon go to Washington state tribes," *The Olympian*, 16 September 2016. Burke Museum, "Kennewick Man, The Ancient One," blog post. 16 December 2016, <http://www.burkemuseum.org/blog/kennewick-man-ancient-one> (Accessed 5 January 2017)

According to Murray's amendment, the Army Corps of Engineers will transfer control of the remains to the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation who will in turn return the Ancient One to the claimant tribes within ninety days. Until the repatriation, the remains are kept at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture on the University of Washington campus in Seattle. Just upriver from where the site of the discovery of Kennewick Man's remains, Wanapum elder Rex Buck articulated the view of many Native Americans that it was time to honor Kennewick Man, The Ancient One, by reburial. "We need to put him back so he can rest," Buck said.⁹

As the litigation over Kennewick Man demonstrates, NAGRPA remains a slow and at times a controversial process. In the first few years after 1990 and the passage of the law this was especially true. Some in the scientific and museum community saw the law as a potential threat that would force the return of collections and disrupt scholarship. However, decades later most view the law as having a very positive effect on the relations between Native American communities and curators and academics. A generation after the passage of NAGPRA, dialog and consultation between Native American groups and museums is part of the ethos of curating Native American collections at most major American museums.

The greatest obstacle in returning bodies and sacred burial goods (estimated at 200,000 sets of remains and more than a million funeral objects) held in federal and museums nationwide is the lack of documentation (provenance) of where collections came from. Centuries of collecting and poor record keeping, and more recently, decades of dam and road construction proceeded by hasty archaeological digs resulted in millions of poorly documented Native

⁹ Annette Cary, "Tribes encouraged that Kennewick Man will be reburied," *Tri-City Herald*, 19 August 2015.

American collections (bodies, grave goods, and other objects) in museums. According to a 2010, Government Accountability Office Report the vast numbers of unidentified collections was a result of “poor curation practices by agencies and repositories, along with poor historical records and documentation.”¹⁰ These “vast numbers” represent roughly 75% of all bones labeled as Native American comprising some 122,736 sets of remains. These bodies remain in limbo because according to the institutions that hold the bones, they do not have the documentation to return the bodies to the culturally affiliated tribes.¹¹ The Spalding-Allen Collection differs dramatically from many early Native American collections because Spalding wrote a detailed letter describing the objects and their relative value. The letter also dates and situates the items in the collection.

In the struggle over the Spalding-Allen Collection, the Ohio Historical Society resisted NAGPRA. They were slow to report on their holdings to the Federal Government and their relationship with Native American history centered on curating historical collections, not engaging with contemporary Native communities. On the other extreme, the Nez Perce National Historic Park, founded by a series of cooperative agreements and an extremely close working relationship with the Nez Perce Tribe exceed the spirit of NAGPRA. Franklin Walker, Superintendent of the Nez Perce National Historic Park characterized the nature of this partnership, “our relationship had built a level of trust and respect rarely seen between a Native Nation and the National Park Service.”¹² Although NAGPRA is part of this story and an

¹⁰ Dylan Brown, “The Spoils of Wars and Massacres: NAGPRA 25 Years Later,” *Indian Country Today Media Network.com*, 9 June 2015.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Frank Walker, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

important legal development in the changing relationships between Native American groups and museums, the Nez Perce decided not to pursue a NAGPRA claim against the Ohio Historical Society. Such claims generally took years to resolve and many NPS officials and Nez Perce feared the Spalding-Allen Collection would be sold on the open market before a resolution.

The Spalding-Allen Collection is at the center of this research. To keep it there, I draw upon an anthropological framework for collecting and curating collections; what anthropologists Amy Margaris and Linda Grimm call a “life history” approach for collections. Meaning is not inherent in objects, and by extension archives, but “is imparted and revealed through their interactions with human agents.” When applied to artifacts, these collected materials once removed from their cultural settings were re-contextualized – or mischaracterized “in accordance with Western paradigms of scientific interpretation.”¹³ By drawing upon a life history approach for the Spalding-Allen Collection, we see that the curation and meaning associated with it, depending on the individuals associated with it and where the collection was held, is an ongoing process: a process that changes over time. This research demonstrates that the “life history” of this particular collection is most vibrant when the collection was restored to its “meaningful and functional” context in Nez Perce country.¹⁴

This “life history” approach is appropriate in another sense, for it is a methodology employed by oral historians. In oral history, a “life history” refers to an expansive interview, generally recorded in multiple lengthy sessions, in which the interviewee can relate their whole

¹³ Amy Margaris and Linda Grimm. “Collecting for a College Museum Exchange Practices and the Life History of a 19th-Century Artic Collection.” *Museum Anthropology*, Vol. 34. Iss. 2. (2011), 109, 112.

¹⁴ Christian F. Feest, “American Indians and Ethnographic Collecting in Europe,” *Museum Anthropology* 16 (1992), 7.

life, “from childhood to the present.”¹⁵ This dissertation is a “life history” of a given collection. I consulted texts and interviewed individuals to tease out the creation and care of the Spalding-Allen Collection to the present. My research therefore draws upon the expertise of curators, dealers, conservators, and most importantly Nez Perce, who preserve the traditions of their material culture, passed down many generations.¹⁶ The prominence of Nez Perce voices in this work seeks to put their voices on an equal footing with those written sources that, starting with Spalding and his fellow missionaries, reflect the views of the dominant culture.

In addition to generously sharing their cultural expertise, several of the Nez Perce I interviewed including Nakia Williamson, Josiah Pinkham, and Kevin Peters also brought their knowledge of Nez Perce material culture. These men intimately know how their ancestors made the items in the Spalding-Allen Collection because they continue these same traditions. Between the three of them, they fashion a wide-range of traditional Nez Perce items such as head dresses, beaded gun cases, carved flutes, men’s shirts, cradleboards, and other objects.¹⁷

¹⁵ Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History A Practical Guide* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 40.

¹⁶ Prior to conducting any interviews, I completed a Washington State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Exemption Determination Application. On February 5, 2015, the WSU IRB notified me that IRB oversight was not required for my research. The IRB determination, however, did not constitute permission to recruit members of the Nez Perce Tribe or conduct my research on their reserved lands. I then completed a Nez Perce research permit to interview enrolled Nez Perce Tribal members. The Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee approved my research permit on April 21, 2015. I used oral history release forms provided by the National Park Service and sent my interviewees copies of the transcripts of our interviews. My intent after completing this dissertation is to donate my oral histories to the Nez Perce National Historic Park in Idaho so that the interviews will join the Spading-Allen Collection.

¹⁷ For examples of their work see, Bob Chenoweth and Tabitha Erdey, *Nuunimnix An Exhibition in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Nez Perce National Historical Park* (Lewiston: Confluence Press Inc., 2015), 24-26, 35-37, 41-44.

For this methodology of conducting interviews and listening to Indian perspectives, I am indebted to Lucullus V. McWhorter whose papers are held in the archives at Washington State University (WSU) where I work. McWhorter was a rancher and an advocate for Native issues. In his youth, McWhorter found the outdoors more compelling than the class room. Though he ended his formal education when he was twelve, McWhorter became a passionate amateur archaeologist, a collector of arrow points, and eventually an ethnographer and historian. McWhorter began forming his archive in earnest in 1906, when he assisted the Yakama people in their struggle against legislation proposed by Washington Senator Wesley Jones that every Yakama Indian give up three fourths of his or her land allotment in exchange for irrigation rights.¹⁸ To win public support for his position, McWhorter collected documents from Indian agents, Yakama sources, and conducted interviews with Indians and non-Indians for a series of pamphlets—*The Crime Against the Yakimas* (1913), *The Continued Crime Against the Yakimas* (1916), *The Discards* (1920)—that he published on behalf of Yakama rights. The Yakama Tribe prevailed and kept their water. Because of these efforts in 1909, the Yakama adopted McWhorter with the name “Old Wolf” and invited him to tribal deliberations, where he listened and took notes.

In these pamphlets and his later books, McWhorter became a close friend and trusted advocate to many Plateau peoples. His writings provided Native perspectives on historical events decades before historians began to include Native American voices in their work.¹⁹ According to

¹⁸ Steven Ross Evans, *Voice of the Old Wolf: Lucullus Virgil McWhorter and the Nez Perce Indians* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1996), 2.

¹⁹ Trevor James Bond, “From Treasure Room to Archives: The McWhorter Papers and the State College of Washington” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 2011 Vol. 102 No. 2, 69.

Nez Perce Tribe member and park ranger/cultural interpreter, Diane Mallikan, the only books the Nez Perce would read of their history were *Yellow Wolf, His Own Story* and *Hear Me My Chiefs* by McWhorter. The other histories of the Nez Perce according to Mallikan, “contained so many lies because historians depended almost exclusively on military reports as the foundation of their research.”²⁰ McWhorter is an instructive model not only for what he wrote, but also for how he wrote.

In addition to my training as a historian, I bring to this research a background in archives and libraries. I oversee the department of Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections at WSU located in Pullman, Washington, on traditional Nez Perce and Palouse lands. In my work at WSU and collaboration with colleagues, I have learned that many of the significant collections that document the early culture of this region’s Native American communities, no longer reside in this region. Important collections gathered by early Euro-American colonizers now grace the storage vaults of museums and research institutions across the United States, Canada, and Europe. Often these collections are poorly documented and inaccessible to the very communities that are particularly interested in them. This pattern of acquisition continues today where the wealthiest of private (and some public) institutions can afford to acquire collections offered by specialized dealers while regional institutions and tribal, archives, libraries, and museums simply cannot compete in this market place.

My work at WSU includes co-directing the Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation, established in 2015 as a collaboration between the WSU Libraries and the College of Arts and Sciences. Our work involves the ethical curation of digital cultural heritage. My colleague and

²⁰ Diane Mallikan foreword in Dennis Baird, et al. *Encounters with the People Written and Oral Accounts of Nez Perce Life to 1858* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2015), xii.

co-director, Dr. Kimberly Christen, developed the Mukurtu Content Management System (CMS).²¹ Murkurtu is an Australian aboriginal term for a dilly bag or a safe keeping place. Created as a safe keeping place for digital cultural objects, Murkurtu was designed with Indigenous protocols for circulating and sharing information. For instance, Murkurtu provides communities with options to circulate digital heritage at a granular level. For example, a tribe managing their Mukurtu site may determine that particular images or recordings should only be seen by women or men, or by family, clan, or other kin group or at certain times of the year. Site administrators can assign access these nuanced protocols to individual digital objects. Murkurtu also rebalances the control and authority over categorizing and description collections by putting Native/Indigenous knowledge on par with archival or library description. Our current work with Murkurtu seeks to develop models for the shared curation of Native American cultural heritage between major American collecting institutions such as the Smithsonian and Library of Congress and sovereign Native American Tribes. This setting provides the context in which I approached this research.

I first learned of the Spalding-Allen Collection at the start of my graduate History program at WSU. The events took place less than a decade before I came to work at the University. Initially, I planned to write about the Spalding-Allen Collection as the fourth chapter in a dissertation about collectors whose collections founded archival repositories in the region. Unfortunately, I wrote the other three chapters first!²² However, the chapter on Henry Spalding

²¹ Kimberly Christen, "Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation," *American Archivist* 2011 Vol. 74 (1), 185–210.

²² These chapters appeared as articles in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* and the *Pacific Northwest History Quarterly*.

and the Spalding-Allen Collection quickly became excessively lengthy for a single dissertation chapter and before long, I realized that the topic should be the entire research project.

It was surprising that the Nez Perce Tribe raised more than \$600,000 to purchase the collection. And I wondered, why did they have to pay for it in the first place? The fact that one of my favorite bands, Pearl Jam, played a small role in the return of the collections (see chapter 4) was also intriguing. As I began my research, I learned the Spalding-Allen was the largest and earliest documented surviving collection of Nez Perce material culture. The collection included beautifully made dresses and shirts with elaborate decorative elements. Not only was it in exquisite condition and extremely rare, the collection itself served as an important bridge between contemporary Nez Perce culture and the lifeways of the Nez Perce during early contact.

I realized that I saw the collection differently than the experts I interviewed. I admired the designs and condition of the artifacts and their documented age. However, when I began interviewing curators and members of the Nez Perce Tribe, I came to appreciate that they viewed these items not as museum pieces, but rather as examples of techniques that represented an opportunity for the repatriation of skills and life ways. The use of porcupine quillwork --present in the collection-- in particular fell out of fashion after sustained Euro-American exchange when beads could be readily attained. These early examples of quill decorations allow contemporary Nez Perce to see how these materials were processed and sewn onto the garments. Thereby providing inspiration to contemporary Nez Perce artists. These objects also represent a rich opportunity to revitalize the Nez Perce language for the technical vocabulary of garments and horse regalia comprise words uncommon in every day Nez Perce speech.

Place matters too; the Spalding-Allen Collection came from a particular place on the Columbia Plateau made from people who fashioned the items from local plants and animals. One

can simply walk outside the Nez Perce National Historic Park gallery in Spalding, Idaho, and see the plants (and if one is lucky) and the animals used to fashion the objects in the collection. The descendants of the Nez Perce work at the park site and live nearby.

As this research demonstrates, the Spalding-Allen Collection once removed from the Columbia Plateau lost much of its connection with the people who understood and appreciated it. According to Nakia Williamson, Director for the Nez Perce Tribe Culture Resource Program, “the problem with collecting in general in terms of the museum environment today is you kind of strip these items out of their natural context.” And in doing so this creates, Williams continued, a “gap between the knowledge and understanding of how these items... were utilized and how they were worn and [on] what occasions... who this item was originally made for and how it was used and all the knowledge that went with it. And it puts it in a kind of relatively inert environment.” The return of the Spalding-Allen Collection to the Nez Perce and its “natural context” represented an important milestone in a broader Nez Perce effort to retain their cultural heritage. Collections are best curated by individuals knowledgeable about the local context of the items.

This research explores one collection and one tribe’s struggle to regain its cultural heritage. However, this story is important on a much broader level because museums and other collecting institutions hold vast and poorly documented collections related to indigenous peoples around the world. By piecing together the provenance of these collections—when they were acquired, under what circumstances, how did the institutions come to own them—affected communities can begin a dialog with museum curators around the ethical, shared curation of these collections.

Why should we have to buy our own things back examines the dynamics of a Native American Nation seeking to preserve its culture by repatriating a collection from the ownership of a museum that claimed title under dubious circumstances. In this sense, this research transcends the efforts of one tribe on the Columbian Plateau, but speaks to peoples across the globe who seek to see collections returned from museums.

CHAPTER 1 The Nez Perce and the Missionary Collector

Dudley Allen to Henry Spalding, “I want more [Native American collections]. They are all worth the having! I will try and pay for them all in due course of time. If you see proper you will oblige me by any different curiosities, that you can send me.” 1847

In exchange for the Nez Perce items sent, Henry Spalding wrote to Dudley Allen, “will you have the goodness to send me in the next B[ar]r[e]l from the Ladies Soc[iety] a dung fork & 3 pitch forks, a hair sieve for meal rather fine[?]”

This chapter introduces the Nez Perce Tribe on the eve of the arrival of the missionaries. Between 1836 and 1847, Henry and Eliza Spalding served at the first missionaries to the Nez Perce Tribe on the Columbia Plateau near Lewiston, Idaho. To supplement his missionary operating funds provided by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCM), Henry Spalding collected Nez Perce and Plateau Indian material culture that he shipped in two barrels to his friend and benefactor Dudley Allen in Ohio. Spalding was not the first collector in the Northwest, but followed in a tradition that began a century before with early contacts between Euro-American explorers and fur-traders.

Importantly the Spalding-Allen Collection survived as did the accompanying letter that Spalding mailed to Allen. The circumstances by which Spalding acquired the collection later became a factor in the Nez Perce Tribe’s efforts to repatriate the collection owned by the Ohio Historical Society. This chapter argues that Spalding did not purchase the collection but instead listed what he thought was the value of the items in exchange for trade goods sent by Allen. His missionary methods left enduring divisions among the Nez Perce that continue to the present and also influenced questions over the ownership of the Spalding-Allen Collection. This is one example of an early missionary removing important items of cultural heritage that later came

under the custody of a distant museum, a pattern that was repeated by other missionaries and colonialists.

According to tradition, the Nez Perce trace their origins to a monster whose body once filled the upper Clearwater River in north central Idaho. After the monster ate most of the peoples and creatures in the land, the trickster hero, Coyote, put a stop to the monster. Coyote armed himself with five stone knives, pitch, and fire making tools and challenged monster to a contest. Each would try to inhale the other. Coyote went first, but could not inhale monster. Monster easily inhaled Coyote. Once monster swallowed Coyote whole, Coyote lit a fire inside monster and then used his knives to cut out monster's heart. Coyote then sliced up monster's body and threw the pieces across the land. From these bloody pieces of monster formed native peoples: the Coeur d'Alene, Cayuse, Pend Oreilles, Flathead, Blackfeet, Crow, Sioux, and other Indian tribes. Coyote then washed the monster's blood off his hands thus forming the Nez Perce people.¹

In the early nineteenth-century, the Nez Perce were one of the larger and powerful tribes of the Northwest, with a population in 1805 of roughly 6,000 individuals.² They were the most influential tribe of the inland Columbia Plateau. Situated in the hilly plateau country of modern Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, the Nez Perce located their camps and villages beneath the steep hills on either side of the Columbia, Snake, and Clearwater rivers. At the start of the nineteenth century, scholars estimate there were more than seventy permanent Nez Perce villages

¹ Archie Phinney, *Nez Perce Texts*. (New York: Columbia University Press 1934): 27-29. Ted Catton, *Nez Perce National Historical Park Administrative History*. (Missoula: Historical Research Associates, 1996), 1.

² Alvin Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians And The Opening of the Northwest* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965): 15.

ranging from 30 to 200 individuals depending on the season and social groups. Archaeologists have identified 300 total sites including seasonal camps, located near available food sources.³ Generally a headman united several villages in bands. A chief sometimes led a group of bands on activities, such as war parties or buffalo hunts. However, the Nez Perce preferred temporary local leadership to permanent leaders. They expected their leaders to make good decisions, live in a morally exemplary manner, and to be generous with their supporters.⁴

As the Nez Perce did not practice agriculture, they moved to the locations of seasonal food they could gather and preserve. With the introduction of the horse after 1700, the Nez Perce dramatically increased the distances they travelled as part of these rounds. The spring snow melts brought enormous salmon runs up the rivers beside their villages and camps. Scholars estimate that per capita, the Nez Perce consumed over 500 pounds of fish per year. After the fishing season, the Nez Perce gathered roots and berries from the higher valleys in later spring and early summer.⁵ In mid-summer, they gathered roots, such as camas, and berries including thornberries, huckleberries, currants, and chokecherries. They preserved portions of this bounty by storing it in woven bags and placing the preserved food in lined winter storage pits. During the summer, the Nez Perce would join with neighboring tribes including the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Yakama to form large hunting parties that would cross the Lolo pass into Montana to hunt buffalo. By

³ Deward Walker, "Nez Perce" in volume 12 *Plateau* part of *Handbook of North American Indians* William Sturtevant general editor (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 425, 420.

⁴ Ibid, 425.

⁵ Josephy, *The Nez Perce Indians*, 16-17.

November, Nez Perce would settle into their winter quarters until the following spring.⁶

Disruptions to these lifeways came as the Nez Perce people engaged with Euro-Americans.

In September 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition arrived in Nez Perce country on their journey west to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark and their party were starving after a long and difficult crossing over the Lolo Pass. After some initial unease, the Nez Perce fed members of the expedition, provided them with horses, and served as their guides down a portion of the Columbia River. The tribe remained friendly when Lewis and Clark and their party returned in 1806.

Between this contact and the arrival of Spalding's mission in 1836, the Nez Perce enjoyed a period of relative prosperity fueled in part by their engagement with the fur trade. They served as brokers in an extensive trade network that extended from the plains of Montana to Celilo Falls on the Columbia River where native peoples gathered to fish salmon and exchange goods.⁷

After witnessing of power of Euro-American technology from neighboring tribes, the Nez Perce and Flathead Tribes sent a delegation of four men to Saint Louis to request missionary teachers. There in 1831 they met the territory governor William Clark, famous for his journey across the continent with Meriwether Lewis. A newspaper report of the meeting characterized the visit as the Indians on a spiritual quest seeking the white man's religion.⁸ Some Nez Perce do not agree with this interpretation. One year later, the Reverend Samuel Parker visited Nez Perce

⁶ Walker, "Nez Perce," 420-421.

⁷ Ibid, 429.

⁸ Albert Furtwangler *Bringing Indians to the Book* (London and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 14-15.

lands and wrote to his missionary colleagues to send reinforcements. On the eve of Spalding's arrival, the Nez Perce were the largest, most influential, and prosperous Tribe on the Columbia Plateau. This wealth was reflected in the fine material culture that Spalding was able to acquire.

In 1836, Henry Spalding and his wife Eliza joined Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and William Gray on a mission to bring Christianity to the Indians of the Oregon Country (present-day Oregon, Washington, and Idaho) then a foreign region, not part of the United States of America. On their way to meet the Whitmans, Henry and Eliza Spalding visited the home of Dudley Allen in Kinsman, Ohio. There Spalding had a wagon prepared for their overland journey west. Spalding and Allen met five years earlier in 1831 when Spalding enrolled at Ohio's Western Reserve College and the two men became lifelong friends and correspondents. Allen was a noted physician and remained a steadfast supporter of Spalding and his missionary activities.⁹ Spalding repaid Allen for his financial aid of cash donations to the ABCFM and goods shipped to Spalding by writing letters to his friend and shipping "Indian curiosities" back to Ohio.

Spalding, Whitman and the other Oregon Country missionaries received support for their activities from the ABCFM, an enterprise with a global reach. Established in 1810 by graduates of Williams College in midst of the Second Great Awakening, the ABCFM sent its first missionaries to India in 1812. In addition to ministries abroad, the ABCFM sponsored missions to American Indian tribes, both within the United States, and in the case of the Spaldings and Whitmans, to places that would later become incorporated into the continental United States.¹⁰

⁹ Grafe, "Our Private Affairs in Way of Barter" 2.

¹⁰ Clifford Drury, *Pioneer of Old Oregon: Henry Harmon Spalding* (Caldwell, Id: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1936), 91-92, 144-161.

After the ABCFM established the Whitmans and Spaldings in the Oregon Country in 1838, the organization sent reinforcements. This second wave of missionaries included Elkanah and Mary Walker, Cushing and Myra Eells, Asa and Sarah Gray, and Cornelius Rogers. During their journeys across the continent, the missionaries bickered and quarreled with each other. This dissension led to their decision to establish multiple mission stations at Tshimikain (near Spokane), Waiilatpu (near Walla Walla), Lapwai (near Lewiston), and Kamiah (further from Lewiston). These missionaries were among the first American, non-Indian permanent residents of the Oregon Country, a contested region under joint occupation by Britain and the United States. Henry and Eliza Spalding served as the first missionaries to the Nez Perce. Except for a brief period between 1847 and 1862, Presbyterian missionaries maintained a continual presence among the Nez Perce until 1932.¹¹

In the 1830s, the Columbia Plateau was home to powerful bands of Cayuse, Nez Perce, and Spokans, who had less contact with whites than neighboring tribes to the west and east. While these tribes maintained their traditions through oral and material culture, the ABCFM missionaries were excessively literate. The letters, diaries, and other publications of these missionaries provide much of the earliest documentation of the Plateau Tribes to whom they ministered. Asa Smith, Spalding's colleague who established another mission to the Nez Perce at Kamiah between 1839 and 1841, studied the Nez Perce language and wrote in detail about their seasonal rounds, while Spalding and the Whitmans met and mentioned Nez Perce leaders in their letters. Spalding also kept detailed climatic data and botanical samples of the region.¹²

¹¹ Dennis Baird, et al. *Encounters with the People Written and Oral Accounts of Nez Perce Life to 1858* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2015): 211.

¹² *Ibid.*

According to Nakia Williamson, Director for the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resources Program, many “Nez Perce people initially were fairly responsive to his [Henry Spalding] coming to this area. Not necessarily just for the fact that we ... somehow ... didn’t know who God was or ... didn’t have any religion and we were waiting for religion. That’s how sometimes the history books sort of characterize it.” Instead, the Nez Perce sought the knowledge that Spalding brought. This knowledge, Williamson continued, “was technology, such as firearms and other things that had a tremendous impact on our lives at that time... And so I think a lot of that was not so much that we were looking for religion or spirituality, because we already had that. But that we were looking for that type of knowledge and ways to access that.”¹³

As Spalding and his fellow missionaries shared their knowledge of agriculture, religion and other topics, they also demanded that the Plateau peoples to whom they ministered had to be “reborn out of their old lives into utterly new ones.”¹⁴ According to Spalding, “while we point them [the Nez Perce] with one hand to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, we... point with the other to the hoe.”¹⁵ This process of conversion included more than religious belief and ritual. It also involved the Nez Perce adopting Euro-American agriculture, dress, and learning English while abandoning their traditional lifeways.

Spalding and his fellow missionaries proscribed a vast array of Nez Perce customs. The missionaries attempted to regulate Plateau social customs, no sex outside of monogamous marriage, gambling, and warfare. They sought to end traditional religious practices including

¹³ Nakia Williamson, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

¹⁴ West, *The Last Indian War*, 43.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

ceremonies that involved drumming, singing, dancing, and wearing regalia.¹⁶ For Spalding, religious conversion and assimilation to Euro-American culture combined in the “civilizing” process. As the historian Elliott West notes, this process of forced assimilation practiced by Spalding and his missionary peers was an aspect of a broader national effort of Indian removal forcing Native peoples west into Indian Territories where missionaries and government agents could have time to assimilate them while other settlers exploited the resources found on ceded Indian lands.¹⁷ This forced assimilation was also a piece in a much larger colonial project whereby colonizing nations exploited colonial peoples economically and culturally by removing indigenous cultural artifacts as “curiosities” for display in museums to demonstrate the superiority of Euro-American culture. Centuries later, museums remain reluctant to return this cultural patrimony, one of the most potent and contested legacies of centuries of colonialism.

The act of collecting was therefore part of colonization. Traditions of collecting Indigenous material culture began centuries before Henry Spalding established his mission to the Nez Perce. The European discovery of the Americas coincided with the advent of Renaissance collecting. In this way, collectors added Indigenous American material cultural to some of the first European museums. The earliest explorers, missionaries, and colonialists sought out objects of material culture from indigenous peoples for their own personal collections or to trade or sell upon return to their home countries.¹⁸ Early areas of collecting included Indigenous religious objects to show the need for Christian missionary work and military technology to demonstrate what European explorers faced or ultimately what they conquered. Scholar and curator Christian

¹⁶ Walker, “Nez Perce,” 433.

¹⁷ West, *The Last Indian War*, 45-46.

¹⁸ Chenoweth and Erdey, *Nuunimnítx*, xii.

Feest noted that “soldiers and missionaries probably destroyed more native works of craftsmanship than they preserved.”¹⁹ According to Feest, “only a small fraction, perhaps as little as one percent, of the objects collected in America ever entered the collections established by princes and scholars, and later by educational and religious institutions across western and central Europe.”²⁰ Furthermore, according to curators Robert Chenoweth and Tabitha Erdey, the European collectors “seldom understood or recorded the cultural context in which Native Americans created these objects.” Their assumption of European “cultural and religious superiority further obscured understanding of the cultures that had created the coveted objects.”²¹

The earliest method of museum displays consisted of cabinets of art and curiosity or *Kunst* and *Wunderkammern* established “upon the idea of the universal representation of the works of man and nature” with “rarity of execution or availability” as the “primary criteria of selection.”²² The earliest materials included in these cabinets came from the regions Europeans colonized including Mexico, Brazil, Greenland, Florida, and French Louisiana. The tradition of displaying “cabinets of curiosities” persisted into the twentieth century. Objects included in such display had only minimal labels and scarcely any explanation as to its importance or to the culture or individual that had created it. Through the late nineteenth and into the twentieth

¹⁹ Christian F. Feest, “American Indians and Ethnographic Collecting in Europe,” 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Chenoweth and Erdey, *Nuunimníx*, xii.

²² Feest, “American Indians and Ethnographic Collecting in Europe,” 8. For an overview of the European tradition of creating cabinets of curiosities, see Patrick Mauries, *Cabinet of Curiosities* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 7-67.

century, curators and anthropologists “erroneously presented the items as relics of static or vanishing cultures.”²³

Although the impulse of Europeans and later Americans to collect “curiosities” of indigenous peoples of the Americas dates back to first and sometimes violent contact, hundreds of years later museums remain reluctant to return these collections. This is a fundamental issue well beyond Native Americans and museums and collections in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Indigenous peoples around the globe struggle to restore their cultural heritage taken by colonial powers. For example, one of the earliest artifacts of the contact between Europeans and indigenous peoples of the Americas, a large headdress, made of more than 400 Quetzal feathers, gold, and precious stones, reputedly given by the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma to Hernan Cortes in 1519 remains in the Austrian Weltmuseum (Museum of the World). Austria refuses to return it to Mexico despite two decades of formal requests from the Government of Mexico. Austria’s Ambassador to Mexico, Eva Hager, argued that “it can’t be transported without risks.”²⁴ Yet, it remains on display in Vienna to the dismay and humiliation of Mexicans. European, Canadian, and American museums hold vast troves of material culture created by the indigenous populations of the Americas.

The earliest extant collection of Native American objects from the Pacific Northwest comes from George Vancouver’s voyage to the Northwest coast in April 1792. In June 1792, Vancouver claimed ownership of the area that is now Washington State and named it “New Georgia.” During a stop at the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Vancouver’s surgeon and first mate,

²³ Chenoweth and Erdey, *Nuunimnítx*, xiii.

²⁴ Kearns, Rick “This Aztec Headdress Came to Europe 500 Year Ago. It Can’t Go Home.” *Indian Country Today Media Network.com*. 2 July 2014.

George Hewitt, collected objects and created a list describing them. Among the items Hewitt acquired were utilitarian objects from coastal peoples including bowls, spoons, combs, and two human-form objects: a carved grease dish and a standing figure wearing a hat.²⁵ During this voyage, Hewitt also participated in a survey trip with Lieutenant Broughton, Vancouver's second-in-command, one hundred miles up the Columbia River. In the area of the Columbia River around The Dalles, Hewitt likely collected the earliest surviving and documented Plateau object, a woman's hat of vegetable fiber (perhaps hemp), bear grass, bark, and leather. This hat became part of the British Museum's collections in 1890 when A. W. Frank acquired the Hewitt Collection on behalf of the British Museum.²⁶

In 1805, thirteen years after Hewitt's collecting, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and their expedition travelled down the Columbia, documenting the Native Peoples of the West. In addition to their written accounts, Lewis and Clark collected specimens and Native American artifacts for President Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson later donated the Lewis and Clark collection to Charles Wilson Peale's museum in Philadelphia. In 1850, the Peale Collection was sold to P. T. Barnum and the Boston Museum. A fire destroyed the collection acquired by Barnum while the Peabody Museum at Harvard acquired the Boston Museum materials.²⁷

The artist George Catlin acquired three skirts and a whale bone bark shredder (western Washington Tribe) from William Clark in the late 1830s when Clark served as Governor of Missouri Territory and Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Clark displayed his personal collection

²⁵ Robin K. Wright, "A Collection History: Washington Native Art," in *A Time of Gathering*, Ed. Robin K. Wright (Seattle: Burke Museum and University of Washington Press, 1991), 32.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 33 and 34.

(mostly acquired after his famous travels with Meriwether Lewis) in a museum he founded and maintained until his death in 1838. Catlin took his collection to Europe where, after becoming financially destitute, he was forced to sell it to Joseph Harrison. In 1884, the Smithsonian acquired the Catlin Collection from Mrs. Sarah Harrison.²⁸

Two more important collections came to Europe via Hudson's Bay Company trading posts in the Northwest. An early collection of coast Salish art that included carved Salish canoes with figures and mountain goat horn bracelets went to the Perth Museum of Scotland when it acquired the Colin Robertson Collection. The second collection came to the British Museum from Captain Edward Belcher who visited the Hudson's Bay Company's fur-trading post at Fort Vancouver in 1839. During his journey along the Columbia River, Belcher acquired a mountain sheep horn bowl, a carved wooden ladle, a cedar bark skirt, several Chinook/Clatsop style baskets, and an oblong Klickitat basket.²⁹

Prior to the arrival of Henry Spalding, maritime exploring and fur-trading expeditions dominated the collecting of Native American material culture from the Northwest coast. With very few exceptions, the material culture came from Native groups who inhabited the lands along the coasts and the mouth of the Columbia River. Since those doing the collecting were Europeans or financed by European companies, the majority of the surviving artifacts went to European museums. The high tide of European collecting of ethnographic material from around the world came with the second wave of colonialism in the nineteenth century. European museums began grouping collections by peoples and cultures. An outcome of the vast expansion of collections was a tremendous overcrowding of exhibit displays. Nor did architects design

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

these museums to accommodate the future growth of collections with the result that they quickly became overwhelmed.³⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, European museums began acquiring fewer Native American collections as North American museums with substantial funds for acquisitions developed extensive collections.³¹

Henry Spalding began the wave of collecting by Americans that would come to dominate the Columbia Plateau. However, collecting was a small part of the activities that Henry Spalding and his wife Eliza undertook. The two faced significant challenges as missionaries. They devoted much of their energy to basic survival. Goods in the Oregon Country were expensive, basic supplies had to be shipped great distances, and the American Board only provided \$500 per year per family. In their efforts to obtain the goods they needed, missionaries such as Spalding relied on donations from eastern supporters sent in barrels.³²

In June 1841, Spalding received one such barrel from his former college friend and ardent supporter, Dudley Allen. Not only did Spalding appreciate the goods packed inside, he made use of the barrel itself. Writing to Allen, Spalding mentioned “it now contains our beef. We need another for pork. We had nothing but small kegs and they usually leaked.”³³ Spalding wrote in his diary regarding the arrival of another barrel, “find my pieces from Vancouver, a box from the Islands and a large b[a]r[r]e[l] from my friend Dr. Allen, Ohio, the former containing native cloth & a few articles & the latter \$100 worth of clothing judiciously selected & not

³⁰ Christian F. Feest, “American Indians and Ethnographic Collecting in Europe,” 10.

³¹ *Ibid*, 11.

³² Grafe, “Our Private Affairs in Way of Barter,” 6.

³³ Drury, *Pioneer of Old Oregon Henry Harmon Spalding*, 271.

highly priced, not injured though put up some two years ago.”³⁴ The two years spent in transit reflects the isolation from the eastern United States in which Spalding labored. The Pacific Islands, portions of Africa and Asia though geographically further away from the headquarters of the ABCFM in Boston than the Oregon country, were nevertheless more closely linked to the east coast of the United States by sea travel.

On August 20, 1847, the first two boxes of “Indian curiosities” that Spalding shipped to Allen in Kinsman, Ohio, arrived badly damaged. Allen wrote with advice for Spalding’s future packing, “your boxes came to house in bad state. One containing the saddle had been broken to pieces. You should hoop with raw leather or iron or wood any boxes for the W. State.” The contents too suffered, “the skin had bread moths & was spoiled & the moths had hurt the dresses &c, eat up the woolens ornaments &c & injured the skins some.” But all was not lost, as Allen continued: “still they look handsome. I thank you for them... I want more. They are all worth the having! I will try and pay for them all in due course of time. If you see proper you will oblige me by any different curiosities, that you can send me.”³⁵ Spalding mailed a detailed letter describing the collection he shipped to Allen. Allen kept the collection and Spalding’s letter at his home in Kinsman, Ohio.

Spalding wrote regarding his difficulties in obtaining items for Allen from the savvy bargaining Nez Perce: “it is no easy matter to obtain these things from the natives as they always want to extort a great price as soon as they find I want them.” Spalding continued, “some times [sic] for a small stone a shirt is demanded, which of course is not given, & perhaps for an

³⁴ Clifford Drury, *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission 1838-1842* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1958), 313.

³⁵ Grafe, “Our Private Affairs in Way of Barter,” 8.

important Geological specimen is taken away and sold to some other person who cares nothing about it, for a single flint.”³⁶ Spalding then noted the relative cost of the items he shipped to Allen.

The prices Spalding included in his letter to Allen were not the prices Spalding paid— for the Nez Perce and the other Plateau peoples did not operate in a money economy, rather Spalding traded other manufactured items for the goods he collected. He may have received some of the items as gifts from Nez Perce who wished to demonstrate to Spalding their desire to join his church. Spalding wrote, “I give the cost of the articles that you may judge whether you will send for more. The property in my possession belongs to the A. B. C. Fr. M. You can think best about paying for them.” However, Spalding clearly did not want Allen to pay the missionary organization as he next made clear, “in my estimation you have already more than paid for them. But should you feel disposed to pay...” and this is what Spalding wanted Allen to send, “clothing for myself & family, table furniture, such as plates, cups & saucers, bowls, etc, etc, calico, cheap for Indian shirts etc, will be better than money.”³⁷ Spalding then requested specific items he needed, “will you have the goodness to send me in the next B[ar]r[e]l from the Ladies Soc[iety] a dung fork & 3 pitch forks, a hair sieve for meal rather fine.”³⁸ For trade goods mattered more to Spalding than money. To spend money Spalding had to go down to Fort

³⁶ Robert Fletcher, “The Spaulding-Allen Indian Collection.” *The Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, Vol. 26 (February, 1930), 138.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

I believe whether you will send for more. The necessity in
 our Indian things to call a skin. You can see as you know think
 just about sending for them. In my collection you have already
 more than paid for them. But should you not suspend to pay,
 Clothing for myself & families both furniture such as beds,
 cups & saucers, bowls, &c., chairs, cheap, for Indian stuff too
 will be better than money. Will you have the goodness to send
 me in the next boat from the States sic. a strong fork & 3 pocket
 knives, a hair sieve for meal water line.

Description of the things sent. Two women, dressed in
 the rich, often the value of 3 horses. The 2 figures a row of which
 is an one, one very costly shell, found in a small lake between this
 & Puget Sound obtained in digging, contain a small insect. The object
 is from a single dress was even taken to the mountains in
 a man who lives near Puget in small parcels for \$16.00. 12 Indian
 head dolls. A young lady (the one) in one of these dresses, upon
 a horse well equipped with saddle & crupper, makes a fine
 appearance. The 1st both upon one dress as also upon the cradle
 are obtained only from the beach both two from an animal often
 upon certain ages, like the horse. The bags are made of the
 bark of the cow tree, one from Puget & one of horse
 hair, yellow - the latter closed by moss from the pine trees. Com-
 mon riding rope, tied to the bridle gives a sufficient distance
 from one end to come over the head loop into the long part
 which breaks when the rider is for adjusting the horse to pass
 around corner in hand when riding, and also for throwing & catch-
 ing the horse from at the distance of 40 feet or upon the ground.
 The women's cradle you will see is an improvement upon
 our side saddle of me consult the case of the woman.
 A blanket or robe is always thrown over the cradle cover-
 ing the lower part of the person, even the feet in my opinion
 to warm more with & rising as also the men national & complete.
 The women hats on the work of the lower Indians used also to
 make caps. Small basket work of lower Indians, used for water
 bags, &c. formerly used for various jobs by means of hot the
 them in. Trip of Elk horn work of a deep & clean & men my hope
 great. Cradle made for the occasion, rather short than much large
 in this the young infant is lashed tight, face only out, often a
 heavy bandage over the forehead which flattens it, lower Indian men
 this cradle with its victor is hung upon the horn of the saddle
 when camp moves, hangs upon the mother's back when she goes for
 work of wood, salt in the sun against a rock through the day
 while she digs her two or three bags of roots, going now & then to
 browse it, or against the root of a pine which she cuts & binds up
 a bundle of wood weighing from 150 to 200 lbs. to warm a
 gambling son or husband who may be at home or sleep. The
 the great pile is swung upon the back the belt coming over
 the head, the cradle ^{with} child is laid upon the top. The women, ob-
 viously said I them in the Southern States for \$50.00 or \$60.00 a pic
 Price of things etc might as I can recollect -

2 Dress Women	\$27.00	2 Men's Shirts	\$4.35
1 for Man's Leggings	2.50	1 Woman's Saddle	4.37
Two Bear Skin	.50	2 Indian Orbits	0.38
Chinese Cradle	3.00		
Woman's Legging	2.50		
6 in Miscellaneous	1.50		
3 Woman's hats	0.60		
2 Small Basket	0.10		
1 Whip	.30		
3 Blank Bags	1.00		

Some Tapa, native cloth of the
 Sand which is also
 sent, with a few specimens of
 Coral & shells from the Indian
 on the coast. I have some that
 accompany upon the horse the
 stones got loose & have picked some things.

Figure 1. Henry Spalding's letter describing the "Indian Curiosities" he collected for Dudley Allen. To the lower left of the image are the values Spalding assigned to items in the collection. Courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives.

Vancouver, however, he could use the trade goods and tools sent by his benefactors, such as Dudley Allen, at his Lapwai mission site in exchange for Nez Perce labor, food, and goods. Spalding also required specific tools unavailable in the region for his extensive missionary enterprise, such as the hair sieve for his grain mill.

In his description of the collection, Spalding emphasized the value of the Nez Perce goods he collected for Allen. He also sought to demonstrate his expertise in Nez Perce material culture. Spalding noted that the two dresses he sent to Allen were “worn by the rich” and often valued for “3 horses.” The dresses included costly dentalium shell decorations and rare elk teeth. Spalding claimed that dresses such as he shipped to Allen “would sell... in the southern states for \$50 or \$60 a piece.”³⁹ Yet Spalding valued the two dresses at the bargain price of \$27.

Spalding itemized the materials he packed for Allen with the heading, “price of things as nigh as I can recollect.”

2 dresses Woman... \$27.00
1 pr. Men’s Leggings... \$2.50
Red Bear Skin... \$.50
Childs Cradle... \$3.00
Woman’s Leggins...\$2.50
6 pr. Mocisons [sic]... \$1.50
3 Woman’s hats... \$.60
2 Small Baskets... \$.40
1 Whip... \$.30
3 Hemp Bags... \$4.00
2 Men’s Shirts... \$14.25
1 Woman’s Saddle \$4.37
2 Hair cords ... \$.38

³⁹ Ibid.

Although this is the most detailed letter of any Native American collection from the region, it nevertheless includes major silences. Spalding does not directly tell us how he acquired most of the goods or the individuals who made them. If Spalding had named the individuals from whom he acquired the items, the Nez Perce would have had an even stronger case to repatriate the collection from the Ohio Historical Society. We can only speculate on the circumstances of how he put the collection together. It should be noted that in his context, Spalding provided much more provenance for his collection than did other collectors of his era or the generations following. At least we know what he acquired, where and when this took place, and that there were Nez Perce and Plateau items.

But how did Spalding acquire the collection? According to Nez Perce National Historic Park curator, Robert Chenoweth, Spalding almost certainly did not pay for these items, as he would have had no cash and the Nez Perce would have had no use for money. Instead Spalding traded goods for the artifact he collected. As he noted in his diary on March 9, 1842, he “purchased one bag for Dr. Allen” [by trading] “2 knives & 10 loads, one cap, 1 knife and 1 do [?], 10 loads, 1 saddle pack, 20 loads.”⁴⁰ Nakia Williamson, Director for the Nez Perce Tribe Culture Resource Program, remarked that there exists:

⁴⁰ Drury, *The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith relating to the Nez Perce Mission 1838-1842*, 330.



Figure 2. Nez Perce women's dress collected by Spalding. The dress manufactured between 1820 and 1840 consists of two deer skins and features dentalium shell, glass beads, elk teeth, two brass thimbles, and fringe. NEPE 8758

a lot of suspicion amongst people now, knowing some of that history from what we know from the written history, but also from our elders, that find it hard to believe that he [Spalding] was actually purchasing those items from Nez Perce people. Because we know the stories of how he would try to shame our people into thinking that those ways were backward, and those ways were somehow associated with the devil and things like that. And so he encouraged them to basically rid themselves of a lot of these type of items that came from our way of life. And so... a lot of Nez Perce people... feel ... that's probably how he got them. Rather than actually paying hard dollars for them.⁴¹

Other Nez Perce are troubled by any valuation of Nez Perce material culture. According to Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee member, Bill Picard, “well, my feelings on that is that you can't put a value on somebody's necklaces or eagle feathers or beaded dresses or ribbon shirts. You can't put a value on it, because... these items are handed down through generations.” Furthermore, according to Picard, Nez Perce regalia provides connections between the Nez Perce and their ancestors. As Picard noted “if I was wearing the regalia and I went to Pendleton, they would look and say, ‘I remember his grandfather used to wear that.’ Or, you know, ‘His grandfather received that from’ this person or that person.” To sell regalia was an abhorrent thought. According to Picard, such a sale would be like “selling [a] part of your body. Or part of like what Chief Joseph told his people was, ‘Don't sell the land, because the land holds the body of your elders. It holds the memories of your people.’”⁴²

Henry Spalding held no qualms about collecting or bartering Nez Perce material culture. In his letter to Allen describing the collection, Spalding did not delve into the details of his acquisitions. He did, however, emphatically make the point again to Allen that he needed goods sent to him in return, not cash, “if you should prefer to pay any more for these things than you have done, we prefer you would do it by sending us clothing etc. as above named, as we get

⁴¹ Nakia Williamson, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

⁴² Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

better goods from your selection & B[a]r[re]ls than we can in this country.” Spalding argued for the benefits of this arrangement, “what you send is same as cash to the Board & better as it saves the expense of drawing on the Board, to be paid in London with the note of exchange against the States.” Spalding remarked that one dollar in goods sent by Allen was worth more than two dollars of cash sent to the Missionary Board.⁴³

On March 27, 1848 Allen wrote to Spalding, “in the Barrel forwarded to Boston last fall I sent you a few things, cannot tell now what, you will see in time I trust. If such articles are as profitable to you as money, why, I will continue to send them.” Allen acknowledged that Spalding was operating in a region where bartered goods were more valuable than cash. Allen continued, “I rec[ieve]d Your 2 Boxes at last. They were badly broken, especially the one containing the saddle & minerals; the last were nicely conglomerated. Moths hurt the dresses much. Still, I prize them more than the cost! At minerals and curiosities try your hand again if the opportunity offers. The clays were all safe. The dresses look tolerable.” Allen continued with more packing advice for Spalding, “if you ever send anything animal [hides] insert it in Tobacco.” Near the end of his letter Allen noted that Spalding would receive this letter and write again before Allen would ship another barrel so Spalding should “write again in full what you want. Our shippers say, dried fruit, honey, &c will spoil in sending. But write all books, or anything for the children, &c tools, &c. and we will send as convenient I trust.”⁴⁴

In addition to collecting minerals and Indian “curiosities” for Allen, Spalding also sent plant samples back east. In 1841, naturalists travelling with the Wilkes expedition visited Spalding’s mission. Afterward, Spalding requested books on rocks and plants from the secretary

⁴³ Fletcher, “The Spalding-Allen Indian Collection,” 138.

⁴⁴ Grafe, “Our Private Affairs in Way of Barter,” 11-12.

of the ABCFM. Two years later in 1843, the botanist Charles Geyer stayed with Spalding. Geyer wrote, "I owe [Spalding] the means of visiting another new field, the highlands of the Nez Perce [sic] where he accompanied me on my excursions... where previous botanists had but cursorily passed."⁴⁵

In 1846, Spalding sent a box of plant samples to the Mission Board in Boston with the expectation that the sale of the samples would contribute to his mission expenses.⁴⁶ Spalding noted in a letter to David Greene of the Missionary Board he had created the collection with Eliza while "traversing the Plains, the vallies & hills looking after my cows, horses, &c, or as my duties called me to visit the different bands of this tribe at their root grounds, fisheries &c... Mrs. Spalding did most of the drying in papers." Spalding commenting on the originality of his contributions to science wrote, "no Botanist has ever spent a whole season in this vicinity or even in this country & therefore could not collect the flow[er]s which were not in existence at the time of his travels." Spalding continued, "I send them to you with the expectation that you will dispose of them as may be thought best. Should they arrive uninjured they will be worth \$5.00 or \$6.00 a hundred i. e. the Botanical Gardens in London offer that price for flowers from this country."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Jack Nisbet, "Henry and Eliza's Box of Flowers." *Boundaries* (April 2014), 3 and J. Orin Oliphant, "The Botanical Labors of the Reverend Henry H. Spalding," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 25:2 (1934), 95.

⁴⁶ Oliphant, "The Botanical Labors of the Reverend Henry H. Spalding," 93.

⁴⁷ Henry Spalding to David Greene June 6, 1846 quoted in Oliphant, "The Botanical Labors of the Reverend Henry H. Spalding," 98-99 and Nisbet, "Henry and Eliza's Box of Flowers," 3.



Figure 3. A decorated Nez Perce woman's saddle made circa 1830-1845 with cotton wood frame and painted geometric designs on the fenders from the Spalding-Allen Collection. Bison hide tie laces secure the rawhide inner pieces forming the pommel. Dr. Allen wrote to Spalding on March 27, 1848 that the box containing this saddle was badly damaged. Courtesy NEPE 8755.

The ABCFM turned Spalding's box over to Asa Gray at the Harvard Herbarium who later sent Spalding a detailed letter requesting that Spalding collect samples of the foods gathered by the local Indians. Gray wrote that Spalding should thin the thick roots and bulbs "with a knife, when the specimen is pressed... it is very desirable to have." The ABCFM included these instructions in reams of pressing paper for shipment to Spalding. However, the box never left Boston for the missions ended suddenly after the attack on the Whitman Mission.⁴⁸

Spalding was not the only member of his missionary party to collect "Indian curiosities." Marcus Whitman sent Dudley Allen a Nez Perce hat and three cedar root baskets. Allen's family later donated them to Western Reserve in 1914. In 2003, Western Reserve deaccessioned the items and sold them via Cowan's Auctions. Cowan's included the accession notes from Western Reserve in their provenance information about the items. However, the provenance remained tentative because no other documentation survived describing the connection with Whitman. Robert Chenoweth, curator at the Nez Perce National Historic Park, purchased the items at very reasonable prices in 2003.⁴⁹

Spalding's collecting should be viewed as more than supporting his missionary work or enhancing his reputation. His actions were at the vanguard of a broader effort to claim the Oregon Country for the United States. As the historian Curtis Hinsley argued, the very act of "collection and removal to the core homeland of territorial resources—botanical, mineralogical, ethnographic—[serve] as the material metonymic proofs of conquest, proprietorship, and

⁴⁸ Nisbet, "Henry and Eliza's Box of Flowers," 5.

⁴⁹ The catalog numbers for the baskets are NEPE 34570, 34571, 34572, 34573.

ultimately incorporation.”⁵⁰ As Spalding packed the barrels of Nez Perce goods and shipped them to Allen, he also staked a claim to the Oregon Country becoming part of the United States.

Spalding never sent the next shipment of artifacts he had collected for Allen. While Allen’s boxes and letters were *en route* to Spalding’s mission, Spalding and his family fled with the other ABCFM missionaries after the Cayuse killed the Whitmans and others at Waiilatpu on November 29, 1847. Spalding’s mission at Lapwai was ransacked. When news of the attacks spread east, the ABCFM ended all of the Oregon Country missions.⁵¹

After the closing of the missions the Spaldings moved to Brownsville, Oregon, where Spalding struggled to earn a living. He farmed, taught school, preached at the local Presbyterian Church, served as school commissioner, postmaster, and Indian agent. Eliza Spalding died in Brownsville on January 7, 1851. Spalding remarried and returned to Nez Perce County in 1859 where he farmed until he received an appointment as Indian commissioner until 1866. During this period, he quarreled with other Indian agents and blamed the Catholics for the Whitman massacre. He died in Lapwai on August 3, 1874.

Spalding had mixed “success” as a missionary. He converted several key Nez Perce leaders, their new Christian names selected by Spalding were Timothy, Lawyer, and Joseph. This (old) Joseph was the father of Chief Joseph who became famous for his leadership during the 1877 Nez Perce War. Spalding maintained discipline at his mission by whipping or having other followers flog the Nez Perce who broke Spalding’s rules. While there was a cultural precedence among the Nez Perce for whippers to discipline older children, publically whipping young men

⁵⁰ Curtis M. Hinsley, “Collecting Cultures and Cultures of Collecting: The Lure of the American Southwest, 1880-1915,” *Museum Anthropology* 16 (1992), 13.

⁵¹ Grafe, “Our Private Affairs in Way Of Barter,” 12.

was shameful.⁵² As for Spalding's memory among the Nez Perce, according to Nez Perce National Historic Park curator, Robert Chenoweth, "I think people in this community [Nez Perce] are conscious of all the perspectives about him." Chenoweth continued, "I've never heard anybody stand up and say, oh, he was like the greatest thing since sliced bread. They say generally it's a good thing that he brought Christianity. But don't go too deep into who he was as a person."⁵³

Allen Slickpoo, Nez Perce ethnologist, wrote that Spalding's mission and that of Whitman were initially successful "by both Indian and white standards," but that began to change. Slickpoo argued that "we preferred our mat houses to the log cabins that took so much time and work to build. Also we felt that a man's status depended upon his ability as a hunter and fisherman, and it was woman's work to gather berries and such." Slickpoo continued, "it seemed to us that the white men were asking us to become like women when they wanted us to garden." "Unfortunately," Slickpoo wrote, "the missionaries interpreted this reluctance to change our way of life as laziness, a notion that could hardly have been further from the truth."⁵⁴

Spalding created lasting divisions among the Nez Perce between his select followers and traditionalists. According to Nez Perce oral tradition, one way that Spalding rewarded his supporters was through his distribution of potatoes. As Nez Perce Cultural Specialist Josiah Pinkham related the memory:

My aunt Mary Waters was telling me about how one of the practices that he [Spalding] utilized to gain his fellowship was along the lines of when he would distribute potatoes that came in, when he received a shipment of potatoes, he would take some of those

⁵² Walker, "Nez Perce," 422.

⁵³ Robert Chenoweth, Oral History Interview, 17 February 2015.

⁵⁴ Allen Slickpoo and Deward Walker, *Noon Nee-Me-Poo (We, the Nez Percés) Culture and History of The Nez Percés*. (Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, 1973), 72.

potatoes and he would cut the eyes out of them. And then he would keep those aside. And then there came a point where he would distribute potatoes to his fellowship. And to those individuals that were ardent followers of Christian faith, or that were performing above and beyond the call of duty of the time, he would give the potatoes that had eyes. And then those people that maybe needed a little bit of a nudge or weren't doing, weren't following as ardently as the rest of the small amount of Christian Nez Perce, that he would give the potatoes that didn't have eyes. And he'd say, "Go forth and plant." And they would do so.

And then the Nez Perce that received the potatoes with eyes, they would come back and they'd say, you know, "Look at all our potatoes."

And he would proclaim, "Oh, God has blessed you. Your faith has been rewarded." And he would talk it up really big.

Those Nez Perce that received the potatoes without eyes wouldn't come forth with anything. And he'd say, "See? God's punishing you, because you're not as faithful as your brethren or your siblings over here."⁵⁵

Nakia Williamson remarked that "when Spalding came, I think many of our people were receptive. And to compare it to what we already knew about our creator, it seemed like it was consistent with what they were saying." However, over time Spalding lost his standing among some of the Nez Perce as he operated as more of a trader than a spiritual leader. As his collecting and trading with Dudley Allen demonstrated, Spalding supplemented his missionary funds with acquiring items, such as regalia, that he told the Nez Perce they had to abandon to become converts. Williamson continued, "He's just here, you know, buying and selling things... Which was probably part of what he had to do to survive. But I think a lot of our people kind of did not take to that very well. And become somewhat disillusioned in his teachings and what he was espousing as a Presbyterian minister."⁵⁶

Spalding's use of physical punishment among the Nez Perce lingers as a troubling aspect of his missionary work. Spalding's biographer Clifford Drury, a historian and Presbyterian

⁵⁵ Josiah Pinkham, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

⁵⁶ Nakia Williamson, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

minister, viewed Spalding's work in a very positive light going so far as to excuse Spalding's use of the whip on the Nez Perces. According to Drury, "it is hard for us to pass judgment [on Spalding] when all of the factors are not know to us. We must remember that these few white people were living among uncivilized Indians, and perhaps times did arise when the only language the natives understood was that of force."⁵⁷ While it may be easy to dismiss Drury's analysis as pro-missionary and racist, he remains the only biographer of Spalding and a key secondary source for early Nez Perce history.

According to Vice-Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribe, Bill Picard, "I've heard stories of Henry Spalding. But I've also read articles and books on the Nez Perce tribe. And they refer to Henry Spalding and they say that Henry Spalding... would whip adult men and women for not attending church on time, or not doing something that they were supposed to." Picard continued "we discipline our children to raise them up the way they should be raised. But when they're an adult, they need to make their own decisions. And if their decision isn't to do this or that, for a man to hold another man down and spank him, I don't think... that's proper." Picard argued that Spalding "brought his way of thinking. Not the Christian belief, or not the word of God in the Bible. But that he brought out his own opinion of how things should be done. So he used the Bible to influence or dictate his way of thinking and force that on the Nez Perce."⁵⁸

To the Nez Perce people religion served as the basis of secular success and when this secular success did not materialize many Nez Perce came to resent Spalding. However, Spalding

⁵⁷ Drury, *Henry Harmon Spalding: Pioneer of Old Oregon*, 180-181 quoted in Trevor James Bond, "The Hunt for Oregon Missionary Sources Clifford M. Drury's Enduring Archives Legacy" *Oregon Historical Quarterly* Vol. 114 No. 1, 54.

⁵⁸ Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

did introduce many innovations to the Nez Perce including new medical practices, a printing press, mills and gardens. Spalding established a school at the mission and also introduced a new form of Nez Perce administration with a head chief, twelve sub-chiefs, each with five police assistants.⁵⁹

Regardless of Spalding's later reputation or his achievements as a missionary, he collected an important cultural heritage and documented it. According to Nez Perce Cultural Specialist, Josiah Pinkham, Spalding "put a lot of time into securing objects and centralizing them in a way that showed a broader spectrum of material culture than others are capable or have the desire to amass." Unlike Whitman who only collected baskets, Spalding collected expansively: garments, a saddle, bags, baskets, rope, etc. Pinkham noted that what Spalding acquired "was visually... representational of the nicer stuff that the Nez Perce people had. And I think that says something about, it says something about Spalding's eye..."⁶⁰

The goods Spalding sent to Allen according to Drury, Spalding's first, and only biographer, are "undoubtedly, the best assortment of old Nez Perce articles in existence today."⁶¹ Josiah Pinkham, Nez Perce Cultural Specialist, echoed Drury's assessment of its significance, "to the Nez Perce tribe as a whole, I think, is that the collection embodies the earliest and greatest centralization of ethnographic objects for the Nez Perce people. You don't have a collection of this size, this age, anywhere else in the world."⁶²

⁵⁹ Walker, "Nez Perce," 434.

⁶⁰ Josiah Pinkham, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

⁶¹ Drury, *Pioneer of Old Oregon Henry Harmon Spalding*, 272

⁶² Josiah Pinkham, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

CHAPTER 2 The Ohio Years

“These few items are among the oldest documented Nez Perce items known to us and do represent examples of our culture that cannot be found elsewhere. We are anxious to see these items return to their homeland where all can see and appreciate them.” Richard Halfmoon

This chapter describes the donation and subsequent care of the Spalding-Allen Collection with an emphasis on the importance of provenance. In the late 1920s, Oberlin History Professor, Robert Fletcher rediscovered the provenance of the collection connecting Spalding’s letter in the Oberlin Archives with the objects held in the College’s nascent museum. In 1942, Oberlin officials transferred the collection on “permanent loan” to the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) where the objects (save the cradleboard) were jumbled with other collections and never displayed.

In the late 1970s, the Spalding-Allen Collection was rediscovered and, on the eve of its loan to the Nez Perce and National Park Service, OHS had the title of ownership transferred to it from Oberlin. This section argues that question of ownership is contested and that the Nez Perce and the National Park Service made good faith efforts to acquire and return the collection to the place of its origins.

While the Spalding-Allen Collection remained in Kinsmen, Ohio, momentous change came to the Nez Perce Tribe. In 1855, nine years after Spalding shipped the Nez Perce materials to Ohio, Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens negotiated a treaty with the Nez Perce and other Plateau Tribes including the Yakama, the Cayuse, and Umatilla, to establish reservations east of the Cascade mountain range.¹ In these negotiations, the Nez Perce

¹ Kent Richards, *Isaac I. Stevens Young Man in a Hurray*. (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2016), 202-211.

maintained the largest portion of their ancestral lands while the Cayuse and the Umatilla saw their lands greatly diminished and were forced to share a reservation.

Nez Perce Chiefs Looking Glass and Joseph signed the 1855 Treaty as did Chief Lawyer, a follower of Henry Spalding. The 1855 Nez Perce reservation boundaries included seven million acres and represented roughly half of their traditional territory. The treaty contained a provision that the Native nations had one year before moving to their reservations. However, any others might “enter upon and occupy as settlers any lands not actually occupied and cultivated by said Indians at this time, and not included in the reservation.” Thousands of gold seekers and settlers soon poured into the region after Elias Pierce discovered gold within the Nez Perce territory in 1860.²

The gold rush unleashed a flood of white miners who soon built a new supply town of Lewiston. A. J. Cain, Indian agent at Walla Walla, proposed a much smaller reservation in 1863 that took away the area around Lewiston, the gold fields, the Wallowa lands of Northeastern Oregon, the Salmon River territory and more, thereby reducing the Nez Perce Reservation by roughly 90%. Several prominent Christian Nez Perce leaders including Lawyer supported the 1863 treaty and the diminished reservations. However, many non-Christian leaders including Looking Glass and Joseph refused to sign the 1863 treaty, gaining them the moniker “non-treaty” Nez Perce.

The 1877 Nez Perce War started over disputed land and the incursion of settlers into ceded Nez Perce territory. After the murder of eighteen hostile settlers by young Nez Perce warriors, the United States mobilized more than 5,000 troops to fight against five bands of non-Christian, non-treaty Nez Perce and Palouse. These included Joseph or the Wallowa, the

² Ibid, 209.

followers of Looking Glass; the White Birds, the Palouse, and the followers of Toohoolhoolzote.³ The war consisted of a 1,170 mile tactical retreat by the Nez Perce through Idaho and Montana.

Following the last battle of the conflict at Bear Paw, Montana, two hundred Nez Perce including Chief White Bird escaped to Canada. Chief Joseph and four-hundred other Nez Perce including all of the children and the elderly surrendered to Colonel Miles who promised they would be allowed to return to Idaho. After years of imprisonment, one hundred and fifty Nez Perce including Joseph were sent to the Colville Reservation, only one hundred and fifteen came back to the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho.

Further reduction of Nez Perce lands was to come. In 1877, Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act, or Allotment Act, and the Nez Perce became one of the first tribes to suffer allotment.⁴ The implementation of this law resulted in dividing up the rest of the already diminished Nez Perce Reservation. This process disrupted patterns of communal living that had sustained Native peoples for thousands of years.⁵ Allotment agent, Alice Fletcher, although an exceedingly honest civil servant, nevertheless demonstrated her partisanship towards the Christian Nez Perce when she used the former house of Presbyterian missionary, Kate McBeth, as her headquarters for determining who received which allotments. Fletcher went so far as to have her allotment laborers rebuild McBeth's front porch and spent another six weeks repairing

³ Evans, *Voice of the Old Wolf*, 11-12.

⁴ Nicole Tonkovich, *Dividing the Reservation Alice C. Fletcher's Nez Perce Allotment Diaries and Letters 1889-1892* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2016), 3.

⁵ Chenoweth and Erdey, *Nuunimníx*, xiv.

McBeth's church at Kamiah.⁶ After making the allotments favoring Presbyterian Nez Perce, fully a half a million acres remained. This land was put up for sale and was quickly purchased by settlers resulting in a patch work of Nez Perce land holdings.⁷

As the allotment process was underway on the Nez Perce Reservation, back in Ohio Dr. Allen kept the Nez Perce "curiosities" that his friend Henry Spalding had sent him in a cabinet in his home. We can only imagine Dr. Allen displaying his wealth and knowledge to guests when he gave tours of his cabinet. The Spalding-Allen Collection remained first at the Allen home and later at his son Dudley Allen's residence in Oberlin, Ohio. Dudley Allen subsequently left the collection to Oberlin College and enough money to have the college name the art museum after him.

In May 1893, an employee in the Oberlin museum recorded the collection that Dr. D. Allen donated as accession #401, "1 lot of Indian clothing, trinkets, etc."⁸ The connection with Spalding was not explicitly stated, only implied. Spalding's letter describing the Nez Perce collection also came to Oberlin. However, when Oberlin staff described the Allen donation Spalding's name as the collector of the Nez Perce artifacts was not indicated. Officials at Oberlin divided the collection: the objects went to the Oberlin Museum housed in the A. A. Wright Laboratory, the manuscript letter Spalding wrote to Allen documenting the collection went to the library. By splitting up the collection, a common practice then and now, and not clearly labeling

⁶ Tonkovich, *Dividing the Reservation*, 101-102.

⁷ Evans, *Voice of the Old Wolf*, 13-14.

⁸ "Indian materials taken from accession list." Oberlin College, Department of Zoology. Resource Management Records 1936-2002, NEPE-00638, Nez Perce National Historic Park, Lapwai, Idaho, box 34 folder 5. Hereafter NEPE.

the connection of the objects with the letter and the Spalding-Allen provenance, Oberlin curators endangered the provenance of the collection.

As Oberlin staff accessioned the Spalding-Allen Collection, another collector, George Gustave Heye began assembling what would become the largest, most important collection of Native American material culture in the United States. Eventually Heye's collection would become part of the Smithsonian Museum system and set the standard for the ethical curation of Native collections. Heye initially treated his collecting as a hobby, but over time he became obsessed with creating his own museum. After sixty years of collecting from multiple sources, funding archaeological digs, and buying entire collections, he amassed over 800,000 objects, more than any other individual collector.⁹

Heye began collecting in 1897 with the purchase of a Navaho man's shirt. Heye's father was an early associate of John D. Rockefeller at Standard Oil and he grew up in a family of wealth. He started his own investment bank and by 1915 inherited a trust of \$10 million.¹⁰ Heye, like other collectors of his era, believed the demise of Indian peoples was inevitable and that it was up to collectors like himself to acquire collections and put them in museums. He developed his Museum of the American Indian in New York City. Initially he stored his collection in his apartment, but soon outgrew the space and established a storage facility in the Bronx. These

⁹ Mary Jane Lenz, "George Gustav Heye: The Museum of the American Indian," in *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, edited by Duane Blue Spruce (Washington D.C., National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution in association with National Geographic, 2004): 87-89.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 89-95.

collections eventually became the core of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.

As the Spalding-Allen Collection moved from the Allen home to the Oberlin campus and Heye began collecting, another momentous event took place in Washington State. On September 21 1904, Chief Joseph died far from his beloved Wallowa Valley on the Colville Reservation. After the 1877 conflict, Joseph was ordered to remain at the Colville Reservation. There he continually advocated for the return of Nez Perce lands as negotiated in the 1855 Treaty ratified by the Federal Government. He was 64. His doctor ruled that Joseph died of a broken heart.

Back on the Oberlin campus, the association between the "lot of Indian clothing, trinkets, etc." and the collector Henry Spalding was lost for nearly thirty years until Robert Fletcher, Assistant Professor of History at Oberlin College, realized the connection between Spalding's letter held in the Oberlin archives and Allen's gift of Native American artifacts. In August, Fletcher gathered in one case the "majority" of the "articles of Indian manufacture mentioned in this letter." It is telling that by 1929, only the "majority" of the collection could be located; unfortunately, not all of it. For as Fletcher noted, "the name of the distinguished missionary has never until now been associated with the articles in the museum." Fletcher wrote an essay on the collection for the 1930 *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* in which he invited his readers to see the

Spalding-Allen Collection:

Here now, if you come to Oberlin, you may see the women's dresses with their elaborate bead work and elk tooth pendants. The deer skin or elk skin, of which these dresses are made, is still as soft as chamois... Here are the men's shirts with their brilliant porcupine embroidery... all made by the Nez Perce over eighty years ago, are in excellent condition. When you look at these things, remember that they came down the Columbia in the Hudson Bay Company boat, thence to the Sandwich Islands, way round the Horn to Boston in one of the splendid Yankee sailing ships... Remember that they were gathered by Henry Spalding, Presbyterian Missionary... Remember that these relics started on their long journey in 1846, the year of the final establishment of the American claim to

Oregon and not much more than a year and a half before the tragic termination of the historic missionary venture of the American Board in Oregon.¹¹

Fletcher made a significant contribution to the life history of the Spalding-Allen Collection. By publishing this article, he left a trail (one cited by Clifford Drury in his biography of Spalding) that would lead others back to the collection. Most importantly, Fletcher reestablished the provenance of the collection.

Provenance refers to origin of a primary source, such as a letter or artifact. Provenance is also used to describe the information regarding the origins of collections, their custody, and ownership. Today, trained archivists organize collections by provenance that is by their creator or collector and try to maintain the original organization of the collection. However, when collections are separated, as was the case with the Spalding-Allen Collection where the artifacts and the documentation—in this case Spalding’s letter to Allen— were kept separate, the provenance was forgotten. If the provenance of a collection is not maintained, if its documentation is lost, its research and monetary value is diminished. However, a collection with a well-documented provenance, one that includes highly collectable items, may dramatically increase in value. In the 1980s and 1990s, the appraised value of the Spalding-Allen Collection dramatically increased because of the rarity and provenance of the collection.

We have no way of knowing how many visitors heeded Professor Fletcher’s call to see the collection in its display case and remember its origins and associations with Spalding. While the collection remained on the Oberlin campus, the United States government and state officials completed the conquest of Native Americans, confining them to reservations, and seizing their lands through reservation allotments and other measures. From a Native American population

¹¹ Fletcher, “The Spaulding-Allen Indian Collection,” 139.

once estimated between 4 and 7 million in the region of the United States, the census of 1900 registered only 200,000 Native survivors. It took decades longer for American Indians to gain the right to vote. Congress granted citizenship of native-born Indians in 1924, but some states denied the rights of Native Americans to vote into the 1950s.¹²

Federal policy toward Indian tribes changed during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Starting in 1934 and continuing until his resignation in 1945, John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, advocated an “Indian New Deal” with increased federal support for social services including health care and education. Collier’s Indian Reorganization Act, shifted Federal policy away from forced assimilation to self-governance and self-determination.¹³

The Nez Perce Tribe, along with many other tribes, developed a written constitution during this period. The Nez Perce Tribe adopted their constitution in 1948 and revised it in 1961. In their constitution, they defined membership in the Nez Perce Tribe as those names that appear on the membership roll of 1956, children who are of at least one-fourth Nez Perce ancestry and whose parents enrolled them before the age of 18, and persons adopted into the Tribe. All enrolled Nez Perce meet twice a year as a Tribal General Council to vote on major issues and to elect a nine-member governing board, the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC). NPTEC’s members and Chair serve three year terms and represent the Nez Perce Tribe in negotiations with Federal, State, and local governments, and with private corporations.

¹² James Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996): 376.

¹³ *Ibid*, 376. Chenoweth and Erdey, *Nuunimníx*, xiv.

NPTEC also administers programs to protect the health, education and general welfare of the Tribe, and to administer unrestricted Tribal funds.¹⁴ This tribal organization later played a key role in the struggle to keep the Spalding-Allen Collection.¹⁵ NPTEC and its Chair speak on behalf of Nez Perce interests and enter into negotiations with other governmental entities.

As the Nez Perce developed their tribal constitution, Oberlin officials transferred the Spalding-Allen Collection. The storage conditions on campus led Oberlin officials in 1942 to move the Spalding-Allen Collection to OHS, presumably to ensure better care. Oberlin Dean, Carl Wittke recommended that the Oberlin College Prudential Committee, “loan for an indefinite period the Spalding Nez Perce Indian Collection, now improperly housed in the Wright Zoological Laboratory, to the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society for exhibition purposes in the Ohio State Museum at Columbus.”¹⁶ The following day, Wittke wrote to a Mr. Shetrone at the Ohio State Historical Society requesting that he draw up a document stating that Oberlin is loaning “this material” and that OHS “undertakes to care for it properly” and both parties would sign the agreement at which “the matter would be closed and your truck could stop by to take the material to Columbus at your early convenience.”¹⁷ The extent to which OHS cared for the collection “properly” would be debated later. It is important to note that Oberlin College loaned the Spalding-Allen Collection to the OHS where it could be properly stored. However, Oberlin did not cede its ownership of the collection.

¹⁴ Revised Constitution and Bylaws of the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho. Theodor Little Papers, Cage 515, box 2, folder 10, WSU Libraries, MASC.

¹⁵ Catton, *Nez Perce National Historical Park Administrative History*, 9.

¹⁶ The committee approved the loan on 10-21-1942 Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio.

¹⁷ Wittke to Shetrone October 22, 1942, NEPE box 34 folder 5.

Decades later, it would turn out to be unfortunate for the Nez Perce Tribe and the National Park Service that that Oberlin officials transferred the Spalding-Allen Collection to OHS. At the time of the collection's "rediscovery" in 1978, Oberlin professor, Mark Papworth, offered to return the Spalding-Allen Collection to the Nez Perce without charge. Ultimately, however, Papworth could not do so because he could not locate the collection.

During the transfer between Oberlin and OHS, the items in the Spalding-Allen collection were mixed with other OHS collections. This may have resulted from the varied sizes of items in the collection requiring their storage in multiple locations. Regardless of the reason, the result was that the provenance of the collection was disturbed. Spalding's original letter to Allen, the key source of provenance for the collection remained at Oberlin. But that was not all that stayed behind at the college. According to Nez Perce National Historical Park Curator, Susan Buchel, clues survive that more of the collection might have remained at Oberlin College.

A list created in 1958 of materials transferred between the Oberlin Zoological museum and the Dudley Allen Art Museum includes items that appear to match Spalding's 1846 letter to Allen, but are not part of the present collection. A pair of women's leggings are on the list as item "57.138 American Indians leggings, beadwork" and also "57.133 and 57.134 American Indian moccasins, beadwork."¹⁸ Spalding mentioned six pairs of moccasins, but only two pairs are present in the current collection. Four pairs are missing. Spalding also listed three hemp bags only one of which remained in the collection held by OHS. From the incomplete records and brief listings there still exists the possibility that other Spalding-Allen materials may be at Oberlin College or at OHS.

¹⁸ NEPE box 34 folder 5.

As the Spalding-Allen Collection rested at OHS in the 1950s, the Nez Perce asserted their rights in a dispute with State and Federal Officials over the loss of fishing grounds at Celilo Falls. After intensive research and the deposition of elders, the Nez Perce appealed an initial decision against their rights to fish at Celilo by testifying before the U.S. Senate committee on Appropriations. Before this Senate committee, the Nez Perce persuasively argued that Celilo was indeed part of their “accustomed fishing places.” Though the Tribe asked for \$6,400,000 (a settlement in line with other tribes located closer to Celilo), the Nez Perce received a judgement of \$2,800,000 which was distributed to the Tribe on a per capita basis.¹⁹ This was the start of a series of cash settlements that would over time help fund Nez Perce tribal government.

In 1960, the Nez Perce Tribe recovered a judgement of \$44,200,000 on the unfair price paid by the U. S. Government in the treaty of 1863 and a further \$3,000,000 for gold seized by settlers from tribal lands. These resources were divided with 87% going to the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, and 13% to Joseph’s band of Nez Perce on the Colville Reservation. Some of these settlements went to individual members of the Nez Perce Tribe, but a large amount remained for tribal use as directed by the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee.²⁰

Nez Perce Tribal members continued to assert their fishing rights through the 1960s. On Wednesday December 13, 1967, a jury voted 11-1 to acquit Jesse Green, a Nez Perce, charged with two counts of fishing with fixed gear in the Columbia River near John Day dam. After the judgment, Green’s attorney, Theodore Little issued a statement that the verdict upheld treaty

¹⁹ Untitled speech delivered by Theodore Little, Nez Perce Tribal Attorney, Clarkston, Washington 6 July 1962. Theodore Little Papers, WSU Libraries, MASC.

²⁰ Ibid.



Figure 4. One of two surviving pairs of moccasins in the Spalding-Allen Collection. Spalding wrote to Allen that he sent six pairs. This pair made circa 1840 includes a decorated/reused parfleche sole and beadwork. NEPE 8738-39.

rights between the U. S. Government and Nez Perce Tribe for members of the Tribe to fish in the Columbia River.²¹ The case against Green hinged on whether the portion of the Columbia River near the John Day dam was part of the Nez Perce's "usual and accustomed" fishing sites. The testimony of Nez Perce elders including Alex Pinkham and James Miles, led to a quick trial and acquittal for Jesse Green. The outcome of the trial beyond the resolution of Green's case, helped to uphold and bolster the treaty rights of the Nez Perce Tribe.²²

As the Nez Perce Tribe asserted their sovereignty, the Spalding-Allen Collection languished at OHS for a generation. During this period there was little interaction between OHS staff and the collection. Oberlin Dean Wittke's expectation that the collection be used for "exhibition purposes" was not realized. On the other hand, this extended "rest" helped preserve the original condition of the objects. Since there was little curatorial attention, the materials in the collection, save the cradleboard, remained in the OHS storage vault away from natural light. The Spalding-Allen Collection was soon to be rediscovered by an expert from the Northwest.

Bill Holm, former Director of the Burke Museum at the University of Washington, recounted how he heard of the collection in 1976 while in England and arranged to stop in Columbus, Ohio, to see it on his way back home. As a museum director, Holm was interested in the collection for possible exhibits in the Northwest. He found OHS's care of the Spalding-Allen Collection less than ideal.

According to Holm, "They brought out most of the things some of it was scattered at that time. Some of it was at Piqua, Ohio [a historical site associated with the Ohio Historical Society] and some was at a reproduction old town that they had next to the OHS museum [in

²¹ "Indian Is Upheld in Fishing Case," *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Friday, 15 December 1967.

²² "Nets Above Dam Get Approval," *The Dalles Chronicle*, 15 December 1967.

Columbus].”²³ Holm recalled that he saw most of the pieces on the list from Spalding letter to Allen in 1846, however “it’s typical of those old time collections that there wasn’t any real documentation and the pieces had been assembled according to the list.” That is the individual artifacts were never labeled as part of the Spalding-Allen Collection, but rather OHS curators checked the early transfer lists (and perhaps a copy of Spalding’s letter to Allen) to retrieve the collection for Holm. Holm remarked that OHS had “tried to sort them out and attach associations to them,” but was not sure they were all accurate. Several attributions were clearly inaccurate. Holm conveyed to OHS staff that the collection was “terribly important and very valuable.”²⁴

In the decade prior to Holm’s rediscovery of the Spalding-Allen Collection, Congress passed a bill establishing a National Historical Park in 1965 to tell the story of the Nez Perce. At the site next to Spalding’s mission at Lapwai, NPS built the headquarters for the Nez Perce National Historic Park (NEPE) and developed other interpretive sites associated with the 1877 conflict in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The new NEPE headquarters included a museum exhibit space and storage for collections. NPS officials working with the Nez Perce Tribe sought materials to exhibit in the space. They envisioned the Spalding-Allen Collection as the key collection for this exhibit area.

In 1969, Nez Perce National Historical Park Superintendent Jack Williams contacted Oberlin College in search of the Spalding-Allen Collection. He likely saw references to it in Drury’s biography of Spalding or read the 1930 *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*.²⁵ Mark Papworth, an Oberlin faculty member from the department of Sociology and Anthropology, replied, that he

²³ “Spalding-Allen Collection Revisited” 27 July 1993. NEPE box 34 folder 5.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bob Chenoweth, “The Spalding-Allen Collection,” Chenoweth Papers Unprocessed NEPE.

had “assumed responsibility for the various collections and single specimens forwarded to Oberlin by its graduates over the past years.” Papworth indicated that the collections were “scattered in storage across campus” making it “quite a job to reassemble and assess the condition, value and proper identification of all items.” He had not found “any designated or recognizably distinct Nez Perce artifacts or reference to such.” Clearly memory of the “indefinite” loan to OHS was long forgotten, the documentation of the transfer buried in the Oberlin Prudential Committee minutes.

Papworth concluded his letter to Williams with the magnanimous offer that “this may mean that they are long gone or, more hopefully, that they are still at large in the basement storage of the Art Museum or etc. If and/or when I do find them you are welcome to the collection. I will keep looking as I sort this considerable supply of ethnographic debris.”²⁶ Papworth likely concluded that the collection belonged with the people who created the objects, in its historical and geographic context; not lost in storage in Ohio. It was the ethical thing to do with no mention of seeking a financial return for the materials.

While Williams prepared new exhibits for the Nez Perce National Historical Park, Native Americans began publically protesting for greater rights. Some Native activists, taking a cue from the Black Panthers, formed the American Indian Movement (AIM) to protect Native Americans from false arrests and police harassment. AIM lunched several major protests that garnered nation attention. A group of eighty-nine Native Americans occupied Alcatraz for nineteen months between November 20, 1969 and June 11, 1971, arguing that under the terms of the Fort Laramie Treaty (1868) between the U.S. and the Lakota Nation, any abandoned federal land was to be returned to the Lakota.

²⁶ Mark Papworth to Jack Williams March 23, 1970. NEPE box 12 folder 11.

The occupation made national news. Doris Purdy, who worked at the Indian Bureau in Berkeley, made a film of the occupation.²⁷ Grace Thorpe, daughter of Jim Thorpe, Native American Olympic gold medalist and football player, was one of the occupiers. She reached out to celebrities including Jane Fonda, Anthony Quinn, and Marlon Brando to visit the island and show their support. Grace Thorpe not only brought attention to the occupation, she also donated supplies including a generator, water barge, and even established an ambulance service to the island.

The band Creedence Clearwater Revival donated \$15,000 used to purchase a boat to ferry supplies to the group. The Alcatraz Occupation lasted for nineteen months and was forcibly ended after federal officials cut off power and later took the island. While this demonstration did not yield the results asked for by the AIM activists to return Alcatraz to Native ownership and the development of a new cultural center, it did bring national attention to the plight of native communities suffering from poverty.²⁸ Media reporters produced stories on the plight of Native American communities and the lack of resources available to them.

The protest inspired American Indians across the country. George Horse Capture, working as a civil servant for the State of California in the Bay area, quit his job and joined the protest. After the protest ended, Horse Capture attended UC Berkeley where he took any course that “touched even remotely on Indian affairs.” According to Horse Capture, “Alcatraz was a

²⁷ George Purdy, son of Doris Purdy, posted the film on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1md5YYKl-9g> (accessed 13 November 2016)

²⁸ Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 722.

beacon that awakened us and set us on a new course. It taught us that we were Indians.”²⁹ Horse Capture would go on to help found the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian.

For many Americans, the status of Native American communities was something that was largely ignored until large and well publicized protests demanded attention. The Alcatraz Occupation also inspired more than 200 instances of civil disobedience among Native Americans. Although the American public, and even many tribal leaders, did not agree with the AIM protests, Native American activists could not be ignored.

This activism spread to museums where Native American curators and their supporters advocated for exhibits that included Native voices and perspectives. Native communities responded to the issue of who curates Native culture by founding their own museums and cultural centers in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to the formation of the Nez Perce National Historical Park in 1965, other Tribes on the Columbia Plateau opened museums including Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, the Yakama Nation Museum and Cultural Center, and the Colville Tribal Museum.³⁰

In this context, while officials at the National Park Service searched for the Spalding-Allen Collection, Brad Baker, Collections Technician, department of Archaeology at OHS, became interested in the Spalding-Allen Collection. On September 23, 1978, Baker wrote to Roderick Sprague, an archaeologist and expert on Plateau culture, at the University of Idaho. Baker planned to apply to the National Science Foundation for funding to “properly” conserve,

²⁹ George Horse Capture, “Introduction: The Way of the People,” in *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, edited by Duane Blue Spruce (Washington D.C., National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution in association with National Geographic, 2004), 36.

³⁰ Chenoweth and Erdey, *Nuunimníx*, xvi.

store, and document the collection. According to Baker, “currently, the material is in fairly stable condition considering the neglect it has received for many years. Through the grant I hope to remedy this neglect and to insure the future care of this largely unknown collection.” Baker hoped that Sprague might help to determine the rarity of the collection. “I know of certain extant Nez Perce collections, but I have very little information on documented collections from the 1840s and earlier. Do you know of any such collections?”³¹ Baker never received funding for his proposal; however the correspondence with Sprague likely alerted park officials and the Nez Perce with whom Sprague worked closely.

Two months after this exchange, in December 1978, Steve Shawley, curator at the Nez Perce National Historic Park and a graduate student of Sprague, visited OHS to view the Spalding-Allen Collection.³² When Shawley returned from his visit, he informed NPS officials that the Ohio Historical Society would loan the collection to NEPE “providing that ownership in the collection may be established with the Ohio Historical Center.”³³

The ownership of the Collection by the Ohio Historical Society was far from clear. Richard Spear, Director and Professor of Art at Oberlin College, wrote to Raymond Baby, Curator of Archaeology at OHS on October 20, 1978, regarding plans by Oberlin to publish a catalog of the College’s holdings of American Indian art, “the source of much of the material is documented in the College Archives.” Spear continued, “with the growing interest in this field, such a catalogue could be highly useful to scholarship in the field... at some future date we

³¹ NEPE box 12 folder 11.

³² Chenoweth, “The Spalding-Allen Collection,” NEPE. Letter dated 20 October 1978 to OHS Curator of Archaeology from Director, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin.

³³ Chenoweth, “The Spalding-Allen Collection,” NEPE. Letter 10 January 1979 to OHS Director from Superintendent, NEPE.

would like to come to Columbus to examine the collection with a view to removing it to Oberlin for examination, cataloguing and eventual exhibition.”³⁴ The return of the Spalding-Allen Collection and other Indian artifacts owned by Oberlin College never occurred.

Curators at the OHS moved to establish their ownership of the Spalding-Allen Collection. On May 10, 1979, Martha Potter Otto, Head of the Department of Archaeology at OHS, wrote to the President of Oberlin College, Emil Daneberg, enclosing three copies of the Deed of Gift and closing with the statement “we are extremely grateful for this donation and will see that the collection is maintained and utilized according to the best professional standards.”³⁵ Apparently President Daneberg signed the collection over without consulting with the Oberlin Allen Museum curators.

On May 26, 1979, President Daneberg wrote to Leslie H. Fishel, a member of the OHS Board of Trustees and President of Heidelberg College, “it seems appropriate after all these years to turn the [Spalding-Allen Collection] collection over to the Historical Society and this letter can serve as official notice of that unless you would prefer some different form.”³⁶ However, Daneberg turned over much more than the Spalding-Allen objects.

Curiously, the OHS deed which “conveys and transfers to the OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY the following described property irrevocably and subject to no conditions or restrictions whatsoever” included numerous Native American collections not part of the

³⁴ NEPE box 12 folder 11.

³⁵ Oberlin College Archives Record Group 2/11 Emil C. Daneberg Series X External organizations folder Ohio Historical Society 1979 box 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Spalding-Allen Collection. The OHS Board of Trustees Meeting on August 3, 1979, officially recorded the receipt by Danenberg, President of Oberlin College a “Nez Perce Collection per the attached list” as accession #1994. The first four items listed were described as Plains Indian objects including a fire bag, leather knife sheath, and another “parfleche” bag. Likewise, items six to eleven have no relation to the Nez Perce and include a harpoon from Norton’s Sound, bows and arrows attributed to Plains Indians, and moccasins. In all, some twenty-two items appear to be from the Spalding-Allen Collection while eighteen do not. In general the items are briefly listed, many with question marks next to their descriptions reflecting the jumbled state of the Spalding-Allen Collection. Its provenance was disturbed and it was far from its source of creation and far removed from the expertise of the descents who originally fashioned the objects and curators knowledgeable about Plateau material culture. Eventually, nineteen items were loaned by OHS to the National Park Service.

On July 18, 1979, Regional Director of the National Park Service Russell Dickenson wrote to Dr. Thomas Smith, Director of OHS, in preparation for a meeting of the OHS board. Dickenson noted “the acquisition of the 22 items of the Spalding-Nez Perce Collection belonging to the Ohio Historical Society would be of immense interpretive value to the Nez Perce National Historical Park. We would appreciate your consideration of our request to have the collection become a permanent part of the Nez Perce National Historical Park Collection... [it] “is a cornerstone of Nez Perce tribal pride and culture.” Dickenson noted that the request is based on the National Park Service’s role as charged by Congress to preserve and interpret the Nation’s cultural and natural resources. According to Dickenson, “the interpretive use of the Spalding-Nez Perce Collection on the site of its cultural origin and collection would be of great public interest and support. We feel that should it be possible to make the collection a part of Nez Perce

National Historical Park, we would thereby ensure the future care and interpretation of this unique collection.”

After describing their new, planned museum facilities, Dickenson continued, “We have found the one-year loan policy established by the Ohio Historical Society Board of Trustees in 1977 to be too restrictive for us to justify the costly expense of conservation treatment and exhibit design, preparation, and installation for any short term. We feel that our request for a permanent assignment for the collection by gift or permanent loan, if a gift is not feasible, is in the best interest of the collection.”³⁷

The Nez Perce also lobbied OHS for the “permanent assignment, gift or loan of the items collected among our people in the 1840’s by Reverend Henry H. Spalding.” On November 13, 1979, Richard Halfmoon, Vice-Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, wrote to Amos Loveday at OHS, “these items are part of the Nez Perce Nation’s – national heritage, a matter of pride and cultural interest of the Nez Perces today.” Halfmoon emphasized the significance of the collection, “these few items are among the oldest documented Nez Perce items known to us and do represent examples of our culture that cannot be found elsewhere. We are anxious to see these items return to their homeland where all can see and appreciate them.”³⁸ Halfmoon’s arguments to OHS did not result in any concessions. OHS later stated that the Nez Perce only made an offer to acquire the collection in 1995. However, as Halfmoon’s letter indicated, as soon as the Nez Perce learned of the existence of the collection, they sought its return.

³⁷ NEPE box 12 folder 11.

³⁸ NEPE box 34 folder 4.

In the late 1970s, OHS was a powerful well-funded organization. It had a new museum and a large network of historical sites. From its founding in 1885 until the 1960s, OHS was a fairly small, private organization with informal ties to Ohio state government, and an emphasis on publishing essays on Ohio history, and caring for historical sites and collections. This all changed in 1965 when Ohio Governor James Rhodes wanted OHS to play a major part in the state's growth. OHS's Director, Erwin Zepp met Governor Rhodes regularly for lunch and as a result of these meetings the two men planned an expansive role for OHS. The result was a new law, Ohio Revised Code 149.30 which stipulated a massive contract for services from OHS to the state.³⁹

The contract specifies a vast range of services provided by OHS for the state of Ohio charging OHS to: operate a public system of state memorials; protect and repair monuments in its care; maintain a state archives; operate a state historical museum; identify historical and archaeological sites; publish research on Ohio history, archaeology, and natural science; conduct historical research for Ohio state agencies; collect, catalog, and provide access to collections related to Ohio history; encourage the development of county and local historical societies; provide teaching materials for Ohio history instruction; lend advisory services for the preservation and restoration of sites; inventory archaeological sites; coordinate history tours at the state capital; provide an annual report to the governor; and commission a portrait of each departing governor.⁴⁰ OHS remained a private organization while at the same time supporting the state with a broad range of services. The arrangement worked well for OHS in the 1960s and

³⁹ Christopher Maag, "Vanishing history" *Monthly Columbus Magazine* (November 2009).

⁴⁰ Ohio Historical Society, *Annual Report Fiscal Year 2004*, 5.

early 1970s as state budgets grew. However, when state revenues declined, OHS struggled to fulfill its varied obligations.

The Nez Perce National Historical Park was a very different organization than the Ohio Historical Society. Established by Congress on May 15, 1965 as Public Law 89-19, the park was created through a partnership between the Nez Perce, officials in the Department of the Interior, and Idaho's congressional delegation and included 24 sites.⁴¹ Managed by the National Park Service, the Nez Perce National Historical Park grew to include sites in Washington, Oregon, and Montana with a visitor center located beside Henry and Eliza Spalding's mission site in Spalding, Idaho. These sites included many locations that were managed, but not owned by the National Park Service. By 1995, the park had fifty cooperative agreements with twenty separate communities and a very close working relationship with Nez Perce tribal leaders.⁴² The very structure of the Nez Perce National Historic Park compelled NPS officials to work collaboratively with the Nez Perce and many other constituencies.

In January of 1980, OHS came to an agreement with the National Park Service and the Nez Perce for one year renewable loans. Unfortunately, OHS refused to loan the cradleboard—the primary artifact sought by NEPE curators for an exhibit interpreting Nez Perce children. OHS informed National Park Service that the cradle board was exhibited at an OHS branch museum. The cradle remained in Ohio for another ten years. Eventually, the Nez Perce would purchase it for \$25,000.⁴³

⁴¹ Catton, *Nez Perce National Historical Park Administrative History*, 5.

⁴² Ibid, 45.

⁴³ Chenoweth, "The Spalding-Allen Collection," NEPE.

The terms of the OHS loan to the National Park Service included one year loans with an indefinite number of possible renewals, insurance carried by the NPS, an appraisal of the collection every five years, and identification of the Ohio Historical Society as the owner of the collection. OHS had the Spalding-Allen Collection appraised in Ohio prior to the loan. In December 1980, the objects (not including the cradleboard) were valued at \$52,700 and insured at \$52,900. Prior to exhibiting the artifacts, the NPS sent the Spalding-Allen Collection to the Harpers Ferry Center for conservation treatment. There NPS conservators stabilized the artifacts for exhibition incurring a \$12,000 conservation fee for the NPS Northwest Division.⁴⁴ This was the first and only significant investment to conserve and stabilize the collections. The NPS also purchased climate controlled exhibit cases and custom mounts for displaying the objects.

According to the terms of the loan, the National Park Service paid for a reappraisal of the collection every five years. In 1985, an appraiser from the Northwest recognizing the cultural significance and its unusually fine provenance valued the Spalding-Allen Collection at \$104,850, roughly double the appraised value of 1980. In the five years between appraisals, the value of the two dresses declined, but the men's hide shirts increased more than fourfold. The appraiser also confirmed that three baskets included in the loan were of African origin, not made by the Nez Perce or part of Spalding's collecting activities. The National Park Service returned the African baskets to the OHS in 1986.

The attribution of three African baskets as part of the Spalding-Allen Collection indicates that OHS had not kept the provenance of the collection and had allowed other collections to become mixed in with the Spalding-Allen Collection. While the Spalding-Allen Collection was left with the OHS by Oberlin College for “proper care,” OHS curators jumbled the Plateau

⁴⁴ Ibid.

artifacts with other random collections. The fact that the OHS sent these African baskets identified as Nez Perce demonstrated that the OHS curators did not have an even basic knowledge of Nez Perce material culture.⁴⁵

In 1980, the Nez Perce National Historical Park was no curatorial paradise. Prior to the completion of the visitor center in 1981, park officials kept collections in a former auto service garage without insulation.⁴⁶ The park's first museum curator, Stephen Shawley, started in 1977. Shawley, the son of missionaries, had grown-up with Nez Perce and knew first-hand about their traditions and material culture. Yet, even with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology, Shawley had no professional training as a museum curator. Park Superintendent Whitaker was concerned about Shawley's performance when it became clear that Shawley had neglected his work cataloging collections, failed to identify if objects were gifts or purchases, and had even mixed some collections thus confusing their provenance. Worse still, Shawley treated the park's collections as his own by trading and not documenting the items.

Susan Buchel, who worked as a curator three years after Shawley, recounted that his "line his own, that line was hazy."⁴⁷ After years of investigations, Shawley resigned in 1985 under threat of indictment for the theft of collections.⁴⁸ After his departure, the park hired trained museum curators. Fortunately, the Spalding-Allen Collection on exhibit in the visitor's center

⁴⁵ Chenoweth, "The Spalding-Allen Collection," NEPE.

⁴⁶ Park officials did invest in fire and burglar alarms and heaters and humidifiers for the structure. Catton, *Nez Perce National Historical Park Administrative History*, 91

⁴⁷ Susan Buchel, Oral History Interview, 22 October 2015.

⁴⁸ Catton, *Nez Perce National Historical Park Administrative History*, 91-93.



Figure 5. Nez Perce man's cured hide shirt decorated with porcupine quillwork and black and white Venetian glass beads. This is one of two shirts in the Spalding-Allen Collection and one of the most valuable pieces in the collection. NEPE 8760.

remained safe from Shawley's care.

When Nez Perce National Historic Park curator Susan Buchel started at the park in the spring of 1988, she found the terms of the Spalding Allen Collection surprising, particularly the annual renewal provision for objects in a permanent exhibit. As a collection manager, she remembered asking, "what's this all about?" Buchel recounted an anecdotal conversation with OHS registrar and loan contact, Melinda Knapp. When Buchel asked Knapp about the one year terms, Knapp replied, "Well, didn't you hear the story?"⁴⁹

The story, according to Knapp, was that during Steve Shawley's visit to OHS in 1978, the "Ohio Historical Society got a good preaching to about how this material shouldn't be in Ohio." Buchel noted that Shawley did not know when "to let off and let go and what tone to take. And according to Melinda [Knapp], that annual loan renewal was mostly for spite... It was done kind of as a resistance to being told what to do kind of thing." This encounter also resulted in the cradleboard not being part of the loan. As Buchel recounted, the end result was "there you are, and now you've got an annual loan."⁵⁰

As the National Park Service and the OHS settled on the terms of their loan agreement, other Native American communities following the Nez Perce Tribe began having more success in legal cases against the United States. In 1980, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua (southwestern Oregon) received a settlement of \$1.5 million for lost lands. The Sioux (Dakota, Lakota, Nakota) one some partial legal victories in their efforts to retrieve the 60 million acres of the Black Hills guaranteed by the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty. The discovery of gold and the forced shrinking of that land base resulted in an 1877 treaty signed by only 10% of the adult male Sioux. The Indian

⁴⁹ Susan Buchel, Oral History Interview, 22 October 2015.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Claims Commission sided (in part) with the Sioux to compensate the tribes with the value of the land in 1877 plus interest. Some Sioux groups including the Standing Rock Reservation voted to accept the award, most refused it, holding out for a return of their land. The awarded compensation remains in an interest bearing account and in 2005 was worth some \$700 million. An estimate of the value of resources extracted from the same land in the Black Hills is four billion.⁵¹ These cases represent an increasingly vigorous and public campaign by Native communities to articulate their rights and demand redress for their stolen lands and resources.

Another major development during the 1980s was the creation of a new National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The founding of the museum, how it operated, and how it cared for its collections became part of the national dialog on the best care and exhibition for Native American collections. Conversations around the founding the NMAI began in the 1970s as land on the national mall was reserved for a future Smithsonian museum. The director of the National Portrait Gallery, Marvin Sadik, suggested to Smithsonian Secretary, S. Dillon Ripley, that the Smithsonian create a museum dedicated to Native American heritage following the *Museo Anthropologia* in Mexico City. Sadik wrote to Ripley that it was “high time that the American Indian was seen primarily on his own terms, rather than solely through the eyes of ethnologists, sociologists, historians, art historians, etc.”⁵²

⁵¹ Elin Woodger and David Burg, *Eyewitness History The 1980s* (New York: Facts On File, 2006), 14-15.

⁵² Douglas Evelyn, “‘A Most Beautiful sight Presented Itself to my View’ The Long Return to a Native Place on the Mall,” in *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, edited by Duane Blue Spruce (Washington D.C., National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution in association with National Geographic, 2004), 182-183.

During the 1980s, the trustees of the Museum of the American Indian-Heys Foundation in New York City, the museum founded by Heys and his massive collection, initiated talks with the Smithsonian about affiliating with the Smithsonian. In 1987, the negotiations were nearly finalized. In 1989 the legislation that created the NMAI, Public Law 101-185 passed Congress. The law indicated that the Smithsonian would operate a museum in the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in New York City (opened in 1994), the collections would be moved and relocated to a new Cultural Resource Center in Suitland, Maryland (completed 1998), and a new museum would be built on the last available site on the National Mall (opened in 2004).⁵³

The planning for the new collections center and Smithsonian Museum would be different than previous Smithsonian endeavors. As the Smithsonian's Deputy Director, Douglas Evelyn, put it, "the act launched a rather new type of cultural museum, to be developed with the direct involvement of Native peoples. It was not a museum produced by others for American Indians, but rather one created by American Indians themselves." Evelyn continued, "It would be a place of Native people to celebrate and share their achievements and aspirations as Americans and citizens of the world."⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid, 183.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3 From Loan to Recall

“OHS really didn’t understand that concept of live native peoples who cared about their history and culture as compared to scholars studying an historic culture. I really don’t think that understanding was ever truly reached, although they did finally realize the importance of the collection to the Nez Perce and that it should be in Nez Perce country.”
Frank Walker, Nez Perce National Historic Park Superintendent.

In 1993, the Ohio Historical Society recalled the Spalding-Allen Collection from the National Park Service where it had been on display for more than a decade on the Nez Perce Reservation. After significant public pressure and extended negotiations, OHS agreed to sell the collection to the Nez Perce at its full appraised value.

While the Spalding-Allen Collection remained on display at the Nez Perce National Historic Park, other Native American communities worked to halt the auction trade of their sacred objects. In May 1991, the Hopi and the Navajo sought to stop a Sotheby’s auction of sacred katsinam: mask-like decorated objects that the Hopi consider spiritual beings. One of the katsinam, a painted design of cloth on panel intended to be worn by Chief Kachina, a dancer representing an ancestral spirit, had a pre-auction estimate of \$12,000-\$18,000. After receiving two letters from the Hopi and Navajo, Sotheby’s declined to halt the sale.

According to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, passed in November 1991), the tribes did not have a legal case to stop the sale. The katsinam, if put up for sale by a museum or any organization that receives federal funds, would have been covered under NAGPRA’s provision to repatriate sacred objects and returned to the Hopi and Navajo. However, as this sale came from an individual collector, the Hopi were unsuccessful in their legal case. Instead, they made an ethical argument for the return of the katsinam.

Leigh Jenkins, director of the Hopi cultural Preservation Office, noted that “we object very strongly to the marketing of these items. They are not pieces of art in the way the public sees them.” Daniel Deschinny Sr., secretary of the Dineh Spiritual and Cultural Society, wrote that the Navajo object could be used in contemporary religious ceremonies, it was not he added, “an obsolete relic of lost ceremonies.” At the time, the head of tribal art sales at Sotheby’s, Bernard de Grunne, could recall only one instance in the previous four years when a Native American community objected to the sale of an item. In that case, the Zuni Nation objected to a 1988 sale of a Zuni war-god figure in the Andy Warhol collection. And in that case, the Warhol Foundation withdrew the carved figure from the sale and returned it to the Zuni.¹

While the Hopi and Navaho Nations fought unsuccessfully to regain their material culture, they articulated a compelling argument that overtime would prevail. A new model of curating and displaying collections began. Officials from the Smithsonian’s NMAI began two years of extensive consultations with tribal communities. As W. Richard West, Jr., a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and the first director of the NMAI recounted, after two dozen consultations with Native communities in the United States and Canada three main concerns emerged. According to West, “first, while acknowledging our deep past, Native peoples want to be seen as communities and cultures that are very much alive today.” He continued “second, we want the opportunity to speak directly to museum visitors through our exhibitions and public programs, and to describe in our own voices and through our own eyes the meaning of the objects in the museum’s collections and their importance in Native art, culture,

¹ Rita Reif, “3 Masks to stay in Auction,” *New York Times*, 21 May 1991. It is worth noting that reporter used the term “mask” rather than the term “katisman.”

and history.” And finally, “we want the museum to act in direct support of contemporary Native communities.”²

While Richard West and his colleagues planned the NMAI forging a new type of relationship between museums and Native Americans, the Spalding-Allen Collection was soon at the center of a major struggle between the Ohio Historical Society and the National Park Service and the Nez Perce Tribe. After twelve years of renewable loans, OHS requested in the spring of 1993, a recall of the Spalding-Allen Collection to Ohio for evaluation. The recall letter came as a shock to park officials for OHS requested that the collection be returned within three weeks. Park officials requested more time to pack the collection and plan a replacement exhibit for the visitor’s center. OHS took this delay as refusal to cooperate.³

Several factors led to the recall decision. Amos Loveday, curator for OHS, attributed a new scrutiny over all loans to a court case in 1977 that was decided initially in the favor of the Ohio Historical Society, but overturned on appeal in 1980. The case centered on a loan to OHS by Mary Houser of items she inherited from her ancestor, General Israel Putnam. Upon receipt of the items in 1934, OHS provided Ms. Houser with a loan receipt for a term of “one year, or more, when they may be withdrawn upon presentation of this receipt.” Ms. Houser died in 1952 and, in 1975, her estate administrator, Helen Houser, discovered the receipts from OHS and requested the return of the items. OHS refused the request. Helen Houser took OHS to court over the loaned goods and at first lost in 1977. However, she appealed the ruling, and in 1980, the

² W. Richard West, Jr., “As Long as We Keep Dancing a Brief Personal History,” in *Spirit of a Native Place: Building the National Museum of the American Indian*, edited by Duane Blue Spruce (Washington D.C., National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution in association with National Geographic, 2004), 55-56.

³ Catton, *Nez Perce National Historical Park Administrative History*, 94.

courts compelled OHS to honor the initial receipt.⁴ The result of the case caused OHS to better document ownership of its collections including the Spalding-Allen Collection loaned from Oberlin College. However, it is hard to see this lawsuit as the reason for the recall of Spalding-Allen Collection from the National Park Service since the case was litigated between 1977 and 1980 and the recall occurred in 1992. The primary reason OHS recalled the Spalding-Allen Collection was their growing realization of the importance of the collection and its valuation.

In the late 1980s, two major loan requests alerted OHS officials to the significance of the Spalding-Allen Collection. To celebrate the centenary of Washington State in 1989, the Burke Museum in Seattle planned a major exhibit titled “A Time of Gathering: Native Heritage in Washington State.” When the curator of the Burke exhibit, Robin Wright, contacted Susan Buchel regarding the possibility of an eight-month loan, Buchel indicated she had no objection and suggested that Wright contact OHS. On July 25, 1988, Wright wrote to Garry Ness to request the loan of the Nez Perce Woman’s dress with dentalia decorations at the Nez Perce National Historic Park and the Nez Perce cradle board held at OHS. She enclosed in her letter slides of the dress and cradleboard that Bill Holm took of the objects during his visit in 1976.⁵ Wright also requested high-quality color transparencies of both objects for an exhibit catalog. According to Wright, “the dress and cradle from your collection are among the earliest, finest and best documented Nez Perce pieces I have seen in the more than 30 museums I have visited in preparation for this exhibit.”⁶ OHS granted the loan request.

⁴ Houser, Admx., Appellee, v. Ohio Historical Society, Appellant no. 79-988.

⁵ Wright to Garry Ness, July 25, 1988. Administrative Records, Burke Museum, Seattle, Washington.

⁶ Ibid.

Susan Buchel recounted that OHS officials asked the NPS if the collection was so important to the Nez Perce Park, why was the Park willing to loan the dress to the Burke for a year? According to Buchel, our response was that by loaning it to the Burke Museum, for the centennial of Washington State, new audiences would see it in “context with other materials and other tribes in a facility” that was “quite capable of doing it in a really stellar, stellar way, which they did.”

To deliver the requested items, Susan Buchel drove with the dress to Seattle agreeing to arrive at Burke on the day that OHS collection manager, Bradley Baker, arrived with the cradleboard. Buchel was eager to see the cradleboard, only black and white photographs of it had been available to her. According to Buchel, Baker was eager to check on the condition of the dress. As Buchel described that meeting:

We have the two boxes sitting on a table. And there’s a number of people from the Burke around us. And Baker is on one side and I’m on the other side. We’re both opening our packages. And as we’re opening our packages, I all of a sudden had to step away. There was like a whoosh of air come up out of both packages. And it made me jerk backwards. And this whoosh thing, I don’t know what it is, rose up above the box and was kind of swirling around, up above of both boxes. And was kind of swirling around. And I felt this immediate sense of joy, reuniting, just happiness. And I can’t even explain it.

And I looked at Baker to see, and he says, “What’s the matter?”

And I said, “Didn’t you feel that?”

And he goes, “No. what?” And I looked at everybody else. And they thought I was crazy. They thought I’d tripped or something. And I definitely felt that. It took me a second before I actually looked into Baker’s box. And the second I looked at that cradle board in real life, and not in black and white, it was like oh my god. That cradle board is made by the same woman who made this dress. They belong together. We have kept them apart for, I don’t know, whatever, 135 [years]... through our own management of these things, or mismanagement of these things. And they belong together.

And of course, Baker could see that, too, looking at them.⁷

⁷ Susan Buchel, Oral History Interview, 22 October 2015.

As Buchel recalled, the high profile loan to the Burke Museum and all of interest in the dress and cradle board from Burke museum curators made the Spalding-Allen Collection, “something real to the Ohio Historical Society again. Maybe when Steve [Shawley] had been there in the ‘70s, it became real again.” Buchel continued, “But for this generation [at the Ohio Historical Society], it had a new value that they hadn’t recognized before. So I think that the Burke Museum’s request for this thing was the beginning of this whole real acknowledgement on the part of Ohio that they had something significant.”⁸

On the heels of the loan to the Burke museum, the OHS received another major loan request for the Spalding-Allen Collection. This request for a travelling exhibit with significant support from the National Endowment for the Humanities focused on missionaries and Plateau Indians titled “Sacred Encounters: Jesuit Missionaries and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West.”⁹

On April 6, 1990, the director of the exhibit, Washington State University Professor Jacqueline Peterson wrote to Melina Knapp, Registrar of OHS. After visiting the Nez Perce National Historic Park, Peterson identified several items from the Spalding-Allen Collection that she wished to borrow from OHS for the exhibit and a travelling tour.¹⁰ On May 17, 1992, Knapp replied that the OHS “Board tentatively agreed to the loan request, subject to several conditions. The primary condition is the recall of the five artifacts currently at the Nez Perce National

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jacqueline Peterson and Laura Peers. *Sacred Encounters: Father de Smet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West* (Washington State University Press, Pullman, 1993).

¹⁰ Peterson to Melina Knapp, April 6, 1990. Jacqueline Peterson Papers, Washington State University Libraries, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, MS 2012.03, box 5. Hereafter MASC.



Figure 6. Nez Perce cradleboard made circa 1846. The teardrop shaped wooden board is covered with buckskin and decorated with black, white, and red glass beads, dentalium shells with elk teeth attached to top fringe. OHS withheld this piece from the original loan of the Spalding-Allen Collection to NPS. NEPE 33887.

Historical Park to the Ohio Historical Society headquarters in Columbus.” Knapp wrote: “as part of a general review of Society holdings, the entire collection has been scheduled for recall at the end of the current loan period in early July. The five artifacts are being recalled early to enable the Society to assess their condition before the next Board meeting in mid-April.” Knapp continued: “The board will require this assessment before giving final approval... The Society is very interested in participating in Sacred Encounters.”¹¹

Though OHS was “very interested” in the exhibit, officials at the Nez Perce National Historic Park were less enthusiastic. As NPS Curator, Susan Buchel recounted, “when the DeSmet project [Desmet was the Jesuit missionary at the center of the Sacred Encounter exhibit] came... I recommended to Frank that we not be as on board with that as with the Burke [exhibit]. And that was going to be a traveling exhibit. It was going to go on for quite some long while. And we basically left that to Ohio to talk to the DeSmet [Sacred Encounters] people about [it].¹²

On May 12, 1992, Jeffery Pavelka, Exhibition Coordinator for the Sacred Encounters exhibit sent Jacqueline Peterson a fax reporting that the OHS loans “may be in jeopardy.” After he placed a call with Knapp, Pavelka wrote that although Knapp in no way indicated the following to me, “my interpretation of the situation is that OHS (on the board level) promised these things to Nez Perce [National Historical Park] on a permanent loan status and the Nez Perce (on the board level) is angry that OHS is authorizing/approving the loan of them for Sacred Encounters and disrupting its installation for a lengthy period of time.”¹³ On July 1, 1992, Knapp sent a fax to Pavelka with an update. The OHS Board did not receive a recommendation from

¹¹ Knapp to Jeffrey Pavelka, Exhibition Coordinator. MASC box 5.

¹² Susan Buchel, Oral History Interview, 22 October 2015.

¹³ Pavelka fax to Peterson May 12, 1992. MASC box 5

OHS staff regarding the Sacred Encounters request because “the Nez Perce Park has not returned the pieces. Negotiations are being handled by the Society’s director, Gary Ness, and chief curator, Amos Loveday.” The frustration of curator Loveday regarding the NPS loan erupted the month before when he called the National Park Service regarding the recall of the Spalding-Allen Collection.

On June 9, 1992, Frank Walker, NEPE Superintendent, received the call from Amos Loveday of the Ohio Historical Society. A detailed four paragraph, singled spaced typed record of the conversation by Walker survives in the National Park Service records. According to Walker, Loveday “demanded” a formal request to extend the loan further. Walker characterized Loveday as “rude” and “demanding.” Loveday reported to Walker that “this [the loan agreement] was only between the National Park Service and the Ohio Historical Society and did not concern the Nez Perce Tribe.” Walker reiterated the point that a recall would greatly “concern” the Nez Perce and that “returning them would be a great loss.” Loveday’s response was that this “was not with the Nez Perce people and was just between the National Park Service and the Ohio Historical Society.” Walker let his temper show at the end of the conversation when he asked Loveday “if he worked for Dr. Ness [President of the Ohio Historical Society] or was it the other way around.” Loveday responded that “he worked for Dr. Ness, but we [NPS] had better get our request in immediately.” Walker concluded that “this was a verbal request for an extension” and that he “requested a written response concerning this call from Dr. Ness.”¹⁴

Walker ended the call visibly shaking. Decades later, he remembered this telephone call as a moment of momentous significance for his career. He. Walker said that Loveday “wanted

¹⁴ Record of Telephone Conversation 9 June 1992, Frank Walker and Amos Loveday. NEPE box 34 folder 4.

the loaned collection sent back immediately. There did not seem to be any concern about the impacts the return might have on the park or the Nez Perce people. I got the feeling at that time that the OHS didn't care about the impacts on the Nez Perce." OHS' position was, according to Walker, "we own them and want them back."¹⁵

Walker wrote to Ness the following day, carbon copying NEPE's curator, Sue Buchel, and Samuel Penney, Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, reminding Ness that he had "indicated a willingness to have a representative from OHS come to the park to assess the pieces' condition." Walker reiterated his offer to arrange a conservation assessment by an independent party if a conservator from Ohio could not make the trip.

In his letter to Ness, Walker wrote that instead of a return call from Ness, he received a "heated almost belligerent, pompous, and demeaning phone call from your Curator, accusing my staff and I of being 'unprofessional.'" Walker noted that when he asked about the site visit by OHS he instead was "cut short." Walker continued: "this leads me to believe that the call back of this loan really has nothing to do with the condition of the objects." Walker pressed Ness "does Mr. Lovejoy's [sic] phone call accurately reflect the position of the Ohio Historical Society, or does your most recent correspondence? I thought you and I, as directors of our facilities, were engaged in an open discussion, but instead I find the communication changed dramatically." Walker concluded with a formal request to extend the loan and for notification if the loan would not be approved so his staff can "properly plan for the major exhibit rehab the loss that material would necessitate." Walker conveyed that he was "shocked, not only by Mr. Lovejoy's [sic] demeanor, but by his statement that the Nez Perce have 'nothing to do with' this loan or this materials. Such a statement, coming from a Curator of Native American cultural material, shows

¹⁵ Frank Walker, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

a dismaying lack of sensitivity for the most basic significance of the very material for which he is the caretaker.”¹⁶

Walker’s letter resulted in a phone call two days later with Ness. Again Walker took detailed notes of their conversation. Ness relayed that the OHS board wanted the OHS curators to “recommit” to the Sacred Encounter travelling exhibit and that the Spalding-Allen Collection needed to be returned to Ohio. Walker countered that rather than sending the collection across the country, NPS could deliver the requested items to the Sacred Encounters exhibit less than 100 miles away. Ness related that an on-site visit by OHS officials was not possible, in part because he did not want a board member or a conservator to be put in a “political situation” with Tribal leaders.¹⁷

After further negotiations, Gary Ness, Amos Loveday, and George Carroll, a Professor at Urbana College and member of OHS’ Collections committee agreed to visit NEPE on October 25, 1992. Walker and his staff at NEPE closely coordinated the visit with Samuel Penney, the Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. Walker and Penney wanted to convey to OHS the proper care that they had taken of the Spalding-Allen Collection. Walker issued a memorandum to all NEPE employees on the significance of the Spalding-Allen materials. He also arranged for Herman Reuben to tell Nez Perce stories followed by a dancing performance by Sam Slickpoo and his father. Walker reminded his staff that “the building will be clean, the

¹⁶ Frank Walker to Gary Ness June 10, 1992. NEPE box 34 folder 4.

¹⁷ Record of Telephone conversation Frank Walker and Gary Ness June 12, 1992. NEPE box 34 folder 4.

lobby will look professional and this group [the OHS delegation] will see how vital the Spalding collection is to our operation.”¹⁸

When the delegation arrived, Carroll and Loveday noted that the National Park Service did not properly display OHS ownership of the Spalding-Allen Collection as was specified by their loan agreement. This lack of attribution led Dr. Carroll to surmise that the NPS “more or less concluded that it was their material.”¹⁹ According to park Superintendent Frank Walker, the Nez Perce “showed up in force and explained the significance [of the Spalding-Allen Collection] to their history.” Eventually this message began to resonate with OHS. Walker recounted that OHS simply “didn’t get it” when working with Native American communities. OHS was accustomed to working with Native American collections in a museum setting. As Walker noted, “OHS really didn’t understand that concept of live native peoples who cared about their history and culture as compared to scholars studying an historic culture. I really don’t think that understanding was ever truly reached, although they did finally realize the importance of the collection to the Nez Perce and that it should be in Nez Perce country.”²⁰

NPS Curator Susan Buchel recalled the visit of the Ohio Historical Society to the Nez Perce country, “it still gives me goosebumps, thinking about it, when those trustees came. And I don't know what they expected. But... people who have never experienced the warmth, sincerity and depth of a culture, and then have it thrust on them in a way that they can't not see it, it changes you.” The visit, Buchel reflected, “helped in a way that no amount of talking or letters

¹⁸ Walker Memorandum October 20, 1992. NEPE box 34 folder 4.

¹⁹ Conversation with Dr. George Carroll and the author on 27 February 2015. Dr. Carroll reviewed and approved my notes and provided permission for me to quote his comments.

²⁰ Frank Walker, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

or other meetings between officials could ever have done... it changed the minds and hearts of at least a few people in that group. That was an amazing thing that we put together.”²¹

The following spring, OHS extended the loan of the collection for another year while the National Park Service and the Nez Perce developed a proposal to “permanently return the objects to the Nez Perce Country.” Walker proposed consulting with the Nez Perce to plan an acceptable range of options, to send an NPS/Nez Perce/academic delegation to Ohio to see the other Spalding items still held there, and to get an independent appraisal of the collection. In an email to Walker, Nez Perce National Historic Park curator, Susan Buchel listed the options under consideration: a congressional appropriation to make the switch, private fund raising or exchange of the Spalding-Allen Collection for other NPS collections.²² In her message, Buchel wrote “if using this option [private fundraising], I personally think we need to strongly consider transfer of ownership to the Tribe rather than NPS.”²³

Walker immediately contacted Nez Perce leadership to gauge their interest in the collection and their level of involvement in keeping the collection at the Nez Perce National Historical Park. Susan Buchel recalled that she and Walker were like-minded on the question over ownership of the collection. According to Buchel, “it doesn’t matter who owns it. In our mind... it didn’t have to be the park service. What mattered was that it was whole and it was where it belonged. And ownership was the least of our interests...” Buchel continued, “the value

²¹ Susan Buchel, Oral History Interview, 22 October 2015.

²² Electronic mail, Walker to Regional Director, Pacific Northwest Region and electronic mail from Susan Buchel. NEPE box 34 folder 5.

²³ *Ibid.*

of the collection was not in Ohio. The value of the collection was out here where it belonged with the people.”²⁴

To formalize their shared efforts, the National Park Service and the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee signed a memorandum of understanding to work together to “bring about the acquisition of the Spalding-Allen Collection of the Plateau materials by the Nez Perce Tribe and ensure their long-term care.” As part of the agreement, the Nez Perce pledged resources and staff time, to allow the materials to remain on loan to the NPS for exhibit for a period of no less than five years and to administer all proceeds of any fund-raising. NPS agreed to devote staff time and “provide routine and specialized preservation cares, including the costs associated with such care.”²⁵ This government to government document laid out their shared interests in the collection and formalized what would become an epic struggle to keep the Spalding-Allen materials.

In May, 1994, a delegation from the NPS and the Nez Perce Tribe travelled to Columbus for a meeting with OHS officials to discuss the future of the Spalding-Allen Collection.²⁶ The participants did not come to an agreement and in the winter, OHS recalled the Spalding-Allen Collection effective December 31, 1995.²⁷ However, on March 3, Ness wrote to Bill Walters, NPS Acting Director for the Pacific Northwest Region, to notify him that the Board of the Society [OHS] would be “willing to entertain an appropriate offer to purchase” but that OHS would “secure an independent appraisal of our Spalding-Allen collection so as to establish a

²⁴ Susan Buchel, Oral History Interview, 22 October 2015.

²⁵ NEPE box 34 folder 5.

²⁶ NEPE box 34 folder 6.

²⁷ Arthur Hathaway to Gary Ness 28 February 1995. NEPE box 34 folder 7.

current value” after which “any negotiations leading to the purchase could proceed from that point.”²⁸

On May 10, 1993, Paul Raczka of Sun Valley, Idaho, completed a new appraisal for the Ohio Historical Society based on an examination of the Spalding-Allen Collection and a comparison of sales of similar objects through private galleries and current auction records. Raczka noted in his appraisal that “the most significant factor in the valuation of this collection is the provenance which is exceptional for Native American material.” Raczka explained: “all of the items were collected... from a specific, identified, location, and by an identified collector.” The most valuable items in the collection, according to Raczka, were the two men’s shirts both made by Nez Perce between 1830 and 1845. Although the condition of one shirt was only “good” with “some damage to quillwork” and the other “fair” with “heavy quill damages” and a replaced “bib,” the valuations of the shirts were \$250,000 and \$225,000. Raczka commented on the more damaged shirt: “despite the condition, valuation is affected by the provenance and rarity.”²⁹

When Spalding sent the collection to Allen, he indicated a \$27 value for the dresses while listing shirts as worth \$14.25. Raczka explained the difference between Spalding’s estimate and a modern appraisal, “at the time Spalding was sending these pieces back the dresses were larger and flashy compared to the shirts. This was a visual response rather than an artistic evaluation. Meaning at that time there was little concern or interest in the methods of decoration.” Raczka continued, “the quill wrapped horse hair shirt strips are much more difficult to accomplish and

²⁸ Gary Ness to Bill Walters 3 March 1995. NEPE box 34 folder 7.

²⁹ Appraisal provided to the author by OHS registrar, Leslie Pohling.

we recognize that today. That skill and artistic genius is acknowledged today, while it was not even considered back then.”³⁰

The Nez Perce and NPS officials worried that with the dramatic increases in value of the materials, if they returned the Spalding-Allen Collection to the Ohio Historical Society, OHS would sell the collection on the open market. Such a sale would certainly break up the unity of the collection. As Nez Perce Cultural Resource Specialist, Josiah Pinkham noted, “being parceled out to different bidders... the collection would never again be put together in one place. And so that was a big challenge for the Nez Perce Tribe.” Pinkham continued: this “collection embodies the earliest and greatest centralization of ethnographic objects for the Nez Perce people. You don’t have a collection of this size, this age, anywhere else in the world. And that was huge for the Nez Perce to be faced with the potential loss of that collection, that meaning, that connection with our ancestors.”³¹

To reacquire the Spalding-Allen Collection, the Nez Perce sought support from other stakeholders. In June 1995, participants at the Mid-Year Conference of the National Congress of American Indians, held in Spokane, Washington, passed Resolution SPK-95-070 Support of the Nez Perce Tribe to Recover the Spaulding-Allen [sic] Collection. “Whereas, the Nez Perce Nation is in a situation of losing an irreplaceable tribal historical collection... which were collected in the 1840s by the Reverend Henry H. Spaulding [sic], in his quest to civilize the Nez Perce people by prohibiting ceremonial customs and practices and confiscation of tribal regalia, and were shipped to his family in Ohio.” This last statement that tribal regalia were shipped to Spalding’s “family in Ohio” is not accurate. Spalding shipped the items to his supporter and

³⁰ Paul Raczka email to author, December 18, 2016.

³¹ Josiah Pinkham, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

friend Allen, not family, but the interpretation of Spalding acquisition of the items is revealing of Native American perspectives on the collecting of missionaries.

The resolution continued, noting that though the collection had been displayed for the last fifteen years as part of an Ohio Historical Society loan program to the National Park Service, it must be returned to the OHS by “December 1995, unless the Nez Perce Tribe can purchase these collection items at the appraised value of \$600,000.” In their final resolution, the NCAI “supports the Nez Perce Tribe’s request in their efforts to retain the Spaulding-Allen collection to be permanently displayed where they rightfully and culturally belong, in the homeland of the Nez Perce Nation.”³²

While Ness and his Ohio Historical Society colleagues communicated with National Park Service officials, they ignored letters and requests from the Nez Perce Tribe. In June, 1995, NEPTEC Chairman Samuel Penney wrote to Ness informing him that the Nez Perce general council voted Richard Ellenwood to chair the Spaulding-Allen Collection committee on September 24, 1993. However, according to Penney, OHS had yet to send a copy of the most recent appraisal of the collection prepared for a September OHS board meeting. On September 28, 1994, Penney again wrote Ness requesting a copy of the appraisal and “suggesting the possibility of negotiating an exchange of items and service of equal value involving the National Park Service.” Having received no reply, Penney wrote again on March 3, 1995 requesting the most recent appraisal. Penney noted that “the Nez Perce Tribe is... again reaffirming our desire to negotiate in good faith.”³³

³² NEPE box 34 folder 5.

³³ Samuel Penney to Gary Ness 1 June 1995. NEPE box 34 folder 7.



Figure 7. Nez Perce man's hide shirt decorated with dyed porcupine quill work and Venetian glass beads. The two men's shirts in the Spalding-Allen Collection remain the most highly appraised items. They represent some of the finest examples of American Indian shirts from the mid-nineteenth century in existence. NEPE 8759

OHS Director Ness finally replied to Penney on June 23, 1995, in a three page, fourteen-point letter outlining the OHS perspective on the status of the Spalding-Allen Collection. Ness argued that “the quality, fragility, and significance of the Spalding-Allen collection requires curatorial attention which is commensurate with the collection’s value.” This is a somewhat ironic statement given such curatorial attention was never provided by the Ohio Historical Society. OHS’ own collections technician Brad Baker characterized his organization’s “neglect” of the collection. It was the National Park Service and not OHS that paid for the professional conservation of the Spalding-Allen Collection.

Money was a major theme of the letter. Ness noted the significant cultural and monetary value of the collection and of the “fiduciary” responsibility of OHS. Given the monetary value of the collection, Ness noted that “no transfer of ownership should occur with appropriate ‘consideration’ being offered in exchange.” Ness wrote that the appraised “financial value” of the collection is a variable factor so that OHS “will consider that the insured value is an appropriate approximation of monetary worth” so that the price can be “validated” by appraisal “if and when a timetable for purchase is negotiated between OHS and the buying party.” It is telling that Ness did not specify the Nez Perce as the assumed purchaser implying that OHS might put the collection on the open market.³⁴ Superintendent Frank Walker recalled, “we kept hearing that OHS had other buyers in Germany and Japan who were offering over a million dollars for the collection. These [rumors] were unsubstantiated, but fed the process.”³⁵

Ness also indicated that once the Spalding-Allen Collection was received, “examined, and treated (as necessary), OHS expects to utilize the collection in exhibitions, including the

³⁴ NEPE box 34 folder 7.

³⁵ Frank Walker, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

possibility of loaning to appropriate organizations and facilities.” In the statement, Ness appeared to confirm concerns that once the collection was sent to Ohio it might never return to the Nez Perce National Historic Park.³⁶

Nez Perce Chairman Penney countered Ness’s letter with an offer for Nez Perce Tribal representatives to travel to Ohio and meet with OHS board members to negotiate the deal and to pay for an OHS curator to travel to Idaho so the Spalding-Allen Collection would not have to be removed from their “exhibit cases and subjected to the hazards of handling and shipping.” Penney added: “since we are requesting the Ohio Historical Society to do an appraisal of the collection, it would appear to be more convenient to perform the appraisal in conjunction with the inspection of the condition of these materials in their present location” in Idaho at the Nez Perce National Historical Park. Given the impending expiration of the OHS and National Park Service loan agreement on December 31, 1995, Penney reminded Ness that it was “imperative” that they negotiate an acquisition agreement “well in advance of that date.”³⁷

While Penney and Ness exchanged letters, Richard Ellenwood, Chair of the Nez Perce Spalding-Allen Collection Committee spoke with local reporters. Ellenwood said that the Nez Perce would offer the appraised price of the Spalding-Allen Collection or \$583,100 even though many tribal members “can’t understand why the tribe should pay for artifacts of their own culture.” According to the reporter Joan Abrams, OHS demanded the return of the collection by December 31. The Nez Perce prepared a brochure on the collection in which Nez Perce artist (and later Director of the Nez Perce Culture Resource Program) Nakia Williamson stated: “We want these things to be here, they reflect another way of living, another way of life. These

³⁶ NEPE box 34 folder 7.

³⁷ Samuel Penney to Gary Ness, 27 June 1995. Letter labeled “draft” NEPE box 34 folder 7.

objects are important for our generation and future generations.” Ellenwood added: “If my grandchildren have to go see these things in Ohio, the journey will be long and our hearts would be heavy on the return.”³⁸

Ellenwood took his case to other reporters and he was quoted by the Associated Press arguing that the collection “rightfully belongs here [in Idaho] because of the significance to this area. They have no significance to Ohio at all. There are no Nez Perce at all in Ohio.” According to Ellenwood, many Nez Perce tribal members were outraged that the collection had to be purchased in the first place. At the semiannual Nez Perce General Council meeting in Kamiah Idaho, Ellenwood reported, “our people expressed to the General Council that its ours and should be returned to us without paying.”³⁹

Ness, President of OHS, responded in the Associated Press story by saying that the collection needed inspection and preservation treatment and should be returned to Ohio because it was “unusual for items to remain on loan for so long.”⁴⁰ Ness made an important point that fifteen years of renewable loans indeed are unusual; however, it was the National Park Service who paid for the curatorial costs associated with exhibiting the collection and its preservation treatment. The conservation work done on the collection and its valuation by experts in Plateau materials culture were the major factors in its increased appraised value. OHS never paid for the collection or devoted curatorial time to conserving, researching, or exhibiting it.

³⁸ Associated Press, 9 June 1995, clipping published in *The Plain Dealer*. Provided to the author by OHS registrar, Leslie Pohling.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The Associated Press reporter made a significant error in the penultimate paragraph of story. In describing the provenance of the collection the reporter accurately stated that “Allen was an alumnus and trustee of Oberlin Collection and its first major art benefactor.” However, the next sentence, “the historical society bought the items more than 100 years ago from Oberlin” was completely false. OHS took much of the Spalding-Allen Collection on loan in 1942 and only obtained title to it in 1979 on the eve of the loan to the National Park Service. OHS never purchased the collection from Oberlin College.⁴¹

Ann Frazier, a spokesperson for OHS, responded to the negative stories regarding OHS’ conduct. Frazier argued that OHS had already been more than generous. According to Frazier, the fifteen year length of the loan was unusual and that OHS loans “items out quite often but always with the understanding that... they could be called back.” Countering calls for OHS to give the collection back to the Nez Perce, Frazier indicated there is “no way the society would consider giving the collection to the tribe outright or selling it for less than market value.” Why readers might ask? “For us to do that would be remiss in our responsibility to the people in Ohio who support us financially,” Frazier added.⁴²

On October 12, 1995, Chairman Penney wrote to the Governors of Idaho and Ohio. In identical letters to Governors Philip “Phil” Batt (Idaho) and George Voinovich (Ohio), Penney requested assistance in his negotiations with the Ohio Historical Society. Penney noted that since the 1992 recall by OHS of the Spalding-Allen Collection, the OHS board agreed to delay the recall while the Nez Perce developed a proposal to acquire the collection. Penney wrote that on June 10, 1994, the Nez Perce sent OHS three proposals: donation of the collection to the Nez

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Sunday 30 July 1995. NEPE box 34 folder 7.

Perce; sale of the collection to the tribe at a “substantially reduced price;” or use of in-kind services by the tribe and/or National Park Service “that could off-set the full market value of the collection.”

Rather than directly replying to these proposals OHS, according to Penney, responded to the National Park Service (not the Nez Perce) that they rejected all three proposals and recalled the loan on December 31, 1995. Meanwhile the Nez Perce elected a seven member committee to raise funds to purchase the collection and asked OHS for additional time to do so. They also proposed a meeting between the Nez Perce and the OHS board in June of 1996. But according to Penney, “there has been no response from Ohio.” Penney continued: “The Nez Perce people are extremely concerned about these objects leaving our homeland and fear that they may be sold on the open market and never be returned to the tribe if they leave the state of Idaho.” Penney implored the Governors for their assistance in extending the OHS loan for another year so that the Tribe could raise the money to purchase the collection for “generations of our people to share with visitors to the Nez Perce National Historical Park.”⁴³

While these negotiations were underway, the Nez Perce explored their legal options. On November 1, 1995, Julie Kane, Deputy Counsel for the Nez Perce prepared for Samuel Penney a detailed analysis for possible repatriation of the collection under NAGPRA. NAGPRA became law in 1990. The legislation provided Native Hawaiians and Native Americans legal protection and repatriation for funerary items, sacred objects, and artifacts of cultural patrimony. Congress passed the regulations to implement the act in 1993. NAGPRA required that any institution, state or local government agency, receiving federal funds conduct an inventory of Native

⁴³ Penney to Governor Batt and Governor Voinovich. NEPE box 34 folder 7.

American collections including funerary objects, sacred objects, and items of cultural patrimony and provide notification to the affiliated Tribes.

According to Kane's memorandum, for the Nez Perce Tribe to repatriate the Spalding-Allen Collection under NAGPRA they needed to: 1) establish the affiliation between the collection and the Nez Perce, 2) identify the artifacts as funerary, sacred, or cultural patrimony, 3) establish that the Ohio Historical Society does not have a right of possession of the objects. In Kane's analysis OHS had "clear documentation that this collection derived from Reverend Spalding, who apparently lawfully obtained them and, in turn, lawfully sold them to Dr. Allen." Under NAGPRA the original collection of the artifacts needed to include "the voluntary consent of an individual." As Kane noted, some Nez Perce questioned if the items were acquired with "voluntary consent" for example, Nez Perce elder, Beatrice Miles, stated that "Spalding took the items from individuals as punishment for not converting to Christianity." However, Kane concluded that the "documentation from the correspondence between Dr. Dudley Allen and Reverend Spalding [indicated] that Reverend Spalding, in fact, purchased the items."

After examining the subsequent transfers of the Spalding-Allen Collection to Oberlin and then OHS, Kane concluded "all transactions seem to be well documented. Therefore, it is fairly well settled that the Ohio Historical Society is the legal owner of the property" under the guidelines of NAGPRA. However Kane noted "it may be possible to establish that some of the objects are culturally or religiously significant." Though even if items in the Spalding-Allen Collection qualified under protection of the act as sacred, ceremonial, or cultural patrimony, the "OHS can refuse to return them" based on their documentation of ownership. If Spalding had included the names of the individuals from whom he acquired objects, their "lineal descendants would have the right to reclaim them (if the requirements of the Act are met)." Unfortunately,

Spalding never listed the individuals from whom he acquired the objects so no paper trail survives.⁴⁴

In addition to advice from their legal counsel, the Nez Perce Tribe sought an additional opinion. Tribal member Allen Pinkham, who served on the board of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, asked the museum's director W. Richard West, Jr. regarding a NAGPRA claim to keep the Spalding-Allen Collection. In a letter dated June 2, 1995, West wrote that curator George Horse Capture reviewed the material Allen sent regarding the collection and reported, "that none of the items in the collection are human remains or associated grave goods, and none appear to be sacred materials." West continued, "however, if items such as the dresses, moccasins, or particularly the shirts can be identified as having a Nez Perce Indian as the owner, a case of cultural patrimony could be established." This process, West cautioned, "would require extensive research in books, photographs, Spalding's letter and diaries, etc."⁴⁵ Repatriating the collection, or portions of it, under NAGPRA hinged on the provenance of the collection. Could ownership of objects in the Spalding-Allen Collection be traced back to individual Nez Perce?

For collectors of his era, Spalding provided more information on what he acquired than most. However, the label of "Indian curiosities" reflects a more general pattern, especially during the nineteenth century of dehumanizing Native American culture. As Nakia Williamson, Director for the Nez Perce Tribe Culture Resource Program, reflected: "it's like what you see in

⁴⁴ Memorandum to Samuel N. Penney, Chairman Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee from Julie Kane, Deputy Counsel Office of Legal Counsel, dated November 1, 1995. "Spalding-Allen Collection—Legal Analysis for Possible Repatriation Under NAGPRA." NEPE box 34 folder 7.

⁴⁵ Chenoweth Unprocessed Papers, NEPE.

a lot of early nineteenth century material about Indian people. I mean, it wasn't even really enough to say Nez Perce. As long as it was Indian, that was good enough. Much less, this came from this family or it came from this individual." Williamson continued, "it was kind of that dehumanizing of our culture and devaluing our culture by just kind of putting these broad sort of general depictions of what our culture is about."⁴⁶

Although Spalding did not record the individual names of the family members from whom he acquired the collection, Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee member Bill Picard made the argument that the Spalding-Allen Collection was closely associated to a broader conception of kinship among the Nez Perce: "we all feel that we're one big family and that we're related, whether it's through marriage or bloodlines. But we're all Nez Perce. And that we, if one of [us] hurts, we all hurt." Picard continued, "so even, even if it isn't specific families, basically what we felt was those items belonged to us as a family. They belonged to my sister. They belonged to my aunt. They belonged to my grandma." Picard drew a modern analogy to make his point: "me and my wife, we raised probably twenty kids in this community in the time that we've been married. And most of them aren't related to us. But they call us aunt and uncle. And now they're grownups. And they still call us aunt and uncle." As Picard noted "that's how we consider family. And so when people say, 'well, how is this boy your brother?' to my daughter, she says, 'we were raised together.' And so even if there's not a bloodline, there's a connection. And so when you look at these items, you feel like these items [the Spalding-Allen Collection] were taken from my family, the Nez Perce Tribe."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Nakia Williamson, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

⁴⁷ Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

With negotiations underway, but no resolution in sight, the National Park Service issued a press release on November 20, 1995, titled “Spalding-Allen Collection Returns to Ohio.” The document quoted NEPE Superintendent Frank Walker, “OHS has not been receptive to offers by the Nez Perce tribe to acquire the collection, so the National Park Service must now honor its obligation and return the loaned items. This is a sad day for Nez Perce Country.” NPS officials invited the public to see the collection until November 26 when they would be removed and packed for shipment to Ohio.⁴⁸

As the NPS prepared to return the collection, the Nez Perce fought back. Richard Ellenwood, Chair of the Nez Perce Spalding-Allen Collection Committee, organized “a day of shame” on November 27, 1995. The text of the flier reads: “The Ohio Historical Society insists it owns the items, despite the fact that Reverend Henry Spalding claimed to have paid next to nothing for these traditional garments and adornments. OHS now claims the collection is worth more than \$500,000, but to our people the spiritual and cultural value has no price.” The flier continued: “By surrendering these items to the Ohio Historical Society, the Park Service begins a process that will ultimately result in their being lost forever. To protest this callous act of greed and indifference, and to renew our pledge to continue the fight for the return of this collection to the Nez Perce people, please join us.”⁴⁹

Coinciding with Ellwood’s efforts, Allen P. Slickpoo Sr., Ethnographer for the Nez Perce Cultural Resource Program, prepared a two page document titled, “Insensitivity to the Native Religious, and Cultural Values.” Slickpoo began his essay with a passionate critique of the historical context in which Spalding collected the Nez Perce items. According to Slickpoo, “the

⁴⁸ NEPE box 34 folder 9.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

government began to exercise a policy of genocide, the insensitivity to the Native American religious beliefs and the traditional cultural values were suppressed by the movement to ‘civilize’ the indigenous people.” Slickpoo wrote “from the time Henry H. Spalding arrived in the Nimiipu [Nez Perce] Country, in 1836, he began to tell our people that it was ‘evil’ to wear the buckskin clothing and the eagle feather. It was the work of the ‘devil’ to do so.”⁵⁰

Slickpoo reprimanded the greed of OHS, “the dollar value of these items does not reflect their cultural sensitivity and sacredness for the Nez Perce people.” However, Slickpoo concluded on a persuasive and conciliatory note: “I strongly hope that the question of retaining these artifacts will be resolved in an amicable manner, realizing that our children and their children must learn to appreciate the valuable history, to realize the interpretation and value of their native culture and lifestyles of their ancestors.” Looking to the future, Slickpoo continued: “It helps restore the self-image and the pride in being a Nez Perce. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that those items belong here, in their homeland, in the place of origin.”⁵¹

With negotiations over the collection at an impasse, Superintendent Frank Walker sent an email to Bill Waters, NPS Regional Director, apprising him of the situation. As of November 21, 1995, Walker reported that OHS was “firm on having the collection returned by December 31,” unsure if they wanted to sell it, and uncertain about the price. More distressing was the following: “So far the Tribal Chairman Sam Penney and Gary Ness [OHS President] have NOT talked.” After meeting with Tribal elders, Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC) members, and Tribal counsel, Frank Walker reported that their legal options an injunction or NAGPRA would not stop the removal of the collection to the Ohio Historical Society. They

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

discussed the need to take the story to the national press and to fully document the collection. This research might support a potential NAGPRA claim and was critical to complete before the artifacts left the Nez Perce country. Chairman Penney proposed taking out a ten year loan and offering a check for the appraised value of \$583,100 to see if OHS was serious about selling. Walker also reported that one NPTEC member proposed going to the park and confiscating the collection. Both Walker and legal counsel reminded him of “existing federal and Indian laws prohibiting that action.”⁵²

On Wednesday November 29, 1995, the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, published an editorial in support of Nez Perce keeping the collection. The author chastised OHS by questioning how they with “no connection to the tribe and its traditions and little reason to display its artifacts can continue to list them as assets... Surely any society that cares more about history than pride would recognize that whatever the question of ownership of these pieces, the location where they should be displayed is here.”⁵³

On the same day, the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee issued an impassioned three-page national press release. “Time is slipping away from the Nez Perce Indian tribe, as they strive to retain sacred and historical artifacts on loan from the Ohio Historical Society.” The release outlined the efforts of the Nez Perce to negotiate the acquisition of the collection and their “inability to receive concise details on the proposed purchase from OHS.” According to Richard Ellenwood, “it seems Ohio is blind to our smoke signals. We have heard nothing from them since July.” Chairman Penney argued that OHS unwillingness to sell at the appraised prices

⁵² Emphasis in original, Frank Walker to Bill Waters email November 21, 1995. NEPE box 34 folder 9.

⁵³ *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, 29 November 1995, NEPE box 34 folder 9.

was because “they can get a much higher amount on the open market.” Superintendent Frank Walker challenged the OHS position that the recall was an effort to preserve the collection. Noting that an independent conservator from Denver visited the park in 1992 and reported to OHS that the “collection was being well cared for and in good condition.” Walker recounted that OHS curator Lovegate [sic] commented during his last visit to the Nez Perce National Historical Park, “these items most appropriately belong here.”

The press release concluded with Tribal elder Allen Slickpoo, Sr. recounting oral history that Spalding “urged our people to give up their native lifestyles. He insisted the men cut their hair and families discard their native clothing. Our people became separated, identified as either ‘progressives’ or ‘heathens.’” According to a park brochure, the growing demand in America and Europe for “Indian curiosities” provided a means for missionaries such as Spalding to ship Indian culture to collectors in return for goods to finance the operations of their missions. The release then drew a parallel between Nez Perce history when the tribe evaded U.S. troops for 1,300 miles through the northern Rocky Mountains under the leadership of Chief Joseph and the current struggle with the Ohio Historical Society. According to a “defiant” Slickpoo: “I feel strongly that the Nez Perce Tribe should *not* surrender its rights. Chief Joseph did not give up easily. This is the precedent we should follow, regarding the Spalding-Allen collection.”⁵⁴

These activities likely spurred OHS to finalize negotiations over the collection. The Nez Perce eventually received the appraisal and on November 29, 1995, Penney, Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, wrote to Ness regarding the “retention of the Spalding-Allen collection in the Nez Perce National Historical Park on the Nez Perce reservation where, in our view, it rightfully belongs for a number of reasons.” Penney made an “irrevocable offer” to

⁵⁴ NEPE box 34 folder 9.

buy the collection for \$583,100 paid on or before June 1, 1996, “on the condition that the collection remains at the Nez Perce National Historical Park Museum during that time.”⁵⁵

Chairman Penney and his colleagues on the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee devoted significant time in their efforts to keep the Spalding-Allen Collection in the Nez Perce country. Retaining this collection was one of a number of serious issues at the time. Others included a 75% unemployment rate and a series of winter floods that damaged homes on the reservation in Lapwai.⁵⁶ With such pressing problems confronting the Nez Perce people, this reveals how important the Spalding-Allen Collection was to the Tribe.

On December 1, 1995, OHS Chief Curator Loveday sent a memorandum regarding the proposed sale to OHS President Ness with his recommendation and those of his fellow curators, Melinda Knapp and Martha Otto. The curators agreed that OHS should accept Penney’s offer though “all recognized that the appraised price is dated and almost certainly below what might be had at auction.” Loveday then shared three matters of concern. The offer did not include the Nez Perce cradleboard that could be added for another \$25,000. Second, that OHS should “re-evaluate our insurance on the collection making sure that value is protected.” As Loveday reasoned “once the asking price is published nationally, as it will have to be, the collection becomes more vulnerable to theft. Since we have no control over the security arrangement, we must be satisfied that the value is protected.” And finally, the curators requested that money from the sale be placed in the collection fund for the acquisition and conservation of OHS collections.

⁵⁵ Samuel Penney to Gary Ness, 29 November 1995. Provided to the author by OHS registrar, Leslie Pohling.

⁵⁶ Jim Carrier, “MTV, Web Aids Indians.” *The Denver Post*, Sunday, 7 July 1996.

Loveday noted that he viewed the sale as a “good outcome; the materials will find a permanent home with the tribe in a publicly accessible museum, the Ohio Historical Society receives fair value for the materials, and years of negotiations are brought to a conclusion.” Loveday’s final assessment “it’s good for business health, good for our cultural psyche, and it improves our capability to acquire Ohio materials.” The windfall of cash to OHS for a collection they only owned on the eve of loaning it, certainly was good for their “business health.”⁵⁷

Not everyone thought that the terms of the agreement were just. Bill Picard, a member of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee recalled the deal: “No. I don’t believe that the amount was fair. And I also feel that the timeframe that they put us under was not fair, either.” Picard made the point that in 1993, more than \$600,000 (including the cradleboard) was a lot of money. “And so trying to collect that kind of money in that short of a timeframe. We didn’t know if we could do it, but we put forth the effort.” What Picard felt troubled by was that OHS “received these items without paying for them or without negotiating for them... without the tribal members whose items these belonged to, the families. There was no compensation given to the [Nez Perce] families.” Picard continued, “not that the families would have sold the items anyway. But there was no negotiation, no compensation for these items. And then they want to sell them back. After they didn’t pay anything for them.”⁵⁸

While negotiations between OHS and the Nez Perce were underway, Nez Perce tribal members continued to make their case to the media. On December 4, 1995, *The Oregonian* reported that “the artifacts in the Spalding-Allen collection are caught in a cross-country tug of

⁵⁷ Memorandum re: Nez Perce Collection to Gary Ness from Amos Loveday 1 December 1995, provided to the author by OHS registrar, Leslie Pohling.

⁵⁸ Bill Picard, Oral History, 2 June 2015.

war between the 12,000-member Ohio Historical Society and the struggling 3,000-member Northern Idaho Indian tribe." While OHS wanted the collection returned for evaluation after a fifteen year loan to the National Park Service, "the tribe insists the collection belongs home, on the Nez Perce Reservation." Nez Perce school children wrote letters to the Ohio Historical Society including Raleigh Ellenwood, age 12, who argued: "There are no Nez Perces in Ohio. It was ours in the first place." More to the point, tribal elder Roy White Sr. observed, "I don't see why we should have to buy our own things back." According to oral tradition, Henry Spalding "was a bad devil," White explained. "That's what my grandmother said. She said he was stealing from us."⁵⁹

On December 10, 1995, Tom Kenworthy, a reporter at *The Washington Post*, wrote a story titled, "Fragile links to the past; Nez Perce Tribe Battles for Artifacts Taken in 1840s." Kenworthy argued that the Spalding-Allen Collection was taken not purchased or acquired. After recounting the war of 1877, when the Nez Perce conducted "one of history's epic retreats," Kenworthy compared those events to the contemporary struggle with the Ohio Historical Society: "But more than a century and a quarter later, the Nez Perce are fighting again to preserve a part of their culture, this time in a quieter battle with the Ohio Historical Society over 19th century artifacts that the tribe believes should remain in Idaho but that the society intends to move to Ohio." According to the story, "Officials of the society, who believe their careful stewardship of the fragile artifacts has helped preserve them, worry the artifacts may be irreparably harmed if they are continuously exhibited." The reporter paraphrased OHS President Ness, "Although the society recognizes its position could be viewed as insensitive, he [Ness] added, it has a fiduciary responsibility to its trustees and Ohio citizens to hold onto the valuable

⁵⁹ Roberta Ulrich, *Oregonian* 4 December 1995.

collection.” However, Kenworth noted “the loss of this link to their [Nez Perce] past is another sorry chapter in a long history of mistreatment by white society.”⁶⁰ The Nez Perce Tribe found many supporters.

By January 3, 1996, OHS and the National Park Service and Nez Perce Tribe settled on an agreement for the Nez Perce to purchase the collection for a whopping \$583,100 and another \$25,000 for the cradleboard for a total of \$608,100. This was \$555,400 more than the \$52,700 appraisal the Ohio Historical Society received at part of the initial loan in 1980. OHS agreed to extend the loan to the NPS until June 30, 1996, giving the Nez Perce only six months to raise the money.⁶¹ The Tribe also agreed to house the Spalding-Allen Collection at a museum where it would be available for public viewing and preservation.

The Nez Perce Tribe faced a significant challenge. They needed to raise a lot of money very quickly to buy the Spalding-Allen Collection. If they were unsuccessful, many believed that OHS would sell the collection to the highest bidder. If that happened, the earliest, finest example of their material culture, when sold at auction would certainly be dispersed among private collectors and most likely remain forever inaccessible to the Nez Perce.

⁶⁰ Tom Kenworthy, *The Washington Post*, 10 December 1995.

⁶¹ Agreement to Sell the Spalding-Allen Collection. Provided to the author by OHS registrar, Leslie Pohling.

CHAPTER 4 Securing the Collection

Regarding the agreement to sell the Spalding-Allen Collection, the Ohio Historical Society essentially said: “Put up or shut up.” Robert Chenoweth, Curator Nez Perce National Historic Park

“The people of the United States have demonstrated that they value our Native American Heritage. We are deeply grateful to all those who have joined us in the spirited and successful effort.” Samuel Penney, Chairman, Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee

After taking their case to the American public, the Nez Perce eventually raised more than \$608,000 to purchase the collection. This chapter examines the ethics of selling Native American collections and the efforts by the Nez Perce to maintain their culture.

With an agreement in place between the Nez Perce Tribe and the Ohio Historical Society for the sale of the Spalding-Allen Collection, supporters of the Nez Perce Tribe argued that the \$608,100 price was too expensive. The high selling price of the collection prompted the *Seattle Times* to run an editorial noting that “others were grumbling that the price was too high, maybe unnecessarily so.”¹ The editorial supported a proposal made by Gerald Elfendahl, Curator of the Bainbridge Historical Society, who in a letter to OHS suggested that “Ohio could generate much good will by *not* charging the tribe.” Rather, according to Elfendahl, “perhaps museums across the country can send you other Ohio historical items whose values can be deducted from your request to the Nez Perce.” Elfendahl had a “made-in-Ohio railway crane used in the construction of the Panama Canal” to offer up.²

Governor Batt of Idaho weighed in. In a letter to Ohio Governor Voinovich, Batt proposed a sale price of \$100,000. Batt argued: “The tribe is being asked to pay an enormous

¹ “A better resolution for the Nez Perce artifacts?” Editorial, *Seattle Times*, 3 January 1996. NEPE, box 34, folder 8.

² Ibid.

sum for articles that are part of their heritage, I appeal to the citizens of your great state to help remedy this unreasonable situation.” Batt pointed out the obvious, “the terms of the arrangement are inequitably stacked against the tribe” and that the need to raise more than \$600,000 “in six short months is unfair and unrealistic. This would be a formidable task for any organization to undertake.” According to Batt, the collection is important to the Nez Perce but “of much less value to anyone else.”³ Batt’s proposal was not accepted by OHS.

Why did the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) decide to sell the collection? According to Dr. Carroll, an OHS board member, the Spalding-Allen Collection was on loan for “too many years running.” The “Native peoples did not make a fuss,” however indefinitely loaning the collection was a “bad idea.” OHS came to an “amicable transfer” with the National Park Service and the Nez Perce.⁴ According to Carroll, OHS had a “tenuous connection” with the Spalding-Allen materials. Carroll noted that OHS could not claim an “ethnic association.” And Carroll, with his background as a collector, noted that the OHS “could have done better with the selling price. I was upset that they did not get enough.” However since this was an agreement between museums, and the location of the Nez Perce National Historic Park and its strong cultural connection with the Spalding-Allen Collection, the OHS board determined the sale price was reasonable.⁵ In this way OHS compromised to a certain extent. Carroll was likely correct that OHS could have received an even higher sale price than the appraisal indicated.

³ “Batt asks Ohio to cut the Nez Perce a deal on artifacts.” *The Idaho Statesman*, January 10, 1996. Chenoweth Papers Unprocessed NEPE.

⁴ Conversation with Dr. George Carroll and the author on February 27, 2015. Dr. Carroll reviewed and approved my notes and provided permission for me to quote his comments.

⁵ *Ibid.*

As the appraiser Paul Raczka observed, given the Native American art market at the time, OHS may have received a higher price if they had sold the collection as individual lots. However, according to Raczka, “more than likely dealers and individual collectors” would pay more for “individual pieces and not the whole collection. If the collection was put to auction it is also possible those higher prices would not materialize, auctions being auctions.” Raczka continued, the “selective buying by a small number of bidders would leave a number of items in the collection without a sale and scattering the collection to the winds.”⁶

The purchase price of \$608,100 was a significant sum, especially given the resources of the Nez Perce Tribe at the time. It should be kept in mind that \$608,100 in 1992 in inflation adjusted dollars would be more than a million dollars today.⁷ There was a stark contrast between the views of OHS and the Nez Perce over the collection. As Bill Picard noted, OHS saw the collection as something “that they could make money off of them. And they did make money off of them... And the Nez Perce Tribe looked at them as we need to bring our items home to our families.”⁸

According to Curator Robert Chenoweth, OHS adopted a no-nonsense bargaining position for selling the collection they termed their “fiduciary responsibility.” Chenoweth recalled OHS essentially said: “Put up or shut up. You know, come up with the money. If you can’t do it in six months, you probably can’t do it. So we don’t want this thing to drag on... I

⁶ Paul Raczka email to author, December 18, 2016.

⁷ Figure for 2015. United States Department of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index inflation calculator: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm (accessed 14 November 2016)

⁸ Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

think it was beginning to be a public relations concern for them.” Chenoweth continued, “Because as the story started getting out, even before the fundraising occurred, I mean people, the newspapers and TV and stuff all came.”⁹

As the story caught the attention of the national press, the Nez Perce Tribe hired Tom Hudson to raise the money for the collection. As part of his detailed proposal, Hudson affirmed that he was “personally committed to undertaking [and] ... while you would be contacting for my professional time, my spiritual and emotional commitment are given freely.”¹⁰ In a interview with the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Hudson described the negotiating position of OHS more starkly than Chenoweth, “my view is the tribe had a gun pressed to its head. The Ohio Historical Society said it was willing to sell to other parties... if the collection was returned to Ohio, we would never see it again and it would go to a private collector.” Hudson noted that OHS viewed the collection not as historical artifacts but as financial assets.¹¹

This was an ironic position for OHS to take as their website overview stated that “in 1885, a group of Ohioans gathered together, united in the alarm over the removal from the state of valuable objects by Ohio’s prehistoric Indians.” The text continued, “they established the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, proclaiming in its charter the goal of preserving such important prehistorical relics.”¹² That the “valuable objects” came from an Indian community raises the question if the OHS was following their own founding principles.

⁹ Robert Chenoweth, Oral History Interview, 17 February 2015.

¹⁰ Tom Hudson, “Proposal Fund-Raising Coordinator Spalding-Allen Collection Fund.” NEPE box 34 folder 8.

¹¹ Joan Abrams, “He gladly shares the credit.” *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, 14 June 1996.

¹² Printed pages of the Ohio Historical Society website are located in the Chenoweth Papers, NEPE.

One of the great challenges of the campaign was that the Nez Perce needed cash and they needed it immediately. Hudson recommended targeting Government, major corporations and foundations, and citizens. This was “no ordinary business transaction.” Rather, it was a “quest,” an effort that would engage all Americans. Hudson named the organization the Nez Perce Heritage Quest Alliance and developed an early (1996) website that charted the progress of the fund-raising efforts. ¹³

A month into the campaign, help came from Idaho school children. On February 9, 1996, the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee issued a press release honoring Boise fourth grade students. When the fourth grade students at Frontier Elementary in Boise learned of the campaign by the Nez Perce to purchase the Spalding-Allen Collection as part of their Nez Perce curriculum in Idaho State history, they initiated their own fund-raising activities and worked with their teachers to contact all fourth graders in the state. A \$300 grant from the school’s Parent Teacher Organization provided the funds to cover the bulk mail donation requests. According to their teacher, Susan Hutchinson, after she told her students about the Spalding-Allen Collection, “their reaction was ‘The Nez Perce are part of our state’s heritage. We’ve to do something. There’s things we can do as kids.’” Nez Perce Chairman Samuel Penney recognized the initiative of the Frontier elementary students in Boise by issuing certificates of appreciation presented by a Tribal representative and sending a group of Nez Perce drummers and dancers to the school. ¹⁴

These events led to a coordinated plan to engage school children in their efforts by asking schools to contribute \$57.90, the symbolic amount of money based on Spalding’s estimate of the

¹³ Printed pages from the Nez Perce Heritage Quest Alliance website are located in the Chenoweth Papers, NEPE.

¹⁴ NEPE box 34 folder 8.

value of the collection in his letter to Allen. According to the Nez Perce Heritage Quest Alliance webpage, school children learned about “Nez Perce history and their rich connection to U.S. history,” while coming up with creative solutions for gathering money. Students at Jefferson Junior High in Caldwell, Idaho, contributed \$1,320 through candy and cookie sales, car washes and the community. Students from Jefferson Junior High School in Columbia, Missouri, raised money by selling privileges at school such as the right to chew gum or wear hats in class. School children sent in pictures, cards, and letters in support of the efforts. All of the school gifts were matched up to \$50,000 by an anonymous donor.

In addition to the money donated by school children something far more significant occurred. The students studied Nez Perce culture and saw the connection between the contemporary Nez Perce Tribe and their nineteenth-century ancestors. To Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee member, Bill Picard, the campaign “was not only to ask for donations, but also to raise awareness of what the tribe’s culture is, and... what the tribe does. And that we’re not just a culture that’s read about in a book. But that we’re actual people. That we’re here and that we do practice, continue to practice, our culture.”¹⁵

Major rock bands joined the school kids in pledging \$57.90. These included Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Pete Drogé, and the Presidents of the United States.¹⁶ The bands also lent their support through announcements on the cable music channel MTV. The members of Alice in Chains signed drumheads and Pearl Jam’s Eddie Vedder sent a signed

¹⁵ Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

¹⁶ Printed pages from the Nez Perce Heritage Quest Alliance website are located in the Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

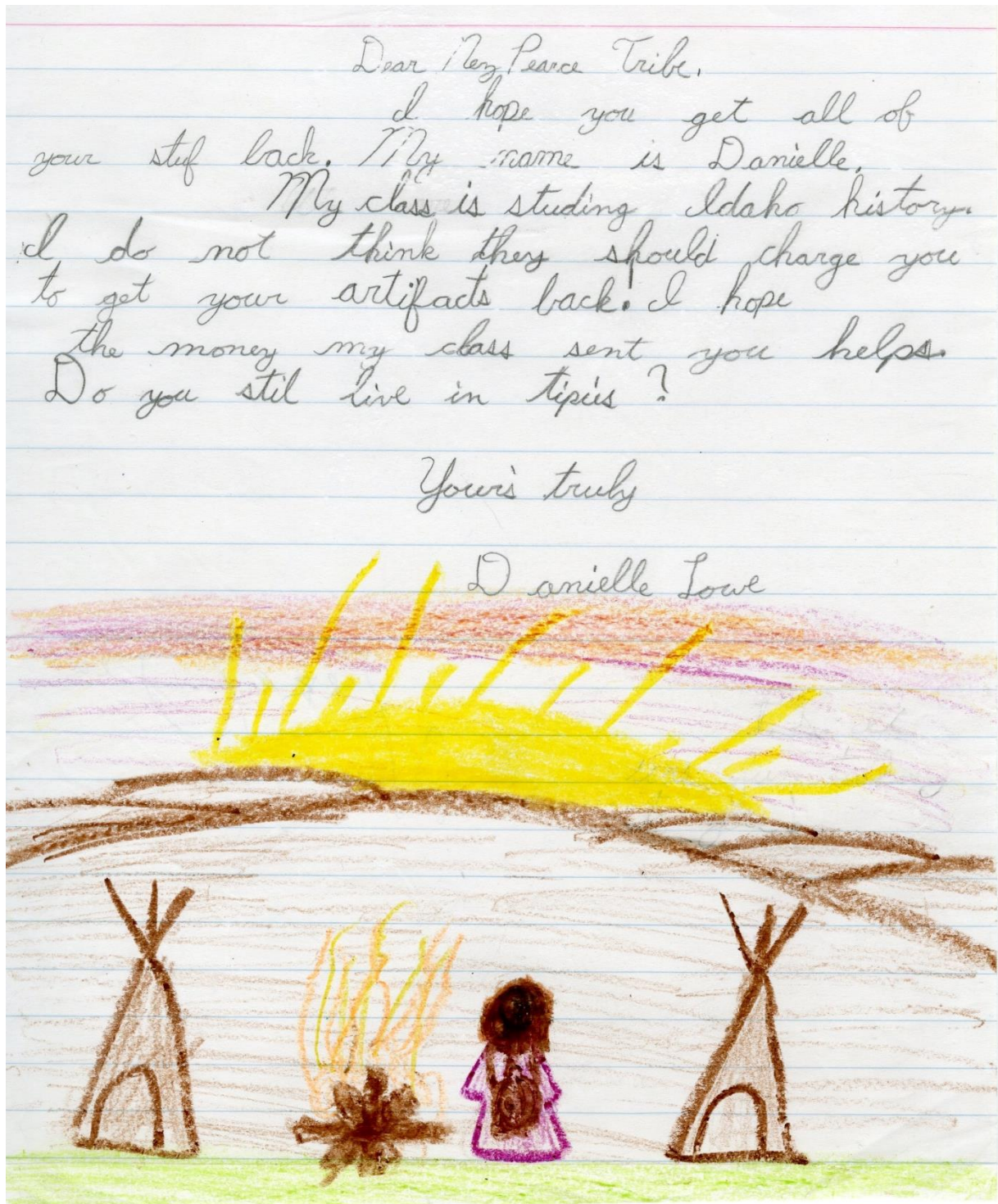


Figure 8. Letter from a student at Butte View elementary school in Emmett, Idaho. Students at the school held a bake sale and sent \$68.61 to the Nez Perce fund-raising efforts. School children across Idaho and beyond raised money to support the Nez Perce purchase of the Spalding-Allen Collection and at the same time learned about the Nez Perce people.

platinum CD to Kerri-Ann Andrews of Lewiston, who sold the items as part of a benefit auction and concert that yielded \$2,960.¹⁷

A key element of the campaign and the Nez Perce Heritage Quest Alliance website was the sponsorship of individual items in the collection. Each of the twenty Spalding-Allen artifacts had an individual webpage with a photograph, information on the item, its appraised value, and information on the sponsor.

Major donors came forward. The Lillian B. Disney Foundation provided a \$100,000 gift that was matched by an anonymous \$150,000 gift. Disney's gift sponsored the man's beaded and quilled shirt. Lillian Disney had a close connection to the region. She grew up in Lapwai, Idaho, near the Spalding mission. Her family farmed. Lillian and Walt Disney married in nearby Lewiston in 1925. Another key donor was Tom Redmond of Redmond Products, Inc. who made a gift of \$50,000 and a matching grant of another \$50,000 for money donated after April 15, 1996. These gifts sponsored the woman's hide dress with dentalia shells. The University of Idaho Women's center contributed \$6,000 to sponsor the woman's saddle.

The growing support of the Nez Perce was reflected in the composition of the Heritage Quest Alliance Advisory Board. The list included important regional politicians: Phil Batt, Governor of Idaho, Larry Craig and Dirk Kempthorne, Senators from Idaho, and Patty Murray, Senator from Washington. Other members of the board included Butch Alford, Publisher/Editor of the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Bill Holm, Curator Emeritus of the Burke Museum in Seattle,

¹⁷ Joan Abrams, "Benefit concert organizer sorts through the rumors." *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, May 22, 1996. Unfortunately for area residents Alice and Chains and Pearl Jam did not play in the benefit concert. "Benefit raises \$2,960 to buy artifacts." *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, May 29, 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

Richard West, Jr., a Washington D.C. area lawyer, and, perhaps surprisingly, Joanne Spalding-Stacy, the great-granddaughter of Reverend Henry Spalding.

Joanne Spalding-Stacy sent letters to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, the *Spokesman-Review* and the *Lewiston Tribune* on December 5th, 1995, in which she stated: “I fervently hope the Nez Perce can somehow retain those splendid examples of their heritage there on the reservation, and in my own small way have been trying to aid in this.” She continued, reflecting a common view held in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, that her ancestor Henry Spalding sent the items to Allen not in exchange for trade goods but to preserve Nez Perce heritage because “by 1846 Spalding foresaw that the long wagon trains of settlers would soon wipe out the Nez Perce culture.” Luckily, the Nez Perce culture adapted to the tumultuous changes that occurred after the missionary period. As this struggle over the Spalding-Allen Collection demonstrated, far from being “wiped out,” the Nez Perce resiliently fought for their cultural traditions.

In her letter Spalding-Stacy wrote: “It seems the Ohioans are the ‘traders’ and are seeking the highest bidder. Their ‘ownership’ comes only because a descendent of Allen didn’t store them and gave them for safe keeping.” Given the expense of building and staffing the National Park Service headquarters, Spalding-Stacy reasoned, “let us find the funding to save this quality display of our Northwestern heritage.” She concluded: “one hundred and twenty years ago U. S. troops drove the Nez Perce off their homeland. We owe them a little help in holding on to the remnants of their culture.”¹⁸

Donors across the country sent small gifts with cards and letters of encouragement. Mary and Brock St. Clair wrote, "To the Nez Perce People we are very saddened by the unwillingness

¹⁸ NEPE box 34 folder 9.

of the Ohio Historical Society to return to you what is yours. We have decided to use some of the money we would have spent on Christmas presents for individuals to go instead to helping you buy back your artifacts.” Their note continued: “If the historical society has a change of heart and returns the collection free of charge please use this money for something else.” While the Reverend Ginny and Jim Burnett penned: “we hope this is postmarked in time for the Spalding-Allen Collection Fund payment. This act of Oberlein [sic] College and the Ohio Historical Society is one of stealing from others.... which is a sin. May God change their hearts.” Finally, Brace of Aloha Oregon echoed a common sentiment found the notes; "What a rip-off!! You have to buy your belongings back that were stolen! Good luck on your fundraising."¹⁹

As the fund-raising campaign was in full swing, Park officials and the Nez Perce knew that it was far from certain that they would succeed in raising the money and to keep the Spalding-Allen Collection at the Nez Perce National Historic Park. According to NPS Curator Chenoweth, “we needed to document as well as we possibly could the artifacts.” NPS officials invited in Nez Perce to capture all of the information possible before returning the artifacts to Ohio, where many felt they would remain. Nakia Williamson Cloud, Kevin Peters, Josiah and Tisa Pinkham, and many others elders came to see the objects. They recorded information on the collection and made detailed drawings of the items. As Chenoweth said, this included Nez Perce “with not only artistic ability, but also people that understood how these things were made. So we had these times set aside where we laid all the stuff out and people came and looked at it.”

This open house for the collection went on for months for anyone in the community to come and see the objects before it was too late. There was also another reason according to

¹⁹ NEPE box 35 folder 3.

Chenoweth, “but you know, the other part of it, the motivational part of it was we wanted people to see potentially what we could lose.”²⁰

On May 3, 1996, as the documentation of the collection was underway and fund-raising efforts accelerated, Jenny Ferguson, a 1993 Oberlin College graduate, wrote a letter titled “Oberlin should acknowledge rightful owners of Nez Perce artifacts” to *The Oberlin Review*. Ferguson remarked that after receiving repeated requests from Oberlin to donate to the college, she instead “decided to give something back” by sending a check to the Nez Perce foundation’s Spalding-Allen Collection fund. Noting that she was unsure if the Nez Perce efforts to reclaim the collection had “gotten much attention on campus” Ferguson characterized the provenance of the collection as follows:

Somehow, what was taken from Nez Perce Indians by the infamous Rev. Henry Spalding, sent to his friend Dr. Dudley [sic] Allen in Ohio, donated by Allen’s son to Oberlin College, permanently loaned to the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) and then temporarily loaned to the Nez Perce National Historical Park became ‘property’ of OHS to be sold back to the Nez Perce for \$608,000.

While some might quibble with Ferguson’s description of Spalding as “infamous,” her argument demonstrates why the public overwhelmingly supported the Tribe’s efforts to regain the collection. It did not seem right that what was permanently loaned and then gifted to OHS should become “property” sold under difficult terms, a high price combined with a short time to make payment.

Ferguson chastised Oberlin for not taking an active role in the negotiations between the Nez Perce and OHS and for not insisting that “the collection should be returned, rather than sold.” For this reason, she continued: “I believe Oberlin College has acted irresponsibly.” While the Oberlin fundraising letters she received called on her to “have faith” in Oberlin, Ferguson

²⁰ Robert Chenoweth, Oral History Interview, 17 February 2015.

continued: “I can have no faith in an institution which acts only on its own financial interests by protecting its relationship with the Ohio Historical Society and shows no understanding of the ways in which its historical ties have taken a toll on other communities.” As she reasoned, “Oberlin has willingly accepted generous gifts from the families of missionaries and has profited greatly. The College should be just as willing to acknowledge that some of the items it has received were obtained unjustly. In addition, Oberlin College should cover the bill which has now been attached to those gifts.” In the end, Oberlin did not become involved in the negotiations or financially contribute to the Nez Perce cause.

After months of effort, the Nez Perce nearly had enough money to purchase the Spalding-Allen Collection. Near the end of May, they were \$45,000 short of the required \$608,100. Potlatch Corp. then donated \$25,000 when combined with other smaller donations and a \$2,500 check from Frontier Elementary School in Boise put them over the goal.²¹

On May 30, 1996, the Ohio Historical Society and the Nez Perce Heritage Quest Alliance issued press releases on the completion of the collection purchase. OHS Director Gary Ness attempted to put OHS in the best possible light remarking that the sale of any collection was “an unusual activity for the society. However, we understand the tribe’s interest in the collection, and in contemplating their offer we were encouraged that the Nez Perce share our desire to preserve the collection and continue to make it accessible to members of the public.” The Columbus Dispatch reported that the sale was a “windfall for the society’s acquisition fund, about four

²¹ Sandra Lee, “Buying a legacy.” *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, Friday, 31 May 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.



Figure 9. Nakia Williamson drawing the woman's saddle in the Spalding-Allen Collection. Photograph courtesy of the Lewiston Morning Tribune May 3, 1996. As NPS prepared to return the collection to the Ohio Historical Society, Nakia Williamson and Kevin Peters made detailed drawings of objects in the collection.

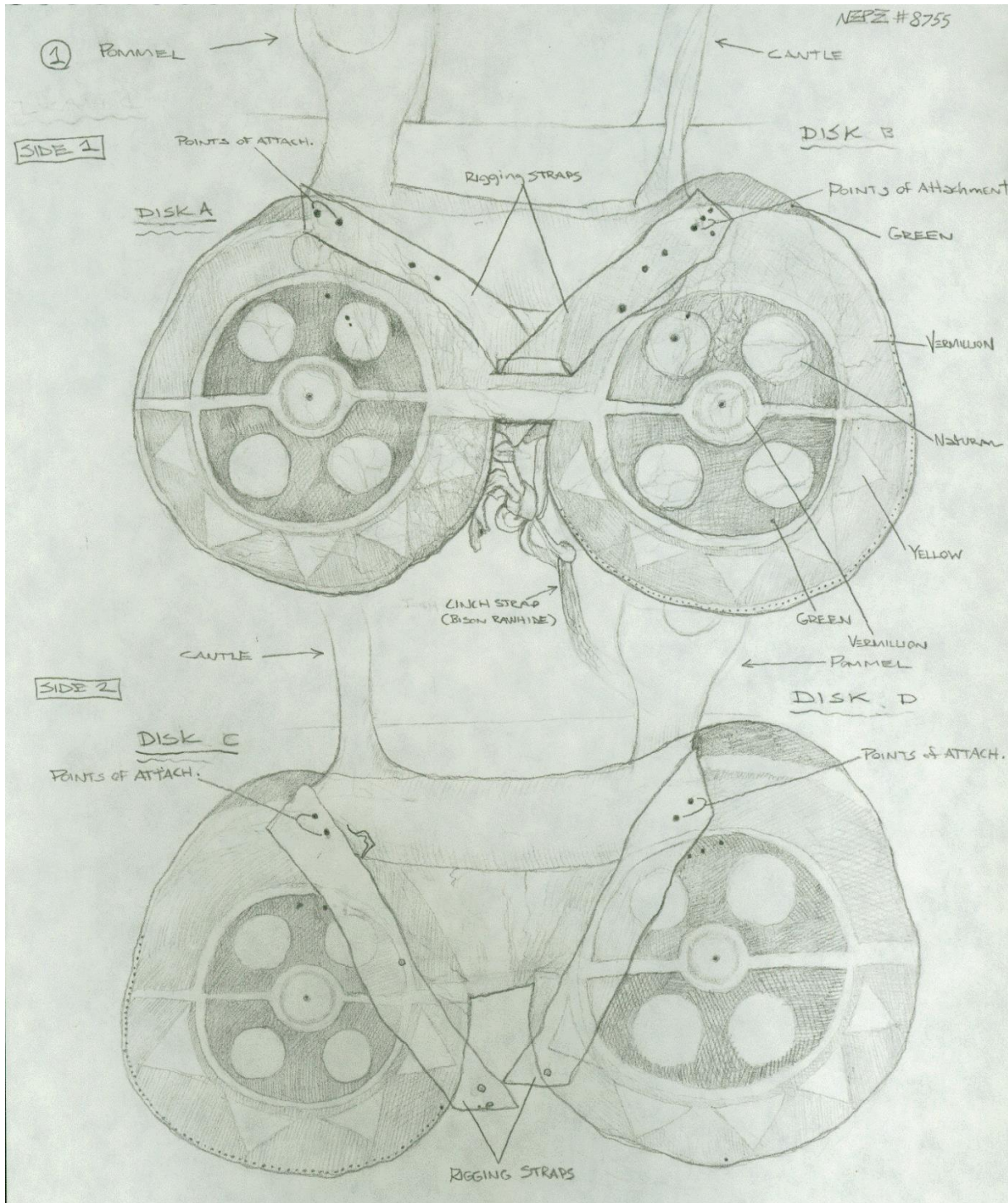


Figure 10. Detailed drawing by Nakia Williamson of the construction and design of the woman's saddled in the Spalding-Allen Collection.

times what the society typically spends each year buying artifacts and library materials.”²²

Chairman Penney framed his remarks more broadly, “This purchase officially ends a 150-year odyssey for an extraordinary part of our heritage our people and supporters all over the U. S. will celebrate the homecoming of the Spalding-Allen Collection.” According to the release, support came from more than 2,000 donors and 50 schools raised the symbolic amount of \$57.90. Penney noted “The people of the United States have demonstrated that they value our Native American Heritage. We are deeply grateful to all those who have joined us in the spirited and successful effort.”²³

In a story the following day, Penney said, “this historic event should not be seen as an acquisition of museum artifacts. It is a restoration of an important part of the Nez Perce culture.”²⁴ Penney remarked: “we found partners and friends when we did not expect them. And we have seen a light of respect and compassion which suggests a greater future for our United States.” Though some Nez Perce faulted the Rev. Spalding for his suppression of native religious culture, Spalding’s great-granddaughter, Spalding-Stacy argued that “there would be nothing left if not for this collection. He [Spalding] did a great favor for the tribe without knowing it.” However, she felt angry that the Nez Perce had to buy the collection back and called the price a “ransom.”²⁵

²² Randall Edwards, “Nez Perce have cash to buy artifacts.” *The Columbus Dispatch*, Thursday, 30 May 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

²³ NEPE box 34 folder 8.

²⁴ Rich Roeslser, “Tribe regains articles of history.” *The Spokesman-Review*, Friday, 31 May 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Reflecting on the end of the campaign, Nakia Williamson, remarked that many people responded to the campaign and “realized that this is where these things belong here in this land. And so I think in that way it was a good thing. And I think our leaders that at that time, our elders that were alive at that time... were making good decisions” Williamson continued, “I guess we’re always asking ourselves what are we doing and are we doing the right thing. And ultimately, I think, you know, when we look back, even though there was probably some negative aspects and some things that probably weren’t so good overall.” Nevertheless Williamson concluded, “I think we can walk away and say what was done and what was accomplished was a good thing for us. Not only for us but again, for this land and for the people that now live here.”²⁶

The Spalding-Allen Collection “needed to be home” according to Bill Picard with “the people who put these things together... They needed to be with the family... They were lost in Ohio.” But the permanent return of the collection signified to Picard a reunion of the collection between living Nez Perce and their lost elders. As Picard recalled: “it was like reconnecting with your elders. Reconnecting with maybe your great-great-grandfather who you’ve only seen in pictures. Or maybe only heard about in oral history. Only heard about in stories. But here’s some items that belonged to him. So there’s a reconnection between you and those that made these items.” This connection had a spiritual aspect too according to Picard, “the importance of these items being home is because the spirituality between those that made those items, those that gave up those items, those that sacrificed, and now being brought back, the reconnection with those

²⁶ Nakia Williamson, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

people. The reconnection with the owners of the items. And then also the reconnection of those items with their owners.”²⁷

On May 30, 1996, Bob Chenoweth flew to Columbus Ohio to hand-carry the deer skin cradleboard back to the Nez Perce. Unlike the journey to Ohio the first time, the cradleboard returned to Idaho after a seven-hour flight. Upon seeing the cradleboard, Chenoweth immediately noticed that it had the same design elements as one of the dresses in the Spalding-Allen Collection. Chenoweth remarked, “it was instantly clear the person who made the dress also made the cradleboard... it has a lot of touches, those extra little things you’d do for your baby to show your pride.”²⁸ According to Tom Hudson, “there’s a design of dentalia shells – white spiral shells from Vancouver Island – and very old trade beads that are identical on the woman’s dress and the cradleboard.” Hudson continued, “it’s so unique and so ornate that it must have been family related. I’m sure they’re from a mother and child.”²⁹ At a special viewing for tribal leaders and elders on May 31, 1996, Hudson said, “I can’t stop smiling. I’ve watched elders through and look at it with such reverence. This is truly a homecoming.”³⁰

Visitors to the Nez Perce National Historical Park’s headquarters in Spalding Idaho will see much of the Spalding-Allen Collection on display in the permanent exhibit area. The Nez

²⁷ Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

²⁸ “Cradleboard comes home after 150 year hiatus.” *Tots Tatoken*, June, 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

²⁹ Rich Roeslser, “Tribe regains articles of history.” *The Spokesman-Review*, Friday, 31 May 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

³⁰ “Cradleboard comes home after 150 year hiatus.” *Tots Tatoken*, June, 1996. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

Perce are focus of the exhibit with very little mention of Henry Spalding. A panel placed beside one of the woman's dresses reads:

The Spalding-Allen Collection

In 1836 Henry H. Spalding established a Presbyterian mission among the Nez Perce here at the confluence of the Clearwater River and Lapwai Creek. In 1846 Spalding sent two boxes containing Nez Perce artifacts to Dr. Dudley Allen of Kinsman, Ohio. Allen donated these to Oberlin College in 1893 and by 1943 they had become part of the collection of the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) in Columbus. In 1969 the National Park Service "rediscovered" this collection and began negotiation which resulted in the collection's loan to Nez Perce National Historical Park. With the exception of the cradleboard, this collection was exhibited from 1981 to 1995. The Ohio Historical Society requested the return of the collection in 1993, but several loan extensions were granted in order to negotiate the purchase of these artifacts by the Nez Perce Tribe. In November, 1995 the collection was removed from exhibition in preparation for its return to Ohio.

In December, 1995, the Nez Perce Tribe agreed to purchase the collection after lengthy negotiations with OHS. On May 30, 1996, Tribal Chairman Samuel Penney presented a check to the OHS for the purchase of the entire Spalding-Allen Collection. At that time the cradleboard was reunited with the rest of the collection. In 2002 Oberlin College located an additional bag belonging to the collection and generously returned it to the Nez Perce Tribe. This is the oldest documented collection of Nez Perce material anywhere in the world.

The text is a concise and neutral summary of the events described in the research. However, it obscures the contested status of the collection and the genuine struggle over negotiating a price and the terms for its repatriation to Nez Perce country. The second paragraph reveals a subtle dig at the Ohio Historical Society (OHS). When Oberlin discovered a lost bag from the collection, unlike OHS, the College "generously returned it to the Nez Perce Tribe." OHS officials *may* have wanted to do the right thing: their actions could not be construed as "generous."

One consequence of the public struggle to obtain the Spalding-Allen Collection was the return of another Nez Perce collection held in Ohio. On July 24, 1995, Curator Bob Chenoweth spoke with Ray Schuck from the Allen County Historical Society in Lima, Ohio. The two discussed the Allen County Historical Society's wish to return a small, but highly significant

collection of Nez Perce artifacts collected by Harry Lee Bailey, a Lieutenant in the U.S. 21st Infantry. Like the Spalding-Allen Collection, the provenance of the Bailey Collection is well documented.³¹

After an attack by General Oliver Howard against a Nez Perce camp near Cottonwood Creek on July 11 and 12, 1877, the Nez Perce fled the Clearwater Battle site leaving many personal items behind. Many U.S. soldiers, including Bailey, took souvenirs before burning the village. These few items are the only documented objects that survived from the battle, a turning point in the 1877 War. The attack by General Howard compelled the Nez Perce to move East through the Lolo Pass into the Bitterroot Valley to seek shelter with the Crow Tribe of Montana.

In 1927, Harry Lee Bailey donated his collection of a child-sized buckskin dress, a beaded sheath, and five bronze bells to the Allen County Historical Society. The society displayed the objects for over twenty-five years. When their curator Ray Schuck contacted Chenoweth he indicated that his society wished to donate the collection, but felt compelled to wait to see what happened with the OHS Spalding-Allen Collection. The Allen County Historical Society did not want “to tip that one way or another.” The Society’s board also felt that the collection should “return home.”

In August 1998, after an exchange of letters between the Nez Perce Tribe, the Nez Perce National Historical Park, and the Allen County Historical Society, NPTEC Chairman Samuel Penney and Josiah Pinkham travelled to Lima, Ohio, to receive the Bailey Collection. At the return ceremony, Tom Henry, a reporter for the *Toledo Blade News* wrote that when a white sheet was lifted and the gathered audience saw “the dress – vivid reminder, they said, of the women and children who were killed or forced to flee their village when it was invaded by the U.

³¹ Accession 517, Nez Perce National Historic Park.

S. 21st infantry near Clearwater, Idaho, on July 12, 1877.” Josiah Pinkham spoke of the Allen County Historical Society’s decision to return the collection, “it’s a powerful thing to be here today, to be part of what’s right.” Unlike OHS which sold the Spalding-Allen Collection at full appraised value, here the collection was donated. Pinkham noted, “these things represent our people. These things carry a story. I say with a good heart I’m proud to be here.”³²

The Allen County Historical Society waited until the sale of the Spalding-Allen Collection was finalized in part because they did not wish to jeopardize their receipt of state funds administered by the Ohio Historical Society. This episode represents the extreme position taken by OHS to cash in on the Spalding-Allen Collection. Nor was the Allen County Historical Society an especially supportive institution for Native American concerns. They refused calls to return 50-70 sets of human remains to area tribes until the communities “can prove they are their ancestors.”³³

³² Ibid, printed copy of Tom Henry, “Museum returns artifacts to Nez Perce Tribe,” *The Toledo Blade News*, August 20, 1998.

³³ Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS

In his barter of Nez Perce goods, the missionary Henry Spalding sought to end traditional Nez Perce culture, by advocating that the Nez Perce adopt western dress, agriculture, and a stern version of Christianity. Spalding packed the Nez Perce goods that he acquired through trade or coercion and shipped them to his friend, and missionary benefactor, Dudley Allen. This research demonstrates that Spalding requested specific goods from Allen to further Spalding's missionary activities (in essence operating a shadow economy outside of the resources provided to him by his ABCFM overseers). Ironically, at the same time Spalding worked to "civilize" the Nez Perce by advocating the abandonment of their cultural practices, he also created an archive of their earliest documented material culture. Spalding's collecting and the survival of his correspondence to Allen describing the objects created an archive of the earliest surviving documented Nez Perce material culture.

Primary sources are critical for writing history. Yet, most historians give little thought to the why and how archival collections were created and preserved. The key to understanding any primary source is its provenance. Provenance is important well beyond the life history of one particular collection, no matter how significant that collection is. When the provenance of collections is lost, such as when collections are broken up and organized by topic, the usefulness of the archive (or collection) is greatly diminished because the context in which the sources were created, preserved, and used is lost. Large collecting institutions, such as the Smithsonian, store millions of Native American archives (artifacts, papers, letters,) with little or no provenance. For example, a woman's dress made of elk hide, glass beads, and elk teeth by an unknown tribe sometime in the nineteenth century is much less interesting from a scholarly, cultural, (and

collector's) view than the same dress made by a Nez Perce, acquired by Henry Spalding at Lapwai, then in the Oregon Territory, circa 1840, the earliest such dress documented.

Archives, or more broadly collections, are at the center of understanding the past. As the historian, Antoinette Burton writes, “at issue in the project of interrogating archival evidence—what counts, what doesn't, where it is housed, who possess it, and who lays claim to it as a political resource—is not theory, but the very power of historical explanation itself.”¹ This work argues that the ownership and location of the Spalding-Allen Collection were critical issues for the Nez Perce Tribe who seek to maintain their cultural traditions.

By questioning the provenance of archives, scholars gain a richer understanding of the creation and preservation of collections. No archives are "objective" or "neutral," instead collections privilege some individuals and silence others. Spalding described the collection he sent to Allen to maximize the rarity and value of the items he shipped to Ohio so that Allen would send an equivalent value back to the mission in trade goods that Spalding could exchange for labor and supplies. Spalding however silenced the names of the individuals who made or traded the goods he acquired.

The archive Spalding created was nearly lost on several occasions. It survived a lengthy trip from the Oregon Country to Ohio being damaged in the process. Allen's descendants gave the Collection to Oberlin where the provenance was lost until Prof. Fletcher re-established the association of the artifacts with the collector Henry Spalding. Here the collection remained until 1942 when Oberlin officials loaned it to the Ohio Historical Society where Oberlin officials thought that the items would be better cared for. OHS did not steward the collection well; never

¹ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 138.

investing in conservation services or research time. The collection was scattered at multiple locations in Ohio and African baskets mistakenly added to the collection. OHS only established ownership in 1979 following a formal request from the National Park Service for a loan. The initial loan terms included difficult to administer one year loans and a reappraisal of the collection every five years. After the collection doubled in appraised value, OHS took steps to cash in on the collection.

The value of the Spalding-Allen Collection went from \$52,700 in 1980 to \$104,850 in 1985 because of the research and \$12,000 of conservation work done at Harpers Ferry Center paid for by the Nez Perce National Historic Park. NPS officials also had the collection appraised by an expert in Plateau materials thus dramatically increasing the value of the collection.

In all of their negotiations over the collection OHS avoided, whenever possible, dealing with Tribal officials. OHS asserted that they only received a formal offer by the Nez Perce in December 1995, however as this research demonstrated Richard Halfmoon, the Vice Chair of the Nez Perce Tribe Executive Committee sought to acquire the Spalding-Allen Collection as early as 1979. In 1995, the Nez Perce offered the full appraised value though many Nez Perce objected to paying for the collection. As the Nez Perce fundraising effort revealed, Americans across the country supported the return of the collection to its creators while criticizing OHS for the high sale price. In a reversal of history of the 1877 conflict between and Nez Perce and federal government, this time a division of the federal government, the National Park Service, collaborated closely with the Nez Perce.

In taking their case to the public, the overwhelming sentiment of opinion supported the Nez Perce cause. The campaign to raise the \$608,100 reverberated well beyond the small Nez Perce Nation. Tom Hudson and his Nez Perce supporters took the opportunity to not only raise

money to keep the important collection, but also educate the American public regarding Nez Perce history and culture. The Ohio Historical Society did the right thing in selling the collection. Appraiser Paul Raczka noted, “it speaks to the integrity of [OHS]... to insure the collection remained intact. The fact that it would also return to the originating tribe, to bridge a gap in historical knowledge by providing a first-hand view of the material culture of their ancestors, was also not lost on the board.” He continued, “their actions are to be highly commended.”² Nevertheless, the high sale price required by OHS reflected poorly on their institution and demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to Native American history. OHS got their money, but also took a battering in the public sphere.

Reflecting on the ethics of the agreement between OHS and Nez Perce, Bill Picard likened it to what would happen if he found a wallet on the street. “If I was in the streets of Coeur d’Alene and I walked up and found somebody’s wallet on the ground and picked it up, it doesn’t belong to me. And so I would dig in it to look, find out who it belongs to and I’d get it back to them.” Picard continued, “But the Ohio [Historical] Society stumbled on some stuff that doesn’t belong to them. And instead of giving it back to who it belonged to, they said, we’ll sell it to you for 600 and some thousand, but we’ll only give you six months to buy it, or we’re going to sell it to someone else.” Picard noted that this was not an isolated case by that museums and art galleries that hold American Indian collections need to ask “who does this truly belong to and where did it come from? How did we end up with it? And then maybe look at trying to get it back to the original owners.” Picard reflected, “I think a lot of the tribes don’t even know that their stuff’s out there in museums.”³

² Paul Raczka email to author, December 18, 2016.

³ Bill Picard, Oral History Interview, 2 June 2015.

For the Nez Perce Tribe, the acquisition of the collection required the attention of the many individuals and the raising of significant resources. However, the process also educated the American public regarding the Tribe and demonstrated their tremendous agency. These were not victims of history, rather activists for their tradition culture getting their way by arguing for social justice and utilizing the public sphere.

While the public nature of the struggle over the Spalding-Allen Collection was noteworthy, Josiah Pinkham reflected that it was “representational of a lot of different challenges that native people face in trying to reassemble what was shattered. And I think that the Spalding-Allen Collection is representational of our efforts to basically put things back together.” For Pinkham, the collection is one of many efforts underway by the Nez Perce to reassemble a culture that was disrupted by Spalding and subsequent history.

In December 1996, months after the return of the Spalding-Allen Collection, a small, but highly significant, portion of the Nez Perce homeland was returned to the tribe. The Trust for Public Lands, a national organization that purchases land to sell to governmental and public agencies to preserve natural lands and sites of historic importance, purchased a 10,300 acre ranch in the Wallowa Valley and returned the property to the Nez Perce. The Tribe agreed to convert the ranch, which borders the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, from a cattle ranch to habitat for salmon and elk. The Bonneville Power Administration also contributed two million to purchase of an additional 6,200 acres and another four and a half million to develop an inventory of the lands and a management plan.⁴ The Wallowa Valley was the traditional home of Chief Joseph’s band. The return of this property and

⁴ Susan Arreola, “Ancestral Wallowa Valley returned to Nez Perce Tribe,” *Indian Country Today*, 9 December 1996.

the repatriation of the Spalding-Allen Collection marked important steps in the restoration of Nez Perce cultural heritage.

Reflecting on purchase of the Spalding-Allen Collection and the wider efforts of the Nez Perce Tribe to sustain their culture, Pinkham remarked, “we’re involved in so many other aspects of putting things together... we were involved in a struggle to put grey wolves back out into Idaho’s “wilds.” And we also put Coho back in the streams, even though the state of Idaho threatened to incarcerate us.” Not long after the Spalding-Allen Collection returned to the Nez Perce, Pinkham recalled, “we acquired the precious lands over in Oregon. Over in [Chief] Joseph’s homeland and that was a pretty cool deal. So you know, those fronts are all related in that people all over are facing the challenge of not just surviving but putting back together those things that were lost.” Pinkham continued, “And so you could probably consider land acquisition, collections like this, language, you know, we’re really struggling to basically put all that stuff back together, because we know that we’re relying upon that as [a] people to survive.”⁵

The efforts to regain the Spalding-Allen Collection should not be viewed as an isolated instance of Nez Perce advocacy, but rather part of a larger and longer series of actions to maintain Tribal sovereignty and continue their traditional lifeways, from nineteenth-century resistance to the reservation system to contemporary efforts to manage their cultural and natural resources.

In April 2002, two members of the Nez Perce Tribe, Lynette and her brother Josiah Pinkham, travelled to the campus of Oberlin College in Ohio. Alerted to the possibility that pieces from the Spalding-Allen Collection were not accounted for, Oberlin students in Professor Linda Grimm’s introductory anthropology class scoured the campus for Nez Perce objects. One

⁵ Josiah Pinkham, Oral History Interview, 14 May 2015.

student in particular, Elizabeth Atack, searched diligently and eventually located a flat-twined Nez Perce bag intermixed with textiles from Southeast Asia. After subsequent research confirmed the bag's connection to Spalding, the Oberlin Anthropology department decided to return it to the Nez Perce Tribe. Josiah Pinkham mentioned that the bag was used to carry food while Lynette, who is a skilled weaver, remarked that "our children will learn from this. To see this, it's amazing to have this quality of work and to have it and cherish it in our possession." Unlike the last time, there would be no fundraising campaign. Oberlin returned the bag without charge.⁶

The actions of the Ohio Historical Society during the negotiations over the Spalding-Allen Collection damaged the reputation of the institution, but OHS was to face worse problems in the coming decade. The Ohio state legislature slashed the Ohio Historical Society appropriation from \$13.6 million in fiscal year 2008 to 7.9 million in 2014, a 42% decline in two years. OHS fired more than half of its full-time employees moving from a staff of 400 in 2001 to just 184 in 2009, closed many of its historic properties, and reduced access to the state archives from three days a week to only one.⁷ OHS library never responded to multiple requests by the Washington State University Libraries inter library loan department; nor could staff there locate the curator files of Dr. Loveday, files that Dr. Loveday suggested I consult.⁸

⁶ Jeff Mohram, "A Long Strange Trip." *The Chronicle Telegram*, Elyria, Ohio. Sunday, 20 April 2002. Chenoweth papers, NEPE.

⁷ Christopher Maag, "Vanishing history" *Monthly Columbus Magazine*, November 2009 .

⁸ Certainly not all of OHS' departments provided such poor research service, Leslie Pohling, the OHS registrar, promptly responded to all of my questions, provided documents, and put me in touch with Dr. Loveday and Dr. Carroll.

After the sale of the Spalding-Allen Collection, OHS did not improve their relations with Native American communities or provide better care for their prominent Native American collections. One of their most significant holdings is the Newark Earthworks, one of the most massive construction works of the ancient world, built over a period of 600 years by the Hopewell culture between 250 and 500 CE. The Ohio Historical Society owns the site and has leased it since 1933 to the private Moundbuilders Country Club, which turned many of the mounds into an 18-hole golf course without public access. According to Richard Shiels, a history professor at Ohio State University, “playing golf on a Native American spiritual site is a fundamental desecration.” Amid growing controversy over golfing on the site, in 1997, OHS renewed the lease to the Moundbuilders Country Club until 2078. In 2005, the Country Club owners barred non-club members from stepping on the greens to view the moon’s alignment with the Newark Earthworks, an event that occurs only every 18.6 years.⁹

In the decades after the return of the Spalding-Allen Collection, the American public and judicial system consistently sided with Native American communities on preventing the sale of Native American sacred objects. As appraiser Paul Raczka observed, “NAGPRA has had a strong influence on the market for Native American art. More than anything it has caused uncertainty in acquiring any piece for fear it will fall under the jurisdiction of the law.” According to Raczka, it is the cultural patrimony section of NAGPRA that is the most ambiguous. Raczka observed that in today’s art market the significance of the Spalding-Allen Collection to the Nez Perce people would likely cause the sale to fall under the cultural patrimony portion of the law. This would prohibit its sale outside the tribe. Raczka continued,

⁹ Christopher Maag, “Ohio Indian Mounds: Hallowed Ground and a Nice Par 3.” *New York Times Magazine*, 28 November 2005.

“this has proven to be the case with several pieces being withdrawn from the larger auction houses. One case being a Sioux shirt identified as belonging to an ancestor of a contemporary family. It was claimed the piece was integral to the culture of the group to survive.”¹⁰

The struggle for Native communities to reclaim their cultural heritage has moved overseas. The Hopi repeatedly failed in their attempts to stop a major sale of 100 American Indian objects by the Drouot auction house in Paris. Among the sacred items up for auction were twenty-four Hopi katsinam considered by the Hopi to be divine, living beings. Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, vice president and director of Annenberg Foundation, who lives in Paris followed the news coverage of the Hopi’s unsuccessful attempts to block the sale in French courts. He approved a budget for the Annenberg Foundation of up to one million to purchase twenty-seven sacred items: twenty-four Hopi katsinam and three items sacred to the San Carlos Apache of Arizona. Working in secrecy with Pierre Servan-Schreiber, the French lawyer who had represented the Hopi *pro bono* in litigation prior to the auction, Annenberg Foundation staff, purchased twenty-four of the twenty-seven items, including the most expensive item of the auction: a Hopi Crow Mother headdress that sold for \$130,000.

As a phone bidder was purchasing so many of the Hopi lots, the owner of the auction house, Alain Leroy, asked his staff to investigate. His staff assured Leroy that the bids were legitimate and that the funds had been previously wired. Leroy remarked after the sale that “it’s a good outcome for the Hopi but not the collectors, I suppose.” His statement in part underscores Leroy’s wish to keep collections circulating among collectors. There is no indication on his part that the sale was a good outcome for social justice; that sacred collections were returning to their home of origin.

¹⁰ Paul Raczka email to author, December 18, 2016.

Annenberg foundation staff worked with the United States State Department, but kept the bidding otherwise secret until immediately after the sale. Immediately following the sale, Annenberg representatives contacted the Hopi to inform them that the katisman would be returned and consulted on the best way to return the belongings. Wrapping the katisman in bubble wrap, for example might suffocate the spirits. In the end, the Annenberg foundation spent \$530,695 and obtained all but three of the twenty-four Hopi lots and the three other sacred Apache artifacts.¹¹

The New York Times reporter, Tom Mashberg, concluded his story on the Annenberg purchase by noting, “the fact that the Katsinam had to be bought and paid for, even by benefactors, was a bittersweet nod to the reality that American Indian artifacts have become highly sought, expensive commodities.” Sam Tenakhongva of the Hopi reflecting on the sale, expressed a sentiment shared by some of the Nez Perce when deliberating on whether to buy back the Spalding-Allen Collection, “no one should have to buy back their sacred property, but now at least they will be at home with us and they will go to rest.”¹²

In an interview shortly after the sale, Pierre Servan-Schreiber, the French lawyer who had represented the Hopi and aided the Annenberg Foundation, noted that the only way to stop similar auctions “is by creating a collective perception that they are wrong. Whether through the media, or court action, people need to know why it is wrong, so that everybody thinks it is.” He continued, “I hope that one day, people will realize that not everything can be bought or sold.”¹³

¹¹ Tom Mashberg, “Secret Bids Guide Hopi Indians’ Spirits Home,” *The New York Times*, 16 December 2013.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Dominique Godreche, “Lawyer Has Hope that Auctions of Sacred Items Will Someday Stop,” *Indian Country Today Media Network.com*, 22 December, 2014

The struggle for the return of Native Collections from European museums continues. Since 1978, the Zuni successfully repatriated more than 100 Ahayuda, sacred war gods, from museums across the United States citing NAGPRA. However, U.S. repatriation laws do not yet apply in Europe. Octavius Seowtewa, a Zuni elder, travelled with Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, curator of anthropology at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, to ask for the repatriation of Ahayuda from European collections. The Zuni make only two Ahayuda a year on the winter solstice to protect the tribe from harm and promote fertility. According to Seowtewa, only the Zuni's Bow priest are allow to touch the Ahayuda, which are owned by the tribe, so any found outside the community are considered by the tribe illegally taken.

During their visits to museums in Europe so far the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, in the Netherlands, has been the most receptive. After being informed of Zuni concerns, the museum removed Ahayuda from display and their curator, Pieter Hovens, indicated in an email that "he was also hopeful that the repatriation would take place."¹⁴ Colwell-Chanthaphonh found other European museums "more colonial" in their resistance to return collections to their source communities.

In December 2014, the Navajo Nation sent a delegation to Paris to buy seven masks used in the winter Nightway Chant ceremony. At the same auction, several lots of Hopi katsinam were up for sale, but the tribe did not bid on the grounds arguing that the seller cannot own such spiritual beings and therefore cannot sell them. Deswood Tome, Navajo Nation spokesman, told the Associated Press, "buying these masks... is a precedent that we've set." However, the sale signaled that the auction of sacred American Indian objects in France was becoming more controversial, as Navajo Speaker Pro Tem LoRenzo Bates noted in a press release, "it was clear

¹⁴ Rachel Donadio, "Zuni Ask Europe to Return Sacred Art," *The New York Times*, 9 April 2014.

that the French people are becoming more and more aware of Navajo people's concern over the respect for Navajo human rights and it was evident by the news agencies and organization that came out to the auction to seek Navajo Nation input.¹⁵ These events underscore that the importance of provenance and the ongoing efforts of Native peoples to retrieve their cultural heritage from collectors and museums.

The story of the Spalding-Allen Collection took place during a shift in relations between museums and Native communities. Through the late nineteenth century into the later twentieth century, many museums collected and displayed Native American materials in ways that affirmed the superiority of Euro-American culture and implied that Native communities had essentially vanished. However, in the 1990s after the passage of NAGPRA and the development of the NMAI, the dialog between Native American communities and museums changed to one of consultation. Museums such, as the NMAI and the Burke to mention only two, closely collaborate with Native American communities on exhibits that featured Native American culture.

On Wednesday, September 14, 2016, I visited the collections center for the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Suitland, Maryland, with representatives from the California Indian Museum and the Zibiwing Cultural Center (in Michigan). Greeting us at the door to the collections center was a statue of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce. We entered a different type of museum collections facility, one built after extensive consultations with Native communities. As the curator Joe Horse Capture explained, the reception area was oriented with

¹⁵ "Masks" is the term used in the Navajo Press release. "Navajo Nation Buys Back 7 Sacred Masks at Controversial Parisian Auction." *Indian Country Today Media Network.com*, 16 December 2014.

the cardinal directions, the windows and a skylight flooded the area in natural light. In the center of room, four glass bricks let in light to the collections area. When we went down stairs to see the collections, we paused in the ceremony room, a private space where Native American visitors could perform ceremonies or prepare themselves before entering the collections space, a circular sand pit, provided a traditional space for smudging, bins nearby stored materials such as sweet grass and other implements to accommodate most tribal traditions. Another space outdoors was available for communities whose traditions required outdoor ceremonies.

Joe Horse Capture explained that he and his fellow curators at the NMAI never used the term “storage” when speaking of the area for keeping museum objects. Instead they described the area as “collections” to acknowledge that the collections are vibrant, living items, not something dead or inert. In arranging the collections, NMAI staff changed the entire organization of the collection from Heye’s original classification by object type, say baskets or pottery, where baskets from all Tribes would be grouped together. Instead, curators oriented the rows of compact shelving and grouped collections according to region and tribe.

Another major change from the earlier curation of the collections under Heye is that Native input is welcomed and suggestions from Native communities are implemented in practice. For examples, ceremonial or sacred items are shelved up high so that NMAI staff do not accidentally allow the general public to see the items. Some objects include notes regarding handling such as whale hunting objects that should only be touched by men.

As the NMAI staff opened drawers of beautiful Pomo baskets, each was carefully housed and individually bar coded. Strict temperature and humidity controls ensure optimal storage conditions. The NMAI can consult with conservators from the other Smithsonian branches on the Suitland campus. One of their ongoing efforts is to closely monitor the collections for any sign of

insect infestation. This is part of a long-term project to cleanse the objects from earlier days when staff under Heye employed mothballs and other toxic powders to keep pests away. While certainly protecting the objects from bugs, the use of such chemicals is anathema to Native communities.

When I started this research, I was interested in the story of the Spalding-Allen Collection's purchase and the ethics of sale. During the course of writing about other collectors including Myron Eells, Lucullus McWhorter, and Clifford Drury, I realized that where collections reside is important. I argued that the location of collections matters so that the people that live in particular places may have access to the collections that inform that place. How can residents truly understand a place if all of sources of that location are held by distant repositories?

As I considered these notions, I was challenged by one of my WSU history professors to think more about why place matters. He argued that collections being kept in Washington DC together made research easier for scholars. He needed to visit only one city to access vast collections. At the time, I do not think I gave a convincing reply. I said something along the lines that places mattered and that travel was expensive. This privileged elite scholars, such as himself. Having reflected on these issues for several years and having had the opportunity to visit institutions such as the Library of Congress and Smithsonian with Native colleagues, I realize that where collections are housed and cared for does matter, but it is not always a simple issue of just returning everything back to Native communities.

The large federal institutions such as the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, and the National Park Service for example, have the capacity to preserve collections because of their access to conservators. For some materials, it is the content rather than the format that is critical.

The earliest surviving recordings of Native American songs were made using wax cylinders. This is a particularly difficult format to migrate because each time the cylinder is played there is the potential for damage. The Library of Congress brings state-of-the-art audio engineering to convert these recordings to digital, in formats that can be widely shared by source communities. It is the content that is critical, the ancient songs or language spoken by fluent tribal elders, rather than the original objects of the cylinder recorders.

Tribal communities vary greatly in the resources they have and can devote to their cultural resource programs. Some communities have state-of-the-art museum facilities and full-time professional staff, other Tribes have inadequate facilities and rely on temporary staff and volunteers. So it is not always simply a matter of giving everything back at least in the immediate term, but of developing relationships and supporting Native communities in their efforts to sustain their cultures.

The model of an individual scholar travelling to collections in major metropolitan areas works well for a professional historian with institutional support to visit collections. However, this model works less well for groups or entire communities who wish to access collections. It certainly privileges the dominant culture rather than Native communities.

Native American collections are living, breathing, and intimately connected to the region where they were fabricated. The shirts, dresses, bags, and other items in the Spalding-Allen Collection come from an identified place on the Columbia Plateau, the plant fibers, animal skins, quills, and dyes all derive from that specific place. For many Nez Perce Tribe members, these items are an enduring testament to their inhabitation of the land that goes back thousands of years. The objects are not just historical curiosities, but inspirational models for sustaining cultural traditions, such as weaving, curing, and beading. The collection therefore represents Nez

Perce lifeways, not just beautiful objects. Language, traditional skills, trade, place, are all imbued in the Spalding-Allen Collection of Nez Perce material culture gathered by a missionary in the Oregon Country, shipped to Ohio, and, after more than a century, returned home.

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Interviewee: Sue Buchel

Interviewer: Trevor Bond

Date: October 22, 2015

Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview.]

Trevor Bond: Hello, this is Trevor Bond. I'm here speaking with Susan Buchel, a curator at the Nez Perce National Historic Park, or former curator, rather. And it is October twenty-second. Sue, would you please describe your time at the Nez Perce National Historic Park as a curator?

Susan Buchel: Sure. Sure. I came in about, I think spring of 1988. And I was there until about June of 1994, when I was transferred within the park to Big Hole Battlefield as a superintendent there. The park was changing and we had gone from being just the Nez Perce National Historical Park in Idaho to, through congressional changes, we became a national historical park in four state. So things were changing very rapidly during this time period.

So, and as a curator, the park was organized differently than it is now. There was no chief of cultural, there was no chief of resource management altogether, like Jason is right now. There was a chief of natural resources, and there was a chief of cultural resources. And so I was the curator in my official title. But the functional title was that I was the chief of the cultural resources division. So that changed the kinds of duties I had compared to what you might be familiar with Bob Chenoweth having now. So there was a little difference in how we operated at the time.

Bond: Sue, can you talk a little bit about how you found the state of the collections at NEPE? I'm thinking particularly of the park administrative history I read not too long ago that kind of described Shalley's work and some of the controversy around his tenure and handling the collections?

Buchel: Yes. Well, I read that [Administrator 52?] and there's a few things I would have, had they talked to me, I would have maybe disagreed slightly with. But I can't remember what that is now. But I remember as I read it a long time ago, I thought hmm, that was a rather short shrift of things. But, so I found the collection to generally be, being cared for in decent shape. But there was a, the storage room was not bad. You know, things had been generally taken care of. I did think there were things that needed finessing. But I've walked into many, many worse ones. There had been not a curator for a while because between Stephen and I, there had been a gal who didn't last very long in Idaho. She was from the Washington, DC area. And she didn't last very long. There had been a bit of a gap.

But I have to say, in my first few weeks of being at Nez Perce, I got a few very strange phone calls. Which indicated to me that what you might have read in the [Admin?] history was correct. There was, Steve's line between being a curator, being a curator, being a material culture expert and being a possessor of collections on his own, that line was hazy, I would have to say. So there was some, by these

phone calls I got from different individuals at Nez Perce, there was some, I would just say hesitation about offering things to Nez Perce as a park. There were some trust issues, I think, is the way I would put it. Anyway, that's probably enough to say about that. But there were some trust issues.

The other trust issue that I found was that there were very, very strict research guidelines. I mean, in order to do research, I'm not sure I would have been qualified to do research there. It was very much, you had to make an appointment, you had to, da, da, da, da, you had to have a certain topic that you were looking for. You had to do this and you had to—there were lots of hoops to go through. And it was such that the Nez Perce themselves didn't feel at all that they were welcome to come in and use the collections. There wasn't much of a library at the time. We worked on that a lot. And there was no archives at the time. We worked on that a lot. Anyway, what was available didn't seem to be very accessible to anyone, much less, the Nez Perce. So there was a trust issue there.

The third trust issue that I can recall really strongly was that there was still a lot of really bad juju about the building itself, and the collections, because – you probably have heard this—as the building was laid, one of the front end loaders went ramming right into a gravesite. And no one had really ever done anything to sort of help heal that wound. And there were many Nez Perce who didn't even feel comfortable going in the building. And so we had, as far as access to the collections to these people who believe this was their stuff, there were some real big blockages to that.

So I was lucky. Roy Weaver, as a superintendent, was quite willing to let me do things to sort of let people know that it was okay to start using the collection. And we did several things. Like one thing was I started having an open house once a month, just to make sure people knew that they were welcome. We asked the long house if they would, Seven Drums, if they were interested in, did they think it would be of any use, to do any kind of blessing to the collections. And they jumped on that. And we did that.

The first time we did that, it took about four and a half hours. It was quite—and we also offered to be gone. You know, if you want to do this without us there, Kevin Peters, who still works at the park, he was Seven Drums, that was plenty for us if he was there.

No, no, no, they wanted us. So Roy and I participated. And anyway, it was quite an emotional thing. And I felt like those kinds of things that we did.

And then after that, when I did the annual cleaning of things, we basically also sort of did a, we invited them back to do a sort of a renewal of things.

So there were those kinds of things that seemed to be needed, more than, necessarily, the physical care of things. Although there were some things to do there. So I don't know if that's--

Bond: Yeah. That's terrific.

Buchel: In my mind, those were some of the bigger things. You know, I'm not a material culture person. I'm not an anthropologist. I'm not an expert in Plateau culture. So the difference between the kinds of things that Steve focused on and I focused on—I'm a collections manager. And up until that blessing, I felt quite inadequate to even be in there, because I'm not a historian. I'm not an anthropologist. But through the Seven Drum ceremony that occurred, I thought oh, I don't have to say anything, because my superintendent's there. He can say stuff and I could just stay in the back. But that didn't happen.

No. They said, "Sue, what do you have to say?"

And I started crying. And anyway, I told them basically how inadequate I felt because I'm not an anthropologist nor a Nez Perce. And I was told by all of them in different ways that the biggest thing they wanted from me was to do my best job that I could and to treat things with respect. And to do it out of a sense of love. And that guided me the whole rest of the time I was there. The way they said it kind of was, if you have a good heart, then we trust that you'll be doing what needs to be done, type of thing. Anyway, that's sort of how I found things.

Bond: Well it sounds to be like this relationship-building that happened early on your tenure there became really important with the Spalding-Allen Collection recall, and working collaboratively towards that. And I was wondering, Sue, maybe if you could say a little bit about how the Spalding-Allen Collection was a part of the park's interpretive program.

Buchel: Okay. Well, and I first want to just add to what you just said. You know, the things that we did there when I first got there, it, the intention wasn't, as far as I'm concerned, anyway, it wasn't political. It wasn't like oh, we'll do this, and then we'll work better with the Nez Perce. It just seemed like the right thing to do. And of course, this is right when things like NAGPRA are being passed. I think everyone in the museum world at least that was thinking was realizing more and more that this is not our story to tell, blah, blah, blah. You know, all that kind of thing. It was part of, I think we were part of that.

So then, when you talk about the collection, the Spalding Collection and exhibits, and you've obviously been in the exhibits. You know, I walked in and this was a fairly new exhibit. It had only been, it had been worked on for several years. But by '83, I think it finally was finished. I walked in, I was very disappointed in those exhibits. I still am. And I'm so glad that I hear that they're going to be redone. My disappointment is that they are treated to me, and, for the most part, at least the Spalding part, more than some of the other pieces. And we've been trying to add interp in there over the years. And I feel it, I've just been there recently, I feel that they've been doing that some more. There was hardly any interp in the exhibits at all. And they were being shown as if they were kind of like an art exhibit. There was so little information. And you'd look at this spectacular array of things from the Spalding period there, and people could go in there and not even realize what it was they were really looking at. It was very disappointing.

And so one of the things that we worked on some, not as much as we wanted to, because there were so many other things as you probably realized all of a sudden. I mean, I was there in '88. By '89, they've got the Idaho centennial and the Washington centennial. And everybody and their dog is wanting information immediately about the Nez Perce. It's like they just found out that they existed, still. And we keep referring them to the cultural people at Nez Perce. That didn't always work. But our information requests just went skyrocketing. And at the same time, that's when Congress started the, we started in on the potential for having this larger story with many more sites in four states. We wanted to do more on the exhibits, but we were going gangbusters working on all this other stuff. And since my job wasn't just being a curator, it was being the cultural liaison to the tribe, you can imagine, my time and attention weren't really necessarily on interp. I kind of left interp to interp. But I believe I voiced some of my concerns about the interp.

The other big push we did when I first got there was we had over ten thousand photographs of different kinds. Prints, negatives, copies of copies, copies of copies of copies. And it was all such a big

mess. And nobody had ever bothered to kind of take it apart piece by piece. And two fellows and I did that. It took us about two and a half years to do, to find out who was in every photograph, who did the photograph belong to. We had stuff that we were, we were recopying things to the public that didn't belong to us. They belonged to the Smithsonian, and we had no right to reproduce them and all that kind of stuff. So it took us several years to do that, plus a lot of talking to elders, which was a lot of fun, to identify people in the photographs. Because the Smithsonian would have maybe "Nez Perce Indian," if anything. Or maybe "Plateau Indian." And we ended up identifying who everybody in the photographs were, and which generation of who. And it was really fun. We got them all in a big database. Anyway, so there was more going on than just caring for, say, the Spalding Collection.

But to answer your question, which I finally maybe need to do, is I was a bit disappointed in how we were not using the Spalding Collection, to my mind, the way we could be using it. As far as helping people really see that what they were seeing was something absolutely amazing. And how it related to the very early history of the white contact with the Nez Perce.

Bond: So, Sue, what do you find amazing about the Spalding Allen Collection?

Buchel: Oh, personal, just systemically. Again, not being a subject area expert, I mean, I look at that dress and that cradle board and I want to cry. It's just exquisite. And the other thing it really brings to my mind is that nexus between trade, white trade, and cultures. The beads that are on there are from several different countries, you know, which they obtained in several different ways from several other contact groups. As well as probably Fort Vancouver and all that. And so the use of materials, the way that at that time period they had this wide variety of choices. They didn't just have to do quill work anymore. And it's pretty amazing how quickly quill work almost dropped off because of beads being available. And the blue beads, the white beads, they just go gorgeously together. So there's that.

And then there's also the story that could go with it that just, and I think, I don't think you and I today can understand the Spalding story. And I think we often put our own 21st century values on that in ways that I'm not sure are necessarily appropriate and necessarily accurate. But I'm just saying that because I think it's really hard for us to look at that period. I think we think of the poor, poor Nez Perce being dispossessed of their culture. And I think that's a disservice to them. Because they were pretty [unclear] and they were pretty good darn traders to start with. And if you talked to Lewis and Clark they'd tell you that they didn't get anything for nothing from anybody. So I think there are stories to be told. And I think, what I love, is telling stories that don't have a for sure answer. I like to tell stories that you put it out there and you make people think about it.

So I think the Spalding Collection is absolutely one of the most amazing for that. Because what other collection do you have from that time period among any of the Plateau and/or Columbian people. It's hard to find. And this is an opportunity. It's a beautiful opportunity.

Bond: Sue, I'd like to circle back to your well-taken clarification of my statement about collaboration and working together to NAGPRA. Your career, working with collections and as a collections manager, saw kind of pre-NAGPRA and post-NAGPRA. Could you just say maybe a couple of, or could you talk a little bit about your memories of how NAGPRA kind of changed the dynamic and the dialog around Native American collections and communities?

Buchel: Well I think it really turned everybody on their heel. Even those who though they were doing very collaborative, and also consulting, that kind of thing. Even though NAGPRA is for a particular type of artifact and human remain and always very specific in what it speaks to, just a thought that this material, you know, does not belong to a museum, it belongs to the people who are the descendants of these people, that thought, I think, really helped all of us look more largely at things. You know, we already were supposed to be consulting with Native people on a government-to-government basis and all. But I think NAGPRA kind of, for those who might have been reluctant to do that, it was like the nail in the coffin. Because [unclear] you had to belly up to the bar. It just happened and it had to happen. So I'm not thinking of anything specific, but I think about how we all operated as curators and cultural resource people before NAGPRA and kind of, I think it is the watershed. I think things were changing already. But, and it probably couldn't have been passed if things hadn't already changed. But it really forced, and it forced the reluctant ones, you know, people who were already being consulted. It maybe wasn't a big deal. But for those places where someone maybe was a collection manager who was an anthropologist rather than someone who was more of a collection manager might have had more resistance to NAGPRA. I don't know offhand. But I do think it was a bit of a benchmark.

Bond: It does seem like, you know, now that we have a couple of decades of distance from its original passage, it does strike me that it also shifted somewhat the dynamics of power in terms of ownership and access and some of those things you touched on a little bit earlier.

Buchel: Oh, yeah. And for people who worked in something with Native people and now were forced to, you know, it also opened up some lines of communication that I think may not have been there, necessarily. I'm not saying that was the case at Nez Perce. But you know, I know people, when we had, because we were a federal agency, of course, it affected us. Not every museum did it get affected right away. But it forced us to look back at our collections and see if anything that we had really was ceremonial. And what is ceremonial? And things that, you know, it was interesting because even the specifics of that legislation as I recall that, and you're talking to somebody who's getting to be an old person and retired and forgetting about all these things. And now into like her little craft.

As I recall, for tribes like Nez Perce, where everybody, it's a very individualistic kind of society. There were not like, there wasn't a lot of community property. Unlike, say, the Zulus or others who had communal property that no one really had ownership of. It should have been—[pause] you know what I'm talking about? I mean, there's a difference, Nez Perce is different than, say, a communal thing. So there were lots of, lots of, for us, looking for things that were definitely NAGPRA things. We had to think about that more than, say, if you were at Zuni or something like that. So there was some soul searching. You had to go into your collection and take a look, you know. Take a look and see. And if you didn't have things identified, then you really didn't know. And it's not just human remains, but you have all those ceremonial things.

So anyway, I think that forced all of us to take another look at our collections. How well we've cataloged them. Do we really know everything we need to know about things?

I remember early on, it wasn't just because of NAGPRA, but I was so lucky. Bill Holm was—[glitch] in standardizing how he called things to take away some of the deciding, in the name that you call something, you sometimes decide what its use is, where maybe they used it for many other things besides that. So there were a lot of old naming conventions that we tried to walk away from. And Bill helped us

create sort of an authorities list of that. It was just a wonderful experience. He was such a wonderful fellow about that kind of thing.

Anyway, I'm probably getting off topic here. I want to, before I forget, talk about other things that before the whole issue with the Spalding Collection came up, things that helped us to have already—the whole Spalding-Allen Collection purchase thing, I don't think would ever have happened had we not already had a couple of things happen that really had made us have a, what I would call, a pretty darn good relationship with the tribe. And several bands who are not part of the Idaho tribe. And it was that legislation that was coming through about the whole thing being in four states that actually forced our, the park service, and our site. Frank was superintendent at the time. That all was happening. And it forced us to not only talk to people in Lapwai. But we had to talk to the Nez Perce people who lived in Umatilla, the Nez Perce people who lived up at Colville. And, you know, it wasn't just one, it made us really recognize that there was more than one group of Nez Perce. And that everything Frank did, or we did, had to be agreed on, not by just the Idaho folks, but by everybody. And often, they would often disagree with each other just to disagree, pretty much. Well, if the Colville guys want this, we don't want that. So it was a great exercise for all in learning how to bring everybody, everybody had to be at the table. And Frank would have to find the things that they all could agree on to start with and then work out from there.

So those kinds of things had already occurred by the time this crisis came up with the Spalding-Allen Collection. We had helped the tribe even, we had a series of, I want to call them strategies, not strategic plan, that the tribe and we invited the forest service, the BLM and others to understand better what the relationship was, government to government, between the tribe and the federal government. Or even state agencies. And we facilitated those meetings to help come up with a plan for how we would all consult with the Nez Perce so they weren't getting bombarded by Tom, Dick and Harry, and by people who didn't understand how you work that. So we'd already done a lot of those kinds of things with the tribe up by the time 1992 came along. So there was a, I think we were at our best moment, I think, almost. Maybe even, I don't know how it's been since, but it was a darn good moment. And thank goodness this all happened at that point, rather than maybe three years earlier, or four years earlier.

Bond: That's terrific, Sue. Really important context. And it makes me wonder when the controversy first came up and you and Frank Walker and others at Nez Perce got together the bands, was there pretty common consensus among the different bands of Nez Perce that this was something important to pursue?

Buchel: I'm going to have to just say yes. I don't remember the details of the other groups because they, I think the other groups like the Colville and the Umatilla did agree that the Spalding-Allen Collection was collected from the Lapwai-Spalding area. So I think they, as I recall, they pretty much deferred to that. Because it was pretty specific. It was pretty obvious where those materials had come from.

I do want to talk a little bit about some of the early indicators I got about from, or what I think led up to that whole recall business. I don't know if that's really on that—

Bond: Please. Yeah, that would be great.

Buchel: Okay. Because I think there are some other things that maybe because, like, say, Bob wasn't there at the time, may not realize. So I get to Nez Perce and pretty quick on I find out that A, we have to pay insurance on this stuff. Which as a government agency, you don't necessarily often do that. Or very

rarely do that. And [unclear] Carol [Gamut?], who was the administrative officer at the time, a lot of work to talk the park service into even agreeing to pay insurance outside of our normal government, you know, government is self-insured. So if anything goes wrong with your things, they're already paid for, if something should happen. If there was a fire in that building, those things would have been paid for. But the loan agreement that I walked in on, that had already been in place for several years, required that insurance thing. Which had already been established and was going on. But I remember being surprised about that, because that was not a normal thing.

The other big surprise to me was that annual renewal. Because when you get something on loan for the purpose of exhibit, you generally, you know, have a five to ten year period for your loan. And then with a possibility of renewal. But to base that permanent exhibit on an annual renewal is just, as a collection manager, you're just going whoa, what's this all about?

And I remember talking, and my contact with Ohio for loan renewal, was not Amos Lovejoy. It was his registrar, Melinda Knapp, I think her name was.

Bond: Yes.

Buchel: But I remember asking her, just kind of, just to chat kind of way, you know, "Do you have any idea why we're doing this on an annual loan?"

And she goes, "Ooh." I think it was she who told me this. And it is anecdotal, so I have to apologize. But you can take it or leave it as you wish. She said, "Well, didn't you hear the story?"

And I said, "No, I haven't heard any stories."

She said, "Well, the story here is that at the time that they were," Bob's article, or that paper you sent me, explains it really well. Where you know, the collection was kind of found, and then it was lost, and then it was found. Or recognized. And then Steve was able to go over there and take a good look at it. That was '78, '79, something like that. Well, according to Melinda, when he did that, and Steve was the preacher's son, evidently the Ohio Historical Society got a good preaching to about how this material shouldn't be in Ohio, blah, blah, blah. And for them not knowing when to let off and let go and what tone to take. And according to Melinda, that annual loan renewal was mostly for spite. Because they said this young whippersnapper, we're going to show him. It was done kind of as a resistance to being told what to do kind of thing.

And she also felt that the issue with the cradle board not coming had a lot more to do with the manner in which things were presented to Ohio than in Ohio's need to have it done. So she said, so there you are, and now you've got an annual loan.

So even that first year, I started to ask, is there any potential for having that redone less often, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. So there were a couple of really strange things about it to start with. But then when I mentioned in an email that I thought the Burke 5Museum, that there's a story in the Burke Museum that has to do with this recall, I do think that that was also true. It's not the early Burke Museum involvement with Bill Holm, it was the whole, the Burke wanted to do that beautiful exhibit of the people of their state. And so they requested of us that they could borrow that dress. And of course we were not able to say yes or no. so we forwarded that request to Ohio.

And I remember Ohio saying to us, basically, I don't know whether this was by letter or just on the phone, "If this material is so important to you, how come you're willing to let it go for a whole year? You know, if this is so important to your exhibits, why are you able to let it go for that while?"

And our basic response is, as I recall, was basically that by letting it be at the Burke Museum, my gosh, for the centennial of that state, it would still be on exhibit. It is still a new audience will see it. And they'll see it in context with other materials and other tribes in a facility that is quite capable of doing it in a really stellar, stellar way, which they did. So we said as far as we're concerned, if you were to allow the loan, we would miss it, of course, but we would think that it's more than appropriate for it to do this.

So then it did go. And they also requested that cradle board, which was interesting. I had never seen a picture of the cradle board, other than a black and white, myself. And again, the whole trying to get that and all that kind of thing. Again, remembering that we were busy on about 25 different fronts. So I didn't have, necessarily, the time to do the finessing that I might have done if I was only focused on curating.

So the time came to bring the dress to Seattle. And I believe it had to have been a Mr. Loveday [unclear] I don't remember but I guess it was. [Burke records indicate that it was Brad Baker not Amos Loveday] He was going to be transporting the cradle board over. And he was going to do that with driving with it. And I was driving with the dress. And he wanted to see the dress, see what condition it was in. and I certainly wanted to see the cradle board. So we made arrangements, the two of us, to get to the place at the same time. And this has nothing to do with the Spalding Collection, but I have to tell you it because it's one of my favorite stories. We have the two boxes sitting on a table. And there's a number of people from the Burke around us. And Amos is on one side and I'm on the other side. We're both opening our packages. And as we're opening our packages, I all of a sudden had to step away. There was like a whoosh of air come up out of both packages. And it made me jerk backwards. And this whoosh thing, I don't know what it is, rose up above the box and was kind of swirling around, up above of both boxes. And was kind of swirling around. And I felt this immediate sense of joy, reuniting, just happiness. And I can't even explain it.

And I looked at Amos to see, and he goes, "What's the matter?"

And I said, "Didn't you feel that?"

And he goes, "No. what?" And I looked at everybody else. And they thought I was crazy. They thought I'd tripped or something. And I definitely felt that. It took me a second before I actually looked into Amos' box. And the second I looked at that cradle board in real life, and not in black and white, it was like oh my god. That cradle board is made by the same woman who made this dress. They belong together. We have kept them apart for, I don't know, whatever, 135 or whatever, through our own management of these things, or mismanagement of these things. And they belong together.

And of course, Amos could see that, too, looking at them. But I don't know I ended up having that thing. But I did have that thing.

And I had it one other time at Nez Perce, which didn't have anything to do with the Spalding-Allen Collection. But it was a woman's dress. And so maybe because I was a female, it happened.

So what I'm trying to get to is that I think by Amos bringing the cradle board to the Burke Museum as a personal thing, seeing the dress, seeing the interest that all the curators and whoever's of the Burke had in this material, I think that it became something real to the Ohio Historical Society again. Maybe when Steve had been there in the '70s, it became real again. But for this generation of a board and a curator and Mr. Ness and all that, it had a new value that they hadn't recognized before. So I think that the Burke Museum's request for this thing was the beginning of this whole real acknowledgement on the part of Ohio that they had something significant. Anyway, that's just a part of it.

Then, of course, when the DeSmet project came, I had and I recommended to Frank that we not be as on board with that as with the Burke thing. And that was going to be a traveling exhibit. It was going to go on for quite some long while. And we basically left that to Ohio to talk to the DeSmet people about, we stayed out of that one a little bit more than we did the first one. Maybe because we were also starting to get a little antsy about the whole thing. But anyway, that's why Burke's story, I think the Burke had something to do with this whole process of the Ohio people noticing their collection.

Bond: I really appreciate that context, Sue, because there's quite a bit more documentation about the DeSmet, the Sacred Encounters exhibit, that I've seen. But I didn't realize that the cradle board and dress had been united in the Burke exhibit. Because when it eventually came back to the park at the very end, there was quite a bit of coverage from Bob Chenoweth and Tom Hudson who helped raise the money about, you know, those design elements where it became very clear that, as you said, the woman who made the dress also made the cradle board.

Buchel: Yeah. Yeah.

Bond: So thank you for that.

Buchel: Yeah, it was that moment, I think. And before that, and Steve may have very well known that. Steve had probably known that. And that was one of the reasons he was probably so adamant about that cradle board, which then got their hackles up and then, "We're not going to give it to you just because." But then between Steve and that moment at the Burke, I think we as a park lost that institutional memory of that. Because we truly only had it as a black and white, and not as a color photograph. I don't even think they had bothered to do a color photograph, actually, of it. I don't think Ohio even had a colored photograph of it, which was why I had to have the black and white. Yeah.

So anyway, okay, where do we want to go now?

Bond: well, I was wondering maybe if we could go to the moment of the recall. And if you could tell me if you were at all surprised by the recall. And maybe in answering that question, if you could touch on your working relationship with the Ohio Historical Society.

Buchel: Okay. Yeah, you know, a number of things led up to that recall. I mean first they started, I think it's been pretty well outlined I think in Bob's, I think it was Bob who had that written down pretty well. Better than my memory would have served me. But you know, they were, first they wanted to get it reappraised. Then when they got it reappraised, then a few years later, they'd reappraise it again. And each time, of course, because Indian art and artifacts were, it was a period of, you know, things were, the

Japanese market was going crazy. So internationally, Native things were just going crazy. So it was becoming quite onerous as far as the insurance and that kind of stuff. So just mechanically – this is all mechanics – just the mechanics of the loan was getting to be more work and all that sort of thing.

And so the grinding of the mechanics, and the more requirements all the time. And then, of course, at one point before they actually did the recall, I think, they started to grouse about did we have the proper facility standards and stuff like that. Which again, that's something that the American Association of Museums was really beginning to plug that. Up until then, people were loaning other people things – other than art museums – but regular museums were loaning things back and forth with very little regard to the environment and that type of stuff. It's certainly valid to require that. But they started asking more questions about that and we had to fill out, I think we had to fill out a form to make sure we were doing this and that. So it was just obvious they were becoming more aware of the value of that collection.

And I shouldn't put this on tape, but Amos was not necessarily the most pleasant person to work with. He and Steve, if they were together, I could see where things, where this, you know, devolved. I don't know how long Amos had worked there by that point.

So when that recall actually came, though, it was like, I remember I got the letter. It came to me as the curator. And it was like one of those whoa, and instantly running upstairs, [unclear] instantly running upstairs to find [Troppis?]. And interrupting whatever the world he was doing. And we just sat there and we just went, oh, my gosh, you know? Now what? And just being, I mean, I just remember we sat there with our mouths open, you know? As you know from reading that thing, the audacity – well, not audacity of their stuff, it's not audacious – but the way they put it and the conditions, how quickly they wanted it returned. And just everything about it was just oh my gosh, ridiculous.

So then, of course, he said, "Well, you go down and you need to think about this and you need to write that letter." That letter that Frank sent back. That was my letter, of course, that he probably did some tweaking to. "But you write down everything you can think of about why we have to think about this."

And I don't remember for sure whether we had started to involve the tribe about anything or whether it was that immediate recall that this made us say, oh, my goodness, we need to get the troops together. So I have to apologize. Because I don't remember quite the A, B, Cs of all that. But it was all pretty darn quick. And everything started to happen really fast.

And of course it was happening right when we were in the midst of this whole big congressional thing, when Congress was asking us on a daily basis for more information about this or that or the next thing. That was a period there at the park where I don't think anybody's ever had to go full steam like that. It was just a crazy period altogether. And then to have this happen, we just went, wah! You know, of course.

And we had just finished, at that point, we'd just finished the first real exhibit we'd ever done, anybody's ever done, on Nez Perce artists. And that had been a major, like a two-year project. And we had just put that to bed, I think. And then we thought is there no rest for the wicked kind of a deal?

And the other part about that was so, the timing was so funny, because we had already talked about how once we had our [Supottime?] exhibit down and finished and put back and we turned it into a traveling exhibit. Not of the materials, but of photographs of the materials. We had been already beginning to talk about that we needed to do something like that with the Spalding Collection. Bring it up as a good catalog and that kind of a thing. And we had a lot of support for that by our regional people, our regional curator, Kent Bush, and others said, "You should go for that, because we'll bet anything it would be a great project that people will want to fund."

So we were just beginning to think about that. We sort of thought once we did this congressional thing with the expanded park, at least done one way or another, either they pass it or they don't, get it over with, then we could maybe focus on something like that. And then this comes along. So it was a whammy on many different fronts. Yeah.

Bond: Sue, could you describe your efforts to keep the collection, the Spalding-Allen Collection, at the park?

Buchel: Well, I think that long letter that Frank sent, that we worked on, was a start. And at least got them to hold off a bit. Let's get this together. And then I do think, and I don't remember whether it was my idea, Frank's idea, whose idea, it doesn't matter, let's get them, let's see if they would come out.

And that was an amazing day, I would have to say. It still gives me goosebumps, thinking about it, when those trustees came. And I don't know what they expected. But they, I think people who have never experienced the warmth, sincerity and depth of a culture, and then have it thrust on them in a way that they can't not see it, it changes you. You know, it just really does. I have to say that just as a personal thing. And I could see those, at least some of those people, and I don't even remember how many there were there, I would say there were probably six or eight came. Including, I think, Amos. I don't think Ness came. But several board people, several of their board people were there. Which, you know, I have to give them some credit for doing that, you know? I think that was quite reasonable of them to actually do that. But you know, they were fed, they were seven drummed, they had culture thrown on them. And I don't think they had any idea what they were in for when they came.

And I do think that that meeting helped in a way that no amount of talking or letters or other meetings between officials could ever have done. I think that at least brought some of the board, maybe not all the board, any board, I've been on boards and I know how it is, you could be the dissenter. But there might be two or three people who really did understand on that board where a few other people who maybe had more power had other thoughts. But I do think it changed the minds and hearts of at least a few people in that group. That was an amazing thing that we put together.

Bond: Sue, one of the things that Frank Walker mentioned was that his perception was that at the Ohio Historical Society, they certainly had Native collections there. But they tended to be very historical and they weren't engaged or kind of immersed in contemporary Native culture the way the Nez Perce park was. So that you know, seeing this vibrant engagement with the Nez Perce, and having the Nez Perce be a part of these events, and telling stories and dancing and drumming, was something they hadn't experienced before, if that makes sense.

Buchel: Oh, yeah. I agreed with that totally. I think that was really quite astute of Frank to remember that. Yeah, you know, the people that had peopled the Ohio area prior to whites were long gone. So you might have effigies. You might have evidence of woodlands culture and all that sort of thing. But you don't necessarily have a living, breathing tribe. You know, those people were long gone. And so yeah, what an incredible experience for someone to actually bump up against real folks, you know? And real folks who can say we've been in this piece of property for ten thousand years. How about you? You know?

Bond: Yeah.

Buchel: So you know, I think it was just, it was probably a life experience for some of them as far as any kind of cultural thing goes. For sure. For sure. And then, of course, somewhere I've seen in the literature, and it's very true, part of this all got precipitated by a whole other action in Ohio that had nothing to do with us at all. You know, the board made a decision, the Ohio board, made a decision about loans based on an incident in Ohio. And then they made a blanket policy that they wanted all their loans to come back in. get them all checked out, get them all figured out and all that kind of stuff. And believe me, having been on boards, that sounds exactly like what a board would do. So there you are! And even if you were a curator who had some interest or caring about something, you now had a directive from your board. And you don't have the wherewithal to not do it. You know? I mean, there is that. And so all these different things kind of coming together to create the perfect storm, I think, needs to be at least acknowledged. That sometimes very precipitous things happen from very minor incidents. You know? So we were a part of that little maelstrom as well.

Bond: Yes. Dr. Loveday sent me the particular court case. And it was interesting. It was what was described as a short term loan. And then a descendent of that original loaner wanted to recall the stuff. And OHS refused. And I would kind of see how that would trigger questions around ownership of collections and outstanding loans.

Buchel: Oh, yeah. And you know, you're a board member thinking of your fiduciary responsibility to the organization and the people of Ohio. And that, you have to balance that with any kind of gee, we'd love to give it to you but it's worth six hundred thousand dollars. So you know, we have an organization that needs to live and prosper. So I don't think it's, of course I'd love to say, "Those darn guys from Ohio!" I mean, you also have to kind of look at it on their end of it, or at least present their end of it. Because they had some, for them, valid concerns that they needed to, through their processes, they needed to do. So I think Frank and I, especially when we went to Ohio with Levi, we certainly tried to make sure that they understood that we understood as managers ourselves that there are things that you need to consider on your end of a thing. But where can we, again, Frank was so good at finding common ground, you know? He just really was. He was always good about, he still is, I'm sure. (laughs) He's not dead yet. Anyway, so I think you know, at least acknowledging that we understood that there was some reasonable concern about things. I don't know if it helped or not. But we certainly felt like we needed to always do that. And not just you know, the bad guys kind of thing. Yeah.

I do remember the series of meetings that, that happened before we went to Ohio, I think. Frank had me go to the tribe and, as a cultural liaison, I worked with the cultural folks there. And the cultural folks gathered who they thought needed to be there, and I gathered who I thought I needed to be there. And we had our big pow wow about what are we going to do about this. And I guess that was maybe even

before Ohio came to visit. It was after we got that letter. Really, the first thing Frank and I said is we've got to get the tribe involved and find out what their interest is. What is their interest? What involvement do they want? At what level?

And the thing I always appreciate about Frank was, he always allowed for, and I think we were like-minded on that, and that made it great working with him was, it doesn't matter who owns it. In our mind. You know, it didn't have to be the park service. What mattered was that it was whole and it was where it belonged. And ownership was the least of our interests. And that happened early on for us.

Anyway, the value of the collection was not in Ohio. The value of the collection was out here where it belonged with the people. So that whole, and I can't remember now who was cultural [unclear]. And by that time, my friend Jamie Pinkham was the cultural director. You know, we got a number of people together, including not all of NEPTEC to start with, but the recent ones in NEPTEC that were involved with resources. And to sit down and kind of create our magna carta of what our agreement was going to be between us in dealing with any of this. And I think, again, that was a necessity in order to do any kind of work with Ohio was to know, where are we as a partner, as partners? Or are we not even partners? Do you not want the park service involved at all? That was always a possibility. But no, no, by then we had that trust thing going on.

So that was an important step. And I think sometimes those mechanical things, getting that together, was an important step in later all the negotiations and things to have that as a base understanding in doing it all.

Bond: Sue, I'm wondering if you would be amenable to pausing here and maybe continuing our conversation at a later date? I recall you have an appointment this afternoon and I have a class I need to go teach fairly soon. Would you be up for talking again maybe tomorrow or a day next week? Would that work for you?

Buchel: Well, tomorrow, I could do it in the morning.

[End Track 1. Begin Track 2.]

Bond: Go ahead.

Buchel: Well, one of the things I thought about was the, I just remembered it, the Ohio Historical Society, you probably know this already, is not the oldest historical society in the country. It's one of the. And I should have looked it up last night to see, and maybe you know this. and that, that sense of we've always been here, we're very traditional, we're very professional, we're, there's something about that that I think at least in the early stages of our dealings with them, oh, you are people from the west, you know? You're young, raw, frontiers people. We are the traditional holder of all things proper. And there was, and I don't want to make too much of it, but there was that sense. And I read it again when I read these letters back and forth a bit. And in discussions and in phone conversations it was, there was just that bit of that. And again, not a big deal. But I just wanted to mention that. It might be, I think it had a little bit of a bearing, at least earlier.

The other thing I wanted to point out, which you probably already, again, know, you know that cradle board. Just at the time they were starting to ask us all about whether we really, really were a proper

place for their valuable things, that cradle board, as I recall, was being exhibited in like a trading post or something. Hung on a post. Probably not in a case. And I would love to see the hygrothermograph records for that particular facility. So I think there was a bit of a disconnect between what they were beginning to ask us of and what they were doing themselves with the other part of the collection that was still within their own care. And I'm not sure about that. But I just remember, I think I recall that that was the case. That it was in some offsite, one of their many facilities, which probably had less environmental control than we have. Anyway, just another piece.

Bond: You know, I think Bill Holm mentioned that. That when he went and looked at the collection in the late '70s, the cradleboard was at the kind of site where they had a reenactment of an old Ohio town.

Buchel: Yeah. And I don't know that it had actually gotten moved from there until maybe quite, you know, recent to these events, anyway. So that was just another thought. But then you were talking about—now where do we want to go? I'm sorry. The other piece of this that I was trying to think about was, oh, I just lost it. Okay. We better just start with something, something new. Because I just lost that thread.

Bond: Sue, could you tell me why you thought it was important for the Nez Perce to lead the fundraising efforts to regain the Spalding-Allen Collection instead of the national park?

Buchel: Oh, I think if not ethically, than I think practically it made all the sense in the world. Both of us, the tribe and the park, wanted to see it be where it is more permanently. And how to actually, that was the first goal. How to accomplish that. In my mind, it's a little hard, I think, for a historical society to ignore a whole nation of people. Versus some little dinky park service site. So I think there was a weight to that on a very practical side.

On the other side, you know, we looked around when this all was beginning to happen. Because at one point, the historical society said, we can't just give this away. So we made a concerted effort, my regional curator, we went to the national, you know, the national office. We put it out all over the place. Was there any kind of a collection that the park service, or even maybe the interior department, had that was outside the scope of their collections, whatever site that was, that we could somehow work an exchange? That was basically the only real tool that the park service had. We didn't have, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars. And there's no way to grab that, unless we went like to the National Park Foundation, or something like that. Which, you know, of course we certainly could have turned to that. But again, by this time in our relations with the tribe, to me, there really wasn't a whole lot of question about it. and I don't think there was anybody on the staff or above us, our regional director, our regional trainer, who disagreed in any way, shape or form that the really, truly honest thing to do is to work with the tribe and let them take the lead. And be there to provide whatever kind of support we need. To do it so I don't see that there's much of a decision. I guess there was. But it just seemed to follow all the things that we'd been working on with the tribe.

Bond: Sue, what are your thoughts on the terms of the agreement to sell the Spalding-Allen Collection? The price of six hundred and eight thousand dollars. Well, \$608,100, and the time window for the Nez Perce and the park service to raise that money? The six months?

Buchel: Yeah, well, you know, I mean, here I am, you know, it's 20 years later. I always, the one big issue I always had with Ohio was yes, this is your stuff. Legally. But it's so outside the scope of your collection. If they really had been trying to facilitate this, they could have taken that \$600,000 and they could have then looked at their cost if they would have continued to have it, to have insurance on it, to store it properly, to do all this in perpetuity. And take that in and somehow amortize that. And realize that they had a cost in keeping this collection. They had it pretty nice both ways. Because we were taking care of it, and it was on their books as an asset. And yet they had no expenses in taking care of it. so at the very least – and I'm not saying that they shouldn't have done more – but at the very least, those kinds of considerations could have been brought to it and some number cruncher somewhere could have helped us all come down to something, if they had to have it sold in some way, something much more, much more reasonable. Given the fact that it is so outside their scope.

And that whole issue of scope of collections and museums. Yes, in 1893, perhaps, Oberlin College didn't think about its scope of collections and just took anything from any of their illustrious alums without thinking about it. But those days are long, long gone. Or they should be in a museum, given all kinds of reasons. And so to not even consider that, I think was, well, anyway.

So the timeline, however, I think was, actually worked toward the goal. I didn't think that was a horrible thing. It put a crunch, it put a crisis, it put all that kind of stuff so that the tribe had a way to engender enthusiasm, desperation, all those things, and could go to, you know, big and small potential donors to get this together. There was a, you know, it gave it a bit of life. So I don't know that the six months was a horrible thing at all. If it had been two years, you know, that's a window that you start going well, I'll donate to that next year, you know, when they've maybe raised more and I'll see if they're really going to make it or not. This was you had to put your money where your mouth was. You had to really say, okay, I believe in this.

And for me, I was so proud of the tribe. Six hundred thousand dollars, any group of Native people in America could use six hundred thousand dollars for a lot of really important things for their people. And it was almost like without a flinch, this was so important to them that they were willing to do that. It tells you, and it should have told Ohio, how very valuable this all is to these people. You know, there still are many, many health and all kinds of economic conditions that need improvement. And yet they were willing to do this. And this, I remember, was before they even had a casino or anything. You know, any real outside incomes of any real great amount. So it just, yeah. It was pretty awesome. I don't know if that answers your questions or not.

Bond: No, it really does. I think, though, you brought up a point that no one else has, and I think it's your experience as a curator, is collections for institutions have costs. They're not just a neutral item. And those costs are played out, as you mentioned, in staff and facilities and preservation, treatment, supplies. There's lots of hidden costs. So that was great.

Buchel: Yeah. Well, but here I am, the armchair quarterback 20 years later. Where was I on that one at the time?

One thing that's really, not really, well, maybe it is for me, I'm not sure. This all started happening. And then for me personally, my mother got cancer. I had a kid in third grade. And I had to basically pull him out of school. And I had to leave my job, for the most part, for about four months. This

was spring of 1993 that this happened to me. And so poor Frank, you know, my focus—and things like thinking about this, like the amortization and all that kind of stuff, for me went right out the window.

And as soon as my mother passed away, my son's father passed away. And so I had that to clean up. And so from about April of '93, I would say till Christmas or so of '93, at which time I told Frank I think I'm going crazy and he told me to take three weeks of sick leave and go see a counselor, because I was shoving my mourning down the tubes because we were so busy, I was not what I should have been on this whole project. I basically had to be elsewhere. So I have maybe a part in not thinking through all the potential things that could have helped minimize some of the impacts. So I do have to say that.

And I think it actually is a factor because a lot of what Frank was saying to both Ohio and the tribe were things that he and I would sit for long periods of time and talk about before we came up with it. So I think he was lacking that counsel for a while. And I do, thinking about it now, I feel quite badly about that.

And then of course by the spring of '94, again for personal reasons, when the opportunity came up to go to Big Hole, I really needed to take that opportunity. It just had a lot to do with my personal situation and stuff. And it was a need we had in the park as well, now that we had the four states and we were in the middle of starting a general manager plan which in the park service was a horrendous process that takes often four years or more to do. You know, we both felt that my best place was there.

So again he, not that we couldn't be on the phone and things, but there wasn't the strong connection as far as these kinds of issues went. Again, we had many other issues going on. So there's a little bit of that. And then thank goodness I know Frank as quickly as he could hired behind me. And then we got Bob and Bob carried it out. But there was that, probably a year, at least a year, when Frank perhaps didn't have the intense help that he had had in all this. I don't know how much of a factor that is, but it's there. So anyway. It made me think about it because why didn't I think about that back then? I don't know that I actually did. So there you go.

Bond: Sue, you touched on this a bit earlier. But I just wanted to come back to it. If you could speak a little bit about the value of the Spalding-Allen Collection. Beyond the high price tag it represented in the market of the 1990s. But just its cultural significance, maybe its significance in terms of representing a major time of transition for the Nez Perce and the Plateau.

Buchel: Well, you know, I mean, I think many of us put, we forget time periods. We forget where we were at different time periods. You know, and in 1830s and '40s, this is before we have a territory. This is before, we're still out there in the wilderness, you know? This is still when the Nez Perce were kings of the hill. And it's not the Nez Perce that you see in 1870 and '77 and all that. So I think we all have to be very careful when we're thinking about that time period. You know, it's only 20-some, 30 years after Lewis and Clark. And it's not yet when they then missionize, reservationized and treatyized. So I think someone like you talking about this, I think there's an onus on you to be very careful in talking either ethics or intentions or impact. Because it isn't the reservation Indian with all their being put upon thing. This is a group of people who are quite, doing quite well, thank you very much, at this point.

So this collection is, to me, it's here we are sort of before all this stuff started to happen. Before the real impact of colonial or imperial kind of things happened. So it's kind of, at that moment in time

before all those different policies began to really hit this group of people. Those policies, of course, were being done elsewhere, you know, closer to the Mississippi and all that. But out here, they had a good deal of company. And so, anyway, I just think it's a marker, that collection serves as a marker of these people at a time when they still were pretty much their own person and their own high level of sophistication and economic impact on their neighboring tribes and peoples. So anyway, I think that's one of the real things about that collection is that.

And then again, on the other hand, even down the coast by this time, there are Native peoples who are nearly wiped out. So by being up here in the mountains where they are, they're not entirely sheltered from it. But I think that that collection at that time, you couldn't necessarily get that collection from some other places lower on the Columbia just because of the things that had begun to happen there. Now this is just me and I am no expert so those are just some impressions I have. I don't know of other collections that are as, you know, of that era collected and that stayed in America. I mean, certainly we have collections that are in different European museums and things. But for a collection in America, this is one of the hot ones, you know? Lewis and Clark didn't do as well as that. So anyway.

Bond: Sue, one of the things that came out in the comments in the public sphere when the struggle with the Ohio Historical Society and the Nez Perce came out was the kind of differing views on the missionary Spalding. Both as a missionary and as a collector. Do you have thoughts on his impact among the Nez Perce? Or do you recall people talking about Spalding when this struggle was starting?

Buchel: Well, again, I'm not sitting here saying that Spalding was anything great or not. I guess when we would have, anytime I'd hear discussions about that, my biggest thing is to always caution people about putting today's understandings, and knowing what all's happened between Spalding waltzing in and the day we were discussing things, it's hard for us, knowing everything we know, not to put intentions and all kinds of things on people that you know, it's hard to look into somebody's heart and soul from 100 and some years later, or 200 years later, or whatever it is. So I guess my main thing in discussing that ever is always to be the devil's advocate and say think about what you say, think about where they were at, think about where the Nez Perce were at. These were not poor, poor people. These were not people who were being whipped and put into submission. These are people who, for one reason or another, agreed to let this dude in. They didn't have to. Just like they didn't have to let Lewis and Clark in. they saw, in whatever reason and however they interpreted it, which wasn't probably what they intended to have happen, but they saw having that person as being of some benefit to them. Otherwise they never would have let him stay. To say that he came and started telling them what to do, I think, is not being very honorific of the people who were there.

The whole thing about oh, we need them not wear their hides, well, again, just being the devil's advocate saying okay, you have a hide jacket or a shirt hanging there on a peg. And you have a cotton shirt hanging on a peg. And it's summer in Lewiston and you're going to go ride your horse. Which garment are you going to pick to ride? People take on new things, new items, new trade items. They put value to newer things sometimes than they do their own.

And so I think we all have to be very, very careful about he stole this stuff, he didn't give them enough money for [unclear] for it. These are people who have been trading for a long time. Who Alexander Ross, wasn't it, said, "I'm not going to keep my trading post here, because these people want too much for their stuff." You know? So I'm not going to put it into the ground here, but you know, when

we talk about Spalding's impact, Spalding, I don't think, this is just me, didn't do anything to the people in his neighborhood that they didn't see some value in at that time. They were not being subjected to him, unlike when the government began to do things or when the army decided to chase a group of people across the country. They weren't being subjected to Spalding. They allowed this dude to live among them for whatever reason they chose to do it. So that's just me.

As a historian, I just worry so much that we write our theses and dissertations and don't really look back at where people were at the time. And I might be missing some really important factors, that if I sat down and really read up and studied I'd say oh, Sue, that was a stupid answer. But that's my general inkling is always to at least question that first. If you can prove it, then fine. But if you can't, remember that these were a people that they could make their own way. And they knew what they were doing. They weren't either ignorant or stupid or subservient in any way.

Bond: Well I think it's clear for the record, Sue, that some bands stayed with Spalding and some bands weren't interested in what he was saying and didn't hang out with him.

Buchel: Oh, truly! Yeah. And that was the beauty of the Nez Perce people. You do what you want to do, I'll do what I want to do and we'll get together when we have something that we need to do in common. You know? I mean, that oligarchy, not oligarchy, what is it? I mean, just the whole consensus thing is an amazing aspect of that group of people and the groups of people that were organized in that way. Each of those bands have a lot of, and still do, a lot of autonomy, to do what they felt worked for them. And also, he was, he hung out in Lapwai. So other peoples in other parts of Nez Perce country, which is pretty scattered at that time, you maybe saw each other, what, a couple of times a year, you know? So his impact would be less the further away you go, number one, just for time and effort and everything. So, yeah.

Bond: I wanted to ask, Sue, if you thought that the sale of Native American material culture is a different category than, say, fine art? Are there different ethics involved in selling Native collections, do you think?

Buchel: Hmm. Boy, that's a cute one. That's a hot one. Um, hmm. Let me think about that. The whole, I have to tell you, the whole thing about buying and selling collections is pretty alien to me, having worked for the park service. Just number one, I'm not real comfortable with that whole idea. And yet art museums and other museums, well, mostly art museums, do that fairly easily. Or maybe less easily now than they used to. But anyway, so to start with, the concept is just, you know, antithetical to my whole way of dealing with collections and things. So, there's that. How they happened to come into a museum, I think, has a lot to do with what kind of options a museum should have or look at them, one collection versus another. And I'm not saying that I say no, you should never do it, or yes, you can. But like for instance, this one has such a strong provenance that it's fairly easy to tie it back to, if not the actual maker, than at least the neighborhood and the group of several families that it could potentially have come from.

It's interesting to me in some ways. I always was kind of waiting for someone in the tribe to say, "You know, my aunty told me a story about," you know, some great-great-aunty having made something that they sold or gave or traded to Spalding. A part of me always sort of expected that someday somebody was going to say something. Because it isn't, at that time, you know, 20 years ago, that wasn't that many generations back.

Anyway, so the provenance on that is pretty clear. I'm not saying I condone this, but things that have a provenance, say, for instance, somebody has a collection of baskets that as they went to the Grand Canyon, the Havasu people, you know, the Havasu ladies made these and had them for sale at a booth, you know, when tourists were coming by. And the intention of them was to sell them. They're still made of Native materials. But the intention of it was to be, you know, sold. And not part of the community, or not held within the community. Therefore not valued as itself, but valued for what it could bring into the community monetarily. Then, if a museum gets those, I think it's a whole different set of ethics around that. So I think not to be the whole answer, and not to say right or wrong, but provenance, I think, has a big role in whether something is ethical or not.

Bond: I think you really answered one of my last questions, which is, in your view, does it matter where collections reside?

Buchel: Oh, I think it does. Depending on what it is. Again, if it's a group of baskets made to be sold or given to non-Indians for one reason or other, that's one thing. If it's something of cultural patrimony, that, you know, the Zuni masks, the Zuni masks in some way don't even exist if you're not a Zuni. You know, there's an ethereal thing about them that they aren't even what they are if they're not a Zuni. So, you know, yes, in the main, collections need to reside where they belong.

Oh, here's one for you. This is way off the beaten path. For a little while, I worked at the Western Archeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, where the park service decided that rather than many, many, many of those teeny little monuments trying to have a collection storage facility, we would just all manage it in one place. And I'm telling you, that was the saddest place I've ever worked. And again, maybe I'm putting some spiritual things on this that I don't understand or don't have any right to say, but there were things in that center that I considered were homesick. The whole center, the people who worked there, the juju that was there, everything about it was, there was a sadness to it of being weighted down kind of feeling to it. And I attribute that a thousand times over to the fact that there were things there that never should have left its homeland. Whether it was in the earth and should have stayed in the earth, or whether it was in the earth and yes, it came out, but it should stay close to home. There were spirits and things roaming around there that were not very happy at all. And I think to me, that's the sense, if it's something that was made to be in its homeland, then that, as much as possible, that's where it could be.

I mean, can you imagine the Navajo medicine bags being held anywhere than at the Navajo Cultural Center? My gosh. Well, they would be just a bunch of stuff somewhere else. That kind of thing.

Bond: Sue, do you have any other comments or thoughts that you'd like to add?

Buchel: Oh, my dear, I've probably said too much anyway, you know. I think the concept of, or at least in your discussions, I would love to read some discussions about scopes of collections. Not so much the 1890s, but in the 1990s. Ohio saying they really wanted those for their own exhibits and things. What in the world is your scope of collections, Ohio Historical Society? You know, are you the society everything? You know, everything and anything? Or are you really just saying that? You know, and really not living up to your own scope. Scope is a very important concept, I think, in museums and archives. And this was definitely not something. I mean, they'd have to really make a stretch to have this stuff within their scope. Other than some benefactor of Oberlin College, not even a benefactor of Ohio

Historical Society, gave it to them. That's not a reason to have something. So anyway, I think scope is something that people don't think about or talk about much, but I think it's important.

And then my other soapbox is, again, 21st century values being laid on 19th century actions. We just need to take care in that. That's always something, I think, that's important to keep in mind. Not to justify anything. But at least to look at it with a balance of some sort.

That's, I guess, my 22 cents worth.

Bond: Great. This has been wonderful, Sue. And you've provided some new avenues for me to explore. And I think I really do need to be more explicit about what a collection development policy is for a museum or an archives. And how, you know, at least in modern practice, these institutions really need to understand what they can do successfully, versus trying to do everything.

Buchel: Well, yeah. There is that. And even if you can do it, ought you be doing it? I mean, part of a scope of collections, again, and there's that arrogance to me. Part of the scope of collections statement is saying you know, there's some other museum somewhere in the world that can do this as well as I can or better. Or more, the relationship is closer. You know? So, sure. Maybe you have enough funding to do whatever you want. That doesn't mean, though, that if you're in the museum community you don't respect the fact that there is some other place that may, it may be best, besides yourself. No matter what. And that whole scope of collections thing is something that developed over time. And it would be kind of fun to just, not for very long, but just a quick glance of how did the idea of scopes of collection really start to come into play? And at what point and how quickly were they adapted, adopted? And are they really being, are museums holding themselves accountable to them? Or is it just still a paper exercise and you still do whatever the heck you want kind of thing? Anyway. Yeah.

Bond: Well, wonderful. Thank you again so much, Sue. And I'll be back in touch after Teresa Bergen transcribes these. And I'll be sure to send you a copy. And if you think of anything else, please just let me know. I'm here at WSU.

Buchel: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Bond: Yes. (laughs)

Buchel: Well, call me about anything. Not that I'll remember any more than I have. But I'm really anxious to see what you come up with, so.

Bond: Great. Thank you so much.

Buchel: I'd love to get a copy of any kind of, if you're putting some articles out somewhere, keep me in mind.

Bond: I sure will. Thank you.

Buchel: Okay. Thanks a lot.

Bond: Sure. Bye.

[End Interview.]en

Interviewee: Robert Chenoweth

Interviewer: Trevor Bond

Date: February 17, 2015

Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview.]

Trevor Bond: My name is Trevor Bond. I'm here interviewing Robert Chenoweth, curator at the Nez Perce National Historic Park. Bob, can you tell me a little bit about how you first learned about the Spalding Allen Collection?

Robert Chenoweth: Well, the collection was here on exhibit when I came. I came as the park curator officially in January of '95, 1995. But I had been coming down here, I was the curator at

Grant-Kohrs Ranch in Deer Lodge, Montana. And at that time, Big Hole Battlefield was in the Rocky Mountain region. And we did all the administration for Big Hole. So it was, the additions bill hadn't been passed. So that place was not yet a part of this park. So I was aware of it from being the curator for Big Hole Battlefield.

So I started coming down after their curator left in around September of '94. I would come down for usually about a week every month. And kind of take care of collection stuff here. Linda was the only one here. And Chris Anne Brown was here. So you know, I just became conscious of it because it was something on display.

And then we found out that there had been a recall, Ohio Historical Society had recalled the loan. So I got in touch with the registrar there to find out what was going on, what that was all about. And what had happened, as was relayed to me, the Ohio Historical Society got into a dust-up with one of their county museums. Institute of Museum and Library Services or whoever, whoever was doing federal funding for museums and that kind of thing, that money came through the state historical society to the county museums. So they had a dispute over the ownership of a painting. And the county took the state to court. And the county won.

And so I think as a, essentially as a reprisal, they said okay, we're going to recall all of our loans and make sure that we have title, clear title to all of our loans and everything. And then we'll consider loaning the things out again. So that's my understanding for the motivation to recall the loan.

The tribe immediately became concerned, because they were convinced, I shouldn't say "the tribe." There were people in the tribe that, in the cultural resources program, that were convinced that OHS would, you know, sell the collection off to the highest bidder. Because they initially talked about their fiduciary responsibility for the collection. And we already had some idea of the, I don't know, whatever you want to call it. I'll call it shenanigans, for lack of a better word. Getting title to the collection when it was first loaned here. And I had talked to Bill Holm and several other people about that process. You know, people were generally nervous that if it went back there, it wasn't where the collection came from. People didn't know how to take care of it. They were concerned that it might not have the same significance to people in Ohio. And that it could possibly end up somewhere else.

Those were sentiments echoed by Richard Ellenwood, who became a principal mover in you know, trying to get the money raised to get out here, and also Al Slickpoo. But there were other people in the community that felt the same way. They said once they get it, then it's going to be really hard to get it back. So.

Bond: I seem to recall a news story about many Nez Perce tribal members coming to the museum—

Chenoweth: Yeah.

Bond: --and seeing the collection and saying goodbye to it. There's a sense of this.

Chenoweth: Well, one of the things we tried to do when we had a time, we had a time limit. There was a time limit to, well, the tribes sent a delegation back to OHS. And they negotiated, you know, we did a little strategy before they went. Then they went and they negotiated a, first of all a purchase price. And the time that they had to pay the money. Otherwise, the deal would be off. So they came to terms. And the terms were based on an appraisal done by Paul Racska, and they valued the collection at a little over \$600,000, six hundred and eight thousand and something. Paul did.

And that was a considerable jump than when it had been loaned. Because at that time, it was valued by an appraiser who was from the Midwest, from Ohio or someplace. And didn't really have a clear idea of the cultural significance of it. They were valuing the objects as objects of art.

Bond: And this was about 1980 when, or '79?

Chenoweth: No, that was, yeah.

Bond: When it, before they loaned it here.

Chenoweth: Yeah, yeah. It was around 1980, somewhere around that time. When they were negotiating to have the collection brought out here the first time around.

So they went. They got the agreement. They came back. So we said okay, two things have to happen. The park service couldn't directly be involved in the fundraising effort. And we were meeting regularly, about once a week, with legal counsel, Julie Kane. It was someone who you should talk to about this. But also Doug Nash. Doug Nash was general counsel at that time. So, and then Ricky and Al, usually somebody from cultural resources, would come to these meetings. And we were just going week by week, what was the situation.

So what the tribe decided to do was to hire a professional fundraiser. And they sent out feelers and had people apply and say what they were going to do and how much they wanted to do the work. So the person they selected was Tom. And that's when I got to know Tom.

Bond: And it's Tom Hudson?

Chenoweth: Tom Hudson, yeah.

Bond: One of the things that—

Chenoweth: I'm sorry.

Bond: Oh, sorry.

Chenoweth: So the other part of the thing, getting the fundraiser in place. But also realizing that this might not be successful. And if it wasn't, we needed to document as well as we possibly could the artifacts. So oh, at the time, [Nikea?] had worked here as an intern and so had Josiah Pinkham, and Josiah's sister [Tesa?]. So we wanted people like that to come in and do assessments of the objects. And Kevin was another person, Kevin Peters. So people with not only artistic ability, but also people that understood how these things were made.

So you can see from this, people did it differently. But they used their artistic ability to describe, to illustrate these objects. Because, well, like, for example, the saddle. [Nikea?] took the saddle apart. I mean, there's probably not too many other people I would have let do that. (laughs) But the result is those drawings that he made, which are exquisite.

And also, it's that difference between when you take a picture, it's the lens and the thing. When you draw, it's the, you look at the thing. Your mind registers. And then you reproduce it with your hand. So we wanted to have as much, not only of that kind of documentation as possible, along with photographs, but part of the reason why we wanted people from the community to come and look at the things was because we were hoping that there might be somebody that saw something in that work that registered for them to see if maybe they could identify family work. You know, work that had been done by a specific family. Because the style, the color choices, the workmanship involved, a lot of times there's clues to the way certain families did things.

So we had these times set aside where we laid all the stuff out and people came and looked at it. And that went on for several months. It was an open invitation to anybody in the community who wanted to come and take a look at it.

But you know, the other part of it, the motivational part of it was we wanted people to see potentially what we could lose.

Bond: One thing that struck me about the negotiations if I recall from the documents was the price was quite high, but the deadline, I believe, was six months.

Chenoweth: Right.

Bond: And I'm wondering your thoughts on that short timeframe to raise money.

Chenoweth: Well, we were scared.

Bond: Okay.

Chenoweth: That was, that was our feeling. I mean, because you know, until you go out and try to do something like that, half a million bucks is a lot of money to raise.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: So we didn't know whether we would be successful. So from our end of it, from a curatorial end of it here, we had to do as much as we could to preserve what we knew about it. In case it did go back

and we did lose it. So that was the impetus for all that, all that work. Nobody thought it was a slam dunk. Nobody thought it was a sure thing. We were nervous. So.

Bond: Do you think the short timeframe speaks to the Ohio Historical Society not wanting to sell it here? Or do you think it was as a lever to have the collection returned? Or do you have any thoughts on that?

Chenoweth: Maybe. We thought, at the time, I think we thought it was a pretty tight, pretty tight window.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: But they were, you know, they had kind of a no, a no-nonsense, as they said, a fiduciary responsibility. Put up or shut up. You know, come up with the money. If you can't do it in six months, you probably can't do it. So we don't want this thing to drag on and become a—I think it was beginning to be a public relations concern for them. Because as the story started getting out, even before the fundraising occurred, I mean people, the newspapers and TV and stuff all came. And they interviewed the [Trembers?] and you know, people were saying, "We don't want this stuff to end up in some collector's house in Japan," or somebody in Germany, or whatever. Some rich guy would take it out of the country. That was the fear. So it was, people were on edge.

And it, I think it began to be portrayed in the media, from the beginning, as this just gross injustice that was. You know, how could something like this happen in 1995? Didn't people understand that, what this meant to Indian culture? What this meant to the Nez Perce? So it was—anxiety.

Bond: Could you amplify a little bit about the meaning of the collection to the Nez Perce, since you—

Chenoweth: Well, I think that first of all, it was some of the oldest stuff that had been collected. I mean, it was the oldest stuff that had really good documentation. And where there was no question that these things were collected right here and sent back to Ohio and all that. So that was significant because it was some of the oldest, I mean, we don't have much other stuff in this collection that has quillwork, for example. This has some quillwork on it. So people felt like it really, it really went back to a time when things, things were different. Where the world hadn't changed that much. And so that mattered a lot to people. How the things were put together. You know, what was it about them that made them, despite all that had happened to the artifacts, what was it about them that allowed them to survive? You know, in terms of their construction, the quality of the construction, all that sort of thing. So.

Bond: What is significant about quillwork?

Chenoweth: It was a medium that people used to represent the ideas and aesthetic that is based a lot in geometry and colors. And it was something that people did, it was a natural material that people used before white contact. It essentially got replaced by beads. Beads were easier to work with. They were more colorful. You had a variety of colors. You were limited with what you could do with quills because you had to dye the quills. And it was a lot of work to secure a bit of quillwork to a hide shirt or dress or whatever. So it was just something that people had done in old times, but was gradually replaced by other, other things like beads. Paint. And, you know.

Bond: So if we could back up to talk about the origins of the Spalding Allen Collection. Could you speak a little bit about what motivated Henry Spalding as a missionary here in what became Idaho to collect these materials?

Chenoweth: Well, the conventional wisdom is that he collected things and sent them back in order to get money to run the mission. But the currency that he got was not money, because it had no, you had to go down to Fort Vancouver to use money in those days. What Spalding needed was, he needed material. He needed fabric for making shirts. He needed axe blades. All these kind of things that traditionally the ABCFM ran a mission operation where every year they would charter a ship. They would load it with these so-called "mission barrels" full of trade items and stuff that the missionaries needed. But you couldn't purchase them out west. You had to, this was another country at the time. So anything west of the Mississippi was not the United States at that time.

But what had been going on for quite some time in the eastern part of the United States was this interest. I mean, it was part of the Victorian movement that resulted in museums and museum collections in Europe. And also, you know, in the U.S. At the Peabody and Smithsonian and all over the place. But the items that people needed since they couldn't be purchased getting the mission barrels was the way to do that.

And Allen, on the other hand, was part of that movement. Or lived in that world where the so-called "Indian curiosities" were becoming important. They mattered to some people.

So I think what probably happened was that Spalding had to give something back to Dudley Allen and to the other people who were supporting the ABCFM's operations. And you know, they were recruiting, they were asking people to donate things, or donate money, so that they could purchase things to send out to the missionaries. So then they went from Boston to around the horn. They went to Hawaii first, and then they could come. Because the ABCFM had those missions in Hawaii. On the Big Island and on Oahu.

That's eventually how that printing press, that famous Spalding printing press that Oregon Historical Society has, that's how that came. Because the guy and the press went first to Hawaii. And something happened, I don't know. And then the press was brought here. And Spalding used it for a while. But this guy ran it.

So I think that the exchange was not currency, per se. It was these goods. And I don't think anybody realistically saw it as a, an equal thing. Spalding was doing what he could.

The stories here are that you know, the people that wanted to be baptized, that wanted to convert to Christianity, Spalding had to see a physical manifestation of that. So you couldn't keep wearing Indian clothes. You couldn't keep wearing buckskins and feathers. You had to change over. So what people say is that Spalding told people, "You have to give these things up. And I'll take care of them. I'll dispose of them."

Bond: And by "people," you mean Nez Perce oral tradition?

Chenoweth: Nez Perce that were interested in conversion. I mean, I don't think there's any way to know the details. The thing, the frustrating thing is that given all that Spalding wrote, he didn't write down

where any of this stuff came from. Who gave it to him. And I don't believe that the Indian people themselves that gave up their things understood that they were going to be preserved.

Bond: One thing that Spalding did in his letter to Allen was to assign valuations.

Chenoweth: Yes.

Bond: As a curator of these collections, what do you think of Spalding's evaluations? Do you think he was kind of in the ballpark in terms of the relative worth? I seem to recall the shirts and the dresses and the saddle were quite a bit more expensive than, say, the hair rope and other things.

Chenoweth: Yes, yes. Yeah. I think he understood, to some degree, that that mattered more back east. Because of the whole collecting thing that was going on, than it did—and I think he had to be able to justify. If he was asking for, you know, a hundred dollars' worth of cloth or whatever, he was saying what he needed. So he had to show Allen, probably, so that Allen could approach other people and say, this is the value of these things that Spalding sent.

Bond: Okay. So just so I have this right, it's an interesting point that what you're saying, then, Bob, is that Spalding is thinking about the valuation of goods that he'd like to see return in the form of cloth, or he mentioned a [dung fork??] and some other things.

Chenoweth: Yeah. Right.

Bond: So that's the general picture. And then the pieces, the artifacts that he's collecting then, he wants them to add up to something equivalent to what he wants. Rather than a, say, a good faith valuation of like a shirt.

Chenoweth: Yes. Yes. He was not, so to speak, he was not interested in charity.

Bond: Right.

Chenoweth: Or he didn't want to appear, didn't want it to appear that he was begging.

Bond: Right.

Chenoweth: That he was giving something of good value in exchange for the congregations contributing to the missionary activity. And this was supposedly, according to what I've read about that missionary movement, what they called the Second Great Awakening. The proselytizing was part of that. I mean, they didn't just go here. They went to Africa. They went to a lot of different places in the Pacific and stuff. So. I mean, you know how our culture works. People want, they don't want to give something for nothing.

Bond: Right.

Chenoweth: They want something. Or at least they want the appearance of it. And of course this was a very noble cause, converting these savages to Christianity. And getting them out of their buckskins and putting on a cotton shirt. And getting out there and farming.

Bond: Right.

Chenoweth: That was all, I think that all worked into that understanding that there was value. These things were contributing to what the missionary movement was trying to accomplish. So. But I think also there was a lot of interest at that time in the material culture of people all over the world. I mean, you had all these explorers. You had Cook and Vancouver and all these people that were bringing stuff back to Britain and you know, so I think people were just kind of caught up in that, or conscious of it. So I mean, obviously Allen kept these things.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: So that's something else. And who knows?

Bond: Yeah. And it seemed like he wanted more, too, for his cabinets. (laughs)

Chenoweth: He did want more. Yeah. He did want more.

Bond: If we could kind of, if you wouldn't mind speaking a little bit to Spalding's reputation as a missionary among the Nez Perce? We talked in specifics about his collecting and the motivations. How is he remembered as a missionary?

Chenoweth: Well, he's remembered differently by people who are Christian converts. Particularly Presbyterian converts. Versus traditional people. Traditional people saw him as authoritarian, paternalistic, even harsh. Because there are the stories of the whipping tree. And you know the accuracy of that is not in doubt in the minds of the people that are conscious of those stories. So that's what they remember. That's what got passed down to them.

Drury and people that have written about Spalding, they want to emphasize the bringing of Christianity. You know there's the story of Spalding bringing potatoes to Idaho. You know, all that kind of stuff. To paint it in a good light. But it was a, even though Spalding was part of a dominant culture, when he came out to this place, he could have been, he could have been at risk. I mean, he was at risk. I don't know there's any question about that. But it was the, I don't know what you want to call it. The way Nez Perce culture operated, it was almost un-, not totally. [pause] They tolerated him. But they did more than tolerate him. I mean, they were curious. There were people that wanted to know what he had to say. They wanted to know what the Bible had to say. Because what he said was, "Our life is a better way of life." And also, there's this whole business of salvation. And doing good deeds and all that. So what, what do you say to that? What does this culture say to that?

Well, just like when Lewis and Clark came, they listened. And they talked about it among themselves. And they knew a lot more than we thought they knew about our world. They were conscious of, through stories and through trading. They knew what white culture was all about. And so there was a struggle, I think, inside this community, to allow him to be here, versus getting rid of him. Just like the debate that happened with Lewis and Clark. Because they, they knew. They knew something.

And there were people that said well this man is saying our way of life, that's sustained us for thousands of years, and our belief, are not good. According to the white people, this is not good. So what does that say about white people? What does it say about us?

So I can imagine other places where he could have gone where he wouldn't have lasted very long.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: But it says something about this culture. Their level of tolerance and their ability and desire to listen to all points of view. To listen to what people had to say. And then to decide for themselves what they, what they wanted. Or what they, you know, some people were indifferent to what they were doing. They just chose to stay away. To not be involved. But they were, you know, there were people that were interested in the cloth. They were interested in the tools. They were interested in metal, metal objects. You know, the culture here is a culture that is open and has always been open to new ideas and to change and to other perspectives. You know, they've done that with other tribes. Even tribes that they're supposedly enemies. You know.

So to me it's a sharp contrast between the intolerance that Spalding was bringing with him. The mindset that he brought with him about the superiority of white people and the superiority of Christianity. The inferiority of the people that he was coming to deal with. And you know, there was a lot of, a lot of internal stuff.

People say, some people say that Eliza got along better than Henry did.

Bond: She could speak Nez Perce.

Chenoweth: She has a better reputation.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: But that's probably, I mean, that's probably true. But she associated with different people. And I think for women, it's always you know, it's, she wasn't, she wasn't on the same level with him. I mean, they may have been to a certain degree, given the reality of their times. But when we look at that relationship, that was an unequal relationship. So she may have found something with tribal women that she couldn't find in her marriage or in her own culture. Because of the role that had been assigned to women by men in white culture.

Bond: You mention a differing viewpoint among the Christian and particularly the Presbyterian Nez Perce? So among that part of the community, is Spalding remembered them more as an industrious missionary or—

Chenoweth: I think people in this community are conscious of all the perspectives about him. And are, what I would say, I've never heard anybody stand up and say, oh, he was like the greatest thing since sliced bread. They say generally it's a good thing that he brought Christianity. But don't, don't go too deep into who he was as a person. I think the person that has come closest to doing that is Clifford Drury's writings. But I get the feeling when I read Drury's stuff that he also was somewhat conscious of, at least how some people felt, if not how everybody felt.

Bond: Yeah. I mean, Drury justifies Spalding's use of the whip.

Chenoweth: Yeah.

Bond: And you know, he really tries to apologize in a—

Chenoweth: Yeah. But that's really what it comes off as, as an apology rather than a—

Bond: Right. (laughs) Yeah.

Chenoweth: He's on the defensive. And that's because of the feelings that people here had. And making those feelings known. So it's not an easy thing.

And there's other people that see his coming, and seeing the establishment of the mission as the beginning of the process that divided the community. That divided the, not just the Nez Perce, but a lot of the tribes. So. And I think they're all valid. They're valid perspectives.

Bond: If we could jump back again to the Ohio Historical Society. First they loan the collection for many years on these renewable one-year loans. And at the start of our conversation, you mentioned the negotiating the selling of the collection. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit to the ethics of institutions like the Ohio Historical Society selling collections. And also if the sale of Native American items differs from other sorts of, say, fine arts, paintings, or those types of materials.

Chenoweth: I think that, I think to have the view that things should be returned to people that made them is, even in 1995, was, I would say, an enlightened point of view. I mean, that was borne out by the decision that they took to sell the collection. You have to think that they saw it as, at least on one level, as some kind of cash cow. If they were going to part with it, they were going to get something for it, and they were going to get something big. They were going to get top dollar. And again, that's one of the things that raised the level of fear here was that the tribe couldn't afford to pay top dollar. And, but that's what they ended up having to pay at the time.

Bond: Did you have a sense of the tribe's resources in the mid-90s? Did they have income from their casino, or did they have money?

Chenoweth: I think Itsayeye had been built. But the Clearwater River Casino had not been built. And I mean, there were people that did not want to see the tribe spend a penny. And in fact, I think, I'm not totally sure about this, but I think what happened as a result of the consultations, and probably you'd have to go back and look at the general counsel. But I seem to remember that there was a general counsel meeting where they decided that they, the tribe didn't have the resources to buy this collection outright. That they had to try to raise money. And if they had to pay a fundraiser, a percentage, I mean, he had to not only raise the money to purchase the collection. He had to raise the money to pay himself as well. So he had to get more than the \$608,000.

And I think that, I think that people, most everyone saw it as an injustice. They saw it as something they shouldn't have to pay for. But there were also people that were realistic and knew that they weren't going to get it for free. I think, I think that the, what should matter here is, I mean, in the United States, and I think what should matter all over is that things, things that are made by a particular culture or a nation rightfully belong there. And I mean, that's my view. But in the museum world of old,

and among some people probably still in the museum world, the feeling is that we can do a better job of taking care of these things than the people that produced them. And so it's justifiable that we have them.

But I don't know. That doesn't make any sense to me. If your museum has the material culture of someone else, then how do you, how do you tell that story? How do you tell the story of these things, or how do you justify having the things? I think you have to, what people are doing now is involving the creators of the objects in discussions prior to doing exhibit design or interpreting those, the material culture that you have. Consulting with tribal people that made those things. That's a good thing. But it still doesn't give people back their stuff.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: And that's, that's what, you know, when they collected around the turn of the last century, a lot of those people, and they were scholars, they were anthropologists, a lot of them firmly believed that the Indian way of life was going to be gone, and those people would all be assimilated into white society. And they would cease to exist. So there was a bit of urgency, desperation, in that process. And a lot of people got involved in it. A lot of the big museums got involved in it.

But I don't think it has much place in today's world. And especially if museums are going to kind of keep up with the times, you have to, I don't know, I guess some of it, some of it has to do with lack of trust. Because Ohio Historical Society didn't know any of the people that would be entrusted with the care of that collection. They didn't know the Indian people and they didn't know the park service people. So I'm sure they felt very justified. I know not everybody felt that way, because I got to know a few people there that were involved in the process. And a lot of those people thought okay, if we're going to be maintaining these kinds of collections, at the very least we should be doing it to fit our mission, which is the Ohio Historical Society. Not the Idaho. You know, what are they doing with Nez Perce stuff?

And that was the Nez Perce argument all along. You know. You don't even know what this stuff is. You don't know anything about it. So how can you possibly—

Bond: I think they made the case that there is the Ohio connection because—

Chenoweth: Yes. Yes.

Bond: --Spalding and Case Western, and Allen and so it's Ohio in the west.

Chenoweth: Yeah.

Bond: But that said, from the documents, I don't recall the Ohio Historical Society ever displaying any of the materials or really presenting them in a public way.

Chenoweth: Only the things that were loaned for, what was it, not "A Song to the Creator." It was the thing before that.

Bond: At the Burke?

Chenoweth: Yeah.

Bond: Okay.

Chenoweth: Where the cradle board went. I can't remember what it was called.

Bond: Okay. But that was not a, that was something initiated from the Burke. It was not an Ohio Historical Society show.

Chenoweth: Exactly. And it was actually something initiated specifically by Bill Holm, because Bill knew of that material and asked for some of that material. And got the cradle board.

Bond: Okay. Let's see here.

Chenoweth: Yeah, it's a funny thing now. Because I remember when I, when I started in the museum business, I was fascinated with the, I was working at the Smithsonian while I was a student. And I was asked to come and work in one of the reconstruction labs, the anthropology reconstruction labs. And so just to be able to see these things, and to know that they were there.

But I worked on a collection from a dig in the Negev Desert in Israel. It was a pre-Christian burial, what they call a tel. And it was full of pottery and skeletons and all that. So it was excavated on very short-term basis during the '73 war. The Israeli army was digging a, they were making a road to get down into the Sinai. And they came across this burial. I mean, it was a tel, one of these—

Bond: Mounds? Yeah.

Chenoweth: So they stopped. The engineer stopped. And they got the archeologists in.

Bond: So it was a U.S. dig? They called in [unclear]

Chenoweth: They brought in people from the Smithsonian. They asked people to come.

Bond: I see. Okay.

Chenoweth: The person that I knew that was involved in it, he was a postdoctoral fellow from University of Arizona. And this was a project that he got involved with. I don't know if he was there at the time or went over immediately, but he was kind of responsible for it, you know, when it came back. And I don't know honestly if the intent was to keep it at the Smithsonian or to repatriate it. But at the time, they said get it out, because the war was going on. And so what you did, you just were happy to see it, not thinking so much about the cultural patrimony aspect of it. I mean, that wasn't, that wasn't something that was widely discussed at the Smithsonian in those days.

And you know, when I worked at Air & Space Museum, that's when I really became conscious of the notion of a national museum versus local, local history. I mean, do the things belong in a national museum? Or do they belong where they were manufactured, where they impacted communities, that sort of thing. And I think it's still hard for people sometimes to, because we have, Americans and Westerners, Europeans not so much anymore, but Americans, especially, have this idea, still, that we can do a better job of taking care of things than the people who made them. And that's a tough, that's a tough jump to get over.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: But it's, it's really important. I mean, it has to do with, well, it has to do with colonialism. It has to do with imperialism. Both the physical manifestation of it, but also the ideology of it. The Elgin Marbles is a—

Bond: Right.

Chenoweth: --a classic case. And I actually joked, when I went one time, I went in '95, no, it was in 2005, I went to, I'd gotten in touch with the British Museum because I wanted to look at the Vancouver stuff. And I had talked to Bill Holm about it. And he said, yeah, if you get a chance to go over and see it, he said, it's really cool. And so I was joking with Jonathan King. I worked with a guy in the morning, a tech, and he had all the stuff out there. And I looked at it. I even looked at the little tags on there that Bill Holm had written saying no, this is not deer skin, this is mountain goat, you know. Because he was looking at their catalog records and he was helping them out. He'd been looking at this stuff.

And there was this old, old [leetscow?] that Vancouver had collected on the river. So when Jonathan came in the afternoon just to say hello, I said, "I have a message for you from the tribal elders," you know, the Nez Perce tribal elders.

He said, "Oh, what? What's that?"

And I said, "They want to know when you're going to give their stuff back."

So he got it. He got it. He was a little, he was a little, I think, put off. But he got it. And he said, "Bob, this is the British Museum." He said, "You should know, we don't give anything back." I mean it was kind of, it was a little tongue in cheek.

But you know, the experience that I've had with museums in Europe, they have enough of their own history to worry about. And so there's a lot of stuff happening there that hopefully will be happening, and is happening, to some degree, here. So attitudes are changing about—

But if your goal is to let that culture be whatever it is, it shouldn't matter to you. If the material culture was made for a certain purpose. You know, people always say, well if you give the stuff back to the Indians, they're just going to bury it. Or whatever. Whatever they think is going to happen. But if you understand that intellectually and culturally it's their stuff, it's none of your business what happens to it. It's theirs.

And also if you understand the inequality of the relationship that resulted in that exchange or that, what's the word?

Bond: Trade. Collecting.

Chenoweth: Well, of the stuff being transferred, expatriated to outside of the area where it came from. Yeah. It's an exploitive relationship. It's an unequal relationship. Under normal circumstances, people would not have been compelled to give up their material culture. There was something in that relationship that happened, whether it was stolen out of a tipi during the war, or however people had to make things in order to sell to get cash because they needed cash in the reservation economy. That's not how their

culture operated before. So you're putting stress on that community and things are falling out of that community as a result of that stress and that unequal relationship. Good ordinary common sense and values says, give it back!

Bond: Do you think there will be a day when there will be legislation or trends following what happened with the return of burial goods and sacred objects under NAGPRA to be applied to archives and other museum objects from—

Chenoweth: I would hope. I would hope so. Because the only thing that can result in that, from that, is a strengthening of both cultures, a strengthening of the trust, and good things. I don't see it as, I think there's people in the museum community that are afraid because they don't understand. But if you, I think if you make the effort to get to know the people who you're going to give these things back to, or who you're thinking of giving them back to, then you have to come to the conclusion that it's the right thing to do simply because what matters most is the preservation of their culture. You know, we want, we want to defend our culture. They want to defend theirs as well. So I think that they have, they have every right to expect that as people become more aware of what the process was, and what the real nature of the relationship between, you know, it started with Columbus. Things were taken immediately. And you know, they were brought back to Spain. They were brought back to Europe. And people went over.

And you don't, you don't know exactly in every case what the relationship was. In some cases, there may have been honest, fair exchanges of things. You know, you read about these adventurers from Britain and France and Germany, these aristocrats that went over to hunt buffalo or, you know, the artist that went with them, and the stuff that they got. Some of those may have been fair exchanges. But nonetheless, why are you keeping them? Why is there a bunch of Plateau stuff in a castle in southern England? Because it was part of Lord So and So's estate. But what good is it there? And what do you gain by having it there versus having it back with the people that created it?

Bond: Maybe we could wrap up with if you could say maybe if you have a favorite item from the Spalding Allen Collection that's here? Or is there something that speaks to you particularly from that collection?

Chenoweth: I don't know, speak to me. But I like the dresses. The shirts, the shirts are cool. The thing about the dresses, though, is I think you get to see so much. You can talk about where dentalia come from. Who are the people that harvested dentalia. How was it a medium of exchange, you know, that went all the way through the northern Plains into the east?

Bond: And these are shells harvested, where—

Chenoweth: From off of the coast of Vancouver Island. In the old days it was the [Hadocet?] people that had the, there was a thing in *National Geographic* some years ago where they even illustrated how they got it, you know, the animal, the mollusk lives in certain depth of water in a sandy, and they figured out how to get them. And you know, you could trade these things. If you had a big string of it you could get a horse in central Washington. But you only needed a few inches of it to get a horse in the Dakotas. It was a valuable medium of exchange. It was like gold or silver.

And there's, there's Russian trade beads on there. There's Chinese beads. There's the elk teeth. So you can talk for hours about the physical things that are on the dress, and how the dress was made. You know, the hides, turning the tail around and using the two hides. Just asking people, you know, which part do you think is the front part and which do you think is the back part of the animal of the hides? So they're wonderful vehicles for just opening all kinds of doors into what was going on during the time that they were made, and why were they made the way they were, and when did a girl get her two-tail dress? When did she get her hide dress? So it's a door into the whole culture. Just one thing.

And each one of the things has that. I mean, just a pair of Cree moccasins that are part of the collection. How did they get there? You know, what's the story of those moccasins? And does that story matter in Ohio as much as it matters here? Maybe to some people in Ohio, it's a big deal. But generally, we know that Cree trappers and stuff came. They came out with the fur traders and all that. But their material culture came, too, you know. And again, the Nez Perce, they're open to stuff. Even people that they consider their enemies, if they were doing something good or they had something good, or something stylistically they liked, they didn't have any problem adopting it, bringing it into their world, too. And almost every one of the artifacts, you can ask those kind of questions about them.

But you know, when, we had that, the quirt, we had that thing for nearly 20 years before Kevin figured out when he took it and was drawing it, there's a little metal thing on there that people thought was a quill. A tip for a pen. But when we looked at it real closely, we realized that it was, it's the brass socket that's at the end of, when you have a ramrod in a pistol or a rifle, it's the one that the end of the ramrod goes into. So it's the one on the stock that's closest to the trigger. So somebody got that and put it on their quirt.

Bond: So it was a found object remade into another—

Chenoweth: Yeah. And there's brass [tragerings?] on it.

Bond: Interesting. Yeah.

Chenoweth: Kevin has just done an absolutely wonderful job of showing you what that thing looks like through the eyes of an artist, but also through the eyes of a technical illustrator. I mean, you can't see in a photograph what Kevin has drawn. Because the marks on there, the decorative marks on there don't always show up in a photograph unless you're concentrating on that.

Bond: And Kevin's last name?

Chenoweth: Peters.

Bond: Peters. Thank you.

Chenoweth: There's just tons of stuff like that.

Bond: Yeah.

Chenoweth: And if you could do that with every object, you would have a lifetime's worth of work, just with the collection we have here. So.

And you know, the sweet thing for me was that it became the tribe's. The choice was the park service getting it or the tribe getting it. And I think the philosophy here is family first. Tribe second. Park third. And that's the position that I've tried to adhere to. Because we're, in a sense, we're kind of the last ditch for stuff staying in the community. My desire, and I think most people who are interested in the preservation of culture here, want to see things preserved in the family, if that's possible. So it's sometimes problematic. But most of the time it's possible. And yeah, there's a risk. But it's their stuff.

It's just like, do you donate your family photo collection to somebody? Or do you keep it yourself? Well, it's your family history.

Bond: Right.

Chenoweth: And that's the foundation of this culture is the families. So of course you want to keep those things. Maybe if somebody wants a little advice about what's a good way to take care of this or that, that's fine. But I'll tell you, the people that make these things and the people that use these things, they know how to take care of it. They may not understand the science, you know, but they know how to take care of it.

And they also, you know, the things are made to be used. Sometimes people say that when the things come into the museum, they become dead. But what you, even if that's true, you still have a visual record. You have a record of how people did things before. And that's inspirational to people. People come here all the time. And maybe they know that something we have was made by an ancestor of theirs. And they want to maybe just get inspiration to do something that they're working on, or they want to take an old idea and reintroduce it into their family. That makes it worth it. That makes it worth it that we've put the money and the resources into taking care of these things.

I mean, what I would love to see is that someday this is an Indian-run operation. Until that can happen, I think this is the next best thing. But it's not easy to, you have to make an effort to build that relationship with the community. And because the tribe doesn't have its own cultural center, they don't have their own museum storage area or whatever, and we can do that, to me that's a good thing. But it's a trust. We have it, we're holding it in trust for them.

Bond: Great. Well, thank you so much.

Chenoweth: You're welcome. (laughs)

[End Interview.]

Interviewee: Kevin Peters

Interviewer: Trevor Bond

Date: July 12, 2015

Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview.]

Trevor Bond: This is Trevor Bond. I'm here on July twelfth with Kevin Peters. Kevin, could you please tell me your title here at the park?

Kevin Peters: Kevin Peters, ranger/interpreter, cultural interpreter. And a little bit of everything else I seem to do around here. A little curatorial. Build things.

Bond: Can you tell me about your involvement in the efforts around this collection? Had you started working at the park when the struggle broke out in the '90s over the collection?

Peters: Actually, when I looked at it, is that it was here when I got here. And that we had this beautiful collection right here. And I didn't, at that point in time I knew it was on loan. But I did not understand the threat. Which is actually not a threat. I mean, they had every right to call in the collection. But the tribe thought it was best interpreted out here where it came from. I mean right here. Literally, this collection was all together down in the park. You know, 300 yards from here. And then it went west and down around the horn and back up the east coast and resided over there. Dudley Allen and the college in Ohio. And then it came out here. So it made a 100 degree trip, 360 degrees, I guess, and a couple hundred yards. And it was like it was appearing to go away again. And I thought this is something that is very, very valuable. Not just for the people, but also for its integrity. I mean, this stuff is like new, some of it. Even though it's very old, it's very well kept.

One of the things I do like to talk about when I'm talking about the collection is that the material they had would last for a very long time. And one of the things I noticed is is one of the dresses has a thimble on it. And when looking at collections in the west, you find a lot of thimbles. What is harder to find on these older elements is, I ask people what comes with a thimble? Needle and thread. The needles were okay. The thread did not last, so they threw the thread away real fast. The needles went away. They have found whole caches of needles that have rusted together in places, so they just got rid of it. The thing that was of value was the little thimble. They made tinklers out of it. Repurposed it.

And when you look at the decorations on these beads and stuff. There's another piece over here I like to talk about. And that's one of the men's shirts. And it has beadwork on it in the larger pony beads strips on the sleeves. But it has, over the shoulder strips that are quills. And the quillwork is done in lane fashion, crisscross technique. And because it lends itself very well to geometrics, they were put in there. But the beadwork has its geometrics. And they're doing that in a back and forth, linear fashion. And it relates to a nice geometric shape down here.

So one of the things I look at is that it's like a change of materials. You can be an artist and you can paint a picture in watercolor or you can paint it in acyclic. Or you can paint it in oils. But you're still

painting. And that's what this shows me. But this one catches us in transition. We have beadwork and the old style quillwork on there. In two different fashions.

One of the things I like on it is that roundel in the center of the chest is quillwork wrapped around horsehair. Now I have a hard time tying my shoes, and this person is putting together horsehair, wrapping quill, punching holes and sewing it down all at the same time. I'm just amazed by the intricacy of the item and how you can manipulate your fingers doing that. It's just kind of like totally amazing.

The other things I've noticed on it is the builds. When we thought it was going away, another fellow Nez Perce Anika and G.G. Pinkham and I think even [Tesa Matheson?] was here helping us. Because we thought it might go away. We had cases built for it. It was coming very close to saying goodbye. And we started looking at it. And what we started looking at was the construction. And that was really neat because we were down looking at stuff with magnifying glasses. Looking at the type of knots. Sinew-sewn. The quillwork is sinew-sewn. I think that even the beadwork is sinew-sewn. But what we found was interesting was when you start counting the fringes on the arms, they were all intact. And it's just amazing after almost 200 years, and these could be 200 years old. They might have been built before Spalding got here. So they could be fairly old. But we found out the number of fringes matched on each side. There's a couple hundred of them. But they matched them, so—

Bond: Oh. Each piece.

Peters: Each side. Yeah.

Bond: So somebody had really counted them out carefully.

Peters: They had counted them out very carefully. And they matched. And they talk about balance. I looked at this and I was going, these people thought about balance. They really thought about balance back then. We talk about it today, but I look back then and I'm going, the thought has been right in line all these years.

There's some other little things I found interesting was, especially with the shirts on, because they have, the roundel is twisted. And it's kind of interesting. It is, you're looking at the back of the shirt here. And the twist is to the left, from the bottom to the left. And I'm looking at something else. There were three fringes hanging off the neck piece here. And they have three of the pieces have quillwork. But three of them have red quillwork on it. And they're hanging also off the rear left-hand side, the same way that the roundel points. And I'm looking at something here where I'm thinking, they're thinking about maybe heart at that point. I mean, I can't go back and ask them. But I can look at it and make some conjecture. So beyond just being a mere shirt and it saying what it is and what it does for somebody, I cannot ask them directly, but I have to look at the shirt and let it try to speak to me. And it does. It's just beautiful. And I'm still overwhelmed by looking at them today. They're quite beautiful. They catch us in transition. They're just marvelous pieces to look at.

The dress, the dress itself, I usually don't talk on these very much. But I did like that little thimble in there. And we also have—

Bond: And where was the thimble in terms of the, was it tucked into one of these—

Peters: It's like on one of these things on here on the bottom. And there was another piece in there that we looked at on this dress, maybe the other dress. There is a missing elk tooth. Real elk tooth. But the thing is, they've replaced it. They have carved an elk tooth and put it in there. So I find it interesting that they would do that. Then I'm going, why not? They were doing other things, manipulating things to make them into something else. Manipulating the animal hide into a dress cover for themselves. And it being quite beautiful, I don't think this is your average, everyday go out and pick berries and dig roots dress. This is something a little special.

Bond: Is that the same you would say for the shirts, too? Are they ceremonial?

Peters: Uh, the shirts, I wouldn't say ceremonial. I'm not sure what ceremonial, anybody's talking about. They always talk about that. But if you needed to be in public or something and were showing up with a bunch of people with you, your group with you, it would give them notice as to what you were, what you could be. But it also gives a sense of everybody belonging. People have certain cuts. You have certain maybe colors you like to use. And maybe it is a group thought, also. And by doing so, it's a language, it's one of the languages that is used by people to communicate among themselves without being verbal. It's like, you know, today. You look back and you're going, there's a lot of platform shoes around. What are they trying to say? (Bond laughs) You know what I mean? You get this.

Bond: Yeah. Yeah.

Peters: There's some group thought here. And so it speaks to me in that fashion that it says who I am. What do I do? What could I do? What were my abilities? I'm here now, but what did I do before? What could I do in the future? That's what it says.

Bond: I think it was Bill Picard mentioned to me about sometimes like if you wore a garment like this, say, to an event, that people would recognize, oh, you know, that family member did that piece. Or it was a way to kind of put you within a band or within a family.

Peters: Yeah. Within a group. Yeah.

Bond: So how do you think Spalding got this stuff?

Peters: Bought it. I mean, look right there. [He sent bills?]. I found that rather interesting. They could still have an inventory that was left there that talks about the transaction between us and him and where it ended up. And the other thing is, what it ended up costing us as the people who purchased it and brought it back. The interest was amazing.

Bond: Do you think that the price was fair? What do you think about the terms of the sale from the Ohio Historical Society?

Peters: Well, all sales are fair.

Bond: (laughs) Okay.

Peters: And it's one of those things where it says for all debts, public and private. But I think there was an idea in here where something could have been done, or should have been done, where it could have been given back to us. Because the price is, the price is no longer there. And even back then, the price wasn't there. Because these were priceless. So I look back and I'm going, why did we have to purchase these?

And it's not necessarily "we." It is the American people. Because we had people from all over. We had kids, you know, with jars of pennies. And it was an amazing, an amazing event in the end. But in the end, we got, we retained them. And we were down to the point of, we had the boxes here, ready to put them all back in and ship them back. And I was just like, I can't believe this. When it finally came through, it was like, hurray! Now we can burn the boxes.

Bond: Right. (laughs)

Peters: We never did. I have no idea where they went. I don't care.

Bond: Yeah. I mean, Bob Chenoweth saved the estimates and the packing materials from the company. I mean, they were really close to going out the door.

Peters: Yes. They were very close. Yeah, it was like, oh my gosh. We've got to get to counting what types of knots did they put in here. How far was it between the stitches? Approximately how thick was the sinew that they were using? How far did they strip it down in order to sew it? Back then you were punching holes to sew your sinew through. That's a lot of hole punching. You're not just putting a needle through something. You're pre-punching it, putting your thread through, tightening it up and going on to the next one. Time-intensive. Labor-intensive. But there's a lot of heart in that. And that's the thing I find. There are just pieces that are just unbelievably beautiful in their construction. And you look at it, they're at a very high point in their constructing. Their idea of aesthetics, how it should appear.

And the aesthetics is not just art, but it covers everything of, like we were talking before. Who you are. What group you were from. You know, so people knew who you were. The construction said something about you, also. It's one of those things where they talk about it, you read about people, that's so and so, that's so and so's group over there, you can tell by the cut. Or that's another group, you get close, it's one of those things that I've looked at, having done it so often. Okay, that's not a Plateau tipi, that is a Plains tipi. Without even getting close to it. Pole construction, how they're laid out and stuff, tells you things. And that's kind of a neat thing to do in that.

Bond: Do you remember in that kind of period where they're the open viewings and the public came in and the Pinkhams were here, and Anika studying this about elders coming in as well? Do you remember learning from elders about maybe a technique or—

Peters: Hmm. Not really on a lot of that. They were looking and talking about it. And I was probably listening intently. And not that it went by the wayside. It's had a probably internalized and kept it there—

Bond: That's right.

Peters: And have been still using it without knowing, you know, who'd that come through. Interesting ideas that come through like preconstruction or prior construction, like the saddle, and the saddle base of wood. And the more modern ones that are 60 years after the Spalding-Allen, Nez Perce collection saddle, you can see change. A little bit of change. And it's kind of neat to see.

Bond: Yeah.

Peters: We see like the stirrups. One of the stirrups has little tiny triangles in it cut out of the rawhide, which is wrapped around the cottonwood. But there's a little piece of wool cloth around that, so there is a little construction that is beyond just having to wrap with rawhide and sew it up. They took a little piece of material, put it behind the rawhide in between the wood, sandwiched in there, and it becomes a design element. Then as you see after 60 years, the design element is now a big triangle and it's on both stirrups. And you've got like fenders hanging down off the stirrups. It's like, you know, this is a Cadillac.

And I've always kind of found that funny is that some of the elder women like to have a big car. And my aunty had her big car. And they would go berry pick, her and her friend, and you'd see all their bags in the back. And off they would go. And it was one of the things where she told me one day about being stuck up on a hill. And as they rounded the corner, it was a hairpin corner, a landslide came down. Covered the road on the top of the corner and the bottom, and they were trapped in between. And then she told me, "This is the reason why we have road food when you take a trip." She said, "We were stuck there for six hours. We had everything we needed. We had food, water and toilet paper. And we had two big seats we could rest on." (Bond laughs)

And it was like, okay, I kind of see a reason for having a big car. You know, this was their horse at the time. That was probably back in the late '50s, early '60s, that happened. But it was kind of interesting to see that because the woman controlled the household goods and it was her ability to move everything, that they would do it in style. It wasn't just, "Okay, let's hop on the horse and go." No, we're going to do it and look good doing it. That way, you all get together and you say, this is who we are. Even we're moving, you're making a statement.

And that's what I found out about these was that there are other pieces, like the fenders. And this being one of the only fendered Native American saddles in America. But the fenders are a construction of rawhide and painted, and probably had beadwork around the edges from all the little holes I can see on it, or maybe had a wrapping of cloth around the edge of it.

Around the world in other museums, I don't know, there are five or six other pieces that are fenders that look like these. I mean, just about identical. So somebody was making a statement at some point in time, in a group, that said this is who we are. And I find them beautiful. I mean, it's just an amazing saddle. I'm amazed we still have it. But it's just quite beautiful. It's a piece of artwork. It's a very three-dimensional piece of work that just looks, you know, that would look good hanging just being by itself, it's beautiful. Doesn't even need a horse underneath it. So.

Bond: Could you speak a little to the importance of, say, having a piece like this saddle right here in Nimiipuu country versus maybe at a museum in Ohio or Germany? What is the significance of material culture being in the context in which they were created?

Peters: Well, that's just it. It is, within the context in the world of which it was created. And so it gives more meaning other than just objet d'art that is looked at by somebody else. This one has beyond somebody trying to interpret it from another country, in another culture. Here it can be interpreted as it should be, as it is. It's more fact here than interpretation when you have an item like this. This is one of those things where items like the dress, the shirt, the saddle, speak to you directly. And they're just beautiful like that. When you have them in the context.

I have had pieces that I've done, two-dimensional art, and have stood behind people. And they, not knowing who I was, I just let them talk on about what they saw in my painting and let them see what kind of interpretation they came up with. And that is what art, if you're doing just art for that, should be. It should draw a reaction.

But sometimes there is art that says something. And it's not just art. This is more than just art. It is a reflection of the people. It is that other language that says this, specifically. And it's still here, and it's still saying that specifically. Even we're not quite sure what they're saying, but it's something very profound. Very unique.

Bond: Now you've been meeting with groups and providing interpretation for a couple of decades now. And I know I've been in the park when Italians have come in and Germans. Have you had some surprising reactions over the years to the collection? Or do you have any stories from maybe meeting with groups? Or questions that they asked you?

Peters: Well probably one of the most things that you do get is they come out and they said, "That is an amazing collection." And it is. As an overall whole, it very much is. And they understand that. They've seen probably other collections of materials or been to other museums. And are doing a bit of a comparison between other collections and ours. Especially with their other Native American groups we've looked at. We do have a unique collection here.

Now as for one of the bigger questions I get is, they ask, "Well, when did you get the beads?"

And I always have to ask them, "Which ones?" We made beads also. But there is the glass bead. And that comes from, now, all over the world. Back then, you're getting a lot of material out of Europe, the glass.

And they said, "Well, what has it done for your art?"

It is like I said before, it's like, okay, we had oils, then we went to watercolors, then you can go to acrylic. It didn't change the art so much as it's just the material that you applied your ideas with. You might have the same idea to do a triangle. You're going to do it one time in paint, one time in beads, one time in clay. It became just another material. Another medium in order which to express yourself.

Interestingly enough, you mention to people, you know, 25 years ago, the United States did not have a mass bead production. And if it was, it was probably plastic. And they're kind of amazed that there wasn't a major bead manufacturer over here until I think Bovisa Beads down in Texas. And I think that came from France, I think. But the idea that it was a trade item, it's still basically a trade item. You pay money for it and stuff. But beads are something that everybody had all around the world. You know, find a hole, but a string through it, put it around your neck, oh, cool, hey, I got something. And it's one of

those things where you find that beads as currency, beads as just beautiful objects. Sometimes not even used to create anything with. Just that you had a mass of them. And you had the ability to say at some point in time, “Oh, they’re bringing in all these colors, but we only like so and so colors.” So they were picking and choosing, even when it came to the colors of beads that came through.

Bond: If we could circle back a moment, we talked a little bit earlier about the high price that the Ohio Historical Society put on the collection. And one of the things I certainly notice in looking at the records was just the overwhelming public support of having the collection stay here.

Peters: Yeah.

Bond: I was wondering if you had thoughts, do you think in the end this was kind of a black eye or a mark against the Ohio Historical Society? Or was that—

Peters: Well, that would all depend how you would look at it, and then think a bit about money.

Bond: Yeah.

Peters: And that would be up to almost anybody else’s idea of how they think about it. I’m very glad we got it one way or another. And I thank all the people who supported the collection staying here. It’s just that it took a lot of resources to retain it. But I’m glad it’s here. Every day I get to look at it. Well, at least five days out of the week. Sometimes on weekends.

Bond: Yeah. (laughs)

Peters: And still, I’m amazed by the art of it. And sometimes I just look at it and just go, useful item, you can sit in it, you can ride in it, you can put it on. But just the art of it sometimes is just beautiful. So it’s like wow, that is so cool.

Bond: I know that the park is in the middle of having the exhibit area redesigned. And I believe some of the pieces are going to go into storage and rest for a period.

Peters: Mm hmm. Yes.

Bond: Do you think others will come out? Or have you been involved with the planning for that?

Peters: Oh, yes. There’s going to be other objects coming out. As for how much of the early Nez Perce collection will go back and what it will bring out. To have one or two pieces like that out, you can talk about the rest of the collection, too, if you have one or two pieces out. That way they have something to visualize and can relate to. And if you have an interpreter there, fine. If you don’t, you can recognize it for what it is. You can say oh, saddle. And at least come up with an idea as to what saddles are. And then they’re probably going to look and say, okay. Very, very nice. But the thing is, they won’t realize, they’ll understand a fender. But they won’t understand the uniqueness of this set of fenders and a few others around the world that look pretty much exactly like it. So it stretches very far when you start talking about these items. Because dresses are still fashioned pretty much in the same way. So are shirts. Saddles. A few saddles have been made recently.

And I found it rather interesting, one of the pieces, a lady was actually looking to learn how to build saddles, tore apart an antique saddle. And didn't quite get it back together before her parents got home. So anyway, she learned about that. And the thing is, we've looked at them, and I've been looking for pieces to study and stuff. What are the bare bones under these saddles? Because the men's saddle very much is bare bones. Fenders, not even fenders. Sideboards. No fenders. And a horn and maybe a back strap. Because the men defended the group. So they had to be able to move on their horse.

And you can see that the woman's saddle is more utilitarian. She has a nice hook up front. And you can put strings over it and hang things all off of it and stuff. Like I said, this is their Cadillac at that time. And the baby could ride at the knee. So it's really, really neat pieces.

Bond: How do you respond when people ask you about the memories of Henry Spalding as a missionary?

Peters: What did they think of him? Well, you get all sorts of things that come through sometimes. And some people have an idea already that Spalding wasn't—he was a man of his times. Literally.

Bond: Yeah.

Peters: I mean, that's what he was. And what he was trying to do or what he thought he was trying to do, and what he thought was good or what was bad, that was up to him and his culture. But when you put that culture in with another culture, sometimes things don't jive. And then you come up with some problems. And either you resolve the problems or you don't. In his case, they were only partially resolved. Maybe in the end, they were still only partially resolved. But it's not that anything was going to be done about him when he came back years later.

Bond: It does seem like Spalding had a hard time getting along with his colleagues in his own culture as well, from the back and forth with the Whitmans and the others. Yeah.

Peters: Yeah. It was rather interesting. When you've gone through some of those letters and read some of the books about the missionaries, between those guys who knew each other and the books that are written about them, yeah, there was like a lot of backbiting going on. And they do talk about that, you see writings about the early people talking about well, why should we believe in you, because you guys fight among yourselves?

Bond: Right. (laughs)

Peters: And I can see that. I'm going, well, things haven't changed a lot, have they? Rather interesting. Yes.

Bond: Do you have any last thoughts that you'd like to add, Kevin? I really appreciate your time and your knowledge of these pieces. And also the techniques involved in doing these things.

Peters: Well I hope they remain for future generations to see. That's what curatorial work does. And I'm doing a little bit of that right now. I seem to wear a few hats around here. Interpreter, a little curatorial work here and there. No gardening as of yet.

Bond: Maybe down the road.

Peters: Maybe down the road here, yeah. Pull weeds, I guess. So.

Bond: This seems to me that this was a really unusual collection. It's pristine. It's been kept together. It has that very early documented provenance. Do you have thoughts on just the challenges that maybe, not only the Nez Perce but other tribes face when their cultural heritage goes on sale at these auctions? And are maybe priced outside of the range of being able to return.

Peters: Yeah. Well one of the other things I'm more amazed on is that a Native American can sell an item of their own volition to a buyer and get a price for it. But the buyer, the purveyor of Native American goods, will turn it around and sell it at an expanded price beyond that which he paid for it. I've always been amazed by that.

Bond: Yeah.

Peters: But it's also one of those things of where you are. Some people would find the richness literally in goods sometimes. And it's one of those things where we still sit on today, Highway 95 and 12, is still a trade route. And it was a trade route when Spalding was here. It was a trade route when Lewis and Clark came through, because they used it. Everybody else used it, too. I mean, it was a way to go in and out. But also, we had a bottleneck. And we kept a lot of material goods just because of that. Because we could pick the best and send on the rest. Going east or west. It didn't matter. You sit on a bottleneck and that's what happens. It's one of those things where at one time, back in the '60s, I think, we had five or six buffalo hide tipis here. And at that point in time, that was 50 percent of all the buffalo hide tipis left in the United States. And I actually think there's another museum person out in Montana or Wyoming, Cody Museum, has found one more Nez Perce tipi. So that means still today, even though they're not all here, we still have a corner on the tipis. We've got one of them here. And every now and then, a remnant pops up from somebody. "Oh, this came off an old tipi." And you can see it was a stake, a peg hole. And that's about all that's left, a little piece of leather around it. And for some reason, why do little things like that get kept? No idea.

But yeah, it's one of those things where we sitting where we are in the physical world, well, we sat on a bottleneck. A lot of things came right through it here. And we also moved a lot of things out. The culture up here was based on a lot of trade. You know, all the big trade routes and stuff that came in and out and the setting up of trade fairs. Materials moved up and down, north, south, at these different locations. And tons of goods were moved up and down these rivers in the canoes. You know, there was one factor that was talking about trade, I think down at Fort Nez Perce on the Snake and Columbia there. Said he looked up and saw 500 canoes coming down the Columbia. I mean, that's a flotilla.

Bond: Yeah.

Peters: And that's, you know, maybe a ton apiece in each canoe. That is a lot of goods moving.

Bond: Right.

Peters: And that was just one group coming down the Columbia River from up, and that group may have even started out in Canada to get down here.

Bond: Yeah.

Peters: Amazing. Just an amazing amount of trade goods went around. So there was a lot of diversity in materials when you start looking through the collections. There really is.

Bond: Right. You've got that long tradition of buffalo hunting out in Montana and Wyoming, and fishing in Celilo and everywhere in between, moving around, right?

Peters: Yeah. Everybody was moving around and stuff. Reading one book about a young mountain man in the west. *Four Years on the Frontier*, or something like that. He's over in the Big Hole Valley. And if you go over to the Big Hole Valley now in Montana, where the Big Hole Battle took place, he's talking about the 1830s, and he talks about people. He doesn't really notice it, but how many people are going in and out of that valley? I mean, it's just amazing amounts. It's a crossroads out there. I think there was probably more traffic back then than there is now, almost.

Bond: (laughs) Right. Great. Well, again, thank you so much, Kevin.

Peters: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Bond: I appreciate it.

Peters: All right.

[End Interview.]

Interviewee: Bill Picard

Interviewer: Trevor Bond

Date: June 2, 2015

Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview.]

Trevor Bond: Bill, would you please start by telling me your name and your current title?

Bill Picard: My name is Bill Picard, and I'm the vice-chairman of the Nez Perce tribe. And I'm a member of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee.

Bond: And Bill, during the time of the Spalding-Allen Collection, I guess controversy, or the efforts to retrieve the collection, were you serving on the tribal executive committee at that time?

Picard: Yes, I was. I was elected to the executive committee in 1990. And I served from 1990 to 1996. And the Spalding-Allen Collection situation came up, I believe, in 1993.

Bond: Correct. Would you please describe your involvement in the efforts among the Nez Perce to have the Spalding-Allen Collection stay at the Nez Perce National Historical Park?

Picard: Like what I stated, I was on the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, which is the governing body of the Nez Perce tribe. And so we went into negotiations with the Spalding-Allen Collection individuals. And along with the park service, negotiated. And then when they basically said, "You're not going to get it. We'll sell it to you, but you have six months to come up with six hundred and some odd thousand dollars," we took action for the Nez Perce tribe. Adopting to be able to raise the money. And then also we contracted with, I can't remember the—

Bond: Was it the Heritage Quest Alliance with Tom Hudson?

Picard: Yes. We contracted with them. And then we also worked with the Disney Foundation to help raise funds. And we went with that Tom Hudson foundation, they kind of went nationwide, asking. And then we went local asking for donations and fundraising efforts and things like that. And so I was on that.

And then like I said, we took action in the council to agree to be that [unclear] so asked people in the area to donate.

Bond: Bill, did you think that the terms that the Ohio Historical Society agreed to, that namely the amount they wanted to charge for the collection, was fair?

Picard: No. I don't believe that the amount was fair. And I also feel that the timeframe that they put us under was not fair, either. Back in '93, six hundred and some odd thousand dollars, in today's dollars,

would probably be like three million dollars. And so trying to collect that kind of money in that short of a timeframe. We didn't know if we could do it, but we put forth the effort.

And with a lot of people's help, a lot of people, friends of the Nez Perce tribe. And then with the Nez Perce tribe and with our own donations from the tribe and fundraising, we were able to reach that. But I guess kind of my feeling in it is that these individuals received these items without paying for them or without negotiating for them, without, without the tribal members whose items these belonged to, the families. There was no compensation given to the families. Not that the families would have sold the items anyway. But there was no negotiation, no compensation for these items. And then they want to sell them back. After they didn't pay anything for them.

Bond: Bill, one of the things I wanted to ask is are you aware of family connections among the Nez Perce with items in the Spalding-Allen Collection?

Picard: Well at the time I remembered who they all belonged to. But as of right now, I can't recall. It's been a number of years. But I do want to state that the Nez Perce tribe, we all feel that we're one big family and that we're related, whether it's through marriage or bloodlines. But we're all Nez Perce. And that we, if one of hurts, we all hurt. So even, even if it isn't specific families, basically what we felt was those items belonged to us as a family. They belonged to my sister. They belonged to my aunt. They belonged to my grandma, you know.

And so kind of as an example, me and my wife, we raised probably 20 kids in this community in the time that we've been married. And most of them aren't related to us. But they call us aunt and uncle. And now they're grownups. And they still call us aunt and uncle. And, because that's how we consider family. And so when people say, "Well, how is this boy your brother?" to my daughter, she says, "We were raised together." And so even if there's not a bloodline, there's a connection.

And so when you look at these items, you feel like these items were taken from my family. The Nez Perce tribe.

Bond: Yes. Thank you for that. Bill, could you tell me how much time or give a sense of the amount of effort the tribal executive committee devoted to the Spalding-Allen Collection negotiations?

Picard: Well in the six months that we were in the effort to raise this money, each NPTEC meeting we had, NPTEC is Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee meeting, we have a meeting every two weeks. The second and fourth Tuesday of each month. So for each one of those meetings was time dedicated on those meetings to this fundraising. And then I would say a lot of time spent with phone calls, in and out of the office, traveling to meet with people. Having people come in and meet with us, to get donations. Traveling to explain to organizations that wanted to donate money, traveling to explain to them why we're having to raise this money. That kind of stuff. So there was a lot of time and effort for, not only for the executive committee, but also for the staff of the Nez Perce tribe to do the same thing, help go out and help with this effort.

And all of our staff plus the executive committee, when you had to go meet with somebody in, say in Seattle, or go meet with somebody in Spokane or Boise or something to try to get funds raised, you also had to take time away from your family.

Bond: Yes.

Picard: To go do that. So you can't really put a dollar amount on the time that you maybe missed a graduation, or maybe missed a baseball game that you'll never be able to watch again with your children or that kind of stuff. So there was a lot of effort put into raising this funds that took people away from their homes and out of their box, so to speak. So I think there was a lot of time and effort not only on the executive committee's part, but also on the staff part, too.

Bond: That reminds me, Bill, of a press release I saw that Sam Penney put out, thinking a Boise elementary school, I believe it was Frontier Elementary, and I believe a full delegation went down with [things?] and dancers. So that was the sort of event that was going on during this period?

Picard: Yes. And that was not only to ask for donations, but also to raise awareness of what the tribe's culture is, and what the tribe, what the tribe does. And that we're not just a culture that's read about in a book. But that we're actual people. That we're here and that we do practice, continue to practice, our culture.

Bond: Bill, do you think in some ways that the very public nature, the newspaper stories about the raising money for the collection and the importance of the collection help teach about Nez Perce history to kids throughout Idaho and other locations?

Picard: Yes. I think it was very helpful. And we did, and I can't remember which school, I'm sorry I can't remember which school, because I would like to give them a plug in here. But we did get money, I believe it was a fourth grade class in one of these local schools, collected money and donated it to us. And I don't remember the amount, but it came in a great big jar. So I mean, these kids felt that urgency or that need to help. And so they needed their help in the Nez Perce tribe. And I think that from that, the tribe went out to enhance the knowledge of local people as to what the tribe is and what it does. And that continues today.

Just about probably a month ago I was invited to a local school down here in Lewiston called McSorley. And I went in and talked to four, or three fourth grade classes. And basically explained who the Nez Perce tribe is, and that we're here. And a lot of the kids have some really good questions afterwards. So I think that that brought an awareness that continues today. That people want to know about the tribe, and want to learn more about the tribe.

Bond: Thank you. Bill, not speaking about the dollar value of the collection, but what do you see as the importance or the value of the Spalding-Allen Collection to the Nez Perce?

Picard: Well, my feelings on that is that you can't put a value on somebody's necklaces or eagle feathers or beaded dresses or ribbon shirts. You can't put a value on it, because what happens right now is these items are handed down through generations.

So an elder wore this regalia that now we're having to purchase back. But one of our elders wore this. And it should have been handed down to her daughter or her son. And his family. And handed down from generation to generation. So that when people, like if I was wearing the regalia and I went to

Pendleton, they would look and say, "I remember his grandfather used to wear that." Or, you know, "His grandfather received that from" this person or that person. So it's like maybe selling part of your body. Or part of like what Chief Joseph told his people was, "Don't fill the land, because the land holds the body of your elders. It holds the memories of your people."

So to have these items taken out of the area and, you know, if you read back, these items were, Henry Spalding told the Nez Perce, "You have to put away these things. These things are from heathens. And you have to change your ways. You have to become a different person." And then all this stuff he talks them out of, to get rid of them, to not wear, he saves them and sends them to somebody for a collection. And then, you know, many years later, we have to buy them back.

So it's more than money to us. It's, you know, like maybe taking a picture of your grandson and instead of handing it down to him when he gets older, you sell it, and then have him buy it back five years later. You know, that's kind of how we were feeling.

And the things that they had that we had to buy, it wasn't just an item. To them, it was an item to be bought and sold, like a commodity. But to the Nez Perce, it was who we are. It was the way we dressed, the way we live. The way that we bead. The way that we design things. It was our story, our history, our culture that was taken, and then being sold back to us.

So you couldn't let, a Nez Perce couldn't let those items go back to the Ohio Society. Because they planned on selling them. But who would know where they're at now today had we not been able to secure them and bring them home.

Bond: Bill, have you heard stories or do you have thoughts on Henry Spalding's memory as a missionary and as a collector?

Picard: I've heard stories of Henry Spalding. But I've also read articles and books on the Nez Perce tribe. And they refer to Henry Spalding and they say that Henry Spalding did, he would whip adult men and women for not attending church on time, or not doing something that they were supposed to.

And you know, as children, we discipline our children to raise them up the way they should be raised. But when they're an adult, they need to make their own decisions. And if their decision isn't to do this or that, for a man to hold another man down and spank him, I don't think that that's, that's proper.

So I read where he did this and stuff. But also I've talked to a lot of other people. They said that when Henry Spalding came out, that he brought his way of thinking. Not the Christian belief, or not the word of God in the Bible. But that he brought out his own opinion of how things should be done. So he used the Bible to influence or dictate his way of thinking and force that on the Nez Perce.

Because right now, I go to church. But I also go to pow wows. You know, I go to, I praise God but I also hunt and fish. You see what I mean?

Bond: Yes.

Picard: So my culture is, I can be an Indian and still be Christian. You see what I mean?

Bond: Yes.

Picard: But with Henry Spalding, you had to be one or the other. You couldn't be both. And if you were an Indian, you were a heathen. And if you weren't, then you were a good Indian. And that was his belief. But that's not the way Jesus or the Bible teaches. So that's, I've got a lot of stories from a lot of people that say that he was forcing his belief – not the Bible's belief, or not the Christian way of life – but that his belief is what he was forcing on the tribes.

Bond: Thank you. Bill, what do you see as the ethics of institutions such as the Ohio Historical Society selling collections?

Picard: Well, I guess kind of what I mentioned earlier is that to these institutions, it's all about money. And they took the tribe's, whether it was a beaded dress or a headdress or eagle feathers or whatever. But they took them and they made them into a material, like a commodity, to be bought and sold. They turned them into like a car or a painting or something along that—but in our culture, these items aren't materials to be bought and sold. They're a way of life. And when you get through using these things, then you hand them down to your children. And they, in turn, hand them down to their children. And so these items were handed down through generations and generations.

Even now, when a tribal member does beadwork and somebody comes up and goes, “Oh, that's beautiful art.” But to us it's not really art. There's a reason for it, and it's part of someone's regalia. It's part of something.

Like when I graduated high school, I was given a beaded belt buckle. And the lady that beaded it, she didn't give it to me as a piece of art or for me to sell it in ten years for money. She gave it to me from her heart to my heart.

And so these items that were taken weren't made to be bought and sold. If, back in these days, the Nez Perce tribe went all the way down the Columbia River. And then we did barter. We bought and sold all the way down the Columbia River. So when the Nez Perce come back, they had knives, they had pots and pans that they traded with settlers and with mountain men and stuff. But they traded like beadwork. They traded buckskin. They traded elk hides, they traded, you know, things like this. These were the things that were materialistic, that were basically like money, to be bought or bartered with. But the items that they created for their regalia and things, it wasn't for, to be bought and sold. It was material to be heirlooms, to be sacred, to be kept so that your children enjoyed these same things.

And handed down and maybe an uncle came and seen you dance and they were very impressed with the way you dance. They might give you an item to add to your regalia, so that when you dance it was something to honor you.

So you don't sell something like that. There's a value that can't be put in dollars. You know, like if your grandpa was passing away and on his dying death bed he gave you something and said, you know, “This was mine. My grandfather gave it to me. I want you to have it because that's how much you mean to me.” You wouldn't take that item and sell it. You'd keep it. You know, it's got that relationship between you and your grandfather. And the importance of it. And I think that that's the way these things should be looked at.

But as these institutions took them, they took them as materialistic, that they could make money off of them. And they did make money off of them. And so I think that that's the two different ways of thinking, is that these institutions thought of these items as something to make money off of. And the Nez Perce tribe looked at them as we need to bring our items home to our families.

Bond: Bill, in the end, do you think the resolution of being able to keep the Spalding-Allen Collection with the families was good? Do you think in the end it was positive? Or were the conditions and the high price, did that kind of detract from the overall sense?

Picard: Well I think it is very important that those items were here. That those items are back home. Because what the Nez Perce tribe, and I think that can speak for all tribes, is tribal people are very spiritual people. My mother even said like when you go to somebody's house and the cook is angry, then they're making angry food. And they pass that anger on to you. And so she told me, you always pray over your food so that whatever is being passed on is good. And so she said when you do things for people, or when you cook for people, or something, you've got to do it in a good spirit. Because that's what you pass on to others is that good spirit.

And so with these items, I think they needed to be home. They needed to be here with the owners. With the people who made them. The people who beaded them. The people who put these things together and the importance of these things. They needed to be with the family. So if you take like these dresses and the headdresses, they needed to be back with their people. So they were lost out there. They were lost in Ohio. They were lost where Henry Spalding sent them to DeSalle. And they were lost. And they were finally found and brought home. And so I think there's a spirit to that. Every connection. Every connection to where they're supposed to be.

And so I think that the people, when they came back, it was like reconnecting with your elders. Reconnecting with maybe your great-great-grandfather, who you've only seen in pictures. Or maybe only heard about in oral history. Only heard about in stories. But here's some items that belonged to him. So there's a reconnection between you and those that made these items. So I think that's the importance of these items being home is because the spirituality between those that made those items, those that gave up those items, those that sacrificed, and now being brought back, the reconnection with those people. The reconnection with the owners of the items. And then also the reconnection of those items with their owners.

Bond: Thank you. Bill, do you have any other comments or anything else that you'd like to add?

Picard: Well I guess the last thing is just like what I'd said this far is that these people, the Ohio Society, Henry Spalding got these items from tribal members who he told them, "These are bad, you shouldn't have these, you need to give these up, take these off." And gave them other clothes. And then he took the items that he told them was so bad, so evil that he said "You need to leave this Indian way of life behind. You need to leave this Indian way behind. Now here's your different clothes."

And then he took those that he told them was so bad that they shouldn't wear them, that they shouldn't have them, that they should give that way up." And then he kept it. After telling how bad they were, he kept them. And shipped them back to New York or whatever. And then they in turn were handed through different hands, and then come back and sold to the tribe. These things that he told us how evil

they were, and how wicked they were. And yet he made money off of them. And the Ohio Society made money off of them after telling, after in my mind kind of tricking the Nez Perce out of them by telling them how evil they were. But yet, he kept them. If they were so evil, why did he keep them? Why did he send them back east if they were so evil? You know, I mean, to me it makes it even more, more sinister, I guess, that he tells these people how bad these are and then how much money later, in years later, they made off of these same items that he convinced the Nez Perce how bad these were.

So I guess that's the part that kind of always gets me is that he tells them how bad they are. And then he, it's like tricking your little brother. Telling him, you know, "You don't want this candy. It's terrible. That's the worst kind of stuff." And so you convince your little brother that it's bad, and then you eat his candy. You know? I mean, that's kind of what Henry Spalding did here.

Bond: Bill, do you have thoughts about Nez Perce materials held at other museums in Europe and in America? Do you think that they're going to come home at some point?

Picard: You know, the bad deal is that we as a Nez Perce tribe, and other tribes as well, we don't even know where all of our stuff went. You know, we don't even know where, if we've got stuff in Canada or Russia or wherever. You know, because the stuff was taken from the tribe and shipped off. And even like with these items here, with the Ohio Society, the Nez Perce tribe didn't realize that all those were over there. I mean, we had to go find them and luckily they came back. But there's a lot of items out there that Indians don't even know where they went.

And I don't know if you've ever read the book *Yellow Wolf, His Own Story* or *Children of Grace* or *Opening of the Northwest*. These are stories about the Nez Perce tribe. These are books about the Nez Perce tribe. Well in them, it tells about how things were stolen. Even during the Battle of 1877, how people were stealing things from the Nez Perce tribe as they went. And how they had to leave stuff behind. Well nobody knows where that stuff went. So it would be nice to get it all back. But a lot of the stuff, we don't even know where it's at.

We came through, me and my wife, we took our kids on a vacation to Yellowstone and then down through the Tetons. And we was coming back and we stopped in this little town. And they had a museum. And in the museum there was an arm, a hand, with the fingers up to the elbow. And it had beadwork on it. So it was an Indian's arm in this museum. I mean--

Bond: Oh, gosh.

Picard: A person's arm. Yeah. A person's arm in this museum. And so not only our beadwork traded and stuff, but here's somebody that passed away. Their arm's in a museum. In a small town somewhere. And so that, I mean, the family that that arm belongs to, they probably don't even know that that arm's there. They don't know that their grandfather's arm is in a museum someplace. So I think that, I think that these museums or organizations that find themselves with items that don't belong to them.

Like the Ohio Society. This stuff was given to them without ever being paid for. And so to me they should have thought well, this isn't ours. We didn't pay for it. It isn't ours. And we need to give it to who it belongs to.

You know, if I was in the streets of Coeur d'Alene and I walked up and found somebody's wallet on the ground and picked it up, it doesn't belong to me. And so I would dig in it to look, find out who it belongs to and I'd get it back to them. But the Ohio Society stumbled on some stuff that doesn't belong to them. And instead of giving it back to who it belonged to, they said, we'll sell it to you for 600 and some thousand, but we'll only give you six months to buy it, or we're going to sell it to someone else.

And so that's how I think about all this stuff that's in these other museums. People should look in these museums or these art galleries or whatever and say who does this truly belong to and where did it come from? How did we end up with it? And then maybe look at trying to get it back to the original owners. But I think a lot of the tribes don't even know that their stuff's out there in museums.

Bond: And I think, too, when I talked to Nakia, he made the point, too, that especially in the 19th century, a lot of these things are described as "Indian curiosities." And names, families, tribal affiliations, none of that is really captured often. So those connections that you describe are lost forever, which makes it more difficult.

Picard: Mm hmm. I think, yeah, like even in today's society, just probably maybe three or four weeks ago, an individual coming into the tribe, and he had an eagle fan. It was beadwork on the end of the eagle fan. And then it had a claw on the end of it. And so when he come in and he turned it over to the tribe. And he said that he had received it from this person who said that they had got it from that person.

So the Nez Perce tribe, we took it in. but we didn't just say, "Okay, this is ours now. These people brought it back." We looked at it and we called in people from all over in the tribe, within the tribe. And that handle was made red, white and blue. So it was somebody who was a veteran that owned this. So we took the time to find out whose family this belonged to, and got it back to their family.

And I think that that's what these entities should do is find out who this belongs to. Because there's a connection. When we give it back to the family that it belonged to, these people cried. You know, there's my grandpa's thing we haven't seen for, you know—so I think with a lot of tribes it's like what Nakia said is that I think if something was brought back and given, the people would cry that it's finally got home. It's finally made it back to its people.

And that's, like I said, like with this Ohio Society, the stuff that they had, and there's a connection, a spiritual connection between this stuff and the people. And so when it come back, it was a homecoming. It wasn't just materials returned. It was a homecoming for this stuff to come back to where it came from.

Bond: Thank you so much, Bill. That's the end of my questions. I asked you before, but I'll ask you one more time. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Maybe points that we touched on earlier?

Picard: Well, no, Trevor. I just want to off the record, offer this stuff. But just between me and you, I just want to thank you—

[End Interview.]

Interviewee: Josiah Pinkham

Interviewer: Trevor Bond

Date: May 14, 2015

Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview.]

Trevor Bond: This is Trevor Bond. I'm here interviewing Josiah Pinkham on March [means May] 14, 2015. Josiah, could you start by telling us your title?

Josiah Pinkham: My official title is cultural specialist within the Nez Perce tribe's cultural resource program.

Bond: Thank you. I know that you were young when the struggle over the Spalding-Allen Collection came up. But can you tell me a little bit about what you remember from 1995 and '96 as the Nez Perce worked with the National Park Service and with Tom Hudson and the Heritage Alliance quest to restore the collection to the Nez Perce homeland?

Pinkham: Okay. So what I remember is that you know, for a long time I remember seeing these objects in the museum. And I was always pretty enamored with them because of their visual significance, along with the understanding of how much time it takes to put something like that together, and the significance of heirlooms in general. So I always did really enjoy looking at them. And I remember hearing that they were being recalled and it was for the purpose of appraisal. And even though I was relatively new to the museum studies realm, I knew enough that through inquiry and talking with Bob Chenoweth and Kevin Peters and others that were more knowledgeable than me, that that was kind of peculiar that they were being recalled for the purposes of appraisal. And I think, my memory's stretching, but I think that in times past when they appraised them for insurance value, they would send somebody out just because it was less expensive to do so.

Bond: Right.

Pinkham: And that sent up a red flag because possession is a big part of, you know, in many regards, ownership. So the objects being on permanent loan and then being recalled for purposes of appraisal when prior to that they had sent people out to do the appraisals, was a big red flag for the National Park Service and the Nez Perce tribe. Because they realized that if they had let them go back that they would be sold on the open market, and thus the collection would lose its unity through obviously being parceled out to different bidders. And the collection would never again be put together in one place.

And so that was a big challenge for the Nez Perce tribe. Because the significance is that, to the Nez Perce tribe as a whole, I think, is that the collection embodies the earliest and greatest centralization of ethnographic objects for the Nez Perce people. You don't have a collection of this size, this age, anywhere else in the world. And that was huge for the Nez Perce to be faced with the potential loss of that collection, that meaning, that connection with our ancestors. And so what I remember is that the Nez Perce tribe internally convened discussions on how to come up with that amount of money, what the amount of money was going to be. We were faced with not knowing how much the collection was going

to be appraised at, let alone how we were going to, as a tribe, come up with that amount of money, knowing that we didn't have the revenue income to basically purchase it.

So when the appraisal amount came back, I remember the Nez Perce tribe wanted to convene discussions about how to get the Nez Perce tribe as the, you know, the right of first refusal on the whole thing. And to my understanding, that was secured. And then came the challenge of coming up with that amount of money in the amount of time that was offered. And if my memory served me correct, it was about six months.

And I don't remember what it was that set that clock ticking. But we immediately turned to trying to come up with an individual whom had the experience to raise that amount of money for the Nez Perce tribe in this endeavor. And that individual was Tom Hudson.

So eventually after the amount of time had elapsed, we secured the funding and made the purchase and the collection was allowed to remain at Nez Perce National Historical Park in Spalding. As far as I know, that's, in so many words, the experience that I remember hearing about. There's probably subtle details that I can get into as we kind of progress through our conversation. But I guess in a matter of a few breaths, that's what I remember.

Bond: If we could circle back to one thing that you said, Josiah, you mentioned one of the things that's so important about the Spalding-Allen Collection is the age, but also the size. So in your experience in museums or your awareness of other Nez Perce items being held at other museums, generally it's an item or two that never like multiple shirts or dresses. This is quite a large collection.

Pinkham: Right. So basically what you have there is that the collector put a lot of time into securing objects and centralizing them in a way that showed a broader spectrum of material culture than others are capable or have the desire to amass. Which is pretty cool. I mean, usually you get people that are drawn to one or another object or types of objects. It seems like for Spalding, he was kind of drawn to a little bit of the most lucrative type of acquisitions, I guess. And the stuff that he amassed was visually, I think, representational of the nicer stuff that the Nez Perce people had. And I think that says something about, it says something about Spalding's eye on one hand. But I'm not sure exactly what was kind of feeding that ambition. Whether he was, because I know that he was actively trying to acquire things. But I don't know that he had a whole lot of choice about what was offered to him.

Bond: Yeah. I was wondering if you could, I know there are different views about how Spalding acquired these items and I know Slickpoo mentioned how one of the things that Spalding was really interested in was kind of Christianizing and, you know, quote "civilizing," unquote, the Nez Perce. And so some elders like Miss Mills indicated that Spalding likely got these items through coercion. I was wondering if you had heard stories about maybe the possible avenues. If these were maybe items that Spalding wanted the Nez Perce to give up, to dress in kind of western clothes and farm and do those things, or—

Pinkham: Right. Well, we don't really know exactly how Spalding came into possession of the objects that now comprise what's known as the Spalding-Allen Collection. Some caveats to that are that he did mention, at least I remember reading in some of the documentation that he kept track of, you know, to a certain extent, anyway. Not completely on everything. But he mentions how much things cost. And so

that shows that you know, he did keep track of what he was paying for these things. But you know, that could have been untruthful on his part.

Bond: Right.

Pinkham: And there are things about his character that are a little bit more complicated. Like for example, my aunt Mary Waters was telling me about how one of the practices that he utilized to gain his fellowship was along the lines of when he would distribute potatoes that came in, when he received a shipment of potatoes, he would take some of those potatoes and he would cut the eyes out of them. And then he would keep those aside. And then there came a point where he would distribute potatoes to his fellowship. And to those individuals that were ardent followers of Christian faith, or that were performing above and beyond the call of duty of the time, he would give the potatoes that had eyes. And then those people that maybe needed a little bit of a nudge or weren't doing, weren't following as ardently as the rest of the small amount of Christian Nez Perce, that he would give the potatoes that didn't have eyes. And he'd say, "Go forth and plant." And they would do so.

And then the Nez Perce that received the potatoes with eyes, they would come back and they'd say, you know, "Look at all our potatoes."

And he would proclaim, "Oh, God has blessed you. Your faith has been rewarded." And he would talk it up really big.

Those Nez Perce that received the potatoes without eyes wouldn't come forth with anything. And he'd say, "See? God's punishing you, because you're not as faithful as your brethren or your siblings over here."

And so those types of manipulations were commonplace for the people at the time. Because that's probably just one of the many things that he did to manipulate the Nez Perce into taking up Christianity. And there were probably others. I mean, there's, we know about the whipping tree and how that was utilized. There's probably other things that he did.

And I think that the way in which he acquired these things is probably along a spectrum. Because I imagine that there were Nez Perce that were ardent in following their faith, their Christian faith, their new Christian faith. And that they would have freely given up some of these things. But I also know that we can't be so black and white in the approach to how somebody like that, somebody with that type of reputation would have come across these things. so that's where it's difficult, because you have a collection that's phenomenal, that took at least a bit of an eye to acquire, a bit of savvy to get. And also a significant amount of influence. But then on the other hand, we know that Spalding was manipulative. And I guess for the time, missionaries were and had to be a little bit manipulative, if not a lot.

Bond: Would you mind amplifying a little bit the tradition of the whipping tree? I recall reading in some of Clifford Drury's accounts of Spalding about how he would try to get some Nez Perce, he called them headmen, to punish other Nez Perce that didn't follow what Spalding wanted to do, and have them publicly whipped. Which would have been a real humiliating experience, especially for a young man. I was wondering how you were taught about that tradition, or if you'd heard stories about the whipping tree.

Pinkham: Well, it's really complicated, because whipping is something that is known in Nez Perce country, I mean, in Nez Perce society, that was something that was utilized in a little bit different way. Because that was something that predominantly was administered on the very young. And the way in which it was done is that the parents weren't the ones typically that whipped their children. Usually it was an aunt or an uncle that was in charge of the discipline. And even at times, there was a person called the whip man who would come into the community. And the family would say, so and so hasn't been behaving the way that they should. And the children were made to line up. And the person would go through and switch their backs like that. And that was their punishment. And oftentimes children were made to lie with their siblings and they were whipped, too. Because they were told well if this person was doing wrong, you should have stepped in and said something, because now you're being punished, too, because you didn't step up and do what was right. And so it was always with that. They weren't punished without reason. And the rationale as to why they were being there was always known and explained to the children. They always understood why they were being punished.

And even I myself, that's the way that my grandfather was when I was being raised. And I remember being punished like that. And wondering, you know, how come I'm here? I didn't even do anything. And from time to time they would say, "You're here because you have to be reminded that what these two did was wrong. And you can learn from that by not being the person that did the wrong. And if you were witness to it, you can learn from the fact that you need to step up and correct what was going on.

So we were always taught like that. And you know, what that made for was kids that had an executive function about them, that knew what to do, when to do it and knew restraint and control and all that.

And you know, that even was magnified with respect to my grandfather, when he would go to different places, strangers would come up and say, "Your kids are really well behaved. They're not running around everywhere, and they're not out of control or anything."

And he said, "Well, it's because I teach them. When I punish them, I don't just do it because I'm angry or upset. I'm doing it because I want to correct what's wrong with them. And I explain that to them."

And so that practice carried on into my life because I punished my boys in the same way. I didn't have to whip them a lot. But when I did punish them, I was always careful that after their emotions had subsided that I went up and, you know, I approached them and I talked to them and tell them, you know, yeah, you did get punished, but you have the opportunity to do differently.

Now what that has to do with the whipping tree is that the punishment oftentimes was more manipulative rather than having a clear-cut rationale as to why that punishment was being implemented, there was no explanation. Or the explanation wasn't as thorough, I guess I might say, as when we would do something similar. And so these young men or these adults, when they would get into that type of a situation, what they would say is that they were being punished because they weren't believing in God, or not following Christian faith as faithfully as their fellow community members.

And so that was a punishment of different magnitude because it was more demeaning, I guess. That's the way that I understood it.

Bond: Josiah, I know that you make shirts. And I was wondering if you could maybe comment a bit on the process that that would have gone into making a shirt like the quilled, beaded shirt that's in the Spalding-Allen Collection. And maybe if you could kind of talk about who would have done the work in terms of you know, killing the animals and when it took preparing the skins as, you know, a viewer of a picture or the garment itself, it seems that this must have required a tremendous amount of labor from start to end to create something so beautiful from natural products from this part of the country.

Pinkham: Okay. So the process really begins with the hunter. Because at this point in time, Nez Perce likely had firearms. And when we go out and hunt, we're always told that we should try to take neck shots. And what that does is that it avoids any lower body damage that would have resulted in bullet holes that would have complicated the hide tanning process.

Bond: So these are bullet holes here?

Pinkham: I'm not sure if those are bullet holes. They could be. They look a little bit low. Because you're talking about the rump area right here. This is the tail. So that rump area kind of tells me that these might not be bullet holes. But I'm not sure.

When we go out and hunt, we try to take neck shots right at the base of the skull. Because then you leave the brains available. They're not disrupted to the point where you can't use them for hide tanning. Because the process is that you take the animal after you've killed it, you clean it up and you pull the hide off. You don't skin it off with a knife, because knives leave cut marks and hide that basically when you're working that hide and softening it, those cut marks can open up and be even bigger holes than bullet holes. So you avoid using a knife as much as possible. You use a knife to make these cuts up the front of the front legs to the base of the neck, and up the back of the back legs to the base of the tail. And then the skin that's on the inside of where the leg comes down, that gets pulled back on each side to the outside, this being the back. And then that hide gets stripped off one direction or the other. We typically go from the neck down and we pull it off. Because that way you've got no knife marks in it. And from that point, you scrape the flesh side of the hide to remove any bits of tendons that are attached to the muscles that allow that creature to kind of shake and twitch like that. And after that, it gets scraped off. You soak it and then you remove the hair and the outer layer of the grain. And that exposes that thin layer of the hide that's eventually going to result in the hide that you use for making a shirt or a dress.

So after that point you wring it out and then you drop it into a warm solution of brains where you take the brain from an elk will tan that elk's hide. The brain from a deer will be enough to tan that deer's hide. It's kind of that type of a ratio. And that, the animal's brain is full of oils that permeate the hide so after you've wrung all the brain matter out of it, you start to work it back and forth like that as it's drying. And if the temperature is right, it will slowly dry at a pace where you're working that back and forth like that and you're causing all those little hair fibers to get oil molecules in between it. And eventually it's dry and it's been worked as it's drying so that it renders this soft, supple kind of a material almost like felt.

From that point, it gets taken, along with a hide that matches up with it, and it gets cut apart at a point that's just right below the upper arms of the animal. And then it's sewed together along the top so that these two back legs form the major body of the shirt. And then each of the—so we have like the legs like that. And then your little tail part. There's a cut right there. This part right here becomes the arm. So that's where this little beaded strip would be like that. And so that gets sewed to this part of it. So this would be the top part of the shirt like that. And then it would be something like that. So that's how it gets sewed together in basic form.

And then these parts of the shirt is fringe that gets cut from another hide. And then you start to decorate that hide. After you have the body of the shirt put together, you start to decorate it with quill work and/or beadwork.

And the unique thing about this shirt in particular is that it shows a lot of variety in the skill that went into making things like this. Because you've got a few different things going on. You've got pony beadwork and you've got plaited quill work. And you've got single bundle wrapped horsehair. And in my experience, the most difficult thing to do is that—

Bond: The rosette?

Pinkham: Yeah. The rosette. Because just the manipulation of the materials is more intricate and detailed, thus more difficult than to do beadwork or plaited quillwork. Because I've dabbled a little bit more, I've dabbled a little bit in each of these types. And that's probably the most difficult to do.

The only thing that's no on here is the double-lane quill-wrapped horsehair, which is what the Nez Perce were really known for. Other tribes did it, too. Like I think the Crows did it and maybe some other tribes. But that's the really cool thing about this shirt is that it shows a variety of things kind of coming together.

And so the other thing is that it shows quill-wrapped fringe, which is what these yellow areas are here. Those are all porcupine quills. And the way that porcupine quills are dyed is after you get quills from a porcupine, what you can do is you can dye them using wolf moss, and that will get you that kind of a yellowish color. And there are other plants you can use to get like the reds and the different colors of quills that you could probably see if we had a little bit better resolution picture.

So the amount of work that it takes to do something like this is something that's not like real easy to do. That's a work that would take place, you know, if women had down time where they weren't actively doing something. They would still always, always be busy. They would be keeping their hands going and making twine for nets or bags or whatever it was. Men did that, too. They would always be sewing.

And the really cool thing about this stuff is that, I do beadwork and I can go down to Joanne Fabrics and I can buy yarn. I can buy string, I can buy thread. I can just pick that stuff up. These guys, they were making, they were twining sinew and using it. They had thread, too, available at the time. But predominantly, a lot of the stuff that they were using to manufacture this was stuff that they had made. They dyed the quills. They collected them. They made the sinew to basically string those beads on. And that's a phenomenal effort.

Bond: Yeah.

Pinkham: I mean, it's easier for me to do this stuff now, and I think it's difficult. But the women back then, they were industrious. I mean, that's what's really impressive about this stuff is the amount of work that goes into something like that. And that, also gives value to the object as something that's transgenerational. Not just in terms of the fact that that's going to go to a leader of some sort and then be passed on to his next in line, his oldest son, his nephew, whomever that might be, and on down through the lineage.

A shirt like this also had, on the other side of the transgenerational interpretation, it had numerous women that were involved in the process. So his sister may have tanned the hide. His wife may have sat down with his mother and did the beadwork together while they were by the fireplace. And they would have been trading stories and talking and doing different things, you know. I mean, that's where the real value is. And looking at these things, you think to yourself, those people didn't have an easy lifestyle the way that I have now. But still they made things that were just absolutely stunning! And I look at those things and I think man, that is just inspirational. They did that without light bulbs. They did that without cars.

Bond: Yeah. So where would you wear a shirt like this? This doesn't look like something that you'd want to put on to go out hunting or doing messy work.

Pinkham: Right.

Bond: Does this look to you like a ceremonial shirt?

Pinkham: Yeah. Definitely. I don't think that this is your, you know, that's where Spalding was wrong in that he was saying that people were wearing these in every day. Because I remember reading that somewhere. He was wrong about that point. There was another point that he was wrong about, just on a little tangent here, he was talking something along the lines of that when, I think in reference to the cradle board, he was talking about a woman would be out with the cradle board and she would gather up like 150 pounds, 200 pounds of firewood to take back to the teepee for her gambling son and her husband sitting by the fire. I mean, the men had to be as industrious as the women. It's just that it was a different nature. They would have been out checking on horses, they would have been out fishing, they would have been out hunting. I mean, that's hard work, too. Because I know that. It's a lot of fun to go out and hunt. But it's also a lot of work.

Bond: Right.

Pinkham: So everybody was just constantly involved in direct production of goods. So that being cleared up, something like this would have been worn at ceremonies. This is not something that people would have been fishing in, hunting in. They would have had other wear that they would have utilized in those more menial tasks of going out to gather firewood or, you know, something along that line. Just because I know that nowadays it's not that easy for me to get beads, but back then, I mean, to acquire beads is something that was a really big deal. I mean—

Bond: You'd trade for them like at Celilo or other gathering places?

Pinkham: Yeah. And for this time period, I think Spalding was having beads shipped in. And then he was distributing them. And I think if I remember right it was like a day's work for a handful of beads, something along that line. That kind of shows you that it's not, you know, these things weren't just kind of worn every day. And so something like this would have come out for particular ceremony's for like, maybe a boy's first kill. Maybe a wedding, a funeral or the first foods ceremony. People typically call it a salmon feast or root feast or something like that. But we call it first foods here. The term [katwea?] is applied to our feast here. And what that means is first bite. [kat?] is bite and [uwa?] is first. And so something like this would have been worn at a ceremony of that magnitude. And same thing with the leggings, because they're similarly made and decorated. And that quill work is just phenomenal. There's not a lot of people that do that anymore.

Bond: Bob Chenoweth mentioned to me that one of the things that was significant about the quillwork is that it really reflects a time in Nimiipuu culture before white contact. Because after more sustained contact with whites, there is more beads available. And beads are easier to work with because you don't have to scrape them and dye them. You know, they're kind of—

Pinkham: Right.

Bond: --ready to be used in decorations, whereas quills take quite a bit more time to prepare.

Pinkham: Yeah. They take a lot more time to prepare because you're dying them and you're getting them ready for use. You're cutting them and flattening them and etcetera. And these are really cool in terms of how they show that transition. Because something like this, if you take it back, you know, decades earlier, it would have been predominantly quill work. And there would have been a lot less beads.

And so you know, the other cool thing is, I realize how much work this takes to do that amount of beadwork. Because I've done beadwork with pony beads and using sinew. And the amount of time that it took was, for me to do a piece of beadwork approximately that size—

Bond: Something like eight inches or nine inches or so.

Pinkham: Yeah. I guess about the size of your palm. That would have taken me an entire day to do that, to be able to twine my own sinew and to use pony beads. So I have pieces at home that I've done that type of work on. And it takes me a full day to do that. So I know that there's a considerable amount of time in doing that.

And there's also, to back that up a little bit more in terms of the cultural value of it, is that those beads, you know, the value of the beads back then is compounded because of the rarity. It's easy for me to get pony beads now. But back then, they would have been waiting and they would have been amassing those over a period of months if not years. So, yeah, that's a pretty cool thing.

Bond: So when you, I guess, getting back to the question of the value of this collection, I can see that collectors value it because it's rare and it's beautiful and there's a market with dollars attached to it. But would you say that when Nez Perce people look at it, they look at a different object in terms of more of an

inspiration of how to make shirts today? Or as an example of their culture in transition from different eras?

Pinkham: I think it's pretty dynamic what an individual from my background would look at. And I think that you're right, that collectors would automatically kind of look at something and assess, you know, the value of this is probably going to be about, you know, X hundred thousand dollars. And you know, that's really cool because it helps us to figure out what the potential is for us to acquire a shirt like that. Because we still have shirts that are out there in the, you know, over the world, actually, that come up for sale. And the tribe is always faced with a dilemma of how do we come up with money for that? But for me, I think, the perception of Nez Perce people is they look at that and they think, you know, look at the potential that we have. Look at what we could do with our time and what we have at our disposal. I mean, I look at those things and I just think it's phenomenal what they were able to do with how little they had. And you know, Nakia and I, we kind of talk about these types of things every once in a while. It crosses our lips about how difficult it would have been to be, you know, living as a Nez Perce 200 years ago, that type of a thing. And it's always inspirational to recount the industry that Nez Perce people had at that time. I mean, they were constantly involved in the endeavor to survive, putting food on the table. But yet still they had time to make stuff like this. And, you know, I honestly think that I'm lazy in comparison with what they were able to do. It's a pretty cool thing, you know?

Bond: Yeah.

Pinkham: So that's what I see. I see the potential. And it's an inspiration to me to look at those things and think God, I need to do more with my time. And so that's why I'm constantly trying to keep my boys in material culture like that. And fortunately I've been blessed with beautiful boys that are interested in making these types of things. They ask about it. They see the benefit of it. Like with my son, his first pair of moccasins, I told him about our tradition of when we make our first pair of moccasins, or our first piece of beadwork, one of the things that I was taught was that you give that away to somebody. And you know, it's his choice who he wants to give it to. But he's not supposed to hang onto those and parade them around like a trophy, you know, look, my very first pair of moccasins. What he's expected to do is to make them, put a lot of work into them making them the best pair of moccasins that he can, and then give them away to somebody that is going to run holes in them. Because then he's not attached to it. What he's attached to is I learned how to make moccasins. I can make another pair and I can contribute.

So that's what this stuff is about is when we make things, we're contributing to the community. And I was just talking to him about this last night. And I was telling him about how when we make things, and we make them as a Nez Perce, it's so that we can manufacture that and a Nez Perce person will wear that, and they'll stand there and they'll look like a Nez Perce. And that sets us apart from other people in our area. Not because we're better, but because we have a unique place in this world. And part of that unique place is the visual appearance of what it means to look like a Nez Perce. We wear particular things and that's what separates us. And it's also because we have a unique way of putting those things together because it's a reflection of our relationship with our landscape.

And so another thing to back that up is that when we make things like this, it's with hopes that when our future generations come along, they see that relationship and they want to embrace that relationship in a way that ensures their survival, too. Because one of the things that I know is that the Nez Perce people have been here the longest. And it's because we have strived for generations to have a

sensitive relationship with the landscape. And that landscape includes deer. It includes elk, plants, water, fish. You know, all those different types of things. We don't get there on our own. We have a lot of help. We've got deer looking out for us. We've got elk helping us out. We've got buffalo feeding us. Salmon. All those things kind of culminate in a visual appearance that says look at the way that I am here. These are the things that take care of me. I'm not parading these things around because I'm a proud Nez Perce. I'm wearing these things as a sense of gratitude for what takes care of me. That's a really different perspective than when people dress for occasions nowadays. I mean, it's a way different perspective.

So when we manufacture things like this, it's also a process of prayer. Because you're praying that when your kids come to be and they have their grandkids, what you're praying for is hey, I really want you guys to help me take care of this, because this is special. And I want you guys to take care of this because this is going to not only ensure that your kids have as good a quality of life as I do, but that their kids will have that quality of life, too. And that's one of the things that we're losing. And that's what this stuff represents on a spiritual level is that it's really important for us to carry that on and to maintain that visual appearance. Because it's not about the striking visuals, it's about the deeper meaning that that symbolizes. And it's really hard to articulate.

Bond: Well it sounds like one of the things I just really wanted to ask you was why is it important for the Spalding-Allen Collection to be here in Nez Perce country versus in Ohio? And one of the things I heard you say was that the objects themselves come from this land, they're tied to this place because all the components and the knowledge that went into making them all took place right around here. But none of that is from Columbus, Ohio. Correct?

Pinkham: Right. Right. So the dilemma that we enter into there is that these things have educational value. Tremendous educational value. Because let's say that the entire collection did exist in Ohio and it was interpreted there. People would come through and they would learn hmm, wow, there's Nez Perce people. And look at what they wore. And they would get an assessment, you know, in a matter of whatever it takes to walk through a museum and glimpse a collection of Nez Perce things. They're probably going to be there for 15, 20 minutes, tops, an hour.

Whereas there's an educational benefit for them there. But if you take those, take that collection of phenomenal Nez Perce material culture and you plant it in the middle of the culture that manufactured them, the learning potential there is compounded. Because you get not only the advantage of accessing those people that might be just passing through. But you also provide the educational potential for a researcher or, the way that I would term it, a steward, that would come in and learn by looking at these things, looking at the curatorial reports, and seeing how they're made so that they could enter into that realm of providing for that relationship to endure. Thus by bringing this collection home, we're helping Nez Perce people to survive.

Because they look at these things, they study these things, and they can make them in the way that their ancestors made them. And that connection is what's restored. That's what this is about is basically perpetuating a relationship. Not just with their ancestors, but with their landscape. And to back that up, one of the terms that we use in Nez Perce is "anaqoonma," and that's spelled a-n-a-q-o-o-m-a. What that means is those that came before me. That means not just the ancestors like the people, my

family, my parents, my grandparents, and all those behind me. But that also includes animal people. Because we regard them as the same way. They took care of our ancestors the same way that they're taking care of us now. They're the ones that came before us and they're our elder kinfolk. So we look to that connection to basically pass on the relationship to our children. So all of that has to basically keep going. So that's why this is more powerful here in Nez Perce country than really anywhere else in the world. I mean, it perpetuates a pretty powerful connection.

Bond: Yeah.

Pinkham: Another thing is that one of the cool things about being a Nez Perce in this century is that I realize now more than ever how important it is for me to maintain that sensitive relationship with my landscape. And to pass that on to my children.

But also one of the things, one of the deeper meanings for your typical United States citizen is that they unwittingly enter into a dependence up on us as well because when you lose an indigenous language in an area, you lose the biodiversity not long after that. That's just studies that they've done, linguists have performed those studies and they've found that relationship. But you also have to look at lifeways that those people embrace. You have to look at the language that they use to convey the meaning of those lifeways. And the presence of those people, even that is a canary in the coal mine that people are depending on. They might not understand that, but that's just simply the way that it breaks down. Because we represent, we as indigenous people represent humanity's ability to have a sensitive relationship with the landscape. And if humanity doesn't have that sensitive relationship with the landscape, everybody is in jeopardy. It doesn't matter if you're Nez Perce or not. It doesn't matter if you're a member of another tribe. It doesn't matter if you're just an average member of the United States. Everybody's depending on that. And so unwittingly they really need for us to embrace this kind of thing and perpetuate that relationship. Because everybody is going to end up in a little bit worse spot. And then things are going to get so bad that it's going to be really difficult for us to survive.

Bond: Josiah, do you have anything else that you want to add about the collection in general? Or the ethics of the Ohio Historical Society selling it? They asked for \$608,000.

Pinkham: Right.

Bond: It strikes me today as a lot of money. And it was a lot of money a couple of decades ago as well.

Pinkham: Right.

Bond: And this is not a, you know, that's a lot of money for this community to raise. And certainly there was a lot of help from around the country. But I was wondering if you had any thoughts on any of those issues.

Pinkham: Well, it's probably really easy for me to take a position. I wasn't happy with their desire to basically gain, to make a financial gain from the collection. I mean, it's easy for me to say that. But it's more difficult for me to understand what they were up against. Because I mean, I don't know what financial hardships they had going on. But it compelled them into making, you know, the decision that they were going to have to sell the collection. Fortunately it played out so that we could ultimately hang onto this collection. So that's what I try to focus on. I don't really want to badmouth the historical society

for what they were compelled into doing. I just want to focus on the fact that I'm incredibly grateful that this collection is just a few miles down from where I work. And that I can take my boys in, my family, my nieces and nephews, and just explain to them, look at the power which your old people had, you know. Because this collection right here, I think the powerful statement it says to me is that Nez Perce people were very resilient in overcoming challenge, and still are. And that's a value that I hope to pass on to my future generations to show them that whatever may come up in this life that may challenge you, know that your old people have been through worse. And that they came through just brilliantly.

Bond: In your capacity working in cultural resources, are you aware of other Native peoples that have had a similar event, say, with a collector or with an institution about having to try to buy back cultural heritage? It strikes me that this was a major national event and got a lot of high-profile people involved.

Pinkham: Yeah.

Bond: But I was kind of, I'm wondering if you're aware of other tribes or nations that have struggled with outside individuals to reclaim collections.

Pinkham: I'm sure there are. I don't know of any that stand out in this magnitude. But it might be because of my bias and being a Nez Perce. Because this is huge for us. But in all actuality, I think this is probably representational of a lot of different challenges that native people face in trying to reassemble what was shattered. And I think that the Spalding-Allen Collection is representational of our efforts to basically put things back together. Because we're involved in so many other aspects of putting things together. Like you know, we were involved in a struggle to put grey wolves back out into Idaho's quote unquote "wilds." And we also put Coho back in the streams, even though the state of Idaho threatened to incarcerate us. We're involved in buying back lands like, not long after the point where we acquired the Spalding-Allen Collection, we acquired the precious lands over in Oregon. Over in Joseph's homeland. And that was a pretty cool deal. So you know, those fronts are all related in that people all over are facing the challenge of not just surviving but putting back together those things that were lost. And so you could probably consider land acquisition collections like this, language, you know, we're really struggling to basically put all that stuff back together, because we know that we're relying upon that as people to survive. And you know, now with this added twist that I was talking about earlier, other people are relying upon us, too. Whether they admit it or not, whether they like it or not. That's just the way it boils down.

So I can't think of a parallel case. But I do know that those struggles are being confronted on a lot of different facets of survival.

Bond: Great. I want to thank you so much for your time, Josiah. This has been terrific. So I think I'll go ahead and stop now.

Pinkham: Okay.

Bond: But thank you so much.

Pinkham: Well, I appreciate you asking.

[End Track 1. Begin Track 2.]

Bond: Josiah, could you tell me a little bit about your trip to Oberlin, Ohio, to retrieve the corn husk bag that students there found and contacted the Nez Perce to return?

Pinkham: Yeah. So the story goes that the bag that's now known to be a part of the Spalding-Allen Collection was misidentified as part of an African collection, if I remember correctly. And they realized that it was out of context with the rest of the greater African collection. And then they started to do research on where it might actually be from. And I think one of the students' names was Liz Atack. And I'm trying to remember exactly how her name was spelled. A-t-a-c-k, I think. Just like "attack" but with one "t."

Then eventually contacted the Nez Perce tribe when they found out that it was attributed, that it was a part of the Spalding-Allen stuff. And my older sister Lynn, Lynette Pinkham and I were, it was arranged that we could travel back to bring it home. And I myself, I was actually trying to like opt out of it because I felt like it was, because it was a corn husk bag, a bag that a woman would have made and used typically, I felt that was more, that should be left to the women to decide. But I was kind of compelled. Anyway, so—

Bond: Who compelled you? Did she? (laughs)

Pinkham: Partially she pulled elder sister rank on me. And the other part of it was that everybody else was kind of opting out. And it really did kind of fall on my shoulders, because at that point in time I was working in the cultural resource program and I was the ethnographer. And for some reason, Nakia couldn't do it. So I just kind of reluctantly said that okay, I'll go.

And eventually it came around to I was and still am thankful that I was able to participate, because it was a cool experience. And you know, it was a really cool experience for my sister, too, because I remember that we were having this discussion over like what I was saying earlier in the interview about remarking on the industry of women at that point in time. And she was marveling at this bag. Because it's a larger size bag. And she was marveling at it. And she was thinking, wow, look at all that work. Because she's a weaver and she's done exactly that kind of weaving. And she was coming at it from a similar angle that I was describing earlier, where she was kind of comparing how hard it is to do that kind of weaving now. Because you can go to Joanne Fabrics down in Clarkston and you can buy yarn. You can buy string. It's ready to go. And you come home and you can start weaving. And she was thinking man, they made that from the ground up. You know, the same kind of thing. You look at that and you think to yourself, man, those people were hard workers. And so, just having that kind of conversation was something that added to my appreciation for that whole experience.

And on top of that, I know that when people made these types of bags, they made them oftentimes for utilitarian type uses. But they also made them for ceremonies. And to describe those ceremonies, one might talk about like weddings. Where a wedding trade was something that was done between the family of a young man and a young woman that were coming together. And what that symbolized was that union was not just those two as a husband and wife, but it was also the union of families. Because sometimes those marriages were arranged by the family to solidify access to different resources. And thus those individuals, they were kind of almost esteemed in a different regard than the

other types of unions. Because those individuals were basically living a life of servitude to their family. And oftentimes those were implemented in terms of solidification of a relationship to other families and other resources, that type of thing. But they always knew that's what they were doing.

And so these bags were made for the express purpose of putting in dried [cutmiss] or dried roots, berries, that type of thing. They would be filled up and then they would be sewed along the top so that they were just bulging like that. And then they were put out as a part of that wedding trade where the families would get together and they would put out a bunch of things for the family to take. And then the other side of the family would reciprocate. And so that was called the wedding trade. And that was the thing that really solidified a union.

And of course there were the other types of union where a young man and a young woman just found themselves on their own and thus got married. But that was pretty significant. Because that's what it did for me was when I saw that bag for the first time in reality, that's the first thing I thought of was like wow, man, that was probably full of [cutmiss?] at one time and just thinking about the amount of work that goes into making [cutmiss?]. I mean, you're out there in the hot sun. You're digging. And you're filling up bag after bag with [cutmiss?]. And then you're baking it for three to five days on top of that. And then you've got to gather the firewood, you've got to gather the rocks. You've got to put the pit together. And then you've got to take everything out. And then you've got to dry those roots for the express purpose of this ceremony that's taking place. And then you've got to trek the roots to the ceremony, and then give them away to family. I mean, that's just a tremendous journey!

Bond: So Josiah, the roots you're describing, are these what I would call camas roots?

Pinkham: Yeah.

Bond: Okay. Okay. So to clarify—

Pinkham: Yeah. Camas roots. And so, you know, that's a lot of work. And seeing that bag there in reality, up close and personal for the first time, that's where my mind went was like wow, think of all the things that that bag could talk about. It was almost like personifying it in a way.

Bond: Mm hmm. Yeah.

Pinkham: And it was really cool to think about you know, if I were a bag, what kind of stories would I tell? What would I see? I mean, I would be surrounded with people that were just like this. I mean, I'd be sitting there in the middle of the ceremony and looking around at all these men dressed in their finest and all these women that have the basket hats on. And dressed with real pretty dresses and all the beads and the quillwork and all of that. And the song. I mean, I was just sitting there and just like marveling at that. That was pretty cool. So I'm glad I went. And glad we're able to, you know, put that where it needed to be. Bring it home, put it where it needed to be.

Bond: Josiah, could you talk a little about your hopes about other Nez Perce collections held at museums? Say back east or in Europe, places like Germany?

Pinkham: Yeah. So it's my hope that at some point those things come back home. And I was kind of remarking about this earlier that it's a troubling thought to know that they're over there and they're

probably not appreciated in the way that they would be if they were back here in our homeland. But it almost adds to the value in a way, in a backhanded way. Because I think about the journey of the Spalding-Allen Collection and how, you know, Spalding collected them and then he packed them in these barrels or crates. And they were taken by horseback down to I think Walla Walla. And then they were taken by horse and buggy on farther down. And then they were put on boats that went all the way down into Ohio. And they're almost kind of like dormant for you know, many years, for decades. And then all of a sudden they're back on the scene. And then they're returned home on temporary loan, or permanent loan, and then the Nez Perce acquired them. And that really, like I said, in a backhanded way, adds to the value of them. Because you know that they survived that tremendous journey.

And that provides a note of reassurance for the present Nez Perce that you're very resilient in what you can overcome. Look at the journey of your material culture and how it went to this far off place and then it came home. Things are always coming home, always coming home. And you count on that as a coping mechanism in some way. And it's my hope that these things that are in, like there are some Martingales over in Stuttgart, in Germany. There are objects in the British Museum. You know, those things are lying dormant. And they're probably sitting in, you know, the stacks. And they're not being seen. They're not being shown. People aren't learning about them to the extent that they could. It's my hope that one day that those things will come back home and you know, again be reunited with their kinfolk that really appreciate the spirit of that expedition. And you know, it's just a pretty powerful thought to know that those things are out there, that there's potential for us to see them.

Bond: Before we finish, you told me something once regarding the moccasins in the Spalding-Allen Collection. And I believe you remarked that to you, you couldn't think that the moccasins were in any way coerced by Spalding because they had never been worn.

Pinkham: Oh, right, right, right. So the moccasins, when I was a museum aid down there working with Bob, the moccasins were part of my work, and helping with the curatorial reports on them. And the one thing that I noticed was that there was little to no wear on the bottom of them. And another couple of interesting points is that they're decorated in an interesting way because of the designs that are on them. And in particular, the bottoms are cut from par flesh. And they're refabricated into soles of moccasins. And one of the things that I did was I recreated the design of the moccasin or the par flesh based upon how they were put on the moccasins. And it appeared at first that the feet were kind of crossed like that. But in all actuality, they did one and then they cut out the other and then they sewed them on. Or else they must have had it reversed.

Well anyway, after they put the par flesh soles onto the moccasins, I realized that there wasn't a real strong imprint of a foot in those moccasins. Meaning that whoever made them parted with them right away, and hardly ever wore them. And so what that leads me to think is that maybe those things were made and they were expressly given to or sold to Spalding.

Because I know that one of the things that's part of the back story of the way that Spalding was collecting was that he had a spectrum, again, of real ardent followers to those that were more skeptical to those that were just outright against his presence and his efforts. Well there might have been a woman there that said yeah, I feel really drawn to Christian faith, I do want to help out, I will make you a pair of

moccasins to sell. Or I'll give them to you or whatever the case may have been. I just think that that's one of the things that's kind of potential about the moccasins in particular. And just to kind of give a gloss about the other things, the shirts, they look like they're used because you've got pieces of them missing. But I don't know if that's because of the way that they were taken care of in Ohio. Or maybe it's a result of their journey down the river. I mean, there's a lot of reasons why they could look the way that they do.

The other thing is that the cradle board is particularly small. It's just really, really small. And I don't know if—

Bond: Like too small to have a kid in it?

Pinkham: Maybe not that. I mean, it's like very, very newborn. And it wouldn't, the infant wouldn't have stayed in there for very long. Because I've made cradle boards. And I usually, you try to overshoot them. Because the amount of work that goes into them, you want that baby to be in there as long as possible.

Bond: Right.

Pinkham: And it just looks unusually small is what I'm saying. Now comparatively, there's a cradle board that was found amongst the Crow that is from a similar time period. And it is approximately the same size. And so what I'm wondering is did they make two of them, one for when the baby was newborn and then another when they were bigger? Or did they just transition the baby out of the baby board and start tending to it sans board, I guess. I don't know. But yeah, that's just a thought that kind of crossed my mind.

Bond: Forgive my ignorance, but what is par flesh? I've seen the term around, but I don't quite understand what it is.

Pinkham: Par flesh is the rawhide envelopes that people use to transport goods. They put food, clothing, whatever in there. And they were typically put onto the backs of horses in pairs to balance the load kind of thing. And they would range in size from, I don't know, like that big. I could probably show you pictures of them.

Bond: So like with Nez Perce people, you would have the par flesh bags. And after they got too worn to maybe carry goods, then you might cut them up and reuse them in the soles of moccasins or something.

Pinkham: Yeah. Yeah, because there was a constant turnover of goods like that. Like a teepee that was too tattered, that would have immediately been cut apart for moccasins.

Bond: Okay.

Pinkham: And then a par flesh that maybe mice got to it, or it was just too old to use, cut it apart and use it as moccasin bottoms.

That's another thing about the moccasins is that it's, okay, so the oldest Nez Perce moccasin is the one that was found in the cave in the Snake River. And it's a four-piece moccasin. Which is attributed to like Algonquin speaking people. Like around the Great Lakes. They call it a top-vamp moccasin. But

it's made out of four pieces. Because you have two pieces that go from the toe all the way around to the back. And then a piece on the bottom that's the sole. And then on the top, there's this little vamp that sits right on the top of your foot. So that's what I would call a four-piece moccasin. That's the oldest Nez Perce moccasin.

The second oldest one is the pair that comes out of the Spalding-Allen Collection. And it's a two-piece moccasin. Meaning that there's the top and then there's the sole. But yet you talk to all the Nez Perce people that make moccasins now, my grandmother included and many of the elders that I've talked to about it, and they say that the one-piece or side seam moccasin is the one that the Nez Perce people have traditionally used.

And so that's a real interesting anomaly that predominantly, 99.9 percent of the moccasins that you see in museums and on Nez Perce feet are, you know, traditionally they're right, they're side-seam or one-piece moccasins. But the two oldest examples that we have are a four-piece moccasin and the Spalding-Allen two-piece moccasins. Real interesting.

Bond: Hmm. Yeah. I think one of the other things that's kind of interesting about the Spalding-Allen Collection is that it shows up a pretty wide trade network, too, because you have intaglio, you've got beads.

Pinkham: Oh, right!

Bond: Maybe even these moccasins coming from the Great Lakes. So there's trade going great distances, right?

Pinkham: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So that's an interesting point. Because it helps me to basically offer a kind of glimpse into how much the Nez Perce knew at that point in time. Because the Nez Perce were a well-traveled people. And I know that they say that, Lewis and Clark, when they came out here, they said something like, they made two knives or hatchets, something like that, with the [manda and hydotza?]. And then by the time that they got out here to Nez Perce country, they saw those same tools here, they'd beat them. So what that meant was that the Nez Perce people were constantly back and forth trading stuff. And even in the days before the horse, back in the days of foot travel, information was transferred, maybe at a slower rate, but we were still pretty well connected.

And we had been going into buffalo country since the days of foot travel, and utilizing buffalo resources, and traveling on down the Columbia River. Well, even at the point where Lewis and Clark showed up in our country, there was still, like Sam Waters remarked about how his grandmother talked about a white baby being born to a Nez Perce woman before Lewis and Clark even showed up.

And then plus, there's the story of Wetxuwiiis and how she as a young girl was abducted, I think in buffalo country, by enemy tribesmen. And she was sold from tribe to tribe. And eventually she came into the possession of white people that set her free. And she was able to make it back to Nez Perce country. And later she became the elder that influenced the council to let Lewis and Clark live. So there's all of that back story in how—

Bond: And how do you spell her name?

Pinkham: Wetxuwiiis is W-e-t-x-u-w-i-i-s. Wetxuwiiis

Bond: Thank you.

Pinkham: So, yeah. There's a lot of activity that's going on that shows you that the network of trade and communication that the Nez Perce people had access to, even before Lewis and Clark showed up, was tremendous. Because there were Nez Perce people, Nez Perce men that were back with the [manda and hydroxa?] in trading and all of that while Lewis and Clark were over here. And so that kind of gives you an impression that when Lewis and Clark show up, it's not wow, they're here! It's like gee, where you guys been? We've been waiting here. You know? Because that's just how connected Nez Perce people were.

And we're probably a little bit more, we're probably better traveled than many other tribes. But I don't think that that's really alarming, because I think that other tribes were like that. But it's just that Nez Perce were among the more connected.

And let's see. Oh, one other thing really quickly. In terms of the saddle. Okay. So. The cool thing about the saddle is that when a lot of researchers come and look at the saddle, the first thing that I've seen some of them remark on is they look at it and they say, "Wow. It looks exactly like a Crow saddle." And they're right. But one of the things that they don't understand is – and I'll get you a citation on this – the first horses that the Crow people acquired were from the Nez Perce.

And there's an oral tradition that talks about how this man, I think his name was Little Face. He was a scout for the military. He talks about in his grandfather's time, they went to Yellowstone. And they secured their first horses from the Nez Perce. And the story kind of takes a little bit of a metaphoric turn at that point, because it talks about how when they were trading with the Nez Perce, the Nez Perce were trying to like coerce them into trading. But they were afraid of what these creatures could do. They weren't quite sure.

And so eventually his grandfather started to return home. And he was told by the spirit, "When you lay down and sleep, or when you travel home, don't look back. Always keep your eyes on toward your home, and don't ever look back over your shoulder."

And so when he would travel, he was even careful when he would lay and sleep, that he would lay with his head towards his homeland so that if he inadvertently woke up in the middle of the night, he wouldn't be looking back. And so he slept like that. And it said that as he was traveling towards home, the closer that he got to home, the more this rumble was heard behind him. And eventually when he returned back, he was followed into camp by a herd of horses. And thus the Crow people became known as the horse people that they are.

And so another part of the back story is that the Nez Perce people really tried to establish a trade connection with the Crow people. Because we've known of them since they came to be where they're at. And there's another oral tradition about a centenarian old woman that recalled her people, the Nez Perce people, meeting the Crow in the Rockies, and the Crow explaining, you know, "We come from back that direction. But we seek a new home."

And the Nez Perce explained to them, you know, “We have high mountains and we have river valleys. And our mountains get real heavy snow. And it’s a good place for us to live.”

And the Crow people remarked, “That’s not the lifestyle for us.” And they turned and they went back and they settled where they’re found today.” So that was in the days of foot travel, of course.

You fast forward to the Nez Perce people acquiring the horse, and they try to trade these horses with the Crow people. And they’re kind of a little bit reluctant, but eventually they commit to it. Where are they going to come up with the idea of a saddle? They had to have gotten it from the Nez Perce people. Because we were already an equestrian people. They couldn’t have come up with that on their own. They would have had to get it from the Nez Perce. But the Nez Perce got it from somewhere else as well.

And there’s another story that talks about how the Nez Perce people, they walked from up here in our homeland all the way down to an area that would later become well known as the Green River Rendezvous. And that’s where we acquired our first horses. We walked there to trade for them. Well, we actually kind of manipulated them out with some gambling.

Bond: (laughs) Some stick games.

Pinkham: Yeah, some stick games. And that’s a pretty cool thing. Because you’ve heard about wyekin powers and spirit powers and stuff like that.

Bond: Mm hmm.

Pinkham: Well there’s this guy who, he would go into a sweathouse. And while he was putting water on the rocks, what he would do is he would see, he would get these premonitions or prophetic visions of people he would play. And he would see the outcomes of that. And additionally, when you go into a stick game, it’s much like poker, where people have tells, you know, that kind of give away how they’re hiding the bones and what not. So he was really good at that.

So when the Nez Perce organized, the Palouse band of Nez Perce organized to go down to acquire these horses, he was one of the guys that they just had to take. And so he was able to use those skills to win some ponies from this real shrewd, almost cruel, trapper/trader guy that had acquired horses down at Taos, New Mexico. And so when they won those ponies, that man was so mad he was like shooting rounds at the people that he had backed on his side of the stick game. They make away with their life. Everybody’s witness to this event. And they’re telling him, “You’ve got to pay up. Because you know what’s at stake. That’s the way that it goes.” And so he had to give those horses. He was compelled to give them over.

The Nez Perce start riding back home, and they’re taking turns and they’re like wow, this is great, we can ride on these things and we don’t have to walk. We can carry all our stuff. And they’re noticing that there’s somebody following them. So they’re immediately put on guard because they think they’re trying to ambush us and take these horses. So they implement this plan where they continue riding, but some of them they kind of stash back and they hide by the trail.

Well they jump out and they ambush this guy. And they hold him to the ground with a knife at his throat. And they say, “You need to tell us what you’re up to, because we will kill you.”

They let the guy up and he’s able to explain through sign language, “My life is those ponies. Wherever those ponies go, I go.”

And the exchange follows that they say, “We won these ponies in a stick game. You weren’t a part of that. We only want the ponies.”

And he comes back with, “Those ponies are my life. That’s all I know is how to take care of those horses. Please allow me to go with them.”

And they say, “You can come with them. But you don’t have to. All we want is the ponies.”

And he says, “Well, maybe I can have something of worth to you, because I know how to take care of them.”

And they tell him, “Well, as long as your intentions are good, we’ll allow that.”

And so they allow him to come back to the Palouse area with them. And eventually they figure out, because he adapts and he learns the language, and he can speak. They learn that his name is [Don?], which is a Nez Perce attempt to say Juan. He was the son of an Indian mother and his father was a Spaniard. And that he actually lived down there at Taos. And because his mother was Indian, he wasn’t allowed to own property. But because his father was a Spaniard, he was allowed to live in the household and take care of the property. He became the man that took care of the horses.

So then when the Nez Perce got back up here, he started teaching them how to do all this stuff. How to selectively breed horses. How to cut them and selectively breed them. How to make all of the horse material culture. And that’s how the Nez Perce people became known as the equestrian tribe that we’re known of today.

Bond: So is this the origin, then, of the appaloosa as well, the type of horse? Or is that later?

Pinkham: Not quite. That’s later. Because the Nez Perce, again, because they’ve got all these horses and their trade network is growing and becoming more rapid in terms of how they acquire knowledge and material, they’re setting up relationships. And they find that there are these unique horses they can get from these particular people down south. And when they start getting the patterns thrown on, you know, the color and all that unique stuff that makes an appaloosa an appaloosa, they say okay, we’re going to call these horses [Momen?] horses because they’re so unique. And what that is, or what that means, is that’s a Nez Perce attempt to say Mormon. That’s where we started acquiring those horses. Because there’s back story on how the Mormon people acquired them. But that’s where we got them from. And we figured out through selective breeding how to get those traits kind of magnified.

But the ultimate endeavor in horse breeding is that you want a good horse that suits your needs. Our needs were to have a horse that had the stamina to take these tremendous steep rock wall canyons. You know, that kind of thing. Just quick jaunts up and down.

Bond: Go up the grade, right. (laughs)

Pinkham: Grade. You know, a little bit of stamina across the prairie, that kind of thing. So we wanted a kind of a balance. It was just a kudo to get that color thrown. To get the pattern on the rump and all the other things that make an appaloosa what it is. And so ideally you wanted a horse that could perform. A horse that looked nice? Yeah, that's great. So that's how all that kind of came to be. So yeah, that's a little bit of back story on your Crow saddle there. (laughs)

Bond: Yeah. Great. Thank you so much, Josiah.

Pinkham: Yep.

[End Track 2.]

Interviewee: Nakia Williamson

Interviewer: Trevor Bond

Date: May 14, 2015

Transcriber: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview.]

Trevor Bond: This is Trevor Bond. I'm here with Nakia Williamson. Nakia, can you start by telling me your title?

Nakia Williamson: My name is Nakia Williamson and I serve currently as the director for the Nez Perce tribe culture resource program.

Bond: Nakia, I saw this picture of you taken in May, 1996 drawing images of the woman's saddle in the Spalding-Allen Collection. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about your memories of this period and your work and gathering information about this collection.

Williamson: During this time, I was studying museum studies at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And I had just come back for a brief period. I can't remember if this was, it was kind of, I can't remember exactly the type of events. But basically what it was was I was doing an internship with Nez Perce National Historical Park. Because I could have chose to be wherever. Some of my friends worked at the Heard Museum. Some of them went to the Field Museum. But for me, the collection here meant the most to me as a Nimiipuu or a Nez Perce person. So I chose to do my work back here.

And then I think that ended and then I kind of did some additional work with the Nez Perce National Historical Park as well. I can't remember if that was some of that supplemental work that I did after initially being there for the internship.

So it was right around that time period when there was a lot of movement in regards to, I think that was after I did the internship and they realized I had some pretty good scientific illustration type skills. And at that time, it was kind of the feeling that the collection was going to go back to, back over there to, I guess Oberlin College or wherever it was.

Bond: Ohio. Yeah. Ohio Historical Society.

Williamson: Yeah, the historical society. So that was the kind of feeling in that. So I think the thought at that time was Bob Chenoweth, you know, the curator at that time, and he's still there. He wanted to get as much documentation about the material culture, you know, it was being photographed. And it was being photographed again. But he also wanted some of this other more analytical, diagnostic type information. From kind of a tribal person. I did some research on it as well that went along with the illustrations. So that if we were to eventually, those items were to go back to Ohio, that we'd have good documentation

that could be retained here. So that was kind of the, I think that was the, you know, the kind of driving force behind what was happening in that picture, and me being involved in that process in that point in time.

Bond: Do you remember elders coming in and talking about the collection? Or were you mostly working by yourself in an area?

Williamson: Yeah. I know at least one time I can distinctly remember was some of the elders coming in. and that was Nancy Halfmoon and Esther McAddy, two sisters. They have since passed several years back. But they were the kind of people that had a lot of knowledge about making traditional type items. And so I know, I distinctly remember they were in B2 and they were talking about, giving input on what they could, not specific to the saddle, but the collection in general about what it was. And just giving their ideas and thoughts about it. So I distinctly remember that one time. But there was probably some other times that I can also maybe have kind of forgot. But that was one where I was actually there just kind of listening to what they had to say, and provide whatever input they had in regards to these items.

And a lot of the items, I think, in the collection are, you know, relatively, I wouldn't say common items, but items that are known to the Nez Perce people. But yet there are some aspects of the items that were, you know, probably because it's the earliest collection of Nez Perce material, that were maybe a little bit, you know, like these rawhide fenders. I think nobody has a really clear idea of what the function of those. So it was a really early type of horse trapping that—

Bond: So these are the, which are the fenders? Just so I'm clear.

Williamson: Yeah. These big rawhide things that were attached below the saddle. There's a lot of speculation, you know, on what those are. And I think for the tribe we've kind of, those are such old items that nobody really knows about those. Just whatever ethnographic information that existed at one point in time, you know, it's lost. So we don't have a lot of information about. So that's like one of the things that were fairly unique. Whereas the saddle is, you know, for the most part the same type of saddle that a lot of the elders knew and had in their families. And the dresses, you know, are pretty much the same. Leggings were, you know, and corn husk bag.

A lot of, all that stuff was relatively common to a lot of the families here. Because here, unlike a lot of other places in Indian country, we retained a lot of these items, these heirloom items. A lot of the families had large collections of traditional regalia, horse trappings, that went back a long time. We don't have the firm documentation like the Spalding-Allen Collection did to give it that provenance. But it was just things that were passed down generation to generation.

So a lot of these items for a lot of the Nez Perce people aren't just museum items. They're items that represent our elders. They represent and memorialize our old people. And so that's what they kind of mean to us. They're not, for us, when a person's life ends, these items are supposed to go, a lot of them are supposed to go on to the next generation. They're not supposed to be put in, like maybe some other tribes, they put them in with the dead when they—and for us, there's certain items that they put in there. But a lot of these type items were passed down. And that's the way we remember our elders is through some of these ceremonial type items that our people still have. Like myself, I still have items, I have, we collect [renusus?] or a headdress that came to me when I received my name. It belonged to my great-great

grandfather. And my name that was bestowed on me, so the headdress goes with that name. So in that way, you know, again, that's another way in which we memorialize our ancestors is through a lot of these items.

And I think that's why they mean so much to people here, even that they would keep them after so many years. They've retained them in the families. And even families that perhaps were not maybe considered traditional type families. They were more aligned with Presbyterian Church. Still even a lot of those families still kept those type of items for probably that same purpose. Because it reminded them of their elders. And they thought of their elders and their old people.

Bond: Do you have thoughts, Nakia, on how Spalding got these items? Or why he collected what he did? Josiah mentioned that one of the things that Spalding did was over time he gathered a range of materials. He had kind of a wide sampling of Nez Perce material culture. I was wondering if you had some thoughts on either how he acquired them or maybe why he collected certain things and not others.

Williamson: Yeah, I mean, I don't, I guess I could only guess as far as what he was focusing on. I remember there was some correspondence between some of the things that were of interest to—

Bond: Allen?

Williamson: Yeah. Allen, back there. And for a lot of tribal people, the knowledge about Spalding where people, just historically where the Nez Perce people initially were fairly responsive to his coming to this area. Not necessarily just for the fact that we were somehow we didn't know who God was or didn't know, didn't have any religion and we were waiting for religion. That's how sometimes the history books sort of characterize it. But the fact that it was providing us, because if you think back a long time ago, our people were always people that sought knowledge. Nez Perce people always sought knowledge wherever it came. So when you had different items that begin to affect our lives, you know, it was important to the Nez Perce to try to find the source of that knowledge, and a way to access that knowledge. And what that really was was technology, such as firearms and other things that had a tremendous impact on our lives at that time. And so. And also if you remember at that time, the academics and those people that taught were, and missionaries were one and the same, basically. Especially out in the west. And so I think a lot of that was not so much that we were looking for religion or spirituality, because we already had that. But that we were looking for that type of knowledge and ways to access that.

So when Spalding came, I think many of our people were receptive. And to compare it to what we already knew about our creator, it seemed like it was consistent with what they were saying.

But over time, I think, there was some, the people became dissatisfied with Spalding because they seen him, for us, somebody who takes upon the role of being a spiritual type leader, you know, they're held to a certain standard. And they kind of felt like after a while that well Spalding's just here, he's just a trader. You know, not a traitor in terms of, a trader in terms of somebody who was like operating a trading post. He's no spiritual man. He's just here, you know, buying and selling things, you know. Which was probably part of what he had to do to survive. But I think a lot of our people kind of did not take to that very well. And become somewhat disillusioned in his teachings and what he was espousing as a Presbyterian minister.

And of course there's all the stories and knowledge about, he did some probably what would be considered very underhanded things to fool Nez Perce people. And I think, so part of the collection, I think, was part of that effort for him, you see reference in various manuscripts, reference these as curiosities. So there was somewhat of a monetary value attached to them. And I think he realized that and tried to capitalize on that.

You know, I think there's a lot of suspicion amongst people now, knowing some of that history from what we know from the written history, but also from our elders, that find it hard to believe that he was actually purchasing those items from Nez Perce people. Because we know the stories of how he would try to shame our people into thinking that those ways were backward, and those ways were somehow associated with the devil and things like that. And so he encouraged them to basically rid themselves of a lot of these type of items that came from our way of life. And so, you know, a lot of us kind of, a lot of Nez Perce people kind of feel that, you know, that's probably how he got them. Rather than actually paying hard dollars for them.

Bond: And during his time, I think Bob Chenoweth mentioned that there wasn't really a money economy. It's like if you had some cash, you'd have to ride to Fort Walla Walla or go a long ways to even use money.

Williamson: Yeah. Right.

Bond: So I think Spalding talks about wanting calico and kind of trade goods, beads and stuff. Rather than cash. You mentioned, Nakia, some underhanded stories. Was that more just as a way to, Spalding's method of persuading Nez Perce people to do work for him? Or to give him goods that he wanted? Are there specifics?

Williamson: Yeah, I mean, I guess there's plenty of stories that have kind of floated around through various families about some of his methods of, you know, maybe persuading Nez Perce people to be associated with the church. And you know for him, and even in later years, in Spalding's, you know, administrative role out here and in later with the Monteiths that the government kind of oversight of tribal people and missionaries kind of intermingled there for many years. And so there's a lot more, you know, of a backdrop to what he was doing out here other than simply trying to provide instruction in the Bible and in Presbyterian Christianity. It was a lot more complicated than that. And I think our people kind of understood that. And so it was a numbers game. And sometimes, you know, how many people, how many souls did you save. And things of that nature. And I think our people kind of understood that at some point.

And so, you know, if it's a numbers game and you're trying to basically demonstrate to the powers that be that you're being successful in converting X amount of Nez Perce people or other tribal people, and you're seeing those reports. You know, I've read some of those reports where it kind of crunches numbers of so and so, amount of people baptized. And so and so came. And of course the larger issue of that somehow that opened the doors to the larger efforts of so-called civilizing tribal people.

And so there's a lot of stories. Like the famous story that's been kind of retold and told time and time again about him trying to persuade Nez Perce people, well, one of the things was trying to make them stay in one place. Because you couldn't do all of the above unless you could get people to become

more sedentary. And that wasn't the nature of our people. We traveled according to what resource was available. We traveled in the early spring. We may have traveled to Celilo to fish. And traveled to different places when certain roots and foods and berries were available. And traveled to buffalo country when it was time to do that. So we were always traveling, always moving. And we only lived in these valleys during a certain part of the winter.

And I think Spalding in his effort to try to keep us more sedentary wanted to make farmers out of Nez Perce people. And he was somewhat, I think he was, there were probably some Nez Perce that thought that was, you know, probably another way to ensure that you have food through the winter months. And some of our traditional foods can be kind of variable, too, you know, depending on the year.

And so there's that kind of well-known story about him trying to convince tribal people to be farmers. And taking it a step further in that those who didn't fully embrace Christianity but maybe liked the idea of having certain food crops that were being grown, agriculturally, that he would use that as a way to manipulate them. We talked about cutting the eyes out of potatoes and giving them to so-called believers. Or giving the good ones to the believers, and giving the ones where he'd cut the eyes out to the non-believers. And you know, that story has been talked about. And of course one grows and one doesn't. And that's because you go to church and you believe in the Bible and what I'm saying, basically. There's that story that's been told numerous times. That's probably one of the classic stories that a lot of Nez Perce people grew up hearing.

And then there's a host of others that basically talk about some of his strategies that he used to convince or outright, you know, outright, basically, lie to Nez Perce people about what he was about and what he was doing.

Bond: Nakia, not thinking about the money of the collection, the monetary value, could you touch on the importance of the collection in terms of its material culture? You mentioned already a connection with elders. Or maybe some of the spiritual meaning behind things like the men's shirts or the dresses or the saddle?

Williamson: Yeah. I mean, a lot of these items, especially when they're passed down through the family. And of course we don't know who these families, you know, which of these items represent which families. We've lost that. And that's part of the problem with collecting in general in terms of the museum environment today is you kind of strip these items out of their natural context. And so you kind of create that kind of gap between the knowledge and understanding of how these items, what they meant to the families and how they were utilized and how they were worn and what occasions, and what it meant and who this item was originally made for and how it was used and all the knowledge that went with it. And it puts it in a kind of relatively inert environment. I think nowadays, I think museums understand that now and I think they're trying to, but back in the day, I don't think there was a lot of value to that side of it. It was just simply, as it's put in a lot of Spalding's correspondence, curiosities. So it was dehumanized as these are Indian—it's like what you see in a lot of early nineteenth century material about Indian people. I mean, it wasn't even really enough to say Nez Perce. As long as it was Indian, that was good enough. Much less, this came from this family or it came from this individual. It was kind of that dehumanizing of our culture and devaluing our culture by just kind of putting these broad sort of general depictions of what our culture is about.

So I think that's the kind of, the bad part of some of these early collections. But nonetheless, we can see that there's a certain amount of continuity between the people that were living at that time. These collections probably butt up against the time of when Lewis and Clark had come through here. Some of these collections go back to probably approaching that time. We don't really know. But so the very early collections, and you can see the continuity throughout the years of similar types of items being made and used by Nez Perce people.

And I think they're really, you know, it's really, I think it was a great thing for the Nez Perce people. And working with Nez Perce National Historical Park and other partners to bring together, to ensure that these remain in their, you know, even though they're in a curated facility, they're still in the environment which they came from. You know, the cottonwood used for the saddle frame, the rawhide, you know, everything that was used to make those items is mirrored in the landscape that we live and that they exist. And that's important because like what our own laws say about who we are is that it's the earth and this land that defines us. Not that we, and the non-Indian view is that, you know, is almost sometimes the complete opposite. You change everything to suit your needs. Whereas us, we, our law was this land. Our land was what we now call resources. And interacting with the land and what we now understand as resources, of course our people didn't think about it in those terms, is how we basically, it's what informed Nez Perce identity.

And so when you look at these items, you know, it just, it's reflective of this landscape. It's just like similar, and it's appropriate and it fits in our way of understanding our place in this larger landscape that our people lived.

I mean, it's the same way in which you see that when you pick berries, you have [tuxkaty?], those imbricated cedar root baskets that we use when we pick huckleberries. Why not use just the plastic Tupperware or whatever? But you know, there's a spiritual aspect to a lot of these things, obviously. But then you know, just in terms of the materials you think about. And I've heard others talk about, like in case of those. So you've got cedar root and you've got bear grass that are used to construct those materials. And those are the same sort of materials that when you go pick huckleberries, they're in the same area. And so they go together. They're with one another. And what lot of people, our people know, is when you put them in those baskets, that they stay fresher a lot longer. So there's a pragmatic aspect. They stay fresher a lot longer because they're from the same place. They're from the same even elevation, a lot of these items. And so it allows, our people understood that that was important. Even just in terms of preservation of foods to utilize things that came from the same elevation and you know, kind of area as the resource that you're trying to store. So our people, I think, understand the connection to the land in a very, very deep level in that way. And it was even reflected in a lot of these ethnographic items as we now understand them. Now. And then obviously there's a spiritual aspect, component to that as well.

Bond: Nakia, do you remember any controversy or kind of dissatisfaction with that high price the Ohio Historical Society wanted? Because they asked for \$608,000 and gave the Nez Perce just six months to raise the money. Those seem like kind of daunting terms for any kind of transaction.

Williamson: Yeah, I mean, yeah, that was, I think that was definitely a really tough situation. And then, on top of that, the thought of, and I think a lot of the idea that of almost having to buy back our own culture, I think it wasn't lost on too many people that did take a step back. But yeah, I think for me and for a lot of people, we're always in that situation. So it's not a new situation. I mean, is it right? Is it

wrong? You know, I mean, yeah, it's probably not right. But ultimately that's sometimes what you have to do to retain things that are important to you. And also you know, I think if those items made it into that broader market, they're probably worth way more than that. You know, probably double that, if not even more. So there's that aspect of it as well.

But yeah, we're always in that situation where we're always trying to, in the way we live now, the bureaucratic world that we live now. And our tribe is run in a similar sort of way. It doesn't always sort of match up in kind of, it doesn't overlay well with our traditional understanding of how we're supposed to be as Nez Perce people, as Nimiipuu. But you know, that's life for us. And it's always a challenge, an everyday challenge, to be involved in the things that we're involved with, even today, as being co-managers in a lot of natural resource realm. Which is the office we're in is natural resources. You know, trying to ensure that we're making decisions and being involved in something that ties us back to that original understanding of who we are is always a challenge. And sometimes you get it right. And sometimes you don't. It's just, you know, and I think you always have to lean on people, elders, knowledgeable elders. And the fact is, it's not even all our elders have now, have the knowledge that maybe 10, 15, 20 years, I think all of them understood a lot of these core values of who we were, who we are and who we were. And able to find a path forward into the future and navigate in a lot of these things that we have to. And ensuring we're still staying true to who we are. And who we are is basically this land. We're a part of it and it's a part of us. It's who we are.

And those people that have that knowledge about, and understanding about that, are the ones we continue to lean upon to basically chart our path forward in any situation. Whether it be a situation like this or another situation. We have to rely on those type of people that have that knowledge to ensure that we are doing right by, not only ourselves and our values, but this landscape and this place that we live and that takes care of us. And we have an obligation to as well. It's not, you know, it's a back and forth relationship. It's not something where we are simply just people that benefit and take from the land. We also have to give something back to it. And so it's a true relationship in that sense.

So, yeah, it was probably wasn't the greatest situation. I mean, to be a part of. But ultimately I think what made it something that made people, and, at least for me, feel good, was the effort that was out there. And a lot of people contributed to that effort. Not only Nez Perce people. And I think that's what really made it, I think there was, just people that maybe not understand the full history, or fully understand the tribe or fully understand a lot of these aspects that are really complicated to think about and to form an opinion. I think they, fundamentally on a human basis, I think a lot of people responded to it and reacted to it. And realized that this is where these things belong here in this land. And so I think in that way it was a good thing.

And I think our leaders that at that time, our elders that were alive at that time kind of navigated that sort of scenario. And, you know, it wasn't—a lot of decisions that are made that faces the tribe even today aren't easy decisions, you know. They're not decisions that are, you know, so clear-cut. There are often, you know, positives and negatives to the things that we're involved in. and I think that was an example of it. But you know, how many years later we look back. And I think overall I think things worked out in a good way.

So I think what that tells us is that the people that we relied upon, and the people who were sitting around the table at that time were making good decisions and were relying on things. Because there was a

lot of discussion, a lot of disagreement, probably, as well. Of whether or not, you know, I guess we're always asking ourselves what are we doing and are we doing the right thing. And ultimately, I think, you know, when we look back, even though there was probably some negative aspects and some things that probably weren't so good overall, I think we can walk away and say what was done and what was accomplished was a good thing for us. Not only for us but again, for this land and for the people that now live here.

Bond: I think it was Bob Chenoweth told me that he let you take apart the saddle. Were you nervous at all when you took the pieces apart? Or do you not remember that? (laughs)

Williamson: I don't remember actually taking it apart. I think maybe what he was talking about was we—

Bond: Maybe just the fenders?

Williamson: Yeah. We may have separated the fenders a little bit. Yeah. So I don't exactly remember it that way.

Bond: Yeah.

Williamson: It could be. Maybe I'm forgetting. It's been a while. And maybe that's just a detail that may have slipped my mind, I guess.

Bond: Could you talk me through a little bit, Nakia, how someone would make a saddle like this? Like what would be involved, both in gathering the materials, but then also the process of doing it?

Williamson: I think a lot of the saddle making, I think now, I mean, like in a western tradition, saddle making is primarily a man's sort of endeavor. But that was somewhat different for our tribe, at least in this situation, because this was a type of saddle that was utilized by women and girls. And from my understanding, these saddles were made by the women. There were certain women that obviously excelled at this, making these sorts of items. But I think it was a fairly widespread kind of necessity at that time. You know, everything that our people utilized was pretty much made by the people themselves. And I don't know if there were necessarily specialists, like there were in other communities where certain people specialized in being blacksmiths or specialized, you know. I think there were people that were probably excelled. But that all people had a lot of this type of knowledge to take care of their own lives.

And so a lot of the women, I think, obviously the hide, the fenders, and I'm not sure about the rawhide, I don't know, but I know a lot of the rawhide that's part of the fenders and part of the rigging is made out of buffalo hide. Which, for the most part, would have been hunted by men, obviously, more than likely in what is now Montana/Wyoming plains. There were buffalo on the west side of the mountains. And our oral histories do talk about buffalo being on this side of the mountains. And then even as early as probably the 1700s they were hunting them on the Snake River Plain and some of those areas. You know, so the hide would have been hunted by the men.

But a lot of the hide work and things of that nature was done primarily by the women, simply because they were the experts at that. And they would have more likely harvested the cottonwood utilized for their frame, you know, here locally or wherever they might have been when they were putting

together this item. And it's sewn together with solid pieces. It's similar to the way western saddle making is, where the pieces are sewn together around a frame. But I think the difference is they use sinew to sew all the rawhide on. Then it was formed. Then it slowly, basically, dried and shrank and made that combination of the cottonwood and the rawhide made it a very sturdy sort of structure to, basis for the rawhide.

And the fenders were painted with various types of, I think most of them were earth pigments. I'm not sure what the analysis was. But a lot of them are consistent with what would have been found locally or within the areas where they could trade various types of colored pigments. You know, there was a cave up in upper Missouri where people would get some of the red color. And it was still known about it today. It's called [atispa?]. And [atis?] is the red ochre, and the orangish red ochre.

But you know, certain places were known for certain varieties of paint. Some of them higher quality, just like anywhere else. And there was other places on here that had that red ochre as well as the yellow and some of the other colors. But I think most of that would have been done by the woman folk as far as producing the saddle and the whole rigging that's associated with it.

Bond: What makes it a distinctly women's saddle? Is it the two high, are these pommels? Sorry for my horse ignorance. (laughs)

Williamson: Yeah. Yeah. They're the, the high pommels, those are women's type saddles. And then the stirrups, which aren't shown here, you know, are the really wide kind of stirrups. The men's mostly, if they did ride a saddle, it was usually a smaller framed saddle, without the high pommels. Or one of those pad saddles. Or oftentimes they just rode bareback. But for traveling, I think they utilized more of some sort of, I think they call them prairie chicken saddles, those smaller framed saddles. But again, they don't have the high saddle horns on them, such as on this one, that's definitely a woman's saddle, or a girl's saddle.

Bond: One thing I wanted to ask, Nakia, and this was for my own efforts to try to contextualize the struggle over the Spalding-Allen Collection and returning it to Nez Perce country. I was wondering if you were aware of other Native peoples and similar struggles to either retain or kind of bring back cultural heritage? I'm just trying to, for my own benefit, trying to find some other parallels around. And I haven't been real successful yet. I was wondering if you've come across, maybe in your work in museum studies, museums returning collections or Native people being able to buy things or have them gifted back. Do any parallels come to mind for you?

Williamson: I think there must be. I can't think of a real specific, specific examples. I know, obviously with the passage of NAGPRA in 1990, a lot of tribes, Nez Perce tribes, we have a division even within cultural resources that deals with Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. But our involvement is primarily with repatriating human remains and things of that nature. But there have been other tribes that have been involved in the cultural patrimony aspect, which allows for them to repatriate items that have that cultural patrimony. And I know there's been several tribes that have done that. And I know there's been some efforts by some of the Northwest coast tribal groups that have gotten things, if I recall, they got them back. Because there were some early collections that were made and taken over to

Europe. And so there was some collaborations made with some of those museums over there. And I don't know what mechanism that was. It obviously wasn't NAGPRA. But it was some other mechanism that allowed them to share information. And now some of those items were able to come back.

But I don't know the specific stories of all that. I imagine there must be other sorts of scenarios where similar things have played out. But I think this is still probably a fairly unique one, just because of all the different aspects of what went on. Of how it was collected, who it was collected by, where it ended up and the whole effort to get it back made it fairly unique in that sense. But I'm sure there were other, definitely other examples of other tribes that have been in a similar situation. I think just what makes the situation here with the Spalding-Allen Collection unique was just all the complexities and unique aspects to what happened and the history behind it. And of course the modern history just made it kind of very interesting to, I think, a lot of people.

But yeah, I think, a lot of tribes have done similar things, I would imagine. Had similar efforts. And of course just the larger sort of efforts by tribes to retain not only ethnographic items but knowledge. You know, which really, that's what we're talking about. Talk about the knowledge in some ways is more important than the actual item. The knowledge about some of these things, how they were used, how they were constructed. It's just as important as the item itself. Actually, in some ways, more important. And I think in a lot of different situations, tribes are interested just as much in that aspect as the items themselves. Because once you have the knowledge then the item, in some ways, can be inconsequential. And it's a living knowledge, not something that just dies with one piece. You know, that's really what's important.

Then, you know, some people don't fully understand what some of these things mean to our people. Again, I talked about that's how we memorialize a lot of our elders through this. But it also reaffirms our connection to this earth and to the land, our spiritual connection, our very deep spiritual connection to this land is also reaffirmed through a lot of these activities.

It also, you know, just even in terms of the efforts for language preservation are connected to this type of knowledge. We have efforts to protect and preserve and perpetuate our language. And we have, we still fortunately have some fluent speakers. But I don't know if we have people who can name all the different aspects of our traditional regalia. And the horse outfits and the whole knowledge that goes into that. Because language preservation isn't just about like the conversation, hey, how are you doing, how was your day today. That's important. But it's reflective of our original way of interacting with this land and all the resources. And that's reflected in a lot of these items.

When like, for instance, we have certain names for certain common things we have that have one name. But when it's put on a horse, the way we dress up a horse, and the certain way of how we do that, the name changes. You know, so there's that type of knowledge, too, that exists. Common things and how they can be made uncommon based on our, you know, more specific. Maybe not uncommon. More specific from a cultural perspective. And I think that's reflective of the values that we had about horses, or about different type of ceremonies that we had involving the horse or involving other aspects of Nez Perce culture and life ways.

It's reflected in the language, too. And those values. It's just like we have so many kinship terms. Dozens and dozens of kinship terms. We don't just have a word for "mother" and "father" or

grandparents. It's different on what side of your family, if it's on your mother or father's. So what that tells you of how robust our kinship terms are, is it tells you that family was really important to us. I mean, I'm not saying it's not important to other people. But it was so important that we had to create all these terms to reflect all those different relationships that were within our community that were so important to the livelihood and lives of Nez Perce people for generations. That's how important it was. So the language also reflects those values as well.

And if you don't have, these sort of things that are a part of our lives, and not something that's just simply behind a Plexiglas in a museum, then that value is kind of stripped away and children don't really understand things. It's seen as a museum item, which is good, as an aspect of that. But it has to be a living, I think it's really important to have a living connection to these items as well. Because they're more than just items. Like I said, they represent our old people, our ancestors and the knowledge that they had, and retention and preservation of that knowledge that they had that kind of informs us of how we're supposed to view ourselves in this landscape. And that's really what's important for me when looking at these ethnographic items, or these traditional items that were so much a part of our everyday life. So much a part of our ceremonial life and what they truly meant to our people.

Bond: Thank you so much, Nakia. Do you have any other closing thoughts? I think we worked through all the questions I had. And I appreciate your time so much.

Williamson: No. I guess that's my hope, for me. I have a son that's 13 years old, and I have a bunch of nieces and nephews. That I'm doing what I can to hold onto, I still have family items, like I mentioned. I still have things that our family considered heirloom items. And I use them in a ceremonial aspect. And I try to have them be around for my family and to be a part of our lives today. Because they have meaning for us today. The things that we have, we don't view them as, I don't think we're supposed to view them as simply those belong in the past, that's irrelevant and inconsequential to our lives as modern Indian people. You know, our job is simply just to be educated and be successful in the values of the dominant culture. You know, that's not the way I feel. That's not the way, I don't think, we should feel as Indian people. We have to maintain connections to these things that tie us back to this land. And these things truly do that.

And not only to the land, but to our experiences and our history that reinforces our identity. And so I think that I try to retain not only these items that were handed down from generation to generation and up unto myself, but also try to have understanding about how these things are made, how they're put together and what that means to us as Nez Perce people. I try to have that kind of understanding as well. Not simply that I have the item and if I were to lose the item, then that's it. I'm trying to retain the knowledge about a lot of these things as well. So again, that's important.

I want my son and I want my nieces and nephews and someday grandchildren to understand what these mean to us. And that they have a deep meaning to us because of what they represent. And to respect them and not to trivialize them in any way. Because more and more I think these things have kind of been devalued over the years, or misrepresented or misunderstood. And so I think that's really what I want. You know, I think there's a broader education. I think people could understand what these things are to us, because I think they're viewed in a really strange way by the outside community and what they mean to us. And I don't want that type of perception to be basically taken on by our next generations. I want them to truly understand what these mean to our people, and what they represent to our people. And

they're a part of our value system. And not to take on the values of the non-Indian and have those superimposed over us. And to retain our values. Because it reinforces everything. You know, again, most importantly, this land that we live in. but everything else grows out of that. Our language, our culture, our songs, our ceremonial life. Our spirituality. It all connects back to this earth. And all the things that our people did and understood also reinforces that connection.

And that's really what it's about for me. And that's what's important to preserve for me is that type of understanding. And you know, like I've been kind of been able to be exposed to elders that had the really true knowledge. And I tried to put myself in a situation and learn from those type of people. And once we've lost this way of life that we have, our spirituality, our true identity as the Nimiipuu, as Nez Perce people, once we lose these types of understandings, then we've pretty much lost everything.

And you know, I think, there's the danger now of a lot of Indian people solely over-reliance on the treaties, that are important. But those practices that were guaranteed under the treaty really mean nothing unless you have the true values and foundational elements that basically provide context to everything that was reserved underneath our treaties. When we lose that, then we lose everything, and everything's out the window. So we have to continue to maintain that knowledge and care for it.

As we're told in our way of life, we're taking care of our life as Indian people. And that's how we do it is in a lot of these ways that connect us back to the land. That's the way we take care of ourselves. And it's a continual maintenance that we have to do. And it's the work we have to put forth and the effort we have to put forth. And never forget it. And always hold onto it. And we have to keep that knowledge that ties us to this land. And that's so important. Without that, like I said, you know, everything does not really matter as much.

And a lot of these horse regalia, different other types of regalia that people use, reinforces all of that, those values that I'm talking about. It reinforces the discipline. You know, that's part of the excuse why a lot of our people, I can't do that, I can't participate, because I don't have this or have, have that. But so it's a discipline in order to make these things so that you can, in a proper way, participate in various aspects of our cultural activities. But it's also a discipline that's needed by our people to retain these. Because there's a market for them. And there's value. There's monetary value attached to them to try to retain them and not divest their selves of these items and lose all the connection to—

Because these are, all the things that we have within our culture are just basically devices and ways in which we connect ourselves to our elders and to our land. And they're reminders, constant reminders to us of our true value system and identity as Nez Perce people. And so when you surround yourself with these things and it continues to reinforces and reminds you on a day to day basis, you know, who you are and what you represent. And that's really important. So that's what a lot of these do for us is they remind us of the old people.

So they used to say this about how to be. Or they would say this of how to hunt. Or they would say this was the proper time to dig roots. It just allows you a way into, to tap in and to remember that knowledge.

And it's knowledge that can never really truly be written down and encapsulated in a book or in any written form. And that's what our old people talked about. It's something you have to live and it has

to be inside your heart. Because you can write it down, and write things down. And that's good in a way. But unless you live it and believe it and do it, and it's a part of you, when you write something down, it automatically limits it. Because it's only limited to what's on the written page. And there's so much more to a lot of these things that our people understood. And so that's a part of it. These are part of the ways in which we access that knowledge and access that type of understanding. And they're reminders to us about the value system of our elders and everything else that are important to maintaining our identity.

Bond: Great. Thank you so much, Nakia. I appreciate it.

Williamson: Yup. You're welcome.

[End Interview.]