

Ethnic Studies Colloquium Series

Indigenizing Museums and the Move Toward Decolonization: Successes and Ongoing Challenges

Professor Amy Lonetree

December 11th, 2014

Cross-Cultural Center, Comunidad Room

3:00-4:30pm

Followed by a reception

The relationship between Indigenous communities and mainstream museums has changed significantly in recent decades as a result of Indigenous activism and new museum theory and practice. These changes include the sharing of curatorial authority, collaborative partnerships, and efforts to decolonize museums. Lonetree's research examines the current state of contemporary exhibition practices at both national and tribal museums. Central to her analysis is exploring how museums can serve as sites of decolonization through honoring Indigenous knowledge and worldview, and discussing the hard truths of colonization in exhibitions in an effort to promote healing and understanding. Several of the sites that she examines move us forward in efforts to decolonize museum representations through the privileging of Indigenous voice and perspectives, serving as educational forums for Native communities and the general public, and by challenging stereotypical displays of Indigenous people produced in the past. Through an examination of the exhibitions at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (including their newly opened exhibit, "Nation to Nation"), and the Zibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan, Lonetree's presentation will explore what a decolonizing museum practice involves and how we can extend our understanding of the potential of museums to be "sites of conscience" and decolonization.



Amy Lonetree is an enrolled citizen of the Ho-Chunk Nation and an Associate Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She received her Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Berkeley in 2002. Her scholarly research focuses on Indigenous history, visual culture studies, and museum studies, and she has received fellowships in support of this work from the School for Advanced Research, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Research Center, the Institute of American Cultures at UCLA, and the University of California, Berkeley Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. Her publications include, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012); a co-edited book with Amanda J. Cobb, *The National Museum of the American Indian: Critical Conversations* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008); and a co-authored volume, *People of the Big Voice: Photographs of Ho-Chunk Families by Charles Van Schaick, 1879-1942* (Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2011). She is currently working on two new projects. The first is a visual history of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin drawing upon two historic photography collections, and the second is a historical study documenting the adoption of Indigenous children throughout the twentieth century.

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