

Decolonizing in Collections Care

Connecting to Collections Care
November 16, 2023



The Museum of Us recognizes that it has the privilege to reside, and operate, on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Kumeyaay Nation -the Indigenous People of this area.

Kumeyaay Peoples have lived in this area since time immemorial. The Kumeyaay Nation maintain their political sovereignty, practice and cultural traditions, and are the stewards of the land



Balboa Park & World's Fair Legacy

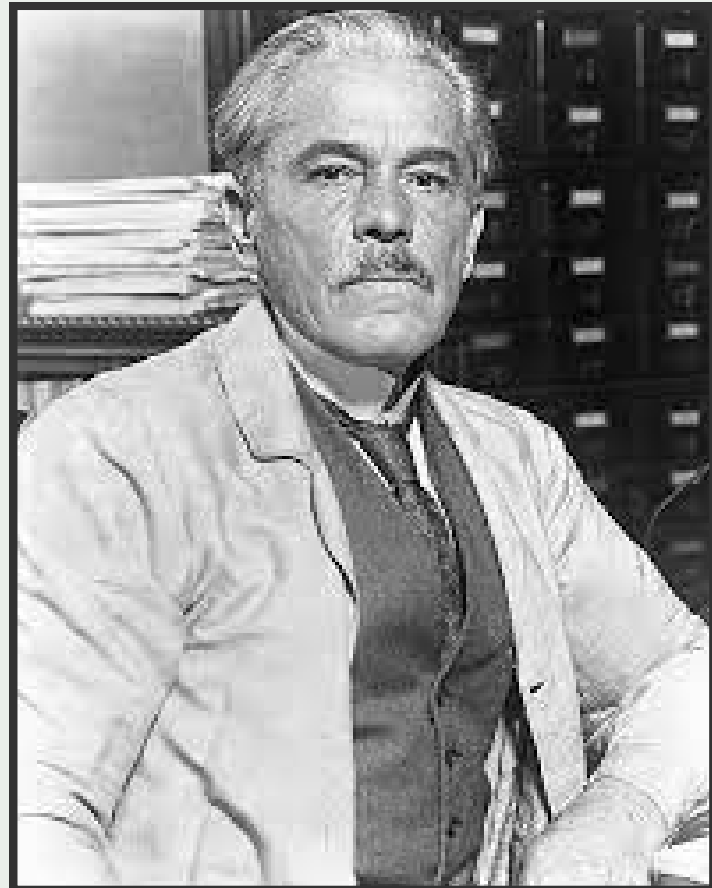


Balboa Park, 1915



Hopi "Indian Village" or "Painted Desert", Balboa Park, ca. 1915

Founding Exhibitions

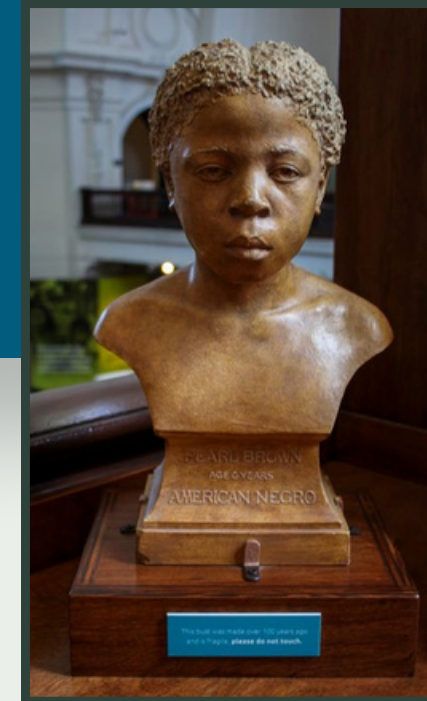


Aleš Hrdlička

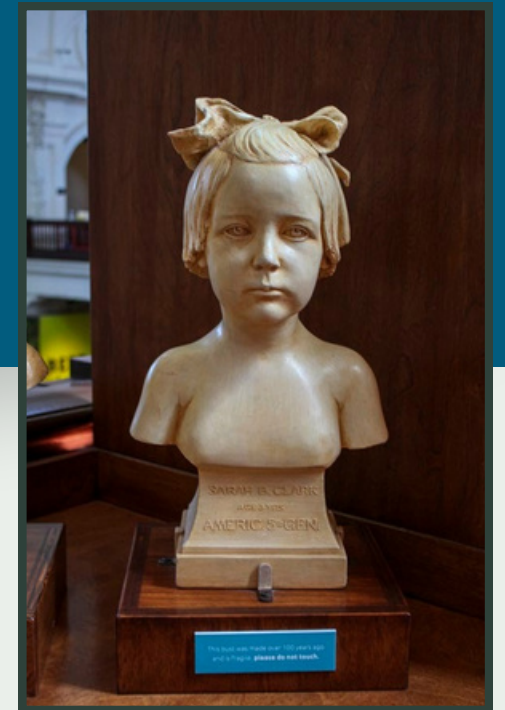
The Science of Man exhibition was a series of five sections concerning: Man's Evolution, Man's Development and Growth, Man's Variation (Races of Man), Man's Decline (Death), and Modern Anthropology.

In Hrdlička's own words "...the three principal races of this country, [are] namely the 'thorough-bred' white American (at least three generations American on one parental side), the Indian, and the full-blood American negro."

– Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, Vol. 1, 1915



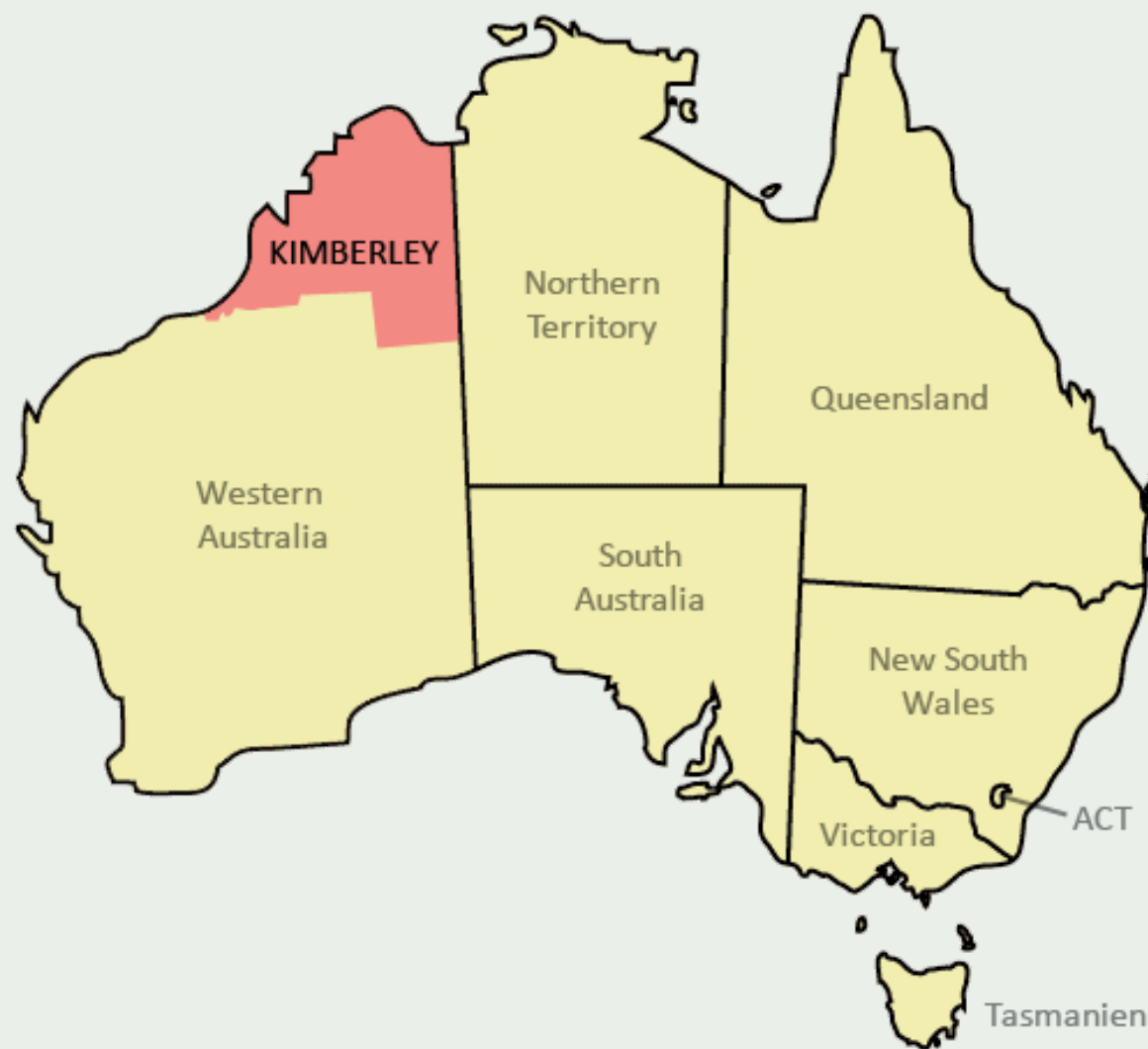
Pearl Brown, 6 yo



Sarah B. Clark, 6 yo



Collecting History



Over 100 cultural heritage items were procured by Museum of Man Curators and Researchers, who were also members of the Stanley Porteus expeditions in the Kimberly District, Western and Central Australia, in 1929.

- Researchers measured Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders heads and other body parts, collected data about lifeways and social structure, and marked their territory boundaries.
- Porteus studied Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islanders communities to bolster his white supremacist racial theories.

Footprint of the Museum

- More than 75,000 ethnographic objects
- More than 700 archeological sites
- Over 7,500 ancestral remains
- More than 100,000 images and 300 liner feet of archival material
- More than 150 Indigenous communities represented within the United States
- More than 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities represented internationally

Decolonizing Initiatives Guiding Principles

Truth telling & Accountability

- Actively practice truth-telling and accountability about the Museum's colonial legacy and ways they replicate colonial practices and thought

Ownership

- Honoring Indigenous ownership to their material culture and intellectual property
- Repatriation: tangible and intangible

Changing Systems & Policies

- Language, practices, and policies
- Prioritizing, centering and honoring Indigenous voices knowledge, and requests

Inclusion & Representation

- Recognize and honor Indigenous authority
- Indigenous representation at all levels of decision making

Reciprocity

- Share this information in the same spirit from which it was shared with us *only with Indigenous consent*
- Museum doesn't own Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous peoples appeal for decolonial change & justice globally

Museum Looked Internally:
Reviewed own colonial history & present colonial actions (archives, collecting process, access, exhibits, etc.)

Honored & Listened:
To Indigenous peoples & Indigenous Scholars expertise to identify what needed to change

Action:
Changed organizational language.
Artifact --> Item
Specimen --> Ancestor, Human Remains Collections --> Cultural Resources

Policy & Structure:

- Human Remains Policy
- Colonial Pathways Policy (curation/repatriation)
- Decolonizing Initiatives Department / Director
- Public statement & commitment

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Internal Working Group:
Decolonizing Initiative Working Group developed (staff, board members, & Indigenous community members)

Action:
Cultural Resources Management Policy changed: Indigenous consultations, stewardship, access, & repatriation

Action:
Indigenous consultations

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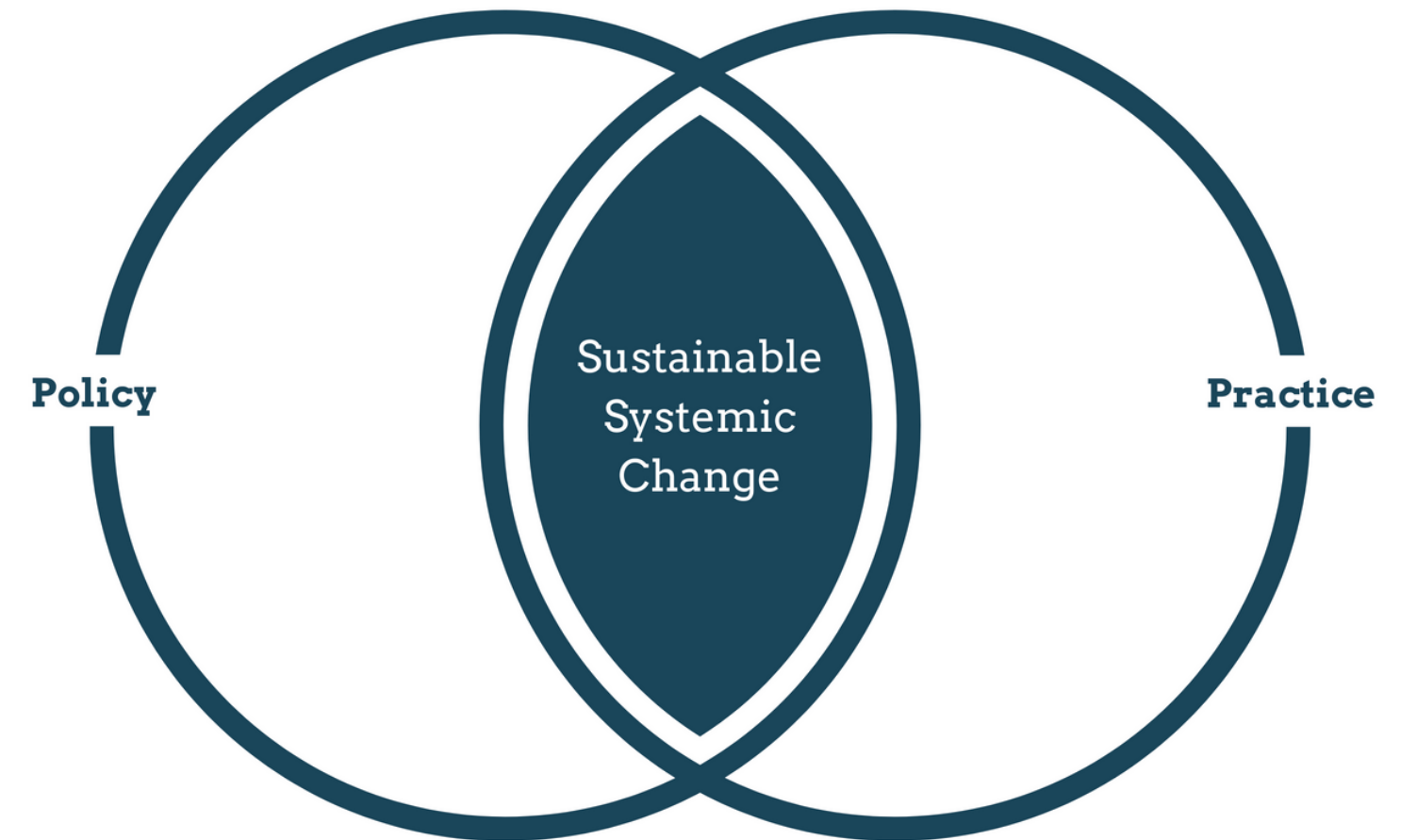
Action:
Curation & Stewardship of Cultural Resources

Action:
Repatriation & restitution

Action:
Exhibit reframe / refresh

Action:
Reflection, restructure, & governance

Systemic Change Models



Colonial Pathways Policy

- “MoU [SDMoM] will accession and/or curate Indigenous cultural resources only in instances where it has documented consent to do so from the Indigenous community, or when it can demonstrate that the cultural resource left an Indigenous community through a decolonized pathway; and...”
- “MoU [SDMoM] will only serve as the steward for Indigenous cultural resources currently held at the Museum that cannot be used for interpretation at the request of a descendant community.”
- “Additionally, Indigenous communities’ needs for their belongings change over time, based upon many factors related to the ongoing legacies of colonization. Therefore, any cultural resource that an Indigenous community has determined constitutes matrimony/patrimony, and belongs with that community, shall be eligible for return under this policy...”

You can find the full policy: <https://museumofus.org/wp-content/uploads/Colonial-Pathways-Policy-Public-Janauary-2020.pdf>

What is a Colonial Pathway?

- Inequitable trade
- A period of economic hardship, community unrest, or armed conflict, any period of time when:
 - cultural practices were under heavy persecution and/or colonization
 - removed, taken or purchased during military activities:
- Removed without consultation or consent
- Acquired through expedition, exploration, or exploitation
- Maintaining ownership when cultural revitalization is dependent upon repatriation



Kumeyaay Nation



IMLS-I: Community Anchors Grant in partnership with the Kumeyaay Nation

Controlled Object Name	
Controlled Object Name	Object Name
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Basket	Please select
Other Object Name	
Object Name	Note
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Àx-mà-ur,	
<input type="radio"/> Quail Egg Basket	

Object name updates in database

KUMEYAAY COMMUNITY DAY

Saturday, May 12th | 10am - 4:30pm

Haawka Ilpai - Típal

You're invited to connect with Kumeyaay objects, photographs, and audio recordings at the San Diego Museum of Man.

Cultural heritage objects not currently on display will be brought out for families to experience at this first-of-its-kind event open only to the Kumeyaay Nation. This free experience also includes lunch and traditional dancing, singing, and games.

While you're visiting, you can also share with us what else you'd like to see happening at the Museum!

Ka'yuu Maatayum

Limited bus transportation is being provided by the museum. Sign up sheets will be located at each tribal office.

SAN DIEGO MUSEUM OF MAN | 1350 El Prado, San Diego CA 92101
Balboa Park | (619) 239-2001

INSTITUTE of Museum & Library SERVICES



Our Decolonizing Initiatives in Action:

NOTE—The Museum of Us is currently working in collaboration with the Kumeyaay Nation to create a new exhibit to replace Kumeyaay: Native Californians/Tipai-Tipai

With support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Museum is working collaboratively with various Kumeyaay community members, elders, artists, and the Kumeyaay Heritage Preservation Committee leaders to develop plans for a new community-driven exhibit. This two year project will include the creation of exhibit scripts, programming, and exhibit designs, developed through a Kumeyaay cultural lens and creative vision.

For more information about the IMLS –

Community Anchors Grant please visit

[https://imls.gov/grants/awarded/ma-245348-oms-20,](https://imls.gov/grants/awarded/ma-245348-oms-20)

or use the camera on your phone to scan the QR code to be directed automatically to the link.



The Museum's Commitment:

1) We will prioritize Kumeyaay community voices, realities, and requests when displaying, interpreting, and writing content for the new exhibit interpretive plan.

2) We will engage with Kumeyaay community members in large forum focus groups, one-on-one meetings, and through written evaluations to capture content for the new exhibit that is self-determined by the Kumeyaay community.

3) We will work collaboratively with the Kumeyaay community to ensure that a new exhibit interpretive plan is approved, along with any of the cultural resources displayed, by our

4) We will work in partnership with Kumeyaay stakeholders to develop curriculum to accompany the new exhibit. Curriculum developed will be community-driven and approved by Kumeyaay consultants.

Curriculum developed will be community-driven and approved by Kumeyaay consultants.

5) We will recognize Kumeyaay sovereignty and that Kumeyaay knowledge—whether documented or passed through oral traditions—is the correct evidence when defining the importance and use of their cultural

"The Artifact Piece" by James Luna, 1987



Maasai



Ambassador Ole Senkale



2023 Treatment image
pending community
approval.

Maya



Our Decolonizing Initiatives in Action:

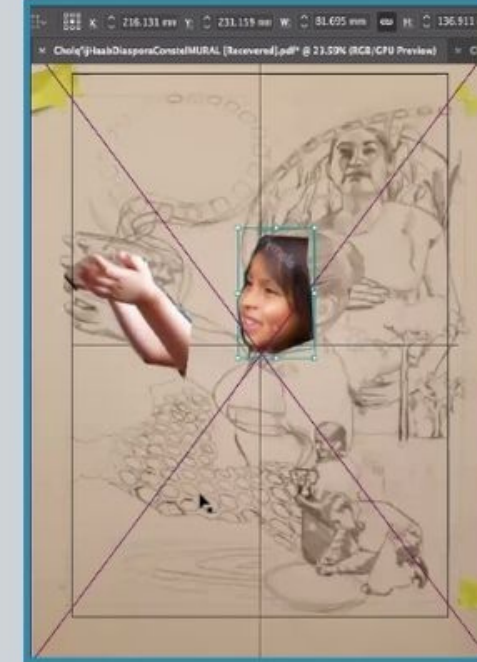
NOTE—The Museum of Us is currently working to change Maya: Heart of Sky, Heart of Earth, the outdated exhibit you see before you.

Maya peoples are still here today and thriving, and they continue to maintain their cultural heritage. Yet, this exhibit presents them as a civilization frozen-in-time and a people of the past. The one-sided narrative of the exhibit elevates Euro-American academic perspectives above the voices of the Maya community relative to their past, present and future. We hope to do the opposite.

With support from the Moxie Foundation, the Museum of Us is consulting with Maya community members about the content of the exhibit, and their cultural resources contained within it, so that we can reframe the exhibit with their expert guidance. In this way, the Museum of Us hopes to redress the harm caused by the exhibit's existing portrayal of Maya peoples and our role in perpetuating it.

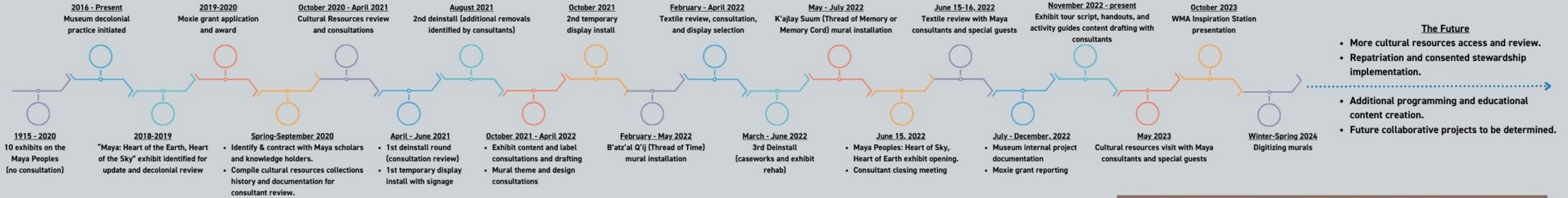
The Museum's Commitment:

- 1) We will work collaboratively with the Maya community to ensure that old exhibit content is replaced with new content, which is approved, along with the cultural resources displayed, by our Maya community consultants.
- 2) We will prioritize Maya community voices, realities, and requests when displaying, interpreting, and writing content for the revised exhibit.
- 3) We will recognize Indigenous sovereignty and that Indigenous knowledge—whether documented or passed through oral traditions—is the correct evidence when defining the importance and use of their cultural resources and heritage.

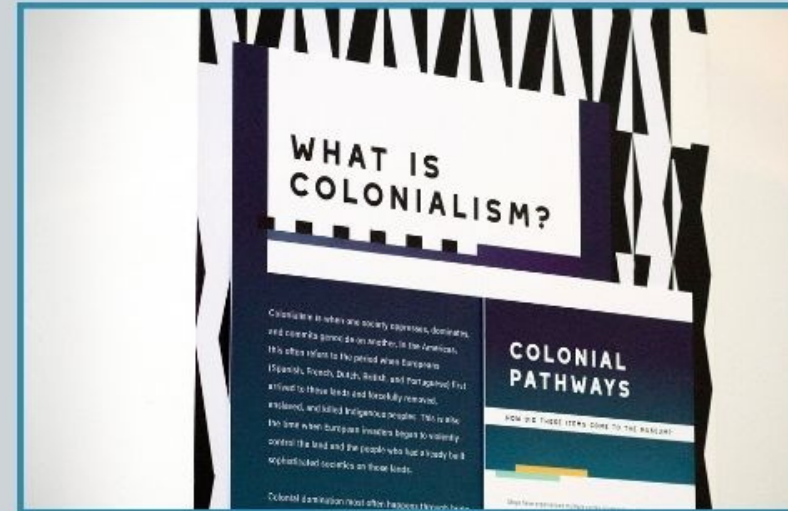


(c) 2022 Alicia María Siu

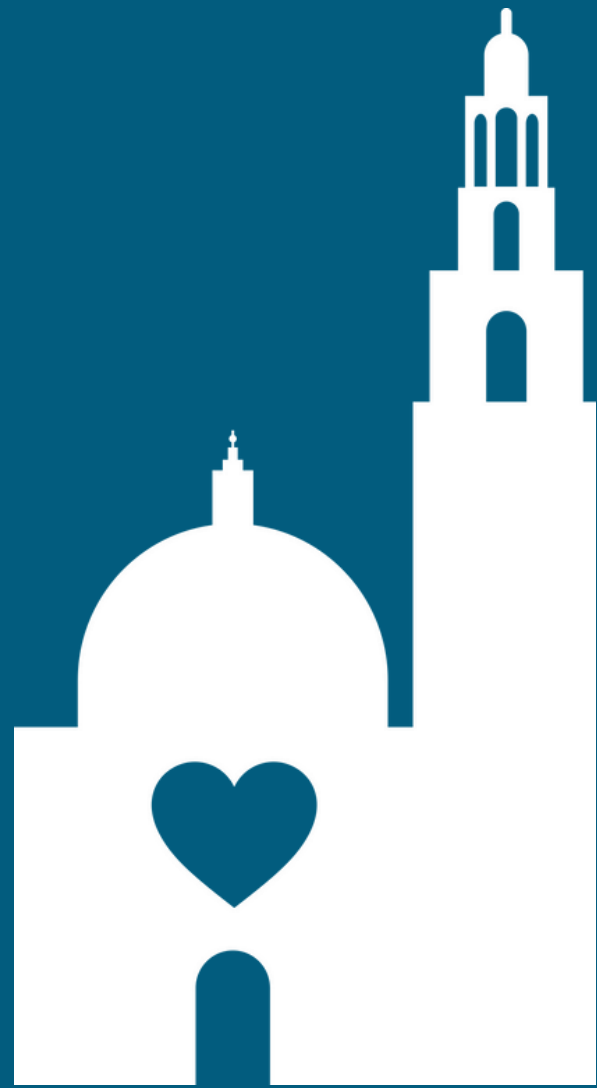
B'atz'al Q'ij (Thread of Time)



Huipil, Made by Oscar Ubaldo Boj Chojolan (K'iche' Maya)



Questions to keep asking ourselves on this decolonial journey



- How do we continue to benefit from the displacement, dispossession, and erasure of Indigenous peoples?
- How have we intentionally and unintentionally perpetuated colonial harm?
- Who defines the industries "best practices" and "normal"?
- What does truth-telling look like and how can you include it in all of your departments?
- How do we honor Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color's voices, requests, and rights to self-determination in our organization, policy, exhibits, stewardship, curation, etc?
- What are the tangible ways that we can take action and make equitable change in the museum field to redress colonial harm through micro and macro change within administrative and programmatic levels?



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