

Lesson 2: New Directions in Native American Studies

1. Exploring Cultural Sovereignty

- We discussed the idea of sovereignty in the previous lesson, and as was mentioned, this concept will be further explored in this and other lessons.
- Cultural sovereignty has always been maintained by Native Americans, but recently has come to be better understood and appreciated.
- Unlike political and economic sovereignty, cultural sovereignty, at least in theory is without limitation and exists beyond the reproach of outside influence.
- Good example in Oklahoma:
 - The Chickasaw Nation Culture Center in Sulpher, OK. The

Chickasaw Nation uses their culture sovereignty to promote their culture as they see fit and for their own benefit. What is on display, what is taught, and what is experienced, is at the discretion of the Chickasaw. Historically, Native peoples were not consulted about what was displayed at these types of centers and museums.

2. The National Museum of the American Indian

- Opened on September 21, 2004 on the Washington Mall.
- Fifteen years earlier, Congress passed Public Law 105-189, which established a National Museum of the American Indian as part of the Smithsonian.
- Chickasaw scholar Amanda Cobb comments that in the creation of the NMAI, “Native Americans have

again turned an instrument of colonization and dispossession into something else-in this case, into an instrument of self-definition and cultural continuance.

- Recall Barker's claim that "sovereignty carries the awful stench of colonialism. It is incomplete, inaccurate, and troubled. But it has also been rearticulated to mean entirely different things by indigenous peoples.
- The NMAI is another example of the Native American experience being rearticulated by Native peoples.

3. Trapped Behind the Glass

- Cobb continues her tour of cultural sovereignty when she writes, "By using a historically unquestioned authority to take Native objects and remains and to define who and what Native Americans are,