

**Weaving a Community through a Common Thread:
The Miccosukee and Seminole Tribes of Florida**

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Abstract

Dreary from a long day of traveling, I trudged through a South Florida Airport terminal wondering where the summer had gone and how I could possibly make it through another semester of graduate school. Ideas for the Florida Ethnographic Collection at the Florida Museum of Natural History, my likely thesis project, fluttered through my head. That's when I saw it: a vaguely marked, unflatteringly labeled display case containing beautiful Seminole artifacts...in an airport! I was simultaneously excited and uncertain. Where did these artifacts come from? What was their provenience? Do the Seminole or Miccosukee people know these are here? What would they think of being "on display" in an airport? Was this common in South Florida? Just how many Seminole artifacts like this are out there? When I returned to school, I was presented with the opportunity to answer some of those questions firsthand. As part of a semester-long project in an *Anthropological Museology* course, I was allowed to create and distribute a comprehensive statewide collections survey, presumably the first of its kind, with the intent of locating as many Seminole and Miccosukee materials across Florida as possible. The reasoning behind such an ambitious (if not naïve) project was not simply to satiate my own curiosity, but to 1) raise awareness of the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes, 2) facilitate collaboration between Florida museums and the Tribes and 3) serve as the common thread upon which new relationships and ideas could be formed between museums. This paper presents the results of that survey, the reasoning behind its creation and recommendations for future improvements, applicable to museum collections of all types.

Background

It is curious to think that the museum, an institution so often revered and unquestioned in its authority, might be founded on principles that undermine the values of equality and freedom this nation prides itself upon. However, with histories steeped in colonialism and Western ideology (Maunder 1999), museums have done just that, often playing the role of “nation-builder (Cooper 2008).” This extraordinary influence, instilled by a hegemonic authority that goes unquestioned by many, has had a tremendous impact on the collective understanding of Native American cultures (Cooper 2008). The development of the “anthropological museum,” as we know it today, would not have been possible without the public display of Native American cultures. Unfortunately, like a parasite to its host, that relationship has historically been one-sided, depriving Native people of their own histories and preventing them from “experiencing an intimacy with [their] own pasts (Cooper 2008).”

From the 1870's to the 1950's, large collections of Native American ethnographic and archaeological materials were amassed to fill the collections of new and increasingly popular anthropology and natural history museums (Krech 1999). The museum's increased interest in Native American material culture coincides with the “Indian craze” of the early twentieth century, during which Native American art became a popular commodity and was sold nationwide in department stores and other commercial venues (Hutchinson 2009). The increasing popularity of Native American artwork overlapped with the prevailing notion that these “primitive” cultures were vanishing, as their increased “civility” demanded

assimilation into modern society (Glass 2002; Gordon and Herzog 1988). The acquisition of many objects was the direct result of government programs trying to instill this “civility” into Native Americans through geographical displacement and the discouragement of traditional lifestyle practices (Summers 2006). Their reasoning, however presumptuous, was thought to be intellectually and morally sound at the time (Maunder 1999). The ‘natives,’ they argued, were incapable of preserving their own heritage, so rather than letting it die out completely, ethnographic material was accumulated so that these ‘vanishing cultures’ would survive in some fashion (Maunder 1999; Glass 2002). In reality, this practice did more harm than good, resulting in the separation of many cultures “from their most significant material heritage (Maunder 1999).” Today, there is an undeniable power shift occurring in the relationship between Native Americans and museums in the United States. The recent emergence of the tribal museum, coupled with the passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, have forced many museums to address their own colonialist histories (Jonaitis 2002) and ask themselves: “who owns cultural heritage?”

Two Native American cultures very familiar with this question are the Seminole and Miccosukee Indians of Florida. For decades, Andrew Jackson and the federal government pursued the Seminole (and what later became the Miccosukee) Tribe in an effort to relocate all southeastern Indians to Oklahoma, part of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Milanich 1998). The Seminoles, however, simply refused to go, resulting in the three infamous Seminole Wars of the 1800’s (Milanich 1998). Their lifestyles were forever changed, as they were gradually pushed further

and further south into the Everglades of Florida (Milanich 1998). They never surrendered or signed a peace treaty with the government, giving them the unique distinction of being the only “unconquered” Native American tribe in the United States (Seminole Tribe of Florida 2011a). In the 1870’s and 1880’s, hunters from the northeast would hire the Seminoles as guides, often accumulating “clothing, trinkets and other items (Schreuder 1989).” In 1908, Two New York museums launched an intensive two-year collecting trip, as interest in Native American lifestyles began to pique and the assimilation of the Seminole Tribe was assumed (Schreuder 1989). Eventually, after several decades in relative isolation and “abject poverty (Seminole Tribe of Florida 2011b)”, the Seminole took advantage of the early 20th century “Indian craze,” creating crafts, stores and cultural displays for tourists (Downs 2007). Some “traditions,” such as alligator wrestling and totem pole carving, were invented simply to appease public assumptions and generate income (State Archives of Florida 2011). This new focus on tourism resulted in the widespread distribution of what are now prized ethnographic museum artifacts such as dolls, textiles and wooden figures (Downs 2007).

Today, the Seminole Tribe of Florida is one of the most well known Native American groups in the United States. Their commercial ventures, such as the establishment of the first tribal casino in the United States and purchase of the Hard Rock Café restaurant and casino chain (McCoy 2006), have caught the attention of many. Their association with certain prominent intercollegiate athletic departments has also generated interest and discussion (Powell 2005). However, beyond their claim of being the only “unconquered” tribe in America, much of their fascinating

cultural history remains relatively unknown to the general public. This is something the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Clewiston, Florida is trying to change. In yet another milestone, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in 2009



Figure 1. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Museum in Clewiston, Florida is the first tribal museum in the United States to be accredited by the AAM. (Photo by A. Bell).

became the first tribally owned museum to be accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM), a feat accomplished by only 779 (AAM 2011b) of the estimated 17,500+ museums in the United States (AAM 2011c). Most importantly, as the rightful owners of their own cultural property, little argument can be made over their authority in matters of collections stewardship and public interpretation.

Still, even as Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki emerges as a world-class institution, an untold number of Seminole artifacts remain housed in various museums throughout the State of Florida. This is an oft-painful reminder of the colonialist collection practices undertaken by these institutions in decades past. Many of today's museum staff members have recognized the error in their predecessors' ways, offering the Seminole Tribe access to collections and collaborative roles in exhibit design (Marquardt 1996). While the implementation of NAGPRA required museums to return human remains and items that might be considered sacred or of "cultural

patrimony”(Trope 1996), there is no current legislation mandating the return of the thousands of other “unsacred” artifacts. Museums were required “to reexamine, catalog and inform Native Americans about the objects they held in their collections (Haakanson 2004),” but this is a difficult policy to enforce, particularly with small or private museums that may not even be aware of NAGPRA, let alone whether or not they have Seminole or Miccosukee materials in their museum. Additionally, Florida’s Sunshine Law, which requires any museums affiliated with government agencies to release records upon request, does not apply to most private institutions, making inquiries by the Seminole Tribe difficult to enforce (“Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual “ 2011). This does not, however, make the materials they house any *less* Seminole. Efforts to inform the Seminole Tribe of their existence are necessary at the very least.

Objectives

Attempts by Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki have been made to locate Seminole materials across the State of Florida (T. Backhouse, personal communication, October 17, 2011), but as of yet, no comprehensive inventory exists. The difficulties in accomplishing such a task are numerous and daunting, but until the first steps are taken, they will always appear that way. The purpose of this research is to take those steps, though they may ultimately prove fruitless. The implementation of a statewide museum survey can be beneficial not only to the Seminole Tribe, but also the participant institutions. Cognizance of local museums with similar collections can foster collaboration of ideas, exhibits and resources. Museums that designate themselves strictly as “art museums” can think “outside the box” and request loans

from natural history or history museums, and vice versa. No culture restricts the entirety of their material culture to the categories of “art,” “history,” or “natural history.” Great educational exhibits can be created from sharing even the tiniest of collections. The objectives of this research, therefore, are to locate Seminole and Miccosukee materials for the benefit of all invested parties, with the hope that new bridges are constructed along the way.

Methodology

In October 2011, a preliminary survey was developed for distribution to *all* Florida museums, in hopes of formulating a master inventory of Seminole and Miccosukee collections across the state. Great care was taken in constructing both the cover letter (Figure 2) and the accompanying survey (Figure 3), as a professional approach would surely yield a higher response rate. While there was no malice or hostility behind this inquisition, it was feared that some museums might sense an ulterior motive, especially as the collection of Native American materials by unaffiliated institutions remains controversial in some circles. Additionally, e-mails from graduate students, who always seem to want *something*, are easily dismissed without a second thought. Conference with several esteemed anthropologists and museum veterans provided valuable input and deemed the survey “ready for launch.” Their assistance and words of wisdom were greatly appreciated.

Compilation of a mailing list proved extremely challenging, instantly making it obvious as to why this inventory did not yet exist. If there is not even a concrete list of museums in Florida, there is certainly not a list of only those containing

Seminole or Miccosukee items. The difficulty in determining what constitutes a museum is certainly to blame for this and would ultimately force the surveyor to decide for himself, at least for the purposes of this survey. It also became immediately apparent that without the Internet, this task would be infinitely more difficult, if not impossible. The first utilized resource was the American Association of Museums website, which has a searchable directory of member museums (AAM 2011a). A museum need not be accredited to be an AAM member, so a long list of museums was gleaned from this. *All* museums on this list were included in the survey, regardless of their function or collection base. Unfortunately, however, no direct contacts were listed, only links to the museums' homepages. For each individual museum, an appropriate staff member's e-mail address had to be uncovered from within the structure of their museum's unique website. In most cases this was relatively simple, but not all were straightforward. Whenever possible, the e-mail addresses of registrars and collections managers were recorded, as they were the most appropriate contacts for a collections-oriented survey. If no such person was listed, the second most logical staff member's e-mail address was recorded. In many cases, especially with smaller museums, this was the museum director.

The second source for Florida museums was the Florida Association of Museums' (FAM) website, a regional organization similar in function to AAM (FAM 2011). A perusal of their database yielded an equally bountiful list, with many museums not listed in the AAM directory. FAM actually *did* list contact information in some instances, making the harvest of e-mail addresses much simpler.

Still, after browsing the websites of both AAM and FAM, more museums came to mind that were not on either list. There seemed to be an overall lack of small regional museums, especially those affiliated with local historic societies. Two additional “unofficial” websites proved very helpful in finding the homepages of those missing local museums: CensusFinder.org and FloridaMuseums.com. The same approach was taken in finding contact e-mail addresses at these websites, as was at the AAM and FAM websites.

When all was said and done, e-mail addresses for one hundred and eighty-two museums were compiled, all from the four aforementioned websites. In only a few instances were institutions that were listed on the websites *not* contacted. Art galleries such as the University Gallery at the University of Florida, which was listed on FAM’s website, do not have permanent collections, so they may not be considered “possessors” of Seminole culture (at least for the purposes of this survey). A handful of other museums, such as the Museum of Science and History in Jacksonville, were surprisingly possessive of their contact information and thus, were excluded. Libraries were also excluded from this survey, though they are certainly major sources for *documents* relating to the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes, if not ethnographic artifacts. The Smathers Library at the University of Florida, for instance, has “2 boxes” of documents and photographs by Albert DeVane, a man who was a great friend and historian of the Seminole Tribe for many years (Davis 2007). The Florida Memory Project, part of the Division of Library and Information Services, has a terrific collection as well, available online and free of charge to the public (State Archives of Florida 2011). Unfortunately, it would simply

be too unreasonable, for both a librarian and the surveyor, to attempt a tally of *all* documents related to the Seminole and Miccosukee in the State of Florida. It is certainly something to consider, however, if this research is ever expanded upon. Finally, there were museums such as the Ormond Memorial Art Museum, whose websites simply did not function. Naturally, they were excluded as well.

All one hundred and eighty-two e-mail addresses were painstakingly entered by name into a contact list on Google Mail (Gmail), which allowed for clean and easy record keeping. Gmail has a feature that allows contact lists to be exported to Microsoft Excel, making the formulation of a database relatively simple. A mass e-mail was sent out on November 10, 2011, one blind copy for every museum on the mailing list. Six additional museums were contacted through built-in query pages on their websites, making the total number of museums contacted one hundred and eighty-eight. The surveyor's own submission, from the Florida Museum of Natural History's Ethnographic Collection, pushed the grand total to one hundred and eighty-nine.

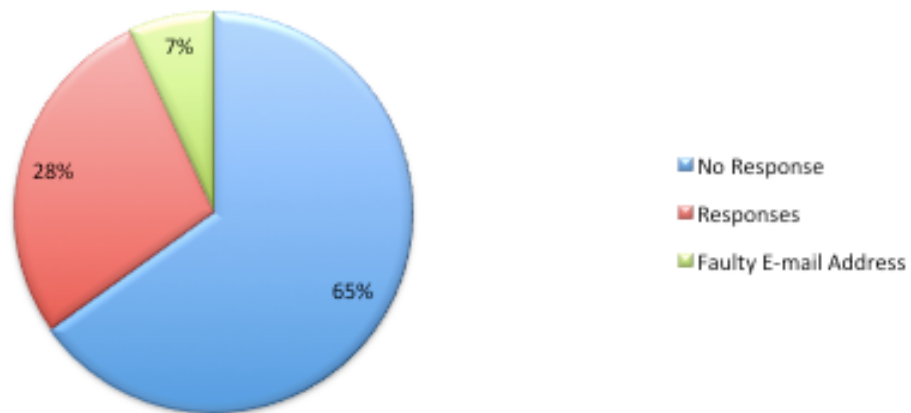
Results

Within seconds of pressing the "send" button, results began pouring in. Unfortunately, a response of such an expedient nature could mean only one-thing: faulty e-mail addresses. In total, thirteen e-mail addresses (6.9%) were returned for various reasons, not terrible considering the total number sent. Gradually, over the next several days, responses began trickling in, most of which were thoughtful and courteous. Fears of defensive or hostile reactions were allayed, as most participants gave a simple response coupled with a "best of luck on your project." With a

deadline of December 9, 2011, just more than four weeks after the send date, it was thought that sufficient time for a simple “yes” or “no” answer was allotted. The option for such an answer was offered in the body of the e-mail, with the “official” survey and cover letter attached as a single file (Figure 4). More detailed responses were encouraged, but with an understanding of priorities for the nearly two hundred museum professionals contacted, a high response rate was not expected.

In total, only fifty-three museums (28.0%) took the time to respond, while no response was received from the overwhelming majority (65.1%) (Figure 5).

Return Rate for Seminole/Miccosukee Collection Survey of 189 Florida Museums



What seemed at first to be a steady stream of e-mail responses slowly trickled out after the first several weekdays. Most opted to reply in the body of their response e-mails, but several actually completed the attached survey form, which unfortunately had to be printed to do so. In conducting future surveys, an editable document needs to be created, or possibly even a website, to make participation as simple as possible. More exciting, however, was receiving several responses via postal mail, sent to the addresses indicated on the official University of Florida letterhead. Those

responses were particularly thoughtful and appreciated. The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, who has no Seminole or Miccosukee materials in their collection, sent a beautiful brochure with an illustrated guide to seashells of Sanibel and Captiva, as well as a completed survey form and business cards.

Of the fifty-two respondents, only fifteen (28.8%) indicated the presence of Seminole or Miccosukee materials within their collections. Such seemingly paltry results, however, are not completely discouraging. The respondents who *do* have

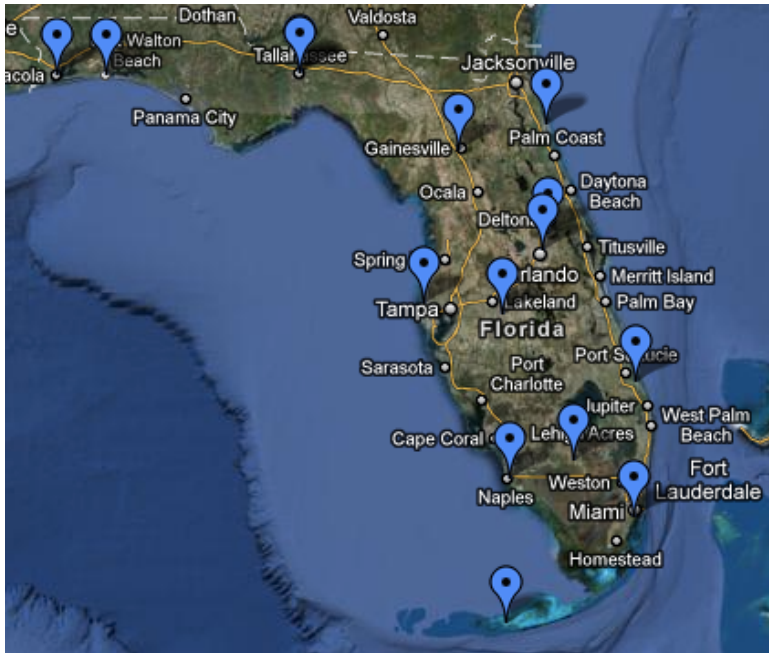


Figure 6. Fifteen museums from across the State of Florida indicated the presence of Seminole or Miccosukee materials in their collections. (Image courtesy of Google Maps).

materials form a surprisingly diverse nucleus, varying in size, collections scope and geographic distribution. Museums from every corner of Florida are represented (Figure 6), from Key West to Pensacola and everywhere in between.

This is indicative not only of the popularity of the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes in Florida, but also of just how evenly distributed the material remains of their cultures are. One might expect to find a denser population in South Florida, but this is not the case. It is no wonder that corraling this information has proven so difficult.

The fifteen respondent museums, perhaps unsurprisingly, are not all dedicated to history or natural history. Three classify themselves strictly as art museums: the Lowe Art Museum in Coral Gables, the Mennello Museum of American Art in Orlando and the Museum of Fine Arts (MOFA) in Tallahassee. A fourth, the Lightner Museum in St. Augustine, has numerous artworks on display, but is more of an old-fashioned “cabinet of curiosities” than anything else. Interestingly, three of those four museums contain such items as Seminole dolls, basketry and beadwork, items that appear often in the responses of the eleven more history oriented museums. The Mennello Museum is the sole outlier, with paintings of Seminoles by non-Native artist Earl Cunningham. Furthermore, the paintings are dramatized renderings of Seminole encampments, with inaccuracies such as “...Viking dragon boats and birch-bark canoes. There are chickees, campfires and some flat boats which are correct (K. Robinson, personal communication, November 10, 2011).” While adding these paintings to an inventory of Seminole and Miccosukee items may be a stretch, they clearly have some relevance and should not be wholly discounted. Their willingness to participate revealed a collaborative attitude that might be applied to future exhibits or loans, perhaps regarding the portrayal of Native Americans in non-Native artwork.

In total, excluding the previously known figures from the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Museum (5,500) and the Florida Museum of Natural History (795), approximately 537 Seminole or Miccosukee specimens were uncovered in Florida (Table 1). More than 400 of those specimens are from a single institution that wishes to remain anonymous, the only participant museum to do so. The

unlikeliness of some respondents, however, fuels speculation that some of these specimens had not previously been accounted for in this manner. For example, the Truman Little White House in Key West, known primarily for its presidential history, was very thorough in its response, finding six photographs of the December 3, 1947 dedication of Everglades National Park by President Harry S. Truman (B. Wolz, personal communication, November 11, 2011). Pictured with Truman are members of the Seminole Tribe, who offered the President a Seminole jacket among other items. “A palmetto bag, souvenir pottery and a lot more photos of the park dedication” are now housed at the Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri, though the jacket’s location is a mystery (B. Wolz, personal communication, November 11, 2011). The Executive Director of the Truman Little White House, Bob Wolz, was incredibly generous in his response, sending a beautiful book, *Native Americans and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, as well as three DVD’s of the 2006 symposium *Truman’s Legacy on Native Americans*. These were all graciously incorporated into the growing Seminole and Miccosukee Library at the Florida Museum of Natural History.

By sharing the results of this survey, institutions such as the Dunedin Historical Society and Museum, which has only one Seminole doll, will now be more privy to the possibilities of having a Seminole item in their collection, rather than awkwardly trying to determine its “place” in an otherwise unrelated collection. As previously stated, the opportunity for anonymous participation was offered, with only one museum electing to do so. It is hoped that participants will initiate contact with each other or the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes as a result of this survey.

The interest in receiving results indicated by participants with *no* Seminole or Miccosukee materials was encouraging as well, as perhaps their open-minded mentalities will lead to innovative and interesting collaborations and ideas.

With little more than a quarter of solicited museums responding, it may be unreasonable to consider the results representative of an entire state. However, for the sake of generalizations, if the resultant percentages were applied to the 189 museums contacted, at least 54 museums in the State of Florida would have Seminole or Miccosukee objects in their collections. Additionally, with 1,332 specimens accounted for between all fourteen respondent non-tribal museums, an estimated 3,843 additional Seminole or Miccosukee objects remain unaccounted for in Florida, putting the total number of objects currently possessed by entities other than the Seminole Tribe at somewhere near 5,000. It was frustrating to be ignored by museums that could help confirm this figure, such as the Tampa Bay History Center (which has a large permanent Seminole exhibit), but the limitations of this study were understood from the outset. Still, this estimation does not even *begin* to account for materials in other states, an inventory that might take a *team* of surveyors to complete. The National Museum of the American Indian, for example, has 354 Seminole or Miccosukee items listed in their online collection (NMAI 2011).

Even with all of these numbers accounted for, the most elusive figures are those relating to private collectors, who likely still hold the vast majority of Seminole and Miccosukee artifacts in their possession. Substantial donations made recently to the Florida Museum of Natural History are a testament to this. The negative connotations associated with private collectors are not always true,

however, as many go to great lengths to share their materials with both the Seminole Tribe and the public at large. Woody Hanson, grandson of “white medicine man” W. Stanley Hanson, is a prime example, having contributed his collections to various exhibits across the state, as well as sharing them firsthand with the Seminole Tribe. Of course, there is no “official” requirement for private collectors to act as generously as Hanson. Museums, on the other hand, are obligated by public duty to share their collections with the world and preserve them in perpetuity. In this sense, materials like the ones broached here are ultimately better off in the hands of a museum. The true number of Seminole and Miccosukee materials “out there” will likely always remain a mystery.

Conclusions

Keeping in line with the practice of general academia, conducting this survey has raised more questions than it has answered. Attempting to categorize *anything* as strictly “Seminole” or “Miccosukee,” or even as an “object,” is problematic, as categorizations are simply too open to interpretation. The boundary between utilitarianism and aestheticism is often blurred when classifying Native American artifacts, as justifications could be made for their inclusion in a variety of museums. For example, even within a classification as specific as “Seminole basketry,” there is sometimes an indistinguishable line between function and beauty. The Seminoles didn’t adopt their method of making coiled sweet grass baskets for tourists until the 1930’s (Clark 1998). Until then, they constructed their baskets from river cane for utilitarian purposes (Clark 1998). Does this mean that all post-1930’s sweet grass baskets should be shown exclusively at art museums, while all pre-1930’s river cane

baskets should be shown exclusively at natural history museums? Once again, the answers are open to a variety of interpretations, as indicated by the distribution of artifacts found in this survey.

Even in communication with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, the authority on all things Seminole, there was confusion as how to best classify everything. Included in this survey were 1,800 “objects (ethnographic/historic)” and 3,700 “photographs” from Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, but more than 23,000 unmentioned documents exist in their “archives,” as well as approximately 1,250 books in the “library (T. Backhouse, personal communication, December 13, 2011).” Thus, it was realized that this research is influenced a great deal by the surveyor’s own biases, relating primarily to his knowledge of the specific collection at the Florida Museum of Natural History. Library books and archives, while an important part of the collection at the FLMNH, were not considered in the construction of this survey, due primarily to the difficulty in calculating their exact number. Should another survey be conducted, these types of items ought be considered, as their importance in the preservation of cultural heritage cannot be understated.

As for the stated goals of collaborative relationships and idea building, only time will measure their success, as these otherwise immeasurable processes are now in the hands (or rather, the “inboxes”) of the survey recipients. As a result of conducting this survey, however, it can at least be said that the connection between Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki and the FLMNH is stronger than before. Interacting with Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki’s knowledgeable staff yielded tremendous insight and valuable connections for the future. Hopefully, the exchange was mutually beneficial. One statement, made by

their assistant registrar, indicates that possibility: “I think in general, 85% of our collection is Seminole-related. That was an interesting statistic to come up with, I don’t think we’ve actually done that before (T. Backhouse, personal communication, December 13, 2011).” That statement alone made this survey worth doing. Through collaboration, communication and mutual understanding, new ideas and new ways of thinking can flourish, benefiting not only the museums involved, but also the objects they care for and the public they serve. Most importantly, in the case of the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Florida, it provides an authority on the preservation and continuation of a heritage that in the hands of anyone else would lose its true meaning.

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**Austin Bell**

Nov 10



to Austin, bcc: info, bcc: Amelia, bcc: Anna, bcc: Apalachicola, bcc: Apopka, bcc: Appleton, bcc: Armed, bcc: Art,

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this! As a project for a graduate course at the University of Florida, I am conducting a state-wide museum collections survey to determine the relative distribution of Seminole and Miccosukee materials across Florida. I have specific research interests in this subject and believe the results, when shared, will be beneficial to all interested parties. Please see the attached .pdf for further explanation and instruction.

Your museum was chosen because it was listed as a member of either the American Association of Museums or Florida Association of Museums on their respective websites. In order to create as unbiased a sample as possible, I did not discriminate against any particular type of museum. So, there is a good chance that you don't have any Seminole or Miccosukee materials in your collections. In fact, it may seem ridiculous for me to even make an inquiry. For those museums, please reply to this e-mail with a simple "no" if you would rather not fill out the attached form. For those that do, I am interested in the amount and types of materials in your collections, but understand the limitations of time and resources in completing a survey like this. I am most interested in the simple question of whether or not your institution has any Seminole or Miccosukee materials, so if you find it unreasonable or impossible to fully complete the attached survey by December 9th, I completely understand. A simple "yes" reply to this e-mail will suffice, although if you would like to participate in more detail later on, you are welcome to do so. I have set a December deadline only so that I can incorporate the "final" results into my class project.

Thank you very much for your interest and participation in this survey. As a Museum Studies graduate student, I have a great deal of respect for everything that you do and hope to one day join you as a "museum professional" in the State of Florida. Feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions or reservations about this.

Sincerely,

Austin J. Bell

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UF Seminole Survey.pdf
148K [View](#) [Download](#)

Figure 4. This is what survey recipients saw when they received the initial e-mail on November 10, 2011.

Table 1

2011 Statewide Collections Survey
Florida Museums with Seminole or Miccosukee Materials

Museum Name	Location	Museum Type	No. of Objects	Object Type
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Museum	Clewiston	Tribal	5500	large variety of objects, photographs
Anonymous Museums	N/A	N/A	410	textiles, sofkee spoon, dolls, basketry, painting, postcards, photographs
Dunedin Historical Society and Museum	Dunedin	History	1	doll
Florida Museum of Natural History	Gainesville	History; Natural History	795	large variety of objects, photographs
Historic Capitol Museum	Tallahassee	Political History; Florida History	15	pottery, arrowheads, basketry, clothing, utensils, photos, doll
Historical Society of Martin County (Elliott Museum and House of Refuge Museum)	Stuart	History	30	wood, textiles, beadwork, ceremonial items, dolls
Indian Temple Mound Museum	Ft. Walton Beach	History	4	textiles, beadwork
Lightner Museum	St. Augustine	History; Art	11	dolls
Lowe Art Museum	Coral Gables	Art	15	beadwork, basketry, costumes
Mennello Museum of American Art	Orlando	Art	unknown	paintings
Museum of Fine Arts of the Florida State University	Tallahassee	Art	3	paintings, basketry
Museum of Seminole County History	Sanford	History	22	textiles, dolls, basketry, beadwork holder, photographs
Polk County Historical Museum	Barton	History	17	textiles, dolls, wood carvings
Truman Little White House	Key West	State Heritage Landmark	6	photographs
West Florida Historic Preservation, Inc.	Pensacola	History	3	clothing, photograph
		TOTAL	6832	



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November 9, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing your museum in hopes that you might consider participating in a brief collections survey.

The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes of Florida represent a vital part of our state's cultural heritage and have long been a subject of interest to museums. Their material culture has found its way into a variety of institutions, both locally and nationally, by virtue of its exquisite craftsmanship and artistic beauty. Popular exhibits are displayed in all regions of Florida and the Seminole Tribe even has its own world-class facility, the outstanding Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Museum in Big Cypress. In the interest of both facilitating collaboration between museums and raising awareness of Seminole and Miccosukee collections, I am conducting a survey to determine the relative distribution of this material across the state of Florida.

This survey, while ambitious in its scope and objectives, is not a requirement of any kind for your museum. I am a Museum Studies graduate student at the University of Florida and am conducting this survey as part of a semester-long project for a course in *Anthropological Museology*. My thesis project, to be completed in December 2012, involves the curation of the Seminole and Miccosukee Ethnographic Collection at the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH), where I have been employed for the past three years.

The information I am seeking is strictly quantitative. For example, at FLMNH there are 795 items in the Seminole and Miccosukee Ethnographic Collection, including 175 silver bangles, 154 photographs, 82 photographic slides, 75 dolls, 32 baskets, 26 postcards, 21 strings of beads/bracelets/necklaces, 19 wooden carvings, 16 rattles, 16 shirts, 14 stickball sticks, 11 skirts, 7 wooden spoons, 5 bandolier bags, 4 mortars, 4 pestles, 4 wooden knives, 4 arrows, 3 pairs of moccasins, 2 longbows, as well as a variety of other items not listed here. The numbers need not be precise, especially since some objects are difficult to categorize, but a rough estimate of each object type is sufficient.

After compiling the results of this survey, I am eager to share them with interested participants. It is my hope that as a result, Florida museums will be encouraged to communicate further with the Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes as well as each other, providing a common thread upon which new relationships can be formed and ideas, materials and resources shared.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Austin J. Bell

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2011 Seminole and Miccosukee Collections Inventory of Florida

Thank you for participating! If possible, please return by December 9, 2011 to aube@ufl.edu or the mailing address listed above. The initial results of this survey will be returned to interested participants by January 1, 2012.

Museum Information:

Name of Participant: _____

Title: _____

Name of Institution: _____

Institution Location: _____

Type of Museum (art, history, natural history, etc.): _____

Collections Information:

Are you aware of the presence of any materials associated with the Seminole or Miccosukee Tribes of Florida in your permanent collections? [] Yes [] No

If you answered "yes" to the question above, please indicate the type(s) of materials present (wood, textiles, basketry, photographs, etc.) if known:

Approximately how many Seminole or Miccosukee items do you maintain in total? _____

If possible, please provide a more detailed inventory below (or attach a separate sheet).

Survey Information:

Would you like to receive the results of this survey? [] Yes [] No

Would you like your museum to be an anonymous participant? If so, the name of your institution will not be included in the final shared survey, only the data you provide. [] Yes [] No