

physical features that indicated racial inter-marriage (Lurie personal communication 1994).

The exhibition is a testimony to the survival of a people. Their vitality and creative energies are the fulcrum supporting the exhibition, both in process and in execution. "A Tribute to Survival" earned the respect and support of the Indian community to the extent that the Museum received \$250,000 for the exhibit from Potawatomi Bingo Inc., a tribally owned bingo operation located in Milwaukee. To my knowledge, this is the largest donation ever given to an American museum from a tribal organization and is proof of the social investment in the exhibit process by the Indian community.

This project and process makes it abundantly clear that American Indians are not totally alienated from museums and museum professionals, but welcome an opportunity to collaborate with them. Native people have perspectives and messages which they are eager to communicate to museum audiences, and central among them is that they are alive and well at the end of the 20th century.

## Conclusion

What do we learn from these exhibits about the relationships between American Indians and American museums? It is safe to conclude that the relationship, if removed from the contentious areas over human remains and sacred objects, demonstrates enormous potential for collaboration and mutually beneficial projects. Indians have a lively interest in 19th century ethnographic materials, not as a means in themselves, but as a way to reflect on who they are today. To some degree, that is a goal of most ethnographic exhibits, but the execution often appears badly done. In addition, Indian communities are eager to assist in exhibitions that portray their modern lives and concerns. While some native people may threaten to demand "that all history and references to Indian people be withdrawn from museums" (Horn-Miller 1993: 46), far more are willing to engage in collaborative projects with sensitive, informed curators who listen attentively to them. Finally, there are some Indians who appreciate the efforts of anthropologists and museums in preserving native material culture, some of which would otherwise have been lost due to the efforts of missionaries and the Indian Bureau.

Central to this discussion is the native concern for the preservation and renewal of their unique cultural heritage. While they do not wish to be represented as shadows from the past, neither do they want to be separated from it. Continuity and survival of a people are themes heard repeatedly in collaborative efforts between museum staff and Indian communities. Just as tribes are attempting to reclaim lands, natural resources and prerogatives lost to them in earlier years, so are they eager to assert an active role in the creation of museum representations of their cultures and histories. The "Indian viewpoint" is not a monolithic sentiment, but one that is subtly different in every community. What binds it all together is a persuasive insistence on the