

Indigenous/Traditional Technology and the Modern Science Center

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As presenters of science to various publics it is useful for science museums to examine how we define science, how we use it, and how we understand it and its cultural positioning over time. The presentation will “dissect” this from several different directions.

The presentation will look at two frequently-used approaches: first indigenous or traditional science and second contemporary or “western” science. This will involve examination and impact of science over time, in various cultures, and as it is used by science centers to illustrate progress, how the world works, and how science is an essential element of modern life. Science has multicultural and temporal roots some of which are fully intact in their cultures of origin and others have been modified and creatively incorporated into the many phases of science that we celebrate today.

The presentation will then report on examples of approaches being taken in science centers via traveling exhibitions, programs with indigenous populations, collaborative presentations that are locally and regionally appropriate, and challenges that are being addressed such as repatriation of sensitive materials properly in the possession of indigenous people.

Cultural sensitivity and scientific accuracy are two elements of the modern science museum that must be co-joined.