The relationship between Indigenous communities and mainstream museums has changed significantly in recent decades as a result of Indigenous activism and new museum theory and practice. These changes include the sharing of curatorial authority, collaborative partnerships, and efforts to decolonize museums. Lonetree’s research examines the current state of contemporary exhibition practices at both national and tribal museums. Central to her analysis is exploring how museums can serve as sites of decolonization through honoring Indigenous knowledge and worldview, and discussing the hard truths of colonization in exhibitions in an effort to promote healing and understanding. Several of the sites that she examines move us forward in efforts to decolonize museum representations through the privileging of Indigenous voice and perspectives, serving as educational forums for Native communities and the general public, and by challenging stereotypical displays of Indigenous people produced in the past. Through an examination of the exhibitions at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (including their newly opened exhibit, “Nation to Nation”), and the Ziibiwing Center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways in Michigan, Lonetree’s presentation will explore what a decolonizing museum practice involves and how we can extend our understanding of the potential of museums to be "sites of conscience" and decolonization.

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