From closed museum spaces to inclusive cultural meeting points: connecting indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic

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CHAPTER 3. Theoretical and methodological framework for connecting communities and Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the theoretical framework approach used to study how to connect communities with Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic. The approach rests on critical museology, a theoretical orientation in current museum studies discussions that calls for a breach from authoritative, one-sided museum narratives (Lorente 2012), and which was used here as a framework for exploring connections between communities and museum collections within the Dominican cultural context. A critical museology approach also encourages us to examine how Dominican museums have contributed to the presentation of Indigenous cultures from the Caribbean as phenomena from a distant past and extinct people.

The chapter also explains the methods used in the qualitative research regarding how to connect Indigenous heritage collections with communities in the Dominican Republic. Procedures are presented, the sampling strategies used, and a description of the types of participants selected for interviews and surveys. This chapter also discusses the approach to reporting and analyzing results from the review of documents, surveys, interviews, and participant observation during community-led activities.

3.2 Collections and connections in the shadow of colonial thought

Decolonization is a well-contested process for considering a revisionist approach to heritage discussions. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) considers decolonization as the process of dismantling colonial "bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic, and psychological" power relations. For her, it is necessary to examine how history came to be accepted as a universal coherent narrative (Smith 1999, 30-31). It is in this context of decolonization that connections between communities and Indigenous and African heritage collections in the Dominican Republic can contribute to transforming the narratives of local and regional histories, eventually helping to mobilize local communities toward cultural self-determination. Nevertheless, for contesting museum narratives in the Dominican Republic, critically examining how to connect Indigenous heritage collections with communities in the Dominican Republic—as it may happen in other nations in the Caribbean—needs to be approached with care. Claims for the restitution of heritage objects taken during the conquest, under the colonial period, or even in modern times may prove difficult to sustain unless the circumstances of their acquisition are

addressed. Exploring community connections with Indigenous heritage collections for contributing to discussions of Dominican identity is necessary and should be approached by empowering local communities to engage in critical discussions and interactions with cultural heritage inside and outside museums. Such discussions may pave the way for museums to publicly address the need to reevaluate the continued colonial framework of collecting practices in the Dominican Republic and offer a way to progress toward a more inclusive narrative of the past.

Amy Lonetree (2012) proposes that museums can be conduits to examine the complex relations between museum narratives, objects, and the trauma suffered by native communities that lost everything. She shows how museums can help communities challenge stereotypical representations of native cultures while mediating discussions of historical trauma and the unresolved grief brought on by colonialism (Lonetree 2012, 5). This examination through museums can a valuable tool in charting community connections. However, the inclusion of critical native perspectives proves difficult in the Dominican context, as there are no officially recognized living Indigenous communities in the Dominican Republic, although there is a recognized cultural movement that has reclaimed their Indigenous ancestry and helped challenge the long unquestioned extinction theories (Forte 2006). What can be adapted from Lonetree's (2012) decolonizing framework (6–8) is the connection between historical reevaluation and contemporary museum practices in a critical museology approach. Although there is no unified definition for critical museology, museum studies discussions point to the need for a deeper, more robust critical analysis of museum practice, its role in shaping the production of knowledge, and its accountability in perpetuating rigid traditional structures in institutional interaction with museum audiences (Shelton 2013; Desvallées and Mairesse 2010; Macdonald 2006; Ross 2004; Vergo 1989). In this sense, critical museology has been framed within the stances of multiple modern and contemporary critical theories (Shelton 2013).

In order for the contestation of museum narratives to have a broader influence, the decolonization of museums cannot happen outside of nation-level discussions. This is a particularly poignant discussion at the local level, as in the Dominican Republic, Spain is still colloquially referred to as the "mother country," even when it might only promote its varied gastronomic offer (Rodriguez 2009). In the Dominican context, it is necessary for discussions of decoloniality to be rooted in the examination of coloniality and how it has framed modernity (Quijano 2000). Dominican museums have tended to present a one-sided

contemplative story—one of extermination—as art through the archaeological objects on display in museums with Indigenous heritage collections. The public trust in museum narratives has mainly been nurtured from a top-down approach. The decolonization of Indigenous heritage narratives can only be brought about through critical reflection; however, such considered approaches cannot work if museum curatorial practices dominate the deliberations (Shelton 2013).

As transmitters of knowledge, museums and their collections have been studied as places where knowledge is produced. Writers have argued that curiosity cabinets and their wondrous collections of strange items have to be looked at within the context of the epistemology of the times (Zytaruk 2011, 2). The context of collecting practice has to also be considered in the case of the Dominican Indigenous heritage collections.

3.3 Critical museology for Dominican Indigenous heritage

Learning how previous scholars have studied Indigenous heritage objects from the Caribbean has helped establish an initial framework for exploring how to connect communities with Dominican Indigenous heritage collections. A critical museology approach seemed appropriate as a strategy to examine how and why collections have been gathered out of context and what can be done to connect communities with these collections. Understanding what these connections can be will aid in preserving and protecting them, as they have long been neglected in their use as transmitters of cultural information that is still very much part of us.

The present research uses Anthony Shelton's critical museology manifesto (2013) in its theoretical and methodological approach to identifying how to make community connections with heritage collections in the Dominican Republic. Critical museology is used as an initial methodological-theoretical orientation to Indigenous research methodologies (Chilisa 2012; Smith 1999). This helped explore an academically complex and personal research topic in a country where the support for revisionist historical accounts has been withheld for generations. Indigenous research methodologies are based on postcolonial Indigenous paradigms and decolonizing strategies that aim to challenge the research process by integrating Indigenous knowledge and resisting Euro-Western thought (Chilisa 2012, 29–30; Smith 1999). Although the present research does not resist Euro-Western thought, it recognizes that it is insufficient for exploring how to connect communities with Indigenous heritage collections to protect and preserve these important cultural heritage resources in the

context of the Dominican Republic, as presented in Chapter 2. Based on what Bagele Chilisa proposes (2012), there is a need to create favorable conditions for Dominican communities—which have been historically marginalized and have accepted their history as presented through colonized narratives without ever questioning them—to reclaim the archaeological vestiges of their past and connect them with their own local narratives.

The review of studies on this topic has provided a background for understanding the heritagescape, where "tangible and immaterial vestiges of ongoing human actions […] are linked to cultural memory" (Siegel et al. 2013, 378). The literature has further provided a context for comprehending how these vestiges are recognized in collections composed of Indigenous cultural material. Despite research on new and critical museology and Western preoccupation with ensuring audiences' participation or engagement in a way that meets contemporary standards (Mason 2005), few studies have considered Caribbean audiences. This is especially true for examining how communities engage with museums, and even further, how communities engage with Indigenous heritage collections. Nevertheless, critical museology offers a framework through which to begin exploring the scope of Indigenous heritage collections and how educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities access or relate to collections. It also helps to identify how collections are not being accessed by these communities. Anthony Shelton's (2013) critical museology considerations further promote the contestation of extinction narratives that broaden the disconnection between communities and Indigenous heritage collections, as is relevant to this study.

Drawing on literature from identity, display, politics, economics, interpretation, and decolonization, the framework of critical museology accommodates inquiry, questioning, and critique without depending on the exclusivity of a museographical framework, possibly laying the groundwork for a discussion of Caribbean museology. A critical museology practice supports critical engagement and interaction (Shelton 2013). The creation of an operational context for the application of critical museology in the Caribbean museum arena also calls for the identification of the museums' audience, public, visitors, or participants. In short, it can help identify critical communities. In doing so, through a decolonial approach (Lonetree 2012; Smith 1999) critical museology is a theoretical framework that contributes to the establishment of multivocal and inclusive meeting points that connect communities and collections and engage in meaningful discussions of identity formation.

Critical museology allows for the exploration of connections and the deconstruction of colonial narratives, challenging museums to consider how their collections can provide communities with opportunities to redefine how their past is presented and how it can make sense to them. In looking at how to frame a model for Caribbean museums, Anthony Shelton's manifesto offers a more structured reference on critical museology. Based on Tony Bennett's (1995) and Néstor García Canclini's (1990) works regarding power and economic relations with heritage and social identity, Shelton differentiates his critical museology from new museology, to which he ascribes a lack of definition or method:

> As a field of study, [critical museology] interrogates the imaginaries, narratives, discourses, agencies, visual and optical regimes, and their articulations and integrations within diverse organizational structures that taken together constitutes a field of cultural and artistic production, articulated through public and private museums; heritage sites; gardens; memorials; exhibition halls; cultural centers; and art galleries (Shelton 2013, 8).

This framework serves as a foundation for exploring many aspects of Caribbean museology. Beginning with the epistemological steps that may guide Caribbean museums as departing strategies, Shelton (2013) proposes to place all museum narratives under skeptical scrutiny. He encourages readers to de-objectivize reductionist historical narratives to focus on understanding the assemblage of collections. Shelton (2013) also asks to consider more subjective knowledge in assigning meaning that is not only based on a traditional curatorial mediation in order to become disruptive of reality (9-13). Scrutinizing the heritage narratives in the assemblage of Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic is necessary to begin questioning how museums have contributed to the perpetuation of Indigenous extension in the Caribbean. Examining museum narratives that are, to a large extent, based on colonial narratives could be a disruptive act.

The identification of studies about how the museological arena has addressed discussions regarding Indigenous heritage collections is necessary to understand why the topic has been understudied. The available literature only sheds a dim light on strategies to enhance the participation and involvement of communities in creating connections with the cultural knowledge of Caribbean collections. Previous collaborative projects in Latin America have used community outreach to revitalize ethnographic collections pertaining to originating cultures. These projects could be a reflexive reference for the Caribbean. For example, the "Sharing Knowledge" web platform (humboldt-lab.de) was developed as a pilot collaboration between the Ethnology Museum of Berlin and the National Experimental

Indigenous University of Tauca in Venezuela. It helped reinterpret objects via decolonizing approaches (Scholz 2018). Through a database, Indigenous community members and museum staff could exchange knowledge regarding objects, which provided an understanding of how ethnic groups in Venezuela see these artifacts vis-à-vis how museums tend to classify them in collections.

Another study on youth engagement in Caribbean museums points out examples of initiatives that have involved outreach and different ways of facilitating and creating community exhibitions (Ariese 2018). In the study's coverage of the Dominican Republic, one of the highlighted examples is the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology, the museum the researcher managed for 19 years. The institution developed a traveling unit that it loaned to schools that could not visit the collection. Ariese (2018) recognized this as an increasingly common practice for Caribbean museums in "renegotiating the museum's position of power and facilitating engagement on a more equal basis" (14). The Barbados Museum & Historical Society found that co-creating exhibitions with youth (by involving them in all levels of exhibition production) gave them a sense of curatorial responsibility, which resulted in more consistent participation engagement (Ariese 2018, 14). Both of these examples involve the examination of identity through exhibitions and community engagement.

Considering heritage as "a form of cultural memory and identification that shifts as societal values and stakeholders change" (Siegel et al. 2013, 376–377), Dominican public and private museums, as well as holders of undocumented Indigenous heritage collections, can work toward the incorporation of heritage values into contemporary Caribbean society. These values provide a basis for higher standards in conservation and respect for the past. Likewise, museums can pinpoint how communities can design their own ways of interacting with material culture and the cultural knowledge embedded in these objects. The multidisciplinary study of individual objects, collections, and heritage activities is a tool that may help foster critical thinking in the Dominican Republic and the rest of the Caribbean with regard to heritage practices and improving how Indigenous history is taught, appreciated, and reflected in cultural practices.

3.4 Examining Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic: The methodological perspective

As caretakers of the cultural materials produced by the Indigenous people of the Caribbean, Dominican museums are responsible for connecting the safeguarded objects in both public and private custody with the different communities that are interested in learning about the past. To identify possible connections and better serve the cultural needs of those seeking to understand the Indigenous history of the country in a more complete manner, public and private institutions that display Indigenous heritage items need to improve the documentation of their collections. However, determining the provenience of Indigenous heritage objects in the Caribbean is often difficult. The subpar excavation practices of the past, undocumented private purchases or acquisitions, and emphasis on the aesthetic characteristics of objects are just a few reasons why the development of systematic registration methods for Indigenous heritage collections has been hindered. Improving the documentation of objects and making connections possible has to be a priority in order to better understand the collections. Gaining a better understanding of Indigenous heritage through objects can also help address overdue discussions of decolonization that have been absent in museum narratives (de Varine 2005b). A more systematic approach to exploring Indigenous heritage collections can help audiences understand the contemporary meaning of these objects in Dominican society. Tracing the history of public and private collections of Indigenous heritage through a critical examination of museum narratives is a starting point in understanding how communities can connect with these collections.

For a critical museology methodological approach, Anthony Shelton (2013) maps the need to identify all possible agency relations and initiatives that depend on culturally based collaborations. He pushes for deconstruction and reflexivity in order to develop fresh insights. Shelton urges experts to stop making a distinction between museography and museology—as the visual application of knowledge cannot be separated from interpretative methods—and to distinguish fields of work and identify the interactions and influences that bind museums in multiple networks (Shelton 2013, 13–15). Shelton (2013) also emphasizes the need to critically assess the institutionalization of collections for their political implications. He finds the incorporation and sustainment of a deconstructive attitude crucial to ensure critical practices and maintain reflexive dialogs (16–19). Lastly, he highlights the recognition of networks as important hubs that, both at the virtual and physical levels, "connect museums, communities, funding, and political sources, providing access to

collections and archives and conduits for critical engagement" (Shelton 2013, 19). For Dominican Indigenous heritage collections, the identification of such networks could force public and private museums, collectors, and public officials to examine their role in the improvement of educational programs, as well as in the heritage market.

Critical museology provides a methodological opportunity for Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic to transform their current structures in line with Alissandra Cummins's (2004) suggestion: "(Caribbean) Museums as sites of questioning should identify ways to allow the community to engage more directly in the construction of national (or local) histories through interactivity and the elimination of boundaries and control" (240). The scrutiny of narratives by Dominican communities may reveal more opportunities to connect with Indigenous heritage collections than any curatorial effort could under the current model of community engagement.

The severity of the cultural rupture caused by European colonization and the lack of context for most Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic have caused a profound disconnect between the various communities and cultural objects in public and private care. These collections are, to a large extent, the byproducts of the extended looting of the archaeological sites in which the objects were found. Once housed in a museum, the collections are often presented as the remains of an extinct and remote culture. Dominican museums with Indigenous heritage collections have failed to update their exhibition methods and have maintained exhibition displays based on classificatory research, perpetuating notions of the past as a far-removed phenomenon. This failure has further contributed to the collections' disconnect with educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities, limiting access to the cultural information that the objects can convey.

This research is a basic qualitative study, constructed through interacting with people, soliciting interpretations of their experiences, and analyzing any significance these experiences may convey (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 23–24). The study's qualitative nature helped address cultural descriptions, subjective understandings, and interpretations (Marshall and Rossman 2006). The study also explored concerns regarding access and management issues that tend to challenge Dominican institutions from only focusing on collections' meanings and context (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 2). This qualitative panorama was formed with data from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and a review of historical documentation and articles related to the care of Indigenous heritage

collections in the Dominican Republic. The qualitative research study illuminated how communities interact with public and private Indigenous heritage collections, raise awareness of these collections' historical value, and protect and preserve them for future generations.

Dominican Indigenous heritage is associated with objects left behind by long-gone original inhabitants, and that can only be viewed in museums. Critical museology helps to explore ways of connecting communities with Indigenous heritage collections and archaeological sites that are still found throughout the country. It also helps in examining how objects from the Caribbean are displayed and categorized for the general public. This framework aids in decoding the meaning and value communities assign to the types of cultural material displayed and how these have been represented in the Dominican Republic. Although intangible heritage aspects associated to Indigenous heritage collections is outside of the scope of this the research, it is important to recognize that it is a crucial steppingstone for larger discussions that address wider connections to the spiritual, healing, and cultural traditional knowledge practices. This topic was explored extensively as part of the Nexus 1492 research by Jana Pešoutová (2019) titled *Indigenous Ancestors and Healing Landscapes: Cultural Memory and Intercultural Communication*, carried out in Cuba and Dominican Republic.

3.5 Methodological procedures

The research design has been depicted as a map "because it helps us understand some elements of reality that we need to understand" (Maggetti et al. 2013, 8). In other words, the design of a research study may be conceived as a roadmap that helps to identify what can be the best ways to collect information to arrive at a solution. The research roadmap began with a literature review to learn what previous studies had been made regarding the study of Indigenous heritage of the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic. The review of previous studies and museological theories helped in selecting critical museology as the most appropriate theoretical framework to approach the exploration of connections and Indigenous heritage collections within the educational, heritage, governmental, and educational communities in the country.

Qualitative research analyzes information from various settings and in multiple forms that relate to human behavior, communication, and surroundings (Berkwits and Inui 1998). Detailed descriptions and approaches that seek to interpret context from multiple perspectives permit the use of qualitative analysis (Geertz 1983). Analyzing how members from the

educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities interact with collections, how they value them, and how these collections are cared for are some practical ways in which connections can be mapped.

The techniques used in this research were based on qualitative design. Qualitative techniques are used to explore collected data in order to yield clear patterns and relationships (Byrne 2002). For the research, this was achieved by gathering information from previous academic research, institutional documents, from people involved in the management or care of heritage collections, and from individuals who do and do not visit private and public museums. The numerical data obtained from the surveys were also used for qualitative interpretation. The study helped create an inventory of national collections, and the analysis of surveys and interviews helped identify the types of access to collections communities might want to have. As part of this qualitative research approach, observations were made on how a local community near an archaeological site develops connections with excavated objects; more specifically, the interaction within the scientific context of an archaeological excavation conducted were observed as a part of the Nexus 1492 project team at two sites in close proximity to each other in the northwest part of the Dominican Republic (Hofman et al. forthcoming). The inquiry aimed at answering the research questions formulated in Chapter 1.

3.5.1 Indigenous heritage collections data

The data collection process began by gathering existing information on Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic under either public or private custody. This part of the process aided in understanding the scope of the collections, their main characteristics, and what type of information about them that was available to the public. It contributed to assessing the country's public and private collections in terms of where they are located, how they are managed, and the composition of the collections. The limited materials and information available for most collections further helped me to formulate the questions for the surveys and interviews conducted in the second phase of the research process.

3.5.2 Inventory of collections

The inventory of public and private collections compiled was used to outline the past and present state of archaeological collections, tracing how the collections were gathered, how they came to be open to the public, and how they are currently being managed. To identify

the scope of Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic, the following characteristics for museums or collections, currently or previously open to the public, with at least 200 Indigenous heritage objects on display were identified:

- geographical location and relation to archaeological sites;
- types of collections, documentation, and archival materials;
- types of activities, programs, and services offered to the public; and
- how information about the collection is made available to the public.

The inventory of collections also assimilated details from written materials developed by the institutions or individuals managing the collections. The materials included brochures, publications with details of the collections, and online texts; these aided in the analysis of how the collections described themselves and what type of information about them was available to the public. This stage of the research intended to develop an inventory of public and private archaeological collections and sites as cultural resources. The collections were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to determine the level of access to heritage material by communities in the local and regional vicinity and explore how the information could be used as a starting point for mapping collections and sites. Cultural mapping refers to gathering information about cultural resources to learn what is available in a specific community (Legacies Now 2010). Specific communities for the present study mean educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities. Adapting models for cultural mapping for these purposes helped identify collections' resources on Indigenous Caribbean heritage throughout the Dominican Republic. Having access to such an inventory of collections, visual map, and list of cultural assets available by geographical area, educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities will have greater information available to pique their interest in learning about and enriching their interaction with Indigenous heritage collections and sites.

Opinions of members of various communities were also gathered regarding the value attributed to Indigenous heritage collections and archaeological sites. As indicated in Chapter 1, the members of the communities consulted for this study refer to people belonging to the education, heritage, governmental, and local communities. They were selected based on shared characteristics and common interests, or common repertoires and interpretation strategies (Hopper-Greenhill 2007b; Mason 2005; Watson 2007), and their proximity to Indigenous heritage collections.

The information gathered helped create an asset map of diverse geographical areas to understand how each collection is used. The mapping of collections also raised awareness about the conservation status of known archaeological sites, creating a visual framework for analysis.

3.5.3 Survey and interviews

Survey and interview data were collected at the same time. The purpose of the survey and interviews was to obtain a general and basic overview of how various communities access Indigenous heritage collections, their opinions on whether these collections are seen as serving to understand the Indigenous history, and how people in different provinces relate to collections across. Participant observation allowed me to see local community members interacting with information generated by the Nexus 1492 project regarding Indigenous heritage objects excavated in their area.

3.5.3.1 Survey

Surveys are helpful for obtaining information from large groups in a relatively short time frame (Bernard 2006). The survey was administered in order to study the attitude members of the various communities have toward Indigenous heritage collections and museums. The survey also provided insight to how these communities were accessing heritage collections, and how mapping techniques could play a role in facilitating access to collections, identity formation, and increase the protection of Indigenous Dominican heritage. It seemed most appropriate to conduct this type of survey in person in the different provinces where it was hoped to obtain information from the local communities. Survey administration is uncommon in the Dominican Republic. There was a possibility that people might not be able to provide information if the survey were administered by phone or submitted by mail and they declined to complete it. Conducting the survey face-to-face also allowed me to clarify the question when a participant did not understand a point; further, it permitted self-administration of the survey when participants expressed that they would prefer to fill it out themselves instead of having the survey administrator read each question. Even though these types of surveys might be considered intrusive (Bernard 2006), in this study, face-to-face administration of the questionnaire also allowed me to obtain information from participants even if they indicated that they could not complete it if they were required to read the questions.

The survey aimed at formulating a more complete picture of the status of access to

Indigenous collections by members of the educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities. Through the survey, it was also hoped to assess the need to improve current and long-term access to collections according to the groups surveyed. The answers permitted the distribution of some characteristics of the people who visit or interact with Indigenous heritage collections and those who do not. The fixed-choice format was utilized frequently throughout the questionnaire to motivate those who voluntarily completed it to answer as many questions as possible.

The questionnaire, which included both closed and open-ended questions, inquired about the frequency of each participant's visits to Indigenous heritage collections, the motivations for their visits, what they find important about the collections, and the types of interactions they have with the collections. The combination of closed- and open-ended questions gave participants some flexibility in expressing themselves on certain topics of inquiry. The questionnaire format allowed me to ask a long battery of questions that might otherwise be considered tedious during an interview and cause participants to lose interest (Bernard 2006).

The survey was comprised of 24 questions to determine respondents' attitudes regarding Indigenous heritage collections, collection access, and the use of technology. The questions were divided into four categories:

a) the participant's visiting habits;

b) the nature of the participant's interest in Indigenous heritage collections and the meanings and values the participant assigns to them;

c) how the participant uses Indigenous heritage collections and what information he or she seeks from them;

d) the participant's use of technology; and

d) the participant's basic demographic information.

3.5.3.1.1 Participation criteria for survey completion

Participants for the survey were intentionally selected for convenience due to the limitations of time and funding. Convenience sampling—i.e., "whoever will stand still long enough to answer your questions" (Bernard 2006, 191)—was a major source of respondents. The survey was originally intended to be conducted in a higher number of provinces, but due

to time constraints and geographic distance, the provinces where surveys were administered included those with collections open to the public and archaeological sites, as well as the main site of research for the Nexus 1492 project. The researcher worked with the assumption that people would be more willing to answer survey questions or participate in an interview if they were within a locality that had a known Indigenous heritage collection or archaeological site.

The study is considered a first step toward establishing connections with members of the educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities, and the Indigenous heritage collection in their geographical area, to make of these collections more inclusive cultural meeting points. Instead of a stakeholder analysis, the survey sought to identify how respondents use collections and how they think connections can be made.

Public school teachers participating in the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo's Certificate Program on Art and Folklore at the La Romana Campus were surveyed, in an effort coordinated by the anthropology class instructor and the campus director. Tourism students from the Cap Cana Campus of the Universidad Iberoamericana in La Altagracia province were also able to complete the survey through the coordinated efforts of the campus's executive director. Art students from Chavón's School of Design in La Romana Province filled out the survey with the permission of the Vice-Rector of the School and the Dean of Students. Students enrolled in different areas of study at the Universidad Católica de Santo Domingo who participated in a special tour of the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology for an anthropology class completed the survey thanks to the coordination of the university instructors who accompanied the students on the museum field trip. Responses were obtained from a few local archaeologists, members of the local press, artists, art teachers, and university professors. Cooperation of some participants were secure by circulating the printed survey at professional meetings regularly attended regarding museum collaborations.

The largest museum audience in the country comes from the school system and regularly use the museum as part of school excursions. For this reason, schoolteachers, high school students, and university students were considered the main respondents from provinces with Indigenous heritage collections and well-known archaeological sites. Although the bias that comes with the use of convenience samples is acknowledged, it was useful to identify and understand what connections could be developed through the opinions

of members of the educational community that visit museums on a regular basis as part of school excursions.

All survey participants were informed of the nature of the research, that participation was on a voluntary basis, and that their responses were anonymous. The individual survey responses have been recorded anonymously and data has been stored at Leiden University's research repository associated with the project Nexus 1492 in accordance with the ethical guidelines established by the University as well as by the European granting institution.

Due to geographic distance and time constraints, two additional people were enlisted to help administer the survey in order to reach more people. In the northwest of the Dominican Republic, Jonnathan García, a local community member that had worked with the Nexus 1492 project in Valverde Province, helped administer the survey in schools and to people on the street in order to reach a more diverse set of respondents from communities near local museums or heritage sites. In La Romana Province, Rafael Serrano, a resident of the town of La Romana who was familiar with the research project, also solicited people on the street to complete the surveys. This permitted the collection of data from participants beyond those who were visiting or in proximity to the Regional Museum in Altos de Chavón, which is about 15 kilometers away from the La Romana city center. A stipend was provided to both of the community members who helped administer the surveys in schools and town centers. The stipend covered local transportation and the cost of mobile phone communication to coordinate with schools or teachers when they could visit to administer the surveys. It also helped pay for any snacks in case the administration of the surveys took longer than two hours at any given location.

As previously stated, convenience or purposive samples—people selected because they were conveniently or purposely accessible to ask if participation was possible (Bernard 2006; Cresswell 2009) were selected. The convenience criteria were based on their location with respect to either the Nexus 1492 project's main geographic area of study or to provinces with an Indigenous heritage collection open to the public and an archaeological site nearby, as indicated in Figure 1.

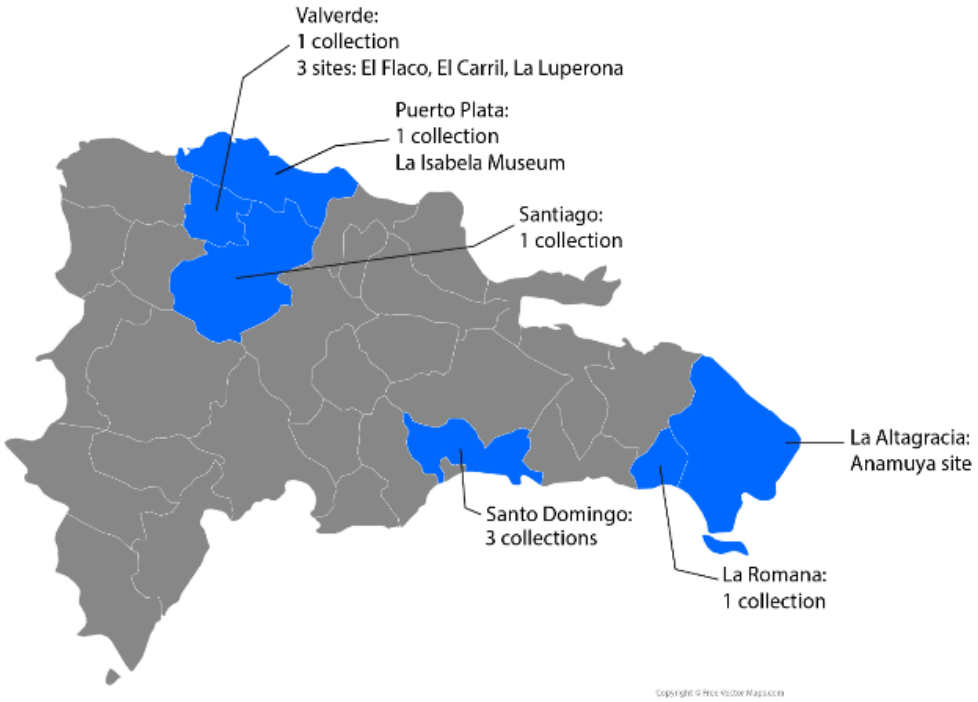

Figure 1. Map with locations and numbers of public and private museums with Indigenous heritage collections open to the public per selected province. Map by Finn van der Leden, courtesy of Nexus 1492, 2020.

- Santo Domingo National District, with Indigenous heritage collections at the Museo del Hombre Dominicano and Sala de Arte Prehispánico, and an exhibition at the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Antropológicas at the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo;

- La Altagracia, Higüey, with archaeological sites in Anamuya and Cotubanamá National Park;

- La Romana, with the Altos de Chavón Regional Museum of Archaeology;

- Puerto Plata, with Parque Nacional y Museo La Isabela (Museum and National Park) and Museo Taíno Dr. Cesar Estrella;

- Santiago, with the Centro Eduardo León Jimenes collection; and

- Valverde, Mao, with the Nexus 1492 project's active excavation sites.

3.5.3.2 Interviews and participants

Qualitative studies that incorporate interviews as part of their data collection strategy are able to profit from conversations with participants; these tend to be based on open-ended questions that the researcher poses to the interviewees. These conversations generate new information and contribute to understanding the meaning of the participants' opinions and

views regarding the topic of inquiry (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009, 229).

The present research employed semi-structured interviews. Conducting interviews requires that questions be formulated beforehand to help the interviewer steer the direction of the discussion. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows for deeper explorations of the participants' answers (Creswell 2009). Even when a follow-up interview is not needed, the initial interview offered opportunities to further probe for insights on particular issues (Bernard 2006).

The interviews for this study allowed public officials, heritage managers, and collectors to anonymously express their opinions regarding heritage legislation, management, and public access to Indigenous heritage collections. Anonymity and confidentiality were provisions established in the interview protocol to allow participants a greater sense of security in expressing themselves in the interviews (Bernard 2006). Such an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality helped to allow strong sentiments to surface in the interview questions' documented responses. Further, anonymity was an important part of the interview protocol as there is a widespread concern over repercussions—such as retaliation or ouster—for open criticism on the part of public officials in politically assigned posts or well-known heritage personalities or sponsors. These concerns have been present in the heritage field for years as behind-the-scenes anecdotes among heritage professionals; colleagues share information of the care one must take when criticizing the conditions of museums or archaeological sites or heritage-related events. Therefore, to protect their confidentiality during the transcription and analysis of the interviews, numbers were assigned to each participant and only their field of work was noted. Information that could identify the participants was withheld when reporting the results of the current study. As part of the ethical and data security standards implemented for all Nexus 1492 projects, confidential information is safely stored in Nexus data repository at Leiden University.

National census data—which could provide useful details for determining which segments of the population could help identify communities to be surveyed for the research inquiry—is challenging to access. Therefore, a study based on random selection was not deemed feasible. Purposive sampling groups were considered for the questionnaires in order to facilitate the recollection of information and reduce time and costs. In purposive sampling, "you decide the purpose you want informants to serve, and you go out to find some" (Bernard 2006, 190). Part of the research depended on inquiring what legal and regulatory knowledge

heritage managers and collection owners have. It was necessary to identify key people in heritage management positions who were willing to answer questions regarding implementing and monitoring public policy for the care of heritage collections. Semi-structured interviews with heritage managers and collectors helped me gather knowledge about heritage legislation and how collections are currently accessed. Because in-depth research on sensitive topics requires nonprobability sampling, interviewees and survey respondents were selected on purpose and for convenience, not randomly.

The same steps were taken to contact potential interviewees in order to maintain consistency of contact and in the participation process:

1. A list was created to identify all potential interviewees.
2. The most effective method of contact was determined in order to yield the fastest possible confirmation: electronic mail, phone call, or visit.
3. Contact was made on a weekly basis to allow enough opportunity to schedule interview times for those who agreed to participate.
4. Responses were systematically tracked on a weekly basis to determine when to move on to the second method of contact as a follow-up when no response was received.
5. The interview protocol was read aloud to confirm the participant's oral consent, and the recording of the interviews began with this review of the protocol.

Interviews with members of local communities and representatives of public and private heritage institutions helped determine the value assigned to objects in collections and sites and the ease of access to collections and activities necessary to engage them with these collections. Interview participants were asked to cooperate with the research by agreeing to voluntarily provide answers. The pool of interviewees was limited to heritage managers in the private sector, public officials in posts related to the Ministry of Culture of the Dominican Republic, and private citizens with an archaeological collection of Indigenous heritage (collectors with at least one major Indigenous object of wood, ceramic, or stone), whether it was accessible to the public. The categories of participants were specified as follows:

- public heritage officials with a current or former post in a governmental position;
- heritage managers;
- private collectors with collections open to the public; and
- private collectors with collections closed to the public.

As the field of heritage is relatively small in the Dominican Republic, public officials, heritage managers, heritage workers, and private collectors tend to know one another. Throughout the study, any information that might facilitate the recognition of any opinions the participants have expressed in confidence regarding the positions they hold or any particular person they might have criticized was omitted.

Interviewees selected from among a pool of professional contacts which included heritage managers and collectors that were familiar to the researcher due to her 19-year tenure as director of an archaeological museum and collaboration in multiple public sectors, private, and nonprofit cultural and educational projects in the Dominican Republic. The government-related participants held posts in museums, public archival institutions, provincial cultural offices, heritage legislation assessment, and education. They work (or worked) at different levels within the Ministry of Culture. Potential participants or their assistants were contacted personally by the researcher via phone and through electronic communication to request and coordinate meeting times to conduct the interviews. A list of interview participants was prepared and included their area of heritage work but do not attach it in order to keep the confidentiality of their answers.

The interviewees were solicited to participate voluntarily; they responded to a set of pre-determined questions and consented to have their interviews recorded for transcription purposes. Authorization to record via oral consent at the start of each interview was obtained, as reflected in the interview protocol shown in Appendix A. The interview protocol was designed with questions specially tailored to each of the different groups of interviewees.

For those who could not be interviewed in person due to scheduling conflicts, the researcher asked them to submit their answers in written form and via electronic communication. The list of participants served to keep track of who had sent written responses since some of them did not reply to an in-person interview. Participation reservation was probably due to the participant's public or private sector involvement in the management of museums or heritage collections. For these participants, the same interview protocol and questions was used as for the in-person interviews, with a modification to indicate their agreement to voluntarily submit the questions in writing.

The interview questions asked information from people involved with the care of Indigenous heritage collections or those associated with heritage policy or management

development. For public officials and heritage managers, the questions collected information in the following categories:

- information on the participant's professional background;
- their opinions on heritage legislation; and
- their ideas for accessing heritage collections.

For private collectors, the categories of inquiry related to:

- their personal reasons for collecting;
- their opinion of heritage legislation; and
- ideas for accessing heritage collections.

An interview script was drafted in order to maintain uniformity in the execution of the interview (Bernard 2006, 212). The in-person interview process began in May 2015 and continued until December 2017. Follow-up solicitations for interview participation continued until 2018, allowing for the submission of written responses by those who declined the request for an in-person interview.

Telephone calls were made to encourage people to accept doing face-to-face interviews. Phone calls helped guarantee in-person meetings and minimized the possibility of people asking to receive the questions in advance by email or to answer them in writing.

After the interview times had been scheduled, basic information was gathered regarding the interviewee's background to facilitate the initial conversation. In general, the interviews lasted 20 minutes, but in a few cases, the interviews lasted between one and a half to three hours. Interviews were carried out in person in the Santo Domingo National District, Valverde Province, and La Romana Province, and the interview questions were sent via email to those who preferred to respond in writing.

In-person interviews were recorded using an internal smartphone microphone and a voice recording application. Interviews took place in single sessions. No interview was conducted without a recorded verbal confirmation of the participant's consent. The interviews transcribed yielded approximately 95 transcribed pages for 11 in-person interviews. There were 35 pages of answers submitted in writing from the participants who sent their responses via email.

Requests for interviews were followed up between January 2017 and June 2019. After numerous attempts to contact prospective interviewees, messages were sent to ask about their willingness to submit the interview answers in writing. The possibility to submit written answers was offered as a last resort but elicited a positive response from most prospective interviewees.

Distance, cost, and time proved to be the main difficulties in setting up an efficient interview schedule. The interviews had to be plan around the full-time work schedule of the researcher. The most efficient way to do it was to coordinate visits to the different provinces and the capital city while linking the trips to museum work-related meetings.

3.5.3.2.1 Transcription of interviews

For interviews, the transcription was done verbatim in order to capture the original interaction as closely as possible; the conversation was transcribed in the form of a dialog (Bernard 2006,487–488). Interviews were conducted in Spanish, as this was the native language of most of the interviewees. The transcription of the interviews conducted in their native language allowed for the analysis of other nuances of meaning. The transcription also permitted a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), which helped identify patterns in the responses from which themes could be derived (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). The thematic analysis done involved the organization of information according to the topic of each question. An analysis of keywords used by the interviewees throughout the responses was also conducted, as well as the words used by different interviewees to respond to the same questions. These words were used to create codes of related patterns in the answers and were later compiled in broader categories of information that permitted the organization of the codes in broader and more relatable terms.

As the interview protocol promised anonymity for the participants in the study, codes were assigned to each respondent of the interview questions. The coding of the participants' names were assigned based on the chronological order in which the interviews took place, or in the order the written answers were received as well as to the type of relationship each participant had with heritage area:

- Participants 1 through 14: Public heritage officials with current or former posts in a governmental position;
- Participants 15 and 16: Heritage managers;
- Participants 17 through 19: Private collectors with collections open to the public;

- Participants 20 through 22: Private collectors with collections closed to the public.

Notes were regularly taken during the course of the research. Both note-writing and constant comparative analysis helped to minimize bias because both activities are reflective, which aided objectivity throughout the study. Field notes, in particular, served as reminders to separate personal thoughts that might impose on the theory from the information that emerged from the data (Mills and Birks 2014). Field notes included topics such as thoughts or concerns related to the study, the interpretation of relevant activities in participant observation, reflections on the quality of the process, and thoughts on emerging codes and categories.

3.5.4 Participant observation

Participant observation was used as part of the methodology of data collection (Jerolmack et al. 2018), alongside the review of documents, surveys, and interviews. As an unobtrusive method in qualitative studies, participant observation permits the researcher to observe activities in a specific research setting while the researcher attempts to determine what is going on (Bernard 2006; Jorgensen 1989). For the present research, participant observation consisted of interactions with rural communities in the scope of the Nexus 1492 excavations and related activities in the northwest of the country between July of 2013 to October 2019. The observation provided an opportunity to better understand and capture the details of interactions between local community members, project researchers, and community heritage administrators in a natural setting. This form of observation was considered more appropriate within the local communities near the excavation projects. Long-term interactions in the local community allowed for participation in activities to not be perceived as a forced integration. Observations carried out within the project's geographical context were not disruptive as it was more feasible than to survey people or ask for their opinions in structured ways. This afforded a chance to learn about the interest of local community members near the archaeological sites within the Nexus 1492 project and their willingness to be more actively involved with local Indigenous heritage and its preservation. Observation and informal conversation during activities with the local community yielded field notes for thematic analysis and interpretation.

Participant observation was possible throughout the study by taking advantage of the Nexus 1492 project activities that were organized with the local community in different geographical sections and neighborhoods within the municipalities of Laguna Salada and

Cruce de Guayacanes, located in Valverde Province. As a local researcher, participant observation was a more viable long-term data collection strategy that permitted witnessing the interaction of local community groups related to the research topic. In this role, the researcher was an outsider who participated in some aspects of the lives of local community members in the areas where the research took place. Notes recording and photographing was done as much as possible. In many cases, participation also helped to become involved in the organization and coordination of activities with members and leaders of the community being studied. Although this meant a limited capability to take notes in situ, it also provided greater insight into how activities and events were coordinated locally. A regular presence at events and activities also allowed the minimization of the curiosity effect as the researcher became a common presence in local gatherings. This further contributed to building a rapport with community leaders and neighbors, which facilitated ordinary conversations that often reveal details of life in the community at other times of the year when the researcher was not around.

The main activities organized by the project supervisor and other researchers, along with local community members and leaders that allowed for observation in the areas under study, were:

- Community field days;
- Community sharing days;
- Neighborhood visits;
- Teacher workshops;
- Exhibition openings; and
- Documentary presentations.

3.5.5 Documentation and archival data

Public institutions regulated by the General Law of Free Access to Public Information (Congreso Nacional de la República Dominicana, Ley 200-04) were visited to search for historical documents in their public archives. The analysis of institutional records helped identify how far back governmental entities have been documenting issues regarding the inventories of Indigenous heritage collections. A review of archived inventory lists, reports, newspaper articles, bulletins, magazines, official gazettes, and governmental correspondence was performed at the following institutions:

- General Archives of the Nation;
- Museo del Hombre Dominicano's library;
- Center for the Inventory of Cultural Goods;
- Library of the Senate, Dominican Congress; and
- Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Antropológicas' library.

Public records were examined at the above-listed institutions to form an idea of their content, as well as how the information has historically been archived and made available to the public. The review of the documents provided a historical overview of how archaeological sites have been represented in government archives. Legislative documents on laws, decrees, and heritage policy were also examined. This helped to determine how public policy has influenced or impacted the care of public and private Indigenous heritage collections. In addition, the document review included any promotional material that described the institutions and collections. The documents reviewed included digital and print materials.

3.5.6 Data processing and analysis

In qualitative studies, data processing and analysis is a fundamental step in the research process. The analysis of the collected data covers narrative—the accounts of related events, the identification of critical aspects of the data, and how the data is organized and presented (Creswell 2009). This analysis allows the researcher to interpret the data to address the research questions and present conclusions (Creswell 2009). Methods used in qualitative studies help decode the meanings people ascribe to their experiences and opinions (Mason 2002). The inclusion of multiple voices by incorporating different instruments in qualitative research contributes to a better understanding of people's realities.

The present study largely depended on gathering information from the people who volunteered to participate by completing surveys and interviews based on their availability and not on a random sample; therefore, it was considered unnecessary to use specialized software for the management of the data. As information was collected and processed, the following categories were identified for analysis: collections, surveys, interviews, and participant observation notes. The numerical data generated through the survey administration was processed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2016, and the narratives and text-based information were processed in Microsoft Word 2016. As data analysis requires data reduction, display, and elaboration of conclusion and verification (Miles and

Huberman 1994), the organization of files by theme helped in the analytical process. Printed information from these files was analyzed and sorted thematically for evaluation, and conclusions were drawn to address the research questions.

A review of archival data, collection inventories, and legislative texts were undertaken in order to determine when heritage issues first began appearing in public records. The review of historical documents regarding the creation of the first national museum and how archaeological finds were reported also formed part of the analysis of documents. This analysis was done to reconstruct the trajectory of the primary collection of Indigenous archaeological heritage from its foundation to its current status of the most extensive collection in a public building.

All the data generated by the analysis of documents, interviews, surveys, and participant observation was part of the process of connecting data. The identification of trends, patterns, and themes, and the results of mapping contributed to the formulation of conclusions and recommendations related to the research questions.

The responses from the survey questionnaires were processed in Excel, which allowed the combination of the data into a standard file that could generate graphs as responses were tallied. Survey respondents had the opportunity to read the questionnaires themselves or have the questions and response options read aloud by me or the survey administrators that were assisting me.

In addition, the results of the first National Survey on Cultural Consumption were also used as a reference to analyze survey results and governmental data regarding consumption patterns and cultural activities that, for the first time in 2014, the Ministry of Culture of the Dominican Republic collected through the Ministry of Labor and Central Bank's yearly labor force and homes survey. The results were compared to try to identify any relevant information that could be linked to the results of the present study. Once the surveys and interviews were conducted, a descriptive and critical analysis were undertaken to draw comparisons and identify distinctions between the groups surveyed and interviewed with regards to their knowledge, opinions, concerns, and recommendations.

Interviews were transcribed, in full, from the recording on the phone into a Word document from the 2016 Microsoft Office Suite. The transcribed interviews were analyzed individually and in-depth to identify any significant issues highlighted by interviewees. The

analysis was conducted each time a transcription was completed, allowing me to reflect and take notes as information began to emerge from the data. Notes were taken and key words were highlighted as transcriptions were read. Repeated words and phrases were documented, seeking patterns in the answers. The identification of common themes helped understand the perspective of the interviewees. The transcripts were compared to identify these common themes, create categories, and draw meaningful conclusions from the commonalities and differences in the individual responses.

The transcribed interviews were manually coded by highlighting statements, words, or phrases of interest from each Word document generated. Highlighted statements or phrases considered important were paraphrased and then coded using single or multiple words to aid in comparing all the participants' answers (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). Codes were used to analyze interview transcriptions in order to manage the qualitative data and identify patterns in the participants' experiences or opinions (Bernard 2006). The transcription of interviews and the manual coding provided further opportunities to understand the participants' opinions. Described themes in the data incorporated some of the interviewees' statements verbatim to allow the voices of the respondents to be reflected in the presentation of results. Significant quotes from the interviews were incorporated instead of making strict summaries and analysis, to encapsulate the findings. This also helped to minimize researcher bias. It was important to present significant parts of the opinions transcribed word for word. For the researcher this became a means of illustrating the thought patterns, beliefs, and values that shaped the discussion of responses on how to better manage Indigenous heritage collections. Documenting extensive relevant responses by members of the heritage and governmental communities helped identify how to forge connections using a local approach that could be considered more realistic in terms of implementation.

Notes and photographs were taken during participant observation opportunities at community activities. The notes contributed to better understand the physical, social, cultural, and economic lives of the people with whom the researcher interacted. Observation allowed for the identification of relationships between local community members and researchers, as well as the interactions that resulted from sharing information about the objects and excavations. Notes were regularly reviewed throughout the project. The field notes were particularly helpful for identifying local members who could assist in the coordination of other community activities, as the activities provided opportunities to observe active participants. Social interactions were possible through neighborhood visits, which afforded

casual conversation opportunities that led to the discussion of the research topic. Field notes were made after informal encounters and activities with the community and later analyzed them to identify reactions, behaviors, actions, and responses related to the objects excavated and the information generated through the research of Nexus 1492.

3.6 Research bias and validity

As the research advanced, the researcher increasingly began to recognize the *a priori* knowledge brought into this study. The background in museum work, specifically at an archaeological museum, was recognized as a risk factor in introducing bias during data analysis, which bore the potential of compromising the validity of the study results. A critical condition of qualitative studies is to have gathered accurate and credible information (Creswell 2009). As the validity of qualitative research has been questioned due to replicability issues (Cho 2006), triangulation was used as a technique to minimize the researcher's bias. Triangulation is "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals […] in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (Creswell 2012, 259). To avoid this, triangulation of the research data was incorporated into the methodology to ensure that the information collected was analyzed and cross-checked (Creswell 2009). The review of documents, interviews, and questionnaires, and participant observation were the basic forms of inquiry. This triangulated data gathering process provided a more comprehensive picture of how different groups of people are using Indigenous heritage resources.

For interviews, the validity check was undertaken by cross-referencing the coded data with the original transcription. Direct quotations from the interviews were used to evidence the meaning of the category code, allowing for verification.

3.7 Ethics and privacy

As mentioned earlier, there were no ethical or privacy issues during this study. For the surveys and interviews, confidentiality was guaranteed in every interaction with participants. Surveys were designed to be completed voluntarily and anonymously without the need to add the participant's name.

For face-to-face interviews, oral consent was obtained. The purpose of the research was described each time and interviewees were assured that they could stop recording at any moment, emphasizing that there would be no mention of information they wanted to keep off the record. For the participants interviewed in person, two people from the public sector

asked to stop the recording at least once during the interview. Only one person, a private collector, refused to be formally interviewed. Notes were taken after meeting the private collector who refused to be recorded, as the conversation revolved around the interview questions.

For interviewees who answered the questions in writing, an introductory paragraph indicated the nature of the research and the answers' anonymity. The written responses to the interview questions were taken as consent to their participation.

The role as a researcher was fully disclosed during the participant observation process. Everyone the researcher encountered during participation in the Nexus 1492 project's activities knew the researcher was part of the team working in the area. The researcher developed relationships with key informants and stakeholders in the local community and participated as a coordinator of activities without calling attention or controlling the environment.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the theoretical framework and methodology used to answer the research questions. A critical museology framework served to guide the methodological approach used to determine how Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic can relate to communities to transform discussions on cultural identity, inclusion, social cohesion, and increase heritage awareness that can help improve how the country communicates cultural identity narratives and to empower communities to contribute to the preservation and protection of these collections. The role of critical museology is explained in relation to the need to challenge reductionist historical narratives. Details on the research's approach, procedures, participants, and data collection tools illustrate how the study was conducted.

Chapter 4 explored how heritage collections have been studied and how museums have approached community engagement in order to identify patterns of possible community connections.