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HOW ABOUT A TRADING POST?

This is a proposal to design, build and stock a Southwest Indian trading post and develop a school program for same. Ideally, we would be dealing with an interior and exterior space; the interior space would display contemporary crafts, pawn, dry goods and groceries; the exterior would suggest the front of a trading post and provide a space for craft activities. Both spaces would accomodate 30 children.

Why Do Southwest Indians

- they, like the rest of Indian America, are a badly misunderstood minority group.
- we've done a "dead" Indian culture (Algonquin) and feel its now important to portray a living one for two reasons:
 - (1) in Algonquin, there is no sense of people; only exposure to the way Indians did things. A contemporary culture would give us a chance to capture the warmth, vitality and problems of a living people.
 - (2) children would have a chance to be exposed to another culture still functioning within the United States, in and despite the 20th century, the B.I.A., tourists, anthros. . .
- Project social studies, University of Minnesota, under a special grant from the Office of Education has developed a curriculum unit on the Hopi family. This unit is now being widely used in New England Chelmsford, Wellesley, Westwood, Dartmouth, New Hampshire to mention only a few. Therefore, a Southwest Indian Program "a la Children's Museum" (and/or even a mobile unit) would key in with the Minnesota unit and be ideal for large numbers of children.
- One of the strongest points in our collections is North American Indian. We have an especially beautiful and extensive collection of Southwest Indian objects. Why no put them on exhibit?
- We are really "turned on" -- we have been to Hopi country twice, have seen houses, ceremonies, trading posts and people, have a deep respect for the Hopi, have excellent contacts for artifacts, and contacts for consultants even in New England.
- Ealing Films is "turned on" -- they have made a series of six film loops on Hopi crafts. There ought to be a way to coordinate our efforts.

Why Not a Hopi House

Originally it was thought that a Hopi exhibit (including multi-storied house and possibly even a kiva) could be developed. However, actual contact with the people has made us feel that homes and ceremonies are private and the Hopi have chosen to keep it that way ("no photographs, no note-taking, no sketching -- please don't ask for permission). Also, we strongly feel that we cannot perceive things the way the Hopi do -- and if we cannot unlock the Hopi mind, how can we unlock his door. Thus, a straight Hopi exhibit would be

- an invasion of privacy
- in poor taste
- sterile; a physical setting with limited perception

How About a Trading Post

- A trading post is an anglo creation and thus frees us of our inhibitions about exposing the "naked Indian."
- Trading posts are public, not private. Anyone can enter and there is no one reality. Each user can have a valid experience within it. Its function is available to everyone, unlike a Hopi home which really functions only for Hopi.
- A trading post is a fine and currently working example of the meeting of two cultures. It can reveal how cultures change and how they become inter-dependent. If this exhibit were successful, it could demonstrate the real bonds -- both emotional and practical -- between two people(s)
- A real trading post is history. There is a visible continuum from the trading post of 1850 to the trading post of today. It is not a recreation of something that once was -- it is as vital to the people who depend on it now as it was to the people who depended on it then.
- A trading post is a translatable example of traditions in another part of this country. Isolated New Englanders, who grew up with Plymouth (1620) and Governor Bradford, don't know that Coronado made it to the Seven Cities of Godl (Zuni) in 1540.
- The richness of a trading post cannot be "boxed" -- its hodge-podge of artifacts, creal boxes, levis, and the concepts implicit in them need a total context, possible only at a museum, to create the desired impact.

A trading post "located on the Hopi reservation" is a way into Hopi culture. It can present the Hopi today: Their crafts and via crafts, their use of the natural environment, their pawn system and via pawn, their ceremonies, their purchase of manufactured goods, and via goods, the impact of the 20th century on their culture.

- Since a trading post would not deal exclusively with the Hopi Indians, it can function meaningfully for the child with no Hopi background. Teachers can use it for other Social Studies units -- history, Southwest geography, economics (?) etc.

Practical Advantages

There are certain practical advantages that make a trading post desirable and feasible:

- In a functioning trading post, certain rare artifacts are regularly on display, out of reach (in counters, on shelves and even on ceilings) and not for sale. What an ideal way to display our rare artifacts without destroying or even abusing them!
- In a trading post, these artifacts do not come only from the geographical location of the post. It would be possible to find a scattering of things like a Northwest coast basket, a California hat, Navaho rugs, a San Ile de Fonso pot (would you believe a Maria) along with large quantities of Hopi material, both old and new. Our present collection has this kind of diversity and a trading post format provides a good context in which to display it.
- Given two rooms (basement of V.C.?) limited funds, time, and staff, we could, with try-outs, quickly find out if this is as good as we think it is.
- A balanced and enthusiastic developmental team exists and is ready to "go" -- Joan Lester, developer; Signe Hanson, designer; Suki Shepard, Master teacher (in abstentia).
- We have met active and garrulous traders (McGree, Branson, Turner, Packard, Hubell) with whom we can confer. Also, there are at least two excellent references on trading and traders.

Teaching Techniques

There are certain tried and true teaching techniques that seem to fit this format

- Trading works, as we know from: Pygmy talk
Algonquin and Pilgrim (Binda, 1965)
Beads and Beaver (Paddle to the Sea MB)
- Role cards work, as we know from Japan Match Box. Perhaps we could create roles for: a trader, tourists, Navahos, Hopis, anthros
- The rich array of artifacts can lead easily to presentation and then participation in craft activities. Perhaps we could set up: a blanket loom, pot coiling, sand casting, spinning, basketry processes
- Additional Discovery Kits should grow naturally out of these craft sessions. They could then be fed into the museum system for use in the V.C.

What Might Inside of Trading Post Look Like (just for fun)

- Imagine big beams, pole between beams covered with upside down baskets, split log fence draped with layers of Navaho rugs, a wall of kachina dolls, bolts of purple and apricot velour fabrics, a shelf of black Navaho hats, a pile of levis and a row of boots, every breakfast cereal Kellogg ever made, 25 pound bags of flour, endless canned goods including Maxwell House coffee, Campbell's soup (Chicken with Rice would be fine) large cans of lard, bits and bridles, a deer skin, photo of an early trader, odd-ball calendar, Dr. Pepper sign or "Please replace the empties," pinon smell permeating all, cases of contemporary silver jewelry, rows of yellow and red slipped Hopi pots, brightly painted toy bows and arrows hanging on wall, bullroarers in a basket, and a back room bursting with pawn - turquoise necklaces on hooks, rolls of factory printed Pendelton blankets, red sashes, embroidered kilts and fringed swiss challis shawls.

What Might Outside of Trading Post Look Like (less defined right now)

- Imagine white washed adobe front covered with signs announcing:
INDIAN TRADING POST - Indian Curios, Navaho Rugs, Old Pawn, Roayl Crown Cola, Fishing Licenses here, Groceries, Crafts . . . an idler's bench, abstract suggestions of hazy, mauve, purple-blue mesa, a cattle guard as you approach, electric meter, propane gas tank, ramada with Navaho loom, coiled pots in process.

What Might Happen in Trading Post (needs much developmental work)

- Children learn different roles (trader, Navaho, Hopi, tourist, etc.) and interact, trade according to their roles.
- "Hopi" receive tokens (we have original ones used at Hubbell trading post) for craft work which they can exchange for groceries.
- Hopi and Navaho prepare crafts (try-out weaving, sand-casting, etc.) for sale to the trading post.

Possible problems

- Do we have enough information and materials to locate ^{the trading post} /geographically and restrict it to a specific Indian group and even to a specific trader.
- Will it be frustrating for kids to be in a "store" and not be able to purchase anything? Will there be a museum shop which could coordinate and sell trading post items? If not, wouldn't selling ⁱⁿ the trading post detract from the school program.
- How do we deal with the casual visitor? Do we exclude him entirely or take him in in mixed groups, or limit his participation to Discoveries? Is this, in any way, feasible as an open exhibit wouldn't the staffing problems be horrendous?

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Mike,

We could go on and on. Should we?

Joan
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