CWAM Conference Reflection

By Rachel Morris

I had the incredible opportunity to attend my first Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums conference this April in Greeley. As a first-year graduate student in the Museum and Field Studies program at the University of Colorado Boulder, this experience was not only exciting but deeply enriching. I currently work in the anthropology section of the CU Museum of Natural History, and I actively seek out professional development opportunities like CWAM as a way to grow and connect within the museum community.

One impactful session I attended was the Deaccession and Disposal Q&A, featuring Elizabeth Beaudoin (Curator of History, Longmont Museum), Jacqui Ainlay-Conley (Director, Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave), and Abigail Wedlick (Collections Specialist, Molly Brown House Museum). This panel was particularly instructive, especially for emerging professionals who will be navigating the sometimes challenging process of deaccessioning down the road. The step-by-step breakdown, paired with reminders to maintain clear policies and rigorous documentation, helped demystify a process that can often feel overwhelming. The panelists didn't just share best practices—they also highlighted common pitfalls to avoid, offering a balanced and practical perspective. I would also be remiss not to highlight the moving keynote talk by Aura Sunada Newlin and Mitch Homma, as well. Their presentation was deeply impactful, emphasizing the power of community collaboration and intergenerational storytelling. I wish I could mention each session I attended, because they were all fantastic!

One of my favorite aspects of conferences like CWAM is the chance to connect with fellow museum professionals. These conversations, both formal and informal, provided valuable insights that I'll carry forward in my academic and professional journey. The CWAM conference was an inspiring experience—one that will undoubtedly help shape my future in the museum field. I look forward to next year's conference in Golden!