Indigenizing SNAC: Indigenous Edit-a-thon 2021

SNAC Annual Meeting, September 29, 2021

Presenters:

Diana Marsh, University of Maryland-College Park

Lydia Curliss (Nipmuc Nation), University of Maryland-College Park

Katherine Meyers Satriano, Peabody Museum at Harvard

Stephen Curley (Diné), National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition
SNAC Edit-a-thon 2020

- Irene Gates (New School), Katherine Satriano (Peabody Museum at Harvard), Jerry Simmons (NARA), Dina Herbert (NARA)

- Put out a call for anyone who would like to brainstorm and/or edit SNAC records and biographical sources; SNACSchools; 3-day virtual event with "drop-in" video-chat

- Concentrated on records for people involved with anthropology in North America who were “nodes” (had collections dispersed across repositories), and on records for Indigenous people in particular

- Informed by the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, "Providing Context"

- Around 20 editors, 20+ records edited

- Next steps-- Nationality field, community input
Why SNAC for Indigenous collections?

Archives hold invaluable Indigenous collections
- Taken from communities during colonial assimilation and cultural genocide
- Dispersed institutionally and geographically
- Usually described within the papers of white/colonial collectors & scholars

Indigenous communities increasingly primary constituents/users
- Least accessible to these communities
- Distance, time, cost
- Long history distrust/gatekeeping/“Serious researcher” requirements)
- Inaccurate/racist/inadequate description
- Finding aids counterintuitive & built on white record creators

COVID pandemic further restricted in-person community use
- Often in-person is the only access for these materials

- Makes ethical stewardship of Indigenous collections a mandate
- Yet many institutions not yet taking on those recommendations

SNAC Potential:
- **Uniting distributed records** - Allowing users to search across institutions & collections
- **Descriptive flexibility** - Adapting description to fit Indigenous needs & highlight Indigenous actors/entities
- **Cooperative model** - Training Indigenous & ally editors who know the content
SNAC Indigenous Edit-a-thon 2021

- Indigenous edit-a-thon taking place on Indigenous People’s Day (October 11 & 12, 2021)
- Focused on editing records relating to Indigenous/Native American/First Nations/Native Hawaiian communities and people
- Collaborative team effort
  - Core Project Team: Lydia Curliss (University of Maryland iSchool [Nipmuc Nation]), Irene Gates (New School), Dina Herbert (NARA), Diana Marsh (University of Maryland iSchool), Katherine Meyers Satriano (Peabody Museum at Harvard), and Jerry Simmons (NARA),
  - Indigenous Advisory Board: Taylor Gibson (Cayuga), Gāhsronih; Margaret Bruchac (Abenaki), University of Pennsylvania; Eric Hemenway (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians); Keahiahi Long, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Stephen Curley (Diné), National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition; Melissa Stoner, University of California at Berkeley
- Pre-Event Requirements for Participants
  - Required SNAC School Training
  - Office Hours
  - Readings to ground the event
- ~70 people signed up and attended SNACSchool, including 20 Indigenous identifying participants
SNAC Limitations & Advisory Board Feedback

Concerns about SNAC content:
- SNAC is a discovery tool, but it also directs users to colonial institutional content (e.g., Inappropriate or culturally-sensitive material available online)

How to reach out to and involve communities:
- Without Indigenous peer review, perpetuation of inaccurate information
- Goal of project to move authority to communities

Orientation for the event:
- Cultural sensitivity for the event itself (as well as description in SNAC)
- Creating a space for Indigenous editors

Limitations of SNAC for Indigenous description/representation:
- Incorporating best practices for description/representation of Native and Indigenous content in archives and in SNAC specifically
- Indigenous naming practices (how to align RDA naming standards with Indigenous names)
- How to represent communities in SNAC (can they be their own entities? How to deal with contemporary political entities [e.g. fed recognized tribes vs. historical communities])
- Lack of Indigenous placenames, languages, subjects, relationships, and information in other SNAC fields

Other feedback which could be addressed in future work:
- SNAC front page - how to make more welcoming for Indigenous community users (inclusion of BIPOC figures)
- Better representation of Indigenous figures throughout the platform
- Creating educational material on commonly misunderstood types of Indigenous materials
- Translating entire SNAC records into Indigenous languages
Action Items for 2021

SNAC Content
● Created a content caution/warning
● Protocols for reporting inappropriate materials back to institutions & starting community-institution dialogue

Reaching out/involving Native communities:
● Had advisory board and team members collectively create lists of folks to reach out to directly as well as national and international listservs
● Made sure to have appropriate career/life stages as part of the registration
● Prioritize Indigenous registrants (including offering honoraria for participation based on UMD Libraries base salaries & no. of hours)

Orientation for the event
● Code of conduct
● Reading list with 4 required readings to ground the event + suggested readings

Indigenous description/representation
● Style guide
● Form for reporting feedback
Future Work with SNAC

1. **Formalizing style guide**

2. **Wider array of technical & cultural upgrades**
   a. e.g. Indigenous thesauri, subjects, placenames, languages/orthographies

3. **Community outreach**
   a. Emphasize role SNAC can play in facilitating repatriation by helping to locate relevant archival records
   b. Indigenous SNAC Training, SNACSchool and/or other educational modules/webinars/training materials
   c. Community-based presentations

4. **Post-event surveys, long-term Indigenous editor engagement, & testing with Indigenous users from range of perspectives**
   a. Creation of a SNAC Indigenous working group
   b. Grants to continue work
Project Team

Indigenous Advisory Board

Margaret Bruchac, (Abenaki), University of Pennsylvania
Stephen Curley, (Diné), National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition
Taylor Gibson, (Cayuga), Gāhsronih
Eric Hemenway, (Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians)
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Core Project Team

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Irene Gates, New School
Dina Herbert, NARA
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Katherine Meyers Satriano, Peabody Museum at Harvard
Jerry Simmons, NARA
Indigenous Edit-a-thon Event Page

#IndigenizeSNAC