

# **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



Susette La Flesche Tibbles, Francis La Flesche

# 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

## 2018 the Society of American Archivists adopted [Protocols for Native American Archival 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)

**Keahiahi Long**, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

**Melissa Stoner**, University of California at Berkeley

## *Core Project Team*

**Lydia Curliss**, (Nipmuc Nation), University of Maryland iSchool

**Irene Gates**, New School

**Dina Herbert**, NARA

**Diana Marsh**, University of Maryland iSchool

**Katherine Meyers Satriano**, Peabody Museum at Harvard

**Jerry Simmons**, NARA



# Indigenous Edit-a-thon Event Page

#IndigenizeSNAC