Indigenous Description Group Report 2023

Ia Bull, PhD Student, UMD iSchool
Diana Marsh, Assistant Professor of Archives & Digital Curation, UMD iSchool
Jerry Simmons, SNAC/NARA
Land Acknowledgement
Timeline:

1. Context/Goals
   a. Why SNAC for Indigenous archives?
   b. Previous edit-a-thons

2. IDG, formed March 2023
   a. Team
   b. Four main priorities for 2023-2024
   c. Ongoing limitations
Databases and Embedded Colonial Knowledge

- Cataloging Records (Turner 2020)
- Colonial power and knowledge extraction (Christen and Anderson 2019; Punzalan 2014)
- Misrepresentation and bias within archival description (Gilliland 2011; Jimerson 2009)
Knowledge Extraction within Archives Histories

Collections created within contexts of assimilation and genocide (O’Neal 2014)

Long history of colonial knowledge extraction & “archival diaspora” (Punzalan 2014)

Legacies of the practice of salvage anthropology (Stocking 1988; Hochman 2014; Redman 2021)

Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation ethnographic film collection: 
https://sova.si.edu/record/NMAI.AC.001.001
NMAI Archives Center
Why SNAC for addressing Indigenous Archival Materials?

1. Long history of colonial knowledge extraction & “archival diaspora” (Punzalan 2014)
   a. Reconnecting dispersed heritage/knowledge→ Communities want access to all of their materials
   b. Mukurtu and community archives creating Indigenous spaces/digital solutions for holding material
   c. Limitations of institutional subject/lib guides

2. Accommodates descriptive flexibility
   a. Editors create their own authority records that fit Indigenous needs
   b. Using culturally-appropriate descriptive terminologies

3. Focus on Indigenous people, communities, or entities represented in collections (rather than white collector or creator)

4. Cooperative model: Indigenous community members and allies as editors
What are we trying to solve?

1. Accessibility to archival collections for Indigenous Tribal communities

2. To mitigate harm caused by extractive collecting processes

3. Reparative description across systems/at scale/in interoperable way
SNAC Edit-a-thon 2020/2021

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

- Concentrated on records for anthropologists in North America who were "nodes" (had collections dispersed across repositories), and on records for Indigenous collaborators

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

2021

- Indigenous Advisory Board + wider team

- Indigenous-focused edit-a-thon taking place on Indigenous People's Day (October 11 & 12, 2021)

- Opening/Closing to ground edit-a-thon; Indigenous zoom room & chat

- Focus on Indigenous historical figures

- Code of conduct, required readings, feedback and cultural reporting form, content caution/warnings; Editorial Guide; Indigenous peer review process

- Wider call & honoraria for Indigenous participants

- 64 participants & 50+ records edited
Edit-a-thon 2021

Core Team

Lydia Curliss (University of Maryland iSchool, Nipmuc) | Irene Gates (New School) | Dina Herbert (NARA) | Diana Marsh (University of Maryland iSchool) | Katherine Meyers Satriano (Peabody Museum at Harvard) | Jerry Simmons (NARA)

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 (Diné), University of California at Berkeley
Indigenous Participants in 2021 Editathon

In total, we had **18 Indigenous participants** who represented the following Indigenous Nations and Communities:

- Anishinaabeg, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- Cherokee
- Chiricahua Apache
- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Gaduwagi
- Catawba
- Kahnawake Mohawk
- Natchez Nation
- Navajo Nation
- Nipmuc
- Oglala Lakota
- Ojibway - Walpole Island First Nation
- Oneida Nation of Wisconsin
- Pipil Nahuatl
- Pueblo of Isleta
- Pueblo of Pojoaque
- Shawnee
- Six Nations of the Grand River Territory
- Tabajara
- Taino
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa
- Yokuts - Tule River Indian Tribe
Over the two days, **around 64 participants** (out of 137 initial registrants) **18 of whom were Indigenous** worked on at least **50 entities**

- Increased # of Indigenous records and Editor (and Editor Allies)
- Greater awareness of SNAC for Indigenous communities across the US
- Reusable model for pre-event protocols & post-event peer review process
- Creation of **Editorial Guide for describing Indigenous Entities in SNAC**
  - This was the most self-reported used document by Participants
Editorial Guide

- Editorial Guide created as a collaborative effort between the project team, advisory board and Indigenous edit-a-thon participants

- Post edit-a-thon→standardized and is open on the SNAC platform for feedback: https://portal.snaccooperative.org/node/595

- Notes concerns around describing Indigenous entities & general issues around Indigenous description in archival records & SNAC
  - Participant feedback showed concerns over adding things like “location,” “nationality” to records; Challenges around describing Indigenous languages
### Indigenous Advisory Board

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Angie Bain</td>
<td>Lower Nicola Indian Band, Nicola Watershed Governance Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiffany Chavis</td>
<td>Lumbee, University of Maryland, Baltimore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan Corbiere</td>
<td>M’Chigeeng First Nation, York University</td>
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<td>Stephen Curley</td>
<td>Diné, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selena Ortega-Chiolero</td>
<td>Chickaloon Village Traditional Council</td>
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<td>Kimberly Toney</td>
<td>Hassanamisco Band of Nipmuc, Brown University</td>
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### UMD Team

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<tr>
<td>Amanda Sorensen</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, UMD iSchool</td>
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### Partners

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<td>Jerry Simmons</td>
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<td>Dina Herbert</td>
<td>NARA (SNAC Liaison)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Satriano</td>
<td>Peabody Museum, Harvard</td>
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<td>Smithsonian OCIO</td>
<td>NAA, NMNH &amp; Many more!</td>
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1. IMLS grant - Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program
   (https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/re-252311-ols-22)
   
a. Expanded Indigenous Advisory Board
   
b. Focus groups/ testing SNAC with Indigenous users from range of perspectives
      i. Indigenous participants in the 2021 Edit-a-thon (who know SNAC well)
      ii. Indigenous LAM professionals
      iii. Indigenous students within MLIS and other related disciplines
      iv. Indigenous community members (who have never used SNAC)
   
c. Indigenous SNAC Training, SNACSchool and/or other educational modules/webinars/training material
   
d. Community outreach:
      i. Emphasize role SNAC can play in facilitating repatriation by helping to locate relevant archival records, especially in service of Indian Boarding School & repatriation efforts
      ii. Community-based presentations
SNAC Indigenous Description Group, begun March 2023

- Maintain the new Editorial Guide
- Develop controlled vocabularies ongoingly
  - Indigenous subjects, placenames, languages/orthographies
- Ways to describe and link communities
  - e.g. Mohawk versus Kanien’kehá:ka

Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Early Career Research Development grant, RE252311OLS22, 2022-2025
# IDG! Project Team

## Members

- Veronica Pipestem
- Worthy Martin
- Rose Buchanan
- Mik Hamilton
- Eden Orelvo
- August Brave Heart Sanchez
- Ugoma Smoke
- Lindsey Chapman
- Jerica Scullawl-Gates
- Lina Ortega
- Jerrid Miller
- Tiffany Chavis

## UMD Team

- **Diana Marsh**, University of Maryland (UMD) iSchool
- **Ia Bull** (Natchez, ᏌᎣᏫᏍᏞ, PhD Student, UMD iSchool)
- **Amanda Sorensen**, PhD Candidate, UMD iSchool

## Liaisons/Facilitators

- **Jerry Simmons**, NARA (SNAC Liaison)
- **Dina Herbert**, NARA (SNAC Liaison)
- **Bernetiae Reed** (EDG)
SNAC Indigenous Description Group (IDG)

Priorities Identified 2023

1. Languages
   a. Expanding MARC alpha-3 code list for languages to include Indigenous languages / new Indigenous language subject headings (LCSH)

2. Boarding Schools
   a. possible partnership with the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition & their Digital Archive

3. Tribal Nations
   a. Starting with federally recognized (while understanding limitations!)

4. Relationship types
   a. Working with Enslaved Description Group (shout out to Bernetiae Reed)
SNAC Indigenous Description Group

Language Project #1:
(started August 2023)

New alpha-3 language codes to better represent Indigenous languages in Library of Congress’ alpha-3 MARC Codes List
August 2023, NARA’s SNAC Liaisons started leading an effort to submit new Indigenous language subject heading proposals via LC’s Classification Web.
SNAC Indigenous Description Group: Language Project

- At request of Library of Congress, IDG will make proposals in batches
- Batch proposal #1: 39 new alpha-3 language codes requested on August 9, 2023
- Batch proposal #2: Pending completion of Batch #1
- Support from Paul Frank (LC Policy, Training, and Cooperative Programs Division)
- Support from John Zagas (LC-Network Development and MARC Standards Division)
These and many more covered currently by nai / "North American Indian" language code
These and many more covered currently by sai / “South American Indian” language code
SNAC Indigenous Description Group

Language project #2
(starts October 2023)

NARA’s SNAC Liaisons will lead an effort to submit new Indigenous language subject heading proposals via LC’s Classification Web
SNAC Indigenous Description Group

Priorities Identified 2023

1. Languages
   a. Expanding MARC alpha-3 code list for languages to include Indigenous languages/new Indigenous language subject headings (LCSH)

2. Boarding Schools
   a. partnership with the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition & their Digital Archive

3. Tribal Nations
   a. Starting with federally recognized (while understanding limitations!)

4. Relationship types
   a. Working with Enslaved Description Group
SNAC Indigenous Description Group

Priorities Identified 2023

1. Languages
   a. Expanding from MARC list for languages to include Indigenous languages (Ethnologue or others)

2. Boarding Schools
   a. partnership with the Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition & their Digital Archive

3. Tribal Nations
   a. Starting with federally recognized (while understanding limitations!)

4. Relationship types
   a. Working with Enslaved Description Group
SNAC Indigenous Description Group

Priorities Identified 2023

1. Languages
2. Boarding Schools
3. Tribal Nations
4. Relationship types
   a. Working with Enslaved Description Group
   b. Using controlled vocabulary to manage the growing list of relationship types
1. (Right now!) Recruiting for Focus Groups
2. Year 2: Hiring Developer + Indigenous MLIS student focus on developer/metadata work
3. New website: IndigenizeSNAC@umd.edu
4. Twitter: @IndigenizeSNAC
5. Email: IndigenizeSNAC@umd.edu
6. ATALM & more!
7. SNAC Info table in SAA registration area
Ongoing SNAC Limitations & Future Work

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)

Reaching out & further involving communities:
- Goal of project to move authority to communities

Culturo-Technical limitations:
- Variant name searching
- Desire to search by community autonym:
  - Better searching by subject terms?
  - Centering community names as entities
  - contemporary political entities [e.g. fed recognized tribes vs. historical communities]

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)
- Only scratching surface of Indigenous placenames, subjects, and many other 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