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Cycles of Learning and Growth: Developing the Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Program Guided by Indigenous Perspectives

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Cover Page Footnote

I am grateful to each of the 46 cohort members who participated in the Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Program, who have been generous teachers and collaborators. Thank you to Josiah Black Eagle Pinkham, Tātlo Gregory, and Nakia Williamson Cloud and other Nimíipuu colleagues for welcoming WSU staff as guests to the lands where we live and work, teaching us throughout the years, and supporting the TDSCP. I thank Dr. Kim Christen, Director of the Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation and TDSCP project, for her leadership and vision. Thank you to all the CDSC team and guest instructors who have poured their time and energy into the project. I am deeply grateful to Omar Poler (Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), Janice Rice (Ho-Chunk Nation), Michele Besant, Louise Robbins, Loretta Metoxen (Oneida Nation), and the Convening Culture Keepers in Wisconsin and the Great Lakes region who first taught me and other University of Wisconsin-Madison LIS students about respectful collaboration. Thank you to following TDSCP members for their review and feedback: Selena Ortega-Chiolero (Rarámuri), Cordelia Hooee (Zuni), Maureen Wacondo (Jemez Pueblo), Raynella Fontenot (Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana), Josiah Black Eagle Pinkham (Nimíipuu), Monique Tyndall (Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians), Amelia Wilson (Hoonah Tlingit), Sarah Dybdahl (Tlingit), Jason Wesaw (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), Ashley Sexton (Catawba Nation). Thank you to Dr. Kim Christen, Dr. Trevor Bond, Emily Cukier, Gayle O'Hara, Talea Anderson, and Erin Hvizdak for their help in developing and editing this article.

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ABSTRACT

This article provides lessons learned through four cycles of the Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Program at Washington State University's Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation. The author coordinated the hybrid online and in-person training program from 2015-2020, focused on the unique needs of staff at Indigenous archives, libraries, and museums at the beginning of digital projects with unique access considerations. The learning and professional growth of program staff was informed by the participants in the program, whose words and work are highlighted in the article. The author reflects on the program design, curricular outcomes, site visits, building relationships and peer support, and the evolution of the training based on assessment and feedback. Similar to how the TDSCP was built using guidance from existing initiatives, the program and lessons learned can be used as a model for future digital stewardship education, relationship building, and responsive curriculum design. As a program extending over several years and involving many stakeholders, the TDSCP is an example of the many opportunities for collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage organizations.

Introduction

The Tribal Digital Stewardship Cohort Program (TDSCP) began at the Washington State University (WSU) Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC). The TDSCP is an educational program targeting the unique needs of Indigenous archives, libraries, and museums. The TDCSP has provided training on topics including digitization, preservation, collaborative curation, and access using a tailored curriculum built on honoring culturally specific ways of reimagining digital access and building partnerships. The training emphasized the entire lifecycle of digital stewardship rooted in cohort members' cultural values and community priorities. During each training year from 2014 to 2020, pairs of participants representing six tribal archives, libraries, and museums (TALMs) took part in the

program, totaling 46 individuals from 25 TALMs.¹ Sarah Dybdahl (Tlingit), Director of Cultural Heritage and Education at the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska and former Director of the Huna Heritage Foundation, felt the importance of connections and similarities across Indigenous communities learning and sharing in the TDSCP. She expressed:

[The TDSCP] brought us into this space that was safe, and it brought us into this space where we may come from different tribal communities—Indigenous—but a lot of our worldviews and a lot of our values are the same. So it made it really easy to share and talk about things that we might not otherwise want to share and discuss... in a larger community. And so, I think on a personal level it allowed me to create relationships with those across our communities that are dedicated to ensuring our history and stories and knowledge are available and accessible.²

A small team at the CDSC led the yearlong in-person and online TDSCP training, working with a network of WSU librarians and other guest instructors.³ Each cohort pair traveled to WSU four times over a year for weeklong training sessions, attended monthly virtual instruction sessions, and participated in individual monthly conference calls. Dr. Kim Christen developed the idea for the TDSCP, first obtaining funding for the program through an Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS) collaborative agreement for 2014-2017, and then an IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant for 2017-2020. While the first cycles of the TDSCP have concluded, the CDSC and several former TDSCP participants are working with OCLC WebJunction to expand parts of the TDSCP curriculum into a free and online, self-paced on-demand training supported by IMLS grant funding.⁴

Maureen Wacondo (Jemez Pueblo), the librarian at the Jemez Pueblo Community Library and member of the 2016-2017 cohort, imagined a fitting metaphor for the

1. The TDSCP cohort member participants represent over two dozen Indigenous nations, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities, and organizations. I am specific whenever possible, and when speaking generally I use the terms “cohort members,” “participants” for individuals, and “TALMs,” “Indigenous communities,” and/or “departments” to represent the variety of Indigenous archives, libraries, museums, tribal historic preservation offices, cultural heritage, language, history, and education departments and programs.
2. Sarah Dybdahl, “The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: Sarah Dybdahl Testimonial,” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), published 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249438996>.
3. The TDSCP Project Team at the CDSC includes Dr. Kimberly Christen (Project Founder and Director), Lotus Norton-Wisla (Project Coordinator), Dr. Trevor Bond, Alex Merrill, Michael Wynne, and Anastasia Tucker. Former team members are Dr. María Montenegro and William Clements. Guest instructors included Dr. Jennifer O’Neal, Dr. Jane Anderson, Mark O’English, Cheryl Gunselman, Andrew Weaver, and Jason Anderson.
4. “Digital Stewardship Training for Tribal Archives, Libraries, Museums, and Small Public Libraries,” WebJunction, published January 2022, accessed September 2022, <https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/digital-stewardship-training-courses.html>.

TDSCP training year in November 2016. She explained the year as a cycle of growth for a flower, picturing a seed taking root, growing into a seedling emerging from the ground, forming leaves and the beginnings of a bud, and finally fully blooming as a flower. Through tailored instruction, discussion, and collaborative work time, the TDSCP offered crucial training and network building for professionals at all stages of their careers. The cohort members shared in both teaching and learning through their year of training and encouraged each other as they brought home knowledge and momentum to their workplaces. Over the years, many cohort members have shared their experience of the training process as deliberate and meaningful growth.

As the coordinator of the TDSCP for the last seven years, I am grateful to have experienced and shared in cycles of learning and growth along with the cohort members, as they invested their time in the training and cohort community. I am a white archivist working at a predominantly white land grant institution (PWI) and I received my archival training through an MLIS program at a PWI. As a CDSC employee, the TDSCP experience and relationships with each of the participants provided an education in the importance of Indigenous Library & Information Science (LIS) issues and the need for relationship building and mutual learning across institutions. The TDSCP training program, our department, and our staff members have all grown with each of the training years.

Looking back on the first four cycles and ahead at the future of the TDSCP, this article will explore the process of designing and adapting the program, delivering curriculum, and learning in community with each other. I will share some of the transformative education I have received (and continue to learn) through TDSCP experiences and relationships. I seek to share with a wider audience the importance of providing education that centers on Indigenous issues in LIS, and that learning for multiple audiences can be enhanced by creating Indigenous-focused learning communities where participants feel recognized and supported to share openly. Building relationships is at the heart of every piece of our program. I will reflect on the importance of meeting face-to-face, highlighting the need for non-Indigenous educators, librarians, archivists, and curators to visit Indigenous communities to build relationships. I will examine how the TDSCP, and the work created by participants, extends and challenges theories and practices within archival education, knowledge creation, access, and dissemination. As I reflect on lessons learned from this program's change and growth over the past four cycles, I contemplate the changes in individuals, connections, thoughts, and actions that can contribute to moving the archives field forward towards understanding and reconciliation.

I cite and reflect on the words of participants in the TDSCP program from a few sources: testimonial videos filmed on a volunteer basis for public dissemination, presentations given outside of the TDSCP referencing work completed in the program, anonymized survey responses collected as part of IMLS grant assessment, and my own memory of events or statements from in person gatherings. I followed up with individuals who I cite by name in a quote or recollection, to make sure I represented their work and ideas accurately. Readers should keep in mind that I write

from my own perspective, and I strongly encourage interested readers to watch and read cited testimonial videos, publications, and presentations, and seek out ongoing scholarship by TDSCP participants to enjoy a full picture of the many experiences in the TDSCP and continuing work.

Background of the TDSCP and CDSC

The journey of the TDSCP is inseparable from the development of the CDSC and the relationships built over time with WSU's Native American Programs and Indigenous nations in the region. The city of Pullman, Washington, and WSU Pullman campus is located in eastern Washington on the traditional homelands of the Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) Tribe and the Palus people. As part of a land grant university founded on endowments created by the Morrill Act, we continue to benefit from the use of lands, water, and resources taken from Indigenous peoples by violence, coercion, and broken treaties.⁶ WSU's five campuses hold a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with twelve signatory tribes, whose presence on lands currently in Washington state and across the Northwest is since time immemorial.⁷ The MOU focuses on strengthening relationships with Native American tribal governments and improving educational opportunities for Native American students at WSU.

Throughout the TDSCP, the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resource Program and Nez Perce Tribal employees have been generous collaborators, allowing the program to grow and flourish.⁸ I am grateful to several Nimiipuu people for teaching us throughout this program, with a special thanks to Josiah Black Eagle Pinkham, Tātlo Gregory, and Nakia Williamson Cloud for their continual support. Pinkham and Gregory were members of the 2016-2017 cohort year but emphasized the importance of the TDSCP's continued collaboration with the Nez Perce Tribe beyond their official participation dates. In their continued involvement, they have taught us about the importance of stewardship, language, and traditional ways of life as they welcome cohort members and CDSC staff as guests to the land and share the history of this region. Through the CDSC's past and into the future, we work towards the goals of

5. "WSU Land Acknowledgement: Acknowledgement of America's First Peoples," Washington State University, accessed September 2022, <https://wsu.edu/about/wsu-land-acknowledgement/>.
6. Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone, "Land-Grab Universities: Expropriated Indigenous Land is The Foundation of The Land-Grant University System," *High Country News*, published March 30, 2020, accessed September 2022, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities>.
7. "WSU Office of Tribal Relations," Washington State University, accessed September 2022, <https://native.wsu.edu/tribalrelations/>.
8. More information about the Nez Perce Tribe at <https://nezperce.org/>.

the MOU relationships and the land grant mission of WSU rooted in accessibility and public service.⁹

Christen and her colleagues at WSU first started learning about how they might contribute to the continuing education of Indigenous cultural heritage professionals through two long-term projects: Mukurtu CMS and the Sustainable Heritage Network (SHN).^{10,11} Christen is Director of both projects with support and contribution from Dr. Trevor Bond, Alex Merrill, and other WSU colleagues. From years of leading Mukurtu workshops, Christen observed that participants were often at the beginning stages of digital projects and needed training in creating digital workflows, writing policies, and forming plans for preservation and sustainability. These concepts could not be meaningfully covered in a basic one-time Mukurtu training, especially in ways that foregrounded each community's particular cultural values and community specifics. After working on Mukurtu CMS, the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal, and other collaborative initiatives, Christen and Merrill read the 2012 report by the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM), *Sustaining Indigenous Culture: The Structure, Activities and Needs of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums*.¹² The report included critical findings on the need for training in digitization, funding, resources, and development of digital strategies. Christen and Merrill began the SHN in 2013 as one way to address needs for training in digitization, funding, resources, and digital strategies. These projects and collaborations laid the groundwork for the approval of the CDSC in 2014 as a joint unit of the WSU Libraries and College of Arts and Sciences, with Christen leading as Director along with co-Directors Bond and Merrill. Its goal was to build upon existing projects to create a Center to bring together "community members, students, faculty, and researchers in collaborative digital projects that emphasize ethical curation, scholarship, research, and publication."¹³

9. The CDSC's mission is to "promote collaborations that use technology in ethically minded and socially empowering ways through meaningful partnerships with a commitment to foster long term relationships with Native American nations locally, regionally and nationally." "Mission, Vision," WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation, accessed September 2022, <https://cdsc.libraries.wsu.edu/mission-vision/>.
10. "Mukurtu CMS is a free and opensource platform built with Indigenous communities to manage and share digital cultural heritage in flexible ways appropriate to the community." Christen, Kimberly, Alex Merrill, and Michael Wynne, "A Community of Relations: Mukurtu Hubs and Spokes," *D-Lib Magazine* 23, no. 5/6 (2017), <https://www.dlib.org/dlib/may17/christen/05christen.html>.
11. Mukurtu CMS: <https://mukurtu.org/>; The Sustainable Heritage Network: <http://sustainableheritagenetwork.org/>.
12. The Plateau Peoples' Web Portal: <https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/>; Miriam Jorgensen, *Sustaining Indigenous Culture: The Structure, Activities, and Needs of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums*, Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (Oklahoma City, OK: Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, 2012).
13. "Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation," Washington State University, accessed September 2022, <https://cdsc.libraries.wsu.edu/>.

In the original proposal for the TDSCP, Christen sought to offer a training opportunity that provided more flexibility than a Master's degree in Library & Information Sciences or Museum Studies but was more in-depth than a one-time workshop. The concept was to give participants a "toolbox" of usable skills and resources, plus adequate work time to create meaningful and individualized workflows in a setting that fostered collaboration, relationship building, and mutual knowledge exchange. As Christen was forming the TDSCP proposal with support from CDSC colleagues, they saw important work going on in the field including Indigenous-focused and cohort-based educational programs and collaborations that worked to return Indigenous collections knowledge to source communities.¹⁴ To create the curriculum at the very beginning of the program, Christen and I drew from existing professional development models designed for Indigenous audiences, MLIS curricula, existing guidelines in the field, and practical expertise from our team at WSU. We relied on the TDSCP Advisory Board's firsthand experience in teaching and organizing workshops and training designed for Indigenous cultural heritage professionals.¹⁵

Developing the Curriculum

To meet the needs of TALMs, our team created a program that went beyond standard programs and training available, which are often developed for professionals working in Western institutions. Roy and Alonzo explaining specific training needs for tribal archivists: "Along with basic archive training, there are also special concerns for tribal archivists. The staff may need to modify archival practices for a tribal setting."¹⁶ Ashley Sexton (Catawba Nation), while working as the archivist at the Catawba Nation Archives, noted that she and her fellow cohort members "just require a whole different set of standards, a whole different set of policies that we don't get from normal archives training and archives educational experiences."¹⁷ In the original

14. The team learned from examples like the National Breath of Life: Archival Institute for Indigenous Languages (<https://mc.miamioh.edu/nbol/>), Indigenous-focused Library and Information Science cohort-based Master's programs like the Knowledge River Program at the University of Arizona (<https://ischool.arizona.edu/knowledge-river>), the Circle of Learning Program at San Jose State University (<https://ischool.sjsu.edu/post/about-circle-learning>), the Tribal College Librarians Professional Development Institute (<https://www.lib.montana.edu/tcli/>), The Oregon Tribal Archives Institute (<https://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/oma/otai>), and the Convening Culture Keepers (<https://www.tlamproject.org/gatherings/convening-culture-keepers/>) which I had the benefit of learning from as a graduate student in assisting with gatherings in 2013-2015.
15. Advisory Board members include Dr. Sandra Littletree, Dr. Jennifer O'Neal, and Omar Poler.
16. Lorie Roy and Daniel Alonzo, "The Record Road: Growing Perspectives on Tribal Archives" in *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory, and Lifeways*, eds. Lorie Roy, Anjali Bhasin, Sarah K. Arriaga (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011). 181.
17. Ashley Sexton. "The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: Ashley Sexton Testimonial," WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), published 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249436211>.

collaborative agreement, Christen focused on identified needs for training that combined culturally appropriate digital access, Indigenous materials, hands-on training, and web-based opportunities.¹⁸ Christen selected a hybrid format for the TDSCP training, knowing that participants would have family and community obligations and cultural needs. This format helped to address challenges such as the distance from tribal communities, time commitment, and financial requirements of many MLIS programs and trainings.

Christen and I designed a curriculum that addressed concepts and skills useful for anyone from seasoned practitioners to beginners. The training included best practices for digital stewardship, curation, and project workflows. We encouraged learners to contextualize and adapt the instruction, resources, and recommendations within the overarching priorities of their local cultural needs and community values. By tailoring the curriculum and listening closely to group and individual needs from past years, we collaboratively built a valuable educational experience. Examples from other TALMs were especially helpful when pairs were creating policies and procedures—a key part of the curriculum. Over the years, Sexton and others have generously provided copies of their draft policies or frameworks to provide examples and inspiration to cohort members.

The TDSCP wove in specific Indigenous and community-centered context throughout all aspects of the training. Our curriculum covered a wide range of topics focused on digital stewardship—all tailored to meet the needs of Indigenous professionals in general, and our cohort members specifically. Throughout the training years, curricular topics rotated and shifted depending on current work and interests or future goals of cohort members. We taught topics within the realm of digital stewardship, preservation, and management, with other topics coming into the training through questions and discussion. We covered everything from archival processing to digitization, intellectual property, digital file fixity, and photogrammetry. Within this wide range of topics, several key learning tools were consistent: cohort members created a Digital Stewardship Lifecycle, a practice Mukurtu CMS website and project, and a Collaborative Curation Model (added in 2018).

Key TDSCP Curriculum Learning Tools

Digital Stewardship Lifecycle

The Digital Stewardship Lifecycle (DSL) is a model for digital stewardship which emphasizes collaboration and flexibility. It is a tool for institutional strategic planning around digital stewardship for TALMs and can be used for outreach to stakeholders.

18. Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, and Miriam Jorgensen. “Sustaining Indigenous culture: The structure, activities, and needs of tribal archives, libraries, and museums.” Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, 2012.

Creating a DSL can be a first step to high-level planning, combining local cultural protocols and values into the processes of digitization, preservation, collaboration, and access.

Christen and Merrill developed the original version of the CDSC's Digital Stewardship Lifecycle by drawing upon models like the Digital Curation Centre's Curation Lifecycle Model, emphasizing the elements most likely to be relevant or meaningful to staff at TALMs at the beginning of managing digital content.¹⁹ They structured the first iteration around four simple areas of "get it, check it, save it, and share it." Christen and I developed the DSL idea further by adding explanatory text and examples for each stage, as well as creating a method for teaching the template using instructional scaffolding by adding new concepts throughout the training year. The DSL model creates a bridge between typical concepts of digital curation, stewardship, and preservation, and the importance of balancing these concepts within an Indigenous worldview specific to each community. Christen emphasizes that it is a "relational model built on obligations that one has to care for, maintain, and preserve a variety of belongings."²⁰ Local needs and responsibilities around culture, language, and infrastructure are not an afterthought, but come first in this planning strategy. We guided each community as they created their own unique lifecycle over the training year. In a more recent version of the DSL for the SHN and OCLC WebJunction Digital Collections Stewardship course series, there are five sections: prepare, gather, process, save, and share.

A key outcome in the DSL creation process is embedding "cultural checks" in each stage. Christen explains: "Emphasizing cultural checks broadens the notion of curation beyond the individual item or collection by locating it within a history, social relations, and ongoing political situations that move between the past and present and multiple groups of people."²¹ A cultural check in the "share it" stage might be the formation of or consultation with a cultural committee or Elders group to help with digital access decisions for culturally sensitive materials.

The process of creating a DSL is the basis of the TDSCP curriculum. On the first day of training, cohort members were introduced to the four stages, and encouraged to write, draw, or discuss their "cultural checks," describing what each stage of the Lifecycle means to them, explaining how their institution currently operates, and imagining how they might include future digital stewardship goals. Cohort members often translated the "get it, check it, save it, share it" stage names to their own

19. "Curation Lifecycle Model," Digital Curation Centre, accessed September 2022, <https://www.dcc.ac.uk/guidance/curation-lifecycle-model>.

20. Kimberly Christen, "Relationships Not Records: Digital Heritage and the Ethics of Sharing Indigenous Knowledge Online," in *Routledge Companion to Media Studies and Digital Humanities*, eds. Jentery Sayers (London: Routledge, 2018), 407.

21. Christen, "Relationships Not Records," 407.

languages, and created visual designs and analogies that tied to their community's environments, values, and knowledge systems. Continuing the DSL worktime throughout the year allowed participants to compare ideas and plans with others and receive feedback from peers. The final presentation during the last training week was an opportunity to see the full potential of each person's work and helped prepare cohort members for future presentations to leadership, other departments, or their communities. We did not expect final versions; instead, we knew these would be works in progress as they evolved within the communities.

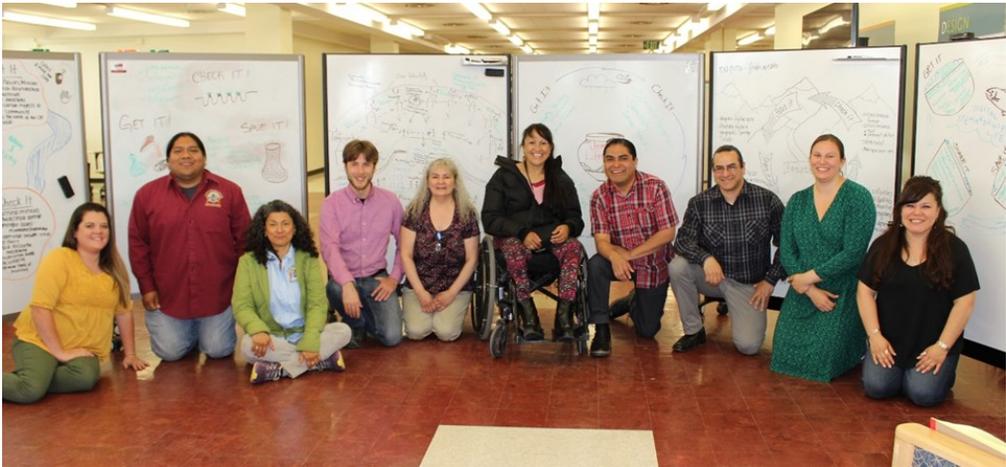


Figure 1. 2016-2017 TDSCP cohort with their Digital Stewardship Lifecycle presentations, May 2017. From left to right: Ashley Sexton (Catawba Nation), Matthew Lewis (Tohono O'odham Nation), Jeannette Garcia, Jason Russell, Marilyn Decker (Iñupiaq), Maureen Wacondo (Pueblo of Jemez), Josiah Black Eagle Pinkham (Nimíipuu), Tātlo Gregory (Nimíipuu), Sarah Dybdahl (Tlingit), and Amelia Wilson (Hoonah Tlingit).

For example, in 2019-2020, Selena Ortega-Chiolero (Rarámuri), Museum Specialist at Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council (CVTC), and Angela Wade (Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax) Environmental Stewardship Program Director, designed a DSL that utilized Ahtna language and depicted a graphic of a birch tree, which is traditionally significant to the community as a food source, material culture, and geographical marking. They designed the lifecycle to support the CVTC mission, to be cyclical to embody Ahtna stewardship of land, and to assist in Nay'dini'aa Na' Kayax goals and programs without creating barriers. It was important for the CVTC Lifecycle to reflect the seasonal wheel as part of the cycle of the birch tree.

CVTC's DSL begins with Tsabbaey Na'aeye (translated to "trout month" or "beginning of spring"), representing the root system of the tree growing. This step

involves families, clans, communities, Elders, collaborators, and CVTC staff working together to gather collections and materials to share. Staff rely on the collections management plan for guidance in this stage. The next step is Łuk'ae Na'aaye ("salmon month" or "summer") which is the trunk of the tree with steps for access control, description, verification, and integrity, followed by Hwitsiic Na'aaye ("autumn") which signifies the start of branches extending out or developing roles and preservation infrastructure. The final step is Dencii Na'aaye ("fourth month of snow" or "winter"), when the leaves fall to represent sharing Ahtna culture in multiple ways and collaborating with partners.²² All the steps outlined here each carry much more detail, including relational considerations and practical steps. Ortega-Chiolero and Wade's unique, community-centered lifecycle demonstrates the opportunities and strong vision found with a local approach based in cultural values and land-based knowledge.



Figure 2. CVTC's DSL first stage, Tsabbaey Na'aeye, created by Selena Ortega-Chiolero and Angela Wade.

22. Selena Ortega-Chiolero and Angela Wade, "TDSCLP Digital Stewardship Lifecycle Presentations," May 2020. See also: Selena Ortega-Chiolero and Monique Tyndall present on the DSLs they developed in the DLF Forum 2022 as part of *Scaling Training for Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums + Public Libraries*, <https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/impacts-and-reflections-digital-stewardship-training-initiative.html>

Mukurtu CMS

Cohort members were often working with many types of cultural heritage materials while serving multiple audiences, and so providing flexible and appropriate access was crucial to carry out their institutional missions. As Indigenous communities consider technological solutions to sharing collections digitally, Roy and Alonzo pointed out that use of cataloging and access systems “must be balanced with the community’s desire to protect cultural knowledge.”²³ Mukurtu CMS provides flexible access protocols and other features which make the platform uniquely appealing for Indigenous communities. For instance, Huna Heritage Foundation staff identified their need to provide access to a selection of photographs, video, and other media for their community. Amelia Wilson (Hoonah Tlingit) stated in a 2017 interview, “We’ve kept and documented and preserved what is important, but that’s not enough—you have to be able to pass it on.”²⁴

In the TDSCP training, each cohort pair received training and dedicated practice time in implementing Mukurtu CMS to manage and provide access to digital materials in their communities. The CDSC team was a part of a learning process as cohort members brought up new questions and use cases as they worked with Mukurtu CMS. A particularly interesting discussion was brought up by members of the 2018-2019 cohort, redefining what the “creator” field might contain while considering the animals that may have given feathers or fur to create a photographed item, or what the word “Creator” might mean in each community. Questions and discussions through these long-term training relationships strengthened the abilities of CDSC staff to provide support and training to other Mukurtu users.

In a 2016 video interview, Marcus Winchester (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), Director of the Department of Language and Culture and 2015-2016 cohort member, points to another important need for TALMs: to be able to “let the people in our community access those things, not only access but contribute as well. And build a larger narrative about our history and our past.”²⁵ Winchester, Jason Wesaw (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, former archivist and THPO), Blaire Topash-Caldwell (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, former archivist), and other department staff have steadily planned and built their website *Wiwkwébhëgen* (<https://wkwwebthegen.com/>) using Mukurtu since 2015. From the About page: “Wiwkwébhëgen in our

23. Lorie Roy and Daniel Alonzo, “The Record Road: Growing Perspectives on Tribal Archives” in *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory, and Lifestyles*, eds. Lorie Roy, Anjali Bhasin, Sarah K. Arriaga (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 186.
24. Amelia Wilson, “The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: A Unique Structure and Focus,” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), published 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249435539>. Huna Heritage Digital Archives: <https://archives.hunaheritage.org/>.
25. Marcus Winchester, “The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: Using Mukurtu CMS,” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), published 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249440745>.

Potawatomi language loosely translates to ‘bundle,’ or ‘place where sacred items and knowledge are kept.’ Wiwkwé’bthëgen is an open digital platform that seeks to share information and teachings about our Potawatomi culture.” The homepage notes that because most content is not publicly available, “Pokagon citizens and our Neshnabé relatives may request an account to view all the content on this site.”²⁶ The Mukurtu CMS platform allows for many modes of contribution and involvement, which have been developed through community-driven development. The year of Mukurtu training in the TDSCP allowed members to make plans and think through ideas to actively involve community members in digital heritage stewardship and the process of providing culturally appropriate access to materials.

Collaborative Curation Model

In the first years of the TDSCP, members often brought up the issue of archives collections located outside of their institutions that often fall outside of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). TALMs may collaborate with external collecting institutions on the local, state, and federal level, requiring professionals to manage many different types of communication, relationships, knowledge of legislation, and research processes. We began to see the need for a larger piece of training dedicated to concepts of collaboration with outside institutions. Thus, in the third and fourth cohorts, we added the Collaborative Curation Model (CC Model) as a key learning outcome.

The CC Model is a series of recommended steps involved in working collaboratively with outside institutions and community partners. It addresses partnerships and projects surrounding digital collections, working with metadata internally and in relationship with external repositories, re-narrating collections with voices from the community, and the many paths of shared stewardship. We based the design of the model on a winding river, showing how the stages flow into one another, and that each stage may result in smaller streams and eddies. Like the DSL, the CC Model steps can be adapted to department and community priorities, needs, and practices. A foundational example of the CC Model in action can be seen in the Plateau Peoples’ Web Portal (PPWP), which Christen developed by working directly with tribal nations in the Plateau region to receive and curate digitally returned cultural heritage materials.²⁷ We encouraged cohort members to think of creating their model as an evolving journey, which can include some or all the stages listed in the base model.²⁸

26. “Wiwkwé’bthëgen,” Pokégenek Bodéwadmik (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi), accessed September 2022, <https://wiwkwé’bthëgen.com/>.

27. Kimberly Christen, “Opening Archives: Respectful Repatriation,” *The American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 185-210, accessed September 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23079006>.

28. Lotus Norton-Wisla and Kim Christen, “Collaborative Curation Model Example,” Sustainable Heritage Network, accessed September 2022, <http://www.sustainableheritagenetwork.org/digital-heritage/collaborative-curation-model-example>.

In the first year of teaching the new CC Model, it was a struggle for Christen and me to incorporate the work alongside other models like the DSL and to communicate a clear task for cohort members to accomplish with limited time and with so many community-specific variables. In the second year, we found that introducing the base model as *one* example tied to a specific project from the PPWP was the most successful strategy to encourage cohort members to make a start on their own steps, as was increasing granularity around cohort members' individual tasks related to collaborative curation. These adjustments made the CC Model a more useful tool for cohort members to start their own plans during the training year.

Cohort members Monique Tyndall (Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans), the former Tribal Archivist for the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin (MITW) and current Director of Cultural Affairs at the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans, and Rebecca Alegria (Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin), Cultural Planner for the MITW, created a CC Model draft inspired by place, stories of the land and forest, and connections to their community's clan roles and responsibilities.²⁹ They thought about how they might create a model that referenced their specific land and environment and Tyndall translated it into a visual representation that honors traditional art from the community, developing an applique design of the Kāēq Askāh representing the white pine tree. The steps of collaborative curation are associated with one or more clan roles, positioned on the tree at specific places like the roots, branches, and top of the white pine. For example, the Mōs (Moose) clan roles are related to security and community, so people of that clan would be involved in steps such as "Engage the community to discover their cultural heritage needs," "Review content of selected items," and "Meet with community to review new community metadata." Creating a CC Model based in Menominee cultural tradition creates a connection to community members for understanding the importance of the work and shared pathways for involvement. Their model creates a flexible framework to engage in collaborative curation, where specific projects and technical steps can be added for specific projects and materials as they work with their community and external repositories.

Tyndall continued to build on this model; in Spring 2021, she used the CC Model to support a remote collaborative project with UW-Madison iSchool Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums student volunteers, using the model to "provide guidance for students about how to work respectfully and effectively with the Tribal Archives."³⁰ In describing her work planning a process for reparative description that centers the voice of the Menominee community, Tyndall notes the opportunity for intersection with Indigenous research frameworks, the Indigenous evaluation field, and critical race and decolonial research theories in the work of TALMs and non-Indigenous

29. Monique J. Tyndall and Rebecca Alegria, "TDSCP Collaborative Curation Presentation," May 2020.

30. Monique J. Tyndall, "Implementing Reparative Description for Indigenous Collections," Society of American Archivists Native American Archives Section, 2021, accessed September 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CstBluKt7Ss>.

repositories. Tyndall emphasizes the importance of partnerships and collaborations based on reciprocity, mutual understanding, and respect with TALMs and Indigenous nations. Other cohort members engage in similar work within their communities and by seeking partnerships with external institutions.

These three learning tools—the DSL, Mukurtu CMS practice site, and CC Model—were the foundation of the curriculum, supported by instruction and work time for participants to create several policy drafts to guide collection development, digitization, preservation, and access. In a final evaluation of the TDSCP in 2016, one cohort member expressed, “You’ve given us an amazing toolbox. Now it’s time for us to work.”

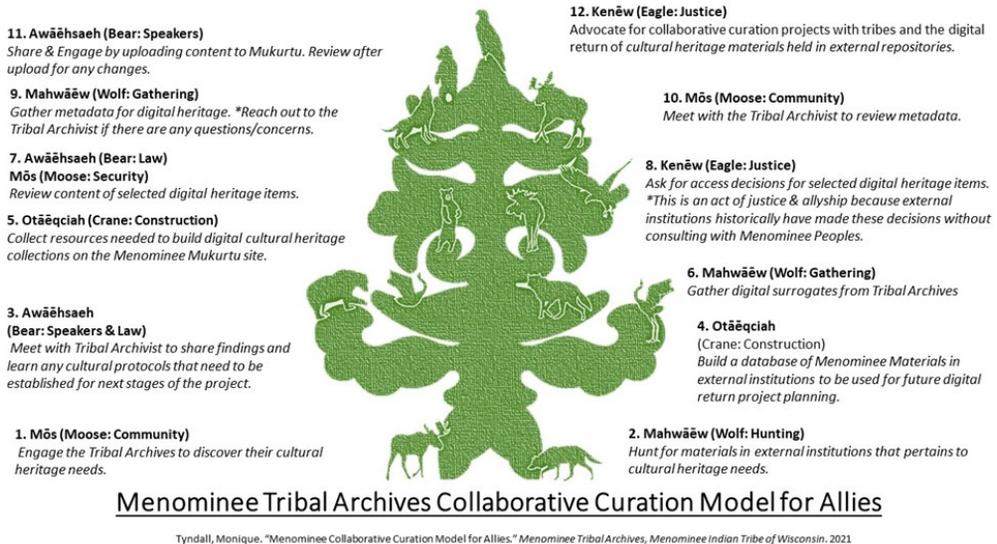


Figure 3. Menominee Tribal Archives Collaborative Curation Model for Allies, created by Monique Tyndall.

TDSCP Site Visits

In the first years of the TDSCP, Christen and I traveled to visit each of the participating Indigenous nations. Christen prioritized site visits in the TDSCP budgets, with the understanding from previous work that onsite visits were essential to understanding the needs of the cohort members. The TDSCP site visits had multiple purposes: to discuss goals and priorities, to meet the cohort member pairs and their colleagues, and for us to get to know the benefitting communities to understand the context of cohort members’ work. The visits were the first step for TDSCP staff to understand our roles as supporters of the work and visions of cohort members, and helped us continually improve the TDSCP structure, curriculum, and delivery with a humble mindset and a creative and flexible approach.

Learning about community contexts helped us know individuals and build a connection before the training began. Wilson spoke about the benefits of the site visits during the year of training: “It’s a wraparound program, and so it really takes into account a whole person, and everything they come to bring with them and the community they represent.”³¹ Our visits involved deeply listening to cohort members and a range of invited stakeholders including supervisors, grant writers, Elders, tribal council members, IT professionals, and architects. We learned through being guests on Indigenous lands and being generously welcomed, fed, and cared for. We gained understanding from tours in such a wide range of museum collections, cultural sites, closets of archival materials, classrooms, community gardens, and future building sites.

The TDSCP site visits shaped our understanding of local resources, needs, and goals and enabled us to create a program that was relevant and responsive. The visits gave us a better idea of the long early morning roads that the cohort members traveled when they came to visit us in Pullman, the extra legs of travel needed for conference travel, or the potential time and cost of trips to external repositories for collaborative efforts. The visits allowed us to design a curriculum that met people where they were at, knowing that cohort members have a wide range of relational responsibilities and cultural values to uphold. We came to understand that each cohort member brought a variety of skills, both in the LIS field and other important specialties, which served people well when they were responsible for a wide range of duties.

Through the visits, we reevaluated our understandings of what communities and participants wanted out of a training focused on digital stewardship, using our time while driving, in airports, and hotel lobbies to continuously create, revise, and rebuild plans. We found that higher level, goal-oriented conversations and spending time with other community stakeholders was a more beneficial use of time during the visits, rather than our original plan to take a detailed inventory of collections and content. When talking with groups of stakeholders, we were at times confronted with the valid concerns and risks of sharing content digitally, varied levels of understanding, concern of inappropriate access, and examples of items people were not comfortable providing digital access to at all. These conversations helped us to reframe digital projects and access software as a range of tools, or options to layer into ongoing work, but are *not* the only solution to community access.

Building Cohort Networks of Collaboration

Participants over the years recognize that one of the primary outcomes and strengths of this program are the relationships with others who are doing similar

31. Amelia Wilson, “The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: Learning in the Program,” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249437534>.

work. One participant gave feedback that the cohort model made the training “more meaningful, fulfilling, and personal.” Participants noted repeatedly that the cohort model and networking with other individuals was a great strength and highlight of the program. Ortega-Chiolero shared that to her, the 2019-2020 cohort felt like a “hermandad de mujeres” or sisterhood of Indigenous women and allies, who supported each other through the training.³² The experience provided many cohort members with supportive connections and renewed confidence in their positions.

Christen developed the TDSCP using a cohort model of training, utilizing her research of successful projects which incorporated a cohort model for the unique needs of Indigenous communities that the TDSCP hoped to serve. The cohort model was an important foundation to carry out a hybrid of face-to-face and virtual instruction, building trust throughout the process. When discussing tribal librarianship, Roy emphasizes the support that colleagues provide to each other: “Native librarians who are often isolated in the workplace, even if they are working on tribal lands, find solace and support in gathering with other Indigenous librarians to whom they turn for answers, questions, networking, and friendship.”³³ Throughout the TDSCP years, we found this to be true for librarians, archivists, tribal historic preservation officers, and others—it helps to have a group of people to talk to and share in your challenges and successes. Wilson noted that the shared experience was helpful in supporting understanding and relationships, saying that the training not only enhanced ties with other people, but also helped to focus the work each person was doing. Wilson highlighted the benefits of collaborative learning, saying, “I think the process is more holistic and more meaningful, and it resonates a lot more than sitting and trying to do the self-taught [thing] or just doing it as an individual.”³⁴ The connections cohort members made during their year of training were an asset to their work and continue to be a lasting support system after the TDSCP, connecting over email, social media, virtual meetings, and by attending conferences together. Going through the year-long training together and sharing face-to-face connections led to a strong bond, and we found repeatedly that these strong connections were not only a celebrated outcome in themselves, but that cohort members felt the connections were linked to other outcomes like educational goals and confidence in their roles.

In the TDSCP, these deep connections and trust grew organically over time, often in unplanned ways. We left most evenings and lunchtimes free during the training, creating opportunities for cohort members to make personal connections during

32. Selena Ortega-Chiolero, “TDSCP 2019-2020 Testimonials – Our Cohort Community,” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2021, accessed 2022, <https://vimeo.com/527360428>.

33. Lorie Roy, “International Efforts in Supporting and Advancing Library Services for Indigenous Populations” in *Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory, and Lifeways*, eds. Lorie Roy, Anjali Bhasin, Sarah K. Arriaga (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 59.

34. Amelia Wilson, “The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: The Importance of the Cohort Model,” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249439846>

unplanned, unscheduled time. Christen and I structured varied curricular elements to encourage growing connections during each day of training, including times for discussion, collaboration, or hands-on work. Each week we made time in the schedule and space in the budget to hold welcome dinners, where all staff and participants were welcome to attend and to bring a dish. Allocating time and funds to make these meals possible was a crucial component of our gatherings, enhancing our ability to create a community of trust and respect during the training.

There was significant overlap in participants' broad goals such as: maintenance and revitalization of language and culture, return and repatriation, working with outside institutions, working with community members, and creating a system of appropriate access for their audiences. Jason Wesaw highlighted some of these shared issues and questions: "I think everybody who was part of that initial cohort was dealing with those same issues. You know, how do we make access to our materials in our archives, how do we bring those out to the community?"³⁵ Both similarities and differences between Indigenous communities enriched the exchange of ideas and learning process in the TDSCP.

A core lesson is that each TALM employee we worked with represented a sovereign nation or a community organization with a unique context—politically, historically, geographically, in language, climate, food, and culture. In a feedback survey, Raynella Fontenot (Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana), Director of the Department of Cultural, Historical, & Natural Resources, underscored the importance of understanding and creating space for a wide variety of unique perspectives among the cohorts saying, "We all have a different story to tell, and [the TDSCP] has the capacity to allow that. The story is ours and will be different than the next." Our experiences reinforce the guidance in the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM) that "librarians and archivists should be aware that each tribe, band, and community is unique."³⁶ This uniqueness strengthened and enriched the learning experience for all participants—cohort members, CDSC staff, and guests alike. As the program ran, cohort members collaborated through their different experiences, needs, and goals and learned from the array of differing perspectives in the process.

35. Jason Wesaw, "The Tribal Stewardship Cohort Program: Jason Wesaw Testimonial," WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2018, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/249436976>.

36. "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials," First Archivist Circle, Northern Arizona University, 2007, accessed September 2022, <https://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>. In April 2006, 19 archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians, and anthropologists gathered at Northern Arizona University, representing 15 Native American, First Nation, and Aboriginal communities. This group would later evolve into the First Archivist Circle. The PNAAM are guidelines for archival practice that respect the sovereignty of Native American Tribes and Nations, recognize culturally specific needs and priorities, and encourage mutually beneficial relationships between institutions.

Cycles of Learning from Participant Feedback

By design, the TDSCP curriculum included deliberate checkpoints and spaces for cohort members to show what they were getting from the program and what could work better. We conducted formal and informal assessments before the program started with surveys and conversations. Participants completed surveys at the beginning and end of training weeks to highlight growth in their comfort and understanding and discover needs for upcoming training. We held a final in-person conversation with each cohort pair, which provided an in-depth reflection on their experience. We adapted and updated the curriculum multiple times based on the TALMs involved in each year, so the training and toolbox was tailor-made for the specific group. We sought iterative feedback, using this information to guide curriculum topics and presentations immediately and later to guide long-term planning.

Christen and I carefully layered each day with a distribution of modes of instruction, which allowed us to temper the intensity of the condensed training timeframe and provided checkpoints to clarify cohort members' needs throughout each day of training. This balance took time and practice to achieve and there were many long nights of rearranging schedules after we found out that a section didn't work well, or that a certain topic needed more time. After the first training year, we dramatically increased work time during the training weeks based on feedback from the cohort members who found the focused work time to be incredibly useful independently in their pairs, while working alongside other cohort members to receive feedback and inspiration. One participant responded in an early survey, "The tasks we undertook this week allowed us to do some much-needed critical thinking and planning for our work back home." Allowing time for structured and informal discussion was a central part of the training and learning experience. Small and large groupings for discussion allowed participants many different opportunities to find their level of comfort in sharing.

As much as we could, we followed the lead of the group for how they preferred to connect with each other. For example, when asked by the 2016-2017 cohort members, we added a daily morning gathering time to allow the group to settle into the day in whatever manner was comfortable, rather than jumping right into instruction. The cohort members decided to extend the morning gathering time, so we carved out extra space each morning for cohort members to gather in a circle together to share reflections, stories, a prayer, or a song to open the day together. Cohort members reflected on the positive impact of Pinkham opening the day with Nimípuu songs throughout 2016-2017 or how meaningful it was in May 2017 when Arlan Sando (Jemez Pueblo) shared an eagle dance at the end of the week to send everyone home safely. The reflections, traditions, and connections shared in the daily gathering circles made learning more meaningful and connected to the cohort members' personal and professional lives. While each cohort group developed relationships and connections that were meaningful, it is important to recognize that each group had a different dynamic as a larger group and between pairs. A later cohort preferred a

shorter morning open time to discuss current events in their communities and instead time in the evenings to connect with each other outside of the classroom. In planning the days of training, Christen and I tried to pay attention to the group consensus and respect preferences so the cohort members could feel at ease to form connections organically.

One of the most important lessons we learned is that our CDSC staff can provide structure and planning to a point, but we must be able to recognize when to leave space, pause, change course, or step back to allow for learning to happen in ways that are most natural for participants. For example, we made changes to the weekly schedule when more time was needed to work through digitization questions or to provide additional time to draft outlines of policies. Changes that were more comprehensive came from a learning process over the training years, and cohort members shared feedback and corrections when we made incorrect assumptions, mistakes, or could otherwise improve our understanding or actions. I am always grateful to the cohort members who told me that the first version of the physical binder of resources was overwhelming and gave suggestions for how to organize it better and provide digital files in more than one way.

We also learned that our own unconscious attitudes could influence the training experience, and that it was important to deliberately change them by accepting feedback graciously. On the first day of an early training week, we did a round of introductions with the newly arrived cohort members, beginning with a sizable group of WSU staff and guest instructors. Many WSU staff introduced ourselves by standing at the front of the room and listing credentials like academic degrees, specialties, and years of experience, and often sharing self-deprecating remarks about our own skills or education. With this tone set up as the starting point, as we went around the room many cohort members commented on their inexperience or lack of formal education in archives and libraries. One cohort member took some time before introducing herself to remind everyone in the room that knowledge of their Indigenous languages, culture, and lifeways have an important place alongside any academic degree or certification, are essential to working cultural heritage, and can take lifetimes to learn. She strongly affirmed the experience and knowledge of her fellow Indigenous professionals. By pausing and drawing attention to the issue, the cohort member called WSU staff to shift our intentions and be thoughtful in how we led introductions with less focus on valuing any kind of “expertise” above another. We tried to approach the goals of introductions with more care as project staff and as individuals, with a greater respect to the opportunity to be known and to know others as we shared a learning experience.

These are just a few examples, but they show the direct way cohort members taught and guided CDSC staff on a daily basis within relationships of trust and mutual respect. When a cohort member brought an important issue to our attention, they spoke with care and empathy with the intention to improve our understanding so we could be better partners and incorporate better practices into future trainings. To earn and maintain this trust, it is important for the CDSC staff to be open to

criticism, welcome feedback in a variety of ways, resist reacting defensively, and implement changes with transparency to the best of our ability.

Fostering Collaboration with Federal Repositories

In later program years, we added in-person visits to United States archival and museum repositories to help TDSCP participants make personal connections and understand research procedures for future visits and collaborations. Over one week in February 2019 and February 2020, the cohorts visited several repositories in Washington, DC, including the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), National Anthropological Archives (NAA), and National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) collections, as well as Library of Congress divisions, the National Archives, and other independently arranged visits. The short visits were an introduction to federal institutions including pre-visit research and contact with federal repository staff, group tours and orientations on arrival, and a few days of independent research time.

Cohort members took time during the first and second weeks of training in Pullman, WA to adapt and outline necessary steps in their Collaborative Curation Model, and then revisited and tested these steps during our third training in Washington, DC. Testing the CC Models looked different for each pair. Some took in the bigger picture of visiting a repository for the first time and adding in information for future visits. Others started to implement digitization projects using their CC Model steps and gained information that influenced their project workflows, such as finding out that only access copy-quality scans would be available or they would need to bring their own equipment for necessary preservation quality scans. While the TDSCP visits focused on collaborative *digital* projects, many TDSCP communities are engaged in larger efforts to create pathways for equitable return and repatriation, in which digital projects are just one component or an opportunity to open the door to ongoing relationships.

Each participating community in the TDSCP can identify collections, topics, events, and ancestor's images, voices, or belongings that may be held in an external repository outside their community. We saw over the course of these years the weight that these visits carry. Ortega-Chiolero remarked that reuniting materials held in distant repositories are incredibly meaningful on a personal, family, and community level: "For us, it's reconnecting with our past and our ancestors."³⁷ These visits can be important steps in an Indigenous community's goals, and desired and necessary work, but the work is emotionally, mentally, and physically taxing.

During the first week of training starting in 2018, we invited an open discussion for members to share their experiences as researchers and professionals visiting or

37. Selena Ortega-Chiolero, "TDSCP 2019-2020 Testimonials – Visit to DC," WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2021, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/527360653>.

working with outside institutions. Cohort members had varied experiences, with some stories of successful reciprocal partnerships as well as painful and frustrating experiences, encountering roadblocks to their work, and barriers to access. Some of these barriers include limited descriptive information available in publicly available catalogs, incorrect or problematic descriptive information, “hidden” collections that are unprocessed or otherwise unlisted, lack of cultural competency and understanding among staff, and lack of funding for staff to carry out extensive travel and research to faraway institutions. Many communities look to Elders and traditional and cultural knowledge bearers to lead and support the research process, but it is often difficult and sometimes impossible for Elders to travel long distances and engage in strenuous research projects due to age, health concerns, and other barriers. Among Indigenous cohort members who had visited federal institutions in the past, some recounted being treated disrespectfully, not acknowledged as legitimate researchers or representatives of their communities, or made to feel unwelcome.

Traveling as a TDSCP group and being warmly welcomed into institutional spaces was a very different experience for some. This arose in part through the privilege that TDSCP staff hold in institutional spaces as white employees of a university, which our participants helped us see and reflect upon. Cohort members emphasized the importance of pre-visit contact, visiting in person, the relationships and connections with individual staff members, and the dedicated research time with materials. Through their feedback around a specific issue during a collections tour, we realized we could do a much better job as facilitators by anticipating as much as possible the potential physical, mental, and emotional risks and culturally sensitive materials and spaces during visits, informing cohort members prior with precise details. Most importantly, we listened and understood the harm caused when staff did not inform cohort members about funerary items present in one of our visit locations. Between the 2019 and 2020 visits, we adjusted the onsite plan to create additional avenues for checking visit locations and provide for cultural needs and concerns so that anyone with concerns could make appropriate preparations or decisions to protect themselves. TDSCP staff connected with each location over a virtual meeting or phone call before the visit to specifically speak about the visit plan and ask a series of questions including culturally sensitive materials to be aware of, accessibility options for visitors with varying mobility, and details like security processes and building layout. These conversations also served to inform the federal staff members about concerns from the group, enabling us to work together to facilitate the visits, rather than placing the burden on the individual to bring up the topic and explain their needs or concerns.

Our staff learned not only about our role as facilitators of these visits, but also as non-Indigenous representatives of an institution which holds materials related to Indigenous nations in our region. We saw how institutional policies and capacities, reading room procedures, staff cultural competency, and collections storage conditions impact Indigenous people in their research. Outside of the research process, participants were affected by difficult elements such as security processes,

building design and decoration, and historical information presented that ignores Indigenous histories. Relying on these visits and other experiences, several TDSCP affiliates, including Ortega-Chiolero, Tyndall, Keau George and myself, contributed to a 2021 Society of American Archivists (SAA) *Archival Outlook* article of recommendations for institutions to decolonize practices and welcome Indigenous researchers to reading rooms.³⁸

Cohort members provided context and guidance to non-Indigenous repositories during their visits, which can be a start to expanding repository staff members' perspectives to meet the needs of Indigenous nations. In a 2020 video testimonial, Fontenot reflected on the experience of telling a staff member at a repository that an item was connected to her family: "It just makes that meaningful impact that these people are still thriving. We're still here. You know, it just helps them know 'well maybe I ought to take better care of this collection'...because right now some of those things are just items on a shelf to them."³⁹ It is important to note that each institution we visited was different and resulted in a range of visitor experiences over the two years. Many TDSCP participants recognized the challenges that workers face in large repositories, such as lack of funding and staff resources. Participants consistently commented positively on the staff support and curatorial practices at the NMAI Collections Resource Center. NMAI has been led by Indigenous directors since its founding in 1990, and in recent years NMAI staff have made efforts to create more connections between museum and archival collections to better serve user needs as they prioritize partnerships with Indigenous peoples and their allies.⁴⁰

To resist collections remaining just "items on a shelf", disconnected from their communities, it is essential that non-Indigenous cultural heritage repository leaders, workers, and future practitioners learn about the history of colonial violence which brought Indigenous materials into our external repositories. We must understand Indigenous sovereignty and the importance of decision-making by appropriate stakeholders, and take action actively collaborating to return materials and knowledge to Indigenous communities. History and archives scholar Dr. Jennifer O'Neal (The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde) notes the key connection between Indigenous archival education and lasting positive change, suggesting that "we must infuse the basics of Indigenous history, traditional ways of knowing, and research

38. SAA Native American Archives Section and Human Rights Archives Section, "Toward Inclusive Reading Rooms: Recommendations for Decolonizing Practices and Welcoming Indigenous Researchers," *Archival Outlook*, January/February 2021: 4, accessed September 2022, <https://mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?i=690860>.
39. Raynella Fontenot, "TDSCP 2019-2020 Testimonials – Visit to DC," WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2021, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/527360653>.
40. Current NMAI director Cynthia Chavez Lamar (San Felipe Pueblo) was preceded by Kevin Gover (Pawnee), who was director when our group visited NMAI in 2019 and 2020. "Cynthia Chavez Lamar Named Director of the National Museum of the American Indian," *Smithsonian*, published January 19, 2022, accessed September 2022, <https://www.si.edu/newsdesk/releases/cynthia-chavez-lamar-named-director-national-museum-american-indian>.

methodologies into the larger Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum.” O’Neal goes on to encourage continual learning and development throughout practicing professionals’ careers via workshops or cultural competency trainings, which require support and investment from institutional leadership. O’Neal brings attention to the urgent need for recommendations like the PNAAM to not only be acknowledged and endorsed, but also implemented and acted upon:

These recommendations must be implemented, not in the future, but now. After years of colonization, assimilation, termination, and restoration, Indigenous communities have waited far too long to reconnect with these collections and to provide the missing Indigenous context and traditional knowledge required to treat these collections respectfully and in accord with the cultural, spiritual, and epistemological needs and concerns of Indigenous people. Addressing this need will ensure a beginning to social justice and reconciliation for this historic trauma.⁴¹

Now is the time for individuals, institutions, educators, and professional organizations in the fields of archives, libraries, and museums to take collective action to listen, learn, motivate others, and implement the guidance laid out for us by Indigenous scholars, professionals, and communities who are working to maintain, protect, and revitalize their cultures, languages, lands, and ways of life.

New Beginnings

The main goal of the TDSCP was to provide educational resources and training to meet the specific needs of TALMs in stewardship of cultural heritage materials from physical materials to digital content. Building the program around a cohort model was a benefit to participants who were able to share their skills, support each other, bring education back home, and even begin to train the next generation.

Throughout the training, we kept in communication with cohort members, providing gentle reminders and nudges to continue the pursuit of their goals. The cohort members responded to the group dynamic and emphasis on relationships with a cohort of professionals, but also to the opportunity to get to know their partner better whether they worked in the same office or miles apart. I have learned repeatedly how important these trusting and caring relationships are to the cohort members, as well as the experience of building confidence and affirming their knowledge and skill in the profession. Creating a space of collaboration and support, away from the day-to-day demands of their jobs, allowed the cohort members to imagine and create impactful planning and policies. The level of work and commitment that the cohort members have shown over the years is staggering, as shown through partnerships, policies, and new ideas for their departments. Cohort

41. Jennifer R. O’Neal, “From Time Immemorial: Centering Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Ways of Knowing in the Archival Paradigm.” *Afterlives of Indigenous Archives*, eds. Ivy Schweitzer and Gordon Henry Jr. (Chicago, IL: Dartmouth College Press, 2019), 45-59.

members have persevered through travel complications, long days and evenings working on homework, jet lag recovery, even completing training despite broken air conditioning in the middle of a Palouse summer, and many last-minute pivots and changes. The cohort members made sacrifices to come out for trainings and fully participate. We are grateful to each person and their families for their participation and belief in our shared goals.

Cohort members and CDSC staff continue to connect across the cohort years. We have gathered in smaller groups over the last few years of ATALM conferences. For instance, Wacondo and Sando invited cohort members and WSU staff to Wacondo's home for a family dinner and a tour of the Jemez Pueblo Community Library & Archives in 2017. We had group dinners and met peoples' families and coworkers at ATALM 2019. Whenever we can, in person or virtually, we share in the good news of momentous occasions as people take on new cultural responsibilities and professional roles in their communities. Cohort members also stay connected remotely through email, social media, and even continued virtual meetings.

The work of the TDSCP can serve as an example to professionals, educators, organizations, and library schools in tailored training, collaboration, and capacity building. The learning experiences of our non-Indigenous WSU staff, a few non-Indigenous TDSCP participants, and other partners, show how incredibly important it is for all information professionals to understand the many issues addressed in the PNAAM and raised by Indigenous scholars and cultural heritage workers. Non-Indigenous people in the LIS field and LIS education need to take active steps to learn about Indigenous history and sovereignty, develop relationships, reach out and listen to the needs of Indigenous communities, and actively identify and dismantle white supremacist and colonial structures in our profession. I personally seek to learn from organizations and initiatives, some led and supported by TDSCP cohort colleagues including ATALM, San Jose State University's MLIS Bridging Knowledge Program, faculty research and initiatives at the University of Washington iSchool, the University of Wisconsin's Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums class and student group, the Curating Indigenous Digital Collections project at WiLS, the Northwest Archivists Native American Collections Roundtable, and the SAA Native American Archives Section, and SAA and Repatriation and Ethical Return Committee, to name a few.

I am grateful for the opportunity to write and reflect on the last several years of the TDSCP as our team transitions from hosting the full year-long TDSCP training sessions at the CDSC to working with the OCLC WebJunction team to create an online self-paced Digital Collections Stewardship Course Series (DCS courses).⁴² Our task going forward is to create an on-demand online training that preserves and extends important elements of the training, while accepting that the DCS courses will

42. The Digital Collections Stewardship Course Series will be released in 2022. Courses will be available through the Sustainable Heritage Network (<https://sustainableheritagenetwork.org/collection/digital-collections-stewardship-course-series>) and OCLC WebJunction (<https://learn.webjunction.org/>).

not be a carbon copy of the 2014-2020 TDSCP. Five former TDSCP participants share their knowledge in the training through video interviews with copies of their policies, which is a way to continue to share their experiences as “virtual” teachers and colleagues. As we endeavor to make some of the TDSCP training more widely available to anyone taking the free DCS course, we consider how to invite and encourage individuals and groups to collaborate with others in their learning and development around digital stewardship.

TDSCP cohort members continue the work of maintaining and continuing cultural heritage, language revitalization, and protection of cultural sites as they work to support future generations. Tyndall’s work in bringing home cultural and historic knowledge and providing appropriate access to her community sustains the work of activists fighting for social and legal justice. In her 2020 interview, Tyndall explains: “Activists in our Indigenous communities rely on culture. By doing my work to ensure that culture is preserved, is sustained, and is made accessible—it’s my way of making sure that those activists have that support that they need.”⁴³ Other cohort members shared similar stories and reasons for their work, to support community members and perpetuate cultural knowledge. Supporting each other and their communities, Indigenous information professionals provide labor and care that is essential to maintain access to knowledge for their communities, families, and future generations.

43. Monique Tyndall, “TDSCP 2019-2020 Testimonials – Our Work as Stewards.” WSU Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation (CDSC), 2021, accessed September 2022, <https://vimeo.com/showcase/4915663/video/527361753>.