

Paper Title: "kewakotam'ka'fope": Together We Find Treasures in Archival Sources of Knowledge

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Abstract: Conserving and sharing information trapped within the documents of the “Great Lakes and Ohio Valley Ethnohistory Collection” (GLOVEC) by creating a digital platform of sharing between the Shawnee Tribe, Indiana University researchers, and academics elsewhere is part of a long-term endeavor of Shawnee tribal citizens. For the better part of the past decade, the Shawnee people have been creating relationships with universities, archives, historic sites, and numerous state agencies. NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) and the Historic Preservation Act drove these interactions in the past, but these relationships have evolved into collaborative and supportive relationships. Continued conversations between engaged, professional scholars and the Shawnee Tribe, one of the 567 federally recognized Native Nations, have created unique opportunities to contextualize history and research projects for both academia and citizens of the Shawnee Tribe. Re-contextualization of knowledge requires Shawnee scholars to become active participants with institutions, such as the Glenn Black Laboratory (GBL) and the Archive of Traditional Music (ATM).

At no time in our past have our ancestral records been so available to our people, yet frustrating paywalls and academic infrastructures impede the “repatriation” of our elders’ knowledge. The emic and etic approach by the scholars of the past often occurred lacking context from the studied community. The information provided by Shawnee informants of the past not only lacked critical context from the community, but also found use by the Indian Claims Commission in federal processes that adversely affected tribal nations. The information collected by scholars of the past has immense value today, but is also filled with irony for native scholars as we apply the same emic and etic approach to studying the institutions that once studied us.

The relationship between the Shawnee Tribe and the Glenn Black Laboratory reveals the need to digitize and conserve the material from the GLOVEC. The opportunity afforded by Indiana University’s Institute for Advanced Study allows for the development of processes and a work model by which the GBL can create a fully annotated, digital repository of the entire GLOVEC collection for access to tribal scholars and academics. Examination of the GLOVEC material reveals deeper needs for more metadata and interdisciplinary access to information.

Through collaboration with the GBL staff, the Shawnee have proposed a methodology and workflow by which the GLOVEC archive can achieve full digitization and bring ethnographic material home to tribal scholars as well as make it accessible to the at-large academic community. Building upon the example of the digitization partnership between the Shawnee Tribe and Glenn Black, we hope to also provide an example of a consolidated, interdisciplinary native scholarship portal at Indiana University as well as show the benefit to researchers worldwide.