Indigenizing the Database:

Embracing Indigenous Knowledge and Instructions

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SAR

School for Advanced Research

Katherine Barry

Katherine Barry (she/her) is the Registrar for the Indian Arts Research Center (IARC) at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. Her work includes database management, accessibility of collections information (where culturally appropriate), and community-based collections care. Barry has previously worked with the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, the Stark Cultural Venues, and Tamástslikt Cultural Institute. She enjoys working collaboratively to enhance stewardship of collections and prioritize Indigenous knowledge in collection records - including configuration to best meet user and community needs.

Stephanie Riley

Stephanie Riley, a member of the Pueblo of Acoma tribe, received her BA in anthropology with an emphasis in cultural anthropology and museum studies from New Mexico State University. Prior to joining the Indian Arts Research Center, she worked for several years at the Sky City Cultural Center & Haakú Museum (Acoma, NM) and at the New Mexico State University Museum. She has also completed a residency at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in collections management. Thanks to previous projects she has been involved in, Riley has become passionate about learning and sustaining traditional pottery-making practices.

Jennifer Day - NAGPRA Coordinator and Community Liaison, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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We would like to acknowledge the work of Jennifer Day, previous Head Registrar at the Indian Arts Research Center, School for Advanced Research. In her 18 years at the IARC, she oversaw the conversion to TMS, co-developed the workflow for Collection Reviews, and implemented the necessary configurations to incorporate indigenous knowledge and protocols into TMS. Ms. Day joined The Metropolitan Museum of Art as NAGPRA Coordinator and Community Liaison in 2024.

Terminology for our presentation

School for Advanced Research / Indian Arts Research Center is moving toward decolonizing terminology relating to the cultures represented in our collections.

- **Tribe/Community** – referring to Indigenous communities, American Indian Tribes, and Native Americans

- **Decolonize** – working with Indigenous communities to undo the lasting effects of colonialism and reclaim control of their items

- **Item** – We use the term item in place of "object".

- **Native Artist** – The term Native Artist is being reclaimed by Indigenous artists in North America.

- **Pueblo** – There are 21 federally recognized (by the US Government) Pueblo tribes. Each Pueblo is a sovereign nation.

- **NAGPRA** – Native American Graves Protections and Repatriation Act (1990) – U.S. Federal legislation

- **Repatriation** – A museum or Federal agency relinquishes possession or control of human remains or cultural items in a holding or collection to a lineal descendant, Indian Tribe, or Native Hawaiian organization. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/glossary.htm

- **Collaboration vs. Consultation** – ongoing relationship between museums or institutions and Indigenous communities vs. short and focused session.   Indian Arts Research Center. 2023. Standards for Museums with Native American Collections (website). Facilitated by Deana Dartt and Elysia Poon. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research.https://sarweb.org/smnac.

Where are we located?
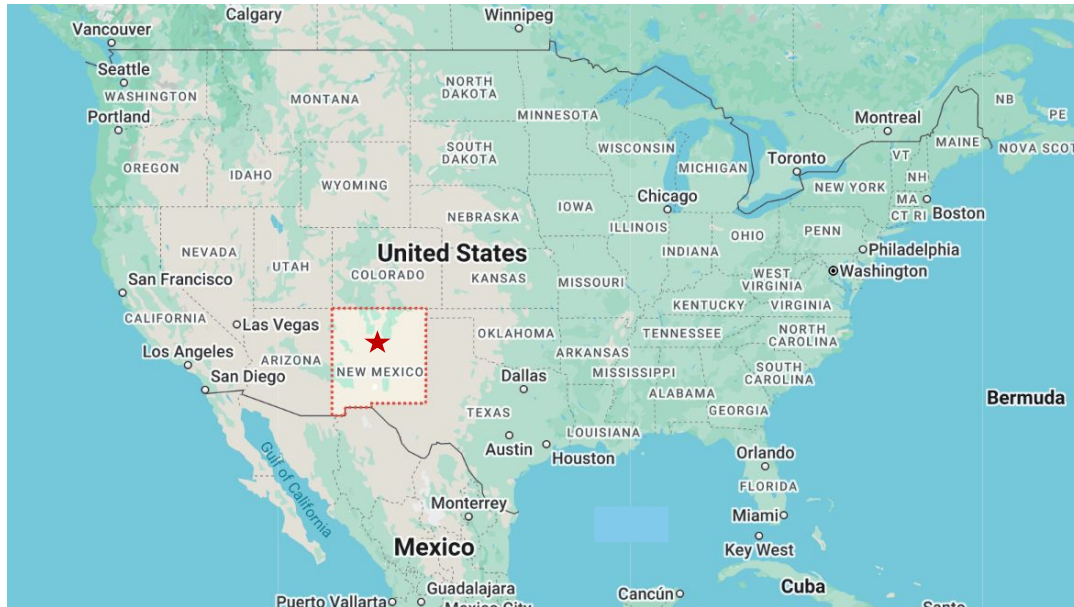
This map [right] was modified by Nate Francis (Tewa), School for Advanced Research, for the Pueblo Pottery Collective, based on a map developed at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

What is the School for Advanced Research?

School for Advanced Research, Administration Building.
Photo courtesy of the School for Advanced Research.

- Established in 1907, the School for Advanced Research (SAR) advances creative thought and innovative work in the social sciences, humanities, and Native American arts.

- Located in Santa Fe, New Mexico

- SAR facilitates intellectual inquiry and human understanding through:
    o scholar residency
    o seminar and artist fellowship programs
    o SAR Press publications
    o range of public programs

Brief overview of the Indian Arts Research Center (IARC)

Indian Arts Research Center, collection open storage.
Photo courtesy of the School for Advanced Research.

A division of the School for Advanced Research (SAR)

- Research collection of over 12,500 Southwest Native American items
  - Pottery / Ceramics
  - Textiles
  - Clothing
  - Jewelry
  - Baskets
  - Paintings & Drawings
  - Carvings
  - Cultural Items ("ethnographic" items)
  - Mixed Media works by contemporary artist fellows

- Collection began in 1920s

Indian Arts Research Center (IARC) programs
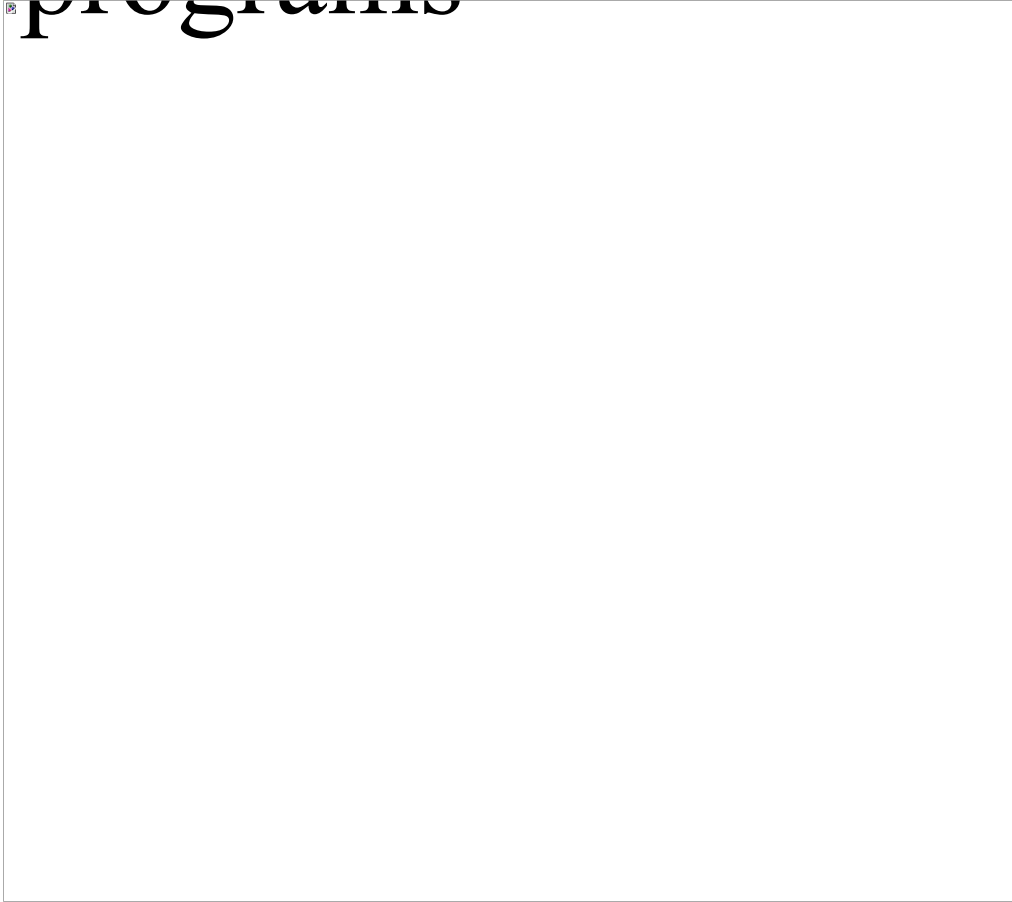
- Offers a range of programs and projects:
    - internships
    - artist fellowships
    - tours
    - research visits
    - Indigenous community visits
    - item loans
    - image requests

- Foster dialogue among community members, artists, and scholars, through collaborative projects, seminars, and symposia

All images in this presentation used with written permission of depicted participants.
Photos courtesy of the School for Advanced Research.

Collection Reviews at the IARC

Collaborative project between the IARC/SAR and Tribal Communities

Goals for collection reviews based on community input: correct inaccuracies, add interpretive and cultural information, establish any guidelines for our staff.

Collection Review process:

- Physical review: Collections staff sets items on tables for easy viewing. Reports are printed and reviewed for each item.

- Data review: later – review new information to make sure we get it right!

Collection Review process continued…

Tribal Collection Review remarks and Tribal Instructions

- Notes combined into cohesive entries for Tribal Collection Review Remarks – for tracking new catalog and cultural info; and Tribal Instructions – a quick reference for staff to see how to approach each item.

What IARC reports look like before adding in the Tribal Collection Review Remarks and Tribal Instructions.

Complete record is shared with the community participants.

IARC Collections Report
Indian Arts Research Center

IARC Collections Report

Obj. Number: IAF.439   **Class.:** Ceramic
Item Name: Water jar
Culture: Southwest | Pueblo - Zia
Artist or Maker Unknown
Date: c. 1870
          This date was estimated by Lanmon and Harlow in "The Pottery of Zia Pueblo," pg. 94.

Description: White slip with black and red painted decoration, two bands of triangles meander design, red band around underbody, red slipped interior, concave, fireclouded base.

Materials: clay | paints

Dimensions: Dimensions: 15.2 × 17.8 cm (6 × 7 in.)
                    Weight: 0.8 kg (1.7 lb.)

Notes:

Researcher Comments:

Acquistion Const.:   Donor   Frank G. Applegate

Ex-Coll. Const.:

Provenance: Donated by Frank G. Applegate, Santa Fe, NM, in 1925.

Accession Method: Acquisition - Donation

Accession Date: 1925

Acquisition Lot: SAR.1925-53

Object Status: Accessioned object

Publications

1.   **The Pottery of Zia Pueblo**   . 2003.
     Pg. 94, Fig. 6.7
     738.0978 Pueblo Har 2003

Repurposed data fields: TCRR and TI

Configuration: Local Column Names

Historical Attributions

repurposed as

Tribal Collection
Review Remarks

Related Works

repurposed as

Tribal Instructions

Database Configuration - IndianArts

File   Edit   View   Manage   Maintenance

Configuration Label:

- Object Dates
- Object Deaccession
- Object Deaccession Use
- Object Flex Fields
- Object Geography
- Object Geography Flex Fields
- Object Groups
- Object Incoming
- Object Incoming Purposes
- Object Levels
- Object Maker Sort
- Object Name Types
- Object Names
- Object Package List
- Object Packages
- Object Preparation
- Object Related Constituent Xrefs
- Object Rights
- Object Rights Flex Fields
- Object Rights Types
- Object Statuses
- Object Titles
- Object Types
- Object Valuation Flex Fields
- Object Value
- Objects
- ObjectTEF
- ObjLocationHistory
- Overall Conditions
- Primary Classification
- Primary Object Number Prefix
- Project Package List

Configuration Value:

Local Column Name	Internal Column Name	Type	Length	Attributes
Negative	Negative	varchar	32	
Notes	Notes	text	16	
Object Count	ObjectCount	int	4	
Object Name	ObjectName	varchar	80	
Object Number	ObjectNumber	varchar	64	
ObjectID	ObjectID	int	4	
On View	OnView	smallint	2	
Paper File Reference	PaperFileRef	varchar	450	
Paper/Support	PaperSupport	varchar	255	D
Portfolio/Series	Portfolio	text	16	
Provenance	Provenance	text	16	
Provenience	PubReferences	text	16	
Public Access	PublicAccess	smallint	2	
Researcher Comments	CuratorialRemarks	text	16	
Secondary Object Number	ObjectNumber2	varchar	64	
Signed	Signed	text	16	
Split Location	CuratorApproved	smallint	2	
State/Proof	State	varchar	128	
Tribal Collection Review Remarks	HistAttributions	text	16	
Tribal Instructions	RelatedWorks	text	16	
Type	Type	int	4	
User Date 1	UserDate1	datetime	8	
User Date 2	UserDate2	datetime	8	
User Date 3	UserDate3	datetime	8	
User Date 4	UserDate4	datetime	8	
User Number 1	UserNumber1	varchar	24	
User Number 2	UserNumber2	varchar	24	
User Number 4	UserNumber4	varchar	24	
Virtual Object	IsVirtual	tinyint	1	

Remarks from multiple reviews

Each Collection Review Remarks entry is dated & refers to its associated Events record.

Remarks from multiple reviews are easily visible in reports pulling this field, as well on eMuseum (where approved by the community).

File   Edit   View   Query   Report   Conservation   Registration   Related   Tools   Maintenance   Help

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☐ Split Location   ☑ Public Access   ☐ On View   ☐ Accountability   ☐ Virtual Object   ☑ In Jurisdiction

Tribal Instructions

Classification
Ceramic

Period

Constituent(s)
Artist or Maker: Mary Histia, 1881 –
Seller: Unknown

Title

Text Edit Window

Tribal Collection Review Remarks

According to the participants in the Acoma collection review visit June 3-5, 2015 (Events Record "Collection Review: Acoma Pueblo, Review 2"): The design on this jar is also referred to as a Tularosa Swirl by most Acoma potters and is a common design today. It symbolizes the journey of life and can also be interpreted as a migration design. The steps in the design can represent the places a person may go or may have been. The black paint used on this jar is very dark which means the quality and color of the black paint rock was very good – a type of iron rock. A flower-like design can be seen when viewed from above (straight on) and when like straight at the bottom. The pot in whole could be a migration pot.

*There is pitting on the surface of this pot, which can be caused by calcium carbonate, an impurity in the clay. It is sometimes called lime popping.

*This could potentially have been made by Mary Histia. The participants mentioned her designs are that are of round patterns or a black style. She was also known to use this Tularosa swirl design often.

According to the participants in the Acoma collection review visit February 26-27, 2019 (Events Record "Collection Review: Acoma Pueblo Review 12"): The shape of a water jar is characterized by usually having a concave base (can also have a flat base) leading to a wider body and shoulder area. The shoulder, which is typically rounded but can also be sharp, leads inward and up to the neck and opening of the water jar. Historic water jars

5 media on file...

OK   Cancel

Front Card   **Notes**

...liography   Flex Fields

Notes

...bution made by Acoma
...5/86)"

Label Text

...view visit June 3-5, 2015
...view 2"): The design on this
...ma potters and is a common
...lso be interpreted as a

Text Entries

Date	Text Type	Purpos...

Add   Edit   Delete

Event Records

Use event records in TMS to track items that have been reviewed by community participants.

Keep a record of who participated in the collection review.

Object Packages

- **Create folders for Community Items:**
  - Packages for each collection review to help track items that will be reviewed by the community participants.

  - Packages for Culturally Sensitive items for review by Tribal and/or Cultural Leadership.

  - Make any other packages that may be needed: i.e. items requested for repatriation, specific artists, data reviews.
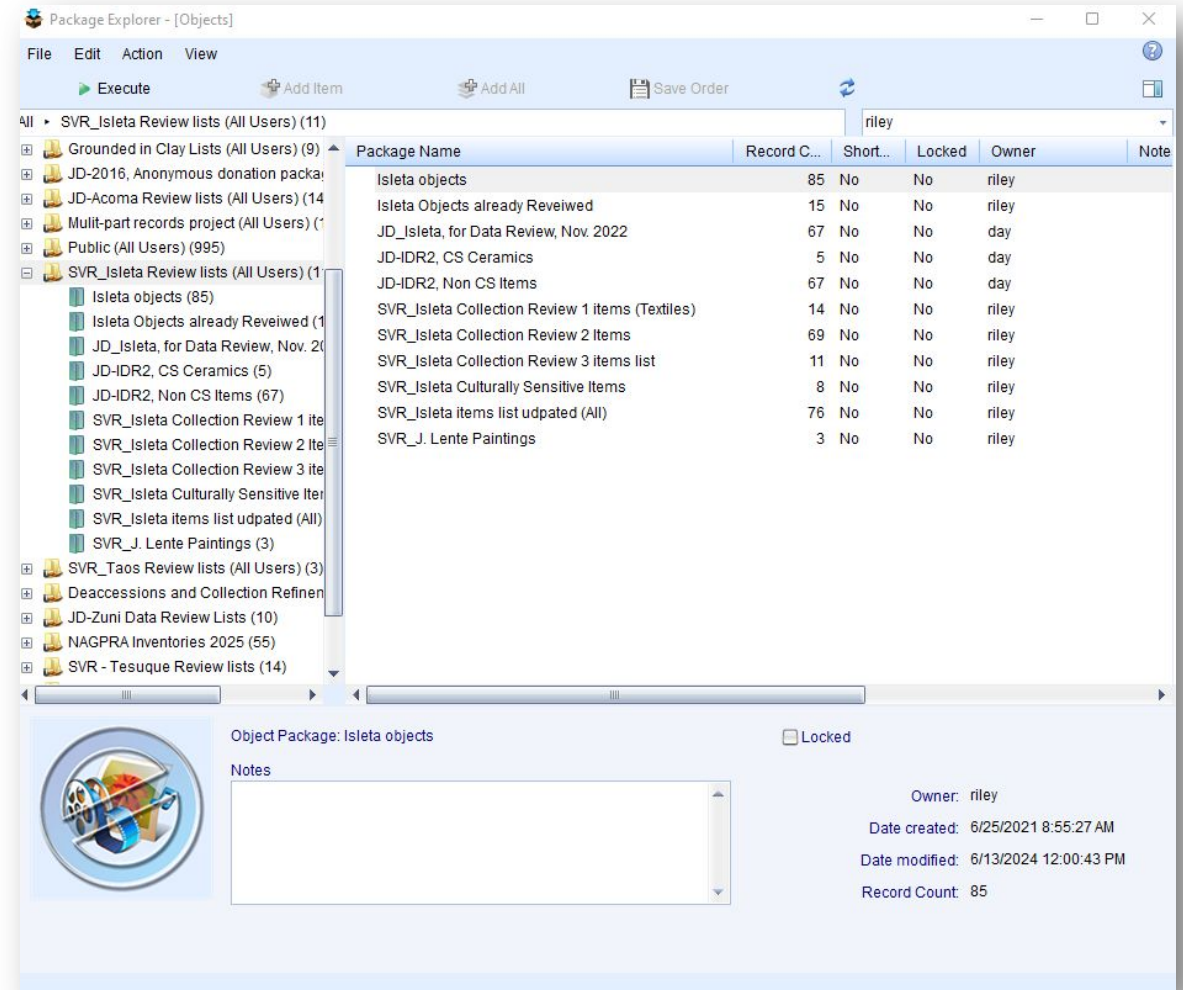
Status Flags

Status flags are used as a quick reference for our staff for things like:
- Tribal Instructions
- Cultural sensitivity
- Restrictions
- Chemical treatment, etc.

Flags assist with filtering queries.

Abbreviations used to fit multiple flags on reports.

Culturally Sensitive Records

Tribal Instructions

SEE: Events record "Collection Review: ____Tribe, Review 4"
ACCESS: ____ people may research, but must not photograph. {Can they sketch?} Must not be made available for research or photography to non-____people. (IARC staff may photograph, but only as needed for record keeping purposes.) The ____ should not be lent to other institutions for use in exhibitions.
PUBLICATION RESTRICTIONS: No publication of this piece is permitted.
SPECIAL HANDLING CONSIDERATIONS: None
SPECIAL STORAGE CONSIDERATIONS: The ____ does not need to be stored in a cupboard (entirely out of view), but should be stored toward center of shelf or toward back where it cannot be easily viewed.

Item moved to Culturally Sensitive Department – limited staff access (only Director, Registration, Collections)

Note: Details redacted to respect cultural sensitivity.

Image restriction - media record

"Restricted Image" thumbnail used as primary image for sensitive items.

Limits staff access to sensitive images except where necessary – including primary image on reports.

Note: **Item depicted is not sensitive.** Restricted image media temporarily added to create this example screenshot.

Data Review

- Bring project participants back to review the new entries made into the TCRR and TI sections.

- Add any additional information that the participants would like to add.

- Confirm or change any instructions or restrictions placed on items.

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Split Location   ☑ Public Access   On View   Accountability   ☑ Virtual Object   ☑ In Jurisdiction   Tribal Instructions

Classification
Ceramic

Period

Constituent(s)
Artist or Maker: Mary Histia, 1881 - 1
Seller: Unknown

Title

Front Card   Notes

Notes

Label Text

Text Entries

Text Edit Window

Tribal Collection Review Remarks

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Water jars of all sizes are made and used. Medium to small size water jars are more commonly used to carry water as the weight of a filled water jar can become quite heavy. Large sized water jars would be used for storing water. Today at Acoma, water jars are still being used and made in both traditional natural and commercial materials.

OK   Cancel

5 media on file...

ography   Flex Fields

ution made by Acoma
/86)"

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Deaccessioning / Rehoming

Deaccession Records in Objects Module only at item level – no Deaccession lot function in TMS

Use of Events Module to track Deaccession lots and Rehoming events.

- Tracks all items deaccessioned together

- Separately tracks all items rehomed together – sometimes one rehoming/repatriation includes items from multiple deaccessions

Deaccession Event Example:
2023 Repatriation to El Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) via Mexican Consulate in Albuquerque, NM

Note: Highly publicized repatriation – with permission from Consulate

Additional TMS Tools & Workflows

Current Key Set: Collection Review TI

Function Keys

F2 | ACCESS: This item can be made available for research
F3 | The word for a water jar in Zuni is "K'yabokya de'ele,"
F7 | SEE: Events Record "Collection Review: Zuni Tribe,
F8 |

- Function Keys
- Flex Fields – project tracking / collection review cataloging checklists
- Custom Data Entry Form
- Package Folders – tracking NAGPRA lists for letters & consultation
  - "remove from query" feature useful for building packages
- Custom Reports

Additional TMS Tools for Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge

- Text Entries – Internal notes for staff vs. public facing data

- Constituents & Role Authority

- Thesaurus
  - Object Names – incorporate indigenous language where requested by community
  - Attributes – Typology vocabulary for pre-contact items (Western & Indigenous)
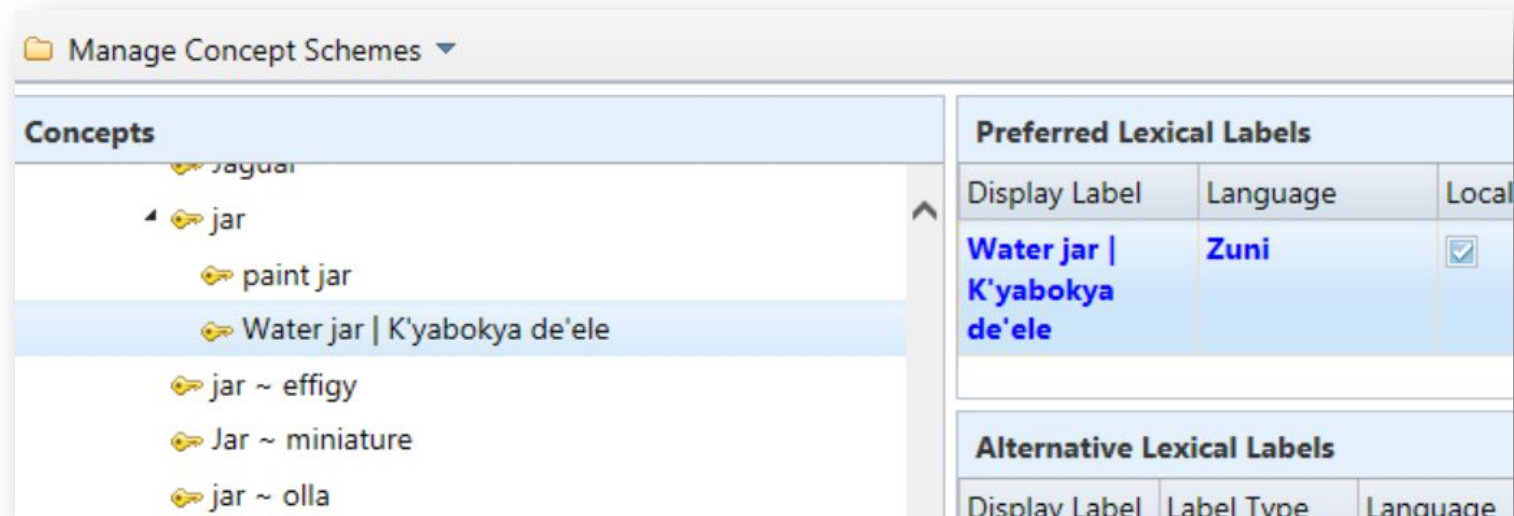
Summary

- Collaboration with Indigenous Communities

- Incorporating Indigenous knowledge, community instructions, sensitivity restrictions into TMS

- Configuring TMS to reflect inclusive terminology

- Needs: expanded features for tracking deaccession lots & repatriation/rehoming of cultural items

Open Discussion

- Share your experiences collaborating with diverse communities – what feedback has informed changes in your registration and collections practice?

- What challenges have you faced in adapting your database to better reflect multicultural collections?

- How can we collectively work with CMS developers to offer more customizable options for decolonizing our databases?

School for Advanced Research

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Additional Resources:

Guidelines for Collaboration: Guidelines for Museums, Guidelines for Communities https://guidelinesforcollaboration.info/

Standards for Museums with Native American Collections (SMNAC) https://sarweb.org/smnac/

Indigenous Collections Care (ICC) Guide – *to be completed Fall 2026* https://sarweb.org/icc