

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
November 18/19, 2024  
Chicago, IL – Hybrid**

**Sustained Funding for the Native American Archives Section  
(Prepared by: Selena Ortega-Chiolero, Alison Clemens, and Joyce Gabiola)**

**BACKGROUND**

In February 2024, the Native American Archives Section submitted a recommendation to SAA Council that Council allocate funding to support travel scholarships for Tribal archivists to the SAA Annual Meetings for the next three years. This request was intended to supplement cost coverage of SAA Annual Meeting registration and SAA membership fees for select Tribal archivists, which SAA has been doing for the past several years. The February 2024 travel funding request was not approved by Council in time for the full need to be met; instead, funding NAAS received from the Mellon Foundation was reallocated to support these travel costs.

As NAAS indicated in their initial request, “approving this funding to the Native American Archives Section will allow emerging Tribal professionals to engage in critical conversations, access and contribute to the latest discourses in the field, and to bring home key knowledge to support their communities’ archives and memory practices; for SAA, approving this funding will encourage a new generation of Tribally-based professionals to diversify our conversations, SAA membership, and the wider archival field.” This year’s Indigenous attendance at the 2024 conference as a result of the Mellon Foundation’s support demonstrates the need for continued SAA dedicated funding: Mellon funding allowed five (5) Native scholarship winners to attend the 2024 Society of American Archivist Annual Meeting held in Chicago, IL on August 14-17. Among these scholarship recipients and through their own funding, some of our IAT participants (8) were therefore able to attend the SAA conference, some in-person in Chicago, and some online. Feedback from these recipients is available in the Discussion section of this document.

This is a critically important issue, and the authors are submitting this discussion item in order to identify ongoing and sustained funding possibilities for NAAS membership and conference attendance, including travel. Following this discussion, the authors anticipate submitting an action item funding request for the February 2025 Council meeting.

**DISCUSSION**

Membership and conference support has been transformational in facilitating the participation of Indigenous archivists in SAA and has the potential to continue to directly increase Indigenous community participation in SAA in the future. To give readers a

sense of the direct benefit of these funds and support to scholarship recipients and to SAA, we share this feedback from scholarship recipients:

- Maxwell Field, in-person participant, IAT cohort, Archivist:
  - “I learned about the SAA as an organization, attended several informative presentation sessions, was recognized as one of the few Indigenous Archivists in attendance, and was able to get closer to the NAAS group itself through the extracurricular events and social hangouts. This was perhaps one of the most meaningful conference experiences that I have participated in.”
  - “My Indigenous archival networking capacity has increased due to meeting other NAAS scholarship recipients and getting to know the existing NAAS committee members better.”
- Kara Stewart, online participant, IAT cohort, Historic Researcher and Archivist:
  - “Receiving the scholarship was wonderful! I was so disappointed that I was not able to travel to the conference in person. For both the virtual conference and the SAA membership, what has helped me the most is the ability to take in information as I can digest it and use it professionally and as my schedule allows. I am learning so much from both the conference virtual sessions and videos and I have a session set up with an archiving software company as a result of reaching out during the conference.”
  - “All of the learning made possible by the scholarship has helped me to better serve my tribe as I create our first archiving station and prepare to archive our digitized documents. I have a lot of learning to do, but SAA membership and networking with the IAT founders and cohort will support me in that learning.”
- Candy Navarrete, in-person attendant, MLIS graduate
  - “This was my first time attending the conference. It was a great experience and wonderful to see some of the Indigenous Presentations and connect with other Indigenous Archivists. ATALM doesn’t connect with a lot of Indigenous Archivists, but rather museum professionals.”
- Nataani Hanley-Moraga, in-person participant, MLIS Student
  - “This was my first time attending the conference. There was a lot of information to absorb, particularly connecting with other Indigenous Archivists. I preferred SAA over my experience attending my ALA. All the NAAS members had a structure to make it enjoyable for Indigenous Archivists.”
- Rochanne Downs, in person participant, NAGPRA coordinator
  - “I was a first-time participant for SAA and it was frustrating at first in how SAA did their sessions and registrations. There were not enough Indigenous focus sessions. I recommend SAA to provide more Indigenous sessions.”

Council’s inability to fulfill the February 2024 budget request from NAAS in time for the need to be met threatened the ability of NAAS members to attend the Annual Meeting.

We are relieved that NAAS was able to reallocate part of its Mellon Foundation funding, but this indicates the clear and urgent need to establish sustained funding for the section.

At the October/November 2023 (where the need was originally voiced, as part of NAAS's annual report), February 2024, and May 2024 Council meetings, Council members discussed the possibility of funding this need on an ongoing basis. Although Council did not vote on this, Council members expressed a desire that after the 2025 fiscal year Council and the SAA Foundation should work with NAAS to provide a more sustainable funding model for the program, rather than expect them to submit component group funding requests each year. The SAA Foundation President was present for these discussions about this topic and expressed an openness for the Foundation to consider supporting NAAS in this way.

Previously proposed annual costs to support five Tribal archivists, as per the February 2024 budget request, were as follows:

Requested Additional Travel Funds  
Estimated travel return flight (est. \$1000 x 5) = \$5000  
Estimated hotel (3 nights x est. \$275/night x 5) = \$4125  
Total = \$9125

Note that this is in addition to other Annual Meeting support, which SAA was able to provide in 2024:

Five Travel Scholarships  
Conference registration (\$399 x 5) = \$1995 (based on last year's rates)  
Complimentary SAA membership (\$325 x 5) = \$1625 (if based on highest median salaries above)  
Total = \$3620

There are at least three possibilities for how SAA might achieve sustained funding for Tribal member participation in SAA and attendance at the Annual Meeting: dedicating a line item in the SAA budget, seeking funding support from the SAA Foundation, and a combination of those two approaches. The Questions for Discussion below provide discussion prompts for identifying preferred options, so that the authors of this discussion item can prepare an action item for the February 2025 Council meeting.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- What are the compelling downsides to not financially support the participation of Tribal archivists and memory workers in SAA? Does Council still agree that this is of central importance?
- What does Council think about dedicating a line item in the SAA budget and/or seeking funding support from the SAA Foundation? What are the pros and cons of each approach? Are there other options we should discuss and explore?
- Sustained funding has been brought up in all Council meetings in the past year. What will be needed to finally move this forward?