

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: SURVIVING SUMMER MADNESS



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Hello friends, it's been a wild summer, has it not? We continue to face attacks on our field, our work, and our colleagues.

We've heard of struggles and reductions in the workforce in an already unpredictable market and we wonder what the future holds for us. Two things have brought me a bit of renewed strength in a time where one wants to throw up their hands, burn it all down, and walk away.

One is the [opening statement](#) of Dr. David Blight this summer before Congress, speaking on how the Smithsonian Institution presents United States history. It is easy to be outraged at the onslaught of attacks (as we should be), and in those moments, become exhausted with the fight. But he offered a reminder for most of

us, and an introduction for others, of what we as historians do. Blight stated that, "a historian reads, listens, searches, measures, imagines [their] way into and through all manner of evidence..." He said that, "we examine, read, accumulate, sift, study these modes of evidence with hopefully empathy and humility. Then we rise up from all of our data and our sources and all manner of context and fashion all of this into a story, into narrative, in order to inspire and take our audiences somewhere." In the last sentence he outlines our duty to the public, the reason why our work is so important. **Once we get our audience somewhere, "we are bound by our craft to make an argument about why this all happened and why it matters."**

And if I'm keeping it all the way real, I needed to hear that last part over and over again. It is the reminder I need to hear for those days when I get so weary that I look for a different

career path, or want to channel my inner [Bernadine Harris](#). Because we are bound by our craft, we are bound by our choosing to be historians, to be *public* historians, and we will continue to be the ones to tell everyone "why all this happened and why it matters." This is our time, and while our field is the subject of intense attacks, while the preservation protections we have worked to have placed and upheld are being tossed aside, it's our job to come out of this and say why all of it—all the chaos, rhetoric, sometimes irreversible damage happened. Because while there is a large focus on the negatives, there is a new generation watching this moment and still choosing this profession. They see what we're going through and are being drawn to public history because they understand the work we do matters. We have the opportunity to cultivate out of these ashes the group that I lovingly refer to as my retirement plans. It seems hard to have these

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2026 NCPH BOARD OF DIRECTORS AWARD FOR EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE

The Board of Directors Award for Extraordinary Service is given when the NCPH Board seeks to recognize publicly an individual who has, through long-term and substantive effort, made transformational contributions to the work of NCPH.

Kristine Navarro-McElhaney



The NCPH Board of Directors awards the 2026 Award for Extraordinary Service to Kristine Navarro-McElhaney in recognition of her exceptional leadership and service to NCPH

over more than a decade. Kristine's dedication to NCPH has been defined by careful financial stewardship, enthusiastic promotion of public history, and an unwavering commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. Her warmth, and compassion have touched volunteers, staff, and members throughout her tenure.

Among Kristine's most significant contributions has been her leadership in helping NCPH more meaningfully address a long and troubling lack of diversity in public history as a field and in our organization specifically. Before becoming NCPH's first Latina President, she co-chaired the Diversity Task Force and helped guide its transition into the standing IDEA Committee. As Vice President, she carried this commitment into board appointments, prioritizing the inclusion of public historians from underrepresented communities in committee leadership and membership. As President, Kristine continued to advance these transformative shifts in NCPH's leadership culture. She regularly used her "[President's Comments](#)" column in the newsletter to highlight the work

and perspectives of BIPOC and emerging public historians. In 2024 she reimaged the traditional Presidential Address as a Presidential Roundtable, creating a more inclusive and collaborative model for leadership and reflection.

Kristine has played a pivotal role in expanding the visibility of NCPH. In 2014, she brought students from the University of Texas at El Paso to our Monterey conference, where they documented NCPH activities and interviewed staff, board representatives, members, and attendees. They produced a [series of videos](#) and other materials defining public history, highlighting NCPH's support for consulting historians and students, and promoting future events.

During her service as Treasurer from 2012 to 2018, Kristine helped guide the organization through major staff transitions at a time when support from our host university was declining. During a break from board service between 2018 to 2020, Kristine volunteered as a social media manager for NCPH's platforms.

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NCPH inspires public engagement with the past and serves the needs of practitioners in putting history to work in the world by building community among historians, expanding professional skills and tools, fostering critical reflection on historical practice, and publicly advocating for history and historians. *Public History News* is published in March, June, September, and December. NCPH reserves the right to reject material that is not consistent with the goals and purposes of the organization. Individual membership orders, changes of address, and business and editorial correspondence should be addressed to NCPH, 127 Cavanaugh Hall – IU Indianapolis, 425 University Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140. E-mail: ncph@iu.edu. Tel: 317-274-2716. Join online or renew at www.ncph.org. Headquartered on the campus of IU Indianapolis, NCPH is grateful for the generous support of the IU School of Liberal Arts and the Department of History.

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NOTICE OF THE FALL BOARD MEETING

On Wednesday, September 16, the board will meet in Providence, Rhode Island, during our joint conference with the American Association for State and Local History. The board welcomes comments, questions, and suggestions from NCPH members throughout the year. Want to get in touch? Please contact the board at large (board@ncph.org). Individual board members are listed at <http://bit.ly/ncphcommittees>.



**NCPH NATIONAL COUNCIL
ON PUBLIC HISTORY**

Wednesday, September 16

FALL 2026 BOARD MEETING

*during our joint conference with
AASLH in Providence, RI*

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REFLECTING ON WHAT DIGITAL SCHOLAR'S DONATION MEANS TO NCPH



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In an era of budget cuts across history organizations, when so many of us have seen our own ability to give constrained, large donations to NCPH matter even more. [Digital Scholar](#) has been a consistent and generous partner to NCPH for several years, contributing \$90,000 since 2021, including their most recent donation of \$20,000 in 2025. Stephanie Rowe, NCPH Executive Director, said, “Digital Scholar’s support for NCPH has enabled us to maintain our staff capacity during a period of declining financial support from partnering institutions, while at the same time increasing accessible virtual programming and maintaining a robust set of un-paywalled digital publications. Their giving enables NCPH’s mission to put public history to work in the world.”

As members of NCPH’s Development Committee, we know how critical large donations are to sustaining NCPH. Since its [inception](#), NCPH has been a powerful force bringing communities together around a shared understanding of the past. Our work is only possible through sustained support from Patron, Partner, and Sustaining Members, our Legacy Circle, and our donors. By contributing to the [Annual Fund](#), Digital Scholar allows us to retain our [staff](#), maintain [operations](#), and provide [low-cost professional development](#) for public historians. In this moment of financial and political uncertainty, many NCPH members are seeking community and leadership, and Digital Scholar’s gift helps NCPH staff continue to support its membership through challenging times.

Formed in 2009, Digital Scholar has had an enormous impact on the field of public history in the digital age. It builds and maintains popular free, open-source tools that public historians around the globe use every day. [Omeka](#) provides free content management systems for publishing digital collections and media-rich exhibits used by museums, libraries, archives (such as the Fred T. Korematsu Institute and University of Utah’s J. Willard Marriott Library), as well as for many collaborative public history student projects. For public historians with a foot in the world of academic writing and publishing, [Zotero](#) is an essential tool for managing sources and citations. Newer tools like [PressForward](#) (a



Organize, describe, annotate, and transcribe your research images with Tropy ([tropy.org](#)), a free, open-source project from Digital Scholar.

WordPress plugin for aggregating and sharing online resources), [Tropy](#) (for organizing and annotating digital images of research materials), and [Sourcery](#) (for requesting scans of archival materials remotely) have streamlined digital workflows for researchers, students, and public history institutions. By implementing sustainable business models, Digital Scholar can afford to support allied organizations like NCPH.

Every gift to and membership in NCPH helps us sustain our mission to build community among public historians and expand their professional skills, but individual gifts and memberships alone are not enough. Membership and individual donations make up only 28% of NCPH’s budget; without the support of organizations like Digital Scholar, we would not be able to consistently develop new [resources](#), offer [pay-what-you-can virtual professional development programs](#), or continue the level of [support](#) and [advocacy](#) we provide the field through our staff and operations.

Digital Scholar’s generous donation offers NCPH potential for outreach and support to our organization’s diverse membership. From the classroom to exhibit halls, and archives to film sets, our members work with dedication to create meaningful interactions with the past. This work is not without complexity, as shown in [a recent special issue](#) of *The Public Historian*. Digital Scholar’s financial support acknowledges that NCPH does powerful and necessary work, but the organization requires monetary assistance to flourish.

NCPH is grateful to Digital Scholar for its ongoing commitment to putting good history

to work in the world. As NCPH President, Nicole Moore says, “gifts like those from Digital Scholar not only matter more than ever but are critical in providing much needed support to further advance our mission and organizational goals.” To learn more about how to support NCPH through monetary donations, visit <https://ncph.org/giving/overview/>.

Joe Cialdella is Assistant Director of Experiential Learning and Public Scholarship, Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan and a member of NCPH’s Development Committee.

Mariaelena DiBenigno is an Independent Scholar located in Charlottesville, Virginia and a member of NCPH’s Development Committee.

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MEET THE 2026 NEW PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL AWARD WINNERS!

NCPH awards two \$500 travel grants to encourage new professionals to attend the annual meeting. We acknowledge the generous support of [Historical Research Associates, Inc. \(HRA\)](#) for underwriting one of these awards.

NCPH NEW PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL AWARD WINNER

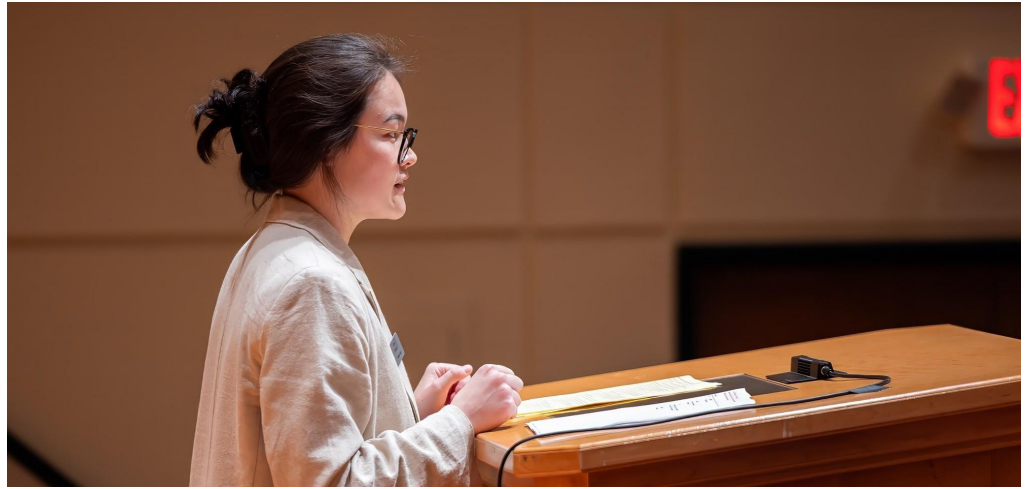


CAROLINE HUGH / CHUGH00006@GMAIL.COM

The first time I heard the term “public history” was at the University of Chicago, in the Public History Practicum taught by

Leora Auslander and Adam Green. It was also my first encounter with the National Council on Public History, as our first assigned reading was [NCPH’s webpage](#) “What is Public History?”. Through articles in *The Public Historian* like [Tiya Miles’s “Edges, Ledges, and the Limits of the Craft,”](#) and [Katharine Corbett and Dick Miller’s “A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry,”](#) I was further introduced to the wonderful ecosystem that is NCPH. I am particularly grateful for that early introduction to the concept of shared authority, which was formative for an overenthusiastic young scholar. I am also incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to travel to the 2026 NCPH-AASLH joint conference.

I came to public history by way of urban history and urban studies at the University of Chicago, where I was leading walking tours before I knew there were best practices for this sort of thing, informed by research projects on landscape architecture and urban renewal in South Side Chicago. After a transformative quarter studying abroad in Paris, I became interested in transnational history and had the opportunity to intern and conduct archival research at both the [Chicago History Museum](#) and [Musée Carnavalet-Histoire de Paris](#). Working with institutions in two cities that engage with their histories in different ways was eye-opening, and it cultivated a simple question that continues to guide my work: how do people represent and interpret the place they live? In the classroom, this question culminated in transnational-comparative research on 19th century urban planning and suburban annexation in Paris and Chicago, but it also informed work outside of the classroom, with organizations like [Blacks in Green](#) and [Landmarks Illinois](#). Learning how to listen, to understand *why* places matter to people, was the most valuable skill I gained through this experiential public history education.



Caroline Hugh speaking at the National History Day Georgia awards ceremony in April 2026. Photo credit: jmphotographics [image0].

Until recently, I was working as program coordinator for [Georgia Humanities](#), the state’s humanities council. I entered that position post-Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cuts, so I figured the landscape of public history and humanities work was going to be rocky. As you all know: it is. Fortunately, as I helped to make [National History Day](#) happen for 15,000 of Georgia’s 6th through 12th graders and supported the [Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street](#) program in rural communities, I was aided by the stellar history and public history networks in the state. The University of West Georgia, Middle Georgia State University, LaGrange College, the Georgia Association of Museums, National History Day: all of these partners confirmed one of the most important lessons I learned in school—the best group projects are those involving public historians.

Working with a wide array of partners, including social studies curriculum coordinators, downtown development authorities, rural museums, and the Smithsonian Institution, exposed me to new ways people “do” history in public. From innovative teacher workshops to communal music venue construction, I was constantly having to update my definition of what a public history project entailed. To meet people from across my home state, learn how they wanted to research, teach about, or celebrate their local community, and then work with them to make that happen was an invaluable experience. In the midst of attacks on National Endowment for the Humanities-funded programs, it was truly inspiring to see people make history happen regardless.

I recently left Georgia Humanities to serve as an [AmeriCorps](#) member at the National Park Service, working with the [National Heritage Areas \(NHA\) system](#), which means I can now say I’ve done public history work at the city,

state, and national level. The NHA program is a unique public-private partnership that allows the NPS to support interpretation, conservation, and economic development in large, lived-in landscapes, led by people who live in each NHA. I know there will be many people from NHAs in attendance at the September conference—please come say hello!

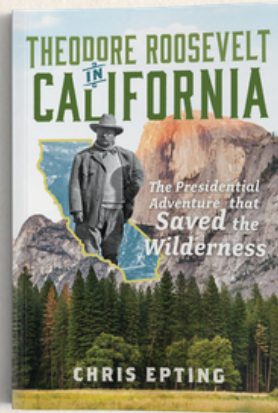
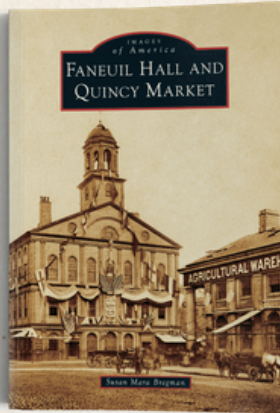
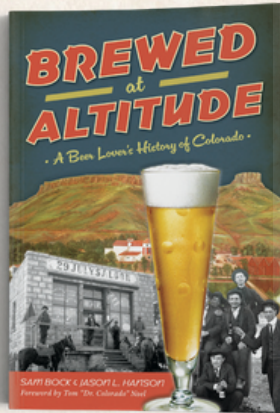
I joined the NHA program to help draft standard operating procedures for this newly-legislated system, but, more importantly, I joined because the program’s purpose is to help people articulate to the nation why their place is significant, why it’s worth interpreting, preserving, or visiting. Because they are stewarding large landscapes, NHAs are engaged in creative projects, from bike and paddle tours, to community archiving and digitization sessions, to food heritage programs. I feel fortunate to have been introduced to so many partnership models early in my career, with people who are committed to shared authority—even if shared authority is complicated in the context of federal funding.

I hope to return to the urban level soon, as I am currently working on applying to doctoral history programs. That guiding question—how do people represent and interpret the place they live?—is one that I am interested in continuing to investigate. At the joint conference, I would love to meet people who are also asking that question (reach out at chugh00006@gmail.com!), and I would love to have conversations about how we are sharing authority in this moment when authority so desperately needs to be shared.

Caroline Hugh is an AmeriCorps service member with the National Heritage Areas system, part of the National Park Service. She is based in Atlanta, Georgia.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

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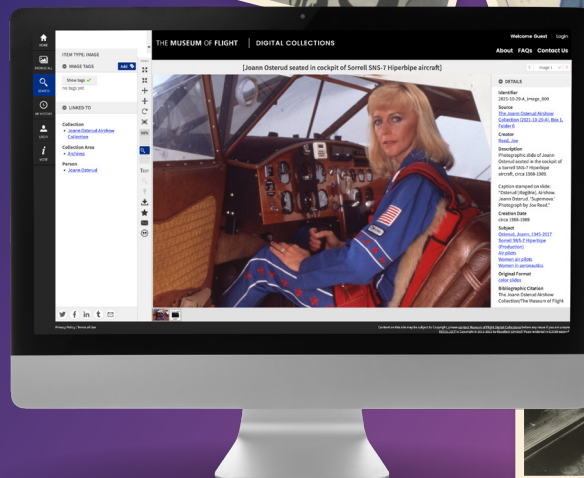
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"Everything has just been so positive and fantastic. We've had people say, 'I had no idea you had all of this stuff. Can I work with you on my book or my school project?' That's the kind of community engagement we always wanted."

ALI LANE
DIGITAL ASSET COORDINATOR,
THE MUSEUM OF FLIGHT



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2026 NCPH BOARD OF DIRECTORS AWARD FOR EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

After joining Arizona State University, she secured institutional support for the 2015 redesign of NCPH's website, along with three additional years of funding for website hosting and maintenance. She helped expand NCPH's reach on Twitter during its peak years and brought greater professionalism, consistency, and visual quality to the organization's online presence—achievements that are often difficult to sustain through volunteer labor alone.

As Vice President, President, and Immediate Past President from 2020 to 2026, she provided essential leadership, stability, and kindness as NCPH navigated the profound impacts of the

COVID-19 pandemic on both the field and the organization. Whether mailing care packages to staff, organizing a virtual baby shower for a fellow board member, or dedicating time to member and donor outreach, Kristine consistently fostered a sense of connection, appreciation, and shared purpose. Her care and generosity helped ensure that board members, staff, and volunteers remained connected, valued, and committed to NCPH's mission during a challenging period.



Kristine Navarro-McElhaney and Alannah Graves at the NCPH 2023 opening reception in Atlanta, Georgia. Alannah pitched the idea for an NCPH student board member at the conference, a position Kristine worked with the board to make happen during her presidency. Alannah later became NCPH's inaugural student board member. Photo courtesy of Sharon Leon.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS: SURVIVING SUMMER MADNESS // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

moments of hope, these silver linings, but those coming after us? They're watching our passion. They're reading and reposting our words. They see our fight and they want to be tagged in. That brings me a small sense of peace in the midst of this torrential storm.

The other thing that brought me renewed strength is the reminder that our [annual conference](#) is coming up. As we gather in Providence, Rhode Island, with our colleagues from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), we'll do so over 1,400 strong. Last spring, as NCPH gathered in Montréal, we got the first inklings of trouble. Remember the collective gasp when [Executive Order 14253](#) was announced? Many of us gathered together to mourn, to vent, and to find community shortly after, at dinners and in conversations in the hotel lobby. With the summer behind us and an uncertain future in front of us, let's gather again. But this time, let us not let current circumstances lead our community building. Let us continue to bask in solidarity and be reminded that we are indeed stronger together. Our work really is the work of revolution.

The [Program's](#) slate of sessions is amazing and the events are wonderful. One event I'm looking forward to is NCPH's IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) Committee and AASLH's Diversity and Inclusion Committee meet-up on Thursday, September 17, at 5:30 pm. All conference attendees are invited to join this informal mixer for conversations about both organizations' core values of public history practice. It's one thing to be in community with my colleagues; it's another to be in



The NCPH Advocacy Committee in Montréal. Photo courtesy of Stephanie Rowe.

community with colleagues who are laser-focused on making sure that everyone feels that their voices are heard, that they belong and that they have workplaces that are accessible and equitable. It's a laid-back event that always leaves me feeling refreshed and inspired, and I would love to see you there! Our Program and Host committees have worked diligently across both organizations to give us a time we won't soon forget. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you, to being back with my people, and to making new connections. For some of us attending both NCPH and AASLH is old hat, but for those who have only been able to select one or the other—a time will be had. I honestly cannot wait to spend that week being in your presence.

We've got this. As historians, we all know of moments in history that felt a lot like our current struggle. We know that this moment matters, and while it will be discussed in the textbooks to come, we will not let it be the final word. Let's continue to advocate and do the work of history. Let's continue to lift each other up, support and look out for one another. In the words of Pulitzer Prize winner Kendrick Lamar, "we gon' be alright."

Nicole A. Moore is the President of the National Council on Public History, Senior Director of Education at the National Center for Civil Rights, and an Independent Consultant.

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HRA NEW PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL AWARD WINNER

SARA SHAFFER-HENRY /
SARA.SHAFFER-HENRY@ILLINOIS.GOV

Greetings, colleagues! I am pleased to share the story behind my 2026 New Professional Travel Award. I write to you today from Emiquon—a vast cultural and natural landscape in the heart of the central Illinois River Valley. A bountiful resource, Emiquon's wetlands provide refuge for diverse flora and



fauna throughout the year, creating a destination for humans past and present. This is especially true for our Tribal Partners, whose Ancestors were the first to call Emiquon home.

Archaeological investigations throughout Emiquon demonstrate extensive networks of pre-contact Indigenous villages, mound groups, and seasonal sites, showing adaptation and cultural transformation over twelve thousand years to the present. This narrative of Emiquon is one of ongoing connection between time, space, and land. It is within this narrative that [Illinois State Museum-Dickson Mounds \(DMM\)](#) resides.

While Emiquon's significance is monumental, the presence of DMM adds a layer of complexity within this landscape. Located on a blufftop, the museum encroaches upon an extensive Indigenous burial site. The ten to twelve superimposed burial mounds located here contain over two hundred Indigenous burials that were interred over a period of four hundred years. When these Ancestors were



Sara providing an educational tour of the famous J-Case, which showcases the evolution of Indigenous technology over twelve thousand years in the Illinois River Valley.

encountered in the early 20th century, they were excavated and placed on display *in-situ*, or as they were found. A tourist attraction for over sixty years, the burial exhibit was closed in 1992 because of two key factors: The passing of NAGPRA in 1990, and the advocacy of Indigenous leaders such as Evelyn Voelker

(Commanche), John Haney (Seminole), and members of the American Indian Movement.

This leads us to now. How do you tell the immense story of Indigenous history at Emiquon and balance it with the present? How do we re-center the story of Emiquon with Indigenous knowledge, truth, and perspectives? Lastly, how do we move forward as a museum that acknowledges its past and builds for a more inclusive future? As the new Associate Director of DMM, my role is to find answers to these questions as we move into our next iteration—one focused on accountability, reconciliation, respect, and healing. To do so, we are taking steps to rebuild DMM into a space that centers Indigenous knowledge, truth, and perspectives while increasing accessibility and public education on Indigenous Peoples—past, present, and future. This new direction is based on collaboration with Tribal Relations and key elements of decolonization, restorative justice, and education. While building this new operational framework, we are utilizing an incremental approach to steadily build confidence with our Tribal Partners and local communities. A few of those changes have been:

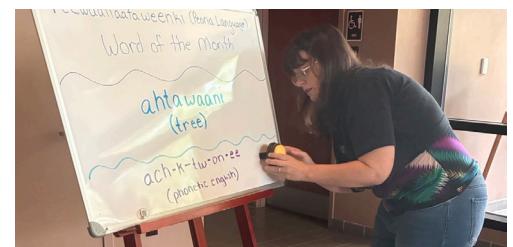
- Enhanced relationship with Tribal Relations: We are building the museum with Tribal Relations as a key partner and stakeholder.
- “Is, not was”: We are internally shifting the dialogue and programmatic approach to one inclusive of present-day Indigenous Peoples. This includes the way we model our verbiage with each other, the public, and in our writing.
- Decolonization of self and space: As a non-Indigenous person, a key aspect of my leadership strategy is a commitment to continual self-reflection, learning, and accountability for myself and my team. To achieve this, we are building decolonization training that educates on key aspects of Indigenous histories and cultures, led by Indigenous community members. This framework will include units on topics like sovereignty, treaty rights, repatriation practice, art, and music. Our goal is to build a museum that understands Indigenous cultures beyond the archaeological lens and can confidently understand Indigenous Peoples past and present.
- Indigenous language integration: We started with a small test of a Peewaaliaataweenki (Peoria language)

“Word of the Month” in our lobby. We are expanding this integration to use adaptive switch technology to add Peewaaliaataweenki language throughout our site. This will allow visitors to hear Peewaaliaataweenki and connect the past to the present. Additionally, we are integrating Peewaaliaataweenki into our new children's center through place and animal names, and a tech station that will engage visitors with different Indigenous languages and cultures of this area.

- Bringing the outdoors in: Aligning with concepts of I-STEAM and land and water knowledge, we are advancing our programmatic model beyond an archaeological focus to one that includes Indigenous interpretations of the natural world. The children's center is incorporating key land and water knowledge of our Tribal Partners into the learning space. Topics such as the Peewaalia (Peoria) lunar cycles, significant animal and plant species, and land/water histories and stories are being integrated to create a comprehensive learning experience. We are building a sensory room that is through an Indigenous lens, allowing all visitors to experience Emiquon in their own way. Finally, we are expanding the museum beyond our walls and into Emiquon through night sky, water, wildlife, and ethnobotany programming.

Thank you to NCPH and Historical Research Associates Inc. (HRA) for this award and the chance to share our story. We are truly excited about this new era at DMM. Hopefully your travels will one day include a trip to our museum for a first-hand experience of Emiquon. (We are only three hours north of St. Louis, if you are attending NCPH 2027—hint, hint!) Until then, follow our journey on [Facebook](#) and our [Website](#). For collaboration with me, it is warmly welcomed on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and Instagram (@sara.shafferhenry).

Sara Shaffer-Henry is the Associate Director of Illinois State Museum-Dickson Mounds. She lives in the Illinois Central River Valley with her partner Joshua and pup Smokey.



Sara adding one of the first adaptive communication switches in the museum. This switch increases accessibility for visitors with disabilities and increases the presence of Indigenous language at DMM.

FAREWELL MONICA, WELCOME SUMMER!

Our excellent 2025-2026 graduate assistant, Monica Berg, left us after graduating with her MA in public history from IU Indianapolis in May. You may have met her last spring in Montréal, where she was indispensable in helping to run our 2025 conference, or at the May mini-con in DC, which she planned and coordinated as her culminating project with us. Even if you never met her, you probably used one of the many NCPH resources she worked on: the jobs page, where she added 30+ jobs a week on a regular basis; the weekly email update, which she edited and helped to write; and the bi-weekly Around the Field listing of events and opportunities for *History@Work*. Please join us in thanking Monica!



Monica standing in front of the NCPH check-in table at the DC mini-con, May 27, 2026.

We loved working with Monica and highly recommend her to potential employers. Monica is currently living in Atlanta, Georgia, and she is open to work in the Midwest, New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast. She can be reached at monicaberg5644@gmail.com. Hire her while you still have the chance!

Join us in welcoming Summer Matthes, NCPH's 2026-2027 graduate assistant! Summer is in her second year in the IU Indianapolis public history program, pursuing a dual MA degree in public history and library and information science. Summer grew up in Chicago and received BAs in history and clinical psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2024. Since studying at IU Indy, she has worked at the Indiana State Archives and currently works at the Ruth Lilly Special Collections & Archives, where she assists with their Omeka exhibits. Summer can be reached at smatthes@iu.edu.



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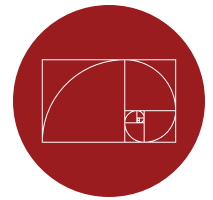
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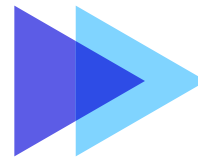
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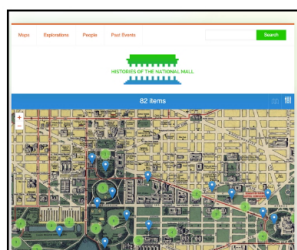
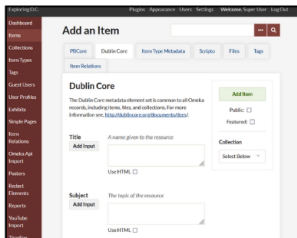
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