

Project Title
"Digital Ethnography for Sustainable Development in Indiana, PA"

Sub-Contract Grantee Name/Authorized Signatory
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Final Report Narrative

Title of Project: **Digital Ethnography for Sustainable Development
in Indiana, PA**

Grant Period: February 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

Grantee Name: Mark Berezansky, Executive Director, IUP Research Institute

Project Director: Amanda Poole

Description of Project:

The 2013-2014 ATP project partnered students from Applied Anthropology (ANTH 360) with the Indiana Borough Council Community Development Committee to create bridges between campus and community through a digital ethnography project that profiles and directs people to community assets within a walk-able distance from campus.

The Community Development Committee represents a sub-group of Borough Council elected representatives. This Committee is responsible for community and economic development initiatives, and serves as a liaison between the Borough and other significant community stakeholders, including IUP, the Chamber of Commerce, and nonprofit community development groups like Downtown Indiana and Welcome to Indiana. Students met with members of the Community Development Committee in class and at their monthly meetings. Students worked with these community partners to select sites of local social significance to include on a wayfinding tour of the community. Students then conducted ethnographic research highlighting the unique history and diverse identity of the community, as viewed through the stories surrounding these key places. This research was compiled in a mobile friendly website. Finally, this website was made accessible through scannable QR codes on signs that are located at the ten places profiled in this project.

Overall, the project was designed to enhance the walk-able and bike-able nature of the town – assets identified as community priorities during the 2012-2013 ATP project. Another main goal of this project was to welcome students and their families into the community. This goal was developed in conversation with community partners who identified key concerns to be addressed in the project – including the loss of a long-term residential population in the borough, desires to support the local business district, and tensions between long term residents and the transient student population. The intended outcomes of this project involved creating bridges between campus and community premised on asset based

development, inclusiveness, and fostering a sense of community belonging among IUP students.

Activities:

In addition to the conference presentation, poster, and other activities, please include full details regarding the following requirements of the 2013-2014 Scope of Work:

- activities with community partners (include partner name(s), **dates and locations of meetings**, topics of focus-group discussions, etc.)

The project director (Poole) met with a representative of the Community Development Committee of the Indiana Borough Council (Peter Broad), along with Borough staff (Assistant Manager Roland Francis) and the head of a Community Development Committee affiliate organization, Downtown Indiana (Jessica Bowman), at an early meeting in June 2013 to begin conversations about this project (attachment 1a). We met for an hour and a half at the Artist's Hand Gallery in downtown Indiana on June 10. Our conversation involved brainstorming about the original project idea, setting a time frame, and discussing desired outcomes. The original idea was to design a wayfinding project. This idea had been suggested by a local community planner familiar with the results of the 2012-2013 ATP project. The 2012-2013 ATP project had solicited public input about asset-based sustainable development in Indiana County, pointing to walk-and bike-ability as important assets to develop locally. This June meeting was particularly useful, as it generated meaningful input into the possible scope and goals of the project, and delineated parameters for selecting places to include. For instance, we decided to include public places of social significance that would increase traffic in the downtown business area, without having to choose between private businesses for inclusion in the project. These parameters were given to the students to facilitate the selection process early Fall semester. We also discussed the possible nature and placement of the signs.

Early fall semester, representatives of the Community Development Committee joined our class to discuss the project at our regular class meeting place in McElhaney Hall (see attachment 1b). This was a useful meeting that framed the project in light of recent tensions between long term residents and student populations in the Borough. We also discussed the results of a freelisting exercise with IUP students performed by members of the class (attachment 2e). This research detailed places students usually bike or walk to from campus, noting that students overwhelmingly visit convenience stores at the edge of campus. In addition to these results, students described their experiences documenting the first annual Northern Appalachian Folk Festival, held in downtown Indiana on September 7 and 8. This Folk Festival, along with a class presentation by visiting musician Sue Masek, exposed students to the diversity of cultural heritage in this region, along with shared issues related to the socio-ecological and economic impacts of a long

history of resource extraction (attachments 2c and 2d). We used these results, along with materials about community walkability and green-spaces supplied by our community partner (attachment 1d) to select ten sites for inclusion in the project that highlighted different aspects of social life and history in Indiana (attachment 2b). These sites link to broader issues. For instance, focusing on the Indiana Community Garden and the local Farmer's Market allowed students to explore how people in the community are working to grow a local food economy. The Old Courthouse, a historic landmark, was featured in the work of environmental writer Edward Abbey, allowing students to trace the legacy of this famous figure in western Pennsylvania. Overall, the places profiled in this project include: The Jimmy Stewart Museum and Public Library (a single historic building downtown), Sites related to the Underground Railroad, the Old County Courthouse, Memorial Park and the Historical Society, a new park at Vinegar Hill, the downtown Indiana Theater, White's Woods, the Indiana Community Garden, the Hoodlebug Trail, and the Indiana Farmer's Market.

The Project Director and three students attended the Community Development Committee public meeting on October 21 at the Indiana Borough Hall (80 N 8th St.) to update our partners on the progress of our project, and solicit their input on signage and on our developing website (attachment 1c). This meeting was useful in that we were able to answer questions about wayfinding, ethnographic research, and how we were meeting our goals in relation to the project.

Finally, we were fortunate to have our lead contact with the Community Development Committee, Peter Broad, attend the Appalachian Teaching Conference with our student group in December. This conference provided us with insight and inspiration related to the significance and scope of our project. For instance, we discussed the possibility of expanding this project in the future to include agricultural heritage resources around the area, or sites and projects that are instrumental in our local food-shed movement, which has been building momentum in recent years. Throughout the spring semester, we communicated with our contact, Peter Broad, as we worked on the website and finalized the brochures and signs.

- required presentations of student research to community groups other than the primary partner (include the name of the group(s), the date of the presentation(s), and document publicity surrounding the presentation in the attachment section below)

In addition to the poster and presentation by our 8 students at the Appalachian Teaching Project Conference in Arlington, students presented on their projects at the IUP Undergraduate Scholars Forum on April 1, 2014. Carrie Aitkins and John Osborn presented our poster "Digital Ethnography for Sustainable Development in Indiana, PA", winning the ECO Award for Innovation in Sustainability at the undergraduate level (attachments 3a and 3b). Please see the following link for news of their award: <http://www.iup.edu/newsItem.aspx?id=172306&blogid=1331>.

Student Lisa McCann also presented a paper at the IUP Undergraduate Scholars Forum based on her ATP research titled "Applying Anthropology to Create a Public Blog." This project helped Lisa to build strong connections at the Indiana Community Garden, where she has continued in her role as blogger and photographer. Lisa was honored for these efforts as one of three people who, on behalf of the Indiana Community Garden, accepted the League of Women Voters annual Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award at the Indiana County League of Women Voters annual meeting May 14, 2014 in Indiana, PA. At that meeting, Lisa spoke to a large audience of around 50 attendees about her ATP research findings and online blog related to the significance of community gardens in building and bridging diverse community groups. The newsletter documenting this award has yet to come out, but you can find a photo, attachment 3g, and review their Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/PowertoCitizens>.

Finally, I worked with three students from our class to present the results of our work to a public meeting of the Community Development Committee on February 17, 2014 (attachments 3c and 3d). This public meeting was held at the Indiana Borough Hall and attended by around 30 people in addition to the Community Development Committee and Indiana Borough Council members. This was an important venue for finalizing our plans related to the website and signage.

- links to any videos or social media that show the students interacting with their community partner(s)

Please see attachment 3g for a photo of student Lisa McCann receiving the Peggy Clark Grass Roots Leadership Award with representatives of the Indiana Community Garden at the League of Women Voters of Indiana County Annual Meeting in May, 2014. Please also refer to our website for detailed descriptions of the interactions of students with community members toward the completion of their ethnographic research. Particularly good examples of these interviews include the Underground Railroad site: <http://ourindipa.net/railroad/> and the Indiana Community Garden: <http://ourindipa.net/garden/>.

Project Outcomes:

One of the students who participated in this project summarized some of the key outcomes in their final paper: "The ATP project developed by our class was the best project for its effectiveness at impacting the Indiana area, improving the skillsets of the students, and use of available resources to make an impact." This section details some of the outcomes related to student learning and community development.

In terms of pedagogy, this project became instrumental in providing a learner-centered experiential activity that allowed students to use key tools in applied anthropology. These approaches included digital and visual ethnography,

ethnographic interviewing, archival research, and community-based research. Students had the opportunity to develop leadership and citizenship skills, along with strengthening writing and oral presentation skills as they presented their research and solicited feedback at public meetings and to publicly elected officials. Students were able to connect with diverse community members in the context of original ethnographic work. Based on this work, students created a brochure, website, and PowerPoint presentation for the Community Development Committee public meeting and for the ATP conference. The website created by students is now available for use by the Community Development Committee. Students also created a poster to disseminate the results of their research at scholarly and community events. Students were also able to contextualize this work in broader issues facing communities in Appalachia – an important component in skill-sets related to civic engagement. This contextualization happened in and out of class: with participation in the first annual Northern Appalachian Folk Festival in Indiana, PA; with the class visit of the talented folk musician Sue Massek; with class readings about regional history and development issues; and through attendance at the ATP conference.

Another exciting outcome of this project involved the potentially lasting partnerships formed between campus and community groups – notably the Community Development Committee, the Indiana Borough Council, borough staff, and the varied community groups that were attached to the places researched by students. Great examples of these new relationships include the connections made between anthropology students and the vibrant Indiana Community Garden, the Indiana Farmers Market, the Historical and Genealogical Society of Indiana, and the folks in charge of the Indiana Theater who are working on cultural and artistic revitalization projects. We are proud to present them with engraved signs to promote the wayfinding project and highlight the significance of their own work on places in the community (see attachment 3e). These signs were designed with input from community partners, are currently on order at a local sign-shop, and will be completed for presentation to these stakeholders in June.

The website is another enduring outcome here. The website is hosted in an affordable and long-term platform, and is organized under the institutional umbrella of the IUP Center for Northern Appalachian Studies. At least two of the places profiled, the Indiana Theater and the Community Garden are interested in using our websites as their main platform, and managing updates to the content. Other sites will be updated as needed by Center for Northern Appalachian Studies in coordination with the groups associated with these sites. We encourage you to explore our website at: <http://ourindipa.net/>. The content has all been transferred to this site, although please bear with us as we edit the formatting on some of the sub-sites for each place. I am working with two students from our class to complete this by the end of June. I think it is testament to students' engagement in this project that some of them are willing to continue working on this long after the conclusion of our class.

In a place where there are significant challenges involved with bridging campus and community rifts, this project was an important step in this direction. This outcome was accomplished through building on the collaborative research done in last year's ATP project in which we identified community assets, environmental concerns, and sustainability goals - providing a solid platform for future collaboration on achieving a locally meaningful vision of sustainability. There are many people who are excited about future collaboration on sustainable local development through the ATP project.

Problems Encountered:

There were only a few problems encountered during this project, most of them dealing with technological issues. The biggest issue had to do with the tremendous time involved attempting to teach web design to students, which was in addition to other class material and to ATP research. This web design component was challenging, and perhaps in retrospect I would have done this differently. I decided to work with our library's media technology center. They created resources to help students in designing web pages, and they provided a presentation to the class about using Google blogger for this purpose. We all created Google accounts, linked them together, and worked on separate blog pages with the understanding that they would migrate later to a more permanent integrated site. I believe that these skills are very valuable to graduating applied anthropology majors. However, it was challenging to bring everyone up to speed and coordinate 20 students in this effort. Many people failed to add me as an admin in the proper way on their sites, complicating the migration efforts. Also, I paired off students to work with each other based on their expressed interests in varied select sites. I now wish I had selected fewer sites and created more strategic student groupings. As is the sometimes the case with undergraduate classes, some students are less invested than others in group projects. I had two students who failed to complete the class, and their projects remain only nominally part of the wayfinding website. Others clearly did outstanding jobs. Next time I will try to create different roles for students to assume in slightly larger groups in order to even out the quality of work.

The migration to a word press site was also time-consuming and technologically challenging. Fortunately, we have a Center for Digital Humanities at IUP, who provided some expertise for this. They were able to assist in securing server space, obtaining a domain, migrating materials from Google blogger, and selecting apps for map interfacing. I had expected this to take much less time than it did. In retrospect, I would have used Word Press from the beginning, particularly considering Word Press is more sustainable in the long term than the free platform that Google offers. In fact, we are still finding formatting glitches in content transferred to the new website. However, I am working with two students from our class, and with the Digital Humanities Center students, to work through this during

the next few weeks. Fortunately, as the website is under the IUP Center for Northern Appalachian Studies, we have institutional support for its maintenance.

Another challenge involved the wayfinding signage. Community partners had varied ideas of what they would look like, how they would be constructed, and where they might be positioned. We found a compromise that involved engraved signs stationed at each place or granted to the organization in charge of outdoor spaces. I am going to offer laminated posters of the signs for the outdoor spaces included in the project, in addition to the plaques with the scannable QR codes. These signs also took a long time to design because we wanted them to be cohesive with the website and brochure. Although I met with the IUP administrator in charge of long-term infrastructure planning and he was very interested in putting a sign on campus related to the project, we both came to realize that a permanent sign meeting IUP requirements would be quite expensive, and would have to be folded into a longer term project.

Finally, our community partners felt that brochures available in key public locations on and off campus would be a good way to spread information about the project. Although one student group from our class was in charge of designing a brochure, in the end, we decided to work with an IUP student from the graphic design program to help translate our ideas into a more polished logo, brochure, and map design. All of this worked out, but took a long time.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

This year, we have continued to grow the connections between IUP and community leaders and organizations – working with community partners (local elected leaders) but also connecting with the myriad people who are committed to these socially significant places in the community. I believe that exposing students to people who are committed to their community encourages and empowers them to become leaders and engaged citizens, at the same time that collaborative research provides them with the experience base from which to advocate for their professional skills. The relationships fostered by this year's ATP involve faculty, students, and community members of various ages and backgrounds. Essentially, these relationships are assets that are as essential to sustainable development as 'walk-ability.'

There is a great ripple effect from this kind of partnership-building. As mentioned above, one of the students who worked with the community garden was recognized as a key leader in this group by the League of Women Voters, and continues in her role as blogger and photographer for the garden and its many community events. She also helped to inspire a collaboration between the community garden, the Anthropology Department, and the Biology Department on an heirloom seed bank modeled on the project at the University of North Georgia (we have benefited greatly from the input of Dr. Rosann Kent during this early planning process). This

exciting partnership has already succeeded in securing two start-up grants. Another student was inspired by her participation in this project, and at the ATP conference, to apply to AmeriCorps when she graduated in May. Another student decided to run for local public office!

The Community Development Committee of the Indiana Borough now has a resource that they can use to promote foot traffic in the business district, to introduce new students to the community in a positive way, and to encourage an awareness of the community as a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally rich place (a key to attracting and retaining residents and promoting good civic behavior).

This project also marks the beginning of long-term relationships between the Center for Northern Appalachian Studies and various community stakeholders. Maintenance of the website is now folded into the Center's strategic planning goals, which will involve contact with these related community groups. We have also been approached by some of these community stakeholders (Downtown Indiana, the Indiana Community Garden, and the Center for Community Growth) to participate in a number of possible collaborations, including: a rural poverty summit to be hosted at IUP Spring 2015; a tour of local organic and heritage farms; and the possibility of working on projects to grow our local food economy, support local farmers, and make local foods more accessible to people in town and on campus.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

As noted above, there have been many positive relationships formed through this year's ATP project that could lead to fruitful collaborations. I see the ATP project as a valuable resource for our students on many levels as they gain hands-on experience with practicing anthropology outside of academia- the fastest growing segment of our field professionally. This ATP project has also been important for the Anthropology department through the opportunity of teaching using high impact learning strategies. ATP has also been a catalyst for growth in our IUP Center for Northern Appalachian Studies, which is now working with the Community Garden and the Departments of Biology and Anthropology on a new seed bank project inspired by one of this year's ATP student who attended the conference in Arlington.

Student recommendations for future projects generated at the end of class included some terrific directions for future work here. These focused on creating a Day of the Dead community event to stimulate local economic development through cultural and artistic projects, creating a campus-to-farmer conduit for increasing student access to local foods, and supporting the local farmer's market in their attempts to expand and reach a more diverse clientele. Ultimately, this project built relationships, generated good ideas, and created momentum for building sustainability through an awareness of the importance of community, diversity, and commitment to place.

Attachments (in PDF format):

1. Work with Community Partners
 - a. Emails related to the first planning meeting, June 10, Artist's Hand Gallery
 - b. Information on community partners' visit to class on Sept. 11
 - c. Email related to first presentation at Community Development Committee meeting on October 21, Indiana Borough Hall
 - d. Planning materials supplied by community partners, including walk-friendly community status information; map of regional community facilities; and map of greenway network
2. Materials documenting student projects
 - a. IRB approved informed consent form
 - b. Selected sites for inclusion
 - c. Folk Festival documentation assignment
 - d. Flyer of our visiting class speaker on resource extraction in Appalachia, Folk Festival performer Sue Massek
 - e. Results of our freelisting project, shared with community partners on Sept. 11
3. Project outcomes
 - a. Poster presented at ATP Conference in Arlington, VA December 2013, at the IUP Undergraduate Scholars Forum (where it won the ECO Sustainability Award).
 - b. Program for the IUP Undergraduate Scholars Forum listing a presentation and poster by ATP students
 - c. Update handout for the Community Development Committee public meeting February 17, Indiana Borough Hall
 - d. Copy of PowerPoint presentation to the Community Development Committee public meeting February 17, Indiana Borough Hall
 - e. PDF of one of the 10 wayfinding signs, engraved and mounted for display at sites profiled on the walking tour
 - f. PDF of our four-fold brochure about the wayfinding project – 600 copies distributed to campus and community locations
 - g. Photo of ATP student receiving an award on behalf of the Indiana Community Garden after speaking about the project at the League of Women Voters of Indiana County annual meeting May 14.