# Faculty Research Focus

## Gi-Gikinomaage-Min: We Are All Teachers

Documenting the experiences of underrepresented communities and ensuring diverse archival collections can be challenging for libraries. A recently published article by Grand Valley State University faculty describes an interdepartmental collaboration to co-create and preserve a digital collection documenting an element of local Native American history. The process they used can serve as a model for other institutions.

Melanie Shell-Weiss, current Chair of the Liberal Studies Department and former Director of the Kutsche Office of Local History; Annie Benefiel, University Libraries Archivist for Collection Management; and Kimberly McKee, current Director of the Kutsche Office and Assistant Professor in the Liberal Studies Department, co-authored: “We are all teachers: A collaborative approach to digital collection development.” The article describes the collaboration between three entities—the Kutsche Office, University Libraries, and the Native American Advisory Board, which falls under the Office of Inclusion and Equity—to document the urban experience of Native Americans in Grand Rapids.

“The project reflects the importance of working intentionally to build collections that reflect the rich histories and diversity of the local community,” said McKee.

The project is entitled Gi-gikinomaage-min, translated from Anishinaabemowin as “We are all teachers.” Starting in 2014, the project will continue through 2019 at least. Currently, 430 materials have been digitized and are available in the University Archives digital collection. The project also includes the recordings and transcriptions of new oral histories.

One of the guiding principles of the project is to ensure Native American control over the newly created content. As an archivist, Benefiel serves as an advisor on best practices to support the future of the collection rather than shaping actual content. Because these materials are being created responsibly and in good-faith, Benefiel hopes they will be valuable to researchers into the future and, most importantly, give voice to the local Native American experience.

Shell-Weiss remarked on the strong institutional support that has made this project possible. “Grand Valley has viewed this project as an extension of our core mission, and this work is centrally important to us a teaching institution.”

## Shell-Weiss, M., Benefiel, A., & McKee, K. (2017). We are all teachers: A collaborative approach to digital collection development. *Collection Management, 42*(3-4), 317-337.

## View the collection at:

## https://digitalcollections.library.gvsu.edu/collections/show/2