

## Awards

### Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship Essay

By Lena Evers-Hillstrom



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The Louisa Bowen Scholarship will help facilitate my continued involvement in digital platforms for archives, including the Indigenous Seed Keepers Network project, as well as in my academic work with oral histories. I became involved in the seed-keeping initiative (begun under the direction of Jessika Greendeer and Dan Cornelius, two Indigenous seed keepers) during spring semester as a student in the Tribal Libraries, Archives, and Museums class at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The goal of the Indigenous Seed Keepers Network Collection was to kickstart the creation of a digital archive to showcase the cultural importance of seeds, not just as materials to be grown, but as living beings that have different journeys within and between tribes, and around the world. Created using the content platform Mukurtu and with the help of Erin Hughes at Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS), community records within digital heritage entries highlight how different seeds are being grown in a diverse range of tribal communities, as well as their cultural connections to those communities and seed keepers within those communities.

I hope to continue working with this collection in the fall semester because I feel a strong connection with seeds and the resiliency of tribal communities that they represent, and I want to continue helping in the collaborative effort to make the seed entries as well represented as possible in an online format. While I have made digital heritage entries for several types of corn, my goal is to expand into making entries for other types of seeds involved in seed keeping, including squash and sunflowers. And as the project moves forward, I hope to continue discussing with seed keepers how to utilize Mukurtu, and the access protocols and metadata fields within Mukurtu, for the project.

The Bowen Scholarship will also aid my work at the Department of Oral History, headed by my supervisor, Troy Reeves. Through the Department of Oral History, I am continuing to work on a project that collects histories from individuals at the former University of Wisconsin Colleges, which have now become branch campuses within the University of Wisconsin System. Part of my work involves cataloging these histories, creating indexes summarizing what people have said, and making this information accessible online for future users within the UW Digital Collections through the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer. Having worked with oral histories in the past, coming to the University of Wisconsin–Madison and being able to continue conducting oral histories has only strengthened my view that oral histories add an extra dimension to existing historical narratives.

Through this work and my work with the Indigenous Seed Keepers Network Collection, I will be continuing to explore the diverse forms that archival collections can take, as well as the different platforms through which we can make them accessible digitally. When people think of archives, they do not always think of oral histories or seeds as traditional archival materials. But both are just as important in showing how archives can increase representation of people's voices within a given community in a meaningful way. These activities, aided by the Louisa Bowen Scholarship, will help bolster my education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Information School.