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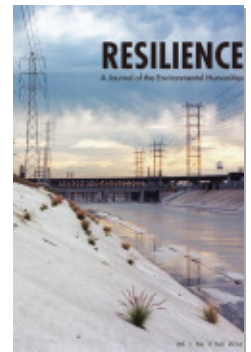
Decolonizing the Archive: Digitizing Native Literature with Students and Tribal Communities

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Decolonizing the Archive

Digitizing Native Literature with Students and
Tribal Communities

SIOBHAN SENIER

This essay describes an evolving website, Writing of Indigenous New England, which I am building with regional Native American authors, my students, and colleagues at other universities and local heritage institutions. I have come to think of this project—indigenous, digital, and literary—as a sustainability project but not for the stereotypical reasons some people might expect, such as indigenous literature representing some kind of repository of ancient wisdom that is supposed to save us from impending environmental doom. Sustainability, as I have been taught to think about it, means the stewardship of cultural as well as ecological systems and an understanding of how those systems are intertwined. Methodologically, sustainability is collaborative; it calls for the dynamic coproduction of knowledge with our students and with local communities, including indigenous communities. Politically, I argue, sustainability requires a commitment to anticolonialism—to unsettling the hierarchies and appropriative practices that have structured academic-indigenous relations as well as human-environmental relations. In a time when public universities are going under as inexorably as Miami, I derive some hope from collaborative anticolonial digital projects for the sustainability of our future's past.

For over a decade now, the stalwart staff, students, and faculty in the University of New Hampshire's Sustainability Institute have been trying to prod humanities scholars into greater involvement with sustainability programming and curriculum. It has not been an easy sell. Ironi-

cally, the scientists seem to understand better than we do why our various pools of expertise—in history, language, cultural production, and philosophy—are so necessary to the future of this planet. They have their data on climate change and species depletion. And they are looking to us to figure out how to communicate these findings effectively; how to work with vulnerable communities, particularly poor communities and communities of color; and, increasingly, how to understand the relations of power and domination that structure any collaborative work or intervention.

So far, though, most of my colleagues in the liberal arts have responded to sustainability with collective disinterest, even occasional hostility. The ethnic-studies people assume that sustainability means feel-good recycling, or some kind of bland pastoralism; the ecocritics think it's already covered under the study of natural resources. Some faculty are understandably sick of the academic penchant for big-tent terms. As one friend recently complained, "Sustainability means anything nowadays. They just want to take what we do and call it sustainability."

Granting that humanists have ample reason these days for paranoia about what "they" want to do to "us," I would like to offer my colleagues a way in to sustainability teaching and scholarship. We know too well that the liberal arts are under siege, but in many places sustainability is on the rise—in funding, in staffing, and in program building. For material as well as intellectual reasons, sustainability might be in a position to contribute to a robust, reinvigorated academic community, as well as constituting an important field of inquiry in itself.

In this essay's first half, I list some basic sustainability principles that I find many humanities scholars brush by. In the second, I offer Writing of Indigenous New England as an exercise in sustainability pedagogy. When I say I "offer" this project, I mean that in two ways: I invite readers to reflect with me on sustainability as a pedagogical project committed to collaboration and anticolonialism, and I welcome anyone reading this essay to contact me and participate—to expand, redefine, and sustain this particular project.

What Humanists Don't Know about Sustainability¹

Sustainability Science Is a New Field Centered on Collaboration.

Sustainability science has a timeline very close to that of Ecocriticism: long roots going back to the 1960s and '70s but not coalescing formally in

the academy till sometime in the 1990s.² In the parlance of the National Science Foundation, sustainability science addresses itself to “coupled human-natural systems”; it looks at the ways humans affect particular ecosystems (not unlike environmental history) and at the ways ecologies affect humans (not unlike environmental justice). “Coupled human-natural systems” is a framework that is, or should be, congenial to ecocritical formulations like Bruno Latour’s “natureculture” or Stacy Alaimo’s “transcorporeality,” and vice versa. These frameworks recognize that humans and ecologies are constructed and mutually constitutive.

Among the so-called hard sciences, in fact, sustainability science has come in for some attack for not being empirical enough. This is due in no small part to its commitment to radically transdisciplinary work, including community-based participatory research—another feature that should make it attractive to humanities scholars. Instead of discrete disciplines and methods, sustainability science emphasizes systems—not only specific systems like earth systems or biological systems but also systems thinking, an epistemology that stresses interrelatedness.³ It is concerned with “the limits of resilience and sources of vulnerability for [the earth’s] interactive systems” (Kates 2010, 21), a concern that has clear ideological and representational (in both the legislative and aesthetic senses of that word) implications.

Sustainability scientists are reaching out to colleagues in the humanities who can help them think about the cultural practices that represent and shape human behavior. The University of New Hampshire’s Sustainability Institute sees a need for contributions from every conceivable discipline and perspective, including such allegedly metronormative fields as queer studies, disability studies, and critical-race studies. It has been unique, I believe, in reaching out in quite material ways to such scholars and teachers: it has granted course-development funds to such classes as *The Global Sex Industry: Exploring Transnational Feminism*, *Ecocriticism*, and *Sex Worker Rights*; and *Why (Black) English Matters: Sustaining the Early Language of African American Difference*.⁴ Critically, the Sustainability Institute has also given some of these funds to non-tenure-track faculty, acknowledging another dire sustainability issue affecting higher education. Additionally, the institute has been a steady supporter of the University of New Hampshire’s annual Indigenous New England Conference, which has in recent years been devoted to the web archive that is the subject of this essay’s second half.

While humanities faculty are joining the conversation slowly, the Sustainability Institute is opening the door for us to explain how our work on cultural production, and relations of power, can contribute to pressing global problems.

*Sustainability Has a History of Honoring
Cultural Diversity alongside Biodiversity.*

Although journals like *American Literary History*, *PMLA*, and *Resilience* have begun to publish articles in this field, sustainability is not without its critics in the humanities. Ecocritics have been especially suspicious of the term's ready co-optation by corporate and other nefarious interests. In "Sustainable This, Sustainable That," Stacy Alaimo contends that "although the concept of sustainability emerges in part from economic theories that critique the assumption that economic prosperity must be fueled by continual growth, the term is frequently invoked in economic and other news stories that do not in any way question capitalist ideals of unfettered expansion" (2012, 559). Some ecologists, meanwhile, believe that sustainability inverts and subverts the "Earth First!" paradigm: "When sustainability is defined broadly to include the full range of economic and social aspirations, it poses the particular risk that ecological and biodiversity concerns will be cast aside in favor of more pressing human wants" (Newton and Freyfogle 2005, 23).

While it's not difficult to see where these critics are coming from, too few of them show much awareness of sustainability's history—a history that includes significant contestation, most notably from indigenous and antipoverty activist communities, particularly from the global South. The single most commonly cited definition of sustainability—"meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs"—comes from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987, 2.1.1), also known as the Brundtland Commission. This definition, and many subsequent iterations, yoked sustainability to development; and in the minds of many, sustainability lovers and haters alike, development is what sustainability means. But the Brundtland report was written in 1987, and since then, as Tom Kelly has shown, many richer definitions have emerged. A continuing grassroots opposition has been adamant that the world's wealthiest nations cannot keep calling all the shots—that cultures need to be sustained alongside ecologies, even if (or when)

that means resisting development. The Global Scenarios Group has described a “great transition” devoted to “changing the relationship between well-being and income”; the Earth Charter of the World Commission on Culture and Development redefined development itself as “being more, not having more.” There are thus already some deep ways of thinking about sustainability that insist on the interrelatedness of environment, equity, cultural practices, and cultural values.⁵

Some of the strongest articulations have come from global indigenous activists. Take, for instance, a document that should rightfully be common knowledge by now, the *Kari-Oca 2 Declaration*. The Indigenous Peoples basically crafted the document outside Rio + 20, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Brazil. Rio + 20 was supposed to be a celebration of *Agenda 21*, the “global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environment cooperation” (United Nations Division for Sustainable Development 1992, 1.3).⁶ But while heads of state dithered over a plan that is by now much better known as the scourge of Glenn Beck,⁷ the Peoples’ Summit got to work, writing a strong critique of

the “Green Economy” and its premise that the world can only “save” nature by commodifying its life giving and life sustaining capacities as a continuation of the colonialism that Indigenous Peoples and our Mother Earth have faced and resisted for 520 years. The “Green Economy” promises to eradicate poverty but in fact will only favor and respond to multinational enterprises and capitalism. It is a continuation of a global economy based upon fossil fuels, the destruction of the environment by exploiting nature through extractive industries such as mining, oil exploration and production, intensive mono-culture agriculture, and other capitalist investments. (Indigenous Environmental Network 2012, 1)

The declaration demands that indigenous people get “Free Prior and Informed Consent” for any “development” happening on their lands:

As peoples, we reaffirm our rights to self-determination and to own, control and manage our traditional lands and territories, waters and other resources. Our lands and territories are at the core of our existence—we are the land and the land is us; we have a distinct spiritual and material relationship with our lands and territories and they are inextricably linked to our survival and to the preservation

and further development of our knowledge systems and cultures, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem management. (Indigenous Environmental Network 2012, 4)

This powerful document positions indigenous people, not as spiritual fetishes or passive repositories of ancient wisdom, but as political agents. It questions one common misconception of sustainability (as continued capitalist production, with a nod to planetary constraints) while claiming—perhaps most radically—a different path to modernity for indigenous people. Too many environmental discourses position Indians either as tragic (and long gone) victims of “white man’s” disregard for the environment or, ironically, as obstacles to development and modernity, including green modernity. The *Kari-Oca 2* insists that sustainability projects must look first to autochthonous peoples for knowledge, not only of particular ecosystems, but also of systems of power and domination.

*“Wicked Problems” Demand Attention to Colonialism,
Race, and Inequality.*

In a previous issue of this journal, a group of us who participated in University of New Hampshire’s first Summer Seminar in Culture and Sustainability issued a manifesto: we called for all work under the rubrics of sustainability, resilience, and environmental justice to put the “wicked problem” of race front and center.⁸ We borrowed the term “wicked problem” from sustainability science, which uses it to describe intractable, multivalent, and global phenomena like climate change, species depletion, and poverty—problems that by their very nature require us to work across disciplinary and academic confines and with communities outside our hallowed halls. If wicked problems are those that have no single, simple solution—that, indeed, involve competing stakeholders who desire different solutions—then race itself is surely a wicked problem. In “The Resilience of Race: A Cultural Sustainability Manifesto” we avowed, “Race is the node around which environmental damage, community vulnerability, and economic imperatives collide. It (over)determines what (and who) gets protected, preserved, and stewarded” (Senier 2014). For us, then, sustainability always raises questions of power, public memory, and archive.

Scientists and social scientists are aware that race, gender, and class

underwrite the differential effects of environmental devastation; but humanists can explain how history and ideology drove this destruction in the first instance. In the context of the United States, that means pointing to indigenous land expropriation and chattel slavery as not only ecologically disastrous but as nationally formative. These are cultural problems insofar as they are ideologically driven—dependent on cultural formations for their maintenance and for their strategic, willful erasure from public memory. And neither is a thing of the past. Settler colonialism, as historian Patrick Wolfe has famously put it, is “a structure, not an event” (2006, 7). Invasion didn’t only happen in 1492 or 1620 and mark the end of indigenous communities; it continues to this day—in the removal of indigenous people from places where permafrost is melting and sea levels are rising, in the construction of tar sands pipelines in abrogation of First Nations territorial sovereignty, in the continued misappropriation of indigenous cultural materials and signifiers.

Many Native intellectuals employ the language of sustainability, because it enables them to foreground indigenous survival over the long term while insisting on decolonization. Dakota scholar Waziya-tawin, for instance, has said that as we face the implosion of imperialism and extractive capitalism, “the paradigm we need is the Indigenous paradigm based on sustainability. Not the kind of sustainability that is tossed around in corporate or governmental discussions of ‘sustainable development,’ but the kind of sustainability that allows a human population to live on the same landbase for thousands of years without destroying it” (2012, 77). Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) has called for replacing existing rights discourses with “sustainable self-determination,” making indigenous self-determination “economically, environmentally, and culturally viable and inextricably linked to indigenous relationships to the natural world” (2008, 108). And Penobscot attorney Sherri Mitchell (2014) casts sustainability and decolonization as inextricable: “We are fighting for more than cultural survival and the protection of a way of life. We are fighting for nothing less than our survival, and the survival of all life on this planet.” These claims are not romantic or essentialist but eminently practical and thoroughly political.

How can humanities scholars and teachers support this work? At the very least, we need a pedagogy that can (a) redistribute authority and power, not only from teacher to student but from the academy to the

public (foregrounding the obvious but often forgotten fact that indigenous people are part of that “public”) and (b) produce knowledge and artifacts that are available for addition and revision over the long term. In our “Race” manifesto, our summer cohort wrote that “our traditional tools of resistance—the library, the archive, the oral tradition, and the academy itself—may not be prepared for the scale of the current crisis. . . . When we reach out and make connections across disciplines and with the public, we begin to transcend the academic and institutional silos that chain knowledge production to a status quo of systemic inequality” (Senier 2014).

Indigenousnewengland.com

Decolonizing and Sustaining Native Literary History

From these lofty aspirations, I turn to a humble project. I started Writing of Indigenous New England (indigenousnewengland.com), with my students and a handful of Native consultants, while I was finishing a print anthology of this literature. *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Writing from Indigenous New England* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014) clocks in at 716 pages; it involved eleven tribal community editors and dozens of living authors and covers nations from the Mi'kmaq of Maine and the Maritimes to the Schaghticoke in southwestern Connecticut as well as texts from seventeenth-century petitions to twenty-first-century blog entries.

This book was almost ten years in the making, and the process left me feeling heretically skeptical about the sustainability of the print archive. In some sense this is not a new feeling: anyone who has ever published anything knows that by the time your work sees print, you have changed your mind about some things. But the tribal editors, too, often chafed against the limits of print and the publishing process. There was just no way they could include every text or writer they wanted to include, no way they could consult with their communities as thoroughly as they wished. More profoundly, several editors were reluctant to “speak for” the literature by annotating and contextualizing it, as is typically done in anthologies. They intuited what Karen Kilcup, who has created quite a few anthologies of her own, has said: “an anthology creates a miniature canon, no matter how resistant the editor is to the vexed notions of goodness and importance” (2004, 113).

Literary scholars are accustomed to thinking of (and interrogating) anthologies as canon makers, but we can think of them, too, as sustainability interventions—interventions that can have unintended consequences. I take this idea from Jeff Todd Titon, an ethnomusicologist who has been using ecological concepts to retool earlier anthropological models of heritage management. In the older model, Titon notes, heritage professionals identified “folk masterpieces” (not unlike literary anthologizers) and created institutions to protect these. He finds fascinating cases where these decisions, like ecological interventions, have had surprising effects. For example, when UNESCO designated the Royal Ballet of Cambodia a masterpiece of intangible cultural heritage, it unwittingly prompted the creation of a specific display repertoire for tourists, while stymieing the development of more dynamic and modern dance forms, which came to be seen as less “authentic.” Titon suggests we consider cultural forms as biocultural resources embedded in systems (“ecosystems”) comprised by sets of ideas, behaviors, artifacts, and institutions. In other words, musical forms and literary texts have the best prospects for, and the most to contribute to, sustainability when their creators and their stewards are mindful of such concepts as diversity and interconnectedness.⁹

As a literary historian, I know that “great literature” does not magically survive the test of time, any more than the “fittest” organisms survive without help from the rest of the system. Indigenous literary traditions have historically been excluded from “major” literary canons, because settler colonialism has had to disavow indigenous presence. In New England specifically, the disavowal of Native writing is an extension of the disavowal of ongoing Native claims to territory, resources, and rights—for how can a people make a claim to territory desired for, say, wind turbines, when they no longer really exist?¹⁰ When we make choices about what literature to preserve (what to teach, what to publish, what to archive), we are also making sustainability interventions. And when we involve our students critically in that process, alongside the communities producing a particular literary or cultural tradition, we are engaging in sustainability pedagogy.

Writing of Indigenous New England aims to be a living document—one that can expand continually, remain open to revision, and be available to tribal community discussion and even disagreement. In the

spirit of sustainability methodology, it invites tribal communities and authors to determine, indeed to provide, its content. The site is currently built using Omeka, a content management system developed at George Mason University's Center for History and New Media expressly to prompt the creation of diverse, grassroots, collaborative, and sustainable projects. Omeka is free, open source, and highly intuitive; it lets local historical societies, nonprofits, or really any group with a story to tell create online exhibits and archives. The system has been used to generate some radically democratic cultural heritage websites, like the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (<http://hurricanearchive.org/>), which stores and curates stories about Katrina and Rita. Users in multiple locations can upload documents, images, video content, and other objects; and they can curate that content by organizing it and writing explanatory text. And perhaps best of all for nonspecialists, Omeka has text boxes where users can insert the necessary metadata to ensure that all of this content is interoperable with other systems and with whatever new platforms might arise in the future.

There have been other collaborative, digital indigenous projects from which Writing of Indigenous New England takes important cues. The Yale Indian Papers Project (<http://www.library.yale.edu/yipp/>) consults closely with tribal scholars as it digitizes documents related to regional Native history; the Plateau Peoples Portal (<http://plateauportal.wsulibs.wsu.edu/html/ppp/index.php>), built on the justly admired Mukurtu CMS, has tribal consultants selecting and curating materials held in the Washington State University Libraries. A critical difference, however, is that most of these projects are “digitally repatriating” items held in non-Native collections. By setting out, instead, to support and supplement tribal people's own archiving efforts, Writing of Indigenous New England also hopes to sustain community uptake—a problem with many digital archives, which often have an initial burst of enthusiasm and use and then silence. The National Endowment for the Humanities, which in recent years has supported the rush to build more and more new digital tools, has now awarded Writing of Indigenous New England a grant to assess what is needed to get these tools more broadly used in tribal communities. In addition to training tribal elders and youth in digitization so they can build their own exhibits, we will be assessing what we need for the long-term sustainability of the website—what kinds of data storage, expertise, partnerships.

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Item #93: "Utilitarian Basket, mid-late 1800s"' interface. On the left is a sidebar with 'Dublin Core' selected, showing a list of metadata elements: Item Type Metadata, Collection, Files, Tags, and Map. The main area is titled 'Dublin Core' and contains three sections: Title, Subject, and Description. Each section has an 'Add Input' button and a 'Use HTML' checkbox. The Title field contains 'Utilitarian Basket, mid-late 1800s'. The Subject field contains 'Abenaki Basket'. The Description field contains a rich text editor with the text 'Farm Basket, mid-late 1800s, Wood Splint, Abenaki, Housed at the Hopkinton Historical Society'. At the top right, there is a 'Delete this Item' button and checkboxes for 'Public' (checked) and 'Featured' (unchecked).

Fig. 1. Adding items via Omeka to Writing of Indigenous New England.
Courtesy of the author.

In the Classroom

In what follows, I will describe how students built one particular digital exhibit, offering some practical advice along the way to instructors who might want to try this kind of project (or even sign on to this one). The most polished exhibit on the site to date is *Along the Basket Trail*, begun in a fifteen-week class on early American Indian literature, with thirty junior and senior English majors. For the first half of the semester, we read from Kristina Bross and Hillary Wyss's documentary anthology, *Early Indigenous Literacies in New England*, whose authors model sustainable literary criticism: consulting with tribal members and indeed decentering the authority of the critic; considering the nexus of ecological and cultural systems that helped produce these early texts; and decolonizing literary history by reading nonalphabetic forms (e.g., medicine bundles, baskets) as texts. In these early weeks, our class also evaluated other digital archives and online literary editions, asking each other, What is an archive? An anthology? A "portal"? What's in them? What's not in them? How are they organized, and for whom?

The second half of the syllabus was open for students to choose and write about their own primary texts. It was extremely helpful to conduct this class in a digital lab, because whatever myths we entertain about “digital natives,” too many undergraduates still lack basic web literacy when it comes to signing up for new accounts and navigating new platforms. Omeka helped facilitate collaboration that went far beyond small group work: it let students, working alongside Native community members, become coproducers of the knowledge usually determined by the syllabus. I hasten to note that successful collaboration did not happen only on the web; this was not a MOOC (massive open online course). In fact, the less successful exhibits (those that never went live) failed when students preferred to work “alone together,” to borrow Sherry Turkle’s phrasing.¹¹ Collaboration meant sharing work in progress on the screen at the front of the class; it meant Skyping with Native authors and bringing Native historians into the lab; it meant traveling out of the lab to Native spaces—museums, people’s homes, heritage sites.

In the spirit of coauthorship, *Along the Basket Trail* was not actually initiated by me but by the Mt. Kearsarge Indian Museum (MKIM) in Warner, New Hampshire. The museum had already launched a physical exhibit, but this too was an exercise in sustainable heritage management: partnering with neighboring historical societies, the MKIM created a traveling collection with workshops and talks by Native basket makers and historians. They also ran what they called Baskets out of the Attic days, inviting area residents to bring in old baskets for evaluation, a la *Antiques Road Show*. The MKIM thus conceptualized this exhibit as infinitely collaborative and extensible: they knew that members of the public hold knowledge about New Hampshire’s invisible Native histories, including stories about how a basket was made or came to be possessed and stories about where Native people continued living and working long after their alleged disappearance. Just as importantly, the original exhibit was profoundly anticolonial. New Hampshire has no federally recognized tribes and an especially pervasive myth that the Native peoples (specifically the Abenaki) “left” in the eighteenth century. In putting members of the public into intentional contact with contemporary indigenous artists and activists, the MKIM decolonized museum space. The opportunity to continue crowdsourcing and decolonizing this knowledge by putting some of it online was their further bid for sustainability.

Omeka sites are divided into “items” (individual entries like photos or text); “collections” (which in the case of our site are tribal nations); and “exhibits” (which can be built and rearranged at will, to organize and curate the items). I asked each student to take responsibility for one “item,” the researching and writing of which would constitute the final semester project (or research paper). We wrote the introductory exhibit text as a class and shared the writing, editing, and organization of all the items. Here are just two examples of how sustainability worked as both content and method.

EEL WEIR BASKET IN MT. KEARSARGE INDIAN MUSEUM

The eel weir basket prompted one student to investigate the network of historic, political, and ecological relations embedded therein. Herself an avid fisher, the student became intrigued by the basket during our class trip to the MKIM and made a second trip to the museum to photograph it. The origin of the basket is unknown, so she researched around it, finding out what she could about where and how such traps were historically used. She visited and e-mailed back and forth with a living basket maker, Bill Gould, who still makes these traps. Her curatorial essay argues that such baskets constitute not only historic indigenous methods of sustenance but also indigenous political sovereignty, for she learned that fishing grounds in New England were (and are) historically sites of fierce resistance to colonial encroachment. It was only, however, through collaborative investigation—with basket makers, with other historical texts, and with other writers—that she was able to address the wicked problem of settler colonialism, both in reading this basket and in writing about it.

BASKETS BY JUDY DOW (ABENAKI)

Another group, in a later class, sustained the project by interviewing contemporary basket maker Judy Dow via conference call and e-mail. Dow works with traditional materials like wood splint and sweet grass; but she often makes the same forms using contemporary materials like gum wrappers, pantyhose, or industrial strapping. This is partly an artistic commentary on the destruction of the black ash by the emerald ash borer, an invasive species ushered into the Northeast by climate change.¹² But it is also a performance of indigenous resilience—the ability to continue traditions and communities by adapting.

Again, students arrived at this insight only through talking with Dow. We worked hard to avoid imposing readings on the baskets, trying rather to create a space where indigenous arguments about indigenous cultural production could be heard. That is a different kind of training than many English majors are accustomed to, having spent their college careers being told to “come up with a thesis.” In a sense, we want instead to give basket makers and tribal historians Free Prior and Informed Consent over everything we post, thus unsettling this archive.

Literary historian Jerome McGann has argued that the entirety of our cultural heritage is going to have to be reorganized and reedited within a digital horizon. This means that we don’t simply replace one system with another but that we begin to embrace more diverse archival and communicative ecosystems. Indeed, I have learned, Native communities have sustained their own literary histories—often without the help of academics, libraries, publishers, or Google—by doing just that. They circulate Xeroxed copies of their most cherished books, bundle old newsletters in tribal offices, share and annotate historic photographs on Facebook, all while maintaining their oral traditions—reciting their grandmothers’ poems at community events and sharing stories about ancestors who wrote letters giving hell to colonial officials. When I’m feeling apocalyptic, I imagine that when the Library of Congress gets completely defunded or flooded, indigenous archiving systems will still be around. Waziyatawin has called this “the paradox of indigenous resurgence” (2012, 68)—that indigenous people seem poised for liberation and leadership on sustainability at the very moment we confront planetary disaster.

Throughout this essay, I have used the term “sustainable” in deliberately and probably annoyingly slippery ways: to refer to a website, pedagogy, literary criticism, cultural heritage, ecologies, and communities. My colleagues at the Sustainability Institute have taught me to think that sustainability actually requires such constantly shifting definitions, that we need to be continually asking and renegotiating what is being sustained, for whom, by whom, and why. No single definition, after all, could possibly solve the wicked problems facing even a single English department, let alone our planet.

Thus, Stephanie LeManager and Stephanie Foote have offered capacious suggestions for what they call “the sustainable humanities,” which

would include “a clear articulation of the relation between our pedagogical practice and our species’ ecological resilience” (2012, 575). Like many other literature scholars nowadays, Foote and LeMenager point out that literature is the place where human beings imagine worlds otherwise. In indigenous literature, communities with the benefit of very long-term existence in place have described worlds otherwise. Sustainable pedagogy, at the very least, means teaching our students to listen and training them to help protect and promote those worlds and visions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Siobhan Senier is an associate professor of English at the University of New Hampshire. She is the editor of *Dawnland Voices: An Anthology of Writing from Indigenous New England and Writing of Indigenous New England*.

NOTES

1. A longer version of this section appeared in (Senier 2014).
2. Compare the genealogy of ecocriticism provided by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) to that of sustainability science provided by Kates (2010), who includes a helpful annotated bibliography. Another brief but widely cited introduction to sustainability science can be found in Clark and Dickson (2003).
3. See Silka (2010) and Meadows (2008).
4. “Liberal Arts and Sustainability Curriculum Grant,” University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute, <http://sustainableunh.unh.edu/courserfp>.
5. Cited in the thorough historical overview of international sustainability discourse provided by Tom Kelly in his introduction to *The Sustainable Learning Community*, edited by Aber, Kelly, and Mallory (2009).
6. If the aspirations of this document seem vague, lofty, or lacking in backbone, Tea Party activists have nevertheless been passing legislation at the state level to “outlaw” it. In 2012 Alabama passed the first official ban on what the John Birch Society calls the UN’s conspiracy against “your freedom to travel as you please, own a gas-powered car, live in the suburbs or rural areas, and raise a family” (John Birch Society n.d.).
7. See, for instance, coverage in *ThinkProgress* (Lacey 2012) and the *Guardian* (Monbiot 2012).
8. A description is at “Summer Seminar—Ecology and Sustainability: Sustainability Studies’ Contributions to Place,” University of New Hampshire Sustainability Institute, <http://www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/summerseminar>. Our manifesto appeared in *Resilience* 1, no. 2 (June 2014).
9. See Titon (2009).
10. The Aquinnah Wampanoag of Martha’s Vineyard have been fighting the Cape Wind project, intended to be located on their sacred and fishing territories—a suit that

the editor of the *Boston Globe* called “A Cynical Gimmick” (“Cynical Gimmick against Cape Wind” 2009); see also Toensing (2011).

11. See Turkle (2011).

12. The University of Maine runs a model sustainability research program around the emerald ash borer, bringing together scientists, anthropologists, and Native basket makers; see “Mobilizing to Fight the Emerald Ash Borer,” Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability, University of Maine, <http://umaine.edu/mitchellcenter/mobilizing-to-fight-the-emerald-ash-borer/>.

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