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MEDIA CONTACTS

Joshua Watts, cyberSW Manager, jwatts@archaeologysouthwest.org, 520-849-6470

Kate Sarther, VP Communications, kate@archaeologysouthwest.org

cyberSW Receives \$350K Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

Funding will expand the scope, significance, and reach of this digital research and education platform through collaboration with Tribal experts

Tucson, Ariz. — Archaeology Southwest is pleased to announce that [cyberSW](#) has received a \$350,000 grant from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) (NEH) for a new initiative, “Expanding cyberSW: From Archaeological Research to Cultural Revitalization.”

In its current form, cyberSW is an open-access, web-based gateway for researchers interested in the archaeology of the US Southwest and Northwest Mexico. It holds information about the pottery, stone tools, animal bones, plant remains, and architecture documented at archaeological sites over the past century. The newly funded project seeks to transform cyberSW by meeting the interests and needs of the Indigenous communities whose ancestors lived in the places represented in cyberSW.

A critical part of that transformation will come through the development and inclusion of Indigenous cultural and language content related to certain plant and animal species that Tribal partners identify as being culturally important (Cultural Keystone Species). At present, the project is focused on 30 species of birds found in central and Southern Arizona. “What we’re calling a digital Indigenous Field Guide is under development in full collaboration with some O’odham community members with whom we have strong working relationships,” said [Caitlynn Mayhew](#) (Diné), cyberSW Native American Fellow. “Community knowledge holders are already committed to working with us, and cyberSW’s Tribal Working Group has been advising us at every turn.”

Mayhew’s fellowship was previously dedicated to initiating and completing a pilot project based on bird species that has demonstrated not only the value and utility of such a guide, but also the effectiveness of a more user-friendly interface. An additional component of the funded project will improve user experience and accessibility, including making the platform available for smartphones.

“We’d like Indigenous community members, citizen scientists, and outdoor enthusiasts to be able to tap into cyberSW while they’re out on the landscape,” said [Joshua Watts](#),

cyberSW Manager. “This funding will ensure that cyberSW goes beyond being an educational or scholarly tool used at a desk and becomes a tool to help people better connect cultural and archaeological landscapes with deep knowledge of the ecologies of those landscapes.”

With this funding from NEH, the cyberSW team and collaborators hope to help revitalize Traditional Knowledge within contemporary Indigenous communities, help explore best practices regarding the nuances of communicating Indigenous knowledge in online spaces through the lenses of [data sovereignty](#) and [co-management](#), and even inform approaches to land conservation in an era of climate change.

[Jeffery Clark](#), Archaeology Southwest’s Vice President for Research, summed up: “This grant helps cyberSW give something back to the Indigenous communities whose ancestral settlements are the core of the current database, and are the heart of what it will become.”

ABOUT CYBERSW

[cyberSW](#) is an online gateway to regional archaeological knowledge that supports big-picture research. A Tribal Working Group guides development, consults on priorities, and helps expand the platform to include data of interest to Tribes. cyberSW is headquartered at Archaeology Southwest and runs on a [Neo4j platform](#).

ABOUT ARCHAEOLOGY SOUTHWEST

Founded in 1989, Archaeology Southwest is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, on the homelands of the Tohono O’odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. We are privileged to work across the US Southwest and into northwestern Mexico on the Lands and Territories of many Indigenous Tribes and descendant communities.

We practice Preservation Archaeology, a holistic and conservation-based approach to exploring and protecting heritage places while also honoring the diverse values these places hold for people. We gather information, help make it accessible and understandable, share it with the public and decision-makers, advocate for landscape-scale protection, and co-steward heritage preserves with people who share interests in their conservation. We are committed to real and ongoing collaboration with Tribes in all areas of our work.

Learn more at archaeologysouthwest.org.

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