



## Marianas Wartime Oral History Portal – Public-Facing Digital Archive of Island Memory

### WHY READ THIS DOCUMENT?

Partners in the *Mariana Islands Wartime Experiences through Oral Histories Fellowship* worked with the community through the Marianas Storytelling and Voice of Guahan public programming launches for feedback on how to make the oral histories that were gathered through the fellowship accessible to the public.

By preparing a webpage on a widely used and popular public-facing website, Guampedia.com, the Fellow and partners took responsibility for undertaking research for the project. The Fellow and partners prioritized accuracy, clear and compelling writing, and creating meaningful visuals that effectively convey context and information.

Guampedia staff created transcripts of Pacific Island references to relevant places and names. Partners at Guampedia also aimed to give visitors to the webpage direct access to the federal government archive, where oral histories and their transcripts are accessible. This document is meant to provide instructions on how to access and utilize the webpage's resources.

This document provides an overview of the arc of the Fellowship that allowed the Fellow to conduct research with partners to produce this webpage. This instructional document will be useful to educators in social sciences and the humanities, and other disciplines who wish to experiment with place-based learning and public-facing work.

## **Keywords**

**Community Engagement • Public Humanities • Indigenous History • Digital Storytelling**

## **Permalink**

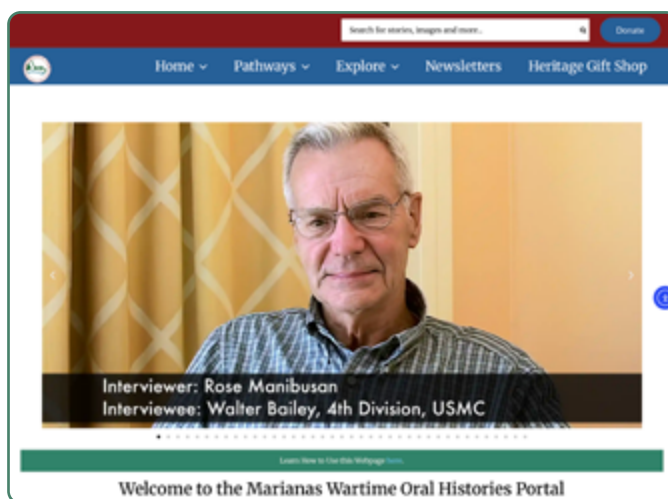
<https://www.guampedia.com/mariana-islands-wartime-experiences-through-oral-histories/>

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*The stories themselves are of people’s wartime experiences in the Mariana Islands. For example, these stories detail what it was like for people in the Mariana Islands to witness their villages being bombed and be hit with shrapnel that had killed family members while they fled to hide in the nearby caves. Other accounts offer vivid details—one war survivor recalled what it was like to smell soap for the first time after several weeks spent hiding in the jungles.*

## **Section 1 - How the Webpage Works**

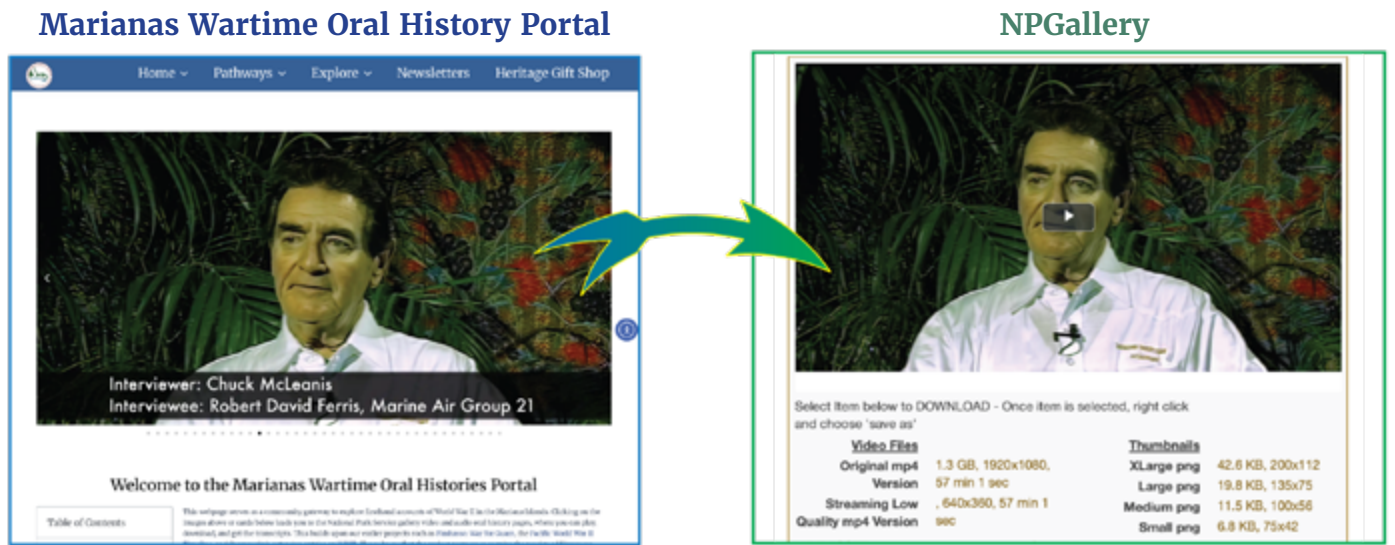


[ACCESS PROJECT webpage](#)

The public-facing webpage serves as both a guide to the **living archive** and a **learning platform**, inviting visitors to explore event recordings, community-curated media, educational resources, and thematic exhibitions. It offers an immersive space for students, researchers, and families to engage in digital storytelling as a means of cultural preservation and connection.

1.1 Living Archive

Guampedia created the [Marianas Wartime Oral Histories Portal](#). At the top of the page is a carousel of the storytellers. Audiences can click on any of their photos, with names and titles, and the metadata page on NPGallery will open on the next tab. When you click on the new tab you are brought to the NPS digital archive NPGallery.



Visual representation of opening or clicking on a carousel image.

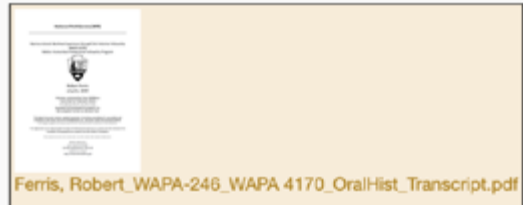
Each photo of the storytellers opens their NPGallery page, which provides the full length digitized oral history for viewing on any device that supports mp4 format. In addition, each NPGallery asset contains the metadata on the video and the full-length written transcript.

Metadata

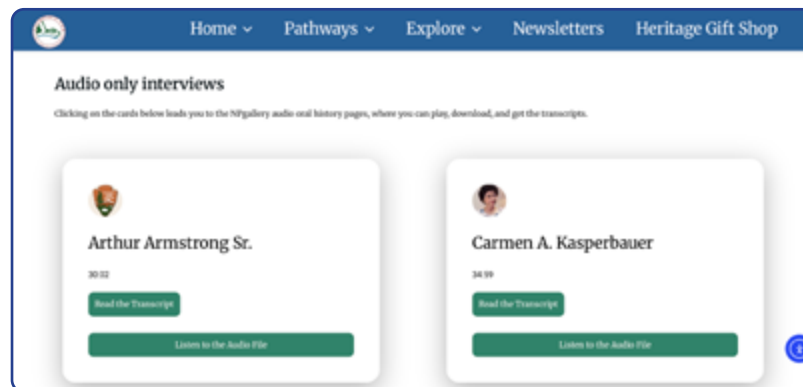
ASSET METADATA	
Asset ID:	b3d2a771-c7d-440d-a9e5-dff056df71bf
Title:	Ferris, Robert_WAPA-246_WAPA 4170_OralHist_Video.mp4
AltText:	Ferris, Robert_WAPA-246_WAPA 4170_OralHist_Video.mp4. Robert David Ferris was born in Milford, Connecticut on April 5, 1926. He and his family lived in Waterbury and Stratford, Connecticut. He graduated from the University of Bridgeport and joined the Marine Corps in April of 1943 when he was 17 years of age. He states that he was part of the Marine Air Group 21 based at Agana and was in VMR252 and VMR353 Squadrons while on

As you scroll down the digital asset page you will come across other related assets, including transcripts of the video interviews.

Transcripts

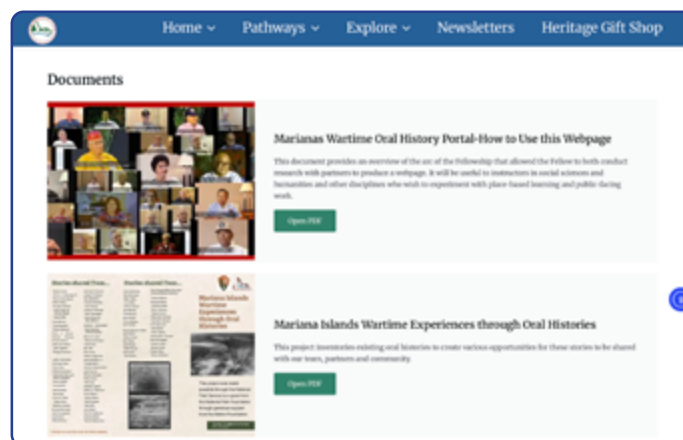
RELATED DIGITAL ASSETS

Ferris, Robert_WAPA-246_WAPA 4170_OralHist_Transcript.pdf
HIDE RELATED ASSETS

Further down on the Portal webpage is the [Audio only interviews](#). This section entails a card that when clicked on reaches the metadata page on NPGallery. This metadata page provides the full length digitized oral history for listening on any device that supports mp3 format, the audio metadata, with associated photos (where possible) and full-length transcript.



Sample image of audio interview section on webpage.

Further down under [Documents](#) we include the brochure that lists the names of all the people who recorded their oral histories with NPS. There is still more work to do and we encourage any families that see their loved one's name to reach out to us to find out progress on future funding to support this ongoing work. The brochure also includes the QRcodes that opens the [Voices of Guåhan](#) tour of different locations within the War in the Pacific National Historical Park where personal experiences from the oral histories are shared. The tour includes short stories woven together with three people to provide a context of the location's significance, along with written historical research about the area, and hyperlinks to the full-length oral histories archived with NPGallery.



Sample image of documents section on webpage.

We're most excited about how the [Marianas Wartime Oral Histories Portal](#) allows families to access their ancestors' stories in their own homes or when standing in the places where their ancestors' WWII experience occurred. We recognized, by doing this work of providing the Living Archive, that our audiences need context of before, during and after WWII in the Mariana Islands. To provide this context with compassion and care Guampedia invited the project into their Marianas Storytelling Series.



## 1.2 Learning Platform

Each Marianas Storytelling program listed in **Section 2.2** entails archival pages for each event, featuring hyperlinks to speaker bios available on other Guampedia pages, and video/photo highlights. During these events the audience's feedback provided guidance on what education they needed to understand the knowledge shared in the oral histories.

This project was designed for a wide public audience, including students, teachers, historians, and families, who seek to learn more about the Mariana Islands through accessible, multimedia formats. It aligns with broader public humanities goals of democratizing knowledge and centering Indigenous experiences in educational spaces.

The project also serves as a model for how digital humanities platforms can support community-based research and participatory storytelling, intergenerational learning rooted in place-based knowledge, collaborative programming across island institutions, and archival visibility for marginalized narratives.

### 1.2.1 Psychological Safety

The title of this section comes from the legacy of Psychological Safety brought to NPS under the leadership of the 19th National Park Service Director Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III. He is Cayuse and Walla Walla and is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Northeast Oregon, with blood ties to the Cocopah Tribe and Yankton Sioux of Fort Peck. Sams is a veteran of the US Navy.

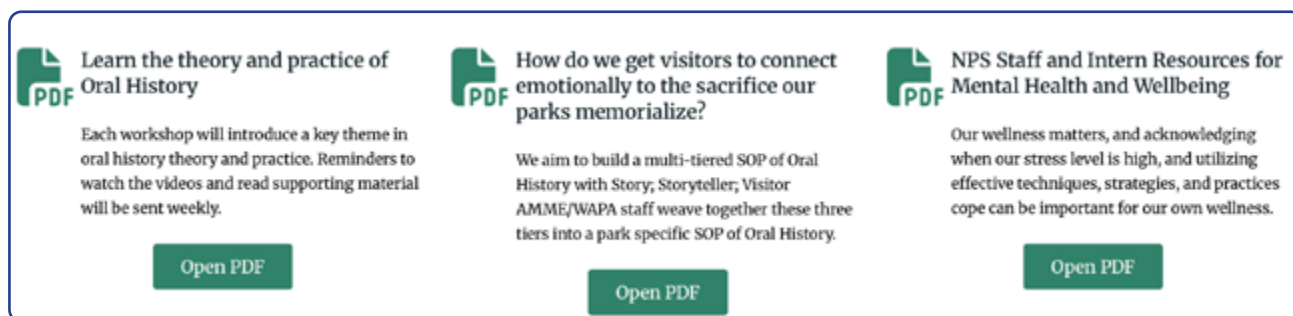


Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III, 19th director of the National Park Service (left), workshop held February 2025 *Trauma-informed Approaches to Difficult Histories: Oral Histories best practices* (right).

In the Mariana Islands Wartime Experiences through Oral Histories Fellowship, a heart-centered archaeology approach involved deep listening and community programming. In order to cultivate our connection with the ancestors and their storytelling while also maintaining our health and wellbeing, Dr. Jennifer Craig created an asynchronous training on Trauma-Informed Approaches to Difficult Histories. This training covered the breadth of Oral History work with

greater emphasis on its Interpretation. The need was recognized in that most colleagues from the War in the Pacific National Historical Park and the American Memorial Park were themselves CHamoru/Chamorro and Carolinian descendants of war survivors. Culminating in a two-day in person workshop, co-led with CHamoru/Chamorro Rita Pangelinan Nauta, participants were re-sensitized to the work they perform and how their bodies, mind and souls need care and kindness to recuperate and reconnect.

Three resources are provided here on learning about oral history practices, emotional labor of working in difficult histories and local resources for mental health safety.



Sample image of Psychological Safety documents for download.

## Section 2 - Project Summary

### 2.1 Context

The Fellowship’s primary focus is bringing to descendants, students and researchers’ collections of WWII oral histories originally conducted by National Park Service (NPS) staff during war survivor community commemorations in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. During these events, Mariana Islands *mañaina* (elders both living and ancestral) and Military Service Members, shared deeply personal stories of the Japanese occupation, forced marches, internment, and the eventual American return to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. These stories capture moments of survival, resilience, and the strength of family and community guided by the Chamorro value of *inafa’maolek*—restoring harmony and mutual care.

The Fellowship was funded by the Mellon Foundation through the National Park Foundation, and later the American Conservation Experience due to NPS program commitment changes in response to the Executive Order 14151 titled, “Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing”. At the center of the Fellowship was the storytelling of the oral histories, and this emphasis remained a key product of the project Pacific Theatre True History. Guampedia staff digitized what Dr. Jennifer Craig had organized of the aforementioned NPS collection. Primarily, we wanted to make it accessible to the public and future generations as open source. The digitization process involved management by Rita Pangelinan Nauta and Myracle Mugol for careful transcription, translation, and cataloging according to guidance provided by Dr. Jennifer Craig of National Park Service standards. This ensured that both the emotional weight and cultural context of each story were preserved in ways that aligned with administrative and cultural protocols.



Image of book cover *Archaeologies of the Heart* and its authors: Kisha Supernant (bottom left), Natasha Lyons (top left), Jane Eva Baxter (top right), Sonya Atalay (bottom right).

The interpretive framework for presenting these histories here in this webpage and in the Marianas Storytelling series, draws on the collections-based heart-centered archaeology methodology by Dr. Jennifer Craig, inspired by Metis Indigenous, feminist and community-centered approaches first described by Kisha Supernant in her work on the missing and murdered children of the Indian Boarding Schools. This methodology recognizes that historical storytelling is both intellectual and emotional work, guided by care, empathy, and reciprocity. In practice, it means we contextualize narratives in community programs with historical background that enriches the oral histories without overshadowing the storytellers' voices. Excerpts from the oral history collection were featured in the Marianas Storytelling series as part of a multiple component program. By honoring place-based memory, we linked stories to villages, concentration camps, and sacred landscapes where *taotaomāna* (ancestral spirits) remain. Of utmost importance to us is the prioritizing of cultural respect and intergenerational access, presenting these materials in ways that uphold the dignity of the storytellers.

By digitizing, contextualizing, and sharing these oral histories, Guampedia ensures that the voices of the Mariana Islands during World War II endure as a living resource, connecting *pa'go* (today) to *paramo'na* (tomorrow). This collection stands as both a historical record and a tribute to the resilience, memory, and cultural heritage of the islands.

Ensuring that the voices of the Mariana Islands are heard across generations, the project provides public access to oral histories, maintaining the stories' rich emotional and historical resonance. By digitizing and interpreting the collection, the Fellowship transformed a set of recorded memories into a living body of knowledge, which continues to educate and honor the island communities and veterans, inviting future generations to engage with and reflect on their past.

The *Marianas Storytelling: Land & Lineage* series was created to bring the voices of the Mariana Islands into public spaces where memory, culture, and history intersect. At the heart of five of these programs between 2024–2025 are the World War II oral histories originally collected by the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS also organized three launches to celebrate the Voices of Guåhan self-tour application.



2.2 Programs: Including Marianas Storytelling Series and Voices of Guåhan Launches





1. **March 30, 2024 - Marianas Storytelling: Land & Linage Ti Geran Mami / A War not of our Making**
  - Introduction of Dr. Jennifer Craig and the National Park Service Fellowship of Mariana Islands Wartime Experiences in Oral Histories and Guampedia partnership in WWII True History project
  - Film screenings of “We drank our Tears” and “War for Guam”
2. **April 18, 2024 [Saipan] - Marianas Storytelling: Land & Linage Ti Geran Mami / A War not of our Making**
  - Introduction of Dr. Jennifer Craig and the National Park Service Fellowship of Mariana Islands Wartime Experiences in Oral Histories and Guampedia partnership in WWII True History project
  - Film screenings of “We drank our Tears” and “War for Guam”
3. **May 11, 2024 - Voices of Guåhan launch - Sumay village**
  - Co-created with Mayors office of Santa Rita/Sumay
  - War Survivor bus tour guide
  - Descendant Talkstory
  - NPS app launch and use guidance <https://www.nps.gov/wapa/planyourvisit/voices-of-guahan.htm>
4. **May 27, 2024 - Voices of Guåhan launch - Assan Beach**
  - 3,050 miniature American and Guam flags installed and displayed to represent the 1,880
  - US service members who lost their lives during the 1941 attack on Guam and 1,170 CHamoru lives lost during the war.
  - WWII artifact touch and talk with a Park Ranger
  - NPS app launch and use guidance <https://www.nps.gov/wapa/planyourvisit/voices-of-guahan.htm>
5. **July 20, 2024 - Voices of Guåhan launch - Fonte Plateau**
  - Immersive experience with wall projection of WWII photographs from NPS photo archive and voice-over of oral history short reel
  - WWII artifact touch and talk with a Park Ranger
  - NPS app launch and use guidance <https://www.nps.gov/wapa/planyourvisit/voices-of-guahan.htm>
6. **December 7, 2024 - Marianas Storytelling: Land & Linage**
  - Update on progress of National Park Service project: WWII True History
  - Encore film screenings of “Promesa” and “Tradewinds”
7. **June 28, 2025 - Marianas Storytelling: Land & Linage Cultivating Connections Through WWIIs Living History & Legacy**
  - Wrap-up of Dr. Jennifer Craig and the National Park Service Fellowship of Mariana Islands Wartime Experiences in Oral Histories and Guampedia partnership in WWII True History project
  - Film screening of “Hasso yan Onra - Mananggon”
  - Book discussion of “The Reconstruction of Guam: 1944-1950, Military and Political”
8. **August 22, 2025 [Saipan] - Marianas Storytelling: Land & Linage Cultivating Ancestral Connections Through Storytelling**
  - Wrap-up of Dr. Jennifer Craig and the National Park Service Fellowship of Mariana Islands Wartime Experiences in Oral Histories and Guampedia partnership in WWII True History project
  - Film screening premiere of “Maila’Ta Fan Estoria, Itto Sibwe Tittillap, Come Tell Stories: WWII Stories of the People of the Northern Mariana Islands”
  - Gratitude Chant and Talkstory with local traditional healer

## Section 3 - Digitization of Collected Oral Histories

These stories choose now! We honor the belief that “these stories choose us,” a deep conviction rooted in *inafa’maolek* (Chamorro values of balance and mutual care). Elders, ancestors, and *taotaomāna* (ancestral spirits) guide this work, bringing stories to light when the timing is right. As we get deeper into the collections of stories more are making themselves available and showing up when it makes most sense to do so. During the interviews conducted between 1986 to 2006, some/most explain their reason for sharing the stories in the first place was to recognize the atrocities of war, so we do not ever participate in or have to experience war again. Now as we notice military installations bulking up around us, here in the Marianas islands, the sense of urgency and worry of imminent battle/war is real.

So, borrowing from the knowledge of our elders and educating our youth from these perspectives is imperative. Our current education materials need updating and expanding to suit the audience of young people that engage with screens continuously. We need to meet our audience where they are at, and that is with digitized humanities materials. The Fellowship’s digitization efforts help storytelling into living and accessible heritage, drawing energy and structure from the spiritual and cultural resonance of these narratives.

The digitized material of the oral histories initially was on DVD and CD in VOB and MB, respectively, for video and audio recordings. The CD versions were solely audio and could be processed over open-source software Audacity, then saved as MP3 format. Minimal editing of noise and cuts were removed. The time-consuming portion of the work is the cultural review of the transcript, this requires local knowledge of placenames designated by CHamoru/Chamorro, Japanese and Americans. Future interpretation would benefit from WWII military operations knowledge too. The DVD versions were both video and audio and required expertise in video production and specialist softwares.

### 3.1 DVD/VOB processes

#### 3.1.1 Audio Digitizing

- **Format Migration:** Audio and video materials originally stored on CDs and DVDs were converted. Audio- via open-source tools like Audacity, output to MP3 after noise editing, and Video- in VOB format were handled with professional ripping tools.
- **Narrative Enrichment:** After initial editing, contextual audio descriptions were crafted, capturing who is speaking and what is shown on screen, such as clothing, background elements, and shifts in camera focus. Each description required 1.5 – 2 hours per video, ensuring audio fidelity and narrative depth.
- **Transcript Collaboration:** All transcripts were edited to adjust video timestamps. As needed, cultural reviewers then integrated time codes and corrected place/family names into the transcripts, with reviews taking 1.5–10 hours per segment depending on complexity. This step preserved authenticity and visibility for the storytellers.



War Survivor during WWII (left, War in the Pacific NHP [Flickr](#)), Beatrice Emsley at interview in 1994 (center), during WWII her neck injury from near decapitation visible (right, War in the Pacific NHP [Flickr](#))

### 3.1.2 Video Digitizing

- **Ripping & Conversion:** DVDs were digitized using HandBrake or MakeMKV, taking 1.5–2× real-time per recording. File organization followed NPS cultural resource naming conventions
- **Quality Assurance:** Initial technical reviews, this process lasting at least the full length of each recording. Recordings were checked for sync, completeness, and clarity.
- **Editing & Enhancement:** Using Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere Pro, teams added audio descriptions, synced captions, and addressed narrative and cultural edits in 2–4 hours per video.
- **Export & Compliance:** Videos were exported as MP4 (20 minutes to 1 hour) and MOV (1–3 hours), formatted to comply with Section 508 accessibility standards.
- **Archival Structuring:** Final files, metadata, and transcripts were securely stored in SSD drives, backed up, and returned to NPS for long-term preservation.

This isn't just technical archiving; it's the infrastructure of live storytelling. The Fellowship's digitized materials fuel Marianas Storytelling's online platform, educational materials, and live events, ensuring the voices of WWII survivors are heard across generations as dynamic, contextual narratives.

Across every technical and archival step, from digitizing and editing oral histories to attaching transcripts and metadata, the work is anchored in a care-first ethos. Practices such as heart centered archaeology, grounded in relationality, emotion, care, and scholarly rigor, call for honoring both the living and the departed by integrating cultural empathy with methodological precision.

Moreover, trauma-informed approaches are woven into workflows to ensure emotional safety, recognize past suffering, and prevent re-traumatization—principles now widely recognized across oral history, archival, and heritage sectors. In this light, the technical processes of digitization become more than infrastructure, they become a respectful framework for preserving stories with dignity, ensuring that our end products remain both a vessel of memory and a cradle of cultural care.



## Section 4 - Co-Leaders

Inspired by the community oriented storyteller historian  
**Anthony “Malia” Ramirez.**

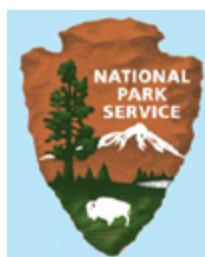


**Jennifer Craig** – As a Maritime Archaeologist in the Asia Pacific, Jennifer brings expertise in underwater cultural heritage and community-based research. She guided the Fellowship’s heart-centered archaeological and place-based components, ensuring that island histories are preserved above and below water.



**Rita Pangelinan Nauta** – As Managing Director at Guampedia, Rita has shaped the Series narrative framework, stewarded partnerships across cultural institutions, and elevated local voices through public humanities programming.

**Myracle Mugol** – As a Film Producer, Entrepreneur and Community Organizer, Myracle's work spans leadership roles in various organizations, where she has driven initiatives that uplift her community and celebrates the cultural richness of the Mariana Islands.



Partnered with National Park Service – War in the Pacific National Historical Park; American Memorial Park; NPGallery archive

## Acknowledgments

This project is a collaborative effort supported by the Guam Museum Foundation, Guampedia, the Guam Economic Development Authority, Guam Regional Medical City, the Northern Marianas Humanities Council, Mellon Foundation, American Conservation Experience, National Park Foundation and additional partners and funders. It would not be possible without the voices of our community. We appreciate how you continue to tell, remember, and honor our stories.

## Bibliography

### Films

- “Maila’Ta Fan Estoria, Itto Sibwe Tittillap, Come Tell Stories: WWII Stories of the People of the Northern Mariana Islands” by Island Image & Motion CNMI, produced by Pacific Historic Parks.
- “Hasso yan Onra - Mananggon” by Nihi Indigenous Media, features Col. Joaquin “Danny” S. Santos, Jr., USMC Ret., produced by the Pacific Historic Parks.
- “Carving the Canoe”
- “Spirits of the Voyage”
- “The Incredible Sail of Lamotrek”, [YouTube](#)
- “Promesa” documentary that explores connection between Chamorro/CHamoru prayer traditions and ancestry by Dr Lola Quan Bautista.
- “Tradewinds” celebrates Guam cultural heritage through music by Might Island productions.
- “We drank our Tears” created by Mount Carmel students and Galvin Guerrero.
- “War for Guam” produced by PBS Guam, [YouTube](#)
- “WWII Marianas True History” reel produced by Guampedia and Simon Sanchez III.

### Publications

- *The Reconstruction of Guam: 1944-1950, Military and Political* by Don Farrell, 2023, self-published.
- *Archaeologies of the Heart* by Kisha Supernant, Jane Eva Baxter, Natasha Lyons, and Sonya Atalay (editors). Springer International Publishing. 2020.
- *Voyager State of Mind: An Oceania Approach to Social-Emotional Wellbeing*, Rob Limtiaco, Matthew Limtiaco, ShinHwa Lee, 2023, University of Guam Press
- *We are the Ocean*, Epli Hau’ofa, 2008, University of Hawaii Press.
- *Bending Archaeology Towards Social Justice: Transformational Action for Positive Peace*, Barbara Little, 2023, University of Alabama Press
- *Ginen i Hila’ i Mañaina-ta: Rinikohen Tiningo’ yan Sinanguan Siha: CHamoru Cultural Dictionary* Volume 1, Kumision i Fino CHamoru yan i Fina’na’guen i Historia yan i Lina’la’ Taotao Tano’, 2022
- *Latte in the Marianas* - by the community for the community, Kelly Marsh Taitano and Jolie Liston, 2021, Humanities Guahan and Northern Marianas Humanities Council.
- *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands*, Pacific Island Monograph Series 25, Keith Camacho, University of Hawaii Press.