



**Native American/Native Hawaiian  
Museum Services  
Sample Application MN-00-13-0037-13**

**White Mountain Apache Tribe**

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$50,000
Amount of cost share:	\$26,151

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

## **Abstract**

The Nohwike' Bágowa Museum of the White Mountain Apache Tribe proposes a digitization project of a substantial collection of oral history and oral tradition reel-to-reel audiotapes, the development of metadata including finding aids for the audio recording collection along with previously digitized photographic collections and partially-digitized paper archives, and the installation of equipment to make these heritage resources available to museum visitors and researchers. The audio recording collection that is the primary focus of this project includes 525 tapes containing an estimated 788 hours of recordings that were collected between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. About half of these recordings have been transcribed and translated to English. Completion of this project will dramatically improve the long-term preservation of a priceless collection of oral history and oral tradition recordings and will make the knowledge that they contain much more easily available for research. Presentation of selections from the recordings as part of exhibition programming at the museum will enhance our interpretive and educational mission.

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# ***Nohwike' Bágowa Archives Digitization***

## **INTRODUCTION AND NEED**

### **Project Justification**

This project will support the digitization of a substantial collection of oral history and oral tradition reel-to-reel audiotapes, the development of Dublin Core Standard metadata including finding aids for the audio recording collection along with previously digitized photographic collections and partially-digitized paper archives, and the installation of equipment to make these heritage resources available to museum visitors and researchers. The audio recording collection that is the primary focus of this project includes 525 tapes containing up to 780 hours of recordings that were collected between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. About half of these recordings have been transcribed and translated to English. Our collections also include more than 3,000 photos and 200 linear feet of paper archives.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe includes approximately 15,000 members, the vast majority of whom reside on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation, the Tribe's Trust Lands located in the highlands of east-central Arizona. The reservation was established in 1871 following the founding of Fort Apache near the center of the White Mountain Apache people's aboriginal homelands. The reservation was subsequently reduced in size multiple times and in 1897 administratively divided from the San Carlos Apache Reservation to the south. As is the case in many rural reservation communities, the legacies of cultural subjugation and economic marginalization leave the White Mountain Apache people struggling. Fewer than 30% of the adult population have completed high school; nearly half live in poverty; and as many as 70% of the working age population are unemployed. Teen pregnancy is more than twice the rate of the state of Arizona at large. The leading cause of death for adults age 20 to 64 is alcoholic liver disease; adolescents in the community are seven times more likely to commit suicide than the national average.

The White Mountain Apaches did not always live under these conditions. Prior to falling under the subjugation of the U.S., the people lived in close association with the land and the abundance that the land provided. Pre-reservation life was not always easy, but the People's vast knowledge of the natural world combined with cultural understandings and profound faith allowed them to live in harmony with their families and their homeland. With the creation of reservations, the White Mountain Apaches were forced to live on smaller tracts of land and restricted from practicing their traditional ways of subsistence. Under tight federal control, the life they knew vanished; their environmental and economic resources were exploited and mismanaged.

In spite of crushing economic, social and health conditions, there exists continual, significant pride in the community's heritage and genuine interest in cultural preservation and perpetuation. The Tribe's Nohwike' Bágowa (House of Our Footprints) Museum is a leader in these efforts. The first Apache Cultural Center and Museum opened its doors in 1969 in the oldest building at the historic Fort Apache, a log cabin built by the army almost one hundred years earlier. In 1997 the museum moved into its current quarters, a modern museum facility located at the west end of what is now the Fort Apache/Theodore Roosevelt School National Historic Landmark. The museum's staff and advisors are committed to heritage perpetuation, a central focus of which is making traditional knowledge and understandings available to the community so that they may be used to help the community to heal.

### **Origin of the Oral History Collection**

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The museum opened its doors with very few collections and exhibits but with big dreams. The tribal council and museum staff agreed that one of the primary goals was to collect stories and community histories from the elderly. The need was urgent. The knowledge and experience of all elders is priceless, but the elders of the 1960s and '70s were especially important to the Western Apache communities as they were the last to have grown up surrounded by parents and grandparents who remembered life before the reservations and the subjugation of the Apache people by U.S. military and civilian authorities. This particular generation of elders was raised in traditional Apache wickiups, spoke Apache only, were known by their Apache names, were taken from their families to attend boarding schools, and recalled stories of harsh, cold winters with "snow as high as a horse" forcing them to wrap their moccasins with layers of burlap sacks for warmth. Some were children during the newly established reservation and the waning years of military presence at Fort Apache. They held great stores of irreplaceable knowledge. Starting in 1969 and continuing into the early 1980s, the museum's founding director Edgar Perry and elder Canyon Quintero and other field representatives created recordings with these elders at any opportunity.

The museum staff traveled out into the various communities to interview the elderly. In the late 1960s few homes on the reservation had electricity so battery-operated recorders were used to collect their stories under a tree or by the side of a road. The outlying communities in which many of the elders lived were miles from the central town of Whiteriver, which serves as the epicenter of business and government for the tribe. The elderly were busy walking to and from their homes, shopping at the trading posts, checking their mail, taking care of their grandchildren, tending their cornfields and gardens, and living life on the reservation as it was back then. As the field representatives drove about on the vast reservation, they encountered some elderly on their way into town so they stopped them by the roadside and recorded a story or two. Field representatives also traveled to nursing homes around the state collecting stories from the elderly. Eventually, word spread that the staff members at the newly opened museum were seeking elderly who were willing to share their songs and stories so some of the elderly made their way to the museum to share their knowledge and memories. Some arrived in groups and often the arrival of these groups created a jovial atmosphere. "Do you have a drum?" they asked, "We'll sing a song for you to record!" And so they did.

All of the 133 narrators are tribal members. Ninety-two men and forty-one women contributed to the collection. All major communities of the Fort Apache Indian Reservation are represented in the collection. The content covers a vast array of subjects, including songs, prayers, stories, memoirs, and instructions on how to play certain games, geographic knowledge, and horticulture and subsistence information.

Tragically, on January 4, 1985, the museum caught fire and burned to the ground. At the time, the museum was housed in the last remaining soldier's barracks, which was built in the late 1800s. Many of the museum's collections objects and archives were lost. Fortunately, Perry, who by a display of almost superhuman strength carried the cabinet containing the recordings from the burning building, saved the collection of oral histories. The collection is now stored in a secure, climate-controlled room, but the tapes are now from thirty to more than forty years old and are at significant risk of deterioration. Once again it is a race against time in order to preserve and share this vast amount of information.

Elders, cultural and health program managers, and community members have noted the value of elders' teachings in helping the Apache people to find balance and health. Limited numbers of videorecordings that have been available in the museum's exhibition space for the last eight years receive much attention from diverse visitors. The small percentage of the museum's large collection that is currently available

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for distribution is frequently requested. The community desperately wants and needs to hear the wisdom of the elders. This project will enhance the long term preservation of our priceless audio collection, and through the development of finding aids and other metadata for the audio collection and other archives, the knowledge that we hold in trust for the White Mountain Apache community will become much more available.

## **PROJECT DESIGN**

The purpose of this project is to digitize our current collection of oral histories and oral tradition information and to make the materials available to local school children, other community members, and non-local museum visitors. As a result of this digitization project, we will meet our goals of providing increased access to the collection, standardizing metadata, and managing and preserving the collection. Additionally, museum staff will acquire new skills and knowledge that will only improve the museum and the community as a whole.

Upon completion, the museum holdings will include a complete digital master of the audio recording collection. Included will be a database with descriptive metadata, at least two finding aids (by contributor and subject), and digitized transcripts from each contributor as available. To make the archival materials available, access stations will be installed in the museum's exhibition gallery.

### **Goals:**

(A) Access to the Collection - By providing access and educational services to the local population and non-local museum visitors, via two public workstations, we foresee increased access to the oral history collection. There are two high schools, six elementary schools and three middle schools located on the reservation that would benefit through educational and interpretive programs. Although a majority of middle age and older adults speak the Western Apache language the younger generation tends to speak English. The elders who were passionate and shared their stories spoke only Apache so local language revitalization efforts will also benefit from access to the material.

(B) Enhanced Metadata of the Collection - We will create and enhance the recordings in the collection by adding annotations, linkages, and catalogue information in accordance with the Dublin Core Metadata standards. Other descriptive data will also be added to an existing database. Additionally, the Nohwike' Bagowa Museum will collaborate with the descendants of the contributors to gather other information such as photographs and matrilineal clan relationships.

(C) Access Protocols – We will review our collection development policy to address any unclear issues relating to access to the collection.

### **Action Steps:**

1. Procure digitization hardware and software then set up a professional workstation
2. Establish scanning standards, digitization workflow, and metadata development processes
3. Prioritize and select material from the collection for digitizing
4. Identify training needs
5. Provide consultant-led training opportunities for museum staff on all aspects of the project
6. Begin digitizing in accordance with scanning standards and metadata inclusion

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7. Review digitized material for content for use in interpretive and educational materials
  8. Create education and interpretive material, based on digital material review, and place material on the public workstations
  9. Review the museum's other archival holdings (manuscripts and photographs collections) for data and images relating to the digitized material for use with the digitized collection
  10. Initiate community outreach to increase awareness of the collection
  11. Complete evaluation of all elements of the project, throughout the grant period

### **PROJECT RESOURCES:**

In addition to our archival collections, the project's resources will consist of staff, consultants, and the digitization equipment.

**Staff** - The museum's existing staff, within the scope of the ongoing responsibilities, will contribute specific capacities to the project.

- **Project Director Karl Hoerig**, who has served as the director of the Nohwike' Bagowa Museum for more than eleven years, has managed numerous significant exhibition and interpretive programming projects. He will contribute project management and educational and interpretive materials development expertise.
- **Project Coordinator, Janelle Joseph**, will devote her time (30 hours per week) exclusively to the completion of the project. She has an M.A. in Information Resources and Library Science and will contribute her knowledge and experience toward ensuring effective preservation and accessibility for the collection. She has served on the Nohwike' Bagowa staff for one year.
- **Museum Collections Manager and Language Specialist, Beverly Malone**, has served the museum for more than twenty years, and is an expert in the collection and management of recorded oral histories in addition to being one of the leaders in the development of written Ndee Biyati'i (Western Apache Language). She will facilitate consultation with elders and the collection of oral histories, and the integration of knowledge shared by consultants into educational and interpretive materials.
- **Museum Administrative Manager, Ann Q. Skidmore**, has served the museum program for more than thirty years, and is an expert in the development of Apache language and culture educational materials. She is also an expert in written Ndee Biyati'i and is a member of the Tribe's cultural advisory board. She will provide guidance in the development of educational and interpretive materials and will assist in project management.
- **Cultural Resources Director, Ramon Riley**, is a recognized community leader in the development of cultural education programming. He will assist in the development of public program materials.
- **Collections Clerk, Nicole Cosen**, is responsible for the care of and access to the museum's object and archival collections, and will be trained to run the digitizing equipment and perform the bulk of the analog-to-digital processing.
- **Consultants** - During the course of this project we will be working with two consultants, preservation specialist Robert Nichol and an information technology consultant to be identified.
- **Bob Nichol, owner of Ping Pong Media**, is an active member of the Association of Moving Image Archivists. Mr. Nichol has extensive experience and technological knowledge on the preservation and migration of ethnographic resources. Ping Pong Media has done restoration and transfer work for the University of Arizona (UA) Libraries, the UA Poetry Center, and a variety of other organizations. Mr. Nichol will join us throughout various phases of the project. During the early stages of the project, he

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will conduct an on-site evaluation, assist staff with purchasing the equipment and assembling the digitization equipment. Then he will train the project staff over a two-day period on the digitization procedures of the collection. He will also be available to conduct an on-site evaluation toward the latter end of the project. Overall, we will schedule 6-8 days for an on-site visit or telephone discussion at [REDACTED] per day.

- **An Information Technology Consultant** will assist in the setup of two public workstations to provide access to the digitized archives, including implementation of network security solutions.

**Digitization Equipment** – Equipment needs are detailed in the Specifications for Projects that Develop Digital Projects. Once the equipment has been purchased and set up, consultants will train the staff in the digitization process. A master copy will be created and stored on external hard drives, with a second copy to be stored off site to provide further data preservation safeguards. The original open reel format, cassette, and videotape materials will remain in the museum’s archives following their digitization.

### **Project Results**

Our museum opened its doors more than forty years ago with very few collections but with big dreams. The most important work that the museum staff completed during those first years was the preservation of elders’ stories, songs, and lessons. The contributors to the collection all shared a vision in which they could share their wisdom with their community’s children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This project will help to realize their vision and ensure that everything that they shared so many years ago will continue to be there for future generations.

The long-term stability of our audio archives will be significantly enhanced through the completion of this project, making hundreds of hours of open reel recordings available for our visitors to experience. By enhancing the collection through the development of metadata materials, community members and other researchers will be able to find the information they seek much more easily, thus further adding to the value of the collection.

The success of this project will be measured quantitatively by the percentage of our audio collections that we are able to digitize, with the goal being completion of the entire collection. Metadata development will also be quantitatively measured by percentage of the collection integrated into catalogue and finding aids. The project will be qualitatively measured through response of audience members to the availability of the archival materials.

By implementing this digitization project, the museum’s capacities and contributions to the community will increase and expand. Part of the project will also provide a training ground for museum staff in technology development and the material developed from the digital content will support educational and interpretive needs of the museum. Most important, a connection with elders from a time that has almost been forgotten will be re-established and engage those of us who follow in their footprints.

