

**Indigenous Perspectives in School Librarianship- Supporting School Librarian Development in AK/MT  
Institute of Museum and Library Services – LB21 Program Grant  
Funding Category: Project /Community Catalysts /Master’s-level**

**Statement of Broad Need.** Montana State University requests **\$577,971 for Indigenous Perspectives in School Librarianship (IPSL), a *community catalyst project grant*.** School districts across the nation experience difficulty in finding and hiring certified school librarians (Kachel & Lance, 2018). “Grow your own” programs are effective in recruiting and retaining educators for a variety of endorsement areas including library media (Murray, 2007; Sutton, Bausmith, O’Connor, Pae, & Payne, 2014). In rural, urban, and suburban communities that serve Indigenous students, like those in Alaska and Montana, access to quality education requires “a stable, well prepared, and culturally responsive teacher workforce that is integrated into the community life” (Burton, Brown, & Johnson, 2013).

Both Alaska and Montana have a high percentage of minority students, and a significant proportion of K-12 Indigenous students; 19.5% (AK) and 14% (MT) respectively (Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2017; National Congress of American Indians, 2019; Showalter, Klein, Johnson, & Hartman, 2017). To encourage retention, researchers suggest that educators need support to understand and engage with the cultural context of their schools and be prepared for the specific demands of teaching in schools that serve Indigenous students (Kaden et al., 2016); yet teachers are resistant to adopting and applying culturally relevant education due to the “absence of a range of practical know-how, usable pedagogical models, and high-quality resources” (Neri, Lozano, & Gomez, 2019).

Training can often be difficult to acquire as nearly 60% of Alaska's and 70.4% of Montana's schools are rural (Showalter et al, 2017) and many rural schools are isolated, which impacts the ability to develop professional learning communities. Travel for schooling and professional development is expensive, time consuming, and often impossible during the school year. IPSL seeks to bridge this gap by developing a fully online school library preparation program using culturally relevant and responsive curriculum including Indigenous perspectives, and recruiting and training 30 teachers in Alaska and Montana to become school librarians who are prepared to be culturally relevant educators in their states via MSU's fully online 21-credit Master's level Library Media Certificate program.

**Project Design.** IPSL will consist of two interrelated components: the development of a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum for school librarian preparation programs with an emphasis on Indigenous perspectives; and, using this curriculum, the recruitment, training, and development of school library professionals in Alaska and Montana. 30 teachers will be recruited to complete the three-semester program at MSU which leads to a teaching endorsement as a K-12 Library Media Specialist in AK, MT, and many other states. In addition to completing the Library Media Certificate program, participants will engage in a cohort model of structured support and community. Applicants residing in rural Alaska/Montana and/or serving Alaska Native/Montana reservation communities will be given priority consideration.

The MSU Library Media Certificate curriculum will be redesigned to align with best practices for culturally relevant education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016) including infusing Indigenous perspectives in support of the [Montana Indian Education for All](#) (IEFA) mandate and [Alaska's Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools](#), as well as continuing to meet [Montana](#), [Alaska](#) and [national](#) Library Media Specialist Preparation Standards. The curriculum redesign will result in a tested and evaluated program of study, published in an open-access format, that can be replicated or modified in school librarian preparation programs across the United States.

Year 1 will consist of research, initial curriculum redesign, piloting of one course, and recruitment of cohort 1 (15 students). In Year 2, cohort 1 will complete their certificate within the redesigned curriculum, the curriculum will be evaluated and refined, and cohort 2 (15 students) will be recruited. In year 3, cohort 2 will complete the certificate, and the program will be evaluated and disseminated. As a result of these activities, IPSL will have a significant impact on the capacity of school library professionals in Montana and Alaska to contribute to the well-being of their Indigenous populations.

**Diversity Plan.** Alaska and Montana have high proportions of K-12 Indigenous students. By providing pre-service school librarians in these states with the competencies to effectively serve their communities, we

believe they will be more likely to stay in their schools and collaborate with educators in their capacity as school librarians and practitioners of culturally relevant education.

Students will engage in a cohort-based model of structured support and community with opportunities to address issues of individual and mutual concern, discuss relevant opportunities and challenges in their schools, and work with experts. Cohort models have been successfully implemented to enable pre-service educators to address issues of race (Daniel, 2009), and build richer understandings of professional expectations and strategies (Eaton, 2018).

To ensure that the curriculum redesign is culturally appropriate, meaningful, and pedagogically sound, an advisory board consisting of Indigenous education, library science, and e-learning experts from Alaska and Montana will guide the development of the curriculum throughout all three years of the program from initial conception to published, open-access materials in order to effectively meet culturally relevant standards in schools with an emphasis on Indigenous perspectives. We have recruited the following advisory board members:

- Amy Conley Andreas, Librarian, Browning (MT) High School (Blackfeet Reservation)
- Joy Bridwell, Librarian, Stone Child College, Box Elder, MT (Rocky Boy's Reservation)
- Jason Cummins, EdD, Principal, Crow Agency (MT) School (Crow Reservation)
- Sheryl Kohl, MSU Library Media Certificate graduate, Poplar (MT) Public Schools (Ft. Peck Reservation)
- Aaron LaFromboise, Librarian, Blackfeet Community College (MT, Blackfeet Reservation); Montana State Library Commissioner
- Janet Madsen, School Library Coordinator, Alaska State Library, Juneau, AK
- Sue Sherif, Head of Library Development (retired), Alaska State Library, Fairbanks
- Sean Asiqłuq Topkok, PhD, Associate Professor of Indigenous Education, School of Education, University of Alaska Fairbanks

**Broad Impact.** This project will result in a redesigned preservice school librarian curriculum that is tested, evaluated, and published in an open-access format. With a focus on culturally relevant/responsive educational practices and alignment with state and national standards, the curriculum can be replicated or modified in school librarian preparation programs across the United States. Those who complete the program will increase their capacity to contribute to the well-being of their school communities through the integration of Indigenous perspectives and culturally relevant standards/pedagogy.

The open-access curriculum will be published in MSU's institutional repository, [Scholarworks](#). This ensures accessibility in perpetuity for school library preparation programs and instructors. Dissemination will occur through presentations at relevant conferences, such as the *Association for Library and Information Science Education* and AASL's *Educators of School Librarians Section*, promotion through email lists and social media, and submission to peer-reviewed journals, such as the *Journal of Education in Library and Information Science*.

**Budget Summary.** The estimated budget for this three-year project is **\$577,971**. Student support costs total **\$349,500**. Included in the budget are:

- **Personnel Costs (3 years):** 0.5 project manager (salary and benefits- \$70,560), research time for PI Ewbank at 5% per AY (\$18,697), summer salary and benefits for Co-PI Rinio (\$45,210- 2 months x 3 years), and contracted services including an instructional designer (\$11,200) and an Indigenous curriculum specialist (\$11,200) = **\$156,867**
- **Student Support Costs:** Tuition and fees for 30 students (\$277,500) and a 0.5 Graduate Research Assistant (3 years' tuition, fees, insurance, and stipend-\$72,000) = **\$349,500**
- **Miscellaneous:** Recruitment and Dissemination (\$10,000) and materials and supplies (\$3,000) = **\$13,000**
- **Indirect costs (excluding student support costs):** 34.5% (federally negotiated rate) = **\$58,604**
- **Cost share:** includes Co-PI personnel costs (\$18,697 for Co-PI Ewbank FY 5%; \$45,210 Co-PI Rinio AY 20%), WebEx videoconferencing user fees (\$10,125), student trainees' time (\$94,500), Licensure Technician (\$1,200), and indirect costs @ 34.5% (\$58,604) = **\$228,335** (99.9% cost share)