



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-251768-OMS-22
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

University of Minnesota (Weisman Art Museum)

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$239,912
Amount of cost share:	\$239,931

The Weisman Art Museum will consult with Indigenous communities to address issues of reconciliation and decolonization in museum practice. The project will be informed by a completed inventory of the Mimbres material housed by the museum. The project team will work with an advisory committee to develop an institution-wide evaluation practice, which will include Indigenous frameworks and methodologies, the establishment of an Indigenous artist fellowship and a public conversation series exploring decolonization and Indigenization in museum practice. The museum will host a convening to present findings and frameworks to its constituent communities and museum professionals. Through this project, the museum aims to foster deeper relationships and rebuild trust with Indigenous communities, shift practice through power-sharing and reciprocal relationships, establish itself as a platform for critical conversations and dialogue, and build its capacity in culturally responsive evaluation methodologies.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

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PROJECT JUSTIFICATION:

Need, Problem, Challenge: Weisman Art Museum (WAM) at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities currently houses a large collection of Mimbres cultural artifacts (ca. 1000-1150), resulting from excavations in southern New Mexico conducted by University of Minnesota faculty and students from 1928 to 1931. More than 2,000 Mimbres objects came to the University as a result of those excavations, including more than 1,000 painted bowls, found in or near Mimbres graves located at the excavation sites; some of these funerary objects were on view at WAM until 2019.

The Mimbres cultural materials taken from the 1928-1931 excavations were transferred to WAM from the University of Minnesota's Department of Anthropology in 1992. Prior to that, in 1989, all human remains from those archaeological digs were supposed to have been transferred from the University of Minnesota Anthropology Department into the care of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC), which still acts as their steward. In 1993, the Weisman submitted a summary of the museum's holdings, but not a complete inventory of associated funerary objects affiliated with human remains. On many occasions over the years, MIAC corresponded with WAM, requesting a full inventory, per Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) regulations. Underscoring the significance of this delay, a small number of previously uncounted human remains were discovered by the inventory team among WAM's Mimbres holdings in summer 2020 (see more detailed background and context in Supportingdocs1). As of fall 2021, the NAGPRA inventory is nearly complete. A memo by UMN President Joan Gabel emphasizes the administration's commitment to repatriation and supporting reconciliation across the entire university enterprise (Supportingdocs1). We acknowledge that the institution's previous non-compliance has been a source of pain and ongoing trauma for MIAC and the Minnesota tribes they represent, the Native artist community of the Twin Cities, and the affiliate tribal nations of the Southwest.

These offenses are felt even more acutely given the ongoing COVID epidemic, the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and subsequent uprisings, the urgent dialogue around racial equity and social justice, WAM's stated commitments to diversity, equity, access and inclusion, and Land Acknowledgement Statement (Supportingdocs1). The museum has collected community feedback through written public opinion pieces, exhibition and program evaluation surveys, and focus groups that highlight the need for both conversation and action around issues of reconciliation and decolonization in museum practice (Supportingdocs1). This issue is one which demands reconsideration and remedy, as we set strategy and priorities in light of societal and museum sector inadequacies that continue to harm the communities we aim to support.

University art museums such as ours, situated simultaneously in the worlds of the arts and the academy, are special institutions in the cultural landscape. This position imbues university art museums with the potential to work across social divisions and build connections that are essential for addressing the social injustices. If we are to remain relevant as cultural institutions, we have a duty to develop new practices that position museums as intentional actors, whose agency extends well beyond the museum walls, and even beyond the arts.

The Weisman is well positioned to support the practice of Indigenization and Decolonization. The museum is part of a land grant university in Minnesota; the histories of both the University and state are rife with treaty violations, intercultural pain, and systemic violence enacted upon Indigenous sovereignty and populations. The University has adopted a new strategic plan that outlines a commitment to reconciliation with Native communities (Supportingdocs1). This commitment is highlighted through the establishment of a Senior Advisor for Native American Affairs, Senior Director for Native American Affairs, and a nation-leading tuition assistance program for Native students (Supportingdocs1). The museum sits near the urban center of the Twin Cities Native American community, one of the largest, most tribally diverse Native communities in the United States. As we retool the museum's institutional approach to relationship-building with the various communities the museum aims to serve, it is paramount that we: acknowledge the role of culture in shaping those relationships; act to catalyze the cultural processes that strengthen community

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relations; and empower cultural institutions to do this work. Museums must rethink and reimagine long-held ideas of cultural stewardship; we must recalibrate our missions, visions, and values accordingly. To “decolonize” and “indigenize” the museum (Supportingdocs1) and its operations, our duty of care must be fully extended to our relationships with people. Our institutional obligations must shift to center the perspectives and experiences of our constituent communities. Going forward, we are determined to learn from our institution’s history and change organizational practices so that the museum operates more equitably and respectfully with the people in our diverse communities. We will collaborate with our partners in the scholarly community, guided by diverse Native communities, working diligently in the coming years to repair the relationships harmed by the institution’s past decisions and actions.

To address this past and ongoing harm, and in consultation with Tribal community members from the Twin Cities and Mimbres-affiliated community members, the Weisman Art Museum proposes a two-and-a-half-year-long Truth and Reconciliation project. This project will be informed by the work of the NAGPRA inventory of the Mimbres material housed by WAM and the University, and the following interrelated elements that will inform and impact each other: 1) The formation of an advisory committee with seven of eight members being Indigenous; 2) Development of an institution-wide evaluation practice that includes Indigenous frameworks and methodologies; 3) Establishing an Indigenous artist fellowship in the museum. In its first iteration, the Fellowship will host an artist representing Mimbres-affiliated nations for two years; 4) A public program conversation series exploring topics of decolonization, indigenization in museum practice, and Truth and Reconciliation with Tribal nations; 5) This roster of programs will culminate in a three-day-long convening that presents findings and frameworks to Native community members, museum professionals, and the general public.

Benefit: This project serves multiple audiences, including the diverse local Native community and the Southwestern Native American tribes who are culturally affiliated with the Mimbres people. Advisory committee members are engaged stakeholders and who have been guiding museum staff on program and relationship development since fall 2020. Mimbres culturally affiliated tribal community members have been working with the Mimbres NAGRPA committee since spring 2020. As a teaching museum for the University of Minnesota, there are scholarly communities that will benefit from the Weisman’s program through engaged learning, public discussion and debate, and curriculum integration. These communities include interdisciplinary undergraduate, graduate and PhD students, as well as faculty members and staff. This program will do more than advance the Weisman Art Museum’s stated commitment to diversity, equity, access and inclusion; it will serve as an example for other institutions across the nation in similar straits, who seek to move beyond what is legally required by NAGPRA law and work toward Truth and Reconciliation with their own constituent communities.

Strategic Ties: The Truth and Reconciliation project will support the needs of the local community while advancing the museum’s strategic plan. Adopted in 2018, this plan calls for the Weisman to *“Improve the museum’s understanding of the needs of traditionally underserved and marginalized audiences in the community”*. This will be achieved by establishing a Native-led advisory committee; advancing the competencies of non-Native museum staff in culturally responsive evaluation methodologies; and collecting and inviting public feedback. The project will also advance the museum’s strategic direction #2, to *“explore new approaches to creating user-generated content and dialogic interpretative strategies with the permanent collection.”* This strategic direction will be achieved by: hosting a two-year artist-in-residence; presenting a public programming series that raises community awareness and expands the dialogue around sensitive cultural materials in museum collections; publishing blog posts and articles produced by collaborative partners on the museum’s website and digital platforms; and hosting a final convening to share findings and frameworks. This project will support the development of the museums’ new strategic plan.

IMLS Goals: This project addresses the IMLS Museums for America program LifeLong Learning goal that aims to *strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public* by bringing together Native artists, scholars, organizers,

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curators and community members with non-Native museum professionals to address the need for public dialogue and action around Truth and Reconciliation at the Weisman Art Museum. This project strengthens our museums ability to *provide programs designed for audiences of various background, circumstances, and abilities* by bringing together an interdisciplinary and multi-generation Native advisory council with non-Native museum professionals *to develop museum resources that foster various types of literacies; and creating and delivering interpretive public programs* through our public program series and with informed action of the Mimbres NAGPRA Committee; academic units and community partners; and *Implementing evaluations or studies to improve learning experiences* working alongside Inspire to Change and the Indigenous evaluators cohort; and through the development and design of a socially engaged artist project presented by the Native artist in residence in the museum's Target Studio for Creative Collaboration. The project supports the IMLS 2018-2022 strategic plan *Transforming Communities* goal #1 by leveraging the museum *as a trusted source for information* by creating programs that center and elevate Indigenous ways of knowing. The project also supports the goal #2 for *building capacity*, which is intended to promote the ability of museums to *serve as trusted spaces for community engagement and dialogue*; and by investing in *museum professionals and institutions to share and adopt best practices and innovations*. As a result of the Truth and Reconciliation project, the Weisman will build capacity to be self-reflexive in a public and transparent manner, develop a culturally responsive evaluation framework, and share these tools and findings so as to encourage other organizations to engage in this process as well.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

Activities, Schedule, Staffing: The Truth and Reconciliation project will begin shortly after the award notification in August 2022. The project will be managed under collaborative direction of Weisman Art Museum Executive Director, Alejandra Peña Gutiérrez, Project PI Katie Covey, Weisman Art Museum Director of Public Programming and Student Engagement, Boris Oicherman, PhD, Weisman Art Museum's Curator for Creative Collaboration; and Jamee Yung, Weisman Art Museum Director of Education. The collaborative leadership team will track project progress and goals utilizing the project management site Basecamp. Basecamp will serve as the central communication tracking tool for the advisory committee, evaluation cohort, artist fellow, the public program series and the final convening. Covey and Yung will coordinate statements of work, contracts, and payment. Weisman development staff Will Haugen and Patti Phillips will complete all required grant reporting. The leadership team will communicate and collaborate with advisory committee members and project partners; contracts will be signed and meeting times will be scheduled by the program admin. The museum's Director of Communications Susannah Schouweiler will submit a press release announcing the project and manage all grant acknowledgements. Oicherman will manage the Artist Fellowship component of the project and mediate between the artist, the museum and the university to provide the artist with access to all necessary institutional resources.

Fall 2022 is the planning and consultation phase of the two-and-a-half-year project and the official convening of the advisory committee and evaluation cohort. Confirmed advisory members include: Juan Lucero, Rosy Simas, Debra Yeppa-Pappan, Andrea Carlson, Rebecca Dallinger and Jaime Arsenault (Resumes). Advisory members have wide-ranging experience in inter-tribal consultation, repatriation, consultation, and socially engaged artistic practice. Meetings will be held via Zoom or in person, pending COVID regulations. The content of conversation that emerges from those roundtable discussions will be synthesized and made public via reported written pieces, produced and published in-house for the Weisman's blog. Advisory Committee members, Native artists, and scholars in the field will also be commissioned, apart from already set committee responsibilities, to write a series of topical essays and response pieces throughout the grant period, which will also be published on the museum blog.

The Mimbres-affiliated Artist Fellow will be selected through a consultation and consensus building process that will include the Advisory Committee, Mimbres NAGRA committee, and museum staff beginning in the fall of 2022. The selection process will take place through both remote consultation and an in-person visit of select Committee members

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and WAM staff to still-to-be-determined locations in New Mexico. This team trip will include relationship-building activities with local community members, visits to the original excavation sites, and consultations with Mimbres-affiliated representatives who have been working collaboratively with the Mimbres NAGPRA Committee, Weisman Art Museum, and University of Minnesota since 2020. In the event COVID-related travel restrictions are put in place, remote meetings and activities will take the place of an in-person visit.

In winter 2022, the Advisory Committee will select an artist experienced in critical, socially-engaged practices from the position of Indigenous cultures, knowledgeable in creative practices and rooted in indigeneity. The artist will also have a demonstrated interest in leading institutional and social transformation through their creative practices. Upon selection, the Fellow will be included as a full member of the Advisory Committee, beginning in January 2023 and continuing for the duration of the project. In addition to all activities of the Advisory Committee noted above, the Artist-Fellow will work with project leaders on development of public programs, alongside developing a personal creative project grounded in institutional engagement with the museum. Throughout the fellowship, the Fellow will travel to Minneapolis regularly, once every semester for one week, to lead focused activities and public programs, participate in meetings, and conduct location-based research. The Fellowship will culminate with a month-long residency at WAM and a public exhibition at WAM's Target Studio for Creative Collaboration.

The public panel conversations series will begin in spring 2023. This program series will be presented via a hybrid method of Zoom webinars and in person at the Weisman Art Museum. A video recording of the panel conversation and written reflection piece will be produced by museum staff and shared via the museum's website following each program. Evaluation findings will be shared with museum staff, board members, and the public. There will be a total of three public panel discussions which will take place throughout the two-and-a-half-year grant period. These will take place in spring 2023, fall 2023 and spring 2024. Panel topics will include: *Museums' Truth and Reconciliation*, *Decolonizing Museums*, and *Museums & Social Justice, Human Rights*. The Advisory Committee will work alongside WAM Staff to select panelists. Each program will be designed to meet accessibility standards, as outlined in our current IMLS Cares Act Grant (Supportingdocs1). Evaluation forms will be sent to panel participants as well as speakers after each program (Supportingdocs2).

All aspects of the grant project will be evaluated through a collaborative consultation process with the Minneapolis-based evaluation firm Inspire to Change (Supportingdocs2). This work will be continuous throughout the grant period, which will allow for course correction throughout the two-and-a-half-year project. Inspire to Change is led by Nora Murphy Johnson, PhD, and A. Rafael (Andy) Johnson, who are experts in developmental evaluation that supports innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments. Inspire to Change is a principles-focused evaluation model which assesses underlying principles of the program or organization, rather than predetermined outcomes. A core aspect of this project's evaluation strategy, Inspire to Change will convene an Indigenous Evaluators Cohort. This program for Indigenous-rooted evaluation methods was developed in 2019 by and for Indigenous leaders in the Twin Cities region. It included a cohort-based series of evaluation topics, such as planning, methodology, best practices, analysis, report writing, community engagement, and Culturally Responsive Indigenous Evaluation (CRIE- Supportingdocs2).¹ Other elements, including facilitation, timeline, and topics, will be designed in partnership with advisors from the Indigenous communities participating in the cohort. The evaluation plan is built around iterative, continuous program improvement with ongoing feedback from partners and program participants. Staff will collect and record data and provide periodic written summaries of the data analysis to help record and track project

¹ Waapalaneexkweew (Nicole R. Bowman-Farrell, Mohican/Lunaape). (2018). Looking backward but moving forward: Honoring the sacred and asserting the sovereign in indigenous evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 39(4), 543-568.

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progress. Specific tools for data collection may include surveys, observations, interviews, focus groups, or other tools that can especially help capture feedback.

At the summation of the grant period in the fall 2024, a final three-day, public convening will be presented. This convening will be developed over the grant period by the Advisory Committee, Artist Fellow, evaluation cohort, and museum staff. The goal of the convening is to share the project's findings and frameworks with museum constituent community members, museum professionals, and the general public. After the final symposium, recordings, photographs, and reflections from the event will be shared on the museum's website.

Risks and Mitigation: One risk of this project is a consequence of the inherited legacy of the Mimbres materials at the Weisman, and the fact that many Native community members have been reluctant to engage with the museum due to this history of mistreatment. This risk will be mitigated through a deliberate relationship development process and transparent decision-making through the formation and leadership of the Advisory Committee and the Inspire to Change, Indigenous Evaluators cohort. A significant mitigation measure is the desire of the museum to be led and informed by the advisory committee.

The established timelines that structure the grant period present another element of risk for the project. Relationships and trust-building take considerable time and do not proceed in a linear way. There is great diversity among and between Tribal communities, and there are many perspectives represented within each Tribe, as well. There may be discussions that will not be appropriate for non-Native museum staff to participate in; we will respect Tribal sovereignty and cultural protocols. The museum will be transparent in all decision-making processes and respect the wishes of project partners and advisors. Consent is a central operating value throughout the entire ecosystem of this project. Museum staff will continue to build relationships with partners and advisors beyond the parameters of the grant period.

Resources [financial, personnel, other]: The selected project team has the experience, qualifications, and time allotted to effectively accomplish the project objectives.

- **Museum Staff:** This project benefits from the oversight of Weisman Executive Director, Alejandra Peña Gutiérrez, and museum staff, project PI, Katie Covey, Director of Public Programs and Student Engagement, Boris Oicherman, PhD, Curator for Creative Collaboration, and Jamee Yung, Director of Education, who have substantial experience managing cross-disciplinary, community, and artist-driven projects and initiatives.
- **Advisory Committee:** there will be eight total advisory members. Six of the eight advisory members have been engaged with the development of this project since fall 2020 and have deep experience in repatriation, audience engagement, and socially engaged artistic practice. Confirmed advisory members include: Juan Lucero (Isleta Pueblo), Rosy Simas (Haudenosaunee), Debra Yeppa-Pappan (Pueblo of Jemez), Andrea Carlson (Grand Portage Ojibwe), Rebecca Dallinger and Jaime Arsenault (White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa) [Resumes]. The two other committee members yet to be confirmed have been identified as a community organizer and the artist fellow. The artist fellow will be selected through consultation with the advisory committee and museum staff. Advisory committee members will meet with museum staff once per semester for 5.5 hours via the zoom platform, and will communicate with museum staff via email for another two hours per semester, for a total of 7.5 hours of consultation per semester; 15 hours per grant period for years 1 and 2 and 7 hours in year 3. This represents a total of 37 hours over the two and a half year grant period. Advisors are compensated \$150 per hour for a total of \$5,550 per advisor for the grant period. Goals and responsibilities of Advisory Committee are: 1) Advise on policies and practices of Weisman Art Museum as we develop a new strategic plan in 2022; 2) Provide in-depth knowledge of issues important to people of Indigenous affiliation; 3) Inform the development of the public program series; provide suggestions for panelists; 4) Identify affiliated committee members to serve on committee; 5) Participate in Evaluation Cohort; 6) Participate in final symposium.

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- **Public Programs:** three public panel discussions utilizing the Advisory Committee and WAM Staff to plan and implement. Each public panel discussion includes three panelists, one moderator, one IT support technician and an American Sign Language interpreter contracted through the Minnesota-based company ASLIS. Marketing support is also planned to include print and digital advertising.
- **Evaluation:** Inspire to Change provides leadership for the Indigenous Evaluators cohort for \$65,000 over the two-and-a-half-year grant period. WAM Staff provides support.
- A three-day final symposium is planned for the Fall of 2024 utilizing the Advisory Committee, Evaluation cohort, artist fellow in residence and WAM Staff for a cost of \$40,000 (included in cost share).
- Resources to cover travel for the three affiliate Community consultants so that they can do an on-site visit to WAM and participate in the three-day final symposium is included in the budget.
- Socially engaged Indigenous artist in residence to be selected by the Advisory Committee. This artist (from a SW affiliate community) will work on one truth and reconciliation project over the grant period in collaboration with the Advisory Committee. Artist stipend, as well as travel costs are required to support this activity. Boris Oicherman, Curator of the WAM Target Studio, will work together with the artist to implement the project.
- Editorial writing compensated at \$600 for 700-1000 words. WAM would commission five pieces throughout the grant period for interviews, blog posts, articles, etc.

PROJECT RESULTS

Intended Results: We seek to foster deeper relationships and rebuild trust with a diversity of Tribal communities through the Native advisory committee and Native artist in residence and resulting artist program; advance conversations around truth and reconciliation between museums and Native communities through a public program series; shift museum practice and policy through power-sharing and reciprocal relationships; establish the museum as a public platform for critical conversations and dialogue; and expand competencies around culturally responsive evaluation methodologies. This project will build on the museum's current strategic directions and produce new strategic and interpretive plans for museum education, engagement, and collections.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the intended audience change as a result of your project? Museum constituents who engage with the public conversation series will have increased knowledge of the topic of truth and reconciliation and decolonization; museum staff members will have increased competencies in culturally responsive evaluation methodologies and applied approaches; advisory committee members and WAM staff will have gained a reciprocally deeper relationship, which may then extend far beyond the project grant period.

How will you track your progress towards achieving your intended results? Project elements will be administered through the project management site Basecamp; surveys and evaluations will be conducted utilizing the tool Qualtrics; program elements will be evaluated throughout the project on a continuous basis which will allow space for course correction.

What data will you collect and report to measure your project's success? We will collect evaluation surveys and feedback from Advisory members, Artist fellow, and public participants from the conversation series and the final convening. These evaluation surveys will be developed through a culturally responsive framework in collaboration with Inspire to Change and the Indigenous Evaluators cohort. We will establish learning outcomes for each specific public conversation series and measure knowledge gained through participation in programs and final convening. We will collect participation numbers, digital media analytics, and track how and where audience members came into relation with the museum.

How and with whom will you share your project's results? Project results will be shared on the museum's blog and website, at the final three-day convening, through a white paper led by evaluation consultants Inspire to Change, and through additional non-grant funded conference presentations, such as the American Indian Affairs annual repatriation

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conference. Museum staff will share results through their professional networks and affiliations. Project results will be shared with University of Minnesota leadership, board members, and the University Mimbres committee.

Tangible Products: This project will result in the following tangible products: Recordings of 3 public programs; written blog posts; written proof of concept for permanent Native artist in residence; updated interpretive and strategic plan; culturally responsive framework, evaluation reports; written white paper led by Inspire to Change and the Indigenous Evaluators Cohort; recording of final convening presentations.

How will you sustain the benefits of your project? The Truth and Reconciliation project at WAM is designed as a systems change project. The efforts of this project will be sustained through the advancement of a new museum strategic plan incorporating feedback and ideation from the Advisory committee. This work will inform museum practice and planning for years to come. A proof of concept for a permanent Native artist fellow will seed resource development and other sponsorship opportunities, as well as increased evaluation competencies among museum staff through consultation with Inspire to Change and the Indigenous Evaluators cohort. The recordings of the public program series, written blog posts, and final recording of the convening will be archived and freely available to the public through the museum's website. WAM has a long-term commitment to incorporating decolonial practices into the ecosystem of the organization.

