



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-259230-OLS-25

Chickasaw Nation

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$149,989

The Chickasaw Nation will support the preservation, digitization, and display of archival materials, in service to maintaining its language, culture, and traditional knowledge. The project will focus on 19th and 20th century materials that contain rich details about Chickasaw social movements and culture. These materials are currently inaccessible to patrons and researchers due to their fragile condition as well as the geographical limitations of seeing them in person. Project funds will support preservation and digitization efforts to increase their availability to tribal citizens and community members, which will improve scholarly production and education. Results will include a digital collection website for these archival materials, which will be available to patrons with access logins.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Tribal Profile
- Narrative
- Schedule of completion

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

The Chickasaw Nation's Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants Project Tribal Profile

The Chickasaw Nation (CN) tribal government is a democratic republic modeled after the United States' (U.S.) federal government, comprised of executive, legislative and judicial departments. Registered voters elect a governor and lieutenant governor to four-year terms, as well as 13 members to the tribal legislature, each with a three-year term. Legislators are selected from the CN's four legislative districts: Panola, Pickens, Pontotoc and Tishomingo. In addition, three justices are elected to a CN Supreme Court, each with a three-year term. The CN governs itself and its treaty territory affairs in accordance with their constitution. The Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities (CNDCH) will be primarily responsible for carrying out the proposed project's activities for the Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants (NAE). Established in 1994, the CNDCH's main purpose is to preserve the heritage, history, language and culture of the CN. In addition to language revitalization and the preservation of archives and material culture, the department offers research and genealogy services, traditional storytelling and cultural education classes, as well as information on cemetery preservation and repatriation. By preserving the history and culture of the CN, the CNDCH embodies the vision statement of the CN as "a nation of successful and united people with a strong cultural identity."

The CN is a federally recognized First American tribe located in southcentral Oklahoma. The CN's treaty territory includes 7,648 square miles that encompass all or part of 13 Oklahoma counties including: Bryan, Carter, Coal, Garvin, Grady, Jefferson, Johnston, Love, Marshall, McClain, Murray, Pontotoc and Stephens. The CN defines a treaty territory as being a reservation which has not been disestablished and refers to Native Americans as First Americans. Presently, there are over 81,000 enrolled Chickasaw citizens. According to CN tribal citizenship statistics, approximately 22,818 tribal citizens currently live within the CN's treaty territory. The CN's mission is "to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people." The CN's tribal headquarters, located in Ada, Oklahoma, is approximately 88 miles from the state capital of Oklahoma City and 160 miles from Dallas, Texas. Both travel routes run along major highways and interstates, creating potential for travelers to visit CN counties and businesses during travel.

The Chickasaw Nation's Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants Project Narrative

Project Justification

The Chickasaw Nation (CN) is seeking funding through the Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants (NAE) to digitize and provide access to critical governmental, cultural and language materials at the CN's Holisso: The Center for Study of Chickasaw History and Culture specialty library (Holisso). This project will address NAE program Goal 3: Advance Collections Stewardship and Access and prioritize Objective 3.2 by promoting access to museum and library collections.

Located on the campus of the Chickasaw Cultural Center (CCC) in Sulphur, Oklahoma, the Holisso is a 20,000-square-foot specialty library, focused on the study of the CN and other tribes' history within their ancestral homelands in what is now the Southeastern part of the United States (U.S.). The word *Holisso* means letter, paper or book and specifically describes the ink on a page, sharing an etymological origin with the Chikashanompa' word for small spots, similar to freckles. This facility provides access to archives of the Chickasaw Nation Collection (CNC), which retains the most extensive repository of historical material related to the CN in the world and is one of the largest tribal libraries in North America. It consists of over 2,500 cubic feet of government papers, legislative minutes, court cases, land documents, maps, newspapers, rare books, photographic material, audio-visual records and digital resources. Additionally, the CNC holds material cultural objects, archaeological collections and visual art both by and about the Chickasaw people.

From the immemorial past to present day, the CN community has worked to ensure their language, culture and traditional knowledge will be preserved and celebrated with each successive generation of their descendants. This project will make 19th and 20th century materials, containing rich details about Chickasaw social movements and traditional knowledge, more accessible to CN citizens, community members and researchers. With one of the largest populations of any First American nation within the U.S., the CN has over 81,000 citizens worldwide. Additionally, the Chickasaw Heritage Center is currently under construction and scheduled to open in 2027. This facility is located in the CN's ancestral homeland of Tupelo, Mississippi and will include exhibits and materials geared toward orienting patrons to the historic relationship the CN shares with the area along with the enduring government of the modern-day CN. By making materials held at the Holisso available to in-person and online patrons via a user interface, the CNC will enhance the preservation and accessibility of CN archives for both present and future researchers.

Many of the CN's archival materials are currently inaccessible to citizens and researchers due to preservation concerns which limit their handling due to their fragility. Additionally, the materials

held at the Holisso are not feasibly accessible to anyone residing outside of the CN treaty territory since they are only available for viewing in person. Most of the items in the CNC were preserved by Chickasaw citizens and community members until the opening of the CCC in 2010. Although lovingly cared for through times of social change, economic disparity and hardship, some archival materials are rapidly deteriorating due to their original, non-archival storage conditions, despite now being held in a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled facility. Additionally, many 20th century audio and video recordings require immediate attention due to deterioration concerns inherent to the format. Through the proposed project, an external contractor will be procured to digitize and thus, preserve these materials.

Periodically, materials are brought in by patrons for assessment or to aid in research. These archives are often maintained by citizens who reside outside of the CN's treaty territory and are unwilling to permanently donate the materials to the CNC, as they are still being enjoyed as heirlooms. These could be family bibles, photographs or other kinds of cultural ephemera. Usually in these cases, an agreement is made between the patron and the CNC to scan the document or image and return the item to the patron. Holisso staff has found that the current equipment makes this process difficult and requires staff to handle documents, which is not an ideal professional practice, as items could be damaged by someone other than the owner. This project proposes upgrades to the Holisso's existing equipment along with improving data management protocols during the period of performance. These upgrades will include a publicly accessible kiosk scanner along with upgrades to planetary and flatbed scanners to be utilized for the scanning of both patron materials and project-specific digitization efforts of CNC materials during the period of performance. Scanning of archival materials within the CNC will be conducted by full-time employees of the CN who have a research affiliation with the CNC and Holisso. This project additionally proposes to make many of these visual materials more easily accessible to patrons via a touchscreen interface.

CN Holisso staff has determined that making Chickasaw archival materials more readily available to tribal citizens and community members digitally – regardless of physical location – will improve scholarly production and education about the CN, as well as enrich ongoing language and cultural revitalization efforts. This will be done through the creation of an online user interface for accessing digital materials during the period of performance. It is the goal of the CNC, through the proposed project, to preserve the Chickasaw people's material patrimony and thus, ensure their legacy for years to come. This goal is reflective of the CN's mission, "to enhance the overall quality of life of the Chickasaw people," as it will strengthen their capacity to access and pass on their history, which is for the betterment of their community. This mission also aligns with the NAE program goals of improving the stewardship and access to collections by promoting access to the CNC. CNC staff will accomplish this goal during the period of performance by creating a comprehensive digital repository of oral history interviews, photographs, government documents and other materials which will connect citizens and researchers to materials vital to understanding the past, present and future of the CN.

Primary Audience/Project Beneficiaries:

- CN staff affiliated with the Holisso, who assist patrons with genealogical and historical research, design exhibits and work to preserve the CNC. These staff members will assist in the scanning of materials, gathering of statistical data, interact with patrons and process requests. Their input has been crucial in the proposed project's planning. A total of 17 staff.
- CN staff working in research and cultural interpretation who provide external consultation regarding Chickasaw history and culture for non-CN entities and institutions, as well as collect oral history interviews. These staff members will assist in the cultural identification of materials, transcription of audio materials and other duties as needed. The impact of the proposed project's activities on their work has been heavily considered during its planning. A total of seven staff.
- Contributors to the Chickasaw Heritage Center, a museum and visitor center located within the CN's ancestral homeland of Tupelo, Mississippi and currently under construction. Digital materials may be implemented in exhibits or made available to patrons in other ways during and following the period of performance. This impact was a substantial consideration during the proposed project's planning. A total of 15 staff and contractors.
- CN staff, students and contractors working with the CN Division of Language Preservation and Chikasha Academy. Digital materials containing Chikashanompa' content will be transcribed and translated for both the benefit of Holisso patrons as well as ongoing language revitalization efforts, which was a major motivator when planning the proposed project. A total of 30 staff.
- Patrons of the Holisso. Educating the public about the CN and the story of the Chickasaw people inspires the exhibits, projects and initiatives carried out at the CCC every day and has been a central concern throughout the proposed project's planning. Approximately 10,000 annually.
- Citizens of the CN. By digitizing the physical archives of the CNC, records documenting CN sovereignty and the survivance of Chickasaw people will be more easily accessed and wait times will be shortened. This has been a key motivator in the planning of the proposed project. Approximately 81,000 citizens.
- Writers and researchers interested in Chickasaw history and culture, whose work will be enhanced through the activities of the proposed project. Educators, schools, classrooms and students who will benefit from the continuation of this project's goals through the sharing of Chickasaw history and culture in the classroom. The benefit of the proposed project's impact on these groups has been a key motivator in its planning.
- The descendants of Chickasaw Elders and culture bearers who have already met their ancestors at the end of the White Dog's Road. This project would not be possible without their contributions to Chickasaw history and culture.

Project Work Plan

What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?

In alignment with NAE program Goal 3: Advance Collections Stewardship and Access, this project will accomplish Objective 3.2 by promoting access to museum and library collections. As such, the CN's primary aims for this project are to:

Goal 1: Digitize collection materials for patrons conducting research, interactive media exhibits and CN culture revitalization.

Objective 1: Contract with an outside vendor to digitize 19th and 20th century audio and video recordings.

Objective 2: Upgrade planetary and flatbed scanners for continued digitization efforts by collection staff and collaborating researchers employed by the CN.

Objective 3: Contract a qualified digitization specialist who will assist with metadata entry, cataloging and digitization.

Goal 2: Make digital collection materials more readily available to both in-person and virtual patrons of the Holisso.

Objective 1: Acquire an archives content management system.

Objective 2: Launch an online user interface.

Goal 3: Make digital improvement within the Holisso accessible to patrons.

Objective 1: Add a publicly accessible kiosk scanner for patron research requests and digitally donated materials.

Objective 2: Add a touchscreen collection interface to the Holisso library for patrons to view commonly requested materials.

To accomplish these goals and objectives, the CN will carry out the following activities in this sequence:

- CNC staff will work cooperatively with employees across the CN Department of Culture and Humanities (CNDCH) to create a precise schedule of digitization of individual collections and related activities (inventories, transcription and metadata entry). This will include cultural consultation, transcription, translation and other research related activities conducted during the period of performance and following the conclusion of the project to ensure sustainability.
- Develop a Digital Preservation Policy, which will be written by the project manager and approved through the CNDCH line of support during the period of performance.
- Acquire an archives content management system and attend related trainings. In addition to uploading digitized material, CNC staff will follow the CN internal collection policy and update the records management system as needed.
- Purchase scanning equipment and desktop computers for digitizing collection materials.
- Contract digitization specialist who will assist with metadata, cataloging and digitization.

- Audio and video materials will be digitized by an external contractor. This will include, but is not limited to the following:
 1. Cassette recordings of “Voice of the Chickasaw” radio program episodes;
 2. Oral history interviews recorded on cassette and mini-cassette;
 3. Video home system (VHS) recordings of governmental events and proceedings;
 4. Audio and video recordings of Chickasaw Historical Society (CHS) meetings;
 5. Language and cultural audio and video recordings;
 6. Various reel-to-reel, high-band Video8 (Hi8) and other obsolete recordings that are otherwise inaccessible due to equipment constraints.
- Using the CN’s information technology (IT) infrastructure for support and accessibility, produce a test website for internal approvals and beta testing with key stakeholders, which include the CN line of support for CNC staff as well as employees from the CNDCH contributing to the project.
- Purchase, delivery and installation of a digitization kiosk for scanning patron materials and research requests inside the Holisso library. This kiosk will be available to patrons and will require a designated operating space, electricity and housing which may require cabinetry construction. The CCC director of facilities and maintenance will assist with this activity.
- Purchase, delivery and installation of a touchscreen digital display for the viewing of visual media, exhibits and research documents. The CCC director of facilities and maintenance will oversee this activity.
- Curate material to be displayed on the touchscreen, including frequently requested documents and photographs. This will be conducted by CNC employees in collaboration with other CNDCH staff during the period of performance.
- Launch the pilot online user interface, featuring digital collections to be viewed for approvals and testing. This will be conducted by CNC employees in collaboration with other CNDCH staff during the period of performance.
- Advertise the addition of the digital kiosk and online user interface as a new feature offered by the Holisso.

Who will execute each activity? Be sure to identify all key staff.

The staff responsible for the proposed project’s activities will consist of participating Holisso staff under the direction of Bruce Fish, executive officer of collections and support for the CN. This team is not expected to have vacant positions during the project period. However, if that occurs, those duties will be absorbed by the remaining staff members while the vacant position is filled.

The project will be primarily supervised by Jacquelyn Sparks in the course of her duties as the senior collection manager for the CN. In addition to leading internal project milestones, she will facilitate project milestones and contract with outside vendors in collaboration with Bruce Fish

and Lee Cravatt. As director of facilities and maintenance for the CN, Lee Cravatt will oversee internal maintenance staff who will assist with installation of equipment and other construction-related needs. As registrar for the CN, Adam Drannon will provide documentation, implement the CN collections policy and update the CN records management system with individual files for each object within the collection.

- **Bruce Fish** is a citizen of the Seminole Nation and has resided within the CN treaty territory since 2020. He holds a Bachelor of Science from East Central University (ECU) and was appointed as the CN director of collections in 2022. He now proudly serves as the executive officer of collections and support for the CNDCH.
- **Jacquelyn Sparks** is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, long-time resident of the CN treaty territory and an employee of the CN since 2013. She holds a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Oklahoma (OU) and currently serves as the senior collections manager for the CN Division of Collections and Support. She is also a researcher with subject area interests in Removal and the visual culture and photography of Indian Territory. She was employed as the senior photography strategist for the CN and helmed the data asset management of image resources in the CN Department of Communications and Community Development for a decade. Prior to her career at the CN, she worked in the photo archives of Western History Collections at OU and the Oklahoma Historical Society.
- **Adam Drannon** is a proud citizen of the CN and has lived in the CN treaty territory for over 20 years. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Cartography from ECU and earned a Master of Science in Geospatial Information from Northwest Missouri State University in 2022. He has served the CN for over a decade through work in multiple departments and divisions, with a key focus on heritage preservation. In the CNDCH, he has worked as a cemetery technician, senior manager in research and cultural interpretation and now as the registrar of the CN Division of Collections and Support.
- **Lee Cravatt** is a proud CN citizen and serves as the director of facilities and maintenance at the CCC. He began his career with the CN in 2008 and has worked at the CCC for 10 years.

How have you involved stakeholders in the planning and development of the project and how will you incorporate their input throughout the project?

The inspiration for this project began through conversations amongst researchers working within the CNDCH, who are key stakeholders in this project. In planning discussions, it was identified that many of the resources held within the CNC are overlooked due to a lack of accessibility and digitization. During the proposed project's period of performance, staff at the CNC will meet with internal researchers and historians acting as stakeholders to provide updates and receive feedback on the progress of the project as a customary collaboration between teams. Further, concerns about culturally sensitive material will be addressed by CNDCH appointed leadership,

utilizing policies reviewed by the CN Council of Elders. In addition to quarterly research meetings, CNDCH leadership will receive updates via weekly reports compiled by CNC staff.

What existing resources within the Tribe, assets within the library or community and/or potential partners will you use during this project to aid in its success?

This project will utilize existing CNC staff and resources in addition to contractual services provided by outside vendors. No personnel salaries will be included in the proposed project's budget. Existing digitization equipment will be used in conjunction with upgraded equipment and contract labor. CNDCH staff may be reassigned temporarily to assist with digitization of individual collections, as needed, after completing a required digitization training offered by the staff of the CNC. In addition to utilizing the Holisso and the collection storage facilities located on the campus of the CCC, this project will make use of the existing CN IT network and infrastructure. Long-term CN employees and Elders will also be called upon to assist with the identification of materials and cultural practices, as needed. Chickasaw language materials will be shared with the CN Division of Language Revitalization, which will provide translation and transcription, when appropriate.

How and with whom will you share your work's results and lessons learned?

An internal presentation will be given to the CNDCH leadership at the end of the proposed project's period of performance. If the results of the project are approved, a presentation will be given to the CHS board, the Chickasaw Press and the Council of Elders about the project, which will introduce CHS members to the online user interface. A planned publicity campaign will be conducted to notify citizens about the newly available service and promotional materials will be given out at citizen events, such as the CN's Annual Meeting and Festival, which takes place in October. A report created by the project manager will also be provided to CNDH researchers and other stakeholders within CNDH with results and opportunities for future project improvements and further research.

Project Results

What are your project's intended results and/or product(s), and how will they address the need, challenge or opportunity you identified in the Project Justification section?

A digital collection website established during the period of performance will provide access to digital materials to researchers, regardless of their geographic location or proximity to the CN's treaty territory. Although digitization alone cannot slow the deterioration of materials, it is a crucial step in ensuring that no archival material is permanently lost. By making digital copies of collection materials more available for direct research requests or through collection management systems with appropriate data asset management protocols for internal research, CN material patrimony will be secure long past the lifetime of the object. Additionally, patrons will be able to access commonly used materials via touchscreen interface in the Holisso, which will cut down on wait times and further curiosity and engagement with the materials.

How do you define success for this project, and how will it be evaluated?

Increasing the ease of access to materials will improve the quality and quantity of materials available for research and genealogy for patrons of the Holisso. In doing so, user experience and accessibility will be improved, which will increase the number of patrons who choose to utilize the Holisso for research. Daily records of patron visits are kept by CNC/Holisso staff and recorded in annual reports. Metrics from the online user interface developed during the period of performance will be included in these reports as well. Additionally, Holisso staff will more feasibly be able to assist with complicated research requests, as frequently requested materials will be more accessible and wait times reduced. The project's success will be determined by these increases, as they will demonstrate improvements in services offered to Chickasaw citizens, researchers and the over 10,000 patrons who visit the Holisso annually.

How will you disseminate the results (deliverables, lessons learned, etc.) of the project to the primary audience?

CNC staff will advertise the service through unpaid media, such as the CN's various social media pages and the *Chickasaw Times* after the conclusion of the proposed project's period of performance. Appointed leadership will also update stakeholders with the project's results after its completion. The CNC will provide researchers access to its archival collections upon request. Researchers will complete a research request or image use form and be assigned an access username and password to view the online interface. Digital content cannot be changed or used commercially without written permission from the CNDH. Requests of restricted content will require a User Access Form agreeing with terms determined by the CNC.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the Period of Performance?

Utilizing the kiosk scanner in the Holisso library, patrons will be able to donate digital reference files and digitize reference materials without issue for the foreseeable future. Archived digital files will be accessible via the digital collection online user interface which will be maintained through existing CN IT servers and their backups, ensuring longevity of the site and its content for years to come. Purchased portable planetary scanners will be made available for scanning documents and ephemera at citizen events outside of the CN's treaty territory following the period of performance and will continue to add to reference images available to CN researchers, historians and genealogists.

Schedule of Completion – Year 1 (September 2025 – August 2026)

[illegible]

Schedule of Completion (cont'd) – Year 2 (September 2026 – August 2027)

[illegible]