



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-259340-OLS-26

Organized Village of Kake

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$149,512

The Organized Village of Kake will improve collections care and preservation practices for the estimated 45 cultural heritage items held in the Charles “Topsy” Johnson Tribal Library & Archive. Kéex’ Kwáan (Kake) is a Lingit community that has faced significant loss of cultural heritage items. Grant funds will support professional conservation services to conduct a conservation assessment and develop a collections treatment plan. Staff will develop new policies and procedures based on the treatment plan including training references. Grant funds will support purchasing the needed supplies, materials, and equipment for storage solutions and protective treatments for collection items, including temperature-controlled shelving units. Through enhanced preservation efforts, the project promotes greater access to the Tribe's important cultural heritage collections and ensures they are preserved for future generations.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Tribal profile
- Proposal 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.

Tribal Profile: Organized Village of Kake

The Organized Village of Kake (OVK) is a federally recognized IRA tribal government that serves the community tribal citizens of Kake, Alaska. Kake is a remote community located on the northwest coast of Kupreanof Island, in Southeast Alaska and is accessible only by boat or small plane. Kake is situated amid the beautiful and coastal Tongass National Forest, the largest national forest in the United States. Because of Kake's geographic location and isolation, community and Tribal citizens rely on Tribal knowledge, values, and practices, and the natural environment to sustain a customary and traditional ways of life.

Traditionally a Lingit village, Kake's population reflects the addition of a number of other cultures today: Tsimshian, Athabascan, Haida, Yup'ik as well as some of the 'Lower 48' Native cultures. The Native population accounts for 73% of the community, with others adopting Kake as home and participating in the rich cultural lifestyle. Until the severe downturn in the economy in 2004 Kake population was approximately 700-800 people with OVK tribal enrollment numbering 640 Native members or 80% of the community's population. In 2020, Kake's population was approximately 563. The service area for this IMLS Enhancement project includes the tribal residents of the Organized Village of Kake and fellow community members.

The mission of the Organized Village of Kake is to promote the welfare of tribal members and descendants through the development and operation of social, economic and cultural enterprises, and to preserve and maintain Native cultural traditions and our subsistence lifestyle.

The Strategic Plan for the Organized Village of Kake that was approved in Spring 2017, includes the following identified priorities:

1. *Strengthen opportunities for tribal citizens to learn about their culture clans, crests, family genealogy, names, history, and landmarks.*
2. *Proactively work to establish and strengthen partnerships in order to appropriately address and improve the social and cultural wellbeing of citizens.*

The Organized Village of Kake was chartered in 1947 as a federally recognized Tribe in accordance with and by authority of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934. The governing body of OVK consists of a Tribal Council that is composed of seven (7) members. Under the thirty-year leadership of OVK Executive Director Gary Williams and the Tribal Council, local program and service delivery was significantly improved in the community in 1987 with the Tribe's first P.L. 93-638 contract with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

In 1992, OVK negotiated its first Self Governance Compact with the Dept. of Interior to assume responsibility of programs once administered for Kake by BIA and Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indians of Alaska. Since then OVK has steadily grown in capacity with other Federal programs with BIA, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Forest Service, Dept. of Justice, and more recently National Park Service first Alaskan Tribal Historic Preservation Office. In 2017, OVK transitioned to a new Executive Director (ED). Dawn Jackson is the first tribally enrolled ED who was mentored for 20 years under Gary Williams. She still serves as the Executive Director today.

Project Title: Caring for At.oow

Project Justification

Program Goal

Provide access to and preservation of information and collections. (Objective 3)

Project Scope

The scope of this project proposal is to secure professional conservation services to ensure the proper care of, and implement better preservation practices for the cultural heritage items held in the Charles “Topsy” Johnson Tribal Library & Archive at the Organized Village of Kake. There are an estimated 45 items that require proper care, including artwork, woven baskets, and small to medium-sized carvings such as masks and paddles. Over a 24-month period, this project will employ a conservator to assist with care and proper storage of current collection items and will develop preservation practices for training of future staff.

Alignment with Agency Level Goals

This 2026 Enhancement proposal aligns closely with all three IMLS Agency Level Goals, including championing lifelong learning, strengthening community engagement, and advancing collection stewardship.

Collection Details

There are an estimated 45 cultural heritage items at the Charles “Topsy” Johnson Tribal Library & Archive.

In 2022, twenty-six items were repatriated from the George Fox University in Oregon. (See Supporting Document 1 for list of items). Since these items were repatriated, it has been part of OVK’s plans to find the best way to care for these items.

Also in the archive collections are carved paddles, items collected from local archaeological projects, and artwork pieces. The reason for having an estimation on the amount of items in our collection is that some containers have not yet been fully opened and inventoried due to lack of proper storage. For example, there are art prints stored rolled up together and have not been removed as there is no proper storage space for large prints. Instead of risking damage to any of the prints, they have been stored as is and kept on a high shelf to minimize damage. However, these temporary storage solutions prevent access to these items and amplify the needs for better care and preservation practices.

Need for Preservation

Kéex’ Kwaán (Kake) is a Lingit community that has faced significant loss of cultural heritage items. In Lingit culture, these items are called at.oow and they hold significant value for clans, their histories, and ceremonies. Some have described at.oow as the written language of the Lingit people as they are records of history, important events, and important people. They are the most sacred and important objects held by a clan.

One significant event in Kéex' Kwáan history showcases the loss of culture and at.oow of the Kéex' Kwáan people. In 1869, due to cultural differences and unjust overreactions to conflict, the U.S. Navy bombarded three villages of the Kéex' Kwáan. (See Supporting Document 2 for in depth details.) Homes and food supplies were destroyed in the middle of winter, leaving many to die. It was a time of great grief and loss for the community, and its affects still linger. Since this time, the United States government has officially recognized the harm they brought to the community. In September 2024, the U.S. Navy formally apologized through a ceremony held in Kake.

These and other events led to significant loss in culture and at.oow for the Kéex' Kwáan people. There are more instances in which these losses were exacerbated, such as the incoming of missionaries, the burning of totem poles, taking children far from their homes to attend boarding schools, and the outlaw of potlatches. This documented series of events are examples of immediate loss of culture and the long-lasting effects it has on a community.

This is the history behind how important preservation is for the community of Kéex' Kwáan. The Tribe does not want to lose more than it has already lost. The Tribe has worked towards repatriation, and it has worked towards finding peace and a way forward through the harm inflicted by the U.S. government. Through the use of IMLS grant funding, the Tribe seeks to find professional assistance in the care and preservation of their at.oow, the cultural heritage items that carry clan histories.

Another limiting factor in proper preservation practices is the current set-up of the tribal library & archive. The Organized Village of Kake is a relatively small Tribe and has only two buildings for staff offices with a total of 17 offices. The tribal library & archive is located in one of the larger offices, but it is still an office space and doubles as the archivist's office as well. Temperature and humidity cannot be controlled for the archive space, and environmental factors have to be considered as well. The community of Kéex' Kwáan and the OVK office building are located on the shorelines of Kupreanof Island (see Tribal Profile) and faces constant high humidity. Thus there is a significant need to install climate-controlled storage spaces for our at.oow.

Primary Audience

The audience for this 2026 IMLS Enhancement project includes all of the residents of Kéex' Kwáan, specifically the youth and future generations. Currently cultural heritage items are inaccessible to patrons at the tribal archive. The items are too fragile to constantly be removing them from the storage containers where they are held. Developing better care practices and storage solutions that are more easily accessible will allow patrons to view the items more frequently. Through communication with local school staff, there is a strong interest in sharing these items and other archive holdings with Kake's students. There are many potential learning opportunities to be gained by providing better access while also safeguarding the collections for future generations.

Project Work Plan

Specific Activities & Objectives

Utilize grant funding to develop and implement a preservation plan for 45 cultural heritage items in a 24-month span.

Each project year will roughly follow the same timeline:

Months 1-3: Prepare for project objectives

Months 4-6: Collection assessments and treatment planning

Months 7-9: Plan implementation and staff training

Months 10-12: Review and document; adjust as necessary

Objective 1 – Develop and implement a treatment and preservation plan for current cultural heritage items.

A professional conservator will be hired as a consultant for the project. Through their inspection and assessment of the collection items and the available space, they will work towards developing a treatment and preservation plan for the proper care of the items. Staff members will work with the consultant in following the care instructions, including purchasing and installing necessary climate-controlled storage units and materials for care and handling.

Objective 2 – Develop new “Policies & Procedures” that will guide the care of future collections.

Following the new treatment and preservation plan, the Tribal Archivist will develop new “Policies & Procedures” for the tribal library & archive. This will ensure that new items entering into the collections will follow the new standard of care. New “Policies & Procedures” for any department at the Organized Village of Kake must be approved by the OVK Tribal Council. Staff members will go through the process of getting the “Policies & Procedures” updated and approved by the Council before officially implementing the changes in the tribal library & archive. This process will also allow for input and additional suggestions on the direction of the project by Council members.

Objective 3 – Continued education and training for staff members.

The tribal archivist plans to take some continued education courses concerning preservation and care of physical collection items. There are a variety of options including college courses in museum studies, preservation management certificate courses, and conservation workshops. The archivist will also focus on studying and utilizing IMLS created resources, such as online webinars. It is in the best interest of the Organized Village of Kake to have staff with additional training in properly handling and caring for objects. This will also ensure the success of the project if this knowledge is carried into the future and not limited to the timeline of this proposed project.

Objective 4 – Conduct further outreach to engage the community and youth.

Team members will participate in outreach activities as opportunities created and implemented. Annual opportunities within Kake include the OVK Annual Community Meeting, the local school’s Culture Week, and OVK’s Annual Culture Camp. A public feedback survey will be conducted at one of the community events to gain feedback on the direction of the project. Additionally, partnerships with local school staff

will be fostered, as they have previously shown interest in the archival holdings in teaching their students.

Key Staff

There will be two OVK team members working on this project: the Executive Director (as needed), and the Project Manager/Tribal Archivist. Additionally, a Professional Conservator will be hired contractually as a consultant on the project.

Project Manager/Tribal Archivist:

The Tribal Archivist & Project Coordinator will be the Project Manager. The Tribal Archivist's duties will be to manage the project, including coordinating the contractual hire, grant administrative duties, budgeting, equipment purchasing, processing any digital materials created (photographs of items), and implementing new preservation practices. The Tribal Archivist will remain the primary team member on staff with a half-time position of 20 hours per week.

Executive Director:

The Executive Director will act as an advisor to the project. Their duties will be as needed for the project, including answering questions, approving management tasks, attending meetings, and coordinating meetings with the Tribal Council.

Professional Conservator:

The conservator will be hired contractually by OVK to serve as a project consultant. Their duties will include inspecting cultural heritage items, developing treatment and preservation plans, training staff, and advising on best practices. The consultant will be hired to spend approximately 100 hours on the project over the course of 20-months.

Existing Resources

To aid in the success of the project, the Organized Village of Kake will reallocate additional office space as needed for necessary storage solutions. A large, temporary work space will also be provided for the on-site assessments carried out by the conservator. There is a limited amount of archival storage materials, such as archival boxes, that can be utilized as well.

Sharing Our Work & Lessons Learned

This project will be shared with Kake City Schools and the community of Kake. There are many events and ceremonies throughout the year that the work will be easily shareable. As mentioned before, the Organized Village of Kake also holds an annual community meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to invite the community to see what each department at the OVK is working on, and community members are given space to offer input or voice any concerns over the work being done. It is a well-attended event and community members often actively participate in the meeting. This is just one example of how we will share that the archive collections will be easier for visitors to view and access.

The lessons learned throughout the process will be shared with OVK Council members and staff members. As this project will provide direct training in preservation practices, it will be beneficial to share some highlights and processes with staff. It will also help streamline collections processing when new items come into the archive through other OVK departments.

Project Results

Tangible Products

- Conservation assessment and treatment plan from conservator
- New “Policies & Procedures” approved by OVK Tribal Council
- Improved storage solutions/units for 45 cultural heritage items
- Survey to community about the direction and success of project
- A completed collections list of all items in the tribal library & archive
- Final report from conservator assessing the preservation improvements with future care strategies

Results

The intended results for the project is to create better preservation practices and improve collections care for cultural heritage items at the Charles “Topsy” Johnson Tribal Library & Archive. As previously stated in the Project Justification, the community of Kake has gone through a significant loss of culture and at.oow. The intention behind this project is to showcase the value of what survival means to the community; it will show the value we place in strength, resiliency, and giving what we can to future generations. Our project aims to strengthen connections between the past and the future by doing what we can now, in the present. It is a gift of knowledge and history from the ancestors to those who will be “future ancestors” (a term used in the Indigenous community) who will carry on cultural traditions and values. Ultimately, the results of the project will allow greater access to important collections and also safeguard the items for continued use by future generations.

Sustaining the Project Benefits

The key to ensuring ongoing success of the project is in the implementation of new practices. Through working with a conservator and continued education, staff will develop detailed “Policies & Procedures” documents which will include training materials and references. The longevity of these new practices will be ensured by the approval of new “Policies & Procedures” by the OVK Tribal Council. Therefore, any potential changes in staff would not affect the level of care provided to collection items in the future. Additionally, all new incoming collections would follow the same standard of care.

Through this 2026 IMLS Enhancement grant, the benefits to the community of Kéex’ Kwáan would be immediate by providing increased access to collections, and long-lasting by providing better preservation practices to the collections for access by future generations.

Schedule of Completion - 2026 IMLS Enhancement Grant

Organized Village of Kake

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