



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-260924-OLS-26

Spokane Tribe of Indians

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$116,854

The Spokane Tribe of Indians Preservation Program, Archives and Collections has a rich array of audiovisual items capturing oral histories with elders, Tribal governance meetings, and Salish language recordings spanning from 1951 through 2005. The goal of this project is to preserve these vital items through digitization and improved access, as many of them are at risk of format obsolescence and physical media degradation. Funds will support the deployment of a Digital Asset Management System platform; A/V access workstations at the Spokane Tribe of Indians Preservation Archives and Collections repository, enabling community members and researchers to access digitized materials on-site; and archival packaging and storage materials in alignment with professional preservation standards. The project will provide direct benefit to Tribal community members, Spokane Salish language learners, Tribal youth, and researchers and educators.

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

Spokane Tribe of Indians — STIPP Archives & Collections

The Spokane Tribe of Indians is a federally recognized Tribe located in northeastern Washington State, with its reservation centered in the community of Wellpinit. The Tribe is governed by an elected Tribal Business Council and provides a range of governmental, cultural, and community services to its members.

The Spokane Tribe of Indians Preservation Program (STIPP) supports the protection, preservation, and management of the Tribe's cultural resources, including archaeological sites, historic properties, and archival collections. Within STIPP, the Archives & Collections (STIPP-AC) program is responsible for the stewardship of historical records, audiovisual materials, and cultural documentation that reflect the history, language, and lifeways of the Spokane people. The program is staffed by Archives and Collections Manager Rachel Vang, a 2022 ATALM Community Archiving Workshop participant with demonstrated expertise in Indigenous archival practice.

STIPP-AC maintains a federally certified repository that meets and exceeds Department of the Interior standards for the care and management of museum property. The facility includes climate-controlled storage with dedicated HVAC and humidity control systems, continuous environmental monitoring, and archival-grade storage materials. These investments demonstrate the Tribe's long-term commitment to responsible stewardship of its collections.

STIPP-AC's audiovisual holdings include approximately 1,717 items spanning 1951 to 2005, encompassing reel-to-reel recordings, audio cassettes, and video formats. The program currently uses PastPerfect 5 as its collections management system for cataloging and inventory. While effective for collection tracking, the system does not provide digital asset management functionality, including media playback, file-level access control, or preservation workflow support, thereby limiting access to these materials.

STIPP-AC serves Tribal community members, language learners, Tribal youth, educators, and researchers. The program responds to research requests, supports K–12 educational programming, and contributes to cultural preservation initiatives, including language revitalization and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Through this project, the Spokane Tribe of Indians will deepen its stewardship work to expand preservation and access to its audiovisual collections. The project supports the Tribe's broader goals of protecting historical knowledge, strengthening community identity, and ensuring that the voices of Spokane elders remain accessible to future generations.

NARRATIVE

A Digital Memory Project: A Vision for Preserving the Voices of Elders and Cultural Knowledge through Digitization and Improved Access

IMLS Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant | FY2026 | Objective 3: Access to and Preservation of Information and Collections

Spokane Tribe of Indians | STIPP Archives & Collections

I. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Within the collections of the Spokane Tribe of Indians Preservation Program, Archives and Collections (STIPP-AC), are the recorded voices of elders who have passed away, language lessons spoken by knowledge keepers whose words exist in no other form, and oral histories that document the Spokane people's relationship to their land, their governance, and their culture across more than half a century. These recordings, spanning from 1951 through 2005, capture knowledge that cannot be recreated. They are the living memory of a people, preserved on aging media now at risk of permanent, irreversible loss. This project directly addresses IMLS NAE Program Objective 3, providing access to and preservation of information and collections, through the systematic digitization, enhancement, and structured community access of an irreplaceable body of community memory.

The STIPP-AC audiovisual collection includes 1,717 items across multiple legacy formats. Among them: 124 cassette recordings of Pauline Flett, an elder Salish language keeper whose recordings exist in no other documented form; 94 recordings by ethnobotanist Bob May documenting Spokane cultural practices and ecological knowledge; cassettes and microcassettes from the Salish '79 language documentation project; 598 oral history cassettes capturing elder interviews spanning the full collection period; documentation of Tribal governance meetings in which the Spokane people advocated for their sovereignty, lands, and resources in the face of decisions by federal agencies; and materials documenting cultural practices, community life, and Tribal history. For the Spokane community, these recordings are not archival abstractions; they are the evidence of who they are and where they come from.

A/V Collection Inventory — Items Requiring Preservation Action

Format	Items	Cultural Significance	Preservation Action
Reel-to-Reel (undigitized)	9	Oral history interviews with past elders	Digitize to WAV/AIFF; create MP3 access copies
Reel-to-Reel (2021 digitization — needs enhancement)	275	Oral histories; audio quality requires remediation	Enhanced WAV/AIFF → MP3
Pauline Flett Cassettes	124	Salish language recordings — elder knowledge keeper	WAV/AIFF → MP3
Pauline Flett Microcassettes	15	Language recordings	WAV/AIFF → MP3
Bob May Cassettes	94	Oral histories, ethnobotany, cultural practices	WAV/AIFF → MP3
Salish '79 Cassettes	16	Language documentation project recordings	WAV/AIFF → MP3
Salish '79 Microcassettes	5	Language documentation project recordings	WAV/AIFF → MP3
Salish '79 VHS	1	Language documentation project recordings	MOV/AVI

Oral History Cassettes	598	Elder interviews spanning 1951–2005	WAV/AIFF → MP3
Miscellaneous Cassettes	293	Government meetings, cultural events, language	WAV/AIFF → MP3
MiniDV Cassettes	175	Language lessons, community events, oral histories	MOV/AVI → MP4
VHS Cassettes	112	Historical documentation, Tribal events	MOV/AVI → MP4
TOTAL COLLECTION	1,717	Legacy media spanning 1951–2005	Full digitization + access copies

Preservation Challenge

The primary threat to this collection is not a single crisis event but a slow and accelerating process of format obsolescence and physical media degradation. Magnetic tapes and cassettes have finite lifespans, and the playback equipment required to access them is no longer manufactured. Prior digitization efforts, while representing a significant Tribal investment, were incomplete and inconsistent: some VHS recordings were copied to DVD and some cassettes to CD, but these copies are of unknown or poor quality and in many cases are missing entirely. Reel-to-reel recordings were digitized to WAV/AIFF format in 2021, but those 275 files require professional audio enhancement and quality remediation before they are usable or shareable by community members. The result is a collection in which the Tribe has already invested substantial preservation resources, but where that investment is now at risk of being lost due to quality deficiencies and coverage gaps. Without targeted, systematic intervention, the window to recover these materials is closing permanently.

Demonstrated Stewardship Capacity

The STIPP-AC repository is federally certified under Department of the Interior standards for the care and management of museum property, and exceeded minimum DOI requirements in its most recent five-year assessment. In 2025, the Tribe invested in a dedicated dual mini-split HVAC system with continuous humidity control for the collections storage room, maintaining temperature between 63°F–70°F and relative humidity between 35%–60%, with environmental conditions logged at 15-minute intervals and reviewed daily. All storage materials are archival-grade throughout: uncoated or powder-coated steel shelving, acid-free and lignin-free containers, and archival-safe plastics. This demonstrated capacity, a certified facility, sustained institutional investment in environmental controls, and professional collections management confirm that STOI has the infrastructure and commitment to responsibly steward a federal preservation investment.

The Access Gap

The preservation challenge is compounded by a critical access gap. STIPP-AC currently has no equipment or workstation that allows community members, researchers, or students to listen to or view any of the A/V recordings. When researchers request access to audio materials, staff can provide transcripts only where transcripts exist; the recordings themselves cannot be played. The collection that holds the voices of the Spokane people's elders is, functionally, silent.

The absence of a Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) further limits access. STIPP-AC uses PastPerfect 5 as its Collections Management System for cataloging and inventory; PastPerfect does not provide media playback, file-level access control, or structured preservation workflow functionality. The selection, implementation, and initial operational deployment of a locally hosted DAMS is a defined Year 1 project deliverable. Local deployment is required given limited internet connectivity on the Wellpinit reservation and Tribal security concerns regarding cloud-based systems for culturally sensitive and restricted materials. Once in place, the DAMS will make the A/V collection searchable, described,

and discoverable for the first time. A 9-by-15-foot workroom within the facility is available to be configured as a dedicated A/V access and listening space, but the equipment, digital infrastructure, and organized files to support that use do not yet exist.

Need, Audience, and Project Identification

This project addresses the immediate access and preservation needs of four primary audiences: Tribal community members seeking connection to their cultural heritage; language learners and cultural practitioners engaged in Spokane Salish revitalization; Tribal youth and local K–12 educational programs that draw on archival collections for culturally grounded learning; and researchers and educators engaged with Spokane history and culture. STIPP-AC currently receives approximately 5 to 10 research and community access requests annually, along with recurring requests from local schools for educational programming. In each case, staff face the same barrier: materials they cannot play for the people asking to hear them. The project need has been identified through this direct program experience, through internal assessment of collection conditions and infrastructure gaps, and through the program's ongoing documentation of recurring access limitations. The project is designed to systematically remove each of those barriers.

Access to the Pauline Flett recordings, the Salish '79 materials, and the oral history cassette collection would directly support ongoing Spokane Salish language revitalization efforts — providing learners, teachers, and cultural practitioners with documented elder speech that exists in no other recoverable form. This project represents the intervention that makes that access possible before the physical media deteriorates beyond recovery.

II. PROJECT WORK PLAN

This 12-month project will be led by Rachel Vang, Archives and Collections Manager for STIPP-AC, who will serve as Project Director with primary responsibility for all project activities. Ms. Vang holds prior professional training through the Community Archiving Workshop offered through the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM, 2022), providing direct expertise in digitization standards, collections care, and archival access. Ms. Vang's anticipated maternity leave is expected to coincide with the first two to three weeks of the project period; during this brief transition, project activities will be covered by John Matt, Preservation Program Manager, who will provide project oversight and administrative coordination. Michelle Largay and Taylor Cooper, Collections Assistants, will provide day-to-day project support, including metadata entry and DAMS population, throughout the project period.

The project leverages substantial existing Tribal assets: the DOI-certified STIPP-AC facility; an existing Buffalo TeraStation three-copy backup infrastructure already in place; the current PastPerfect 5 catalog, which provides the inventory baseline for digitization planning; and the 275 reel-to-reel files produced through the 2021 digitization investment, which will be professionally enhanced rather than re-digitized from scratch. Project planning has been guided by STIPP-AC staff assessment and recurring community access requests. Cultural sensitivity protocols and access tier controls will be developed in coordination with Tribal cultural leadership to ensure appropriate stewardship of restricted and sensitive materials throughout the project period.

Phase 1: Planning, Procurement, and System Development (Months 1–4)

Phase 1 establishes the project's infrastructure and procurement foundation. Financial systems will be confirmed and all procurement processes initiated in accordance with Tribal purchasing policy. The DAMS platform will be selected through a structured needs assessment and competitive procurement process, with local (on-premise) deployment required. Vendor outreach has been initiated prior to the grant period; Daminion has been identified as a leading candidate offering a perpetual local license with on-premise deployment capability. Final platform selection will be confirmed through the Quarter 1 procurement process. A competitive RFP for digitization vendor services will be issued and awarded; the selected vendor will be required to meet FADGI three-star standards, deliver preservation masters

and access copies with checksum manifests, and sign a data-handling agreement affirming STOI ownership and no retention of copies. A/V workstation equipment will be procured, and metadata standards, file naming conventions, and cultural sensitivity review protocols will be fully documented.

Deliverables: DAMS installed and operational; digitization vendor contracted; metadata standards and protocols documented.

Phase 2: Priority Digitization and System Deployment (Months 5–7)

Phase 2 digitizes the highest-risk and culturally most significant audio materials. The 9 undigitized reel-to-reel recordings will be digitized to WAV/AIFF preservation masters with MP3 access copies created. All 1,145 audio cassettes — including Pauline Flett, Bob May, Salish '79, oral history, and miscellaneous cassettes — will be digitized by the vendor to WAV/AIFF with MP3 access copies. Concurrently, the 275 reel-to-reel files from the 2021 digitization will undergo professional audio enhancement and quality remediation, with MP3 access copies derived from the enhanced WAV/AIFF masters. The DAMS will be configured and initial metadata entry will begin. The A/V workstation will be installed and tested in the facility workroom. Staff training in DAMS operations and digitization quality review will be completed. Cultural sensitivity review and access tier assignment (open, Tribal-only, restricted, sensitive) will begin for Phase 1 materials.

Deliverables: 1,154 items digitized; 275 audio files enhanced; DAMS operational; A/V workstation installed; staff trained.

Phase 3: Full Collection Digitization and Access (Months 7–10)

Phase 3 completes digitization of the remaining audio and video collections. The 175 MiniDV cassettes, the Salish '79 VHS recording, and 112 VHS cassettes will be digitized to MOV/AVI preservation masters with MP4 access copies by the vendor. Metadata development and DAMS population will continue across all completed materials. Cultural sensitivity review will be completed for the full collection. The community A/V access program will be formally launched, with supervised access sessions available to Tribal community members, language learners, and researchers through the STIPP-AC facility workstation.

Deliverables: 288 items digitized; full access derivative set created; DAMS substantially populated; community access program launched.

Phase 4: Finalization and Sustainability (Months 10–12)

Phase 4 completes all quality control, documentation, and final reporting. Final QC review of all vendor deliverables will be conducted, with reconciliation of any outstanding issues. DAMS population will be completed and the full collection will be fully accessible within the system. The Buffalo TeraStation three-copy backup protocol will be verified across all digitized materials. A preservation workflow and procedures manual will be developed and finalized, documenting all standards, protocols, and processes established during the project for use by STIPP-AC staff in ongoing stewardship beyond the grant period. Community outreach and engagement evaluation will be completed, and final performance and financial reports will be submitted. Project staff will attend the required IMLS-designated meeting to share project findings and engage with peer grantees.

Deliverables: Full 1,717-item collection digitized and accessible; DAMS fully operational; preservation workflow manual completed; backup verification confirmed; final reports submitted.

Communicating Results and Lessons Learned

Project results, including the preservation workflow documentation, DAMS implementation approach, cultural sensitivity access tier framework, and community access program model, will be made available through STIPP-AC program records and shared with the broader Tribal archival community through professional networks including ATALM. These products represent transferable models for other Tribal programs undertaking similar A/V preservation and access work.

III. PROJECT RESULTS

The project's intended results directly address each gap identified in the Project Justification: the preservation emergency facing 1,717 items of irreplaceable cultural and historical material; the access barrier that currently leaves the collection functionally silent; and the absence of the discovery infrastructure needed to make these recordings searchable, playable, and available to the community they belong to.

Preservation Outcomes

- 1,717 audiovisual items digitized to FADGI-aligned archival standards, with WAV/AIFF preservation masters for all audio and MOV/AVI for all video
- MP3 and MP4 access copies created for all materials, enabling community listening and viewing
- 275 previously digitized reel-to-reel files professionally enhanced and made usable for the first time since the 2021 digitization investment
- All physical media re-housed in archival-grade materials following digitization

Access Outcomes

- A locally hosted Digital Asset Management System selected, implemented, and operational, providing media playback, file-level access control, and searchable metadata records using Dublin Core and culturally specific fields
- A dedicated A/V workstation installed and actively in use in the facility's available workroom, enabling on-site community access to A/V recordings for the first time
- Culturally appropriate access tier controls implemented (open, Tribal-only, restricted, and sensitive materials) in coordination with Tribal cultural leadership
- Community access program launched and operational, with supervised access available to Tribal community members, language learners, Tribal youth, and researchers

Community Impact

Improved access to these materials will directly support Spokane Salish language revitalization by making documented elder speech available to learners, teachers, and cultural practitioners. The project will restore access to the voices of Spokane elders, strengthen intergenerational knowledge transfer, increase community and researcher engagement with archival collections, and expand use of materials in K–12 education and Tribal cultural programming.

Evaluation and Performance Measurement

Project success will be measured against the following performance targets, addressing IMLS performance dimensions of Effectiveness (contribution to NAE Objective 3), Quality (meeting community expectations for access and cultural sensitivity), and Timeliness (completion within the 12-month period of performance):

- Number of items digitized and enhanced (target: 1,717 items fully processed)
- Number of metadata records created and integrated into the DAMS
- Successful implementation and operational use of a locally hosted DAMS by end of Quarter 1
- Number of supervised community access sessions conducted (target: minimum 12 sessions during the project period)
- Number of individual users accessing A/V materials on-site (target: increase from a current baseline of approximately 5–10 annual requests to at least 25 interactions during the project period)
- Staff completion of DAMS operations training and digitization quality review training
- Documentation of user feedback and community engagement through session records

Data will be collected through vendor QC documentation, DAMS usage logs, access session records maintained by STIPP-AC staff, and the preservation workflow manual upon completion. Progress will be tracked against the Schedule of Completion and reported in interim and final performance reports.

Sustainability

The Spokane Tribe will ensure long-term stewardship through its existing three-copy backup infrastructure (Buffalo TeraStation local storage, off-site copy, and redundant external drives), ongoing DAMS management by trained STIPP-AC staff, and annual review of digital preservation practices. The DAMS platform will be procured under a perpetual local license, eliminating ongoing subscription dependency. Ongoing maintenance costs, if applicable, will be absorbed into STIPP-AC's annual program budget beyond the grant period, ensuring that core system operation does not depend on continued external funding. Digital files will remain under Tribal authority, with culturally appropriate access protocols governing use. The preservation workflow and procedures manual completed during the grant period will establish the institutional knowledge base for ongoing stewardship and will guide future staff in maintaining the collection to professional standards.

A Digital Memory Project: A Vision for Preserving the Voices of Elders and Cultural Knowledge through Digitization and Improved Access - Schedule of Completion

Spokane Tribe of Indians | Project Period: 12 Months | IMLS NAE Grant FY2026 All activities correspond to project phases described in the Narrative and Schedule of Completion

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