



NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Sample Application NAE-260927-OLS-26

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$150,000

The Medweganoonind Library aims to bolster library use and update and expand physical holdings and digital resources with a focus on Indigenous voices. Grant funds will support youth events and activities for groups ranging from pre-K through high school, such as Native author talks. A primary focus of the project is encouraging youth engagement. Library staff will weed outdated physical holdings and purchase new acquisitions with input from library patrons and local schools. Funds will also support digital literacy workshops for all ages. The project will provide direct benefit to the Red Lake community and students of all ages.

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.

Red Lake Nation Tribal Profile

Red Lake Nation Governance

The Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, also known as the Red Lake Nation, is a federally recognized, sovereign Tribal nation located in northern Minnesota. The Tribal government has an elected Tribal Council consisting of a chairman, secretary, treasurer, and representatives from the four districts: Little Rock, Ponemah, Red Lake, and Redby. The Council manages governance, economic development, and administration of services to the community (Tribal Council, 2026).

Through multiple treaties from 1863 to 1902, the Red Lake Indian Reservation was formed and the Red Lake Band was forced to cede over 14 million acres (Tribal History & Historical Photos, 2026; Treuer, 2015). The Red Lake tribal leadership resisted the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and held the reservation land intact for the tribe as a whole. Still today, all land is held in common by all the members of the band, and the Red Lake Indian Reservation is a rare closed reservation (Tribal History & Historical Photos, 2026; Treuer, 2015).

The key partner that will be involved in this project is Red Lake Nation College (RLNC). This Tribal college is located in Red Lake, Minnesota on the Red Lake Reservation. It is also the building where the Medweganoonind Library is housed. RLNC will help with this project through the faculty and IT department. An additional partner will be the Red Lake Tribal Archives, which is housed adjacent to the library. The Tribal Archives will partner for exhibits and related events and programming.

Setting and Demographics

The geographic region that would be served is the Red Lake Reservation. The Reservation has over 840,000 acres of land, including forests, lakes, and wetlands. The Red Lake Nation is a closed reservation, meaning that their land is held in common for the benefit of its community members.

The Red Lake Nation includes approximately 15,000 enrolled tribal members, around 7,000 of which live on the Reservation, while others live in Minneapolis, Duluth, and other cities in the midwest. The community is predominantly (over 90%) Anishinaabe (Ojibwe/Chippewa).

About 85% of people living on the Red Lake Reservation who are 16 years and over are employed (US Census Bureau, 2022). Poverty rates are relatively high at 26.2% (US Census Bureau, 2022). And, it is estimated that 82.5% of residents have achieved high school graduation or higher, with just 6.3% achieving bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2022). The Red Lake Nation provides services to families, youth, and elders with healthcare, social programs, and education.

Project Narrative

Enhancing Community Connections with the Medweganoonind Library and the Red Lake Tribal Archives

Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians (Red Lake Nation)

The Red Lake Indian Reservation is located in the beautiful lakes and forest region of northern Minnesota. In the late 1800s, tribal leadership resisted the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and held the land intact for the tribe as a whole. Still today, all land is held in common by all the members of the band, and the Red Lake Indian Reservation is a rare closed reservation. The people of the Red Lake Nation are Anishinaabe (Ojibwe people) and their traditional language is Ojibwemowin (Ojibwe language). The Red Lake Nation includes approximately 15,000 enrolled tribal members, around 7,000 of which live on the Reservation, while others live in Minneapolis, Duluth, and other cities in the midwest. As has happened elsewhere, there has been a loss of Ojibwe culture and language, along with traditional knowledge and practices due to colonization, though there are still some respected elders who preserve traditional language and knowledge. There is great community interest in preserving and disseminating language and culture for future generations.

The Red Lake public library is called the Medweganoonind Library, named after Red Lake Band Chief Medweganoonind, who helped negotiate and signed the Agreement of 1889 rejecting allotment (Tribal History & Historical Photos, 2026). In 2015, the Medweganoonind Library and the Red Lake Tribal Archives were moved into the new Red Lake Nation College building. After this move, the new library motto became “We live in the college; We serve the community” (Medweganoonind Library Handbook of Policies, 2024). Since then, the Medweganoonind Library holdings, resources, and programming have expanded so the library can serve both as the public library for the Red Lake community and the academic library for the college, as mandated by the library mission (Medweganoonind Library Handbook of Policies, 2024).

Project Justification

Author and activist Vine Deloria, who wrote about and worked on many important Native issues, specifically advocated for library and information science education for tribal members. He felt that Native people have rights to and responsibilities for their own history and knowledge (O’Neal, 2015). It is important for tribal libraries to amplify the voices and perspectives of Native people and to bring in cultural programming that pairs books with local traditional knowledge (Hurley et al, 2017; Littletree, 2018). While the basic elements and functions of a tribal library are similar to any public library, tribal libraries also function as cultural centers and include activities designed to preserve the history and culture of the tribe (Patterson et al, 2008). The Medweganoonind Library of the Red Lake Nation takes this mandate seriously and is exploring ways to improve both holdings and programming to meet these needs.

When the Medweganoonind Library moved to the Red Lake Nation College building in 2015, it left a small space in the back of the government center and entered an area specifically designed to be a library. In the past ten years, we have been slowly building up the collections, technology, and programming to fill this new larger space and serve a wider age range of patrons, while still focusing on cultural interests of the community. Early on, it was not necessary or desirable to do any weeding or turn away any donations because we did not have enough holdings to fill the shelves. But now we have great need to weed outdated holdings and obtain new fiction and non-fiction for library patrons of all ages and also to expand our Native focused holdings to match community interests.

As Red Lake community members were adjusting and making use of library resources in the new location, COVID-19 hit in 2020 and basically shut everything down, putting many of us at home and online. Since then, the Medweganoonind Library has been looking for ways to get library patrons of all ages back to the library in person and also online to engage in programming and resources. Youth engagement is especially challenging in this digital age. We recently updated desktop computers in the library, but a concerted effort will be needed to engage community youth. And in this digital age, plenty of people of all ages would benefit from increased digital and information literacy.

As we pursued possibilities for expanding cultural programming, we discussed some options with the Director of the Red Lake Tribal Archives, which is also located at Red Lake Nation College. We learned that Red Lake community members would like to learn more about what is in the Tribal Archives. This presented us with an opportunity to collaborate and provide integrated programming to meet community interests in culture and archives holdings.

The overall purpose of this project is to enhance and expand connections with Medweganoonind Library programming and resources for Red Lake community members of all ages. Specific objectives are as follows:

- Objective. 1. Enhance Medweganoonind Library use and engagement by Red Lake Community youth
- Objective 2. Develop Red Lake Archives exhibits as a catalyst for Medweganoonind Library programming and Red Lake community engagement
- Objective 3. Update and expand physical holdings and digital resources of the Medweganoonind Library, with particular focus on Indigenous voices and digital literacy.

We feel the project best aligns with IMLS Goal 2, Objective 2.1. Promote broad public engagement. However, some of our proposed objectives and activities also align with IMLS Goal 1, Objective 1.1. Advance shared knowledge and learning opportunities for all, as well as IMLS

Goal 3, Objective 3.2 Promote access to museum and library collections. Similarly, our project aligns primarily with NAE Objective 1. Serve the learning needs and interests of the community. But, part of the project also aligns with NAE Objective 3. Provide access to the preservation of information and collections.

Our primary audience for this project is Red Lake community members of all ages. Youth programming would, of course, target those 18 years and younger, including cultural programming. Exhibits and events prepared and hosted in collaboration with the Red Lake Tribal Archives would encourage community members and students of all ages to attend and participate, and include learning from elders. Updating holdings, with a focus on Indigenous authors, would also benefit patrons of all ages. Community member feedback on surveys, participation in events, and requests for information and programming have all informed the planning of this project. Red Lake K-12 schools have requested further programming for youth. Community members and Red Lake Archives staff have expressed interest in more visibility and programming related to archives holdings. We planned and will execute the archives related exhibits and events with Red Lake Archives Director Floyd Jourdain and archives staff.

Project Work Plan

The project will be overseen by Sarah Barott, Interim Library Director, who will serve as the Project Director. Library interns will assist with daily library operations, programming, and weeding out old and shelving new holdings. We will collaborate with Red Lake Nation College faculty and staff throughout the project and with Red Lake Tribal Archives staff for exhibits and related library programming. And we will communicate and coordinate with Red Lake K-12 schools for youth programming. During and after project implementation, we will share documentation of events and feedback with the Red Lake Community and Red Lake Nation College. We will also share our experiences and findings with the Tribal library community at the national ATALM conference each year. Project activities will be organized by objective.

Objective. 1. Enhance Medweganoonind Library use and engagement by Red Lake Community youth

Planning for youth activities and events will begin in Fall 2026 so that monthly activities can begin in Spring 2027. Events and activities will include arts and crafts related to a selected book or books, storytelling with invited elders, and scavenger hunts for items and resources in the library. We will explore activities and programming options suitable for groups ranging from pre-K through high school. Native authors will be invited for various age groups. Some of the locally and nationally recognized authors we have in mind include Anton Treuer, Brenda Child (Red Lake), Tashia Hart (Red Lake), and Byron Graves. Events for older youth will be geared towards young adult readings, interactive activities, some in-person and some online.

The Interim Library Director will take the lead in planning events and activities, communicating with Red Lake K-12 schools and the Boys and Girls Club, which is located nearby. Collaborations with college faculty in Ojibwemowin and Anishinaabe Studies will also contribute to program planning and execution. Events and activities will be publicized through social media, local radio and news outlets, flyers, and contacts with schools. Library interns will work with the Interim Library Director to prepare for and implement youth programs and activities. Short surveys will be given after most events to get feedback from participants and gather information about interests and ideas for future programs.

Objective 2. Develop Red Lake Archives exhibits as a catalyst for Medweganoonind Library programming and Red Lake community engagement

Planning for archives exhibits and related events will begin in Fall 2026, and the first exhibit and event will happen in Spring 2027. The Interim Library Director will continue to confer and coordinate with Red Lake Archives Director Floyd Jourdain and Archives Assistant Jasmine Gonzalez. The Archives Assistant will be the lead on implementing the exhibits, with assistance from one Library Intern designated to help with preparing and monitoring exhibits as needed. Archives exhibits will include local treaties, Red Lake artwork, traditional objects, clothing, and genealogy. We plan to have two or three exhibits per year, with several connected library events relating to each exhibit. Community members will be invited to events with exhibits and speakers. Some exhibits and events will include discussion of related books and library materials. Exhibits will also be open to the public during specified hours as we are able to staff the exhibit room. Exhibit visits and programs for K-12 students will also be offered on request. These events and exhibits will also be publicized through social media, local radio and news outlets, flyers, and contacts with schools. Short surveys will be given after events and at exhibits to get feedback from participants and gather information about interests and ideas for future programs.

Objective 3. Update and expand physical holdings and digital resources of the Medweganoonind Library, with particular focus on Indigenous voices and digital literacy

In Fall 2026, the Interim Library Director will begin working on weeding out physical holdings that are outdated and/or no longer relevant, working section by section with assistance from Library Interns. Guidelines set out in the Trails Library Procedures Manual (Patterson et al, 2008) will be consulted for planning and implementation of weeding. In Spring 2027, assessment of gaps in knowledge, genres, age categories, and newly published materials will begin in order to plan for starting to obtain new desired holdings later that year. Many sources will be consulted for recommendations for new holdings, including American Indians in Children's Literature (Reese and Mendoza, 2025) to expand our culturally relevant holdings for children. Library patrons from the community, local schools, and the college will also be invited to suggest new acquisitions of interest. Weeding and obtaining new holdings will continue throughout the project period.

Digital resources and links provided on the Medweganoonind Library website (Medweganoonind Library, 2022) will continue to be supported. These include the American Indian History Infobase, cloudLibrary, eLm (eLibrary Minnesota), and links to other regional libraries and resources such as the Ojibwe People's Dictionary and Purdue OWL. We plan to add a library subscription to the Minneapolis Star Tribune that will provide all library patrons with digital access to a nationally acclaimed and regionally relevant newspaper. In addition, we plan to provide digital literacy and resource access workshops and training for library patrons of all ages. The Interim Library Director will take the lead on planning and programming for these, in consultation with college faculty and Red Lake schools. Workshops will be publicized for specific age groups in appropriate venues. Surveys will be given to gain feedback from participants.

Project Results

The results from implementing this project will be increased community participation in library programs and events as well as greater library traffic and engagement with resources. This will be evaluated by documenting participation at events and activities, patron and participant surveys for feedback, and monitoring patron use of physical and digital holdings and resources. With the increase in youth programming and acquisition of new holdings, it is expected that youth engagement with the library resources will also increase, along with their use of cultural resources. Similar metrics will be used to monitor youth engagement. With the archives exhibits and programming, there should be greatly increased community awareness of archives holdings, cultural practices, tribal history, and related library resources. Attendance at events and exhibits along with surveys for feedback from the community will be documented.

Weeding and adding new acquisitions should give Red Lake community members of all ages greater access to diverse perspectives and voices through nonfiction, fiction, and increased holdings of Indigenous authors. Checking out of holdings will be monitored, along with spot checks on what patrons find appealing or would like to see more of. Continued increase in use of digital resources is expected and will be monitored. We should also see increased digital literacy after for participants after workshops. Participation will be documented and feedback solicited.

Library information and reports will be available to the community. Results and lessons learned will also be shared at the annual ATALM conference. Overall, the Medweganoonind Library will achieve greater engagement with resources and programs from Red Lake community patrons of all ages. The accomplishments of the project will continue into the future with established programming and collaborations with the Red Lake Tribal Archives and Red lake Nation College.

Schedule of Completion

	Oct 2026	March 2027	July 2027	Oct 2027	Mar 2028	July 2028	Sept 2028
Objective 1. Enhance Medweganoonind Library use and engagement by Red Lake Community youth							
Plan youth events and activities							
Host youth events and activities							
Objective 2. Develop Red Lake Archives exhibits as a catalyst for Medweganoonind Library programming and Red Lake community engagement							
Plan first archives exhibit and related events							
Open exhibits and host events							
Objective 3. Update and expand physical holdings and digital resources of the Medweganoonind Library, with particular focus on Indigenous voices and digital literacy.							
Determine plan to begin weeding physical holdings							
Begin weeding physical holdings and assessing gaps							
Begin purchasing new physical holdings							
Support current digital holdings, add Star Tribune							
Plan and host digital literacy workshops							