

Bridging Knowledge: Supporting Indigenous Scholars into the Field of Librarianship

Summary: Alaska Library Network (ALN, Jodi Jacques), American Indian Library Association (AILA, George Gottschalk) and the Alaska State Library (ASL, Julie Niederhauser) request \$711,091.74 (\$328,864.89 cost share) for a three-year master's level project called "Bridging Knowledge: Supporting Indigenous Scholars Into the Field of Librarianship". This project will provide funding for 15 American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian graduate students to earn MLIS degrees in partnership with San Jose State University (SJSU). *Bridging Knowledge* aligns with Goal #2 "Build Capacity," of the IMLS 2018-2022 Strategic Plan and the objective to "Support the recruitment, training, and development of library and museum staff, boards, and volunteers, helping to grow a skilled, professional workforce."

Statement of Broad Need: The field of library and information science (LIS) is not racially or ethnically diverse. The lack of qualified Indigenous librarians is a critical issue.¹ Dr. Sandy Littletree's recent dissertation, *Let Me Tell You About Indian Libraries*, outlines the historic challenges and... "problems with recruiting and retaining American Indian professional librarians, which continues to be a significant problem even today."² This project has broad national support from geographic areas with high need. Alaska, Montana, and Hawai'i have place-based remote rural communities with unique needs that can be addressed by developing professionals with appropriate cultural competencies. Advisory Committee members representing state libraries (Alaska, Montana), academic libraries (Hawaii, Alaska, Montana), Ilisagvik Tribal College Library and SJSU, public libraries (Anchorage, Seward) and the American Indian Library Association met over several months (March 2020 to August 2020) to address this critical need. *Bridging Knowledge* builds on the success of *Circle of Learning* (COL), a 2010-2014 Laura Bush 21st Century grant led by SJSU and AILA which led to 18 American Indian/Native Alaskan librarians earning their MLIS degrees. A survey of COL students during the fourth year of the grant project highlighted that 85% of students had been involved in or planned to be involved in a digital inclusion project that would benefit their tribal community. Additionally, at the University of Hawai'i LIS Program, a majority of the Hawaiian students focus on archives for their degree. With these foci in mind, *Bridging Knowledge* aims to focus on honoring Indigenous students' ongoing concern with the preservation of cultural histories and artifacts as a means of reclaiming Indigenous narratives from Western-centered information systems.

Project Design: A broad-based advisory committee, consisting of leaders from academic, public, state and tribal libraries in Alaska, Montana, Hawaii, SJSU and AILA will be involved throughout the life of the project. Advisory members have conducted a needs analysis, developed the preliminary proposal and will promote the project and assist with student recruitment in their respective states. **Phase 1:** Student Recruiting (September-December 2021) Information about the *Bridging Knowledge* project will be available on the ALN and SJSU websites. The ASL will develop and coordinate the distribution of promotional materials. Project partners and Advisory Committee members will leverage their community connections, use listservs/emails and other communication channels from state, regional and library associations, and universities in a national recruiting effort. Information will also be shared with tribal libraries and colleges, Native organizations, tribal leaders and Alaska Native Regional Corporations, especially those who have received an IMLS Native American Grant in recent years. A subcommittee will review *Bridging Knowledge* applications and make recommendations for admission to grant program. Advisory Committee members will mentor students, assist with securing internships and contribute to the professional development opportunities available to students. **Phase 2:**

¹ Sands, A.E., Toro, S., DeVoe, T., Fuller, S., and Wolff-Eisenberg, C. (2018). Positioning Library and Information Science Graduate Programs for 21st Century Practice. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services

² Littletree, S. (2018). "Let Me Tell You About Indian Libraries": Self-Determination, Leadership, and Vision-The Basis of Tribal Library Development in the United States. Seattle, WA: University of Washington

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Student Support (January 2022-May 2024) Fiscal Agent Jodi Jacques (ALN) will coordinate the payment of student's tuition, books, travel, technology costs, such as laptops and internet fees, and conference attendance. Project Manager Cindy Hohl (AILA) will be the designated contact person for students interested in the project and oversee the delivery of the supplemental webinars and student mentorships. COL alumni will serve as professional mentors, presenters and career advisors to build professional networks and provide leadership development. The project will emphasize Indigenous methodologies to teach culturally appropriate digital curation skills and build the capacity of Indigenous students to be change makers to decolonize information services. Fifteen Indigenous students will earn an ALA-accredited MLIS degree online through SJSU School of Information. The curriculum includes 43 credits of library, archives and record management courses. Throughout the project, Indigenous librarians, advisory members and COL alumni will present supplemental webinars on aspects of librarianship, archives, digital curation and preservation, that are inclusive and representative of indigenous experiences and perspectives.

These webinars will be posted on the Sustainable Heritage Network (SHN) under the Alaska State Library, Archives and Museums Community to increase public understanding of Indigenous librarianship. Students will also participate in professional development, networking and educational experiences that are centered in Indigenous epistemologies. **Phase 3:** Student Internships (May 2023-July 2023) involve each student participating in an eight-week digital stewardship internship that complements their graduate-level education and apply their learning to the benefit of Indigenous communities. Project Manager Cindy Hohl and Advisory Committee members will identify and secure paid internships for students. Fiscal agent Jodi Jacques (ALN) will distribute funds to students for travel and housing during their internship. Students will share their experiences via an online platform enhanced by contributions from mentors and internship supervisors and present at professional conferences and write academic articles. **Phase 4:** Final Evaluation & Dissemination (May-August 2024) An external evaluator will assess and report on project outcomes. The results of the project will be disseminated nationally via articles in library journals and presentations at national and regional library conferences.

Diversity plan: *Bridging Knowledge* will recruit students who are American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian to provide Indigenous librarians to Indigenous communities. While students may represent other diverse groups, this project focuses on enhancing and supporting Indigenous librarianship.

Intended Broad Impact: *Bridging Knowledge: Supporting Indigenous Scholars into the Field of Librarianship* will have current and lasting impact on diversifying and shaping communities of practice and the future of LIS. As the graduates enter the workforce and assume leadership roles, they will inspire more Indigenous scholars to pursue an MLIS. The educational and hands-on digital curation experience that the 15 graduates gain from this project will allow them to serve as a bridge between the wisdom keepers and the knowledge seekers in their Native communities. The graduates' ability to implement language revitalization and culturally relevant digitization projects will support kinship connections within and between Native communities. The project will serve as a model for future American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian MLIS recruitment initiatives. The synergy of the strategic collaboration of this project will inspire future LIS projects of national significance.

Budget Summary: Salaries and Wages (\$131,363.25 & \$187,754.42); **Fringe Benefits** (\$40,748.49 & \$58,241.86); **Travel** (\$29,000 & \$5,000); **Supplies, Materials, and Equipment** (\$0.00 & \$72,868.61); **Contracts and Subawards** (\$15,000 for External Evaluator & \$0.00); **Student Support** (\$494,980 & \$5,000); **Other Costs** (\$0.00 & \$0.00) **Total Direct Costs** (\$711,091.74 & \$328,864.89); **Indirect Costs** (\$0.00 & \$0.00) ; **Total Project Costs** (\$711,091.74 & \$328,864.89)