

## Preliminary Proposal

### **Honoring Alaska Native Cultural Heritage: Continuing Education for Alaska Community Libraries**

The Alaska Library Network, with the Alaska Library Association Native Issues Roundtable, proposes to provide student-centered, community-centered continuing education for Alaska public and tribal library staff working with indigenous populations and cultural materials. Collaborators will be the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rasmuson Library, and the Alaska Division of Libraries, Museums, and Archives. Other partners will include the Oral History Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the Tuzzy Consortium Library of Iñisagvik Tribal College, the Museum of the North, and the Alaska Native Language Archive.

The purpose of the project is to address gaps in training and professional education for community and tribal library staff, particularly those in rural Alaska, and also to help library staff strengthen their libraries as community anchors.

The proposal builds off of previous initiatives nationally (Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums conferences and workshops) and in Alaska (the Alaska Native Libraries, Archives, and Museums Summit and workshops). It is needed in a place where the opportunities for professional development and continuing education are minimal, in a state where three quarters of the communities are off the road system and where no institution of higher learning offers library training or cultural preservation degrees. Most librarians work in isolation with few opportunities to meet face to face with other colleagues. In the past the Alaska State Library led the effort to provide meaningful continuing education to staff in small and dispersed libraries, but the current budget crisis in Alaska has significantly reduced available funding. The changing economic landscape and rapidly changing climatic conditions mean that it is imperative that indigenous cultural treasures are preserved, curated, and made accessible for future generations.

In the first year of the two-year project, an institute for 20-30 participants will be offered at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Before the institute, a survey of applicants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills along with an inventory of their libraries' cultural assets and community cultural networks will be conducted. The results will inform the institute curriculum. Likely topics will be intellectual property considerations, emergency preparedness, preparation for digitization projects, preservation of existing photo and recorded collections, current practices in oral history collection, local indigenous language preservation, evaluation of collections, development of libraries as local history and cultural centers, either stand alone or in collaboration with other community anchors.

The second year, five to seven libraries will be selected through an application process for a week of customized on-site, hands-on training offered to the community library staff and other community agencies. These might be staff from a local museum, native heritage cultural center, tribal cultural agency or project, or even the local high school. Visiting specialists will be chosen based on the

needs of each community, and a specialist will spend a week training, assisting and assessing the community's project. After the visit, the specialist will present a topical webinar, based on their particular expertise and their on-site activities, to all libraries in Alaska and elsewhere. These will be streamed, archived, and made available on both the Alaska Library Network and the Alaska State Library websites. Thanks to 15 years of grant programs (Gates Foundation, U.S. Department of Commerce) these isolated, far-flung libraries have access to current technology and subsidized support for very costly bandwidth that is adequate to participate in webinars and, in some cases, videoconferencing. For some of the tribal libraries, it will be possible to provide DVD's of the follow-up sessions.

We have developed this proposal based on experience offering training in various formats in the past. What has been missing is that trainers, even some from urban Alaska, are often not acquainted with the cultural and physical settings of largely indigenous rural Alaska. Students are often enthused by the content of the too rare opportunities for face-to-face training and continuing education, but sometimes find it difficult to apply newly learned precepts once they return to their home libraries.

We aim to produce stronger and more sustainable outcomes of customized continuing education by taking this two-step approach. This will also allow the librarians to assess how to make their collections and programs more accessible and in ways that are culturally appropriate. By extending the training to other cultural agency staff in the second-stage communities, the outcome is expected to be new or even stronger cooperative efforts in local cultural preservation, an important collaboration of key village anchor agencies. The follow-up webinars should serve as resources for the participating communities and be instructive to a wider audience. A contracted evaluator will help us capture outcomes.

Tyson Rinio, Assistant Professor, Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Chair of the Alaska Native Issues Roundtable of the Alaska Library Association, will direct the project. Other project leaders include David Ongley, a *Library Journal* "Mover and Shaker" and past president of the American Indian Library Association; Erin Hollingsworth, Public Services Librarian, Tuzzy Consortium Library of Iñisaḡvik Tribal College; and Sue Sherif, former Alaska State Library Development Director.

The projected budget for period from October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2019 will be \$88,000. No cost share is required, but Salary and Benefits for the project leaders will be in-kind contributions. Travel (Year 1: \$11,200 /Year 2: \$18,000) will total \$29,200 and reflects the high cost of travel to and within Alaska. Supplies (Year 1: \$750/Year 2: \$700) total \$1,450. Contracts (Year 1: \$2,600/Year 2: \$8,600), primarily for instructors, site visitors, and an evaluator, total \$11,200. Student Support (Year 1: \$44,050/Year 2: \$700) largely consists of student travel and student materials costs for the institute and amounts to \$44,750. Other Costs (Year 1: \$500/Year 2: \$900) are \$1,400. Total Direct Costs (Year 1: \$59,100/Year 2: \$28,900) are \$88,000. No indirect will be claimed.