



Organizational Profile

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) is a federally recognized tribe located in southeastern Oklahoma. In July 2020, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of tribal sovereignty during the *McGirt v. Oklahoma* case that determined Native American Reservations were never disestablished by Congress, thus restoring jurisdictional rights to tribes. The CNO Reservation oversees a 10,922 square mile region in southeastern Oklahoma, that overlays thirteen counties: Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, Coal, Haskell, Hughes, Johnston, Latimer, Leflore, McCurtain, Pittsburg, and Pontotoc. The area is extremely rural and is comprised of numerous small, isolated towns and communities.

Departmental leadership considers proposed Federal projects in terms of how they will fit the strategic plan, support the mission and vision of the division and CNO, and promise the maximum investment for tribal members relative to CNO resources. The CNO's governing body is made up of a Chief, Assistant Chief, and twelve Tribal Council members who represent the interests and needs of an area that has been historically underserved. The Chief and Tribal Council function much like a board of directors who are responsible for evaluating and ratifying all decisions that guide the tribal government toward embodying the vision and mission of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Vision: Live out the Chahta spirit of faith, family, and culture

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Mission: To the Choctaw proud, ours is the sovereign nation offering opportunities for growth and prosperity.

In 1891 the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma established Jones Academy (JA) and named it after Choctaw Chief Wilson N. Jones who recognized the importance of education for his Tribe despite having little formal education himself. Previously, an approximate two-hundred students attended grades 1-12 from tribal nations across the U.S. In a strategic response to the changing landscape and a commitment to enriching the lives of Native American families within the CNO reservation, Jones Academy opened its doors to day students. JA recognized the opportunity to offer an education that goes beyond the conventional curriculum found in public schools. For Native American families residing within the Choctaw Nation reservation, this move was a beacon of promise, signifying a commitment to preserving and celebrating their cultural identity.

Often many of the students are from single-parent homes in underserved communities and their attendance at JA is out of necessity. JA is proud to accept responsibility for the children and empower them in a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment that meets their basic needs and provides more than an education. Jones Academy's mission is to empower Native American youth by providing individualized care and development through educational, cultural, and spiritual opportunities.

Jones Academy emphasizes transforming the learning experience through the combined efforts of teachers, administrators, counselors, and caretakers to produce a unique environment where students are provided the care and experience needed to promote their development into mature, balanced, responsible and compassionate adults.



Project Justification

For the FY24 Native American Library Services Enhancement grant, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) will prioritize efforts toward **Goal 2: Improve educational programs related to specific topics and content areas of interest to library patrons and community-based users** and the corresponding objective to “**support the development and implementation of classes, events, teaching tools, resources, and other educational services**” (**Objective 2.2**). The project will support new library programming and updated materials for Jones Academy (JA), the no-cost American Indian residential school located in Eastern Oklahoma. The hybrid campus is home to approximately 200 students in grades 1st-12th from across the United States, but also supports non-residential students from the community during regular school hours. This recent decision was not driven by bolstered enrollment, but rather a conscious effort to provide a unique educational experience rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the Choctaw Nation.

The identified target group for the proposed project are the students at Jones Academy who will benefit from the investment in their facilities and educational experiences. The funds requested will be used to replace current books which are well-worn and in moderate to poor condition, while supporting the acquisition of new titles which will focus on Indigenous subject matters to cultivate a relevant curriculum. Additional to expanding the library’s collections, the programming will include crafts, special events, and after school programming to increase participation among students. Additional consumable materials like glue, paper, and other craft supplies will be used to engage students in tailored activities centered around the literary subjects and skill building. Guest speakers and demonstrators from within the tribal community will also be invited to present on topics related to American Indian culture. The funding will benefit the library at JA by providing new and updated materials but will also provide learning opportunities that feature portrayals of Native peoples. Positive representations in books and media can be beneficial to supporting self-esteem and the solidification of cultural identities. The speakers and guests will bridge the gap between the community and Jones Academy while providing the opportunity for students to make a meaningful connection to educators and leaders who mirror their experiences.

Jones Academy is in a unique position as a tribally controlled school to provide an attentive, curated approach to education, as opposed to public schooling. Often, students are from single-parent homes in underserved communities and their attendance at JA is out of necessity. Regularly, they arrive at a minute’s notice. Once settled, academic leveling is provided in cases where students are not performing at the appropriate level for their grade. The library is essential to providing the necessary resources and services for students to reach those goals and achieve academic success. Regularly, students in grades 1st– 6th utilize the campus library during school hours, with 7th–12th graders joining in for after school events, tutoring, and mentoring opportunities.

The JA library is reliant on funding for expanding and enhancing services, but also to support the salaries of the passionate staff. Due to the residential aspect of Jones Academy, the dedicated faculty and staff bridge the gap between educator and caregiver to ensure that the students can receive the individualized care and attention needed to develop into future leaders. The best way to meet the needs and challenges of the students is to provide meaningful connections and engagement within a safe, secure, and positive learning environment. The Jones Academy Library and its related programming are integral toward this goal.



Project Work Plan

Joy Tribbey will serve as a Project Director for the FY24 Native American Library Services Enhancement Grant. Ms. Tribbey holds a master's in education with an emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction. The funds will support 5% of her salary. Sierra McAfee serves as the Library Media Specialist at Jones Academy, with a Bachelors in Elementary Education and a master's in library media. Sonia Donaies serves as the Teaching Assistant at Jones Academy, with a master's in public education. Both Sierra and Sonia will be supported as part-time employees through the grant funding.

Joy as Project Director will be responsible for overseeing the Library Enhancement Services grant activities, including managing the budget and ensuring timely reporting and evaluation. Sierra will be responsible for programmatic planning and implementation of the proposed grant activities. Sonia will support those efforts where necessary, while also maintaining the library through daily maintenance, such as shelving, organizing materials, and assisting students.

The program will implement the following activities during the school year:

- During the school year, the Library Media Specialist will purchase new selections of books appropriate for grades 1-12. This activity is vital to the success of the program because it ensures that the library has a variety of culturally appropriate books for the students. **(Grant Goal 2, Objective 1.1)**.
- After purchasing the books, The Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will ensure the books are cataloged in the library's system and shelved within 2 months of their arrival at Jones Academy.
- As new titles cycle in, the Library Media Specialist will select a new book and/or subject matter that will be featured.
- Throughout the school year, the Library Media Specialist will create after school activities, events, and/or crafts for the students, to engage them with subject matter and foster a love for learning in the library space. Program staff will monitor for participation.
- The program staff will organize a minimum of two cultural events with a speaker and/or demonstrator to discuss topics related to Native American culture. These events are for students to enhance their engagement with Native American Culture and history. **(Grant Goal 2, Objective 2.2)**.
- The Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will track the attendance at the cultural events to determine if the minimum attendance goal of 30 students is met.
- Throughout the school year, the Library Media Specialist and TA will seek informal feedback from students and faculty regarding the quality, engagement, and enjoyment of current library resources and activities. The feedback will be noted and integrated where possible. **(Grant Goal 2, Objective 2.1)**
- At the end of each semester, the Library Media Specialist will distribute a survey to ensure the library's programing and resources are meeting student needs. This will support continual improvement activities. **(Grant Goal 2, Objective 2.2)**

Announcements are often posted outside of the library to keep students informed about past and future events. If creations are made, they will remain on display for inspiration.



Additionally, documentation of activities and events are often published on the Jones Academy Facebook page to inform the public and other invested parties such as tribal members and parents. It is the mission of Jones Academy to build a positive reputation for the school as a viable educational opportunity for Native students.

Careful planning has been undertaken to mitigate potential risks to program implementation. A possible concern is the availability of guest speakers and presenters due to scheduling conflicts. To accommodate this, program staff will compile an extended list of potential guests from the Choctaw Nation Cultural Center, Tribal Communities, or other appropriate spaces to ensure fulfillment of the proposed activity. Another additional concern may be the timeliness of book acquisition. If titles cannot be procured in a timely manner, program staff will inform the funding agency, and other vendors may be explored to acquire the appropriate items to meet the intended goals and timeline.

Project Results

It is Jones Academy's intention to cultivating an engaging library with books, resources, and programing that spark an interest among students. The proposed project meets this goal by providing new books, replacing well-loved books in lesser condition, and creating new opportunities for student engagement though meaningful connections to cultural topics and literary events. By fostering a joy for reading, students further develop their imagination and creativity. As a result, students unconsciously strengthen their reading comprehension which will serve them beyond an academic setting and support lifelong learning.

The sustainment of the project beyond the conclusion of the grant will include continued programing informed by the data gathered throughout the grant period. Future programing may improve upon the proposed activities or provide similar offerings based on feedback. The books purchased through grant funding, new or as replacements, will be incorporated into the library for long-term use. After school programing will serve an outlet for students, and any crafts created will serve as a reminder of the student's participation.

Inviting the community to participate when sourcing potential speakers and demonstrators allows tribal members to engage with the future keepers of tradition and invest in cultural revitalization. The value and appreciation of these experiences will prove significant as students forge their identities as individuals and tribal leaders.

The goal of the project is for students to engage with the library on their own volition, outside of the regularly scheduled visits and curriculum requirements. Jones Academy is dedicated to building upon skills that transform outside of academic success into a love and desire for knowledge. The commitment to the students goes beyond the grant funding and the JA team and CNO will continue to work tirelessly in its pursuits.



Schedule of Completion												
YEAR 1												
Activities	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
As needed, the Library Media Specialist will purchase new books and titles appropriate for grades 1-12.												
After purchasing books, Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will ensure the books are catalogued in the library's system and shelved within 2 months of their arrival at Jones Academy.												
As new titles cycle in, the Library Media Specialist will select a number of books that will be featured in the library throughout the school year.												
The Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will create activities for the students, to engage them with subject matter and foster a love for learning in the library space.												
The program staff will bring in a speaker and/or demonstrator to discuss topics related to Native American culture at least twice each school year.												
The Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will note the attendance at the events to determine if the goal is met for 30 students to attend the speaker/demonstrator events.												
At the end of each semester, the Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will attempt to distribute a survey to ensure the library's programming and resources are meeting student needs.												



Schedule of Completion												
YEAR 2												
Activities	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
As needed, the Librarian will purchase new books and titles appropriate for grades 1-12.												
After purchasing books, Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will ensure the books are catalogued in the library's system and shelved within 2 months of their arrival at Jones Academy.												
As new titles cycle in, the Library Media Specialist will select a number of books that will be featured in the library throughout the school year.												
The Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will create activities for the students, to engage them with subject matter and foster a love for learning in the library space.												
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The Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will note the attendance at the events to determine if the goal is met for 30 students to attend the speaker/demonstrator events.												
At the end of each semester, the Library Media Specialist and Teaching Assistant will attempt to distribute a survey to ensure the library's programming and resources are meeting student needs.												