

Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums

Education for Professional Growth and Field Sustainability



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Preface

Since the initiation of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) tribal museum and tribal library grant programs, IMLS has provided key program and operating funds to several hundred American Indian and Alaska Native libraries and museums. In the mid-2000s, IMLS sought to deepen its collaboration with the burgeoning group of tribal libraries, museums, and archives (TALMs). Initially providing support for national conferences, its investment broadened in 2007 to include even more comprehensive field development. *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways: A Continuing Education Project for 21st Century Native American Librarians* was a three-year grant (2007-2009) to the Western Council of State Librarians intended to:

- provide quality educational opportunities to tribal archive, library and museum staff through the presentation of national conferences, immersion institutes, and professional training;
- improve the delivery of library, museum, information, and cultural services to American Indians; and
- increase communication and collaboration between tribal and non-tribal archive, library, and museum staff.

This work enhanced IMLS's outreach to Native America, substantially strengthened the field, and laid the groundwork for the development of a sustainable association of TALM professionals.

The project's specific components were a national conference in Oklahoma City in 2007, four "immersion institutes" and training workshops in 2008, and a national conference in Portland, Oregon in 2009. By agreement with the Western Council for State Librarians, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) was responsible for the 2007 and 2008 activities, and the Oregon State Library (OSL) was responsible for the 2009 conference. With remaining funds generated through earned income, the grant was extended through June 2011 and additional activities were undertaken in 2010-11 by the ODL. This summary and evaluation addresses the activities in turn and concludes with support for overall findings on individual professional development and field enhancement.

2007 National Conference

The 2007 National Conference of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, entitled *Guardians for Language, Memory, and Lifeways*, was held in Oklahoma City from October 22-25 and organized by the ODL.

2007 Conference | Events

Six concurrent pre-conferences were held on October 22, 2007, the most popular of which was “Establishing a Tribal Archives and Records Center,” with 75 attendees. Attendance at the other pre-conferences (“Journey to Successful Fundraising,” “Past Perfect Museum Software Training,” “Planning and Implementing Oral History Projects,” “Managing Tribal Museum Collections,” and “Collection Development for Tribal Libraries in the Electronic Age”) ranged from 15 to 45. Average preconference attendance was 41.

Regular conference events ran from the morning of October 23 through early afternoon on October 25, 2007. They included 56 concurrent sessions; affinity breakfasts organized by discipline (archives, libraries, museums); six general sessions with speakers (three luncheons, three assemblies); an opening night reception; a storytelling evening; an exhibit hall that attracted 39 vendors; poster sessions featuring 52 posters (the majority of which were IMLS grantees); and a closing ceremony.

2007 Conference | Achievements

Success in providing an appropriate response to field growth and the demand for professional development opportunities

The conference’s rich schedule of opportunities and activities attracted 550 registrants,¹ more than twice the number of attendees at the 2005 event. While the large number of conference attendees created some logistic difficulties for conference organizers, it is important evidence of field growth and of the conference’s ability to meet practitioners’ substantial demand for programs and training that address their specialized needs.

As the late Chief Wilma Mankiller, honorary chair of the conference, noted in her welcome,

The next three days will offer you a wide array of useful resources ... and, hopefully, provide inspiration for future programs. This dynamic conference agenda is also designed to spark conversation among the conference participants, for it is through conversation we increase our understanding of the common ground we share, express our unique concerns, explore new ideas, envision the future, gain wisdom, and make treasured friendships.²

The conference’s popularity attests to attendees’ agreement with Chief Mankiller’s assessment, and post-conference evaluation feedback drives the point home—the

¹ If all pre-conference attendees, one-day attendees (who were not all required to register), and guests are counted, actual cumulative attendance was as high as 635.

² Wilma Mankiller, *Program Brochure, National Conference of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums: Guardians of Language, Memory, and Lifeways*, Oklahoma City, OK, October 2007, p. 3.

growing corps of tribal archivists, librarians, and museum professionals has been eager for ways to gain new knowledge and foster collegial relationships.

92% of those who responded to the conference evaluation questionnaire noted that they “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement, “The conference was a valuable professional development opportunity for me.”

*“I was very impressed with this year’s conference and don’t think that I would change much but the topics so that if everyone returns again, we can get more information.”
(2007 attendee)*

*“The conference was emotional for me, it touched me deeply. My fire has been stoked. I am an Art Education major, American Indian studies minor, and now I want to include museum and libraries in my education.”
(2007 attendee)*

Success in increasing tribal and wider community recognition of the importance of tribal archives, libraries, and museums

Again quoting Wilma Mankiller’s welcome, “Nothing has greater significance for the cultural preservation of our individual tribes than to ensure that we wisely and professionally preserve our history, artifacts, stories, art, and literature for generations to come.”³ Walter Echohawk, a founding board member of the Native Arts and Culture Fund, is even more emphatic:

I firmly believe that every Indian tribe, museum, and college should have its own tribal archive to house locally its historical photographs; song, story, and language recordings; treaty documents; legal histories; traditional information; historical data; and ethnographies pertaining to each tribe. That critical body of knowledge—along with oral traditions and traditional art/artifacts—needs to be preserved and made readily accessible, in a central local location, to every tribal member, tribal attorney, Native student or parent, tribal leader, expert witness, and technical staff. If housed in appropriate facilities and managed by professionally trained staff, such data would be indispensable to the political and cultural survival of tribal peoples in the 21st century and beyond.⁴

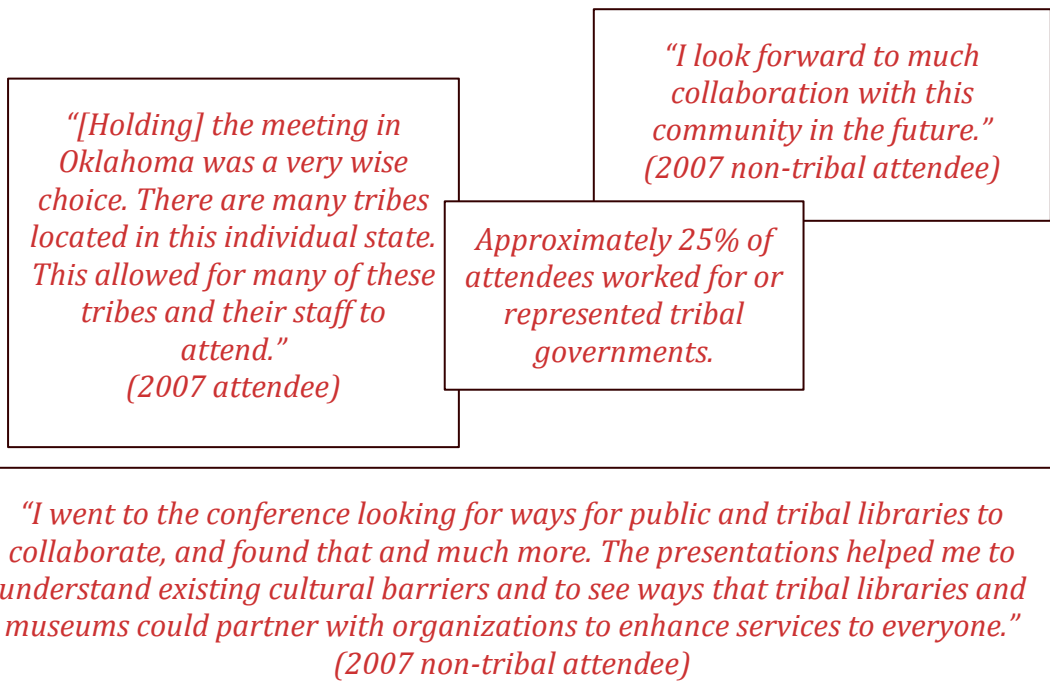
³ Ibid.

⁴ Email communication, Walter Echohawk to Susan Feller, October 17, 2009.

Nevertheless, tribal governments' attention to and investment in cultural, arts, and preservation programming often takes a backseat to matters deemed more pressing. Among key collaborators—such as state libraries and museums—a lack of familiarity with tribal institutions and professionals may cause partnerships with them to be overlooked.

The 2007 National Conference succeeded in overcoming these barriers. No fewer than 10 Native nations provided direct and in-kind support to the meeting. (Among these were the Cherokee Nation, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation, Fort Sill Apache Tribe, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Seneca Nation of Indians, and Tonkawa Tribe.) Additionally, more than 70 local, regional, and national businesses, universities, libraries, museums, cultural centers, government agencies, and private foundations engaged with conference attendees as sponsors or exhibitors.

Much of this tribal and wider community recognition can be attributed to the remarkable volunteer support that ODL recruited to aid their hosting efforts. A 33-member National Envisioning Committee provided advice concerning national issues. A 40-member Local Planning Committee served as conduits to the broader archives and museum fields (ODL provided this outreach itself to the broader library field) and to tribal nations in the region. Subcommittees for programming, scholarships, social events, exhibitors, awards, and evaluation provided direct means for committee members to promote recognition of tribal archives, libraries, and museums and become involved in the conference's success.



Success in generating significant conference income to help defray costs

Conferences are costly events. Certainly, professional conference hosting companies turn profits—but to do so, they typically charge high fees, disdain scholarships, and minimize attendee benefits. By contrast, ODL offered a reasonable registration fee and awarded 116 scholarships of varying values. The conference included a number of meals and gratuities such as a conference bag, logo pens, and a complete, professionally produced program book.

ODL kept costs down through a strategy focused on careful vendor selection, vendor negotiation, cafeteria pricing for extra events (such as the pre-conferences and storytelling evening), exhibitor fees, and both direct dollar and in-kind sponsorships. Especially with regard to exhibitor registrations and sponsorships, the volunteer committees were again key. Absent their advocacy, many revenue-producing relationships would have been less fruitful or would not have borne fruit at all. The 2007 National Conference's success with revenue generation was an important demonstration of the viability of future conferences.

Sponsorship opportunities resulted in over \$30,000 in additional income to the conference.

In-kind contributions from ODL, tribes, the host hotel, fiscal manager, artists, volunteers exceeded \$150,000.

2007 Conference | Lessons

Diverse program offerings support broad and cross-boundary learning

The conference organizers' efforts at generating a wide array of learning opportunities should be replicated. Attendees were able to adapt their conference participation to their individual interests, as well as step outside those bounds to gain new information. Given that most TALMs have multiple missions, the conference's format and content were able to meet participants' diverse training needs and strengthen their programs at home.

Well organized volunteer committees have multiple payoffs

Volunteer committees helped ensure effective outreach to tribal communities and governments and to the broader, non-Native professional field. They helped leverage goodwill and monetary support for the conference, and more generally, they helped garner tribal community and preservation sector support for TALMs.

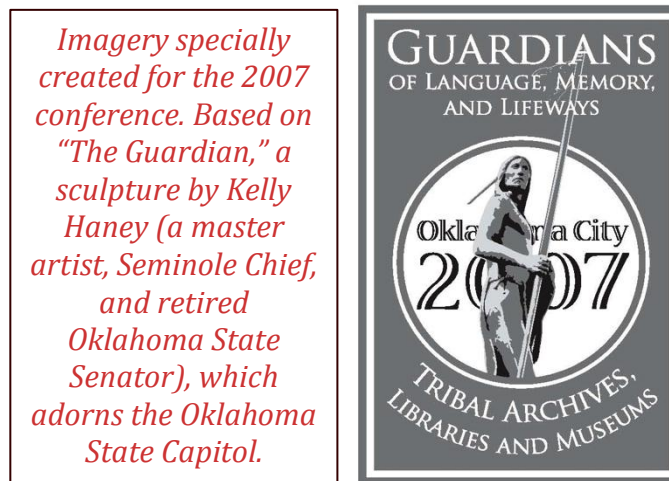
There are opportunities to increase volunteer participation

Despite these successes, there is room for improvement. By design, the local committee was more active than the national committee, so most volunteer

participation came from Oklahoma. A lesson learned may be to increase the responsibilities of the national committee—which could be made more affordable through virtual collaboration—as a means of producing still broader support for future conferences and for TALMs generally.

Especially while the field is growing, too much space is better than too little

The primary complaint about the 2007 conference was the lack of space for eating, viewing presentations, visiting with poster presenters and exhibitors, and networking. Since attendance at future conferences may be hard to predict given active field growth, erring on the high side in terms of conference space may be wise. Large rooms can be made to feel smaller, but the opposite is not true.



2008 Immersion Institutes & Training Workshops

2008 Immersion Institutes & Training Workshops | Events

The *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project planned for four “immersion institutes,” or multi-day, intensive training events as a bridge between the two national conferences. As implemented by ODL, the trainings were actually two-part events. Each included a one-day standalone workshop related to the institute’s topic, but which was not a required component of the three-day immersion training. The workshops covered topics appropriate to one day of teaching or training. The institutes, for which completion certificates were awarded, covered material in depth, with an eye to developing participant expertise.

The table below lists the workshops and institutes offered. All four institutes were held in Catoosa (Tulsa), Oklahoma, at the Cherokee Casino and Resort. The workshops were offered at appropriate locations in and around Tulsa. For example, the October 24 libraries workshop was held at the Tulsa City-Country Library.

2008 Institute and Workshop Schedule

Date	Type	Title	Attendance
April 14, 2008	Workshop	How to Recognize and Prevent Threats to Your Collection	47
April 15-17, 2008	Institute	Skills and Strategies for Managing Tribal Records	58
July 14, 2008	Workshop	Behind the Scenes Tours of the Philbrook and Gilcrease Museums	64
July 15-17, 2008	Institute	Caring for and Displaying American Indian Objects	90
August 11, 2008	Workshop	Digitization Projects: From Concept to Completion	60
August 12-14, 2008	Institute	Collection, Use, and Care of Historic Photographs	64
October 21-23, 2008	Institute	Training for American Indian Library Services	125
October 24, 2008	Workshop	Building and Managing Culturally Responsive Library Collections & Programs	82

2008 Immersion Institutes & Training Workshops | Achievements

Success at establishing a regular flow of continuing education for the TALM field

The first national conference for TALMs was held in 2003, followed by the 2005 and 2007 national conferences. These two-year recesses between gatherings left practitioners without regular access to culturally relevant networking and educational opportunities. The 2008 institutes and workshops resulted in greater continuity of operations between the two national conferences.

*“Keep up the conference sessions on an annual basis.”
(2007 conference attendee)*

*This event could be improved if we could...“meet more often.”
(2008 institute attendee)*

*“Sharing of knowledge among tribal professionals was important; this needs to continue so that continuous improvement can be made.”
(2007 conference & 2008 institute attendee)*

Success in meeting demand for in-depth learning opportunities with effective curricula, materials, and trainers

Participants left the 2007 conference with a taste not only for more meetings, but for more in-depth training. Conferences are highly useful for networking, cross-disciplinary learning, and introductions to new topics; they are less useful for deeper learning. To the extent that some conference participants wanted this kind of training, the 2008 institutes and workshops were able to offer it.

*“Participants could have benefited from fewer and maybe longer sessions.”
(2007 conference attendee)*

*“[You could] offer so much more if some of the sessions created a more detailed, more in-depth learning experience, with more time to do hands-on projects and to learn how to do things or how not to do things.”
(2007 conference attendee)*

This success depended on the development of focused curricula and materials and on the recruitment of respected and skilled presenters. ODL met this challenge well. Each workshop and institute was structured with clear educational objectives in mind, which then guided personnel recruitment and materials selection. As a result, presenters were able to provide on-target talks, their presentations fit together well, and participants walked away with relevant reference resources.

The scale of this task should not be underestimated. ODL recruited 72 presenters, all of whom were exemplars in the archives, libraries, and museum fields. The comprehensive course resources assembled by ODL for each event typically included a binder of training presentation materials and a CD of additional references. In some cases, they also included a textbook. For example, attendees at the Caring for and Displaying American Indian Objects institute received a copy of Sheryl Ogden’s book *Caring for American Indian Objects: A Practical and Cultural Guide*.⁵ Remarkably, in nearly every case where a training participant suggested (via the evaluation questionnaire) that some extra information on a topic would be helpful, the training organizers were able to respond, “This is available in the training binder/on the CD/in materials distributed during the session.”

*What did you like most about the institute? “The information’s accuracy and veracity, and that I can put it into practice immediately upon returning [home].”
(2008 institute enrollee)*

*What did you like most about the institute? “The amazing quality of the presenters, and their willingness to share even outside the institute.”
(2008 institute enrollee)*

*What did you like most about the institute? “Getting examples and how-tos, not to mention the book and notebook for reference.”
(2008 institute enrollee)*

⁵ Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2004.

Success at increasing TALM practitioner and professional expertise

The point of offering more in-depth training was to develop expertise and increase professionalism in this burgeoning field. The success highlighted immediately above is that the workshops and institutes offered appropriate in-depth training; the accomplishment noted here is that participants actually did grow in knowledge and expertise. They left each event with a strong sense of having learned something practical and new. Responses to the culminating survey of conference and workshop participants in 2011 also showed that *years later*, participants continued to apply the knowledge gained at these 2008 events.

*What changed as a result of your participation? "I believe we are operating at a much more professional level than previously and also continuing to improve."
(2008 institute attendee, responding to 2011 survey)*

*"The workshop series in Tulsa was outstanding and provided useful solutions to some very real problems. So often we have workshops that focus on the ideals rather than reality. In that sense, we were able to take home information that allows us to deal with our problems as they exist while continuing to strive for the next level."
(2008 institute attendee, responding to 2011 survey)*

2008 Immersion Institutes & Training Workshops | Lessons

There is a consistent demand for training that is more hands-on and embraces "learning by doing"

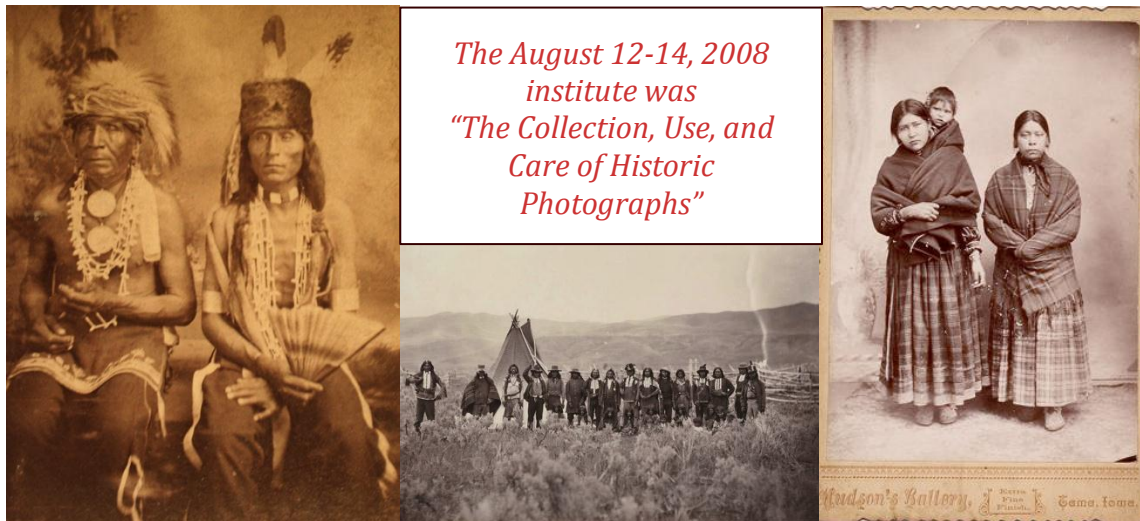
Feedback from every institute included several comments about the desire for more hands-on time. Most of the institutes (and some of the workshops) actually did offer hands-on time—the issue is that participants want more of it. Yet accommodating more learning by doing may reduce the time available for providing key information. This will be a delicate balance for training organizers to strike.

There is demand for "201-level" training

Feedback from the workshops and institutes suggests that some participants would have benefited from even more technical or higher-level training—"201"-level courses. Having developed a knowledge base during the 2008 institutes, some 2008 trainees might also be prepared for 201-level training. This presents several challenges to the organizers: they must determine what the real demand for more technical courses is, and if market-worthy, whether to offer an advanced institute or to reserve this key training time for bringing truly lay cadres up to speed.

Training organizers may wish to reconsider the venue

While Tulsa was a convenient location for this work because of the proximity of many tribal archive, library, and museum experts to serve as workshop and institute trainers, and while “buying Indian” has both ideological and economic importance, a significant portion of institute participants reported that the casino was too smoky.



Credits: All photos from “Native American Indian – Old Photos,” a Facebook collection of pre-1950 public domain photographs (see <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Native-American-Indian-Old-Photos/10150102703945578?sk=info>).

2009 National Conference

The 2009 National Conference of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums, entitled *Streams of Language, Memory, and Lifeways*, was held in Portland, Oregon from October 19-22. The Oregon State Library and Tamástslikt Cultural Institute were the co-hosts.

2009 Conference | Events

Modeling the successful 2007 pre-conference experience, six concurrent pre-conference workshops were held on October 19. One hundred thirty-six conference attendees participated in the pre-conferences, of which 82 provided evaluation feedback. Based on this information, the most successful session was “The Basics of Archives.” This session had 41 participants, with 95 percent of those responding to the evaluation “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that they found the pre-conference useful. “Oral History for Beginners” was nearly as popular, with 40 attendees and 88 percent of evaluation respondents finding the session useful. Attendance at the other four pre-conferences (“Intermediate to Advanced Oral History,” “Making Sense of Mounts,” “Preserving Tribal Museum Collections,” and “When Disaster Strikes: Emergency Preparedness & Response”) ranged from 8 to 24; their proportion of “useful” ratings ranged from 68-75 percent.

Regular conference events were scheduled from the morning of October 20 through early afternoon October 22. As in 2007, the conference featured 56 concurrent sessions. On Tuesday and Wednesday these were offered in three timeslots of seven sessions each; on Thursday, a half day, sessions were offered in two timeslots of seven sessions each. Additionally, the conference offered four general sessions with keynote speakers; an opening night reception with a performance by award-winning Native musician Arvel Bird; opening ceremonies on both October 20 and 21; a closing ceremony on October 22, which included retiring the colors; an awards ceremony to honor leading institutions and individual contributors; an exhibit hall that attracted 24 vendors; and poster sessions featuring 34 posters (27 of which were IMLS Tribal Enhancement Grant awardees).

The conference also offered an optional menu of six extracurricular tours and visits, most of which required a modest additional fee. On Tuesday, October 20, the Oregon Historical Society and Portland Art Museum sponsored a gala evening reception. On Wednesday, October 21, conference participants could opt to spend their evening at a movie screening, taking scenic tour of Multnomah Falls, visiting Spirit Mountain Casino, or visiting Quintana Galleries and Powell’s Bookstore, landmark colleague institutions in downtown Portland. Post-conference on Thursday, attendees were offered the option of a Skidmore Old Town walking tour or a visit to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

2009 Conference | Achievements

Ongoing success in meeting the demand for professional development

The 2009 conference attracted 505 attendees, 45 fewer than the 2007 event.⁶ Even so, this number was significantly more than the approximately 250 participants engaged in the first field meetings (in 2002 and 2005). The conference attracted this large number of registrants by offering diverse information-sharing and training opportunities and by deliberately structuring its programs to support networking and multiple learning modes (group, one-on-one, and experiential).

More specifically, professional development occurred across each of the disciplines (archives, libraries, and museums). Often, both basic and advanced versions of the material were available, so that attendees could better match offerings to their experience and skill level. Sessions stressed linkages and partnerships within and outside Native America to strengthen programming and further build the field. Networking occurred at all the sessions and in pre-arranged forums, such as meals, breaks, and receptions. The preconference meetings, keynote addresses, and concurrent sessions supported group learning. One-on-one learning was available in exchanges with exhibitors and poster authors and was promoted by the spatial layout of the conference area and by the conference agenda: The “schedule was arranged so that refreshment breaks were held in the exhibit area and were of

⁶ This relatively small variance between the 2007 and 2009 numbers is likely attributable to the fact that 39 tribal nations share a geography with the state of Oklahoma—as compared to 10 Native nations that share a geography with Oregon.

extended length to allow for interaction between exhibitors and participants,” and “the poster sessions were held adjacent to the exhibits so they benefited from the refreshment breaks and the extended break periods.”⁷ Optional field trips and certain concurrent sessions (those focused on case studies and skill building) provided the opportunity to observe and engage more directly in practical applications.

*On case studies: “We can only learn through other facilities’ success.”
(2009 attendee)*

*“These are people who have been right where we are in starting up libraries or museums or other projects, and [they] give us valuable insight.”
(2009 attendee)*

*“Not only did [the presenter] provide practical info she was an inspiration. I learned what to do, what to ask, what to look for...”
(2009 attendee)*

116 of the 203 registrants who submitted a conference evaluation offered a specific statement on how they would use what they had learned.

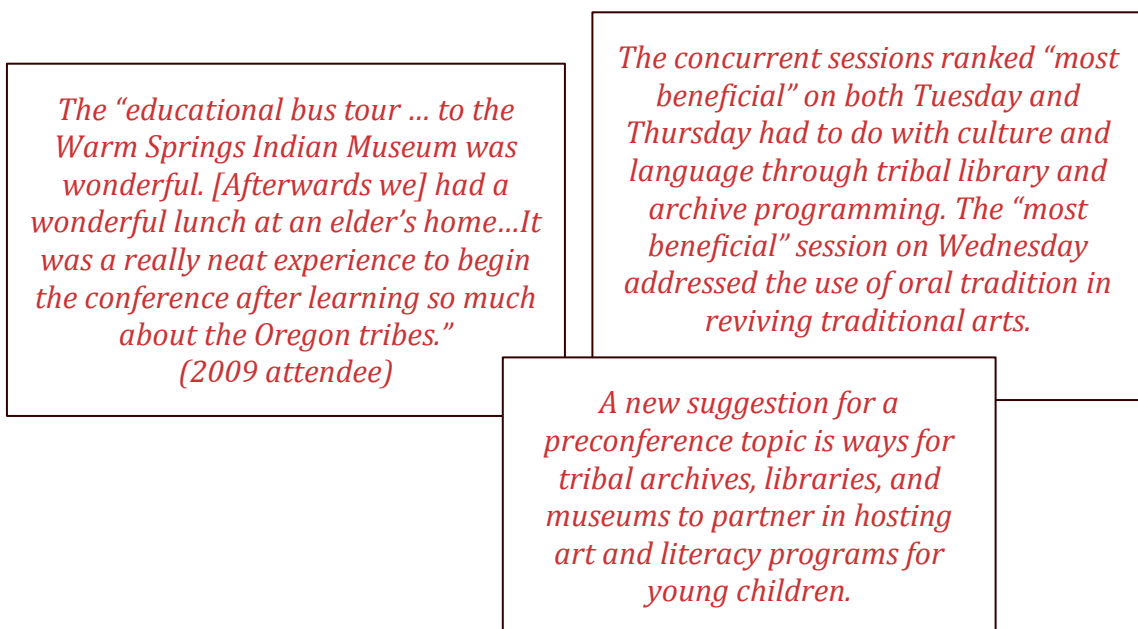
Emerging success at placing TALM work within the broader Native American arts and culture sector

Feedback from the 2007 conference suggested that more connection to the broader Native arts and culture sector would be useful at future TALM national meetings. For example, evaluation comments concerning the storytelling evening and other direct cultural practice activities emphasized that attendees saw this not only as entertainment but an example of their institutions’ programmatic opportunities. Some attendees also requested that Native arts and crafts vendors be included among the exhibitors at the next national conference.

More than that, important changes in the Native arts and culture sector overall argue that the work of tribal archivists, librarians, and museum professionals should be more deeply embedded in that domain. There has been a groundswell of recognition (inside and outside Indian Country) that tribal museums and libraries—and all other Native arts and culture activities—are not simply about the preservation of static (or historic) tribal cultures. They are about engagement with and participation in living cultures. One manifestation of this different consciousness is the creation of the Native Arts and Culture Foundation, which was incorporated in 2007, engaged in an internal organization and external outreach phase from 2008-2009, and initiated grant making in 2010.

⁷ MaryKay Dahlgreen, *Tribal Conference Interim Report* (to IMLS), Oregon State Library, Portland, OR, January 2010, p. 2.

This broader understanding also was woven into the 2009 conference (although it was not a core focus of the event). Conference organizers offered tribal-member craft vendors centrally located exhibit tables at no charge. Ten vendors participated, and feedback on their presence was positive. Concurrent session case studies of cultural activities such as the canoe journey emphasized the mutually reinforcing nature of Native crafts, music, spirituality, and language, as well as the tribal nation-building relevance of all of these practices today. Optional field trips provided broader cultural connections. Arvel Bird's performance following the opening reception emphasized living *and evolving* cultural practice. These elements are evidence of the conference's emerging success at placing the tribal archives, libraries, and museums field within a broader sector and movement.



Success at promoting Native control

When tribal communities operate their own tribal archives, libraries, and museums, they exercise greater control over the way their culture is presented, interpreted, and taught. This idea is intellectually appealing, but it is not always practiced on the ground. When there is much to do, resources are scarce, and training is hard to come by, personnel doing the day-to-day hard work of museum collection management, archival cataloging, and library program development sometimes find it easiest to implement the standards and practices of the mainstream.

Certainly, individuals who seek out participation in a national conference for tribal archives, library, and museum practitioners are more likely to embrace the Native-centric ideal. Nonetheless, it is affirming that attendees expressed their appreciation of and desire for Native community control of cultural presentation. For some attendees, this sentiment extended to a desire for non-Native conference presenters to share key information only, so that Native participants could be afforded more

time to dive into the issues from a cultural perspective. Their idea was not to discount the role of key non-tribal partners (after all, a goal of the *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project was to strengthen such partnerships)—it was to promote mutual recognition of expertise.

In fact, there was growing momentum at the 2009 national conference for development of a national professional organization of TALM practitioners. In 2002, 2005, and 2007 state library and museum organizations (often affiliated with state governments) implemented TALM professional development programming. The 2009 conference was co-hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla's Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, which was a step forward in tribal control. But several conference attendees noted that the next challenge was to form a stand-alone professional organization and ready it for hosting the 2011 national event. Their comments were on track: the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 2010 and hosted the 2011 national conference in Honolulu, Hawaii from September 23-26, 2011.

Seventy-three percent attendees responding to the evaluation questionnaire indicated that future conferences should keep up the strong representation of Native professionals in the speaker pool.

*Future pre-conferences should address how the profession can grow our own and [address] the "need for a national organization along the lines of the AISES, INMED, etc."
(2009 attendee)*

*"I always let elders take time or change their minds about sharing information [and] do not pressure them to have information recorded. I will no longer feel I have to apologize for this. I am empowered to act respectfully according to my cultural values."
(2009 attendee)*

2009 Conference | Lessons

There is room for deepened cooperation and cross-pollination across the tribal archives, libraries and museums disciplines

Some conference attendees noted that there seemed to be a bias toward libraries work at the conference, an impression that was either created or strengthened by the fact that 44 percent of attendees (among those reporting a sub-field affiliation) were librarians. The fact that state library organizations were key hosts of both the 2007 and 2009 conferences also may have contributed to this sense of bias. In their final debrief, the organizing committee for the 2009 conference advised that balance could be restored in the future by making sure that the planning committee had broad representation from all sectors—tribal libraries *and* archives *and* museums.

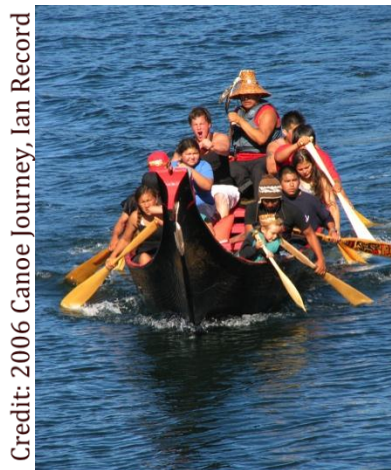
Shifting conference organization responsibilities to a national professional organization for TALMs themselves might also help.

Field funders and conference organizers should aim to create a regular annual cycle of intensive professional trainings and national conferences

The *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project began a possible cycle of alternating conference and workshop training years. This would be a promising format for providing intensive topical training to highly interested segments of the professional pool while also providing integrative interaction at large national events. (In fact, this is the cycle adopted thus far by the nascent ATALM.) Many 2009 conference attendees were hoping that the conference would provide even more hands-on opportunities, even more intensive training, and even more opportunities to interact with a small group of key colleagues. These activities are more appropriate for focused daylong workshops and immersion institutes—yet many conference attendees seemed unaware of such training options. By adopting and promoting the proposed annual cycle, the national professional organization might reduce undue expectations on the national conferences and solidify its role as a key provider of continuing education for tribal archive, library, and museum specialists.

International representation is beneficial

Especially given the perspective presented by keynote speaker Billy Frank, that the work of tribal archives, libraries, and museums is a component of the promotion of Indigenous human rights, international collaboration has great value. The Indigenous human rights struggle has been a worldwide struggle, and successes for Indigenous cultural institutions in this domain should be shared. Attendees not only reported being inspired by Maori (New Zealand) and First Nations (Canada) organizations' presentations, but of learning approaches that were completely “out of the box” as compared to ways of thinking formed in reaction to the US context. And, the enthusiasm flowed both directions: international Indigenous participants reported that the conference offered them high value as well.



Credit: 2006 Canoe Journey, Ian Record

At the 2009 conference, a case study of the Canoe Journey helped place TALM work within the larger Native arts and culture sector.

2010-2011 No-Cost Extension

At the conclusion of the 2009 national conference, \$29,925 remained, for which a no-cost extension was requested and granted. These remaining funds were generated through costs savings and project-oriented revenue generation at the conferences, immersion institutes, and workshops held in the years 2007-2008.

2010-2011 No-Cost Extension | Events

In consultation with IMLS, the Western Council of Libraries, and OSL, ODL used these excess funds to offer two webinar-based professional development courses in 2010. The first—offered through four 1.5-hour webinar segments on March 9, 16, 23, and 30, 2010—was “Essential Records for Tribal Governments.” This course helped extend the collection capacity of tribal libraries and archives to key contemporary government documents. The second—offered through four 1.5-hour webinar-based segments on April 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2010—was “Emergency Preparedness for Essential Records.” This course provided plain-speaking detail on how TALMs might prepare for and respond to natural and other disasters. The first course drew 79 registered participants, and the second drew 84.

Content for both courses was provided by the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) in collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, an agency of the US Department of Homeland Security). ODL collaborated with CoSA and FEMA to expand the courses’ scope to tribal entities and recruited experienced Native practitioners to teach each webinar series.



Final grant monies were expended in 2011 to fund a planning meeting in Washington, DC for an ATALM Cultural Sovereignty Summit/White House Conference. The purpose of such a conference would be to engage participants in a few key issues concerning cultural preservation and the advancement of America’s Indigenous peoples. These issues include strengthening TALMs; addressing how indigenous history is taught in the classroom; improving cultural literacy at all levels; and protecting the cultural property rights of tribal entities. Delegates to the planning meeting reviewed old and new reports on the status of TALM and preservation issues in Native communities, worked through a tentative agenda for the conference/summit, and met with potential key partners, including

representatives from the Library of Congress, National Parks Service, White House Domestic Policy Council, and Heritage Preservation.

2010-2011 No-Cost Extension | Achievements

Success in developing a new training mode

Not all teaching and learning is workable in a distance-learning format, but much is, and ODL successfully offered two professional development programs that fit this training mode. While program-specific evaluations were not conducted for the webinars, the significant registration numbers and ad hoc feedback indicate that participants assessed the both topics and training approach as needed and desirable.

Success in laying the groundwork for a national Native American cultural sovereignty summit

Planning meeting participants voiced unequivocal support for the idea of a cultural sovereignty summit, suggesting that the time is ripe for national-level political engagement on these issues. For example, the White House hosted a first-ever tribal leaders summit in November 2009 and a second in December 2010. At the 2010 convening, President Obama announced the United States' intention to finally endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Multiple articles of the declaration address cultural sovereignty, but especially Article 3, which defines self-determination as the right of Indigenous peoples to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."⁸ In addition to increased attention from Native and non-Native elected political leadership, popular sentiment may be growing in support of Indigenous cultural sovereignty: the Washington, DC-based National Museum of the American Indian has emerged as the sixth most popular of the 19 Smithsonian museums.⁹

Reflecting on these events and attitude changes, as well as on partnership opportunities and a critical mass of new information about Native Americans' cultural sovereignty efforts, all planning meeting attendees voiced their commitment to moving an event forward. Their desire is to see TALMs recognized and empowered at the nexus where Native language transmission, artifact preservation, artistic creation, visual and print media stewardship and promotion, and other cultural development activities converge.



The Two-Row Wampum Treaty: an early statement about Indigenous sovereignty (cultural and otherwise)

⁸ The full declaration is available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html>, retrieved September 30, 2011.

⁹ <http://newsdesk.si.edu/about/stats>, retrieved September 30, 2011.

Overall Impacts and Achievements

While a final assessment still depends on how the TALM field evolves, the years 2007-2011 and the *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project appear to mark an important turning point. From a loose confederation of organizations (represented by some 250 individuals) that met around their shared interests and goals, the field shifted toward being a more tightly bonded group of organizations and practitioners (some 1000 strong) who were able to come together—when offered seed support from IMLS—to form the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums. The project also established a pattern of annual national conferences and in-depth, subject-specific training events.

In other words, the *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project helped institutionalize professional development for field practitioners and, in so doing, met two of its goals (to provide quality educational opportunities to TALM staff through the presentation of national conferences, immersion institutes, and professional training, and to improve the delivery of library, museum, information, and cultural services to American Indians).

A second overall achievement relates to the project's final goal—to increase communication and cooperation between tribal and non-tribal archive, library, and museum staff. As the discussions of the 2007 and 2009 national conference achievements make clear, the project actually went above and beyond this goal of improved communication with non-tribal partner organizations in the field: it inspired the respect of these practitioners, which in turn will motivate further communication and collaboration. The project also improved communication with and inspired the respect of a growing number of tribal governments, which are beginning to recognize the role TALMs play in protecting tribal sovereignty. Ultimately, this respect and recognition should translate into tribal governments' provision of much-needed in-kind and/or direct financial support for tribal cultural institutions, activities, and programs. Finally, the project increased communication between tribal archives, libraries, and museums and the broader Native arts and culture sector, encouraging collaboration on the shared goals of cultural preservation and vibrant cultural sustainability.

This report records both a triumph and a challenge. The *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project has closed. Its successes were substantial. Yet they will prove fragile without follow through. The incorporation of ATALM and the training activities it was able to fund in 2010 and 2011 (with grant savings created with off-setting project revenue) are part of that follow through. But ATALM should not have to stand alone. Tribes, member and partner organizations, and funders (large and small, public and private) can help further its effectiveness and help strengthen this critical field. As stewards of tribal history, artifacts, language, art, and cultural practice, tribal archivists', librarians', and curators' work safeguards tribal patrimony and Native nations' cultural and political distinctiveness. Their

work is the work of Native America and its allies. It will keep tribal nations strong throughout the 21st century—and beyond. It is part of what Oren Lyons (Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan, Onondaga Nation) was talking about when he said,

We're survivors. We've gone through a lot, and *we're still here*. Every day is a test, so we have to look forward again now to protecting the interests of our people, of our nations. We have our ceremonies, we have our ways, we have our cultures. Seven generations ago, the people were looking out for us. That's why we're here. We think seven generations ahead, well, we have to look out for them as well. We have a great heritage. There's none like it in the world as far as I can see. We've had great leaders and great people. And we can still maintain that. But it is up to us now. Survival is in our hands.¹⁰

¹⁰ Oren Lyons, *Honoring Nations Awards Ceremony Address*, Sacramento, California, October 3, 2006.

Appendix A: Project Closing Survey

In June 2011, ODL contacted 2007-2009 *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project conference, institute, and workshop registrants (for whom an email address was known) to conduct a final follow-up survey. This project-closing questionnaire aimed to determine some of the longer-lasting effects of the project and to gather information helpful for sustainability. For example, it queried the usefulness of the meetings offered as compared to other events, a variety of pricing strategies, personal and local change as a result of attendance, and ways to improve future events.

Q1. Which of these IMLS/ATALM events did you attend?

(total respondents=124, total responses=198, multiple responses possible)

Response	Percent	Count
2007 Oklahoma City Conference	35.5%	44
2008 Archives and Records Institute, Tulsa	12.1%	15
2008 Care of Historic Photographs Institute, Tulsa	5.6%	7
2008 Care of American Indian Objects Institute, Tulsa	14.5%	18
2008 Tribal Libraries Institute, Tulsa	14.5%	18
2009 Portland, Oregon Conference	77.4%	96

Q2. What type of organization do you represent?

(total respondents=124, total responses=159, multiple responses possible)

Response	Percent	Count
Archive or Records Center	16.1%	20
Library	46.8%	58
Museum	16.9%	21
Cultural Center	12.1%	15
Educational Institution	9.7%	12
I'm a student	7.3%	9
Other	19.4%	24

Q3. As a result of your participation at the IMLS-funded programs, would you say your skill level:

(total respondents=122)

Response	Percent	Count
Greatly improved	49.2%	60
Improved somewhat	47.5%	58
No change	3.3%	4

Q4. Overall, the IMLS/ATALM events:
(total respondents=123)

	Yes	Somewhat	Not Really
Helped you establish professional and personal contacts	83.7% (103)	10.6% (13)	5.7% (7)
Provided you with information that will help you do your job better	84.6% (104)	14.6% (18)	0.8% (1)
Provided you with a renewed enthusiasm for your job	86.9% (106)	10.7% (13)	2.5% (3)

Q5. Approximately how many workshops/conferences/institutes do you attend annually?
(total respondents=123)

Response	Percent	Count
1-2 per year	65.0%	80
3-4 per year	23.6%	29
5-6 per year	1.6%	2
More than 6 per year	3.3%	4
Don't usually attend events/conferences/workshops of this type	6.5%	8

Q6. How would you rate the IMLS/ATALM events to other conferences and workshops you attend?
(total respondents=123)

Response	Percent	Count
Far better at meeting my needs and expectations	65.0%	80
Somewhat better at meeting my needs and expectations	30.1%	37
Not as good as other events in meeting my needs and expectations	0.8%	1
No opinion	4.1%	5

Q7. How likely are you to attend future ATALM-sponsored events (more information is available at www.atalm.org)?
(total respondents=121)

Response	Percent	Count
Definitely will attend	66.1%	80
Perhaps will attend	32.2%	39
Will not attend	1.7%	2

Q8. What changed as a result of your participation? Did you gain new skills? Change the way you are doing a particular activity? Make new contacts? Provide improved services to your patrons? Have a renewed enthusiasm for your job?

Selected responses:

- “The information helped me create new projects and better understand some of the issues we already have. I have enjoyed learning about new projects and materials and learning how to incorporate them into our library.”
- “I have made many contacts as well as learned of programs and funding. [I have] been able to adopt protocols. It is a support system for me to continue to learn and grow in the profession—which is what ultimately benefits my work and tribe.”
- “Participating in the 2009 ATALM Conference increased my knowledge about tribal libraries in general and enhanced my skills as a state library consultant and liaison to the libraries of the tribes in our state. I feel more confident and better prepared to serve tribal libraries effectively and in a culturally competent manner.”
- “I met others involved in reaching across institutional and educational boundaries. We've shared ideas, made lasting friendships, and become part of a growing, global family of Indigenous people striving to spread truths in environments that have historically stifled Indian viewpoints. My publishers have opened their eyes to new books reflecting modern Indian lifestyles, even in the world of children's illustrated literature. My most recent book would never have been published without the national impact of IMLS and ATALM.”
- “My attendance and participation at ATALM events allowed me to network and build a professional resources listing on language and tribal libraries and archives. I can call on these professionals to assist me in the enhancement of our tribal language, library, and archive programs.”
- “This is the only conference that brings Native American cultural institution staff together. ATALM provides a unique opportunity for this community to come together, share ideas, and create networks to collaborate.”
- “What changed most of all is my perspective on what kind of museum we could have on our reservation, provided we have the right kind of long-term planning. This new perspective provided renewed enthusiasm for my work here in Wisconsin.”

- “Besides the technical skills I gained from the various workshops on conservation, preservation, care, and techniques for preserving and presenting tribal art, language, historical and cultural materials, I discovered the untapped, unpublished, or otherwise unavailable world of materials and documents related to the culture and history of the Cherokee tribe. And, [I discovered] the important and urgent significance of proper preservation and presentation of these materials so future generations may study the true essence and stories embedded in the materials versus the non-Native interpretations and presentations offered of them.”
- “The workshops provided additional learning skills such as language and culture preservation techniques, oral history practices, and hands-on training in preservation. The contacts I made have proven beneficial whenever I am stumped with a question or problem. I have been able to make book donations to several of the librarians that were present. [Attendance] opened a world to me that library school did or could not.”
- “Being a non-Native, I felt like a whole new world of understanding was opened up before me. I went to the conference looking for ways for public and tribal libraries to collaborate, and found that and much more. The presentations helped me to understand existing cultural barriers and to see ways that tribal libraries and museums could partner with organizations to enhance services to everyone involved. Beyond that, I felt welcomed by the people that I met and moved by the stories that I heard. I will never forget this experience.”

Q9. Please rate your overall impression of the events you attended.

(total respondents=119)

	Excellent	Very Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
How do you rate the event(s) overall?	60.5% (72)	37.0% (44)	2.5% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
How do you rate the event(s) for meeting your needs and expectations?	54.6% (65)	38.7% (46)	6.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
How do you rate the quality of information presented?	56.3% (67)	40.3% (48)	3.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
How do you rate the presenters overall?	55.5% (66)	42.9% (51)	1.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
How do you rate the event(s) materials overall?	54.7% (64)	41.9% (49)	3.4% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

Q10. Is the registration fee of \$250:
(total respondents=118)

Response	Percent	Count
Extremely reasonable	12.7%	15
Reasonable	83.1%	98
Not reasonable	4.2%	5

Q11. Would you prefer that some meal functions not be included if registration fees could be lowered?
(total respondents=118)

Response	Percent	Count
Yes	37.3%	44
No	40.7%	48
No opinion	22.0%	26

Q12. Are you concerned that the cost of travel, accommodations, registration, etc. will limit your ability to attend future events?
(total respondents=119)

Response	Percent	Count
Very concerned	47.9%	57
Somewhat concerned	47.9%	57
Not concerned	4.2%	5

Q13. If you received scholarship support, please tell us how it helped you. Would you have been able to attend without the support? Did the availability of scholarship funds help leverage additional support from your organization?

Selected responses:

- “I did receive a scholarship, and I would not have been able to attend without it. Travel funds are very limited. Perhaps it has increased the awareness [for the tribe] of the need to travel to continue to develop skills to better meet the needs of our collection and population.”
- “Scholarship funds leveraged additional support from my organization and other organizations.”
- “I would not have been able to attend without the support. The scholarship enforces our self esteem and fills a need.”

- “Receiving a scholarship enabled me to be able to go and participate, and since our city budget has been cut, including travel and training, availability of a scholarship just might help change the minds of the city.”
- “I have not required scholarship support in the past, but appreciate that some of our staff members have received scholarships. We try to hire tribal members, and many are not experienced with museum management. A few have received registration fee waivers, which have made a huge difference in our ability to send multiple staff members. I believe that having a lot of staff present at one institute helps build good staff morale.”
- “The scholarships provided are extremely helpful for students, for tribal participants who cannot afford to participate because of budget cuts, or tribal members who are not supported by their council. I wish more funding could be used for this purpose.”
- “I was able to attend the pre-conference workshops by having help with hotel costs. Although I had some funding from my organization, it looked good that I was also looking elsewhere for financial support. They saw cost-savings and know that I am capable of finding outside resources to supplement professional development.”
- “I'm not sure if I would be able to attend if I didn't receive a scholarship. However, having received a scholarship sure helped when it came to convincing the higher ups that this conference was necessary and valuable in enriching our own efforts here towards an eventual museum and cultural center. Without the information, networking and contacts made at these conferences, we could still be sitting in the dark wondering what our next steps may be towards planning for our own museum and cultural center.”

Q14. What did you like most about the event(s) you attended? What could have been done to improve the experience for you?

Selected responses:

- “Networking, highest quality workshops in every field of study.”
- “Loved the keynotes at the 2007 conference, especially the one by Rennard Strickland on stereotypes in movie posters and the opening by Jay Hannah on the value of archives.”
- “The evening events were great. One could mingle with the presenters one on one and discuss the sessions of the day.”

- “I did not feel there was willingness to network outside (with non-tribal members) at the conference.”
- “I enjoyed the workshops that I attended. They provided valuable information that would otherwise not be available in one location.”
- “Historical accuracy is replacing conventional views of Native American issues. These come out powerfully at ATALM events. I would like to see more debate style presentations with multiple points of view.”
- “At the 2009 conference in Portland, most of the presentations focused on libraries. I would have liked to have seen more presentations relating to museums. Possibly have more hands-on workshops during the actual conference.”
- “The cultural events were top notch.”
- “I felt very positive about the events that I attended. They were conducted with respect and dignity for Native American ways: incorporating traditional elements (storytelling, prayers, etc.) with the most current topics and techniques in the workshops.”
- “The keynote speakers opened my thoughts to a bigger picture and changed my thoughts on the importance of knowing my community and understanding all that has gone on before us to provide what we as a tribe have today.”
- “One drawback was having to choose between so many good sessions at the same time!”
- “While the focus of the many of the presentations was on different aspects of developing/maintaining tribal archives, libraries, and museums, some of the keynote speakers were especially informative in talking about actual practices/problems, and developing policy for their particular institution. Having authors and experts in their field to make presentations was great.”
- “I think it is valuable to talk about how the conference represented a real family experience: there were people of all ages, young and old, who came together to hear from the speakers and share their knowledge. This is pretty rare. So often I attend conferences where the speakers are held up on a pedestal as the real experts, but it strikes me that at TALM, we were surrounded by such a broad knowledge base, that the person sitting next to you at dinner might have more memorable experiences to share than the presenters. I hope TALM continues to have this community-feel. It was refreshing, especially coming from an academic library background.”

- “I was excited that it was for and about tribal communities. I felt much better about the things I did not know as the presenters explained that we are all on a path of learning. I gained more knowledge than I did by self study.”
- “I loved being able to attend sessions for libraries, archives, and museums (and language) all in one place.”
- “The only thing I thought should have been different was the menu. Not a lot was offered for people who have diabetes or wanted lighter foods to eat for dietary purposes.”

Q15. Will you please help ATALM plan future training opportunities by suggesting topics, keynote presenters, themes, and locations?

Selected responses:

- “Accessioning and de-accessioning examples and policies, NAGPRA, intellectual/cultural property rights protection.”
- “I think it would be great to have a training session on the more technical aspects of archival work. I think that most archives are ready to go online but staff need additional training.”
- “Practical models of collaboration between state library agencies and tribes.”
- “My suggestion is to increase efforts to involve tribal governments.”
- “Though I know these efforts continue, and more tribes are represented every year, we need to keep our marketing to younger audiences.”
- “More topics that effect us in Indian country: small communities, starting a cultural center, development and philanthropy (finding financial resources, how to write a good grant), NAGPRA information as needed for tribal entities, green building ideas for cultural centers in Native communities with resources, ecotourism, ...”
- “Seed preservation in tribes is a big subject these days. It would be good to have a panel of seed savers talk about storage and distribution of seeds.”
- “Recruiting volunteers and running a successful volunteer program.”
- “Something about the future of museums.”

- “Customer service, outreach with in the community.”
- “I think archival workshops and topics are very important right now as many tribes are in the early stages of developing research centers as well as tribal government archives. Things seem very free form right now (generally that's not good) with how people are going about doing that, and there is a lot of mixing between libraries and museums, which means that archival methods can get overlooked. It would be good to have ATALM continue with these workshops on archival methods and issues.”
- More on how to organize and catalog materials. We have too many little hiding places for things.”
- “One area of interest for me would be library assessment.”
- “One thing I often see in tribal (and many other) museums is the tendency to hand over design and message decisions to outsiders. The result is often too much money spent on extremely inflexible exhibit design. Can we do some skill building on opening new museums, decision making and design, training local designers and curators? A tribal museum needs to be community based—ah, I am preaching to the choir!”
- “While I feel that caring for our objects is important to curators, I [also] feel that we must move on to the other roles that museum professionals can play in representing Native culture—education, development, marketing, etc.”

Credit: Hibulb Cultural Center, The Tulalip Tribes, Miriam Iorgensen



Appendix B: Acknowledgements

While IMLS provided the financial support that made the *Preserving Language, Memory, and Lifeways* project possible, its success also depended on the efforts of a broad array of coordinating staff and volunteers. They are recognized, by event, below.

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