

GOING HOME: RETURNING MATERIAL CULTURE TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) is requesting \$250,000 for a one-year project (April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023) to establish the “Going Home: Returning Material Culture to Indigenous Communities Project”, a program that will help facilitate the return items of cultural significance to tribal museums and/or cultural centers. Funds from the Mellon Foundation will be used to create a sustainable program that includes raising public awareness, building connections between tribal communities and non-Native collecting institutions, building the capacity of tribal museums to seek loans and gifts, developing and testing funding protocols and application methodologies to distribute “Going Home” funds, and establishing a funding mechanism to sustain the program.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES AND RATIONALE

1. WHY THE WORK IS IMPORTANT TO THE ORGANIZATION, ITS CONSTITUENCIES, AND THE FIELD IN WHICH IT OPERATES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH ACTIVITIES ARE BEING ADDRESSED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIELD

Non-Native museums, academia, and private collectors are in possession of millions of culturally significant objects that are linked to contemporary Native cultures. These ancestral objects were primarily acquired during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and often through systematic theft and looting of sacred sites. Some materials were acquired through direct trade or purchase, but often during a time Native people were struggling to survive. As a result, material objects that are vital to preserving the cultural identity of indigenous communities are sitting on the shelves of storage facilities when they could be contributing to the cultural continuity for indigenous peoples.

As collecting institutions recognize how extremely important and powerful these cultural items are to the originating Indigenous communities, and indigenous communities invest in adequate facilities and personnel to receive and care for the materials, there is a need to facilitate the return of items either through long term loans or direct gifts.

The high cost of returning objects to the originating communities, either through a long-term loan or direct gift, is a major impediment. For example, Native communities requesting loans from mainstream institutions must adhere to stringent facility and security requirements, pay for conservation assessments, fund the cost of any conservation needed, cover packing and shipping, insure the item, and other associated costs. It is estimated by collections staff at the National Museum of the American Indian that each item borrowed can cost as much as \$10,000.

In addition to items held by mainstream collecting institutions, many culturally significant objects are in private collections. These items sometimes are made available for purchase through private art dealers and auction houses. Purchase of items held in private collections is typically beyond the reach of most Indigenous communities. On occasion, donors such as the Annenberg Foundation have purchased items with the intention of returning them to the originating community, for example the acquisition of 24 sacred Hopi items for \$530,000. For every item returned to the originating community, hundreds more are transferred from one wealthy collector to another. ATALM would like to establish an emergency fund to

facilitate the discreet purchase of significant cultural items needed for present-day ritual activities. While this activity is beyond the scope of the current request, it is a part of the sustainability plan.

Another element of the sustainability plan is to establish a mechanism to facilitate the donation of items from individual collectors or corporations which are sometimes hampered because tribal entities are not considered charitable entities under U.S. Revenue Service rules. ATALM, a 501(c)3 non-profit, has served as a conduit for the return of cultural items. The “Going Home Fund” could help with expenses such as expert appraisals required by the IRS, transportation and storage of items, and administration.

The positive impact the return of cultural items has on an indigenous community is profound. As Leonard John, a Tlingit community member articulated on the day an intricately carved wooden beaver prow was returned to the community after an absence of nearly a century, "The day it came back was something you couldn't even imagine. The whole village was at the dock. People were crying and weeping. This is not just art to us. It's something far deeper, something with a healing and spiritual aspect. When our artifacts left us and were scattered across America, they left a void. We lost our honor and our value system. Now that they're coming back, people look at them and feel their honor and their self-respect coming back as well. There are still a lot of festering wounds, but the process of healing has begun." (Excerpted from New York Times Article, “[Museums and Tribes: A Tricky Truce](#),” 2020)

Repatriation of items such as the beaver prow described above are guided by federal legislation known as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which addresses a narrowly defined set of artifacts related to items removed from burial sites and items of significant cultural patrimony. The proposed “Going Home” project will include items that do not fall under NAGPRA but are still culturally significant. Funds will also help supplement the limited financial support available through the National Parks Service which provides small grants of between \$1,000 and \$15,000 to about 50 tribes each year to support the return of ancestral remains and items of cultural patrimony. The program is limited in its scope and does not scratch the surface of what is needed.

The “Going Home” project is unique in that it will provide more substantial support, will cover loans and gifts, expand eligible items to include those beyond cultural patrimony items, and will build the capacity of Native cultural organizations to meet the standards of care required for loans.

2. EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

Activity	Outcomes and Benefits	Output(s)
Establish a National Advisory Council made up of collections managers, museum association leadership, funders, and other stakeholders. Service will be voluntary.	The Advisory Council will bring diverse professional and cultural experiences to the project. In preparing for this application, ATALM consulted with several potential members. They asked questions that resulted in a more robust project. Specifically, Council members will guide the development of funding parameters, identify and/or develop training resources, build networks between Native and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written operating guidelines • Regular meetings • Board position for Council Chair on ATALM’s Board of Governors

	<p>non-native cultural institutions, participate in re-granting activities.</p>	
<p>With \$200,000 in grant funds, establish an application process to enable Native and non-Native museums to seek financial support to facilitate the loan or return of cultural items. It is anticipated grant amounts will range from \$5,000-\$25,000 and up to 10 applications will be funded during this pilot phase.</p>	<p>The concept of establishing a fund to help Native organizations regain access to cultural materials has never been tested. The pilot phase will enable ATALM and the Advisory Council to establish funding protocols, build audiences, and test the application process.</p> <p>ATALM uses the automated application system Submittable to manage several million dollars in regrants. It allows for efficient communications with grantees and reviewers, allows applicants to collaborate, tracks activities of applicants and reviewers, and streamlines the reporting process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines • FAQs • Application • Reviewer Guidelines • Grant Agreement • Financial Reports • Grantee Reports
<p>Provide technical assistance to grantees.</p>	<p>A requirement for funding is that the item(s) being returned must be displayed. Advisory Council members will be available to provide guidance on display cases, mounts, exhibit labels, promotion, and other technical procedures involved with a successful project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibit • Public program
<p>Provide training and resources to help cultural institutions navigate the loan or gift process.</p>	<p>Loans and gifts of museum objects is a complex endeavor and often requires facility reports, condition reports, exhibit case construction, legal documents, and more. ATALM will draw from its robust library of available training sources and work with the Advisory Council to create new ones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live training • Web page with links to resources and training videos • Preconference workshop at ATALM2022
<p>Provide a platform for private donations in support of the “Going Home Fund” and cultural items.</p>	<p>The Going Home Fund has the potential to attract donations from a broad array of funders. To facilitate unsolicited gifts, ATALM will establish an online giving form. Additionally,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media campaign • Web page • Resources for Donors • Donation Form

	ATALM has served as a conduit for private donors who want to gift items to tribes but need a tax deduction. Tribes are not considered charitable entities by the IRS which is an impediment for some donors. ATALM will promote this service and continue to serve as a conduit.	
Identify the location of USA based collecting institutions holding Native cultural items.	Native cultural institutions need help identifying the location of their items. ATALM will work with the American Association of Museums and the Association of State and Local History to encourage their members to participate in the development of a directory of holdings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directory
Build awareness of the Going Home Fund with mainstream collecting institutions and tribes.	Non-Native institutions have expressed a desire to work with Native institutions but are unsure how to initiate the process and who to contact. The Going Home Fund may be the ideal vehicle to build bridges and increase confidence levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations at mainstream museum conferences. • Exhibit booths at conferences, both Native and non-Native. • Resources and protocols on website

3. KEY PARTICIPANTS

The Advisory Council will be led by **Walter Richard "Rick" West Jr.**, a member of ATALM’s governing board and the recently retired president and CEO of the Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles. Mr. West is nationally recognized by funders, stakeholders, and government leaders for his role as the founding director of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. Mr. West has led two national repatriation Summits for ATALM. His leadership will resonate with cultural institutions and funders.

Project oversight will be provided by **Susan Feller**, ATALM President & CEO, with over 40 years of grant making experience, including directing regrants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Historical Records and Publications Commission, and the California Arts Council. Susan designs programs, recruits and trains peer review panels, provides overall supervision of regrantee programs, ensures compliance, and directs evaluation activities.

Project administration will be provided by **Melissa Brodt**, ATALM Director of Programs, with 12 years of experience in managing the solicitation, review, and processing of applications.

Administrative support is provided by **Jessica Cordes** who oversees financial disbursements and tracking, grantee reporting, and the collection of evaluative data.

ATALM is governed by a five-member board with **Walter Echo-Hawk** (Pawnee), a noted attorney, legal scholar, and author serving as Chairman of the Board. Additional members are **Jim Enote** (Zuni), Founder and Director, Colorado Plateau Foundation, **Kevin Gover** (Pawnee), Under Secretary for Museums and Culture, Smithsonian Institution, **Samonia Byford Meredith** (Cherokee), Publisher, Noksi Press, and **Rick West** (Cheyenne), President & CEO, The Autry Center of the American West. Advisors to the Governing Board include 20 of the nation’s top Indigenous cultural experts. More information may be found at [Leadership | ATALM](#)

The “Going Home” project will be advised by a national team of collections managers, tribal leaders, and others who can help guide the project and advance its objectives.

About ATALM:

Established in 2010, ATALM is the only national non-profit organization providing training and funding for Native archives, libraries, museums, Native language programs, and historic preservation officers. It takes a holistic approach to training and funding opportunities, ensuring that grantees are equipped with the resources and training needed to implement successful programs. ATALM encourages broad participation through its 1,250 members, 30,000 social media followers, and targeted databases of 6,500 people. More information may be found at www.atalm.org

Its current regranting programs include:

- From 2021-2023, ATALM is managing a \$3.6 million regrant program through the National Endowment for the Humanities. It anticipates awarding up to 175 grants ranging from \$5,000-\$50,000.
- Since 2007, ATALM has recruited, awarded, monitored, managed, and evaluated over 200 training grants per year with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
- During 2018, 2019, and 2020, ATALM managed over 125 training subgrants for the National Museum of the American Indian and the Bush Foundation.
- ATALM serves as the national coordinator for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s Native American Oral History Revitalization project which provided over \$1,400,000 in funds to seven universities across the nation. As the national coordinator, ATALM developed the granting program and is providing oversight. It currently is in discussion with DDCF on a \$3,000,000 project to regrant funds to organizations and individuals who want to make use of the materials found in the Doris Duke Collections.
- ATALM is a partner in a regrant program funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Center for Disease Control to provide grants ranging from \$1,500-\$100,000 through the “Communities for Immunity” project.
- With funding from the Ford Foundation, ATALM is working with Native communities to establish Native Arts Agencies.

4. SCHEDULE OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES

MONTH	MAJOR ACTIVITY
April	Advisory Council appointed; project activities commence and continue throughout the grant period
May	Application developed, resources identified, web page built
June	Announcement made, national media campaign, application period opens

July	Applicant guidance commences, pre-application webinar provided, grant applications reviewed by ATALM staff and Council members as they arrive.
August	Grant period open, project activities continue. Grantees must have a letter of commitment from the lending or gifting institution to ensure the project can be completed during the grant period.
September	Advisory Council and Governing Board approve funding recommendations
October	Grant awards announced at ATALM2022
November	Grantees work on projects, ATALM continues to provide guidance, monthly meetings with grantees and advisory council commence.
December	Grantees work on projects, ATALM continues to provide guidance, monthly meetings with grantees and advisory council commence.
January	Grantees work on projects, ATALM continues to provide guidance, monthly meetings with grantees and advisory council commence.
February	Grantees work on projects, ATALM continues to provide guidance, monthly meetings with grantees and advisory council commence.
March	Project ends, grantee reports collected, evaluation commences, white paper produced

5. SUSTAINABILITY

ATALM is grateful to the Mellon Foundation for providing the funding that will enable the “Going Home” project to be developed and tested. It is a compelling project and most likely will generate support from private donors, corporations, foundations, tribal governments, and the federal government.

6. ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ATALM and the Advisory Council will provide in-kind support for administration and project development. ATALM will provide indirect costs. Additional support will likely be generated through the giving platform established on the “Going Home” project website. ATALM will leverage support from an ongoing grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to support in-person training at the 2022 International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

ATALM’s research consultant Dr. Miriam Jorgensen (Research Director for the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona and Research Director of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development) designs the evaluation components for ATALM’s grant-funded projects and writes the final report/white paper.

ATALM will evaluate its performance as a grantor of funds as well as the performance of the grantees.

ATALM’s performance:

At the commencement of the grant period, ATALM staff will define performance measures and determine what kind of information should be collected, in what format, and when.

Both qualitative and quantitative survey questions will be used when asking grantees to evaluate ATALM’s overall performance and the project in general. Examples of questions to be asked include:

1. Was the process for completing applications clear and appropriate?

2. Was the work and/or time required to develop a proposal appropriate given the level of funding?
3. Did you have sufficient time to complete the funded project?
4. How do you rate your experience with the ATALM grant website?
5. Were communications from ATALM timely and helpful?
6. Were the comments from the reviewers useful?
7. Was technical assistance provided by ATALM staff and consultants useful?
8. Were ATALM staff and consultants supportive, thoughtful, constructive, and accessible?
9. Was the reporting process clear and reasonable?
10. Did ATALM grant funding have a substantial impact on your organization?
11. What future funding would be most helpful to you?

Dr. Jorgensen will compile data based on the evaluations submitted by grantees and make recommendations for improvements, if any. She also will compile recommendations for future funding programs.

Data will be collected at the conclusion of the project period using the Submittable reporting module.

Grantee performance:

During the application process, organizations will define at least three measurable performance objectives which must be met. ATALM will monitor the performance objectives during regular meetings with the grantees. ATALM staff and Advisory Council members will help grantees address any obstacles that arise.

The organizational report forms will collect standardized information using the Submittable program that provides guidance on asking evaluative questions that help produce statistically viable reports.

Grantees will report on “Progress Against Objectives” in which results and outcomes are described for each objective, the impact of the project, the degree to which the recipient achieved the mission, barriers encountered, relationships established, numbers of people served, and other questions.

A final report confirming and describing the use of the funds will be due 30 days after the completion of the project. The report will include a narrative describing the use, impact, and outcomes of the grant, data including audience served, kinds of programs implemented, number of people benefitting, lessons learned, best practices established, and number of jobs preserved or created.

A white paper on the program’s impact will be produced and widely disseminated.