

IMLS Enhancement Grants Program
Seldovia Village Tribe: "Seldovia StoryBook" Project

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Mission Statement:

The Seldovia Village Tribe mission statement, as approved by the Seldovia Village Tribe Council in the 2009 Strategic Plan, states: *"We promote the wellness of our people and communities through health care and social services, economic development and education."*

Service Area:

The Seldovia Village Tribe service area includes Seldovia, Seldovia Village, Homer, and Anchor Point on the southern end of the Kenai Peninsula in southcentral Alaska. Seldovia and the Seldovia Village are located 18 miles across the Kachemak Bay from Homer and are only accessible by water or air. Homer is considered a regional hub that provides access to many services and goods our communities need. Unlike Seldovia and Seldovia Village, Homer is connected to the road system. Because of the connection to the road system, Homer is the central point for groceries, fuel, and services needed to live and work in rural Alaska. Homer is 222 miles south of Anchorage, the nearest urban center.

As with many small Alaskan coastal communities, the Seldovia Village area has a population of approximately 401 year-round residents, a mix of Alaska Native, Northern, and Eastern European heritage. The Alaska Native/American Indian population is approximately 34% of the total population¹.

History:

Seldovia Village Tribe is located in the Aleut territory, on the boundary of several modern-day Alaska Native Corporations. The Seldovia area was a popular trading and gathering place for the Koniags, Aleuts, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq, Chugach, and Dena'ina peoples. Other Alaska Native groups and Europeans migrated to Seldovia because of the rich and abundant marine resources. In 1995, SVT was reinstated as a federally recognized Tribe. From a single contract as an Indian Health Service subcontractor in 1976, we promote various business ventures and health and social services programs today.

The Seldovia Visitor Center and Museum was completed in 2004-05, and the Tribal Lending Library in 2015. The summer months bring an influx of visitors to our museum. Some years, we have as many as 7,000 in our remote community. Over the years, we have continued to gather and document historical information for our museum and continue staff development in caring for our collections.



¹ ACS 5-year estimate 2022

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PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

1. PROGRAM GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The "Seldovia StoryBook" project will address the Native American Library Services Enhancement Program:

Goal 3: Enhance the preservation and revitalization of Native American cultures and languages

Objective 3.2: Support the preservation of content of unique and specific value to Native communities

Objective 3.3: Support the sharing of content within and/or beyond Native communities.

2. NEED

Seldovia Village Tribe is proposing the "Seldovia StoryBook" project, a collaborative learning and sharing effort to preserve the rich history and cultural traditions of our Native community of Seldovia. The project will result in a collective book created by multigenerational participants. We intend to illuminate our community's voices and capture each individual's unique perspectives. Their stories will give the book its shape and form.

This project is part of a larger initiative to preserve our stories, history, culture, and subsistence traditions as remembered by our Elders. Our community is rapidly losing those who remember Seldovia as it was in its heyday. In particular, we are losing the Tribal Elders who grew up in more traditional ways and still remember the language, stories, and cultural traditions that shaped life in this area for hundreds of years.

The "Seldovia StoryBook" project follows the "In Our Own Words"¹ oral history project supported by an earlier Native American Library Basic grant. The local Elders recorded videos sharing their stories of Seldovia's history, cultural and subsistence traditions of gathering, processing, or preparing traditional foods and medicinal plants, and activities such as boat building. The recorded stories are available to the public, and we intend to utilize them during our project activities and include them in the "Seldovia StoryBook."

Multiple informal discussions over the last four years with tribal members and community members identified the multigenerational disconnect within the community, disappearing knowledge and stories unique to our Native heritage and culture, and the decreasing level of writing skills and interest in reading within our children and youth. There are minimal literary resources about Seldovia, explicitly only one book, written from a one-person perspective rather than a collective memory, and two books for children (non-Native perspective). Multiple parents have repeatedly expressed the desire for books to read to their children, including the forgotten

¹Online at: <https://jukebox.uaf.edu/seldovia>

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stories they heard from their relatives and Elders. Seldovia Village Tribe highly values the art of storytelling and embraces the oral tradition as it is passed from generation to generation. Still, with many of our beloved Elders passing away and other community members moving away, our Alaska Native history, stories, traditions, and culture are disappearing.

3. TARGET GROUP

The target group is the people of Seldovia. The "Seldovia StoryBook²" will be the ultimate creation of all participants across generations, from kindergarten-age children to our Elders. As mentioned in the "NEED" section, the proposed project is part of the overall initiative to preserve our culture and heritage.

The largest target group in this project will be Seldovia children (K - 5th grade). We strive to encourage all growing readers in our community to deepen connections with our history and traditions through reading and storytelling. Stimulating reading and writing activities is vital for children's future potential and educational achievements. This project will create a unique opportunity to connect Seldovia children with their cultural heritage and evoke their interest in reading. We anticipate this target sub-group to be up to 30 participants.

We aim to involve Seldovia High School youth by providing an engaging mix of contemporary and traditional art forms. We will encourage their participation through modern media experiences, such as graphic novel workshops, thinking visually, and sharing their inner storyteller. We anticipate this target sub-group to be up to 10 participants.

By identifying different instructors, knowledge bearers³, and artistic approaches to capture our stories, we hope to involve everyone: children (30), high school youth (10), adults, parents, caregivers, Elders, knowledge bearers, and anyone who wishes to join and collaborate (up to 35 participants).

We anticipate up to 75 community members will participate in the project's workshops and work with us on the "Seldovia StoryBook" creation.

4. BENEFICIARIES

We recognize the Seldovia children and youth as the ultimate beneficiaries of the "Seldovia StoryBook." The creative two-year process will support their literacy, creativity, artistic freedom, and cultural heritage, stimulate intergenerational connections, develop collaborative skills, and allow them to learn from others and teach them in return.

The project will, however, expand beyond our community as we will share the created book with multiple regional libraries. We hope to spike interest among our neighbors in learning about Seldovia and its people and inspire them to create their own

²For the purpose of this project proposal, we call the book of collections (project result) a "Seldovia StoryBook". However, our community will select the title as a part of this project.

³ Knowledge bearers for this project refer to community members who are Elders, adults, parents, or others who have lived and experienced Seldovia and are supporting this project.

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StoryBook. From this perspective, the number of beneficiaries will vary from 401⁴, the population of Seldovia, up to 13,993, the population of the surrounding communities⁵.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

1. ACTIVITIES

Seldovia Village Tribe will host six Storybook sessions over the two-year project period, resulting in a collaborative book of stories and memories that captures Seldovia's unique Native heritage, history, and culture.

Outreach and Planning

During the first quarter of the project, our Project Coordinator will reach out to the community's knowledge bearers. This activity will be completed through group gatherings, home visits (for those knowledge bearers who prefer our Project Coordinator to come to them), during the Elder's Meals⁶ senior program, and any other identified opportunities available. The Project Coordinator will record and document the results of this outreach activity and will ensure the information is utilized and considered in the planning and development of the StoryBook workshops. The Project Coordinator will then contact identified workshop instructors and develop a calendar of workshops for the next eighteen months with the Project Team.

Implementation

The first StoryBook workshop will be held in January 2025, followed by five more sessions each quarter. The participants will vary depending on the workshop/session theme. Throughout the project, we will involve knowledge bearers, children, youth, adults, parents, caregivers, and anyone who wishes to participate.

Each workshop is anticipated to be approximately 8-12 hours. We intend to have each session reflect the community's needs. For example, a short afternoon or evening class, multiple times a week, or a week-long session, depending on the time of year and availability. This will maximize our time with each instructor and be flexible or amiable to the participants and the topic. We anticipate approximately 10- 20 participants per session. After each session, the Project Team will debrief with the instructors and knowledge bearers to receive feedback about the event and elaborate on any potential changes/ideas for future sessions.

The project's final calendar schedule will reflect a quarterly workshop for the next eighteen months. The Project Team, knowledge bearers, and involved instructors will plan the content of the sessions. We anticipate the selected topics being Seldovia Native history, culture, participants' memories and experiences, subsistence food preservation, hunting and gathering, local recipes, favorite places, family lore, or storytelling. The creative formats for documenting these topics vary from zines to scrapbooks, graphic novels, or collages.

⁴ 2022: ACS 5 Year Estimate (ZCTA5 99663). Online at: data.census.gov

⁵ 2022: ACS 5 Year Estimate (ZCTA5 99556, ZCTA5 99603). Online at: data.census.gov

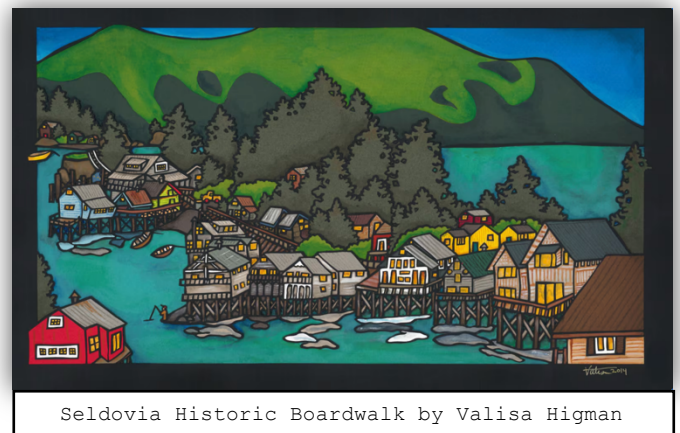
⁶ Online at: <https://svt.org/elders-services/#meals>

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We intend to capture our knowledge bearers' stories throughout the project by having them tell a story and having the instructors facilitate each individual's depiction of that story in various art forms. The art media methods will be varied, encouraging participants to express their views through art media and share them in the "Seldovia StoryBook." We also plan to record the oral stories to ensure they are reflected as they are told. Before the participants take home their original work, the Project Coordinator will duplicate the work and make notes on the artist, date, session topic, and other pertinent information. Our goal is to facilitate the sessions to help participants express the session information in an art technique that captures their perspective.

We have confirmed commitment from two workshop instructors, Erin Higman⁷ and Valisa Higman⁸, Seldovia residents who have written, illustrated, and published children's and adult books. Erin Higman is an outdoor enthusiast and environmental steward documenting her family's adventures throughout the Pacific Northwest. *Small Feet, Big Land* is a published book depicting their adventure with their children. Valisa Higman is a local artist inspired by her natural surroundings and community. Valisa provided illustrations for the children's book *My Coyote Nose and Ptarmigan Toes* in partnership with Erin.

Other invited instructors are the Seattle-based indigenous graphic novel artists Dimi Macheras and Casey Silver⁹. They are experienced presenters teaching interactive storytelling workshops. Their workshops teach participants how to think visually and express their inner storytellers through graphic novels. Nathan Shafer¹⁰, an augmented reality artist, graphic novelist, and certified special education teacher, has shared an interest in facilitating a session. We have also approached a Naturalist Artist from Homer, Kim McNett¹¹, who previously collaborated with the Seldovia Village Tribe Culture Camps. Through nature journaling, Ms. McNett integrates visual art, science inquiry, and personal experience. She enjoys teaching and sharing her experiences with people of all ages. Letters of Support are included in the attachment Supportingdoc1. The attachment Supportingdoc2 includes vendor quotes. Lastly, the attachment Supportingdoc3 has all the references and weblinks shared in the footnotes.



After the fifth session in March 2026, the Project Coordinator will begin collecting and organizing participants' renderings into a collection in preparation for

⁷ Online at: <https://groundtruthalaska.org/Book-Small-Feet-Big-Land/>

⁸ Online at: <https://groundtruthalaska.org/Book-My-Coyote-Nose-And-Ptarmigan-Toes/>

⁹ Online at: <https://eightypercentstudios.com/workshops/>

¹⁰ Online at: <http://nshafer.com/>

¹¹ Online at: <https://www.kimsnaturedrawings.com/>

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editing. During this timeframe, the Project Coordinator will coordinate with a small group of interested community members to choose a name for the Seldovia Storybook collection.

The Project Coordinator will distribute a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the contractual book editor in early spring 2026. The RFP will follow the Seldovia Village Tribe's Accounting Policies and Procedures. The last session will be held in June 2026, and the participant renderings will be added to the collection. The Project Coordinator will send the collected work to the contracted book editor to review, edit, organize, and help us create a storybook that flows and tells the Seldovia heritage from the participants' perspective.

StoryBook Distribution

Once the final design is approved by the Project Manager and President/CEO, the book collection will be sent to the printer. We anticipate making one hundred hardcover copies with colored pictures to enhance the collection's creativity. The copies will be distributed to the project participants, a portion sent to regional neighboring libraries (Homer Public Library, Seldovia Public Library, Anchor Point Public Library, Susan B. English School Library, Port Graham School), and, most importantly, inventoried in our Tribal Seldovia Library.

2. RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Our Elders are a reserved group who sometimes have difficulty sharing in a public setting. As mentioned earlier in the "Need" section of this proposal, we intend to substitute a potentially low number of knowledge bearers by working with the "In Our Own Words" recordings on the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Jukebox. The Project Coordinator will review the recordings and select excerpts relevant to share during the session.

Due to the small size of our community, we recognize this may be a challenging project to complete if the overall participation rate is low. We plan to mitigate this by selecting diverse instructors using various art techniques to attract different age groups and personalities.

We will also work closely with our public relations and marketing department to assist in community outreach. It will be important for residents to know about this opportunity in advance and to be involved in shaping this project. The events will be advertised on our social media (Facebook, Instagram), website, the Seldovia Post Office community bulletin board, flyers, and any other means identified.

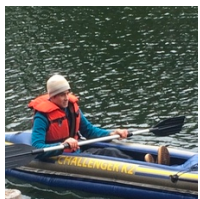
3. PROJECT MANAGEMENT/PROJECT TEAM

As a small Tribe and community, our staff wear multiple hats to provide all the programs and events for our community members.

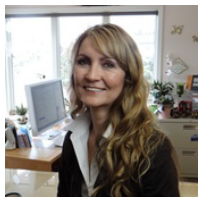
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Harmony Payton will be the Project Coordinator. Ms. Payton's official job title is Museum Curator, and she is responsible for the Seldovia Village Tribe's Museum and Library. For the project, she will reach out to community members, coordinate public outreach and distribution, develop the finalized calendar, and contact all instructors, ensuring their availability and schedules. She will develop and submit reports promptly and ensure the project progresses as planned. The general duties of the Curator/Librarian include library operations check-out and check-in procedures, inventory, caring for collections, updating interpretive materials, and overseeing and conducting museum acquisitions and accessions. Ms. Payton has worked for the Tribe for the past seven years and eight months as a Museum Curator.



Stephen Payton will oversee the project as a Project Manager and provide guidance and support with weekly updates to ensure all activities and objectives progress as anticipated. Mr. Payton will oversee the workshops' planning, implementation, and coordination and share progress, challenges, and successes in quarterly reports to the Seldovia Tribal Council. He will also meet regularly with the President/CEO to share progress reports and problem-solve any challenges. Mr. Payton has managed the Seldovia Village Tribe's Museum and Library since 2022 and supported the implementation of museum and library projects for several years prior. During this time, he has completed multiple IMLS projects for the museum and library, including increasing digitization capabilities for the museum and sharing indigenous writers with Seldovia's youth through our tribal library.



Crystal Collier, President/CEO, was hired thirty-five years ago as a Project Coordinator to re-establish our federal recognition. She advanced her position through the years, engaging the community and establishing health care, social services, economic development, and education. As CEO, Ms. Collier is responsible for managing and administrating all Seldovia Village Tribe's programs and implementing all policies and procedures established by the Seldovia Tribal Council. As the CEO, she ensures all management systems comply with appropriate federal and state laws and regulations. She has inspired and led Seldovia Village Tribe to become an independent and culturally responsive community agency for the people it serves.

4. PROJECT RESOURCES

The project will require approximately 658 hours annually for the Project Coordinator, 156 hours annually for the Project Manager, and 126 hours each project year for knowledge bearers and session instructors. The project will support the Project Coordinator's salaries, fringe benefits, knowledge bearer's stipends, workshop instructor's fees, and Elders stipends.

We have included \$4,000 for the mandatory IMLS Grantee meeting, up from the required \$3,000 allotment in the NOFO. We have included an additional \$1,000 to ensure we have enough travel funds, as Seldovia is located in a remote, rural community accessible by boat or plane. Round-trip travel from Seldovia to Anchorage alone is \$640.

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5. EXISTING RESOURCES

Other personnel resources supporting the initiative are the accounting staff, the marketing/public relations director, and the grants office. These positions and related services are charged to the indirect pool as they support all programs within our Tribe. We envision the Community Engagement Department staff partnering with us on a few sessions. They hold weekly events in the community to engage children, youth, and adults in family activities.

Community partners for this project are the Homer Public Library, and the Susan B. English School (Seldovia's local school); refer to the Letters of Support in the attachments section – Supportingdoc1. The Susan B. English School is an additional venue option that provides exceptional space for group gatherings. Each brings its expertise to our small community.

Seldovia Village Tribe has several venues to support the sessions; the largest is the Alaska Tribal Cache "conference room," which has video recording capabilities, large tables and chairs, and restroom facilities. Additional options include the administrative building, Sea Otter Cabins, and the Museum/Library. The Project Coordinator and Project Manager have designated offices with the typical office needs: a computer, printer, phone, and scanner.

6. PROJECT SHARING AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Project Coordinator will share the ups and downs, the "this went well" and "this needs improvement," with fellow grantees at the IMLS grantee meeting in years one and two. This project is one of many projects the Seldovia Village Tribe has developed. However, it is a unique project in that the final product is a collective representation of our community. However, we are up to the challenge and willing to learn while reaching out to our community to join us in this adventure.

In year two, we anticipate the Project Coordinator submitting a proposal to present the project to the conference attendees at the Alaska Library Conference 2026, hosted by the Alaska Library Association and Pacific Northwest Library Association in Juneau, Alaska. In addition to sharing the "Seldovia StoryBook," the Project Coordinator will benefit from the conference's professional library resources, peer networking, and staff development.

PROJECT RESULTS

1. PROJECT'S INTENDED RESULTS

The project will provide the written component of the Seldovia Village Tribe's initiative to preserve our stories, history, culture, and subsistence traditions as remembered by our Elders. The proposed project will result in a collective book of stories and memories to capture our culture and traditions through Seldovia residents' unique and multigenerational perspectives. This is an opportunity for Seldovia to capture and share our Tribe's history inside and outside our small community. The project will be a collaborative effort of many participants,

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including children, youth, parents, and seniors, who will use multiple visual storytelling techniques. We anticipate the target group K-5th grade will develop a deeper sense of self and appreciation of life in Seldovia.

The final copies of the "Seldovia StoryBook" will be sustained and shared with the book placed in the Homer Public Library, the Seldovia Public Library, and neighboring communities.

2. TARGET'S GROUP KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND/OR APPRECIATION

The target group of children in K-5th grade will have first-hand knowledge about Seldovia and experience creating visual stories from oral storytelling. The sessions will support their reading and writing skills in an interactive, fun community event. The knowledge, skills, and experiences will help their self-identity and their place in the world and support their self-esteem. This project will enhance children's and youth's literacy and creativity. Participants will enjoy the final "Seldovia StoryBook" to read and remember their experience creating the content for many years into the future.

The secondary target group of adults will be giving back to their community, learning from each other, learning new art forms to share their stories and memories, and supporting the primary target group in reading and writing skills. The "Seldovia StoryBook" is not only about our written history, culture, and traditions. It ultimately involves multiple art forms, such as illustration, carving, or printmaking, to capture our memories, experiences, and knowledge. We will collaborate with many local artists, writers, and knowledge bearers to incorporate techniques from graphic novels/comics and nature journaling that integrate visual art with science and adventure to a scrapbook method of preserving, presenting, and arranging our stories.

3. PROJECT RESULTS

The final product resulting from this project will be the "Seldovia StoryBook," a collection of artworks created by our community members during six different workshops over the project period of two years. Additionally, after each session, the participants will keep their original creations to take home to enhance their connection with the book (after we make a copy). A final "Seldovia StoryBook" will be printed and distributed to all participants and regional libraries (public and school).

4. SUSTAINABILITY

The project's benefits will reach far into the future after the final project is completed through the hard copy book in every participant's home to take and reflect on the lessons learned. The book in regional libraries will be reviewed and read by interested readers, engaging and teaching about living in Seldovia. Our Tribal Library will have the "Seldovia Storybook" on its shelves for visitors and locals alike to read and enjoy. Essentially, this project will promote children's literacy and indigenous ways from the perspective of those who live here. This opportunity is unique to the Alaska Tribal communities since visiting researchers and archeologists often tell our stories. This is our story.

