

## Gékendamén Pane (Always We Are Learning) Organizational Profile

The mission of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, DBA Gun Lake Tribe, is, “We, the members of Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan, will maintain our elders’ vision, integrity, spirituality, culture and economic self-sufficiency by protecting our sovereignty, treaty rights, traditions, land and natural resources for our future generations.” The mission of the Tribe was included in the Constitution of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan. The Tribe’s Constitution was adopted on July 6, 2000.

The Tribe offers programs and services to Tribal Citizens, Tribal Government staff, Native Americans from other tribes, and household members of Tribal Citizens who reside in Allegan, Barry, Kalamazoo, Kent, and Ottawa counties of Michigan. The Tribe currently has 615 enrolled members. Of the 615 enrolled members, 393, or 64%, reside in the five-county service area. The Tribe is comprised largely of Tribal Youth as 236, or 38%, of the membership are eighteen years of age and under. Of the 615 enrolled members 105, or 17%, are Tribal Elders fifty years of age and older.

The Tribe’s Government is headquartered in Shelbyville, Michigan, a small, unincorporated community in Allegan County. The Tribe’s fee and trust land is also located in Allegan County. The Tribe’s fee and trust properties are spread across a wide area in a checkerboard pattern; some parcels are separated by as many as thirteen miles. Hopkins, Michigan, a village with a population of about 615 people, and Wayland, Michigan, a small city with a population of about 4,435 people, represent the most developed areas near the Tribe. The area immediately surrounding the Tribe’s base of operations is defined by agriculture. Farmland and forested areas dominate the landscape.

The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians is part of the historic Three Fires Confederacy, an alliance of the Pottawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa nations. The Tribe is named after Chief Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Chief’s Band inhabited the Kalamazoo River Valley. The Band’s primary village was located at the head of the Kalamazoo River. After the Chief signed the Treaty of St. Joseph in 1827, a period of movement northward to avoid forced removal west began. The Band eventually founded a permanent settlement in Bradley, Michigan, near its present-day location, in 1838. The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians became a federally recognized Indian tribe on August 23, 1999.

The Tribe’s Education Department will be responsible for carrying out the work on this project. The Education Department’s mission is to “promote and assist our Tribal Citizens with educational opportunities that encourage and support an enriched standard of living through life-long learning.” The Education Department is comprised of four employees, including an Education Director, Education Assistant, Tribal Librarian, and Youth Specialist. The Education Department manages the Tribe’s Higher Education & Continuing Education programming and the Learning Center, which is the Tribe’s library and hub for learning for the Tribal Community.

## Gékendamén Pane (Always We Are Learning) Narrative

### **Project Justification**

#### **Which program goal and associated objective(s) of the Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants program will your project address?**

The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, DBA Gun Lake Tribe, is headquartered in Shelbyville, Michigan. The Tribe's Education Department offers higher education and continuing education programs and manages the Learning Center, which is the Tribe's hub for lifelong learning and provides library services to Gun Lake Tribal community members of all ages. The Gun Lake Tribe's proposed Gékendamén Pane project will address **Goal 2: Improve educational programs related to specific topics and content areas of interest to library patrons and community-based users.** The Tribe will achieve this goal by addressing **Objective 2.2. Support the development of and implementation of classes, events, teaching tools, resources, and other educational services.** The Tribe's selected goal and objective will be accomplished by hiring a Higher Education Specialist and by offering continuing education courses to all Tribal Citizens.

#### **What need, problem, or challenge will your project address and how was it identified? Describe how you have used demographic information, economic circumstances, condition assessments, and other relevant data from reliable sources to define the need, problem, or challenge and develop the scope of the project.**

The Gun Lake Tribe currently offers all Tribal Citizens access to higher education programming to pursue a post-secondary education but lacks the capacity to ensure that Tribal Citizens, especially Tribal Youth, have the support and resources they need to access and successfully leverage the existing programming. The Education Department has identified a need for a comprehensive project that promotes education as a core value within the Tribe by encouraging all Tribal Citizens to not only pursue a higher education but to build their overall skills and knowledge in preparation of entering the workforce.

The Gun Lake Tribe currently has roughly 615 enrolled Tribal Citizens. Of these 615 enrolled Citizens, 236, or 38%, are Tribal Youth under the age of eighteen. The Gun Lake Tribe currently offers a Higher & Career Tech Education Scholarship to all Tribal Citizens, which funds expenses such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, and transportation as calculated by the prospective higher education institution's financial aid office. The Tribe's other higher education programs include the GED or High School Completion Program and the Higher Education Laptop Program. Although the Education Department offers a comprehensive scholarship, the Education Department has noticed a decrease in the number of Tribal Youth who access the Tribe's higher education programs over the past 5 years. Although 10 Tribal Youth earned their high school diploma last year, only 3 students enrolled in a higher education program. This has been consistent with a downward trend in enrollment year-over-year. By comparison, of the 10 Tribal Youth who graduated in 2020, 70% enrolled in a higher education program. In 2021, 61% of 18 graduating students enrolled in a higher education program. In 2022, 33% of 6 graduating students enrolled in a higher education program.

In 2021, the Gun Lake Tribe completed a Tribal Youth Needs Assessment through the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center (GLITEC). Questions pertaining to education were asked of respondents 14 to 17 years old. When asked about the likelihood of pursuing additional education or training, 90.9% of respondents said they were likely or extremely likely to pursue additional education or training within

the next 5 years. This demonstrates that Gun Lake Tribal Youth are interested in pursuing a higher education, but various circumstances are preventing them from doing so.

The Education Department currently has 1 staff member dedicated to managing and implementing all higher education programming. In addition to completing the day-to-day tasks of the Education Department, this staff member receives frequent time-intensive requests from Tribal students for assistance with completing college applications, completing the FAFSA, and completing the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver application. While Education Department staff do their best to accommodate these requests, the department currently lacks the capacity to provide the one-on-one guidance necessary to ensure that students receive consistent support before, during, and even after they graduate from a higher education program.

The Education Department has noted that one of the greatest challenges in working with higher education students is that they don't understand the ramifications of dropping and/or failing classes. According to the Education Department's internal data, an average of 3 to 5 higher education students drops at least one class each term. In addition to this, at least 3 students were on academic probation for at least 1 term last year. Although 3 students were on academic probation, no students accessed the Tribe's tutoring funds last year. One of the primary difficulties that Tribal students face is a lack of support at home. Many Gun Lake Tribal students are first generation college students and, when faced with difficulties in their higher education program, their parents are unable to help them. According to a 2021 report from the Pew Research Center, "Enrolling in U.S. Higher Education is a complicated multistep process that includes completing college prep coursework in high school and navigating the admissions and financial aid process. Whether labelled 'college knowledge' or 'cultural capital,' students whose parents have their own experience and success have great access to postsecondary education. Once on campus, students whose parents have not attended college are less likely to complete a degree"<sup>1</sup>

It is for this reason that the Education Department is requesting funding to support a new Higher Education Specialist position. The Higher Education Specialist will provide guidance and support not only to Tribal Youth, but to all Tribal Citizens interested in pursuing a higher education. This includes helping students navigate the application process, providing them with information on financial aid, and providing students with resources to ensure they succeed in their studies. In addition to assisting Tribal Citizens with pursuing a higher education, the Specialist will develop and implement programming that encourages a culture of lifelong learning, bridging the gap between the Tribe's higher education programming and the Tribe's long-term goal of "Create Opportunities for Citizen Employment, Growth, and Success" as identified in the GLT HR Department's 5-year strategic plan.

The Gun Lake Tribe strongly supports hiring Tribal Citizens to work for Tribal entities, which include the Gun Lake Tribal Government, the Tribe's investment arm, Gun Lake Investments, and the Tribe's primary economic enterprise, the Gun Lake Casino. However, many of the positions for all 3 enterprises require advanced degrees. In the 2021 Tribal Youth Needs Assessment, when asked about incentives or supports for completing education and training related to critical positions at the Tribe, 68.2% of respondents said if incentives or supports were available they would be interested in pursuing training and/or education for critical positions within the Tribe such as medicine, engineering, architecture, planning, economics, and the Bodewademi language.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/05/18/first-generation-college-graduates-lag-behind-their-peers-on-key-economic-outcomes/#fnref-31421-1>

In addition to preparing and supporting Tribal Youth in their endeavor to pursue a higher education and work for the Gun Lake Tribe, the Education Department has noticed an interest amongst adult Tribal Citizens 18 years of age and older in continuing education programming. Last year, the Education Department offered STEAM courses for Tribal Youth and received many requests for similar course offerings to adults.

Although the Tribe prioritizes hiring Gun Lake Tribal Citizens in open positions, the Tribe is frequently unable to fill open positions with Citizens due to their lack of qualifications. It is for this reason that the Education Department is requesting funding to implement programming focused on providing continuing education courses and resources to all Gun Lake Tribal Citizens 18 years of age and older. The Education Department would like to offer twice-monthly courses. This will include science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) related courses (including but not limited to simple coding, CAD, and 3-D printing); employment assistance courses (including but not limited to resume writing, job interview techniques, and job application help); and essential competency courses (including but not limited to Microsoft/Google basics and home office set-up). The courses are meant to provide current Citizens, regardless of their education level, with marketable skills for entering the workforce, as well as improving basic skills and learning new skills. It is the hope of the Education Department that by attending these classes, Tribal Citizens may also develop an interest that will encourage them to pursue further education, thus utilizing existing higher education funding and services.

The Education Department currently has about 40 to 50 Tribal Citizens taking advantage of higher education programming. The Education Department has identified the potential of increasing that participation to at least 100 Tribal Citizens by the end of the project period.

**Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning? “Target group” refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by your project. Be specific by identifying particular age groups, community members with particular needs, and/or other types of target audiences. Identify the number of individuals in the target group or in each target group, if you identify more than one.**

The Education Department has identified the following target groups:

- For Tribal Youth ages 13 to 18 years of age, the Higher Education Specialist will collaborate with the Tribe’s Youth Specialist to provide Tribal students with guidance in higher education. The HES will leverage existing events such as the Education Department’s annual college visits and Youth Council meetings to provide students with information and resources related to college preparation.
- For Tribal Citizens aged 18 and up who are interested in attending college and/or those already attending college, the HES will assist them with all their higher education needs. THE HES will pay special attention to students who are struggling in college, such as those who are considering dropping classes or those in academic probation and will connect them with resources, such as tutoring, to ensure their success.
- All Tribal Citizens aged 13 and up will be able to attend the proposed STEAM courses. The purpose of the STEAM courses is to allow Citizens to explore new skills and interests.
- All Tribal Citizens aged 18 and up will be the primary target for employment assistance and essential competency courses. The employment assistance courses will be most beneficial to newly graduated Citizens seeking to enter the workforce for the first time. The core competency classes will be most beneficial to Citizens who have been absent from the workforce for an extended period or for those who have limited experience with technology. The Project Director

expects that the core competency classes will also appeal to Tribal Elders who have expressed past interest in receiving education in basic technology skills such as sending emails or setting up a home office.

**Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project? “Beneficiaries” refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long-term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your target group. Identify the number of individuals who will benefit from your project in the long term, if reliable and defensible counts are possible. Otherwise, describe the characteristics of the beneficiaries you expect to be served eventually by your project.**

The whole of the Gun Lake Tribal Community will benefit from this project. By hiring a Higher Education Specialist, the Education Department anticipates that GLT students will receive the focused support they need to successfully complete their post-secondary education. By the end of the project period, the Education Department anticipates that there will be an increase in the total number of students accessing the Tribe’s higher education programs, a reduction in the total number of dropped classes each term, and a reduction in the total number of students in academic probation each term.

By helping more Tribal Citizens pursue a higher education, the Tribe will increase the skills and knowledge of its potential workforce, giving Tribal Citizens the capacity to fill job positions across all Tribal enterprises. By offering continuing education courses to all Citizens, the Education Department will reach Tribal Citizens of all ages, ensuring that the Tribe’s approach to promoting higher education, including continuing education, is comprehensive in approach. While this project is specifically focused on promoting and increasing Citizen access and success in higher education, well-educated and skilled Citizens will ultimately lead to economic growth and stability for the entire Tribal Community.

As previously stated, between 40 and 50 Tribal Citizens currently take advantage of higher education programming. The Education Department anticipates that by the end of the project period, participation in the Tribe’s Higher Education programs will increase to a total of 100 participants.

### **Project Work Plan**

The Tribe will support Goal 2: Improve educational programs related to specific topics and content areas of interest to library patrons and community-based users. The Tribe will achieve this goal through the development of and implementation of classes, events, teaching tools, resources, and other education services.

### **What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?**

The Tribe will carry out the following activities:

- Activity 1: Hire a Higher Education Specialist to support all Tribal Citizens, especially Tribal Youth, seeking to access the GLT’s Higher Education programming.  
The Education Department Director and the Gun Lake Tribal Human Resources Department will coordinate to hire a qualified Higher Education Specialist. The draft job description and a letter of commitment from the Gun Lake Tribal Council are attached.
  - Performance Measure(s):
    - A qualified Higher Education Specialist is hired and onboarded.
- Activity 2: Develop evaluative tools to measure qualitative and quantitative project data.  
The Higher Education Specialist (HES) and the Project Director will develop surveys and assessments that will be distributed to all Tribal Citizens. This may include an initial survey to gauge interest and anticipated participation in the continuing education courses. The HES will also develop and conduct a yearly assessment survey to collect data to analyze the higher

education needs of the GLT community. The HES will use the results of the survey to assess planning for Year 2 of the project and measure project success post award.

- Performance Measure(s):
  - Total number of surveys completed.
  - Total number of assessments completed.
- Activity 3: Develop and implement the continuing education courses.

The Project Director and the Higher Education Specialist will develop and implement the continuing education courses. The classes will include STEAM courses (including but not limited to simple coding, CAD, 3-D printing, writing, and art); employment assistance classes (including but not limited to resume writing, job interview techniques, and job application assistance); and essential competency courses (including but not limited to Microsoft/Google basics and home office set-up.) The Project Director will coordinate with the GLT Human Resources Department and the GLT IT Department to develop the courses. The Project Director anticipates offering courses at least 2 times per month. Courses will be repeated or terminated depending on participation.

  - Performance Measure(s):
    - Total number of courses.
    - Total number of course attendees.
- Activity 4: Identify and hire contractual teachers for the continuing education courses.

The Project Director will identify and contract teachers specializing in identified content areas. The Project Director will comply with all Tribal and all federal, IMLS, and program requirements related to contractual procurement. The Project Director will endeavor to contract qualified teachers within the organization and/or within the Gun Lake Tribal populace. The Project Director will partner with the GLT Human Resources Department and the GLT IT Department to teach and/or identify potential teachers for the courses. The Project Director will provide IMLS with copies of the teachers' resumes as required by the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

  - Performance Measure(s):
    - Qualified teachers are identified and contracted.
- Activity 5: Develop a communications schedule and advertise higher education programming, including the availability of continuing education courses, to Tribal Citizens.

The Project Director will develop a communications schedule with the intention of advertising both new and existing higher education programming. This will include, but not be limited to, the assistance and mentorship the Higher Education Specialist can provide to Tribal Youth, upcoming continuing education classes, as well as information about the Tribe's existing Higher Education programs. The Project Director will coordinate with the GLT Communications Department to publish articles to the Tribal Tribune monthly newsletter and publish other updates to the Tribe's various social media platforms.

  - Performance Measure(s):
    - Communications schedule completed.
    - Number of articles submitted to the Tribal Tribune.
    - Number of Facebook, myGLTapp, Tribal website, and Tribal email posts.
- Activity 6: Leverage existing events and implement new events to educate Tribal Citizens about special higher education topics.

On a quarterly basis, the Higher Education Specialist (HES) will plan educational opportunities to further the college and career readiness of GLT Citizens. The HES will partner with the Education Department's Youth Specialist to leverage and/or plan new Youth events that may include topics such as how to apply for financial aid, how to apply to colleges and vocational schools, etc.

  - Performance Measure(s):

- Total number of educational events held.
- Activity 7: Complete IMLS-directed travel in each year of the project.  
As required by IMLS, the Project Director will complete and take part in the IMLS-directed travel in each year of the project.
  - Performance Measure(s):
    - Number of IMLS-directed trips taken.

**What are the risks to the project, and how will you mitigate them?**

The Project Director has identified the following project risks and mitigation strategies:

- Project Risk 1: Lack of participation.
  - Mitigation Strategy: Reassess communication with prospective participants. This may include working with the Communications Department to reach out to Tribal Citizens through the Tribal Tribune monthly newsletter and the Tribe’s other social media platforms. The Project Director may also directly reach out to past and prospective participants to assess how to improve participation, such as distributing surveys to help determine why participation is low.

**Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?**

The Tribal Librarian will serve as the Project Director. The Project Director will serve as the lead contact for the project and will be responsible for completing grant administrative duties such as reporting, attending grant related meetings, completing IMLS required travel, and assisting with the development and implementation of the proposed project activities. The Tribal Librarian has experience managing grants and currently serves as the Project Director of the Tribe’s Native American Library Services: Basic Grants award.

The Higher Education Specialist will be responsible for developing and implementing the project activities. The Higher Education Specialist will serve as the lead working directly with project participants and will be responsible for overseeing all the Tribe’s Higher Education programming.

This project will receive additional support and oversight from members of the GLT’s Finance Department and the GLT Grants, Planning and Management Department. The Finance Department is responsible for completing all grant financial reports and providing fiscal oversight over all grant awards. The GPM Department is responsible for providing compliance oversight and assistance with all grant awards.

The Tribal Librarian’s resume and the Higher Education Specialist job description are included as attachments.

**What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?**

To carry out the activities of this project, the Education Department will require funding for expenses related to personnel. As previously described, all project activities are built upon existing programming. The Higher Education Specialist will be most important to carrying out the activities of this project. Additional personnel will include contractual teachers to teach the proposed courses. The Tribe is also requesting funding for supplies for the proposed continuing education courses.

All time, financial, personnel, and other resources required to carry out the activities of this project are outlined in the Budget Form and Budget Narrative.

**What existing resources within the tribe, assets within the library or community, and/or potential partners will be utilized during this project to aid in its success? Resources and assets can include both tangible and intangible. Potential partners can include other departments within the tribe, tribal colleges and universities, etc.**

As previously mentioned, this proposed project will build on the Tribe's existing programming. For the classes, the Tribe will leverage existing spaces such as the Tribal Learning Center. If there is a large number of participants, the Tribe has the ability to host classes offsite, such as at the Luella Collins Community Center, the Tribe's community gathering space.

Internally, the Project Director also plans to work with the Tribe's HR and IT Departments. The Project Director will work with both departments to either leverage existing staff to teach the continuing education courses or request their assistance in identifying and contracting subject matter experts to teach the courses. In addition to these internal partners, the Tribe may leverage existing relationships with local schools and local teachers to assist with the development of the continuing education courses and identifying additional subject matter experts to teach the courses.

Additionally, the Project Director will leverage the GLT Communications Department to advertise and distribute information about all new programming through existing communications channels. The GLT Education Department regularly distributes program and event information in the form of Tribal Tribune articles, electronic and physical flyers, as well as posts to the Tribe's social media channels. The Project Director also has an existing relationship with the Tribal Community and will be able to distribute information by word of mouth.

The Project Director has demonstrated experience with managing IMLS grants. The Project Director is currently responsible for managing the Tribe's Native American Library Services: Basic Grants award. The Tribe's Grants, Planning and Management Department as well as the Finance Department have extensive experience in overseeing a wide variety of grant projects across all Tribal Departments and will assist the Project Director in ensuring compliance with all grant award terms and conditions.

**How and with whom will you share work's general findings and lessons learned?**

The Project Director and Higher Education Specialist (HES) will collect data to measure project impact. Specifically, the HES will track the total number of participants in all the continuing education courses. The HES will also track the total number of requests they receive for assistance and general data about the students enrolled in higher education programming. The Project Director and Higher Education Specialist will also collect qualitative data – this will be collected through surveys and other assessments developed through this project.

Using the collected quantitative and qualitative data, the Project Director will share project findings with senior leadership, including the Gun Tribal Council. The Education Department is required to submit regular reports to the Tribal Council and holds regular work sessions, which are open to Tribal Citizens to attend. The project's general findings and lessons learned will be shared through these existing avenues.

**Project Results**

**What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified in the Project Justification section?**

This project's intended results include the following:

- An increase in the Education Department's capacity to assist all Tribal Citizens in accessing and successfully leveraging existing higher education programming.



- An increase in the total number of students accessing the Tribe’s higher education programs.
- A decrease in the total number of dropped classes each term.
- A decrease in the total number of students in academic probation each term.

This project will bridge the gap between higher education and one of its ultimate end goals of preparing Tribal Citizens for careers and professions. The mission of the Gun Lake Tribe is, “We, the members of the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan, will maintain our elders’ vision, integrity, spirituality, culture, and economic self-sufficiency by protecting our sovereignty, treaty rights, traditions, land and natural resources for our future generations.” By helping more Tribal Citizens pursue a higher education, the Tribe will increase the skills and knowledge of its potential workforce, giving Tribal Citizens the capacity to fill job positions across all Tribal enterprises. Self-sufficient Tribal Citizens will ensure the economic self-sufficiency of the Tribe.

**How will the knowledge, skills, and/or appreciation of the target group’s community values grow as a result of your project?**

As previously discussed, this project will result in an increase in the general skills and knowledge of all Tribal Citizens through improved access to existing higher education programming and the implementation of new continuing education courses. In addition to an expansion in the educational opportunities provided to Tribal Citizens, the Education Department hopes that this project will foster a sense of responsibility in Tribal Citizens for the continued success of the Tribe. The success of the Tribe is dependent on the success of its Tribal Citizens.

**What product(s) will result from your project?**

The ultimate product of this project will be a comprehensive higher education program. The Tribe currently has programming in a place that addresses the three identified areas of interest to this project – higher education programming, continuing education and skill building, and career preparedness. By hiring the Higher Education Specialist and implementing the proposed courses, the Tribe will be able to bridge the gap between these three identified areas. If feasible, the Tribe will seek to continue implementing the activities included in this project following the end of the project period.

**How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?**

The Gun Lake Tribal Council supports the activities proposed in this project. A Project Sustainability Letter is included as an attachment. If feasible, the Gun Lake Tribal Council will continue to fund the activities proposed in this project post project period.

If it is not possible to continue funding the project activities post project period, the Project Director anticipates that the project will have built a framework that the Education Department can use to implement the same or similar activities in the future. The Education Department views this project as a next logical step in enhancing its existing educational programming – by building this foundation, the Education Department will have gained additional data, experience, and rapport with Tribal Citizens that will inform the department on needed projects to meet the needs of the Tribal Community.



