

Nooksack Library Enhancement Project 2024

Organizational Profile

The Nooksack Tribal mission was developed in 2005 with the Nooksack Strategic Plan. Mission below. The Nooksack Tribal Council envisions a future for the Nooksack Indian Tribe where The Nooksack language is preserved by everyday use in the home and workplace as it is essential to ensuring the health of Nooksack Tribal members. Our culture is preserved through honoring our elders, having mutual respect for each other, being hospitable, and welcoming in the Nooksack tradition.

The Nooksack Tribal Library is open to all ages, offering books, magazines, and DVDs for checkout, and access to computers, internet, printing, copying, faxing, scanning, and additional reading materials through tablets/e-readers. The Tribal Library has a large Native Research Collection focusing primarily on content from Native American authors, as well as a sizeable collection of Coast Salish history and biographies. The library also carries a large selection of current releases and popular titles from across fiction and nonfiction genres. The Library is a hub for Youth Program participants to get homework help, learn, play, and read. The library also has dedicated sections for young child visitors, and for adult visitors and Elders.

***IT IS THE MISSION** of the Nooksack Tribal Library to promote community, literacy, education, employment, and on-going reading enjoyment for our patrons by providing culturally-relevant materials, services, and programs that support Nooksack lifeways learning and Native American research.*

About Community: The Nooksack Reservation is located in Deming, Whatcom County, in the north-west corner of Washington State. Nooksack Indian Tribe land base is estimated to be 305.2 square miles. The Nooksack Indian reservation is located near US/Canada border, 17 miles east of Bellingham, WA in the unincorporated town of Deming; population 353. The Nooksack Tribe's current enrollment at 1,953 members, around half of whom live in the local area. In addition to our 2.2-acre Reservation, the Tribe has over 282 acres in fragmented Fee and Trust lands as well as over 2000 acres in private allotments. Tribal housing is dispersed from South to North Whatcom County, with some tribal service offices located in Deming and other services located in north Whatcom County.

History: Until 2001 there were no specific library services for Native Americans in this area. There is a general public library in Deming that maintains a collection of books on general topics for the geographic regions but does not focus on Native American holdings, nor on the unique needs of the Native American Community. In 2001, we began with about 50 books in a bookcase in our Education Department. We were able to hire a part-time librarian and increase holdings to 2,500 by 2003, then added a server, computers, internet access and printers soon after. In 2003 we expanded the library to provide specialized services to our children, youth and Elders, manually catalogue holdings, and provide some shelving and library furniture for our patrons.

In 2012, the Nooksack Indian Tribe expanded the library services through the relocation of the library facility to a stand-alone building adjacent to the Education Department at Timber Ridge (a rural cluster of buildings that is currently leased by the tribe). This brought the library closer to the after-school program, the alternative high school, the Head Start program and the language classes at Timber Ridge which allows more students the opportunity to utilize the facility. This location also brought library services closer to more Tribal housing sites, making it more convenient for a greater number of community members. We are a small library in a rural and remote setting, but our presence is an important resource for the Nooksack community.

Narrative: Nooksack Indian Tribe

1.PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

As one of the smallest, most economically disadvantaged tribes in Washington, the Nooksack people rely on our modest tribal library as the primary local free public access point for critical digital inclusion services. Over half of our tribal members are without home broadband access, so our library computer lab is the primary resource Nooksack youth and families use to connect to many online tools including academic databases, learning programs, language programs, career planning resources, research tools, job searches, and soon for cultural information and language revitalization tools. Our goal with this grant opportunity is to replace our Computer Lab's aging machines, and to provide a compelling new technical tool as we partner with the Nooksack Cultural Department to link to their innovative language revitalization and culture programming.

Computer Lab: The library computers purchased in 2018 now pose daily barriers due to aging, failing, incompatible hardware and software. Freezes, crashes, and wait times are common, wasting precious time. Tribal youth often visit the library after school, and sluggish systems impede students who need to work online, hinders effective homework reviews, and slows down the overall learning process. Upgrading equipment and programs would allow our library patrons to have a smoother and more productive learning experience.

The current 6-year-old computers often struggle to run the latest software and access online resources seamlessly. Replacing outdated hardware will guarantee compatibility with the latest learning tools and ensure students, adults, and elders can make the most of available resources.

Older computers also require more maintenance, leading to increased downtime in the Library. This disruption can hinder students' sessions and impact their schedules. Additionally, outdated computers are more susceptible to security vulnerabilities, potentially compromising student privacy, and the security of their academic work. Upgrading to newer systems with up to date security features will help safeguard sensitive student information and protect against potential cyber threats.

Advanced Digital Technology: With the new computers, we plan to add the language information and recordings of over 6,000 Nooksack words prepared over three years through the Nooksack Digital Language Revitalization Project. This project includes the words, definitions, images of what the words mean, and an audio recording of a Nooksack tribal member pronouncing the words correctly. We are excited about the opportunity to mesh this project with the technology available at the library and make it available to our patrons. We have struggled to reach some of our tribal members, especially youth, to engage them and interest them in learning about their language and culture. Research tells us that a strong cultural identity among a tribe's youth has numerous benefits including improved mental health and a reduced likelihood of involvement in the justice system.

We are requesting high quality VR headsets for our library patrons to access the Cultural Departments language recordings and images, and this tool will be ideal as that department expands their offerings into footage of elders, Nooksack language speakers, special events and ceremonies, traditionally important places, and other important cultural and language touchstones that will enrich all Nooksack tribal members. With these new advanced technical tools enhancing our library, and by using audio and video recordings with a Virtual Reality system that is state of the art we anticipate the novelty will attract youthful patrons and this will provide a very appealing way of engaging our young people in learning about Nooksack language and culture.

2. PROJECT WORK PLAN

The Nooksack Tribal Library is requesting funding to replace the outdated computers and provide updated software. In addition, we will partner with the Nooksack Culture Department and the Cultural Committee to implement an exciting new resource- interactive language software and virtual reality viewings of tribal elder videos, historically important places and events, and footage (and Names) of culturally important places that many tribal members have never seen. VR cultural programming will showcase elders sharing oral histories, traditions, and preserved sites in 360-degree videos viewable through headset goggles. This tangible time travel experience will deliver inherited wisdom directly from elders to youth to powerfully instill cultural identity and continuity. Language software reintroduces the Nooksack dialect in engaging ways to enroll new speakers. The Cultural project will eventually expand to provide footage of remote ancestral lands and large cultural events such as the multi-tribal annual Canoe Journey. Provided through a VR system these will offer library patrons a chance to experience these images in a powerful, immersive manner.

This will allow a realistic and immersive experience for those who are unable for physical reasons to attend these events, or hike into some of these places. Plus, these technology advancements are imperative for digitally engaging youth in cultural education, language fluency, academic achievement, and future-forward skills—securing the continuity of tribal heritage while expanding individual opportunity. We aim for nothing less than cultural continuity, academic achievement, career readiness, and empowered, forward-thinking young tribal members embracing modernity without forfeiting history.

Computers and VR tools: Upgraded computer hardware will help remove equity barriers to academic and economic self-improvement resources. State-of-the-art technology solutions combined with targeted cultural programming will engage Nooksack youth in reconnecting with a rich heritage while gaining skills necessary for future success and self-sufficiency. This project will involve installing the computer lab and new equipment, and letting the Nooksack tribal community know the Computer Lab has up to date and exciting new technology to be able to access the language programming and new cultural content as developed by the Cultural staff. The IT staff will then train library staff and patrons to use the new VR tools.

The Cultural Committee's Nooksack Revitalization Project will work as a link on the computers, and will be similar to Babel or Rosetta Stone but with Nooksack language. The language program, a new way of teaching and instilling identity with culture, will be available on all the computers, providing an opportunity for language revitalization and with the eventual VR tools, an immersive cultural experience. The project incorporates language revitalization, and includes information about cultural sovereignty, Nooksack Place Names, and about being stewards of the environment.

As the Culture Department continues to gather footage related to tribal language and culture, patrons of the library will be able to view these in a powerful virtual reality format with the two VR sets. The VR headsets will show Nooksack Place Names from various locations on Nooksack lands. Library patrons will be able to visit historically important Nooksack sites through VR with a narrative explaining what they are seeing. These sites will also be transferred to the new computers to viewers are presented with more than one way to learn about these important places and their names.

We aim to inspire Nooksack youth and community engagement through cutting-edge, culturally-connected digital services designed to uplift lives on personal and collective levels. Specific technology funding requests include 19 new desktop computers offering reliable connectivity for education, career, and personal growth needs, and two Apple Vision Pro virtual reality (VR) headsets allowing immersive, interactive viewings the new language project programming, and of tribal history and elder interview footage, bringing cultural lessons vibrantly to life. Footage of respected elders will be preserved and the VR users will be able to feel they are sitting next to this person even years later. The Culture department has plans to purchase a drone to be able to include aerial views of historically important landscapes, including remote areas, and events as a way for viewers to gain an immersive experience of them through the VR headsets. Many of our tribal members are unable for a number of reasons to visit these important historical locations, and being able to “see” them via VR technology will be a truly inspiring experience.

The Culture staff also plans in the future to use AI to manipulate drone footage of currently populated areas to show how they looked before colonization, to be viewable through the VR. These new digital tools will open up a range of compelling new opportunities for Nooksack patrons of the tribal library, from elementary age children to Nooksack elders, to access, remember, and preserve their culture- its values and history.

Target Groups:

- 60 students ages K-12 grade
- Adults including Elders
- Parents

Beneficiaries:

- K-12 Students will learn native language from the language program developed by the cultural committee
- K-12 students will learn and explore Nooksack culture including historical sites and events using footage and narrative on the VR headsets
- Adult patrons will learn native language
- Adult patrons will have the opportunity to explore these Nooksack places and names using the VR headsets

Risks: Theft is always a risk, so the Library Manager will use a check out system allowing only users with identification to sign in and use them. Additionally, we are requesting a heavy-duty safe to store the VR equipment when it is not being used. Finally, there is inherent risk with technology- we know the computers and software will eventually become obsolete. However, we have a very skilled IT department that will be able to do repairs and maintenance to maximize the lifetime of these new Computer Lab stations and VR sets.

Planning, implementation and management of this project: The Library Manager will work with the IT Director, the Culture Department and Cultural Committee, and the project will also be guided by informal feedback from library patrons and community members. The Library Manager will provide information about the upgraded Computer Lab and the virtual reality learning project to encourage visitors and inform the community via the community newsletter, social media, the tribe's website, and through word of mouth. Even with the problems due to outdated hardware, the current Computer Lab is still popular with library patrons, especially youthful visitors, and we anticipate even greater interest with these new additions. We anticipate in particular that the VR headsets will offer such a powerful experience for learning about language and culture, that in time additional sets may be purchased by the tribe.

Resources: Nooksack IT Department, Culture Department, the Cultural Committee, the contracted culture and language curriculum developer, Nooksack Education Department, tribal Elders, and tribal leadership. Additionally, the Culture staff is working with the University of Washington to access copies of historical research about the Nooksack people. We are excited about partnering with these entities, and to have an up to date Computer Lab with the VR technology that will increase the number of users and improve the experience of learning about Nooksack culture.

How we will share general findings and lessons learned? As this project proceeds, the information about the updated Computer Lab and the innovative new VR resources will be publicized through the well-read community newsletter, the tribe's social media presence, the website, and through word-of-mouth in the community. In terms of sharing lessons learned, this will be shared internally among the partners to the project- to encourage improving the process and to be able to address potential problems directly in the future.

3. PROJECT RESULTS

Our goal is Goal 1: Improve digital services to support needs for education, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, and digital literacy skills.

We will focus on Objective 1.1: Support the establishment and refinement of digital infrastructure, platforms, and technology.

Additionally, with enhanced digital technology we also are hoping to enhance the preservation and revitalization of Native American cultures and languages with this funding, as it will provide a new and unique immersive way to experience language and cultural programming.

By updating our Computer Lab, we will be able to provide a much more user-friendly experience for those who need to use this resource for work, study, and to gain access to world events and other news, without the frustration of delays and barriers. This includes not just youth and students, but adults, parents, and elders, many of whom may have this as their sole means of online access. The intended result of this is to ensure broadband access to all of our community members, as many tribal members live in remote areas that have little to no broadband access.

The Nooksack people will find that the project will provide a unique and powerful way to present and preserve the cultural knowledge and skills of the tribal elders. First, by making the impactful language project results available to all Nooksack tribal members, and if funded, the VR tool for users will provide a unique, immersive educational experience that allows students and community members to learn about their culture, place names, and language directly from the elders that hold this knowledge. The tool will provide an immediacy and intimacy that will enlighten viewers and motivate them to learn about these important culture touchstones. The Nooksack Indian Tribe has community at the core of its value system, and not only will this new tool provide a breathtaking new way of learning, it will help preserve the language, stories, and sensation of being spoken to directly by these respected elders, long into the future.

We appreciate your consideration of this urgent request to provide the next generation of the Nooksack community with updated computer technology for a superior, less frustrating user experience, and the VR sets, a transformative technology that will help inform and preserve irreplaceable culture. Your support enables us to protect heritage and progress hand in hand.

Sustaining the benefits: This will be a new computer lab and brand-new VR technology, so we anticipate being able to utilize them for at least five years even with the intensity and long hours of usage in the library's Computer Lab. It is also the nature of technology that as new software and tools are developed, the old systems tend to become obsolete over time. Our IT Department is skilled at troubleshooting, however, so as technical issues arise they will help to make sure these devices last as long as reasonably possible.

As for the Language and culture curriculum and the VR records are built upon over time, this can be used, improved, and added to over the years. We see the revitalization project as an excellent resource that will be refined and expanded to provide a lasting and invaluable cultural archive for generations, and are pleased that we will be able to offer a unique viewing experience of these resources in our Computer Lab.

-Computers for lab and software for our library patrons, so they are not subject to delays, freezing, and being handicapped by some websites and apps no longer compatible with the outdated technology.

-Virtual Reality sets to provide an immersive experience of the footage prepared by the Language Revitalization project but also to support providing library patrons with a dramatically expanding digital theater of interviews with elders, historically important places (and names and how they are correctly pronounced) and footage of important cultural festivities and events, as developed by the Culture Department.

-Equipment and supplies to support and protect these tools, including a safe for the VR headsets.

Nooksack Library Enhancement Project 2024

Schedule of Completion

Task	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	→	Apr 2025
1	█													
2		█	█											
3			█											
4				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
5			█											
6														█

Task 1: Order new computers, software, VR headsets, batteries back up, and switch safety equipment.

Task 2: Install all new computers and all new equipment into the Library Computer Lab.

Task 3: Connect all new technology to internet and resources, including new Language project information.

Task 4: Patrons are able to use new Computer Lab technology.

Task 5: Librarian attends (Nov 12-14, 2024) ATALM Conference

Task 6: Librarian attends WA State Library Conference (Apr 10-12, 2025)