

Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria
Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Library

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria is a federally recognized tribe with ancestral ties to the Yurok, Wiyot, and Tolowa peoples. While they share similar cultural and historical traditions, each tribal group has a distinct heritage. The Rancheria is within the ancestral territory of the Yurok peoples and is located in an area of great cultural significance to the Trinidad Rancheria and other local Tribal entities. The core land holdings of the Rancheria are located on a coastal bluff east of U.S. Highway 101 just southeast of the town of Trinidad, which is about 25 miles north of Eureka.

The Trinidad Rancheria was established in 1906 by an act of the U.S. Congress that authorized the purchase of small tracts of land for “homeless Indians”. In 1908, 60 acres of land were purchased on Trinidad Bay to accommodate the tribe. The Tribe’s Federal Recognition was granted by the Department of the Interior in 1917 and between 1950 and 1961 the Trinidad Rancheria approved home assignments on the reservation and enacted their original Articles of Association. In 2008 the tribe passed a new constitution that replaced the original Articles of Association and has increased their Enrolled Membership to 236.

The Trinidad Rancheria is now comprised of three separate parcels that total 82 acres. The largest parcel is located on the west side of Highway 101 along the Pacific Coast and is made up of 46.5 acres. This parcel accommodates Tribal Member Housing, Tribal Offices, a Tribal Library, and tribal businesses. Through economic development and self-sufficiency, the Tribe was able to purchase additional land. Approximately 8 acres were purchased in Westhaven, directly across Highway 101 in the late 1980s and a third 27.5-acre parcel, located in the unincorporated community of McKinleyville, was purchased in the 1990s and now houses 12 residential properties.

The Trinidad Rancheria Library was established by the Tribal Council in 1994 for the benefit of the Tribal Membership. The mission of the Library as set forth by Tribal Council is to promote the well-being and preserve the history of the Trinidad Rancheria. It provides Tribal membership with literature collections that reflect the experience of the community and expose future generations to new ideas. It provides Tribal membership, employees and the surrounding community with access to culturally accurate and appropriate information regarding indigenous peoples and indigenous histories. It is a source of support for the education of our youth, a place for social gathering, and a center for lifelong learning.

The Library is intended to be the holding place for the history of the Tribe, through the preservation of both oral histories and written documents. It is the repository for historical and governing documents in all media including photographs, audio/visual materials and printed materials. Tribal members and employees, as well as members of the surrounding community are encouraged to utilize both the circulating and non-circulating collections. Access to culturally sensitive information by non-members is granted on a case by case basis

NARRATIVE

The Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria is a federally recognized tribe with ancestral ties to the Yurok, Wiyot, and Tolowa peoples. While they share similar cultural and historical traditions, each tribal group has a distinct heritage. The Rancheria is within the ancestral territory of the Yurok peoples and is located in an area of great cultural significance to the Trinidad Rancheria and other local Tribal entities. The core land holdings of the Rancheria are located on a coastal bluff east of U.S. Highway 101 just southeast of the town of Trinidad, which is about 25 miles north of Eureka.

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In addition to Rancheria property, the Trinidad Rancheria also owns the Trinidad Pier & Harbor and Seascape Restaurant in the City of Trinidad. The Rancheria’s property in Trinidad also includes the main entrance and access point to the Trinidad Head, which hosts walking trails, and cultural and historical points of interest.

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The Library is currently open 35 hours per week, from 10am – 5pm Monday through Friday; however, the collection is available to patrons 40 hours per week as they may request access to the Library during normal business hours. The Librarian is responsible for day to day operations in the Library, while the Tribal Programs Director is responsible for administrative oversight of library operations.

The Library currently supports the Cultural Resources Department in providing cultural programming for Rancheria members and to the larger community surrounding the Rancheria. Current programming includes youth regalia making, community garden, traditional fishing and marine resource gathering, fitness activities and much more. In the past we have offered a basket making and language workshop that incorporated cultural practices and immersion techniques for language acquisition. Partnerships with key community leaders in traditional activities have allowed this programming to occur on the Rancheria.

Project Justification

The Library is currently housed in a 30-year-old modular building that was once the administrative offices for the former United Indian Health Services Clinic that was housed on the reservation from 1977 to the early 2000's. The building is horribly out of date and limits the expansion of programming due to its impractical layout and outdated infrastructure. Additionally, the Library as currently configured is not ADA compliant nor is it accessible to disabled patrons. The Tribe has plans to remodel the Library building and include a Youth Center, which will house a youth program on one side and the Library on the other (see Supportingdoc4 for remodel plans). Current shelving units were either custom made for the spaces or are remnants of cabinetry of the former office building. As the building remodel is completed, we will need to purchase all new shelving, furniture, including desks, tables, and chairs, computers and circulation software to outfit the new Library.

Remodel of the building and the subsequent furnishing of the Library side of the facility using IMLS funds potentially meets all three of the goals and objectives of the Program. Goal 1: Improve digital services to support the needs for education, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills and digital literacy skills; Objective 1.1: Support the establishment and refinement of digital infrastructure, platforms and technology is met through infrastructure and equipment upgrades. Goal 2: Improve educational programs related to specific topics and content areas of interest to library patrons and community-based users; Objective 2.2: Support the development and implementation of classes, events, teaching tools, resources, and other educational resources is met by creation of a modern space to support those activities. Goal 3: Enhance the preservation and revitalization of Native American cultures and languages; Objectives 3.2 and 3.3 respectively, are also met with the creation of an up-to-date space in which to do the work we are already doing at the Library and in other spaces on the reservation.

The target group, as well as the ultimate beneficiaries of the project are the Tribal Membership, Tribal employees and the surrounding community. The Library is a public institution that serves

the entire community. In 2023, there were 199 active patrons utilizing the Library regularly; a number impacted by the closure of the Library for the first quarter due to Librarian injury. 90% of Library patrons are Tribal members. The Library houses a collection of over 7,000 items including an extensive Native American Collection, Fiction and Non-Fiction, Young Adult Fiction, Juvenile Fiction, Juvenile Native Collection, Easy Reader and Board Books as well as DVD, VHS and audio book collections. Additionally, the library houses copies of all governing documents of the tribe, oral histories, video interviews with elders and historic recordings of traditional songs and stories. The Library also maintains and cares for a small collection of cultural objects including basketry items.

Project Work Plan

The Library renovation will begin by June 2024, as the project will go out to bid sometime in April 2024. We anticipate completion of the remodel by December 2024. We plan to begin purchasing the new furniture and other needed items at the start of the project period to allow delivery time to coincide with completion of the remodel.

At this time, no risks have been identified with the IMLS funded activities of purchasing furnishings and needed equipment. However, we understand that prices in the post-COVID economy are subject to change and potentially increase over time and we have included mid-range quotes (Supportingdoc 1, 2 and 3) for furnishing with the understanding that we may need select different products depending on price at the time of purchase.

Rachel Sundberg, Tribal Programs Director and Dessa Gunning, Librarian will plan, manage and implement the project. We estimate that it will take at least a week to finalize purchase of the items, and minimal time to receive and store the items while the remodel occurs. We will need assistance of our Fiscal team, to implement the project, as well as the Maintenance team to assist in building and placing the furniture when the remodel is complete.

We plan to conduct a grand re-opening for the Tribal membership and surrounding community to share the results of our work.

Project Results

The intended result of the project is to create a safe, accessible, well-designed and easy to use, up-to-date Library for the Tribal membership and surrounding community to enjoy. The renovated space will support access to cultural and education programs, career development, school research and other learning activities.

Library services will naturally expand as the space allows for integrated services and community interaction. The updated space will allow for easier access to the collections, access for disabled patrons and allow for gathering space for community events, and expanding programming. This will continue beyond the life of the grant award and impact our community for years to come.

Trinidad Rancheria Library
IMLS Enhancement Grant 2024
Year One

