Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at https://www.neh.gov/program/cultural-and-community-resilience for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.
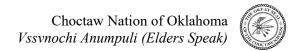
Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Vssvnochi Anumpuli (Elders Speak): The Past, Present and Future in Choctaw

Institution: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Project Director: Phillip Lewis

Grant Program: Cultural and Community Resilience

Narrative

<u>**Project goals and humanities content**</u>

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) is a federally recognized Native American Tribe that oversees a 10,922 square mile reservation in southeastern Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation has suffered extensively from the effects of both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, but the effects of the pandemic on the loss of cultural heritage have been particularly devastating. CNO is likely only 10 to 20 years away from experiencing the complete loss of all first-language speakers of Oklahoma Choctaw, and COVID-19 has accelerated this loss by claiming the lives of many elders in this final generation of speakers.

This project represents a Choctaw Nation initiative to document the speech of first-language Choctaw speakers before it's too late. The primary goal of this project is to collect audio recordings of conversations between Choctaw elders in *Chahta Anumpa* (the Choctaw Language). To achieve this goal, project staff will collect the thoughts and reflections of 30 of the last remaining first-language Oklahoma Choctaw speakers as they discuss topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Tribe's cultural resiliency in the face of pandemic-level threats. These interviews will be transcribed into written Choctaw and translated into English for subsequent use by Tribal members, language learners, educators, and scholars.

The importance of this project is demonstrated most strikingly by the severely endangered status of the Choctaw language. The Choctaw language has been under threat for over a century from multiple forces including colonization, the removal of many Choctaws via the Trail of Tears, punishment for speaking Choctaw at boarding schools, social and economic pressures to abandon the language, and more. These threats have largely been brought about by human efforts and policies that have sought to diminish and/or eliminate the Choctaw people, their culture, and their sovereignty. The threat from COVID-19 is unique. COVID-19 has targeted Choctaw culture, and especially the Choctaw language, in a way that is particularly heart-breaking, and it has done so at a time when the language is most vulnerable.

The level of endangerment of the Oklahoma variety of the Choctaw language is indicated in part by the advanced age of the remaining first-language speakers. There are no first-language speakers in their child-bearing years, and there are no children who are learning Oklahoma Choctaw as a first language. While some Tribal members in their 50s and 60s grew up hearing the language, very few of them speak it. Most speakers are in their 70s and beyond. Using the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) from Lewis and Simons (2010), Oklahoma Choctaw would best be classified as "nearly extinct" (level 8b), since "the only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language."[1] This is the most severe level of endangerment for languages that are still being spoken. The only higher categories are for languages that are dormant and extinct.

To make matters worse, the number of remaining first-language speakers is critically low. Citing a 2015 US Census report, Ethnologue lists 9,640 speakers of Choctaw, but this report is outdated and incorporates all varieties of the Choctaw language, including the Mississippi dialect, which is also endangered but less so than Oklahoma Choctaw.[2] The current situation for the variety of Choctaw spoken within Oklahoma is much more dire. Phillip Lewis, the Director of the School of Choctaw Language, estimated that there are fewer than 375 first-language speakers of Oklahoma Choctaw. In fact, Lewis' best estimate, based on CNO member surveys, is that only a couple hundred first-language speakers remain (personal communication, July 27, 2022). Given the age and number of speakers, the next 10 to 20 years may indeed see the loss of all remaining first-language speakers.

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[1] Lewis, M. P., & Simons, G. F. (2010). Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique, 55*(2). 103–120. http://www.lingv.ro/resources/scm_images/RRL-022010-Lewis.pdf
[2] "Choctaw." *Ethnologue, Languages of the World*, Retrieved July 2022 from www.ethnologue.com/language/cho

While the precise number of first language speakers lost to COVID-19 is unknown, Teresa Billy, Assistant Director of the School of Choctaw Language, estimated that number to be around 80 to100 lives lost (personal communication, November 7, 2022). Thus, it is likely that around 25% of the population of first-language speakers has been lost due to illness from COVID-19. As Chief Gary Batton remarked, "When we lose our elders, we lose our traditional knowledge. We lose our history, lose the ceremonial things that we have done in the past."

The magnitude of this loss is further compounded by the fact that Choctaw speakers have been isolated from one another by COVID-19 policies and by personal efforts to preserve their lives and health in the face of the pandemic. Social distancing has taken a toll on the mental health of millions of Americans, and the effects have been especially pronounced among racial and ethnic minorities.[3] This may be particularly true in Choctaw communities, which tend to be more collectivist in nature and are strongly oriented toward families and social networks. The heart of Choctaw culture centers around gathering together to talk, joke, laugh, sing, dance, worship, and more.

Of all the impacts of COVID-19, the loss of language is arguably the most devastating from a cultural perspective. Indeed, the effects of language loss on culture are difficult to overstate. Because language is so closely intertwined with culture and identity, the loss of the ancestral language inevitably involves a significant disruption to Tribal members' sense of Tribal identity and sense of self. As such, protecting the Tribe's language is the key to preserving cultural heritage and safeguarding sovereignty. In other words, speaking Choctaw is part of being Choctaw, so if Choctaw speakers cease to exist, a large part of what it means to be Choctaw and to embrace and transmit Choctaw cultural heritage will be lost.

Knowledge of the language also provides access to the wealth of knowledge that has been encoded in written Choctaw over the past nearly 200 years. The School of Choctaw language, *Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna*, which was founded in 1996, is working tirelessly to raise up another generation of Choctaw speakers. Even so, successful second language acquisition is a monumental task, and second language learners often have incomplete or even minimal understanding of the many nuances and complexities that characterize a living language. This wealth of linguistic knowledge that is embodied in first-language speakers is truly irreplaceable.

This language documentation project, entitled *Vssvnochi Anumpuli (Elders Speak): The Past, Present and Future in Choctaw*, will fill an important gap in language preservation efforts to date. While there is a relatively extensive set of documents preserved in written Choctaw, the number of recordings of spoken Choctaw is small and generally cumbersome to access. The recordings produced by this project will add to previous collections in several important ways. We consider the following distinctive features to be the most significant:

1. **Linguistic uniqueness**: These recordings propose to fill two major linguistic gaps in current documentation efforts: (1) Most current recordings are of interviews with a single speaker who primarily functions as a narrator throughout the recording, rather than as a conversation partner. There is a great need for documenting how conversation works in Choctaw, since there are many features of conversation that are critical for learners to know but that do not often emerge in narration or in written texts. Learners and linguists need access to examples of Choctaw conversations to truly understand how to use the language. For example, how do speakers signal agreement/disagreement or their level of engagement in the conversation? How do conversation partners know when it's their turn to speak? How do they use language to support each other and

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[3] Thomeer, M.B., Moody, M.D. & Yahirun, J. (2022). Racial and ethnic disparities in mental health and mental health care during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, 2022*, p. 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-022-01284-9

keep the conversation going? These kinds of issues lie at the heart of what it means to be a proficient user of a language. (2) Choctaw has a rich verbal system that provides a variety of methods for marking tense, aspect, and modality.[4] Yet most recordings to date center around topics situated in the past (e.g., past experiences of the interviewer or Tribe). Particularly lacking are recordings of Choctaw which contain discussion of future or possible events (Dr. Aaron Broadwell, personal communication, November 21, 2022). This project will focus on collecting language data, not only about the past, but also about the present and, especially, the future. The proposed collection of recordings will remedy both gaps in the current documentation of Choctaw by recording two first-language speakers conversing with one another and a first-language interviewer about topics mostly pertaining to the future, including talk about possible/impossible and desirable/undesirable events.

2. **Topical uniqueness**: These recordings will also be topically unique in two other important ways: (1) These recordings will provide Choctaw elders' perspectives on a life-changing event of global proportions: the COVID-19 pandemic. Past recording projects have focused on more local and/or culturally specific events (e.g., Choctaw traditions, the Trail of Tears, boarding school experiences). This collection will allow for a diverse (and to our knowledge, currently undocumented) perspective on a health crisis that has reshaped the entire world. (2) By focusing on elders' perspectives about the future, this collection will provide another set of perspectives that we believe to be completely undocumented to date: elders' hopes, desires, and expectations about future pandemics and the cultural resiliency of the Tribe.

3. **Cultural significance**: Given the state of the language, all preserved recordings of the Choctaw language are culturally significant, but this collection is significant in a new and critical way. To our knowledge, there is no other spoken record of the future hopes and expectations of Choctaw elders for their families and the Tribe. Members of the Choctaw Nation have long cherished the perspectives of their elders. This project provides an opportunity to record a piece of their vision for the future. Of course, this could happen in any generation as long as there are Choctaw people, but this generation of elders offers the last chance to record that vision from elders who grew up speaking the Choctaw language—a group that was raised in a distinctly Choctaw way, surrounded by Choctaw traditions and cultural heritage, at a time when the threat of forced assimilation was powerful and ever present.

4. **Ease of access**: To our knowledge, very few spoken Choctaw audio recordings are easily accessible online. Some collections have not yet been digitized (e.g., recordings in the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives). Other collections have been digitized, but the repositories for those recordings (e.g., the Sam Noble Museum, the American Philosophical Society Library) require a request or application process to access them. We believe the materials from our project would constitute the largest collection of spoken Choctaw recordings with direct online access. This is especially critical for students and educators, since they may not have the time or resources to find the other collections, gain access, and determine the extent to which those files can be used in classroom instruction.

This project would mitigate the loss of Choctaw cultural heritage resources by documenting the language, experiences, perspectives, and hopes of our remaining first-language Choctaw speakers who have lived through the COVID-19 pandemic. These recordings, which will be translated into English and transcribed into written Choctaw, will be of interest to Choctaw people who are invested in learning about their ancestral language, their cultural heritage, and the vision of their elders. These resources will also be valuable for those who teach Choctaw language and culture and other Native American studies courses as well. Finally, these resources will provide a wealth of information for scholars across a variety of humanities fields, including linguists, anthropologists, historians, and sociologists.

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[4] See Broadwell, G. A. (2006). *A Choctaw Reference Grammar.* University of Nebraska Press.

Program priority

The CNO reservation is overlayed by 13 Oklahoma counties, which are among the poorest in the state, with poverty levels ranging from 14.4% (Pontotoc County) to 21.4% (Hughes County).[5] These high poverty rates are coupled with low levels of educational attainment. On average, across the 13 counties, more than one in five adults ages 18-24 (21.2%) have not received a high school diploma or equivalency.[6]

Data from the Justice40 Initiative also clearly indicates that CNO's reservation is a disadvantaged area.[7] There are a total of 83 census tracts in the 13 counties that overlay the Tribal service area. Of those 83 census tracts, 61 tracts (73.5%) qualify as "disadvantaged" according to this initiative. Over half of those census tracts (n = 33, 54.1%) are disadvantaged in the climate change category, and over three-fourths (n=48, 78.7%) are disadvantaged in the category of health burdens. As shown in Table 1 below, at least a portion of all 13 CNO counties qualifies as disadvantaged in one or more of the eight Justice40 categories. Moreover, according to the Justice40 Initiative data, the average life expectancy across the 13 counties is just under 76 years, while life expectancy in dataset for the entire US is at 78.3 years. Taken together, these numbers reflect the serious dangers this community faces from many different factors, including drought, extreme weather (especially tornados), heart disease, low levels of education, and pervasive poverty.

Table 1: Disadvantaged status of counties within the CNO reservation

County status	County name	Number of categories exceeded	Percent of census tracts qualifying as disadvantaged
Counties fully within the CNO reservation	Pushmataha	3	62%
	Leflore	3	67%
	Latimer	2	73%
	Choctaw	4	75%
	Bryan	3	80%
	Atoka	3	92%
	Haskell	2	100%
	Pittsburg	3	100%
	Coal	3	100%
	McCurtain	4	100%
Counties only partially within the CNO reservation	Pontotoc	3	20%
	Johnston	2	67%
	Hughes	4	80%

Given the data summarized above, it should come as no surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a large toll on the Choctaw Nation reservation. As shown in Table 2, COVID-19 cases have been high within this rural section of southeastern Oklahoma, and Choctaw elders have been among those most

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[5] U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates. *SAIPE Interactive Tool.* Retrieved June 21, 2022 from https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saipe/#/?s_state=&s_county=&s_district=&s_geography=county

[6] U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. *S1501 Educational Attainment.* The Census Bureau. Retrieved June 23, 2022, from https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=United+States&t=Education%3AEducational+Attainment&g=0400000US40_0500000US40005%2C40013%2C40023%2C40029%2C40061%2C40063%2C40069%2C40077%2C40079%2C40089%2C40121%2C40123%2C40127&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1501&tp=false

[7] Council on Environmental Quality. (2022). *Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: Communities list data.* Retrieved October 24, 2022 from https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/downloads

affected by the virus. There are countless stories of loss throughout the reservation, including loss of life, loved ones, work, long-term health, relationships, and more.

Table 2. Population statistics and COVID-19 data for the CNO reservation

County name	County Population[8]	Percent AIAN[9]	Total COVID deaths reported[10]	Total COVID cases reported[11]	AIAN COVID cases (elders)[12]	AIAN cases receiving treatment (elders)[13]
Atoka	13815	22.10%	54	4385	752 (140)	702 (161)
Bryan	47325	20.90%	139	16032	3640 (507)	3434 (546)
Choctaw	14727	24.10%	67	4769	1093 (234)	959 (264)
Coal	5577	25.80%	25	1971	154 (27)	133 (22)
Haskell	12688	24.50%	43	3202	830 (195)	507 (163)
Hughes	13265	26.00%	63	2937	53 (11)	29 (8)
Johnston	11028	22.30%	57	3573	63 (11)	63 (9)
Latimer	10239	31.60%	38	2562	796 (151)	411 (113)
Leflore	49999	19.20%	111	14669	3866 (759)	2274 (597)
McCurtain	32913	22.90%	169	9134	2486 (531)	2227 (576)
Pittsburg	43955	22.10%	224	12980	3107 (556)	1211 (334)
Pontotoc	38385	26.40%	159	15060	14 (2)	18 (5)
Pushmataha	11055	25.20%	45	3084	648 (166)	507 (169)

Community participation

This project is being carried out by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and implemented by and with members of the Tribe. Planning for this project has been undertaken by the School of Choctaw Language. These planning efforts have been led by Teresa Billy, the Assistant Director for the School of Choctaw Language, who is a Choctaw Tribal member and a first-language speaker of Choctaw. Decisions about which speakers to interview, what interview questions to ask, how to archive these materials, and how the

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[8] U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. *S0101 Age and Sex.* The Census Bureau. Retrieved from
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Populations%20and%20People&g=0400000US40_0500000US40005,40013,
40023,40029,40061,40063,40069,40077,40079,40089,40121,40123,40127&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0101

[9] U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. *ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates: AIAN alone or in any combination.* The Census Bureau. Retrieved from
https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?g=0400000US40&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP05

[10] USA Facts. (2022). *Oklahoma coronavirus cases and deaths.* Retrieved October 25, 2022 from
https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/state/oklahoma

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] Choctaw Nation Health Reporting and Analytics. (Nov. 8, 2022). These counts represent the number of CDIB cardholders who tested positive for COVID-19 at a CNO facility. The numbers in parentheses are counts for the subset of the patients who were 55 years old or older.

[13] Choctaw Nation Health Reporting and Analytics. (Nov. 8, 2022). These counts represent the number of CDIB cardholders who were received medical treatment for COVID-19 at a CNO facility. The numbers in parentheses are counts for the subset of the patients who were 55 years old or older.

archived materials will be accessed are being made by the School of Choctaw Language and primarily for members of the Choctaw Nation.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has agreed to review this project if the grant is awarded (see the attachment entitled commitment.pdf for a commitment letter from the chair of the CNO IRB), and project staff are committed to meeting all ethical standards of the IRB.

Staff are also fully committed to adhering to the NEH Code of Ethics Related to Native Americans. As noted above, this project is being carried out by and for the native community involved. Prior to the interview, participants will be fully informed that the recordings, transcriptions, and translations of their interviews will be posted online and made available to anyone with an internet connection, including language learners, instructors, researchers, and the general public. Participants will also be notified that the materials may be used for instructional purposes by the School of Choctaw Language and by linguists and other interested scholars. All project participants will be asked to give verbal consent to the recording before it takes place and sign an informed consent form upon completion of the interview. Interviewee consent forms will be kept in the collection files to confirm for prospective researchers that a release was obtained at the time of the interview, but the forms will not otherwise be made publicly available. Moreover, any personal information on the forms (phone numbers, address, etc.) will not be visible to researchers, even if they request to see the forms. Interviewees who provide consent will also be allowed to request that certain portions of the interview be redacted in the publicly available files.

Participants will be treated with the utmost respect and sensitivity and compensated fairly for their time and contribution. Participants will be allowed to choose whether their recordings are audio only or audio and video and will decide whether they want their names to be attached to their interview files or would prefer to remain anonymous. For those who wish to remain unnamed, any mention of their names during the interview will be redacted. If any other individuals are incidentally named during the interview, those names will be redacted from the publicly available files as well. A notice will also be posted with the archived materials that any publications concerning this collection should credit the participants appropriately and must be reviewed and approved by the CNO Institutional Review Board prior to publication. Contact information for the IRB will be provided as well.

The materials produced by this project will be archived and housed by the Choctaw Cultural Center, a business unit of the CNO that is dedicated to preserving and promoting Choctaw cultural heritage. The remastered version of the recordings as well as the final transcripts and translations approved for public dissemination will be freely available online through the online catalog: *Hina Hanta* (the Bright Path). A link to the online catalog and a description of this collection will also be available on the School of Choctaw Language website to make this collection more accessible to learners, instructors, Tribal members, researchers, and other interested parties.

Methodology

Participants. Participants will be chosen based on the recommendations of Tribal elders and individuals involved in the School of Choctaw Language. This method of recruitment is most feasible because of the small number of first language speakers of Oklahoma Choctaw and the fact that many of these elders are unfamiliar with Internet and email. Project staff will contact each potential interviewee to assess their willingness to participate and to explain the details of the project, the compensation for participation, and what will be done with the collected materials. First-language speakers who are interested in participating will be asked to identify another first-language speaker they would like to converse with during the recording. Those speakers will also be contacted to assess their willingness to participate and to inform them about the details of the project.

Interviewers and setting. Interviews will be conducted primarily by Teresa Billy, the Assistant Director of the School of Choctaw Language who is also a first-language speaker of Choctaw. A male first-

language interviewer will also be selected to help with this project. When possible, female pairs of participants will be interviewed by Ms. Billy and male pairs by the male interviewer. Mix-gendered pairs of interviewees may be interviewed by either interviewer. Interviews will take place in the home of one of the participants or in a different location of their choosing. Efforts will be made to ensure that the recordings are made in a quiet and comfortable environment.

Equipment. If the two members of an interview pair consent, both audio and video data will be collected. Audio data will be recorded using the Zoom F6 6-Input/14-Track Multitrack Field Recorder, which features 24-bit linear and 32-bit float resolution and sampling rates of 192 kHz. This audio equipment will allow us to fit each speaker with a wireless microphone (RODE Wireless GO II Compact Digital Wireless Omni Lavalier Microphone) so we can capture each voice separately and record in stereo. That way, each participant's audio can be isolated as necessary to help with the transcription phase of the project.

For participants who consent to video recording, video data will be captured using a JVC GY-HM170UA 4KCAM Compact Professional Camcorder with Top Handle Audio Unit, which provides 4K 24/30p recording at 150 Mb/s. Cameras will be mounted on tripods (Manfrotto MVH500A Fluid Drag Video Head with MVT502AM Tripod), and a three-piece light kit (GVM 800D-RGB LED Studio 3-Video Light Kit) will further enhance the recording quality. The complete collection of audio and video recording equipment will produce ultra-high-definition recordings and result in archival-quality digital files.

Interview questions. Since a primary focus of these recordings is to collect natural conversational data, the interviewer will not be in complete control of the content of the conversations. Nevertheless, the interviewer will work to direct each conversation using Choctaw translations of the following questions:

A. Questions eliciting conversation about the past and present:
   1. What are some lessons that you have taken away from your experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic?
   2. Do you think there are any ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Choctaw culture? If so, how?
   3. Do you know any stories from Choctaw survivors of the 1918 Spanish Flu? If so, can you tell us about those? Do you see any connections in those stories with the current pandemic?
B. Questions eliciting conversation about the future:
   4. If you hear that a new pandemic is coming, what will you do to prepare?
   5. What else will you do differently next time?
   6. What do you hope your children or grandchildren will do in the case of another pandemic?
   7. If there is another pandemic, what should the Choctaw Nation or the Choctaw Nation Health Authority do differently?
   8. What do you think the Choctaw Nation should do to preserve Choctaw culture and language?
   9. What aspects of Choctaw culture do you hope your children and grandchildren will continue to practice throughout their lives?
   10. What aspects of Choctaw culture do you think will still be alive and well when your grandchildren or great-grandchildren are grown?

Staff will also collect the following demographic information from each participant via a brief demographic questionnaire: (1) speaker's gender, (2) speaker's age or age range, (3) where the speaker lived during childhood, (4) at what age the speaker began learning the Choctaw language, and (5) who served as the primary source of language transmission for that speaker (e.g., parents, grandparent, etc.). This information will prove especially valuable for linguists and other scholars who use these recordings to gain a deeper understanding of Choctaw language and culture.

Informed consent and other ethical considerations. All interviewees will be fully informed about the purpose of project, the items produced by the project (viz. recordings with accompanying transcriptions

and English translations), and how these materials will be archived and made accessible. Prior to the interview, participants will receive a printed informed consent form and a verbal explanation of the content of the form. Interviewees will be asked to give verbal consent to the recording prior to the start of the interview and will provide formal written consent upon completion of the interview (see the application attachment entitled documentation.pdf for a sample informed consent form). Because current first-language speakers are also fully proficient in English, the consent forms process will be carried out in English unless the participant requests otherwise.

Participants will choose whether to be named in the interviews and whether they consent to audio only or audio and video recordings. Given the size of the native speaker community and the recognizability of voice data, full anonymity for the speakers may be impossible. Participants who choose to remain anonymous and only participate in audio recordings will receive a clear explanation about the possibility of being recognized simply by their voice. Any personally identifiable information about other individuals that is mentioned incidentally during the conversations (names, birthdates, etc.) will be redacted from the publicly available files.

The details of the project will be reviewed by CNO's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and adjusted as needed to meet the IRB's ethical requirements. Our project team is also fully committed to abiding by the NEH's Code Ethics Related to Native Americans in its entirety.

Project output. In total, we plan to collect 15 interviews accounting for approximately 20 hours of conversation in the Choctaw language and each involving a pair of first-language speakers along with the first-language interviewer. These recordings will be unique among current recordings of spoken Choctaw in that they will represent conversations, rather than narrations, and focus on topics related to the future, rather than the past. Each interview will be transcribed into written Choctaw and translated in to written English by Eveline Steele or Dorothy Van Horn. These women are both first-language speakers of Choctaw who have extensive experience with transcription and translation.

Preservation and access. The materials produced by this project will be archived and housed by the Choctaw Cultural Center. The remastered version of the recordings as well as the final transcripts and translations approved for public dissemination will be freely available online through the online catalog: *Hina Hanta* (the Bright Path) or by visiting the Choctaw Cultural Center archives. The generated materials and associated metadata will be maintained by the experienced Collections Department staff at the Choctaw Cultural Center using Collection Management Software (reDiscovery Proficio) and best practices for registration, archival, and born-digital media.

Digital copies of the interview materials (viz. raw audio/video footage, remastered copies, and copies of the transcriptions and translations) will all be archived through the Collection Management Software, and the publicly accessible files (viz. the remastered videos, transcriptions, and translations) will be shared through the online catalog website *Hina Hanta*. Physical copies of any materials produced (e.g., consent forms, demographic questionnaires) will be stored in the collection files either in fireproof filing cabinets in the registrar's office or in the archival storage space, which is monitored and equipped based on current best practices. Digital items will be housed on the CNO servers, which are actively maintained, backed-up, and supported. A redundant physical copy of the digital files will also be created on a removable hard drive and stored within the Cultural Center archives. Archive staff will also develop and implement a plan to assess these files every few years to ensure that they remain readable in the face of changing technology. The digital masters, informed consent forms, and demographic questionnaires will be stored in the collection files, but not made available to the general public.

The following information from the demographic questionnaire will also be entered into the archive and provided online about each conversation (if permission is granted by the participants): the participants'

name, gender, age range, and general geographic location during childhood, age when they began learning Choctaw, and source of Choctaw language transmission. A link to this collection will be placed on the School of Choctaw Language website to promote accessibility and awareness.

Deliverables

The primary deliverables for this project will be a set of 15 recordings of conversations between first-language Choctaw speakers in the Choctaw language (30 speakers in total plus the interviewer). Each recording will be accompanied by a precise transcription into written Choctaw and a translation into written English.

With consent of the participants, these materials will be accessed through *Hina Hanta,* CNO's online collections website and linked to from the School of Choctaw Language website. These measures will ensure that these recordings are easily located and freely available online. This collection will easily represent one of the largest and most accessible set of Choctaw language recordings, and the only set featuring large amounts of conversation (as opposed to narration) and talk about the future (as opposed to the past).

The consent form we will use for this project and a signed MOU from the Cultural Center staff detailing their agreement to archive these files are available in the application attachments (see documentation.pdf and commitment.pdf, respectively).

Work plan

A summary of our work plan is provided in Table 3 below, where PD refers to the Project Director (Phillip Lewis) and PC to the Project Coordinator (Teresa Billy).

Table 3. Work plan summary

Timeframe	Activity	Outputs	Responsible party*
Oct. 2023	Grant kickoff and introductions to Grant Services support team	Successful grant project commencement	NEH PreAward, PostAward, Accounting, Procurement, PD
Oct. 2023 – Nov. 2023	Update list of first-language speakers	Updated listing of first-language speakers, contact list for project participants	PD, PC, community members
Nov. 2023 – Dec. 2024	Schedule interviews	Interview schedule for recordings	PC
Dec. 2023 – Feb. 2025	Conduct interviews (1 per month)	Raw language data	PC, interview participants
Jan. 2024 – April 2025	Edit interview footage	Language data for public consumption	Project technical staff
Feb. 2024 – May 2025	Transcribe and translate interviews	Written Choctaw transcriptions and English translations of primary language data	Transcribers and translators
May 2025	Attend CCR meeting in D.C.	Staff development	PD, PC
June 2025	Submit materials to Choctaw Cultural Center	Materials available for processing in the archive	PD, PC

June 2025 – Aug. 2025	Process materials for archiving and public access	Materials preserved according to best practices and made freely accessible online	Cultural Center Collections Department staff
Aug. 2025	Produce promotional materials	Expansion of public awareness and access	PD, PC
Sept. 2025	Grant closeout	Completion of project	PD, PostAward, Accounting

<u>Project personnel and advisors</u>

The Project Director for this work will be Phillip Lewis, Director of the School of Choctaw Language. Mr. Lewis is a CNO Tribal member and a second-language learner of Choctaw. He has been directing the language program since July of 2021. Before that, Mr. Lewis worked in CNO's Grant Services Department, and his earlier work consisted of over 20 years of experience managing grants for other Native American Tribes. As a result, Mr. Lewis is very familiar with federal grants and grants management. Most recently, he successfully managed a language documentation grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (viz. American Rescue Plan Act Emergency Native Language Preservation and Maintenance Grant), which has resulted in a collection of recordings (native speaker narrations about the past) that will be posted online soon. Mr. Lewis will dedicate 5% of his work time to this grant, providing oversight and ensuring successful grant management.

Teresa Billy, Assistant Director for the School of Choctaw Language, will serve as the Project Coordinator and will commit 5% of her time to this grant. Ms. Billy is also a CNO Tribal member and is herself a first-language speaker of Choctaw. In addition to coordinating the interviews and managing the day-to-day operations of the grant, Ms. Billy will serve as the primary interviewer. Ms. Billy successfully performed these functions for the Emergency Native Language Grant mentioned above and has been deeply involved in language preservation work for decades. A backup male first-language interviewer will be appointed to fill in for Ms. Billy as needed.

Eveline Steele and Dorothy Van Horn will transcribe these interviews into written Choctaw and translate them into English. These two CNO Tribal members are first-language speakers of Choctaw and have expert knowledge of written Choctaw and English. Their skills in these areas have been amply demonstrated in their work translating and transcribing for numerous Choctaw documentation projects over the last two decades, including the recent Emergency Native Language Grant. Their time will be 100% committed to this grant.

The Language Department's technical support staff during the project period of the grant will provide technical support and advice and edit the raw audio and video files from the interviews. This person will commit 5% of his or her time to this grant. We will hire an additional outside technical consultant as needed to train project staff on how to use the recording equipment and editing software and help with any additional technical issues.

Dr. Alexandria Gough will oversee the archiving of these materials within the Choctaw Cultural Center and the Collection Management System, Proficio. Dr. Gough holds a Ph.D. in Native American History from the University of Oklahoma and has ten years of experience in archival processing and management.

Margaret Malone will oversee the transfer of the materials to the Choctaw Cultural Center and the upload of the materials onto the *Hina Hanta* website. Ms. Malone holds a master's degree in Museum Studies and has over a decade of experience in registration, collection management, and other related tasks.

Resumes for the named project staff above are provided in the application attachments. All CNO staff will be compensated by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; no personnel salaries will be paid through the grant.