

# **A Language Fair, a Community and a Museum: The Role of Museum Anthropology in Sustained and Responsive Engagement**

**Daniel C. Swan<sup>1</sup>**

Sam Noble Museum, University of Oklahoma

**Mary S. Linn<sup>2</sup>**

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution

<sup>1</sup>Sam Noble Museum  
University of Oklahoma  
2401 Chatauqua Ave  
Norman, OK 73072  
United States  
dcswan@ou.edu

<sup>2</sup>Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage  
Smithsonian Institution  
P.O. Box 37012, MRC 520  
Washington, DC 20024  
United States  
LinnM@si.edu

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## **Abstract**

Founded in 2003 the Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair (ONAYLF) has become one of the largest gatherings of Native American language learners in the United States. The Fair is unquestionably the most significant and sustained interaction with Native American communities in the history of the Sam Noble Museum, quickly becoming a signature event that contributes to the museum's reputation and stature. As the Fair gained increased prominence and importance in the Native American communities of Oklahoma and the surrounding regions it was consistently marginalized within the institutional culture of the museum. Over the course of our respective leadership of the ONAYLF we encountered the continued need for anthropological intervention to "re-institutionalize" a very successful program. In this report we focus on specific impacts of this failed ownership and the anthropological methods employed to address them. We conclude with an assessment of the ONAYLF in terms of on-going efforts to decolonize museum practice.

## **Keywords**

fairs; indigenous peoples; intergenerational relations; language revitalization; natural history museums; Oklahoma; youth movements.

## **Competing Interests**

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For editorial inquiries, e-mail: [mar1@indiana.edu](mailto:mar1@indiana.edu)

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**Daniel C. Swan**

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In 1899, the Territorial Legislature of the future state of Oklahoma mandated the founding of a natural history museum on the campus of the University of the Territory of Oklahoma, now The University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, USA. The museum quickly established important collections of geological, zoological and botanical specimens that were deployed in exhibit cases around campus to support the teaching mission of the university. In 1930 a "museum room" was established in the geology building to facilitate exhibition of collections. As the collections and research programs of the museum grew, they spread to a variety of buildings and locations on campus. In 1987 the museum was designated as the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History by the Oklahoma State Legislature. On May 1, 2000, the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History (Sam Noble Museum) opened its doors to a new 198,000 square foot facility housing eleven curatorial departments, labs, libraries, offices and 70,000 square feet of public, education and exhibition spaces.

In 2002, a new curatorial department, Native American Languages (NAL), was created at the Sam Noble Museum. With advice from a Native advisory committee, the curator established a collection that includes audio and video recordings, manuscripts, books, journals, ephemera and instructional materials relating to more than 245 Native North American languages. The majority of the collections are community-initiated, focusing on teaching materials and curricula, family recordings, and back-up copies for Tribal Nation collections. The programs and activities sponsored by the NAL department support Native American communities and their members in their work to document, maintain and perpetuate their ancestral languages (Fitzgerald and Linn 2013; Linn 2014).<sup>1</sup>

The most significant program of the NAL department at the Sam Noble Museum is the annual Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair (ONAYLF). Held on the first Monday and Tuesday in April, students, teachers, parents, relatives, elders and other members of the Native American community gather at the Sam Noble Museum to celebrate language diversity and vitality (Figure 1). The Language Fair provides a unique opportunity for students to share their language abilities in live presentations of song and spoken word. Students also compete in material submission categories that include poster art, videos, books, poetry, and comics. Through its material submissions, the Fair provides an outlet for various genres of expressive culture, particularly visual and literary arts (Figure 2). In many ways the ONAYLF embodies and mirrors the recent ascendancy of language reclamation in Oklahoma as a major locus of community interest and activity. Tribal Nations, public schools, and Native American families in Oklahoma invest considerable time, energy and resources to preserve and perpetuate Indigenous languages. We use ‘reclamation’ to mean the empowerment of Indigenous communities in regaining rights and setting their own goals over their language, land, and wellness. Reclamation is representative of changing from colonial and settler perspectives to Indigenous perspectives in the larger language revitalization movement (Leonard 2012; De Korne and Leonard 2017).



Figure 1. Attendees and participants at the Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair, Sam Noble Museum, University of Oklahoma. 2004. Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.



Figure 2. Image by Des Cygne Anson of the Osage Nation, which was the 2008 Poster Contest Grand Prize Winner. Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.

The first ONAYLF was held in April 2003. Elder and teacher Geneva Navarro (Comanche), educator Quinton Roman Nose (Cheyenne), and the museum's first Curator of Native American Languages, Mary Linn, developed the program at the museum to recognize Native language teachers and students in Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup> The Fair supports the language reclamation efforts of Native American communities in Oklahoma, and celebrates language learners at all stages in their acquisition, elements often overlooked in the long process of revitalization. Linn directed the Fair from its inception in 2003 through 2014, when she accepted a curatorial appointment at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. As Curator of Ethnology and Associate Director for Public Engagement, Swan assumed this responsibility in 2015 and directed the Fair through 2017. In that year Raina Heaton was hired as Assistant Curator of Native American Languages at the Sam Noble Museum and has served as fair director from 2018 to the present.<sup>3</sup>

The Fair creates a singular opportunity for students and teachers from dozens of Native American communities to gather and exchange ideas, methods, and accomplishments. This exchange of ideas and successful strategies among Indigenous communities is governed by a shared set of social protocols and relationships. This stands in stark contrast to the common situation in which Indigenous people serve as objects and subjects in museum-based research and public programs (Smith 2012, 109). In this manner the Fair privileges Indigenous methodologies for language maintenance and renewal through its unique structure and format.

Early in its history the Fair provided a connection among Native American youth from across the state who were learning their languages, often in isolation even in their communities. In many ways, the Fair creates a language community for learners to interact and engage across Native communities and educational contexts. While



seemingly temporary, we believe the connections made by students have lasting consequences beyond strengthening motivations and confidence in using their languages. The Fair provides an important shared social experience among allies that have helped propel language reclamation as they age into leadership roles (Figure 3). Finally, by bringing new generations of Indigenous youth into the museum, we wanted the Fair to be an agent of long-term change in the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples (Fuller 1992, 36; Gurian 2006, 70; Weil 1999, 236, 243).

The ONAYLF has grown to become one of the largest gatherings of Native language teachers and learners in the United States. In 2017 the Fair celebrated its fifteenth anniversary, hosting over 3,400 participants and guests from 91 language revitalization programs. The Fair now includes language teachers who were student participants in the Fair and others who continued to support the Fair while attending the University of Oklahoma. Forced to pause in 2020 due to COVID-19, the Fair returned in 2021 with asynchronous judging of recorded performances later posted online.

The Fair has evolved to better reflect and support community agendas in language maintenance and revitalization and strives to be responsive to changing student interest and motivation. A seminal moment in the history of the Fair occurred with the addition of a “Modern Song” category in 2010. Cherokee Nation Immersion School’s 3rd-5th grade choreographed performance of “My Girl”<sup>©</sup> followed the next year by the Chickasaw Nation Language Program’s 3rd-5th grade performance of “Hit



Figure 3. Anadarko Youth Two Steppers who were recognized with 1st Place in Small Group Music/Dance Performance category for Grades 3-5 in 2004. Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.

Me with Your Best Shot”<sup>©</sup> transformed the Fair into a vehicle of student-driven new expressions. The addition of a “comics and cartoon,” category and a focus in 2014 on “language and skateboard art” provide additional examples of our efforts to keep the Fair relevant in the ever-changing nature of youth culture. Recent increases in the number of individual spoken word entrants necessitated an additional performance venue at the 2018 Fair. We interpret this as evidence of increased confidence and competency among student language learners as they move beyond the need for the support and security provided by group performances and as they are using language, even modestly, in their daily lives. Insight into the changing contexts and agendas of language revitalization programs in Oklahoma and the surrounding region is a key element of the work of the NAL Curator. This dialogue is a critical element in on-going efforts to sustain and expand the level of community engagement at the core of the Fair.

The Oklahoma State Board of Education recognizes the study of Native American languages as core curriculum, part of their World Languages choices and standards. The public schools that offer Native languages have an on-going relationship with the Fair. The set spring dates of the Fair attempt to maximize semester-end learning goals while minimizing conflict with statewide testing dates. School administrators allow the students leave from other classes and provide buses for transportation to the museum, thus acknowledging the educational significance of the Fair. Many of the schools prominently display the student trophies and ribbons, won for language achievements.

The Language Fair quickly assumed a central position in the museum’s program of engaged scholarship and institutional collaboration with Native American communities. The social relations engendered by the Fair function at multiple levels of community integration and include varying degrees of shared authority and decision making.<sup>4</sup> At the center of this organizational scheme is the ONAYLF Community Advisory Committee, comprised of individuals engaged in language revitalization and maintenance programs in a range of educational settings. The Community Advisory Committee benefits from strong support from the Native American faculty and staff at the University of Oklahoma. The committee meets twice a year, once in the fall to review and discuss plans, potential speakers, rule changes, format issues, and the themes that drive the material submissions and performances at each year’s fair. The committee meets again in the late Spring to review the data from the recent Fair and discuss challenges and opportunities for the future.

The Museum also employs a first language speaker and university educator as Fair Coordinator.<sup>5</sup> The Fair Coordinator exercises significant authority in planning and preparation for the Fair and plays a key role in managing the actual event. The Native American fraternity at the University of Oklahoma, Sigma Nu Alpha Gamma (SNAG), serves as the host drum that presents an honor song for the students at the opening ceremonies on each day of the Fair. The Fair traditionally invites community language advocates to deliver an inspirational keynote address to attendees and participants. Native elders and educators serve as judges for the physical submission and performance categories. Judges for the performance categories gauge amount and ease of language use (not accuracy), spirit of presentation and stage presence (Figure 4).

Under Heaton’s leadership (2019–20) the Fair added a Native American hymn singing event on Monday evening.<sup>6</sup> This event provides an additional source of fellowship for Fair participants, OU students and local community members, broadening the



Figure 4. Judges for the performance categories in 2004. (l-r) Virgil Swift (Wichita and Affiliated Tribes), Geneva Navarro (Comanche Nation), Ava Dody (Comanche Nation), and Josephine Wapp (Comanche Nation). Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.

social networks engendered by the fair. The ONAYLF also promotes communication between the museum and a number of stakeholders in Native Language revitalization in Oklahoma. This includes linguists, language program administrators, first language speakers, students, teachers, parents, community elders and tribal officials.

The working relationships engendered by the ONAYLF, both formal and informal, creates a social network that causes us to view the ONAYLF as an inherently Indigenous activity, shaped by expectations, protocols and standards gained from our community partners. The Fair promotes sustained collaborations through the willingness of the museum to solicit and act upon community critiques and changing expectations. The Fair has also prompted new forms of collaboration and community partnerships at the Sam Noble Museum. The ONAYLF was instrumental in the advent of financial support from tribal governments for programs and exhibitions at the Sam Noble Museum. The Fair has benefitted tremendously from the sponsorship of a number of Oklahoma Native Nations and Native American organizations, often defraying the majority of the direct costs of the Fair.<sup>7</sup> We interpret this as testament of the value and respect Oklahoma Native Nations ascribe to the Fair and their desire to support its continued growth and success. The Fair has also fostered community connections and partnerships that have developed into opportunities for collaborative research, exhibitions, and heritage documentation projects (Asma 2001; Gurian 2006, 72; Lonetree 2012, 170–71; Smith 2012, 223; Willow 2010, 38, 53).<sup>8</sup>

The ONAYLF is a signature public program and the museum's most sustained engagement with the Native American communities of Oklahoma. The Fair generates a tremendous amount of pride and positive recognition for the University of Oklahoma

and the Sam Noble Museum and has received a number of awards in recognition of its unique nature and contributions to indigenous language reclamation. On April 9, 2012, the Oklahoma House of Representatives recognized the ONAYLF, students, teachers and elders for their excellence in perpetuating Native languages. In 2013 the NAL programs at the museum received a National Medal of Merit from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and in 2017 the ONAYLF received a World Heritage Award from the University Museums and Collections Group (UMAC) of the International Congress of Museums (ICOM), a UNESCO organization. The respective plaques and certificates are proudly displayed in the museum lobby and news clippings from the award ceremonies remained on the bulletin board at the staff entrance long after their date of publication.

Despite this success and recognition, the museum had difficulty embracing the event with any sense of true ownership. Early in its history the Fair was charged for one hundred percent of the indirect costs of the event, including space usage, staffing, and lost revenue in museum admissions and sales in the café and gift shop. This created a situation in which a significant portion of the funding necessary to sponsor the Fair each year was actually a contribution to the operating budget of the museum. Over the last ten years these issues have largely been addressed and the museum has assumed full responsibility for the indirect costs of the Fair.<sup>9</sup>

The increase in museum funding did little to address the marginalization of the Fair within the institutional culture of the Sam Noble Museum. A key factor in this detachment was the unwillingness of executive management to see value in the Fair early in its history. They were overtly critical of new initiatives that deviated from the traditional programs offered by a natural history museum. The will to engage in meaningful institutional advancement must be supported at all levels of management. Echoing the position of executive leadership, the middle managers and broader staff of the museum largely dismissed and avoided the Fair, viewing it as something separate from the museum's mission. The failure of this support to materialize contributes to a lingering philosophy that continues to alienate the ONAYLF from the museum.

These handicaps often threatened the ability of the Fair to evolve and adapt in response to its early success. ONAYLF grew exponentially and in retrospect it clearly overwhelmed the capacity of a conservative natural history museum to comprehend its potential, let alone embrace the experience. This was not a simple matter of a missed opportunity but evidence of the limitations of an institutional "monoculture" (Smith 2012, 223) grounded in the value system of settler colonialism.<sup>10</sup> The unwillingness to respect and access alternative value systems and Indigenous modes of knowledge production caused the museum to view the Fair as a burden as opposed to a unique opportunity for enhanced public service and institutional growth (Buntinx and Karp 2006, 208; Lonetree 2012, 170–71; Willow 2010, 53).

Our hope that the ONAYLF would stimulate and guide a broader decolonization of the Sam Noble Museum has failed to materialize. A welcome exception involves the front-line staff of the museum, including security, custodial, special events, visitor services, and exhibitions. Largely due to the nature of their positions these segments of the staff have been the most responsive to the special circumstances and considerations of this unique event. This is where museum anthropology matters on the ground. The NAL curator and Fair Director works with these units of the museum to incorporate more diverse methods and greater flexibility in the delivery of customer service during the event. The museum security guards now understand that there are



culturally appropriate manners in which to remind Native elders of museum rules and procedures and they more readily consider accommodations that include Indigenous values and protocols. The volunteers of the museum, valued members of the staffing at the Fair, have also developed a community friendly attitude and while not all volunteers appreciate the managed chaos of the event, those who do are deeply devoted to both the cause and the audience. Educating the staff and promoting the value of diverse programs and audiences are powerful tools in our effort to rectify the often culturally hostile environment of museums (Figure 5).<sup>11</sup>

While the Fair benefits from the application of decolonizing methods similar to those employed in Native American directed museums, these efforts represent individual approaches in our professional activities and not an institutional commitment. Central to decolonizing initiatives is an explicit acknowledgement and apology for past exploitative and exclusionary practices and policies, many that remain unaddressed in our respective institutions. Despite this lack of institutional commitment by the museum, ONAYLF claims the moral edge that emerges when museums are sites of reconciliation, truth, and healing. The ONAYLF is proud to play a minor role in the important process of recovery from the colonial legacy of federal assimilation policies and the language loss they caused (Buntinx and Karp 2006, 216; Fuller 1992, 328–33, 362; Lonetree 2009, 325–38).

Our efforts to organize and deliver the annual ONAYLF respond to renewed calls for museums to enhance and expand their public service missions in new and meaningful manners (Ames 1999; Buntinx and Karp 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Gurian 2006; Janes 2012; Linn 2014; Lonetree 2012; Swan and Jordan 2015; Weil 1999). We accept the challenge to move beyond the rhetoric of collaboration to pursue meaning-



Figure 5. The Black Bear Singers (Pawnee Nation), who were recognized with 3rd Place in the Small Group Music/Dance Performance category for Grades 9-12 in 2008. Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.

ful and enduring community engagements grounded in shared authority and decision making. Here, we benefit from the concept of “mindful museum practice,” an effort to redefine the proper roles of museums through expanded social awareness and innovative modes of public service (Janes 2012, 514).

Our work also accesses the theory and practice of “tactical museologies” (Buntinx and Karp 2006, 208–209) working to move the primary focus of the Sam Noble Museum from galleries and collections to programs and public outreach (Figure 6). The ONAYLF represents an appropriation of the museum through a series of small movements that combine to represent a “strategic displacement” of the colonial authority of museums (Buntinx and Karp 2006, 213). The ultimate goal of this methodology is the transformation of the modernist museum to a post-museum that emphasizes the intangible heritage of communities, in our case the value of language and cultural reclamation (Buntinx and Karp 2006, 217; Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 152; Weil 1999, 243, 254).

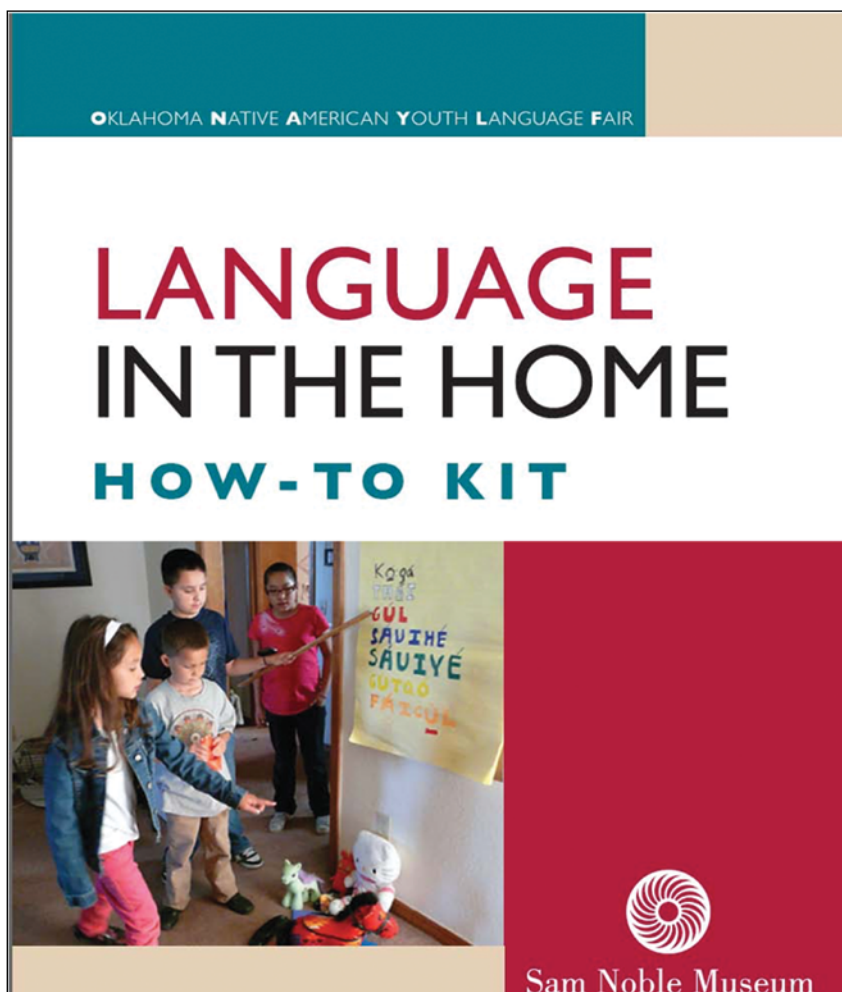


Figure 6. *Language In the Home*, Native American Language Publication Series, Sam Noble Museum, University of Oklahoma. 2012. Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.

A combination of internal and external factors placed the Language Fair on a developmental trajectory that largely exists outside the colonial space of the museum. On two days each year the museum conceptually and philosophically transforms into an Indigenous space, governed by community standards and protocols. The fact that the Fair conceptually resides slightly outside the internal program structure of the museum provides greater community agency in the collaborative process. Our ability to successfully support the event through fundraising separate from the museum's development program affords additional autonomy. The labor to plan and host the Fair each year comes from a mix of staff, museum volunteers, community members, students and faculty who are free from institutional hierarchies and fixed divisions of labor that often impede innovation and collaboration (Janes 2012, 517) (Figure 7).

We want to conclude with some comments on the relevance of our experiences with the ONAYLF to broader theoretical discussions in museum anthropology. The ONAYLF and its institutional position provide an excellent example of what Jean Dennison (2012, 7–9; 2017, 685) characterizes as a “colonial entanglement,” a product of the ongoing effects of settler colonialism and the need for Native Nations to interact with institutions of the dominant society on an ongoing basis. In her consideration of Native American economic development Jessica Cattellino (2008, 16–17, 161–63) applies the term “sovereign interdependence” to characterize these relationships and questions the common theoretical linkage between sovereignty and autonomy. This interdependence certainly exists between the museum and the active Native language revitalization community of Oklahoma. The Fair brings a



Figure 7. The Muscogee (Creek) Language Class from Glenpool High School, Glenpool, Oklahoma, 2015. Courtesy of the Sam Noble Museum.

tremendous amount of positive attention to the University of Oklahoma and the Sam Noble Museum, and they are quick to embrace it in this context. The Native American language community supports the Fair as a source of student motivation, curriculum enhancement, and an important opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of language teachers and their students.

The Fair exemplifies these relational aspects of sovereignty and in our assessment is best viewed as a multinational act of interdependent sovereignty, a negotiated conceptual and physical space among respectful partners.<sup>12</sup> While this relationship provides a means for mutually beneficial outcomes, it is not without strains and tensions engendered through the “ongoing negotiated compromises” required by relational sovereignty (Dennison 2017, 686). Amanda Cobb’s (2005, 129–31) discussion of Native American sovereignty contributes to this view of the Language Fair, causing us to separate its contributions to the decolonization of the museum from its primary role as an enactment of interdependent sovereignty. Cobb (2005, 131) warns against the conflation of sovereignty and decolonization based on the limitations imposed on the latter given its anchor in colonial processes. Colonial entanglements require individuals willing to negotiate and facilitate the relations of interdependence, to represent the positive benefits derived by both parties in the relationship. In the case of the Language Fair, the NAL curator and other key staff work with members of Native Nations to assume these roles. The Fair also supports the contention that the common agenda of language and cultural reclamation functions as a source of motivation for the initiation of these interdependent relationships (Cobb 2005, 127, 130; Cattellino 2008, 69–72; McMullen 2004, 275; Willow 2010, 35, 54).

Our experience with ONAYLF reminds us that there are multiple measures of success in the effort to advance, expand, and decolonize museum relationships with Native American communities. As individuals, we work to be mindful and respectful in our practices and approaches, incorporating diverse theoretical interpretations of collaboration to provide a broader range of guiding principles and expectations for museum programs. We also continue to advocate for positive and constructive change within our respective institutions, and we support efforts by our parent organizations to address systemic issues regarding diversity and inclusion. We view the ONAYLF as an important example of the powerful benefits gained by Indigenizing the museum environment.

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## Notes

1. The Native American Languages Department at the Sam Noble Museum has established an impressive suite of programs and initiatives to support the documentation, maintenance and perpetuation of Native American languages. Notable efforts include NSF funded *Breath of Life*, *Silent No More* workshops (2010–2014). Following an approach created by and for communities with few or

no fluent first language speakers, the goal of these workshops and institutes are to assist the participants in finding and utilizing the archival language materials and cultural collections for their own efforts in language reclamation and to promote healing, mutual understanding, and respect between archives and Indigenous patrons (Baldwin, Hinton and Pérez 2018; Linn 2021; National Breath of Life 2021). The Department also sponsored a Native American language publication series (2006–2013) to support language documentation and revitalization. Titles and subjects from the series include *How to Kit: Language in the Home* (Linn and Torrabla 2012), *Saynday Kiowa Indian Children's* (Waters 2013), *Native American Food Plants of Southwest Oklahoma* (Sutton 2013), and *'Yuchehe Gogwane aheda Sethl'échenego'wedana* [Euchee Songs and Prayers] (Euchee Dictionary Project 2006). The NAL Program has been a full member of Digital Endangered Languages and Music Archival Network (DELAMAN) since 2007. DELAMAN works in collaboration with Indigenous peoples, academics and professionals to explore best practices for accessibility and metadata standards for Native language materials (DELAMAN 2021). The NAL Curator also worked with the New Cherokee Language Teacher Certification Test Development (2006–2007) and the Native American Languages Certification Committee (2012) at the Oklahoma State Department of Education to develop standards and a credentialing process for Native Language teachers in Oklahoma public schools.

2. The concept of a language fair gained inspiration from a similar themed event sponsored by the Indigenous Language Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico in the late 1990's. Geneva Navarro was instrumental in these events and brought the idea to Roman Nose and Linn.

3. The 2020 Fair was cancelled due to the COV-19 pandemic. The museum encouraged families to facilitate home performances of student presentations and submit video clips to the museum's social media platforms. At the time of article acceptance, museum staff and communities were preparing for an online, virtual Fair in 2021.

4. A number of works in the realms of anthropology, ethnography, folklore and museology call for new paradigms of community-museum collaboration (Baron and Spitzer 2007; Christen 2007, 2008; Clifford 2004; Fienup-Riordan 1999; Fluehr-Lobban 2008; Jackson 2000; Kallenbach 2009; Karp, Kratz, Szwaja and Ybarra-Frausto 2006; Lassiter 2005a, 2005b; McMullen 2008; Peers and Brown 2003; Phillips 2003) and our efforts benefit from the models and insights that they provide.

5. Christine Armer, Cherokee Nation citizen and Language Instructor, Department of Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma has served in this capacity from 2006–2021. Armer is a first language speaker of Cherokee, a respected educator, and tireless Native language advocate. Core responsibilities of the Fair Coordinator include service as the official host of the Fair and coordination of judges and judging.

6. The 2020 hymn singing event was held online.

7. Financial support for the ONAYLF includes generous donations from Tribal Nations and Native American organizations, including the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, American Indian Student Life (University of Oklahoma), Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, Cherokee Nation Industries, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Chickasaw Industries, Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation Language Department, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Comanche Nation, Delaware Nation, Kaw Nation, Muscogee Nation, Oklahoma Bar Association-Indian Law Section, Native American Studies (University of Oklahoma), Oklahoma Indian Gaming Association, Osage Casinos and Hotels, Otoe-Missouria Tribe of Oklahoma, Pawnee Nation, Quapaw Nation, Sac and Fox Nation, Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, and Wyandotte Nation.

8. These opportunities include the documentation and dissemination of Native American Church music in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage Program of the



Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes (Swan and McCarty 2008); video documentation of the Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society tipi painting and 50th anniversary celebration (Jordan and Swan 2011); *A Gathering of Traditions: A Centennial Celebration of Dr. Charles Marius Barbeau in Oklahoma*, a collaborative exhibition project with the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma (Swan and Jackson 2012); The *Native Peoples/ Native Plants Workshop* (Swan and Minnis 2014); and the *Wedding Clothes and the Osage Community: A Giving Heritage*, a collaborative exhibition and publication project with the Osage Nation Museum and Wahzhazhe Cultural Center (Swan and Cooley 2019).

9. As Ann McMullen (2008) notes, museums are often reluctant to discuss the financial details of their programs and operations. We agree that it is important to bring museum funding and expenditures into broader discussion and assessment. In 2018, the total cost of the Fair was approximately \$40,000, divided evenly between the indirect costs (staffing, space, IT support, custodial, publicity) and direct costs (temporary staff, student amenities, honoraria, meals for judges and volunteers, equipment rentals). The direct expenses of the Fair are defrayed through a combination of donations from Tribal Nations and private foundations, in particular Boeing and the Cyril Fund, augmented by direct funding from the museum.

10. The value system that American universities employ in their tenure and promotion systems contributed to the lack of institutional recognition and support for the ONAYLF. Tenure is based on three areas of faculty activity: research, teaching and service. This scheme overwhelmingly privileges research and its associated grantsmanship and scholarly publications. Teaching and student mentoring are a distant second and service is largely viewed as a necessary distraction. Service in university systems generally consists of committee work to support academic administration at the department, college and university levels. Sustained collaborations and public programs like the ONAYLF are rarely encouraged and are poorly rewarded in most tenure systems. This is exacerbated by the limited outlets for peer review publications grounded in the applied anthropology necessary to sustain community collaboration and facilitate engaged scholarship. Curators at the Sam Noble Museum are jointly appointed at the museum and in partner academic departments where they earn tenure according to established and traditional expectations. This situation inhibits and marginalizes the museum work of museum-based tenure track faculty curators. See Swan (2015).

11. Normal turn-over of front-line staff requires regular training, accomplished through annual orientation meetings where the NAL Curator and key staff explain the history and structure of the Fair. This meeting describes the manner in which the Fair relates to the museum's mission and identifies the challenges that staff may encounter when presented with the special circumstances of the Fair. In the public services departments of the museum our efforts benefit from a largely stable set of middle managers who accept the challenges of the Fair as an important element in their professional performance. Our experience underscores the value of developing long-term career tracks for front of house staff and incorporating decolonizing measures and practices in employee performance expectations and evaluations.

12. In 2018 the Sam Noble Museum executed a memorandum of understanding with the Native Nations Center at the University of Oklahoma to formalize a partnership to guarantee on-going support for the ONAYLF. This represents an effort to further integrate the Fair into the ongoing efforts of the University of Oklahoma to provide meaningful representation and participation by Tribal Nations in the education, research and public service agendas of the university. The Fair would not be possible without support of Indigenous staff and Native American Studies students who volunteer to staff many of the operations of the Fair.

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Daniel C. Swan is Curator of Ethnology *emeritus* at the Sam Noble Museum and Professor of Anthropology *emeritus*, both at the University of Oklahoma. He has curated numerous exhibitions and is the author of varied works, including *Peyote Religious Art: Symbols of Faith and Belief* (University Press of Mississippi, 1999), (with Garrick Bailey) *Art of the Osage* (University of Washington Press, 2004) and (with Jim Cooley) *Wedding Clothes and the Osage Community: A Giving Heritage* (Indiana University Press, 2019).

Mary S. Linn is a linguist and Curator of Language and Cultural Vitality at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage where she heads up the Language Vitality Initiative that focuses on collaborative language research, training communities in language and cultural documentation, and evaluating impacts of grassroots language revitalization efforts. Before joining the Smithsonian in 2014, she co-founded the Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair and the Oklahoma Breath of Life as curator of Native American Languages at the Sam Noble Museum.