

O'-Si-Yo'

Buzhu

Anishinaabe

Hau

Miyaxwen

Greetings

Da'anzho

Aniin

Apaa

Ya'at'eeh

Halito

# **Guide to Building Support for Your Tribal Library**

**ALA**  
DIVERSITY, LITERACY  
& OUTREACH SERVICES

American  
Library  
Association

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# Introduction

Tips and tools you can use from the ALA Rural, Native and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds Committee in collaboration with the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services and The Campaign for America's Libraries.

Ongoing advocacy is important for any library, whether you're at the very beginning stages of developing a tribal library or you've already done the work to develop, maintain, and extend library services for the Native people of your community.

With limited resources, how do you get the support you need to continue to meet the needs of the people and the tribe? This guide is designed to help you and the people who believe in the power of the tribal library become successful advocates.

## What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about getting the support you need from people who are in a position to help you and the library. It is about getting decision-makers, potential partners, and community members on the side of the library through the messages you send on an ongoing basis. You'll not only need the support of the community, but also tribal leaders, elders, educators, funders, government officials, and other decision-makers to help you sustain Native library services.



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# Advocacy is a combination of public relations and lobbying

- Public relations is the everyday advocacy of working to provide the best library services and taking everyday opportunities to tell people about the library.
  - Lobbying is advocacy directed at decision-makers and politicians. This may include activities ranging from making presentations at council meetings to keeping local decision-makers informed about the library.
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## Advocacy is...



- About educating our communities about why tribal libraries and librarians are essential in an information society.
- An ongoing effort.
- The responsibility of all library workers.

This guide is designed for tribal libraries, whether you have a specific, urgent need for funding/support or are looking for ways to build general support for the library.



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# Why is advocacy important for tribal libraries?

Tribal libraries are special places. The possibilities of positive growth are endless. But without support, growth is difficult to achieve. Though decision-makers may support the library in spirit, they may not realize all of the potential benefits a well-supported library would have for the community and its people. Now is the time to speak up for your library!

You might find the following points helpful when trying to make your case to your stakeholders.

## **Tribal libraries...**

- Serve a vital role in revitalizing and preserving tribal culture, history, and language
- Promote literacy for our community
- Bring technology to our people
- Are important for the growth and development of our children
- Empower tribal members
- Bring reading material and news to tribal members
- Promote inter-generational activities
- Strengthen cultural identity
- Serve as research centers for tribal and non-tribal members
- Belong to the people

**Reasons why  
tribal libraries  
matter**



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# Make the library the heart of the community

It's easier to get people to support the library when they know that the library is working hard to meet the community's needs. You may be located in the oldest BIA building on the reservation, but you can become known for your excellent service, your outreach programs, your willingness to host community meetings, your memorable summer reading programs, and your commitment to serve. The tribal library should be *the* source that people go for information, resources, and answers.

## ***Start now. Don't wait for a crisis.***

"Let your local tribal government know that the library is theirs. Go out of your way to welcome them and inform them about how the library can help them in their official duties."

*Irving Nelson  
Program Supervisor  
Office of Navajo Nation Library*

## 4 ways to win support

1. Use every opportunity to tell people what's going on in the library. Never assume that others understand what the tribal library does or what it takes to do it.
2. Don't be afraid to speak up and ask for support. Most people who don't use the library appreciate its role and wish to support it.
3. Don't do this alone. Your message is most powerful when others speak up for you.
4. Be generous. Giving is just as important as receiving

To learn more about running a more effective tribal library, review the contents of the TRAILS document.

Available at [www.ala.org/tribal](http://www.ala.org/tribal)



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# Who are library advocates?

These are the people who believe in the importance of tribal libraries and librarians. They understand vital role tribal libraries play in providing educational, informational, cultural, and recreational services and activities for tribal communities. If the following people aren't already advocates, you need consider ways to get them on the side of the library.

## These advocates include:

### **Tribal and community leaders**

Members of the tribal government, school principals, business owners, tribal college leaders, and members of the local media should be in your circle of advocates. Support from such leaders helps to ensure your message will be heard far and wide.

### **Librarians and library staff**

Advocacy is the responsibility of every library employee and should be put into effect both inside and outside the library so that everyone understands the value of the tribal library.

### **Potential advocates**

Many people would be glad to speak out for the tribal library if asked. These are the people who have had good experiences in using libraries in the past, have family members who benefit from the library, or who just believe that tribal libraries are important.

### **Library users**

School children, students, teachers, parents, elders, and researchers are key to any advocacy effort. Decision-makers need to hear about the positive experiences the people have had in the library.



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# Getting started with an official campaign: steps to success

- **Identify what you want:** Is it a new building? Funding for cultural programs? The more specific you can be, the better.
- **Gather statistics:** Statistics regarding visitors and circulation, computer use, etc. are crucial to demonstrating the need for library services.
- **Build your team:** Try to find people who both believe in the library and are well connected in the community. Start with your library's biggest fans—your users. Your team could consist of other tribal libraries that are working to achieve a similar goal.
- **Make an action plan:** Your plan should identify key strategies and tasks (outreach, publicity, fundraising, volunteers, etc.), deadlines, and budget. See the Small Is Powerful Online Toolkit at [www.ala.org/rural/advocacytoolkit.htm](http://www.ala.org/rural/advocacytoolkit.htm)
- **Identify strategies:** Your action plan should identify specific strategies, a timetable, and who is responsible.
- **Have a memorable message:** You will need a simple, powerful message, one that is easy to say and remember—about 10 words. Use it consistently in publicity materials and presentations. Example: "The tribal library brings us together"
- **Target your audiences:** Identify those whose support is most critical and make them your highest priority. Don't forget to include your internal audiences: staff, board members, and volunteers.
- **Encourage everyday advocacy:** Make an ongoing effort to keep your community informed of how the library contributes and what it needs to provide the best possible service. Take advantage of everyday opportunities to talk about the library.



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# Collaborate

Getting other tribal departments/offices and other libraries to lend their support will strengthen your library's case.

Successful partnerships with other tribal departments can not only enhance library programs, but can also boost the library's image within the tribe. The support for the library can swell when employees in other departments realize the positive impact libraries can have throughout the tribe.

Libraries with similar goals, such as other tribal libraries, can band together to make a stronger case on larger advocacy issues such as at the state and national levels.

Making your case for support is all about getting organized and focused. The best way to do that is to keep it simple.

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# Telling your library's story

Your goal should be to make it easy for decision-makers to understand and support the library. Here you'll find examples of how you can influence decision-makers.

- Attend meetings with partners throughout the year, not just when you need help.
- Get on the agenda to provide brief monthly or quarterly reports.
- Stay in contact. Call or drop by to chat on a regular basis.
- Keep them informed. Send the library's newsletter and other items of interest.

- Identify common goals where you can support each other.
- Link the library's message to their concerns. e.g. Indian education, diabetes prevention, etc.
- Talk about the library's successes and needs.
- Be clear when making the 'ask'.
- Have a fact sheet available for support.
- Invite decision-makers to the library.
- Follow up.
- Thank them whenever possible.
- Stay on good terms. Even if they don't support the library this time, they may the next.



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# Speaking successfully

It is important that everyone at the library knows the library's mission and message, and advocates for it. In addition, you can identify particularly articulate and passionate spokespeople who are comfortable and skilled in that role. You may be nervous about speaking in front of a group, but remember that your voice increases the visibility of the library and people won't know what you want unless you ask.

While you know the library best, it is often helpful to also have a supporter be the front person at times. Consider having teens, parents, local business people, or other users of the library share the library message.



## Speaking tips

- Reach their hearts as well as their minds by speaking sincerely and with passion. Sharing your enthusiasm will spark theirs.
- Share compelling real stories and pictures that your audience can relate to.
- Avoid reading your statement.
- Look at your audience.
- Acknowledge key decision-makers in the audience.
- Remember to smile!
- Be brief—10 minutes plus questions.
- Take questions and be comfortable waiting for questions. If you don't know the answer, get the asker's contact information, find out, and reconnect with them.
- Open strong and end strong.
- Introduce yourself in the Native language, if appropriate.
- Practice, practice, practice!



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# Tips on creating your message

- You will need a **simple, powerful message** that is easy to remember and share. This message could be your library's strategic plan, mission statement, or current goal.
- **Develop two or three talking points** and a few good statistics, or stories or examples to build your case.
- **Have an “elevator” pitch** that you have practiced and can deliver comfortably to any audience.
- **Use your message consistently** in publicity materials and presentations. The more you use it, the more likely people will “get it” and act.
- **Focus** on the needs and interests of your audience. Use examples that your audience understands, e.g., children need to hear stories from the elders; students need a place to get homework help.
- **Paint a positive picture.** Talk about the library's successes, not only its needs. Get to know your individual tribal Council members on a personal note before going to talk to them as a group.

## Make the most of media



Newspapers, radio, and TV may be few and far between where you live. If so, you will need to look for other opportunities such as newsletters published by schools or the tribe. You may even decide to start your own library newsletter. If you do have local media, don't hesitate to approach them. Many newspapers with small staffs welcome news items and columns that you write.



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# Go where the people are

The only way to get more support from the community is to get out of the library to reach them—otherwise they may never know that your library could use their support or how great your library is. Posters and bookmarks are great publicity tools, but too often they end up sitting inside the library. Think outside of the circle to reach others, either through printed publicity materials or delivery of one-on-one messages.

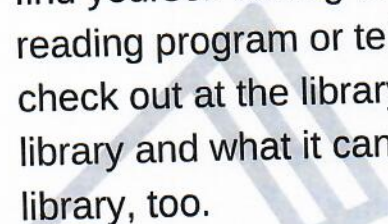
Here is a list of places you might distribute printed materials:

- Post offices
- Tribal offices
- Dental or health clinics
- Committee meetings
- Grocery stores
- Community events
- Sporting events
- Powwows
- Schools
- Community/Tribal parades
- Tribal employees' e-mail news board

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## Speak up

Learn to recognize opportunities to talk up the library and its services. You might find yourself talking to the cashier at the gas station about your upcoming summer reading program or telling your son's friends about the graphic novels they can check out at the library. Be sure that everyone on the reservation knows about the library and what it can do for them--so that they can become supporters of the library, too.





# Sample message

**Key Message:** "Everyone in our community deserves access to the resources at the tribal library."



**Call to Action:** "We ask for your support to create a mobile library for our reservation."



## Statistics:

- Since we moved to our new location, our average number of books checked out dropped from X books per month to Y per month.
- X% of our people live outside of the 5-mile radius surrounding our library.
- X number of our children, or Y%, attend Head Start.



## Talking Points:

1. *The benefits* - the tribal library is a community gathering place where people come to learn, connect, and read.
2. *The problem* - currently we are not able to serve people who need us most - very young children, the home-bound, elderly, and those without transportation to the library.
3. *The solution* - we have a plan to bring books to people in isolated areas.



## Example:

Sally, who was taking care of her grandma at home last year, said that the Meals on Wheels delivery person was her lifeline—providing not only meals but also books and magazines that she could read to her grandma and herself. Sally said that a regular book delivery service would have been very much appreciated at that time.



# Basic Tools



## Annual Report

A basic tool for telling your library's story, it should be brief, attractive and reinforce the library's key message.



## Business Card

Don't forget the obvious. Be sure to include the library's URL and hours.



## Brochure

Another medium to publicize the library with basic information (hours, location, and URL).



## Communication Plan

This should include goals, objectives, positioning, key message, target audiences, strategies for delivering the message, and evaluation.



## News Release

Newspapers and other media welcome a well written news release and will often run it "as is". Start with the most important information and end with the least. Keep it short—one page if possible.



## Public Service Announcement

Free space for ads may be available from local newspapers and radio stations.



## Website/blog

These can be useful tools for providing timely information. The trick is to keep them simple and current.

For tips, strategies and more tools, see the American Library Association's Communications Handbook for Libraries at [http://bit.ly/ALA\\_Comm\\_Handbook](http://bit.ly/ALA_Comm_Handbook).



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# Get recognized

ALA Libraries Transform website offers good information about increasing public awareness of your library in your community. Check it out at <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/librariestransform/because>.

Before you begin using some of the tools, you will be asked to set up an account.

**LIBRARIES  
TRANSFORM®**

## Become the best librarian you can be

You may or may not have a degree in library science, but you can always take advantage of opportunities to develop your professional skills as a librarian. Attend conferences, read about the profession, network with other librarians (tribal and non-tribal), and stay informed about the latest trends in librarianship. Encourage other library staff to do the same. You are likely to get more support from your tribal government and community if people see you and the library staff as highly-skilled professionals. Take pride in being the tribe's librarian!

## ALA Resources

- **ODLOS:** <http://bit.ly/aladiversity>
- **Advocacy:** <http://bit.ly/alaadvocacy>
- **Communications:** [http://bit.ly/ala\\_cmo](http://bit.ly/ala_cmo)
- **Washington Office:** [http://bit.ly/ala\\_wo](http://bit.ly/ala_wo)
- **Library:** [http://bit.ly/ala\\_library](http://bit.ly/ala_library)
- **United for Libraries:** [http://bit.ly/ala\\_united](http://bit.ly/ala_united)
- **Value Calculator:** [http://bit.ly/ala\\_calc](http://bit.ly/ala_calc)
- **Libraries Transform:** [http://bit.ly/ala\\_lt](http://bit.ly/ala_lt)
- **Rural Library Toolkit:** [http://bit.ly/rural\\_toolkit](http://bit.ly/rural_toolkit)
- **Library Card Sign-Up:** [http://bit.ly/lib\\_card](http://bit.ly/lib_card)

## Other Resources

- **First Nations:** [http://bit.ly/fn\\_toolkit](http://bit.ly/fn_toolkit)
- **Advocacy:** <http://bit.ly/advassoc>
- **Web Junction:** <http://bit.ly/WebJun>
- **What's Your Story:** [http://bit.ly/msl\\_story](http://bit.ly/msl_story)
- **AILA:** <https://ailanet.org/>



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To share your questions, successes, challenges, and observations with the ALA Rural, Native and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds Committee (RNTLOAK), please send an email to [diversity@ala.org](mailto:diversity@ala.org).

With support from the American  
Indian Library Association (AILA)  
[www.ailanet.org](http://www.ailanet.org)

