Helpful Hints

Not sure where to begin for your performance or project? Here are a few ideas that might help. Remember that the Fair is all about Native Language use, so simply talking or writing is the most important part.

If you’re still not sure where to begin, or have questions about any of the following, please contact ONAYLF staff at onaylf.samnoblemuseum@ou.edu or 405-325-7588.

Category Crossovers

Some of the Fair categories occasionally seem very similar to other categories. ONAYLF staff will help you make sure your students are registered in the right category, but keep these distinctions in mind when selecting a category for your performance or project.

- Traditional and Modern Song: Hymns and anthems should be registered under the Traditional category. Translations of temporary music, original songs and others should be registered in the Modern category.
- Spoken Language and Spoken Prayer: The Spoken Language category is the overarching category for skits, plays and general performances. Spoken Prayer is reserved for more solemn oratory, such as prayers and traditional speeches.
- Spoken categories and Song categories: Spoken language entries may be accompanied by background music, but if the performance relies heavily on song, it should be registered under the appropriate Song category.
- Comics and Cartoons/Books and Literature: You should indicate which category your entry is intended for on the Material Submission form. Comics tend to include panels and a focus on character dialogue. Books must be bound in some way and tend to include an emphasis on narration.
- Books and Literature: Some of our participants use PowerPoint to design and create their book entries. That’s fine with us, but we will not print your book for you.
- Live performances and Material Submissions: Live performances demand student presence at the Sam Noble Museum on the Fair days. Consequently, we do not accept filmed presentations in live categories.

Ideas for Performances

Tell a traditional story, when and if appropriate to your tribe. You can tell other kinds of stories, such as humorous narratives or personal narratives about something that happened to you or someone in your family. Act it out in a traditional skit or through a new story. Put on a puppet show of traditional or new stories. Show how to do something or explain how it is done in your family or community. Tell the history of something in your culture, such as basket-making or a part of your tribe’s history.

Song: Traditional and Modern
If you are adapting a tune from an English song, do not try to directly translate. This never works. You can keep the general idea of the song but use the way your own language expresses it. Or, you can make up your own, new meaning and words entirely. We accept all types of songs, including but not limited to: hymns, anthems, lullabies, etc.

- Make a vocabulary list ahead of time. Go over the words once before you introduce the song.
- Make the song interactive wherever possible. Adding actions enhances language acquisition and memory.
- Use “karaoke” when learning longer or more complicated songs. When students sing along with a recording, it helps them get in all the words, pronounce them correctly and feel comfortable singing.
- Pattern songs, such as “Old McDonald” or “There Was an Old Lady who Swallowed a Fly” are good for introducing new vocabulary. Have students create their own new verse.

Poetry: Spoken

Poetry allows students to use their language to express themselves, even when they may not know much of it or have perfect grammar. Poetry gets students to use whatever language they have. Poems do not have to conform to any traditional poetic style or structure. We accept all types of poems on any topic. Information websites can help your students started on learning about types of poems and strategies for writing.

Books and Literature

Students may write and illustrate a traditional story if appropriate to do so, or they may create new stories of their own. Tell a story about something that happened to you, a parent or a grandparent when they were young. Show how something is done or made in your community. Some suggested types of books are:

- Pattern books repeat a certain sentence form and are great for teaching sentence structures.
- Silly sentence or tongue-twister books often have funny pictures — think Dr. Seuss. How does your language have fun with sounds, words and sentences?
- Create pop-up books to give a 3-D effect to your story.
- Alphabet books are fun to make and for sharing with friends and other children. Be sure to have complete sentences with the word that illustrates the sound.
- Poetry: A book of your collected poetry

Cartoons and Comics

Entries must be illustrated in some form, but can be done by hand or by computer. Several comic and cartoon generators are available online. Many fonts are available to download online for indigenous writing systems as well. If you cannot find a font for your language but want to use a computer to illustrate your comic, print out your illustrations and then write the language by hand.
Comics and cartoons can be about any topic. They can be single-panel (like satirical cartoons), three-panel (like in the daily newspaper) or longer than a page (like graphic novels). You can tell jokes, tell stories or comment about a topic of your choosing.

**Film and Video**

Films are the fastest-growing medium for capturing and expressing Native language and Native themes. Here are a few ideas for your film:

- Document an elder, a social event or how to do something
- Create an original storyline and act it out. This can be dramatic, humorous, sci-fi or any other genre.
- Create a documentary about a historical event, current event or issue.

There are many resources and examples of Native film and video online. Check out the following YouTube channels for ideas:

- Weyiiletpu’s channel (Phil Cash Cash) has an excellent assortment of films in and about Native languages created by indigenous people around the world.
- The Living Tongues Institute and National Geographic’s Enduring Voices Project have a channel that contains documentary clips in indigenous languages.
- Oklahoma’s own 1491’s provide humorous shorts. Most are in English, but provide excellent examples of Native-made short films.

**Language Advocacy Essay**

The Advocacy Essay category is different for several reasons. Essays can include Native language, but should primarily be in English and should be about how the author experiences language in his or her community. Essays should be double-spaced, in 12-point font and about 1,000 words (no more than three pages).

Students can choose how to organize their essays, be they persuasive, personal or in another style. Essays should have clear introductions, support (personal stories and experiences, numbers, examples, etc.) and a conclusion. Essays will be checked for plagiarism. If found, the essay will be disqualified. Please submit your own work. Some ideas for essays include:

- The importance of your language to yourself, your family and/or your community.
- Why students should learn their language
- The relationship between identity and language
- How your community has changed with programs or with the loss of language
- Where you learn your language
- “If we all spoke ______ again…”
- Why Native languages are important to everyone/America