

OKLAHOMA NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH LANGUAGE FAIR 2026

General Fair Guidelines

The Fair honors Native American languages and promotes Native language use in speech and writing. The Fair categories are designed to practice and display spoken language skills, literacy skills and the use of Native languages in modern media. Categories are designed for students at every language learning level. We hope that all students, whether they can attend the Fair or not, will enjoy participating in at least one category.

While language is central to all the categories, it is inextricably bound to other expressive forms in several categories. Remember that the Fair focuses on language use, not on dance, singing, art or attire. We certainly welcome and expect these elements in performances and material submissions, but the essence of the Fair lies in Native language use in both speech and writing.

Procedures

Check-in for live-performances: Please arrive for check-in between 8:30 – 8:45 a.m. on the day(s) of your participation. Opening ceremonies will begin promptly at 9 a.m. on both days. Registration tables are located in the museum's main lobby. Your group's Designated Representative must be available to check in participants and to pick up registration packets.

If you are planning to arrive nearer to the time of your performances, please plan on checking in at least 30 minutes prior to your performance time to finish the check-in process and get your students to the appropriate performance venue.

Please note that due to time constraints and out of consideration for our judges and other student performers, we do not accept late or walk-in registrations.

Designated Representative: Only your Designated Representative (the lead instructor listed on your registration sheet, to whom your confirmation e-mail was sent) can check students in and pick up t-shirts or other items. T-shirts or other items will not be released to anyone else. If this individual cannot attend, please notify us by email before the Fair to designate a substitute who will be in attendance.

Chaperones: One (1) adult chaperone is required for every five (5) PreK – Grade 5 students or ten (10) Grade 6 to 12 students. Chaperones are responsible for their students at all times in the museum or on the museum grounds. If chaperones fail to adequately supervise students, the museum reserves the right to request the group's departure.

Clothes changing and rehearsal: The museum has limited areas available for participants to change into performance dress or to use as a rehearsal space. These include public restroom facilities in the museum lobby and on the second floor of the exhibit area for clothes changing, and one room on the first floor for rehearsal space. Please be considerate of others in adjacent areas while rehearsing. We respectfully request that all areas be used only for the time required as they are shared areas.

Age Divisions

Each category is divided into the following age groupings:

- Pre-K – second grade (PreK-2)
- Third – fifth grades (3-5)
- Sixth – eighth grades (6-8)
- Ninth – 12th grades (9-12)

Groups with members in mixed age divisions should register in the age division of the highest grade level present in the group. For example, groups who span fourth through sixth grades should enter the sixth through eighth grade age division. Please contact ONAYLF staff if you have questions about age divisions. The on-line registration program will choose the age division appropriate for a mixed age group.

Each category guideline page contains a table that shows which age divisions apply for that category. Open age ranges are indicated by a check mark on that table. Most categories are open to all age ranges, with a few exceptions.

Students will undoubtedly seek guidance from teachers, elders and speakers throughout the Fair categories, but students' performances and material submissions must be primarily the students' own work. Students can indicate the nature of assistance received from instructors on the Material or Electronic Submission forms (required for all non-performance entries).

Group Sizing

Each category guidelines page contains a table that indicates whether entries are accepted for individual students or groups of students. Category guidelines are updated for each Fair; please make sure you use the guideline with the current fair date in the title. The presence of an icon beneath the heading "Group" or "Individual" indicates that entries are accepted for either groups or individuals. In several material submissions categories (Mobile Video, Books, Comics & Cartoons, Film & Video, Poster Art), entries by multiple students are considered single units. The Poster Art category is further limited in that a maximum of two students can collaborate on a poster.

Participants who register in live performance categories must specify the number of students in each performance. Live performances are subject to group size based on the number of registered entries we receive each year. Groups may be designated more specifically (duet, trio, small group, medium group, large group) based on the circumstances that year. We divide these groups based on scale so that there is no great disparity between group sizes who compete in the same age range and category. For example, we try to avoid scheduling a group of four students to compete against a group of 25 students.

Awards

Participants who register in live performance categories must be present at the Fair to be eligible for prizes. Entries in material submissions categories must be pre-registered and received by the Sam Noble Museum no later than the material submissions deadline posted on the Fair website to be eligible for prizes and display during Fair days.

All registered student participants who perform in a **live** performance at the Fair receive a T-shirt. All registered student participants who participate in material and electronic submission categories but do not participate in-person will receive a backpack or similar item. All students participating in live performances receive medallions after their performance. Students participating in material and electronic submissions categories receive medallions if present at the Opening Ceremony at the Sam Noble Museum during the Fair days. Live performances that place first, second and third within category and age division receive trophies. Material and electronic submissions that place first, second and third within category and age division receive ribbons. Each category guidelines page contains a table that indicates which rewards are given in that category.

T-shirts can be collected at Registration as your group is leaving the Fair. Please do not distribute T-shirts to your students at the museum. T-shirts, trophies and ribbons are pre-ordered and will not be replaced, if lost at the Fair.

Grand Prize

Each year, a single Grand Prize is awarded from the Poster Art category. The Grand Prize artwork serves as the inspiration for the following year's design for T-shirts and other items as well as the cover for the Fair program. The Grand Prize winner receives a Grand Prize ribbon and five T-shirts that bear their winning design. Students are only eligible to win the Grand Prize once. They may still win prizes in other categories in their age division but will not be considered for the Grand Prize in subsequent years.

The Grand Prize Poster Art winner will be required to sign an agreement allowing the use of their artwork for the next year's Fair graphic designs by the Sam Noble Museum.

Material and Electronic Submissions

Material and electronic submissions categories (Poster Art, Film & Video, Books, Comic & Cartoon, Mobile Video, Electronic Puppet Show) are pre-judged before the Fair. Selected entries are displayed and/or screened during the Fair days. Mobile Video entries are not screened at the Fair. Winning entries are posted on the ONAYLF You Tube Channel. Material and electronic submissions must be pre-registered and received by the Sam Noble Museum not later than the deadline posted on the Fair website.

Each entry must be accompanied by a material or electronic submission form written in English. The form should be completed by or on behalf of the student(s) who contributed to the entry. Younger students may have assistance in completing the material submission form. This form gives the judges in these categories a better understanding of how students prepared their project for the Fair. Use the space provided (add a page if needed) to describe what the work is about, why it is personally significant, how teachers helped or any other information that shows student

engagement with language for the Fair project. For example, a Pre-K – 2nd grade book entry form might tell how the student(s) drew illustrations for a story told to a grandmother, who then wrote down the student's words for her, e.g., the student liked learning animal names for her story and her favorite animal is the rabbit because rabbits are clever.

Material submissions will be returned after the Fair. Non-displayed material submissions may be picked up by the Designated Representative at the end of Day 2 of the Fair. We request that Pre-K through fifth grade displayed entries be left so that attendees on the second day can enjoy the projects. Entries, awards and other items that are not collected or are left for display will be returned by mail once the Fair is finished. If you prefer, you can make arrangements to pick up your student materials from ONAYLF staff after the Fair is over. To facilitate return of the items, please make sure that the correct mailing address for your students has been entered in the on-line registration program.

Performance Parameters

All teachers and parents are to remain off stage at all times, except for teachers of Pre-K and Kindergarten (K) classes. Pre-K and K teachers and parents may help their students set up for performances but **must exit the stage before the performance begins**. We recognize that some participants may have special circumstances and ask that you contact ONAYLF staff prior to the Fair Days so that we can help accommodate your needs.

Time limit for live performances is five minutes, with two minutes to set-up and exit the stage. Performances exceeding the time limit may be asked to exit stage. The time limit for Film and Video is 10 minutes. Films exceeding 10 minutes in length may not be screened at the Fair and will not be eligible for prizes.

Performance scheduling is contingent on the number and sizes of registered entries (see Group Sizing above). Performance times and venues are determined by group size distinctions. In order to accommodate as many performances as we can, larger groups usually perform in the Kerr Auditorium, smaller groups usually perform in the Great Hall and individual presentations are usually staged in the Education Classroom and the other small venue (Redbud Café or Higginbotham Gallery). The Film & Video Category screening is held in the Kerr Auditorium.

ONAYLF staff strive to avoid scheduling conflicts for students participating in more than one in-person performance category. Time and space for performances are limited so this may not always be possible. Please contact us if your circumstances require special consideration prior to the Fair Days so that we can work to accommodate the circumstances.

Props and Performance Items

Students are encouraged to make and use costumes and props for performances. The Sam Noble Museum provides several props that you may reserve when entering your performance in the registration program. These include short round table, tall round table, 6-foot rectangular table, chairs or easels. Please be aware of space limitations on the stages when you plan your props.

Props should supplement the performance. They should not be used as memory aids, nor should

they contain scripts or cheat-sheets for the performance. Please be respectful of other groups and limit your props to items that can be arranged and disassembled within the 2-minutes allowed for performance set-up and tear-down. In accordance with the Museum policies for Integrated Pest Management (IPM), certain props containing “organic” materials and corrugated cardboard require special IPM considerations. Please see the Museum Policies section below for more information.

Photography

Parents, teachers, and others are allowed to take photographs and videos during the Fair. Due to University of Oklahoma policies, the Sam Noble Museum does not make videos of the performances. Photography or filming by a staff member or an approved news media may occur at the event. By participating in and being present during the event, you consent to the photography and filming and give the Museum the right to use photographs or videos taken of your students during the event for educational and promotional purposes without specific written permission. If you or your students do not wish to appear in such photographs or videos, please contact an ONAYLF or Museum Visitor Services Associate for accommodation.

Museum Policies

The Sam Noble Museum operates under strict requirements for cleanliness and sanitation, especially with regard to preventing insect infestation. The Department of Integrated Pest Management requests that you avoid bringing “organic” materials into the museum. All items brought into the museum are subject to inspection. If items are found to be dirty, they will not be allowed into the event spaces until they are clean.

Please ensure that your props, costumes and other possessions are clean and free of dust, dirt, cobwebs, insect nests, grasses, etc. Organic items such as wood, feathers, furs, hides, basketry and plant materials are subject to inspection. Please place these items in a closed plastic bag while in the museum. Traditional regalia that includes feathers, animal hides and woven fabrics or basketry are permitted during the Fair, though the Sam Noble Museum reserves the right to prohibit questionable materials from entering the building.

Corrugated cardboard is a source of harborage and food for pests. As such, it is not permitted inside the museum. If you need to bring materials into the museum, we ask that you transport them in plastic containers or bags, not corrugated cardboard. If a prop needs to be made with corrugated cardboard, please bring it in a plastic bag and leave it in your vehicle until just before your performance and return it to your vehicle as soon as possible after completion of the performance category.

Pizza boxes are allowed in the museum in the eating area only! Please remove the pizza boxes from the museum to the trash bins on the exterior of the museum or placed in a covered trash bin in the lunch area.

Beverages, including water, are not generally permitted in the Museum except in areas used for meals. In some circumstances, water bottles are allowed for spectators in the Great Hall and museum foyer areas.

Please contact us at onaylf.samnoblemuseum@ou.edu or 405-325-7588 if you have questions.