

And Then There Were 12

Primary Election Narrows Field for 2025 Tribal Elections

Rosemary Stephens, Editor-in-Chief

(CONCHO, OK) After months of campaigning, the field of candidates has narrowed following the 2025 Primary Election held Oct. 7. The results determine which candidates will advance to the General run-off election set for Nov. 4, 2025.

Governor/Lieutenant Governor Candidates

Incumbents: Reggie Wassana / Hershel Gorham — 834 votes (49.81%)

Alden Whiteman / Debra Woolworth — 302 votes (17.97%)

Cheyenne District 2 Legislator

Roberta “Bobbie” Hamilton — 94 votes (22.76%)

Milan Roman Nose Jr. — 61 votes (14.77%)

Cheyenne District 4 Legislator

Mariah Youngbull — 53 votes (36.55%)

Incumbent: Byron Byrd — 26 votes (17.93%)

Arapaho District 1 Legislator

Pam Sutton — 38 votes (25.53%)

Roni Sue (Allen) Villeda — 21 votes (14.89%)

Arapaho District 2 Legislator

Incumbent: Kendricks Sleeper — 102 votes (26.70%)

Leah Burrows — 65 votes (17.02%)

According to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Election Commission, there are 5,789 registered voters for the 2025 tribal elections. According to Automated Election Services (AES) Activity Report (see report page 7) a total of 4,122 voters cast a vote in the 2025 election.

In this election, a mandate from the Election Commission

ELECTION pg. 7



Concho polling site for the 2025 Primary Election. (Photos / Rosemary Stephens)

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal Tribune

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General Election Run-Off Candidates - Nov. 4, 2025

Governor / Lieutenant Governor



Incumbents: Reggie Wassana and Hershel Gorham

Arapaho District 1 Candidates



Pamela Sutton

Roni Sue Villeda

Arapaho District 2 Candidates



Incumbent Kendricks Sleeper

Leah Burrows

Cheyenne District 2 Candidates



Roberta ‘Bobbie’ Hamilton

Milan Roman Nose Jr.

Cheyenne District 4 Candidates



Mariah Youngbull

Incumbent Byron Byrd



Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Journey to Bring 16 Children Home from Carlisle Indian Industrial School

Office of the Governor

CONCHO, Okla. — In a solemn and historic undertaking more than two years in the making, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, in partnership with the U.S. Army, have begun the sacred process of returning 16 children with Cheyenne and Arapaho bloodlines to their homelands. The disinterment began September 8, 2025, at the Carlisle Barracks Post Cemetery in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

This month-long project represents a significant moment of healing and remembrance. The work is being carried out with the collaboration of family descendants, ceremonial leaders, forensic anthropologists,

forensic archaeologists, representatives from the U.S. Army, and Tribal officials. Upon completion, the children will be reinterred with honor and ceremony on Tribal land in Concho, Oklahoma.

Eleven Cheyenne and five Arapaho children who passed away while attending the Carlisle Indian Industrial School (CIIS) will finally be brought home. Thirteen of these children were under the age of 18. During their time at the school, they were forced to assimilate and trained in various trades, such as sewing, tailoring, and music.

Annual Tribal Council meeting passes 2026 Tribal Budget, implements first-ever remote voting for out-of-district tribal citizens

Latoya Lonelodge
Senior Reporter

(Concho, Okla.) The 2025 Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes’ Annual Tribal Council meeting convened Oct. 4 with a strong turnout of tribal citizens. This year’s meeting marked a historic step forward with the introduction of remote voting, allowing tribal citizens living outside the districts to participate for the first time without being physically present.

Remote participation was approved during a special Tribal Council meeting on Aug. 16, 2025. The measure enables tribal citizens to vote using their phones, laptops, or desktop computers. Registration forms were distributed prior to the meeting, and approximately 30 citizens successfully registered as remote voters.

According to the 2006 Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Constitution, Article V, Section 2, the Tribal Council holds the power to set tribal policy, approve the annual budget, authorize treaties and compacts, and

establish its own rules of procedure.

The meeting opened with an invocation by Lydia West, followed by roll call. A 75-member quorum was established by 10:12 a.m. Tribal Council Coordinator Albert Old Crow announced the removal of the final resolution from the agenda before nominations for officers began.

Roberta “Bobbie” Hamilton was nominated and confirmed as chairperson by acclamation. Jennifer Bailey was selected as secretary, and Kelly Loneman as sergeant-at-arms.

The agenda included six active resolutions after one was withdrawn:

1. Selection of Tribal Council Coordinator, The only applicant, incumbent Albert Old Crow, was reappointed by acclamation.
2. Approval of the 2026 Tribal Budget, Presented by Reggie Wassana, the resolution passed with 166 yes, 90 no, and 28 abstentions.
3. A m e n d m e n t to the Terms and Conditions of the Tribal Council Coordinator:

Terms of Employment – Introduced by Ramona Tallbear, the resolution emphasized the need for improved communication, documentation, and accountability. It passed with 214 yes, 53 no, and 20 abstentions.

4. A m e n d m e n t to the Terms and Conditions of the Tribal Council Coordinator: Bonding Requirement, also read by Tallbear, the measure established bonding as a financial accountability safeguard for public officials. It passed with 215 yes, 78 no, and 29 abstentions.
5. Initiate Constitutional Amendment Process for Term Limits and Residency Requirements for Election Commissioners – Introduced by Robert Goodbear, the resolution received support from several citizens, including Jennifer Bailey and Pat Smothers, who emphasized the need for new leadership and ideas. The measure passed with 262 yes, 81 no, and 12 abstentions.
6. Support for the Recovery of Fort Reno – Presented by LaRen-



Over 300 tribal citizens attend the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes annual Tribal Council meeting in Concho, Okla. Below, Tribal Council Coordinator Albert Old Crow making announcements at the close of the meeting.

da Morgan, this resolution called for continued efforts to reclaim Fort Reno lands for the tribes. “Through every administration we’ve been working to recover our land because that’s our land, it doesn’t belong to the federal government,” Morgan said. The resolution passed overwhelmingly with 298 yes, 39 no, and 19 abstentions.

The final agenda item — a proposal to establish an Independent Tribal Accountability and Enforcement Committee (ITAEC), was withdrawn by the author



prior to discussion. A closing prayer by Charles Sleeper concluded the meeting, which adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Native American Nation says a republican lawmaker is blocking it from getting their land returned

A Native American nation in Oklahoma is incensed that a Republican lawmaker is requesting millions of dollars to fund renovations at the Oklahoma and Central Plains Agricultural Research Center, or OCPARC.

It’s not that the nation opposes the research, but it sees the funding request as a way to stymie efforts to get its land back from the federal government.

The land near El Reno, Oklahoma, belongs to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and overlaps with about 10,000 acres of land that the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes have been trying to get back for more than 150 years.

Rep. Frank Lucas, the Republican lawmaker who is making the request to the House Appropriations Committee, has long argued that the tribes have been compensated for the patch of land in his district. The tribes disagree. Now, the governor of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes says Lucas is doing everything he can to avoid working with them.

Reggie Wassana, the governor of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, told NOTUS that Lucas has been stonewalling the tribes from striking a land deal, and that the ongoing re-

search and proposed renovations are part of a “game of keep away.”

“We’ve offered everything and tried to do everything and bend as much as we can, but nothing is ever good enough for him to say, ‘Yeah, let’s work the deal together. We can be partners,’” Wassana said.

Lucas’ office did not respond to NOTUS’ requests for comment.

But the lawmaker is requesting \$16.6 million for a community project to renovate research facilities at the Oklahoma and Central Plains Agricultural Research Center, a drastic increase from similar projects he requested for the center in 2024 and 2023 for about \$1.3 million each. It’s also coming in the context of the Trump administration making broader cuts to research.

“Repairs to these facilities will promote OCPARC into a world-class facility promoting the use of improved plant genetics and water use efficiency, sustainable beef cattle production, and safer dams and waterways, benefiting all communities in OK-03 and all communities on the Central Plains,” reads a description of the project on Lucas’ website.

Earlier this year, Wassana spoke with Interior Secretary Doug Burgum about potentially transferring the land, and the Biden administration told The Hill last year that it was “committed to finding a long-term workable solution with the Tribe.” But any change in ownership is blocked by a provision in the farm bill — legislation that Lucas has led for years — at least until the funding deadline at the end of September.

“Keeping some type of research going,” Wassana said, “To me, it’s more of a control issue than it is doing what’s right for the general public.” He added that he plans to call federal departments to try to move negotiations forward given the upcoming government funding deadline.

Wassana said his ideal outcome would be to enter into an agreement with the USDA so the department could continue its research and use of the land, but with the tribes having ownership, being “benefactors of the property, its usage and its sustainability.” Wassana also hopes



the tribes can develop the land one day, including raising cattle, growing crops, drilling for oil or building entertainment or manufacturing facilities.

Wassana said he’s also proposed collaborative research efforts to the USDA, like studies on bison, hoping it could lead to more jobs for his tribes’ members. The USDA did not respond to a request for comment.

“I just really feel that the best possible use and the best possible stewardship of the property, still hand in hand, would best fit the tribes and the local communities,” Wassana said. “I believe the local communities also agree that the tribes should receive those lands back.”

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This story was produced as part of a partnership between NOTUS and Oklahoma Watch.

“To me, it’s more of a control issue than it is doing what’s right for the general public,” *Cheyenne and Arapaho Governor Reggie Wassana*

Silenced at Sappa Creek

by Dee Cordry, author of Children of White Thunder

In northwestern Kansas a system of waterways has been the home to Indigenous people for thousands of years. The valleys of the North Fork, Middle Fork, and South Fork of Sappa Creek in Rawlins County, Kansas provided food, water, and shelter to these people who survived using primitive tools. Physical and written artifacts support the oral histories told by generations of Plains Indians. Such is the case of the Cheyenne men, women, and children who were attacked and killed by US army soldiers on the Middle Fork of Sappa Creek in 1875 - the Sappa Creek Massacre.

Sources of food for Indigenous people on Sappa Creek included a very large mammal called “Bison Antiquus” that roamed the Great Plains of North America until about 10,000 years ago. The ancient bison were about twenty-five percent larger than today’s American Bison. Indigenous peoples of the Paleo-indian Period (13,500 - 8,000 years ago) were nomadic hunters who used spears with distinctive points to kill Bison Antiquus. The Twelve Mile Creek bison kill site is located along the Smoky Hill River in western Kansas. Bison were killed there by Indigenous people during the Paleo-indian Period. The site is in present day Logan County near Russell Springs. The Twelve Mile Creek bison kill site is about seventy miles due south of Sappa Creek.

Even closer is the Burntwood Creek Rockshelter and bison kill sites in Rawlins County about thirty miles northwest of Sappa Creek. Indigenous bison hunters of the Late Paleo-indian Period used a bison jump on Burntwood Creek. And Indigenous peoples of the Archaic Period (8,000 - 2,000 years ago) continued to hunt Bison Antiquus using spears. During the Late Archaic Period they periodically utilized the rock shelter as a campsite, where they worked with stone tools.

The Indigenous peoples developed clay pottery cooking vessels during the Ceramic Period (2,000 - 500 years ago) and formed the bow and arrow for hunting. They made their camps in stream valleys, using the natural resources found there. The Indigenous peoples of the Ceramic Period continued the life of nomadic hunters of the Paleo-indian Period.

It was during the Protohistoric Period (500 - 200 years ago) that two significant events occurred on the Great Plains - Indigenous peoples acquired horses and they had first contact with Europeans. The nomadic bison hunters, including the Cheyenne and Arapaho, became horseback nomads of the Great Plains. Other tribes travelled by horseback to the western Plains on bison hunting expeditions. The effect of Europeans on Indigenous culture included the creation of records

written by Europeans heavily influenced by European beliefs. The Europeans wrote about some of the Cheyennes who were born during the Protohistoric Period (the late 1700’s) and who died during the Historic Period (200 years ago to present). A Cheyenne man, name unknown, was born in the Protohistoric Period and died during the Historic Period. He and his wife Loose Fitting Leggings were the parents of Bull Elk, who was born in 1807.

Bull Elk was in the camp of Cheyenne Chief Black White Man at Sand Creek in 1864. Bull Elk, his wife Southern Woman, and their son Bull Elk Jr. were survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre. It is likely they were among the survivors who fled, on foot, north to the Big Timbers in Kansas on the Smoky Hill River near the current Colorado border. The Olsen-Chubbuck bison kill site, where the remains of 190 bison were uncovered, is located at the headwaters of the Smoky Hill River about thirty miles west of Big Timbers near the current day town of First View, Colorado. It is likely that the Sand Creek Massacre survivors were acquainted with that bison kill site. The distance from the Olsen-Chubbuck bison kill site to Sappa Creek is about one hundred miles.

In 2015 an Oklahoma archeologist wrote about the Beaver River Complex of bison kill sites in northwest Oklahoma. Artifacts indicate Indigenous peoples of the Paleo-indian Period used the sites “over and over again in the course of 800 years.” The archeologist made a significant observation: “It is far less likely that these people accidentally stumbled across this ideal hunting territory . . . It is far more likely that to some extent the knowledge of the hunting techniques and location was passed down through generations building and continuing a hunting tradition.” Therefore, it is likely that Bull Elk possessed generational knowledge about the Olsen-Chubbuck and other bison kill sites, and the natural resources at Sappa Creek.

Bull Elk’s second wife was No-chu-Va. Their daughter was Walking Woman (1857 - 1908). Walking Woman, known as a Cheyenne medicine woman, was the great grandmother of Shirley Williams, also known as Hestaneeco’e - “Standing Against the Wind.” Shirley (born 1948) is a member of the Southern Cheyenne Tribe of Oklahoma. Shirley Williams noted a significant detail: “On the morning of April 23, 1875, H Company of the 6th U.S. Cavalry attacked a Cheyenne Indian Camp located on the Middle Fork of Sappa Creek. My Great, Great Grandfather, Bull Elk, age sixty-eight, and his wife, No-Chu-Va, were among those who were murdered by Lt. Austin Henley. Alongside them other elders, women, and children, those who could not defend themselves, also lost their



Photo of Sappa Creek on April 23, 2025, the 150th anniversary of the massacre. The Cheyenne village was located in the center of the photo in the area highlighted by sunlight. (Photo / Dee Cordry)

lives.”

The 1874 Red River War was caused by the decimation of the bison that Indigenous peoples had hunted for thousands of years. At the conclusion of the war many Cheyenne surrendered to the US army at the Darlington agency (near current day El Reno, Oklahoma). Many others, including Bull Elk, did not surrender. He was described as a prominent warrior and therefore it is likely he fought in the Red River War. Bull Elk led a group of about 200 Cheyenne men, women, and children who intended to seek safety in the land of the Northern Cheyenne. The groups led by Bull Elk and Black Hairy Dog, son the Arrow Keeper, met on the Great Plains and proceeded together north across western Kansas. Shirley Williams identified an important reason for the trek north: “Bull Elk and No-Chu-Va did not want to be confined to the reservation in Oklahoma. Their hearts longed for their northern homelands, where their relatives remained and where their ancestors had walked. They carried with them not only memories of the old ways but also the hope of returning to the land that gave life to our people.”

The Cheyenne did not have a written language and therefore do not have an original written account of Sappa Creek. The military report concerning the Sappa Creek Massacre is an example of records written by Europeans heavily influenced by European beliefs. The report was written by Austin Henely, Second Lieutenant, Sixth Cavalry. He wrote the report on April 26, 1875, at Fort Wallace, Kansas. The Henely document, which in-

cluded a map, should be considered a written Sappa Creek artifact.

Henely’s report described the movements of his army, including Fort Wallace post trader Homer Wheeler who volunteered to be their guide. Henely wrote “a hunter’s trail was discovered, which was followed until we met a party of hunters.” Henely failed to fully identify them as a party of buffalo hunters. They told Henely that the “Indians I was after were on the North Fork of Sappa Creek.” He promised the buffalo hunters they would be “suitably rewarded if they found the camp.” The buffalo hunters and Wheeler led Henely and his soldiers to the vicinity of the Cheyenne village. Henely wrote: “My plan of attack had been arranged as follows . . . ten men to surround the herd, kill the herders, round it up.” At least three buffalo hunters joined the US army soldiers in the attack on the Cheyenne village, using their high-powered buffalo guns. They attacked at dawn.

Henely described artifacts recovered from the Cheyenne village: “a memorandum-book containing rude though expressive sketches, made by themselves, of their exploits;” and “From the war-bonnets and rich ornaments, I judged two were chiefs, and one, whose bonnet was surmounted by two horns, to be a medicine man.” The sketch book, wherever it is, should be considered a visual Sappa Creek artifact. The disposition of the Henely artifacts is unknown, as is the identity of the Cheyenne artist who made the sketches in the book.

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Cheyenne and Arapaho artists and dancers featured at 2025 Red Earth FallFest



Braydon Whiteman

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK – The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes will be strongly represented at the upcoming Red Earth FallFest, taking place 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025, at the scenic Myriad Botanical Gardens in downtown Oklahoma City.

Last year’s FallFest Youth Powwow included an impressive showing from Cheyenne and Arapaho youth, with many placing across categories. Among the winners were Chris Pratt Jr., Sky Pratt, Leann Pratt, Audrina Greely, Adele Greely, Daryn Bullcoming, Anais Bullcoming, Joran Fingernail, Parker Blessing, La’Miyah Emily Gray, Braydon Whiteman, Aurelia Blackbear, Adrian Redbird II, Mahlea Warrior, Landyn Williams, and Tarryn Williams.

Also recognized were Halona Lewis, who is of Ojibwe and Cheyenne heritage, and Bella Kodaseet, who carries Kiowa, Cheyenne & Arapaho, and Navajo heritage. Together, these young dancers showcased the strength, pride, and cultural traditions of their people in the arena.

“Cheyenne and Arapaho artists and youth bring incredible strength and spirit to FallFest,” said Chelsey Curry, Executive Director of Red Earth. “We are proud to highlight their creativity and traditions, which continue to inspire and connect our communities.”

FallFest will also feature artists connected to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Lisa Levi and Chase Jackson bring their artistry to the Art

Market, while Micah Hart, who is of Chickasaw and Cheyenne heritage, adds their unique perspective as a multi-tribal artist. Their work reflects the diversity and resilience of Native cultures.

The day-long celebration includes a schedule filled with activities for all ages. Dancer registration will open at 9 a.m. and close at 11:30 a.m. The Art Market and food trucks will open at 10:00 a.m. Guests are invited to enjoy family games on the lawn from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., open to all ages. The Grand Entry will begin at 12 p.m., followed immediately by the Tiny Tots Contest. The Red Dress MMIW/MMIP Special Contest, open to all ages, will begin at 1 p.m. Junior and

RED EARTH pg. 4



Joran Fingernail

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Cheyenne and Arapaho

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Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Dept. of Education receives \$4.8 million grant from U.S. Dept. of Education

(CONCHO, Okla.) The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Dept. of Education was selected to receive funding for a Native Youth Community Project (NYCP) five-year grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education. The grant is entitled, *Increasing Literacy and College and Career Readiness Opportunities to Support Success for Native Students*. The goal of the project is to strengthen Native student achievement by providing evidence-based out-of-school time and college/career readiness opportunities, empowering Native parent involvement and educational choice, and building tribal capacity to develop

and support charter school academic infrastructure. The NYCP Grant will improve children’s literacy skills by providing a culturally relevant Summer Bridges Literacy Camp and will work directly with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Head Start and Child Care Programs to recruit students. The grant will also provide career development and workforce experiences for 10th-11th grade students who are interested in potentially pursuing a career in teaching. Lastly, the grant will provide a family engagement program that increase parents’ capacity to support their children’s reading development and em-



powers them to make educational choices that support their children’s success. “We look forward to creating a sustainable and replicable approach to enhancing American Indian/Alaska Native student opportunities

and achievement. Thank you to our partners Academic Development Institute (ADI) and ImaginED for collaborating with the Dept. of Education on this grant.” Dept. of Education Executive Director Carrie Whitlow, M.Ed.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Dept. of Education Partners with University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University, receiving \$1.5 million Professional Development Grant from U.S. Dept. of Education



(CONCHO, Okla.) The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Dept. of Education partnered with the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University on The Southern Plains American Indian Teaching Pathway Project grant submission. The professional development program was selected for funding for a five-year grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education. The project partners with several Native Nations and LEAs across Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma to train 15 teachers in elementary and middle/secondary education. There are over 90% of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students who are in public school education. Oklahoma has 8% AI/AN teachers in their workforce compared to Kansas who only has .01%.

This project will work to build capacities to advance tribal sovereignty through collaborative teacher training programming that works across IHE, TCU, and LEA contexts. This project will begin by recruiting 15 individuals with an associate’s degree (or currently finishing an AA) and are seeking certification through an additional two years to complete a bachelor’s program that leads to certification at HINU or KU. The grant will provide tuition, fees, monthly living stipends, as well as money for laptops, tablets, and books. “We look forward to the partnership with KU and HINU and implementing The Southern Plains American Indian Teacher Pathways Project to recruit students with associate’s degrees who are looking to transition into certified teaching positions in the communities. Thank you to Dr. Alex RedCorn and the Office of Sovereign Partnerships and Indigenous Initiatives for partnering the Dept. of Education on this grant.” Dept. of Education Executive Director Carrie Whitlow, M.Ed.

RED EARTH

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RED EARTH

continued from pg. 3

Teen contests will follow at 2 p.m., the Men’s Fancy Dance Special Contest, open to all ages, will take place at 4 p.m., and the award ceremony will conclude the day at 5 p.m. Admission is free for all.

Community members can support FallFest by attending with family and friends, becoming a sponsor, or helping spread the word. Together, we can keep this celebration thriving for generations to come.

Red Earth FallFest is presented by Red Earth, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit, and is made possible through the generous support of Allied Arts, Chickasaw Nation, KFOR News4, Kirkpatrick Family Fund, National Endowment for the Arts, Oklahoma Arts Council and Tinker Federal Credit Union. Special thanks also go to our Dance Category Sponsors, whose support makes it possible to award Native youth in the Powwow: Virginia Treadway, Les and Pat Berryhill, Jay Laxton, Yonavea Hawkins, Oklahoma City Indian Clinic, Gregg Standridge, and Winton Law. Additional sponsorship opportunities remain open. For more information, please visit the official website at www.redearth.org or contact (405) 427-5228.

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ATHLETES' SPOTLIGHT

By Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

Marcella Sankey, Oklahoma School for the Deaf



When it comes to sports, there are no limitations to what Marcella Sankey, 18, can accomplish on the court. Despite having a disability, Sankey continues to shine in her capabilities on and off the volleyball court and is a beacon to the meaning of perseverance, no matter the barriers ahead.

Standing 5'9, Sankey plays middle blocker for the volleyball team at the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, based out of Sulphur, Okla.

Born in Yukon, Okla., Sankey was raised between the communities of El Reno, Okla., and Sulphur, where she had attended school for most of her life.

In her first year playing volleyball as a senior, Sankey was motivated by family and coaches to participate more in sports. Sankey had already been playing basketball since she was younger.

"I started playing basketball in the fifth grade, this is my first year playing volleyball. At first I did not want to play basketball, but my mother and coaches pushed me to play and then I started to love the game. It has taken me so many places all over the U.S., now I love the game, I don't know what I would do without sports," Sankey said.

And what motivated Sankey the most was her connection and support she received from teammates and family who gave her feelings of belonging.

"At the end of the day it gives me joy and that is my motivation," Sankey said.

Giving volleyball a try for the first time, it had become a

season of learning the sport for Sankey, however she loves the competitiveness with sports.

"Volleyball has been a new year for me. Basketball is the sport I love most, in all it's the competitiveness and teamwork. I also love traveling to all the Deaf schools and seeing all the friends I have made over the years," Sankey said.

What Sankey looked forward to the most in the season was the excitement and joy of the games, the moments on the court where she's in the zone.

Goals that Sankey had set for herself included focusing on enjoying every game and practice in her senior year, including the tough ones and celebrating the small wins along the way. And as a senior, Sankey had felt all the emotions going through the season.

"I have a mixed of emotions. I feel proud and excited for everything I have accomplished so far, but also a little bit nostalgic knowing this is my last year with OSD. I have grown up here. I became the person I am here. I want to make the most of every moment on off the court in the classroom and with my friends. So that I can leave with the best memories," Sankey said.

Maintaining an estimated 2.8 GPA, Sankey was also selected as the Student of the Year for the Oklahoma School for Deaf and will receive an award in March 2026 for the People with Disabilities Awareness Day.

"It makes me feel truly honored and grateful. It shows me that all my hard work and dedication and the way I carry myself has been noticed. It has motivated me even more to keep striving for my goals and to be a positive example for not only others but my younger siblings," Sankey said.

While having accomplished so much already playing sports in high school, Sankey had built friendships with teammates while improving her skills in practice.

"Since I have first started playing volleyball I have learned so much about what I can put my body through. It's a tough sport diving, running and not only learning my moves but my teammates as well," Sankey said.

Sankey had continued to focus on improving her skills and understanding the game, but most importantly, learning discipline and teamwork and what it meant to have confidence.

"One thing I think is important to have would have to be sportsmanship. It takes a lot to respect an opponent but it takes

more to respect an opponent after a meet, whether you win or lose. Another thing important to me is to be as proficient as I can be for myself and my teammates," Sankey said.

Sankey hopes to be remembered as a player and teammate who gave everything for her team, someone who worked hard and stayed positive and encouraged her teammates, leaving behind a lasting impression.

"Playing sports has taught me a lot about discipline. It has also taught me to be respectful to myself, my team, my coach and my opponents," Sankey said.

Being a part of the team and continuing to play the sports she's come to love,



Sankey felt a sense of pride every time she sets foot on the court, knowing that she's been a part of something bigger than herself.

"There is nothing like being a part of a team, it's like a second family while away from my actual family," Sankey said.

Overcoming barriers associated with having a disability, what Sankey had learned the most is resilience and patience, as there were times when she felt limited or frustrated, but had to learn to focus on what she can do rather than what she can't.

"I've had to adapt, work harder and stay mentally strong even when things got tough. My love for sports and my determination to keep improving pushed me to keep going, no matter the challenge," Sankey said.

After graduation in the spring of 2026, Sankey plans to further her education. With an interest in art, she plans to attend the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma in Chickasha, Okla.

Marcella's parents are Nina Woods and her stepfather Father Fritz Woods. Her father is Chase Sankey. Maternal Grandmother is Virginia Reyes and her grandfather is Bruce Whiteman, Jr., paternal grandmother is Laquita (Keetz) Lonebear and the late Marcel Sankey. Marcella's grandmother is Agnes and Frank Woods of Alaska. Siblings include Marcus Sankey, Silas Woods, Ophelia Woods and Shyann Whiteman



Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes EPA hosts site visit for Educational Garden Project

(Concho, Okla.) Under clear skies and warm sunshine, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Tribal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hosted representatives from the American Geophysical Union (AGU) Tribal TAB Program and the OSU Extension Master Gardener for an in-person site visit to the future site of the Educational Medicine Wheel Garden Project.

The collaborative initiative aims to promote sustainable agriculture, youth engagement, and community-based education through hands-on learning opportunities.

The visit began with a guided tour of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal lands, where guests

were introduced to the tribe's buffalo herd, a living symbol of the tribes' enduring connection to the land and the cultural values that guide their stewardship efforts. The group then traveled to the designated site of the garden, allowing partners to connect with the land that will soon host the project.

Representatives from the Cultural Program, Diabetes Wellness Program, and EPA Program provided an overview of ongoing initiatives and discussed how each will contribute to the success of the garden project. Once completed, the Educational Medicine Wheel Garden will serve as an interactive learning space, blending traditional ecological knowledge

with horticultural and environmental education for students and community members alike.

The project underscores the tribes' commitment to place-based learning and inter-organizational collaboration. With continued support from local partners and the wider community, the garden is expected to grow into a vibrant center for environmental education, wellness, and cultural connection.

The visit concluded with a blessing of the grounds by Cheyenne Chief Gordon Yellowman, a moment that left participants with a renewed sense of purpose and unity, and a reminder of the power of shared vision and partnership.



(Left to Right)- Marsha Smith, OSU Master Gardener, Michaela Shirley, Tribal TAB Program Manager, KSU Center for Hazardous Substances Research, Chieko Buffalo, EPA Director for Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Shari Rose, Program Manager for Community Leader Engagement, AGU Thriving Earth Exchange, Cuauhtemoc Landeros, Tribal Program Manager, KSU Center for Hazardous Substance Research, Marcos Baros, Diabetes Wellness Director for Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Nathaniel Charley, Environmental Specialist for Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes EPA, Andrew Sonnier, Water Coordinator for Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes EPA, Gordon Yellowman, Cheyenne Chief and Tribal Historian for Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Language and Culture Resource Program. (Submitted photo)

ELECTION

continued from pg. 1



mission was issued that all absentee ballots had to be notarized when signing and mailing. According to the AES Activity Report, 80 absentee ballots were purged due to no notary, and a total of 489 absentee ballots were returned by the United State Postal Service marked “undeliverable.”

Polling sites were open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at 10 locations within the tribes’ jurisdiction.

As the election unfolded, several social media posts surfaced from individuals claiming they were unable to vote at polling sites or that they never received their absentee ballots.

According to the 2006 Constitution, Section 12 (“Certification of Election Results”) states:

“The Election Commission shall certify all election

results within twenty-four hours of the election. A tie vote in a General Election shall be decided in a Special Election.”

Section 13 (“Election Challenges”) further states:

“All protests and challenges to the results of an election shall be initially filed with the Election Commission... The Election Commission shall render a final determination within forty-eight hours... An appeal... may be filed directly with the Supreme Court, which shall hear and decide all election appeals within twenty days...”

As of press time, no one had challenged the results of the primary election.

The top two candidates from each race will advance to the Run-Off Election scheduled for Nov. 4, 2025.

The Cause For Indigenous People’s Day

By David Kaw

I would like to believe that Indigenous People's Day came about because of the event of Native Americans occupying Alcatraz Island in 1959 to proclaim their grievances against "the Great White Father and All His People" and give all the Native American tribes reason to celebrate their cultural identity. Further, in 1972 in what was known as the Trail of Broken Treaties, a group of Native American activists occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington D. C. to force the country to notice the broken promises made to the Native tribes. Then in 1973 came the American Indian Movement which brought Indian people into public consciousness to support their cause during the occupation of Wounded Knee in the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. These were causes by Indians who thought in the way of Indians. Thanks to them these social movements have

brought change to the poverty and despair of reservation life. It was by those struggles that brought about cultural preservation, political justification in dealing with treaty obligations as well as other social and economic issues; reasons to be thankful on *Indigenous People's Day*

I fail to see the white man's reason to celebrate Columbus Day. Columbus stumbling onto this New World almost caused the annihilation of the native people through disease, forced relocation to reservations, and what looks, from a modern perspective, remarkably like genocide by Euro American invaders.

But today the Native American people survive and are redefining themselves, not as white washed survivors of a holocaust but as heirs to an extraordinary cultural tradition that justly deserves a day to celebrate their heritage on Indigenous People's Day.

Tribal Foster Families Needed

Let's Make a difference in a child's life Today!

IN OKLAHOMA, THERE IS A NEED FOR TRIBAL FOSTER PARENTS. BECOME A TRIBAL FOSTER PARENT!

BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT IS ANOTHER WAY TO CARRY ON THIS TRADITION BY KEEPING TRIBAL HISTORY AND VALUES ALIVE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

For more information contact:
The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Social Services
Foster Care Program
Lakendra J. Gould
1015 E. 12th Street
Cheyenne, WY 82001
307.422.6900

Every Child needs a Family

Activity To Date		
Summary by District		
Cheyenne and Arapaho		
Cheyenne Arapaho - Primary Election - Election Held on Tuesday, October 7th, 2025		
Issued Ballot		Records Logged
A1		232
A2		370
A3		80
A4		5
C1		259
C2		512
C3		305
C4		90
Total Records Issued Ballot		1853
Re-Issued Ballot		Records Logged
A1		3
A2		3
A3		2
C2		3
C3		2
Total Records Re-Issued Ballot		13
Ballot Undeliverable		Records Logged
A1		64
A2		165
A3		9
A4		3
C1		34
C2		147
C3		54
C4		13
Total Records Ballot Undeliverable		489
10/8/2025 11:32:55 AM		
AUTOMATED ELECTION SERVICES		
Page 1 of 2		

Activity To Date		
Summary by District		
Cheyenne and Arapaho		
Cheyenne Arapaho - Primary Election - Election Held on Tuesday, October 7th, 2025		
Returned Ballot		Records Logged
A1		30
A2		51
A3		21
A4		4
C1		38
C2		78
C3		62
C4		29
Total Records Returned Ballot		313
No Notary		Records Logged
A1		16
A2		15
A3		6
C1		9
C2		20
C3		12
C4		2
Total Records No Notary		80
Voted at Polls		Records Logged
A1		111
A2		331
A3		72
A4		10
C1		127
C2		342
C3		261
C4		120
Total Records Voted at Polls		1374
Total		4122
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AUTOMATED ELECTION SERVICES		
Page 2 of 2		

CHEYENNE and ARAPAHO TRIBES

2025 PRIMARY ELECTION

October 7, 2025

OFFICIAL ELECTION RESULTS

GOVERNOR AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR	CANTON	SEILING	WATONGA	KINGFISHER	GEARY	CONCHO	CLINTON	WEATHERFORD	HAMMON	ELK CITY	ABSENTEE	TOTALS	%
REGGIE WASSANA AND HERSHEL GORHAM	36	25	50	15	35	290	140	40	35	35	133	834	49.81%
ALDEN WHITEMAN AND DEBRA WOOLWORTH	17	3	10	8	11	148	29	10	4	7	57	302	17.97%
ALBERT OLD CROW AND AMARIS SWEZEY	5	1	10	9	18	93	25	18	15	10	82	286	17.01%
CORNELL SANKEY AND DENNY MEDICINE BIRD	13	6	10	7	6	140	25	6	7	3	36	259	15.41%

LEGISLATOR CHEYENNE DISTRICT 2	CANTON	SEILING	WATONGA	KINGFISHER	GEARY	CONCHO	CLINTON	WEATHERFORD	HAMMON	ELK CITY	ABSENTEE	TOTALS	%
ROBERTA HAMILTON	0	0	0	9	1	59	1	3	0	0	21	94	22.78%
MILAN ROMAN NOSE, JR.	0	0	2	1	0	52	2	0	0	0	4	61	14.77%
WANDA WHITEMAN	0	0	0	7	2	38	1	0	0	0	10	58	14.04%
DARYL MAX BEAR	0	0	0	1	3	35	0	0	0	1	12	52	12.58%
GEORGE WOODS	0	1	1	6	0	30	0	0	0	0	14	52	12.58%
MELVIN ROMAN NOSE	0	0	0	2	2	21	0	0	0	0	6	31	7.51%
TRACIE SANKEY	0	0	2	3	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	23	5.57%
SHARI CLAYTON	0	0	0	5	0	6	0	0	0	0	2	13	3.15%
DOUGLAS NOEAR	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	2	12	2.91%
IRENE DEER	0	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	2	8	1.94%
JEWEL TURTLE	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	6	1.45%
ALMANITA N. BROWN	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0.73%

LEGISLATOR CHEYENNE DISTRICT 4	CANTON	SEILING	WATONGA	KINGFISHER	GEARY	CONCHO	CLINTON	WEATHERFORD	HAMMON	ELK CITY	ABSENTEE	TOTALS	%
MARIAH YOUNGBULL	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	8	33	5	53	36.55%
BYRON BYRD	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	21	1	3	26	17.93%
TIFFANY BULLCOMING	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	11	2	6	20	13.79%
THURMAN STARR	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	9	2	18	12.41%
RUTH ANN COSTILLA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	6	12	8.28%
ALEXANDRIA ANDERSON	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	4	10	6.80%
JOHN PAUL HOFFMAN	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	2.07%
AMELIA (BEAVER) WATERS	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	2.07%

LEGISLATOR ARAPAH0 DISTRICT 1	CANTON	SEILING	WATONGA	KINGFISHER	GEARY	CONCHO	CLINTON	WEATHERFORD	HAMMON	ELK CITY	ABSENTEE	TOTALS	%
PAMELA SUTTON	25	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	36	25.53%
RONI SUE (ALLEN) VILLEDA	11	1	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	21	14.89%
KENNY RAY WILLIAMS	7	1	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	3	18	12.77%
DIANE WILLIS	0	1	9	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	17	12.06%
LETISHA DELEON	3	0	3	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	3	15	10.64%
ROBERT CHENEY, SR.	5	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	13	9.22%
DONALD RUNNELS, JR.	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	11	7.80%
AMANDA SHIREY	7	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	10	7.09%

LEGISLATOR ARAPAH0 DISTRICT 2	CANTON	SEILING	WATONGA	KINGFISHER	GEARY	CONCHO	CLINTON	WEATHERFORD	HAMMON	ELK CITY	ABSENTEE	TOTALS	%
KENDRICKS SLEEPER	0	0	0	1	6	85	0	0	0	0	10	102	26.70%
LEAH BURROWS	0	0	2	0	15	32	1	0	0	0	15	65	17.02%
EARL PLUMLEY	0	0	0	0	24	39	0	0	0	0	1	64	16.75%
JUAQUIN LONEL0DGE, JR.	1	0	1	0	6	43	0	0	0	0	5	56	14.66%
JERRY C. LEVI	0	0	0	0	4	27	0	0	0	0	8	39	10.21%
MELISSA PEDRO	0	0	0	1	2	17	0	0	0	0	7	27	7.07%
LAQUITA "PINKY" LONEMAN	0	0	0	0	2	6	2	0	0	0	2	12	3.14%
DONNA SANDOVAL	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	3	12	3.14%
0VERTON SANKEY	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	1.31%

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Election Commission, hereby certify the above to be a true abstract of the votes cast for the Primary Election held October 7, 2025

Sarah J. Orange C4

Kelly Brown A2

PT

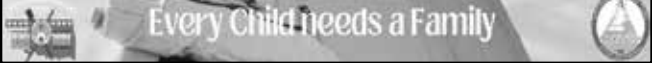
Theresa Johnson C2

Bryn A1

Donna A3

R. Welch C3

Jandra Amos C1





continued from pg. 3

Other artifacts have been found within six miles of the massacre site on the North Fork and Middle Fork of Sappa Creek. These sites are on private land owned today by ranching families. Bison skulls found on the North Fork, one northwest and one northeast of the massacre

In early 2020 the landowner cooperated with Kansas state officials who were interested in the massacre

In fact, there is no physical separation of the massacre site and the pre-contact habitation site. Pre-contact artifacts such as pottery sherds have been found only a few steps away from shooting positions of the US army during the 1875 massacre. Artifacts from both the

Numerous arrowheads have been found at the pre-contact habitation/massacre site. When Bull Elk and Hairy Black Dog arrived at Sappa Creek, they were literally in the center of a buffalo range hunted by their ancestors. Just as Cheyenne oral history proclaims. Shirley Williams is the great-great granddaughter of Bull Elk. He was the son of a Cheyenne man born in the Protohistoric Period, a horseback nomadic bison hunter. The artifacts of the North Fork and Middle Fork of Sappa Creek authenticate

Special thank you to Shirley Williams for her support and contributions to this story.

Adult Protective Services (APS)
provides assistance and
services to help protect
vulnerable adults from abuse,
neglect or exploitation occurring
on trust land.

Adult Protective Services
Caseworker- Tiara Osage (405)
422-7746

Supervised IIM Accounts Assistance is
offered to help tribal members that
have been determined unable to
handle their own financial affairs.

Supervised IIM Caseworker- Rylee
Ortega
(405)422-7739

OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES

Sophie Cruzita Panana Burgess

Sophie Cruzita Panana Burgess passed away Sept. 24, 2025, surrounded by family and loved ones in hospice care in Oklahoma City. She was born to Rosita Panana on Feb. 25, 1941, in Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico. She lost her mother when she was still a young child and was raised by her grandparents, Lousia and Christino Panana.

She attended the Jemez day school until the age of 8 when she started attending the local Catholic school, although she was not Catholic and going to a Baptist church. Following Catholic school, Sophie attended Jemez Springs High School where she graduated May 28, 1963.

Her family was always a cherished priority. She learned the value of hard work at an early age. Sophie had a full life taking care of children, her family, cleaning houses, and picking fruits and veggies as her family grew.

On April 11, 1970, Sophie married Jonathan Burgess

in Los Angeles, Calif. They stayed there about a year and eventually moved back to New Mexico to be with their oldest son, Matthew. Not long after, their daughter Joan was born. In 1975 they moved to Kingfisher, Okla. Sophie had never been to Oklahoma and was in awe how empty the area was when they first arrived, not even a neighbor for miles.

She started working for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Head Start Program with little children, and in 1991, she found her second home at the Emergency Youth Shelter in Concho. She became "grandma" to all the kids she cared for and loved that, as adults, they still thought of her and would stop to visit. Her passion was caring for children and all that came her way. Sophie overcame many obstacles in her long life and will live on through all her loved ones.

Sophie was preceded in death by her loving husband Jonathan Burgess, mother Rosita Panana, grandparents Lousia and Christino Panana,



grandson Brandon Matthew Panana and son-in-law Vincent Edward Scott.

She is survived by her sister Cresencia Gachupin, children, Joan Scott and Matthew Allen Panana, nieces, Marcella Gachupin and Audrey Gachupin, nephew Bob E. C. Gachupin, grandchildren, Ryan Panana, Janelle Burgess, Cheyenne Scott, and Antonio Scott, great-grandchildren, Kyran Panana, Alexia Panana, Mairén Arms, Opal Sheridan, Onyx Sheridan, Christino Burgess and many cousins, including Gerald Panana whom she considered her brother.

Ida Elaine Hoffman

Ida Elaine Hoffman, age 72, long time Hammon resident, was born Feb. 3, 1953, in Clinton, Okla., to Fred and Katherine (Youngbull) Hoffman, and passed away Oct. 4, 2025, in Oklahoma City.

Ida was raised in Hammon and graduated from Fort Sill Indian School in 1972. Following graduation, she attended Southwestern State College in Weatherford, where she took business courses. She dedicated much of her career to serving her community, working for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes in various positions, including many years as housing director.

Ida was a proud member of the Red Moon Baptist Church in Hammon and the Red Moon Service Club. She enjoyed going to church, cooking, playing hand games, attending powwows and benefit dances,

and traveling. Above all, she loved spending time with her grandchildren. Ida was known for her warm smile and kind heart that made everyone feel welcome.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Fred and Katherine Hoffman, her son Amos Beaver Jr., and her siblings, John Tyler Hoffman, Archie Hoffman, Fredrick Hoffman, Lucy Snyder and Pat Hoffman.

She is survived by her daughters, Kimberly Beaver of Hammon and Amelia Waters and husband Matias of Hammon, her sisters, Thelma Kauahquo of Moore, and Shelia Arlene Chapman of Pawnee, grandchildren, Elijah Beaver, Michael Beaver, Joshua Beaver, Amariah Beaver, Prince Ray Beaver, Laura Beaver, Ayonna Dutchie, Mariona Dutchie, Jeffery Dutchie, and Mariya Waters and great-grandchild-



dren, Winter Beaver, Journie Beaver, Ember Beaver and Elijah Beaver Jr.

A traditional all-night wake service was held Oct. 8 at the Hammon Emergency Response Center at the Hammon, Okla. Funeral services were held Oct. 9, with Rev. Gerald Panana officiating, followed by an interment at the Hammon Mennonite Cemetery under the direction of Lee's Hometown Funeral Home.

Reta Louise Mata

Reta Louise Mata was born Sept. 5, 1958 in Memphis, Tenn. She passed away Oct. 3, 2025, at Integris Hospice House in Oklahoma City.

Reta worked as a production worker for a carpet manufacturing company.

She is survived by her daughter Juanita Loneman of El Reno, brothers, Cecil Haurey and Christopher Haury, both of El Reno, sisters, Donna Libertus of De Queen, Ark., and Sara

Loneman of Ft. Smith, Ark., grandchildren, Jionni Escamilla, Greyson Loneman, Tra'Chele Richard, Timothy Richard Jr; Alexander Lopez Loneman, Leonardo Lopez Loneman, Anthony Swallow Jr; and Kaeli Swallow and five great-grandchildren.

Reta was preceded in death by her mother Frances (Madewell) Willis, father Donald Loneman Sr; brothers, James Haury and John Haury, sisters, Leta Smith, who was her twin, and Ev-



elyn Castrejon, and a son James Loneman.

Gaming icon Ernie Stevens Jr. oversaw record-breaking growth in tribal gaming, dies unexpectedly September 26

Ernest L. "Ernie" Stevens Jr. — who led the powerful Indian Gaming Association for more than 20 years while working to help others through community activism — died suddenly on Friday, Sept. 26. He was 66.

His family issued a statement late Friday acknowledging his death.

"It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our Dad and Papa, Ernie Stevens Jr.," they said in a statement. "We ask for privacy at this time as our family navigates this profound loss. More information and announcements will be shared in the coming days. Thank you for your prayers and support."

Jason Giles, executive director of the Indian Gaming Association, also released a statement late Friday to ICT.

"Our IGA Board and staff are stunned and saddened by Chairman Stevens passing," the statement said. "Out of respect for his wife Cheryl, his lovely family and the Oneida Nation, we will issue a full tribute at the appropriate time. Please send your prayers to the Stevens family."

Giles later stated in a press release that Stevens was "more than a chairman ... he was a warrior, a statesman, and a champion for all of Indian Country."

Stevens did his best to protect the integrity of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, Giles said. A historic win for tribal nations in 1988 and a federal law that established the gaming framework in Indian Country.

"His vision and commitment built bridges across

tribal nations, Congress, and federal agencies, ensuring that tribal gaming remained a cornerstone of tribal self-determination and economic growth," Giles stated in the news release. "His legacy will be unmatched, and his voice will echo for generations to come."

In many ways, Stevens was larger than life, yet he was humble in his strong and effective advocacy for tribal nations and their members, said Willie Hardacker, longtime legal counsel for the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, who met Stevens through work over 25 years ago and came to count him as a friend.

"He always treated me with the utmost respect, and I feel confident that's how he treated everybody," Hardacker said. "He was a tireless advocate, just constantly working. His loss to Indian Country is enormous, and he will be greatly missed."

Stevens' death came just weeks after he was recognized in Milwaukee for leading the association during a time when tribal gaming operations nationwide reached record revenues of more than \$43 billion in 2024. A growth from \$11 billion in 2000 which made "Tribal Government Gaming the largest segment of the U.S. gaming industry, according to the association's press release.

"Ernie Stevens Jr. has dedicated his life to Indian Country with unwavering commitment and passion," Mark Powless, chairman of the Oneida Gaming Commission, said in honoring Stevens on Aug. 12 in Milwaukee.

"From the boxing ring to the boardroom, in his career, he has demonstrated strength, vision, and resilience that uplift tribal communities nationwide," Powless said. "His leadership has advanced tribal gaming and empowered tribal governments, and we are proud to honor his achievements and lasting legacy."

Stevens, a citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, was re-elected in April to his 13th term as chairman of the IGA on the final day of the Indian Gaming Tradeshow and Convention in San Diego, California. The IGA is based in Washington, D.C., and works with the federal government and Congress to develop policies and advocate for tribal gaming issues.

He told the crowd gathered in San Diego in April that he was proud to continue serving.

"Together, we will vigorously advance our proactive agenda and stand ready to unite Indian Country to defend tribal sovereignty at all costs," he said. "I promised each of you that I would dedicate myself fully — morning, noon, and night — to champion our interests in tribal government gaming."

He told the gathering in August in Wisconsin that he would redouble efforts to work with the Washington leadership.

Stevens served as an elected councilman of the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin from 1993-1999, and also served as first vice president of the National Congress of American Indians, according to the Oneida Gaming Commission's announcement

when he was honored in August.

He was inducted into the American Gaming Association's Gaming Hall of Fame in 2015, and served on the boards with the Center for American Indian Enterprise Development and the Nike N7 Foundation, the executive board for the Center of Native American Youth and on the Native American advisory board for the Boys and Girls Club of America.

Stevens was also an athlete, starting as a boxer in his teens. He was inducted into the National Indian Athletic Association Hall of Fame in 2008 and into the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame in 2022.

In 1975, at age 16, he joined with renowned boxer Louie Askinette in co-founding the Soaring Eagle Boxing Club in Oneida. He was a four-time consecutive state heavyweight champion from 1976-1979, and was a two-time National Heavyweight Champion out of Carson City, Nevada, in 1977 and 1978, according to the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame website.

He received an associate's degree from Haskell Indian Junior College in 1983 and a bachelor's in criminal justice from Mount Senario College in 1996, the North American Indigenous Athletics Hall of Fame reported. He obtained a master's in management from the University of Phoenix in 2021.

Even with a long list of accomplishments, "Chairman Stevens always believed his greatest accomplishment and legacy was his family," the association stated in the



news release.

He and his wife, Cheryl, were married for more than 45 years. He leaves behind his five children: Brandon, Ernest III, Margaret, Maria and Lois; and his 20 grandchildren, according to the association.

Stevens was born July 5, 1959, and based in Oneida, Wisconsin.

The news of Stevens' sudden death sent waves of shock across Indian Country.

"At a time when the Indian Gaming Industry was experiencing exponential growth and challenges, it needed a dynamic and visionary leader," said Phil Hogen, former longtime National Indian Gaming Commissioner. "They found one in Ernie Stevens, and Tribes and Indian communities are so much better off on account of Ernie's leadership. He will be sorely missed."

Deb Parker, chief executive officer of the National Native American Boarding School Coalition, said on social media, "We will always

remember the time and energy you spent uplifting our lives. Ernie Stevens Jr., may you rest in peace." Stevens sat in the crowd and participated in the organization's Day of Remembrance event on Sept. 16 at IGA's conference center in Washington, D.C.

Gila River Indian Community Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis said at a symposium in Arizona that Stevens was "an incredible person, a brother to me."

"He was a friend to the Gila River Indian Community, deeply admired for his leadership and unwavering advocacy to protect tribal sovereignty," Lewis wrote in a statement. "Stevens was the face of tribal gaming and one of our strongest supporters. He led with heart, integrity, and devotion, and he will be remembered as a wise and faithful servant of his people."

The Oneida Nation of Wisconsin flew their flags at half-staff until funeral services were completed.



✓ RE-ELECT

WASSANA GORHAM 2025

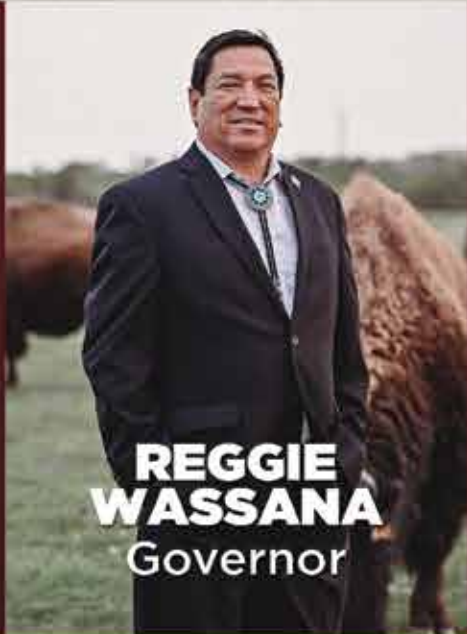


LET'S BUILD WHAT'S NEXT -

VOTE NOVEMBER 4TH!

- Opening a **TRIBAL CHARTER SCHOOL** rooted in culture, language, and excellence.
- Building the **WOODWARD HOTEL, CASINO AND TRAVEL CENTER, EL RENO HOTEL & CASINO RESORT AND THE ELK CITY HOTEL & CASINO RESORT**.
- Launching a **TRIBALLY OWNED POWER PLANT AND AI DATA CENTER** for additional revenue streams and employment opportunities.
- Developing **CANTON MARINA & RECREATION AREA** to boost tourism and community enjoyment.
- Constructing a **NEW TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING** to serve as a hub for modern, efficient government services.
- Expand **WATONGA INDIAN CEMETERY**.
- Building **9 DUPLEXES** for elders and multi-family unit in Concho.

- Continue efforts to **RECLAIM FORT RENO LANDS** to the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe.
- Expanding **CONCHO WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**, replacement of water tower and placement of new water line.
- Creation of a **BROADBAND NETWORK SERVICE FOR FREE OR LOW COSTS WIFI** for tribal members.
- Creation of a **BURIAL AND CHAPEL BUILDING** on the Concho Reserve. Facility will host funeral services and house the Burial Department.
- New, expanded **IHS FACILITY** in Watonga to serve rural communities with quality health care.
- Continue to work to establish the **CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES OF COLORADO** that will bring agriculture and other economic opportunities to the tribe.



REGGIE WASSANA
Governor

“Thank You for Joining the Conversation —

and Believing in Our Shared Future.”

From our community conversation gatherings across the Tribe, one thing is clear — our strength comes from listening to each other and working together. Thank you to everyone who came out, shared ideas, and supported our vision. With your help, we’re building momentum and continuing the projects that keep our Tribe moving forward — stronger, prouder, and more united than ever.

We are humbled by your support in the Primary Election and energized by the conversations shaping our shared future. As we head toward the General Election November 4th, we remain focused on finishing the work we started — from housing and healthcare to education and economic growth — to ensure lasting progress for generations to come.

Vote in the General Election - NOVEMBER 4th

Together, We’ve Built a Stronger Nation!