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Rendition of a family duplex

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Building Hope at Home: Cheyenne and Arapaho Housing Authority Plans Affordable Duplexes and Solar Energy Future

Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

As rent prices continue to climb across Oklahoma, many Cheyenne and Arapaho families are feeling the strain of finding safe, affordable places to live. For tribal leaders and housing advocates, the issue is not just about buildings, it's about stability, dignity and keeping families close to home.

That belief is driving a long-awaited housing project by the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Housing Authority, which aims to ease the burden of high rental costs through the construction of low-income family and elder duplexes on tribal land in Concho.

For Housing Authority Executive Director Damon Dunbar, the project represents years of persistence finally paying off.

"This project has been something we've tried to get off the ground several times," Dunbar said. "Housing affordability has consistently been the number one concern we hear from our tribal citizens."

That opportunity came when a \$6 million Indian Housing Competitive Block Grant (IHCBG) through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) became available. With the help of a specialized grant writer, the Housing Authority successfully secured the funding and was awarded

the grant in 2025.

The project will bring nine new duplexes to tribal land, four elder duplexes and five family duplexes—marking Phase I of a larger, long-term housing vision.

Each duplex will be designed with safety and comfort in mind. The elder units will be two-bedroom homes measuring approximately 1,070 square feet and built east of the Concho Food Pantry. The family duplexes will offer three bedrooms and 1,230 square feet of living space, located on the north end of the Concho Campus. All units will include hardened FEMA-approved safe rooms, built into reinforced utility spaces to provide protection during severe weather.

Affordability is at the heart of the project. Targeting households earning 80 percent or less of the area median income, rents will range from as little as \$100 to a maximum of \$450 per month, far below current market rates.

"That's the biggest thing we're trying to address," Dunbar said. "We want our people to be able to come back to Concho, to live on tribal land, and to afford it."

The project is currently in the environmental review phase, with hopes of completing that step by the end of December 2025. Once finalized, the Housing Authority plans



Rendition of elder housing

"HUD funds the construction, but this is trust land, unlike most of our other housing," Dunbar explained. "So we'll be making some policy adjustments to make it work."

Utilities will also be structured with affordability in mind. Elder duplexes will require only electric service, with water supplied by the Concho water plant. Family duplex residents will be responsible for electric and rural water utilities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING pg. 5



Cheyenne and Arapaho citizens, Tommy Orange, LaDonna Orange and Victor Orange participated in a panel discussion facilitated by Sheldon Spotted Elk, Northern Cheyenne in Denver, Colo. (Photo / Montoya Whiteman)

Connections Across Generations: Orange Family at History Colorado Center

Rosemary Stephens
Editor-in-Chief

defeated challengers Alden Whiteman and Debra Woolworth.

Following the election, Whiteman and Woolworth filed a challenge with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Election Commission contesting the election results. Under the 2006 Constitution, the Election Commission is required to issue a final determination on any election challenge within 48 hours. If the commission fails to do so, the original certification of election results is deemed final for the purpose of judicial review.

According to constitutional provisions, the Election Commission did not issue a final determination within the required timeframe, allowing the challengers to pursue judicial review before the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Supreme Court.

Article IX, Section 13 of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Con-

stitution states that all election challenges must first be filed with the Election Commission, which must issue written findings of fact and conclusions of law within 48 hours. If no determination is made, the original certification becomes final. Appeals may then be filed with the Supreme Court, which has 20 days to decide the matter.

The Constitution reads, in full, "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 on any protest or challenge within forty-eight hours setting forth in writing separate findings of fact and conclusions of law. If the Election Commission fails to render a final determination on an election protest or challenge within forty-eight hours, the original certification of the

Montoya Whiteman
Tribal Tribune Correspondent

candor.

On December 10, 2025, the History Colorado Center in Denver hosted a sold-out event celebrating three generations of the Orange family: Victor Orange (80), LaDonna Orange (49), and acclaimed novelist Tommy Orange (43), a Pulitzer Prize finalist. The family sat on a riser framed by Cheyenne tepees as a backdrop, adding

a strong visual and historical connection as the crowd eagerly anticipated a night of storytelling and celebration across generations.

Facilitated by Sheldon Spotted Elk of the Northern Cheyenne tribe, the one-hour conversation invited audiences to "get a glimpse into Cheyenne exceptionality" exploring themes of pride,

ORANGE FAMILY pg. 5

INAUGURATION pg. 3

Colorado cannot heal until it confronts Sand Creek honestly

By Chris Tall Bear

The soul wounds of history do not heal on their own. They must be tended. This truth is why, every year, descendants of the Sand Creek Massacre conclude the Spiritual Healing Run at the steps of the Colorado State Capitol, the very heart of the state's government. And it is why, as a descendant, I look at the empty pedestal on the Capitol's west plaza and foresee that the most crucial step in Colorado's journey toward true reconciliation is still ahead of us.

On November 29, 1864, a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho people, who had been promised U.S. military protection, were slaughtered by Colonel John Chivington's troops. More than 200 lives were taken – mostly women, children, and elders – in an act of betrayal so profound that it echoed across generations. Though it was swiftly condemned

as a massacre by military and congressional investigations, Colorado celebrated it as a victory for decades.

That lie was embodied by a plaque that listed Sand Creek among Colorado's Civil War battles on a monument that stood until recently on the Capitol grounds. Now, that space is reserved for a powerful and necessary replacement: the "Peace Keepers" memorial, a bronze sculpture honoring the courageous, peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders, like Chief Black Kettle and Chief Left Hand, who held on to the promise of peace until their final breaths, and Medicine Woman who survived the massacre with 8 bullet wounds.

In 2025, the Colorado Legislature and Governor Jared Polis took a critical step by unanimously endorsing this monument. They have affirmed that the truth about Sand Creek

must no longer be hidden. This is a historic act of remembrance, a call for governmental forgiveness for the institutional betrayals of the past, and a public commitment to honoring the innocent lives lost.

However, the real work, the hardest work, is healing.

Healing is not about forgetting or achieving comfortable closure; it is about recognizing that trauma is not confined to the past. The profound soul wound of the Sand Creek Massacre continues to shape the lives of the Cheyenne and Arapaho today. The "Peace Keepers" memorial is not simply a statue for us; it is a space for all Coloradans to confront that trauma, understand its legacy, and begin to repair the foundational trust of this state.

SAND CREEK pg. 3

A Leap of Faith into Retirement After 35 Years Dedicated to Serving Veterans and Family

By Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

Taking that next step into retirement after working 35 years with the federal government, Cheyenne and Arapaho citizen, Gail Williams takes a leap of faith leaving behind a career full of service, commitment and devotion.

Residing in El Reno, Oklahoma, Williams roots began in Canton, Oklahoma, where she was born and raised in a family of 13. Williams remembered what it was like to share what little they had growing up and believes that's the reason for being so close to family.

"Because that's all we have. Our mother used to always say that when I'm gone, you guys are it and that's why I'm real close to all my family and we just try our best to do what we can," Williams said.

And doing the best she could in all aspects of life, Williams had come full circle when she began her career at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center in Oklahoma City.

After graduating high

because my mother, she had cancer and I wanted to be around her much more than being away in Nashville, so I was trying to get me a job back in Oklahoma," Williams said.

Torn between the decision of going back to Tennessee or staying in Oklahoma, Williams didn't want to lose her job with the federal government, however, she had made the decision to work for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes for a short time. Just before terminating her job with the federal service in Nashville to come back home, Williams again did not want to lose her federal government employment.

When the opportunity became available, she went on to work for the Indian Health Service in Lawton, Okla., where she would make the daily three-hour round-trip from El Reno to work in Lawton.

In 2003, Williams was informed there was an opening at the VA Medical Center in Oklahoma City, which she happily applied for. Williams

veterans and would get them reimbursed for when they had doctor's appointments.

"And from there, I just basically did all what I could," Williams said.

Coming from a family of veterans, Williams felt she had to do all she could for other veterans as it was heavily instilled into her heart to be of service.

"I just tried my best and my brother Richard, he's a Vietnam vet and I put all that in perspective and that's when I said, this is where I need to be and this is where I'm going to work," Williams said.

Williams felt gratitude and compassion in her job assisting veterans, as they would often compliment her work ethic.

"They were all so grateful and a lot of them used to pray, saying 'I want to pray for you, Gail,' and that was much respect coming from the veterans that I served," Williams said.

Continuing to serve and assist veterans, Williams would help veterans with

tally astounded to hear a call back from me," Williams said.

Williams also thought it was astonishing that veterans took pride in her work and that her job wanted to honor her.

"The greatest thrill of my life was just helping them and assisting them and taking it from there," Williams said.

Believing everyone needs to help each other with the ongoings in the world, Williams took that belief to heart in her role working in the VA.

"That's just how the world works, helping each other out and Maheo tells it, help each other out, we're here for a short time and that's it," Williams said.

Coming across many tribal citizens in her line of work, Williams would assist veterans from different tribal affiliations. And although she loved her job and loved working with veterans, at 68 years old, Williams made the tough decision to retire after a total of 35 and a half years of working for the federal government. In total years, Williams worked 36 years but having took a break working for the federal government, she officially worked 35 and a half years.

"And I loved my job. I surely do and I wish I had gone on a little bit further, but with my age and I'm 68 years old, I felt that I needed to spend some quality time with my family," Williams said.

With family members facing health issues, Williams felt the need to be there for them and do the best she could for all her family.

"I know everybody all needs help, so that's basically why I did what I did and I loved my job, they had a reception for me and everybody came, all my coworkers I worked with in previous years and they all wanted to be there and honor me, that was much respect," Williams said.

Committed to her career in the VA just as much as she was devoted to her family, Williams' life has been of servitude to others, assisting veterans and being there when her family needed her the most.

"They were grateful that I reached out to them and returned their phone calls. each one of them. They were to-



Gail Williams

Overall, Williams looks back on her time working for the federal government as an honorable time. Coming from the small town of Canton, Williams never imagined herself being in government service or that her career would've taken off the way it had.

"But through life's ups and downs, it made me who I am now because through all the challenges and the struggles, that's where it all started, it's a real big honor," Williams said.

Acknowledging the need for more native youth to take interest in government careers, Williams says to the younger generation to nev-

er give up and keep going as you never know where you're going to end up.

"Don't give up because the struggles are real, but also when you finally accomplish and jump over those hurdles, you never know how good, how great it is on the other side to experience all your success until you live it," Williams said.

Although officially in retirement, her life of servitude and commitment to her family will continue on outside of having a job, as Williams looks forward to raising her grandchildren and being of assistance to family and many others.



A retirement ceremony was held honoring Gail Williams' 35 year career working for the Veterans Administration assisting Veterans. (Submitted photo)

school in 1975, Williams worked several jobs in between and her career started in 1979 at the VA as a clerk typist when she was working for Indian Health Services (IHS) in Oklahoma at the time. From then on, Williams climbed the ladder to accounting technician. After receiving a RIF notice, Williams went on to work in Nashville, Tenn., where she worked for several years for the Nashville Area Indian Health Services before returning back to Oklahoma. "I had to come back home

would continue to hold that position for the next 22 years at the VA.

"As luck would have it, they were real happy with what I was working with and at the time I was working in accounting and more or less the health insurance benefits, the co-pays and the deductibles and all that, that's what they wanted," Williams said.

Williams climbed the ladder from working as a patient accounting tech to working with veterans as an accounting technician, where she took care of travel claims for

their travel pay as well as handle their home improvements when they were in need of repairs or remodeling, such as having handicap access. Williams also handled the pharmacy payments, which were in the millions.

What Williams enjoyed the most working at the VA was helping the veterans, as she said they were always respectful and grateful for her assistance.

"They were grateful that I reached out to them and returned their phone calls. each one of them. They were to-

SAND CREEK

continued from pg. 2

Healing is not about forgetting or achieving comfortable closure; it is about recognizing that trauma is not confined to the past.



A model of the "Peace Keepers" memorial, a bronze sculpture honoring Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders Chief Black Kettle, Chief Left Hand, and Medicine Woman. (Courtesy photo)

This is where the history of Sand Creek becomes a powerful, immediate cautionary tale for our current moment.

The massacre was born from a toxic mixture of fear, hysteria and the willful rejection of conscience. Chivington's attack was fueled by politicians and a press that dehumanized

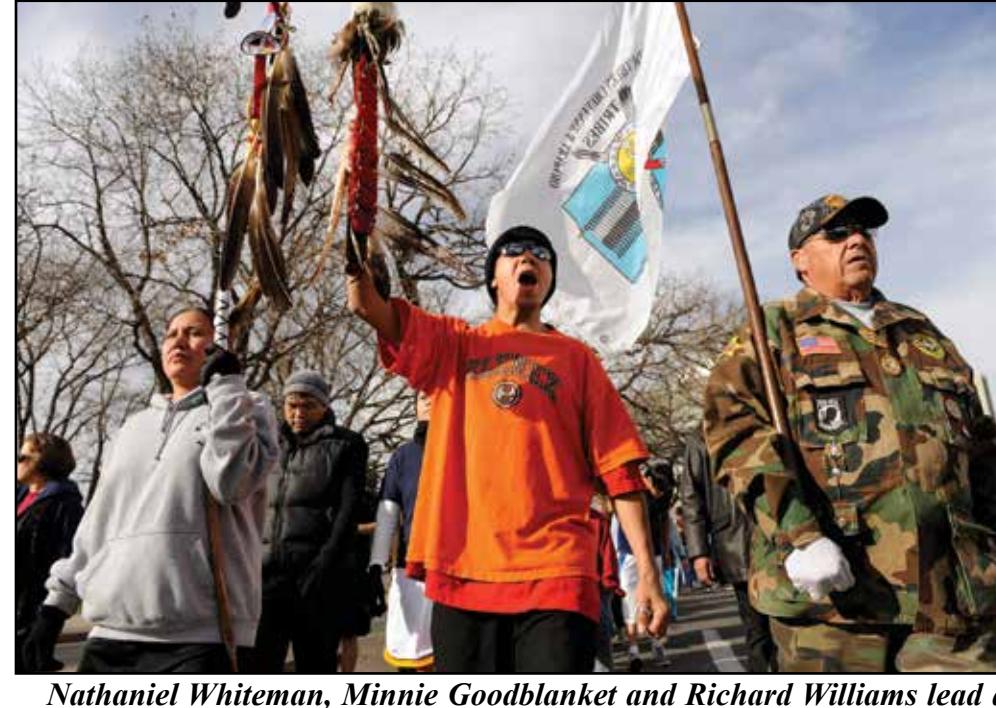
the tribes and encouraged violence, replacing diplomatic engagement with brute force and treachery.

Today, in our national discourse, we see those same dangerous conditions: rampant political division, the strategic spread of fear and disinformation, and the increasing temptation to view political opponents as existential enemies to be vanquished rather than citizens to be negotiated with. When we replace dialogue with demagoguery, and diplomacy with dismissal, we are laying the same groundwork that allowed the Sand Creek Massacre to happen.

The story of the "Peace Keepers" chiefs reminds us that even in the face of violent dehumanization, they, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Chiefs, chose peace. Their sacrifice calls on all of us to stand for humanity, truth and dialogue, especially when

the national atmosphere tempts us toward anger and division.

We have a deadline for this commitment. The "Peace Keepers" memorial is scheduled for dedication on November 29, 2026, coinciding with Colorado's 150th anniversary of statehood. This is Colorado's chance to declare, at the highest level, what



Nathaniel Whiteman, Minnie Goodblanket and Richard Williams lead a group of walkers down the streets of Denver to the state capitol during the annual Sand Creek Massacre Spiritual Healing Run in 2009. (Photo-Kathryn Scott Osler/The Denver Post via Getty Images)

kind of history it chooses to commemorate and what kind of future the citizens choose to build.

The Sand Creek Massacre Memorial Committee is working diligently to raise the final funds necessary for the bronze casting and installation. They have secured a generous matching gift, a sign that the community is ready to stand with us.

Should we allow this pedestal to remain empty for another year, we are signaling that our commitment to truth is only theoretical. By supporting the completion of the "Peace Keepers" memorial now, we are declaring that healing is a priority. We are choosing to fill the void of a false, violent past with a permanent, visible testament to courage, peace, and the enduring human spirit of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. It is a decision that honors the past and is essential for the future health and healing

of the state of Colorado.

This article first published by High Country News on December 19, 2025.

About Christ Tall Bear

Chris Tall Bear, Southern Cheyenne, is an enrolled member of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and a tribally appointed representative of the Sand Creek Massacre Memorial Committee, working to honor victims and promote healing through the Peace Keepers memorial. He is a member of the Cheyenne Council of 44, the traditional leadership for the Cheyenne.



INAUGURATION

continued from pg. 1

election results shall be deemed final for purpose of judicial review. An appeal of a final determination made by the Election Commission on any protest or challenge to the results of the election may be filed directly with the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court shall hear and decide all election appeals within twenty days, provided that, if the Supreme Court fails to decide such appeals within twenty days, then the decision of the Election Com-

mission shall be final and no subsequent judicial review shall be permitted."

On Nov. 21, 2025, Whiteman and Woolworth filed an election challenge petition docketed as CIV-2025-0087. A subsequent petition was filed on Nov. 24, 2025, docketed as SC-2025-0001, which included an affidavit from tribal citizen Rossi Harjo.

On Dec. 2, 2025, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Supreme Court issued a

decision addressing both petitions. The court dismissed the election challenge without prejudice, citing lack of jurisdiction. In its ruling, the court stated the petitioners failed to demonstrate that the challenge had been properly filed with the Election Commission as required by the Constitution and tribal code.

The court noted that because the petitioners did not allege or show that a final determination had been made by the

Election Commission, the Supreme Court lacked original jurisdiction to hear the case.

The court's decision referenced the "November 5, 2025" election; however, the general election was held on Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025.

Despite the legal challenge, the certification of election results remains in effect, and the inauguration will proceed as scheduled.

CHEYENNE & ARAPAHO TRIBES OF OKLAHOMA FILED DEC 02 2025	
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE COURT CLERK CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES	
DOCKET	PAGE
IMAGE	
DEPUTY	
ALDEN A. WHITEMAN, DEBRA WOOLWORTH)
Petitioners,)
v.) Case No. SC-2025-0001
CHEYENNE & ARAPAHO TRIBAL ELECTION COMMISSION,) Case No. CIV-2025-0087
Respondent)
ORDER	
Per Curiam.	
This matter comes before the Court upon submission of an "Election Challenge Petition" by petitioners Alden A. Whiteman and Debra Woolworth. ¹	
In order for this Court to consider the petition, it must first confirm that it has jurisdiction to do so. This Court's jurisdiction is defined by the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Constitution in Article VII, Section 5, entitled "Jurisdiction." CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. VII, §5. In particular, Section 5(b) provides:	
The Supreme Court shall have original and exclusive jurisdiction over any final determination by the Election Commission on a protest or challenge of the results of an election, and such jurisdiction shall include the power to make findings of fact and conclusions of law, and to issue all remedies in law and equity.	

¹ Petitioners initially filed an "Election Challenge Petition" on November 21, 2025, and that case was docketed as Case No. CIV-2025-0087. The same petitioners filed a subsequent "Election Challenge Petition" on November 24, 2025, docketed as Case No. SC-2025-0001, which included an affidavit of Rossi Harjo. This order addresses both petitions given that they are identical except for the case numbers.

CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. VII, §5(b) characterizes this Court's jurisdiction as "original" when addressing "any final determination by the Election Commission on a protest or challenge of the results of an election." CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. VII, §5(b). Second, in those matters, this Court sits as a trial court and has "the power to make findings of fact and conclusions of law, and to issue all remedies in law and equity." CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. VII, §5(b). Before this Court may do so, however, it must first have jurisdiction over the suit.

Article IX of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Constitution addresses matters related to "Elections." Section 13 of that Article 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 on any protest or challenge within forty-eight hours setting forth in writing separate findings of fact and conclusions of law. If the Election Commission fails to render a final determination on an election protest or challenge within forty-eight hours, the original certification of the election results shall be deemed final for purposes of judicial review. An appeal of a final determination made by the Election Commission on any protest or challenge to the results of the election may be filed directly with the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court shall hear and decide all election appeals within twenty days, provided that, if the Supreme Court fails to decide such appeals within twenty days, then the decision of the Election Commission shall be final and no subsequent judicial review shall be permitted.

CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. IX, §13. Section 13 states that "[a]ll protests and challenges to the results of an election shall be initially filed with the Election Commission." CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. IX, §13. The usage of the term "all" in this section encompasses any type of action related to the results of an election. The instant petition challenges various aspects of the tribal election held on November 5, 2025 and is entitled "Election Challenge Petition." Therefore, the petition is the type of action covered under Section 13. Next, Section 13 requires that such challenges "shall" be "initially filed with the Election Commission." CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES CONST. Art. IX, §13. The word "shall" is mandatory rather than optional, thereby necessitating that all election challenges must be filed

with the Election Commission at the outset. We note that, on August 9, 2025, the Legislature of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes enacted the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Election Law codified in the Cheyenne and Arapaho Code (CAC) at Section 2.801 et. seq. Consistent with Article IX, Section 13 described above, §2.829 entitled "Protests and Challenges" contains the exact language from the Constitution requiring that "[a]ll protests and challenges to the results of an election shall be initially filed with the Election Commission." CAC §2.829. The Cheyenne and Arapaho Constitution and the Cheyenne Arapaho Code are in harmony regarding the legal requirements for challenges to an election.

Petitioners' filing provides background, context, and makes factual allegations and arguments regarding the November 5, 2025 election. The filing does not demonstrate that the election challenge was initially filed with the Election Commission as required by Article IX, Section 13 of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Constitution and §2.829 of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Code. Because Petitioners have not alleged or shown that they filed with the Election Commission or obtained a final determination, this Court lacks original jurisdiction to hear this matter under Article VII, Section 5.

The petition therefore must be DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE for lack of jurisdiction.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 2nd day of December 2025.

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Cheyenne and Arapaho

Tribal Tribune

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2010-2025 INDIGENOUS JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION MEDIA AWARD WINNER -- 2012-2017 AWARD WINNER OF THE OPA BETTER NEWSPAPER CONTEST

2020-2021-2024 SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALIST/OK CHAPTER MEDIA AWARD WINNER

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Future Leaders Rising: Cheyenne and Arapaho Students at Haskell Indian Nations University

On December 2 Arapaho District 3 (A3) Legislator Travis Ruiz and A3 administrative assistant Caleb Gilbert, collaborated with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Dept. of Health and its supporting programs, providing resources and incentives to the Haskell Indian Nation University's Cheyenne and Arapaho students.

"We're celebrating one student graduating at winter commencement and three more graduating this May. So proud of these future leaders who are investing in knowledge for the next generations," Ruiz said. "Leadership needs to listen to better understand future perspectives and concerns so during the discussion, we asked should future Cheyenne and Arapaho generations have access to our languages through a public charter school? Nineteen out of 19 said yes!"

In 1884, 22 American Indian students entered the doors of a new American Indian boarding school in Lawrence, Kansas, to begin an educational program that focused on agricultural education in grades one through five.

Originally named the United States Indian Industrial Training School, enrollment quickly grew from its original 22 students to over 308 by the end of 1884. The early trades for boys included tailoring, wagon making, blacksmithing, harness making, painting, shoe making, and farming. Girls studied cooking, sewing, and homemaking. Most of the students' food was produced at the school's farm, and students were assigned various duties throughout the institute. In 1887, the school was renamed Haskell Institute, after Kansas representative, Dudley Haskell, who had led efforts to open the school in Lawrence, Kansas.

Ten years passed before the school expanded its academic training beyond the elementary grades. A "normal school" was added because teachers were needed in the students' home communities.

The commercial department (the predecessor of today's College of Business) was added in 1902.

Business) opened in 1895 with five typewriters. The first touch-typing class in Kansas is believed to have been taught at Haskell.

By 1927, high school classes were accredited by the state of Kansas, and Haskell began offering post-high school courses in a variety of areas. Part of Haskell's attraction was not only its post-high school curriculum but also its success in athletics. Haskell football teams in the early 1900s to the 1930s are legendary, and you can learn more about it by visiting <https://theclio.com/entry/63264>.

Industrial training became an important part of the curriculum in the early 1930s, and by 1935 Haskell began to evolve into a post high school, vocational-technical institution. Gradually, the secondary program was phased out, and the last high school class graduated in 1965.

In 1970, Haskell was approved to be accredited as Haskell Indian Junior College. It offered associate degrees in American Indian Studies, Business, Nursing, and Printing along with continued vocational training in fields such as carpentry and auto mechanics.

In 1992, after a period of planning for the 21st century, the National Haskell Board of Regents recommended a new name to reflect its vision for Haskell as a national center for Indian education, research, and cultural preservation. In 1993, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs approved the change, and Haskell became "Haskell Indian Nations University." In 1998, the University graduated the first Elementary Education majors in its baccalaureate program. It also offered bachelor's degrees in American Indian Studies, Business, and Environmental Sciences while retaining its associate degree programs.

Haskell Today – Honoring the Past, Embracing the Present, and Building the Future

For over 140 years, Haskell Indian Nations University has remained dedicated to serving Alaska Native and



Arapaho District 3 Legislator Travis Ruiz and his administrative assistant Caleb Gilbert visit with Cheyenne and Arapaho students attending Haskell Indian Nations University, providing resources and incentives to the students. (Submitted photo)



Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU) held its fall graduation Friday, Dec. 12, 2025, in Lawrence, Kansas. Cheyenne and Arapaho Gov. Reggie Wassana currently serves on the HINU National Board of Regents as the Southern Plains member and was present to congratulate the graduates, Rachelle Roman Nose, Javier Baxcayay, Mya Guzman and McKenna Lime. (Courtesy photo)

American Indian students in partially fulfillment of trust responsibility between the United States and Indian Country. What began in 1884 as an assimilation-era American Indian boarding school has grown into a nationally recognized, accredited university that makes a positive difference in the lives of our students. We do this by respecting Indigenous knowledge and cultures throughout our certificate and degree programs—as well as across our campus—while welcoming more than 900 students each semester from federally recognized tribes across the United States.

As a federally supported institution within the Bureau of Indian Education, Haskell offers an affordable, quality education in a supportive environment designed for Indigenous students. Our undergraduates gain a meaningful college education while being part of a vibrant intertribal community that values tradition, innovation, professional and career development, and personal growth.

With a strong academic foundation that is connected to Native cultures, Haskell graduates are prepared for whatever path they choose.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

continued from pg. 1

Looking ahead, Dunbar sees this project as only the beginning. The Housing Authority plans to apply for an additional \$7.5 million IHC-BG grant to expand housing further, including additional elder and family units and potentially three homes in El Reno on tribally owned property.

While housing construction addresses one side of the affordability challenge, another initiative is working to lower monthly utility costs for tribal families already in their homes.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Housing Authority's Energy Program is launching a solar pilot project aimed at reducing electricity bills while building long-term energy independence.

Andres Lonebear, energy coordinator with the Department of Housing, said the program will begin with a feasibility study involving 13 tribal homes across communities ranging from El Reno to western Oklahoma.

"We want to see how much of an impact solar actually makes for these families," Lonebear said. "That way we can continue to go after more funding and grow the program."

The initiative will also focus on workforce development, training up to four tribal citizens to become certified solar technicians. Training is expected to begin soon, with construction

targeted for February of next year.

Beyond cost savings, potentially cutting electric bills in half or more, the program is about empowerment.

"Our biggest push is education," Lonebear said. "Solar isn't new technology, but people are just now seeing how much it can benefit them."

Solar panels generate electricity directly for the home, reducing reliance on utility companies and, in some cases, allowing households to earn credits for excess energy produced.

The program is currently supported by two grants totaling more than \$800,000, including funding from the Tribal Solar Accelerator Fund and GRID Alternatives.

For Lonebear, the ultimate goal is energy sovereignty.

"We want tribal citizens producing their own electricity," he said. "Keeping jobs here, keeping money in tribal pockets, and not being so dependent on utility companies that keep raising rates."

Together, the housing and energy projects reflect a broader vision, one where Cheyenne and Arapaho families can live affordably, safely and sustainably on their own land.

"It's about more than buildings," Dunbar said. "It's about giving our people a place to come home to."

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Micki Black retires after decades of service to Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

ers, her family and Gov. Reggie Wassana and Lt. Gov. Hershel Gorham.

Micki is a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and originally from Geary, Oklahoma but made her lifelong home in El Reno, Oklahoma. She is the daughter of the late Edward Lumpmouth Black Sr. and Rev. Joann (Bushy) Black-Williams.

Micki graduated high school in 1972 and in 1973 began classes at The School of Banking and Business in Oklahoma City. In 1977 she began working for the tribes and over the years held various positions, taking only stints of maternity leave as she birthed four daughters, LaRenda, Janell, Leslie and Jennie.

Micki's first position was with the tribes bingo hall, then she held positions administratively for various Cheyenne Arapaho Elected



Business Committee members, as well as in position serving students in the tribes education office, and providing news and information in the Public Information Office, and finally her last 31 years in Treasury working in travel.

Thank you Micki for being a positive example of work ethic with your dedication and longstanding service to the Cheyenne Arapaho Tribes.



The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes' Dept. of Treasury held a surprise retirement luncheon December 15 for Micki Black at the NAC in Concho, Okla. The luncheon was attended by her coworkers,

ORANGE FAMILY

continued from pg. 1

joy, and hope, through narratives spanning from the 1870s to the present day. As descendants of survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre, the Orange family shared deeply personal stories that honored their ancestors while inspiring future generations.

The discussion was vibrant, touching on heroes and ancestors, education, and identity, and even the intersections of writing and basketball. Discussions were at times humorous, delighting the crowd with warmth while in other moments it carried the historical weight of the Cheyenne people's tragic history in Colorado.

Raised from the age of two by his grandparents, Ve'kesohvo'komaestse (White Bird) Victor Orange shared stories passed down from his grandparents about the Sand Creek Massacre. Victor shared that he was named after a courageous boy who survived the Sand Creek Massacre and who heroically stayed behind at the camp to lead others to safety. One of the few fluent speakers of the Cheyenne language, Victor reminisced about growing up in Hammon, Oklahoma. He expressed his heartfelt prayers for the Cheyenne and Arapaho language programs, emphasizing the critical role language plays in preserving tribal culture.

LaDonna Orange is a graduate student at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe where she is pursuing a degree in museum studies.

Tommy Orange, a 2019 Pulitzer Prize finalist and 2025 MacArthur Foundation Fellow, is the author of two acclaimed books: *There There* (2018) and *Wandering Stars* (2024). He is recipient of the PEN/Hemingway Award, the National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize, the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize, and the

American Book Award.

When asked to name someone who has inspired him, Tommy spoke of Mochi (also known as Buffalo Calf Woman), a Sand Creek survivor who saw her mother perish before her eyes. In retribution, she spent the next 11 years at war. She was captured and imprisoned at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida, the place the Cheyenne called the "Prison Castle."

LaDonna reflected that it was a hard question to answer, explaining that her greatest teachers are beside her, her father and brother, whom she described as strong collaborators who deeply care for one another. She added that she draws inspiration from the Cheyenne and Arapaho women who were victims and survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre.

Victor spoke of the Cheyenne prophet Sweet Medicine as his source of inspiration. He expressed pride in being Cheyenne and, equally, pride in his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

While on their road trip to Denver from New Mexico, the family shared that they had stopped at the Sand Creek Massacre site but were upset they could not enter due to the government shutdown. When Sheldon asked about their experience, Tommy said he grew up hearing Sand Creek stories from his father, including his father's powerful naming story that emerged from this national tragedy.

LaDonna recalled life in Oakland, saying they barely made it through those years. She believed they were the only Native family there. Most of her friends were Hispanic. She smiled as she remembered Victor saying grace for 20 minutes at dinner.

Sheldon noted that seven-

ty percent of Native people live off reservations, which explains why Tommy's stories resonate so deeply with audiences, they speak to identity and connection.

Tommy added that basketball is a "Native thing," explaining that Native youth reach to basketball when there is nothing else.

LaDonna emphasized that Victor never let his children forget they were Cheyenne.

Tommy closed with, "At Sand Creek they burned our tepees. They burned us from the area, but they never took away our language. All these things make us who we are."

When asked what it means to be Cheyenne in 2025, Victor reflected that many people are drifting away from the spirit and goodness of living together in harmony with one another. He said, "We live with the price of these massacres, what is now called historical trauma."

Victor emphasized that language is the foundation of identity. He spoke of how the Cheyenne people were turned away because of the color of their skin but expressed hope that "Creator has something better in store for us all."

Grateful for the present moment, Victor acknowledged, "I'm not sure how much time I have, but I'm going to make the best of it."

When Sheldon asked how the MacArthur Award impacted him, Tommy said receiving the honor was humbling and he was deeply grateful. He shared that his close friends teased him about the "genius" title. He said he is excited to meet the other fellows in 2026.

When asked about their creative process, Tommy shared that he first earned an associate degree in sound engineering. However, because technology was evolving so quickly, much of what he learned became outdated. In

2004 or 2005, he turned to writing. He was also a roller hockey player when rollerblading was popular.

Tommy spent ten years in community health at the Native American Health Center, where he gained deep insights into human health, character, and storytelling. Later, he enrolled at the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA), earning a Master of Fine Arts degree.

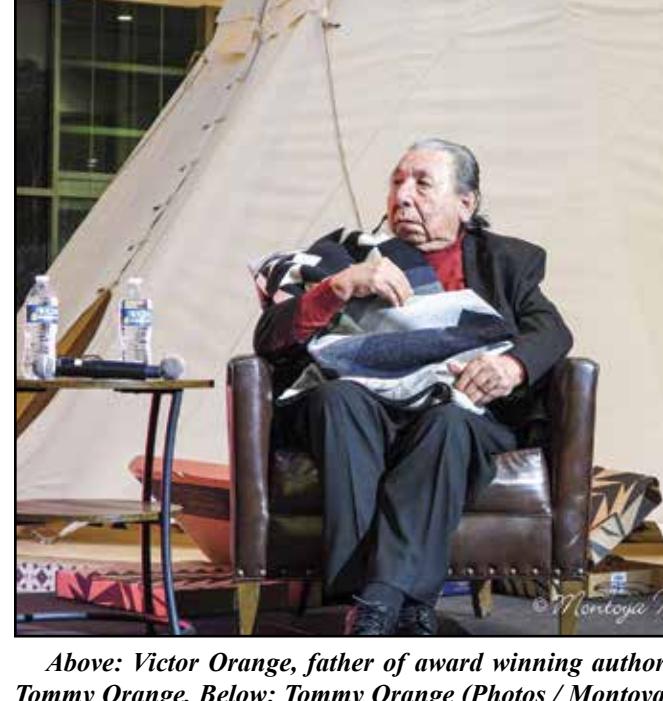
LaDonna said "Tommy is a genius. He's been a genius as long as I can remember." Although years apart in age, she has always admired and looked out for brother.

Artistically, LaDonna loves museum studies and has a lifelong passion for art, especially bead work. She spoke about her love and appreciation for IAIA, and the vital role tribal colleges and universities play in supporting Native students, making success possible.

Victor said, "I'm not an artist." His first love was basketball. He spent his childhood playing in the forests with his siblings, using imagination, and toppling logs and riding on them miles downriver in western Oklahoma. Victor said, "AI can't replicate those experiences."

When asked about the next book, Tommy shared that he is finishing his third novel, which explores the concept of "pretendian," someone who claims to be Indigenous, but isn't. He noted that the Boston Tea Party was the first pretendian moment in history. He also cited *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter as an example of how deep rooted, long running, and harmful misrepresentation can be.

Tommy reflected on storytelling, saying, "We are storytelling creatures whether we realize it or not. Even when you are at the bus stop talking to a friend about your



Above: Victor Orange, father of award winning author Tommy Orange. Below: Tommy Orange (Photos / Montoya Whiteman)



day, you are storytelling." He added, "Specific has the most potential to connect to the most people."

When asked who inspires them, LaDonna said Tommy is her source of inspiration ... and Victor agreed.

Tommy said he admires Sterling Harjo, mentioning his latest film *The Lowdown* starring Ethan Hawke. He also expressed appreciation for Dr. Henrietta Mann, a Cheyenne author, educator, and historian, whose book on the Sand Creek Massacre had a deep impact on him.

The evening concluded

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ATHLETE'S SPOTLIGHT

By Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

Hezakiya Satepauhoodle, El Reno High School

EL RENO, Okla. - Using basketball as his outlet, Hezakiyah Satepauhoodle, 17, knows when he picks up a basketball and steps onto the court, he takes nothing for granted.

Standing 6'5 and playing forward for the El Reno High School boys basketball team, Satepauhoodle grew up playing the sport for most of his youth.

Born in Midwest City and raised in Anadarko, Okla., Satepauhoodle started playing basketball at the age of five when his mother put him on a little league team.

What Satepauhoodle loved the most about playing basketball was building friendships.

"One thing I love most about basketball is the ability to make connections, almost all of my friends and every-

one I'm cool with comes from the sport, whether that be a teammate or someone I played with one time, the ability to create friendships through the sport is amazing," Satepauhoodle said.

With his senior season just starting, what Satepauhoodle looked forward to the most was growing as a player. His goals for the season include having a good record.

"Working hard every game, hustling whenever I can and winning as much as possible," Satepauhoodle said.

With motivation and support from his family, Satepauhoodle continued to play the sport his family has all come to know and love.

"Growing up basketball has always been a part of my life. my mom, grandma, and other numerous family mem-

bers keep me going," Satepauhoodle said.

Knowing the importance of having people to lean back on when the weight of the world is too much, Satepauhoodle continues to work hard on the basketball court in honor of his family.

"Growing up my ah'pee used to cut out newspaper prints from the little league of me and my brother and keep them, even though she's gone I still work hard no matter what, she's another reason I keep pushing," Satepauhoodle said.

In his last season of high school basketball, Satepauhoodle felt the weight of reality and how fast time has passed by as he remembers it was just like yesterday when he was playing in little league.

"Times flies and taking

nothing for granted is so important, it still doesn't feel real sometimes," Satepauhoodle said.

Maintaining a 3.9 GPA, Satepauhoodle believes in separating athletics and academics and focusing on each respectively.

What Satepauhoodle hoped to accomplish the most in playing basketball was to make his family proud. Having a support system such as family is important as a basketball player, as well as having another outlet.

"I know I have my family to lean back on and then probably another outlet like frequent breaks around the sport, you can't just put your all into it and just expect it to be perfect, it's not going to be perfect. So having an outlet is good," Satepauhoodle said.

Through the years, Satepauhoodle believed he's grown as a player by getting stronger and more aggressive, which is what he's been working on the most this season and staying consistent in practice is how he improves his game the best.

"Practicing and practice, you got to hustle in practice, work hard and it just translates over," Satepauhoodle said.

Playing basketball over the years, what Satepauhoodle has learned the most is resilience, to keep trying and to keep pushing through the hurdles.

"Basketball makes me feel good, it's an outlet to put things away if I'm upset, I



can always pick up a ball and just go shoot and I'll feel better," Satepauhoodle said.

When his high school basketball career comes to an end, Satepauhoodle hopes to be remembered as the teammate who was always there for others when needed and the one that could be counted on the most.

"Whether that be hustling on plays or cheering on my team, as a player I want to be remembered as a hard worker, one who does the things that aren't natural such as hustling after loose balls, crashing the boards, and doing the things no one wants to do," Satepauhoodle said.

Satepauhoodle's work ethic is unmatched, Rodney Hayden, El Reno High School head basketball coach said.

"Hez is above all coachable and respectful to coaches and teammates on our basketball team, he has stepped in and been a great addition

to our program, but most importantly is beyond his years in maturity and will be very successful in whichever path he chooses after high school," Hayden said.

So far in the season, Satepauhoodle has averaged 3.3 points per game, leads the team in total rebounds with 25 and leads in block shots with 14. He is 10 for 19 from the floor shooting 52.6%.

After graduation in the spring of 2026, Satepauhoodle plans to further his education in college. He currently is working on finishing his aviation maintenance certification through the Canadian Valley Technology Center.

Hezakiya's parents are Jessica Kodaseet and Ronnie Satepauhoodle, his maternal grandmother is Geneva Kodaseet and his paternal grandmother is Shirley Williams. His siblings include Xavier, Toehay, Exodus Satepauhoodle and Gracie Kodaseet.



OBITUARIES

Joshua Keith Hines

Joshua Keith Hines, age 40, of Clinton, Okla., was born June 8, 1985, in Clinton to Marvin Hines and Shannon (Phillips) Hines, and passed away December 12, 2025.

Josh spent his early childhood in Clinton before moving to Northwest Arkansas, where he attended school in Rogers, Ark. Growing up, he was active and adventurous, enjoying football, running cross country, and performing BMX bike tricks alongside his brother and friends. He was also naturally gifted in drawing and music, talents that reflected his creativity and free spirit.

As an adult, Josh found his greatest joy in spending time with his wife, children, and family. He enjoyed working on cars, fishing, and keeping a home full of dogs that he deeply adored. One of his favorite ways to unwind was sitting beside a night sky camp-

fire with his wife, Summer, or settling in to watch movies together. Josh never met a stranger and was known for his generous heart, always willing to give the shirt off his back, or anything else he had, to someone in need. His family and friends will forever remember his unique, infectious laugh, affectionately known as "the Josh."

Josh married the love of his life, Summer Graham, on November 15, 2012, in Bentonville, Ark. Their life together was filled with love, laughter, and family.

He was preceded in death by his father Marvin Hines, his grandparents, Larry Hines, Lucian Twins Sr. and Jimmy Phillips.

Those left to cherish his memory include his mother Shannon Robertson of Pace, Fla., his wife Summer Hines of the home in Arkansas, his grandmother Viola Hines of Clinton, his children, Reilly



Tuggle, Seth Hines, and Judah Hines, all of Arkansas, his siblings, Matt Hines and Caleb Robertson, one grandchild, along with many nieces, nephews, extended family members, and friends.

A wake service was held December 22 at the Clinton Emergency Response Center in Clinton, Okla. Funeral services were held December 23, at the same venue, officiated by Rev. Gerald Panama, followed by an interment at the Clinton City Cemetery.

Leroy Yelloweyes

Chief (MUH'TAWAN') Yelloweyes, age 81, passed away peacefully on December 5, 2025. Lee was born on May 5, 1944, in Concho, Okla., to Rachel Yelloweyes.

Lee was a citizen of The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and a descendant of the Sand Creek Massacre.

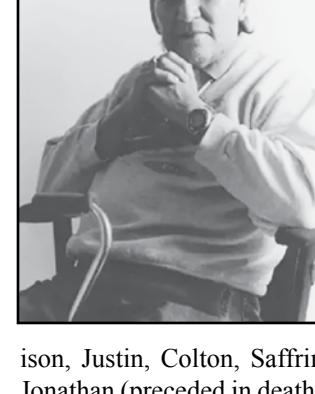
Lee is an Oklahoma University alumnus and was particularly passionate about art and design, leading him to complete patents throughout the midwest.

Lee was a beloved husband, father, (great) grandfather, brother, friend, and a mentor to many. He was greatly respected throughout the Kansas City community by establishing the beginning stages of the Kansas City Indian Center, sharing the gospel with prison inmates and building the beautifully

Leroy Yelloweyes, age 81, passed away peacefully on December 5, 2025. Lee was born on May 5, 1944, in Concho, Okla., to Rachel Yelloweyes.

Lee will be remembered for the love and dedication he had for his family and to the church. He leaves behind a legacy of tradition, humanity, and was best known for his unwavering faith. Leroy's warmth and kindness touched the lives of many, leaving a lasting impression on everyone he met. He had a unique ability to make everyone feel welcome and loved, and his presence will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Lee is survived by his daughters, Angela Iniguez and Leeann Wyatt, stepsons, Kenneth Leggett, Carlton Stigletts, grandchildren, Angelique, Letishia, Toni, Megan, Leah, Lauren, Mad-



ison, Justin, Colton, Saffrin, Jonathan (preceded in death), stepgrandchildren, Bobbie and Dianne. As well as many great-grandchildren.

A wake service was held December 19 at the Concho Community Center in Concho, Okla. Funeral services were held December 20, at the same venue, followed by an interment at the Concho Indian Cemetery.



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NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

Heinrich, Mullin reintroduce Senate Bill 3478 Indian Buffalo Management Act

The Indian Buffalo Management Act will assist tribal governments in the management of buffalo and buffalo habitat and reestablishment of buffalo Indian land is reintroduced

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Senators Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) and Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.) reintroduced the bipartisan Indian Buffalo Management Act, legislation to direct the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary to coordinate with Tribes and Tribal organizations that have an established buffalo herd and management program, as well as provide resources for Tribes that would like to establish new herds.

"For generations, buffalo have been a critical part of our culture – in New Mexico, the West, and especially in Indian Country. And I hope that within my lifetime, thanks to our broad coalition, buffalo will return to the prominent place they once occupied as the keystone species on American short-grass prairies," said Heinrich. "That's why I'm proud to reintroduce this bipartisan legislation to strengthen federal support for Tribal buffalo programs and continue the growth of Tribal buffalo herds. I look forward to continuing to work with Senator Mullin to strengthen this federal partnership and secure future funding for this initiative."

"The buffalo is essential to our heritage and must be supported. I am proud to reintroduce this important legislation that will help Tribes reestablish buffalo herds on reservation lands," said Mullin. "Doing so ensures that Native peoples across the country will continue reconnecting with a keystone of their historic culture and way of life."

The Indian Buffalo Management directs the Interior Secretary to work with Tribes and Tribal organizations to:

Promote and develop the capacity of Tribes and tribal organizations to manage buffalo and buffalo habitat;

Protect and enhance buffalo herds for the maximum benefit of Tribes; and

Ensure that Tribes are directly involved in the Interior Department decision-making regarding buffalo.

The bill has been endorsed by the InterTribal Buffalo Council, the National Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund, and the National Bison Association.

"We are so pleased that Senators Heinrich and Mullin are reintroducing this important legislation. There are 89 Tribes who are members of the ITBC in 22 states.

We have been dependent on the buffalo spiritually, culturally and nutritionally for thousands of years, as this wonderful animal, whom we consider our relative, has provided for our people in ways too numerous to list. The Indian Buffalo Management Act passed the House in the 117th Congress when the late Don Young sponsored it and it passed the Senate last year. Now we look forward to passage through both bodies of Congress. Helping Tribes reestablish herds of buffalo on our reservations is a righteous thing for the Congress to do and will be thoroughly welcomed by Tribes and Indian people across the country," said Ervin Carlson, President of the

InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), Delbert Chisholm, Taos Pueblo of New Mexico Member, and Randy Hawk, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma Member.

"Buffalo are a treaty right afforded to Tribes in support of food sovereignty and self-determination. This bill recognizes the federal government's trust obligation to build capacity and access to buffalo on Tribal lands," said Jason Baldes, Senior Tribal Buffalo Program Manager for the National Wildlife Federation. "We're working toward large scale restoration of buffalo across even larger landscapes, and the Indian Buffalo Management Act prioritizes the cross collaboration needed to amplify that effort."

"American buffalo are a national icon, as well as a global symbol of strength and resilience. They deserve protection—in the form of buffalo recovery and buffalo habitat restoration on Tribal lands. And Native American communities are best positioned to lead this work, given their ancient, ceremonial connection to buffalo. That is why The Nature Conservancy, which supports the transfer of buffalo to Tribal partners across the nation, is excited about this legislation," said Dr. Shane Doyle, North American Indigenous Right Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy.

"Buffalo represent everything that is strong, and good, and resilient about America and its people. For many Tribal Nations, they are also our relatives who are

at the heart of our traditional lifeways, which is why Tribal Nations have led efforts to save them in the face of enormous historical challenges. The Indian Buffalo Management Act acknowledges the critical role that Tribal Nations are playing in bringing buffalo back – and the essential role that buffalo continue to play in food security, economic development, and cultural and spiritual life. We thank Senators Heinrich and Mullin for their leadership in reintroducing this bill to ensure continued federal support for Tribes and their work to restore and conserve this iconic American species," said Heather Dawn Thompson, Vice President for Native Nations Conservation and Food Systems, World Wildlife Fund.

The American Plains Bison, also known as the American Buffalo, is deeply connected to many Tribes, and has long held great meaning for Native Americans. Prior to the systematic destruction of the buffalo in 1800s, there were over 60 million bison roaming freely throughout much of the United States. They provided Tribes with everything from clothing, to food, shelter, utensils, pouches, headdresses, containers, arrows and much more. It is impossible to overstate their importance to Native Americans historically and, to this day, culturally.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has provided nominal funds for buffalo management for over 20 years. This legislation grows and strengthens that work by directing the Interior Secre-



Randy Hawk, Bison Ranch Manager for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes was re-elected to serve another two-year term on the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council Board (ITBC).

The ITBC is a tribal organization formed to assist Native American nations restore buffalo (bison) to their ancestral lands, fostering cultural, spiritual, ecological, and economic revitalization through herd management, technical assistance, and policy advocacy, representing dozens of tribes and managing thousands of buffalo across millions of acres, bringing back hope and tradition.

tary to support the work of Tribes and Tribal organizations that already have established buffalo herds and management programs and providing the opportunity to

expand the program to other interested Tribes.

There are now 89 Tribes in 22 states that are members of the InterTribal Buffalo Council, up from 19 in 1991.

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