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Fiber, Data and the Future: Tribal Leaders Explore Broadband Solutions on Tribal Lands

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Governor panel speaker at Regional FiberConnect Event

Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

Across nations, many tribes are exploring the idea of broadband infrastructure and data centers as the world continues to adjust to the coming age of AI. On February 5, the Regional FiberConnect event was held at the Okana Resort and Waterpark in Oklahoma City, featuring a day filled with sessions and panelist discussions over fiber broadband and data, specifically on tribal lands.

"We have about 624 companies we represent in the industry and part of our 19 different working groups is one of those, our tribal broadband working group so we work with tribes across the US and in Canada and this is our second tribal event in the last six months," Bolton said.

Bringing the event to Oklahoma City, president and CEO of Fiber Broadband Association, Gary Bolton said the event focused on tribal broadband. "What we're talking about is getting fiber to every member of Oklahoma and across the nation and to every tribe across the nation," Bolton said.

With over 400 registered and in attendance at the event, Bolton said it's been their biggest tribal event they've had in Oklahoma.

With half of the Fiber Broadband Association as service providers, providing fiber broadband to communities, the other half supplies equipment, products and services, enabling people to get connected.

Bolton said as people connect to fiber, allowing them to work from home, connect to education, health care, it also enables AI, the Artificial Intelligence future.

"AI is really going to change the future, we want to make sure that every tribal member and every citizen across the country and here in Oklahoma is part of that AI future," Bolton said.

BROADBAND pg. 5

Cheyenne and Arapaho Citizens to Vote on Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity for Elk City Casino Project



Rosemary Stephens, Editor-in-Chief

On March 7, 2026, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal citizens age 18 and older will convene for a special Tribal Council meeting to vote on a resolution concerning a limited waiver of sovereign immunity tied to financing for the proposed Lucky Star Casino-Elk City Hotel and related facilities in Elk City, Oklahoma.

ing up tribal sovereignty. "Without granting a limited waiver, there's no bank in this country that will loan anybody money without that limited waiver," Gorham said. "In the past there's been comments that have stated that the tribe is giving away their sovereign immunity, but that's not correct."

The resolution would approve a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity, Consent to Jurisdiction, Waiver of Exhaustion of Tribal Remedies, and Consent to Arbitration as outlined in loan documents between the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and PNC Bank, N.A. The waiver is a required component of the bank financing for construction of the project.

Gorham explained that a limited waiver is narrowly defined within the terms of the loan agreement and serves only to give the lender legal recourse in the event of a default.

This will be only the second time in recent years that tribal citizens have gathered for a special Tribal Council meeting to vote on a limited waiver of sovereign immunity. The last such vote occurred on Nov. 23, 2019, for financing of the Lucky Star Hotel & Convention Center in Watonga, Oklahoma. More than 200 citizens attended that meeting, where the resolution passed with 197 votes in favor, 47 against, and four abstentions.

"With tribal sovereign immunity, the tribe's sovereignty is the right to govern itself, to govern its people and to pass their own laws," he said. "That is not the same thing as granting a limited waiver of sovereign immunity, which is giving the bank an outlet to say, 'Hey, we have a right to take you to court in case you default on a loan.' Without it, you won't get a loan."

During a recent special session of the 11th Legislature, Cheyenne and Arapaho Lt. Gov. Hershel Gorham addressed concerns surrounding limited waivers of sovereign immunity, emphasizing that such waivers do not equate to giving

The proposed Elk City development is expected to include a hotel, casino, food court, restaurant, travel center, event center, and other amenities. The event center alone is projected to exceed 15,000 square feet, making it a significant addition to the area and a potential economic driver for the tribe and surrounding community.

Tribal officials have stressed the distinction between tribal sovereignty and limited waivers of sovereign immunity. Sovereignty refers to a tribe's inherent authority to govern itself, including the power to make and enforce laws, determine citizenship, enter into treaties,

ELK CITY PROJECT pg. 5

Elk City Development Informational Meetings

⌚

All informational meetings begin at 6 pm - 8 pm.

Food will be served at all meetings.

Monday Feb. 23	Hammon ERC Building, 20415 Highway 33, Hammon, OK.
Tuesday Feb. 24	Clinton ERC Building, 2015 Dog Patch Rd, Clinton, OK
Wednesday Feb. 25	Concho ERC Building, 200 Wolf Robe Circle, Concho, OK
Tuesday March 3	Gib Miles ERC Building, 928 S. Blaine, Geary, OK
Thursday March 5	Kennedy's Kitchen, 2000 S. Eastern Ave, Elk City, OK
Saturday March 7	Tribal Council Meeting - Parties on Purpose 1309 Airport Industrial Rd., Elk City, OK Breakfast 8 am - 10 am Meeting 10 am - 2 pm

For more information, call (405) 422-7734 or email info@cheyenneandarapaho-nsn.gov.

Finishing the Walk: The Sand Creek Massacre, Victory at Greasy Grass and the call for principled leadership

By Chris Tall Bear

As 2026 begins, the United States of America prepares to commemorate the 250th year of nationhood. Colorado, too, marks its 150th year as the "Centennial State." But for the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota nations, these anniversaries carry a deeper weight, one shaped not only by loss, but by survival, resistance, and the enduring strength of our people.

For many Plains Tribes, 2026 is also the 150th anniversary of what is considered one of the greatest defeats of the United States military: the Battle of the Little Bighorn, or Greasy Grass. While the United States celebrated its centennial in 1876, congratulating itself on a century of independence, the Cheyenne and Lakota delivered a stunning reminder that Indigenous sovereignty was still alive, still powerful, and still unwilling to be erased. It was, in many ways, our rise and resistance, one last defiant stand before the reservation era closed in.

Colorado's statehood in 1876 cannot be separated from what happened twelve years earlier at Sand Creek. The birth of the state was built on the displacement, betrayal, and violence that began on that cold November morning in 1864. I write this as the tribally appointed Sand Creek Massacre representative for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, standing in unity with the Northern Cheyenne and Northern Arapaho representatives. We are the "Long Line", the descendants of those who survived, resisted, and carried our tribal nations forward. It is true that history is often told by the victors, but we are here to tell our own story.

My relative Grey Beard was camped with the people and survived the attack that morning at Big Sandy Creek so that my family's bloodline would not be broken. That survival is not just a story of endurance; it is a calling. We call this moment "Phase Two": we have confronted the truth of our past; now we must confront the responsibilities of our future.

The Blueprint for Principled Leadership

Our ancestors left us a model for leadership rooted in integrity, courage, and service. Leaders like Black Kettle (Moketavato), White Antelope (Wokahokomas), and Left Hand (Niwot) held to their word even when surrounded by betrayal. Beside them stood the strength of our women, Medicine Woman (Máhkéhe), Black Kettle's wife, who survived Sand Creek but was later killed alongside him by Custer's 7th Cav-

alry at the Washita Massacre nearly four years later, on November 27, 1868.

In the new Sand Creek Massacre memorial sculpture, she is depicted holding a baby. That child represents the Seventh Generation, the future we have always fought for. Their survival, and ours, is the result of leaders who understood that true power comes from the strength of one's word.

Greasy Grass: The Counter-Story to America's Centennial

In 1876, while the United States celebrated 100 years of independence, the Cheyenne and Lakota stood together and delivered one of the most decisive defeats in U.S. military history. Greasy Grass was not just a battlefield victory, it was a declaration.

It exposed the contradiction at the heart of the American centennial: a nation celebrating freedom while denying it to others. It also offers a timeless cautionary lesson: When a nation believes its power is unquestionable, it stops listening. When it stops listening, it makes catastrophic mistakes.

Greasy Grass was a reminder that Indigenous nations were not passive subjects of history, we shaped it.

The Work of Introspection

As we stand at the intersection of these anniversaries, we must ask: Who among us will carry the leadership forward?

The Cheyenne Council of 44's traditional teachings tell us that leadership is not about titles or personal gain. It is about service, humility, and the strength found in unity. Today, as we navigate sovereignty, healing, and the legal battles that shape our future, we look for those who will carry traditional law forward and those who understand that integrity is the foundation of true leadership.

We recognize that:

- Forgiveness is an act of strength: It frees us to lead without being chained to the past.
- Integrity is our shield: It protects our nations from repeating the mistakes of history.
- Unity is our power: It carried us through Sand Creek, through Greasy Grass, and into the present.

November 2026 – An invitation

As Colorado concludes its anniversary year in November 2026, we will gather at the State Capitol to dedicate the Sand Creek Massacre Memorial. This is not a funeral for the past, it is an invitation to the future.

It is a bridge between the principled leaders of our history and the young men and women who must now step forward. It is a reminder that our story is not only one of trauma, but of survival, resistance, and sovereign presence. And we honor our Lakota allies, whose own history at Wounded Knee reminds us that our struggles, and our resilience, have always been shared.

The path has been long. We are ready to finish the walk. The question remains for the youth of our nations: Who will lead the next century?



"It's Not Just a Job": Eldercare Program Serves Cheyenne and Arapaho Elders with Heart

Kimberly Burk, Tribal Tribune Correspondent

The purpose of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Eldercare Program "is to enrich their lives, and just to help enhance their quality of life," says Lori Penner, Eldercare Program director.

"It's an honor to do this. It's not just a job. The staff that I have, we all have the same intent, to serve the people in the best manner possible."

Tribal citizens are eligible to apply for Eldercare benefits when they turn 55. Services include help with rent, mortgage and utility bills, eyeglasses every two years and assistance with medical and dental payments up to twice a year.

Eldercare also helps buy supplies such as walkers, wheelchairs and shower chairs, and nutritional supplements such as Ensure are available four times a year.

In 2016, the tribes started providing a monthly food check of \$150 for ages 55 to 61 and \$300 for elders 62 and older.

"I feel that we have so many people who are in need of the nutritional side," Penner said of the food check. "I know that it really does help a lot of people."

But not all tribal elders opt to receive the food check.

"We have contacted some who aren't in the program, and they say they don't really need it," Penner said.

Penner, who has been director for 12 years, says "people from other tribes are amazed at what we do for the elders."

And she and her staff members are blessed by their associations with clients.

"You genuinely fall in love with them," she said. "Some of them call just to check on us. They are our friends. They bring us treats."

Pat White, a retired tribal employee who signed up for the program when she turned 55, said Eldercare staffers "go above and beyond."

"No matter where I see them, they come up and give me a smile and a hug, and ask how I'm feeling," said White, who is 74 and lives in El Reno. "They talk to you like they have known you all your life."

Penner said White "is a most amazing lady. She tells us how much she appreciates us and what our help means to her."

White said her mother died when she was 10 and she did not have an easy childhood. She attended Riverside Indian School where she said she was treated well, but does not remember receiving a lot of cultural training.

After going to work for the tribes, White said, "I fell in love with my own people. I'm a firm believer in our traditional ways."

Caring for the elders is a crucial facet of tribal tradition, Penner says.

"We respect what the elders have taught us. Everyone knows that most of the knowledge comes from the elders."



The Diabetes Wellness Program's annual Elders Conference honors Cheyenne and Arapaho elders yearly, hosted by the Diabetes Wellness Program. (Photo / Latoya Lonelodge)

Eldercare falls under the umbrella of Social Services.

"There's only four of us who work directly in Eldercare," Penner says. "Three are elders and we are all tribal members. We have a good camaraderie in this office."

Penner said she worked in a nursing home for six years and then worked in Arizona, helping developmentally disabled people. She has also worked in the prison system.

About two months before tribal citizens turn 55, Eldercare staffers send them a welcome letter, an application

and a brochure.

"So it's important to keep your address updated," Penner said.

As of Feb. 1, Eldercare had a roll of 2,482 clients receiving services.

Penner said she and co-workers spend most of their time in the office processing requests for help, but they are able to get out during the holidays to take gift baskets to nursing homes and to the homes of clients.

"I feel like the tribe is very fortunate to be able to take care of the people the way we do," she said.

Special session of the 11th Legislature approves special Tribal Council meeting

Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

On January 30, a special session of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes 11th Legislature was called by Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Gov. Reggie Wassana in Concho, Okla.

The public hearing portion was called to order at 10:09 a.m., with invocation given by Milan Roman Nose, Jr. Present at roll call was A1 Pamela Sutton, A2 Kendrick Sleeper, C1 Bruce Whiteman, C2 Milan Roman Nose, Jr., C3 Thomas Trout and C4 Mariah Youngbull. Absent for the special session was A3 Travis Ruiz and A4 Rector Candy.

On the agenda, two items were discussed and voted on:

A resolution to call a special meeting of the tribal council.

The purpose of the special meeting of the tribal council is to vote on a resolution approving limited waiver of sovereign immunity for the construction of Lucky Star Casino-Elk City hotel and related facilities in Elk City, Okla.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Gov. Reggie Wassana said the Tribes would not be able to sign or do anything without a limited waiver for the loan that will be used for the proposed Lucky Star Casino-Elk City project.

"In the constitution it says five members of the legislators can sign to call a special meeting," Wassana said.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Lt. Gov. Hershel Gorham explained limited waiver of sovereignty as a means of giving the bank lender recourse to get their money back in the case of defaulting.

"Without granting a limited waiver, there's no bank in this country that will loan anybody money without that limited waiver, in the past there's been comments that have stated that the tribe is giving away their sovereign immunity, whenever they hear that, but that's not correct," Gorham said.

The difference between granting a limited waiver will be limited, Gorham stated and will be detailed in the terms of the bank loans. With tribal sovereign immunity, the tribe's sovereignty is the right to govern itself, to govern its people and to pass their own laws.

"That is not the same thing as granting a limited waiver of sovereign immunity, which is giving the bank an outlet to say, 'hey we have a right to take you to court in case you default on a loan,' and without it, you won't get a loan," Gorham said.

With a feasibility study on the Elk City location, Gorham stated he believed the proposed casino to be in one of the best locations in the state as it would be located right off Interstate 40.

The special meeting of the

tribal council will be held at the Parties on Purpose Building in Elk City on March 7 at 10 a.m.

Community meetings will be held in various locations for discussion of the proposed Elk City development.

Item number one passed unanimously with a vote of six yes.

A resolution to amend resolution 10L-SS-2024-0228-003, a resolution to authorize the Governor, Reggie Wassana to sign Public Law 93-638 for a one-year (FY2024-FY2025) contract with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for the Bison Expansion Project.

As part of a one-time funding opportunity from the BIA for the Bison Expansion Project, the contract is an extension to continue building up the tribe's bison program.

"It was just a one-time funding, like a special funding request, they were giving tribes money to support their buffalo programs and to build up their buffalo programs and part of ours was fencing and water wells and any kind of habitat we could improve upon," Wassana said.

New fencing projects are underway for locations in Colony, Canton and Concho, Okla., for the bison.

Item number two passed unanimously with a vote of six yes.

PUBLIC NOTICE Special Tribal Council Meeting Saturday March 7, 2026 @ 10:00 am

Elk City, Oklahoma
Parties on Purpose Building
1309 Airport Industrial Road

In accordance with the Constitution of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, pursuant to Article V, Section 3 (a) Special Meetings of the Tribal Council may be called by five members of the Legislature. On Friday January 30, 2026 A Special Session of the Legislature was called to pass a Resolution to call a Special Meeting of the Tribal Council.

Special Tribal Council Meeting Agenda Item:

- 1) Approve a Resolution approving the Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity; Consent to Jurisdiction, Waiver of Exhaustion of Tribal Remedies; and Consent to Arbitration as contained in loan documents between the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and PNC Bank, N.A. for the construction of Lucky Star Casino-Elk City hotel and related facilities in Elk City, Oklahoma.

In accordance with the Constitution of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, pursuant to Article V, Section 3 (a) The Tribes shall provide bus transportation for members of the Tribes to attend the Annual Meeting. Tribal members may call my office to request a ride, the number is below. Tribal members may also request remote access to participate in the meeting, contact my office.

Breakfast will be served 8-9:40am, there will be no lunch. Vendors are not allowed.

Office of the Tribal Council
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Office Phone: 405-422-7430
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CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES

SPECIAL TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING

Parties on Purpose Building, Elk City, Oklahoma

March 07, 2026 @ 10:00 AM

A Tribal Council Resolution to approve the construction of Lucky Star Casino – Elk City hotel and related facilities in Elk City, Oklahoma

Tribal Council Resolution Number: 030726STC-001

Date Posted: February 4, 2026

Date Published: February 4, 2026

Date Approved:

WHEREAS, The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes are a federally recognized Indian tribe organized under a Constitution (Cheyenne & Arapaho Constitution) approved by the tribal membership on April 4, 2006 and approved by the Secretary of the Interior; and

WHEREAS, Cheyenne and Arapaho Constitution Article V. Section 3 (b) "Special Meetings of the Tribal Council may be called by five members of the Legislature...;" and

WHEREAS, Cheyenne and Arapaho Constitution Article V, Section 2(c) states "The Tribal Council shall have the power to grants the Tribal Council "the power to set policy for the Tribes" and "all other powers and duties specifically provided by the Constitution [;]" and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TRIBAL COUNCIL OF THE CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO TRIBES that the Eleventh Legislature of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes hereby call a Special Meeting of the Tribal Council to be held in Elk City, Oklahoma at the Parties on Purpose Building on March 07, 2026, at 10 AM. The purpose of the Special Meeting shall be for the Tribal Council to approve this Resolution regarding the Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity; Consent to Jurisdiction, Waiver of Exhaustion of Tribal Remedies; and Consent to Arbitration as contained in loan documents between the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and PNC Bank, N.A. for the construction of the Lucky Star Casino – Elk City hotel and related facilities in Elk City, Oklahoma.

Page 1 of 2

Tribal Council Resolution No. _____

A Tribal Council Resolution to _____

Tribal Council Chairperson

I, _____, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Tribal Council Resolution 030726STC-001, which was voted on by the Tribal Council of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Special Tribal Council Meeting on March 07, 2026, by a vote of _____ for, _____ against, and _____ abstaining.

Tribal Council Secretary

Page 2 of 2

Tribal Council Resolution No. _____

A Tribal Council Resolution to _____

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Cheyenne and Arapaho

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

Oklahoma's Voice of Termination

Mark Trahant, marktrahant.substack.com

A twisted reminder of a failed policy. The governor's phrase 'equal rights for all' is a twisted reminder of a 1950s Termination call, forget treaties, the economy, too; just 'exacerbate a divide.'

Only it's why Oklahoma's next leader must turn the tide

When I wrote *The Last Great Battle of the Indian Wars*, the story of Forrest Gerard and the enactment of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, I made the case that the termination policy was over for ever. Pretty much all of the political discourse had shifted from at least a few people advocating against treaties toward a recognition that tribal nations had roots in the Constitution and where as permanent as any city, county or state.

I was wrong.

There are still forces out there that want to end tribal sovereignty and assert state control over Indigenous people.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, who is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, used his last state of the state speech Monday to attack Oklahoma tribes.

"Many of us in this room have decried the DEI programs of the Biden administration yet stand quietly by when some say an Indian should be subject to a different set of laws," Stitt said. "We either believe in equal rights for all or we don't, and it's time to choose."

Of course he is wrong on so many levels. I can't imagine a state governor attacking a major employ-

er, say a Microsoft, the same way Stitt does with tribes. Yet the economic impact of tribes in Oklahoma is far greater than any one company. Study after study pegs the contributions in the billions of dollars.

From the annual United for Oklahoma report prepared for gaming tribes:

Tribes directly employed 55,659 Oklahoma workers in 2023, paying out wages and benefits totaling \$3.3 billion.

Tribes accounted for \$12.7 billion in direct Oklahoma production through a combination of business revenue, government expenditures and capital expenditures.

But the governor's ideology is not about economic well being. It's about power. Stitt (and Trump) seek a unitary executive. One person at the top making all the decisions. But a unitary executive does not work well with others. Instead the best practice is a state leader who can partner with equal sovereigns on issues ranging from jurisdiction to funding education. That was never Stitt.

The "equal rights" phrase has always been a part of the termination push. House Concurrent Resolution 108 — the termination framework — put it this way:

Whereas it is the policy of Congress, as rapidly as possible, to make the Indians within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibil-

ities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, to end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all of the rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship.

Termination's champion in the Senate. Arthur Watkins of Utah, loved his lofty turn of phrase too. He said the aim of termination was "equality before the law" and a "constant consideration for those of Indian ancestry should lead us all to work diligently and carefully for the full realization of their national citizenship with all other Americans."

The phrases were used again in the 1970s. The Interstate Congress for Equal Rights and Responsibilities, an anti-treaty organization, said Indians had to choose between being "treaty Americans" or "first-class citizens" and it said it had no objection to "being treaty Americans or full-fledged American citizens, but we do object to them claiming both.

"Until they decide what they want to be, treaty Americans or first-class citizens, but not both, they will feel the bite of the backlash, and it will get stronger until a more equitable solution is found."

As a policy, termination was immoral and impractical. It was an economic and culture disaster. And a modern version would be devastating for Oklahoma. It's hard to imagine any governor making the case for a policy that failed so badly.

Time to move.

Mark Trahant, *Shoshone-Bannock* is a journalist with 50 years of experience in Native media.

Trump administration targets Office on Violence Against Women with 'consolidation'

The Trump administration is working to consolidate the federal Office on Violence Against Women with other grant-making offices within the U.S. Department of Justice, while proposing funding cuts of nearly 30 percent.

The office — created in 1994 to implement provisions of the Violence Against Women Act — was given permanent status in 2004 by Congress as an independent office reporting directly to the U.S. Attorney General.

The changes surfaced during the 20th annual tribal consultation meeting held Jan. 21-23 in Prior Lake, Minnesota, a gathering that for years has included tribal leaders, advocates and representatives of the Office on Violence Against Women.

"Beginning next month, all OVW grants to tribes will be managed by the [Department of Justice] tribal affairs division, with the goal of each tribe having a single OVW grant manager," Ginger Baran Lyons, the OVW deputy director for grants development and management, told participants at the meeting.

"This is a change we are making in response to your calls for more consistency in how we administer these grants."

Prior to the consultation meeting, the DOJ sent an email notice to tribal leaders and advocates indicating that agency leaders would discuss President Donald Trump's plan in his proposed 2026 budget to consolidate the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Office of Justice Programs and the Office on Violence Against Women.

Associate Attorney General Stanley E. Woodward, who oversees the department's civil rights division and grant-making components, described the change as an effort to simplify the grant process in response to tribal leaders' calls for more "consistency in how we administer these grants."

Over two days of testimony at the meeting, however, nearly every tribal leader and advocate expressed opposition to the proposed consolidation plan. ICT attended the meeting virtually and also obtained transcripts of the testimony presented.

Several people testified at the meeting that the Department of Justice has wrongfully used requests from tribes to reduce red tape as an excuse to further restrict tribal access to funding.

"Contrary to what is being communicated to tribes and organizations this [consolidation] is not something tribes are asking for or something that they want," said Elizabeth Jerue, a citizen of the Anvik Tribe and executive director of the Healing Hearts Coalition

in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Glenda Martin, citizen of the Red Lake Nation who sits on the tribal council as the Ponemah District representative, voiced similar concerns.

"Consolidation means years of confusion, delays in funding and interruption in service and collective loss of institutional knowledge among federal authorities," Martin said during her testimony.

Martin was among several tribal leaders at the meeting who insisted that consolidation of the office would not be allowed under federal law.

"These offices were congressionally established and fought for by advocates who have worked in the field for decades," she said.

Need for funding

In addition to consolidating the office's responsibilities, Trump has proposed in the 2026 budget a 29 percent cut to funding for the OVW. Native advocates who attended the gathering underscored the potentially devastating impact of consolidation.

A majority of tribes and victims service organizations depend entirely on federal funding to provide services to victims of domestic violence and assault, and to support tribal policing and the judiciary, they said.

Several people lauded the DOJ for the 20-year partnership that contributed to strengthening legal protections for tribal citizens through the Violence Against Women Act and expanding tribal jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence, trafficking, stalking and violence against children in Indian Country.

"The progress we have made demonstrates what is possible when tribes and the federal government work together," said Tami Treutt Jerue, Elizabeth Jerue's mother, also of the Anvik Tribe in Alaska. She noted that the success points to the need for continuing the federal funding, commitment and resources.

Several representatives lamented the transient nature of federal funding that they say prevents building sustainable infrastructure for victims and tribal justice services.

"We propose mandatory, non-competitive funding for tribal justice infrastructure including courts, law enforcement and social services," said Robert Smith, chairman of the Pala Band of Mission Indians in California.

Without reliable funding, tribes are unable to pay officers and court staff competitive salaries or offer benefits, contributing to high staff turnover, Smith said.

Other requests and concerns included calls for an overhaul of federal law to restore

tribal jurisdiction over all crimes committed by non-Native perpetrators on their lands and enough federal funding to provide tribal courts and law enforcement with the ability to protect citizens.

Treutt Jerue said meeting those demands would require an annual federal investment of \$1 billion for law enforcement, \$1 billion for tribal courts and \$233 million for detention facilities.

"When the federal government fails to adequately fund tribal courts it doesn't just create a resource gap, it actively prevents tribes from exercising self-governance," Jerue said.

She noted that Native American and Alaska Native women face the highest rates of violence in the nation.

"Four out of five have experienced violence in their lifetimes, more than 56 percent have experienced sexual violence, nearly half have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. Native women are three times more likely to experience sexual assault compared to non-Native women and children," Treutt Jerue said.

"Most alarming," she added, "is that Alaskan Native women face a murder rate of up to 10 times higher than the national average."

DEI need not apply

In late May 2025, the OVW included new restrictive "out of scope" activities for grantees that seemed to fly in the face of the missions of most organizations providing victims services.

Grantees were told that they may not frame domestic violence or sexual assault as systemic social justice issues rather than criminal offenses. The restrictions appeared to stem from President Donald Trump's war on diversity, equity and inclusion, known as DEI.

According to consultation attendees and advocates, effective justice programming and victims services in Indian Country require an upstream view of the impacts of systemic racism and violence.

"The spectrum of violence against Native women and communities is intertwined with systemic barriers that are embedded within our complex relationship with the federal government," said Carmen O'Leary, director of the Native Woman's Society of the Great Plains.

O'Leary, a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, also called attention to the DOJ's decision to remove the "Not One More: Findings and Recommendations of the Not Invisible Act Commission," released in 2023 and authorized as part of Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act signed by Trump in 2020.

Mary Annette Pember, *Indian Country Today*

The report vanished from the DOJ website in February 2025 shortly after Trump began his second term in office. Language in the report is heavy with terms the administration dismisses as DEI.

"A lot of resources from tribes and the federal government went into producing the 'Not One More' report," O'Leary said.

"What is going to happen to the recommendations made in that report that came from members of communities?" O'Leary asked. "We had families that came from far away to talk about their family members that had been murdered. I would hope that the report could go back up [on the website] and that those recommendations would be funded and followed."

Treutt Jerue noted that she has been attending the annual OVW consultations for many years in working with various organizations, and continues to push the same concerns.

"Some of the things I am going to say are the same that I said last year and the year before that and maybe even the year before that," she testified. "I don't want my granddaughter to be in front of these types of panels when she is my age; it is time to stop this. This needs to stop."

She continued, "Every role I have carried to these meetings has been shaped for the same purpose, to address generational trauma and a relentless hope for change."

'Time to stop this'

The tribal consultation meeting in Minnesota was overshadowed by protests over the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement confrontations in the state that have led to sweeping arrests and at least two deaths.

According to those who testified during the consultation, at least 50 percent of attendees chose to cancel their attendance over concerns of being swept up in ICE actions.

Treutt Jerue pointed to the tone-deaf expectation of the federal government in asking tribal leaders and advocates to travel across the country for consultation when people are being racially profiled, stopped and detained by federal agents who may not recognize tribal sovereignty.

"The problem is that many of our tribal members only have tribal identification for their travels," Treutt Jerue said. "They were very afraid."

Media representatives for the Department of Justice did not respond to ICT's emailed questions regarding number of attendees or legal requirements relating to a minimum number of participants required to constitute a valid consultation.

BROADBAND

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With discussion ensuing throughout the day's event, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Gov. Reggie Wassana sat as a panelist on a panel entitled, "Edge and Sovereignty: Building Tribal Data Futures." The focus of the discussion explored opportunities associated with Edge data centers and enhanced connectivity across tribal communities.

Edge data centers are defined as small, localized facilities that share and store data. The panel discussed ways they also enhance connectivity, uphold data sovereignty and drive economic growth.

Sachin Gupta, VP of Business and Technology Strategies at Centranet led questions as moderator. Gupta asked the main question of why edge data centers are needed and what are the opportunities that are manifested within tribal nations from edge data centers.

As the tribes' jurisdiction covering 11 counties, Wassana said few cities in those counties have over 10,000 residents but are so rural that they need these centers. Wassana continued to say children could utilize connections through remote learning and data centers are needed to continue educating youth.

"Not only that but telemedicine, we have centers in the rural areas, our emergency response centers, we have like eight of them so we need that information, if we had a catastrophe again, telehealth centers would be served, it's a way we can provide social services and other tribal needs out there in the communities that are so far sparse," Wassana said.

Technology will be able to help in rural areas, Wassana said, as the tribes are not fortunate to be in some of the larger metropolitan areas.

Another panelist on the discussion, Joe Baeumel, vice president, strategy and business development, KGPCo, said it's the hunger for data as more people are using data in homes and businesses.

"The applications that our families and our kids are using are more data hungry," Baeumel said.

Andrew Metcalfe, president and CEO, Native Network Inc., said the biggest component from a tribal perspective is tribal ownership of the Edge data center, as well as opening up doors for technical amenities and job opportunities.

"Enhancing those capabilities from an AI perspective, this is really about AI and what's coming down the road," Metcalfe said.

Another question posed by Gupta was how do they plan for and deploy these data centers.

Metcalfe answered to map out existing broadband and fiber network and power.

"These data centers are power hungry, so you have to have a big power source, where is that, the best place to locate that," Metcalfe said.

Wassana responded saying from the tribe's standpoint, they look at location first and foremost and what they do to the environment.

"What is the local environment like, do we have cultural ties to that particular spot, do we have ceremonial ties there and a lot of times, the catastrophic weather that we may have, such as a tornado," Wassana said.

Along with weather conditions, Wassana also stated laws, policy, regulations and what needs to be put in place as far



The panelist discussion entitled Edge and Sovereignty: Building Tribal Data Futures features panelists Andrew Metcalfe, president and CEO, Native Network, Inc., Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Gov. Reggie Wassana, Joe Baeumel, vice president, strategy and business development, KGPCo., and moderator Sachin Gupta, VP of business and technology strategies, Centranet. (Photo / Latoya Lonelodge)

as protections for any environmental issues or concerns that may arise in the future, as well as putting together a team.

"We want a team of people who work for the tribes that have knowledge and background and sometimes those people that are a little bit more educated and have a little bit more knowledge that don't work for the tribes, so we usually try to find other consultants with people that'll help us learn what the process is," Wassana said.

As the Covid-19 pandemic forced technology on communities, Wassana said AI has also forced a lot of people to adapt quickly.

"We have to understand that if you're going to do something on tribal land, where are you going to do it and are we protecting the land and are we making sure that we're not disturbing our cultural and ceremonial grounds as well," Wassana said.

Discussion ensued throughout the panel exploring the ideas of enhanced connectivity of fiber broadband and data centers, with tribal leaders openly sharing their own thoughts amongst another.

With the focus on tribal broadband and connecting tribal communities for the event, the paradox of broadband, Bolton said is the worst connectivity is the most expensive and when thinking about tribal areas, it's low density and very rural and hard to connect.

"The expense to connect because you don't have the high density you would have in a city, so then what politicians would typically push for is to have some kind of wireless or satellite service that can be able to address that, but what

the studies have shown is the higher quality your connection is, so fiber is the highest quality you can get, it's the most band with the most capacity, that's the cheapest service per month," Bolton said.

Connecting tribes with enhanced technology, tribal communities in rural areas will have more access.

Bolton said studies have shown that 75% of people in fiber use AI daily whereas less than 10% are on a satellite connection. Depending on the type of platforms used, such as a computer or laptop, will use more fiber.

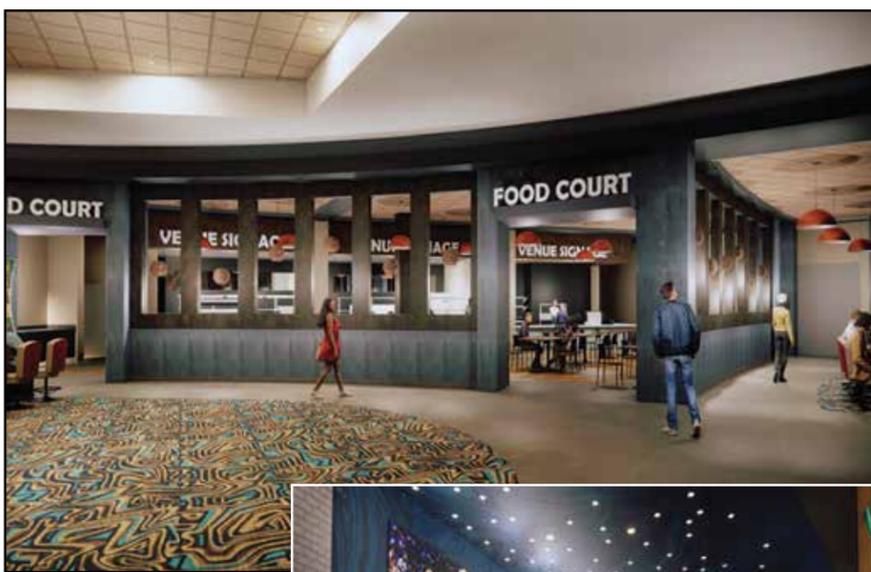
"More robust platforms that's going to be doing telehealth, work from home, online education, whereas when you have a lower quality connection, you're basically using your phone for basic connectivity and so being able to get the tribes connected with high quality fiber, you're going to be able to have more things available to your community and be able to have those services online," Bolton said.

Bringing the event to Oklahoma for others to participate in, Bolton said gives an opportunity for Fiber Broadband Association to not only have state leadership, like the state speaker of the house and state broadband director and tribal leaders, but be able to have communities see what is available to them and how they can be connected to preserve the heritage of Native Americans.

"By being able to be connected, by being able to leverage broadband, leveraging video, it preserves the language, the culture, it preserves the opportunities for Native Americans for generations to come," Bolton said.

ELK CITY PROJECT

continued from pg. 1



manage resources, and protect its citizens and territory. Only Congress has the authority to diminish tribal sovereignty, a power known as plenary authority.

Tribal sovereign immunity, a long-standing principle of federal Indian law, generally protects tribes and their entities from lawsuits in state or federal courts unless the tribe explicitly consents. A limited waiver, however, allows a tribe to consent to legal action for a specific purpose, such as a loan or contract, without broadly surrendering its immunity.

According to tribal leadership, granting limited waivers is a common and necessary practice for tribes engaged in commercial development, bank financing, and federal contracting. Without such waivers, tribes would be unable to secure loans or participate fully in government contracting programs, including Small Business Administration 8(a) opportunities.

To ensure citizens are informed ahead of the March 7 vote, a series of community meetings will be held in February and March



to provide project details and explain the scope and implications of a limited waiver of sovereign immunity. The first meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 23, at the Hammon Emergency Response Center in Hammon, Oklahoma.

Tribal leaders encourage all eligible citizens to attend the meetings, ask questions, and participate in the March 7 vote, noting that the decision will play a key role in the future development of the Elk City project. The Special Tribal Council meeting will be held 10 a.m. Saturday March 7 at Parties on Purpose, 1309 Airport Industrial Road in Elk City, Okla. Breakfast will be served from 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.



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CHEYENNE and ARAPAHO TRIBES



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- Work Readiness Training

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Age 14-24 by June 1, 2026
- Enrolled in a Federal Recognized Tribe
- Reside in Service Area

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- CDIB
- Birth Certificate
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- Proof of Income
- Grades, Transcript, or Diploma.
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Trump orders removal or changing of Native American signage at national park

By: Hannah Pedferri

The Trump administration has flagged two exhibits at Montana's Little Bighorn National Monument as non-compliant, targeting displays that honor tribal sacrifices and reflect on the historic battle known as Custer's Last Stand.

The order follows President Trump's promise to restore "truth and sanity to American history," but critics view it as an attempt to silence important Indigenous perspectives from the nation's historical narrative.

At Little Bighorn Battlefield, where history runs deep in the valley where the famous battle occurred, the controversy has stirred strong emotions among Native American community members.

"Everything with the battle, where it happened, it was here in this valley where it happened," Keianna Cachora, who works at the Custer Battlefield Trading Post, said Sunday.

For Cachora, the history at the Little Bighorn Battlefield is deeply personal.

"Without these teachings, I wouldn't know who I was, it's only recently that I've started to get more into my identity, as a Native person, as an Indigenous person," Cachora said.

The Trump administration's move targets signage describing broken promises to Native American tribes and references to the loss of Indigenous culture and language under boarding school systems.

"It bothers me really deeply," Cachora said. She calls the action an attempt to erase Native history.

"It's disturbing, disgusting, and wrong. You should not erase other people's history because it makes you uncomfortable," Cachora said.

Cachora believes the story must remain accessible to all visitors.

"Other people need to know this too. We're not a thing of the past. We're here, we're present, and we've been here for a really long time and we'll be here for a long time to come," Cachora said.

Lucy Real Bird, an educator at Crow Agency Public Schools, views preserving Indigenous history as a responsibility she won't abandon.

"We're still going to continue teaching our language, teaching our history, being who we are as Apsáalooke's, as Indigenous people, and the original people of this land," Real Bird said.

Even if the controversial signage disappears from the monument, Real Bird emphasized the community's resilience.

"We're still here, we never left," Real Bird said.

The educators and community members remain committed to sharing their history regardless of federal policy changes.

"We're going to keep telling our story. This victory happened 150 years ago, and they're welcome to join us because we're going to have a victory," Real Bird said.

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe announced it will fight the Trump administration's effort to alter or remove displays honoring tribal involvement at the Little Bighorn National Monument.

In a press release issued February 4, tribal officials said the tribe has taken official action "to oppose the reported Trump Administration order to change or remove signs, markers, and exhibits recognizing Native Americans at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. In a unanimous vote 11-0, the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council adopted a resolution

to prevent changes to or removals of Native American markers, monuments, and signage at the battlefield."

The tribe cites federal and state law that authorized the Indian Memorial at the national monument.

"It is the resolute position of the Tribe that to alter or remove signs and exhibits honoring Native Americans at the battlefield -- or to harm warrior markers and monuments would go against federal law, and would betray the spirit of Montana's constitutional goal to preserve American Indian cultural integrity," the press release states.

The Trump administration announced recently it had flagged two exhibits at the monument near Crow Agency as non-compliant with the government's effort to reshape some historical narratives.

At the Little Bighorn National Monument, the administration has targeted for removal signage describing broken promises to Native American tribes and references to the loss of Indigenous culture and language under boarding school systems.

Below is a brochure written by Max Bear, Tribal Historic Preservation officer, who was informed by the National Park Service the brochures were being ordered to be removed from their site. To obtain a brochure, contact Max Bear at 405-422-7714.

Castillo de San Marcos

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes

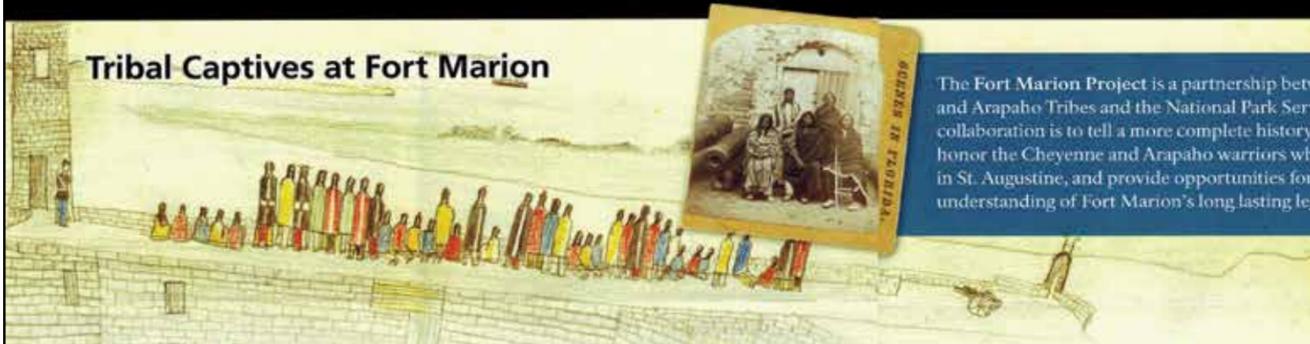
Tribal Captives at Fort Marion

The Fort Marion Project is a partnership between the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and the National Park Service. The goal of this collaboration is to tell a more complete history of Fort Marion, honor the Cheyenne and Arapaho warriors who were held captive in St. Augustine, and provide opportunities for healing and better understanding of Fort Marion's long lasting legacy.



Brochure written by Max Bear, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

Fort Marion Project Creator: Norene Starr, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Executive Special Projects/Resource Coordinator



Who are the Cheyenne and Arapaho people?

The Cheyenne or Tsistsistas were the westernmost Tribes of the Algonquian family eventually migrated west and southwest toward the Great Plains beyond the Missouri River after they obtained horses. They moved near the Black Hills of South Dakota then became more nomadic following the buffalo and adapted more to the Plains and accustomed to the landscape. The early Cheyenne people were made up of two descendent Tribes, Tsistsistas and Sub'tai, who joined as one Tribe after crossing the Missouri River during their movement west. While in the Plains they eventually allied with the Arapaho and still have a lasting alliance.

The Arapaho or Hinono'ei were originally part of the Algonquian branch of people whose early ancestors may have originated somewhere along the Atlantic seaboard, reaching as far west as the Missouri River. Sometime before the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some Algonquian bands migrated westward. Originally, the Hinono'ei were made of five main bands of the Tribe. Each band had their distinct customs, traditions, and dialects. After acquiring horses the Hinono'ei migrated throughout the Great Plains and along the front range of the Rocky Mountains. In the Black Hills country in present South Dakota they eventually met the Cheyenne and united as allies.

Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) and Hinono'ei (Arapaho) Today

Presently, Cheyenne and Arapaho people are made up of three federally recognized Tribes, The Northern Arapaho located in Wyoming, the Northern Cheyenne located in Montana, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho in Oklahoma. Although they are made up of three modern Tribes, historically the Cheyenne and Arapaho were two individual Tribes and with two different languages, and different but similar traditional customs. Despite many attempts at assimilation we are resilient and still maintain our culture; traditions, language and identity. We will always be a strong people and individual Indigenous nations. Throughout the history of our Cheyenne and Arapaho people and all the atrocities that affected our people

WE ARE STILL HERE!



Representatives from Cheyenne and Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Caddo Tribes gather in St. Augustine

1875 Cheyenne and Arapaho in Florida

Following the Red River Wars, members of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes were held as prisoners at Castillo de San Marcos, which was then called Fort Marion.

During their incarceration, U.S. officers admired the drawings some prisoners made and then invested in the production of multiple ledger drawings, supplying the colored pencils and military style ledger books. Then the drawings were sold as income to locals and collectors but the profits from the sale of the drawings prompted very little return for the captive artists.

Red River War: A United States military campaign starting in 1874, to displace Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Caddo Tribes from the Southern Plains and force them onto reservations in Oklahoma.



The ledger drawings included in this publication were created by Cheyenne warrior Making Medicine and other unnamed artists.

Why is Fort Marion called Castillo De San Marcos now?

Today, Fort Marion is better known by its original Spanish name, Castillo de San Marcos. The Castillo, completed in 1695 by the Spanish, is the oldest masonry fort in the United States. The national monument resides in St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest continually inhabited European settlement in the continental United States.

The fort is protected as a unit of the National Park Service. While this fort has stood for centuries under different names. It still stands today as a memorial to those captives imprisoned within its walls and the important and the difficult legacy of forced assimilation.

Why were Cheyenne and Arapaho "prisoners" at Fort Marion?

Since the early to mid-1800's and the discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains and the Black Hills of South Dakota, the original homelands of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people, the Indigenous Tribes have been on the defense of an invasion that was initiated in a land far away from the vast landscape of the North American continent with the Doctrine of Discovery. Plains Tribes tried to avoid conflict and pursued peace through the treaty process but never understood that process or why they had to give up most of their sacred homelands and hunting grounds. They had always opposed the efforts against them but still wanted lasting peace with the government. It all changed when the expansion west and the push for "opening the land for settlement" raged forth. The Cheyenne and Arapaho were two Plains Tribes of among many Plains Tribes, that were recipients of the full might of the United States government. As part of Manifest Destiny, which Europeans used as a divine right to claim this abundant land, it seemed necessary, many times, to remove or eliminate the original Indigenous inhabitants to open for settlement from eastern immigrant colonizers. To this day, many aspects of suppression can still be felt by the Tribal descendants of the captives or hostages that were unjustifiably sent to Fort Marion.

Doctrine of Discovery: a papal policy that began in the 1400s justifying the Christian colonization of non-Christian lands and people, including the North American continent and its Indigenous people.

losing any more rightful land stated in treaties and to combat the loss of the buffalo, which were being decimated to extinction by fur traders, soldiers and sport hunters. The buffalo was the main source for food, shelter, clothing, and tools for many Tribes in the Plains. This led to many major conflicts with Cheyenne and Arapaho and the U.S. Government for many years with an innumerable loss to the population of the Tribes.

In 1874, southern Tribes including Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche allied with the Cheyenne and Arapaho and thus began what was dubbed the "Red River War" as the Tribes fought against forced removal from their homelands and being placed into reservations.

Beginning in summer 1874, at least two bands of Cheyenne warriors moved from the south into Kansas to seek revenge on the horse thieves and buffalo hunters they blamed for the Red River War. However, due to lack of force strength and low supplies to fight on the remainder of Tribal soldiers eventually surrendered in 1875. At that time it became known as the last days of the free roaming Indigenous peoples on the Plains.

Following the Red River War and the after effects, military authorities, especially General Phillip Sheridan, ordered that all the "ringleaders" of the Red River War as well as "such as who have been guilty of crimes" were to be incarcerated. At the time, the Attorney General of the United States stated that Sheridan's commission to incarcerate the Indian leaders was illegal. However, since General Sheridan was good friends with President Ulysses S. Grant, Grant ignored the illegality of the commission and ordered the Indian leaders and those deemed worthy of a crime to be separated from their families and incarcerated many miles away from the only homeland they knew and away from all which was familiar.

General Phillip Sheridan: As the U.S. Army General placed in charge of the Southern Plains area in the 1870s, Sheridan led the effort to force the Southern Plains Tribes into submission and onto reservations, using tactics of destroying food, supplies, and camps, and killing those who resisted.

When did the Cheyenne and Arapaho go to Fort Marion?

The Indians were brought to or surrendered at the Cheyenne Agency at Darlington near present day Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal Reservation in Oklahoma. The commanding officer at the time Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Neill was assigned to watch over all of the incoming Indian "prisoners". Based on identification of the "ring leaders" and warriors involved a total of 33 Cheyenne and 2 Arapaho were selected to be imprisoned, including a large number of chiefs, mostly chosen based on the unsubstantiated testimony of white men. After these identifications, selection for which warriors were to be incarcerated became random. During the detaining of the selectees, at one point, Lieutenant Colonel Neill reportedly became visibly and belligerently intoxicated and in order to fulfill his quota, randomly picked the eighteen random men to be incarcerated. All the selected warriors were put in the guardhouse until they could be brought by train from Oklahoma to Fort Marion, Florida, where they were to be incarcerated.

A Prisoner of War (POW) is a person who is held captive by a belligerent power during or immediately after an armed conflict.

On April 6, 1875, the Cheyenne and Arapaho "prisoners" were led to be shackled for their upcoming journey to Fort Marion in Florida. They were taken one by one to a blacksmith who would put a shackle on their legs. Nearby Cheyenne women, upon seeing the shackling, began loudly chanting native war songs. Black Horse, one of the prisoners, kicked the blacksmith as he was about to be shackled, and

jumped onto a nearby horse to escape. He fled towards the nearby village just north of the Canadian River, where U.S. soldiers followed and shot him and supposedly killed him. Black Horse had survived the ordeal, but was unable to tell the camp what was happening. Since previous attacks resulting in massacres happened in years prior, the village assumed something similar was happening again and decided to flee. Many guards raced towards the nearby village but could not enter due to the Tribe's Dog Soldiers who stayed behind to buy the rest of the camp time to flee. The U.S. Sixth Cavalry rode up and opened fire into the village. Captain William A. Rafferty and his men started to move towards the retreating warriors upon a sand hill. However, unbeknownst to him, the Cheyenne warriors acquired firearms, previously stashed, and opened fire upon him causing Rafferty and his men to retreat. More U.S. soldiers arrived from the Tenth Cavalry; however, the Cheyenne held them off until Colonel Neill arrived with a Gatling gun, breaking up the Dog Soldiers position. This was the first time in recorded history that the Gatling gun was used west of the Mississippi River. However, just as Colonel Neill ordered his men to advance, the Dog Soldiers opened fire once more and with nightfall coming, Neill commanded a retreat. Some in the Cheyenne camp (mostly men) decided to head north to further escape from the U.S. military. General John Pope offered amnesty from the sand hill fight for all those who would come back to Cheyenne-Arapahoe Agency, which many of the women from the village did.

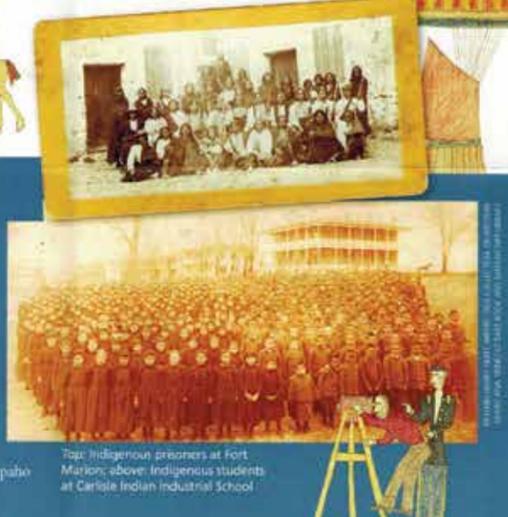
What happened to the Cheyenne and Arapaho while at Fort Marion?

Those who were selected were transported to St. Augustine, Florida and placed under the care of Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who would later go on to found the Carlisle Indian Industrial Institute. He also is known for the infamous quote "Kill the Indian, save the man" which is in reference to the forced assimilation of Indigenous people into white culture. They were sent by train but along the route they were displayed to local townspeople on train station steps as "captured savages". This ultimately made a profit for those who were able to benefit and some of the captives were ever compensated. Once they arrived in Florida they were stripped of their traditional clothing and had their hair cut, which is taboo to do so unless when grieving death. They were forced to learn English, march and conduct themselves as soldiers, but were not regarded as soldiers.

Eventually after three years incarcerated, the Cheyenne and Arapaho amongst other Tribes that were present, were offered a choice by Captain Pratt to return home or go north to Virginia to continue their education at the Hampton Institute, a school originally started to educate African Americans following the Civil War.

Using the experiences and forced assimilation techniques tested at Fort Marion, Captain Pratt opened the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania (right). Carlisle, the first off-reservation boarding school, led to the extensive boarding school system and forced assimilation for the Cheyenne and Arapaho people, as well as many other Indigenous nations.

Capt. Pratt (second row, far left) with prisoners in military uniform, 1878.



Top: Indigenous prisoners at Fort Marion; above: Indigenous students at Carlisle Indian Industrial School



Behind the scenes: Cheyenne and Arapaho citizen keeps Oklahomans informed at News 9

Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

(OKLAHOMA CITY) Making Oklahoma's own News 9 stories flow efficiently on air and working actively behind the scenes is Cheyenne and Arapaho citizen, Jules Black, who is a producer at News 9.

Coming a long way since her internship with Cheyenne and Arapaho Productions (CAP), formerly known as CATV, in the fall of 2024, Black is putting her skills and passion to use in the world of news journalism.

Black graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) in the spring of 2025 with a degree in mass communications with an emphasis on professional media. While in school, Black took a producing class that prepared her for working at a news station, as she was also taught by former producers and an executive producer at News 9. This introduction ultimately led to Black being offered to apply for an associate producer's position at News 9. She happily applied and was awarded the position.

"They made it so safe and so comfortable and it was just an incredible experience getting to interview with them and eventually get the job, so that was really fun," Black said.

Black worked as an associate producer for six months before being promoted to producer, when she started stepping in for different shows and doing producer duties. As producer, Black decides what content and stories are put in the shows daily, based off of audiences and viewers' interest and keeping them informed and safe.

"We have breaking news, it's a lot of quick decisions and it's a lot of communication and it's a lot of working with other people towards your show, making sure it flows really well, two of the biggest things are communication and decision making, I'm also in constant communication with our reporters and our anchors and making sure things make sense on air to our viewers," Black said.

Ensuring nothing sounds too complicated for viewers to understand, Black also does a lot of the writing and stacking the shows, making sure the shows flow correctly with News 9 airing nine shows a day. Black works alongside other producers as well and teammates producing new stories on a whim.

"I think it's just a fun and creative way into the news industry, I think I've had so much fun going into it, I've learned so much about the industry from a young person going immediately straight into the industry after college, I have learned so much and have relied on people who are also passionate about news and to also grow in my skills as a writer and as a producer," Black said.

From morning until night, Black is there at the station producing and assisting with shows. What she enjoys most is getting to meet industry professionals in news and broadcast that have been there for years and even decades that are able to teach and guide her through



Jules Black began working at News 9 in June 2025 and has been promoted from associate producer to producer. (Submitted photo)

the beginnings of her news journey.

"It was eye-opening to see all of the hands at work in a professional news environment, especially news 9 where we're in a small big city, as they say, but it was incredible to meet all of those people and just get to hear their stories about what they experienced in the news industry, like with the Oklahoma City bombing and just different events," Black said.

When Black first started working with News 9 in June 2025, the Oklahoma City Thunder had just won the NBA Championship, a newsworthy event that rocked the nation as Oklahoma's first NBA championship win.

"I got to experience that on my first month of working there, I got to work that and just seeing people in action, that's really what was the most incredible thing and most incredible part of the whole process and the whole beginning of my journey basically," Black said.

Since her internship with CAP, Black has taken what she's learned from her time working alongside Darren Brown, senior producer.

Darren also worked for News 9, he told me all the stories that he experienced with being a photojournalist and I think he also kind of pointed me in the right direction of what my reasoning should be for going into this industry," Black said.

With CAP focused on people and community, Black said she prefers that type of coverage over big industry news catching the big story and worried more about making money and not worrying how people and communities are affected.

"It's about how people are impacted and going in, going out of my internship and then going into news 9, it's pretty much taught me that I should stand in that vision and I should stand in that reasoning other than we're first to report on this crash or this shooting or this breaking news, no, it's more how people are impacted," Black said.

Taking that vision to heart and into her career, Black bases her stories she writes as producer to always keep Okla-

homa safe.

"We can keep Oklahomans informed and I think that I will forever be grateful for my internship at CATV because it was really eye opening," Black said.

In her line of work as producer, what Black has learned the most working at News 9 is experiencing firsthand what the journalist and news industry is really all about at its core. The people and the community.

"Our job is so important as journalists, I mean with the state of the world right now, being a young journalist, and with everything unraveling in our world, in our country, it's really taught me that we should stand up for what we're passionate about in our duties as journalist," Black said.

Making her mark in the news industry, what Black hopes to get the most out of her time at News 9 is the experience as a journalist. Getting to experience firsthand coverage of the OKC Thunder winning the national basketball championship in her first month of work at News 9 was an eye opener. Black got to be hands on with coverage from games to the parade downtown, which opened her eyes to another world of journalism, making her realize she was where she needed to be.

"It kind of jump started like what I knew what I wanted from this industry and that's getting to do creative things and getting to do big things with something I'm passionate about, especially news broadcasts and I think that's the biggest thing and I also want to form connections within the industry," Black said.

Getting the most out of her experiences with her internship with CAP and working with News 9, Black can see herself working in the news industry long term as she enjoys producing news and broadcast.

"I think this is where I'm meant to be, this is where my passion lies, so I think getting the opportunity to work at News 9 is also incredible for me to continue my passion and continue growing as a journalist and as a storyteller as well," Black said.

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Come meet A1 Legislator Pamela Sutton and staff. Share your voice by filling out a questionnaire on community needs.

A meal will be served & Door prizes

Thursday, February 19, 2026
6:00pm-8:00pm
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Tuesday, February 24, 2026
6:00pm-8:00pm
Watonga ERC
25210 E 820 Rd
Watonga, OK

Wednesday, February 25, 2026
6:00pm-8:00pm
Delizioso Bistro & Coffee Bar
1093 U.S. HWY 270
Seiling, OK

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Oklahoma tribal leaders see racial profiling amid federal ICE sweeps

Gavin Norman, Gaylord News

A dispute has erupted between the federal government and tribal nations as "Operation Guardian Sweep" brings Immigration and Customs Enforcement actions into the heart of Indian Country without warning to the tribal nations.

Oklahoma tribal leaders have said they only learned of ICE operations on their reservations through social media reports by tribal citizens, rather than being informed by federal officials.

Gov. John Raymond Johnson of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe issued a rebuke of federal actions in response to reports of ICE agents stopping people in the Shawnee area in a manner bordering on racial profiling.

"The Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma has recently been informed that the federal government, in its attempt to deport undocumented migrants, has begun to approach, question and even detain tribal members in Oklahoma. To be clear, there is no reasonable basis, reasonable suspicion, or probable cause to restrict the liberties of Native Americans based on any of the following characteristics: skin color; hair color; eye color; lack of identification; etc.," Johnson said.

The Oklahoma Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, representing the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Seminole, Muscogee, and Choctaw Nations, unanimously approved a resolution demanding formal government-to-government consultation. The council argued that tribal citizens in their jurisdiction are "categorically outside immigration jurisdiction" and that current ICE tactics ignore tribal sovereignty.

U.S. Rep. Tom Cole, (R-OK) the first Native American to serve as chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, addressed last week the lack of communication surrounding the operations, admitting his office was not informed about ICE operations in his district or about a warehouse in Oklahoma City, also in his district, that had been considered for conversion to an ICE detention facility.

"I have not been consulted on anything of that nature. However, federal law is the supreme law of the land and officials have every right to enforce it. I don't find being asked for identification threatening. I carry mine right now. I think some local officials have stirred things up rather than being cooperative, and I haven't seen anything that raises alarm yet."

While Cole is maintaining a wait-and-see approach, tribal leaders argue the alarm has already gone off.

Federal officials maintain that their authority to enforce immigration law does not stop at tribal borders. Tricia McLaughlin, assistant secretary for the Department of Homeland Security, recently defended the increased enforcement actions.

"President Trump and Secretary Noem have unleashed Immigration and Customs Enforcement to target the worst of the worst. Our brave law enforcement is facing an 830% increase in assaults against them and yet they continue to arrest violent criminals and drug traffickers every single day. We will not allow sanctuary politicians or activist hacks to stand in our way of protecting the American people," McLaughlin said.

Chief Gary Batton of the Choctaw Nation released a statement pushing back against a rumored detention facility near Choctaw tribal headquarters.

"We oppose the location of the proposed Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding facility near the Choctaw Nation headquarters in Durant. We are extremely concerned about the proposed facility's close proximity to our day care, child education center and large employee base, which provides programs and services to our tribal members, including children and elders," Batton said.

Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt, a member of the Osage Nation and the city's first Native American mayor, has also waded into the debate. While acknowledging federal agencies are not legally bound by city zoning, Holt addressed local anxiety regarding the placement of



High School students from several school districts surrounding Oklahoma City staged walk out protests against ice during the last couple of weeks, joined my many parents and adults. Above are students from Mustang High School protest held February 5 in Mustang, Okla. Below is a photo from the El Reno High School protest held February 9. (Courtesy photos)



a major detention center in a heavily populated area of Oklahoma City. On Thursday, Holt announced via social media that following meetings with the owners of the facility, the deal for the warehouse was off the table.

"This morning, I met with the owners of the property at 2800 S. Council in southwest Oklahoma City. The owners are not residents of Oklahoma and this is the only property they own in Oklahoma City. The owners of the property at 2800 S. Council confirmed to me this morning that they are no longer engaged with the Department of Homeland Security about a potential acquisition or lease of this property. I commend the owners for their decision and thank them on behalf of the people

of Oklahoma City. As mayor, I ask that every single property owner in Oklahoma City exhibit the same concern for our community in the days ahead," Holt said.

As ICE operations continue, the gap between federal oversight and tribal reality remains wide. Tribes throughout Oklahoma are advising their citizens to carry their Certificates of Indian Blood at all times to avoid being caught up in an unfortunate situation. It's a measure they describe not as typical, but as a necessary response to what they consider to be federal overreach.

Gaylord News is a reporting project of the University of Oklahoma Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication.

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Friday, March 27th
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Lori Harless, Esq., Education Justice
This project was made possible in part by a generous grant from the Oklahoma Bar Foundation

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Creating safe spaces in Teen Talking Circles

Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

Creating a space for youth to come together, encourage one another and speak from the heart is what the Teen Talking Circle is all about.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 50% of all lifetime mental illnesses begin at age 14. The troubling truth according to the Center for Native American youth state in the United States, Native communities experience higher rates of suicide than any other ethnic group and suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native American youth ages 10-24.

With alarming statistics, there are many challenges

that youth face and sometimes having a space to talk and be who they are in a supportive group is what they need in a demanding world.

Created to bring youth together to share, listen and support one another, where everyone is equal and all voices matter, the Teen Talking Circle will be held on the first and third Thursday of the month starting in February.

Used as a traditional indigenous practice, talking circles are formed when participants sit in a circle and take turns speaking and sharing their thoughts, voices and perspectives, as a

form of healing from trauma, building relationships and exploring ideas.

Leading the teen talking circles will be Tatum Escott, community outreach manager for the Cheyenne and Arapaho TOR project, who has been working on getting certified in different White Bison curriculums for the last year, including the medicine wheel and 12-steps for youth certification, as well as a mothers of tradition and daughters of tradition, curriculums that are able to guide the youth. Escott will be guiding the youth in cultural healing, the journey of identity and finding them-

selves and giving them an overall safe space.

"As someone that's not an authoritative figure or a parent, to be able to talk about their struggles in their home lives, in their school lives, wherever they may be struggling, just providing a safe space for them so that's my goal for the talking circle," Escott said.

There were teen talking circles held in the past year at the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Dept. of Health building located in El Reno, Okla., however, did not gain much participation. With a

TALKING CIRCLES

continued from pg. 8

new time and location set for El Reno High School, Escott is hoping for a better outcome bringing the circle back, as it will become more accessible for youth after school.

“My circle would be anywhere from four to eight kids, I think was the biggest circle we had and now that we have this space that we’re getting to use at the high school, we’ll actually have room for 20 kids,” Escott said.

With the circle targeted for youth ages 14 to 18 years of age, the circle would be open for anyone and not just tribal youth.

Topics and activities planned for the talking circle will include discussion of alcoholism, addiction, identity, healthy coping mechanisms and many more.

“One thing that I like to do in the talking circle to kind of get things flowing is I like to talk about my struggles as a teenager in high school and allows them to kind of start to feel safe when they know they can relate to me and my struggles,” Escott said.

The overall goal for the talking circle is to become a beacon of hope for youth, Escott said as she is in her fourth year of sobriety from drugs and alcohol.

“I’ve been able to grow within myself and my journey and now through work helping others in the job that I do and so my goal is just to let them know that they’re not alone, they have someone that cares about them and will walk them through any of the challenges that they’re experiencing,” Escott said.

Typically, in a talking circle, Escott said a topic is chosen to discuss from a book and turns are taken as each participant passes around a talking stick or a feather.

“There’s no cross talk, no interruption and it just gives that person time and space and attention to get what they need to get off their chest,” Escott said.

After talking for a certain amount of time, Escott will allow time for youth to participate in activities that revolve around recovery and mental health.

Escott encourages all youth to

come participate in the talking circle to try something new.

“Come in and sit down and have a snack and maybe you don’t even want to talk the first time and you don’t have to, but you might just relate to something that someone else says and that can lead to a healthy life, healing, that could lead to a new friend, finding a community where you feel at home,” Escott said.

Activities planned for the talking circle also include incorporating cultural crafts and opportunities to reconnect with culture and learn about living a health life.

Looking forward to connecting and providing a safe space for youth, Escott hopes bringing the teen talking circle back will continue to build and grow.

“I’m going to let the kids help me to name our talking circle, so we’re going to all come together as a group and name it and I hope, my hopes for them are they feel they get to be apart of something special,” Escott said.

Together, we support one another.

Join us for a Teen Talking Circle
every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month.



The Youth Talking Circle is a safe space where young people come together to share, listen, and support one another. Everyone is equal, each voice matters, and participants are encouraged to speak from the heart. Snacks & drinks will be provided.

WHEN: 3:30PM - 5PM
WHERE: El Reno
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407 S Choctaw Ave,
El Reno, OK 73036

Contact info - Tatum Escott
572-240-6748
Tescott@cheyenneandapaho-nsn.gov



‘With a name like Beans’: Chickasaw golfer lands licensing deal

Peyton ‘Beans’ Factor will be the face of a company that sells – what else? – beans

Mark Wagner

Sara Factor recalls the moment that food company Saucy Spoon reached out to make a licensing deal with her daughter, Peyton “Beans” Factor, a gifted collegiate golfer.

“A complete surprise, shock,” she told ICT. “Followed by, ‘Shut up! No way!’”

The company wanted to negotiate a contract with the young golfer for a Name, Image and Likeness contract, known as an NIL, to sell their product — beans.

Factor, Chickasaw, a rising golf star who committed last year to play Division I golf at Manhattan University in New York, caught the attention of the company after influencer Bunkie Perkins began a social media campaign to promote the idea that Factor was a candidate for the growing NIL market for college athletes.

With her talent for golf and a name like Beans, Factor caught the attention of more than a million viewers from Golf Oklahoma to Barstool Sports, TikTok and X, formerly Twitter.

“It was last January,” Sara Factor recounted. “My friend called and said a story that mentioned Beans was getting millions of likes.”

The folks at Saucy Spoon and their ad agency, space150, took notice.

“A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for us,” Jilliann DeLawyer, the senior director of marketing for Saucy Spoon, told ICT. “We are all about beans.”

The Saucy Spoon parent company, Faribault Foods, includes Saucy Spoons Baked Beans and more than a half-dozen other brands of foods — many of which also include beans. The company, formed by the merger in 2014 of Faribault Foods and Arizona Canning Company, is based in Faribault, Minnesota, with a manufacturing and distribution facility in Tucson, Arizona.

The company had never considered an NIL sponsorship, but the leadership at Faribault Foods got on board quickly.

“Serendipitous to say the least,” DeLawyer said. “The more we learned about Beans and her family, how delightful they all are, the more we were convinced this was a good partnership.”

While details are private, the multi-year contract between Saucy Spoon and the Factor family is not trivial. When ICT reached the family, Beans was treating her mother with a

trip to the Oklahoma-Alabama football play-off.

A true trophy hunter

Factor earned her nickname as a child, her mother said.

“When she was 3 years old, maybe even younger, my grandmother, Sue Burris, babysat her and fed her beans every day,” Sara Factor said. “She had a hearty appetite for beans as a tyke. She became so well-known as Beans that her enrollment papers (which used her first name Peyton) at school would get lost.”

The family welcomed the attention from Saucy Spoon.

“As Native people, we’re often taught, don’t get in the limelight,” Sara Factor said. “A lot of it stems from grandparents from the past. As Native, you’re not supposed to brag about yourself. But the tribes have grown. Before you weren’t Indian. Now you’re Indian. Now it’s ok. And if we don’t root for them, if we don’t cheer for them, who will?”

As her family cheered, Beans racked up wins in golf.

“She is a true trophy hunter,” her mother said.

Lots of driving

For many talented athletes, parental support is critical. There’s little surprise that Beans is not the only Oklahoma state champion in the family.

Her brother, Wyatt Factor — aka Boomer — was an Oklahoma state champion in baseball. Bean’s sister, Taylor, was a two-time Oklahoma state champion in softball. Just above Beans in birth order, Elijah was an Oklahoma state champion in basketball. Beans also has two younger siblings, Elliot, 6, and Goose, 4.

Jimpsey Factor, Bean’s father, remembers a lot of driving. Although there’s a country club in their hometown of Ada, Oklahoma, they would go to a driving range in Norman for golf.

“It was just too expensive,” Jimpsey Factor said. “So we’d go to Norman and she would practice sometimes every other day ... We were taking her to Norman from when she was about six.”

Beans began to win tournaments before she had turned 10, and when she got to high school, her dad recalls that she was a key reason that Ada High School adopted golf.

“The golf team was pretty much nonexistent until she got there,” he said. “Maybe one girl, two girls would come out for the team. That’s all they ever had ... Now golf is big.”

With Beans aboard, the Ada high school team won the state tournament in her sophomore year. She transferred in her junior year to Sequoyah, where, surprise, the team won the state tournament. In her senior year, she won the Oklahoma state-wide individual medal for low score.

Licensing deals

After years of lawsuits and negotiations, the National Collegiate Athletic Association began to allow student athletes to receive money for the use of their name, image and likeness beginning in July 2021.

While there is no reliable count of women with NIL income, the most active NIL deal-makers are most often for women in basketball, softball, soccer, and gymnastics. Combined with the fact that Native American athletes make up less than 1 percent of NCAA Division I athletes, Factor’s NIL in women’s golf is all the more impressive.

Coach Keith Prokop, who oversees the Manhattan Jaspers golf teams for men and women, said that NIL contracts “are definitely a different world than I’m used to with the landscape of coaching golf, which sometimes doesn’t get the flowers it deserves. So I’m happy for them to find a way to shine.”

DeLawyer, with Saucy Spoon, said the company was careful in reaching out.

“We approached Beans directly to see if she was interested in an NIL partnership,” DeLawyer said. “When developing the agreement we had to make sure we were compliant with state and school rules. When Faribault and Beans were both happy with the arrangement, we then submitted it for review/approval from both the NCAA and Manhattan University.”

Above the mean

As Beans Factor is not your average golfer, Saucy Spoon varieties are not your average beans.

“We spent a lot of time talking to consumers about how we could improve baked beans, and the answer was clear: ‘Give me more flavor,’” said DeLawyer. “So we did. We developed flavors like applewood smoked bacon, jalapeño bourbon, sweet hickory, and spicy roasted chipotle. Our newest flavor is Korean style barbecue.”

Parent company, Faribault Foods, which includes Saucy Spoons Baked Beans with more than a half-dozen other food brands, was formed by a merger in 2014 of Faribault Foods and Arizona Canning Company. It is based in Faribault, Minnesota, with a manufacturing and distribution facility in Tucson, Arizona. Products are available in groceries across the U.S. and on Amazon.com.

DeLawyer said that baked beans have been a staple in American cuisine for generations, and that Saucy Spoon’s innovations have introduced new flavors to the grocery aisles and attracted more than a million new households to baked beans.

They are also innovating in the NIL space, and could not pass on an opportunity to have Beans promote their beans.



Peyton ‘Beans’ Factor signs NIL contract to represent Saucy Spoon company. Factor plays Division I golf for Manhattan University in New York. (Courtesy photo)

“We are just happy to have met Beans and her family,” DeLawyer said. “At the same time, we want her to focus on her studies, golfing, and just generally enjoy being at college as much as possible, so we’ll probably shoot footage only once or twice a year.”

Good start

In her first fall season at Manhattan, Factor finished in the top 10 at two tournaments and combined with her teammates to record Manhattan’s first-ever win at the Evann Parker Memorial in October. During that win, the team senior Nawel Ben Latief received support from Beans, who put together a near-perfect second round.

Prokop, the coach, remains impressed by his young team and their desire to learn.

“We are a very young team and a talented team that needs to become wiser in how we approach our play and build confidence,” he said.

Among the team members is Factor’s long-time golf colleague and friend Maddison Long, Navajo and Coeur d’Alene, who is a sophomore at Manhattan. Both developed through programs like the U.S. Golf Association qualifiers, NB3 Elite Golf and Nike’s N7 program. And both appear to be adjusting to big city life.

Their moms told ICT of a shopping trip to midtown. Beans and Long came on a QR code sponsored by the city in Times Square. They clicked on it and, lo and behold, their surprised faces appeared on the towering screen above the New Year’s Eve ball drop. That jumbotron is often called the ‘#1 billboard in the world’ for its visibility.

The Manhattan Lady Jaspers begin the spring season March 8 in Orlando at Orange Tree Country Club.

Mark Wagner is a golf historian and the founding director of the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement at Worcester State University in Massachusetts. His book, “Native Links, the Surprising History of Our First People in Golf,” was published in 2024 and is available from Back Nine Press and Amazon. He can be reached at markgwagner@charter.net.



OBITUARIES

OBITUARIES

Floyd Guy Black Bear

Floyd Guy Black Bear passed away on Jan. 29, 2026. He was born Feb. 8, 1941, in Kingfisher, Okla., to James and Daisy (Turtle) Black Bear and was raised in the Kingfisher community that remained close to his heart throughout his life.

Following his early years in Kingfisher, Floyd proudly served his country by joining the United States Army Airborne Division. He was stationed in Germany, where he served as a guardsman at the Berlin Wall during a pivotal time in world history. His military service reflected his deep sense of duty, courage, and commitment to protecting freedom.

After completing his military service, Floyd pursued his calling to faith and ministry by attending theology school in Tempe, Ariz. It was there that he met his wife, beginning a lifelong partnership rooted in faith and service.

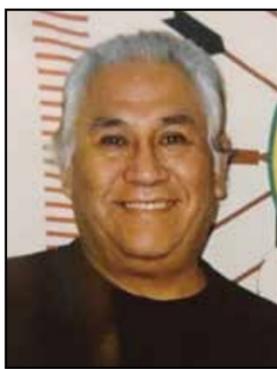
Upon graduating, Floyd served with a church in Arkansas City, Kansas, before being called to a church in Watonga, Okla. In 1971, he made Watonga

his home, where he lived and faithfully served for the remainder of his life. Floyd was deeply involved in his community and his people.

During the 1980s, he was active in tribal politics for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, serving as Tribal Secretary and advocating for the rights and voices of his community. A committed civil rights activist, Floyd proudly marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., standing firmly for justice, equality, and dignity for all.

A man of deep spirituality, Floyd was known as a giving, loving, faith-based leader whose strength came from his unwavering beliefs and compassion for others. He was also a respected member of the Bowstring Society of the Cheyenne Tribe, honoring tradition, heritage, and cultural responsibility. Floyd Guy Black Bear's life was one of service, to his country, his faith, his tribe, and his fellow man. His legacy of love, activism, and spiritual strength will continue to inspire all who knew him.

Floyd is preceded in death



by his parents; sisters, Bessie and Erma; brothers, Nick, Luther, James Jr., Lester, Clarence and Charlie.

He is survived by his children, Darren Black Bear and Cheyenne Black Bear; grandchild, Jacob Black Bear; sister, Mary Lou Black Bear Powell; brother, Burton Black Bear and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Wake service was held February 4 at the Watonga Emergency Response Center in Watonga, Okla. Funeral services were held February 5, at the same venue, followed by an interment at the American Baptist Home Mission Society Indian Cemetery under the direction of Sanders Funeral Home.

Haylee Whiteplume Paddyaker

Haylee Whiteplume Paddyaker, age 29, of Albuquerque, N.M., passed away on Jan. 22, 2026. She was born on Jan. 17, 1997, in Oklahoma City, to Jennifer Renee Madbull and Mark Paddyaker, and was a cherished only child. Haylee's early education included attending the Concho Cheyenne-Arapaho Head Start Program. She later attended Darlington Public School and continued her studies in the El Reno and Oklahoma City public school systems, eventually graduating from high school in Albuquerque, N.M. From a very young age, Haylee was exceptionally bright and curious. By the age of three she could hold conversations with people of all ages and had memorized many phone numbers, a testament to her remarkable memory. One of Haylee's favorite childhood memories was attending a Kid Rock concert at age five, a story she loved to share with family and friends. This recollection reflects the lively and adventurous spirit she carried throughout her life. Haylee held her Native American heritage close to her heart. She participated in cultural dances and pow-

wows and was honored to serve as the Tiny Tot Princess in the year of 2000 at the annual Oklahoma Indian Nations Pow-wow and again 2002 at the Geary Fourth of July Powwow. She was proud of her Comanche and Gros Ventre descent and was an enrolled citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Throughout her life, Haylee was known for her warm smile and her kind, engaging nature. She will be remembered for her intelligence, enthusiasm, and the joy she took in learning and celebrating her heritage.

Haylee is preceded in death by her grandfathers, Leroy Madbull and William Paddyaker, her maternal great-grandparents, Theodore and Angeline (Spottedcorn) Pratt, her paternal great-grandparents, Leonard and June Goodbear and her great-grandmother Julia Madbull.

She is survived by her loving parents, Jennifer Renee Madbull and Mark Paddyaker, her maternal grandmother Gayle Pratt of Oklahoma City, her maternal grandmother Margaret Sutton of El Reno, Okla., her paternal grandmother Minnie Moore



of Albuquerque, N.M., her aunt Leann Madbull of Reseda, Calif., and her uncles, Mike Paddyaker and Jared Whiteskunk of Albuquerque, N.M. She also leaves behind many other relatives, including aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews, who will cherish her memory.

A visitation was held February 1 at Turner Funeral Home in Geary, Okla. Funeral services were held February 2 at the Geary First Baptist Church, officiated by Willie Doyeto, with Anna Romero giving the obituary reading. Cheyenne and Arapaho hymns were sung by Ernestine Whitebird and Wanda Whiteman. An interment followed at Sunset Cemetery under the direction of Turner Funeral Home.

Monica Rosanna Red Hat

Monica Rosanna Red Hat, 55, of rural Longdale, Okla., departed this life on Feb. 5, 2026 at her home. She was born Dec. 28, 1970, in Clinton, Okla., to parents Kenneth Keith and Arleen Kay (Fletcher) Kauley.

Monica was raised in Hammon, Okla., and attended school at Hammon and at Riverside Indian School in Anadarko. She liked going to the casino, listening to music and caring for her pets. She worked as a certified nurse's aide at the Fairview Fellowship Home and Okeene Nursing Home. She also worked at the Lucky Star Casino in Canton.

Monica is preceded in death by her father Kenneth

Kauley, daughter Michelle "Shelby" Red Hat and sister Michelle Kauley.

Survivors include her husband Steven Jay Red Hat Sr. of Longdale, three sons, Steven Jay Red Hat Jr. of Longdale, Alexander Paige Red Hat of San Francisco, Calif., and Henry Red Hat of Oklahoma, mother Arleen Kauley of Red Rock, Okla., two sisters, Brenda Kay Smith and husband Greg of Kingfisher, Okla., and Kristi Kauley and Carlos of Clinton, brother Kendall Kauley and wife Sara Orange of Hammon, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild and many extended family and friends.

Wake services were held February 9 at the Longdale



Gym in Longdale, Okla. Funeral services were held February 10, at the same venue, with Pastor Delfred White Crow Jr. officiating, followed by an interment at the Canton Chief's Reinterment Cemetery under the direction of Pierce Funeral Home.

Kimberly Kaye Reyes

Kimberly Kaye Reyes, 61, passed away peacefully on Jan. 30, 2026, at Integris Canadian Valley Hospital in Yukon, Okla., surrounded by her loved ones. She was a devoted mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, whose warmth, kindness, and gentle spirit touched everyone who knew her.

Kim was born on Nov. 29, 1964, in Watonga, Okla., and made her home in El Reno in 2015. She loved shopping, had a great sense of humor, and most of all cherished every moment spent with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Her laughter, her stories, and her hugs brought joy and comfort to all who knew her.

She is survived by her children, Christopher Reyes of Kingfisher, and Jonathan Reyes, Matthew Reyes, Estevan Reyes, and Alejandra Reyes, all of El Reno; her brother Jon Riggles of El Reno; 14 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren, who were the pride and joy of her life.

She was preceded in death by her mother Norma Jo Riggles; her sisters, Patricia Riggles and Vivian Riggles and her husband Saul Reyes. Kim's love, light, and laughter will live on forever in the hearts of her family and friends.

An all-night wake service was held February 3 at the Concho Emergency



Response Center in Concho, Okla. Funeral services were held February 4, at the same venue, followed by an interment at the El Reno Cemetery under the direction of Huber Benson Funeral Home.

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ATHLETES' SPOTLIGHT

By Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

Violet Black, Riverside Indian School

(ANADARKO, Okla.) Helping lead her team to a shot at playoffs through her senior year of high school basketball, Cheyenne and Arapaho youth, Violet Black, 18, looks forward to seeing how far her team can go this season.

Standing 5'10 tall, Black plays forward for the Riverside Indian School Lady Braves, a boarding school located in Anadarko, Okla.

Born in Lawton, Okla., and raised in El Reno, Okla., Black first started playing basketball in the fifth grade when her father formed a basketball team for her and her sisters to play.

"My dad, he just always wanted us to play, so he got us into it," Black said.

Continuing to play the game she's come to know and love, Black's biggest motivation for playing has been her family and playing to make it to the state championship. What she loves most about playing basketball is the connection and community it has built for her.

"I just like the atmosphere of games and the people that you meet and the lessons you learn from it," Black said.

In her senior year, what Black looked forward to the most is making it to the state play-offs. Leading a strong record so far in the season, the Lady Braves have a 16-4 record.

Striving to work on herself the most this season, goals Black made were to work on "self-improvement and confidence in myself," Black said.

Knowing this is her last go-round on the basketball court as a senior in high school, Black felt sad, however excited for the future.

"It feels good, kind of sad, but knowing that I've worked hard to get to where I am right now, it feels exciting," Black said.

Maintaining an estimated 3.6 GPA academically in school, Black has learned to manage her time as she felt it's easier for her to do so being at a boarding school, where she stays on campus for learning and playing basketball.

"It's easier because I go to a boarding school, so I have time to myself and time to do my work and get to practice because I'm here," Black said.

Through the years, Black has had to learn how to step up as a player and be a leader, growing in her position on the court.

"I used to be, I don't want to say bench player, but I had to look up to my previous seniors and I got put in a position to play more, so I had to learn to step up," Black said.

Overall what Black hoped to accomplish the most in playing basketball is the life lessons she will gain from basketball.

"Life lessons, like learning and how to manage my emotions," Black said.

Practice wise, Black is in the gym every day at 6 a.m., getting in extra shooting time and what she spends her time practicing on the most is her rebounding and post moves.

The best way to improve her overall game, Black believes is, "repetition, doing



something over and over, you can always get better at something."

Black felt it's important to have a good support system, such as having good coaches and good teammates when it comes to basketball, as well as having a good basketball IQ and a will to keep going.

Ending her senior year of basketball, Black hopes to be remembered as the player who was hard working.

"A leader who is good to everybody and just a good person to be around," Black said.

Stepping onto the court each time in her final moments in her senior year, playing basketball has made Black feel all the emotions, but most importantly, to feel the thrill of being excited. And what basketball has taught Black the most in her years of playing is resilience.

"Basketball has taught me discipline and consistency, you have to be consistent and resilient," Black said.

After graduation, Black plans to further her education and attend college.

Violet's mother is Lena Russell. Her siblings include LaKylah Black, Camilla Russell, Cheyanna Black, Derek Black, Adrian Black. Violet's grandparents are Byron Black, Rowena Kauley, Thelma Whitebird, LaVelle Russell. Violet's uncle is Derek Black.



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