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Tribal Citizens Approve Limited Waiver for Elk City Entertainment Venue

Rosemary Stephens, *Editor-in-Chief*

(ELK CITY, Okla.) More than 200 tribal citizens attend the special Tribal Council meeting on Saturday, March 7, 2026, in Elk City to vote on a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity that will allow the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes to move forward with a multi-million-dollar entertainment development. After establishing a quorum of 75 members, nominations were taken from the floor for secretary and chairperson.. Roberta ‘Bobbie’ Hamilton was elected chairperson, and Melissa Pedro was elected secretary. The meeting agenda included one item: consideration of a resolution approving a Limited Waiver

of Sovereign Immunity; Consent to Jurisdiction; Waiver of Exhaustion of Tribal Remedies; and Consent to Arbitration contained in loan documents between the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and PNC Bank, N.A. The loan will finance construction of a hotel and related facilities at Lucky Star Casino, Elk City in Elk City, Oklahoma. The resolution passed with 189 votes in favor, while 38 citizens voted against the measure and three abstained. **Remote Voting** According to a statement from Tribal Council Coordinator Albert Old Crow, 118 tribal citizens signed up for



Over 200 tribal citizens attend the special Tribal Council meeting held in Elk City, Okla. on Saturday March 7, 2026. (Photo / Chris Roman Nose)

TRIBAL COUNCIL pg. 4

GENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Breaking the Cycle: Generational Trauma Workshop Focuses on Healing and Awareness

Latoya Lonelodge, *Senior Reporter*



Jacqueline Turtle, with the American Legion Post 401 as commander, provides welcoming remarks during the first day of the Generational Trauma Workshop. Turtle helped spearhead the event. (Photos / Latoya Lonelodge)

WATONGA, Okla. — Inside the conference center at Lucky Star Casino in Watonga, Okla., the conversations were not easy ones, but they were necessary. Tribal elders, veterans, health professionals and community members gathered in a shared space to talk about something many Native families have carried quietly for generations ... trauma. For two days, February 24-25, participants came together for the Native American Generational Trauma Workshop, a community-led event focused on healing, awareness and action. The gathering created space for tribal citizens and neighboring communities to confront the lasting effects of historical trauma and explore ways to move forward together. Breakout sessions allowed participants to engage more deeply in conversation and reflection, while traditional meals and community resource booths helped create a welcoming space for learning and connection. The workshop was organized through the efforts of Ramona Tallbear, administrative assistant for the Tribal Council office, alongside Jacqueline ‘Jackie’ Turtle and Teresa France. Together, the three spearheaded the Native American Generational Trauma Workshop with the goal of raising awareness and beginning conversations about healing within Native communities.

“I believe in generational trauma, you talk about being generationally traumatized, all us have been, so it came together that quickly and there was some good support speakers, with limited attendance, but still pretty good. We were hoping for 200 and I think we have close to 100 so that’s really good,” Tallbear said. According to Tallbear, the idea for the workshop first emerged during a health board meeting when a resolution was introduced calling for a workshop focused on generational trauma. The resolution was brought forward by Melvin Roman Nose. The event itself was made possible entirely through community support. Donations helped cover expenses, speakers volunteered their time, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes’ Governor’s office contributed \$4,000 to support the workshop. Tallbear said the effort to raise awareness about generational trauma will continue with another workshop planned for November, which will focus on Native American and holistic treatments and remedies for generational trauma. “Generational trauma comes from a wide range of symptoms and so there’s a lot of holistic Native American treatments and what I’m going to do is get in touch with a lot of tribally run programs that offer any type of assistance,” Tallbear said. She added that many programs across the country already incorporate traditional healing methods into treatment, including some prison programs that allow ceremonial sweat lodges as part of rehabilitation and cultural reconnection for Native Americans. “Most of them are federally recognized so they have to give numbers and outcomes of this type of treatment ... just like we have to give program reviews for federal monies they have to give program reviews for activities and of course they have to measure is it helpful or hurtful,” Tallbear said. The first day of the workshop featured discussions and presentations examining generational trauma

and its impact on Native communities. Speakers included Cheyenne Elder Henrietta Mann, Health Board Chairman Quinton Roman Nose, Cheyenne and Arapaho Gov. Reggie Wassana, Chief Executive Officer, Indian Health Services, Joe Bryant, acting Superintendent for Bureau of Indian Affairs, Jennifer Hill, presentations from Roberta Hamilton of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Dept. of Health, tribal veteran Richard Williams, and Charles O’Leary, American Legion national executive committee member. The second day focused on interactive workshops and breakout sessions, providing participants an opportunity to share their own experiences and engage in dialogue about healing and solutions for their

WORKSHOP pg. 5



Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Gov. Reggie Wassana discusses generational trauma and its impact within the tribes and older generations.

Native American Leaders Are Furious with Trump’s Tribal Education Shakeup

By Adora Brown, Oklahoma Watch

The Trump administration’s recent moves to dismantle the Department of Education have left Native American leaders feeling frustrated and unheard as several tribal education projects are caught in limbo between federal agencies.

Tribal leaders said they are seeking solutions to the lack of direction from the Department of Education as it tries to delegate some of its responsibilities through new interagency agreements. They said they are unsure about the logistics of some existing projects, from the movement of personnel to their financing under new agencies.

“In reality, we also need to be thinking about if this is going to happen, and it looks like it’s happening, then how can we step in to make sure that the transition goes the way that we would have recommended had we been consulted in the first place?” Jake Keyes, chair of the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, said.

Tribes are also wondering where they stand under the MAGA-led Department of Education that wants states to have more power over education, particularly the many tribal nations that are in red states.

The agency announced in November that it would move several projects related to tribal education to the Department of the Interior and the Department of Labor. These projects span a wide range of tribal education matters, from professional development of teachers to grants for colleges run by tribes.

Under the Trump administration, the Department of Education has made clear its intention to dismantle the agency. Now that tribal education programs are caught up in

the first wave of interagency agreements from the Department of Education, Native American leaders say they are increasingly concerned that the agency is willing to violate its trust and treaty responsibilities to tribes to achieve its goals.

“We have a preeminent right to education because of the treaties,” Aaron Payment, a board member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians in Michigan, said. “The treaties exchanged two billion acres of land in exchange for the promise of health, education and social welfare. My tribe ceded 14 million acres of land for the promise of health, education and social welfare. That’s a federal responsibility, and that’s a federal constitutional right for American Indians.”

The Department of Education directed NOTUS to a statement from Secretary of Education Linda McMahon made on Feb. 11.

“This partnership is not just a policy: it is a promise rooted in trust, treaty obligations, and our shared responsibility to ensure that every Native American student has access to high-quality education and the opportunities that follow,” McMahon wrote in a press release.

A high concentration of tribal land is in Republican-controlled states, and some tribal leaders are concerned that if their states were left to decide how federal funds are allocated to tribes, there could be problems.

One tribal leader gave the example of an education official in their state who is “pushing an English-only initiative.”

“We were able to talk to him, and he does understand that there was a guidance issued from U.S. ED, and that tribal languages and

history is not [diversity, equity and inclusion],” said Derrick W. Leslie, the education director of the White Mountain Apache Tribe of Arizona. “And a lot of states, especially red states, tend to have this anti-DEI [sentiment], which is worrisome.”

Tribal leaders in Oklahoma echoed a similar sentiment. The state is often ranked 50th in education in the country. Before its MAGA-aligned state superintendent resigned in September, he threatened to withhold federal funding from schools that did not follow a Department of Education mandate to end DEI. In a state that is often the site of culture wars over DEI in education, the tribal leaders said their education seems particularly vulnerable.

“If the state had been in charge of Indian education throughout these past several years, that would have been devastating for us,” Keyes said. “On top of that, our state seems to have an issue with being able to actually even manage education.”

This month, the agencies began the formal process of consulting with tribes about facilitating the transfer of education programs, part of a formal process where agencies meet with tribal leaders about any policy change or action that has tribal implications. Tribal leaders traveled to Washington this month to meet with Department of Education officials, but many left the meeting frustrated and disappointed in a process they said seemed intended to placate leaders rather than solve issues.

Hundreds of people showed up online and in person to the consultation, and leaders were only given a few minutes each to speak.

The resounding sentiment at the consultation was: It’s too late to consult with tribes about a decision that has already been made.

“I feel like they were just checking a box to say that they met with tribes and they listened to tribes, but that the plan is already in motion,” Leslie said.

Several tribal education leaders who were present at the consultation told NOTUS that leadership from the Departments of Education, Interior and Labor left no room for reconsideration and spoke about the interagency agreements as though they were already implemented.

These leaders, who included McMahon, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum and Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer, appeared only briefly during the nearly three-hour consultation.

In her statement, which is from the day after the consultation, McMahon said that the consultation was meant to help tribes “focus on serving students instead of complying with burdensome bureaucratic regulations.”

Tribal leadership only spoke directly with Julian Guerrero Jr., the director of the Office of Indian Education.

“I feel like the people that needed to hear those statements weren’t there,” Dr. Carrie F. Whitlow, the executive director of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Department of Education, said about the agency officials. “So by the time they got up there, the tone was that this is happening, and it’s been signed, and basically we are doing you all a favor.”

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

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Rendition of a proposed Buffalo Wallow Canopy Shelter to be erected in Adams Park in El Reno, Okla.

Route 66 Vision Grows: Buffalo Wallow Canopy Proposed Near Future Iron Bison

Co-published with the El Reno Tribune-Ray Dyer



Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Planning and Development office Director Daniel Tallbear and Planner Christine Morton presents idea of a Buffalo Wallow Canopy being built in Adams Park, El Reno, as part of the Route 66 upcoming centennial celebration across the U.S.

El Reno’s Route 66 and especially Adams Park continue to attract attention from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. Last summer, Nathan Pratt, a citizen of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, and a well-known artist, proposed creating a sculpture of the world’s tallest bison. El Reno city leaders liked the idea and carved out a piece of Adams Park at Country Club and Sunset Drive for the Iron Bison project. Pratt is working to raise funds for the massive sculpture, projected to be 39 feet tall. The project was kick-started with a \$10,000 grant from the tribes. It has since received more support from the tribes, Pratt said.

At the February El Reno City Council meeting, representatives from the tribes proposed creating a “Buffalo Wallow Canopy Shelter” also in Adams Park. It would be constructed on the north side of Sunset, near the entrance to Jenks Simmons Field House. The plan drew the backing of the City of El Reno with council authorizing a letter of support that will be included in a grant application the tribes are making to the Oklahoma Route 66 Commission. The application deadline was February 27.

Daniel Tallbear, Director of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Planning and Development office, along with Christine Morton, tribal planner, pitched the idea of the Buffalo Wallow Canopy. They were joined by architect and University of Oklahoma professor Andrew Stone.

Stone, of Clinton, has been working for more than a year with a group called the Cheyenne and Arapaho Route 66 Roundtable on ideas and plans to help support Route 66 and enhance the presence of tribal citizens in El Reno and western Oklahoma.

“Over the past year, the Route 66 Committee has worked diligently to study a wide range of proposal areas, designs and community priorities along the Mother Road,” Stone said. “From conceptual explorations to detailed site considerations, the process has been one of balancing heritage, function and civic identity. The Wallow Canopy emerges as a synthesis of that work, a project that embodies the committee’s collective vision for how Route 66 revitalization can both honor history and serve the living community.”

Stone said he found a tremendous amount of informa-

tion about the area at the Canadian County History Museum. He praised the archives offered by the museum as well as the staff there for their enthusiasm to help.

Stone said the Wallow Canopy “is a sculptural shade structure proposed for Adams Park” along Route 66. He said it’s “where the lineage of the highway unfolds from buffalo development to modern road culture.”

Stone said the canopy is “conceived as a civic and cultural landmark rooted in Cheyenne and Arapaho heritage, shaped by the layered history of the plains, and tied directly to the great highway of travel and commerce that is Route 66.”

The canopy’s form draws inspiration from the buffalo wallow, the shallow, circular depressions created by bison rolling in the earth. Instead of shaping the ground, the canopy lifts the wallow into the sky, carving a constellation of circular cut-outs in its roof. As sunlight filters through, moving patterns of light and shadow are cast onto the ground, evoking the wallow through time, ritual, rest, migration and renewal.

“But the wallow has always been more than an ecological trace,” Stone said. “For generations, it carried multiple lives: a burial site where memory was laid to rest, a hiding place where safety could be found and a garden where sustenance was cultivated.”

Morton said the wallow is one of several projects members of the roundtable have been discussing. She said the group consists of about a dozen members who try to meet monthly. Morton and Tallbear met several times with City Manager Matt Sandidge to discuss the wallow. She said it was Sandidge who suggested the location in proximity to Pratt’s proposed Iron Bison, which will rest on the south side of Sunset.

The group has also proposed creating a large mural on the planned mobility Hub the city intends to build at Sunset and Choctaw. She said a number of Cheyenne and Arapaho artists are involved in the creation of large murals. A mural competition will be held that challenges Cheyenne and Arapaho artists to create a design that incorporates the story of Route 66 with the story of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people.

“We want to make our presence known,” Morton said.

Stone said the Buffalo Wallow could be used for public gatherings, music and entertainment. It would be lighted at night similar to The Filling Station at Sunset and Choctaw.

“Positioned at the bend of Route 66 where the highway curves through El Reno, Adams Park becomes the ideal setting for this civic marker,” Stone said. “The canopy’s circular, non-directional form allows it to be viewed along the axis of the highway from both east and west, transforming the site into an open, visible thresh-

old for locals and travelers alike.”

Zooming deeper into Adams Park, the canopy anchors an in-town Buffalo Learning Trail that traces the longer story of the buffalo and its many legacies. Here, tourists and locals can encounter the layered lineage of the plains and highways: Buffalo I Migration Patterns, Nomadic Tribes I Irregular Paths, Military I Trails, Wagon Trains I Ruts, Cattle Trail I Routes, Route 66 I Highways. Along this trail, the wallow becomes both subject and teacher.

Historically, buffalo wallows were more than ecological marks: They became gardens, places where seeds took root in disturbed soil; hiding places, where humans and animals found cover; graveyards, where remains were buried in sheltered depressions; and watering holes, where water was gathered for survival. Each of these uses marked a form of exchange between humans, animals and land. The disc of the wallow is thus both literal and figurative: a first currency of the prairie, a site of commerce, sustenance and survival that prefigures the later development of Route 66 and the culture of highways and commerce it made possible. In this way, the Wallow Canopy bridges past and present, heritage and highway, ecology and economy. It is both civic amenity and cultural marker - an architectural lens through which the community can gather, reflect and make visible the deep history of movement, exchange and renewal across the Western Plains.

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Watonga Indian Clinic	1305 S Clarence Nash Blvd, Watonga	10:16 AM
Geary Community Center	132 E Main St, Geary	10:38 AM
Calumet Travel Center	945 S Wallbaum Rd, Calumet	11:00 AM
Geary Community Center	132 E Main St, Geary	11: 22 AM
Watonga Indian Clinic	1305 S Clarence Nash Blvd, Watonga	11:44 AM

AFTERNOON		
Canton ERC	205 Jefferson Ave, Canton	1:53 PM
Canton Lucky Star	301 NW Lake Road, Canton	2:02 PM
Seiling ERC	411 N Main St, Seiling	2:28 PM
Watonga Indian Clinic	1305 S Clarence Nash Blvd, Watonga	3:16 PM
Geary Community Center	132 E Main St, Geary	3:38 PM
Calumet Travel Center	945 S Wallbaum Rd, Calumet	4:00 PM
Geary Community Center	132 E Main St, Geary	4: 22 PM
Watonga Indian Clinic	1305 S Clarence Nash Blvd, Watonga	4:44 PM

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TRIBAL COUNCIL

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remote voting, with 24 participating until the internet outage and only 15 participants were able to cast a vote after internet was restored. During the meeting an internet interruption occurred shortly before the final vote was taken and not all participants were able to cast their vote before the final voting process concluded. After reviewing the situation Old Crow stated the issue was not related to the voting equipment itself, but rather to the type of internet service that was available at the meeting site. Old Crow emphasized the importance of remote participation voting as an important step to ensure all tribal citizens have a voice in Tribal Council meetings.

“As we continue to use this technology we will learn from experiences like this one and work to improve the reliability of remote participation for future meetings,” Old Crow wrote in a statement. *(See full statement below.)*

Plans for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes’ Elk City entertainment center call for a two-phase development.

Phase One will include a casino featuring

750 gaming machines and 12 table games, along with a steakhouse and bar, food court, office space, a 100-room hotel, indoor pool, conference center, and banquet and meeting rooms.

Phase Two will focus on family entertainment amenities, including an arcade, bowling lanes, and an indoor play area. Additional plans include an outdoor pool, a full-service RV park with showers and laundry facilities, and a convenience store and truck stop with eight fueling kiosks, five diesel pumps, truck parking, and a trucker lounge.

Tribal leaders have described the project as a “destination resort,” with the goal of attracting visitors not only for gaming but also for family recreation and large-scale community events. Supporters say the development represents an important step forward for the tribes while also contributing to the long-term economic growth of Elk City.

The resort will be located at East 7th Street and Interstate 40 in Elk City, a high-traffic corridor that leaders believe will maximize accessibility and future growth.



Melissa Pedro (l) who was voted in as secretary at the special Tribal Council meeting, and Bobbie Hamilton (c) as chairperson pose for a photo with Tribal Council Coordinator Albert Old Crow.

Community Engagement, Key Meetings, and Spring Events Highlight March Activities

By Albert Old Crow, Tribal Council Coordinator

Please know that I am actively involved in numerous Tribal government activities, and the programs here maintain a very full schedule. In addition, I regularly participate in community events, as our tribal members are equally engaged and busy. By attending these activities, I represent my branch of government and help demonstrate that this office remains attentive to and supportive of policy matters affecting our government and community.

Over the past several weeks, as winter gives way to early spring, tribal members have gathered for information meetings, wellness events, community outreach, and preparations for the March 7 special Tribal Council meeting. With more activities scheduled through midMarch, the spirit of participation remains strong across our communities.

Special Tribal Council Meeting Draws Strong Participation

The March 7 special Tribal Council meeting in Elk City marked a significant moment for tribal governance. Remote voting numbers increased substantially, with 118 tribal members registered, up from 75 during the October 2025 meeting. This rise reflects growing engagement among tribal members who live outside the area or cannot travel.

Information meetings regarding the proposed Elk City casino were held at Clinton, Concho, and Geary, with the final session in Elk City on March 5. Attendance was strong, and many

members asked thoughtful questions that contributed to a productive leadup to the vote.

Workshops and Community Healing Efforts

In late February, preparations were completed for the Generational Trauma Workshop held February 24–25 at the Watonga Lucky Star Convention Center. The workshop—open to all with no registration required—addressed the long-term impacts of trauma and emphasized community healing and support. It was well received, the next workshop is being planned for November 17 & 18, 2026, also at Lucky Star Watonga.

Sweat lodge ceremonies also continued at the George Hawkins Treatment Facility, marking the midway point for Cycle 15 of its 90-day recovery program. These ceremonies and ongoing prayers for clients reflect our commitment to supporting sobriety and wellness among our people.

Civic and Program Work Across the Tribal Area

Throughout February and early March, the Office of the Tribal Council’s coordinator participated in several interagency and community activities, including:

Bureau of Prisons Volunteer Recertification, allowing continued fellowship and sweat lodge visits with inmates at the El Reno facility.

Housing Authority Commissioners Meeting in Clinton, where staff contin-

ue their work despite ongoing limitations with office technology.

Veterans Meeting at Concho, honoring those who served and continue to serve our people and the nation.

High School Basketball Season Energizes Communities

High school basketball playoffs have been a unifying and energizing part of community life across the Cheyenne and Arapaho territory. Students, families, and local supporters continue to show enthusiasm as teams advance through postseason play. Leadership extended encouragement to all teams—and acknowledged the tough choice between civic duties and cheering on local athletes during competing events.

Looking Ahead

EOC Meeting, Friday, March 20, 11 AM–Noon, Clinton ERC

Higher Education Banquet, April 16, 6–8 PM, Concho RESPECT Gym - Honors 2025–26 high school and college graduates - **Registration Required.**

Staying Informed Strengthens Our Nation

Across all events and meetings, one theme remains constant: tribal involvement strengthens our government and honors our ancestors. Whether attending workshops, participating in legislative sessions, supporting youth, or staying informed on key issues, every act of engagement builds a brighter future for the Cheyenne and Arapaho people.

Statement Regarding Internet Interruption at the March 7, 2026 Special Tribal Council Meeting

By Albert Old Crow, Tribal Council Coordinator

During the special Tribal Council meeting held Saturday, March 7, 2026, in Elk City, an internet interruption occurred shortly before the final vote was taken. I want to take a moment to explain what happened so that tribal members understand the situation.

For in-person voting, the tribe contracted with Option Technologies, a company that provides handheld electronic voting devices and on-site technical support to ensure accurate vote tabulation. Their system uses secure wireless keypads that transmit votes to a receiver and control computer for immediate tabulation.

Last year, the Tribal Council also approved remote participation for tribal members, which allowed those unable to attend in person to watch and vote remotely. This system was successfully used during the October 2025 Annual Tribal Council Meeting and again during the March 7 Special Tribal Council Meeting.

Just before the final vote was to be taken, the internet service at the Elk City location briefly went down. The facility relied on tower-based internet service, which timed out the Zoom connection being used by Option Technologies for the entire meeting. The interruption was short and service was restored quickly; however, during that brief window some remote participants were unable to cast their vote before the voting process concluded.

There were 118 registered

for remote participation. Twenty four participated until the internet outage and 15 were able to cast their vote after it was restored.

The resolution before the Tribal Council did pass. In reviewing the situation, the issue was not related to the voting equipment itself, but rather to the type of internet service available at the meeting site. If the meeting had been held at a Tribal ERC facility,

which uses broadband internet, the interruption likely would not have occurred. For example, the Hammon ERC is located approximately 20 minutes north of Elk City, and all Tribal ERC locations are equipped with broadband internet capable of supporting remote participation without the limitations associated with tower-based service.

Remote participation is an important step forward in ensuring that all tribal members—especially those who live out of district or cannot travel—have a voice in Tribal Council meetings. As we continue to use this technology, we will learn from experiences like this one and work to improve the reliability of remote participation for future meetings.

Thank you to all tribal members who attended in person and to those who participated remotely. Your involvement continues to strengthen the Tribal Council and the voice of our people.

The final vote was: 189 for, 38 against and three abstain.

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WORKSHOP

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communities.

For Turtle of the American Legion Post 401, the workshop highlighted the real and lasting impact trauma has on individuals and families.

“Sometimes it’s generational, we don’t know, some people might carry the traits and they don’t know, but we can address it,” Turtle said.

Turtle explained that generational trauma can have a devastating effect on people’s lives.

“Sometimes you have a hard time getting back on your feet, your legs are wobbly, you’re having a hard time dealing with it,” Turtle said.

Through gatherings like the generational trauma workshop, she believes communities can begin to help individuals find their way forward.

“We just want there to be awareness, that maybe we’ve been going through a lot of trauma and nobody talks about it and we think it’s normal. It’s not normal, we need to get back in balance with life, where everything gets good again and whatever we need to do, even with mental health,” Turtle said.

In addition to raising awareness, Turtle said the workshop also highlighted a growing desire within the community to expand mental health services. Organizers circulated a petition supporting the development of a future mental health clinic.

“We got a petition going around to support this, we want a mental health clinic, it’s not going to cost gaming or anything, we already have grants waiting, we just need a piece of land, we’re asking for that 92 acres if we could use that and that would be for us, for the people, for us to use so we can get better,” Turtle said.

Teresa France, a tribal advocate and a descendant of the Potawatomi Tribes, also helped facilitate and promote the event. She emphasized that the workshop was designed not only to address Native experiences, but to foster broader understanding across communities that have experienced historical trauma.

“The workshop’s main focus is healing and connecting, healing everybody, healing not just the traumas that were occurred through boarding schools and generational traumas, the Native American communities, but also the Jewish communities, the Black communities, many communities that are maligned as far as when it comes to misunderstanding when tradition is involved,” France said.

France said the gathering provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of traditional healing practices and to encourage open conversations about difficult issues without stigma.

“We want to let people know that there’s a safe space and that we wanted to provide education for those safe environments and so that was the real key factor in making sure that this was open to not just the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribe, but other tribes as well as other communities,” France said.

Gov. Wassana said the workshop helped bring greater awareness to generational trauma and its continued impact on Native families.

“Generational trauma affected a lot of people, probably the earlier generations and the generations today, because we remember our grandparents and our parents, they went through boarding school and how they had to live their life, it was tough and mentally challenging,” Gov. Wassana said.

While those experiences remain part of the community’s history, Wassana said he believes progress has been made over time.

“I think the tribes have definitely made an impact on kids mental and social welfare, it’s curving but at the same time it’s still part of our past and we have to remember our past in order for us to have a better future,” Wassana said.



Cheyenne and Arapaho Veteran, Richard Williams leads discussion and gives a presentation during the generational trauma workshop.

As organizers look ahead to future workshops and continued community dialogue, the event marked another step toward healing and understanding, acknowledging the past while working toward a healthier future for generations to come.

New business brings a touch of healing: Ancestors Touch Massage Therapy

Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

(EL RENO, Okla.) Never considering herself as a healer but wanting to create an avenue for others to explore ways of healing and therapy, Cheyenne and Arapaho citizen, Debra Woolworth, newly licensed massaged therapist opens her doors for massage therapy services.

Opening up her business officially in January called Ancestors Touch Message Therapy in downtown El Reno, Okla., Woolworth looked forward to connecting with others through massage therapy, something that once made her feel special and connected.

“I’ve always enjoyed getting a massage and back in 2012 my son passed away and I started going a year later, I don’t know it was just something for me, it really helped me with the depression, the stress, the trauma that I was experiencing at the time so when I started going it helped me,” Woolworth said.

Woolworth’s massage therapist at the time had created an open space for her, leaving it open for her, whether she wanted to talk or didn’t want to talk, letting her express her emotions.

“We started talking, we became friends and so it just kind of helped me,” Woolworth said.

Since that experience, Woolworth took an interest in massage therapy and obtained her license. Looking back, Woolworth said she wished she would’ve started massage therapy school earlier, but never really did quit working between jobs and raising her grandchildren.

In 2025 Woolworth took the initiative to begin massage therapy school and attended Central Oklahoma College where she had to complete a 750-hour program. She completed the program and received her license in November 2025. A resident of Watonga, Okla., Woolworth thought it would be a better business decision to open her massage therapy space in El Reno to reach more clientele.

“For me it’s just been kind of like an escape at the time and I always consider myself like an empathetic



Debra Woolworth opens Ancestors Touch Massage Therapy in El Reno, Okla., located at 207 N. Bickford Avenue. (Photo / Latoya Lonelodge)

ic person so I just kind of wanted to give back if there’s anybody else experiencing the same issues, like grief, anything like that,” Woolworth said.

While Woolworth believes herself not to be a healer, she believes massage therapy is another avenue of healing art.

“I don’t consider myself a healer, but I know that in the past, some people have that gift, to have that healing touch, but I think it goes along with those lines of it all ties into medicine, it’s just another avenue of healing art to me as it can help others avoid pain relievers or narcotics,” she said.

What Woolworth enjoys most about being a massage therapist is connecting with her clients, being able to provide a space for them to feel comfortable.

“There’s been a couple of ladies, they are going through grief and they are going through that trauma, there were two ladies they just came in here and one of my first two clients and they had experienced the loss of their husband, one of them did ... but they’ll get up here, I think it’s kind of like a release, so when you’re massaging somebody it’s like human touch has always been important,” Woolworth said.

At Ancestors Touch Massage Therapy, Woolworth specializes in Swedish massages, which Woolworth de-

scribes as more relaxing.

“I do add therapeutic massage which is a little more, like for pain management, stretching, I offer hot stones, I offer cupping and with every massage you always get hot towels I know a lot of places don’t do that but that is one thing our instructor was like everybody loves hot towels on their feet, on their back, on their neck, wherever,” Woolworth said.

As a native owned business, Woolworth believes that’s what makes her business stand out the most compared to other massage therapy businesses.

“I’ve been to a couple massage therapists, even in school, I don’t even know if I can say that, I never really ran into a native, I’m sure they’re out there, but there was a lot of other races and I think for me, just the fact I do get a lot of native clients,” Woolworth said.

Wanting each guest and client to know that each massage is tailored to their liking and that they are in charge, Woolworth wants others to know who have yet to try massage therapy to not feel scared to try it.

“Don’t be afraid I know some people don’t like to be touched but it’s just stress relief, whatever you’re experiencing, it can definitely help,” Woolworth said.

For more information or to book, email ancestorstouch26@yahoo.com

StrongHearts Native Helpline Marks Nine Years of Serving Survivors

Throughout the past nine years, the organization has achieved significant milestones, including:

- Received over 85,000+ contacts via calls, chats and texts.
- Upon survivor request, provided over 26,000+ referrals to direct service providers.
- Developed partnerships with Tribal, State, and National organizations to improve response to the violence impacting Native individuals, families and communities.

This past year, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), announced a projected \$15 million, five-year grant to fund StrongHearts Native Helpline as the First-Ever Standalone National Indigenous Domestic Violence Hotline for American Indians and Alaska Natives. With the five-year funding commitment, StrongHearts will continue to serve as the trusted resource for survivors seeking anonymous and confidential crisis support.

"This anniversary is not just a reflection of where we’ve been—it's a testament to our team, to our commitment

to ensure that the thousands of survivors who have reached out receive culturally honoring support," said Lori Jump, Chief Executive Officer of StrongHearts Native Helpline. "We are honored to have served our communities for nine years and look forward to expanding our impact”.

StrongHearts plans to expand its impact include:

- Finalizing the Alaska Specific Initiative, focusing on expanding and strengthening outreach and access to services for Alaska Natives.
- Developing and strengthening existing partnerships with Tribes, States and Local service providers to ensure continuity of care.
- Enhancing StrongHearts’ website to improve user experience, including expanded search capabilities and a dedicated resource center for general information, reports, articles and more.

About StrongHearts Native Helpline

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a 24/7/365 culturally-appropriate domestic, dating and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans, available by calling or texting 1-844-762-8483 or clicking on the chat icon at strongheartshelpline.org.

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FILED MAR 03 2026

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IN THE TRIAL COURT
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In the Matter of the Guardianship of:)
L.H.)
Case No. PG-2025-0015

Minor Child,

NOTICE OF HEARING
BY PUBLICATION

The Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes to: **MADYSON HAAG**
UNKNOWN ADDRESS

The above-styled case is hereby set for hearing in the Trial Court of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes on the 1st day of APRIL 2026, at 10:00 A.M. in the courtroom, 100 Black Kettle Boulevard, Concho, Oklahoma.

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED TO APPEAR, on the above date and time indicated for presentation of your case before the above-entitled Trial Court. **You have the option to appear in person or through Zoom.** To appear by Zoom, you will need a smart device such as a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. Your smart device will need a camera, microphone, and a stable internet connection. If you do not have access to a smart device, you can use a non-smartphone or traditional telephone.

Parties must use the following in order to log in or join the meeting.

- Video conferencing for smart device users:
 - o Zoom link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4524251494?pwd=S2RCcmU2WDVlOEFMc0pMc0Q3RCxkTGhOT09>
<https://zoom.us/join>
 - o Meeting ID: 452 425 1494
 - o Passcode: Court2021
- Phone conferencing for non-smartphone or traditional telephone users:
 - o Telephone number: 1 (346) 248-7799
 - o Meeting ID: 452 425 1494
 - o Passcode: 854454251

Dated at the Trial Court this 3rd day of March, 2026.

Tawny Melendez, Deputy Court Clerk
Cheyenne and Arapaho Trial Court

Ancestors Touch Massage Therapy LLC

Reconnect with Serenity

My practice is rooted in the belief that true wellness is a reflections of how we connect to the land, to our ancestors and to ourselves. Drawing from my indigenous heritage, I view massage not just as a physical treatment, but as a way to honor the Ni'ine'etiit, philosophy of "living good".

For me, the land is the ultimate healer, I bring that grounded, restorative energy into every session, using my hands to channel a sense of peace.

I specialize in Swedish massage techniques, chosen for their ability to calm the nervous system and create a rhythmic, flowing experience. I help my clients release the weight of the modern world.

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Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Saturdays

207 N Bickford - El Reno, OK

Debra Woolworth ~ LMT

OBITUARIES

Lonnie Kay Mendoza

Lonnie Kay Mendoza age 62, of Denver, Colo., passed away peacefully surrounded by her loving family on Feb. 8, 2026. Lonnie was born on May 7, 1963 in Clinton, Okla., to Lawrence and Emma Francis.

Lonnie was a proud Denver Native who loved her Broncos and chili relLENos from Las Delicias. She met the love of her life John in July 2006 and from then on, they shared 20 years of love, devotion and unwavering support for one another. Lonnie was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and sister. Her family was the center of her life.

Lonnie will be remembered for her loving spirit, strength and contagious smile.

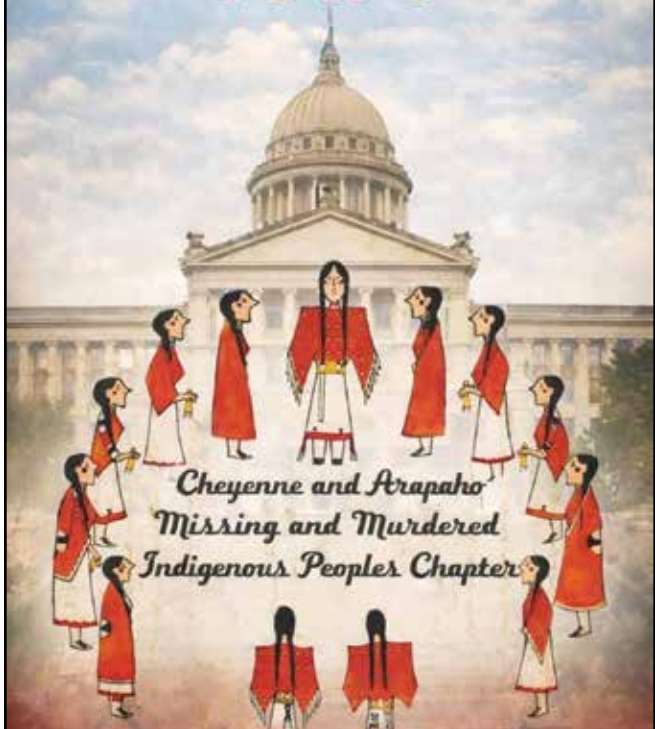
She is survived by her beloved husband John, her daughters Nelly Hernandez, Kelly Atayde, her two sisters and her cherished grandchildren and great grandchildren.



SAVE THE DATE

MMIP Awareness Day

MAY 5



Cheyenne and Arapaho
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Peoples Chapter

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The Tribes offer up to \$500 to help honor your loved one with a beautiful headstone. Now is the perfect time to ensure they have a meaningful marker at their final resting place. We understand that making these arrangements can be emotional and overwhelming, so if you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to us.

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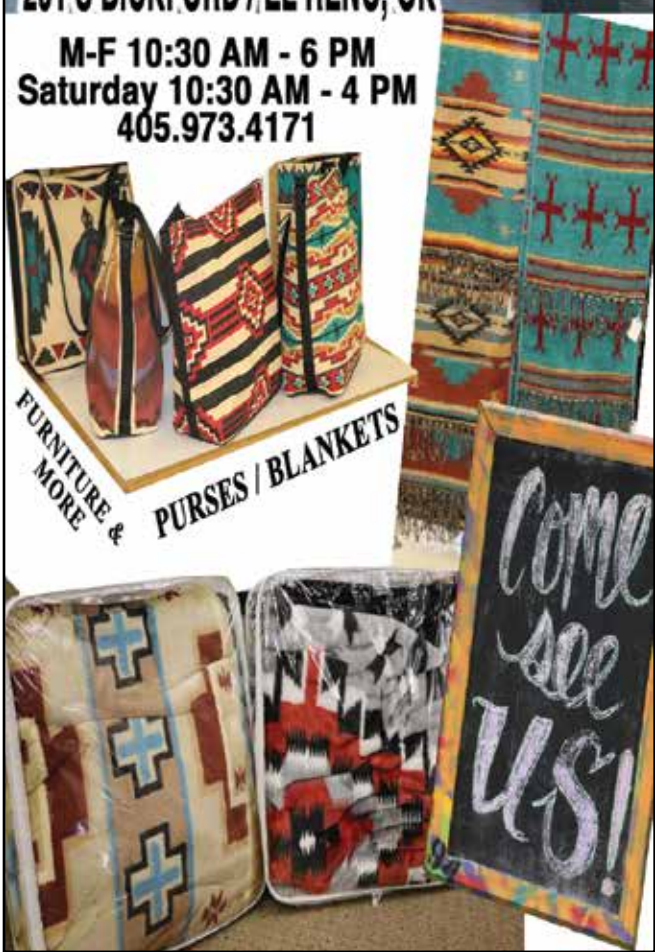


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DEADLINES

MAY 22ND

LAST DAY TO REGISTER
FOR JUNE PRIMARIES

JUNE 16TH

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

OCTOBER 9TH

LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO
VOTE IN GENERAL ELECTION

NOVEMBER 3RD

GENERAL ELECTION

HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN
THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

CHEYENNE AND ARAPAHO
TRIBAL MEMBER GUIDE

VOTING

Easiest way to check and see if you're on the voter rolls is going online and searching your name - Scan QR Code!



Why Voting Matters for Our Communities

Voting is one of the most powerful ways we can make our voices heard and protect the future of our people. This year's elections include the Governor's race, school board elections, and local offices that directly impact our daily lives, our children's education, public safety, health services, and how resources are distributed in our communities.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho people live across nine counties, stretching from El Reno to Elk City to Woodward and everywhere in between. Decisions made at the local and state level affect us all, whether it's funding for schools, roads, healthcare access, or policies that impact Tribal citizens and Native families.

Too often, decisions are made about us without us at the table. Voting ensures we are counted, represented, and respected in local government decisions. When we vote, we honor our ancestors, support future generations, and stand up for the needs of our Tribal communities.

Our voices matter. Our votes matter. Let's show up.

By Latoya Lonelodge, Senior Reporter

shin. His grandparents are Ervin Bull and Bernice Bull. Ronnie's siblings include Zaiya Slinkey, Yaz Slinkey, Alfonzo Slinkey, AJ Reynolds and Tryston Proa.

The image is a vertical promotional poster for a contest at Lucky Star Casino. At the top, the casino's logo is displayed in a stylized script. The main title, "MOW MONEY MARCH," is prominently featured in the center, with the words filled with a texture of green grass and surrounded by falling US dollar bills. Below the title, two red Toro zero-turn riding lawn mowers are shown from a side-rear perspective, positioned as if they are being driven across a green lawn. The text "WIN 1 of 28" is written in large, bold, orange-outlined numbers. Underneath, the prize is identified as "TORO® ZERO-TURN RIDING LAWN MOWERS". A section below details the schedule: "EVERY SATURDAY IN MARCH AT 11PM, 7 TORO® ZERO-Turn Riding Lawn Mowers will be given away! One per week, per each Lucky Star Casino location." Three white rectangular boxes provide information on how to enter: earning ten slot points for one entry, starting entries on Monday, March 2, 2026, and five times entries on Fridays. The bottom right corner includes social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, along with the website address. A small disclaimer at the very bottom explains that the mower shown is representative and not actual prize, valued at approximately \$4,000.00, and provides terms regarding the promotional period and management's rights.