

## Greater Tulsa Area Indian Affairs

### 2021 Annual Report

**Chair: Cheryl Cohenour**

**Vice Chair: Vanessa Adams Harris**

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES:

**University of Tulsa Canebreak Talk** – Commissioner Sammy Haynes attended and discussed the Commission and what the Commission does for the City of Tulsa and how we interface with the City of Tulsa and the Native Community.

**Joy Harjo Poetry event** at All Souls Unitarian Church, the Chairman attended and read the GTAIAC land acknowledgement at the beginning of the meeting.

Since that event Chairman has worked with numerous groups on creating and reading of the Land Acknowledgement at their meetings.

All Souls Unitarian Church

Gilcrease

City Council

**Tulsa Arboretum Project** - The Commission entertained a request for a letter of endorsement by the Tulsa Garden Center to create three native gardens representing Cherokee, Muscogee Creek, and Osage native plants.

Presented by Laura Challus of the Garden Center and Ross Swimmer. Covid prevented the commission from having a quorum and voting until our October meeting. The request passed and the chair created the letter of support.



**Students of Excellence Awards** were awarded to the top Seniors in Tulsa Public Schools that are enrolled in Indian Education. Awards were mailed to students as COVID precautions prevented us from having the in-person award event. Students recognized were:

Trinity Dake, Central High School  
Joey David, East Central High School  
Allison Drew, Edison Preparatory School  
Ashleigh McMullen, Hale High School  
Trinity Henderson, McClain High School  
Zachariah Chorette, Memorial High School  
Liliana Perryman, Will Rogers College High School  
Jenna Walkingstick, Street School High School  
Parrish Pipestem, Booker T Washington High School  
Mason Blose, Daniel Webster High School

### **DREAM KEEPERS PARK**



### **Dedication of the newly Named Dream Keepers Park**

Original announcement held in June of 2021 of the Newly Named Park for the Native American Community and the Dream Keepers, those that make a significant contribution to their native community.



Park Dedication and flag raising occurred on November 13, 2021

Muscogee Creek Nation Chief David Hill attended and spoke at the event. City Councilor Kara Jo McKee, Anna America Director of Tulsa Parks Department and Commission Chair Cheryl Cohenour also spoke. The event was attended by various members of the Native Community,

Greater Tulsa Area Indian Affairs Commissioners, and Muscogee Creek Nation Tribal Leadership.

**Backpack Giveaway for TPS Indian Ed.**

Commissioners worked with Tulsa Public Schools Indian Ed program to prepare and give out backpacks with school supplies to Indian Ed Students. Over 500 backpacks were given out per day on the three- day event. In the past only a total of 500 backpacks had been given out over the three- day period. This year there were a need for many more due to Covid and many parents not working.



**Flag Ceremony for TPS at Three different Schools.**

Greater Tulsa Area Indian Affairs Commission attended Tulsa Public Schools raising of Indian Nation Flags at four campuses to reflect on whose lands they are situated. The Commission Chair and members attended each event.

ESC – Muscogee Creek

Edison – Muscogee Creek

Booker T Washington – Cherokee Nation

Central High School- Osage Nation



**Native American Day Event** was held virtual this year although we had our planning committee working on both a virtual and in-person event. However, due to the increase in COVID cases in September and early October was decided to hold a virtual event only and do an in - person event again in 2022.

Our event was very successful with many views from across the United States. Natives that live everywhere are grateful for our Event exhibiting cultural dancing and singing as well as the videos that are presented by the various Indian Education Programs in Tulsa Public Schools and the surrounding Tulsa County Schools.

Tulsa Public Schools allowed us to video dancers and singers at Clinton West Elementary Schools to include in our virtual event. We also included a competition on Tik Toc to have student tell us what Resilience meant to them. Our Theme this year was Rise to Resilience and that we are still here and will no longer be an invisible race.

### **Special Community Meeting: Held October 27, 2021**

After the City of Tulsa filed an Amicus brief in support of Governor Stitts request to the Supreme Court to overturn the McGirt Decision the Native Community was outraged and contacted the GTAIAC to intervene with the City of Tulsa. The Commission held a special meeting to hear the Native Communities concerns and the result of that meeting the Commission created a letter to the Mayor and the City Council asking them to withdraw the Amicus Brief.

The Mayor declined our request to pull the Amicus Brief and sent a letter admonishing the commission for advising the City of legal issues which was not the intent of our letter request. The GTAIAC requested the other Title 5 Commissions to send a letter of support for the GTAIAC's letter. All but one commission did support the GTAIAC. The Mayors Commission on the Status of Women refused to consider our request.



**Dream Keepers Awards** were presented to the Award winners at the November 16, 2021 Commission Meeting. The award winners were also announced during the Native American Day Virtual event this year. The Award winners were recognized with a picture and bio during the event. Award winners this year were:

Carmelita Skeeter – Kenneth Anquoe Lifetime Achievement Award

Nicole Albert-Lewis B. Ketchum Excellence in business Award

Elizabeth Battiest – Charles Chibitty Family community Contributor Award



Alice Whitecloud – Will Anquoe Humanitarian Award (Posthumous)  
Pauline Tsosie – Will Anquoe Humanitarian Award (Posthumous)  
Robert Anquoe – Moscelyne Larkin Cultural Achievement Award  
Dr. Joseph “Bud” Sahmaunt – Jim Thorpe Sports Excellence Award  
Tonya Cain – Dr. Ralph Dru Career and Professional Award  
Dr. Steve Tiger – Rennard Strickland Education Leadership Award

**Commission Membership:**

Filled two new positions on the Commission this year as Mayoral Appointees. Stacey Laskey, Osage and Daniel Carter, Muscogee Creek filled vacant positions. Organization of Indian Health Care Resource Center filled their position with Elizabeth Battiest. Chief Standing Bear is considering a name to fill the Osage Nation position on the Commission and the Tulsa County Commissioners are considering a name to fill a vacancy. We are trying hard to fill our vacancies on the Commission and get the participating organizations to nominate an active member to represent them on the commission. This work will continue into 2022.

**Presentation:**

Chairman did a presentation for the US Global Alliance on Small Business and Indian Tribes economics in Oklahoma presentation in November 2021. Chairman Cohenour presented for this group and held a question-and-answer session.

**By-Laws Update:**

The Commission has updated their By-Laws and made changes to them that were voted on at the November 2020 meeting. It is our goal to review the By-Laws of the Commission every two years to keep them current and updated.