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oklahoma

MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2023

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Mark Fulton

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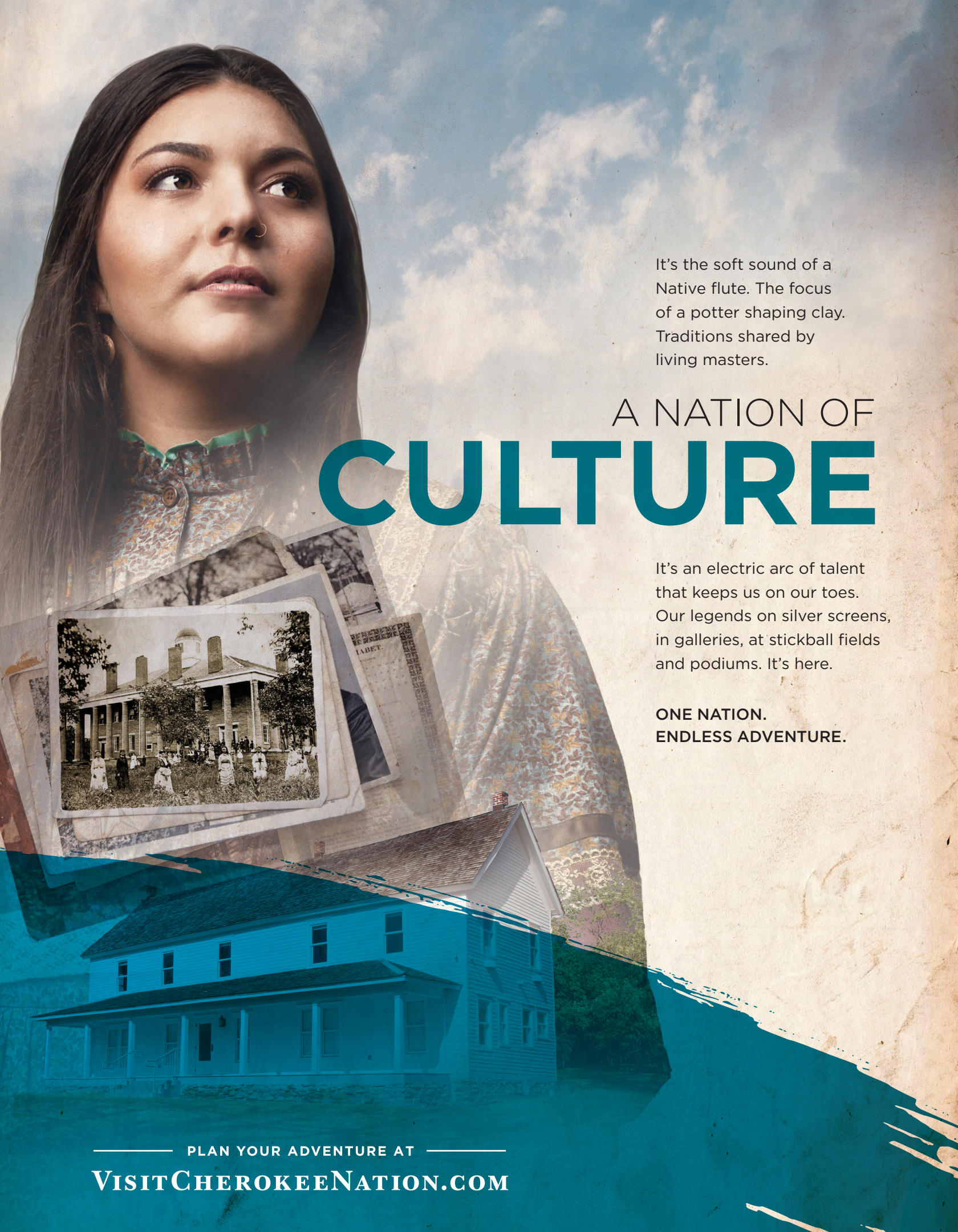


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NATIVE *oklahoma* MAGAZINE

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"Tribal Nations Should Control Federal Recognition"

By Fus Yvhikv

In 2011 the U.S. extended formal recognition to the Libyan rebel National Transitional Council as the recognized and legitimate government of Libya. The action of the U.S. was quickly followed by Britain, France and at least 100 other countries in the granting of full diplomatic recognition of the new Libyan government. The United Nations also voted to recognize the new government and to recognize the NTC as holding Libya's seat at the UN.

These sovereign recognitions and the establishment of full diplomatic relations not only welcomes the new Libyan government as an equal into the international community of nations but also paves the way to accessing billions of dollars in funding for the Libyan government. Notably, the new Libyan government acquired full recognition status in only 60 days! Indian Country has much to learn from this international recognition process that just played out concerning Libya.

The most important takeaway for Indian Country is this: Native Nations, not the federal government, should be the ones that grant recognition to other Native Nations.

I have been richly blessed during my lifetime to witness Native Nations all across Indian Country rise Phoenix-like from the ashes of centuries of attempted conquest, genocide, assimilation, and perverse neglect to flourishing governments that now flex their sovereign muscles.

The governments of Native Nations now have their own legislative bodies, judicial and enforcement systems, and executive departments. They successfully operate a wide variety of health, education, and social service programs. They also own and operate a multitude of businesses. Many tribal governments here in Oklahoma even issue their own car tags.

The Native Nations governments thus manifest a variety of characteristics and attributes common to governmental entities and sovereigns. Indeed, many have additionally created an Office of the Secretary of State. The Muscogee-Creek Nation here in Oklahoma is an example. The Chickasaw Nation even has an Ambassador to the U.S.

Accordingly, the Native Nations' governmental apparatus has the necessary infrastructure and momentum to take the next paramount step in their evolution by expanding the exercise of their sovereign powers. Indian tribal governments should now be the ones to formally grant full diplomatic relations with each other. This is paramount with respect to those groups currently seeking federal recognition as a Native Nation.

Exercising the sovereign powers of recognition and diplomatic relations between and among Native Nations will have the felicitous effect of enhancing tribal sovereignty while at the same time greatly reducing the role of the Office of Federal Acknowledgement of the BIA.

The problems and issues of the OFA at BIA are far too numerous to fully address in a short article. At least four issues compel mention. The current system effectively is based upon non-Indians at the Department of the Interior determining who is Indian. That fact alone should be so repugnant to Indian Country as to require immediate change.

Then there is the glacial pace at which OFA processes recognition applications. The OFA has ruled on only 30 of the 350 applications it has received. Some applicant Native Nations have been required to push papers at OFA for over 50 years! Remember that the new Libyan government achieved recognition in 60 days. The current system invites aspects of politics, power, and vested moneyed interests with respect to decisions rendered.

In addition, Indian Country is still faced with the lingering issue of Termination. Under the federal policy of termination as expressed under House Concurrent Resolution 108 enacted in 1953 at least 175 tribes were terminated by federal fiat. Over the years, many of these terminated Native Nations have attempted to regain federal recognition only to have the feds slam the door in their face. There has to be a better, fairer, more equitable, and culturally appropriate way.

The better way lies in the community of Native Nations being the ones to grant tribal recognition. We know who we are and we certainly are far better situated to make such determinations than non-Indian bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. Each extant federally-recognized Native Nation could articulate its own diplomatic and recognition criteria (in much the same way as each country does). While there would be variances in each Nation's criteria, I think in the end there would be many more similarities than differences.

If and when a tribe achieves recognition from a majority of the then-existing federally-recognized tribes, that tribe would then be welcomed into the community and family of Native Nations. This could even be taken a step

further in the sense of the community of Native Nations establishing a protocol with the feds wherein those applicant tribes who have been granted full diplomatic status by a majority of these Native Nations are then automatically accorded federal recognition as well.

At the very least, the OFA should include as another factor in its' base criteria for federal recognition the extent to which an applicant tribe has achieved recognition as a Native Nation by the Native Nation community. Indeed, I would propose that such a factor be the paramount consideration.

I have full faith in the community of Native Nations to weed out those faux-tribes who seek federal recognition for reasons of venality and greed (viz., a casino, etc.). I believe that each Native Nation will establish a thorough and robust identification process such that they will ultimately recognize legitimate groups as a fellow Native Nation.

It appears as though Indian Country can never rid itself of the notion of a federal recognition process and the concept of a federally recognized tribe. Such recognition carries with it a plethora of legal rights and legal standing which undergirds the entire government-to-government structure.

However, we can and should ensure that the community of Native Nations not only has input into the federal recognition process but that the overall sense of the majority of these Nations is given the greatest weight. Indeed, it should be the Native Nations, not the feds, who grant tribal recognition.



FUS YVHIKV

Aconav

CULTURALLY FUELED FASHION FROM ACOMA POTTERY ART

The Pueblo of Acoma is home to designer Loren Aragon. It is one of 19 thriving Pueblo communities, located in New Mexico, and is considered to be one of the oldest continually inhabited civilizations in North America. The deep rooted history and rich cultural heritage of the Acoma people is the fueling factor for Aragon and has become the foundation for ACONAV designs.





The Sky-Eagle Collection is more than just a fashion brand, it is a celebration of Native American culture and a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. The brand was founded with Yanti, his wife, muse, premier of the Fashion House, and they named the brand after their daughter. Together, they are building a legacy that honors their heritage and inspires others to follow their dreams.

skyeaglecollection.com

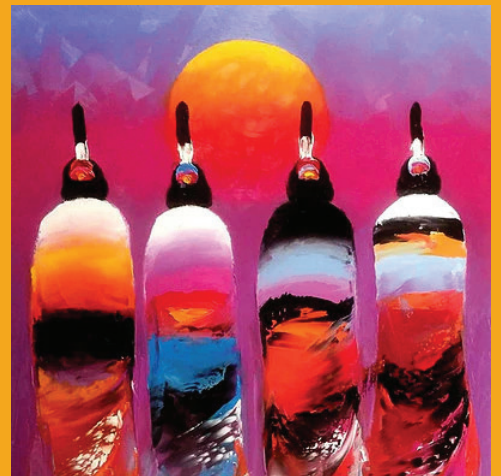
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Sky-Eagle Collection



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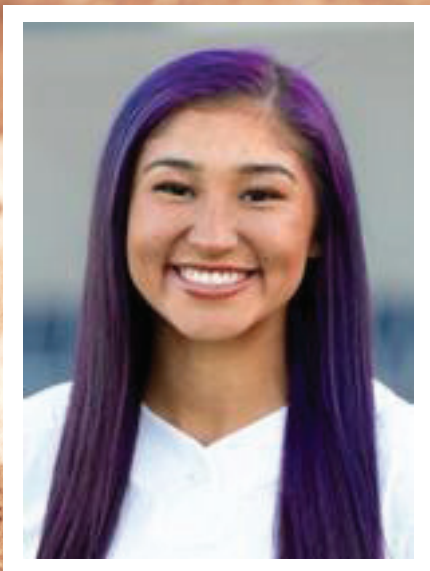
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Fellowship of Christian Athletes Player Spotlight

Lana Gass

Rogers State University Softball #14

Position: Outfielder

Height: 5'9"

Class: Junior

High School: Tahlequah Sequoyah HS

Hometown: Tahlequah, Ok

Q and A with Lana Gass

Favorite Bible verse: "Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ." —Colossians 3:23-24

Tribal Affiliation: Cherokee

Nickname: I have so many but my favorites are: Lan, Markale, Belle and Banan!

Favorite food: Steak and any form of potatoes

Favorite walk-up song: I would have to say Gasolina by Daddy Yankee only because my teammates say "Lana, Lana, Gasolina" and it fits perfectly with the song and my name!

Favorite player: Lauren Chamberlain; former OU Softball Player

Favorite part of being on a team: The sisterhood and friendship that is formed, just knowing that someone always has your back and is there to pick you up when ever you need that helping hand. I've always been told to surround myself with good people and I don't think there is anyone else better than my teammates here at school.

Who I look up to: All the women in my family honestly; they have went through so many tough times and just have stayed so strong. It really shows how strong, resilient and powerful Indigenous women are. For them I am very grateful to have such an amazing support system and to have great role models to look up to and follow in their footsteps. They mean the world to me.

Plans after Graduation: I want to find a stable job at a gym or fitness center. I'll work to save up, so I can open my own all women's gym. I want women who want to start out their fitness journey to feel comfortable, and in a safe space to allow them to workout in an environment where everyone is there lifting each other up, and there's no judgment just great vibes!

Favorite part about being a Christian athlete: That I get to play the sport I love oh so much, not only for me and my dreams but for the Lord, and for all those little indigenous girls who look up to me. I want them to know that they can achieve anything they put their mind to, and to always put God first in everything they do.

My favorite coach: You are putting me on the spot, haha I love all my coaches, I would have to say Coach Moss though, she has been with me since my freshman year and she has took me under her wing, and has taught me so much in the outfield. I knew nothing about how the outfield worked until she came and just worked with me during practice. She has not only helped me grow into an amazing ball player but as a respectful young woman. This is what Rogers State Softball is all about; building

a mindset of gratefulness and positive morals and values, and to provide encouragement and life lessons that will extend beyond the softball field, for that I am grateful for my whole coaching staff!

Favorite part of FCA: Just being present! The whole vibe and atmosphere is just something different, if I was to explain the feeling, it would just feel like a big hug! Student athletes coming together hearing the word of God and taking that devotion into your own hands and using it the way God wanted you to.

FCA - You Are More Than Your Sport

As a coach or athlete, it can be difficult to navigate the pressures of being a competitor. This is why it is essential to understand that you can find your identity and worth in something more than your sport. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus!

"He must increase, but I must decrease." —John 3:30

John Morris is currently serving with Oklahoma Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Cherokee, Adair and Delaware Counties and is supported financially by faith partners. If you are interested in more information on FCA or being a faith partner go to this link <https://my.fca.org/johnmorris>. John can be contacted through email: johnmorris@fca.org or by cell number (785-760-1627).

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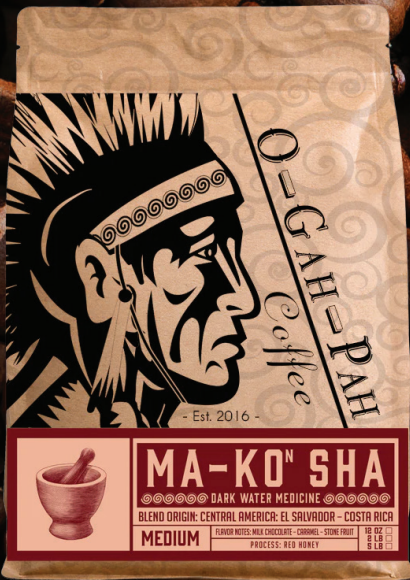
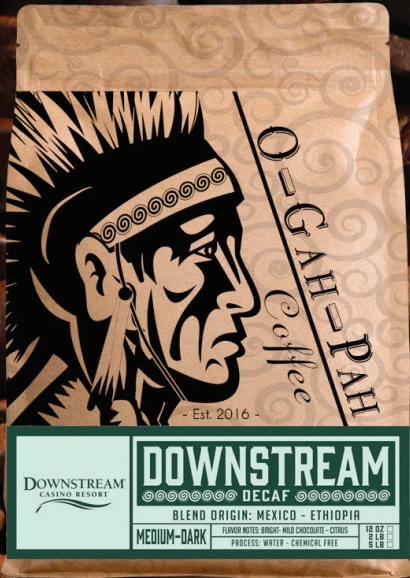
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O-GAH-PAH

Many centuries ago the Quapaw Nation followed the Mississippi River into our traditional homeland in Arkansas. This is the Origin of the name "O-Gah-Pah" which can be translated as the "Downstream People".

For centuries the O-Gah-Pah (Quapaw) people lived in four large villages and many smaller communities along the Mississippi River and across modern-day Eastern Arkansas. The Quapaw people would annually plant and harvest crops and hunt buffalo according to the seasons. The Quapaw traded pottery, painted hides and other goods through an extensive trade route based along the rivers. The Quapaw people were particularly known for pottery, which was often painted; swirls being a distinctive pattern of the Quapaw people.

After removal, the Quapaw Nation came to reside in Northeastern Oklahoma, where we are still located today. The Quapaw Nation continues to take great care and pride in crafting everything we put our name on, including O-Gah-Pah Coffee.





Mahota

SHARON BLANKET

\$400

labisowa ' ishtalakchi ' (Garters) were worn below the knee and were an essential part of Chickasaw men's regalia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beaded designs, most likely created by an artist removed from a Great Lakes tribe, or Potawatomi, due to their shared northern border with the Chickasaw Nation in Indian Territory, were worn by Chickasaws. The design is taken from the garters and placed in an ascending motif, named in tribute to a dear friend of the Potawatomi Tribe.

Native Oklahoma has an intertribal outreach not only in Oklahoma, but also to all American Indian tribes and nations across the country.

Shop intertribal today!





Sentencing for the murder of Brad Gustavus-Hale

TULSA, OK – On March 9, 2023, a sentencing was held in the Tulsa County District Court for one of the co-defendants in the murder of Brad Gustavus-Hale (Osage).

Edson Bellefleur, 15-year-old co-defendant, was charged with first degree murder and armed robbery. Today, he agreed to a plea bargain with the State of Oklahoma which places him in the Department of Corrections as an adult offender for 25 years. Because this is a violent crime, Mr. Bellefleur will have to serve at least 85% of his sentence before being eligible for parole.

Prior to the judge imposing the sentence, the mother of Brad Gustavus-Hale, read a victim impact statement to the court. During this statement, Ms. Gustavus recounted the moments in the car after Brad was shot and before he died. She spoke of her family's loss and grief. She spoke of her sadness that a teen will spend the rest of his youth and a considerable amount of his adulthood in a penitentiary because he decided to go along with a plan devised by another of the co-defendants. She also spoke of her sadness that now his mother has effectively lost her son because of this decision.

Mr. Bellefleur had his attorney read a prepared statement to Ms. Gustavus as well as to Brad's sister who was also in the courtroom. His statement was short but in it he accepted responsibility and his willingness to be held accountable.

As Ms. Gustavus left the courtroom, she had a moment with the defendant's mother. They held each other and wept with Mr. Bellefleur's mother apologizing for the actions of her son and Ms. Gustavus reiterating that she was in pain not only for her own loss but also for the loss that Mr. Bellefleur's mother was now going through.

Two of the co-defendants have yet to stand trial. Zion Crawford was recently certified as a youthful offender. The State of Oklahoma through the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office has filed an appeal and a court date has been set for that appeal. The second co-defendant's case is being held through the Northern District of Oklahoma's U.S. Attorney's Office. According to testimony, Zion Crawford devised the armed robbery plan that led to the murder of Gustavus-Hale and the attempted murder of his mother.

Mahota

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This abstract design symbolizes our rising. In the Chickasaw creation story, the Crawfish dove into the water to build the first land mass at the bottom of the ocean, and life ascended from there. The golden-brown stripes represent the earth's mass, and the blue represents the ever-important water that we need to sustain life. The red symbolizes the blood of our people as we were created, as well as the blood we have shed throughout our history. The deep shades of red, blue, and golden brown combined with various textures create a work of art you see, feel, and enjoy.

Native Oklahoma has an intertribal outreach not only in Oklahoma, but also to all American Indian tribes and nations across the country.

Shop intertribal today!



Indigiqueer Celebration

October 14th & 15th | Tulsa, Oklahoma

Two Spirit Festival Shines Light on LGBTQ Native Americans

By Kimberly Marsh

Coming out to her family and friends as Queer in the 1980s, Marca Cassity ultimately left home in 1997 because the personal journey in Oklahoma was more difficult than it needed to be. They relocated to the Pacific Northwest, and then in California surprisingly rediscovered their Osage roots, linking the Oklahomans in the Native American / Osage community there and the LGBTQ communities. As a Two-Spirit, therapist and musician, Cassity could combine their talents to promote healing for LGBTQ Native Americans.

"Two Spirit" is an umbrella term used by some Native Americans to describe gender-expansive and LGBTQ+ Indigenous identities. It recognizes diversity that existed pre-colonization.

A child of the 1960s in Oklahoma, homosexuality was still considered a disorder as outlined in the diagnostic manual for the American Psychiatric Association. But in 1973, that definition was removed. However, Cassity said, the ramifications continue today, even though diversity of gender and sexuality has been around for centuries. It was part of the European settlers' colonization of the Americas, and with that came misunderstandings, bias and shifting societal norms and attitudes.

The divisiveness that is inherent in gender issues, and the attitudes Queer Native Americans have to face today, led to 33 percent of the LGBTQ Native American youth attempting suicide in 2020.

"I was one of those kids in the 80s, that was having suicidal ideation and risk taking behavior," they said. "I feel like, if even one queer person or indigenous queer person sees or hears something that I do, and they stay alive and love themselves more, or if one person who may be homophobic or transphobic, hears something or sees something, or is inspired by something that I say or do, I celebrate that."

Cassity performs under the name Marx Cassity, an X in their first name in honor of gender diversity that has existed in tribal societies throughout history. Now on their fourth studio album, Cassity will release songs from the album on Native American Day in Tulsa and will premiere a contemporary music video at the Two-Spirit Fest they helped organize. Their music and video project, funded through a Radical Imagination Grant from NDN Collective, covers the themes that Cassity once faced in the 1980s coming out with very few resources or positive role models. Performers such as the Indigo Girls, K.D. Lang, and Ellen DeGeneres were some of the first to reveal, and relating to their experiences is what helped Cassity stay alive.

"I really was passionate about bringing in Two Spirit or LGBTQ native folks in Oklahoma into the music video. And I wrote to NDN Collective and said, for this grant, what I would do if you choose me is make a 10 song album and a music video inspired by the statistics to bring visibility and representation around the decolonization of sexuality and gender.

"Gender diversity is very old. What's new is the way we express it," Cassity said. "I'm inspired as a therapist and as a songwriter, public figure, as somebody who has a platform, to speak about this, to shine the light here again."

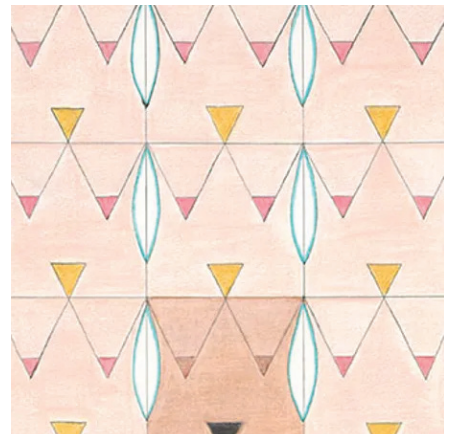
Twisted Arts founder Kevin Lovelace said there hasn't been an LGBTQ Festival in Tulsa in more than 10 years.

"This is the only one in Oklahoma, and the support from the community has been so great that it expanded into a year round organization where we hire about 20 local artists who are Two-spirit and LGBTQ," he said.

Cassity's connection with Twisted Arts organizers grew from a small concert to a two-day, Two Spirit festival, free and open to the public. The inaugural event aims to empower and uplift Two-Spirit Native American artists by providing a platform to showcase their talent, creativity, and cultural heritage. Festival dates are Oct. 14 from 6:30 pm to midnight at 101 E. Archer St., and Oct. 15 from noon to 3:30 pm at WOMPA Tulsa, 3306 Charles Page Blvd. The schedule may be accessed at <https://twistedfest.org/twospirit/>

"Whenever we uplift and make a place and help the healing of LGBTQ people, it's not just good for them. It's good for all of society. It's good for all of us. We can point back to those tribal societies, pre colonization, and where people lived, had roles and were part of normal thriving wellbeing of societies. We are not asking for something new here," Cassity said.

MOONHAWK ART



MoonHawk Prints can be found at:
native-oklahoma-store.myshopify.com/



No Fees, Just Access:

Totem Digital Bank Is Breakthrough for Financial Barriers

By Kimberly Marsh

The idea for the award-winning Totem Technologies digital bank for Native Americans originated in the founder's own financial history: From growing up in a low-income family, to predatory lending vulnerability in college, to lack of access and gaps in benefits for Native Americans when it was time to buy a home.

Amber Buker, a Choctaw citizen, found it difficult to find anyone with knowledge about benefits for a first time homebuyer within the Tribal system. When she did grasp the knowledge needed she discovered the bank policies were so restrictive they would not help her. She eventually bought a home, but without tribal or federal assistance to defray her costs.

"I was just kind of stuck. It set my home buying journey back" she said. "It was a broken process where the invisibility of being Native and the barriers that that creates was on full display."

Native Americans are familiar with the problems surrounding Buker's experience. The more she dug in, she realized those issues are prevalent not only in banking but throughout all financial services.

"No one in the traditional financial services system knew how to deal with my tribe and what these benefits were. There are policies that make it difficult for our people to access banking, just because they (bankers) don't understand the lived experience of our reality."

Her experience in law, Fintech and banking along with her first-hand knowledge of the gaps in access to financial assistance fueled her work toward a customized system for Native Americans. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Buker watched as digital banking was exploding. Then, in 2022, Buker established the first Native American digital bank with \$2.2 million in venture capital and set up the

Totem App for digital transactions free of monthly fees and account minimums in a system that keeps things simple.

"Natives are the largest group of unbanked people in the country when you look at racial and ethnic groups, even more than Black Americans, even more than Latin X folks. We are eight times more likely than white Americans to be unbanked. We knew we needed to start with just getting our people parity within the digital banking ecosystem that's really taking over finance today."

Buker described Totem's offerings as safe, simple products that are easy to navigate with app buttons to "add money" and "send money," all created based on community feedback.

"In Native cultures, our first priority is to take care of basic needs and then...start taking care of the people around you. You need to be able to send your cousin 20 bucks to help with a light bill? We prioritized that with our "send money" feature so that people can send funds from Totem account to Totem account with no fee and instantly."

Buker said the app highlights resources and educational sections regarding programs and other assistance available to customers to make their lives easier, including social services like utility assistance, housing assistance and the benefits she herself did not know as a first-time homebuyer.

"We are trying to be a trusted source that has done the actual research to point people in the right direction."

Buker said digital banking adoption is happening gradually, especially with elders, so Totem still provides cash access through an extensive, surcharge-free Automated Teller Machine network. While Totem itself is not a chartered bank, it works with a charter bank partners, FDIC member First Priority Bank, to provide FDIC-insured products. The Totem team directs the technology and user experience.

Totem's longer term plans include business accounts, and white label offerings for tribes to disperse funds/benefits into Totem accounts. However, enrollment in a tribe is not required to be a Totem customer.

In September, Totem Technologies was named an official 2023 Solver team by MIT Solve, providing \$10,000 in unrestricted funding and a cohort of innovators working together in a nine-month support program to scale their work and impact. The MIT's Indigenous Communities Fellowship grant provides validation for Totem's strategic roadmap, resources and creates new connections for Totem.

"I think the most important thing is the cohort," Buker said of the grant. "Being a part of the Indigenous communities cohort is just beyond cool because we're all working in very different fields. Some of the award winners are working with large carnivores or hydroponic growing, and blending that with traditional ways of living. Some are helping to build the next generation of tech entrepreneurs. At our heart, we all have a lot of commonalities in what we're seeing and what our stories are in terms of serving Indigenous populations."



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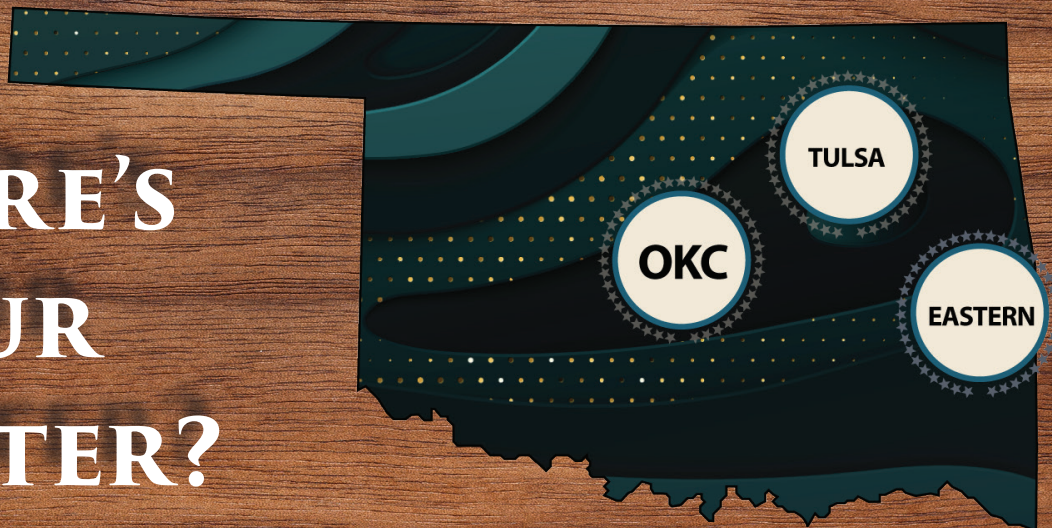
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