

NATIVE
oklahoma

MAGAZINE

JANUARY 2024

“Strengthening the Cherokee Nation isn’t just our commitment — it’s the heart of our operations, the daily mission of our team and the foundation of our company’s legacy.”

Mark Fulton

President

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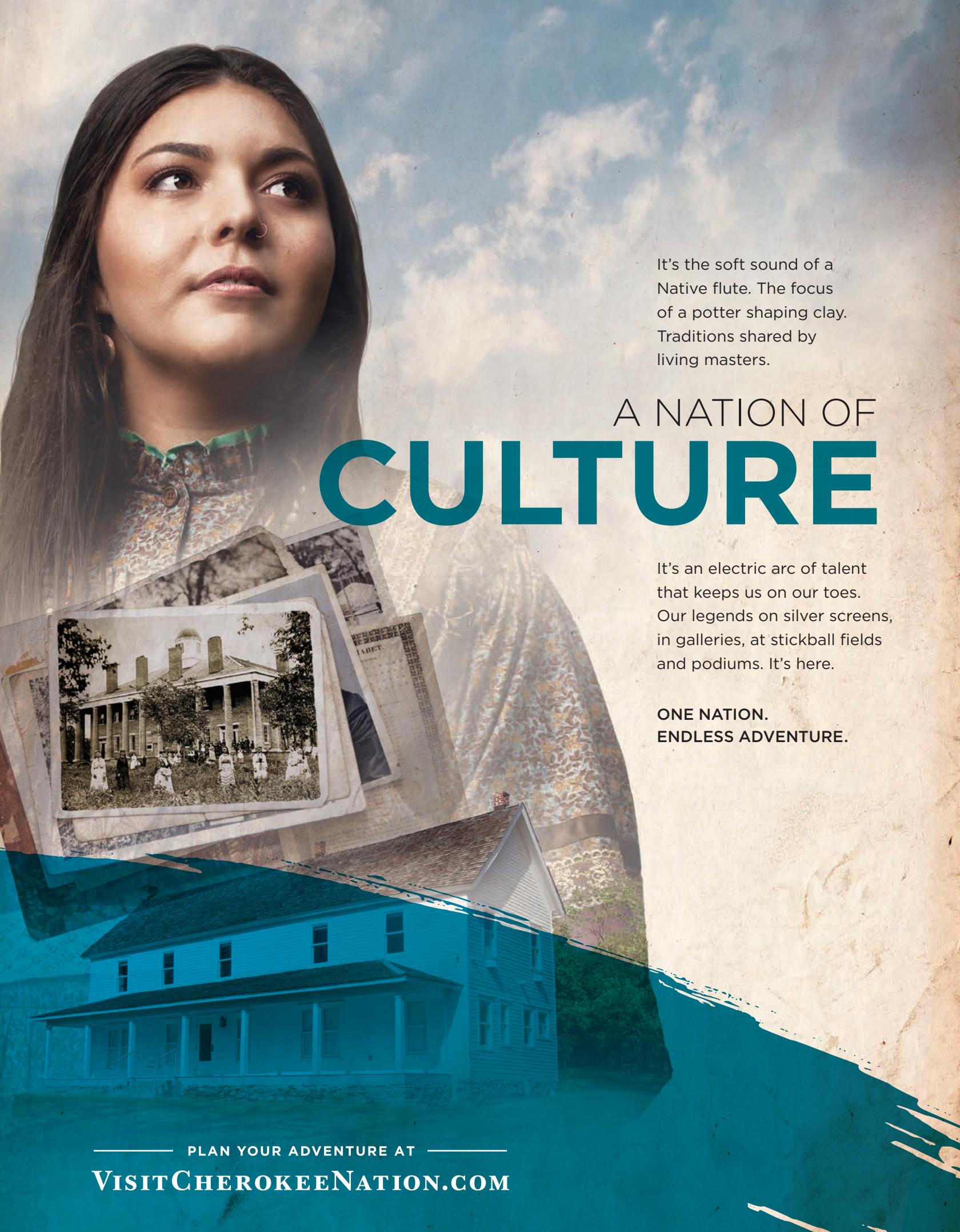


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NATIVE *oklahoma* MAGAZINE

NATIVE OKLAHOMA MAGAZINE | JANUARY 2024

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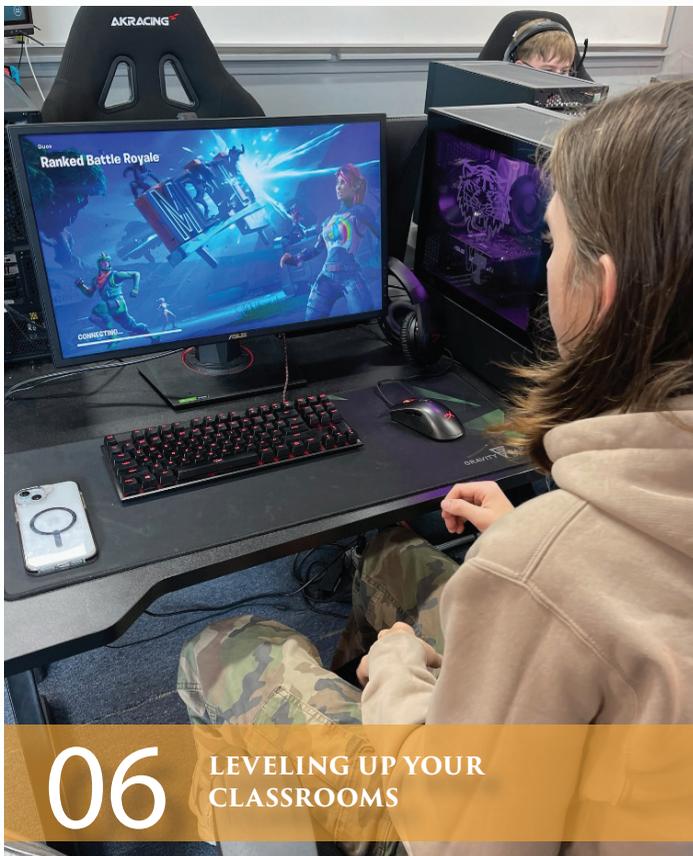
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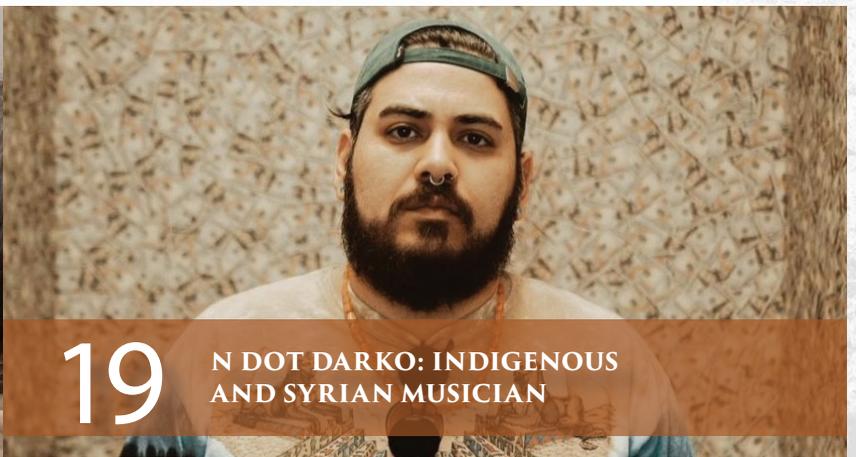
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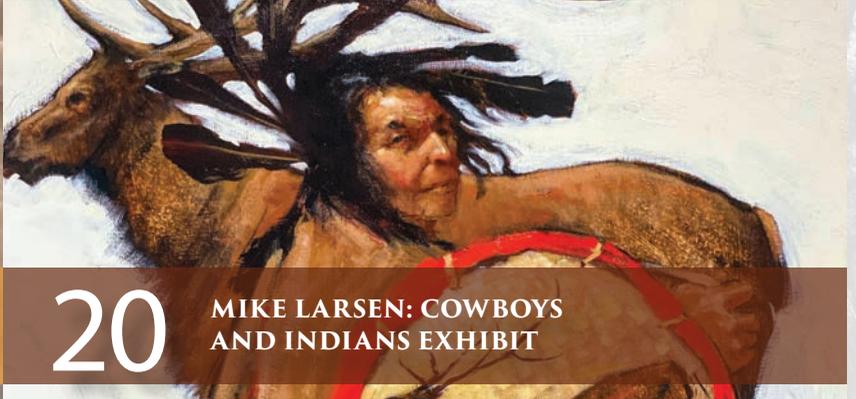
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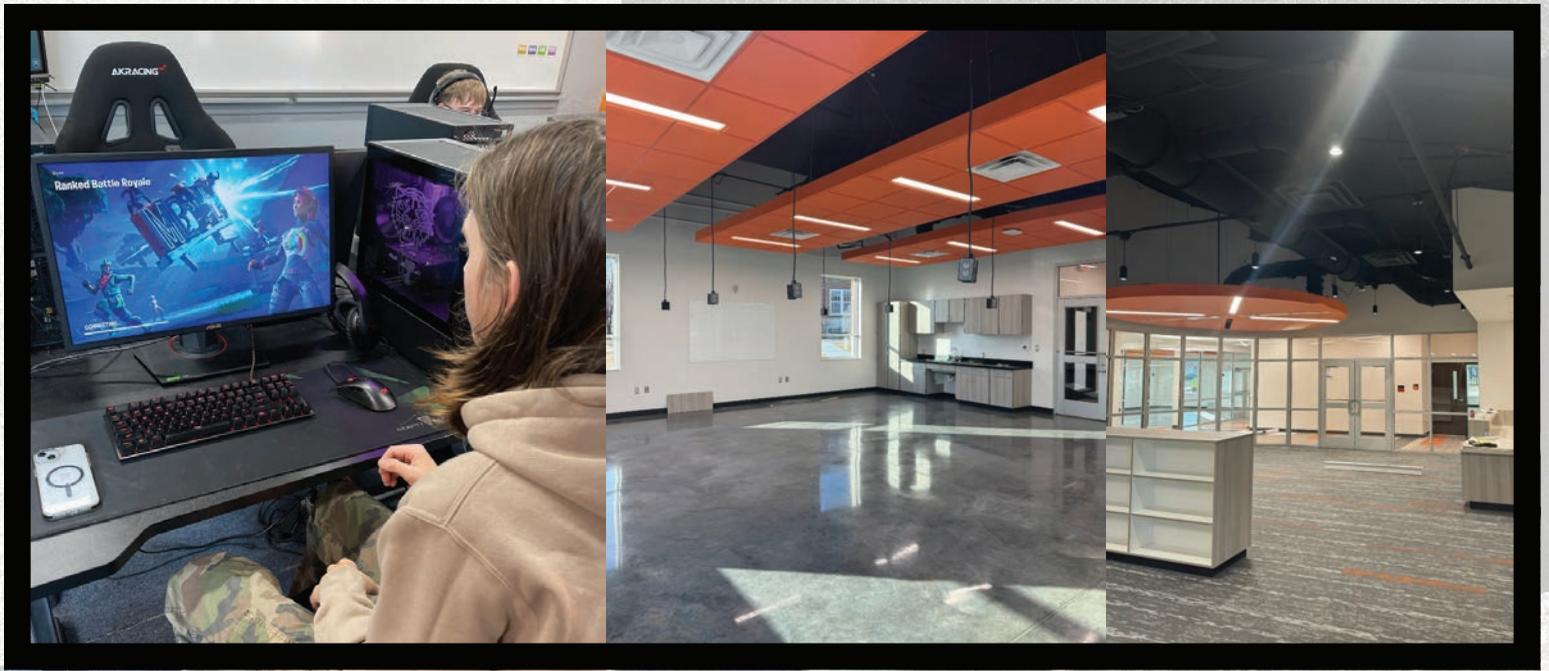
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Level up your classroom with powerful tech tools

By: Georgia Matlack

Oklahoma has recently been ranked the 50th state in the United States for education. There is no one simple answer to solving this problem, but implementing and increasing the use of technology in rural school districts will benefit our students tremendously. The Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA) reports the average public school district in Oklahoma only receives \$12,582 per student. These limited funds make it extremely difficult to remain up to date on current technology that supports learning in the classroom. While students in rural towns in Oklahoma are bright and eager to learn, the lack of resources makes it difficult for students to keep up.

According to the National Education Association's 'Ranking of the States 2022 and Estimates of School Statistics 2023' released in April, Oklahoma ranked 38th nationally for average public school teacher salary. For Oklahoma to make advances in education, our State Leadership should commit to increasing the compensation for our valuable educators. Teachers are the lifeblood of our educational system and they should be appreciated and applauded for the demanding job they have. Both teachers and students require advanced technology within the School District to maximize learning time in the classroom. A dedication to STEM learning within a curriculum is one way for Oklahoma students to advance themselves and be better positioned to attain college and/or a job after High School. We need attention to our rural school districts as so much of Oklahoma is based in small towns.

Wewoka Public Schools is lucky to be situated in a community that supports education. "Technology is the great equalizer for rural communities. Our partnerships with technology leaders have allowed us to build and maintain state of the art, industry leading networks and connectivity," stated Stephen Howard/Technology Director.

Stephen gives insight into the struggle of getting students excited about learning and how their district is working to solve the issue. Wewoka is a small rural town close to the center of Oklahoma. Wewoka is the County seat for Seminole County and the Home of the Great Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. Wewoka has a population of 3100. Demographically diverse. The population is one-third Native American, one-third African American and one-third Caucasian.

The school system demographically mirrors the town with approximate thirds to the same population. The school is located centrally in town. The campus houses three educational sites. The Elementary, Middle School, and High School. The High School was built almost 100 years ago in the 1930s. Being a small district in central Oklahoma connectivity and poverty are two of our main hurdles to providing a first-rate education. We use both to our advantage.

Most of the larger homes and properties lay outside of our district, leaving us with a very small tax base. We have taken advantage of this by applying for and receiving federal dollars and grants. We use Erate as our main source of technology funds. We qualify at the highest discount rates available. This along with other state and federal grants have been the foundation for building an amazing infrastructure and curricular opportunity.

Absenteeism was one of our largest hurdles when it came to raising the educational levels in our district. Old school

methods such as calling parents and truancy officers were not gaining the attendance we hoped for. Therefore, we decided to raise the excitement of attending through technology. We have been very successful in increasing participation through implementing Stem programs. We offer aviation, esports, robotics, and coding just to name a few. We offer STEM programs at all three of our sites. The goal of increasing attendance through the fear of missing out, FOMO has proven to help get our students on campus. We cannot teach them if they are not here.

Students realize the importance of learning through technology and in turn get excited to learn because they understand the significance technology holds in our modern world. Students should be developing learning skills with the same tools they will be using in work life.

There are many strategies for advancing technology for STEM learning in Oklahoma schools. Initiatives such as providing reliable Internet access, implementing one-to-one technology devices for students in grades K through 12, and teaching coding all help prepare students for future jobs. Some schools offer online STEM programs, and joint classes with Community Colleges and Tech Centers, while others organize workshops for our teachers to properly advance STEM education will be beneficial. Oklahoma students need the ability to explore many different areas of study and technology is relevant to make sure learning in our classrooms is up to date.

#RedAlert
MISSING



Trey Allen Glass

Last seen on December 17, 2023 in Kansas, Oklahoma near Wilkerson Ranch wearing a black shirt, black coat and black sweats.

Last contact with family December 16, 2023

Age: 19

Hair Color: Black

Eye Color: Brown

Height: 5'7

Weight: 130 lbs

Scars/Tattoos: No

Tribe(s): United Keetoowah Band



CONTACT

Any information regarding the whereabouts of Trey Glass please contact the Kansas Police Department.

(918) 868-2198 and reference

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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.

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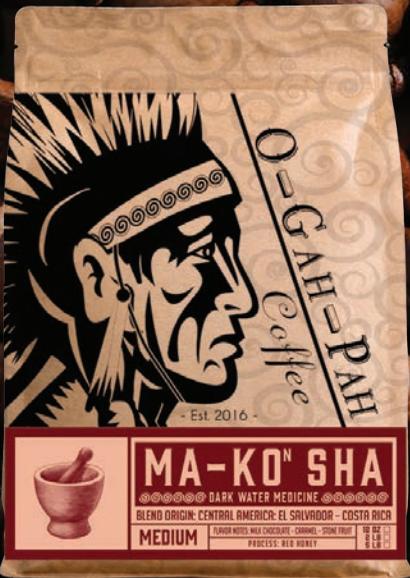
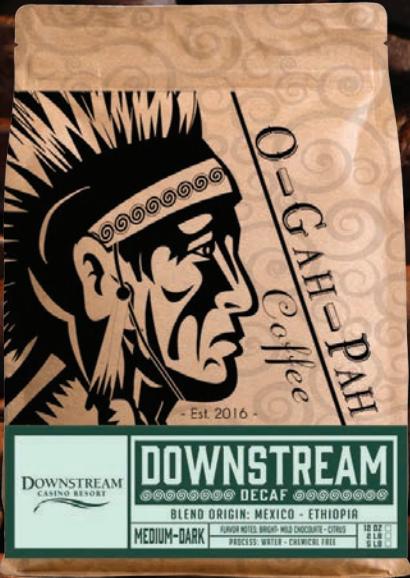


O-GAH-PAH

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.





Killers Movie Review

By Fus Yvhikv

I can't believe this movie received a 9-minute standing ovation at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival. Perhaps the audience felt an acute need for a little exercise after sitting for 3.5 hours?

The most memorable moment in Martin Scorsese's monotonous film was a bizarre scene in which William K. Hale (Robert De Niro) takes a wooden paddle to Ernest Burkhart's (Leonardo DiCaprio) backside and gives him an old school spanking. I think the audience can be forgiven for wanting to borrow that paddle from De Niro and giving Scorsese a 3.5 hour whoopin' for making this ponderous film.

Killers run time is so long I was convinced Mexico would pay for The Wall before the final credits rolled. It could have easily shed 25 pounds and achieved more muscular story telling. The scene with the grassfire at Hale's house was interminable. I was hoping the movie screen might ignite so the audience could flee to the nearest exits.

The hapless audience was unmercifully subjected to nearly an hour of witnessing poor Mollie Burkhart (Lily Gladstone) receive repetitive poisonous injections of insulin from her husband. Mollie got more injections than my perpetually flat front tire. I'm not sure who suffered more, Mollie or the audience.

Speaking of flats, Killers left me feeling as emotionally flat as the protagonists. Over the course of 3.5 hours I rarely felt moved. Neither did the rest of the audience. As the movie droned on, a palpable fog of tedium seeped into the theater rendering the audience mute. The plot limped along in aimless fashion. The characters were as one-dimensional as the Terminator. None of the actors had backstory, depth, or a character arc.

Take for example the luckless Anna Mae Brown, Mollie's sister. Her persona was reduced to a simplistic, sexually promiscuous, nouveau riche, perpetually drunk Indian. What caused her to be that way? Was it the sudden overnight wealth that transformed her to party like it was 1899? Perhaps it was because she was abused at Indian boarding school? That would have added great depth and understanding to her character as well as layering in an important, if tragic, pan Native experience.

Mollie is reduced to a cliché of pathos; anguish, suffering, grief, and tragedy. Otherwise she spends most of the film sitting mute and as stone-faced as the Great Sphinx of Giza. At least Mollie has a nose. Mollie manifests only the briefest fits of emotions such as joy, humor, or anger. Her character was as dull as a Presbyterian sermon.

Many have advocated for Gladstone to receive an Oscar nomination. I agree that she is a very talented actor who gave a remarkable performance. Unfortunately, she wasn't given much to work with. Scorsese kept her under wraps as tightly as the identity of the Man on the Grassy Knoll.

Both Di Niro and DiCaprio are much too old to be playing the roles of Hale and Burkhart, respectively. The real-life Burkhart was merely 19 years old when he moved to Osage County. He was 24 when he obediently complied with the directive of the King of the Osage Hills (Hale) to marry Mollie.

At such a young age it is credible that the King would have suzerainty over him. But Di Caprio is pushing 50! The Di Niro-DiCaprio paddling scene was intended to illustrate Hale's emotional and financial subjugation of Burkhart. But the audience already understands this. Hale's flagellation of Burkhart is as superfluous as it is comical. With the actors being age 78 and 47, respectively, at the time of filming, this scene has overtures of an elderly S&M act in a dystopian nursing home. It seems the only purpose of this scene is to satiate Scorsese's schadenfreude.

And so many characters coming and going then magically reappearing. As Dorothy might have said, "My! People come and go so quickly in the Land of Osage!" They were mere chess pieces, mainly pawns, with roles as restricted as the King piece. "Johnny, we hardly knew ye."

To be clear, I am glad they made the movie. I'm glad this tragic episode of the Osage Murders has been brought to the big screen (and the book). I loved the portrayal of the Osage people and culture, their ceremonies, dances, and culture. And I think the movie did a good job of evoking the crucible of the cataclysmic change wrought upon their nation by the discovery of oil, wealth, and subsequent victimization.

That said, the plot should have been more focused and streamlined. We needn't have to wait 2 hours for the calvary to arrive and save the Osage from the clutches of the rapacious and avaricious White Devils.

The movie was so long, unfocused, and tedious that I was hoping the FBI would show up and arrest me. I eventually fell into a catatonic trance. Either that Burkhart had somehow slipped into the seat next to me and had been injecting me with insulin!

Inexplicably, the movie has received widespread praise and adulation. It has been nominated for several awards including Golden Globes. Behind the hagiography however, I discern group think white guilt at the Silver Screen apartheid that has historically segregated Native stories from the big screen. The pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction that these days Native stories must be met with universal adulation. It is patronizing praise.

Sadly, Killers is yet another example of Native stories being told by non-natives. I am increasingly persuaded that in 20 years pundits and the general public will look back and wonder what all the fuss was about. For a great example of extant Native stories told by Natives I highly recommend the movie Frybread Face and Me.

Tedious storytelling, a plodding plot, one-dimensional characters, and a 3.5 hour run time are what killed Killers. Now, where's that paddle?



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.

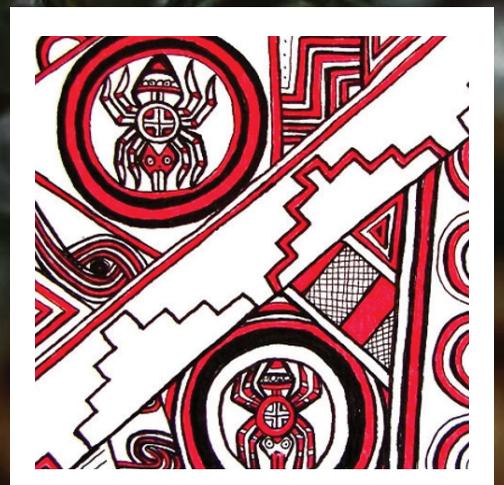
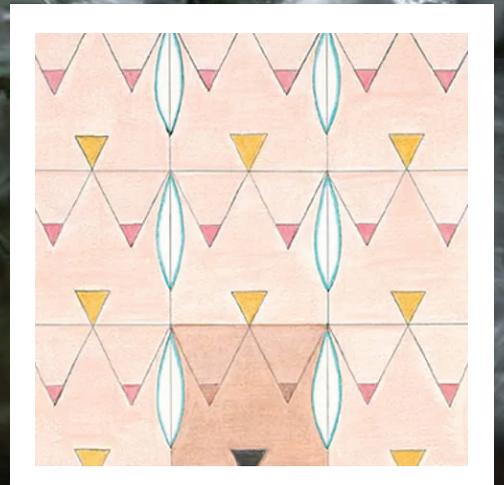
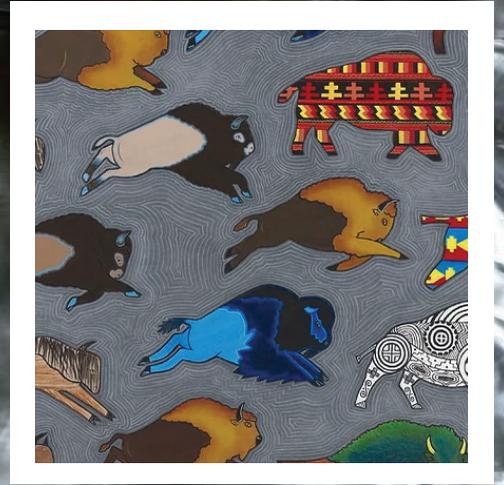
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FCA Player Profile

Hayden Smith

Position: Forward

Height: 6'7

Year: Freshman (Redshirt)

Hometown: Park Hill, Ok

High School: Tahlequah High School

Hayden Q & A

Tribal Affiliation: Cherokee

Favorite Bible Verse: Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take." This verse has gotten me through a lot of tough times. It helps me calm down through my storms because I know God has a plan in my life.

Nickname: Big Country

Favorite food: My moms chicken fried steak or my sisters chicken and dumplings. They both taste so good and they both remind me of home.

Favorite Walk-Up Song: No Stains-Aha Gazelle

Favorite Player: Giannis Antetokounmpo

Favorite Part of Being On a Team: I love my family and knowing that my brothers will always have my back. Getting to work to be my best everyday to push them and for them to do the same.

Who Do You Look Up To: I look up to my parents. They are both such strong people and have always pushed me to be the best I can be at whatever I do.

Plans After Graduation: I plan to go into ministry work. I am leaning towards being a youth pastor.

What Is Your Favorite Part of Being a Christian Athlete: The influence I have on other people and knowing I can make a big impact in someone else's life.

Who was my favorite Senior or Junior High Coach: My favorite coach in High School was Coach Qualls. He coached me throughout middle school and high school. He always wanted what was best for me and he always had. Great sense of humor.

Favorite part of NSU FCA: I love the testimony's in the beginning. Getting to hear how Jesus has changed everyone life in a different way is truly special. Everyone has a different path that makes it their own.

Fellowship of Christian Athletes:

Who We Are-

We are a community working to see the world transformed by Jesus Christ through the influence of coaches and athletes.

What We Do-

We seek to make disciples through our strategy of engaging, equipping and empowering coaches and athletes to know and grow in Christ and lead others to do the same.

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

We're grateful for all the Lord has done through FCA in 2023!
If you have been a FCA donor and made an investment in FCA, I want to say thank you!

God has blessed the FCA ministry! We have celebrated hundreds of decisions for Christ and passed out thousands of Bibles this year! We give God the honor and glory!

The Lord continues to bless and use FCA to reach coaches, student/athletes and communities with the Good News of Jesus Christ!

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/?form=johnmorris&keyword=John Morris](https://my.fca.org/?form=johnmorris&keyword=John%20Morris). John can be contacted through email: johnmorris@fca.org or by cell number (785-760-1627).

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Innovative "Native Oklahoma" program extends beyond host tribe reservations

Written By: Brittany Harlow

(OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.) Oklahoma's 39 tribes are widely known for their innovation and fortitude, particularly relating to economic development, cultural preservation, and community support.

For the last several years, many tribes have pulled back their dynamic curtain to reveal their inner workings to a select few: Leadership Native Oklahoma (LNO) students with the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Oklahoma (AICCO).

LNO 2023 Alumni Nicolette Casula attended the program as a Community Relations Specialist at ArchWell Health.

Several months later, Casula is now Director of Community Outreach, Engagement, and Development at Integrated Research Institute (IRI), a nonprofit focusing on identifying, researching, and improving health disparities across underserved communities.

"We are working directly with Oklahoma Tribes, including through multiple grants for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes," Casula said. "Our most recent award aims to assess the prevalence of Alzheimer's and Dementia within the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes and address the root causes of cognitive decline."

Casula said building relationships with fellow students, chapter officers and state officers was a highlight of her LNO experience.

"To be honest, I expected to sit in a classroom setting and hear different presentations from different tribal leaders," Casula said. "To my surprise, this was a hands-on experience that would be hard to replicate. Our 2023 class was invited to different tribal reservations to learn their history and about their established systems of sovereignty."

But, Casula said, her favorite memory would have to be the graduation.

"It was beautiful to see us all in the room sharing our experiences and what we took from LNO," Casula said. "Specifically, I was moved by the support for community, the future, and all its possibilities. The one (memory) that puts the biggest smile on my face was when we convinced the DJ to play 'Creator Made an Animal' and 'Boujee Native' by Snotty Nose Rez Kids. Just picture a group of 'Aunties' breaking it down on the dance floor in their ribbon skirts. The best! I smile still today just thinking about it."

And the memories did not stop at graduation. Casula said the relationships built during LNO continue to blossom, resulting in new mentorship, friendships, and confidantes.

"If you're considering it, get your application submitted," Casula said. "This is an opportunity that will create opportunities down the line. It is an investment in your future."

Casula even decided to take her leadership to the next level this fall.

Following a successful campaign to become secretary of AICCO's Oklahoma City Chapter, she said she's looking forward to having a seat at the table and joining a team of dedicated individuals to promote growth and partnerships with Native and non-Native businesses.

"I decided to run because I've been a member for several years and the growth is beautiful to watch," Casula said. "I want to do my part to serve and work towards the growth of OKC chapter."

If you are interested in receiving leadership education and training from Oklahoma's diverse tribes, applications to join the LNO Class of 2024 are now open. Both Native and non-Native applicants are encouraged to apply by the January 12 deadline. LNO 2024 will be held March through July with the LNO Class of 2024 Graduation in August.

AICCO State President Bailey Walker said he expects this year will be the most exciting one yet.

"The anticipation is certainly building for this year's leadership training program," Walker said. "Fueled by a commitment to cultural preservation and economic growth, our host tribes are already working to prepare 2024's transformative experience. This year will set new standards for success and empowerment."

For more information, visit <https://aicco.org/leadership-native-oklahoma/>



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Mahota

HATCHET WOMAN PILLOW

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The Battle of Ackia or Aahíkki'ya' as the Chickasaw call the event, was a battle between the French and Chickasaw. d'Arteguette launched the assault of Chokkilissa' (Ogoula Tchetoka in French), about 4 miles north of the town we call Tupelo, Mississippi today. The French military leader attacked on March 24, 1736. As they entered the area, Chickasaw women began singing loudly, and the French troops became disoriented. The singing women wielding hatchets advanced into the battle of Chickasaw warriors and French soldiers, frightening the French and forcing them to retreat. The singing, warring Chickasaw women became known as Hatchet Women. They are revered in Chickasaw history as part of the unconquered and unconquerable.

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

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More Native Art, Film and Political Recognition for Oklahoma Tribes in 2024

By: Ryann Gordon

2023 was a triumphant year for Natives in Oklahoma. Native Americans hit the map on a national scale in categories across culture, most certainly in that of film. Though the ongoing feud with Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt rages on, Native American politics have gained positive attention that will hopefully grow favorable results for tribal governments across the state and others in 2024.

Aside from art, Oklahoma's made national headlines politically, probably more in the year to come. Governor Stitt's eroding relationship with tribal leaders tempted damage to the relationship between the state and tribes, one that leaders have nurtured for decades to maintain, causing many state leaders to stand up for the tribal nations and rebuke Stitt's animosity. If Stitt's actions continue to push against tribal governance, legislators have threatened removing compact negotiations from the governor's office. His public attempt to re-control Native lands and rights could prove beneficial for tribal governance in 2024.

Oklahoma Natives have big things coming in other greater feats, some might say, more recognizable than politics. In film, Native culture has become widely recognized and sought after in the mainstream, as *Reservation Dogs* and *Killers of the Flower Moon* took the front row in American film in 2023. While KOTFM shined Hollywood light on the traumatic past of one of Oklahoma's Native tribes, *Res Dogs* introduced America to countless indigenous stories and inside jokes, and brought their vibrant folklore to life in a way that was heartfelt, heartbreaking, at times, and entertaining above all. The first series to be filmed entirely in Oklahoma, *Res Dogs* also was the first to feature all indigenous writers and directors.

A breakthrough for Native film, these two productions brought unprecedented success and attention to Oklahoma Native Americans, bringing indigenous culture and historical hardships into the minds and hearts of the American mainstream. Native film in Oklahoma has continued to skyrocket since, expanding into projects that will continue to grow in 2024 and beyond. Not only have Oklahoma Natives like Sterlin Harjo joined the ranks in Hollywood, but Native-run production teams have become a staple in Oklahoma and immensely sought after in the film industry for location-based productions.

Native films continue to come out on high-streaming platforms like

Frybread Face and Me, recently released on Netflix, and others soon to come in 2024: *Rez Ball*, about reservation basketball, co-written by Harjo, produced by LeBron James; AMC's *Outer Range* season 2; and *Echo*, about Marvel's first Native American superhero, Maya, who seeks redemption in her Oklahoma hometown.

Not just in Oklahoma, but around the world—Native culture is on the comeback. There's no better time to connect with the grassroots that enrich the culture that we live in, Native or not, in Oklahoma. Over the year to come, there are growing numbers of events locally to enjoy and represent Native culture.

Start the year with a New Year's celebration at the 71st Annual Oklahoma City Powwow on January 6. The 2nd Annual MMIP (Missing and Murdered Indigenous People) Central Oklahoma Chapter Benefit Gourd Dance is on January 13, 2024 in Seminole, Oklahoma. Then the 27th Annual Myaamia Winter Gathering is a winter storytelling event that will take place in Miami, OK on January 26-27, 2024; and the OU American Indian Alumni Society Benefit Powwow on January 27, 2024 at Thunderbird Casino in Norman, OK.

Featuring more than 1,000 indigenous artists, the Red Earth Native American Cultural Festival will return the weekend of March 22-24 in OKC, followed by the IndigiPopX Indigenous Pop Expo with returns to Oklahoma April 12-14, in OKC, with a new theme: "Revolution." The Chickasaw Nation will host their Artesian Arts Festival in Sulphur, OK on April 13, 2024, and the Mvskoke Art Market will commence at River Spirit Casino in Tulsa on April 20-21, 2024.

Gather for a powwow of art, dances and a tribal princess crowning at the Tonkawa Tribal Powwow, June 28-30, 2024. The OIGA (Oklahoma Indian Gaming) Conference and Trade Show will be held in OKC August 12-14. And see a gathering of tribes at the Standing Bear Powwow, held annually in Ponca, OK, this year, the final weekend of September, 2024.

November as always, provides a special time with Native American Heritage Month, Native American Indian Heritage Day falling on November 29, 2024, the day after Thanksgiving, yearly. More events to look for in 2024 include the Southeastern Art Show and Market, Cherokee Art Market and others.

Musician N Dot Darko Creates Music Meant to Heal People

By: Ryann Gordon



It's a late-night gathering in a room in Tulsa. Three artists discuss music, jamming back and forth, switching instruments and vocals, reliving the night they just had. The host of Rabbit Hole's Monday night open mic night, Noor Hammami, aka N dot Darko, leads the singalong. This is his kind of jam.

A member of the United Keetowah Band, half Native and half Syrian, N dot Darko is a singer, rapper, guitarist and keyboardist, whose mentorship is regarded highly among the Tulsa music scene.

"I'm more Native than Arabic spiritually," says N dot Darko. "My beliefs are traditional. But what I'm doing in Tulsa and trying to do in the future ... bust the fuck out of here and try to be a voice for the Native American and Tulsa natives. I just want to make good music and go on tour, perform at festivals. If I get big in music it's going to take me away from here, but this will always be my home. I know I'll come back here no matter what."

Front man of the four-person band, The Solution, N dot Darko hosts an open mic every Monday at Rabbit Hole, where local musicians, singers, poets or anyone who wants to get on the mic can go on stage and share their voice with a full band behind them. But getting where he's at today took time, and many years of putting his passion for music to the side to focus on work and being a dad.

"I was working a 60-hour job, that's what I was doing. For a long time, that was my reality," says N dot Darko.

"I had done music before but I let it go for my kid. Then I went out one time downtown and just seeing music again, it was pure, it was beautiful and it inspired me, and I quit my job and I wanted to make music. I didn't care if I got laughed at. I didn't want to be a cog in the machine. I wanted to do music and that's what I wanted to do. It's been a super long journey to who I am now."

After taking time to raise his 13-year-old daughter, he returned to making music and began transitioning from traditional work life to working artist. In doing so, he's managed to find a way of working that involves making music and facilitating that for other people

"I figured out what I wanted to do — I wanted to make music," he says. "I didn't know that I was going to be a curator everybody. I didn't know that I was going to be a leader in this scene trying to bring artists out and show how amazing Tulsa is and how many artists we have. I didn't know that was going to be me. My intentions were to be the best artist I can be for my bandmates for myself. I wanted to show my kid anything was possible, if you put your mind to it. My true intention in all this is, besides the joy music brings me, it's to show everybody that you can do this if you put your mind to it, if that's what you really want."

The first one in his family to make music, the artist's love of music began in his youth with writing until his mom bought him his first guitar at age 11. From there, he taught himself to play, honing his craft and expanding to writing full compositions. Now, at age 35, he still finds reprieve in lyrical writing.

"I inspired to be a lyricist more than anything, guitar was more of a hobby," he says. "Whenever you hear a song, the guitars, the drums, the bass, they all capture certain emotions. It's been proven many times that music can capture those feelings. So the second part comes with intentions, lyrics, that's where relation comes in. Most people, nine times out of 10, look for relation in music. I know my generation at least looks for deep storytellers to evoke that way you can relate and get over the things that you can't."

With his open mics, N dot Darko and his other bandmates, Lawrence Balalong bass, Tyler Downing on guitar and Savannah Darland on drums, they do as their name, The Solution, suggests and provide an outlet for expression, to resolve trauma and find solutions, together.

"I want to bring that sense of comradery and musical openness," he says. "I think my intention is to tell my story to tell people what emotional and intellectual level I'm at and hope somebody hears it and relates to it and finds comfort in it and maybe I can help people transition into their next level as a human being especially when I write things now I want people to gain perspective and be like damn I understand that and that helps me as a person."



You can save more in your 401(k) in 2024

An increased IRS contribution limit means you can put more away for retirement throughout the year

By Brandy Marion, retirement plans education manager at BOK Financial

Bulk up your 401(k) next year and take advantage of long-term gains after a year of economic bumpiness and inflation. The IRS announced 401(k) annual contribution limit increases for 2024 for employees who have access to such a plan. This includes:

- The amount individuals can contribute to 401(k), 403(b) and other tax-advantaged employer savings plans will increase to \$23,000—up from \$22,500 in 2023.
- People 50 and older can make catch-up contributions of \$7,500 beginning the calendar year they turn 50. This stays the same as 2023.
- For participants in 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 plans, as well as the federal government's Thrift Savings Plan who are 50 and older, the max contribution increases from \$30,000 to \$30,500.
- The contribution increase is a reflection of the high inflation rates we've seen the past few years.

Inflation was high much of 2023 peaking at 6% in February to eventually dropping to 3.2% in October as a result of the Fed's steady increase in interest rates. The IRS will also increase tax brackets for 2024 by 5.4%.

The 401(k) increases also come on the heels of a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) increase of 3.2% for Social Security beneficiaries.

Contributing to your 401(k) helps prepare you for retirement and provides tax advantages in the long run. It's important to check in on your account periodically and be attuned to this type of change to be sure you're taking advantage of every opportunity you can.

Free money

If you're not already contributing to a 401(k), now is the time to investigate taking advantage of the long-term benefits. Even if you're not maximizing your contributions, if your employer offers to match a percentage, you should contribute enough to earn the match. By not taking advantage of this benefit, you are missing out on "free money."

Increasing your 401(k) contributions will also reduce your taxable income.

The more you increase contributions from your pre-tax income, the less you'll be taxed on the remainder. If your pre-tax paycheck is \$2,000 and you allocate 10% to your 401(k), you'll only be taxed on \$1,800. Even a 1% increase in your contribution rate can make a difference in the long run.

Bottom line: Review your 401(k) contributions regularly. Now is the time to go in and see how much you're contributing and make changes based on your needs going into the new year. Here are a few more tips:

The increase from the IRS doesn't include employer matching. It's important to note that the increase is only for the employee contribution portion, so an employer match can go above that amount.

Are you retiring in the next 10 years? Then you might need to revisit your selections.

Avoid front-loading your contributions. In most situations, employee matching is done per pay period, so front loading your contributions may mean you're not eligible for employee matching—and this could mean missing out on a lot of "free money" throughout the year to help grow your retirement account.



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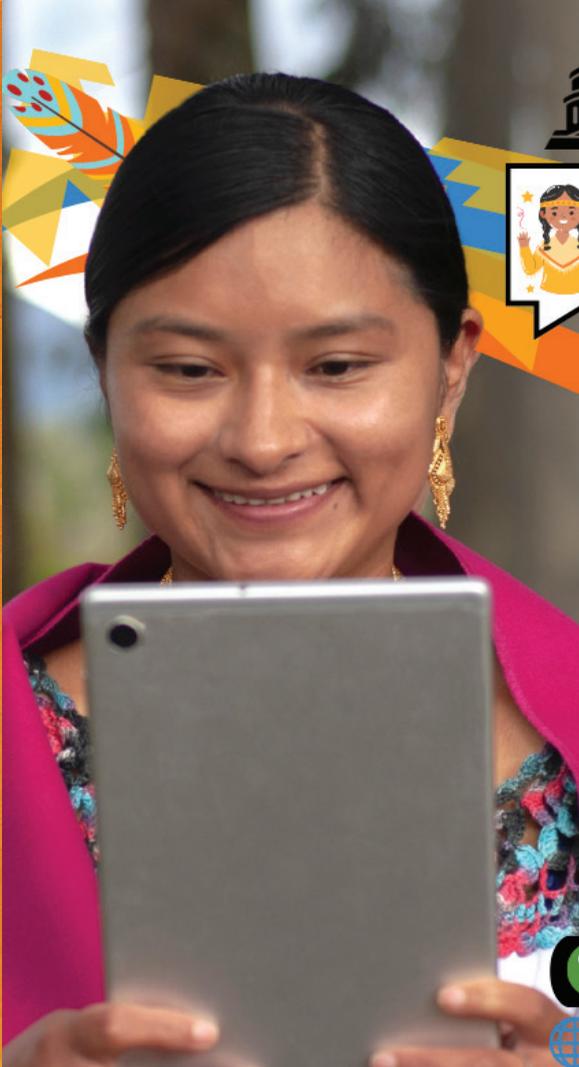


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Oklahoma Art Hall of Famer Mike Larsen Represents Native American Portraits at Cowboys and Indians Exhibit

Ryann Gordon

JRB Art at the Elms is featuring a Chickasaw artist and his longtime friend in the upcoming exhibit, *Cowboys and Indians*. Famous for his portraits of Indians, Mike Larsen's paintings will be paired with the cowboy sculpture works of Harold "H" Holden to paint a picture of the west from two vastly different, yet ironically close figures.

Both members of the Oklahoma Art Hall of Fame, Larsen and Holden are known for contradictory subject matters. Though historically in opposition, cowboys and Indians are paired together on the same historic timelines, most certainly that of Oklahoma.

Mike Larsen has made his name in Oklahoma painting Native Americans. His famous mural at the Oklahoma State Capitol "Flight of Spirit" has been given national acclaim, giving tribute to five world-renowned, Native American prima ballerinas. One of the *Cowboys and Indians* paintings, "Yvonne Study," features Oklahoma's own Yvonne Chouteau, one of the capitol ballerinas.

"This has been part of the genre for ages," says Larsen. "I have since the '80s done Native American work, because I am Chickasaw, and we have several friends here in Oklahoma who are Indian, Cheyenne, Crow, Arapahoe."

Larsen's collection of Native portraits includes hundreds of paintings of living subjects. Over the years, he's done work directly with Chickasaw Nation to study and paint living elders in the tribe.

"We got started developing our relationship with the Chickasaw people, with the hospices of the Chickasaw Nation we have been able to do nearly 100 large paintings of living Chickasaw elders," says Larsen. "Now, emphasize 'living,' because we do not rely on

historic pictures, so we have been able to paint, interview, spend time with nearly 100 living Chickasaw elders and do their portraits. We spent time with them in their homes, interviewed them, Martha shot a couple hundred photographs of each one and out of those photographs, 72 developed into paintings that now belong to the Chickasaw Nation, part of the historical artifacts in Ada."

A painter for over 50 years, Larsen has come a long way from when he had his first art show in the early '70s, evolving his craft while keeping in the same overarching style.

"My style hasn't necessarily changed but it has developed over the years," says the artist. "You pay attention to what you're doing, you grow and develop, work with what you have done and try to not repeat too much, try and do new things, develop new characters, new ideas."

"I went to school in New York because I realized some things were really missing from what I was doing. So I went to the Art Students League, went to school there, met some really good people, and came back home painting better than I was before because I discovered what was missing in my work — paint quality. I came back home and studied several people in the Cowboy Hall of Fame, mostly Edgar Payne and a couple other people, looking at their canvases and why they were so alive and wonderful, and it was the quality of their paint on the canvas."

For the past 40 years, Larsen has been perfecting his craft with quality paints that allow the art to pop from the canvas. His realistic portraits of Native American people vary from posed portraits to action shots; "Chiricahua," an Indian holding up spear and shield; a singular stomp dance in "Dances in the Sun;" and "Ittapiha/Kin," depicting an Indian man holding an eagle on one arm, directing the bird with the other.



Aside from his Native art, Larsen's depiction of the west is apparent in other themes as well, Oklahoma land and skylscapes, religious motifs and even one cowboy, titled "American Cowboy." His skyscape paintings have been highly regarded, appearing on postage stamps in the past.

"Most of the landscape pictures are paintings from our property, sunrises or sunsets from our front porch or back porch," he says. "I did the centennial stamps in 2007 with the US Post Office. Those paintings came about when we moved out of OKC and were finally able to see the sunrises, and they were chosen because of the new emerging sunrise paintings. So there are a few sunrises, a lot of figurative work. There's a couple in there that are kind of inspired by H Holden."

Close friends in real life, both Mike and Martha Larsen call H Holden and his wife two of their favorite people in the world. The duo collections in Cowboys and Indians contrast one another accordingly, with Larsen's Indian paintings appearing in distinctly different mediums even from Holden's bronze cowboy statues.

Both representations of the west will be situated next to another exhibit featuring the contemporary, pop-western works of Jack Fowler. Together, the three artists' works depict three vastly different Oklahoma histories. Alongside the artwork of Fowler and Holden, Larsen's works do the job in highlighting the Native American heritage that embodies our state and nation's past.

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Anadarko, OK | 405-247-2448

EASTERN SHAWNEE TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

127 Oneida St., Seneca, MO
918-666-2435

FORT SILL APACHE TRIBE

Route 2, Box 12, Apache, OK
580-588-2298

IOWA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

RR 1, Box 72, Perkins, OK
405-547-2402

KAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

698 Grandview Drive, Kaw City, OK
580-269-2552

KIALEGEE TRIBAL TOWN

623 East Hwy. 9, Wetumka, OK
405-452-3262

KICKAPOO TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

P.O. Box 70, McCloud, OK
405-964-7053

KIOWA INDIAN TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

Hwy. 9, West of Carnegie,
Carnegie, OK
580-654-2300

MIAMI TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

202 S. Eight Tribes Trail, Miami, OK
918-542-1445

MODOC TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

418 G Street, Miami, OK
918-542-1190

MUSCOGEE (CREEK) NATION

Hwy. 75 and Loop 56,
Okmulgee, OK
800-482-1979

OSAGE NATION

813 Grandview, Pawhuska, OK
918-287-5555

OTTAWA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA

13 S. 69 A, Miami, OK
918-540-1536

OTOE-MISSOURIA TRIBE

8151 Hwy 177, Red Rock, OK
877-692-6863

PAWNEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA

Pawnee, OK
918-762-3621

PEORIA TRIBE OF INDIANS OF OKLAHOMA

118 S. Eight Tribes Trail, Miami, OK
918-540-2535

PONCA TRIBE

20 White Eagle Drive,
Ponca City, OK
580-762-8104

QUAPAW TRIBE OF INDIANS

5681 S. 630 Rd., Quapaw, OK
918-542-1853

SAC AND FOX NATION

920883 S. Hwy 99, Stroud, OK
918-968-3526

SEMINOLE NATION OF OKLAHOMA

Junction Hwys. 270 and 56
P. O. Box 1498, Wewoka, OK
405-257-7200

SENECA-CAYUGA NATION

23701 S 655 Road, Grove, OK
918-542-6609

SHAWNEE TRIBE

29 S. Hwy. 69A, Miami, OK
918-542-2441

THLOPTHLOCCO TRIBAL TOWN

09095 Okemah Street, Okemah, OK
918-560-6198.

TONKAWA TRIBE OF INDIANS

1 Rush Buffalo Road, Tonkawa, OK
580-628-2561

UNITED KEETOOWAH BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS

PO Box 746, Tahlequah, OK
918-431-1818

WICHITA AND AFFILIATED TRIBES

(Wichita, Keechi, Waco, Tawakonie)
Hwy. 281, Anadarko, OK
405-247-2425

WYANDOTTE NATION

64700 E. Highway 60,
Wyandotte, OK
918-678-2297



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ALL NATIONS. ONE MISSION.

We invite you to “Come Grow With Us” this year as we continue to expand our programs, re-invigorate our local chapters, and provide more benefits to our members. Our goal is to **EDUCATE, EMPOWER** and **ENGAGE** the Native American business community. We look forward to having you join us as we make a difference in Indian Country! We are dedicated to working with all members of the community to advance the educational and economic opportunities for Native Americans throughout Oklahoma.