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Native Oklahoma Magazine is a publication not only for the visitor to Oklahoma, but also a resource for our Native community and neighbors. Every month, Native Oklahoma's award-winning writers showcase Native artists, chefs, traditional foods, culture, and fashion, as well as current events and powwows. Our issues include event calendars and lists of Native American attractions across Oklahoma. Native Oklahoma also includes a list of gaming venues, places to stay, and the location of tribal headquarters.

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CHICKASAW ACTOR BRENT CHARLES' JOURNEY TO THE STAGE

Brent Charles emits an aura of gratitude. He is grateful for his parents and his teachers — all the people who have encouraged and believed in him — but also for the help and support of the Chickasaw Nation. He realizes that, without this support, it would not have been possible for him to succeed when he moved to Los Angeles, California, from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, at the age of 18. He wanted to pursue his dreams of acting, and through his network of support that is exactly what he is doing.

Charles first discovered his love of performance when he was in elementary school. He realized how much fun acting was. "This was my version of a video game," Charles said. When Charles got to middle school, though, sports became more of a focus for him. He still took theater classes, but he didn't perform. He was trying to figure out who he was and what he wanted to do, and sports provided something a little different for him.

When he transferred to Putnam City North High School in Oklahoma City, a school known for its high level of athleticism, Charles decided to change course. He liked sports, and he was good at them, but he did not think he was good enough to play competitively at that level. This decision ended up being a transformative moment in his life, because it brought him back to the theater. This was the

moment when it was more than just fun for him; he fell in love with the theater and began to see it as a career path. This is when he decided to move to Los Angeles.

After graduating high school, Charles moved to California to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional actor. He had been accepted into The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in Los Angeles, and he was ready to take that next step as an artist. It wasn't easy, though.

"It was exciting. It was nerve-wracking. It was all the emotions. I feel like it would have been different if I had family there or someone to fall back on if I was feeling down, but I didn't have that," Charles said. "I was in a new place with new people. I didn't know anybody and was thrown into the deep end and there was a lot of uncertainty."

Despite the loneliness and the uncertainty, Charles was determined to succeed. It was a determination he had learned from his family, and he always knew that even if he was half a continent away, he still had their love and support.

Growing up, his parents were very strict, but Charles is grateful for that because it made him the person he is and taught him valuable life lessons. His parents were determined for Charles and his siblings to succeed, and they were supportive of

all three of their children's artistic pursuits. While Charles is an actor, his brother Kaleb, who goes by Kristo Blanc, is a musician who also does video production. His sister, Lailah, is a fine artist, working in sculpture, pastels and painting. Even though his parents were not in the arts, they were supportive of their children's interests and pursuits.

"My parents were really supportive of me following my dreams," Charles said. "They weren't able to pursue careers in the arts. Our parents had to get 'real jobs' and I say that with the utmost respect because I realize that what I do is a privilege, and I certainly don't take it for granted."

After completing the two-year studio program at AMDA, Charles worked for four years and then enrolled in the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 2018. As one of the most prestigious theater programs in the country, Charles could not have been more excited. However, it is also a very expensive school. Charles said there is no way he would have been able to have that experience without the support of the Chickasaw Nation.

When Charles was a child, he remembers going to Chickasaw Nation awards ceremonies for having good grades, and his family would utilize the clothing grants and other services the Chickasaw Nation had to offer. When he wanted to go to CalArts, he didn't know if he would be able to get the financial support he needed, but the Chickasaw Nation came through with scholarships.

His time at CalArts led him to a part-time job at the Roy and Edna Disney/ CalArts Theater (REDCAT), which eventually turned into a full-time managerial position. It also introduced him to the Independent Shakespeare Co., which he has been with since 2019, performing Shakespeare in the park, sometimes for thousands of people in a single night.

"If it weren't for the tribe, I wouldn't be here right now. I wouldn't have gone to CalArts. I wouldn't have the job that I have or be with the Shakespeare company that I'm with. That all came from CalArts which was possible because of the Chickasaw Nation," Charles said. "From a child to the present, I'm seeing how the tribe takes care of its people in a way that makes everything just a little bit less stressful."

As Charles has matured, he has also started to learn more about his Chickasaw heritage. Charles is Chickasaw on his mother's side.

"I present black, and I'm well aware of that, but I became curious about my Indigenous roots considering how much my tribe has done for me,"

Charles said. "In my industry, most people only care about the surface. I used to think that I needed to be one or the other, and so for a long time I was just confused. Then I realized I just need to learn how to be myself, and I can't be myself if I don't embrace all parts of me."

His curiosity led him to call the Chickasaw Cultural Center to ask questions about different people in his family. Charles found it necessary to explore this part of himself.

"I realized I needed to ground myself with my roots — where I came from and who came before me," Charles said.

Even though Charles is continuing to learn about his own Chickasaw identity and heritage, he has had a unique opportunity in Los Angeles to connect with other Indigenous actors through Native Voices, which is a theater company "devoted to developing and producing new works for the stage by Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and First Nations playwrights."

"Haunted," a play by Tara Moses (Seminole Nation of Oklahoma), ran Oct. 10 through Oct. 26. The entire cast and crew are comprised of Indigenous Americans. At CalArts, Charles encountered few First American students; now he has a chance to work with actors from tribes all over the Americas, and it has been a great experience, stepping into some of the other native traditions.

The first day of rehearsals, elder Dennis Garcia of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, blessed their rehearsal space in a white sage ceremony. Charles was moved and inspired by the experience.

"Now we feel safe and at home, which is important for this piece because there are themes that require some emotional depth and digging deep. It's really cool to see these traditions brought into this space that has housed so many actors."

Charles' love of theater led him to Los Angeles and countless new experiences. Behind it all, though, is gratitude — gratitude for his family, his mentors, the Chickasaw Nation and everyone who has helped steer his path along the way.

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America250 Patriot Marker in Tennessee Highlights Legacy of Nancy Ward and Modern Literary Connection

Benton, Tennessee



As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of its founding, communities nationwide are examining the people and events that shaped the nation through the America250 campaign, a multi year commemoration culminating in 2026.

In Benton, Tennessee, that reflection is visible through an America250 patriot marker placed near the historic burial site of Nancy Ward, a revered Cherokee leader, diplomat, and peace advocate whose influence extended far beyond her lifetime. The marker stands as recognition that America's story includes Indigenous leadership that predates the founding of the United States.

Nancy Ward, also known as Nanyehi, played a pivotal role in Cherokee diplomacy during the eighteenth century. She is credited with maintaining relationships with key colonial figures, including Daniel Boone and George Washington. Historical accounts indicate Ward saved Washington's life during conflict, and it is believed Washington later returned the favor. Letters from Ward to Washington were later discovered among Thomas Jefferson's personal effects, further documenting her role in early American diplomacy. Ward was also instrumental in land negotiations involving present day Kentucky, a historical detail frequently highlighted in literary and historical discussions of her legacy. In addition, she is remembered for warning Cherokee leaders of the coming forced removals that would later be known as the Trail of Tears, demonstrating foresight into one of the most devastating chapters in Native American history.

Ward holds a direct ancestral connection to contemporary author Debra Yates, her seventh-great-granddaughter. Yates explores Ward's life and legacy

in her book *Woman of Many Names*, which examines Ward's role as a cultural bridge between the Cherokee people and early European settlers while placing her contributions within a broader American context.

"As forces converged on the Cherokee lands from Kentucky to present day northern Georgia, Nancy Ward and her son and brother worked to ensure their family had a place in the America that was more than a dream of a few. Nanyehi (Nancy Ward) had a dream as well," Yates said. "For her help and participation in the founding of America, the Village of Chota was to be held in perpetuity for her children and grandchildren for all time. The name Nanyehi is still whispered 250 years later in the Smoking Mountains and throughout the land."

The America250 campaign encourages communities to engage with local history while examining the values, conflicts, and contributions that define the nation. The Benton marker serves as a reminder that America's founding narrative is complex and incomplete without acknowledging Indigenous leaders whose diplomacy and vision helped shape the country.

Woman of Many Names offers a contemporary literary lens on Ward's enduring influence, inviting readers to reconsider how early American history is told and whose voices are included.

Debra Yates is available for interviews and expert commentary on Nancy Ward's historical significance, Indigenous history within the America250 framework, and the research and writing process behind *Woman of Many Names*.



Attached are two pictures from the ceremony – one showing the marker itself and another showing Debra Yates unveiling it.

The Oorang Indians NFL Team



— Fus Yvhikv, Sour Sofkee #72

The Oorang Indians. Stuffing a bartender into a telephone booth? Picking up a trolley and turning it 180 degrees to return to the team hotel? First ever half time shows? Bear wrestling at halftime? Tomahawk and knife throwing demos? Jim Thorpe drop kicking field goals from the 50-yard line? The team owner who only wanted to sell Airedale Terriers? This was the first and only NFL franchise comprised entirely of Native Americans, the Oorang Indians.

The Oorang Indians were an NFL team established in 1922 by Walter Lingo in tiny LaRue, OH. With a population of only 795 people in 1920, LaRue remains, by far, the smallest city ever to host an NFL franchise. The city was so small that it didn't even have a football stadium. The Oorang Indians were forced to play their "home" games fifteen miles away in Marion, OH.

With the team being in a tiny town without a football stadium underscores that the franchise was all about promotion! Mr. Lingo clearly had other goals in mind beyond fielding a winning football team. Indeed, he owned a large dog kennel that bred and sold Airedale Terriers. He used his NFL team to promote and sell his Airedales.

Fielding a team made up entirely of Native American players, and coached by the great Jim Thorpe, whetted the public's appetite to buy tickets. The Oorang Indians created the NFL's first pre-game and halftime shows. These shows made extensive use of the Airedales doing tricks. Of course, having



Native Americans also performing only added to the curiosity, intrigue, and most importantly, ticket sales.

Sadly for Mr. Lingo, owning an NFL franchise meant having to play football games. Lingo showed little interest in winning. The Oorang Indians existed only for the 1922 and 1923 seasons. The 1922 team finished at 5-8. The Indians started the 1923 season by losing their first nine games and being outscored 235-12. The team finished the year with a 2-10 record.

The players knew they were mere circus attractions. Their primary role was to show dogs and play to Indian stereotypes. But curiosity about the Indians was robust. Therefore, the players would perform halftime tricks. These included the ever-popular faux Indian dances, archery, tomahawk, and knife throwing exhibitions. The "Indian dances" were not authentic but played to the Hollywood images expected by the crowd. The joke was on the fans.

With little effort made to win games, or even practice, the Indians had a lot of free time on their hands. Not surprisingly, they spent a great deal of time partying and drinking. Their spirited times were the stuff of legend.

In 1922, the night before a game with the Chicago Bears, the Indians were partying at a bar called Everyman's Saloon. The bartender stopped serving the team members at 2am. Upset at being cutoff, the Indians stuffed and locked the bartender into a telephone booth. The Indians staggered back to their hotel in the wee hours of the morning. Just hours later, the Bears trounced them 33-6.

During the 1923 season the Indians were in St. Louis for a game against All-Stars. Again, the team partied into the wee hours of the game day morning. They boarded a trolley to return to the team hotel. However, the trolley was headed in the opposite direction. The Indians solved the problem by picking up the trolley and turning it 180 degrees. They made it back to their hotel for a couple of hours of sleep before traveling to the stadium.

By 1924 the novelty had worn off. Fans had already seen the dancing Indians and the tricks of the Airedales. Mr. Lingo did not renew the franchise fee and thus the team folded. The team did produce two future NFL Hall of Famers in Jim Thorpe (Sac and Fox), inducted in 1963, and Joe Guyon (White Earth Chippewa), inducted in 1963. Go Indians!

-Okis ci, Fus.

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WHO TO WATCH IN 2026

Design



WEOMEPE

Jessica Moore Harjo

Jessica Moore Harjo, Ph.D., Weomepe, Otoe-Missouria, Osage, Pawnee, Sac & Fox, is an interdisciplinary artist, designer, and educator based in Oklahoma. Her approach to art and design is unique, post-traditional, and grounded in cultural symbolism. Her pieces display intricate intersections of traditional ribbonwork, florals, appliqué, elements of nature and other harmonious and symmetric forms with atmospheric color palettes.

Dr. Harjo has current displays of visual and digital art at the First Americans Museum, Oklahoma City's Scissortail Park, Tulsa's Philbrook Museum of Art, Oklahoma City's Automobile Door Tour Alley, the Tulsa Art Alley, the Osage Nation Museum, and the Osage Nation Casinos. Most recent and notably, a permanent public art sculpture titled "People of the Great Sky, Constellations of the Land" was installed in June 2023 at the Oklahoma State Capitol, and a public art mural "Foundation of Remembrance" was completed in July 2023 with the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Dr. Harjo is the founder and owner of Weomepe Designs, a small business that provides graphic design services and operates as an online design shop with jewelry, wearable art, and other creative design products. Weomepe Designs has products in various museums, shops, and centers across Oklahoma. Weomepe Designs as a brand has branched out in recent years to include fashion arts. A fresh endeavor, she successfully opened a holiday-pop-up shop with 3 other co-owners, called INDIGICHIC, Native Fashion Arts Collective, LLC., offering exclusive contemporary fashion arts to Tulsa and surrounding communities.



LINDSAYKING.CO

Lindsay King

Lindsay King is of Saulteaux, Ojibway, and Mohawk heritage and a registered member of her father's Treaty 5 First Nation, Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba. Born in Winnipeg, she is a Mother, Grandmother, Social Worker, and Fashion Designer.

Her childhood was spent between her parents' First Nations of Little Grand Rapids in Manitoba and Mississaugas of the Credit in Ontario. She also spent time growing up in Texas and Nevada with her mother and siblings.

In 2014, Lindsay took a bold step toward her dream, enrolling in fashion studies in both Toronto, Canada, and Florence, Italy. With no prior experience in sewing or design, she embraced her new path, bringing to life the garments she had once only imagined. Along the way, she found mentors and artisans who helped to bring her brand to life.

Since its debut in 2022, the Lindsay King brand has become known for its timeless, luxury outerwear and fashion collections. Each garment is carefully handcrafted

in Toronto by skilled artisans, designed with care and intention to celebrate individuality, transcend trends, and inspire others to pursue their own dreams.

Lindsay's artistry and impact have been recognized across Canada. She was the recipient of the 2024 Myles Sexton x Fashion Arts Toronto Breakout Talent Award and winner of PARO Canada's Indigenous Women in Business Award. Her Red Collection, designed in honour of and to bring awareness to Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP), was showcased at Fashion Arts Toronto and Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week. She has also appeared live on Breakfast Television as part of Lincoln's Skipped Exits campaign, which highlighted inspiring Canadians. Her work and story have been featured in leading publications including Elle Magazine, Fashion Magazine, Native Max Magazine, BlogTO, Toronto Star, Windspeaker News, and more.

WENDY PONCA

Osage Indian fine artist who is skilled in draping, tailoring, beadwork, jewelry, silk-screen printing, ribbon work, body and textile painting, contemporary and tradition design and symbolism with works in permanent museum collections and current exhibitions. Retired fine arts instructor. Pendleton blanket designer. Theatre costume designer. Fashion designer.



OH.KI.YO

Oh Kíyo was formed in 2017 as a play on words while learning the Chickasaw Language as a teen. Oh Kíyo translates to "Oh No!" In English. This business was founded in 2022 and is located in the Heart of the Chickasaw Nation, Sulphur Oklahoma. We currently operate with one designer, Chickasaw Nation Citizen Anna Frye, and feature ghost artists who have requested their identities remain protected.

We hope to Unite our Tribal Communities for the greater good by helping revitalize our Chickasaw and Choctaw Arts and Culture. By breathing new life into our stories, we can spread Chickashanompa and share our culture with others.



MARGARET ROACH WHEELER

Chickasaw textile designer Margaret Wheeler honors the spirit of her great-great-grandmother, Mahota, and a legacy of creative Chickasaw women. Margaret has become known internationally as a painter, sculptor, educator, Native historian, and award-winning weaver. From her earliest business in handwoven fashions to creative textiles to the field of fine arts, Margaret's art and work continue today in selling original handwovens and in the national brand of Mahota Textiles, both collaborations with the Chickasaw Nation.

Margaret has also received a research fellowship to study at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in New York. Her intricate textiles have exhibited

works at prestigious institutions, including the Museum of Art and Design and the Museum of Contemporary Native Art (MoCNA), Oklahoma, New Mexico, New York, Colorado, Indiana, and Arizona museums. Alongside her museum exhibitions, her "Street Clothes" weavings have been seen in fashion shows as well.

She has earned numerous awards including Best of Class-Heard Museum Indian Market, First place in SWAIA (Santa Fe Indian Market), and Purchase Award at Eitel Jorg. In 2010, Margaret Roach Wheeler was inducted into the Chickasaw Nation Hall of Fame and was honored by the State of Oklahoma with the Governor's Arts Award in 2018 for her unique contributions to art.

LAUREN GOOD DAY

Lauren Good Day "Good Day Woman" is a Multi-award winning Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfeet and Plains Cree artist & sought after fashion designer. She is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation) of the Ft. Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, USA and also a registered Treaty Indian with the Sweet Grass Cree First Nation in Saskatchewan, Canada.

She has shown her artwork at the world's most prestigious Native American juried art shows such as the Santa Fe Indian Market, Heard Guild Museum Market, Autry American Indian Arts Marketplace, and more.

Being a sought after artist and designer her work is in numerous public and private collections throughout the United States, Canada and the World, including the National Museum of American Indian. You can find her work and mentions in publications such as Vogue, InStyle Magazine, New York Times, Fashion Magazine, Cowboys & Indians Magazine, Cosmopolitan and numerous national and international publications.



PMWATERLILY DESIGNS

Patricia Michaels (Bpah-oo Pbup-oo {WATERLILY} in Tewa language) Patricia Michaels, of Taos Pueblo, is a world renowned fashion and textile designer and the CEO of PMWATERLILY DESIGNS. She has studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, apprenticeship in Italia with a Taylor and worked on costumes at the Santa Fe Opera and designed costumes for dance and Opera at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC.

Numerous recognitions include Best of Textiles SWAIA (2009), Taos Citizen of the Year (2013), the Smithsonian's Inaugural National Museum of American Indian in NYNY Arts and Design Award (2014) parentheses, NEW Mexico governors award excellence in the arts parentheses (2023), when living treasures award by and Living Treasures Award by MIAC Museum (2024).

Patricia is an activist working with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Woman and Relatives; Community Against Violence, Indigenous Fashion Collective, and Preservation of Native Culture and Natural Resources. She had gained national recognition as a contestant on season eleven of Project Runway; she won First Runner Up title and was asked back for All Stars. Her Native inspired hood couture fashion have been featured at the prestigious, New York Fashion Week, Santa Fe, Indian Market, museums around the world and International Fashion Shows in Johannesburg, Africa, Wellington, New Zealand, Geneva, Switzerland, Toronto, Canada, and publications in Vogue, New York Times WWD to name a few.

Recently, Michaels dressed award-winning actress Tantoo Cardinal (Cree and Métis) in a gown with her signature hand painted eagle feathers design for Mrs. Tantoo Cardinal's red carpet international premiere of Martin Scorsese's new film Killer of the Flower Moon at the Cannes Film Festival. Tantoo stars with Lily Gladstone (Siksikaisitapi and Nimíipuu), Leonardo DiCaprio, and Robert DiNiro.



ORIGINAL LANDLORDS

Original Landlords is a garment and fashion accessory brand specializing in themes related to or derived from the Native American or American Indian. The brand's mission is to challenge the status quo of dominant culture with thought provoking graphics and messages. The brand is a vehicle of expression with an audience composed of Indigenous and non-indigenous people who purchase goods on the website and select retailers. 100% Native owned and operated by Jeremy Arviso, RVS078 LLC.

RVS078 LLC is a creative consultancy specializing in but not limited to brand identity design, fashion design, graphic arts, mural advertising, film and fine art. The mission at RVS078, LLC is to provide innovative solutions to solve creative problems for companies like The Phoenix Suns, Nike, The NFL and BBC Studios London. The vision for RVS078, LLC is to emphasize the importance and significance of indigenous design in mainstream multimedia presentations. In doing so, the value created in these successful campaigns is one designed for authenticity and originality.



WHO TO WATCH IN 2026

FILM



JEN LOREN

Jen Loren (Cherokee Nation) is an Emmy Award-winning TV host, filmmaker and senior director of Cherokee Film. In this role, she sets strategy and oversees all operations of Cherokee Film Productions, Cherokee Film Studios, the Cherokee Film Commission and the Cherokee Film Institute.

Selected as an inaugural Obama Leader USA by the Obama Foundation in July 2023, Loren is recognized globally for her efforts and successes in breaking new ground in Native American representation in film and media.

In addition to hosting the Emmy Award-winning docuseries "Osiyo, Voices of the Cherokee People," she leads a team of more than 40 content creators and change-makers whose mission is to protect and share the authentic Cherokee experience, culture and history, and to increase the presence of Native Americans across film and media.

With a background in broadcast television and investigative journalism, Loren brings integrity, creativity and community-focused strategies to her work.



STERLIN HARJO

Harjo is the co-creator and showrunner of the acclaimed series *Reservation Dogs* (FX Productions). The comedy follows four Indigenous teenage friends living on a reservation in Oklahoma. The show has won an impressive number of awards, including a Peabody for its debut season (2021), Gotham Award for Breakthrough Series (2021), Independent Spirit Awards for Best New Series and Best Ensemble Cast (2022), Television Academy Honors (2022), along with being an American Film Institute Awards Honoree and nominated for a Golden Globe, multiple WGA Awards, Critics Choice, and Television Critics Association Awards, among many others. *Rez Dogs* concluded its run in 2023 with Season 3.

Harjo's newest series *Poster Girls*, which he co-wrote with bestselling novelist Jonathan Lee, is in development with FX Productions. Paramount+ recently acquired his series *Yellowbird*, which he is co-creating with Erica Tremblay and is based on the Sierra Crane Murdoch novel of the same name. Along with his numerous projects in development, LeBron James's company SpringHill, is producing Harjo's newest series, *Rezball*, for Netflix, which he co-wrote with

Sydney Freeland.

Over his career, Harjo has also created and directed five feature films: three narrative dramas and two documentaries. His most recent feature, *Love and Fury*, is a documentary chronicling the work and intersection of over a dozen contemporary Native American artists. The film was acquired by Ava DuVernay's ARRAY and released on Netflix in December 2021. It received its premiere at the 2021 Hot Docs International Documentary Festival and was an official selection of the Seattle International Film Festival, Virginia Film Festival, and DeadCenter Film Festival.

Harjo's first feature film, *Four Sheets to the Wind*, premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize. His feature documentary, *This May Be the Last Time*, premiered at Sundance in 2014. His most recent narrative feature, *Mekko*, premiered at the 2015 Los Angeles Film Festival and had its international premiere at Toronto International Film Festival. Each of his films are set in Oklahoma and address contemporary Indigenous experiences.

PRESTON SMITH

Preston is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and was born and raised in Oklahoma. Growing up he had a fascination with film and television and always annoyed family and friends by stating the director, date and cast of the movies they watched. He also spent time learning about Cherokee traditions from his grandparents and

other traditionalists met through dances and other community events in northeastern Oklahoma.

After earning his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design, Preston decided to try to do what he really wanted to do: be in the film industry. After working on commercials and occasionally working on sets for bigger productions, he joined the Cherokee Film Commission at the beginning of 2020. His job is to

connect productions with the right locations, crew and talent they need. Introducing and advancing Native Americans in the film industry is another passion Preston has that perfectly aligns with CFC. Preston continues to make films in his spare time with the aim to include Native cast and stories that fight stereotypes and normalize Natives in film and television.

ERICA TREMBLAY

Erica Tremblay's an American writer & director from the Seneca-Cayuga Nation. She recently worked as an executive story editor on Reservation Dogs at FX, where she directed her 1st TV episode. Together w/ Sterlin Harjo, she developed a series adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize finalist Yellowbird (2014) for Paramount+. She was an executive story editor on Dark Winds (2022), produced by George R.R. Martin & Robert Redford. Her feature project Fancy Dance (2023) was accepted into the 2021 Sundance Directors & Screenwriters Labs. In 2021, she was awarded the Walter Bernstein Screenwriting Fellowship, the Maja Kristin Directing Fellowship, the SFFILM Rainin Grant & the Lynn Shelton of a Certain Age Grant. Her short film Little Chief (2020) premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival & was included on IndieWire's top-10 list of must-see short films at the festival. In addition to writing & directing, she's also studying her indigenous language.



HANAY GEIOGAMAH

Hanay Geiogamah is a playwright, TV and movie producer, artistic director, and a professor of theater in the School of Theater, Film and Television at the University of California, Los Angeles. He was born in Lawton, Oklahoma, and is Native American of Kiowa/Delaware descent. He served as a producer for the TNT TV series of "The Native Americans: Behind The Legends, Beyond the Myths" in 1993. He is considered the first widely known and successful Native American playwrights and one of the few Native American producers in Hollywood.

LOREN WATERS

Loren Waters (Cherokee/Kiowa) is an award-winning filmmaker and founder of Waters Media, where her work spans directing, producing, and casting. Growing up in Oklahoma has shaped her cross-cultural storytelling, rooted in Indigenous experiences and community collaboration. She has been recognized on prestigious lists, including Forbes 30 Under 30 and Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces, and she currently serves as the Executive Director of the Lindy Waters III Foundation, where she is dedicated to serving Native youth and Indigenous communities.

Her work has been showcased at esteemed festivals such as Sundance, SXSW, and Hot Docs. Her Academy Award-qualifying short documentary film, *Tiger*, received the Short Film Special Jury Award for Directing at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival, along with multiple festival honors.

She has contributed to renowned films and television series, including *The Lowdown*, *Reservation Dogs*, and *Fancy Dance*, as the youngest Indigenous casting director in the industry. Her achievements have been recognized with prestigious awards such as the Princess Grace Film Honoraria Award, the New York Foundation of the Arts - Anonymous Was a Woman Environmental Art Grant, and the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation LIFT Award.

In 2024, her short documentary, *Meet Me at the Creek*, garnered significant acclaim, receiving First Place at the UBUNTU Climate Arts & Storytelling Showcase and recognition as a Best Mini-Doc Top 10 Finalist at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival.

Loren's storytelling continues to shape a vibrant and inclusive future through her work.



JOSIAH JONES

Josiah Jones – Chickasaw, Choctaw, Ohkay Owingeh, and Kiowa, born and raised in Shawnee, OK. He graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University with a business degree in May 2021 but had always had a passion for filmmaking. After graduating, Josiah moved up to Tulsa to pursue a career in filmmaking. There, he started working at Pursuit Films and was pulled on full time as a production assistant, assistant video editor, camera operator, and producer. Outside of work, he is a writer and director. He received the Emerging Filmmakers award at the LA Skins Film Festival in 2021 for his short film *Chapisala'Cho*. Josiah has also starred in *Reservation Dogs* as Young Fixico, along with finishing up his short film *The Love for the Game* through the Vision Maker Media Creative Shorts Fellowship Grant.

NATIVE BOY PRODUCTIONS

Mark D. Williams is an award-winning Choctaw filmmaker from Shawnee, Oklahoma. Having never been to film school, Mark was self-taught using friends and family for his first few projects. His first short film premiered at the Red Fork Film Festival in Tulsa in 2006. He would go on to write and direct more short films until 2012 when he made his first feature length film, "The Unrest" (winner of the BEST FILM award at the Mvskoke Film Festival).

In 2016, his second feature film, "Violet", won 12 awards in the US and overseas with 29 award nominations overall. In 2016, he began focusing on Native American sport and athletes's stories with his first documentary titled "Beans" (Best Documentary at the Fort Worth Indie Film Showcase). It was followed by another award-winning boxing documentary titled, "Shiloh" which can be found on Amazon Prime. He followed up Shiloh with another boxing film, "Knifechief". In 2020, his short film, "Warrior Coach", won 2 awards (Bare Bones International Film Festival and Best Director at LA Skins Fest).

Mark's first feature length sports documentary, "Tvshka Nowvt Aya", covered Oklahoma Choctaw stickball and won Best Film in 2018 at the NatiVisions Film Festival in Arizona. His second documentary with the Choctaw Nation, "Ikhaiyana la chi" (I Will Remember) won three awards (NatiVisions Film Festival, LA Skins Fest, Will Rogers International Film Festival).

Mark's latest film, "The Journey of Tiak Hikiya Ohoyo", a sports documentary about Mississippi Choctaw Stickball was released in August 2022 in Film Festivals having won Best Feature Documentary (Fort Smith International Film Festival) and Best Feature Film (Indigenous Film Festival). He is currently writing his next script and researching more cultural projects to give the Native people an authentic voice.



WHO TO WATCH IN 2026
VISUAL
ARTS

ALLYSON STUMPF

Allyson is a member of the Wahzhazhe nation and has spent a majority of her life residing in Northeastern Oklahoma. Currently she is practicing ceramics in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. As an OU bachelors of fine arts recipient, she is experienced in the mediums of drawing and ceramics. Her work consists of a love for animals and the ongoing journey of self discovery. The nature of her work is inspired by her personal experience as an indigenous American.



AMANDA RUTLAND

Amanda is a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and is of Seminole Nation descent. She is a daughter of the Raccoon Clan, and she grew up attending traditional Muscogee churches.

Amanda is inspired by Mississippian designs and the natural world. She works primarily in copper and gemstones. Her work incorporates the iconography and symbolism of her Mound-builder ancestors with the contemporary uses of color and pattern.

Amanda has contributed work to historical parks in Alabama and Georgia, and has created gorgets and custom jewelry for people across the United States.

She resides in Okmulgee, Oklahoma with her husband and two children.



BRENT GREENWOOD

Brent currently serves as the Fine Arts Director for the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma. Over the past 25 years, his work has been featured in exhibits across North America and abroad in Paris, France.

Because of this distinct cultural background; he expresses his narratives through both the southeastern and plains tribal lens. His early artistic influences were Native artists such as Jerome Tiger, Rance Hood, and TC Cannon. The remnants of the "Oklahoma Style" of Native art and Brent's love for contemporary art and graffiti; have come together in a style recognizably his own.

Over the years, Brent has developed his underpainting techniques to create layers of depth and energy throughout his work. His "live paint" creations are in constant demand because not only do you see the artist in action, but this is an excellent way to acquire an original painting for corporate or fundraising initiatives. Brent's paintings have been featured in publications such as First American Art Magazine, Southwest Art, and Oklahoma Today and have received numerous accolades. Although plate remains full of commissions and public art opportunities; his passion as an artist and job as an arts education director has never been more evident as he mentors the next generation of young First American artists.



WHO TO WATCH IN 2026

MUSIC



ELISA HARKINS

Elisa Harkins - is an artist, singer, electronic music composer, and curator. Her work is concerned with the body, language revitalization, and Indigenous music. She has exhibited and performed at Crystal Bridges, The Getty, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, MoMA, Spoleto Festival, and REDCAT. Harkins has received awards from Creative Capital, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Harpo Foundation, and the Mid-America Arts Alliance. In addition to her artistic practice, she serves as a visiting lecturer at various institutions, fostering dialogue around Indigenous music and arts. Harkins is an enrolled member of the Muscogee Nation and lives and works on the Muscogee Reservation.



KEN POMEROY

Ken Pomeroy – (Cherokee) raised in Moore, OK. Her songs will break your heart. She'll do it with a single line--sometimes, just one word. The pain begins as an empathetic ache. Then, as Pomeroy sings her stories, you begin to see yourself in her hurt and hope. And you realize: We're in this together.

Pomeroy weaves patterns of self-reflection and self-realization into her writing. She is chasing that sublime satisfaction that only comes with capturing a moment or a feeling that otherwise is gone forever. "I want people to hear my songs and think, 'Wow, I went through something similar, or this line reminds me of something that happened in my life. Someone else feels it, and I'm not alone.'" Pomeroy sighs. "That's what I want: People not feeling alone."



SIERRA SPIRIT

Sierra Spirit, born Sierra Spirit Kihega, is a singer songwriter from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her music is a blend of indie rock and guitar-driven melodies, drawing inspiration from her personal experiences and cultural background. She has been influenced by artists such as Phoebe Bridgers, The Japanese House, and Ethel Cain. Sierra Spirit's debut EP, "Coin Toss," explores themes of loss, love, mental health, and self-discovery, with her single "Ghost" reflecting the emotional exhaustion of a one-sided relationship. Her upcoming single "American Pie" reflects the brokenness and uncertainty felt by many, resonating with listeners due to her empathetic songwriting and authenticity.



AARON HALE

Aaron Hale – a classically trained (Oklahoma State University), multi-instrumentalist, singer/songwriter, and an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. Upon the release of his debut album “Wildflowers & Atom Bombs” in 2017, Hale began performing with and without his band (Aaron Hale & The Human Beings) at music festivals nationwide taking with him a strong message of environmental stewardship, Native American Sovereignty, and global unity. Currently Hale is recording his sophomore album, “Stardust & Campfires.” The album features McKenzie Webb on drums, and Patricio Labarca (Medicine for the People) on bass with Hale playing guitar and keys. The album also features a collaboration with Supaman, Peewee Dreads (Wookiefoot) and Sierra Marin contributing vocals, and Tim Snyder (Medicine for the People/Wolfgang Timber) on violin. Hale is also featured as a keyboardist in Chase Makai’s (Medicine for the People) debut album “Undique.” Trent Bell (Chainsaw Kittens) produces and records Hale’s albums at Bell Labs Recording in Norman, Oklahoma.



AGALISIGA “CHUJ” MACKEY

Agalisiga “Chuj” Mackey – a Cherokee singer/songwriter who grew up in the small traditional Cherokee community of Kenwood, OK. Mackey melds a classic country and blues sound drawn from Jimmy Rodgers and R.L. Burnside with his deep baritone voice honed from his upbringing in singing Cherokee ceremonial songs. In a short time, the 21-year-old father of two has grown from covering vintage tunes down at the creek to performing on big stages around the Midwest while cultivating a growing audience among country western fans and Native Americans alike. Audiences are universally intrigued to hear the Cherokee language sung in this mode and captivated by Mackey’s authentic folksy presence on stage. Outside of his music, he is a language and culture educator at the Cherokee Immersion Charter School, where he teaches children from Pre-K to 8th grade both ceremonial songs and contemporary Cherokee music.



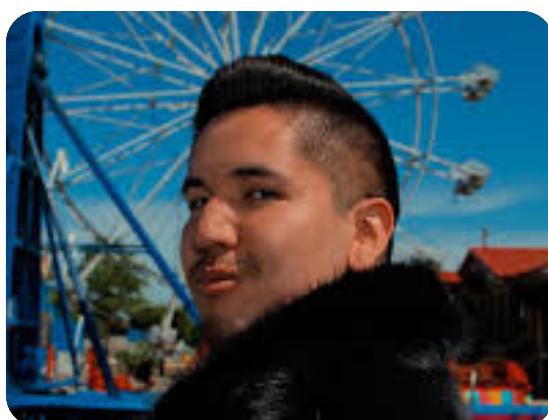
KALYN FAY

FOLK/AMERICANA SINGER-SONGWRITER.



LILA (LILLIAN CHARLES)

CHEROKEE POP SINGER-SONGWRITER



COLBY LUPER

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www.downstream.com

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Event Center: 918.786.1974
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Facebook: Oklahoma Indian Arts & Crafts Co-Operative

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www.famok.org

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Facebook: @SAndLGallery

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Red Earth

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www.redearth.org

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www.seminolenationmuseum.org

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www.fivetribe.org

Gilcrease Museum

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www.gilcrease.org

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Caddo Nation of Oklahoma
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405.656.2344

Cherokee Nation
South of Tahlequah, Hwy. 62, Tahlequah, OK
918.453.5000

Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes
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405.262.0345

Chickasaw Nation
124 East 14th Street, Ada, OK
580.436.2603

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
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Citizen Potawatomi Nation
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918.337.6550

Delaware Nation
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Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
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Fort Sill Apache Tribe
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405.964.7053

Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
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580.654.2300

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Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma
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918.542.1190

Muscogee (Creek) Nation
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800.482.1979

Osage Nation
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918.540.1536

Otoe-Missouria Tribe
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877.692.6863

Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma
Pawnee, OK
918.762.3621

Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
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918.540.2535

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580.762.8104

Quapaw Tribe of Indians
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918.542.1853

Sac and Fox Nation
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918.560.6198

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United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians
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Bar/Grill | Pro-shop

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Fountainhead Creek Golf Course

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918.689.3209

18 Holes | Par 72 | Dress code | Bar/Grill | Pro-shop

Cherokee Springs Golf Course

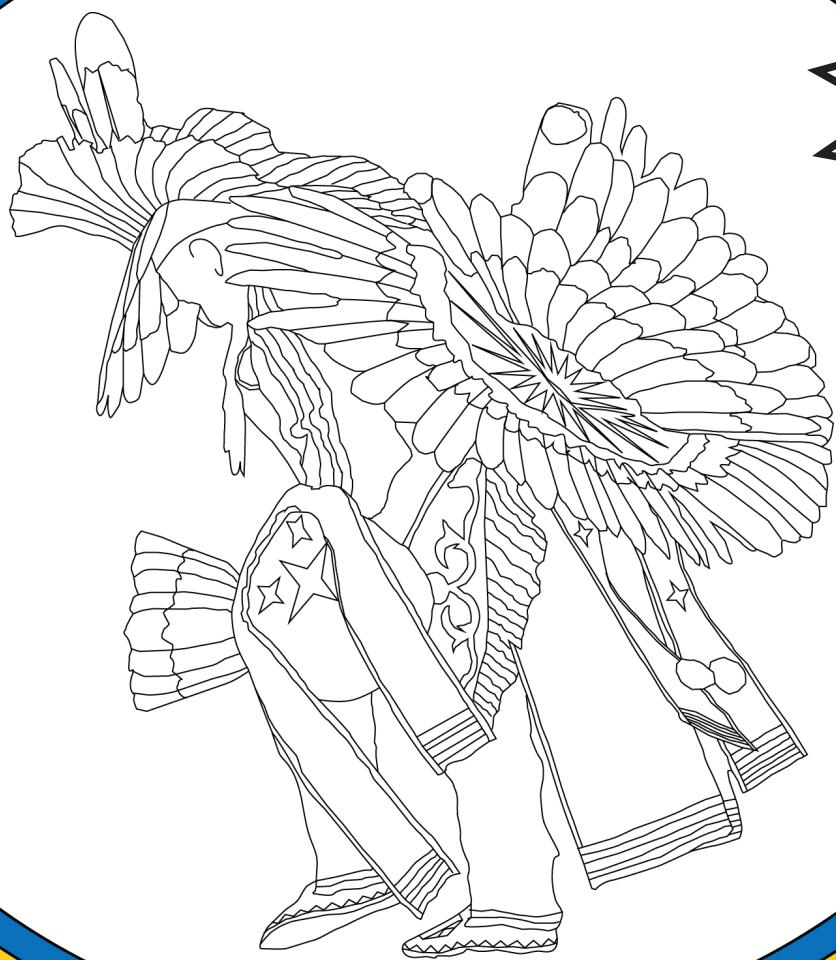
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POW WOW

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