

Building Knowledge. Elevating Sovereignty.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Partners,

This year marks a turning point for the Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research—a vibrant new chapter that we've proudly come to call our Research Era.

For the first time, we are not only convening conversations but producing policy research that aligns with and supports the priorities of Tribal Nations. We hired our first policy analyst, who will focus on tribal healthcare policy, and I had the privilege of publishing a piece that signals the kind of sovereignty-centered analysis we intend to deliver moving forward. These steps may seem small in the academic world, but they are transformational for our Center—built on a vision of pairing ethical engagement with rigorous, tribally grounded policy work.

At the same time, we deepened our foundation through our Ethical Tribal Engagement (ETE) series. This year, we developed and delivered three major events in the series, each one welcoming more voices and growing a shared understanding of what it means to build sustainable, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with Tribal Nations. We also hosted OU's first Faculty ETE Showcase, highlighting both research and creative work with Tribal Nations across disciplines.

And to make this learning more accessible, we created a self-paced ETE Canvas course that is now available to the entire OU community—ensuring the core principles of ethical engagement live beyond our events and are embedded into the everyday fabric of the university.

With that goal in mind, the Center will now be stepping back from direct event planning for the ETE series. Instead, we're focusing our energy on supporting long-term institutional integration of these values through the policy research we will produce. We are proud of the foundation we've built and confident that it will continue to flourish in new ways across campus.

We also made key investments in how we reach our community. Thanks to new technology upgrades in our event space, we can now extend our programming to more partners and campuses—amplifying our message and our mission.

None of this would be possible without our incredible students, staff, and partners. We are proud to be building this era with you—and we're just getting started.

With appreciation and excitement,

TANA FITZPATRICK

Associate Vice President, Tribal Relations Director, Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research The University of Oklahoma

ABOUT US

OUR EVOLVING IDENTITY. INTRODUCING OUR NEW NAME.

This year, we proudly introduced our new name: the **Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research**. This change reflects our sharpened focus on producing tribally centered research that informs policy, builds capacity, and elevates tribal governance and sovereignty. As we grow into a research-driven institution, our new name signals a deepened commitment to ethical, reciprocal partnerships and to amplifying the voices and priorities of Tribal Nations. With this transformation, we honor our foundation while stepping fully into a future shaped by Native knowledge, leadership, and innovation.

OUR VISION

The Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research strives to be recognized as the premier institute that conducts objective, tribally centered research in the areas of tribal governance and sovereignty while providing capacity building initiatives through ethical, collaborative partnerships.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research is to serve Tribal Nations. By bridging Western and Indigenous knowledge structures, we produce exploratory, applied, and policy research for tribes in their advancement of governance and sovereignty. The Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research continually provides transformative capacity-building efforts, incorporating tribal values to deliver dynamic solutions. With an endeavor to uphold exceptional standards, we strengthen reciprocity between Tribal Nations and the University of Oklahoma while delivering essential services that were previously unavailable.

The Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research seeks to provide expertise in **tribal** economic development, tribal energy, environment/natural resources, tribal healthcare, and innovative technology.



OUR RESEARCH ERA BEGINS

NEW POLICY ANALYST

HEALTHCARE POLICY
ANALYST, GRACE FOX



The Native Nations Center hired its first Tribal Healthcare Policy Analyst, Grace Fox, to support policy research and capacity-building in partnership with Tribal Nations. In collaboration with Stephenson Cancer Center, the role focuses on cancer care policy and advancing tribal sovereignty through informed, strategic engagement.

BIO

Grace Fox is a Tribal Healthcare Policy Analyst at the University of Oklahoma's Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research (NNCTPR), where she leads research and policy development under the NIH-funded "Improving Cancer Outcomes in Native American Communities" (ICON) grant. As the first policy analyst hired at the Center, Grace's work focuses on understanding and addressing the structural barriers that impact cancer outcomes for the 38 federally recognized Tribes in Oklahoma, as well as Native communities across Indian Country.

A proud citizen of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, Grace brings a strong background in federal Indian policy, culturally grounded research, and advocacy. She earned her Master of Public Policy from the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government in 2024 as an Eisenhower Global Scholar. To fulfill her fieldwork requirement at Oxford, Grace worked in Washington, D.C. with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Tribal Relations. Her experience supporting Tribal food sovereignty and economic development initiatives during that time directly inspired her dissertation, which examined how flexible federal funding can be leveraged to uphold the federal trust responsibility while advancing sustainable, community-led development.

Grace earned her bachelor's degree from Columbia University in 2023, graduating cum laude with a double major in Psychology and Ethnicity & Race Studies (Native American/Indigenous Studies). Her leadership and academic achievements have been recognized through several prestigious honors, including the Gates Scholarship, the Udall Undergraduate Scholarship, and the 2023 Udall Native American Congressional Internship, during which she served at the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Education.

Originally from Edmond, Grace now lives in Norman, Oklahoma. Outside of work, she loves traveling, playing tennis, learning languages, beading, fashion, bartending, playing the viola, and—most importantly—creating beautiful memories with her incredible friends, family, and two goofy Boston Terriers.

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OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

TANA FITZPATRICK WINS HARGRAVE FACULTY WRITING COMPETITION

Sovereignty Symposium XXVII, June 12–13, 2025 OKANA Resort, Oklahoma City, OK Oklahoma City University School of Law

NNCTPR director, Tana Fitzpatrick, was awarded the Hargrave Faculty Writing Award at the Sovereignty Symposium XXVII for her research titled, "Federal Gatekeeping and Hollow Sovereignty: A Historical Statutory Analysis of Tribal Access to Legal Representation." The piece explores how, for over a century, federal law restricted tribes from hiring attorneys without approval from the Secretary of the Interior—effectively limiting tribal self-determination. Her analysis highlights the legacy of legal barriers that continue to shape what sovereignty looks like in practice today.

Read the full publication on the NNCTPR website at ou.edu/nativenationscenter/research.



STUDENT RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: IMPROVING FEDERAL-TRIBAL CONSULTATION PROCESSES

Grace Harris (Cherokee Nation), a Fall 2024 intern and NAS Mellon Impact Fellow, researched how to strengthen tribal consultation between Tribal Nations and the federal government. Her work recommended standardizing agency websites for better accessibility and increasing tribal capacity through dedicated consultation funding. Grace's research builds on previous NNC efforts to support more effective and respectful government-to-government engagement.

Read the full publication on the NNCTPR website at ou.edu/nativenationscenter/research.



2024-2025 ETHICAL TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT SERIES

OVERVIEW

The 2024–2025 ETE Series focused on honing relationships with Tribal Leaders and bridging the gaps in understanding around tribal governance and sovereignty issues. Each ETE event featured a Tribal Leader as part of the featured panel.

participants in

This year, the ETE series served participants across all OU campuses and world-wide with a 136% increase from the previous year.

participants in

total engaged Tribal Nations in

This year, the ETE series served representatives from 31 Tribal Nations across North America with a 343% increase from the previous year.

total engaged **Tribal Nations in** 2023 - 2024

*See graphic under Tribal Impact on the next page

NEW CANVAS COURSE

On June 17th, 2025, we launched the ETE Basic Training course. This self-paced Canvas course introduces foundational principles for engaging ethically and respectfully with Tribal Nations. Developed by the NNCTPR and the Office of Tribal Relations, the curriculum explores best practices in collaboration, reciprocity, and relationship-building in research, projects, and partnerships with tribes. It is part of the broader Ethical Tribal Engagement Series and is designed to support ongoing learning and cultural understanding within the OU community.

Our DOE-funded Methane Emissions project, a collaboration with the Institute for Resilient Environmental & Energy Systems, supported the initial stages for the development of the Canvas course. Through other partnerships and collaborations, such as the collaboration with Stephenson Cancer Center Native American Center for Cancer Health Excellence (NACCHE) team on the Improving Cancer Outcomes in Native American Communities (ICON) grant, we continue to develop our Canvas

Canvas course available at ou.edu/nativenationscenter/resources/ete/training.

total ETE Series events hosted

This year, the ETE Series hosted six events across all three OU campuses—including a return to Tulsa and a first-ever event at the OU Health Sciences Center (OUHSC).

OCT Tribal Engagement 101 -Session I (Hybrid Seminar)

Bridging Gaps: Treaties and Treaty Rights - A Tribal Leader's Perspective (Keynote Presentation)

Ethical Engagement Showcase: Tribal Partnerships in Academia (Poster Showcase)

Al, Data Sovereignty, and Tribal Issues – OU Tulsa (Panel Discussion)

Tribal Engagement 101 -Session II (Hybrid Seminar)

Sacred Science: A **Conversation About** Traditional Healing and Research with Tribal Nations -**OUHSC** (Panel Discussion)

NOTABLE FIRSTS

In November 2024, NNCTPR hosted the first Ethical Tribal Engagement Showcase highlighting Tribal Partnerships in Academia. This event sought to transcend silos, offering a space where ethical collaborative engagements were on full display through poster presentations, interactive displays, and networking opportunities. There were 17 stations with 37 faculty, tribal partners, and graduate researchers represented from across the Norman campus sharing their work across a diverse range of departments and topics.





"The poster session and the talk before it worked out very well, it allowed us to meet many new faculty, students, and guests visiting the center. We had such a good time discussing our work with all those who attended."

– Sherry Kast, Instructor of Public Relations

"It was incredible to see the amount of research that is being conducted with our tribes in Oklahoma. We are thankful for the partnerships we have developed with the lowa Tribe of Oklahoma and Muscogee Nation as we work with them to celebrate heritage and diversity along Oklahoma's Route 66, particularly since the centennial of the Mother Road will be observed in 2026. The Showcase also provided my PR writing students an opportunity to cover the event for a writing assignment, while at the same time learn about the initiatives on campus with Native Nations."

- Victor Maggue, Senior Program Administrator - IREES

FEATURED SPEAKERS & PANELISTS



Tana Fitzpatrick Associate VP of Tribal Relations; Director, Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research



Forrest Tahdooahnippah



Warren Queton D-7 Legislator, Kiowa Tribe

Benjamin Barnes Chief, Shawnee Tribe



Jeff Fife Chief of Staff. Muscogee (Creek) Nation

filled in for **David Hill** Principal Chief, Muscogee (Creek) Nation



Professor of Law - University



Dr. Matthew Beattie Adjunct Professor of Applied Artificial Intelligence - OU Polytechnic Institute



Vanessa Hiratsuka

Senior Researcher/Co-Director for the National Resource Center for Alaska Native Elders Southcentral Foundation Research Department



Chris Tall Bear Tribal Public Health Advisor and Traditional Healer



Mark Doescher OU-HSC Researcher &

Professor; Associate Director. Community Outreach and Engagement, Stephenson Cancer Center

June 2025 marked the ETE series debut at the OU Health Sciences Center. This event was a notable success with 47 OU Departments and institutes representatives from across all three campuses, 23 tribes or tribal organizations represented from across the country, 11 city and federal representatives, 5 major universities representatives, and countless for profit and non-profit representatives in attendance.

LOOKING AHEAD

While the ETE programming will continue through efforts by the AVP-TR and CFE, the NNC-TPR is intentionally narrowing our event calendar in FY26 to prioritize research.

STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

OVERVIEW

Over the past year, the NNCTPR has continued to expand and deepen its relationships across campus, throughout the state, and with Tribal Nations across all regions. Our data shows a significant increase in both the number and diversity of partners we've supported-from academic departments and research initiatives at OU, to Tribal governments and organizations across multiple regions. These collaborations have strengthened our role to becoming a central hub for advancing Indigenous research, knowledge exchange, and innovative solutions that address Tribal priorities.



events hosted in the Native **Nations Event** Center

total events hosted in 2023 - 2024

50% increase



OU deparments & organizations supported via **Event Center** Usage

supported in 2023 - 2024

Natives Into Health Student Organization

Tribal and Indigenous Education Iniatives



30% increase



OU departments & organziations supported via podcasting equipment

total supported in 2023 - 2024

Education Leadership



OU departments & organizations supported via Tribal Flag Rentals

supported in <u> 2023 - 2024</u>

100% increase

Organizations & Departments Supported (from above) Norman Public Schools Indian Education Native American Studies (NAS) American Indian Student Association (AISA) Department of English Admissions and Recruitment Human Resources Department Indigenous Art Forms Indigenous Resource Circle Department of Women's and Gender Studies Stephenson Cancer Center - OUHSC Osage Club School of Biomedical Engineering American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) **OU Alumni Association** Multiethnic Intervasity Bible Study Tovebo - Kiowa Tribe Native Americans in Healt Care Association Kiowa Tribe - District 7 VPRC - Data Insitute for Societal Challenges Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Gamma Delta Pi Sorority Office of the President Graduate Associates in Polital Science (GAPS) OU Graduation Center for Applied Social Research (CASR) Marketing & Communications (MARCOMM) Genomics and Ethics Program for Native Students





Tribal Nations engaged (ETE series & **Event Center** usage)

total engaged in 2023 - 2024

343% increase



Tribes Engaged

Total

2

Oklahoma - Absentee Shawnee, Caddo Nation, Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation, Comanche Nation, Kaw Nation, Kiowa Tribe, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Otoe-Missouria Tribe, Osage Nation, Quapaw, Southern Cheyenne

Alaska - Aleutian Pribilof Islands Tribes, Athabascan Tribe, Eastern Aleutian Tribes, Yakutat Tribal Community

California - Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake Tribe (HPUL), Winnemem Wintu

Saskatchewan, Canada - Cree Nation

Arizona - Dine (Navajo Nation)

Maine - Passamaquoddy Tribe

Alberta, Canada - Blood Tribe

Colorado - Southern Ute

Minnesota - White Earth Band of Ojibwe

Nevada - Lovelock Paiute Tribe **New Mexico -** Pueblo Descendant, Dine (Navajo Nation)

South Dakota - Lakota Sioux

Wisconsin - Oneida Nation Wyoming - Northern Arapaho

STAYING CURRENT WITH TECHNOLOGY

In 2024, the NNCTPR team prioritized staying at the forefront of emerging technologies to better serve Tribal Nations and the university community. This commitment was demonstrated through professional development, national conference participation, and significant infrastructure upgrades.



In August 2024, three NNCTPR staff members attended the Ai4 Conference in Las Vegas, a leading national conference focused on the responsible use of artificial intelligence in enterprise, research, and public policy.

The knowledge gained at Ai4 directly inspired the Al, Data Sovereignty, and Tribal Issues ETE Panel, hosted in Spring 2025, and laid the foundation for our ongoing efforts to explore the intersection of Al, tribal governance, and data ethics.

Our attendance at Ai4 2024 was made possible through complimentary academic tickets and support from event organizers, ensuring responsible stewardship of our center's budget.

While attending the Ai4 2024 Conference in Las Vegas, our team also visited the iconic MSG Sphere—a state-of-the-art immersive venue known for its cutting-edge audiovisual technology and data-driven design. The Sphere visit served as an extension of our research into emerging technologies, offering insight into the practical applications of AI, spatial computing, and real-time audience engagement. This experience deepened our understanding of how immersive environments can be leveraged for education, communication, and cultural preservation—insights that continue to inform our programming and strategic vision.

Looking ahead, the team will continue its focus in this area with plans to attend both Ai4 2025 and the National Conference on Al Law, Ethics, Safety & Compliance in the upcoming academic year.

To enhance our ability to host hybrid and hightech events, the NNCTPR Event Center underwent several technology-focused upgrades. These improvements include:

- Enhanced automatic audio/visual system integration for livestreaming and hybrid event delivery.
- Installation of touch-panel controls for streamlined room and presentation management.
- Upgraded cameras, microphones, projection systems for accessibility and clarity.

These upgrades were funded in part by a Department of Energy-funded Methane Emissions grant, with additional support from our partners at ICAST (Institute for Community and Society Transformation). The upgrades reflect our ongoing commitment to providing a welcoming and modern space for Tribal Nations, researchers, and students to gather, learn, and collaborate.





Quanah Yazzie, NNCTPR Office Manager, attended the Adobe Summit, held March 17-20, 2025, in Las Vegas, Nevada. During the summit, he received certifications in a suite of Adobe enterprise products, including Adobe Analytics, Adobe Marketo Engage, and Adobe Experience Manager. These certifications enhance our center's capacity in digital storytelling, audience engagement, and data-informed outreach,

allowing us to elevate both internal projects and our communications with Tribal Nations.

This experience also prompted an internal review of the digital tools and platforms currently available through OU, helping us assess which products could best support our work and where there may be opportunities to adopt new tools or improve existing systems for broader impact.

INSIGHTS & ANALYTICS

16,104

Total website visits

*14,437 total visitors reported in 2023-2024.

Top 10 Regions (USA):

Oklahoma 9,782 255 Arizona 1922 215 Texas 155 California 421 Minnesota Virginia 314 142 **New York** 302 2,563 Illinois Other

Top 10 Countries:

Our website analytics this year provided valuable insight into audience behavior,

including age demographics, traffic sources, and peak visit times. Using this data,

we're currently developing a Marketing Communications Plan, set to be drafted

in the upcoming year, to guide our outreach and strengthen our online impact.

USA 15760 12 Italy 67 12 32 India New Zealand 11 Germany 19 Poland 11 18 130 **Philippines** Other

> 140.4% INCREASE

7,855

Total unique visitors

7 267 total unique vicitors reported in 2027, 2024

ONLINE IMPACT Following the launch of a new mission, vision, and brand identity last year,

the NNCTPR established a refreshed digital presence through a complete overhaul of its website and social media platforms. Now in our second year of implementation, we've entered a more sustained phase of digital engagement.

With consistent website updates, targeted content strategies, and active social media management, we've seen continued and significant growth in our online reach and audience engagement compared to our initial launch year.

WEBSITE DATA

Over the past year, we've significantly increased our online presence through our website, as tracked and managed via Google Analytics. Our site saw strong growth across key metrics, including a notable rise in total visits, user engagement, and an increase in international viewership.

CONGR



NTER FOR TRIBAL POLICY RESEARCH THE OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER

HE 2025 NRA CHAMPIONSHIP

TIVE NATIONS CENTER





SOCIAL MEDIA DATA

The NNCTPR has seen steady growth across our most-used social media platforms, further expanding our reach and engagement with audiences online.

11.9%

CHALLENGES ON X

Our Twitter (now X) account saw a significant drop in followers and engagement this year, more than we anticipated. This decline aligns with broader platform trends: mass follower losses driven by bot purges, widespread user deactivations, and an exodus of users moving to newer platforms. Given this, we're evaluating alternative channels like LinkedIn to regain traction and build more more engagement outside X.

112.4% INCREASE
+154
New Followers

291 Total Followers

11

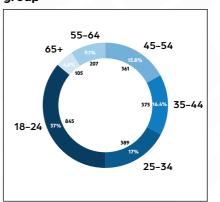
Unfollowers

65 Total Followers

*117 new followers reported in 2023-2024.

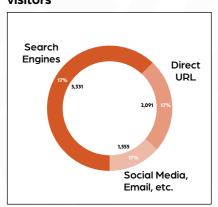
Total unique visitors by age group

DEMOGRAPHICS



*This data reflects **2,282 unique visitors** with reported age group. Remaining data is unknown.

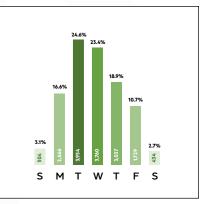
Website traffic sources for total



*This data reflects **8,977 total website visitors**. Remaining data is unknown.

12

Website peak days of the week for total visitors



*This data reflects **total website visitors**. According to data, Sunday, December 29, 2024 was the only day without a visitor.

New Followers

424 Total Followers

eported in 2023-2024. *137 new followers reported in 2023-2024.

^{*379} new followers reported in 2023-2024

OTHER **HIGHLIGHTS**

AISA OU POWWOW

The Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research proudly supported the American Indian Student Association's OU Powwow with a \$500 donation. We are honored to continue our ongoing partnership celebrating Indigenous culture and community.

\$2,000 to OU LAW

The Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research provided essential funding to the Center for the Study of American Indian Law and Policy at OU College of Law.

OKLAHOMA NATIVE YOUTH LANGUAGE FAIR

The Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research proudly supported the 2025 Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair with a \$2,000 donation. This important event celebrates Indigenous language revitalization and student achievement across the region.

SOVERIGHTY SYMPOSIUM XXVII

NNCTPR Director, Tana Fitzpatrick, and Research Project Manager, Evelyn Cox, represented the NNCTPR at the 2025 Sovereignty Symposium in Oklahoma City, engaging in vital conversations on tribal sovereignty, law, and policy.

INDIGENOUS MEDIA PORTAL

NNCTPR provided grant support and advisory guidance for the Indigenous Media Portal and hosted the project's official launch in our Native Nations Event Center, advancing Indigenous storytelling and digital access.

NATIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY SYMPOSIUM

NNCTPR team members supported the Native Renewable Energy Symposium on September 12–13, 2024. NNCTPR Director, Tana Fitzpatrick, provided welcoming remarks. The NNCTPR team provided a campus tour for tribal officials.

MEET & MINGLE INFO SESSION

The Office of Tribal Relations, including the Native Nations Center and Associate VP of Tribal Relations, hosted a "Meet and Mingle" session to share updates and strategic plans for the year ahead. The event offered a chance to connect and learn about ongoing initiatives advancing our commitment to Tribal partnerships.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY

The NNCTPR proudly supported OU's Indigenous Peoples Day by providing our tribal flags and access to our Native Nations
Event Center for various activities. We're honored to help celebrate and uplift Indigenous cultures on campus.

2025 STATE OF THE TRIBAL NATIONS

Evelyn Cox, NNCTPR Research Project Manager, attended the Tulsa Regional Chamber's State of the Tribal Nations. We were proud to represent the Office of the President and support OU Tulsa at this event.

2025 AND BEYOND

With the finalization of our strategic plan in FY23, the Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research is poised for significant growth and impact in the coming years. Central to our vision is the expansion of our research capacity—broadening the scope, depth, and quality of applied and policy research that directly supports Tribal Nations.

These steps are part of a sustained effort to build institutional capacity that honors tribal knowledge systems and advances tribal sovereignty through rigorous, community-engaged scholarship. As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering meaningful partnerships, developing innovative research tools, and providing research for Tribal Nations.

50TH ANNUAL INDIAN LAW CONFERENCE

NNCTPR Director Tana
Fitzpatrick attended the
Federal Bar Association's 50th
Annual Indian Law Conference
in Albuquerque, strengthening
connections and engaging in key
discussions on federal Indian law
and policy.

TRIBAL PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE

Evelyn Cox, NNCTPR Research
Project Manager, attended the
Southern Plains Tribal Health
Board's 17th Annual Tribal
Public Health Conference at
the Choctaw Casino & Resort in
Durant, Oklahoma. This was in
support of the ICON community
engagement core event.

NAISA CONFERENCE 2025

Evelyn Cox, NNCTPR Research
Project Manager, volunteered at
the 2025 Native American and
Indigenous Studies Association
(NAISA) Conference, held in
Oklahoma City, OK, supporting
the event and engaging with
scholars and community leaders
in Indigenous research

WITH GRATITUDE

Thank you to the Chickasaw Nation, our university partners, and tribal communities for your continued support.

Special thanks to OU's Istitute for Community and Society Transformation (ICAST) for their contributions this year.