



AMERICAN INDIAN  
HERITAGE MONTH



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## **American Indian Community Working Group Statement**

The opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the Kansas City Chiefs is an opportunity for the American Indian Community Working Group to be consistent with the mission of creating an awareness and understanding of issues affecting Native people. Native people and American Indian tribes have consistently encouraged consultation with our communities to better understand and address issues affecting us.

The American Indian Community Working Group respects the diverse perspectives that exist in Indian Country on broadly addressing the mascot issue in our nation. We recognize the opportunity to engage in a cross-cultural consultation and dialogue with the Kansas City Chiefs in hopes of facilitating a process that – over time – can lead to a cultural change in disrespectful behavior seen at times by some fans at NFL games. This journey began more than three years ago when we first contacted the Chiefs, and as we embark on this year’s celebration of American Indian Heritage Month, we appreciate their continued and sincere effort to better understand the issues from a Native perspective. We have been educated on the history and values of the Chiefs organization; and, we believe there is an opportunity to educate on the issues through connecting our community here and honoring traditions.

The consultation in which we are engaging has just begun; and, we are optimistic that it will be a part of an ongoing process that can serve as a model to be implemented by other teams in other communities.

## **American Indian Community Working Group**

- The American Indian Community Working Group serves as a liaison with the Native community and as an advisor to the Kansas City Chiefs to promote an awareness and understanding of Native cultures and tribes in the region.
- The working group is comprised of four individuals who have experience working in intertribal communities and with diverse Native cultures.
- In addition, the working group members have a strong collective experience in working with education, job creation, culture programs and youth team sports relationships in Native communities.
- Members:
  - John Learned – Cheyenne-Arapaho
  - Gena Timberman – Choctaw
  - Gary Johnson – Choctaw
  - Richard Lanoue – Lakota



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## Biographical Information for Key Individuals

- John Learned
  - Born in Lawrence and grew up in Oklahoma City. Currently resides in Kansas City.
  - His mother, Juanita, was the first woman to be elected chairperson of the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma.
  - Founded the American Indian Heritage Center of the Great Plains in Kansas City.
  - Two younger brothers, Brent and Matt, are accomplished painters. Brent's depictions of Plains Indian life have appeared at the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institution.
  - Consultant at Kansas City Indian Center.
  - Purchased the Loretto for a Native American sports building that will house Hall of Fame.
  - Coached volleyball at Haskell Indian Nations University and then at Kansas as an assistant. Became the first women's volleyball coach at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1987.
- Gena Timberman
  - Liaison for the American Indian Community Working Group.
  - Resides in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
  - Attorney and Founder of the Luksi Group, LLC, a consulting firm specializing in museums and cultural projects.
  - Member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.
  - Prominent positions and affiliations:
    - Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Museums Association.
    - Served as the Executive Director of the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority of the State of Oklahoma.
    - Served as the Director of the American Indian Cultural Center & Museum.
    - Honored as a Native Daughter by the University of Nebraska.
    - Oklahoma Health Center Foundation Board of Trustees.
    - Creative Oklahoma Board of Directors.
    - MAPS Citizens Advisory Committee/River Subcommittee.
    - Oklahoma City Rotary Club 29.
    - Journal Record's Oklahoma City Business 40 Under 40.

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## American Indian Heritage Month Gameday Highlights

- Blessing of the Four Directions
  - Performed by Mr. Creg Hart, a member of the Kitfox Society of Men, a Cheyenne Spiritual Leader and Teacher from Thomas, Oklahoma.
  - Tribal leaders from up to 20 tribes with a historic presence in Chiefs Kingdom will participate while displaying their tribal sovereign nation flags.
- Blessing Ceremony and Honor Song
  - Led by Mr. George Curtis Levi, a Southern Cheyenne Kitfox Warrior Society Member and Cheyenne Ceremonial Leader, along with the Cheyenne-Arapaho Singers, it is performed in honor of the family of Chiefs long snapper James Winchester.
- American Indian Honor Color Guard
  - The Buddy Bond Color Guard of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes will present the colors for the game.
- National Anthem
  - The Chickasaw Nation Youth Choir will perform the national anthem.
- Drum Mallet Delivery
  - Harding George Levi, a Southern Cheyenne Chief in fifth grade, will present the drum mallet to the Chiefs Drum Honoree for the game (this concludes the pregame ceremonies and acknowledgements).
- Additional Highlights:
  - Four In-Game Educational Announcements:
    - Recap of American Indian Heritage Month
    - Blessing of the Four Directions Recap
    - Honoring those of American Indian Heritage in the Chiefs Organization
    - Chiefs American Indian Heritage Month PLAY 60 Event Recap
  - Table and display at Ford Fan Experience outside of Founder's Gate (near Lot M) to allow for fan interaction and the building of cultural awareness.
  - Additional information available on:  
[www.chiefs.com/americanindianheritagemonth/index.html](http://www.chiefs.com/americanindianheritagemonth/index.html).



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## **Blessing of the Four Directions (9:45 a.m., 50-Yard Line, Home Sideline)**

- Mr. Creg Hart is giving the Blessing of the Four Directions in the way of his people.
- Today's blessing is meant to bring a sense of preparation and good spirit to this special day.
- The sacred directions are incorporated into the blessing.
- Tribal leaders and tribal representatives are encircling Mr. Hart and are carrying the flags that represent their tribes as sovereign nations.
- These tribes involved in the ceremony today are tribes who have had a historic connection to the land around where we are today at Arrowhead Stadium.
- The presence of tribes today signifies that, despite historical challenges, they join us today to honor tradition and unite our community.
- The visual representation on the field represents the diverse and vibrant American Indian cultures that surround us.

## **Honor Song (11:40 a.m., East Endzone Sideline)**

- Mr. George Curtis Levi will be joined by the Cheyenne-Arapaho singers to prepare the Chiefs drum for today's game by blessing the drum and then performing a special Honor Song.
- The Honor Song will be performed in recognition of the Winchester family.

## **Color Guard (11:57 a.m., South Sideline)**

- A fitting tribute to American Indian Heritage Month, the Buddy Bond Color Guard of the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes joins us to display our nation's colors.
- The color guard was formed in 1989 to honor the Cheyenne-Arapaho Veterans.
- The color guard was initially called The Oklahoma Inter-Tribal Color Guard. In 1996, the name changed to Buddy Bond Color Guard in honor of one of its members who passed away.
- The color guard has done funeral details, presented colors at numerous powwows, school activities and sporting events.



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## **National Anthem (11:57 a.m., South Sideline)**

- Today's national anthem will be performed by members of the Chickasaw Nation Youth Choir.
- Since its beginnings in 2002, the Chickasaw Nation Youth Choir has had the honor of performing at milestone celebrations such as the "Ground Blessing" of the American Indian Cultural Center in Oklahoma City, Okla., Governor Brad Henry's Children's Inauguration and numerous times at the Oklahoma State Capitol.
- The choir also performs at a variety of tribal events, including the Chickasaw Annual Meeting and Festival and the Youth Arts Celebration.
- Since music is such an important part of the Chickasaw lifestyle, the children's choir has been an important opportunity for children to be engaged in music while learning the language of the Chickasaw Nation.

## **Drum Mallet Delivery (12:00 p.m., East Endzone)**

- Today, in a symbolic act of ceremony, Harding George Levi, will present the drum mallet to the Chiefs Drum Honoree for the game, Chiefs Hall of Fame Guard Ed Budde.



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## **Tribes Represented in Today's American Indian Heritage Month Celebration**

- Absentee Shawnee Tribe
- Cheyenne-Arapaho
- Chickasaw Nation
- Choctaw Nation
- Citizen Potawatomi Nation
- Delaware Tribe
- Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska
- Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma
- Kaw Nation
- Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas
- Modoc Tribe
- Navajo Nation
- Peoria Tribe
- Pima Tribe
- Seneca-Cayuga Tribe
- Spirit Lake Tribe
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
- Wichita Tribe
- Wyandotte Nation





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## **Additional Educational Information provided by American Indian Community Working Group**

- Understanding Where Tribes with a Historic Presence in this Region Come From, according to Gena Timberman, former Director of the Native American Cultural & Educational Authority in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma:

“Prior to Kansas becoming a state, it was designated as Indian Territory, which was part of the Indian Removal Act. Many tribes signed treaties agreeing to move onto reservations in Oklahoma and Kansas in exchange for undisputed ownership of new land. Other tribes refused or resisted and were forcibly moved into Kansas by the United States Army.

“Many of the tribes who were relocated to Kansas suffered a second wave of removal when the fertile land in and around Kansas was re-designated as a territory in 1854 and the region opened to white settlement. At that point, the vast majority of Kansas Indian tribes, including many of the tribes originally native to this area, were forced to go through a second removal to Oklahoma in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, where many still live today.

“The majority of tribes participating in the ceremonies today are tribes who have a present day or historic presence in the area around Arrowhead Stadium. Today, they are part of a regional tribal community that includes the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations – native to Oklahoma – that support the Chiefs initiative to unite the community and create American Indian Heritage Month experiences that educate on the awareness of who tribes and Native people are – both past and present.”

- Two current members of the Chiefs roster are of American Indian descent:
  - QB Tyler Bray is a member of Citizen Potawatomi Nation.
  - LS James Winchester is a member of Choctaw Nation.

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## Additional Educational Information provided by American Indian Community Working Group

- Understanding Symbolic and Spiritual Treasures of American Indian Culture
  - The Headdress and War Bonnet
    - Headdresses have deep spiritual and cultural meaning for Native Americans.
    - The feathered war bonnet is the headdress that many people typically associate with Native Americans, and is the one that popular culture most generally uses to portray American Indians.
    - Worn mostly by Northern and Southern Plains tribes, Native people create the regal crown by hand from the feathers of eagles, considered the sky's greatest bird and believed to have the power to protect the wearer from harm.
    - The headdress is a symbol of leadership, and each feather is earned and shows a position of leadership.
    - Not everybody in Native cultures has the right to wear headdresses. They are reserved for special cultural or spiritual occasions.
    - While it might be the most recognizable to the general public, the war bonnet is not the only manner of headdress worn by American Indians.
    - All tribes and all indigenous nations have their particular headdress or regalia specific to their tribe.
    - Balance between the promotion of stereotypes and actual knowledge and respect for how American Indians use the headdress as a cultural treasure is always the goal.
    - The notion of Native people primarily existing in the past and open to acquisition by anyone is not compatible with understanding and respecting Native people as modern citizens of Sovereign Nations in our community today.
  - War Paint
    - Like the feather of a headdress, face paint has purpose and often contains great spiritual significance depending on tribal protocol and individual interpretation.
    - Face paint, like feathers, is earned through actions and deeds that bring honor to both tribes and nations.
    - To many American Indians, the idea of individuals outside of the Native community who have not earned the right or permission to wear face paint would be analogous to casually wearing a military uniform and displaying medals when one has never served as an active member of the military.