



Panelists Bio and Picture

Welcome Session

Riverside Indian School Color Guard

Vice Chairman Jacob Tsotigh

Chairman Lawrence SpottedBird

President Walter Echo Hawk

James Nells, Riverside Indian School Color Guard

James Nells, Dine', Combat Veteran, Coordinator, Riverside Indian School Color Guard.



Riverside Indian School Color Guard 2022-23

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|----|-------------|
| 1. Zayla Ataddlety | Iowa | OK | |
| 2. Melissa Chalepah | Apache | OK | |
| 3. Kaylen Coleman | Kiowa | OK | |
| 4. Eva Follette | Iowa | OK | |
| 5. Nathaniel Taliman | Hualapai/Dine' | AZ | Rifle |
| 6. Nolan Taliman | Hualapai/Dine' | AZ | Rifle |
| 7. Elijah Toles | Cheyenne/Arapaho | OK | US Flag |
| 8. Nanabahzhoni Tom | Dine' | NM | OK Flag |
| 9. Suellyn Walks | Crow | MT | RIS Flag |
| 10. Aurelius Yesslith | Dine' | AZ | Eagle Staff |
| 11. Kamea BlackCloud | Sac & Fox | IA | |

Sponsor: Captain James E. Nells – Dine' (Navajo)

US Army Infantry-Ranger – Combat veteran – Bronze Star Medal

The Riverside Indian School Color Guard was founded by Sergeant Lowell "Skeets" Russell, US Army, a member of the Kiowa Tribe in the mid 1990's. The color guard has travelled many places to present the Eagle Staff and flags at functions such as pow-wows, parades, conferences, athletic events and funerals. They have travelled as far as Albuquerque, New Mexico, Scottsdale, Arizona, and Denver Colorado. All members are current students of Riverside Indian School at Anadarko, Oklahoma and represent many different Native American Tribes. Riverside Indian School is a BIA boarding school and is the oldest BIA school in the United States founded in 1871.

Jacob S. Tsotigh, Jr.



JACOB S. TSOTIGH, JR. (KIOWA), M.Ed., is the Vice-Chairman of the Kiowa Tribe and a former Kiowa Tribe Legislator who represented approximately 5,600 tribal citizens. He has been involved in American Indian education programs for the past 38 years retiring from the University of Oklahoma and working recently with the National Indian Education Association. He served for 12 years as the Indian Education Director for Anadarko (Oklahoma) Public Schools, 3 years as Program Director and Production Specialist for Inter-Tribal Associates, Inc., and 2 years as a Training Associate with the American Indian Research and Development by the Indian Education TA Center Five and Title IX Indian Education. Mr. Tsotigh returned to Inter-Tribal Associates as Project Director to work as a sub-contractor with the University of Oklahoma's Region VII

Comprehensive Center with direct responsibility for providing high impact TA in American Indian education for over 500 grantees in the seven-state region. Mr. Tsotigh is past president of the Oklahoma Council for Indian Education (OCIE) and a long time member of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA). He was voted as "Best in Indian Country – American Indian Role Model" by readers of the Oklahoma Indian Times in 1999. He has three children and one deceased and five grandchildren. He is a 4/4 citizen of the Kiowa Tribe and specialized in parent committee training, culturally responsive pedagogy, Title VII Indian Education programming, and school improvement

Lawrence SpottedBird



Lawrence SpottedBird is currently serving as the Chairman of the Kiowa Tribe having been sworn into office on July 15, 2022. His Kiowa name is Ah Oi Hole (Kills Him Again) given to him by his grandfather – Yale Tanequoot SpottedBird. His two brothers and he were raised by their grandparents, Yale and Mary WhiteHorse SpottedBird in Hobart.

He is a lifetime member of the First American Baptist Church in Hobart which was founded in 1893. He has one brother, Tommy SpottedBird, of Mescalero, New Mexico and one son, Darrin SpottedBird, and one grandson, Dylan SpottedBird. He is married to Lanie Mae Otong SpottedBird originally from President Roxas, Philippines. They have been

married for sixteen years.

He has worked for more than forty years with American Indians and Alaska Natives to promote economic development in remote communities in Oklahoma, Nebraska, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, California, Minnesota and Iowa. He graduated from the University of Central Oklahoma with a degree in Business Administration in 1982 and initially studied architecture and participated in collegiate wrestling at the University of Oklahoma.

He is a Veteran of the U.S. Navy during the VietNam Era and a member of the Ton Kon Gah (Kiowa Black Leggings Society), Tiah Piah Society and Ohomah Lodge, and next year, will become a new member of the Kiowa Gourd Clan. He is also a member of the Meskwaki Nation American Legion Post, Sitka Veterans Association and lifetime member of the Yakama Warriors Association.

Walter Echo-Hawk



Walter Echo-Hawk is President of the Pawnee Nation Business Council. As an author, attorney, and legal scholar (www.walterechohawk.com) he was the “Dan and Maggie Inouye Distinguished Chair on Democratic Ideals” at University of Hawai’i’s Law School (2018). He authored *The Sea of Grass* (2018); *In The Light Of Justice* (2013); *In the Courts of the Conqueror* (2010); and *Battlefields and Burial Grounds* (1994). A Pawnee Indian with a BA, Political Science, Oklahoma St. Univ. (1970) and JD, UNM (1973), he practices law in Oklahoma. In addition to his tribal government duties, he is Chair, Board of Directors, Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM); and is a Knowledge Givers Advisory Board member,

First American Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

As a staff attorney of the Native American Rights Fund (1973-2009), he represented Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians on significant legal issues in the modern era of federal Indian law, during the rise of modern Indian Nations in the tribal sovereignty movement. He litigated indigenous rights pertaining to religious freedom, prisoner rights, water rights, treaty rights, and reburial\repatriation rights. Echo-Hawk is admitted to practice law before the US Supreme Court, Colorado Supreme Court, Oklahoma Supreme Court, Courts of Appeals for the 8th, 9th, 10th and District of Columbia Circuits, Federal Claims Court, and several US District Courts.



Panelists Bio and Picture

Panel I – Physical, Mental, and Behavioral Health

Deb Starnes

Geneva Strech

Dr. Lancer Stephens

Debbie Starnes



Debbie Starnes, Chief Development Officer
Indian Health Care Resource Center

Debbie Starnes has been serving the Tulsa nonprofit community for more than three decades. Her love for people and her desire to make the world a better place are the driving force behind her fundraising skills and abilities. Debbie specializes in the establishment of development programs, grant writing and major gifts. She started her career in programming and maintains a love for project management and evaluation to this day. She has worked for community nonprofits, a major state university, a National organization, and an International Society Foundation. Debbie has

served on numerous Boards and Commissions in the Tulsa community and assisted a wide variety of Oklahoma communities as co-owner of her own consulting firm. During the six years Debbie spent as a consultant, she was an active educator in the fundraising community training Boards, volunteers, and development professionals. In 2009 she moved from her home in Tulsa, Oklahoma to Arkansas. In 2014 she returned to Tulsa to serve as the Development Director for Indian Health Care Resource Center (IHCRC). In February 2022, she was promoted to Chief Development Officer responsible for development, marketing, public relations, strategic planning, and non-clinical programming, including IHCRC’s youth programs.

Geneva Strech



Geneva Strech, M.Ed., M.H.R., is the Associate Director of the University of Oklahoma E-TEAM, a research and evaluation unit in the College of Continuing Education. She also teaches an undergraduate course for the Organizational Leadership Bachelor of Arts. She has been with the University of Oklahoma since 1996 and has more than 25 years' experience managing and implementing federally funded and state funded programs and contracts. She was the program coordinator for the New Mexico pediatric sex abuse team and received the Children's Safe House of Albuquerque award in 1995 for her work. Geneva then worked for 10 years at the American Indian Institute at the University of Oklahoma where she served as the curriculum developer for a Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Prevention Project funded through the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

and the IT Coordinator for the American Indian Head Start Quality Improvement Center funded through the Administration for Children and Families. She began her work with the E-TEAM as the lead evaluator for the Treatment Effectiveness Study in Oklahoma Systems of Care (OKSOC) and has since served as the lead evaluator on several federally funded projects for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. She has coordinated large-scale evaluations, designed survey, observation, and interview instruments, coordinated data collection, and authored evaluation reports. She has served as a project director, program monitor, curriculum developer, and grant writer for various projects. Geneva is also a veteran of the U.S. Army where she attained the rank of Sergeant. She was awarded the U.S. Army Commendation Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster in 1989; the U.S. Army Commander's Coin, First Lance Missile Battalion in 1988; the U.S. Army Commendation Medal in 1988; the U.S. Army Commander's Coin, Third Corps Field Artillery in 1988; the U.S. Army Achievement Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster, 1987; and the U.S. Army Achievement Medal, 1987.

Dr. Lancer Stephens



I am enrolled in the Wichita & Affiliated Tribes of Oklahoma through the traditions of my father and also half Muscogee Creek through my mother (not enrolled).

Lancer Stephens (Wichita/Creek) is an associate dean of sovereignty, equity, diversity and inclusion and assistant professor of research at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in the Hudson College of Public Health. Additionally, Dr. Stephens is the associate director of Outreach for the Oklahoma Shared Clinical and Translational Resources Institute. He began his college career attending Haskell Indian Junior College and received his doctorate from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center focusing on Health Administration, Public Policy and Research Ethics. He has over 20 years of working with many of Oklahoma's 38 federally-recognized tribal nations in clinical research as well as national programs for the benefit of tribal populations. Dr. Stephens has had the honor of helping to establish many American Indian centric non-profit coalitions

in Oklahoma, including the Oklahoma Inter-Tribal Diabetes Coalition (OIDC), Oklahoma Tribal Finance Consortium (OTFC), and the Native Youth Preventing Diabetes (NYPD) program.



Panelists Bio and Picture

Panel 2 – Education and Early Childhood Development

Quinton Roman Nose

Randi Attocknie

Lauren Jenks-Jones

Kimberly TeeHee

Quinton Roman Nose



Quinton Roman Nose, Cheyenne

Executive Director, Tribal Education Departments
National Assembly

As an enrolled citizen of the Cheyenne Arapahoe Tribes, Quinton Roman Nose has dedicated most of his career in the Indian education field to promote and develop educational initiatives and opportunities to improve the educational levels of Native American students and tribal members. He has served two three-year terms as a Board Member and as President of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA). He did his undergraduate studies in Mathematics at Southwestern Oklahoma State University and his Graduate Studies in Gifted/Talented Education at the Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, OK. He is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Bacone College in Muskogee, OK, a board member of the Oklahoma Native Youth Language Fair at the University of Oklahoma, and the President of the school board at Riverside Indian School (BIE funded and operated) in Anadarko,

OK. Quinton currently serves as the Executive Director of Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA). He has served as Moderator/President for the Oklahoma Indian American Baptist Association and currently is the Moderator of the Watonga Indian Baptist Church, a member of the American Baptist Indian Caucus and is on the Board for the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS).

Randi Attocknie



Randi Attocknie, Director, Director, Comanche Nation Youth Program

Haa! Maruaweka!

Nu nania-tsa Ma-Ya-Va. Nu taibo nania-tsa Randi Lynn Attocknie. Nu se Yamparuka. Nu se Numu wai?pu. Nu nanumunu tsa Atakani, Pekwiohapitu, Parasumuno. Sokni ku nu pahin. Ukitisi Apache, Oklahoma-ku nu numitu. Wahati tutureti-katu. Numuturuuetii ma'ai turuaitu. "Taa Numu Turu?etuu Numi Tuetutuanu Sika Tabeni Sukuhu Tsaatu Puetsuku."

Greetings!

My name is Mayahvah (meaning: to take and knead/shape). My English name is Randi Lynn Attocknie. I am from the Root Eater Band. I am a Numu (Comanche) woman. My family is

Attocknie (Lone Tipi), Pekwiohapitu (Yellowfish), and I am a direct descendant of Chief Ten Bears. I was born in Lawton, Oklahoma and currently reside in Apache, Oklahoma. I have two children: Drey, 20 and Rosalie, 8 months. I work for the Comanche Nation Youth Program to "Serve our Comanche Youth today for a better tomorrow."

I'm lifetime resident of southwest Oklahoma, and I have been with the Comanche Nation Youth Program for over ten years and currently serve as the Program Director. My passion is rooted in the continual learning and practicing of Comanche teachings, language, and ceremony to share with the Comanche Youth that I serve to empower thru: Education, Culture, Citizenship, and Wellness. Incorporating a Comanche centered educational experience with Comanche youth thru youth led activities for ages 6-18.

Lauren Jenks-Jones



Jenks-Jones is the Executive Director of Early Childhood Education at the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Her work in the Office of Curriculum & Instruction focuses on ensuring educators, administrators, and families have the tools they need to support the academic and social-emotional development of Oklahoma's youngest learners. Prior to her current role, she has served as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, policy fellow, and professional development specialist. Lauren

holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Arkansas and a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from the University of Central Oklahoma.

Kimberly Teehee



Kim Teehee is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. She is Director of Government Relations for Cherokee Nation and Senior Vice President of Government Relations Cherokee Nation Businesses.

In 2019, Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. named her the tribe's first delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, as guaranteed in Cherokee Nation's 1835 treaty, the Treaty of New Echota, and as outlined in the Cherokee Nation Constitution. She was also named a visiting Sequoyah Fellow at her alma mater, Northeastern State University, in 2019.

Prior to returning home to the Cherokee Nation, she served as Partner for Mapetsi Policy Group, a Washington, D.C. based federal advocacy group representing Indian tribes and tribal organizations.

She previously served President Barack Obama as the first-ever Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs in the White House Domestic Policy Council for three years. Kim worked with federal agencies to develop and implement policies focused on environmental justice, tribal consultation, tribal self-determination, economic growth, public safety, health care, and education and to resolve longstanding disputes. Kim's work helped lead to a Presidential Memorandum on tribal consultation and an Executive Order on Improving American Indian and Alaska Native Educational Opportunities and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities. Kim guided the Administration's support for the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and addressed the U.N. Permanent Forum on issues affecting the world's indigenous peoples. She is especially proud of her work toward the Administration's support of proposed legislation to hold all perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their crimes against Native American women, closing a jurisdictional gap in Indian country. Kim played a key role in three White House Tribal Nations Conferences and led a government-wide team to ensure that progress was being made on tribal policy and legislative priorities.

Kim also served as Senior Advisor to the U.S. House of Representatives Native American Caucus Co-Chair, Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI). Serving the bi-partisan Caucus for nearly 12 years, she established an impressive record of accomplishments on a wide array of Native American issues.

She grew up in Claremore, Oklahoma, and held various positions at Cherokee Nation prior to working in Washington, D.C. Kim received her B.A. in Political Science from NSU and her J.D. from the University of Iowa, College of Law.



Panelists Bio and Picture

Panel 3 – Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Violence

Geri Wisner

Leah Lopez

Jacob Castillo



Gerri Wisner



Gerri Wisner, JD, Attorney General, Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Gerri Wisner is the Attorney General for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and is nationally recognized as the Indian Country Prosecutor. Victims of crime want her in their corner because she has a reputation of fighting the good fight, ensuring voices of the marginalized and vulnerable are heard. Law enforcement want her to prosecute their cases because she stands for law and order. Tribes want her as their prosecutor because she serves as a role model and is committed to justice and safety within indigenous communities while strengthening Tribal sovereignty.

Gerri is citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, a former United States Marine and a mother. Ms. Wisner is a nationally recognized speaker on the issues of issues of criminal justice, collaborative responses to address violent

crimes and integrating traditional Tribal healing and customs with recognized best practices. She is in high demand as a national speaker presenting to Tribes, state and federal agencies, professional organizations, schools and communities throughout the country to develop and improve the child abuse responses and justice systems. Gerri trains child abuse professionals on advanced investigative and prosecutorial techniques utilizing a victim-centered approach. Ms. Wisner is the former Attorney General for the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma. She has prosecuted for the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma, Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma, Pawnee Nation, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Oklahoma, Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas and the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. Ms. Wisner has been appointed to serve on several Congressional committees focusing on the improvement of Tribal justice, the protection of Native children and safer communities in Indian Country. Ms. Wisner served as the first Ambassador to the United Nations for the Muscogee Nation, making presentations to the UN in Geneva, Switzerland and New York City. Her experience and perspective on indigenous issues provides a global context for her work with Native American people, as well as Tribal, domestic and foreign governments. A 2001 graduate of Oklahoma State University with a B.A. in Political Science and an American Indian Studies Certificate, Gerri received her Juris Doctorate and Native American Law Certificate from the University Of Tulsa College Of Law in 2003. Gerri attends her ceremonial grounds of Tvlvhassee Wokokyv and her Muscogee church, Hvcecupv.

Leah Lopez



Leah Lopez is the Social Services Coordinator for Ysleta del Sur Pueblo's Department of Behavioral Health. She studied at Texas Woman's University where she obtained her BSW and continued her studies at the University of Texas at El Paso earning her MSW. She is licensed in the state of Texas with her LMSW. She began working for Ysleta del Sur Pueblo as an intern while in grad school and began employment right after graduation. She has served the Pueblo for eleven years; seven of which have been in a supervisory role. She is non-tribal, but has enjoyed working in such a close-knit community learning about culture, tradition and helping those in need. She has a passion for domestic violence advocacy, ending violence against women, trauma-informed care, raising awareness and the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). She is a member of the National

Association of Social Workers (NASW), National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women (CSVANW), and the New Mexico Tribal Indian Children Welfare Consortium (NMTIC) since May 2017. Ms. Lopez also serves on the Children's Commission's Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Task Force. She is proud to be a part of the social work profession and to serve people with passion.



Panelists Bio and Picture

Panel 4 – Systems Innovations and Best Practices in Native Communities

Reverend David Wilson

Dewayne Hornbuckle

Cortney Yarholar

Reverend David Wilson



Reverend David Wilson, Indian Methodist Church of Oklahoma Rev. Dr. David M. Wilson is currently serving as the Assistant to the Bishop of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference of The United Methodist Church, which is comprised of 81 Native American churches in the state of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas. He previously served as the Conference Superintendent for eighteen years.

He serves on the General Board of Global Ministries, the missions board for the United Methodist denomination. He is currently working with the denomination on a task force to research the denominations' role in Native

American boarding schools. The board operated schools in the past, along with the former Women's Division of the denomination.

Rev. Wilson is a graduate of Oklahoma City University with a B.A. in Mass Communications and received his Master's of Divinity from Phillips Theological Seminary. He received an honorary doctorate from the historic Bacone College. He is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and currently serves as the director of Rock the Native Vote, a non-partisan group that works on voter engagement in the Native American communities.

Dewayne Hornbuckle



I am a Choctaw tribal member and work for Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Tribal services as a Youth Advisor. Before coming to Choctaw Nation, I worked in public schools, primarily as a wrestling coach for 17 years. I have 2 adult children and a 5-year-old. My clients are Choctaw tribal members in pre-K through 12th grade with situational hardships such as; single parent family, living with relatives, financial poverty, educational struggles, and/or lacking family stability. We cover 10.5 counties in southeastern Oklahoma and are tribally funded. In addition, I coach our youth stickball team (traditional Native American game) and participate as a member of several youth, cultural, and education committees.

Cortney Yarholar



Cortney Yarholar, LMSW

Is an enrolled member of the Sac & Fox Nation of Oklahoma as well as descendant of the Muscogee Creek, Pawnee, and Otoe Tribes. He is a husband of an amazing wife and father of two beautiful children. He is a mental health professional specializing in Children Youth and Family services and systems development. His interest is in decreasing suicide among youth and eliminating behavioral health disparities among American Indian tribal communities.

In 2003 he attained his B.A. from the University of Oklahoma, majoring in Native American Studies. Later, attaining his MSW from Washington University in St. Louis, MO in 2006.

He currently works as a Director of

Organizational Development with the Native Services Unit of the Boys & Girls Club of America. He is also founder of Evergreen Training & Development, LLC where he strives to help organizations be more culturally responsive and responsible for the people they serve through diversity and inclusion enhancement training.



Panelists Bio and Picture

Welcome Session

Chairman Bobby Gonzales

Tony Dearman

Jason Dropik

Chairman Bobby Gonzales



Chairman Bobby Gonzales is Chairman of the Caddo Nation. Ancestors of the Caddo Nation were agriculturalists whose distinctive way of life and material culture emerged by A.D. 900, as revealed in archaeological sites in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. When members of Hernando de Soto's expedition entered the region in 1542, thriving Caddo communities were distributed along the Brazos, Trinity, Neches, Sabine, Red, and Ouachita rivers. These communities played important economic and diplomatic roles during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colonial era. The Caddo people suffered hardships when the United States government removed them to reservations in Texas and later Oklahoma during the nineteenth century. Indian Territory (Oklahoma) 1866-1889

Additional losses resulted from the subsequent sale of reservation lands as a result of allotment. Twentieth century efforts to revitalize economic, social, political, and religious institutions preserved links with this heritage that enable the Caddo people to maintain a distinctive identity today and continue building toward a hopeful and prosperous future.

Tony Dearman



Tony Dearman, a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, is the director of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Bureau of Indian Education implements federal Indian education programs and funds 183 elementary and secondary day and boarding schools serving approximately 48,000 students. As the director, Dearman oversees the operation of two post-secondary schools, and administers grants for 29 tribally controlled colleges and universities and two tribal technical colleges, and provides funding for higher education scholarships to Native youth.

Dearman brings over two decades of experience as a teacher, coach, and administrator in BIE operated and tribally controlled schools. He began his career in education in 1993 at Sequoyah High School as a science teacher and coach. Sequoyah is a boarding school operated by the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, located in Tahlequah Oklahoma. He served as the principal at Sequoyah High School from 2004-2005. In January of 2006, Dearman accepted the leadership role of Superintendent at Riverside Indian School. Riverside is an off-reservation boarding school operated by the Bureau of Indian Education. It serves grades 4-12 and is located in Anadarko, Oklahoma.

From 2008-2009 he was the acting Education Line Officer for the Seattle, Washington office. While in this position, Dearman worked with nine tribally controlled schools and one BIE operated off-reservation boarding school. From 2009-2010 he served as the Education Line Officer for the BIE New Mexico South office. While serving the New Mexico South office, he worked with five tribally controlled and four BIE operated schools.

In 2010, Dearman returned to Riverside Indian School as the Superintendent. During Mr. Dearman's tenure at Riverside, he participated in the development and planning of a new academic high school building and two residential dormitories. He remained in this position until November of 2015 when he was selected as the Associate Deputy Director of BIE Operated Schools. While serving in this position, he has assisted in the implementation of the BIE Reorganization and Reform. As Associate Deputy Director, he oversaw 17 schools, four off-reservation boarding schools, and one peripheral dormitory spanning across eight states. In June 2018, Dearman was appointed to the Council of Chief State School Officer's School Safety Steering Committee to work towards creating safe and supportive school environments for all students.

Mr. Dearman earned an Associate of Arts degree from Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education and a Master's degree in School Administration from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Jason Dropik



JASON DROPIK
BAD RIVER BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR
CHIPPEWA INDIANS
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS,
NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

Jason P. Dropik serves as the Head of School at the Indian Community School, just outside of Milwaukee, WI. Growing up as an Urban American Indian provided Mr. Dropik with a wealth of experiences working to support Native Education, Community Engagement, Language Revitalization, and Policy Development. He was a member of the first graduating class of the Federal

Program Urban American Indian Teacher Training program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He went on to serve in Public schools supporting American Indian Students and inclusive practices to benefit all. He returned to the Indian Community School to serve as a middle school math teacher while completing his administrative degree in Educational Leadership from Concordia University. He served as Associate Principal for two and half years before being named Interim Head of School before officially being offered the Head of School position. He has dedicated this work to building strong relationships grounded in a strong Native Identity, Language, and academic excellence. Mr. Dropik has served as WIEA alternate, Milwaukee Indian Education Committee Member, Wisconsin Association of Environmental Education Board Member, and countless committees, volunteer opportunities, and community partnerships. He leads with compassion, thoughtfulness, integrity, and pride of his Native Identity with all who he serves



Panelists Bio and Picture

Panel 5 – Youth/Community

YOUTH

Ava Rose Johnson

Alyssa James

Isabel Sutteer

COMMUNITY

Elizabeth Apala

Dakota Wahkinney

Ava Rose Johnson



Ava Rose Johnson Powerful. Oklahoma Osage and Cherokee Native, 15-year-old, singer-songwriter, Ava Rose Johnson has been gifted by God with an extraordinary powerful voice that has been provoking powerful responses from coast to coast.

Ava Rose Johnson made history on November 2nd, 2019, at 12 years old, when she won Best Independent Recording By A New Artist for “Heaven’s Window”. The youngest ever to be nominated and win a Native American Music Award, Ava gives God ALL the Glory.

In 2017, at 10 years old, she won the title of Oklahoma Kids Gospel Vocalist of the Year with her rendition of “How Great Thou Art” then went on the same year to become American Kids National Performer of the Year, 1st runner up with the same song. From entertaining guests on Good Morning America and the Good Morning America, Summer Concert Series, venues in Nashville, performing at Disney World and

Disneyland, Nashville and Nashville to New Mexico to the entry way of Walmart, where a patron videoed her singing “How Great Thou Art” went viral, Ava Rose has seen how much music can be used as a vehicle to touch lives of others in such a powerful way.

In 2019, Ava Rose was given an amazing opportunity to record and song write with Nashville producer and singer-songwriter, Billy Dawson, Lainey Edwards and Sean Fuller (drummer for Florida Georgia Line). She took this time to write about her dear friend, Behr Place, who was tragically killed in an ATV accident 3 years ago. Ava Rose said she wanted this song to be symbol of hope for his family and friends. The song and video (filmed by international filmmaker James Rayner), “Heaven’s Window” was released on April 9th, 2019. The music industry veteran Billy Dawson said, “music opens doors for people and Johnson and her song is going to move a lot of people.”

During the COVID 19 pandemic, Ava Rose was given an amazing opportunity and received training from Monique Coleman, Lauren Frost, Jodi Katz, Mark Christopher Lawrence, Mark Schoenfeld and Jon Stoddard to name a few. She also was a presenter and performer for the nonprofit organization, GlobalmindED and was on the panel “Fortifying Native American Students, Faculty and Communities during and after COVID 19” with several Native American influencers.

Ava co-hosted and performed at The Spin Awards (the biggest night in Gospel Radio) Preshow and also was a performer at The Spin Awards Show in Atlanta, Georgia in October of 2019. She was the 2020 Spin Awards Brand Influencer and Performer for 2020’s award show.

In 2021, Ava was awarded the NextGen Under 30 Award in The Arts category in the state of Oklahoma. She was the youngest to win in her category.

Ava's song "There's A Boy" charted at #2 on the Indigenous Music Countdown and is being played worldwide including on Sirius XM & FM stations.

Ava has been nominated in 2022 for 3 Native American Music Awards for "There's A Boy" in the categories: Best Female Vocalist, Best Country Recording and Best Pop Video. The winners are to be announced Nov. 19th in Niagara Falls, NY at the awards gala.

Her most recent release, "You Were Just A Dream" is also being played worldwide. This single is the sequel to her award-winning song, "Heaven's Window".

Ava continues to perform live and recently performed in San Francisco for the National Tribal Self Governance Conference, Nashville to New Mexico In Eagle Nest, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma.

Alyssa James



My name is Alyssa James. I am a citizen of the Chickasaw nation and identify as two-spirited. I have been working as an advocate for mental health awareness for 5 years now. I am a sophomore at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma majoring in photography. I dedicate my work in hope of building a generation of acceptance and change within our world so future generations will have a greater chance at a bright future.

Isabel Sutteer



My name is Isabel Sutteer and I am from the Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians. I am the most recent valedictorian from Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, Oklahoma as I graduated last May. Currently, I attend Oklahoma State University and am studying Biology. In addition, I am the current Grand Worthy Advisor (State President) in the Jurisdiction of Oklahoma for the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls. After college, I plan to work for Indian Health Services in some capacity. I am so excited to be given the opportunity to speak on behalf of Native youth across the state! Wado!

Elizabeth Apala



Elizabeth Apala

Senior Research Assistant

Astrophysics Science Division, 660, GSFC

[International Women's Day: In Conversation with Elizabeth Apala \(azoquantum.com\)](https://azoquantum.com)

My name is Elizabeth Apala and I am the Senior Research Assistant for the Astrophysics Science Division. My duties include working in diversity, equity, and inclusion and outreach. Being that I am a Native American, belonging to the Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee tribes, my work is very personal and important to me. I started my position on November 2, 2020, so I am still a little new but loving every second of it. Astronomy and physics have been a lifelong passion and interest of mine, and I find a lot of enjoyment in sharing that love with students at different events and through different schools and outreach-focused efforts. As I started during the pandemic, I have not been on-site as an employee yet, but I am happily working from home in southeastern Oklahoma at goat farm. I started my farm early last year which consists of twelve Nigerian Dwarfs. Outside of my farm animals I also have two Chihuahuas named Annie (named after Annie

Jump Cannon) and Little Man and One seven month old bloodhound named Tommy. For fun, I like to crochet, read, and travel.



Panelists Bio and Picture

Closing Remarks

Vice Chairman Jacob Tsofigh

Jacob S. Tsotigh, Jr.



JACOB S. TSOTIGH, JR. (KIOWA), M.Ed., is the Vice-Chairman of the Kiowa Tribe and a former Kiowa Tribe Legislator who represented approximately 5,600 tribal citizens. He has been involved in American Indian education programs for the past 38 years retiring from the University of Oklahoma and working recently with the National Indian Education Association. He served for 12 years as the Indian Education Director for Anadarko (Oklahoma) Public Schools, 3 years as Program Director and Production Specialist for Inter-Tribal Associates, Inc., and 2 years as a Training Associate with the American Indian Research and Development by the Indian Education TA Center Five and Title IX Indian Education. Mr. Tsotigh returned to Inter-Tribal Associates as Project Director to work as a sub-contractor with the University of Oklahoma's Region VII

Comprehensive Center with direct responsibility for providing high impact TA in American Indian education for over 500 grantees in the seven-state region. Mr. Tsotigh is past president of the Oklahoma Council for Indian Education (OCIE) and a long time member of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA). He was voted as "Best in Indian Country – American Indian Role Model" by readers of the Oklahoma Indian Times in 1999. He has three children and one deceased and five grandchildren. He is a 4/4 citizen of the Kiowa Tribe and specialized in parent committee training, culturally responsive pedagogy, Title VII Indian Education programming, and school improvement