



Notes from the Chief

What I'm working on for You



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The Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes is an organization that unites the tribal governments of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole nations, and it represents approximately 750,000 Indian people throughout the United States. Together our tribes represent about a quarter of the entire population of American Indians throughout the United States. This year, I proudly serve as president of the council. The other executive board members are Seminole Nation Principal Chief Greg Chilcoat, Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby, Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton and Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief James Floyd.

The ITC meets quarterly at revolving locations hosted by member tribal governments. Its mission is to protect our tribal sovereignty and advance issues critical to our people. It is one of the oldest and largest tribal organizations in America.

These quarterly gatherings are a unique opportunity for our tribal governments to convene and share ideas and best practices. We are stronger as tribes when we share in one another's success and hear the important things we are all working on for our citizens. As tribal leaders and senior staff working for our respective nations, we all benefit from this time together. It strengthens Cherokee Nation's efforts when we are able to collaborate with other tribal governments to promote an agenda at both the federal and state levels.

A spirit of cooperation fuels our collaborative work at ITC, and the joint resolutions we create support issues that ensure we continue to protect our inherent tribal sovereign rights. At the staff level, multiple committees—including housing, education, health care, cultural preservation, government relations and communications—offer an opportunity to share best practices and ideas between the five tribal governments. ITC ensures our five tribes remain united in important decision making on issues important to our collective populations.

The council, which was originally founded in 1949, had gone dormant for many years, but in 2012, we worked hard to rejuvenate the ITC and fulfill the mission of the original founders, who created a constitution with a clear and noble goal for the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole:

“...to secure to ourselves and our descendants the rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws of the United States of America, and the State of Oklahoma; to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian race; to preserve Indian cultural values; to enhance and promote general educational opportunity among members of the Five Civilized Tribes; to seek equitable adjustments of tribal affairs; to secure and to preserve rights under Indian Treaties with the United States; and other-wise to promote the common welfare of the American Indians...”

Tribal issues are both national and statewide, and that means our tribal governments must work as equals with both the federal and state governments.

We have taken a formal position on a wide range of issues on the federal and state spectrum, including funding issues, voting rights, cultural preservation and increased access to quality health care. We believe in protecting our tribal rights and will always be an advocate for our tribal sovereignty. Through the ITC, we have in the past, and will again in the coming year, create a progressive legislative agenda for our five tribal nations. In 2018, that is just as important as it was in 1949 when this organization was founded. A spirit of togetherness and unity defines the council. We are all very distinct tribal governments with unique histories and cultures, but the five tribes have similar issues and concerns, including protecting our right to self-govern and providing critical services to our citizens.

I look forward to working for this organization this year as its president. Together, we can do more good for our people, our governments and our state.

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