



# Notes from the Chief

*What I'm working on for You*



Osiyo -

The forthcoming American Indian Center and Cultural Museum in Oklahoma City will be a world-class facility and has tremendous potential for education, economic development and tourism purposes in Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation is proud to support AICCM and pleased to see it moving closer to opening. The heart of Indian Country will be home to one of America's finest museums.

Recently, I began serving a three-year term on the American Indian Cultural Center Foundation to help move this center of collective history and culture toward completion. It will be a unique destination, designed to tell the powerful and significant story of Native Americans in Oklahoma. The AICCM's mission has always been to enhance what individual tribes, including the Cherokee Nation, do to share our heritage. Art, history and contemporary culture will be all in one place, and if people want to dig deeper they can travel to Tahlequah or Ada or Anadarko or Lawton.

I am proud to be a part of this creative endeavor and a public-private venture with the state of Oklahoma, city of Oklahoma City, AICCM Land Development LLC and private sector. Absolutely none of this would be possible without the cooperation of the 38 federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma today.

Construction will resume this summer and take about two years to complete, while exhibits and other interior finishes will take another year to install. The museum will open in the spring of 2021. Construction was stopped six years ago on the museum, which sits at the junction of Interstates 35 and 40 in Oklahoma City, when state funding ran out.

As Native people, perseverance is something we know well, and we would not be moving forward today without Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby and his leadership in establishing a powerful and productive partnership with Oklahoma City's leaders. He has been a champion to achieve this

dream. Once completed it will be an epic indoor/outdoor adventure for the entire family with unique exhibits, hands-on educational programs, firsthand accounts and cultural demonstrations.

Tribes have tremendous heritage and history in Oklahoma, which is why state leaders wanted to build this museum in the first place. It will substantially increase opportunities to educate Oklahoma's youth on the rich history of our state, which was born from Indian Territory. Those critical aspects of Oklahoma's history simply are not stressed enough in public classrooms. Oklahomans need to know more about their history and certainly need a better grasp of how important tribal governments are not just to our past, but also to our bright future.

Tribal governments mean so much to the state, not just its cultural identity, but also in a very real and tangible way economically. The Cherokee Nation alone has an economic impact on our state of over \$2 billion.

Oklahoma is Indian Country, and AICCM will be a tremendous asset to all of us.

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