

Honorees of the 56th Algonquian Conference

First Americans Museum

24-27 October 2024

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After 55 iterations, it is quite fitting that the Algonquian Conference should come to Oklahoma for the first time. Current home to twelve Algonquian tribes, the state has been a stronghold of speakers for decades. In recent years, it has also been the site of burgeoning language revitalization programs. From established programs to emerging ones, this is an exciting time for Oklahoma's Algonquian languages.

As such, the organizing committee asked the tribes to nominate honorees for their work with the language. Many of these honorees have devoted decades to their effort, often with little recognition. Others are building the new efforts with lessons learned from older programs. By presenting these honorees in this booklet, we hope to provide a portion of the honor due to these language activists.

It is also an honor to have the conference at the First Americans Museum. Itself the product of decades of effort, it has become one of the finest new museums in the state, if not the country.

Please join us in honoring these accomplishments.

James Pepper Henry
Raina Heaton
Douglas H. Whalen

Brett Barnes

Honoree of the
**Eastern
Shawnee Tribe
of Oklahoma**



Brett Barnes currently works for the Eastern Shawnee Tribe as a NAGPRA and THPO consultant. He has also served as Gaming Commissioner. During his tenure as Gaming Commissioner, he received the award of Regulator of the Year for Indian Country from the International Masters of Gaming Law. He was elected for two terms as Chairman of the Oklahoma Tribal Gaming Regulators Association. After leaving in order to work in the Indigo Sky Casino as an Assistant General Manager, he again voluntarily changed jobs, becoming the Language and Cultural Director for the Eastern Shawnee. He also serves as a consultant for the Shawnee Language Immersion Program

Brett has lived in the Quapaw, OK, area for most of his life and was raised among the White Oak Ceremonial Community where he has maintained an active role for over 50 years. He is currently a sitting member of the White Oak Ceremonial Council and is very active in Shawnee culture and language preservation. His extensive knowledge of the Shawnee culture along with his willingness to teach, has made him an exceptional asset for the Shawnee Community. He has spent most of his life teaching and sharing his knowledge with those who wish to learn. His commitment has made a pillar of the Shawnee Community.

George “Fife” Blanchard

**Honoree of the
Shawnee Tribe**



George “Fife” Blanchard is a first language speaker of saawanwaatoweewe, born 80 years ago into a large family in Cleveland County, Oklahoma. He didn’t learn English until he was five years old. A member of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe (for whom he was Governor from 2009 to 2013), he is heavily involved in traditional, cultural, and ceremonial activities. Currently, he serves as the First Language Specialist for the Shawnee Tribe in Miami, Oklahoma, though he has worked (and continues to work) with all three Shawnee tribes. He has been teaching the Shawnee language for almost four decades and has been a language activist his entire life. He has taught saawanwaaki of all ages and across Oklahoma, and his language knowledge is the backbone of many saawanwaatoweewe classes and curriculum both in-person and online, reaching countless Shawnees throughout the years and across the country. “There are deep things you can’t explain in English that you can in Shawnee,” he says. “It’s a spiritual language. Everything means something: the ground, the trees, the relationship of sky, water, rock. My father used to say that if you want help from the Creator, you have to speak with the language you were put here with.”

Mosiah Bluecloud

Honoree of the **Kickapoo
Tribe of Oklahoma**



Mosiah Bluecloud is the director of the Kickapoo Language Development Program, the Kickapoo Tribe's program in McLoud, Oklahoma. He got his undergraduate degree from the University of Oklahoma in linguistics. He started his language journey in high school while attending Shawnee-language community classes and private Kickapoo lessons from his grandmothers. When he graduated in 2007 from Norman High he started advocating for the revitalization of his heritage languages; later that fall Mosiah began studying linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. He simultaneously began working with the Sauk Language Department, where he developed the skills necessary to navigate language-teaching and -learning through the modified master apprentice technique, and the teaching of languages at the collegiate and secondary level.

Mosiah believes that language is life, the glue that holds communities together by connecting past, present, and future culture caretakers and that language provides access to identity and ways of being. He has dedicated his life to language revitalization and preservation, including pursuing a Linguistics Ph.D. at the University of Arizona.

Ervin Bull

**Honoree of the
Cheyenne and
Arapaho
Tribes**



A native Cheyenne speaker, Ervin Bull is from the Fonda community. He received his academic education in Seiling, Oklahoma. He is deeply respected and cherished within the tribe, and is a cherished grandfather or "pops" for many members. Within the competitive work-field, Bull has worked within his tribal communities and throughout the United States; all while consistently upholding his cultural identity and proficiency in the Cheyenne language. Bull's commitment reflects a profound dedication to his cultural heritage and significantly contributes to the revitalization of the Cheyenne language. The investment of his time and efforts to educate others about the importance of language preservation gives way to future generations to access their Cheyenne linguistic heritage. Bull's endeavors highlight the crucial role to sustain cultural identity and enhancement of community unity.

David Costa

Honoree of the
**Miami Tribe of
Indians**



David Costa currently serves the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma community as the Director for the Language Research Office at the Myaamia Center at Miami University. David grew up in San Jose, California, and completed his B.A. in linguistics at UCLA in 1985 and his Ph.D. in linguistics at U.C. Berkeley in 1994. He has been studying the Miami-Illinois language since 1988, and first visited the Myaamiaki in Oklahoma in 1989 and in Indiana in 1990. Since 1995, David has been working continuously with the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma on language revitalization. Two of his greatest contributions to this effort have been uncovering and digitizing nearly 250 years of documentation on what is now known as the Miami-Illinois language, alongside his ongoing efforts to reconstruct Miami-Illinois grammar, syntax and phonology. His nearly three decades of work has allowed the Miami Tribe effort to establish best practices for using archival materials to directly support community revitalization goals. Today David leads a team of five Myaamia Center staff who manage various aspects of the extensive archive including transcription, data analysis and software development. David moved to Oxford, Ohio to work on site at the Myaamia Center in 2017.

This is David's thirtieth Algonquian Conference, and he has spoken at 28 of them. His first was in Chicago in 1990, when he was 28 years old. Since 1990, he has missed only five conferences, but has attended all of them since 2003.

**Kalisha Dixon
Pheasant**

Honoree of the
**Ottawa Tribe of
Oklahoma**



Kalisha Dixon Pheasant is Chief of the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma. She coordinates the tribe's language programs, which make integrated use of many of the Anishinaabemowin language projects throughout the Anishinaabe diaspora.

Chief Dixon Pheasant also has a Masters of Social Work (MSW), and she is currently working with INTEGRIS Home Care Northeast in Miami, OK. This past summer, she took time out of her schedule to read an Anishinaabe book that shares the words and customs of her tribe to a group of young children at the Miami Public library. Keeping the language and culture alive is an active part of her mission.

Wesley “Tosan” Louis Farless

**Honoree of the Peoria
Tribe of Indians of
Oklahoma**



Wesley “Tosan” Louis Farless is a Peoria citizen and grandson of former Peoria Chief, Louis “Blackie” Myers. During his lifetime, Chief Myers named Wesley with his own Peoria name “Tosan” (Human/Native person) – the grandfather/grandson share this family name distinction. Tosan is a native of Oklahoma and has been raised in and around his Peoria community. Recently, Tosan began exploring more deeply the language he heard his family speak at home. This developed into a full-time Peoria language revitalization effort. He began informal training under the mentorship of linguist Dr. David Costa, who researched the Peoria language through several centuries of documentation and developed elements of grammar, phonology and syntax for what is now known as the Miami-Illinois (Peoria/peewaalia) language. Tosan then studied through the Myaamia Center language program (Miami University, Oxford, OH) where he was 1 of 5 students chosen for the Neepwaankiita Certificate Program (NCP). The NCP also allowed for Tosan to teach students and share linguistic distinctions, dialect knowledge and historic references specific to the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea and Piankeshaw Tribes, all confederated within the present-day Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma. Tosan is now the Peoria Language Specialist. Tosan’s journey, first as a student and now as an instructor, has provided for the first-ever language curriculum for the Peoria Tribe. The Peoria language (peewaaliaataweenki) revitalization program is beginning its fourth year and has advanced successfully over 129 students in its first three years.

Cole Rattan

Honoree of the **Citizen
Potawatomi Nation**



Cole Rattan is from Tecumseh, Oklahoma and belongs to the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. He grew up in Tecumseh his whole life except for a stint in the Marine Corps in San Diego. He is from the Ouilmette Family, which has attended the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Festival for decades. He first started learning about his Language Ode Zheshmowen in 2006 when in the 6th grade.

One of his neighbors was his first mentor. His name was Michael Dykstra of the Pambogo Family, and he worked in the Language Department at that time. He would drive kids over from Citizen Place to Squirrel Creek and Raymond Peltier Park where they got to sing, drum, and play lacrosse Pegnegéwen. There, he met the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Language Director Justin Neely of the Navarre Family.

After completing two archaeological field schools and graduating East Central University with a Degree in Cultural Resource Management with a focus in Native American Studies, he went to work for his Tribe, able at last to give back. He has worked with summer language classes, some co-produced with Josey Wood and Shelly Kay Watson of the Curley Family, his Nij Neshnabek. A quote his Teacher Kenomagwet guides him: “wégwendek ekendemen eyoyen”. “Whatever you know use regardless of how much or how little you know use it.” Rattan concludes, “We come from an Oral Society where Speaking and using the language is more important than writing. Saying it out loud is spiritual.”

Jim Rementer

Honoree of the
**Delaware Tribe
of Indians**



Jim Rementer, language project director, began his study of the Lenape or Delaware language in the summer of 1961. He returned the following summer and resumed his study with James H. Thompson, one of the oldest tribal members. After Mr. Thompson's death in 1964, Jim continued his study primarily with Nora Thompson Dean, daughter of James Thompson. Some of the other people he worked with over the years were Lucy Parks Blalock, Fred Fall-Leaf, Freddie Washington, Leonard Thompson, Anna Davis, Rueben Wilson, and Tom Wilson. He has also worked with tribal elders among the Western Delawares.

Jim has been the secretary of the Culture Preservation Committee for 33 years, and is on the Board of Advisors of the Williamson Museum, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana. In 1997 the Delaware Tribe appointed him director of the Lenape Language Project. As director of Lenape Language Project, he has worked under grants from the National Science Foundation digitizing many Lenape language tapes, resulting in a talking dictionary (www.talk-lenape.org).

Carl Schaefer

Honoree of the **Shawnee Tribe**



Carl Schaefer grew up in Maryland and currently lives there while volunteering for the Smithsonian. In 2016, after retiring from a career in the computer coding industry, he began his work on Shawnee under the guidance of Ives Goddard. Carl has a Ph.D. in linguistics from Cornell University and the combination of his coding experience and linguistics knowledge allowed him to create an offline database of the Shawnee language. He has volunteered countless hours of his time to transcribe and analyze handwritten documents and audio recordings from C. F. Voegelin's fieldwork with the Shawnee. Carl's database includes a large portion of Voegelin's Shawnee texts along with the entirety of Thomas W. Alford's Shawnee translation of the Gospels, all transcribed into the Shawnee Tribe's orthography, searchable, and easily exported for use. Carl also published Thomas W. Alford's Shawnee Translation of the Gospels in Normalized Orthography and With Glossary in print form in 2023. Since 2019, Carl has been a volunteer linguist for the Shawnee Tribe, providing valuable resources for the Shawnee Language Immersion Program, or SLIP, as it has been developing curriculum and grammar resources for language learners. The database also allowed SLIP to expedite data entry into the Shawnee rendition of the Indigenous Languages Digital Archive (ILDA), which currently has over 40,000 entries. Carl has been a part of SLIP's Brain Trust team for five years and attends weekly meetings to discuss the Shawnee language.

Shaynna Walker

**Honoree of the
Cheyenne and
Arapaho
Tribes**



Shaynna Walker is a dedicated Arapaho Language learner. Born and raised in Oklahoma, she started working for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Language Program at 19 years old in 2016.

After graduating high school, she was hired by the language program. Shaynna started as a Junior Apprentice with zero Arapaho language exposure. At this time, she was immersed in language sessions that were focused on conversational dialogue. After four years working for the program, she was promoted to Arapaho Senior Apprentice. During this time, she obtained a Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes teaching certification, as well as an Oklahoma State Department of Education teaching certification as an Arapaho Language Teacher for grades K-12. She currently serves as the Arapaho Lead Apprentice & Master Teacher in the Arapaho Language and Culture Program. She is responsible for producing second language speakers by leading immersion sessions and guiding junior apprentices in Master Apprentice sessions with fluent speakers.

Shaynna's background in Arapaho language learning, combined with her commitment to actually speaking the Arapaho language, make her a great candidate to be an honoree for the Arapaho language at the 56th Algonquian Conference. Her work as a 2nd language learner and speaker perpetuates the life of our sacred Arapaho language.

Desireé “Storm” Brave

Honoree of the **Kaw
Nation**



Desireé “Storm” Brave is the Kaáⁿze Íe (Kaw Language) Director and Master Teacher for the Kaáⁿze Níkashiⁿga (Kaw People). She teaches classes within her community at both Language Department sites, zoom classes, Kaw Nation daycares, and two elementary schools. Ms. Brave’s great grandmother was the late Maude Rowe. Maude was the last fluent speaker of the Kaáⁿze Níkashiⁿga and was a major component of language revitalization efforts of the Kaáⁿze Íe Department.

Ms. Brave started attending the Oklahoma Native American Youth Language Fair with her language teacher, Dr. Justin McBride, when she was in first grade. She participated every year until she graduated high school alongside her brother, Dewey. She and her brother assisted Dr. McBride with many activities while building the Kaw Nation Language Department, for instance they created a board game similar to monopoly using Kaáⁿze Íe (funded by a grant from the Endangered Language Fund) and were utilized for the Kaáⁿze Íe app for iOS.

Ms. Brave is a Native American Actress and portrayed Bertha Bigheart in the Martin Scorsese Epic Film, Killers of the Flower Moon. She has been in several documentaries and one theatrical film since her first acting debut in 2021.

Ms. Brave has been studying Kaáⁿze Íe since she was five years old and prays that someday, with constant dedication, to build the most successful language department in her tribe’s history.



L to R: **Dylan Herrick, Stephanie Rapp, Marcia Haag, and Cameron Pratt**

Honorees of the **University of Oklahoma** and the **Endangered Language Fund**

Cameron Pratt

Cameron Pratt is a member of Osage Nation with an MA in Educational Leadership from Kansas State University and a BA in Linguistics from the University of Oklahoma. His first language teachers were his father, uncles, and aunts. Since 2018, he has been working as a teacher and an Osage language curriculum specialist with ᏓᎠᎠᎠ ᏃᎠᎠ ᎠᎠᎠᎠᎠᎠ, *Our School*, a pre-K-through-6th-grade Osage language immersion school. He has also worked for the Osage Nation Language Program in a number of roles that include teacher, curriculum specialist, and database specialist. He was also part of the team that succeeded in having the Osage alphabet added as a Unicode font.

Stephanie Rapp

Stephanie Rapp is an Osage language and culture consultant and a retired Osage language teacher. She grew up surrounded by first language speakers and began studying and researching the language in earnest when she became an adult. She has worked as a language

teacher and curriculum specialist for Osage Nation, and she worked as a traditional cultural advisor for the Osage nation Historic Preservation Office. In addition, she served as an Assistant Site Manager at the White Hair Memorial Research Center for the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Marcia Haag

Marcia Haag is Professor Emerita at the University of Oklahoma, where she is a member of the faculty of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics. She earned her doctorate in linguistics at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Her career has been focused on the description of endangered Native American languages. She is also interested in translation of Native texts, and the ways that the grammars of Native languages influence linguistic theory. She was named President's Associates Presidential Professor by the University of Oklahoma in 2006, and Kinney Sugg Outstanding Professor by the College of Arts and Sciences in 2014.

Dylan Herrick

Dylan Herrick is an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and joined the OU faculty after having spent two years at Mie University (Japan) and one year at Pomona College. His research concerns the sound systems of language and, more recently, language revitalization. He has published articles on Catalan, Cherokee, and Comanche. In addition to teaching linguistics courses, he has taught English language courses in Japan and Japanese language courses in the United States. He received the John and Jane Patten Teaching Award from the University of Oklahoma College of Arts and Sciences in 2014 and the Cecil Woods Memorial Award for Excellence in Teaching from the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics in 2019.

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Marcia Haag



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