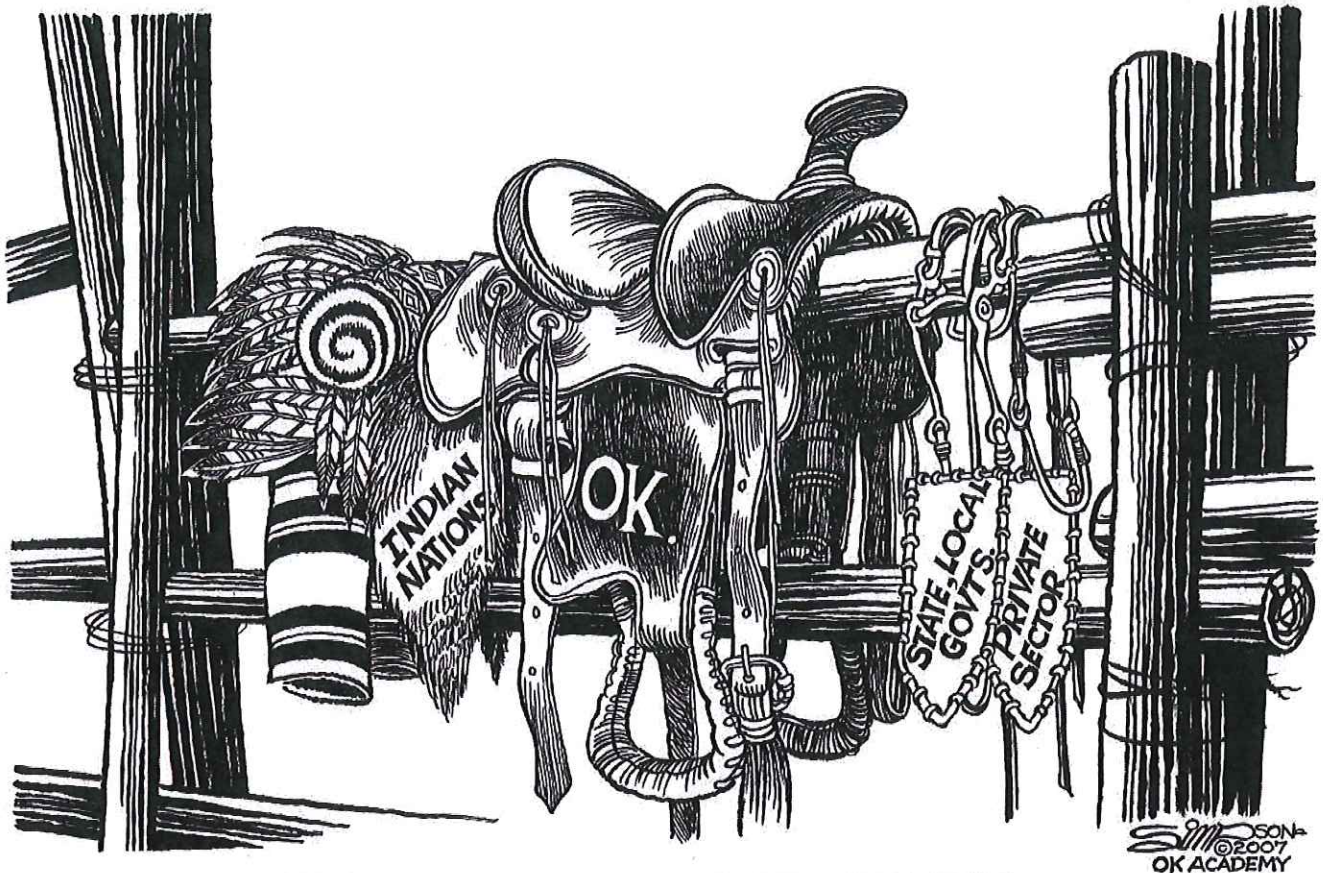


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MS. NATALIE SHIRLEY

The 2007 Town Hall Priority Recommendations

Priority Legislative Recommendations

Integration of tribal governments and entities with state, county and local jurisdictions will facilitate collaboration and successful solutions to the economic, education, environmental, infrastructure and transportation issues facing Oklahoma today. This integration must start at the state government level with a greater emphasis on tribal relations through tribal liaisons at state agencies, tribal relations advisory boards and increased tribal representation on state boards and commissions. Therefore, the Town Hall recommends the following:

1. The Town Hall recommends a new Cabinet position be created. The recommendation calls for the Governor to name a cabinet Secretary for State and Tribal Relations. This cabinet position will be charged with overseeing agency consultation and collaboration with the various nations and to be in charge of relations for the executive branch with the tribal governments in Oklahoma.

The bill will name several agencies that will be directed to name a tribal liaison: Oklahoma Department of Commerce, State Department of Education, Oklahoma Department of Health, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse, Department of Human Services, Department of Agriculture, Department of Conservation, Department of Environmental Quality, Oklahoma Water Resources Board, Department of Transportation, Department of Public Safety, ABLE Commission, Oklahoma Tax commission, Oklahoma Corporation Commission, Department of Tourism, Oklahoma Historical Society, etc.

Direct all agencies to report to the new cabinet secretary on their interaction with the various Native American nations. The secretary shall then compile this information into a report for the legislature outlining the work being done and identifying which agencies not named in the legislation that need to have a tribal liaison.

Establish an official state consultation policy for agencies directing them to consult and collaborate with tribal governments before taking action that will affect them or their property.

2. The Town Hall Action Committee wholeheartedly supports the Town Hall recommendation to appropriate \$42 million for the Native American Culture Center.

3. The Committee fully supports the Town Hall recommendation to encourage the Federal Government and Oklahoma's Congressional Delegation to make permanent the accelerated Depreciation Tax Credit for historically tribal areas.

Priority Issue Related Recommendations

Education and Workforce Issues

- The State of Oklahoma must identify a shared and common vision for education in Oklahoma and identify the specific roles that tribal and non-tribal entities can play in achieving this vision. There must be a coordinated and collaborative effort among tribal and non-tribal entities and scholars to ensure that an accurate historical view of the cultural diversity and history of the many tribes is contained in the educational delivery systems of the state.
- √ Oklahoma history taught in public schools must be accurate and more comprehensive with regard to distinct Indian cultures and history. The State must ensure that state-adopted textbooks and curriculum thoroughly covers Indian history, sovereignty and inter-governmental relations. Curriculum, textbooks and teaching materials must include accurate historical information of the

Native American experience in Oklahoma to include the history and presence prior to their arrival in Oklahoma.

- ✓ Curriculum established by the State Department of Education must recognize the diversity and culture of the many tribes that exist in the state and it must reach out and work with tribal entities on both a statewide and local basis in developing this comprehensive and integrated curriculum.
- Recognizing the educational gap occurring with tribal students, the State Department of Education must work with tribal entities to identify the causes of this gap to better identify and pursue appropriate solutions. Expanding the Department of Indian Education within the State Department of Education could assist with this.
- Better collaboration and partnering must occur between the pre-K through 12 systems, the Career Technology System and the Higher Education System in providing greater awareness of the various technology and higher education programs available to tribal students once they graduate from high school.
 - ✓ Career Technology systems and tribal entities must collaborate and partner in developing educational programs that effectively meet the needs of the local community, tribal entities, and businesses. Through the Career Technology System centers could be established to provide collaborative assistance for tribes and municipalities. These centers (Technical Assistance Centers) would furnish training in designated areas of workforce development, economic development and business development, as well as serve as a venue to address the challenges faced by the tribes and municipalities in rural Oklahoma.
 - ✓ Higher education must evaluate its existing programs and career paths to better prepare all Oklahoma students as lifelong learners. There must be greater effort made in providing information about higher education institutions and programs to tribal students and other minority students. Once tribal students arrive at higher education institutions, better efforts must be made to retain these students to include peer counseling and activities that bring Indian students together.

Health and Social Concerns Issues

- A special focus on expanding adolescent substance abuse prevention and treatment programs must be a priority. Adolescent substance abuse left untreated results in higher dropout rates, occupational problems, juvenile justice involvement and a long-term burden on the Department of Corrections.
 - ✓ Drug courts must be used as an alternative to incarceration in instances of substance abuse and mental health courts as an alternative to incarceration.
- Between the 12 Indian Health System regions in the United States, inequities in funding exist. A panel of experts should generate data documenting inequities that negatively impact the Oklahoma region. This data can be used by tribes and state healthcare experts to demand remedy and ensure an adequate level of funding for the Oklahoma region. The data can also be used to create a more equitable system by making funding mandatory rather than discretionary.
- Partnerships between tribes and the State should be created that focus on providing affordable, but sustainable group coverage to Oklahomans, tribal and non-tribal citizens and in particular the uninsured.
 - ✓ Tribal sponsored individual health care plans for those without access to group plans should be created and administered by the State.
 - ✓ A model should be created by which a tribe could create a franchise or entity to provide health care services thereby allowing tribes to derive revenue from providing health care services outside their tribal lands.

Economic Development and Tourism Issues

Town Hall participants recognized that there is, first and foremost, a significant need for greater development of tribal and non-tribal relationships and understanding of common focus and interests. Local governments and tribal governments can work collaboratively to create pro-business environments that are attractive. Pro-business collaborations include developing inventories of common resources, assets and workforce, creation or promotion of the foreign trade zone model in tribal areas, educating governmental decision makers on the positive benefits of quality jobs and tribal economic development, and encouraging start-up businesses with venture capital funding.

- A regionalized approach to economic development must be better understood and utilized and must require joint collaboration between all entities, tribal and non-tribal. Develop informational seminars on doing business on tribal lands. Include information on commercial codes, laws, regulations, etc. Regional coalitions could facilitate workshops on how to do business with all Indian tribes in Oklahoma. Utilize existing forums like the Oklahoma Supreme Court Sovereignty Symposium to educate the business sector on “how to do business in Indian country.”
- Create collaborative planning boards consisting of both tribal and non-tribal entities to address ways to achieve the common goals of both.
- To assist the Oklahoma Department of Tourism, a Native American Advisory Board must be created. The Town Hall discussed specific steps to encourage and motivate non-tribal and tribal governments and entities to leverage their individual resources to better market and promote Oklahoma’s unique assets and diverse cultures.

Infrastructure and Transportation Issues

- Every tribe is located within a regional planning area, circuit engineering district (CED), conservation district or council of government jurisdiction (COG). While tribes have been involved in these organizations, they should play a more active role in these groups either in an advisory capacity or through actual membership and participation. These regional planning organizations must be encouraged, either voluntarily or statutorily, to be more inclusive of tribes located within their jurisdictional boundaries.
 - ✓ The Councils of Government should change their charters or bylaws to reflect tribal government voting membership on their Board. To elaborate, the tribal government seat would be one voting seat per tribe per region for each COG. The seat would be filled by the Chairman or Chief or their designee.
- It is critical that collaboration occur on complex infrastructure projects relating to critical issues such as water, water conservation and water distribution. The promotion of planned, as opposed to ad hoc, water alliances that have greater opportunity for financing is possible.
- Create a formal telecommunications model which would use the ODOT statewide plan. This would involve a statewide planning process with tribal, state and local governments, and the business sector. The Oklahoma State regents for Higher Education would be designated as the facilitators of the model. It would include distance learning, telemedicine and tribal colleges. As an example, the business sectors, tribes, local governments and the state could harness new technologies such as the new super internet highway, “the National Lambda Rail” OR build super data centers on trust land for the tax incentives and access to the power grid with minimal transportation costs.
- Bridge the “digital divide” in rural areas by bringing broadband internet resources to help build an information infrastructure. Provide incentives to the private sector to bring broadband access to rural communities.

and begin cross-cultural education. Additionally, by recognizing that Oklahoma has a world-class early childhood program, both tribal and non-tribal entities have an opportunity to maximize Oklahoma's current workforce and jump start the educational process by providing quality child care programs for working parents.

An education that is complete and accurate is fundamental in decreasing the mutual mistrust and ignorance prevalent in both tribal and non-tribal populations. There must be a coordinated effort among tribal entities, non-tribal entities and tribal scholars to ensure that an accurate and complete account of the cultural diversity and histories of the many tribes is contained in the educational delivery systems of the State. The State must ensure that state-adopted textbooks and curriculum thoroughly cover tribal history, sovereignty and inter-governmental relations. Tribal entities and tribal scholars must be given a meaningful opportunity to work with textbook authors and publishers to ensure materials are historically and culturally accurate and appropriate.

The Town Hall recognizes the importance of an advanced degree in today's global economy. Further, it has been well documented that the tribal population trails behind the percentage of Oklahomans with college degrees. The State and the State Department of Education (SDE) must work with tribal entities to identify the cause of this educational gap in order to effectively address appropriate solutions. There was a minority view point that this could be accomplished through an expansion of the Department of Indian Education within the SDE. The Town Hall identified various other strategies to address this disparity, including mentoring programs that communicate the benefits of advanced education to the tribal population.

Post High School

Higher education, including both degree and technical programs, must do a better job of evaluating existing programs and career paths to better prepare all Oklahoma students as lifelong learners. Further, there must be greater efforts made in mentoring and preparing tribal students for higher education through curriculum that maximizes educational success. And, once tribal students arrive at higher education institutions efforts should be made to retain those students. Such efforts might include peer counseling, encouraging family support and promoting tribal students' activities.

Oklahoma's Career Technology System is nationally recognized for its excellence in delivering workplace training and skills. Career Tech and tribal leaders must communicate and arrive at a consensus as to the needs of the local community and tribal citizens. Panelists discussed at great length the dire need for skilled graduates from Career Tech programs in tribal communities and the State in general. Career Tech should expand on the current program of technology certification geared toward the specific needs and requirements of the tribes and their communities. The creation of a Technical Assistance Center, through the Career Technology System, would provide collaborative assistance for tribes and municipalities. This center would furnish training in designated areas of workforce development, economic development and business development, as well as serve as a forum for the challenges faced in rural Oklahoma by tribes and municipalities.

Administrative Policies

The Town Hall participants identified additional ways that administrative policies could be changed to ensure clearer and better programs. To better prepare teachers, it is important to integrate tribal history into educational and teacher certification programs through cultural competency training and education. Examples could include a traveling American Indian heritage center that could visit the various school districts, web and technology based programs that teachers could access. Tribal scholars should be invited to help develop the various aspects of this program. The State Department of Education should provide incentives that compete with those of No Child Left Behind for general education topics to ensure a willingness to address tribal issues within the public school context. Importantly, partnerships should be embraced with professional state education organizations such as the Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School Administrators, the Oklahoma State School Boards Association and the Oklahoma Association of Career and Technology Education.

III. Health and Social Services

A. Health Care

Health care for Oklahoma tribes is pluralistic in that qualifying tribes may seek and receive services from the tribal health services, Indian Health Service (IHS) and/or non-tribal sector. Such services may be paid by any combination of tribal, federal, state, private insurance and/or personal funds. However, there is no specific formula by which a tribe

may offer services. For example, certain tribes provide services for their members only, while other tribes rely upon the IHS.

The main issue with health care in Oklahoma affecting both tribal and non-tribal Oklahomans is accessibility to affordable care. The need for an improved health care system offers a unique opportunity to the tribes, state and local governments and private sector to work together to address these issues and find solutions. The key to successful collaboration is a shared vision among the cooperating parties.

Many of the Town Hall panels' recommendations included some combination of efforts on the parts of state, regional and tribal governments to increase accessibility to health care and decrease the number of uninsured Oklahomans. Partnerships between tribes, the State and non-tribal entities should focus on providing affordable and sustainable group coverage, or individual coverage to those who do not have access to group coverage, to all Oklahomans: tribal, non-tribal and, in particular, uninsured citizens.

There are numerous opportunities for tribal and non-tribal entities to work together to address health care issues. Tribes can work with local health care systems to expand access and provide more comprehensive care to both tribal and non-tribal people. Tribes should consider providing for-profit services to non-tribal citizens in their areas. There may also be opportunities for tribes and existing non-profits to work together to meet health care funding needs. Finally, tribes and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority could work together to enroll tribal citizens in Sooner Care.

Mental Health

An estimated 15 to 18 percent of the tribal population suffers from a diagnostic mental disorder. Over a lifetime, about a third of the population will be in need of mental health and/or substance abuse services. Improvements in mental health care are needed and could be created through the expansion of existing tribal and non-tribal treatment programs and/or the creation of new programs and partnerships, particularly in rural Oklahoma communities that in many instances lack a health care facility.

Within the mental health and substance abuse treatment community there is already evidence of successful collaborations between tribes, treatment centers, drug courts and mental health courts that could be used to lower the stigma attached to seeking mental health services, provide treatment and lower the rate of incarceration. The Town Hall suggests using drug courts as an alternative to incarceration in instances of substance abuse and mental health courts as alternative to incarceration of mentally ill.

Adolescent substance abuse prevention and treatment is seriously limited across the State. It is recommended that a special focus on expanding adolescent substance abuse prevention and treatment programs be a priority. Adolescent substance abuse left untreated results in higher dropout rates, occupational problems, juvenile justice involvement and a long term burden on the Department of Corrections.

Prevention

Many of the health problems prevalent in both tribal and non-tribal populations are preventable. A united effort at increasing the awareness of preventative health measures can take place in schools and in the community. Schools should promote physical education and good nutrition. The community should host forums on preventative measures, traditional tribal healing and other educational programs on the prevention of health problems. Further, awareness of preventative practices and increased education could possibly lead to an increase in socioeconomic status and, thus, an increase in quality of life and life expectancy.

Overall, collaboration between tribal and non-tribal entities can increase accessibility to affordable health care, promote healthier living, and address issues of mental health and substance abuse. The Town Hall panels agreed that the 12 Indian Health Services regions are funded unequally. A panel of experts should generate data documenting inequities that negatively impact the OKLAHOMA region. This data should be used by tribes and state healthcare experts to demand remedy and ensure an adequate level of funding for our region. This data can also be used to create a more equitable system by making funding mandatory instead of discretionary.

The Town Hall participants considered the concept of a National Hospital for Native Americans in Oklahoma. However, Town Hall panelists overwhelmingly recommended that rather than create a National Hospital for the Native American, the State should consider creating a specialty research institution to focus on health issues prevalent in the tribal and/or general population(s) such as diabetes or creating/strengthening cooperative partnerships that identify the gaps in rural/Native American healthcare. The institution should capitalize on already established alternative means of delivering care such as telemedicine.

Existing alliances and programs that could be built upon or used as models were identified. They are listed at the back of this report. One of these examples, however, that was discussed at length is Oklahoma State University's osteopathic medical school in Tulsa. This school produces many of the doctors who locate in rural Oklahoma, where many of our tribal citizens live. OSU's school is threatened by an ongoing dispute with Ardent Hospital Corp., the for-profit hospital company which owns Tulsa Regional Medical Center (TRMC). OSU uses TRMC as its main teaching hospital. It was suggested that OSU should initiate discussions with the tribes, particularly those in Eastern Oklahoma, to determine if agreements could be reached that would help solve the TRMC issue. Such agreements could include tribal health services preferring TRMC for hospital referrals; OSU residents performing outreach programs for the tribes and other services that might profitably benefit all parties. In particular, OSU resources could be utilized to help identify and fill gaps in the delivery of health services in rural Oklahoma. Other benefits would include student recruitment for OSU, opportunities for tribes to recruit graduate doctors, and opportunities for OSU to work with tribes to focus services on the health and well being of tribal citizens.

B. Social Services

As with healthcare services, social services issues also provide a unique opportunity for collaboration among tribes, governments and private business. Areas ripe for collaboration and education include elderly and childcare services. The State and many of the tribes provide such social services to their respective populations, but encounter logistics problems. Some tribal governments have chosen to create and operate tribal social services in order to be more culturally responsive to their members. These services parallel, and in some instances collaborate with, existing state and local government programs on a wide range of social services in tribal communities. Before collaboration is possible, studies should be conducted across the State to identify community needs, gaps in care, existing facilities and duplication of services.

Many tribes, valuing the presence of their elderly populations, prefer to provide care at home rather than using assisted living centers. The PACE program provides adult daycare and allows tribal elderly to stay in their homes and communities. Our older citizens can also be utilized to enrich the lives of both tribal and non-tribal community members via their involvement in childcare and education programs. For example, Northeastern State University uses Cherokee elders to teach courses on the Cherokee. It may also be possible to consolidate day care programs to include both the elderly and children, thereby increasing and encouraging multi-generational and multi-cultural relationships. This idea, though not widespread in non-tribal communities, has merit as an alternative to assisted living centers or nursing homes. Raising the awareness of non-tribal communities to the benefits of such an approach may be necessary, but provides yet another opportunity for tribal, state and local government and private business to collaborate.

Another opportunity for collaboration between state government and tribal government is possible in the Department of Human Services (DHS) Advantage program. The Advantage program cannot adequately serve all rural areas; this service gap is an opportunity for the tribes to step in and reach both native and non-native senior citizens with their elderly services. Because DHS has a presence in almost every community it could act as a coordinator between entities, but not as the sole stakeholder.

Child welfare is another opportunity for alliance, but one that has seen little cooperation thus far. The Indian Child Welfare Act focuses on the matching needs of the tribal child with the resources of tribal DHS, but needs more collaboration between tribal social services and state DHS. To address this issue, further education on the act is needed, as well as, a better understanding of cultural heritage and best practices for the tribal child in need of such services.

Social Security

Of utmost importance in considering social services issues is the possibility of a large number of Baby Boomers retiring and applying for Social Security benefits at one time. To confront this problem, tribes and the State should

consider collaborating in order to more quickly process applications and provide services. Because of already existing tribal health care facilities, the Social Security Administration has considered approaching tribes to ask them to take and process Social Security applications. The tribes' involvement in this process could possibly cut down the application process time from 90 to 20 days.

Further, the provisioning of social services is a numbers issue; there are simply not enough Generation Xers and Yers to pay for the provision of necessary services to the Baby Boomers. To combat this issue, tribes could investigate using their domestic sovereign status to facilitate and expedite the lawful application for work visas.

C. The OMB Reimbursement Rate

As part of its discussion on tribal and non-tribal partnerships and alliances in the context of health and social services the Town Hall panelists explored possibilities for expanding utilization of the OMB rate program for coverage and payment for outpatient services to Medicaid eligible patients. They concluded that efforts should be made to encourage tribal citizens to learn of and utilize available services. Increased participation in the program could be achieved via educational programs for health care professionals and state enrollment of eligible individuals. Any tribe that operates a health care facility and has the capacity to serve non-tribal patients should be encouraged to explore arrangements similar in structure to the "Okeemah Hospital" model.

All tribal citizens that qualify for other programs, whether with a private plan, or state program such as Sooner Care, should be encouraged to enroll. To the extent that Indian Health Services can collaborate with commercial plans or Sooner Care, they should do so. This will generate funds for the tribes as well as provide access to health care for Oklahomans. The Town Hall panelists support the establishment of a task force comprised of members of the medical community charged with the goal of working with this issue and understanding how to better optimize available benefits.

IV. Economic Development and Tourism

A. Economic Goals Common to Municipalities and Tribal Governments

The first step toward building alliances for the promotion of economic development is a shared vision of goals. The Town Hall panels discussed and identified numerous economic goals common to tribal and non-tribal governments. In general, the Town Hall panels agreed that increasing the quality of life by decreasing poverty and increasing wealth for citizens is the ultimate goal of economic development. To accomplish a better quality of life for all Oklahomans, both tribal and non-tribal entities should collaborate to increase educational opportunities that grow a strong workforce; develop a diversified economy through the attraction, creation and stimulation of new business; and encourage the viability and prosperity of the state's communities. Drawing from the Academy's 2004 Town Hall addressing the environment and economic growth, the Town Hall participants recommended promoting "sustainable and smart growth" while preserving natural resources.

B. Benefits of Tribal and Non-Tribal Collaboration for Economic Growth

Town Hall panelists identified a number of potential benefits that could result from tribal and non-tribal collaboration on economic development endeavors. For example, tribes in partnership with local governments and other non-tribal economic development organizations can access federal grants and program dollars, thus leveraging capital resources. In order to promote the tourism industry in the State, tribal, state and local partnerships should emphasize cultural heritage tourism modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation ("Share Your Heritage"). Likewise, alliances between tribal and non-tribal entities can facilitate expansion of industry and encourage entrepreneurial activity in science and technology.

C. Barriers to Collaboration

Once again, Town Hall panels cited mutual mistrust and ignorance as the number one barrier to collaboration. Additionally, the Town Hall panels identified the legitimate but often competing economic goals of tribal and local governments as a barrier. For example, tribes seek to acquire property and create businesses on which they may not pay sales taxes and ad valorem taxes that are vital to the support of local government. Non-tribal entities often view unstable tribal leadership, ever changing ground rules and perceived tax disadvantages as disincentives for pursuing alliances and partnerships with tribal entities. Acknowledging that these differences exist, strategies should be developed to mitigate the negative financial and non-financial consequences for all parties involved.

D. Opportunities for Collaboration

The topic of economic growth and development proved to be rich with potential opportunities for collaboration between tribal and non-tribal entities. Listening to one another and establishing mutual trust and respect will allow the ideas to flow, collaborative agreements to be reached and the autonomy and diversity of both tribal and non-tribal entities to be maintained. First and foremost, there is a need for the greater development of tribal and non-tribal relationships formed around a common goal. For example, tribal and non-tribal entities living in a common region of the State might work together to promote a regionalized approach to economic development in the following ways: leveraging and maximizing resources for community or regional investments (i.e. infrastructure projects), increasing high-school graduation numbers, re-energizing downtown areas, creating common planning boards to tackle common goals in the community or region and/or sharing governmental services (i.e. cross deputization of law enforcement) for the benefit of all citizens in the area.

Tribal and non-tribal entities can work together on economic development on a statewide level, as well. To identify a shared vision, education symposiums should be held to illustrate the positive aspects of collaboration and what some common goals might be. For example, tribal and non-tribal entities could steer collaborations toward value added pursuits such as manufacturing rather than retail or explore the possibility of creating a new magnet or anchor enterprises, such as a Branson-like destination, to attract other industries and other sources of revenue.

E. Traditional Business Expansion, Retention and Attraction

A major aspect of economic growth is the state's ability to attract businesses seeking to relocate. Local governments and tribal governments can work collaboratively to create pro-business environments that are attractive to those businesses. Pro-business collaborations include developing inventories of common resources, assets and workforce; creating or promoting the foreign trade zone model in tribal areas; educating governmental decision makers on the positive benefits of quality jobs and tribal economic development; and encouraging start-up business with venture capital funding.

In order to aid industries considering partnerships with tribes, Town Hall panels recommended providing information on "How to Do Business in Indian Country." For example, an existing forum like the Oklahoma Supreme Court Sovereignty Symposium could be used to educate the business sector on partnering with the tribes. Such information forums or workshops should focus on business development and planning, commercial codes, laws, and regulations. Another approach from the tribal perspective might be the creation of one-stop business development shops in tribal areas that enable a new business to obtain all the relevant information needed to start a business.

For tribes without business experience, the Town Hall panels recommended partnerships with state officials or mentoring/internships opportunities with economically successful tribes in order to learn how to create new business opportunities.

Traditional business expansion, retention and attraction needs to be enhanced. More informative steps must be taken with Oklahoma's Congressional Delegation to encourage their influence with the Federal Court to direct more funding from full and open competition to hub zone set aside contracts. In that same regard, the general public must be made aware of hub zone opportunities.

Further discussion in all Town Hall panels resulted in many ideas, to include that accelerated depreciation and employee tax credits be promoted; that tribal and non-tribal staff be made aware as to the importance of a positive attitude where interfacing with other parties; that accelerated depreciation and employee tax credits be promoted; and that collaboration occur to improve institutional opportunities in order to alleviate child care concerns.

Another major aspect of economic growth and development is the state's ability to attract new business and support entrepreneurship efforts. Again, the first step in attracting new business and supporting entrepreneurial efforts is to identify the potential business's workforce needs and meet them by growing and retaining a trained workforce. To do this the Town Hall panels suggest working with the state's education system to identify economic goals and to produce a workforce with the necessary skills. To combat "brain drain," the Town Hall panels suggest tribal and non-tribal entities present a unified front by creating tax incentives for businesses who hire Oklahoma graduates, requiring tribal scholarship recipients to work in-state for a period of time, and/or offering loan forgiveness for students who agree to stay in Oklahoma.

Beyond workforce matters, tribal and non-tribal entities can work together to create and attract new business to the State. Examples of potential tribal and non-tribal collaboration include establishing a council of tribal and non-tribal entities whose goal is to promote growth in the State. Such a council might collaborate to develop a joint marketing package to project a seamless presentation to lure new business to the area. This council should work together to promote the benefits both tribal and non-tribal entities bring to a potential new business such as the tribes' tax credits or the potential for federal and private sector funds as a source of revenue for start up businesses.

In addressing the importance of attracting new business and supporting entrepreneurial efforts, the Town Hall participants recommend the creation of convention centers in close proximity to casinos to accommodate large groups; development of a plan to move Oklahoma's commodity production from raw commodities to doing more "value added" processes in-state; and to promote the mentality that "all work is honorable."

F. Ways to Motivate Progress in the Area of Economic Growth

The Town Hall panels discussed specific steps to encourage and motivate non-tribal and tribal governments and entities to leverage their individual resources to better market and promote Oklahoma's unique assets. Those unique assets include, but are not limited to, the number of lakes in the State and the tribes' unique roll with respect to ownership and environmental regulation issues. An obvious recommendation to motivate economic progress is to publicize the existence of two water ports for the distribution of goods to the central United States.

Oklahoma City has made significant progress in marketing the cultural experience; Town Hall panels identified other areas for additional progress in the tourism industry. It must be noted that a holistic and honest conversation regarding conflicting points of view should first take place, but the panels agreed that Oklahoma's tourism industry, aided with some aggressive marketing and PR, has a lot to offer visitors. By first taking inventory of the State's assets, tribal and non-tribal entities can work together to identify and promote attractions and control the State's image.

As identified by the Town Hall panels, the State's assets include rich, diverse tribal experiences featuring festivities and attractions such as Red Earth and the Cherokee Film Festival, an abundance of lakes, 11 eco-regions, Route 66, affordability and hospitality. While recognizing the assets, Town Hall panels emphasized the importance of creating a unique brand for the State, such as "I ♥ NY" or "What Happens in Vegas Stays in Vegas," that is supported through marketing, public relations and advertising efforts. The creation of a Native American Advisory Board could assist The Oklahoma Department of Tourism in promoting Oklahoma as a tourist destination. These two entities could work together in creating packages of both tribal and non-tribal tourist destinations and key attractions in the State.

Importantly, as it will be a key focal point for the tribal cultural experience, it is imperative to raise the balance of funds needed to complete the American Indian Cultural Center. The Town Hall unanimously supports an appeal to the legislature to provide \$42 million in state funding and to encourage financial participation from the tribal and private sectors.

V. Infrastructure and Transportation

A. Advantages and Opportunities in Developing Alliances for Infrastructure

The Town Hall participants discussed the development of alliances and partnerships with tribal governments and entities for the various infrastructure concerns at the state, county and local levels. The panels agreed that virtually all conceivable infrastructure projects, whether related to energy, telecommunications, roads, bridges, water, affordable housing, and even the provisioning of health care services, can be facilitated and even advanced through collaborative efforts of tribal and non-tribal entities. By sharing costs and pooling capital resources and knowledge, value is added, money and time are saved and projects previously unattainable become attainable. Finally, partnering with tribal entities enables non-tribal entities to be given preference in terms of government awards; it also opens up sources of funding not available to the general public. Existing alliances that could be built upon or modeled for Infrastructure projects include The Conservation Security Program.

A sound emergency infrastructure will be of critical importance as we move into Oklahoma's second century. Tribal and local non-tribal governments must work together to implement preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of infrastructure breakdown, especially during times of disaster. It was recommended that communications frequency, such as an 800 megahertz protocol utilized for radio communications, be made available to everyone in emergency

situations. Emergency communications systems used by the State and the tribal governments should be integrated for more effective and widespread communication. In emergency situations, centrally located tribal governments and county governments must work together to build subsidized first responder programs.

The opportunities for tribal and non-tribal local governments, utilities, businesses, education institutions and entities, and others in all areas of the state to work together to improve services is abundant. Cooperative projects which address infrastructure needs can alleviate stress on common schools, higher education and career techs, as well as housing needs in Oklahoma's rural areas.

Collaborating on complex infrastructure projects relating to critical issues as water, water conservation and water distribution is critical. The promotion of planned, as opposed to ad hoc, water alliances, that have greater opportunity for financing such projects is possible.

Enhancing the understanding of grant writing for tribes and smaller communities is another area in which cooperation with larger cities that have this knowledge could be made available. Technical assistance for grant writing could be provided by staff from larger cities.

Returning to the 2001 and 2006 Academy Town Hall recommendations emphasizing "connectivity," the Town Hall participants recommended bridging the "digital divide" in rural areas by bringing broadband internet resources to help build an information infrastructure. Emphasis was made to provide incentives for the private sector to bring broadband access to rural communities.

Federal dollars should be fully utilized in joint efforts. It was suggested that an inventory and analysis be provided and made available for water, rail, air and other state infrastructure projects and then collaborate with the business sector and local, state and tribal governments to fully utilize the federal dollars in a joint effort.

Integration of tribal governments and entities with state, county and local jurisdictions will facilitate collaboration and successful solutions to the environmental, infrastructure and transportation issues facing Oklahoma today. This integration must start at the state government level with a greater emphasis on tribal relations through the establishment tribal liaisons at state agencies, tribal relations advisory boards and increased tribal representation on state boards and commissions. It was also recommended that the governor (1) create a cabinet level position of Secretary of State and Tribal Affairs, (2) appoint tribal liaisons in each State agency, (3) change the structure of the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission to ensure that the board is comprised of officials appointed by each federally recognized tribe, (4) issue an executive order adopting a policy of agency consultation and coordination with tribal governments.

Further, every tribe is located within a regional planning area, circuit engineering districts (CED), conservation district or council of government (COG) jurisdiction. While tribes have been involved in these organizations, tribes should play a more active role in these groups either in an advisory capacity or through actual membership and participation. These regional planning organizations must also be encouraged, either voluntarily or statutorily, to be more inclusive of tribes located within their jurisdictional boundaries. COGs should change their charters or bylaws to reflect tribal government voting membership on their COG board. To elaborate, the tribal government seat would be one voting seat per tribe per region for each COG to be filled by the Chairman or Chief or their designee.

The State is divided into eight CEDs which are multiple county regions that build upon economies of scale, pooling resources. CEDs provide services such as planning and research that will improve the quality of the County Highway System and the tribal road network where the two overlap.

Tribal entities should work with the Department of Transportation to coordinate long range plans for capital facilities. Additionally, state and local governments should reach out to each particular tribe to coordinate long range plans for capital facilities. Tribes should also take advantage of the resources available through circuit engineering districts and be proactive in working with the local governments and COGs to be engaged in planning. The development of formal policies for consultation between tribal and non-tribal entities is strongly encouraged to ensure that the communication necessary to achieve the alliance takes place. It is recommended that the state legislature work to create laws which would require these consultation policies, and it is recommended that the Governor issue an Executive Order

to all state agencies requiring consultation with tribal entities until such legislation is adopted. Tribal liaisons should be established to promote this state tribal constitution policy.

One panel discussed and recommended the need to create a formal Telecommunications Model which should use the ODOT statewide plan. This would be a statewide planning process with tribal, state, and local governments as well as the business sector. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education would be the facilitator of the Telecommunications Model. Also included in the model would be distance learning, telemedicine and tribal colleges. An example of a collaboration model would be the business sector, tribes, local governments and the state harnessing new technologies such as the new super internet highway the "National Lambda Rail" or build super data centers on trust land for the tax incentives and access to the power grid with minimal transportation costs.

Significant opportunities do exist for collaboration between tribal governments and non-tribal entities for economic development along the McClelland-Kerr River Navigation System, including increased utilization of the Tulsa Port of Catoosa as a centralized distribution center and through the foreign trade zone model, riverbed mining partnerships and recreational opportunities such as riverboat casinos. The congressional delegation should also secure funding to dredge the riverbed from a 9 to 12 foot draft to permit ocean going vessels to have access to the Port of Catoosa. However, further study of such opportunities is necessary on various issues that impede such opportunities, including funding and ownership issues.

Conclusion

The Town Hall panels' efforts to identify alliances between tribal and non-tribal entities have formed a firm foundation upon which a relationship of trust can begin to be built. While the 2007 Town Hall has come to an end, its legacy is the commencement of a process of rich dialogue and alliance building that must continue. Much collaborative work and implementation still remains in order to expand upon the recommendations and findings contained in this report, but the Oklahoma Academy is dedicated to continuing the process in the coming years. Your continued participation and input in this collaborative process is critical to the success of this endeavor.

burden is traditionally placed on the tribes to educate others in the State regarding tribal success; and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes, biases and generalizations among tribal and non-tribal entities by iconic American institutions such as the mass media.

C. Deterrents to partnerships and joint project development

Town Hall participants also identified deterrents to establishing partnerships and pursuing joint project development between tribal and non-tribal entities. The lack of clarity or understanding by the business community and non-tribal entities of the regulatory, statutory or cultural ground rules for doing business with tribes deters partnerships and economic development. Whether real or perceived, confusion exists regarding regulatory and statutory requirements and the rule of law regarding the “deal,” especially in the context of the sovereignty of the particular tribe. Jurisdictional struggles continue to hamper tribal and state relationships. Barriers to joint project development also include a history of broken governmental promises and a mindset of having been taken advantage of.

Another deterrent to joint endeavors is the perception on the part of both tribal and non-tribal entities of an uneven playing field. Non-tribal entities often view the tribes as having unfair advantages or unstable governments that allow for the rescission of contracts made with prior tribal leadership. From the tribal perspective, not all tribes are included in compact negotiations and joint state-tribal economic development opportunities. To address this disparity, the Town Hall panels recommend inclusion of all tribes in a formal process of direct negotiation of compacts and in opportunity to participate in economic ventures as these ventures are identified. This process would be conducted in such a way that is fair but does not inhibit the economic process and is aimed at economic development projects that are state, not private, economic development deals.

D. Actions that enhance communication and collaboration

Despite the barriers and deterrents that exist, the Town Hall participants recommended specific actions to enhance communication and collaboration among tribal, state and local governments and the private sector. One common underlying theme of these action items was finding ways to address mistrust, fear and ignorance and the resulting misunderstandings that exist today.

Creating informal collaboration-based processes would educate tribal and non-tribal people about cultural differences, the benefits of working together and, ultimately, help to conquer aforementioned communication barriers. Specific actions to address the need for collaboration-based processes include adopting dispute resolution mechanisms that are culturally appropriate, providing comprehensive training in cultural competency and appointing an ambassador for each tribe from the Office of Indian Affairs. The role of the ambassadors would be to establish and enhance strong cultural, political and economic relationships between the private sector and tribes on a consistent basis. The constant enhancement of these relationships would serve to build understanding among all Oklahomans regarding the unique advantages of collaborating with multiple sovereign nations.

The five Town Hall panels identified actions that would enhance communication and collaboration in state government and specific areas include encouraging state and local boards, commissions and governmental units to increase tribal representation; expand tribal and non-tribal economic development groups with expertise in building relations in economic development fields; develop and demonstrate diversity and sensitivity training for federal, state and local governmental employees; develop a centralized records management system for the sharing of public documents, records and tribal courts orders; utilize the regional organization of county governments model for tribes; enhance economic development through the Chamber of Commerce and Department of Commerce organizations that promote “trade missions” to tribes and the foreign trade zone model in tribal areas; address the need for building a greater understanding of contracting with tribal entities through education and such vehicles as “trust deposits;” and promote already existing successful partnerships among tribal and state/local governments as illustrative of the potential of alliances.

II. Education and Workforce Development

Common Education

A quality education is critical to children becoming productive, successful adults, and education plays a vital role in the development of a quality workforce. Beginning at birth, education is a life long process and should start in the home. Tribal and non-tribal entities can work together to provide support for positive early-childhood learning experiences

2007 Town Hall Findings Report

Building Alliances:

Tribal Governments, State and Local Governments and Private Sectors

I. Communication and Collaboration

Communication between tribal governments and non-tribal entities in Oklahoma is essential if alliances are to be built to take us into the next century. Open communication and collaboration require participants to share thoughts and ideas and actively listen to each other. To facilitate this communication and collaboration, both parties must possess trust, show civility, and generate mutual respect.

A. Enhancing communication and collaboration

Town Hall participants identified a diverse range of advantages that enhance communication and collaboration among tribal and non-tribal entities. First, Oklahoma has more federally recognized Native American tribes per capita, 38, than any other state in the union. The prevalence of tribes brings a heightened sensitivity and awareness of tribal cultures and history to the citizens of the State. Unlike states with federally-designated reservation lands that isolate tribal communities, Oklahoma is unique in that it possesses tribal trust lands. Tribal trust lands help break down barriers and foster understanding between tribal and non-tribal peoples.

A diverse population composed of non-tribal people and the people of 38 tribes with their respective cultures and histories can make for relationships fraught with conflict and misunderstanding. Yet, tribal and non-tribal people in Oklahoma live in the same communities, attend the same schools, work in the same businesses and ultimately share the same dreams and aspirations. By recognizing that our day to day lives are interwoven, Oklahomans can begin to build and pursue a shared vision for the State's future through better communication and collaboration.

Enhanced communication and collaboration rely on tribal and non-tribal representatives making an effort to better understand each others' cultures and work toward common goals in their shared communities and in the State overall. While tribal people have adopted some "Anglo" approaches, they expect that non-tribal entities make a concerted effort to recognize and respect cultural diversity. The integration of tribal citizens into mainstream leadership roles in non-tribal organizations and businesses has had a positive impact on relationships between the tribal and non-tribal entities. The ability of tribes to effectively communicate their many stories of economic success continues to have a positive impact in the State.

Examples of successful communication and collaboration between tribes and non-tribal entities is evident in the towns of Ada, Tahlequah, and McLoud, in education programs such as Head Start, and in various economic development, technology and communication advancements throughout the State.

B. Barriers to communication and collaboration

While positive attitudes toward cooperation and collaboration have increased in recent years, the biggest obstacle to improved tribal-non-tribal relations continues to be the lack of understanding of the State's 38 unique tribes and their respective cultures and histories. While Oklahomans share much in common, we must overcome the lack of trust that has resulted from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding and conflict. Only by advancing the trust factor through improved education and awareness can communication between tribal and non-tribal people be advanced.

Attempts to increase communication and collaboration between tribal and non-tribal entities are often thwarted by the lack of understanding and communication surrounding the issue of tribal sovereignty. An understanding of tribal sovereignty in business is necessary to avoid uncertainty in the market, adversarial relationships and the accidental encroachment of tribal sovereignty. The prevalent misunderstanding of sovereignty often adds to the resentment felt by both sides and prevents cooperation between tribes and local governments on matters such as infrastructure projects.

Additional barriers to communication and collaboration were identified as the lack of communication between the federal government and tribes regarding the availability of federal contracts and workforce development; the fact that the

Prologue to the Report

Oklahoma has a long list of valuable assets that include a colorful history, an abundance of natural resources and a culturally rich and diverse population. Perhaps the state's most unique assets are the 38 sovereign tribal governments, each with special authority, advantages and responsibility. Additionally, Oklahoma possesses powerful public and private sectors with the ability to work with the tribes to attract and create development in Oklahoma.

The challenge of this Town Hall was to identify tribal-non-tribal alliances that would allow those involved to accomplish what they could not necessarily accomplish alone. However, these two sectors of Oklahoma society must overcome a long-running history of mutual mistrust, ignorance, fear, and misunderstanding that has made partnerships between tribal and non-tribal entities, now and in the past, especially difficult. By recognizing the strengths that each brings to the table, tribal and non-tribal Oklahomans will be able to work together to ensure the continued economic viability of the State, and, for the benefit of all Oklahomans, make great strides in areas such as health care, natural resources, banking, technology, economic development, education and infrastructure. To achieve this goal, alliances must be based in trust and politically acceptable to all parties.

Success is imperative and the stakes are high. Oklahoma now competes in a national-global marketplace that confers competitive advantage on those best able to effectively mobilize their collective human-intellectual capital and its associated combined assets. Sadly, Oklahoma is poorly prepared for the contest. We must leave behind the historic, social, economic, regional and cultural quarrels of our loosely organized past. An important opportunity lies ahead in the development of powerful political and economic alliances between Oklahoma's tribal and non-tribal worlds.

To begin this process, 131 Oklahomans gathered at Quartz Mountain for the Oklahoma Academy 2007 Town Hall to identify potential and existing alliances and develop new relationships based in trust. During two days of intense discussions regarding communication and collaboration, education and workforce development, health and social services, economic development and tourism and infrastructure and transportation, the following findings and recommendations were made.