

American Indian Resource Center

recognizing the diversity and strength of American Indians

More American Indians live in Oklahoma than in any other state in the nation, except California. Though tribal differences are vast, American Indians share a rich heritage. Tulsa City-County Library's American Indian Resource Center highlights the culture and history of American Indians and provides a support system for this often-overlooked segment of the community.

The American Indian Resource Center provides cultural, educational and informational resources, activities and services honoring American Indian heritage, arts and achievements. The center provides access to more than 4,000 books and media for adults and children by and about American Indians, including historical and rare materials, new releases, videos, DVDs and music CDs. These resources are located in the American Indian Resource Center at Central Library and throughout the Tulsa City-County Library. Subjects include American Indian languages, art, culture, fiction, genealogy, history and religion.

The center also offers outreach to area tribes, maintains a LISTSERV designed for tribal libraries plus provides a monthly e-newsletter. "We want Oklahoma's tribes to be current on what's happening in the library and to let them know we're here to assist them," said Teresa Runnels, coordinator of the American Indian Resource Center. To sign up for the LISTSERV and/or e-newsletter, contact Runnels at trunnel@tulsalibrary.org or call 918-549-7472.

festival of words and author award

Tribal elders, storytellers, craftsmen, dancers and musicians share the history and traditions of North America's native people during the American Indian Festival of Words, held biennially in March. The free festival celebrates the contributions of American Indians through enlightening family programs. This year's celebration is scheduled March 5 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Central Library. See the back cover of this event guide for a complete list of presentations scheduled at the 2011 American Indian Festival of Words.

The highlight of the festival is the presentation of the American Indian Festival of Words Author Award. LeAnne Howe, an enrolled citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, will receive the 2011 award. "Oklahoma is my home and where I grew up, so this award means more to me than anyone will ever know," said Howe. "So much so, that I'm flying home to Oklahoma from Amman, Jordan, where I'm currently a William J. Fulbright scholar." Howe went to Jordan to research her newest novel and to teach American Indian studies at the University of Jordan.

Inaugurated in 2001, the American Indian Festival of Words Author Award recognizes the literary contributions of outstanding American Indian authors. It is the first and only award given by a public library to honor an American Indian author. Past award winners are Carter Revard, Leslie Marmon Silko, Vine Deloria Jr. and Joy Harjo.

and strength of American Indians



Pictured in the American Indian Resource Center are: back row (left to right), Sonny Bucktrof, David Proctor, Felix Brown Jr., Wiley Washington, Gilbert Matthews and Herman Tehee; and front row (left to right), Katie Bucktrof, Teresa Runnels, Abbey Runnels, Amy Hill and Beth Pickering.



circle of honor

Inaugurated in 2004, the Circle of Honor ceremony honors an American Indian for his or her achievements and contributions that have enriched the lives of others. Induction into the Circle of Honor is a celebration of the honoree's actions in the face of adversity, commitment to the preservation of American Indian culture and legacy for future generations. The center inducts an individual into the Circle of Honor in even-numbered years. Past inductees are Billy Mills, Neal McCaleb, Wilma Mankiller and Charles Chibitty.

preserving native languages

"In the 1800s, our government made a concentrated effort to take the Indian out of Indians," said Runnels. "Subsequently, some of the tribal languages have gone silent. The elders did not teach the language to their children as they had to endure a lot for speaking the language and they did not want their children to have to go through what they did."

To promote, revitalize and preserve our country's native languages, the American Indian Resource Center is building its collection of print and audio resources, offering hands-on language classes, and enhancing activities for the young and the elderly who are the future and past of our native languages.

The American Indian Resource Center recently received the Humanities in Education Award from the Oklahoma Humanities Council for its achievements in language preservation through the development of its Native Language Supplemental Resource Packet. The curriculum is in the Sauk and Euchee languages. It is simple enough for teachers to use in early childhood classrooms but also intricate enough to use in language immersion classes. Visit the center's Web page at www.tulsalibrary.org/airc to request a packet.

Currently, three native languages are taught year-round at area libraries: Cherokee at Zarrow Regional Library, Osage at Skiatook Library and Ponca at Maxwell Park Library. The public is invited to attend the free classes. Check the library's monthly event guide for dates and times. If your organization conducts a native language class and is interested in offering the class at a Tulsa City-County Library, please contact Runnels.

native voices in public places

The American Indian Resource Center is launching a new language initiative called "Native Voices in Public Places" to build on its efforts to preserve native languages. The center will launch the initiative at the American Indian Festival of Words on March 5 from 11:40 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Central Library.

"We're targeting students ages 21 to 40 or so who are learning a native language," said Runnels. "We're hoping that native language speakers will come and listen to the students speak the language and then converse with them. We want to give these students an avenue to speak the language and for language speakers to encourage them to continue learning the language."

This first program will focus primarily on the languages of Muscogee Creek, Pawnee, Osage and Cherokee. The center hopes to do a follow-up program in November to be inclusive of more native languages.

contact us

The American Indian Resource Center is located at Central Library, Fourth Street and Denver Avenue, in downtown Tulsa. You can reach us by phone at 918-549-7472; e-mail, trunnel@tulsalibrary.org; or on the Web at www.tulsalibrary.org/airc.