

SAC & FOX NEWS



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CHIEF'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION

Dear Tribal Members:

Now that the season of Spring has arrived and our traditional feasts are about to begin, graduations are being anticipated by our children and grandchildren, and life is rejuvenated all around us, I wish everyone the best.

This month I'm sharing news from Indian Country.

Indian Country Meetings - April 12, 13 & 15. The Sac and Fox Nation, Otoe-Missouria Tribe, and the Caddo Nation are each



Chief George Thurman

hosting a meeting of the United States Attorney's Office Law Enforcement Roundtables and Tribal Consultations with Indian tribes in the Western District.

Arvo Mikkanen, Assistant U.S. Attorney and Tribal Liaison with the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Western District of Oklahoma, stated in a letter to each tribal nation, "We greatly appreciate your hospitality, cooperation, and assistance in connection with this important effort to improve law enforcement response, communication, and cooperation between various branches of the local, state, tribal, and federal governments."

He provided a schedule of events:

10:00 a.m. – Noon. Roundtable with state, local, and tribal law enforcement. Invited are the Sheriffs, Police Chiefs, District Attorneys, and Tribal law enforcement heads in the three areas to discuss issues, questions, and challenges they face in Indian Country.



Henrietta Massey provided the Opening Prayer during the March 10 coalition meeting of Oklahoma tribal NAGPRA representatives held at the Sac and Fox Multi-Purpose Center in Shawnee. Principal Chief George Thurman gave an official welcome, and lunch was provided by Stella Wilson.

Noon. Lunch Break
1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Consultation with Tribal Officials. Invited to the afternoon consultation are the Tribal Leader, Tribal prosecutor, and Tribal law enforcement head for each tribe.

Dates & locations: April 12 at the Otoe-Missouria Community Center (located at the Otoe-Missouria Tribal Complex, approximately 27 miles North of Stillwater on Highway 177).

April 13 at Caddo Nation Cultural Center (located at the Caddo Tribal Headquarters, 5 miles East of Binger at the intersection of Highway 152 and Highway 281).

April 15 at the Sac & Fox Nation Learning Center (located at the Sac & Fox Nation Capitol grounds, approximately 6 miles South of Stroud on Highway 99, just East of intersection of Highway 99 and E-930 Road).

Mikkanen: President Obama nominated Arvo Mikkanen for a Federal District Court Judgeship that would make him the only Native American on the Federal Bench.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) issued a press release about the potential appointment:

Obama's District Court Nominee to Be Sole Native American on Federal Bench

Washington, D.C. – The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) commends the Obama Administration's nomination of Assistant U.S. Attorney Arvo Mikkanen to the United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma. NCAI, the nation's oldest and largest American Indian and Alaska Native organization, is calling on the Senate to move quickly to confirm the appointment and fill the federal district court vacancy.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Mikkanen has served our country for many years as a federal prosecutor, and with his vast experience in both federal and tribal law, he is an excellent choice for the Federal District Court in Northern Oklahoma," said Jefferson Keel, President of NCAI, and Lt. Governor of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma. "We urge the Senate to act swiftly to confirm Mr. Mikkanen's nomination and make the federal judiciary more representative of all citizens of this country, including Native Americans."

When confirmed, Arvo Mikkanen will be the only [Article III] Native American serving on the federal bench, out of a total of 875 federal judgeships, and only the third Native American in history to secure a federal judgeship. The other two American Indians to serve on the federal judiciary were Frank Seay (now on senior status), nominated by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, and Billy Burrage, nominated by President Bill Clinton in 1994.

Mikkanen, who has been an Assistant US Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma since 1994, is an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and has had a distinguished

legal career. He served as a trial and appellate judge for Court of Indian Offenses and Court of Indian Appeals for the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Wichita, Caddo, Delaware, Fort Sill Apache, Ponca, Pawnee, Kaw, Otoe-Missouria, and Tonkawa Tribes from 1988 to 1994, and he served as Chief Justice of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Supreme Court from 1991 to 1994. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and Yale Law School.

Confirmation obstacles Mikkanen is President Obama's first federal judicial nominee for Oklahoma but faces confirmation obstacles. In making the nomination, President Obama did not adhere to the tradition of consultation about lower court nominations with state's senators and/or representatives and thus did not first speak to Oklahoma's two U.S. Senators Tom Coburn of Muskogee and Jim Inhofe of Tulsa, both Republicans who oppose the choice of nominee, nor to U.S. Representative Dan Boren, Democrat. Coburn also serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee and stated that Mikkanen was "unacceptable for the position". Mikkanen's supporters, however, have been numerous and public with their support and include Kirke Kickingbird, an attorney and former Oklahoma City University professor; NCAI President Jefferson Keel who in the February 9, 2011 The Oklahoman described Mikkanen as "an outstanding attorney" with the needed "background and experience" to hold the federal court position; and Lael Echo-Hawk, President of the National Native American Bar Association and a member of the Pawnee Nation.

Daniel G. Webber, Oklahoma Democrat and former U.S. Attorney who now works at the Oklahoma City law firm Ryan Whaley Coldiron Shandy, endorses the nomination of Mikkanen, with whom he worked for three years in the 1990s.

In an interview with CapitolBeatOK, he stated: "I don't see how anyone could question Arvo's qualifications for the federal bench. He has a distinguished 25-year career as an Oklahoma lawyer. He started by clerking for two different federal judges. He worked in private practice at a well-known Oklahoma firm. He has represented the United States in both civil and criminal cases. In fact, Arvo has been an advocate in over 475 federal court cases. He has been recognized by the Oklahoma Bar Association for his 'pro bono' service and by the FBI for his prosecutorial skills -- not many lawyers can say that."

"I personally worked with Arvo for seven years. ... He was known throughout the Justice Department as an expert on federal criminal jurisdiction in Indian Country. He helped develop a memorandum of understanding between law enforcement and state, tribal, and federal government officials regarding the investigation of child abuse crimes in order to hold abuser accountable. He also

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Mary Ellis, oldest Sac and Fox Tribal member, celebrated her 99th Birthday with family and friends recently. (Photo by Kay Hurst)

Language Project Receives Humanities Award

On February 24, 2011 at the Oklahoma History Center, the Oklahoma Humanities Council presented its "Humanities in Education" Award to the American Indian Resource Center (AIRC) at the Tulsa City-County Library for its Native Language Supplemental Packet.

Teresa Runnels accepted the award on behalf of the AIRC. As the AIRC Coordinator, she initiated the project and enlisted the help of Sauk Language Director Jacob Manatowa-Bailey and Euchee Language Project Director Richard Grounds in creating the introductory product. Both have worked years to establish and implement language programs in their respective tribes to prevent the loss of their native languages, and they have frequently been called upon to demonstrate successful methods or assistance at conferences and workshops.

The packet features the Sauk and Euchee languages in a format designed for early childhood students that can be used either in a regular classroom environment

or in an immersion program. Each packet provides a translation sheet containing pronunciations and examples as to how sounds are used, lesson worksheets, and a translation CD.

Runnels and Manatowa-Bailey are both Sac and Fox Nation tribal members. Runnels and Grounds were present at the awards ceremony in Oklahoma City with the Sauk Language Department represented by Orvena "Twiggy" Gregory, Language Teacher.

"We are here for our language," says the Sauk Language Mission statement included in the packet. "Our language is a central, necessary, and healthy component of our families, communities, and nation, and 500 years from now it will still be all of these things to all of our people."

The AIRC offers numerous avenues of education about Native American history, heritage, and languages through a variety of mediums and contact with tribes, thus providing a wealth of information to anyone who wants to learn more.

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Award accepted: (Left to Right) Ann Thompson, OHC Executive Director; Teresa Runnels, American Indian Resource Center's Coordinator, Tulsa City-County Library; Ann Neal, OHC Board Chair. (Photo by Steve Sisney, Oklahoma Humanities Council)