

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 50th Legislature (2006)

HOUSE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION 1045

By: Wesselhoft of the House

and

Lerblance of the Senate

AS INTRODUCED

A Concurrent Resolution memorializing the American Indian, respecting the Sovereignty Symposium, celebrating Red Earth Day, and commemorating the opening of Oklahoma's Native American Cultural Center and Museum; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, American Indians long lived and prospered in organized societies, developing their own forms of government for millennia before contact with Europeans; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans have striven to steward, protect and maintain a natural ecological balance on the North American continent for thousands of years; and

WHEREAS, tribal cultures demonstrated some of the basic democratic principles that would later be embodied in the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, we ought to be mindful of the contributions that our forefathers found here among the Native Americans and from which they borrowed liberally; and

WHEREAS, in colonial times, English legislation prohibited unauthorized purchase or confiscation of Indian land; and the Proclamation of 1763 reserved the entire area west of the Appalachians to the Mississippi River for Native Americans; and the United States adopted the policy of the national government controlling the purchase of Indian lands; and

WHEREAS, when American Indians provided a formidable balance of power, first European settlers and later United States citizens were forced to negotiate with Indians and to deal with tribes as political entities through treaties and other instruments; and

WHEREAS, when American Indians gradually lost their power, the Federal Government often forced them into treaties which sold ownership to millions of acres of land and valuable natural resources. In exchange, the United States committed to pay for the lands, protect the rights and resources, and provide some services for a certain period of time to the tribe or tribes signing the treaty; and

WHEREAS, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 marked a continuation of a long series of coercive policies. During the westward expansion, many gruesome wars ensued and atrocities were committed by both white people and Indians; and

WHEREAS, some Indian tribes and many white people regrettably participated in the enslavement of African Americans and fought a great war to, among other issues, ensure such practices; and

WHEREAS, at the end of the Civil War, some tribes who allied with the Confederates lost further rights to sovereignty of certain lands; and

WHEREAS, by 1887 most Indians were forcibly moved to reservations, frequently lands which were strange to them; and

WHEREAS, the mistreatment of the First Peoples of this nation and destruction of traditional tribal communities and economies are among the most horrific stories in United States history; and

WHEREAS, the United States government's Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was a monumental step in establishing programs for the advancement of Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, citizens today regret the violence, maltreatment and neglect inflicted on Native Americans by former generations and seek Indian's forgiveness for various injustices; and

WHEREAS, reconciliation and healing among all Americans is paramount and in the best interest of our United States; and

WHEREAS, the voices of tribal and spiritual elders in each generation reminded their people of their rightful roles and authorities as self-determining and self-governing Indian nations; and

WHEREAS, thankfully the American Indian endured – never as subdued in spirit as in body, and despite all the injustice and hardships, American Indian cultures and communities have survived and thrive today; and

WHEREAS, collectively Indian history is our history and should be part of our shared and remembered heritage; we should respect the aboriginal peoples and treasure the many contributions of their descendants; and

WHEREAS, when we forget great contributions to our American history – when we neglect the heroic past of the American Indian – we thereby weaken our own heritage; and

WHEREAS, American Indians are entitled to economic independence, revitalization of traditional culture, protection of legal rights and autonomy over tribal lands and nations; and

WHEREAS, every tribe and nation is special, contributing its own culture and custom and possessing its own traditions, storytelling, history, language, dress, and songs; and each tribe's powwows and other equivalent celebrations are a kaleidoscope of feathers, jingle dresses, jewelry, buckskin, colorful shawls and blankets – all set to the rhythm of the same drum; and

WHEREAS, some American Indians have dark skin, others do not; some wear vestiges of their cultural or tribal apparel, others do not; some bear non-European names, others do not. Each American Indian is a unique individual and defies stereotyping or any single description; and

WHEREAS, the name "Oklahoma" literally means "red people" and Oklahoma has the second largest American Indian population of any state; and

WHEREAS, many of the more than 390,000 Native Americans living in Oklahoma today are descendants from the original sixty-seven tribes inhabiting or moved to Indian Territory; and

WHEREAS, thirty-nine of the American Indian nations currently living in Oklahoma are headquartered here; and

WHEREAS, twenty-five tribal languages are still spoken in Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, thirty-nine Indian nations in Oklahoma are reported to contribute 8 billion dollars annually to our state's economy. They are a vital part of Oklahoma's present day economy and infrastructure and have a vested interest in making the state a better, healthier place to live and work; and

WHEREAS, chiefs, chairmen, governors and leaders from each tribal nation, as well as state leaders and federal officials, meet annually in a Sovereignty Symposium, which is one of the first of its kind in the United States. This Sovereignty Symposium brings leaders, Indian and non-Indian, together to work for a common cause, work to reach understandings on all sides of an issue and work to pool economic resources for a greater state; and

WHEREAS, to this day, Indian self-determination and self-government in Oklahoma and throughout the nation are strong; cultures and customs are preserved; factual history is told and taught; biographies are recorded for posterity; native languages are instructed and passed on to new generations; arts and commerce are shared; seasonal ceremonies such as Red Earth Day are celebrated; and museums like the Native American Cultural Center and Museum are built to provide volumes of history and literature to all and to house and preserve important paintings, sculpture, crafts, and artifacts of the past and present.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 50TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE, THE SENATE
CONCURRING THEREIN:

THAT the Oklahoma Legislature memorializes the American Indian,
respects the Sovereignty Symposium, celebrates Red Earth Day and
commemorates the opening of Oklahoma's premier Native American
Cultural Center and Museum.

THAT a copy of this resolution be presented to Oklahoma's Native
American Cultural Center and Museum and distributed to the
headquarters of every Indian tribe or nation in the State of
Oklahoma.

50-2-8276 TM 02/13/06