

## **Let's Get More Engaged in the Tribal Government**

I don't know how many of you older than 65 (just my age factor for elders) have access to a computer or a cell phone but it sure would be nice to hear your perspective(s) on what it means to be an elder of the Kiowa Tribe, especially those living in the District 7 areas. Heck, I would be pleased with receiving an old fashion post card stating what you would like to hear from the D7 podcast, Tik Tok, newsletter, facebook and other communication tools. It seems kind of crazy that many of us still have the landline phones as our major tool of communication, other than word of mouth, but such is the life of an elder. Thank God for our grandchildren and their abilities to manipulate the computer software and cell phones these days, hàu? Please try to engage with our D7 communication activities as D7 staff try to inform you about tribal affairs while our D7 elected representative works hard to represent your best interest while conveying your ideas, needs, opinions, and perspectives to our tribally elected officials and service people. You have an excellent representative in Mr. Warren Queton. He does a good job of advocating for you and representing your lives outside the tribal service region. He uses the current communication tools and is always trying to learn how to utilize the new, advanced tools in order to let you know how much you are a vital part of our Kiowa tribe and its existence. His position is the most difficult of all tribal legislators in my opinion in terms of reaching D7 tribal members, considering that his region covers all areas outside the out of date tribal service area and the other parts of the State of Oklahoma, and his constituency involves almost half of the total tribal citizenry. He needs more assistance with staff and finances but manages to use his excellent people skills, management, and organization networks, and leadership capabilities to compensate for his limited budget and people power (staff). We elected him for another 4 year term as our legislator this past election. We need to advocate for more funding for District 7 engagement and a larger staff. Call him and visit about his needs as a legislator while you inform him of your needs as a D7 tribal citizen. In addition, his staff announces and conducts a D7 podcast every month on YouTube with special cultural and tribal service providers as part of this podcast. Tune in via your communication network on your computer or cell phone. If you don't know how, ask your tech savvy grandchildren, they know just about every social network in the tech world and how to manipulate the network.

A great big Happy Father's Day to all you conventional and traditional dads, grandpas, and great grandpas! My dad, uncle, and grandpa were meaningful contributors to my being and I am very thankful to God for providing me with these men in my life. Today finds many of our young men without the influence of their fathers, grandpas, and uncles and for them we all pray for their progress and well being. Take the time to show and tell the men in your life how much

you appreciate and care for them. Just a little bit of this will go a loooooong way, I promise you.

One more perspective for your ingestion and digestion, as elders we must exert ourselves in the preservation and perpetuation of our tribal identity. A simple way to contribute to this concept is to demonstrate more of the Kiowa Way (culture, values, customs, ceremony, behavior specific to our Kiowa spirit) to your children and grandchildren. I venture to guess that many of our baby boomer children have not experienced that much Kiowa culture over the course of their lives? I may be wrong but until something/somebody proves me wrong I will continue to advocate for focusing more on the Kiowa identity in our homes and communities today and the future. If you speak some Kiowa use it on your children and grandchildren, even if it is just singing hymns or gesturing. Explain and practice Kiowa customs (respect for elders, sharing, feeding, offering prayer and cleansing ceremony, naming of your grandchildren, story-telling, cooking certain foods, arts/crafts, music, etc.) as much as you know and can demonstrate. Try not to be imposing but take advantage to teach and be taught when the opportunity presents itself. A brief story to reinforce my comments and suggestions: when I was 8-9 of age, before the house got hooked up to electricity, along with my brothers, we would be expected/required to help cut wood for the winter months. Of all the brothers I was the one who asked a lot of questions about life, sometimes too many as my grandpa would say “*this one here is going to compete with those politicians in talking all the time*”. He knew I was the curious one of the brothers and would not hesitate to ask why and what about things. One morning as I was picking up the chips to start the fire, I heard him whistling and humming a tune, one that he continued for some time. I finally had to ask him “what are you humming grandpa and why?” He knew my curiosity would get the best of me and cause me to ask questions. He told me it was a tune that came to him last night and he was putting words in his mind to the tune. Longer story short, he set me up for “teaching” me how songs came to our people especially the spiritual leaders of the tribe (grandpa was a “peyote convert to Christian” individual like many of our baby boomer grandparents). He literally put context to his whistling and humming and taught me a Kiowa hymn that day. He was a great teacher! He knew his grandchildren and their tendencies and used these tendencies to catch and keep their attention in teaching them some old Kiowa Ways.

Hopefully, you can take this message and use it with your children and grandchildren in teaching them more of Kiowa Ways. Children are always curious, especially at an early age so take advantage to teach them when possible.

Have a great Fourth of July celebration and watch out for the heat and overeating at all the camps. Stop by Mr. Queton’s (our D7 legislator) camp to meet him and enjoy some Kiowa hospitality.