
“Can I tell you a story? When I was much younger, I visited Kansas with my uncle Luther. He was vice chairman of the carnation at that time. And I'm vice chairman now of the combination. But we visited Kansas, and went to a lot of historic sites around Kansas. And we visited Council Grove, Kansas. And there, there's a monument to the Unknown Kaw Warrior right outside of council Grove, which is now part of our Tribal Park. But this was private land at that time, it was, it was farmland and, and we had initial conversations with the landowner. And he was very interested in selling the land to the tribe that he wanted this monument to be within the ownership of the tribe. And so we talked about it, went back to the tribe, I was the Historic Preservation Officer for the tribe back then this was in the mid 1990s. And when I met with the Tribal Council, we decided to purchase the land, 115 acres or so. And prior to that, the city of Council Grove would host this festival called Washunga Days. And we come up every year, it's in the middle of June, we come up every year as a tribe, and they parade us down the street, we wave to all the people on the side of the street, and we have a dance there in Council Grove, and everybody's happy, and we have a good time. And then we leave, we're there for two or three days, and we're gone. And we when we got the word out that we were considering buying land in Council Grove, that attitude completely changed. And back in the 1860s, early 1870s, before we were removed from Kansas, the papers would describe our people as “dirty, filthy people, beggars, people begging for food”. You know, we were on hard times, you know, almost starving with the government commodities that were promised to us that we never received. And people would just describe us as “filthy people that we needed to be eradicated like rats”. And eventually, we were moved to northern Oklahoma. And then, fast forward 100 years later, I'm with my uncle who were talking about buying land and they said, “We don't want these dirty Indians here, they're going to come they're going to bring a casino, they're going to bring drugs, they're going to bring their crime they're going to…” So, nothing had changed in 100 years in terms of the attitude of the people there. The only thing that changed was that we would show up for a few days, and everybody loves us and then we would leave but the idea of us coming back and setting up any kind of residence there having any kind of presence. Just all that racism and everything else just came to the surface again. And we're still struggling with that today. But you know, the only you know, we said we're not here to build a casino. We're here to have a presence again in a state that bears our name. That's the only land that we own in Kansas right now is Allegawaho Memorial Park. That's 18 acres that we purchased. But I'm telling you, people were freaking out when they thought we were coming back to Kansas and that is still there is still within your community right there. That attitude just under the surface. So it's nice to think “Oh, it'd be nice for you to come back to Kansas. It'd be nice for you to have some of your land back…” But, there's going to be a lot of resistance when that day comes.