Cherokee Nation Signing Remarks

Oct 17, 2026 · Dean Celine

Delivered from the signing table, 11:00–11:30a, Martin Luther King High School, Riverside.



Front row: Cherokee Nation citizen and associate professor at UCLA TFT Joseph Erb, UCLA TFT Dean Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr., Deputy Principal Chief Bryan Warner, Senior Director of Cherokee Film Jen Loren, Speaker of the Council of the Cherokee Nation Johnny Jack Kidwell. Back row (L-R): Senior Advisor to Chief of Staff Austin Patton, Miss Cherokee Jaycee Gideon, At-large councilor Julia Coates, Cherokee Nation Community Liason Melissa Payne, Deputy Secretary of State Canaan Duncan and Chief of Staff Dr. Corey Bunch.

(Photo Courtesy of Cherokee Nation)

Remarks

Osiyo. This is a big day for Indian Country, and for UCLA.

The Cherokee Nation launches Language Preservation and Cultural Abundance at the premier public school of theater, film and television, inside the most applied to university in the country, and the most renowned university system in the world: the University of California. This is narrative sovereignty: a Nation telling its own story, in its own language, on its own terms.

Our communities of abundance, the ones some call minorities, never arrive alone. We bring our people everywhere we rise, and we bring more seats to the table. That is how our L.A. Rebellion began. Black, Native, Asian American and Latine students found one another, and honored one another. No student body has more films in the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress, for changing the canon of American cinema.

I am a Filipina refugee to the US. I grew up under martial law, where young people in the civil rights movement closed their gatherings with “Isang Bagsak”: when one falls, all fall. I lead with that commitment.

Twice I have traveled to Tahlequah as the Chief's distinguished guest. The stomp dance, the powwow, the blowgun, a language you grow with every child: your commitment to cultural abundance transformed me. I bring your community with me. Your film institute runs on technology ahead of ours. Your Nation plans seven generations ahead. Native nations are thriving.

Here is what we build together. Cherokee students come to UCLA. Our students travel to your studios in Oklahoma. Together we take the Cherokee language to stages and screens worldwide. Professor Joseph Erb leads this work, and you will hear from him today. Industry leaders already want in.

The moment matters. Across the country, the right to speak and to belong faces a systemic, well-funded attack. Joseph tells of his child watching *The Jungle Book*. The child wins only by knowing it is someone else's narration of him. Then he can talk back, seize the means of representation, and make his world known. That is how the world gets better. Your investment answers loudly: own your story.

We receive this gift as a responsibility. We will steward it toward a permanent center for Indigenous media at UCLA TFT, across theater, film, television and digital media, so the next seven generations of Indigenous media artists and scholars never arrive alone.

Principal Chief Hoskin, Deputy Principal Chief Warner, Speaker Kidwell, Film Institute Director Jen Loren, and the Cherokee Nation: thank you for your trust and your vision.

Wado.

