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NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN HALL OF FAME ANNOUNCES THE 2026 HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

The National Native American Hall of Fame will enshrine six contemporary Native American icons on November 21st in Oklahoma City.

OKLAHOMA CITY -- The [National Native American Hall of Fame](#) is pleased to announce the six outstanding individuals receiving induction into the 2026 Hall of Fame. The 2026 National Native American Hall of Fame class's contributions to Indian Country span disciplines such as Government, Law, Education, and Athletics. They will be honored at the induction ceremony gala on November 21st at the OKANA Resort and Hotel in Oklahoma City.

The 2026 inductees include:

Tom Cole, Chickasaw Nation. Thomas Cole has represented Oklahoma's 4th Congressional District as a Republican since 2003, previously serving in the Oklahoma Senate and as the state's 26th Secretary of State. An enrolled Chickasaw Nation member, he is Congress's longest-serving Native American and chairs the House Appropriations Committee since April 2024. Born in Shreveport, Louisiana, Cole holds advanced degrees from Yale and the University of Oklahoma in British history. His early career included congressional staff work and chairing the Oklahoma Republican Party. In Congress, he maintains a conservative record while advocating for Native American issues, particularly protections for Native American women.

Carol Juneau, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. Carol C. Juneau, an enrolled member of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, is a distinguished educator and politician who served in both chambers of the Montana Legislature from 1998 to 2011. She is best known for sponsoring Montana's landmark Indian Education for All legislation. Born in White Shield, North Dakota, Juneau holds degrees from Eastern Montana College and the University of Montana. Her early career focused on tribal higher education, including leading Blackfeet Community College. She continues serving through education consulting, the Montana Indian Democrats Council, and community leadership advocacy.

Arlinda Locklear, Lumbee Tribe. Arlinda Locklear is a leading authority in federal Indian law who began her career at the Native American Rights Fund. In 1983, she became one of the first Native American women to argue before the Supreme Court, successfully defending Sioux tribal jurisdiction in *Solem v. Bartlett*. She later secured a landmark ruling protecting Oneida tribal lands wrongfully taken by New York. Locklear also championed Lumbee Tribe federal recognition for over two decades. Her honors include the 1987 Outstanding Woman of Color award and the ABA's 2012 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award.

Richard Milanovich, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. Richard Milanovich was a prominent leader of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, serving as tribal chairman for nearly 30 years beginning in 1984. Under his leadership, the tribe transformed into one of America's most prosperous Native American communities through major developments including the Spa Hotel, Spa Resort Casino, and Agua Caliente Casino. These ventures funded education, cultural preservation, housing, and healthcare programs. A strong advocate for tribal sovereignty, Milanovich served on numerous boards and challenged opposition in Washington. He is remembered as a courageous, humble, and visionary leader who elevated his tribe to national prominence.

Ernie Stevens, Jr., Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. Ernie Stevens, Jr. was a transformative leader in Native American gaming, serving over 24 years as head of the Indian Gaming Association. Under his leadership, tribal gaming revenue grew from \$11 billion in 2000 to upwards of \$49 billion in 2024, becoming the largest segment of the U.S. gaming industry. A citizen of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, Stevens fiercely defended the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act while ensuring gaming revenue funded essential tribal services. Inducted into the Gaming Hall of Fame, he was also a cultural practitioner and mentor who embodied Native leadership traditions of humility and service.

Lyle Thompson, Onondaga Nation. Lyle Thompson, of the Hawk Clan of the Onondaga Nation, is widely regarded as one of the greatest lacrosse players of all time. At the University at Albany, he became the first male player to win the Tewaaron Award in consecutive seasons (2014–2015), forming the legendary "Thompson Trio" with his brother and cousin. Professionally, he earned NLL MVP honors in 2017 and the 2022 PLL Attackman of the Year award. Internationally, he won three World Lacrosse Championship bronze medals. He co-founded Thompson Brothers Lacrosse, promoting the sport's Native roots and community development.

For more information about the National Native American Hall of Fame, please visit nativehalloffame.org or contact CEO James Parker Shield at james@nativehalloffame.org.

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About the National Native American Hall of Fame:

In September 2025, the National Native American Hall of Fame established its permanent home at the historic Sundial Mansion in Oklahoma City. The organization is dedicated to identifying and honoring contemporary Native Americans who have achieved excellence across all fields, often in the face of profound historical challenges including the legacy of boarding schools, poverty, and discrimination. Through its programs and initiatives, the Hall of Fame strives to inspire the public and foster a deeper understanding of Native resilience and achievement.

The NNAHOF is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All contributions are tax deductible. EIN #: 81-3870734