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**Native American Energy in Transition:
Old Problems, New Challenges in Indian Country**

NORMAN, OKLA. -- On October 2–3, 2025, the University of Oklahoma hosted the second annual *Native American Energy in Transition: Old Problems, New Challenges in Indian Country* symposium at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History in Norman. This two-day tribally-led event brought together over 70 attendees, including Native Nations leaders and representatives from 10 recognized tribes, government officials, industry leaders and academic experts from across the U.S.A. to address the complex challenges and opportunities shaping the future of energy in Indian Country.

Spearheaded by the Caddo Nation in collaboration with OU's Institute for Community and Society Transformation (ICAST), the NSF RANGE team, and the Native Nations Center for Tribal Policy Research (NNCPTR), the symposium served as a national platform for advancing conversations around energy sovereignty, innovation and sustainability.

"Understanding energy transformation is essential for tribal sovereignty and for the prosperity of the Caddo Nation and many other nations in Oklahoma. Today, we are pleased to partner with OU ICAST and the RANGE team to facilitate discussions among business leaders, government representatives, OU researchers, and Native Nations members to share best practices and generate ideas for a more prosperous future of the state and the nation," said Bobby Gonzalez, Chairman of the Caddo Nation and one of the organizers of the symposium.

After the opening ceremony, led by the Kiowa Black Leggings Color Guard, participants engaged in two days of discussions on Tribal sovereignty, energy innovations and the economic and policy frameworks supporting energy independence across Native communities. Speakers and participants highlighted the challenges and opportunities of funding energy projects and the importance of Native nation-building through governance and institutional strength. Many discussed the role of federal policy in shaping tribal energy operations.

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“This symposium is a unique event that brings together tribal leaders, industry experts and university researchers to discuss how energy transformation can benefit every corner of the state of Oklahoma and beyond,” JC Warton Whorton, EnDev Resources LLC Inc., Founding Member Director and a symposium organizer and speaker.

The symposium also featured insights from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Oklahoma Geological Survey and several tribal utilities exploring microgrid development and market access. OU faculty from the School of Sustainable Chemical, Biological, and Materials Engineering (SCBME), Geosciences, Petroleum and Geological Engineering, Oklahoma Geological Survey, Electrical and Computer Engineering, the Water Survey and Civil Engineering and Environmental Science shared the results of the energy-related research projects.

"We are honored to partner with the Caddo Nation to provide a platform for important conversations between OU researchers and leaders and energy experts of the Native Nations. This symposium is a great testament to the ongoing commitment of the University of Oklahoma to conduct practice-focused research that can improve the lives of all Oklahomans," Dimitrios Papavassiliou, SCBME Director and C. M Sliepcevich Professor of Chemical Engineering, said.

Symposium discussions highlighted how Native Nations could use self-governance and collaborations to support energy initiatives. Members of several Native American tribes from around Oklahoma showcased their leadership in the state in expanding and strengthening energy portfolios. Leaders from the Caddo Nation, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Kiowa Tribe and Southern Ute Department of Energy shared success stories and strategies for advancing sustainable energy systems that align with tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

As a co-host and collaborator, ICAST played a key role in bridging academic research with community-driven energy solutions. ICAST helped to facilitate the dialogue among the representatives of the tribal nations, federal partners and energy innovators. Shane Connelly, Director of ICAST and George Lynn Cross Research Professor in Psychology is optimistic about these energy conversations.

“Through this annual collaboration, ICAST facilitates connections across Native Nations and other communities with basic and translational research at OU. Our university is a national leader in energy innovation, and these collaborations are vitally important for the energy future of Oklahoma and its Native Nations,” Connelly said.

The symposium contributed to meaningful hands-on experience for several students from the nation’s top-ranked media program at the OU Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication. Students took photos and videos and conducted interviews with participants to share the information about the event with communities across campus and Oklahoma.

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About the University of Oklahoma

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