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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – From the desk of Kiowa Tribal Chairman, Matthew Komalty

Happy New Year!

The Year 2019 has been the most progressive I’ve seen so far in my administration and beyond. Growth is an understatement and I can actually see physical change happening everywhere I look. Here’s a brief look back at the year in review.

Renovation of the Red Buffalo Hall is in its final stages. In just two months we’ve held numerous events such as the annual winter hand games, Thanksgiving and Christmas employee dinners, toy giveaways, and more. All the gymnasium lacks is new seating and a few internal and cosmetic tasks, for the most part, it’s open for business.

After a short hiatus the Child Care facility in Anadarko, Okla., has reopened. After three months of renovations to the inside bathrooms, flooring, electrical work, and new appliances, the Kiowa Child Care Assistance Program (KTCCP) held a grand reopening in December. The program is federally funded and because of their positive reporting status, the program was able to fund the much-needed renovations for the children and families. The future looks even brighter, KTCCP has funding that will enable them to hire more teachers, which means more children may attend. In the new year, they have plans for more room and everything they need under one roof. The new addition will include a full kitchen, dining room, offices and a storm shelter. They’ll also add a new infant room, purchase a new bus, a new parking lot and playground and install a new fence for added safety to name a few of the enhancements in 2020.

One of the programs eagerly anticipated was our housing program. Before my term, because of total disregard for regulation our tribe was stripped of funding. After 15 years of doing without, as of July 2019, all NAHASDA accounts were set up in the name of Kiowa Tribe Housing Authority (KTHA) and are fully funded. Currently, KTHA has nearly 50 rental and lease units in inventory and minor repairs have been made. The more intense repairs are a priority but will be stretched over a two year period due to a limited amount of funding. KTHA was able to reestablish its program and the tribe developed its own Indian Housing Act, which is a requirement of HUD and is in full compliance.

Another program that continues to do great things is our Alcohol & Drug Abuse Program (KDAP). KDAP will be turning 35 years old, it’s one of the tribe’s oldest programs. Last year KDAP assisted more than one hundred tribal and non-tribal members sobriety training and awareness and treatment. That is not counting the number of youth who attended ‘healthy living’ workshops. In the year 2020 KDAP hopes their program will not be needed at all, but sadly the addiction still exists. They hope to increase services to the number of individuals needing assistance through treatment, sobriety services, and the ability to host more prevention and community activities for the youth and adults.

Indian Child Welfare continues to be an important part of the services we offer. In its constant effort to find foster homes, the Kiowa Tribe Indian Child Welfare (KTICW) program strives to meet the need. The goal for 2020 is to find more foster homes. Many applicants get discouraged because of timely background checks and paperwork. This year that won’t be a problem with the new Department of Justice Tribal Access Program
(TAP). The partnership with the BIA TAP is the use of a new kiosk that will give you instant results. The objective is to develop a tribal ICW supportive prospective to current foster, adoptive, and kinship placement for foster care applicants. This year’s goal is to help more families considered at-risk and to complete home visits to address positive changes through employment, education, and rehabilitation.

Transportation is a barrier to our communities. A service we offer that helps address the need is our Kiowa Transit. It offers affordable rides to folks to their job sites or to run errands. It’s been around since the early 1980s and going strong. The big push for 2020 is becoming more visible to the public. We want everyone to know that this is your public transportation system, everyone and anyone can ride. You don’t have to be Native American or Kiowa. This year we will launch a new marketing/public relations campaign to increase riders. We are happy to report in the year 2019, we recorded no accidents or incidents.

The old head start building on the west side of the tribal complex is the home of our Kiowa Tribal District Court. The priority of the project is to complete the courtroom (which is near complete) so that cases could be filed and heard. Internal logistics are underway such as staffing in order for the judicial branch to do its job. This is an exciting time in our tribal history and we appreciate your support.

Speaking of history, we’ve made great strides in our internal controls. Our employment rate is at its highest. There are approximately 180 employees within the tribal roster, the most ever recorded. The tribe is one of the major employers in the area. The tribe’s finances are in good shape. The audits on the tribe’s finances are caught up and are expected to be completed by June 30.

Our casino has been a huge help to our programs and services. During the month of November, the casino’s hold a can food drive. This year more than 10 tons of food was collected to help stock the shelves of the AOA center, food distribution, daycare, child care, and head start programs. The casino’s also acquired two new coach buses. So far the tribe has utilized the buses for an elderly trip out west and youth sporting events. We look forward to utilizing the buses for more trips this year.

If you visited our campus, you’ll notice our gift shop has its own building and is fully stocked with Kiowa memorabilia, gifts, and clothing. Look for a new lineup of fashion and flare coming soon.

Also coming soon is our at-large community information meetings. These will be scheduled meetings with the executive branch in the heavily populated areas outside of the Kiowa jurisdiction. The meetings are intended for us to get acquainted with tribal members we don’t normally get to see. It’s also a time to update members with our programs and services. We held a pilot information meeting in Albuquerque, NM, in October and had a great turnout with our families out west.

2019 ended on a high note and one specific event was the highlight of my year. I was able to visit our local nursing home. More than a dozen Kiowa citizens are housed there. None of these folks knew I was coming and thanks to the Kiowa Casino, I didn’t come empty-handed. The casino made up some gift boxes full of treats, socks, a blanket and more trinkets for their living area. I think the visit did me more good than it did for them. Just seeing their faces light up with surprise and happiness made my year complete. And that’s a look back at the year 2019.

I look forward to serving you in the new year. Much prayer and blessings to you all in 2020!

Respectfully,

Matthew M. Komalty
Kiowa Tribal Chairman