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Best-selling book sparks broader interest in Osage history and culture

By James D. Watts Jr. Tulsa World Sep 4, 2018





David Grann's best-selling "Killers of the Flower Moon" is the story of one of the darkest moments in the history of the Osage Nation, when dozens of Osage men and women were murdered in the 1920s and '30s for their oil wealth.

But Grann's book, the subject of the Tulsa City-County Library's current "One Book, One Tulsa" program, has also done much to spark interest in the broader scope of Osage history and culture.

"We've had libraries and organizations from all over reach out to us, asking us to send someone to participate in their programs about this book," said Andrea Hunter, director and tribal historic preservation officer of the Osage Nation Historic Preservation Office. "We see this as a wonderful opportunity to share our history and culture with others."



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In "Killers of the Flower Moon," Grann recounts how the Osage Nation, which retained the mineral rights of the Oklahoma land to which they were relocated, became the richest group of people per capita in the world at the beginning of the 20th century. That wealth made the Osage targets of unscrupulous criminals, who enacted their murderous schemes from within the nation itself.

Grann will be in Tulsa for a free event at 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7, at Central Library, Fifth Street and Denver Avenue. Grann, a staff writer for The New Yorker, will discuss his work on "Killers of the Flower Moon," answer questions from the audience and sign copies of the book, which will be available for purchase.

The Central Library has on display a pop-up exhibit of historical photographs on loan from the Osage

Nation Museum in Pawhuska.

Hunter will be in Tulsa to talk about “Exploring Osage Culture and History” at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 4, in Central Library’s Pocahontas Greadington Learning and Creativity Center.

Experts from the Wahzhazhe (Osage) Cultural Center will present “A Glimpse Into Osage Culture” at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 5, at the Bixby Library, 20 E. Breckenridge Ave., and at 5 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 6, at the Collinsville Library, 1223 W. Main St., which will delve into Osage culture and history using traditional Osage artifacts.



Hunter said her talk will provide a basic overview of Osage history, from the point when the nation first identified itself as a unique people.

“What we are trying to do with these outreach programs is to trace our history from the Ohio River Valley, to the St. Louis area, where the nation was part of the Cahokia culture, which was one of the advanced ancient cultures on this continent,” Hunter said. “It is all to set up a discussion of the time period of ‘Killers of the Flower Moon,’ giving people a larger context for that story.”

Hunter, a registered member of the Osage Nation, said the story told in “Killers of the Flower Moon” is one that most members prefer not to dwell on, as almost every Osage family was in some way affected by the murders.

“I had relatives who were victims of these crimes,” she said. “And my own family moved away from the reservation for a time because of what was going on around them. They didn’t want to be victims.

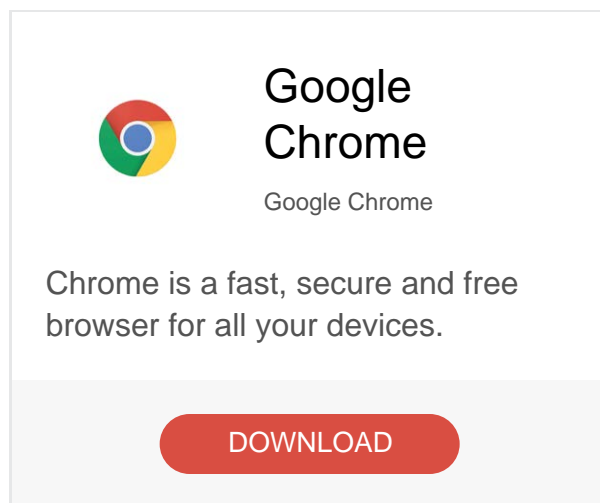
“And that is a reason why we want to share our full history,” Hunter said. “It shows that, despite all the adversities the Osage Nation has experienced, including the period highlighted in David’s book,

we are still here and surviving.”

James Watts

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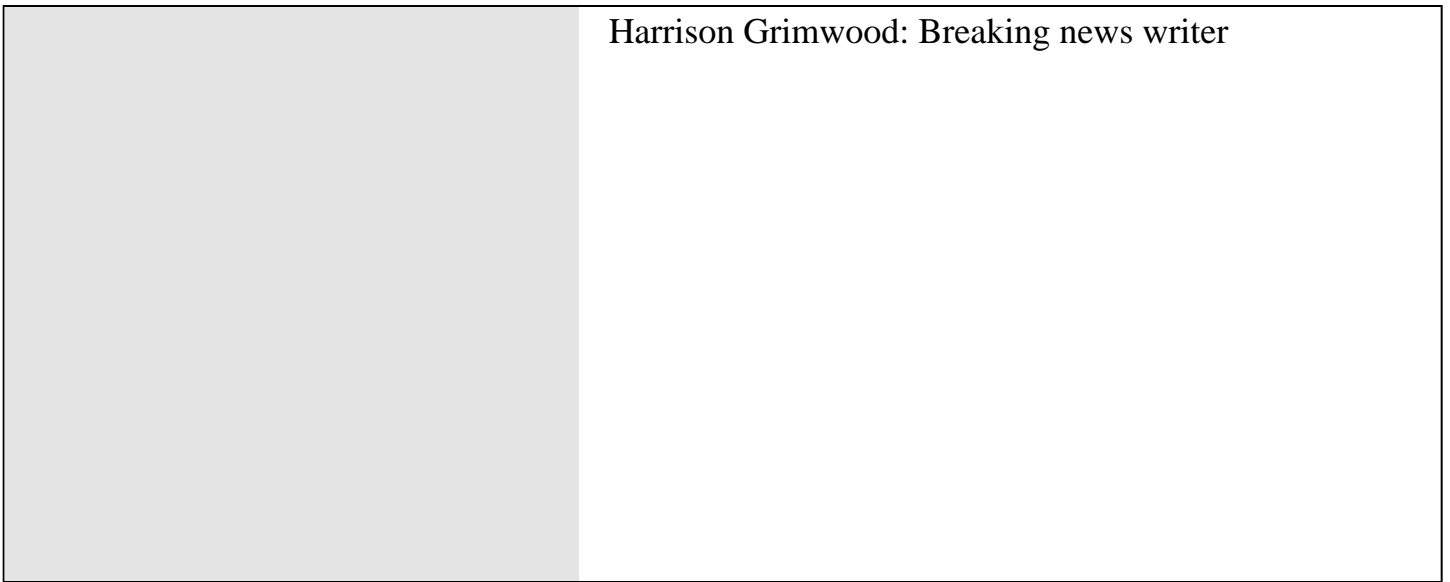


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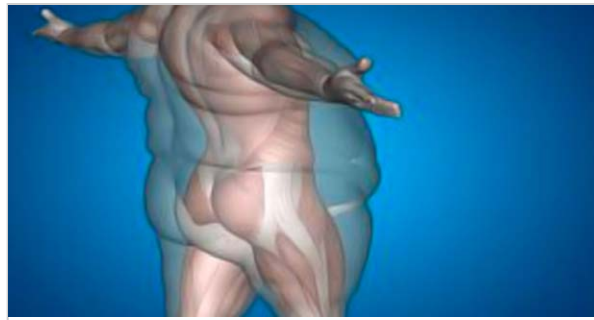


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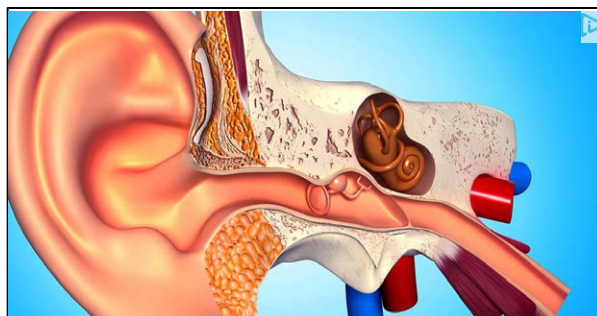
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