

## Tribal Songs Project Oklahoma Folklife Center

Songs are a vital component of American Indian cultures and the Oklahoma Indian experience. Indian songs may be social, educational, or ceremonial, and they are central to spiritual life—whether traditional, Native American Church, or other Christian denomination. Songs recall past events, and they honor individuals, families, veterans, chiefs, organizations, and societies. They celebrate birthdays, and they salute the American flag. They enhance good times, comfort the grieving, and encourage the down-hearted. In 1998 Jim Anquoe, a Kiowa singer, approached the Oklahoma Historical Society with an idea calling for the preservation of tribal songs. He believed that many of the old songs might be lost and ask the Society to assist in preserving the old songs of all tribes in Oklahoma. The Archives Division of the OHS had been collecting a variety of tribal songs for many years and this was a natural addition to the collections. Through a partnership with the Oklahoma Folklife Council, singers from several tribes were identified, interviewed, and recorded. This initiative also resulted in the donation of two important private collections—the Jim Anquoe Collection (Kiowa) and the Eva and Edwin Chappabitty Sr. Collection (Ft. Sill Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, and others).

In addition to songs, the Tribal Songs Project has gathered through interviews valuable collateral information: the origin of songs, the protocol of songs, famous singers, early Indian commercial recordings, the broadcast of Indian singing on Norman, Oklahoma's radio station WNAD, changes in songs and singing, powwows, cross-cultural exchange, and musical instrument making. The result is a complex and rich body of American Indian oral traditions exceeding one thousand hours of songs and interviews.



Tommy Ware, Kiowa, flute maker, singer, dancer.

The current collection represents songs and music from the following tribes and nations in Oklahoma: Arapaho, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Caddo,

Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chickasaw, Chippewa, Choctaw, Comanche, Creek, Delaware, Ft. Sill Apache, Keetowah, Kiowa, Nez Perce, Osage, Ottawa, Otoe-Missouria, Pawnee, Ponca, Sac and Fox, Shawnee, Seminole, Sioux, Tonkawa, Ute, Wichita, Wyandot, Yaqui, and Yuchi. Types of music include peyote songs, hymns, lullabies, morning songs, powwow songs, dances, 49 songs, and hand-game songs. Although the OHS collection was begun decades ago, within the last three years it has grown rapidly with the recording of today's singers and the acquisition of recordings dating from 1910.

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