

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION DEMANDED

# The LEADer



Third Quarter 2024

LEAD AGENCY'S 26TH NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL

## TAR CREEK CONFERENCE

# Change starts HERE



I flood

&

I vote

Many attending the 26th National Tar Creek Conference took a break to brandish the orange shirts boldly stating: "we won't be quiet, our votes count and we want representatives who will protect us from flooding." When a community that has faced repetitive flooding over the last 50 years and believed for decades the floods must have been "acts of God," learning the damages have occurred according to FERC, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in a statement last January, that GRDA and the actions taken to regulate the dam had been responsible, caused many people to begin to speak up and out!

LEAD received our set of I FLOOD & I VOTE shirts from the Anthropocene Alliance, a national organization for communities impacted by climate change or environmental abuse. (*Rebecca Jim is currently serving as one of their board members.*) If you search for Anthropocene Alliance or "A2" as we have shortened their name, you will be amazed at the vast number of other community organizations who are members, too.

<https://anthropocenealliance.org/our-communities/>



## REMOVE LEAD TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

One of the nation's greatest advocates for our future was a keynote speaker at this year's Tar Creek Conference. He juggled a very busy schedule to make sure he was able to come. There are many HOT SPOTS in the country that are in crisis due to lead poisoning, and Ottawa County ranks up there. The whole county is a SUPERFUND SITE for the risk of LEAD. It takes very small amounts to poison a child, but we all can be harmed at any age. Reducing lead exposure is Tom Neltner's "Game." And we have been discovered and are "in play."

He was on President Biden's Airforce One the day before our conference, going with the president to make an important announcement. They went to an event that might not have happened if it hadn't been for the pressure this Tom fellow put on the US government over perhaps as long as the last decade. If we know lead is always a poison, and we know where some of that lead lies, there in the ground carrying water into the safety of our own homes. Poisoning us slowly with every drink of water we take. The change was announced last week at that event with Tom sitting on the front row, to REMOVE ALL LEAD PIPE SERVICE LINES IN AMERICA! Think about that. It's as big as taking leaded gas off the market, or removing lead from paint!!

We had been dumbing down America as thoroughly as the best products on the market could provide. Lead paint was NOT cheap, it was what we thought back in the day as being the "good" stuff. From the lead paint advertisements we learned it would last longer and they were right. It went off the market in 1978 but we are still finding it in homes nearly 50 years later. There are still so many older homes in our neighborhoods, and filling the housing gap as rentals for young families on tight budgets. There is no use for lead in the human body. It is a poison. Everything we can do to remove it can protect us. The lead industry was efficient and effectively promoted their product to be used in every household in America with the use of lead pipes for water lines. With advocates like Tom Neltner, lead pipes will not be poisoning the next generations of children, the pipes will be replaced. Make those calls to your city water departments and find out the schedule for when yours will be checked and removed to protect you and every drink of water you take. I feel like a broken record. But remember, Lead poisoning is the only childhood disease we can eliminate. It takes the effort of removing the poison or pushing authorities who regulate or operate our water departments to make this happen.

Check out Tom's blog at [unleadedkids.org](https://unleadedkids.org). We got a friend who cares. And now the next big move is to actually protect adults from exposures, too! Lead harms not only children but lead is linked to cardiovascular risk factor on par with high cholesterol, smoking, and high blood pressure.

<https://unleadedkids.org/lepac-action-to-protect-adults/2024/12/16/>

EPA is in Ottawa County because of lead and we aim to keep them here until the poison is removed. ~ **Your Tar Creekkeeper, Rebecca Jim**

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**"YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE SILENCED." — JAMES DEVITA**

LEAD AGENCY'S 26TH NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL

# TAR CREEK CONFERENCE

# Change starts **HERE**



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA  
College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences



LEAD's 3 day conference was held at NEO A&M College October 8, 9, and 10, 2024. Community members, researchers, federal and state regulators, tribal representatives, many college and high school students and other interested individuals attended this year. The full conference is available on-line and was offered as a 1 hour Special Projects Credit by NEO. The theme and conference shirt design were inspired by youth from LEAD's 2024 summer camp.

We had hoped for us to *put our minds together as one* to work for the future the 7 generations who follow us deserve. We believe much was learned, accomplished and left those who attended with hope and determination to continue working together. We continue to appreciate NEO A&M College for use of their facility.

***LEAD Agency Appreciates the Support for this year's Conference from:***



Also Recognizing  
Eric Ferrell's generosity



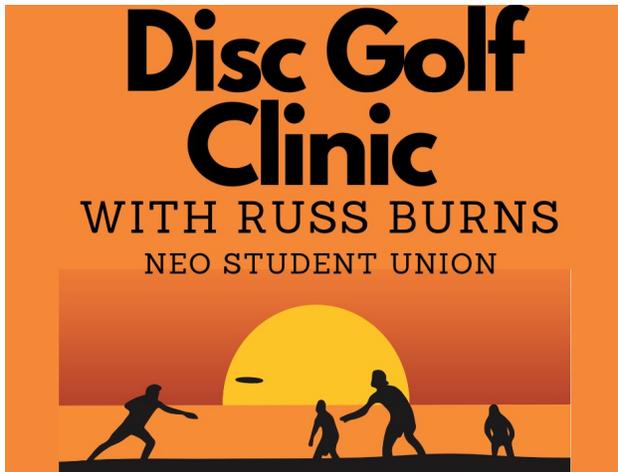
## Featured Speakers



**SCOTT THOMPSON**, the former Executive Director of the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality spoke about the great relationship the agency had developed with tribes throughout the state. He began his career at Tar Creek.



**TOM NELTNER**, [unleadedkids.org](http://unleadedkids.org) was a surprise guest speaker this year, stressing the importance of paying attention to the lead exposures we face in Ottawa County, especially after seeing the scope of the risk after a Toxic Tour given by **CLARK FRAYSER**, who gave the opening remarks about the newly established annual Shawnee's Tecumseh Day.



**RUSS BURNS - MISSOURI HALL OF FAME** not only conducted a Disc Golf Clinic on the grounds of NEO College, but also spoke to how his own sport has environmental impacts to the courses many play upon. He shared remedies that have been installed to deal with the erosion a well-played course can create. Many of the conference attendees enjoyed learning terms and trying the techniques on the portable course he and LEAD staff member Paul Marquez had set up outside. We tried out a new way to enjoy the environment we strive to protect. All who joined in were given the discs with this year's conference logo.

REGRETS this year? NOT Reading One-Act-Plays and the discussion that would have followed with the playwrights Mary Sue Price and Clark Frayser

The other regret having the POETRY SLAM at the end of the conference.  
**WE WERE TOO TIRED TO SLAM!**

**One-Act-Plays**  
*Mary Sue Price's* *Sundown at Miners' Manor*  
*Clark Frayser's*  
 The Shifferdecker Electric Park  
**OPEN MIC/Poetry Slam**  
 GOODFELLA'S PIZZERIA



**CRYSTAL TARRANT** prepared the Indian Taco Dinner with her husband.  
**WILLIAM TARRANT** organized a wonderful evening of traditional singing and social dances the conference attendees enjoyed.



# SPECIAL EVENTS *Advocacy through the ARTS*

The Art of Fly Fishing was demonstrated on the grass by Ron Seat. His MAKO members and John Lomax showed the intricate methods they use to create and “tie the flies.” Seeing the demonstration was reminiscent of the First Tar Creek Fish Tournament held in 1996 as an awareness event at Miami High School by Cherokee Volunteer Society, before there was a LEAD Agency.



## Documentaries & Discussion

TAR CREEK IS MY CREEK



# Movie NIGHT

COMMON ENEMY  
THE FACTORY FARMS OF OKLAHOMA



CRAFT MAKING  
NEO COLLEGE ART CLASSES

Wood Block Prints  
MHS 5th Hour Art Class

Music  
Performed by  
**MORIAH BAILEY**



Panel discussion with Lesa Stabus & Ed Brocksmith

www.leadagency.org

**TAR CREEK FISH TOURNAMENT FISH FRY**

Fundraiser for LEAD AGENCY, Inc.  
Part of the 26th National Tar Creek Conference

Fly Fishing Demonstration begins at 4:30  
Fish Fry provided by Joe Johnson & Team

**\$10** Ticket

**OCTOBER 9, 2024**  
Held at NEO College Ballroom, Miami, OK  
5:30 - 7:00 pm

**JOE JOHNSON** and team provided the Fish Fry for the second day of the conference. The line was long and we lost count of how many we served, but we had **NO LEFTOVERS!** Thanks Joe & TEAM !

# ᏩᏃᏱ ᏅᏍᏓ Meet Me at the Creek

# IMPACTS & TRAVEL



Being featured in **Meet Me at the Creek** ᏩᏃᏱ ᏅᏍᏓ has been an experience throughout 2024. **Loren Waters** had a vision to tell both my story and hopes for this community impacted by our Tar Creek. Visually the film is beautiful and yet stark as we see the damages and glimpse into the past and the losses Native people experience when industry harms the land and water. We see also that beautiful future in the waters. Our culture is at risk if we fail to protect our lands and water.

The screenings began with the film's premiere in Montana at Big Sky Film Festival in February. Since then Loren has been across the nation screening the film and I have had the pleasure to join her in Tulsa at Circle Cinema, but also on the Cherokee lands in North Carolina, I would say was "a trip of a lifetime." But also with McKalee Steen at the AISES Convention in San Antonio, Texas and most recently in Los Angeles at the Autry.

Loren not only made a film, she has elevated LEAD Agency in every event, in every grant she has written in our behalf. SHE has made an impact in my life, I would say, changed my life forever, by taking my small efforts to speak for an eleven mile long creek damaged by industrial mining and shared it with the nation, one screening after another. Our Tar Creek made the big screen.

To quote my son, I would say "a thousand Wado's Loren Waters." And we can't wait to see your new film **TIGER** as it takes off at Sundance Film Festival! ~ *Rebecca Jim*



Former Cherokee Chief of the Easter Band of Cherokee Indians, **Joyce Dugan** with Ms Jim after a panel



## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STARTS WITH YOU

# LEAD AGENCY ENCOURAGES INDEPENDENT FILMS



**AARON GIBSON** was a graduate student at OSU who did research on chat in the Tar Creek Superfund Site. Twenty years later he returned to create a film he calls **Take Care, Tar Creek**. A short documentary shot with **Super8** film with the voice of Tar Creek speaking on the history of the site and forecasting the future of other streams and rivers if people who care about them don't speak up. He allowed Rebecca Jim in the film to be the voice of Tar Creek. LEAD Agency encourages the arts and independent filmmakers in the small ways we are able. **Margie Berk** prepared a basketful of buttons for the recent screening held in New York City at the Columbia Forum. Karen Fields, Mary Moon and Rebecca Jim attended the screening.

*Take Care,  
Tar Creek*

**“We need Storytelling. Otherwise, life just goes on and on like the number Pi.”**

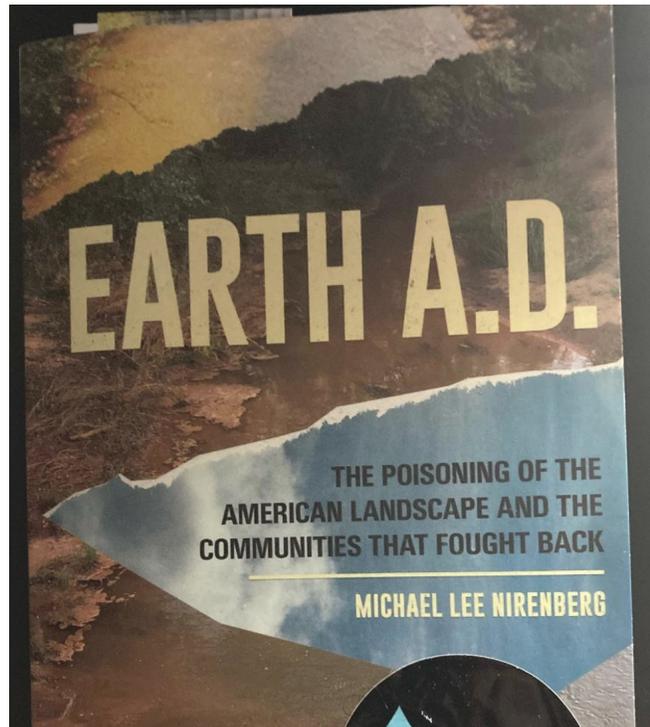
Ang Lee



The Tribal and Alaskan Natives participating in the Climigration gathering in Louisiana this fall. Elder Chief Shirell Parfait-Dardar, Deputy Chief Crystlyn Rodrigue, Chief Devon Parfait, (back) Twyla Thurmond and Rebecca Jim (front)



**NEWTOWN CREEK** has keepers, people who long, like we do at Tar Creek to have the waters have the protections they deserve and the quality to be restored. Newtown Creek has been industrially challenged for 150 years. And on seeing what they are up against, it seems daunting. But the Newtown Creek-keepers are on it. Watching and advocating even as we see across the creek piles of waste. But they have a park and they have a roof garden where we launched kites! We became SISTER CREEKS! They GOT EPA to issue DO NOT EAT FISH CRABS or SHELLFISH in FIVE different languages! With a QRCode!



Michael Nirenberg tied our two communities together in his book EARTH A.D.: a red state and a blue state, rural and urban. Of course it was a natural when you look at it that way, using WATERKEEPER Alliance members. On a recent trip to New York City even though Michael was unavailable to meet with us, he brought us together connecting us with phone and emails.

**FOUND & MET OTHERS WHO FOUGHT BACK**

### State Organizing Committee Plan for LEAD

Anthropocene Alliance has provided training to help us in our efforts to begin establishing a State Organizing Committee here in Oklahoma. Wade Rathke also with ACORN and A2 Tanya Harris-Glason came for not only a site visit but to begin our training with a “Door Knocking Training” including role play and one-on-one practice with those attending. *Shown below is Wade with LEAD’s Kindel Maymi practicing new techniques.*



Youth Activist and the young artist who designed the t-shirt she is wearing is practicing her “radio” skills in preparation for a radio station A2 is assisting LEAD in acquiring.

**Change  
starts  
HERE**



LEAD is receiving technical assistance from the National Parks Service RTCA as organized through Jared Wahkinney because of another Loren Waters grant request for us.

**“YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BE SILENCED.” — JAMES DEVITA**

## RESEARCH AT TAR CREEK CONTINUES



Representatives from SciAps were analyzing items on site with an XRF to give community members immediate feedback on the safety of continued use of the items they had brought to the conference to be tested. Toys and dishes, cups and teapots as well as items in the Silent Auction!

**Emporia State University** conducted a multi-year analysis of heavy metal contamination in Tar Creek and Miami Soils. **Wellesley College** investigated how historic mine waste undergoing reprocessing is showing increased legacy metal geomobility.

Germanium became a topic covered by **USGS** Bob Seal as well as by Emily Wallace with **Tulsa University**.

Birds have been identified and their heavy metal exposures discussed by Abigail Triemsta from **Oklahoma University**.

Combating Invasive Carp in Grand Lake discussed by **Missouri State University**.



### Additional Conference Topics:

**Flooding**/Update from the City of Miami

**Soil Health** with **Native Grasses**

**Lead Poisoning** and the State's response  
Arkansas River's **Zinc Lake** not SAFE

**Bees** Guardians of our Ecosystem

**LEAD** in soil by EPA change for the better

Tribal Alliance for Pollinators **Monarchs**

**Updates on LEAD Agency's Projects:**

LEAD's **Flood Survey**

Neosho Watershed **Tallgrass Prairie**

Collaborative **Oral History & Storytelling** Project



### Continuing Legal Education

**Seminar** The Third Annual CLE was held as a pre-conference event, planned by Dana Jim and Martin Lively. Speakers this year were **Kelly Hunter Foster** speaking on *Industrial Agriculture Impacts and the Need for Legal Reforms*. **Arvo Mikkanen** with the Indian Bar Association instructed on *Jusisdiction in Indian Country and Case Updates since McGirt*. The 2 hour session was held at NEO. Plans are already under way for 2025 CLE.

**THE BEST RESEARCH YOU CAN DO IS TO TALK TO PEOPLE**

- TERRY PRATCHETT

# OTTAWA COUNTY FILM SERIES

  Working Films 2024 Cinema cohort this year, Rural Cinema supported LEAD Agency in launching a community film series focused on environmental justice for 1 year, providing participants with virtual training, technical support, funding for hard costs & film screening equipment, including \$16,000 worth of solar-powered screening equipment. LEAD showed movies in the Miami Riverview Park, the Peoria Housing Authority and in the Charles Sill Park, Commerce Oklahoma. And of course with Free Popcorn made with our own popcorn machine!

[#ruralcinema\\_#storyleadstoaction](#)



Children shown here brought their dogs and cats to sit with them during the show.

**FREE POPCORN!** Sit on the Bleachers or Bring your own lawn chair.  
For more information visit [www.leadagency.org](http://www.leadagency.org).



Campers Created Posters warning of our local dangers

The Traditional Cherokee Ecological Knowledge or T-CEK camp, hosted by the American Indian Resource Center, helped Cherokee youth explore ecology from different Cherokee perspectives.

The day camp was held at Camp Sevenstar near Park Hill and offered a variety of activities for youth ages 13-17, covering topics such as traditional plants, foraging, gardening, waterways, geology, animals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, birds and environmental stewardship.

T-CEK Program Director **MELISSA LEWIS** said youth would explore nature and learn ecological knowledge from Native instructors. so children, the next generation have an experience to remember. Rebecca Jim and Pam Kingfisher met with the young campers to instruct on water quality and lack of safe water. The group then spent great care working on images and art presentations that are currently on exhibit in Cherokee Nation.

**THE ULTIMATE TEST OF A MORAL SOCIETY IS THE KIND OF WORLD THAT IT LEAVES TO ITS CHILDREN. ~ DIETRICH BONHOEFFER**

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*Thanks Loren Waters for taking Tar Creek across the Nation*

