



# Sia

The Comanche Nation  
Ethno-Ornithological  
Initiative

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### COMANCHES CREATE FIRST NATIVE AMERICAN FEATHER REPOSITORY

Native Americans meeting the historic feather needs of Native Americans  
through partnership with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service

Albuquerque, New Mexico June 21, 2010

Representatives of the Comanche Nation met with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Regional Director Dr. Benjamin Tuggle today for the official signing of the authorization that establishes the Nation's first Native American Feather Repository. The repository will be operated by Sia: The Comanche Nation Ethno-Ornithological Initiative to provide for the ethical and legal acquisition and distribution of culturally significant feathers of all species of migratory birds other than eagles. Provisions for legal access to Bald and Golden Eagle feathers through the federal government have existed since 1962. However, until today, there has not been access to the feathers of other migratory bird species from a culturally dedicated entity. This unprecedented partnership between the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Sia heralds a new day in Native American - federal governmental relations.

The spiritual integrity of certain Native American ceremonies require the use of feathers and/or parts of many different species of migratory birds. Unless these feathers have been handed down from generations that

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predate the laws that prohibit the acquisition of these feathers from wild birds, there has not been the legal mechanism for acquiring such feathers. Sia will address this issue utilizing molted feathers from birds legally held in captivity by zoos, rehabilitation facilities, educational centers and falconers, process and catalogue the feathers then assemble the feathers to meet the specific needs of Native Americans across the country. Sia has pioneered the digital, microchip and RFID technology of imparting absolute authentication to individual feathers so that once distributed, the feathers will carry a unique identity. This aspect of Sia research and protocol will minimize the illegal abuse of migratory bird feathers. Federal and state laws prohibit the sale, barter or trade of protected species feathers.

"A Native American feather repository can only be truly successful if established and operated by Native Americans" says Sia founder and executive director Wahathuweeka a.k.a. William Voelker. "There are nuances of culture and sensitivity to the essence of the living bird that only comes from generations of cultural oneness with these essential species. Our ancestors established living bonds with these creatures long before the rest of the world knew we existed. We Native Americans have the history, science and spirit to best address the unique requirements of living our historically based, cultural life ways while simultaneously adhering to environmentally responsible conservation ethics of the twenty first century."

Sia (the Comanche word meaning "feather") brings over four decades of raptor research, public education and conservation to the establishment of the repository. Sia is one of only three tribes to be granted the Native American Religious Use Permit that allows for the permanent housing of non-releasable Bald and Golden Eagles. Under this authority, feathers molted by these eagles can be distributed to Comanche tribal members as well as members of any of the federally recognized tribes. Sia has assisted 44 different tribes with feathers to date.

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For more information go to the Sia website at [www.comancheeagle.org](http://www.comancheeagle.org) or telephone the contacts listed at the top of page one.