National Indian Education Association  
2022 Parent of the Year  
Leslie Tanyan

Sometimes in Indian Country you see a few extraordinary parents that because of their strength, support, and servant leadership role model for youth, Native youth have the confidence to succeed. Many times, these parents are unrecognized and not be publicly acknowledged because they "let students lead" but you can see their passion through the inspiration the youth around them live.

Leslie Tanyan is the poster person for such a parent. Leslie selflessly serves on the Moore Public Schools JOM/Title VI Parent Committee and as their JOM Dance Troupe Coordinator. Leslie is also Moore Public Schools JOM Powwow Committee Chair. Leslie is the OKC Metro Area Youth Dance Troupe Coordinator and a Treasurer Board Member for the Changing Winds Cultural Society (Miss/Jr/Little Miss Indian Oklahoma City Youth Competition). You will find Leslie at school events, pow wows across the state and nation, museum ceremonies and events across the state and nation, along with university events supporting all tribal youth. Many times, its often hard to know which youth belongs to Leslie because she is equal in her passion of supporting all youth. Leslie is a University of Oklahoma American Indian Alumni Society Board Member giving back to her alma mater and is a constant influence for youth to strive for higher education while serving as a "warm hand off" resource for youth connection to university opportunities.

Leslie is the mother of two beautiful children with one in college and one in higher school. Both of her children have been raised within the circle and hold themselves with love, honor, and dedication which is easily learned from her home. Leslie’s daughter has held many royalty titles and her son is the face of many national cultural prevention campaigns, the First American Museum advertising, and an upcoming actor such as his appearance in the Reservation Dogs Hulu series. Leslie guides her children to use their recognition responsibly and to help uplift others.

Leslie is education focused and supports youth to be culturally present in their education. Speaking in her language and highlighting the diversity in Native youth, Leslie is a teacher, guide, advocate, and cheerleader for all that is positive in using culture as a vessel for prevention and education. Two years ago, Leslie contracted Covid-19 twice. She almost died in her struggle and from the hospital ICU bed decided to fight and use her journey to advocate the education and awareness for the sake of others. Leslie’s story was featured on the local and national news as she gave a voice to the awareness of Covid-19. Leslie was awarded the Indian Parent of the Year this past December from the Oklahoma Council for Indian Education. Leslie is the persona of what this recognition of the NIEA Parent of the Year is seeking to find.