Osage Nation – Old Nation and Emerging Nation

In December 2004, the nation embarked on a two-year process of constitutional reform, convened a constitutional commission, engaged in a substantial process of community engagement, and worked to develop new governing forms. Culminating in the passage of the Osage National Constitution, the new government began operating in June 2006, implementing new laws to govern the nation’s environment, redirecting social service delivery, economic structure, etc. The trip to the Osage Nation framed both the process and growing pains of how this very old nation – whose territory used to stretch as far as St. Louis – is now an “emerging nation.” The visit also showcased citizen mobilization, community development, and critically, how social and economic policy is made and implemented for a nation that grew in citizenship overnight. The trip was hosted by tribal members in their social service program, political leaders (Chief Jim Gray, Chief of Staff Hepsi Barnett, and Osage Congressman Eddy Red Eagle), and congressional leaders (Eddy Red Eagle and others).