

**The Indian Leader**  
**Newsroom Policy and Management Guide**

Credits: The policy and management guide is adopted from *The University Daily Kansas* with permission and modified for *The Indian Leader*. Thanks to the *Kansas* for their input and direction.

# **The Indian Leader**

## **Newsroom Policy and Management Guide**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to The Indian Leader. The Indian Leader Newsroom Policy and Management Manual is developed to help orient students, faculty, staff, and others in the management and production of The Indian Leader.

The Indian Leader Newsroom Policy and Management Guide was approved in the Spring of 1993 by the Indian Leader Association, publishers of the Indian Leader and the Haskell Yearbook — last updated 2020.

The Indian Leader is edited and published by students at Haskell Indian Nations University for the purpose of promoting the free and informed debate and discussion of (1) topics of special interest to HINU students and alumni, (2) issues of special importance to Native Americans generally, and (3) all newsworthy topics and public issues of general interest to American citizens. The Haskell Yearbook is edited and published by students at Haskell Indian Nations University for the purpose of maintaining records of the previous year's events.

The Indian Leader Association is committed to improving the ability of Native Americans to determine their own destiny by providing an open public forum in which all concerned citizens, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, religion or national origin, might freely discuss the important public issues of the day. The members of the Association believe that by providing a public forum, readers and contributors alike will improve their understanding of the true meaning of leadership, citizenship and democracy in contemporary American society through an open, honest and fair-minded exchange of views.

### **Ethics and Policy**

Standards of conduct for staff members of *The Indian Leader* are the same as those adhered to by any responsible professional newspaper. They are outlined here as guidelines that staff members are expected to follow. This policy manual does not describe every circumstance that could pose a problem. It does not answer every question that might arise. Instead, it is designed to establish general rules that editors, reporters and photographers are to use in reporting the news and producing the newspaper. Violation of these standards can be grounds for dismissal.

**Advance Viewing:**

Outside review of copy, photographs or artwork is not permitted unless approved in advance by the editor. For some stories, such as those that involve complex scientific information, a knowledgeable source might be asked to verify the accuracy of specific elements of the story before it is published. An entire story should never be reviewed by someone outside *The Indian Leader* staff. Check with an editor or adviser about similar situations.

**Conflicts of Interest:**

The first obligation of staff members is to perform their assigned *The Indian Leader* duties. To do so, staff members, or anyone who writes for the *The Indian Leader*, must be free from any obligation to any interest other than the public's right to the distribution of news and enlightened opinion.

Staff members should exercise great care before becoming involved in any political context beyond voting. Under no circumstances may a staff member work, for pay or as a volunteer, in political organizations or campaigns.

If a relative or close friend is involved in any political activity, a staff member should tell the editors and refrain from covering or making news or editorial judgments about such a campaign or organization. Such precautions should be taken on all types of stories or photographs.

Because of the nature of the *The Indian Leader* and its readership, student politics and campus political organizations are even more likely to create the appearance of partiality than traditional political organizations. Remember that the appearance of bias is devastating to the newspaper's credibility as is actual bias.

**Other conflicts:** An *Indian Leader* staff member may not work as a staff member, editor or contributor for any other publication or news service without the consent of the *The Indian Leader* editor. Staff members who wish to free-lance periodically for other publications also must seek permission from the editor. Any staff member who is found hiding his affiliation with another publication also must seek permission from the editor. Any staff member who is found hiding his affiliation with another publication will be dismissed.

Appearances on radio or television by *The Indian Leader* staff members may be permissible only if reported in advance to the editor. Remember, however, that only the editor may talk as a representative for *The Indian Leader*.

**Gifts:** As journalists, the obligations of staff members are clear--gather and report the news with vigor and compassion and report it without prejudice. Staff members must not use their positions at *The Indian Leader* to obtain any benefit or advantage not afforded to the public generally. Staff members do not accept business-related gifts or favors, either at home or in the office.

Staff members should not accept free rooms, sample equipment or goods of any kind. Staff members may not accept free trips. Free tickets or access to events may be accepted, but only when special arrangements for the press are necessary. The press box at sporting events is an example. Editors are responsible for making certain that advantage is not being taken of certain situations. Friends or guests are not allowed to use *Leader* passes to events. *The Indian Leader* pays for tickets to entertainment events that staff members are reviewing. Books and records are accepted only as news releases and become the property of the *Leader*.

*Leader* members should not accept free meals or drinks. This does not mean that staff member cannot accept a cup of coffee or something that can be repaid later. Reporters should not, however, be “wined and dined” while pursuing a story. The cost of meals incurred in the course of gathering stories will be paid by the *Leader*. Generally, however, it is difficult to take accurate and complete notes while eating.

Any travel must be approved by the editor and the Association.

When in doubt, please follow the American Society of Professional Journalists code of ethics in the back of the booklet.

## Dealing with the public

Courteous and professional treatment is afforded anyone who telephones or walks into the newsroom.

**Telephone Etiquette:** When taking messages, be sure to get the correct name and phone number.

Also include your name, the time and date the message was received. The telephone is for business use only. Do not leave this number for personal messages to be taken by any staff member or the faculty adviser.

**Complaints:** Complaints should be referred to the editor. If no editor is available, take a name and phone number and tell the person that an editor will call back. If a complaint is in any way abusive or if the staff member is threatened, write a short but thorough memo and give it to the editor.

**Corrections:** The decision to run a correction is made by the editor. When the *Leader* incorrectly has reported a story or misidentified someone in a photograph, the editor will arrange for a correction to appear promptly. It may appear on Page 1 if the story was on Page 1. Otherwise corrections will appear on Page 2. When talking to someone who has a complaint, do not verify the mistake, blame anyone, agree with anything or promise anything. Do not give your personal opinion as to what should be done. Refer the person to those mentioned above. Any staff member who makes a mistake requiring a correction must fill out a correction form and turn it in to the editor.

**News Tip:** When readers call in with news tips or photo ideas, staff members are expected to treat them with courtesy. The *Leader* encourages readers to call or to stop by the newsroom when they have story ideas. It's a way for them to let the editors know what they want to see in the paper, and those ideas often turn into the best stories and photos. Listen patiently to callers, write down the tips and thank them for calling or stopping by the newsroom.

**Letters Policy:** The *Leader* accepts letters to the editor with the understanding that the editor may edit or reject the letters. When readers bring letters to the newsroom, make sure that the letter has a signature and a phone number.

## Police News and Obituaries

**Crime Stories:** In crime stories, description of the incident must be attributed carefully. Police records are protected in cases of libel, but they might be wrong nonetheless. Let readers know where the information came from. When the *Leader* reports that someone has been accused of a crime, the newspaper incurs the obligation to follow the case to trial and to its conclusion.

**Suspect Identification:** The *Leader* does not identify suspects in crime stories unless the suspects have been charged in the court system. An arrest does not mean a suspect has been or will be charged. Identify a person charged with a crime with age and address. Also, the term "alleged" should be used with care. "Alleged murderer" is libelous. A suspect's race or ethnicity should not be mentioned in a story unless the information is part of a detailed description including age, height, weight, attire, and distinguishing characteristics.

**Victim's Names:** The names of juveniles, rape victims and people who have attempted suicide are not published except in circumstances approved by the editor. Consult with the editor when naming the victims of any traumatic event or violent crime.

**Here are some guidelines that staff members should use to determine whether a victim's name should be used.**

**Living or dead.** Did the victim die, or is he or she still living? If the victim survived, it is probably not a good idea to use the name, especially if it was a private individual in a common type of traumatic event. If the victim died, it lends more weight to using the name (as in an obituary).

**Juvenile or adult.** Kansas law protects the identity of juveniles involved in criminal proceedings. The same kind of protection should be given to juveniles involved in traumatic events.

**Prominence/public figure.** Is the person well known? In what context: national, regionally or locally? Determining whether someone is a public or private person should be done in the same manner as it is determined for libel.

**Newsworthiness/manner.** Is the event newsworthy enough to justify it. Unusual circumstances often are cited, but be careful not to sensationalize a tragic event needlessly.

**Rape.** As stated before, rape victim's names should not be used. Do not name the suspect of a rape until the suspect has been charged in court.

**Suicide.** Generally, names should not be used in stories dealing with suicide attempts. If the suicide was newsworthy only because it was a suicide, consider using an obituary format. Then it is appropriate to use the victim's name.

## **Dealing with Sources**

Staff members must identify themselves when covering any event for the *The Indian Leader*, unless the editor has given approval for reporters or photographers not to disclose their identity. To help reporters and news sources understand what information is fair to report, under what conditions the information may be used and how that information may be obtained, complicated news gathering practices have evolved. Even among journalists, there is disagreement about defining these terms. Listed are some reporting procedures that *The Indian Leader* reporters are expected to follow.

**The Leader Policy:** Our policy is for reporters never to agree to conduct an interview in any way other than on the record, unless the editor has been consulted before the interview. There almost always is some other way to get information. Not for attribution, off the record and

background (explained below) many times serve only to tie the hands of both the reporters and the newspaper. Remember, unless a specific agreement is made before the interview, the interview is on the record.

In some cases, exceptions to this policy may be justified. Again, speak to the editor for questions about this.

**On the record:** All the information and name of the news source may be used in a story. Interviews are on the record unless an agreement to the contrary is made in advance. In most cases, reporters will not say an interview is on the record. The assumption is that if someone is talking to a reporter, the information is for the record. Sometimes out of courtesy, however, reporters should explain to people who are not used to dealing with the press that all information could be used in a story.

**Anonymous Sources:** This is information given to a reporter that can be published, but the identity of the source cannot be used. For example, a district attorney might tell a reporter of plans to move for a mistrial in a murder case. But the district attorney tells the reporter he or she can use the information as long as the reporter identifies the source only as one close to the case. This way the district attorney will not offend witnesses who may first learn about the move by reading the paper.

**Background:** This is a difficult area. Generally, background information is intended to educate and guide the reporter in writing a story, and the gist of the information can be used if the source is identified. A writer should make clear for the reader that the writer is not the original source for the information. For example, an administrative assistant might brief reporters about the college's coming budget and the rationale behind parts of it so they will be better prepared for a news conference or a meeting later in the week.

## Reporting Standards

**Report News; Do Not Make It:** *Leader* staff members should not put themselves in situations that result in their making news or in their altering their presentation. *Leader* reporters should not ask questions during public question-and-answer forums or during public meetings, such as faculty meetings or student senate. Ask questions after the meeting or during intermission. Likewise, the newspaper generally should not intrude into news stories with such phrases as "told the *The Indian Leader*" or "*The Indian Leader* has learned."

**Fairness:** Any viewpoint in a story must be balanced by an opposing viewpoint. This does not mean a reporter should dig up or create controversy. But people or groups that have been criticized in a story must have a chance to respond in the same issue. One call to obtain the other side of an issue is rarely enough. The reporter's obligation is to present a true reflection of the situation.

Do not tarnish the *The Indian Leader's* reputation by acquiring information through questionable means. If in an extreme case the editor approves an extraordinary way to get information, the story will explain how the information was obtained and why it was gathered that way.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Be sensitive to the concerns of members of other minority groups. Realize that not all people celebrate the same holidays or have the same values. Try to stay abreast of the events that are going on in your sources' lives, no matter what race, religion or sex. As a forum for a diverse community, *The Indian Leader* cannot afford and will not tolerate prejudice from its staff. Racial slurs, sexual harassment and similar discriminatory misconduct will be grounds for dismissal.

**Direct Quotes:** Except for minor grammatical errors in the speech of ordinary persons, quotations are not to be altered. *The Indian Leader* does correct minor errors that might otherwise take on undue importance or cause the speaker to look foolish. Mispronunciations rarely should be used, even for color, as they tend to make a speaker appear inarticulate.

**Verification:** In general, do not quote from news releases, other paper's stories or news broadcasts without verifying the information or attributing it. *Leader* reporters are expected to verify information in news releases and then rewrite the releases. Information from another newspaper should be identified as being from that newspaper. Reporters should try to get quotations directly from the source instead of quoting from prepared statements. If quotations are taken from prepared statements, the story should say so. When covering a speech, reporters should try to get a copy of the text to quote the speaker accurately and talk to the speaker afterward for elaboration about specific points.

**Obscenities:** Obscenities and vulgarities should not be used simply to add color or humor. Use them sparingly and only when imperative to give a full portrayal to the reader. The number of listeners—one or two reporters as opposed to an auditorium full of people--often enters into news judgement in questions of obscenity. The editor or assistant editor decides whether to use questionable language.

## Newsroom Management

**Personnel:** The editor handles all problems in the news department. Any staff member with a complaint or scheduling conflict should talk to the editor. Suggestions are welcome.

**Mail Boxes:** Staff members will have mailboxes for messages and assignments. Staff members should check their mailboxes several times a week. They also should not let papers accumulate in their boxes.

**Phones:** Personal long-distance calls will not be tolerated. Making such call is grounds for dismissal. All long-distance calls are to be logged on the out-going telephone log.

**Travel:** Travel must be approved by the editor. Most travel should be authorized first by the Indian Leader Association.

**Materials:** The Leader provides staff with a computer and other materials to layout the paper. The Leader does not provide notebooks.

**Office Access:** Navarre Hall is open from 8-5 p.m. Staff members are expected to organize their time to reflect these hours. If you need in the building beyond specific hours, the time needs to be arranged in advance. This is for *Leader* staff and yearbook activities only. Tecumseh Hall is open at various hours. A key to Tecumseh and to the *Leader* office will be available to staff at the front desk of the library. Staff must sign keys in and out. In the event a staff member forgets to return the key to the library the Editor or sponsor must be notified. A lost key charge of \$200 will be submitted to the business office under a staff member's account for lost keys.

**Maintenance:** The newsroom should be clean all the time. The public, faculty and administrators frequently visit, and the newsroom must project every aspect of professionalism. Reporters and editors are expected to clean up around computer terminal(s). Otherwise, loose notebooks and belongings will be thrown away.

Smoking is prohibited in the building. This includes the newsroom, and other offices. Keep food and beverages away from the terminals. Staff members will be responsible for any damage they cause to them.

**Newsroom Conduct:** Staff members should act as professionals in the newsroom. Less-than-professional behavior will not be tolerated and is grounds for dismissal. Alcohol and substance abuse will not be tolerated and is grounds for dismissal.

## Newsroom Procedures

**Deadlines:** They must be met. The *Leader* reporters are to complete their assignments on deadlines given by the editor. To meet our responsibilities, deadlines need to be staggered. Failure to meet a deadline on schedule is grounds for dismissal.

**Style:** The *Leader* uses *The Associated Press Stylebook*. In addition, a *Leader* style guide at the end of this pamphlet explains the newspaper's exceptions.

**Datelines and Bylines:** A dateline is not used on a byline unless the reporter was actually at the place named in the dateline and provided a substantial part of the information in the article from that area.

**Staff Meetings:** Staff meetings are held twice a month. Meetings should last no more than 30 minutes. The meetings are for the entire staff. Attendance is mandatory.

## Style Supplement

**AIDS** People do not die of AIDS; they die of complications of AIDS.

**Black** Use when African-American is inappropriate or inaccurate. Capitalize in all instances when referring to people of African ancestry.

**Board of Regents** Use Board of Regents on first reference, then Regents. No apostrophe in any usage.

**chairperson** Do not use chairman or chairwoman. When possible, construct the sentence with the verb "to head" instead of chairperson. For example, "John Doe, who heads the HIJC student board, .. ."

**cities in Kansas** Do not use Kansas or Kan. after Kansas towns, unless they are likely to be confused with big cities in other states, such as Minneapolis, Kan., and Kansas City, Kan.

**coed** do not use coed to refer to a female student. More descriptive uses of the word are acceptable: coed softball, coed residence halls.

**departments** Athletic Department is uppercase, but don't capitalize academic departments (department of history) unless a word normally would be capitalized (department of English, department of History). Governmental departments appear as you normally see them: Department of the Interior.

**grade point average** on first reference, then GPA.

**Coffin Sports Complex** on first reference, the Complex.

**homecoming** It is Homecoming Day, but homecoming.

**Haskell Indian Nations University** When referring to Haskell Indian Nations University use Haskell

**Identification:** Faculty members are identified as thus, Rhonda LeValdo Instructor of Media Communications. Professors who hold distinguished or named professorships should be identified with their complete titles. Thus: John Doe, professor emeritus of history.

Haskell students are identified thus; John Doe, (Creek), Tulsa freshman. Put tribal affiliation in ().

But, individuals should always be identified in a manner most appropriate to the context of the story.

**The Indian Leader** *Leader* on second reference.

**names** On second reference, normally use a person's last name only. First names may be used on second reference in stories about children under the age of 10. In stories about several people with the same last name, use first and last names to avoid confusion.

**newspaper names** Italicize names of newspapers and other publications.

**quotes** Avoid using colons to introduce quotes.

**Representatives and Senators** refer to AP Stylebook.

**semesters** When followed by a year, the season is capitalized. For example, Fall 1989. However, fall semester is lowercase.

**senators** Identify student senators by the groups they represent or by their position in Senate, whichever is more important. John Doe, Blalock senator.

**sheriff's office** Douglas County Sheriff's Office on first reference, then sheriff's office. Refer to deputies as deputy sheriff.

**streets** Use AP Stylebook

**theater** Use this spelling except for proper names

**time** The order is time, day, place: 10 a.m. Friday in 141 Ross Hall.

**titles** In the title of a book a lecture or a play, don't capitalize an article (a, an, the), the "to" of an infinitive, a preposition with fewer than five letters, or "and" as, but, if, nor, or," unless the word is the first or the last word of the title. Capitalize the titles of all publications.

**United States** Except in quotes or editorial page copy, change America to United States and American used as an adjective to U.S. wherever the meaning is the nation, not the hemisphere. However, be reluctant to change American used as a noun to U.S. citizen; the meanings are not necessarily synonymous.