



## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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**Gary Batton**  
Chief

**Jack Austin, Jr.**  
Assistant Chief

Dear Friends and Colleagues in Southeastern Oklahoma,

This letter is concerning the upcoming 2020 United States Census.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce has asked us to host a meeting on its behalf on November 13<sup>th</sup>. The meeting concerns the Census and the preparations we need to be making. Attendees are invited from every county in the southeastern quadrant of the state.

For the past ten years, due to a large undercount of our regional population in the 2010 Census, we've all been living with decreased amounts of money available for schools, highways, public safety, health care and other important issues. The undercount occurred because many of the residents of our respective jurisdictions did not respond to the U.S. Census. Our artificially low population count, in turn, has led to smaller federal and state grants being made available to us to accomplish important things in our jurisdictions. We need to do everything possible to plan and organize in advance of the 2020 Census, to prevent a repeat occurrence.

Even though the U.S. Census—which is conducted every ten years—is a federal initiative, it will only be a success if we promote it locally. Some states, such as California, are allocating tens of millions of dollars to promote the Census and gain a more accurate count. Oklahoma will not be funding any promotion activities, meaning we will need to do this ourselves.

We are increasingly concerned by Southeastern Oklahoma's lack of planning and organizing for this major event. Our tribal government organized a steering committee which has met weekly since the summer. We are hoping you or other key opinion leaders in your communities will also begin planning for this major event, which begins in March 2020.

The meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup> is being organized by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce to explain to you the importance of the Census, provide ideas for promoting it locally, and answer your questions. We'll be happy to share with you our official Choctaw Nation marketing plan, which includes paid advertisements on billboards, TV and radio ads and social media. Hopefully, what we do will dovetail with any local activities in your communities.

We hope you will consider joining us on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Should you have any questions, please contact our Senior Director of Membership, Melissa Landers, at [mlanders@choctawnation.com](mailto:mlanders@choctawnation.com) or 580-924-8280, ext. 2291.

Sincerely,

Gary Batton, Chief  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma