



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin, Jr.
Assistant Chief

August 12, 2019

Dr. Steven Dillingham, Director
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, D.C. 20233

Dear Dr. Dillingham,

We are beginning an education campaign designed to boost our tribal members' participation in the 2020 Census, as well as the accuracy of their responses, and require your assistance.

Many areas of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, which comprises 10,922 square miles spanning all or parts of 13 counties, were categorized as low-response areas following the 2010 Census. We have formed a tribal Complete Count Committee and have begun using social media channels and other methods to educate our tribal members regarding the importance of the census.

A key element of our messaging effort will concern how our tribal members should self-identify in the 2020 Census as members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. We understand our members, when responding to your question on "Race," and after ticking the box for "American Indian or Alaska Native," will need to use the character boxes provided on the official form to write in their tribal affiliation.

The phrase, "Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma," requires 26 letters, including spaces. The print version of your 2020 Census form will accommodate only 16 write-in letters or characters.

This concerns us. While completing the 2010 Census, 159,630 respondents wrote in "Choctaw" and 24,000 respondents wrote in "Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma." Since then we have learned some federal or state grantors use the lower figure, 24,000, when determining the amount of grant monies for which we may apply. The number of our individuals holding Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in 2010, by contrast, was 199,410.

Of the three federally recognized Choctaw Indian tribes, we are the only one known as the Choctaw Nation. The other two are known as the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, headquartered in Louisiana, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, in Mississippi. The phrase, "Choctaw Nation," requires only 14 write-in characters, and will be readily accommodated by your 2020

Census form. Will you accept and denote this phrase as indicating respondents' affiliation with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma? If not, may we ask your guidance in how to proceed?

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Batton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" being more prominent than the last name "Batton".

Gary Batton, Chief
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Cc: Ms. Cathy L. Lacy, Regional Director
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