By Christian Toews

When was the last time you looked up at the stars? Not just a glance up to remember they exist, but when you paused and had a long, contemplative look at the stars? For most people it has probably been a while. With the speed of our lives these days, we barely have time to pause and out, much less introspective. For our ancestors, stargazing was a regular occurrence. Early texts from around the world reveal that people spent a lot of time searching the stars for meaning, inspiration, comfort and beauty. The Bible even tells the story of shepherds following a star to the location where they shepherds following a star to the location where they found Jesus.

Our modern relationship with the night sky is a bit less dramatic. Many of us have seen the stars, but perhaps not to the extent our forefathers used them. With the invention of the lightbulb, our relationship with the night sky became, well, dim. Sure, we are more productive because we have been able to work later into the night. We’ve had more fun because we no longer have to rely on daylight to play sports and games. But has all of this convenience come at a cost to our relationship with nature?

In Oklahoma might be the last place on your mind when you think of stargazing. In Texas they sing, “The stars at night are big and bright,” and in Oklahoma we sing, “Where the wind comes sweeping down the plain.” But night are big and bright,” and in Oklahoma we sing, “Where the wind comes sweeping down the plain.” But there is much more to Oklahoma than plains and wind.

Nation features darkest skies for hundreds of miles

Starlight, star bright: Choctaw Nation skies Delight

Within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma lie some of the best dark skies in the eastern half of the United States. Between Nashoba and Smithville there is a stretch of Oklahoma that is almost untouched by light pollution. John Bortle worked to develop a way to map and classify how well the night sky can be seen on a clear moonless night. The area between Nashoba and Smithville is classified as level 2 skies on the Bortle Scale. That means, on a clear and moonless night, the summer Milky Way is highly structured to the unaided eye.

While we cannot shut off the city lights across the nation, there are so many people who have never seen certain stars, constellations or even the Milky Way, our own galaxy.

A New York Times article described a 1994 earthquake that shook the Los Angeles area around 12:15 in the morning. The quake was very strong and knocked out the power to the area. Naturally, people gathered outside their homes during the quake and residents reportedly called various emergency centers to report a mysterious cloud overhead. The cloud was the Milky Way galaxy which had been obscured from view by the artificial lights. While we cannot shut off the city lights across the country, we can escape to areas with less light pollution to show ourselves and our children the beauty above us.

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Nation announces recovery plan

Halted. I hope you all are doing well and staying healthy. My thoughts and prayers are still with anyone who has been directly affected by this pandemic.

I wish everyone health and safety during this time. God bless you all.

Florian, Family, Culture

Chief Gary Batton

Family more important than ever

Living out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture. That is the vision of the Chahta Nation of Oklahoma. You’ve heard us say it many times. We are strong in our faith and proud of our culture. But there is a reason family is in the middle of our vision. It is the glue that keeps everything together. Family is the foundation of everything we do as a nation. Without family, there would be no way to pass down our faith and culture. Even when we migrate from one place to another, we carry on our family traditions with us.

In times like this, family is essential. It is the central unit of all we do. Our families keep us grounded and make feelings of isolation even stronger. Leaning on our families for help and keeping each other close is so important for our mental health. Due to the pandemic, many families got closer together and realized that the home is really the place where we have the strength to overcome adversity in times like this. Lean on your family, slow down, enjoy this time together and eventually, things will go back to normal and we will go back to our busy lives.

Faith, Family, Culture

Chief Gary Batton

Make the home great again

There is a saying in the provisional wing which reads out the idea of making America great again. We may consider making the home great again to reach that state of greatness that is implied. We understand that in the order of creation, God established the home first. God’s intention was that the home should be a blessing and a joy, a haven from fear, strife and sorrow. The home is to be filled with God’s word. “And these commandments which I command thee this day shall be thy guide.” (Deut. 6: 7). The promise God made to Abraham is as pertinent to us as well. In the Book of Galatians, Paul was inspired to write, “So, then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” If you be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29). The Old Testament contains not only the moral law but also the ceremonial law, and the reformation laws are fulfilled and are not required of us. God’s eternal principle is the same. Those who blessedly hear the Word of God have a sight to greater things. Godly minds create good citizens. And it begins in the home when the family is surrounded with the Word of God. There was a time when family altar was a common practice. At selected times during the day, the whole family would read the scriptures and pray together. During this pandemic, many families got closer together and realized that the home is the strength of our democracy and the base foundation of our values which makes a nation great. What a difference it would be if families would begin the old-fashioned family altar and make the home great again.

Topping off ceremony

A topping off ceremony is planned to be held atop a structure during its construction.

Pastor Olin Williams

Employee Chaplain

Tribal member mass mailings

In an effort to reduce waste, Choctaw Nation most mailings to one per address.

If your household requests more than one copy of mass mailings and you have not previously contacted us, then please email or call.

(Excluding Christmas Ornament and Yearly Calendar)

CIRCULATION@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

800.522.6170 Ext. 4028

TRIBAL MEMBER MASS MAILINGS

For Children

Receive an EBT card for the purchase of healthy food this summer.
The division’s beading classes, which have been tremendous service areas and at community meetings throughout the country for several years, are how many have been waiting to get their start. Several have become proficient in the art, selling their pieces as well as teaching classes for Choctaw organizations throughout the country. J.J. Jacob, bead expert and culture bearer, said, “We are not scheduling any activities at this time in case we need to cancel. Staff is working on dates and locations at this time should a decision be made to move forward or other options are available.”

Moving into the new Cultural Center is a high priority in the next step for the division. Through the pandemic has canceled many events, upcoming activities for the Cultural Center are still being planned and developed. Countless opportunities to learn and be involved will be available.

To find out more about the Cultural Services Division opportunities within the division, go to https://www.choctawnation.com/history/culture or call 918-522-4777.

Project Empower
Assisting victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking to achieve a stable, successful life free from violence.

Eligibility Requirements:
• Must be 18 or older. Must be able to receive services in the 10.5 county service area

To help victims enrich and reclaim their lives

For more information, please contact Susan Edwards at (505) 934-3280, ext. 2181 or 800-622-4679.

Cultural Services staff members remain culture bearers through pandemic

By Shelia Kirven

(Short 2 in a 2-part series on Choctaw culture bearers, the third in the series of the Cultural Services Division.)

Culture bearers: any individual, especially a migrant, who carries, and thus diffuses, cultural values and truths between cultural regions. The role of culture bearers is particularly important within these cultures undergoing transition or experiencing change throughout the culture. (Dictionary of Ethnicity, 2nd ed. 2000).

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services Division preserves and shares the Choctaw story through diverse means such as classes, programs, and projects. Project staff serve as mentors to others by teaching cultural arts and sharing Choctaw culture and knowledge. Within it, the Compliance Department works to protect Choctaw historic sites and to support and mentor. “The Historic Preservation Department explained some of the ways that the Historic Preservation Department is doing to ensure that our own projects do not impact historic sites.”

Audrey Jacob, Director of Museum Cultural Events and culture bearer, said, “We are not scheduling any activities at this time in case we need to cancel. Staff is working on dates and locations at this time should a decision be made to move forward or other options are available.”

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PROJECT EMPLOYER

EDUCATING, MOTIVATING AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP VICTIMS ENRICH AND RECLAIM THEIR LIVES

TO HELP VICTIMS ENRICH AND RECLAIM THEIR LIVES

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:
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District 11
Halito, Choctaw Nation

I hope everyone is safe and healthy. Just as our ancestors
experienced hardships, today we have in our DNA to over-
come this COVID-19 crisis. The Choctaw Nation will
never lose sight of the critical and long-term impact of
COVID-19 on our citizens. I want to thank all of our lead-
ers and associates. I would like to say “raokee chito” to all
our employees and associates who have continued to do
their jobs during this time. I hope everyone is safe and healthy. It was an honor to call the Chahta Foundation
Wednesday from 11-12. There are big plans for the rest of
the year, so come enjoy them soon.

I wish everyone the best, and we are very blessed to have a strong Choctaw Nation.

Robert Karr

District 10
Halito, Choctaw Nation

I hope everyone has endured the isolation and the challenges of working from home. This has been an unprecedented time in my life that I could
not have imagined. I believe we will have a new normal to get used to in the coming days and weeks. I expect
our campus will be closed until the end of the school year because of the COVID-19 virus. It was an honor to call the Chahta Foundation
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Robert Karr

District 9
Halito, Choctaw Nation

I hope everyone has been staying safe as we look forward to all district activities. At this time, we must avoid
tearing the soul of our tribe and some semblance of normalcy in our personal lives. I encourage all our citizens to participate in
online conferences with Chief, Mrhs, and at Tribal Council. This is one way to make initiatives happen. As they say, we believe we were born in the heart of our tribal members and
as we continue to work on overcoming COVID-19, we must ensure that the delivery of our services to our tribal members during this
time continues. We have had to cancel many events and activities soon.

I wish everyone the best, and we are very blessed to have a strong Choctaw Nation.

Robert Karr

District 8

I hope everyone is safe and healthy as we are facing
time as we have never seen before. Our leaders and associates have worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of all our citizens.
Our social workers and CHERS have also been serving our tribal members during this
time. It was an honor to call the Chahta Foundation
Wednesday from 11-12. There are big plans for the rest of
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Robert Karr

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District 1

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Robert Karr
Veteran Lunches

Please call ahead to ensure the lunch is still available.

USCG Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
        McAlester Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
        Wilburton Community Center – Noon
        Stigler Community Center – Noon
        Durant Community Center – Noon
        Wilburton Community Center – Noon

June 10

Choctaw Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
        Atoka Community Center – Noon
        Stigler Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
        Bethel Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
        Durant Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
        Wilburton Community Center – Noon
        McAlester Community Center – Noon
        Wilburton Community Center – Noon

June 17

        Weight City Community Center – Noon
        Broken Bow Community Center – Noon

June 19

        McAlester Community Center – 11:30 a.m.

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Mary Ann Starnes, Senior Director
Kellie Manthey, Managing Editor
Chris Jennings, News Reporter

Christian Towns, News Reporter

Durant, OK 74702

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Send us your stories!
The Biskinik is a free service to our tribal members. We want to be an outlet for all members to share their successes with the rest of the tribe.
Please send your submissions to us at biskinik@choctawnation.com

Chahita Anumpa Altvikna
April Language Lesson

COVID-19 Nan Ihs Ahah Ahani
Coronavirus Safety Precautions

Chi chukha ish achii micha.
Keep your distance from others.

Chi chukha ish antta chike.
Wash your hands with soap and water.

Chi chukha ish i mishema chike.
Cover your mouth and nose with a covering.

Chi nashka ish potali nna.
Do not touch your face.

Kvna inla ish mishema chike.
Keep your distance from others.

Chi chukha ish antta chike.
Wash your hands with soap and water.

Chi chukha ish i mishema chike.
Cover your mouth and nose with a covering.

Chi nashka ish potali nna.
Do not touch your face.

Tribe Council holds May session

CHOT CATION OF OKLAHOMA REGULAR SESSION
May 5, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL-CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
5. WELCOME GUESTS/RECOGNIZE VETERAN OF THE MONTH
6. NEW BUSINESS
7. OLD BUSINESS
8. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
9. APPROVAL APPLICATION AND BUDGET FOR CONTINUATION OF CHOCTAW NATION EARLY HEAD START – CHILD CARE PROGRAM FOR FY 2019-2020
10. APPROVAL OF THE Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan of 2020
11. CLOSING PRAYER

November

1. Call to order
2. Opening prayer
3. Call roll
4. Approval of minutes
5. Welcome guests/recognize veteran of the month
6. New business
7. Old business
8. Other new business
9. Approval of applications for operation of抢购
10. Approval of plans for early childhood education center

All council members were present. Speaker Thomas Williston, Secretary Ron Perry and Chaplain Jennifer Woods were present in Council House and all others by phone.

For more information, contact Traci Cox at 904-677-8473.

Payton Perry, Commander 419-230-2780

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Guide to using time at home to record oral family histories

INTERVIEWER TIPS

• Use those questions as a guide, you don’t need to ask every single question.
• Skip around with the questions. Ask the questions that you have the person you’re interviewing can answer.
• Treat this as a conversation. You can ask those questions while baking cookies or gardening in your yard together if you want.
• Add your own questions; ask follow-up questions.
• If people get stuck, you can always come back to a topic a later time.
• Ask your interviewee if they have old photographs or keepsakes somewhere in the house that they want to tell you about. These items can help start a conversation or jog some memories. After the interview, you can store these pictures or artifacts together with the copies of the interview after you transcribe and print them out.
• Have fun!
• If you have any questions or would like to share your interviews and have them archived with Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation, please contact meganb@choctawnation.com.

BACKGROUND

When and where were you born?
What are some Choctaw traditions that you have passed down or encouraged others to do in your family?
What are some of the hardest things about doing [Choctaw language/art/craft that someone does here]?
How did you learn to [Choctaw language/art/craft that someone does here]?
What was an important teacher for you when you were growing up? (This can be an actual teacher; an elder, a neighbor; a parent or sibling - whoever you can consider someone who taught you a lot during your childhood.)
What kind of activities or chores did you do when you were growing up?
What were some of your favorite memories from your childhood?
Who did you spend time with when you were growing up?
What were some of your childhood friends?
Who were some of your friends in high school?
What are some events in Choctaw Nation history that you have lived through?
What did you want to be when you grew up and how was that journey?
What do you do for a living now?
What was your first job?
What was an important teacher for you when you were growing up? (This can be an actual teacher, an elder, a neighbor, a parent or sibling - whoever you can consider someone who taught you a lot during your childhood.)
What made them special to you? Can you share some of your favorite memories?
Who was an older person that you liked to spend time with when you were a kid?
What are some Choctaw language/arts/crafts that someone does here?
What was your family like?
Are you involved with any Choctaw cultural activities now? If yes, what made you start?
What are some of your family memories?
What did you live over the course of your life?
Who are your neighborhood?
What were some of your favorite stories?
Where did you go to high school?
What are some of your favorite high school memories?
Who were some of your friends? What are some of your favorite stories with them?
Who were some of your childhood friends?
What are some of your favorite memories from your childhood?
Who did you spend time with when you were a kid?
What were some stories that older shared when you were younger?
Where did you grow up?
What are your favorite stories involving them?
What are some stories that you’ve learned from working?
What are some things you’ve learned from working?
Who were your parents?
What do you do for a living now?
What was your neighborhood?
What are some of your favorite stories?
Where did you go to school?
What are some stories that you’ve lived over the course of your life?
Who made them special to you? Can you share some of your favorite memories?
What are some stories that you’ve learned from working?
Who is an older person that you liked to spend time with when you were a kid?
What are some of your favorite memories?
What are some stories that you’ve lived over the course of your life? How were those stories?
Where were some of your childhood friends?
What are some of your favorite memories?
What did you want to be when you grew up and how was that journey?
What do you do for a living now?
What was your first job?
What was an important teacher for you when you were growing up? (This can be an actual teacher, an elder, a neighbor, a parent or sibling - whoever you can consider someone who taught you a lot during your childhood.)
What made them special to you? Can you share some of your favorite memories?
Who was an older person that you liked to spend time with when you were a kid?
What are some Choctaw traditions that you have passed down or encouraged others to do in your family?
What are some of your family memories?
What did you live over the course of your life?
Who are your neighborhood?
What were some of your favorite stories?
Where did you go to high school?
What are some of your favorite high school memories?
Who were some of your friends? What are some of your favorite stories with them?

CHOCTAW CULTURE

What are some events in Choctaw Nation history that you have lived through?
What are some stories that you’ve learned from working?
What are some of your family memories?
What did you want to be when you grew up and how was that journey?
What are some things you’ve learned from working?
What were some stories that older shared when you were younger?
What are some of your favorite memories?
What were some stories that older children shared when you were younger?
What did you do for a living now?
What are some stories that you’ve learned from working?
What did you want to be when you grew up and how was that journey?
What are some of your favorite memories?
What did you live over the course of your life?
Who are your neighborhood?
What were some of your favorite stories?
Where did you go to high school?
What are some of your favorite high school memories?
Who were some of your friends? What are some of your favorite stories with them?
Amber Sells receives award

Kathleen R. Hester of Broken Arrow will graduate in May 2020 from Southeastern Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor's degree in History.

Hester is a Parsons Scholar and will graduate magna cum laude. Honors and activities include Top Ten Freshman, Senior Editor of Southeastern Color Guard Yearbook, Alpha Theta History Honor Society, and Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society. She is also a Leadership Southeastern Initiation Fellow.

She is the granddaughter of the Choctaw Nation and would like to thank all those who helped her throughout her college years. She will begin her graduate studies at the University of Oklahoma in Fall 2020.

Solomon receives UA Distinquished Outreach Faculty award

Tobita G. Acunlual Solomon, PhD was inducted on January 15, 2020 by the Arizona Board of Regents as the recipient of the University of Arizona Distinquished Outreach Faculty Award.

Dr. Solomon focuses on addressing complex social issues in Native American communities. She is an associate professor in the University of Arizona Department of Family and Community Medicine and Co-Founder of the American Indian Research Center for Health. Solomon's research and professional career have been dedicated to improving health equity for Native Americans. She has done significant work in pushing for national public health policy that is culturally proficient and honors the sovereignty of tribes in research.

CNIO residents graduate

Chocteau Native Family Medicine Residency is proud to announce the upcoming graduation of two family medicine physicians, Tammy Tasby-Willcox, D.O. and Hao Yang, D.O. After successfully completing 3 years of residency training, these physicians will be eligible for board-certification in family medicine.

Ott to intern at Harvard MA General Hospital

Ashley T. Ott, of Sunnyvale, Calif., obtained her Bachelor of Science in Cell Biology from UC Davis in 2014 and will graduate with her MD from UC San Diego on May 31, 2020. Ashley will practice her internal medicine residency at Harvard’s Massachusetts General Hospital beginning in June. She plans to pursue a career in Gastroenterology, specifically hoping to continue working with patients in a clinical setting while investiga- ting the healthcare disparities that exist for low income communities within her field.

Amos Veteran of the month

Walter Lee Amos of McAlester, Okla., is the June 2020 Veteran of the Month.

He served in the United States Army from Dec. 21, 1942 to Jan. 30, 1946, with the rank of private, 1943-45. He was a member of the 2nd Armored Motorized Infantry Class.

Col. D. First Class Amos served in Okinawa, Japan, where he assisted with military base preparations.

Butler turns 1

Lucas Babe Butler turned 1 year old April 11, 2020. He is the son of Stevens-Curry Myers and Josie Butler and grandson of Sandra Cofer Myers. His paternal great-grand father was Babe Cofer of Okla., and his maternal great-grandmother Lillie Spring Cofer, original, enrolled.

2020 Oklahoma Native All-State

Boys Cross Country

Quarrman Briggs (Cayton) Kyle Henry (Shawnee)
Colby Jones (Siguiente) Tyler Warden (Moyers)
Boys Basketball

Quarrman Briggs (Cayton) Cael Eaton (Byng)
Braden Shaw (Moyers) Kalib Stephens (Kinta)
Earl Henry (Shawnee) Anchor (Catoosa)
Girls Basketball

Mackenzie Cruse (Choctaw) Hollie Lindley (Barbour)
Diana Mcginnis (Choctaw) Tanner Moore (Paden)
Shelby Jones (Catoosa) Lucy McBride (Kinta)
"Outstanding Wrestler" at the Midwest Classic with his record being 2-6. Grey went 2-6 in this season with a pair of falls, six major decisions, and 12 technical falls. He also showed a 204 advantage in takedown.

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Diana Mcginnis (Choctaw) Tanner Moore (Paden)
Shelby Jones (Catoosa) Lucy McBride (Kinta)
Douglas Jay Hollingsworth, 83, passed away April 23, 2020, in Gainesville, Texas, to Betty Ruth (Null) Hollingsworth. For the full obituary, please visit Mobley-Groesbeck Funeral Home.

Jack Miller, 88, passed away April 13, 2020, in Dallas, Texas, to his mother and his wife. For the full obituary, please visit Myers and Smith Funeral Home.

Rebecca May Nix, 62, passed away May 7, 2020, in Octavia, Okla., to Mary Ann (Clinton) Jasper and Clarence "Gene" Johnson. She was preceded in death by her father, brothers and sisters, and great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit Anderson-Upper Cumberland Funeral Home.

John Randolph Johnson, 57, passed away April 4, 2020, in Ponca City, Okla., to Bo and Janice Johnson. He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers and sisters, and many nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit Line(Lowe) Funeral Home.

Ruby Remedios, 85, died in October 2019, in Denver, Colorado, to family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

Linda Ann Mitchell, passed away May 1, 2020, in Forney, Texas, to her parents, son Christopher Mitchell, brothers Clotilde Robinson and Brandy Robinson, her mother; children Amy Bourque, Eugene and Bernice Comeaux. In Forney, Texas, to Mary Ann (Clinton) Jasper and Clarence "Gene" Johnson. For the full obituary, please visit尬ckie Phillips Funeral Home.

Lucy Lee Morris

Lucy Lee Morris, 78, passed away April 4, 2020, in Forney, Texas, to her husband. For the full obituary, please visit尬ckie Phillips Funeral Home.

Minnie Fug氧 Bone

Minnie Fug氧 Bone passed away March 22, 1942, in Gainesville, Texas, to Debbi Woods. For the full obituary, please visit видicion Debbi Woods.

Doris Box

Doris Box, 88, passed away March 24, 2020, in Haskell, Texas, to family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit видicion Delores Box.

Dorothy Fry

Dorothy Virginia (White) Fry, 95, passed away May 7, 2020, in Smithville, Okla., to Nellie Home. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband Elton White, brothers and sisters, and many nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit видicion Dorothy Fry.

Janice Davidson

Janice Davidson, 98, passed away March 19, 1953, in Gainesville, Texas, to family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit видicion Janice Davidson.

Ronnie Renee Fitzpatrick

Ronnie Renee Fitzpatrick, 48, passed away May 7, 2020, in Mineral Wells, Texas, to family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit видicion Ronnie Renee Fitzpatrick.

John McCurtain

John McCurtain, 89, passed away January 31, 2020, in Forney, Texas, to family and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers and sisters, and many nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit видicion John McCurtain.

Steven Johnston

Steven Johnston, 60, passed away July 9, 2020, in Decatur, Texas, to family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit видicion Steven Johnston.

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The Choctaw Nation Adult Education Program is an opportunity for adult students to complete their High School Equivalency Exami-
nation (HSE) classes since 1983. What started out as a small program has turned into a full-scale education depart-
ment that provides education and training to over 1,000 students each year. Their success is only possible through the efforts of the Adult Education Program and its dedicated team.

The Adult Education Program is directed by Bebout, a seasoned educator with over 30 years of experience in the public school system, where he worked with the tribe since 2005, starting at the Tribal Center of Excellence, and now oversees the six-member team of Adult Education staff.

The program offers a variety of classes and an online program for adult Choctaw tribe members who wish to complete their high school equivalency diploma. The program provides educational opportunities in traditional and online settings, including at the Tribal Center of Excellence, Adult Education Center, and online through thePearson Vue testing center.

The program also offers financial assistance, which includes a $250 incentive award to students enrolled in either Computer Academy or Adult Education programs. Tutoring is also available to help students prepare for the GED test.

The Adult Education Program is dedicated to helping students overcome challenges and reach their educational goals. With the support of the Choctaw Nation Education Department, the Adult Education Program continues to help tribal members achieve their educational goals and improve their quality of life.

The program has a high success rate, with 195 students earning their high school equivalency diploma in 2021. This success is a testament to the dedication of the team and the support of the Choctaw Nation.

The Adult Education Program is committed to helping students reach their full potential, and they encourage all Choctaw tribe members to consider enrolling in the program and taking the first step towards achieving their educational goals.

For more information or to enroll in the program, visit www.smokymountain.edu or call 1-888-374-4226.
36 million adults in the U.S. live in poverty.

43% of adults with the lowest literacy levels live in poverty.

1 in 6 young adults drop out of high school each year.

Education

Hannah Gammon starts Teen CERT program

By Christian Toews

At 16 years old, one Choctaw teen is already making a big impact on her local community. Hannah Gammon is an Akosa native and the co-chair of the Region VI Youth Preparedness Committee (YPC). The YPC is a national initiative through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Since the inception of the council in 2014, local, state, tribal and local partners have been coming together in a shared commitment to prepare youth for disaster and emergency events, severe weather, floods and tornadoes are only a few.

Kraft said the name of the program for teens is “Tvshka Himitta” which means “youth preparedness.” The council’s goal is to help develop and prepare the top teenage leaders in Region VI to put forth the top teenage leaders in Region VI by giving them the opportunity to work at the Tribal level. The Region VI YPC focuses on preparedness for disasters of all kinds. “I didn’t know what to do in a time of disaster and I think many people don’t know what to do. We want to educate people on how to better serve their community during a disaster situation,” she said.

The Region VI YPC focuses on preparedness for disasters of all kinds. Active shooter events, severe weather, floods and tornadoes are only a few.

Continued from page 9

Interested test candidates can view the tests available at the Pearson Vue website. If you're not sure if you or your company: Chickasaw Nation associates with the Chickasaw Tribe to offer many search testing options, and it saves them from traveling to other locations, completing the course online saves them hours they would have spent traveling, and they become more efficient. The testing cost is affordable and the course covers all the information that test-takers need to know. The class schedules are flexible and online classes are available. Interested test candidates can view the tests available at the Pearson Vue website. If you're not sure if you or your company: Chickasaw Nation associates with the Chickasaw Tribe to offer many search testing options, and it saves them from traveling to other locations, completing the course online saves them hours they would have spent traveling, and they become more efficient. The testing cost is affordable and the course covers all the information that test-takers need to know. The class schedules are flexible and online classes are available.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation’s Home Finance Department is committed to helping Choctaw tribal members find the right mortgage product. We understand that every borrower is different and that different mortgage products are available to meet individual requirements. We make the process of searching for and selecting a mortgage very easy and accessible. One of the main things we do is assist clients with the process of applying for purchase, refinance and construction loans. These loans are a fixed market rate loan for up to 30 years. Downpayment assistance loans are offered to Choctaw tribal members to help with their down payment. These loans are available to those who meet the income requirement and have a good credit score. The Home Finance Department also offers 203K loans to help with the repair of homes. Both McGee Creek State Park and Robbers Cave State Park offer camping and recreational activities. They are great locations to camp, stargaze and connect with nature.

As Tafreshi mentioned, ecotourism is a big factor in preserving untouched landscapes around the world, as well as right here in Oklahoma. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustain the well-being of the local people and involve interpretation and education.”

Tourism is a huge industry, and many places in Oklahoma see visitors from around the world. Ecotourism advocates for conscious, sustainable travel to these places. In other words, to leave them in a similar state to what our ancestors saw. As Tafreshi explained, we as a society have to commit to the impact of our visit on the night sky. We can preserve areas of the country where people can escape the city lights and see the natural night sky in all its glory. “A truly dark night sky can change someone’s life forever,” said Tafreshi. The area between NANDHU and SMITHVILLE is one of the best places to view the Milky Way. But it’s not the only place to see great views of the night sky within the Choctaw Nation. McGee Creek State Park and the area surrounding it just outside of Choctaw Reservation on the east side of town is a Level 3 on the Bortle scale. It is shielded from surrounding city light by the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains. If you travel around 20 miles northeast of McGee Creek, you’ll find Robbers Cave State Park. This park is famous for the cave that was used as a hideout for outlaws Jesse James and Belle Starr. A Level 3 on the Bortle scale, the park is also a great place to see the night sky.

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Severe weather still a concern during pandemic

By Chris Jennings

Preparing for severe weather is something that can’t be put on hold, even during a pandemic. Severe weather still happens, and its effects can last long after the event has occurred. During a pandemic, emergency managers must evaluate if weather patterns operate. There will still be severe storms with flooding, lightning and potential tornadoes, and even a plan can save lives.

Jeff Hansen, Director of Emergency Management for the Choctaw Nation, said, “the biggest thing that we see is people falling asleep from severe weather; however, state and federal officials agree that your top priority should be to protect yourself from severe weather.

“Officials can recommend sheltering from tornadoes inside your home when possible. If you don’t have a below-ground storm shelter, well-constructed homes and buildings provide life-saving protection from 98% of Oklahoma’s tornadoes. If you’re in a different type of shelter, interior hallway or other interior room with no windows on the lowest level of the building or house,” Hansen said.

The need to practice social distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19 brings added complications to taking shelter from severe weather, however, state and federal officials agree that you must prioritize protecting yourself from severe weather.

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Planning during the current pandemic is important, as severe weather patterns may have changed. The Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and the National Weather Service (NWS) offer guidelines for how to look for shelter from severe weather during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To serve, place biscuits on top of heated stew. Pour prepared vegetables on top of biscuits. Heat on stove until hot enough to serve.

Beef Pot Pie

• Biscuits (made from bakery mix)
• Ground beef
• Gravy
• Prepared vegetables: potatoes and corn, drained
• Sautéed veal
• Onions
• 1/4 cup of water
• 1 green bell pepper
• 1 medium-sized tomato

Preparation

1. In a large heavy pot, brown meat, garlic, onion, bell pepper, and tomato. Add gravy and water.
2. Add sautéed vegetables and sautéed veal.
3. Pour into a 9x13 baking dish. Cover with biscuit dough on top of the meat, ensuring there are no holes or gaps. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

To serve, place biscuits on top of heated stew. Place in oven for 10 minutes.
Chocotaw Nation gift from 1800s inspires generosity during global pandemic

By Dana McCoy

In 2017, the people of the Chocotaw Nation of Oklahoma sent $170,000 to Ireland in response to suffering caused by the Great Famine of 1845–1849. This gift, in partnership with the Irish government, was a powerful symbol of philanthropy for Native American tribes during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“The incredible thing about our tribe’s gift to the people of Ireland more than a century ago and the story of that gift inspires others to share our cultural values and heritage,” said Chief Scott Batkin.

On March 15, 2020, an online fundraising campaign was established to assist the Nanuag, who are the descendents of the Irish in Oklahoma. The fundraiser, established by community members, has made several referrals to the Choctaw Nation headquartes, with their gift as repayment on a long-overdue debt. The Choctaw nation, said the most significant and accurate way to support the 1840s Irish is here.

Ireland has known hunger. That lived experience of famine and hardship lives on in strong Irish cultural tales, such as County McCarthy, Consul General at the Consular General of Ireland in Austin, Texas. “The gift from the Chocotaw Nation came at a time when Irish people felt abandoned by everyone, it struck deep really, and that story continues to resonate really deeply.”

The story has since been repeated around the world in a similar fashion as how humanity can rise above difficult times. The widespread news coverage, which includes the New York Times, CNN, the Washington Post, BBC News, and many others, have paid tribute to the Choctaw Nation and its generosity.

The gift inspired the Irish people to respond with kindness and generosity.

Scott and Christine Davison have used their business, Fry- Twist Express, to help others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Ireland has known hunger. That lived experience of famine and hardship lives on in strong Irish cultural tales, such as County McCarthy, Consul General at the Consular General of Ireland in Austin, Texas. “The gift from the Chocotaw Nation came at a time when Irish people felt abandoned by everyone, it struck deep really, and that story continues to resonate really deeply.”

The story has since been repeated around the world in a similar fashion as how humanity can rise above difficult times. The widespread news coverage, which includes the New York Times, CNN, the Washington Post, BBC News, and many others, have paid tribute to the Choctaw Nation and its generosity.

The gift inspired the Irish people to respond with kindness and generosity.

Scott and Christine Davison have used their business, Fry- Twist Express, to help others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chocotaw Nation gift from 1800s inspires generosity during global pandemic

By Dana McCoy

In 2017, the people of the Chocotaw Nation of Oklahoma sent $170,000 to Ireland in response to suffering caused by the Great Famine of 1845–1849. This gift, in partnership with the Irish government, was a powerful symbol of philanthropy for Native American tribes during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

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