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July 2021 Issue



Choctaw Cultural Center tells 14,000 year story



By Kellie Matherly

The much-anticipated opening of the Choctaw Cultural Center is scheduled for July 23. The Cultural Center, located on Highway 75 in Durant, Oklahoma, uses interactive and immersive exhibits and cutting-edge technology to tell the story of the Choctaw people, which spans over 14,000 years. More than a decade of research, planning and construction went into making the dream a reality.

"I am excited about the Cultural Center grand opening," said Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton. "The Center embodies the Chahta Nowvt Aya, or Choctaw Journey, that we are proud to share with our tribal members, neighbors and friends."

The building spans over 100,000 square feet and houses two exhibit halls, an art gallery, auditorium and children's play area as well as a café and gift store. Guests will also be able to participate in seminars and hands-on workshops in the classrooms.

Even the smallest details have been crafted with the Choctaw people in mind. For instance, the diamond and basketweave designs throughout the main lobby reflect important elements of Choctaw tradition, and stone used for the floor around the Central Fire was quarried in Stigler, Oklahoma, located in the northern part of the reservation. Guests may also recognize some familiar faces as they make their way through the permanent exhibits. Living Choctaw tribal members are reflected in the life casts throughout the landscapes. These life casts, created from 3-D scans and plaster casts of tribal members, lend an even higher level of authenticity to the exhibits.

Children are precious to the Choctaw people, and the Luksi Activity Center was created especially for them, their families and anyone else who is young at heart. The room features two different styles of Choctaw dwellings as well as a log slide and a giant Luksi (turtle) where guests can sit and hear traditional stories.

The Center also includes a Changing Exhibition Gallery for traveling and community curated exhibits and special events. The inaugural exhibit

in this gallery is called Long Ago: Stories of the Choctaw People. This exhibit is also designed to be an immersive experience.

A state-of-the-art collections area is devoted to caring for cultural items, collections and some of the Nation's most important historical documents. This space is equipped with temperature and humidity-controlled storage units as well as a cold room for the decontamination of artifacts. In addition to interior protections, these priceless items are protected from the notoriously volatile southeastern Oklahoma weather by walls specifically designed to withstand storms and tornados.

Aside from the interactive landscapes and exhibits, guests can visit the Living Village just outside the main building, where they can see demonstrations of traditional Choctaw dances, stickball and a traditional heirloom garden. The Living Village also offers a walking path around a mound modeled after Nanih Waiya, the Mother Mound located in the Choctaw homelands.

"It is very humbling to have such a beautiful facility dedicated to sharing our rich Choctaw heritage and culture. Our ancestors are smiling upon us as we honor them and their path of the past and present. I'm confident that future generations of Choctaws and visitors alike will also come away with a sense of pride yet humbling experience," said Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

For more information on the Choctaw Cultural Center or to plan a visit, go to choctawculturalcenter.com or call 833-708-9582.

Admission, Hours and Directions

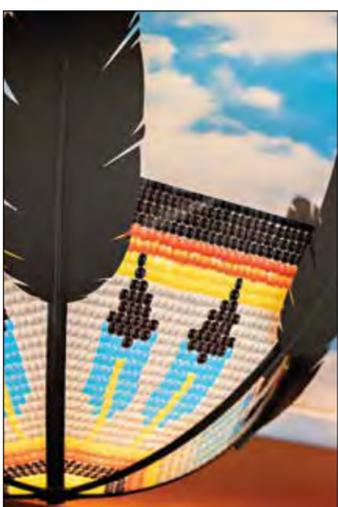
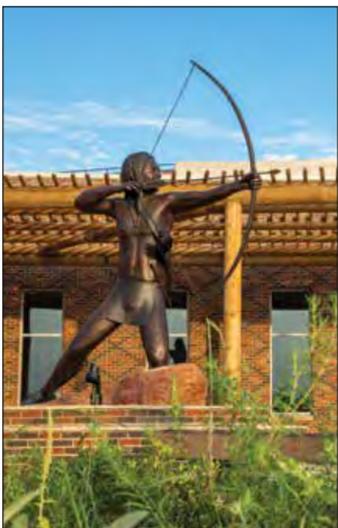
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal members will have complimentary admission.

General admission for adults will be \$12.

Discounted admission will be available for children, veterans, senior citizens and college students. Hours: Wednesday – Friday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.; Sunday 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; Closed Monday and Tuesday.

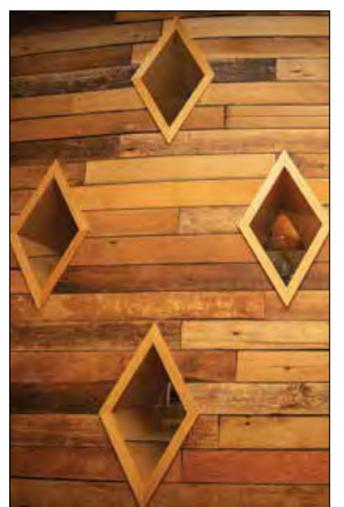
The Cultural Center is located at 1919 Hina Hanta Way in Calera, Oklahoma, 74730.

The entrance to the Cultural Center is off Choctaw Road, west of the intersection of Choctaw Road and Highway 69/75 in Durant.



Photos by Mekayla Monroe and Deidre Elrod

The Choctaw Cultural Center, pictured above, will hold its grand opening on July 23. The story of the Choctaw people can be seen, both inside and outside of the over 100,000 square feet facility.



Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

CNO launches initiative to consider tribal membership for Freedmen

The Choctaw Nation recently announced the launch of an initiative to consider tribal membership for Choctaw Freedmen. Changing the tribal membership requirements will require a Constitutional amendment, which will require a vote from tribal members. To be successful, we'll have to tell the story of why we believe this is necessary and listen to tribal members' input. This initiative will engage Choctaw Freedmen, the Department of Interior, existing tribal members, our elected officials and membership department officials, and other Choctaw proud in listening sessions to present findings and a recommendation to Choctaw elected officials.

I respectfully request that you take a moment to read this open letter and learn more about how we have arrived at this critical juncture in both tribal and American history.

Our mission is, "To the Choctaw proud, ours is a sovereign nation offering opportunities for growth and prosperity." Our vision is, "Living out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture."

Our tradition of oral storytelling brings Choctaw history to life, and has long been one way we educate young Choctaw people.

When I first learned of the US government's plan to withhold promised funding unless we changed our Constitution, I was frustrated. As you might imagine, there is a lot of baggage in the relationship between Native Americans and the US government. As chief, protecting tribal sovereignty is one of the most sacred honors and responsibilities entrusted to me. In this moment, I was focused on a threat to our sovereignty - that's all I heard. The story of Choctaw Freedmen deserves our attention and thoughtful consideration within the framework of tribal self-governance.

I, along with the Tribal Council, have meditated on the words of our mission and vision. We have reflected on the stories our elders have shared with us about the experiences of their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. We have unpacked some of the baggage and remember that while today in 2021, part of our tribal sovereignty is being able to determine tribal membership; that right was also tarnished by the federal government 125 years ago.

The Dawes Rolls. Early in the 1830s, nearly 125,000 Native Americans lived on millions of acres of land in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, North Carolina and Florida. Land our ancestors had called home for generations. Among them, thousands of enslaved people were forced to provide manual labor along the way and after arriving in what is now Oklahoma. The Trail of Tears left an indelible scar on Choctaw people and on African American people among us.

In 1887, the US government, led by Senator Henry Laurens Dawes of Massachusetts, passed the Dawes Act to take the land of Native American people, break up our tribal governments and assimilate us. Like many other times in Native history, the US government did not honor its treaties.

According to Dawes Act language, Native Americans could apply to receive their due allotment of land. White people also applied for the Dawes Rolls to get "free" land, at times using bribes to federal agents to be selected. History shows us that over 250,000 people applied for tribal membership and land, and a little over 100,000 were approved. Over half of the applicants were "rejected, stricken, and judged to be doubtful." The approved received an allotment of land. Some Native Americans did not trust the US government and did not apply in an attempt to protect their families from additional harm. For 10 years after Dawes left the Senate, he worked to dissolve tribal governments and managed to take 90 million acres of treaty land. In 1928, just 23 years after the Dawes Rolls closed, President Calvin Coolidge's administration studied the effects of the Dawes Act and found that the Dawes Act had been used illegally to deprive Native Americans of their land rights. And yet no changes were made.

Today our tribal membership is based on the Dawes Rolls — a poisonous legacy from 125 years ago that took root and caused a myriad of membership issues for tribal nations, including Freedmen.

The CDIB Card & Blood Quantum Law. The US government's Bureau of Indian Affairs issues a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood, commonly known as a CDIB card. According to the US government, "it provides a blood degree by tribe." These degrees are based on the Dawes Rolls. I respectfully ask you to take a moment and reflect on that. This is a federal construct that has fueled division and racism. To receive a CDIB card, a person must trace their "blood" ancestry to the Dawes Rolls. At this time, the US government also does not recognize Freedmen in its CDIB enrollment process. This systemized measuring a person's "degree of Indian-ness" is fundamentally flawed, has heavily influenced modern-day tribal membership and should change.

This moment in Choctaw Nation history calls for courage and bravery. It is a moment to live out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture. We know that by calling for these reforms, we are peeling away layers of scar and are exposing a deeply painful wound for tribes across the US. And we know it is the right thing to do.

Today we call upon the US government to also consider its moral and legal obligations and review the CDIB process for Freedmen. CDIB enrollment for Freedmen would mean automatic access to critical programs like tribal health care, housing programs and more.

Today we call upon the Choctaw proud to open dialogue on the issue of Choctaw Freedmen. Ours is a sovereign nation offering opportunities for growth and prosperity. Our stories, Native American, African American, are inextricably linked with European Americans, and with one another. Let us not be bound by an artificial construct of those who sought to take our lands, culture and dignity hundreds of years ago. Let our sovereign nation reclaim what was taken 125 years ago - the ability to determine tribal membership.

Today we reach out to the Choctaw Freedmen. We see you. We hear you. We look forward to meaningful conversation regarding our shared past.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Celebrating Independence Day

Summer is in full swing in the Choctaw Nation. In-person events are starting up again, and it is so wonderful to see everyone begin to live life again.

Independence Day, better known to most as the Fourth of July, is a federal holiday that commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence of the United States on July 4th, 1776. This year, America celebrates 245 years of independence from Great Britain.

Whether you are at the lake, in the stands watching a game, or at home grilling a meal, it's a great time to spend with family and friends. On July 2, we will celebrate Independence Day with our annual Boom in the Valley Fireworks Spectacular in Tvshka Homma. This event features fireworks display beginning at dusk. This is always a special event, and I hope to see you all there.

While celebrating with fireworks, parades and cookouts are all fun ways for people to get together and celebrate, we should never forget the true meaning of the holiday. Independence Day is more than sparklers and red, white and blue. It represents an unmatched determination of effort to earn and keep freedom that continues to this day. Our service members and veterans all took a vow to protect our country and keep us safe. While you celebrate this year, I encourage you to remember the sacrifices made to give us the freedoms we enjoy every day.

We at the Choctaw Nation believe in taking care of our people and helping our communities. We have held several job fairs in the past few months in hopes that individuals in our community get the opportunity to find a career that is right for them.

July 25th is National Hire a Veteran Day. Every day, military personnel leave the service in search of civilian employment. National Hire a Veteran Day reminds employers to consider veterans to fill their open positions.

The Choctaw Nation is committed to our Choctaw veterans. The Veterans Advocacy program advocates for Choctaw veterans to receive benefits and services on par with other veterans, so they don't encounter barriers or impediments in their attempts to access services, and they are treated with respect and dignity by Veterans Affairs service providers. The Veterans Advocacy program will also serve Choctaw veterans by assisting with the eligibility and entitlements of veterans and their dependents and contacting appropriate VA service providers in their area. If you would like to know more about our Veteran's Advocacy program visit www.choctawnation.com or call Roger Hamill at 580-642-7934.

If you are a veteran and looking for employment opportunities with the Choctaw Nation, visit www.careers.choctawnation.com or text 22100 with the keyword 'CHOCTAW' for an instant application.

Have a safe and happy 4th of July everyone, God bless.



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Ancestral Salvation

"Not everyone that saith unto, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7: 21-23).

This refers to unrepentant Jews who thought that their ancestry automatically entitled them to the kingdom of God. They thought that they were assured of special favor by God because of their ancestry and their good works.

Jesus is saying no one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless they follow the will of God. What is the will of God?

Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3).

The will of God is that a person must be born again to be able to go to heaven. A person must be convicted by the Spirit of God that he is a sinner by nature and needs a savior. He must repent of his sin of unbelief and pray the

Lord to forgive him and convert him.

This conversion is accomplished by the work of the Spirit of God and not by one's good works or religious efforts. In the natural cognitive thinking, a person may believe his good works or religious practice earns merits toward entrance into heaven. Not so. The only way is through the merit of Jesus dying on the cross in substitution for guilty Man.

Jesus continues to say that there are many who trust their own wonderful fruits of labor to convince them of their eternal home. At last when an unrepentant individual stands before God, trusting in his ancestry or good works, God will say, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23).

What does this mean? Is God not all knowing? What does he mean when he will say, "I never knew you." God is all knowing. He knows everything about us and even our thoughts.

The same word "knew" occurs in Genesis 4:1. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord."

The word in Hebrew is "yada." It means to know, to experience, to learn, indicating the most intimate relationship between a man and a woman, the marriage bond.

The Choctaw word is "ithana or ikhana", meaning to acquaint, to embrace, to acquire knowledge and experience. So what God is saying is, I know you but I never had personal relationship with you. Unless one is born again by the Spirit of God, he could never have relationship with God, who is a spirit. Behavior modification, philanthropy, and church activities are all good social endeavors, but they are not salvation of the soul.



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Choctaw Nation Outreach Services



FIND COLLEGE SUCCESS

Through the College Freshman Year Initiative, we look to unify the community of Choctaw students and empower them to make informed decisions about their academic futures.

With the assistance of First Year Experience Coordinators and partnerships with various campuses across the state, Choctaw students will find the appropriate tools to achieve their goals through graduation.

If you are a first-time freshman, Choctaw tribal member, and are considering attending one of the schools listed, contact our office today.

CONTACT

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Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

CHOCTAWNATION.COM



CNO programs help Choctaw students succeed

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw tribal members planning to attend a vocational school, college or university may qualify for extra support from Choctaw Nation's Higher Education and Career Development programs.

The Higher Education Program began in 1984, but in the past three years alone, the program has served over 16,000 students looking to obtain a college degree.

Layla Freeman was one of those students. She graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and a minor in Native Studies. According to Freeman, both the Higher Education and Career Development programs were tremendous resources, not only with funding but also with motivation and support, including having a counselor help her identify and develop her educational plan.

Freeman said that Higher Education and Career Development provided scholarship funds each semester based on her grades, hours enrolled and class level.

Career Development also required the completion of a certification related to the degree pursued. The counselor helped Freeman identify a certification, develop an educational plan, map out her degree completion first, then the certification completion.

"I am extremely grateful for both programs and the support they provided me in my journey," Freeman said.

The Higher Education Program is a scholarship and grant program designed to provide tuition assistance to enrolled Choctaw tribal members attending an accredited

college, technical school or university.

"Higher Education assists any tribal member of the Choctaw Nation actively pursuing a higher education degree. Students must be working at a minimum towards an associate degree. Please contact the Higher Education for further details to help you achieve your educational goals," said Amanda Lee, Director of the Higher Education program.

The Career Development Program was established in 2007. Each year, the program assists over 3,500 students. The goal of the Career Development Program is to enhance the lives of Choctaw tribal members by providing opportunities for education and training that lead to industry-recognized certifications or licenses and self-sustaining employment.

Program services include career guidance services, assessment, academic remediation, financial assistance for quality training, soft skills training and employment services.

Dylan Grant is a 28-year-old truck driver from Lebanon, Oklahoma, who obtained his CDL license through the Career Development Program.

Grant said he visited with a Career Development counselor who gave him a career assessment test to determine his career interests after deciding that he was not interested in continuing in a college/university setting. The counselor helped him explore alternative options and asked if he had ever considered driving a truck.

Though Grant said he had never explored that possibility previously, he decided he wanted to give it a try. Grant is now employed with a food warehousing and redistribution company as a driver. He has been there three years and is very happy with his career choice.

"They offered opportunities that I would not be able to access myself. Most people don't have the money to try a truck driving school to see if they like it and find out they don't and stop doing it," explained Grant. "I definitely would never have done it myself unless they had given me the opportunity. It ended up being a very good fit for me. It's probably what I will do until I retire."

Penny James, the program's director, said that Career Development assists with tuition, fees, and books at approved career technology centers, licensures, colleges and

James said that people have been very excited about the return of the Labor Day Festival this year.

According to James, he and his team will be able to focus on preserving and representing the Choctaw Culture.

"Last year really gave us the opportunity to refocus and add more cultural elements to the festival," he said.

Despite all the negative and frustrating ways the pandemic affected the world, James said that he has seen some good things come out of it.

"Covid allowed us sort of hit the reset button and to look at things through a different lens and what is the best way to progress and move forward. Our leadership here at the Nation has been great about helping us shape a return to in-person events safely," said James.

Brian Prettyman, Reginal Director of Marketing for the Choctaw Resort and Casino in Durant, said that since offering live entertainment again, the resort properties have been busier than ever.

"We have initially thought it was a pent-up demand for an entertainment experience of any kind, but what we have found is that we worked really hard during our closure to prepare for reopening and to bring a better experience and even better entertainment," explained Prettyman.

According to Prettyman, much of their efforts are focused on the grand opening of the new expansion of the Choctaw Casino and Resort in Durant in August.

Prettyman said the Durant casino will be the third-largest gaming resort in the world with the new expansion.

"We have something for everyone. If you want, you can see a concert in the grand theater, enjoy live music at Gil-



Photos Provided

Jeremy Loper, Alexandria Folsom, Arie Young and Amanda Saxon recently graduated from the nursing program through ECU at SOSU. Jeremy started with Career Development back in 2016 and earned his Certified Nurse Aid license through Kiamichi Technology Center, and has worked as a CNA throughout college. He plans to start his master's in nursing soon. Alexandria began her college career at Grayson College before transferring to SOSU. Arie started at Murray State College taking pre-requisite courses before deciding to go for her bachelor's degree. Amanda got her CNA through KTC in 2009, followed by a certificate for Medical Office Assistant before deciding to pursue her bachelor's degree in nursing.

universities. The program also assists in the purchasing of required uniforms. For those who already have degrees and need a certification for their jobs, the program may help with that as well. Career Development follows the student until they are employed, as their status is not completed with the program until the participant has completed training and becomes employed. Participants also receive assistance with resumes, interview training and soft skills.

Career counselors are offered in the largest counties in Choctaw Nation, the Oklahoma City area, in Ardmore and on the campus of Okmulgee OSU-IT. Walk-ins are welcome.

James said, "Career Development is helping tribal members to enhance their lives by career laddering or career laticing through short- or long-term training programs. It is paving the way for tribal members to have substantial income for themselves and their families by obtaining certifications and licensures to become better employed."

Samantha Manuel was a participant in both the Higher Education and Career Development programs. She went through her undergraduate degree in three years, having earned concurrent hours before starting her degree program at the University of Oklahoma.

"Both programs have been amazing. I have had great outcomes every time I spoke with anyone from Career Develop-

ment or Higher Education," said Manuel.

She went on to say, "I'm very grateful for it because I wouldn't be able to come out of OU debt-free without both programs. I did work for the university, so that cut my debt. But having the Choctaw Nation behind me and wanting to see me have a better education, especially after coming from a poor place in McCurtain County and having the obstacles of being the first person in my family to ever go to college, to being a person who was raised by their grandparents in a very rural area and not being to do a whole lot of things, being able to go to such a prestigious university in the state, and then going all the way to law school has just been amazing. I am grateful to both programs. I looked forward to applying for them each semester, knowing that I was going to have the assistance and the backing of the Choctaw Nation to help me achieve my goals."

If you would like to see if one of our educational programs can assist you, contact the Higher Education and Career Development programs to visit with staff concerning your educational goals.

For more information on the Career Development Program, call 866-933-2260 or visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/education/career-development>.

For more information on the Higher Education Program, call 800-522-6170, or visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/higher-education-0>.



Kelsey Plummer on her graduation from NSU. Kelsey began her education journey at Carl Albert State College with the assistance of her career counselor, Cynthia Martin. After graduating with her associate's degree from CASC, Kelsey transferred to Northeastern Oklahoma State University where she pursued a bachelor's degree in education with a focus on Special Education. Kelsey was accepted to participate in the Teach 2 Reach (T2R) grant which provides financial assistance in return for a service payback.

In-person events return in 2021

By Christian Toews

Chances are that an event you were planning to attend in 2020 was canceled. Events large and small were moved online canceled or due to the coronavirus pandemic. While this might have caused some frustration and disappointment, there is good news. In-person gatherings are beginning to come back, and the Choctaw Nation is no exception.

The first in-person event was the Trail of Tears Walk, held on May 15 at Tvshka Homma.

Jon James, Tribal Events Director at the Choctaw Nation, said that he wasn't sure what to expect but was pleased with how many people come to the event.

"People were excited to start meeting together again, and that was proved by how many people came out," said James.

According to James, the next event to look forward to will be Boom in the Valley on July 2 at Tvuska Homma.

James said that the success of last year's event has led to the decision to keep it a drive-in event for 2021.

James mentioned how special it is to see and hear the fireworks show in the Tvuska Homma valley.

"The way it echoes through the grounds, you just feel something special about this show. It's a unique fireworks show that you can't get anywhere else," explained James.

James also talked about the opening of the Choctaw Nation's new Cultural Center. He is excited to see people gather to celebrate the grand opening of this state-of-the-art facility. He mentioned that there would be many activities and unique events happening during the grand opening on July 23.



Photo by Christian Toews

The Trail of Tears Walk was the first in-person event to be hosted by the Choctaw Nation since COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. Held on the historic capitol grounds of Tvshka Homma, members and friends of the Choctaw Nation walked in remembrance of their ancestors who journeyed from their ancestral homelands in Mississippi to the Indian Territory 190 years ago.

ley's, and then we will have live music on the gaming floor periodically. But if you aren't ready for the intimate experience, you can still come out to the casino and enjoy yourself. There's a lot to do here, not just gaming," he said.

He mentioned that while the Covid restrictions have been lifted for the Choctaw Nation, they are still conscious of health and safety.

"We are cognizant of the fact that there is a need to be smart. We are still encouraging masks and social distancing," said Prettyman.

As the Choctaw Nation returns to in-person gatherings, Chief Gary Batton commented in a recent interview about staying safe as we gather.

"I would encourage everybody to be vaccinated, for themselves and their families," said Batton, "While it's a

personal choice, we know the vaccine reduces your chances of getting Covid, and if you do get it, the severity is far less."

Jon James commented on in-person events playing an important role in life and encourages people to come out to an event in the future.

"The most impactful form of communication is still face-to-face—being able to look someone in the eye and see their smiles again. No matter what piece of technology is invented next, nothing is going to trump that. I think Covid really opened up people's eyes to the fact that we need each other," said James.

For more information on these upcoming events and more, visit www.choctawnation.com and www.choctaw-casinos.com.



CHOCTAW LABOR DAY FESTIVAL

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Once your application is received it will be reviewed by the Labor Day Food Vendor Committee. If selected, you will be contacted by direct mail for instructions on where to submit your money order to secure your vendor spot.

Deadline for applications is July 30, 2021.

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BUSINESS CENTER AND COMPUTER LAB SURVEY

Please take a few minutes to fill out the online survey about the needs of a Business Center/Computer Lab at the CNO Community Centers.

Scan this QR code to register using a smartphone.



Choctaw Nation Community Centers

CNO supports development of local communities through Community Partnership Fund

Last month, the Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Broken Bow \$12,300, Idabel \$6,400, Garvin \$4,40, McCurtain County \$13,500, the city of Wilburton \$9,700, Talihina \$15,000, Latimer County \$13,600, the city of Hugo \$29,300, Boswell \$11,900, Choctaw County \$24,700, the city of Antlers \$19,800, Clayton \$30,900, Pushmataha County \$26,800, the city of McAlester \$13,500 and Pittsburg County \$5,400.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund contribution continues quarterly to cities and counties that host non-gaming businesses throughout the Nation's territories. The expectation is for each local government to apply the Choctaw Community Partner Fund contribution toward supporting and developing the communities that serve tribal and non-tribal citizens.

This is the 10-voluntary contribution from the Choctaw Nation, for a combined total of \$336,100 to the cities of Broken Bow, Idabel, Garvin and McCurtain County, \$329,400 to the city of Wilburton, Talihina and Latimer County, \$577,250 to the cities of Hugo, Boswell and Choctaw County, \$754,650 to the city of Antlers, Clayton and Pushmataha County and \$171,950 to the city of McAlester and Pittsburg County.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund began in 2019 and has put back more than \$4 million into southeastern Oklahoma communities.



Eddie Bohanan, Choctaw Nation Council Member District 3; Cody Covey, LeFlore County Commissioner District 2 and Delton Cox, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 4.



Thomas Williston, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 1; Craig Young, Mayor of Idabel and Walt Frey, Idabel Industrial Development Authority.



Tony Ward, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 2 and Vickie Patterson, Broken Bow City Manager.

Medical School Provides Tribal Training Opportunity

Purcell, Oklahoma – Medical student, Ashton Gatewood gained more than patient care skills and clinical knowledge during her Summer Tribal Externship at the Chickasaw Nation Purcell Health Clinic.

During the two-week program, Gatewood said that she learned the importance of forming meaningful physician-patient relationships to facilitate lifelong health and wellness for both patients and their physicians.

At the Purcell Health Clinic, Gatewood worked with Dr. Beth May, D.O., an emergency medicine physician practicing in the primary care clinic. "Being back in the tribal community reminded me of the purpose behind all the challenging schoolwork, and Dr. May has provided a role model to strive towards becoming like as a future physician," said Gatewood.

Gatewood is a medical student in the inaugural class of 2024 at the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine at the Cherokee Nation. She is a tribally enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and descent of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma.

"I was excited to work with an osteopathic physician in the tribal setting, and Dr. May exemplifies implementing the osteopathic tenets in her daily practice. She considers her patients' work environment, family situations, diet, and exercise when forming treatment plans, and works with patients to achieve results that are meaningful to them." While at the Purcell Health Clinic, she was able to ob-

serve physical therapy, optometry, and case managers working together to provide patients optimal healthcare interventions through all the resources available. "I'm continuously impressed at how much our tribal leaders have invested in healthcare, especially in rural settings," said Gatewood.

Gatewood is no stranger to small towns. She graduated from Mustang High School and grew up visiting her parents' families in Marlow, Oklahoma and Neosho, Missouri. Before going into medicine, she worked in several healthcare roles within Indian Health Services (IHS), including pharmacy technician, public health nurse, and healthcare administrator.

"I've been passionate about improving the health and wellness of tribal members throughout my professional career. So, getting this opportunity to apply knowledge gained through the coursework by working among health care providers and patients within my own community has been a rejuvenating experience," she said.

"I benefited from mentorship, financial support, and professional opportunities from my tribes' programs and tribal community leaders; therefore, I feel the responsibility of my position as a future American Indian physician to give back to the community whose investments have carried me to where I am today," she said.

Gatewood will begin her second year in medical school during the upcoming school year. She is a National Health Services Corp



Scholar and plans to return to IHS to work as a primary care physician upon completion of her training in osteopathic medicine.

About Organization - Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences and the Cherokee Nation have established the nation's first tribally affiliated college of medicine in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, which opened in August 2020 with an entering class of 54 first year medical students.

The OSUCOM-CN is an extension of the OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine located in Tulsa. OSU College of Osteopathic Medicine is accredited by the American Osteopathic Association's Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation.

About Program - The OSUCOM-CN Tribal Medicine Track and the Summer Tribal Externship Program prepare students to be highly qualified future physicians within Indian Health Services, through cultural and language coursework along with clinical rotations at federal, tribal, or urban IHS facilities.

Newly remodeled Stage 271 opens in Grant

GRANT, Okla. (June 2, 2021) – Choctaw Casino & Resort – Grant is excited to introduce their newly remodeled entertainment venue: Stage 271, formerly known as the Grant Event Center. Choctaw Casino & Resort – Grant is located on US-Highway 271, making Stage 271 the ideal name for the renovated entertainment space.

"The venue has undergone a remarkable transformation into a spacious entertainment destination for live entertainment," states Ken Eisele, Director of Marketing at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Grant. "We wanted a name that could be recognizable and connect us with the local community. It's been over two years since the space has been used and we can't wait to bring back live entertainment."

The new venue is an approximately 11,000 square-foot facility and can accommodate 1,200 people. Upgrades to Stage 271 include a new state-of-the-art entertainment system, a large projection screen for easy viewing, concessions and restrooms.

To kick off the new music venue, Choctaw Casino & Resort-Grant is proud to welcome for the first time the Eli Young Band (EYB) as they perform live at Stage 271 on Friday, July 2.

Tickets went on sale Thursday, June 3 at 9 a.m. and start at \$20. Tickets and can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/6am98865>.

The concert on Friday, July 2 will begin at 8 p.m. and doors open at 7 p.m.

Stage 271 at Choctaw Casino & Resort-Grant is located at 1516 US-271 Grant, Okla. To learn more, visit www.choctawcasinos.com/grant/.



2021 LABOR DAY TENT CITY SCRAMBLE

Mark your tent campsite for the 2021 Labor Day festival in person.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 28, 2021
GATE OPENS AT 10:00 A.M.
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CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY

YOUTH OUTREACH SERVICES

877-285-6893 (TOLL-FREE) OR 580-326-8304

choctawnation.com/tribal-services/member-services/youth-outreach

Making a difference in the lives of Choctaw youth with character building activities designed to establish a sense of independence and appreciation for service within the community.

- Life skills
- Mentoring
- Short-term and long-term goal setting

- Location of resources
- Safety camp training
- College preparation referrals

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Choctaw tribal member
- Pre-kindergarten to high school senior

- Evidence of hardship circumstances

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma → TOGETHER WE'RE MORE →

CHOCTAW LABOR DAY FESTIVAL

SEEKING CHOCTAW PERFORMING ARTISTS

Please send demo CD/video (or website link) and a current band or artist photo with current contact information and CNO membership documents for review. Calls will be made to top prospects. Must be 18 years or older and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to be considered. Open to groups, solo artists, and other performance-based mediums.

Choctaw performing artists are invited to apply to perform on the main Amphitheater Stage during the 2021 Labor Day Festival.

Submission Deadline is June 25, 2021.

MAIL SUBMISSIONS TO:
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma | Choctaw Artist Committee
P.O. Box 1210 | Durant, OK 74702

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS:
tribalevents@choctawnation.com

SEPTEMBER 3 - 5, 2021 | #CHAHTALABORDAY

CHOCTAW NATION PRINCESS PAGEANT

THURSDAY, JUNE 3 - 6 P.M.
District 1 – Choctaw Community Center, Idabel
District 3 – Choctaw Community Center, Talihina

THURSDAY, JUNE 10 - 6 P.M.
District 4 – Choctaw Community Center, Poteau
District 5 – Choctaw Community Center, Stigler
District 6 – Choctaw Community Center, Wilburton

THURSDAY, JUNE 17 - 6 P.M.
District 7 – Choctaw Community Center, Wright City
District 8 – Choctaw Community Center, Hugo
District 9 – Choctaw Nation Headquarters Amphitheater, Durant

THURSDAY, JUNE 24 - 6 P.M.
District 10 – Choctaw Community Center, Atoka
District 11 – Choctaw Community Center, McAlester
District 12 – Choctaw Community Center, Coalgate

THURSDAY, JULY 1ST - 6 P.M.
District 2 – Choctaw Community Center, Battiest

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/PRINCESS-PAGEANTS
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Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



JUROR SUMMONS

Choctaw Nation tribal members, spouses of tribal members, and any Choctaw Nation associate residing within Choctaw Nation territory may be summoned to jury duty with the Choctaw Nation court system.

A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHICKASAW NATION

SUMMER EBT FOR CHILDREN

RECEIVE AN EBT CARD FOR THE PURCHASE OF HEALTHY FOOD THIS SUMMER

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NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation
Circulation Department
580.924.8280 x4028

Read the Biskinik online at
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS

BISKINIK

Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above. Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.

We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.

All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

Mail to: Biskinik
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Gary Batton
ChiefJack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
Monthly Publication
of the
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Dara McCoy, Executive Director
Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director
Kellie Matherly, Content Development Director
Kendra Wall, Content Development Manager
Chris Jennings, News Reporter
Christian Toews, News Reporter

P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170
www.ChoctawNation.com
email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Circulation Department would appreciate hearing from you at ext. 4028.

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation. Circulation is monthly. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run in the following month.

Editor's note: Views and opinions in reader-submitted articles are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Choctaw Nation.

YAKOKE

My two sons and I are senior citizens. We thank the Choctaw Nation for the very generous Visa food cards each of us received.

It helped to make the holidays and the extended period much more enjoyable, especially during a time such as the pandemic everyone has been experiencing.

Mary Norman Wood



CHOCTAW COLOR GUARD — POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

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Choctaw Nation Adult Education

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

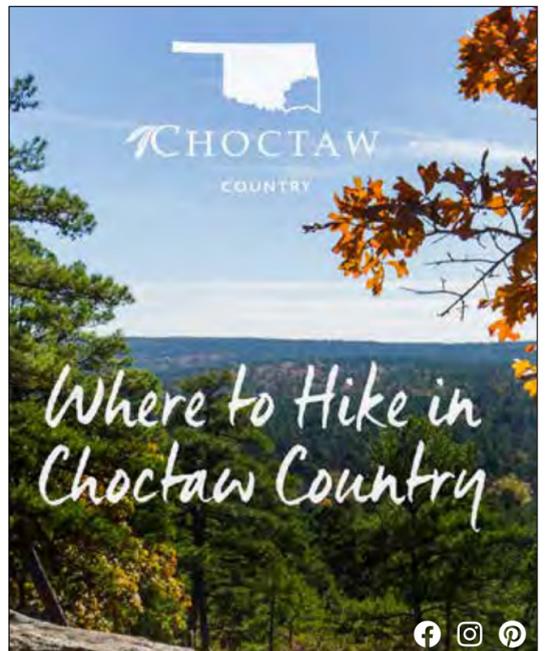
July 6	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 6	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 7	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 9	Crowder	By Appointment
July 13	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 13	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 14	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 16	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 20	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 21	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 21	Stigler	By Appointment
July 27	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA June 12, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session May 8, 2021
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month—Jack Mayo, District #9
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve the Application and Budget for the Continuation of the Choctaw Nation Early Head Start – Child Care Program for FY 2020-2021. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - b. Approve the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Abbreviated Indian Housing Plan for Year FY 2021. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - c. Approve the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 Indian Housing Plan for Year FY 2022. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - d. Approve Funding for the Expansion of and the Purchase of Additional Equipment at the Choctaw Print Services Facility in Durant, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - e. Approve Funding for an Equity Investment in, and Prepayment for Services to a Meat Processing Facility to be Located Near Octavia, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - f. Resolution Supporting Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. to serve on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - g. Approve an Amendment to a Service Line Agreement in Favor of Oklahoma Natural Gas Company, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Bryan County, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - h. Approve Application for the Environmental Regulatory Enhancement Grant. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
10. OLD BUSINESS
11. ADJOURNMENT
12. CLOSING PRAYER

All Council members were present (meeting was held in Council House) in person or via WebEx (Perry Thompson).



Where to Hike in Choctaw Country

Take a stroll through Broken Bow, Robbers Cave, and more.

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Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

The Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association offers small business, home, home improvement and agriculture loans. The Choctaw Revolving Loan Program offers micro-loans, available for emergency home improvements and small businesses.

For more information, please contact Susan Edwards at (580) 924-8280 ext. 2161, ext. 2158 or toll-free (800) 522-6170.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan
To Be Eligible to Apply:

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

If you are interested in applying for a loan a representative will be available at the:

Antlers Community Center
July 9, 2021
9:00 – 11:00

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna June Language Lesson

Choctaw Verbs to Nouns

In Choctaw, the meanings of verbs can change by adding prefixes and suffixes as well as adding extra vowels and nasal sounds. An 'a' or 'ai' placed before a verb changes to a noun meaning 'a place of or a place to'. When the verb begins with a consonant 'a' is prefixed to the verb, when the verb begins with a vowel 'ai' is prefixed to the verb. This lesson will focus on verbs that begin with a consonant.

Ex. nusi – to sleep	impa – to eat
anusi – bedroom, hotel, etc.	aiimpa – table, dining room
ikbi – v. to build: construct; create; make	
Banaha ikbi la chi.	I will make banaha.
aiikbi – n. a factory; a plant; workshop	
Sioshi yvt shulush aiikbi atuksvli.	My son works at a shoe factory.
ipeta- v. to feed; nourish; to serve	
Wak vhleha ipeta tuk.	He fed the cows.
aiipeta – n. a place to feed; trough; bird feeder; a place to serve	
Community center okla aiipeta tuk.	They served at the community center.
anumpuli -v. to talk; to speak; say	
Miko yvt chukka himona isht anumpuli tuk.	The chief spoke about new housing.
aianumpuli -n. a place to speak from; podium, microphone, platform	
Aianumpuli ashaka hikja.	He is standing behind the podium.
ittatoba – v. to trade; to swap; to shop	
Kaa il ittatoba tuk.	We traded cars.
aiitatoba– n. a place to shop; a market; a store; commerce	
Aiittatoba mvt haksobish takali i lawa.	That shop has a lot of earrings.

www.choctawschool.com

Ernest Leroy Wood

Ernest "Ernie" Leroy Wood, 87, passed away March 26, 2021.

Ernie was born June 26, 1933, in Norman, Okla., to Ernest and Mary (Harris) Wood.

He was preceded in death by his parents; grandson Joshua Morris; sisters Alline Hoyer, Anna Faye Wood, and Louella Wood; and brothers Sherman Wood, Vernon Wood, and Mac Wood.

Ernie is survived by his wife Keitha; son Stephen L. Wood and spouse Beth; daughter Marci Morris and spouse Melvin; grandsons Stephen C. Wood and spouse Amy, Justin Wood and spouse Sue, Tanner Wood, and Tracey Wood; granddaughter Jessica Morris Scott and spouse David; great-granddaughters Sarah Wood, Audrey Wood, and Paige Wood; great-grandsons Stephen M. Wood and Elijah Scott; brothers Kenneth "Ken" Wood and spouse Georgia, and Gerald "Jerry" Wood and spouse Michelle; along with many loved nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Sierra View Mortuary](#).

**Bobby Dean Logsdon**

Bobby Dean Logsdon, 69, passed away April 16, 2021.

Bobby was born Oct. 24, 1951, in McAlester, Okla., to James T. "Jim" and Leona Ruth (Hendrix) Logsdon.

He was preceded in death by his mother; and brother Jimmy D. Logsdon.

Bobby is survived by son Adam Hass and spouse Jackie; daughters Hannah Hughes, and Candis Frederick and spouse Bear; grandchildren Stoney Hass, Styner Hass, Steele Hass, Kyah Masters, Kase Frederick, and Hayden Hughes; his father; brother Donnie Logsdon and spouse Sherri; several nieces and nephews; special friend Cindy Riley; and other family members and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Bishop Funeral Service](#).

**Linda Sue Welch Platt**

Linda Sue Welch Platt, 74, passed away April 16, 2021.

Linda was born Aug. 25, 1946, in Stigler, Okla., to Olen Nixon and Viola Christy Haygood.

She was preceded in death by her husbands Royce Welch and Jim Platt; her parents; stepdad Jack Haygood; brothers Elbert and Gary Haygood; and nephew Dallas Jones.

Linda is survived by son Bryan Welch and spouse Sonya; daughter Tamara Kinsey and spouse Larry; grandchildren Brandon and Brittany Welch; sisters Erma Sallie and Shirley Jones; nieces Christy, Kelly, Dee Ann, Micki, Teresa, Brenda, Stephanie, and Alysa; and nephews Todd, Craig, Ron, and Kye.

For the full obituary, please visit [Cornerstone Funeral home](#).

**Judy Ann Johnson**

Judy Ann Johnson, 61, passed away April 15, 2021.

Judy was born Feb. 16, 1960, to Leonard and Tommie Jean Johnson.

She was preceded in death by her infant son; her parents; brother Bruce Johnson; and niece Cindy Johnson Martin.

Judy is survived by her husband Greg; son Michael Johnson and spouse Kati; daughter Alisha Speck and spouse Steven; brothers Tom Johnson and spouse Peggy, and Mike Johnson and spouse Terrie; grandchildren Hailey Wright, Trenton Johnson, Samara Johnson, Gavin Johnson, Jacob Johnson, and Sophia Speck; along with countless friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service](#).

**Christine Betsey-Benge**

Christine Betsey-Benge, 88, passed away April 23, 2021.

Christine was born July 11, 1932, in Bentley, Okla., to Preston and Frances (Wells) Bentley.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Eryon Leslie Benge; sons Marcellus Jobe Benge and Edward Lee Pilcher; siblings Alice Ward, Marie Baxter, Loretta Johnson, and Adam Betsey.

Christine is survived by grandchildren Kryste Carter and spouse Jordan, Nathan Allen Benge, Elonka Ray Voros, Maxwell Stern Dry, Joshua Lewis, and Desiree Kinsley; 15 great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews; along with many dear friends and loved ones.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service-Atoka](#).

**Sheryl Lynn Battiest**

Sheryl Lynn Battiest, 51, passed away Feb. 7, 2021.

Sheryl was born Nov. 18, 1969, in Talihina, Okla., to Dorothy Jean Battiest and Marcus Ray Battiest Jr.

She is survived by daughters Erica Battiest, Jessica Battiest, Natalie Battiest, and Desiree Carrillo; grandson Christian Battiest-Andrade; sister Lisa Battiest; and sons-in-law Sergio Andrade and Rafael Crisostomo.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

**Helen Jane Edwards**

Helen Jane Edwards, 82, passed away April 22, 2021.

Helen was born in Waurika, Okla., to Eldon and Esther (Nowell) Garrison.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Helen is survived by her husband Don; daughters Cathy Eley and spouse Mark, and Cindy Tekobbe and spouse Chris; 10 grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

**Mildred Jene Wells**

Mildred Jene Wells, 86, passed away April 26, 2021.

Mildred was born Dec. 21, 1934, in Watson, Okla., to Herman and Ollie Mae Lewis.

She was preceded in death by her husband Albert; her parents; granddaughter Amber Dawn Wells; great-granddaughter Samara Wallis; and several brothers and sisters.

Mildred is survived by her children Darnette and Larry Taylor, R.D. and Sherrie Wells, Danny and Roxanne Wells, Jannette Wells, Ronnie and Gerri Wells, and Herman and Trish Wells; brother Cecil Lewis; sisters Mackelene Clements and Charlene Battiest; grandchildren Melissa and Chet Patel, Duane and Kelly Wells, Mitch and Tina Wells, Damon and Tanya Wells, Chris Wells, Jeremy Wells, Brandy Wells, Cody and Rebecca Marie Wells, Jessica Wells and Briar Frady, Kyle Wells, and Terry Sprayberry; 19 great-grandchildren; and many other relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

**Donna Jean Wade**

Donna Jean Wade, 67, passed away April 26, 2021.

Donna was born August 30, 1953, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Oda Leon Wade and Mildred Delores (Wall) Wade.

She was preceded in death by her father; and daughter Beth Carrier.

Donna is survived by her son Dustin Wade Kusik; grandchildren Grant Gaines and Kamber Carrier; her mother; sister Becky Wyman and spouse Jim; brother Bob Wade and spouse Frances; and many other loved ones and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Eisenhour Funeral Home](#).

**Cinnamon D. LeFlore-Kelley**

Cinnamon Dawn Leflore-Kelley, 52, passed away May 11, 2021.

Cinnamon was born July 21, 1968, in Lawton, Okla., to Meb Jack and Peggy LeFlore.

She was preceded in death by her father; brother Meb Jack "Little Jack" Jr.; sister Sandra Jackson; and stepdad Lewis "Sonny" Timothy.

Cinnamon is survived by her husband Michael; her mother Peggy; sisters Jacquelyn Lara and spouse Romero, Barbara Johnson and spouse Terry, and Ellen Conklin and spouse Joseph Jr.; brother David LeFlore; special nephew Kyle "Kybaby" Fletcher; and traditionally adopted brother Karl Beaston.

For the full obituary, please visit [Shipman Funeral Home](#).

**Billy Howard Talbot**

Billy "Bill" Howard Talbot, 86, passed away April 12, 2021.

Bill was born July 12, 1934, in Williams, Okla., to John Frank Talbot and Ruie Evelyn (Howard) Wallet.

He was preceded in death by his son William Patrick, his parents; sister Mary Francis Hartness; aunt Francis Paolucci and her spouse Al; aunt Anna Mae Howard; and uncles Louie, Robert, and J.D. Howard.

Bill is survived by his wife Sharon; his son Mike Talbot and spouse Rainey; daughter-in-law Michelle Talbot; and granddaughters Mackenzie Anne and Emily Paige Talbot.

For the full obituary, please visit [Floral Haven Funeral Home](#).

**Donna Sue Ruble Stewart**

Donna Sue (Ruble) Stewart, 61, passed away Nov. 9, 2020.

Donna was born Jan. 16, 1959, in Fairbanks, Alaska, to Peggy Claudene Paddock and Richard Cass Ruble.

She was preceded in death by her husband Wayne Barrett; her father; grandparents Claude and Maude Paddock; aunts Doris Thompson, Pauline Damron, Aileen Waffle; and cousins Teddy, Ronnie and Tommy Damron.

Donna is survived by her sons Dusty and Derrick Collins; grandson Ashton Collins; granddaughter McKayla Collins; her mother; brothers Dale Ruble and Mike Ruble; sister Janet Hjermastad; and numerous cousins.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

**Karol Jean Hall**

Karol Jean Hall, 87, passed away March 8, 2021.

Karol was born Jan. 31, 1934, in Tulsa, Okla., to Harry Edward and Marie (Taylor) Welsh.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Karol is survived by her children Mark Hall, Jana Pickles, and Kary Crouch; her spouses Marilyn, Graham, and John; and grandchildren Gavin Hall, Shelby Hall, Philip Welty, Tyler Welty, and Kristin Hymel.

For the full obituary, please visit [Floral Haven Funeral Home](#).

**David Wickson III**

David Dewayne Wickson III, 45, passed away Feb. 25, 2021.

David was born June 13, 1975, in Talihina, Okla., to David "Dave" Wickson Jr. and Shirley Noah Wickson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Veanna Wickson.

David is survived by his wife Sharon; Tyler Wickson and spouse Elisha; sisters Jackie Smith, Sharon Deal, Rhonda Wickson, and Rachel Battiest; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of other family, friends and loved ones.

For the full obituary, please visit [Miller & Miller Funeral Home](#).

**Lillian Faye Cagle**

Lillian Faye (Jones) Cagle, 69, passed away May 5, 2021.

Lillian was born Dec. 8, 1951, in Centrahoma, Okla., to Clyde Jack and Edith Geneva (Martin) Jones.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Sue Jones; and infant brother Randy Jones.

Lillian is survived by her husband Alvin Vernon Cagle Jr.; her children Jason Cagle and spouse Amy, Shane Cagle, Chey Anne Clifft and spouse Jade, and Rachel Wood and spouse Jeremy; grandchildren Kaden, Briley, Gavin, Ashton, Cash, Hazin, Kynleigh, Parker, and Madison; sisters Nelda Osborn and Ginger Lynch and spouse Mike; brothers Billy Clyde Jones and spouse Pam, and Paul Jones and Amanda; numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, and many dear friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service](#).

**Phyllis Ann Murphy**

Phyllis Ann (Benjamin) Murphy, 82, passed away May 2, 2021.

Phyllis was born July 6, 1938, in Wardville, Okla., to Sampson Simeon and Lura (Blair) Benjamin.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son Stacy Murphy; sisters Ruby Williams and Lillian Benjamin; and brother Buddy Blair Benjamin.

Phyllis is survived by sons Sammy Dean Brook and spouse Rachel, Buddy Brian Brook and spouse Sharon, and Victor Nils Brook and spouse Kathy; daughter Ruby Renee Murphy; grandchildren Adam Brook and Amanda Brooks, Alan Brook and spouse Tara, Sydney Blair Brook, Hunter Brook, Audrey Brook, Olivia Brook, Averie Brook, and BJ Brewer and spouse Jenna; great-grandchildren Walker Brewer, Liza Leigh Brewer, Abbey Brewer, Addison Brook, and Caleb Brook; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and many dear friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service](#).

**Weldon A. Brumley**

Weldon "Bud" A. Brumley, 89, passed away April 4, 2021.

Bud was born Dec. 24, 1931, in Stratford, Okla., to Jessie and Mabel Brumley.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sisters Pauline Cox and Marg Nelson.

Bud is survived by his wife Carolyn; daughters Jayna Eager and spouse Jim, Beth Eggleston, and Paula Evans; grandchildren Jason, Timothy, Ethan, Tia, Talia, Emily, and Frank; great-grandchildren Claytin, Cambria, Wyatt, Willow, Poppy, Fox, and William; brother Ken Brumley.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

**Anthony Lee Thompson**

Anthony Lee Thompson, 70, passed away May 1, 2021.

Anthony was born July 6, 1950, in Talihina, Okla., to Robert H. Thompson Sr. and Susie Mae (Polk) Thompson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; paternal grandparents Hampton and Narcissa Thompson; maternal grandfather Willis Cephus Polk; maternal grandparents Stephen and Annie Eva (Carney) Roberts; brothers Harold Wayne Taylor, Robert H. Thompson Jr., and Leroy Thompson; and sister Diane Roberts.

Anthony is survived by his fiancée Peggy Powell; daughters Malena Colby and spouse Darren, and Rochelle Bussey and spouse Will; grandsons Cruz and Niko Colby, and Liam Bussey; brother Dean Thompson and spouse Sue; sisters Corliss Dwight and significant other David Jacob, Laverne Tiger and spouse Jon, Debbie Wolfmule, and Phyllis Williston; numerous nieces and nephews; special friends Mack Jimmy, Delton Billy, Lester Noah, and Alicia and Tim Nevaquaya.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

**James Lee Baker**

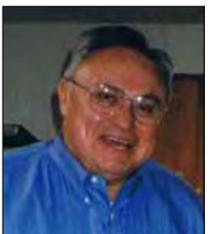
James "Jim" Lee Baker, 84, passed away May 5, 2021.

Jim was born March 23, 1937 in Lawton, Okla., and raised by his grandparents John and Ruth Hayes.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents; aunt Dr. Helen Harris and spouse Dr. Edward Harris; and his mother Mary Victoria McIntosh.

Jim is survived by his wife Karen; his children James Lee Baker Jr., John Rich, David Rich, Cindy Lessig and spouse Tom, Dr. Jonathan Baker and spouse Sharon, and LTC (P) Justin Baker and spouse Jennifer, grandchildren Jeremy Rich, Matthew Rich, John Benton Jr., James Lee Baker III, Lawson Baker, and Bennett Baker; great-grandchildren James Lee Baker IV, Logan Rich, Lauren Rich, Avery Rich, Julianna Rich, Spencer Rich, and Corbin Rich; nieces Dr. Rhonda Taylor and spouse Ron, Dr. Victoria Gayle Harris, and Ruth Soucy JD and spouse Lewis; and nephew Edward Harris and spouse Debi.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Home](#).

**Obituary Policy**

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation tribal members only and are free of charge.

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

Family members/individuals may submit funeral notices as long as the notice is from the funeral home or printed in their local newspaper through a funeral home service.

Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws. Therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official notice.

Due to space limitations, there is a 150 word limit for obituaries. The online issue of the Biskinik will contain links to the full obituaries.

Send official obituary notices to:

Biskinik
PO Box 1214
Durant OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Shirley Mae Summers

Shirley Mae Dees Summers, 80, passed away May 24, 2021.

Shirley was born Sept. 25, 1940, in Bee, Okla., to Edger Ralph Dees Jr. and Ruby Mae Kinnear-Bouse.

She was preceded in death by her son Steven Eugene Wright, and her parents.

Shirley is survived by her husband Warren; sons Clifford Edwin Wright Jr. and spouse Brenda, and Kevin Lynn Wright and spouse Nancy; granddaughter Bailey Erin Clovis and spouse Chipper; grandson Gage Wright; and great-grandson Banks Christopher Clovis.

For the full obituary, please visit [Walker Funeral and Cremation Service](#).

June Loretta Greenwood

June Loretta Greenwood, 95, passed away May 11, 2021.

June was born Feb. 1, 1926, in Coalgate, Okla., to Preston and Vera Ethel Locks Pebworth.

She was preceded in death by her daughter Patricia Ann Tilus.

June is survived by her grandchildren Brenda Williams, Berenice Voss, Bonita Cleveland, and David Tilus; great-grandchildren Ashly, Nathan, Kayla, Cody, Michael, Thomas, Rebeca, David, and Rachel; and great-great-grandchildren Tyler and Mira.

For the full obituary, please visit [Criswell Funeral Homes](#).

Jeanette Lois Torres

Jeanette Lois Torres, 66, passed away May 10, 2021.

Jeanette was born June 21, 1954, in Talihina, Okla., to Sylvester Emil Scott and Lonie Willmon Scott.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Willie Juan Torres; daughter Gail Scott; grandson Damien Ruston; nephew Greg Tate; sisters Sistine Kusler, Bobbie Scott, and Earline Marrie; and brothers Quincy Scott, Roy Scott, and Gary Scott.

Jeanette is survived by her children Chayo Torres, Hershel Torres, Amy Milliron, Artenio Torres, and Marisela Torres; 16 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; sister Patricia Cly; numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

For the full obituary, please visit [Watts Funeral Home](#).

Rita Fay Scott

Rita Fay Scott, 66, passed away April 11, 2021.

Rita was born July 16, 1954, in Marietta, Okla., to Frank and Laverne (Brokeshoulder) Johnson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; father-in-law Charles Scott; brother-in-law Tim Scott; brothers Calvin "Sonny", Jim "Tiny", Ronnie, Bill, and Kenneth "Pookie"; nephew who was like a brother Russell; and sister-in-law Lavelle Johnson.

Rita is survived by her husband Larry; daughter Lesley Scott Rackley and spouse Lee; son David Scott and girlfriend Dawn; mother-in-law Ann Scott Thompson; sisters Shirley Thompson and spouse Edwin, and Barbara Williams; in-laws Lorraine Johnson, Andrea Johnson, Virginia Johnson, Tony and Robbie Scott, and Greg and Kathy Scott; many nieces, nephews, numerous great-nieces and great-nephews; and dear family friend Jane Dupy.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Newana Carlene Ferrall

Newana "Bullet" Carlene (Crowder) Ferrall, 91, passed away April 26, 2021.

Bullet was born Sept. 17, 1929, in Blanchard, Okla., to Carl Atherton Crowder and Nellie Myrtle (Madden) Crowder.

She was preceded in death by sons Carl Richard Ferrall and Jim Wietelman.

Bullet is survived by her children Neshia Ronzello and Bill Wietelman; and nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Advantage Funeral and Cremation Services](#).

Ellis Ray Jefferson

Ellis Ray Jefferson, 65, passed away May 17, 2021.

Ellis was born Nov. 27, 1955, in DeQueen, Ark., to Elliston and Ella Mae (Baker) Jefferson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife Theda Monahan Jefferson; sons Buddy and Anthony Monahan; sister Debbie Jefferson; brother Williston Jefferson; and many cousins and other family.

Ellis is survived by his wife Audrey Jefferson; sister Jan Jefferson; grandchildren Savannah, Jordyn, Brandy, and Ashlyn; daughter-in-law Dyanne Monahan; special cousins Austin Jefferson and Alton Noahubi; special friends Linda and Emerson Wilson; along with other relatives and many friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

Tulsi Ann Courson

Tulsi Ann Courson, age 12 days, passed away May 17, 2021.

Tulsi was born April 25, 2021 in Houston, TX., to Brian Lee and Erica Nicole (Long) Courson.

She was preceded in death by her grandfather Robert Wardrope.

Tulsi is survived by her parents; siblings Blaydon, Brynleigh, Rocco, and Tucker Courson; grandparents Jason and Jerica Thompson, and Jason and Janice Stover; great-grandparents Ronnie Rainey, Cora Wardrope, and Sue Yarbrough; and aunts and uncles Fisher and Gunner Stover, Kristen and John Thompson, Kenley Thomson, Shacole Thompson, Dakota Judd, Rusty and Chelsea Long.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Service](#).

Sharon Faye McNoel

Sharon Faye McNoel, 65, passed away May 20, 2021.

Sharon was born May 8, 1956, in Fort Smith, Ark., to John and Agnes (Tom) McNoel.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Melba Woolard and Loretta Shipman; brother Billy King; and her special aunt Sina Ohler, who raised her, and she called mom.

Sharon is survived by her sisters Mildred Gish, Betty Karbo, Donna Robinson, Deborah McNoel, and Lisa Schalski; brothers Floyd McNoel and Ricky Schalski; numerous nieces, nephews, other family, and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory Funeral Home](#).

Chiverle Ann Raymond

Chiverle Ann (Bell) Raymond, 69, passed away May 17, 2021.

Chiverle was born Jan. 27, 1952, in Poteau, Okla., to Davis Wesley Jr. and Gertie (Qualls) Bell.

She was preceded in death by her sisters Aline and Mary; brothers Everet, Dee and J.W.; twin grandsons Marcus and Joshua; and her mother.

Chiverle is survived by daughters Latasha Carshall and Rebecca, and Felisha Raymond; sons Stanley Raymond and spouse Paige, Dakota Raymond and spouse Shalyn, Herb Raymond and Roger Raymond; grandchildren India, LaBryant, Tywon, Kaius, Tenten, Abigail, Easton, Miken, Graysin, and Emmarie; sister Bertha Miller; and other relatives.

For the full obituary, please visit [Evans and Miller Funeral Home](#).

Karen Ilene Stundon

Karen Ilene (Wickham) Stundon, 74, passed away May 21, 2021.

Karen was born Nov. 26, 1946, in Los Angeles, Calif. to Charles and Ilene (McCormick) Wickham.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Karen is survived by Lee Linnell; her children Kelly Buck and spouse William, Lora Johnson and spouse William, and John Stundon and spouse Diane; grandchildren Tyler W. Stundon, Jessica Johnson, Kyle Buck, Jaimie Christensen and spouse Joe, Dawson Johnson and spouse Anna, Justin Stundon, Haley Stundon, and Jaren Buck; great-grandchildren Wyatt Johnson, Renly Christensen, Gwyneth Christensen, and Remy Johnson; and sister Pamela Anderson and spouse Merlin.

For the full obituary, please visit [George Boom Funeral Home](#).

Rachel Mays

Rachel Mays, 70, passed away May 19, 2021.

Rachel was born Aug. 9, 1950, in Bennington, Okla., to Boswell "Buster" and Alice (Brokeshoulder) Bully.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Paul Bully and Bill Bully; and sisters Mary Floyd and Margie Brown.

Rachel is survived by her husband Kenneth; son Kirk Mays; daughter Terri Mays; grandchildren Trenver Mays and Covin Mays; brother Roy Bully; sisters Patricia Bully, Emma Bully, Marie Haag, and Donna Bully; along with a host of other friends, family, and loved ones.

For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home](#).

Cameron Ashley Parks

Cameron Ashley Parks, 27, passed away May 22, 2021.

Cameron was born Oct. 13, 1993, in Hugo, Okla., to Shane and Andrea (Booth) Parks.

He was preceded in death by his paternal grandmother, Delta Anderson.

Cameron is survived by his parents; sister Samantha Parks; niece Harper Parks; paternal grandparents Lonnie and Pattie Parks; maternal grandparents Larry and Kathy Booth; many aunts, uncles, and cousins; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home](#).

James Larry Wood

James "Jim" Larry Wood, 69, passed away Dec. 30, 2020.

Jim was born July 14, 1951, to James Daniel Wood and Mary Virginia Clyma Wood Sasser and was raised by his grandparents James Ona and Martha Lou Zena Wood in Keota, Okla.

He is survived by his wife Diane; children James Wood and spouse Anjeana, Victoria Wood and spouse Dustin Wallace, and Patrick Wood; grandchildren Michael Wood, Amanda West Laws, Dakota Wood, Niandra West Murillo, Sadie Wood, Cassidy Wallace, Baylee Wallace, and Katie Wallace; and four great-grandsons.

For the full obituary, please visit [Cornerstone Funeral Home](#).

Benjamin Franklin Britton

Benjamin Franklin Britton, 82, passed away May 15, 2021.

Benjamin was born Feb. 27, 1939 to Walter Britton and Pearl Battles-Britton.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and his son Benny Britton.

Benjamin is survived by his wife Mandy; six children; 12 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; and sisters Juanita Burnett and Ann Stringer.

For the full obituary, please visit [Wulf-Ast Mortuary](#).

James Ray Loman

James Ray Loman, 77, passed away May 31, 2021.

James was born July 26, 1943, in Antlers, Okla., to Jimmy Loman and Myrtle Wesley Loman.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Richard, Lloyd, Howard, Bobby, and J.W. Hampton.

James is survived by his wife Lucille; son Phillip James; daughters Kristy Lynn Cox and spouse Les, and Deborah Lynn Bentley and spouse Scott; grandchildren Rayna, Raegan, and Bryce Bentley, and Hailey, Jordan, and Corey Cox; siblings Terry Loman and spouse Merry, Clara Battice and Vic Eyachabbe, Paula Jones and spouse Jimmy, Ruby Theophilidis and spouse Steve, and Iwana Morris; as well as numerous nephews, nieces, and cousins.

For the full obituary, please visit [Serenity Funeral Service](#).

Robert Wayne Wagoner

Robert "Robby" Wayne Wagoner, 54, passed away May 10, 2021.

Robby was born May 7, 1967, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Wayne and Carmen Wagoner.

He was preceded in death by his grandmother Inez Woods; his parents; and brother Kevin Wagoner.

Robby is survived by his daughters Ashleigh Spaid and spouse Lucas, Jaden Wagoner and boyfriend Uriel Baca; and Jett Wagoner and fiancé Shawn Hampsten; son Trey Wagoner; grandchildren Charlie and Chase Spaid, and Lydia Baca; extended family Dick and Beverly Hall, Robyn Wagoner and sons Nathan and Ty Smith; and a host of close lifelong friends and work associates.

For the full obituary, please visit [Alan Clark Funeral Services](#).

Gerald Leslie James

Gerald "Jerry" Leslie James, 62, passed away May 27, 2021.

Jerry was born June 29, 1958, in Lone Pine, Calif., to Leslie Roy and Geraldine "Jo" (Harris) James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Regina Gayle James.

Jerry is survived by sisters Marcia James and Jayson Dailey, and Dodie Bowers and spouse Dennis; brother Garry James and spouse Shelly; nieces Carmen Futch, Raeanna "Baby Rae" and Robert "Boo" Shoaft, Leona Ward and spouse Dustin, Leslie Clark and spouse Daniel, Valerie James and Dustin Gomez, and Vanessa James and Ray Eidinger; nephews Frank Johnson, Anthony James, and Zachary James; numerous great-nieces and great-nephews; other relatives, loved ones, and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Evans Funeral home](#).

Betty Carrol Shaffer

Betty Carrol (Pool) Shaffer, 84, passed away May 23, 2021.

Betty was born Aug. 10, 1936, in Durant, Okla., to Ike and Margie Lou (Wilson) Pool.

She was preceded in death by her husband Jack; granddaughter Angie Trent; her parents; brother Bill Pool; and sister Anne Parker.

Betty is survived by son Wayne Trent and spouse Eunice; daughters Carol Trent-Castrop and spouse Tommy, and Beth Taylor and spouse Randy; grandchildren Lonette VanMieghem, Andrew Yocum, Cory Trent, Dillon Yocum, Kyle Podrecca, and Carson Taylor; and eight great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [McNeils Funeral Home](#).

Loretta Connie Wooley

Loretta Connie Wooley, 95, passed away May 23, 2021.

Loretta was born Oct. 15, 1925, in McAlester, Okla., to Wallace and Delphia (Pearce) Jefferson.

She is preceded in death by her parents; husband Bob; sons Roger Stone and Samuel Wooley; daughter Bonny Lee Wooley;

grandchildren Bobby Shannon and Laura Lee Shannon; brothers Wallace, Cleno, Ullis, Johnny, and Otis Jefferson; and sister Ruth Jackson.

Loretta is survived by daughters Iris Hallbert and spouse Chuck, and Carol Sibole and Donny James; grandchildren Kim Mason, Annetta Grinnell, Carol Ann Brummett, Charles Hallbert III, Robert Hallbert, Samantha Walker, Sam Wooley, Jason Knight, and Bretton Lee James; great-grandchildren Tyler Mason, Ashley Shannon, Casey Grinnell, Cody Grinnell, Caitlin Stubblefield, Johnny Brummett, Garrett Brummett, Soren Hallbert, Seth Hallbert, Adrianna Hallbert, Caitlyn Wilson, Cyprus Hallbert, Cara James, Carsyn James, and Coda James; 10 great-great-grandchildren; brother Thomas Jefferson; sister Alice Marie Hayes; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley-Mills Funeral Home](#).

Geneva Ann Cole

Geneva Ann Cole, 79, passed away Feb. 21, 2021.

Geneva was born June 27, 1941 to Roy Cole and Rena Austin Cole.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings Mattie Lois Ross, Odis Cole, and Lena Cole.

Geneva is survived by brother Raymond Cole and spouse Marilyn; nieces Deborah Cole, and Erin Alexander and spouse Jonathan; several other "adopted" family members whom she loved and treated as her own; along with many friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Melinda Dawn Dellinger

Melinda Dawn Dellinger, 52, passed away May 6, 2021.

Melinda was born Dec. 6, 1968.

She is survived by her son Brawn.

For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Jones Academy Class of 2021

Shyanne Renee Donovan is the 18-year-old daughter of Angel Scott of Chickasha, Oklahoma, and Zak Donovan of Cordell, Oklahoma. She is a member of the Seminole Tribe of Oklahoma. Shyanne first enrolled at Jones Academy in 2016. She was inducted into the National Honor Society at Hartshorne High School. Shyanne has been an active member of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Hartshorne High School Student Council, and the varsity Color Guard team. She was also the president of the Unity Youth Council at Jones Academy and active in the American Indian Science and Engineering Society chapter. She was enrolled in Health Careers Certification classes at the Kiamichi Technology Center and received licensing as both a Certified Nursing Assistant and a Basic Medical Assistant. Shyanne has enrolled at Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton, Oklahoma, where she will enter the RN program.

Alysia Gabriela Lewis has been a resident of Jones Academy since August 2016. She is the 18-year-old daughter of Gregory and Chanda Goings from Smithville, Oklahoma. Alysia is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She completed her Teacher Prep/Early Care and Education course work at the Kiamichi Technology Center in McAlester, Oklahoma, and did her worksite learning at Jones Academy Elementary. Alysia was named as a KTC Star Ambassador in 2019-2020. She was an active member of the Hartshorne High School Band and Color Guard for four years. Alysia was named the 2021 Hartshorne Band Student of the Year. She has enrolled at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, where she plans to study psychology.

Damarion Jevon Lewis is the 19-year-old son of Gregory and Chanda Goings and the grandson of Athelene Lewis and of Norman Goings. Damarion is from Smithville, Oklahoma, and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He has attended Jones Academy for four years. Damarion distinguished himself this year by winning the Champi-

onship for the First Annual Student Success Center Corn Hole Tournament. Damarion's future plans include receiving training from the Talking Leaves Jobs Corp Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. His attention to detail and focus will be invaluable as he pursues a career in building construction.

Jaylee Jean Moore is the 17-year-old daughter of Patrick and Jamie Moore of Hartshorne, Oklahoma. Jaylee is an enrolled member of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma. During her time at Hartshorne High School, Jaylee excelled both at basketball and in the classroom. She was selected for the all-state teams of the Oklahoma Girls Basketball Coaches Association, the Oklahoma Native All-State Association, and the Oklahoma Coaches Association 2021 All-Star by Class Girls Basketball Team. Jaylee also made the All-Area team in the Pick and Shovel Classic basketball tournament in Hartshorne. In her academics, Jaylee was inducted into the Oklahoma Honor Society. She served on the student council at Hartshorne High School and was active on the Unity Youth Council at Jones Academy. Jaylee has received an athletic scholarship to play basketball at Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton, Oklahoma, and complete her general studies.

Jordan Alando Nash first enrolled at Jones Academy in 2012. He is the 19-year-old son of Courtney McClendon of Choctaw, Mississippi. Jordan is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. During his time at Jones Academy, Jordan was on the Hartshorne High School's varsity football and basketball teams. While at Jones Academy, he was Member at Large for the Jones Academy Unity Youth Council. In the fall, he will attend classes at the Talking Leaves Jobs Corp Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Jordan dreams of operating his own landscape business.

Muh-Jutheen Roberts is the 18-year-old son of Dale and Rowena Roberts of Atwood, Oklahoma. Muh has been a resident of Jones Academy for two years and is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Okla-



Shyanne Renee Donovan



Alysia Gabriela Lewis



Damarion Jevon Lewis



Jaylee Jean Moore



Jordan Alando Nash



Muh-Jutheen Roberts



Christefer Trejo Rains

homa. He was active in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America at Hartshorne High School and was vice president on Jones Academy's Unity Youth Council. He also participated in high school varsity basketball and track and field. Muh is a Grass Dancer. Since his birth and before he could walk, Muh and his family have participated in pow wows and tribal gatherings, traveling throughout 48 states and most of Canada. He has dedicated his young life to Grass Dancing, promoting and teaching the rich traditions of his Indian culture. Muh dances on weekends, during school holidays and summer breaks, in competitions and exhibitions. He is proud of his Native upbringing and heritage and honors his ancestors through his passion for dancing. Muh plans to attend Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, and is interested in sports medicine.

Christefer Trejo Rains is the son of Stephanie Rains and Lucio Trejo of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He is 19 years old and a descendant of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Christefer first enrolled at Jones

Academy in August of 2011. Christefer was the student president of both the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America at Hartshorne High School and the Student Council. He has been a member of 4-H, Football team, treasurer and member at large of the Unity Youth Council, and a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society at Jones Academy. Christefer was in the Bio-Med Program at the Kiamichi Technology Center in McAlester, Oklahoma, and was active in the Health Occupations Students of America. During his senior year, he was selected as a finalist for the Bill Gates Scholarship. Christefer has enrolled at East Central University this fall to begin his studies in pre-med.

Due to space limitations, the Biskinik doesn't run high school graduation announcements outside of Jones Academy. Jones Academy is a residential school for grades 1-12, tribally controlled by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



Ethan Williams qualifies for State

Ethan Williams, and his team qualified for the Texas High School State Championship at Lake Texoma. The 15-year-old Choctaw tribal member attends White Oak

High School in White Oak, Texas. He is an avid hunter and fisherman. He has spent the last five spring breaks fishing for crappie at Atoka Lake with his Uncle Bob.

White Oak High School won the state tournament in 2018. During the tournament, competitors can only keep five fish that are at least 14 inches long. The team that has the most total weight wins.

This year, Ethan's team placed 147 out of 243 teams with four fish and a total weight of 9.05 lbs.



Hibbs named Udall Intern

The Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation and the Native Nations Institute at The University of Arizona are pleased to announce the selection of the

2021 Native American Congressional Interns. The program's newest class of Udall Interns comprises five students representing five tribes and five universities from around the country. The Udall Interns were selected by an independent review committee on the basis of academic achievement, leadership and demonstrated commitment to careers in tribal public policy.

Logan Hibbs is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and is currently pursuing a Juris Doctorate from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. As an undergraduate at the University of Tulsa, Logan wrote two research papers analyzing the sociological and legal significance of the Indian Child Welfare Act and the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act. Logan previously interned for the Choctaw Nation's Judicial Center and for the Native American Institute at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. After graduating from law school, Logan hopes to represent tribal governments in litigation focusing on economic development and tribal sovereignty.



Dr. Mark Yearly receives award

On April 27, 2021, Dr. Mark Yearly, a professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering at the University of Oklahoma (OU), received the Award for Excellence in Research Grants from OU's Office of the Vice President of Research & Partnerships. Dr. Yearly

is the principal investigator on a new project titled "Near-field Scanner and Projects for Advanced Digital Radar" from the U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Naval Research. Under Dr. Yearly's leadership with his large team, the project will allow for the development of a state-of-the-art antenna measurement system, host collaborative experiments to enhance the nation's security and train the next generation of students. The three-year project will create the largest near-field scanner in the nation at a university and will be housed at OU's Advanced Radar Research Center (ARRC). The face of the scanner will be 20 feet by 20 feet and will enable OU to characterize its large mobile phased array radar systems. In brief, Dr. Yearly has been with OU since 2002, where he is a Hudson-Torchmark Presidential Professor and founding member of the ARRC. He serves as a Faculty Advisor to OU's American Indians in Science & Engineering Society (AISES) chapter. His parents are Jim and Gail Yearly of Purcell, Oklahoma.



Smith NWOSU freshman athlete of the year

NWOSU Athletics announced their 2021 Northwespawards. Emily Smith, a 2020 graduate of Holdenville High School, was named

the Female Freshman Athlete of the Year at Northwestern Oklahoma State University. Smith was the top cross-country runner for the Rangers at each meet this year. In track and field, she set school records in the 100m-hurdles and the 400m-hurdles and the 400 x 4 relay. Smith also received honors as the Great American Conference Female Track Athlete of the Week in April after the meet in Wichita, KS.

Smith is also a scholar in the classroom, and she maintains a 4.0 GPA. She is majoring in music education at NWOSU. Emily is an enrolled member of the Choctaw Tribe of Oklahoma.

Atoka Head Start students participate in garden study

The Choctaw Head Start at Atoka participated in a garden study over the past six weeks. The children planted lettuce in the green house at the Choctaw Community Center.

Each week the children and staff made walking field trips to water and pick the lettuce; the lettuce was harvested and prepared for lunch for the children. Councilman Anthony Dillard also assisted in our gardening study. During this study children learned about fruits and vegetables, growing foods, harvesting foods, and cooking.



Wood celebrates 99 years

Mary Norman Wood celebrated her 99th birthday June 16. She is hoping to announce next year, that she has reached the milestone of 100 years. Mary is the granddaughter of Ida Stanley Norman and daughter of Alvy Norman who were original Dawes enrollees. Mary is still active, plays bridge, and lives in her home. She enjoys being with her two sons, daughter-in-law, three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Jaxon Thorpe McCurtain

Jaxon Thorpe McCurtain was born April 5, 2021, at Crouse Memorial Hospital in Syracuse, New York. He weighed six pounds, five ounces and was 19 inches long.

Jaxon is the son of Jay and Brenda McCurtain of Clinton, New York. He is the grandson of the late Jay Tee McCurtain and Angelita Diaz of Texas. Jaxon is the great-grandson of the late Jim and Edna McCurtain. He is the great-great-grandson of the late Jackson Haskel Sr. and Ernestine McCurtain.



Dean graduates from East Central

Elaine (Lainey) Dean graduated from East Central University in May. She graduated with honors and was East Central University's Social Work Student of the Year.

Lainey and her family would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for helping her achieve her dreams. Her family is so proud of Lainey and are proud to be a part of the Choctaw Nation.

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ITI FABVSSA

A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1880-1890

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series that covers the span of Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands using Choctaw-created documents, we will get a better understanding of Choctaw ancestors' experiences and how they made decisions that have led us into the present. This month, we will cover 1880-1890, an era in which Choctaw Nation worked to maintain sovereignty in the face of the growing influence of non-Choctaws living within the Choctaw Nation.

Throughout the 1880's, the Choctaw Nation faced increasing challenges to upholding our own laws within our lands. Due to the growth of the railroad and mining industries, the non-Choctaw population soon outnumbered Choctaw citizens. This put more pressure on the Choctaw government to innovate new ways to protect their lands. In 1875, Chief Coleman Cole signed into law the office of the National Agent, who would "act as agent for the sale of timber, stone and stone coal, to any railroad company for the construction and repairing of said railroad, within the limits of the nation." Such an individual would help prevent people from going into Choctaw lands on their own and taking all the resources from the community. Choctaw leaders wanted to be sure there was a balance of industrial development and enough resources for the people.

The non-Choctaw citizen population within the Choctaw Nation grew rapidly with the expansion of the railroad and the mining industries. Since the Choctaw Nation wanted to use these industries as modes of economic development, Choctaw officials faced the challenging task of balancing the influx of migrant workers for the coal

mines while still managing intruders that did not have permits to be on Choctaw lands. This made the existing permit system more important than ever. In this system, all non-Choctaw citizens were required to hold a permit to live and work within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation. By this time, miners were the most common workers coming to Choctaw Territory. Mining companies, which were often owned and operated by railroad companies, paid 25 cents per individual per month. This permit fee was usually deducted from each miner's monthly earnings. When miners went on strike in an effort to gain better safety conditions for themselves, mining companies used the Choctaw permit requirement against the miners by stopping the permit payment of striking individuals. By stopping those payments, striking miners were deemed to be intruders to Choctaw Nation and could be removed. To ensure people followed Choctaw laws, Choctaw Nation continued to rely on their Lighthorsemen, the law enforcement in the Nation.

In 1824, General Council passed a law establishing the Lighthorsemen in the homelands. After removal, Choctaws used Lighthorsemen to maintain the law and manage the courts. But Lighthorsemen could only enforce laws regarding Choctaw citizens. Non-Choctaws were handled by the U.S. government. If a non-Choctaw broke a Choctaw law, a U.S. agent would have to come and arrest them. But because of the distance between Choctaw Territory and Arkansas, where U.S. agents were based, the journey took a long time and sometimes US agents would not come at all.

Toward the end of this decade, allotment loomed as a threat to the Choctaw Nation. In 1887, Congress



Four members of the Choctaw Lighthorsemen, circa 1928. Seated left to right are Ellis Austin and Stanley Benton. Standing on the left is Peter Conser. Box 1, Otis Leader Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Division.

passed the General Allotment Act. Also known as the Dawes Act, the law was developed by Senator Henry L. Dawes. This law would divide up all Indian nations' lands and force individuals to become private property owners. By owning land as private property, this would assimilate Choctaws and other Indigenous people into the U.S. political-economic system and make it easier for non-Natives to take their land. Allotment increasingly became an issue that divided Choctaws. By dividing up land, it would fundamentally disrupt the Choctaw way of life and their form of government. This was part of the

very design of the program. For the U.S. government, which increasingly no longer wanted to deal with Indigenous nations but still wanted their lands, allotment would destroy the "tribal way of life." Traditional Choctaws often opposed allotment precisely because it would disrupt Choctaw laws and governance. Choctaws who were familiar with American culture and/or had a business oriented mindset were often pro-allotment. They often saw allotment as an opportunity to advance their own personal riches. Fortunately for Choctaws and the other Five Tribes, the General Allotment Act did not apply to them. Because of the foresight of their leaders during removal, the Five Tribes' treaties prevented the application of allotment to their territories. But this did not stop the threat of allotment altogether. Congress, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and individual settlers pushed for Choctaw and other Five Tribes' lands to be allotted, and the negotiations became a defining feature of the 1890-1900 decade that we will discuss in next month's Iti Fabvssa.

Next month, we will cover the period of 1890-1900 when the Dawes Commission went to Indian Territory to negotiate the possibility of allotment with Choctaw leaders and the results of the allotment process which included the Atoka Agreement and the Curtis Act.

Additional reading resources on this period are available on the Choctaw Nation Cultural Service webpage (<https://choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/additional-resources.aspx>). Follow along with this Iti Fabvssa series in print and online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>. If you have questions or would like more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at meganb@choctawnation.com.

Softball coach determined to beat cancer with help from team, community and Nation

By Chris Jennings

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Native Americans have a higher rate of cancer than white people in the United States. The CDC says the most significant differences in cancer rates between Native American men and white men were found in Alaska, followed by the Southern Plains, Southwest, and Northern Plains.

Regardless of where you live, when a family member is diagnosed with cancer, it hits home. A recent cancer diagnosis for Jimmie Wyrick stopped him in his tracks.

"It's like the world just kind of stopped," said Wyrick. Wyrick, the softball coach in Broken Bow, Oklahoma, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma in March of 2021 at the Choctaw Nation Healthcare Center in Talihina.

From the doctors in Talihina and Idabel to the transportation department helping with traveling expenses to Paris, Texas, Wyrick is grateful for all the support he has received.

Wyrick said, "I'm thankful for the Choctaw Nation and everything they've done."

When Wyrick told his softball team about his diagnosis, they were in a state of shock.

"They were very heartbroken for about a week because they thought that I wasn't going to be with them. I had to explain to them that, hey, this is something I'm going to be able to endure; I'm going to have good days and bad days," said Wyrick.

After treatments had started, the girls could see that Wyrick was tired. When you have an entire team of young women accustomed to working hard to achieve their goals, you can't expect them to sit still and watch someone struggle.

Wyrick often tells his girls to button up the chin strap and take their struggles head-on to remain as positive as they can. After the initial shock, that's just what they did. From getting on the field for practice to carrying gear, Wyrick said he doesn't need to waste energy to get

them to do the things that sometimes require extra prodding when dealing with teenagers.

Jimmie's mother, Karen Wyrick, said, "They got a little momentum up and said, coach, we're going to get this. They keep his spirits up."

Another testament to the team's tenacity came when they told their coach they were going to win for him.

"They really stepped up and said, hey, we're good enough to win. Let's just go win one for coach," said Wyrick.

And win, they did. Despite Wyrick missing the first three games of the season for treatments, the girls were able to earn a trip to the state finals in Shawnee.

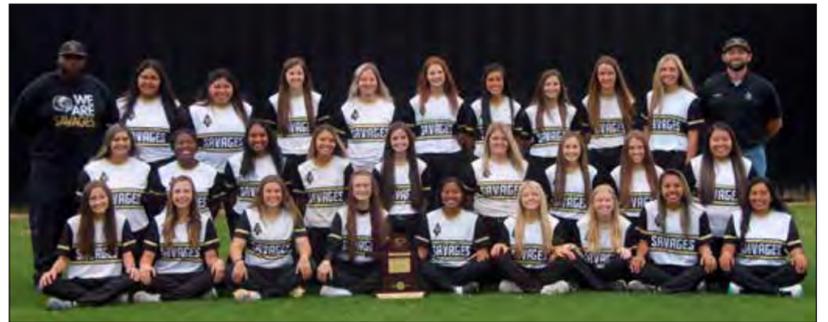
Often, when someone is diagnosed with cancer, it knocks them down, and they have to come from behind to get ahead of the disease. It was no different with the Lady Savages softball team in the state tournament.

Wyrick said, "We're down eight to one in the first game, we were at risk of getting run-ruled, and then we came back to win nine to eight."

The other games were no different; the Savages came from behind in every game, finally getting ahead to beat their opponent each time, just as Wyrick is determined to beat his cancer.

Choctaw Nation Councilman Tony Ward, whose daughter also plays on the team, was present at the state tournament.

"They did play for him; they got together as a team. It wasn't just the all-stars that made the big plays in the tournament; people stepped up. I think that's one thing that they really don't realize how, how much they [all



Submitted photo

The 2021 Broken Bow Lady Savages State Champion team.

the players] elevated their game," said Ward.

Earlier in the season, the team had shirts with a green lymphoma awareness ribbon made to honor their coach. When girls from the competing teams asked what that was about, the news of Wyrick's diagnoses spread through the ball fields.

Karen Wyrick said what usually happens when a team loses in the finals is they'll load up the bus and head home. This year, though, several teams stuck around to see what would happen and support the Savages' coach.

Karen said, "When it came out he won, there wasn't a dry eye in the stadium."

Tony Ward said to her that this was meant to be. Wyrick's mother said one parent from another team even told her if they had to lose, they were glad it was to Broken Bow.

Wyrick has a simple message that he wishes to pass on to his girls. "I tried to let them see, just because life has dealt you a difficult situation, it doesn't mean that life is going to stop," said Wyrick.

With the help of his team, his community and his tribe, Wyrick has buttoned up his chin strap and is ready to face his cancer head-on.

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Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

On July 15, 2015, the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (HACNO) was the only Tribal Nation selected by the President of the United States and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to participate as one of 28 ConnectHome Pilot communities. The goal of the ConnectHome Program was to "Bridge the Digital Divide" that existed within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's service area. This program was created to offer (HACNO) tenants residing in Affordable Rental units, Independent Elder and 202 PRAC elder units access to the internet and training services. The objective is to give them the ability to better their lives by taking schooling online, applying for jobs, and exploring all that the internet has to offer. This is all to achieve self-sufficiency through utilizing this essential free resource.

The ConnectHome team has developed an educational program using the following:

- Internet Safety and Security – Group Training
- Basic Digital Literacy – One on One Training
- Choctaw Nation Home site – Social Services and applications for additional services
- Facebook – Reconnecting Families
- ABC Mouse (for children)
- KANO (computer kits)
- EveryoneOn – Washington, DC (partner)
- MyCNHSA – My Choctaw Nation Health Authority-Pharmacy Refill/ Appointment Scheduling
- Choctaw Nation YAB (Youth Advisory Board)

The ConnectHome Program started with a goal of 35% connectivity in the first year, with 379 total units. HACNO now has 920 units that the ConnectHome program is working with. ConnectHome currently has 708 units connected to the internet. That is 77% connectivity with new sites currently under construction. The program currently has 601 children connected to the internet.

Stay Connected

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Housing Authority

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Family reunions good for mental and generational health

By Chris Jennings

Coming out of a year of limited contact, many people have realized that it's their weird, wacky, sometimes frustrating family members they miss the most. As COVID-19 restrictions are beginning to be lifted, families are starting to plan their family reunions.

When many are struggling with different aspects of getting their life back to normal, Choctaw Nation Integrated Care Project Manager Mary Ayn Tullier, RN., explained that support of other family members can help.

"It's really important to gather the support you need for good mental health and get hope from your family members," said Tullier.

According to Tullier, these reunions don't have to be elaborate affairs; Sunday dinners with immediate families are one way to stay in contact with those closest to you.

You could host smaller family gatherings, monthly meetings or picnics with family members in a regional area. Then a yearly, larger reunion with family members traveling from across the country ensures consistent contact with a robust family support system. These larger family reunions are also where relatives from across the country get the opportunity to meet new spouses and babies that they otherwise wouldn't have. These larger gatherings also create a stronger bond with distant relatives that give a sense of belonging.

If you're in an area with no immediate family nearby, Tullier suggests that it doesn't have to be blood family.

"There's a work family that you love and care for; there are different families [such as church families] that you can get hope and encouragement from," explained Tullier.

Tullier stresses that the important thing is to develop a supportive family who can be there for you when you need it.

Reunions with family members have benefits beyond just finding out what's been going on. Recording family histories can have effects that last for generations.

"Hearing the stories of different family members, how they grew up or how they remember their grandparents or heard stories about their great-grandparents is important," said Tullier. "A lot of families have really strong backgrounds with their whole family praying for them down through the generations."

Hearing these stories of generational support can provide hope to those who need it most.

These memories and histories of Choctaw families also help teach younger generations about their ancestors, philosophies, ways of life and values as Choctaw people. As family elders age, reunions are an excellent opportunity to record these histories for future generations before they are lost.

Basic things like when and where were they were born and important details about their life are just the start. Getting as much information from elders about the things they remember, including stories told to them by their elders, is key to preserving a family's Native culture.

"The way to develop [as a family] is to learn about each other, to gather stories about each other and to see how other family members have coped with different problems or experiences in their life... that's how you can grow emotionally to combat the different things that come up that hurt mental health," said Tullier.

For more tips and ideas on recording family histories, see the Iti Fabvssa in the June 2020 Biskinik at <https://www.choctawnation.com/june-2020>.



PLANNING A FAMILY REUNION

FAMILY REUNIONS ARE A TIME TO LAUGH, CELEBRATE, SHARE OLD STORIES AND MAKE NEW MEMORIES.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO PLAN A REUNION IN JUST SEVEN DAYS.

- SET A DATE AND RECRUIT SOME HELP
- PLAN YOUR GUEST LIST
- BOOK YOUR LOCATION
- CREATE YOUR MENU
- PLAN THE ENTERTAINMENT
- ADD A VIRTUAL REUNION
- SEND OUT YOUR INVITATIONS

THINGS TO BRING TO THE REUNION:

- PHOTOS
- FAMILY HISTORY
- OLD BIBLES WITH LISTS OF FAMILY TREES
- SIX EASY REUNION MEALS
- GAMES TO PLAY

Know the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke

As summer temperatures begin to rise, it's time to prepare for extreme heat. According to the Centers for Disease Control, extreme heat is periods of high heat and humidity with temperatures above 90 degrees for at least two to three days. Extreme heat is the highest cause of weather-related deaths annually.

Knowing the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke, along with what to do, can save lives.

Heat Exhaustion

What to look for

- Heavy Sweating
- Cold, pale, and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fainting (passing out)

What to do

- Move to a cool place
- Loosen your clothes
- Put cool, wet cloths on your body
- Sip water

Get medical help if:

- You are throwing up
- Your symptoms get worse
- Your symptoms last longer than one hour

Heat Stroke

What to look for

- High body temperature (103 or higher)
- Hot, red, dry or damp skin
- Fast, strong pulse
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Losing consciousness (passing out)

What to do

- Call 911 right away - heat stroke is a medical emergency
- Move the person to a cooler place
- Help lower the person's temperature with cool cloths or cool bath
- Do not give the person anything to drink

ENROLL FOR CHOCTAW LANGUAGE CLASSES



Enrollment open for Choctaw language classes in college, high school, online and community center classes. All classes begin in August.

Visit these pages for individual dates and enrollment information:

Carl Albert State College and Southeastern Oklahoma State University
choctawschool.com/classes/college-classes.aspx

High School
choctawschool.com/classes/high-school-classes.aspx

Online Classes
choctawschool.com/classes/internet-classes.aspx

Community Center
choctawschool.com/classes/community-classes.aspx

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Choctaw Nation Health Services

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Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431

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Location	Days	Hours
Antlers 580-298-3161	1st & 2nd Tue. Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Atoka 580-889-5825	Mon., Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tue. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Tue. & Thur. (except for Battiest & Smithville days)	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Durant 580-920-2100 x-83582	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Hugo 580-326-9707	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Idabel 580-286-2600 x-41113	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thur. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Stigler 918-867-4211	Mon. & Tue.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Talihina 918-567-7000 x-6792	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Wilburton 918-465-5641	Mon. & Fri.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Mobile Clinic	Tues., Wed., & Thurs.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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CHOCTAWNATION.COM/BENEFIT-COORDINATORS

Choctaw Nation Health Services



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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COVID-19: Stories of loss and survival

By Shelia Kirven and Christian Toews

Jerry and Shirley Lowman, beloved Choctaw elders and highly respected teachers of the Choctaw culture, were from a small community in McCurtain County, Oklahoma. Both contracted COVID-19 in October 2020. They died eight days apart. Shirley was 73 and Jerry was 75, and they had been married for 55 years.

The Lowmans had been so careful to keep themselves safe, rarely going out in public after the virus started going around. Then Jerry injured his knee, which caused an emergency room visit, a transfer to an out-of-state hospital and surgery.

Because of visitor restrictions at the hospital, Shirley could not visit until after his recovery from surgery. When she was finally able to visit, she caught the virus, as did Jerry, and then so did other family members. Jerry and Shirley ended up in the same hospital at the same time. Neither knew the other had passed away.

Jerry's sister, Jackie, who lived within walking distance, also passed away with what the family believes was the virus.

After the deaths of her beloved family members, the Lowmans' niece, Keosha Ludlow, said she was one of the first to get the vaccine. She then worked to encourage other family members to get vaccinated as well.

Though some were skeptical, Ludlow says they are now glad that they went ahead and received the vaccine.

"If the vaccine is offered to families or to tribal members, I encourage them to get it. Right now, it's the right thing to do to protect yourself and to protect others," said Keosha.

Tammie Dugger, an emergency room RN at the Choctaw Nation Health Center in Taliuhina, Oklahoma, said the last year and a half of the pandemic has been very hard.

"We would come in and hit the road running. Constantly patients were coming from every angle," said Dugger.

She said it was a different situation with each patient, and they never knew how bad it would be or if the patient would survive.

"We were having to send people to Denver, to St. Louis, to Washington, because there were no beds available," explained Dugger. "We'd never seen stats that low before. You would have a very healthy person, and they would be the one who passed away. And then you would have a person with comorbidities, and they would survive. There has been no rhyme or reason on who survived and who did not survive this."

Dugger talked about the immense sadness associated with patients who were not able to have a loved one with them as they were in the hospital. People were dying in hospitals by themselves. Dugger herself lost her own mother to the virus and had to watch her pass away through a glass door.

"We want to get the vaccine so we don't get back into that pandemic, that state where we can't let anybody back here with their loved ones. That was hard to watch," said Dugger.

Dugger emphasized the seriousness of the illness for those readers who may not take the threat of COVID-19 seriously or don't feel that they need the vaccine.

"You have to think about your loved ones. You may be a carrier and not know it. Your viral load may be low,

and then you give it to someone else, and they just can't fight that off," said Dugger.

Dr. David Young is an emergency room physician at the Choctaw Nation Health Center in Taliuhina. Not only did he get the virus himself, but he also lost both his grandmother and a cousin to the virus.

Hospitalized for eight days, Dr. Young became seriously ill before the vaccine was available.

"Having to intubate patients with Covid due to their respiratory status, you are right in their face. Even though you are gowned up and wearing an N95, there's the risk of getting it. I wish they would have had a vaccine before I had those types of exposures, but I just got lucky."

Still experiencing side effects, Dr. Young explained, "We need to start taking it more serious. They are doing a really good job of making it (the vaccine) available. People need to wake up and understand the severity. It is not a joke. It is not influenza. People are dying from it. You get a lot of stuff in the media that is wrong or pushed; you get a lot of rumors that this is just made up, and a lot of people believe that stuff, so they choose not to be vaccinated. And others are just scared of it. They don't know what the side effects might be long-term. I think there are a variety of reasons that people just don't. But the best thing for us to do is push education and listen to people that deal with it and have had it. I couldn't express any stronger for people to get vaccinated from it."

For those who think they have the immunities because they may have had Covid, Dr. Young said, "Your natural immunity you get from having Covid, as far as what we know now, lasts 6-8 months. Then you lose that immunity. I think that having the vaccine will extend that immunity. I think there's going to be a booster at some point. But we still recommend they get vaccinated. I was vaccinated after having Covid. They knew I had antibodies, but I wanted to extend that out. Your immunity may start to falter, and the vaccine will certainly boost that immunity."

Dr. Young stated that the vaccine will also have some immunities to the variants that are coming out now. He explained that when vaccinated, you can still get a virus variant, though most of the time, your symptoms may not be as severe as if you were unvaccinated.

"But you still don't want to run that risk. If you have COPD or some comorbidity, even a person who has had the vaccine can still get really sick from it," stressed Dr. Young. "The chances of them having severe disease are less with the vaccine is what the studies are showing right now."

When asked about children getting the vaccine, Dr. Young said, "I think that target population would be a huge benefit to get vaccinated because they're not going to be spreading it as much as they are, because they don't know they have it."

Dr. Young went on to say, "We are definitely making progress. I do not attribute most of this to herd immunity. I think it is because of the vaccines. People need to look at that. They need to ask themselves why is it better? It is because the vaccine is working. What more proof do you need than that? People need to use common sense and don't think that it's over." He urged, "Use common sense and follow the CDC



Photo by Pollaro Video

Shirley and Jerry Lowman both passed away from COVID-19 complications in 2020. The Lowmans dedicated much of their lives to Choctaw traditional music, dancing and artistry. Both grew up in the hills of northern McCurtain County, where isolation allowed their cultural traditions to stay intact. Both Jerry and Shirley spoke only Choctaw until they entered grade school. The couple met in high school, and soon after got married.

guidelines."

Perry Thompson, Choctaw Tribal Councilman, has been in a continual battle against the virus for over seven months. He first became ill in November 2020. His wife, Gail, tested positive three days after he did, and then several other family members did as well.

Low oxygen first sent Thompson to an emergency room. Over the next few months, he was in and out of multiple hospitals, the first-time stay being for almost a month.

Gail said it was touch and go during that time. According to Gail, the pulmonologist said he was lucky to be alive and that God must have another plan for him.

Earlier this year, Thompson got pneumonia and was hospitalized for the third time. During this winter's ice storm, he had just gotten to come home when his oxygen levels dropped again, requiring the next hospital stay.

Within a few short weeks, he was admitted again, and then went on to a rehabilitative facility for a few weeks. After being able to go home, he was quickly back at a nearby hospital and was then transferred by airlift to a Texas hospital.

Doctors discovered he had a severe infection that would require hospitalization for yet another two weeks and high-powered medication to get the infection under control. Thompson is finally at home but still taking medications, along with having tests to gauge his progress and physical therapy. The virus nearly took his life.

Thompson said he wants the readers to know the importance of getting vaccinated for this virus.

"I just hope everything goes back like it used to be because this is pretty rough."

When asked if he would encourage people to get the vaccine if they are able to, he said, "Yes."

He also expressed gratitude, "I want to thank everyone who prayed for me. Thank you for that."

Gail said, as the wife of a survivor, she would tell others, "If they have any reservations about getting the vaccination, they need to rethink it, because this has been a rough seven months of this, and it puts a stop to normal life. You just cannot do what you have been used to doing."

Belinda Webb, a tribal member and CNO associate, said the last thing she remembers is getting an IV upon ar-

riving at the hospital. That was July 3, 2020. She was airlifted a few days later to another hospital, where she stayed in the ICU for around three weeks.

During that time, she remained unconscious.

Her next memory was getting out of ICU and going into a regular hospital room. She said after leaving the ICU, it was a miserable experience. She said she could not eat or feed herself and was incredibly weak.

When asked if she would have taken the vaccine had it been available she said, "Yes, I would have. It is better to get that shot than be in that kind of misery, knowing that you might not ever be able to walk again, might not be able to do anything again. Yes, I would have taken it."

Belinda calls her recovery a miracle. She said she still has several long-term side effects she is dealing with, although she has been able to go back to work.

As of June 6, 2021, ABC News reported that over 300 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine had been given in the United States to more than 49% of eligible Americans, but it is not enough. Oklahoma is still averaging around 100 new cases of the virus per day, with approximately 900 active cases going on at any given time in the state.

Statistically speaking, the fight to end the pandemic is far from over, and new cases of the virus are still popping up daily all over the world in alarming rates.

Research and statistics are proving that the benefit of receiving the vaccine far outweighs the risk of contracting the virus. In addition, the vaccine has been through all the same trials and research as any other vaccine and has been shown to be safe and effective.

If you need to schedule your vaccination, appointments are now available to anyone 18 years and older at any Choctaw Nation Clinic. Those 12-18 years old can receive the Pfizer vaccine at our Durant, Poteau and Taliuhina locations. Appointments are encouraged and will be limited daily per clinic.

If you live outside of the Choctaw Nation, there are several ways to find a vaccine.

Visit <https://www.ihs.gov/findhealth-care/> to search for an Indian Health Service facility (IHS) near you. Search [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), text your zip code to 438829, call the National COVID-19 vaccination Assistance hotline at 1-800-232-0233 or contact your state's health department.



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Choctaw Nation Health Services

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[FACEBOOK.COM/CHOCTAWNATIONFOSTERCARE/](https://facebook.com/choctawnationfostercare/)

When Choctaw children fall victim to abuse or neglect, they are temporarily placed into foster care until it is safe and appropriate to be reunified with their parents or caregivers. In 2020 Choctaw Nation had on average 55 tribal foster homes across Oklahoma. We need your help. Please call us to inquire more about how you can help.

Choctaw Nation Children & Family Services

FEMA COVID-19 FUNERAL ASSISTANCE

CONTACT: 844-684-6333
 (MONDAY – FRIDAY | 9 AM – 8 PM CENTRAL TIME)

THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) IS PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR COVID-19 RELATED FUNERAL EXPENSES INCURRED AFTER JANUARY 20, 2020

ELIGIBILITY AND MORE INFORMATION:
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/COVIDRELIEF](https://choctawnation.com/covidrelief)

FEMA

FCC EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT APPLICATION OPEN

ENROLLMENT BEGINS MAY 12, 2021

The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) is a temporary Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program to assist households struggling to afford internet service during the pandemic.

ELIGIBILITY AND MORE INFORMATION:
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/COVIDRELIEF](https://choctawnation.com/covidrelief)

Don't stick to the rivers and the lakes that you're used to: Visit Choctaw Country for your next water sport adventure

By Christian Toews

It's an iconic image of the outdoor experience: a kayak glides across a glassy stretch of water, its bow knifing through the water and its wake stretching out behind. Imagine a canoe cutting through the river rapids on a warm summer morning.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma holds the perfect spot for your next kayak or canoe adventure.

According to the Oklahoma Water Resources Board's website, Oklahoma has approximately 1,401 square miles of water area in its lakes and ponds and about 167,600 miles of rivers/streams.

Much of this water is located within or bordering the Choctaw Nation. Oklahoma's largest lake in surface area is Eufaula, at 105,000 acres. This lake sits within the borders of the Choctaw Nation and offers a huge expanse of water to explore by kayak or canoe. Lake Texoma is the second largest, with an impressive 88,000 acres. Lake Texoma sits on the border of Choctaw Country but close enough to visit if you are in Durant. Maybe you want to stay at the third-largest gaming resort in the world and pop down to Lake Texoma to enjoy a sunset by kayak. You can do both by visiting the Choctaw Casino and Resort in Durant, Oklahoma.

Kayaking or canoeing on a lake or pond can be a great way to explore without hiking around the shoreline. Having a small boat is also a unique way to go fishing. Many people enjoy taking their kayak or canoe and fishing otherwise inaccessible parts of a lake, river or pond.

Trey Hedrick is an avid fisherman and kayaker. He enjoys fishing from a kayak. "The kayak is a great fishing experience.

It gives you access to different areas than fishing from the bank and is a relaxing way to spend time on the water," said Hedrick. He also commented on a recent river kayaking trip he enjoyed. "We had such a good time floating on the river and being able to have good conversation and enjoy the river and the water. If you have never taken a river trip, I highly recommend it," he said.

One of the best and most popular places to canoe and kayak in the Choctaw Nation is the Broken Bow, Oklahoma area. It doesn't matter what type of water you want to be on; this area has it all, from the fast-flowing rapids of the upper and lower Mountain Fork River to the tranquil waters inside Beavers Bend State Park. Many kayak and canoe rental locations in and around Broken Bow offer float trips in the area, and people travel from all over the area to escape the ordinary and enjoy one of Oklahoma's most beautiful areas.

Broken Bow Lake is another fantastic location to take a canoe out on the water or kayak to a new location. This lake covers 14,000 acres and has 180 miles of shoreline, so there is plenty of room to explore. Whether you bring your own canoe or kayak or you rent one when you are there, don't miss out on the opportunity to enjoy this lake.

It doesn't matter if you are a beginner to paddling or an experienced kayaker. Choctaw Country has something to offer anyone who wants to escape the summer heat and get on the water. For more information on area lakes and rivers, visit www.choctawcountry.com and explore the many options inside the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

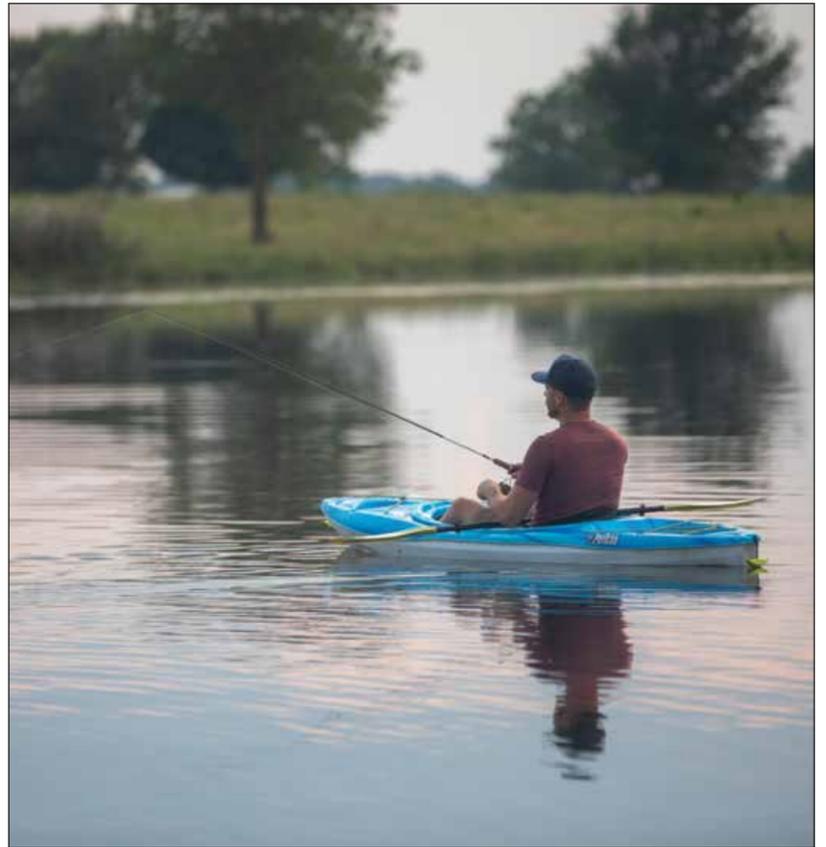


Photo by Christian Toews

Trey Hedrick tries his luck from his kayak on a warm spring evening on one of the many fishing spots in the Choctaw Nation. Kayaks and canoes provide access to unique fishing locations in southeast Oklahoma.

CAMP CHAHTA

What to expect from Camp Chahta

- Move-in date TBD by campus
- Access campus communications
- Experience Cultural Events
- Earn orientation credit
- Develop new friendships
- Resolve any enrollment and financial aid issues

FOR MORE DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT THE LOCAL CAMPUS REP

800-522-6170 EXT 2292
COLLEGEFYI@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

AVOID CLOSE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK

COVER YOUR COUGH OR SNEEZE WITH A TISSUE, THEN THROW THE TISSUE IN THE TRASH

AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE AND MOUTH

CLEAN AND DISINFECT FREQUENTLY TOUCHED OBJECTS AND SURFACES

STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK, EXCEPT TO GET MEDICAL CARE

WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN WITH SOAP AND WATER FOR AT LEAST 20 SECONDS

CDC.GOV/NCOV

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma • TOGETHER WE'RE MORE •

COVID-19 VACCINE NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Appointments for vaccines are now available to the public for ages 18 and older at any CNHSA clinic. Patients ages 16 and older can receive the Pfizer vaccine at the Talihina location. Other locations will primarily be giving the Moderna vaccine.

800-349-7026, EXT. 6
USE YOUR MYCNHSA APP, OR VISIT MY.CNHSA.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

NEW COVID-19 VACCINATION SPECIAL EVENTS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Rural Health Network of Oklahoma

<p>ANTLERS</p> <p>July 10 9AM - 3PM</p> <p>Antlers Fair Barn</p> <p>Hwy 271 S, Antlers, OK</p> <p>Vaccine Manufacturer: Pfizer</p> <p>Walk-ins Accepted</p> <p>Appointments encouraged for fast tracking:</p> <p>580-326-7561, ext. 35086</p> <p>Minimum Age Requirements: 12 Years Old</p> <p>Plan ahead, 2nd dose will be on July 31</p>	<p>HUGO</p> <p>July 10 9AM - 3PM</p> <p>Hugo Agriplex</p> <p>415 E Rena St, Hugo, OK</p> <p>Vaccine Manufacturer: Pfizer</p> <p>Walk-ins Accepted</p> <p>Appointments encouraged for fast tracking:</p> <p>580-326-7561, ext. 35086</p> <p>Minimum Age Requirements: 12 Years Old</p> <p>Plan ahead, 2nd dose will be on July 31</p>
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Choctaw Nation Health Services

BISKINIK

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July 2021

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GRAND OPENING
JULY 23, 2021

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

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Student successes with CNO programs.

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COVID-19 vaccination can save lives.

Biskinik Mission Statement: To serve as the source of information for Choctaw Nation tribal members by delivering community news through a variety of communication channels.

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