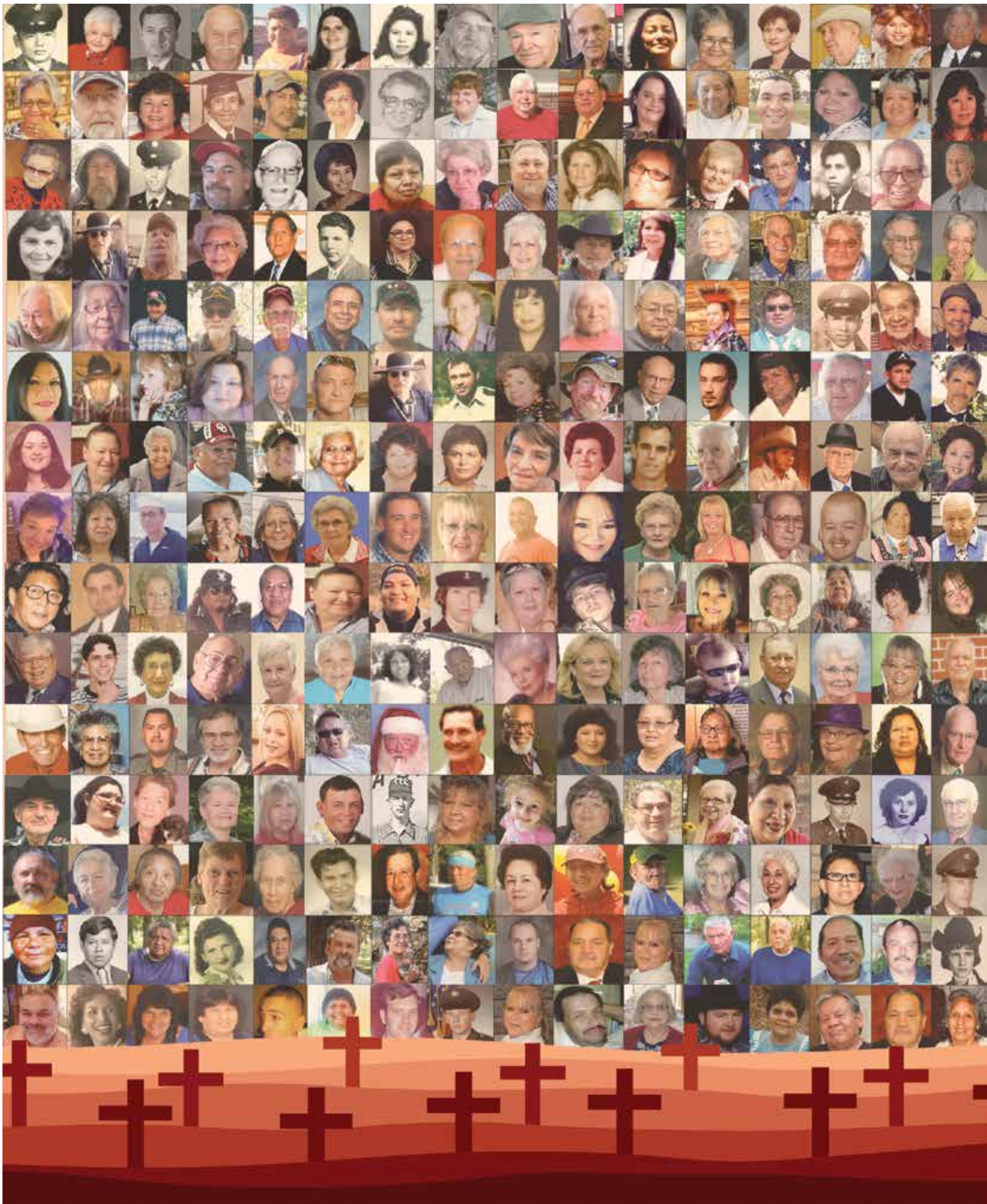




March 2021 Issue



In 2020 there were more than 200 obituaries in the Biskinik. While we don't know the circumstances of all these deaths, we do know that for each family member lost, that is a voice that will no longer be heard. As the COVID-19 pandemic takes its toll on the Nation, we have the ability to keep the voices, language and traditions alive by protecting one another. Visit www.choctawnation.com/honoring-those-lost to see a special tribute honoring those we lost last year and resources on dealing with grief.

Loss of elders during COVID-19 pandemic is loss of culture

By Chris Jennings

The deaths of tribal elders during the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a sudden loss of native Choctaw speakers and teachers of cultural traditions.

The Choctaw language can be thought of as an echo. As sounds from our ancestor's past that instead of fading away, continue to bounce off the walls of homes and places of work. While you can still hear that echo, it's in danger of fading away if more people don't begin to speak the language.

The pandemic has brought this problem to the forefront. Often, the cultural torchbearers are the elderly, a demographic that has been particularly hard hit during this pandemic.

Chief Gary Batton said, "When we lose our elders, we lose our traditional knowledge. We lose our history, lose the ceremonial things that we have done in the past."

The loss of Choctaw elders has always been a struggle, and this sudden loss has accelerated the Nation's need to take steps to save the language and traditions proactively.

The Choctaw people have overcome many struggles, though. They've endured the Trail of Tears; their children endured boarding schools, institutions that were rampant with forced cultural assimilation; places where language, prayers and traditions were forcibly forbidden.

Despite this, the language and culture have also endured. The numbers are not good, though. Of the nearly 200,000 tribal members, it is estimated that fewer than 1000 people are fluent in Choctaw.

Director of the Choctaw Nation Language Department, Teresa Billy, estimates that 35-45 Choctaw speakers have died since the pandemic started. That's only considering the people she personally knows across the Choctaw Nation. There have been many more across the country.

The void left by this loss is tremendous.

"Many are our spiritual leaders; they are the ones that can start and sing the traditional hymns; they are our dressmakers; there are those who cook traditional foods," said Billy.

Carol Ayers is a second language Choctaw speaker. She didn't learn Choctaw growing up but instead has taken it upon herself to do her part to preserve the language and culture. Ayers has also personally seen the pandemic's effect on the Choctaw Nation.

"I have several friends that were fluent speakers and very knowledgeable in the grammar and their understanding of the Choctaw language that have passed on now. You feel this great sense of loss when that person is gone," said Ayers.

The pandemic and its accompanying death toll have also affected the Nation's elders' well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control, results from a survey conducted in June 2020, U.S. adults reported elevated adverse mental health conditions associated with COVID-19.

Younger adults, racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers and unpaid adult caregivers reported having experienced disproportionately worse mental health, increased substance use and elevated suicidal ideation.

The impact of physical distancing can have catastrophic effects on the population. Of the 9,896 eligible adults who took the survey, 31% suffered anxiety/depression symptoms. These results are a considerable increase from the same time last year. The survey also showed that 13% started or increased substance abuse, and 11% seriously considered suicide.

Taking away elders' social life can have a considerable effect on them.

Ayers emphasizes this, saying, "The Choctaw are very family-oriented and very socially oriented. It's been difficult for the elders because they've not been able to do their gatherings and the things that we do as a group. We do so many things that are social. We sing together; we dance together; we eat together."

The issues of physical distancing can be eased to a point with technology. Using things like video conferencing, for example, can help, but many elders find it difficult or don't have the resources for that.

Simply picking up the phone and talking to a loved one could be the first step in saving the Choctaw language. If you have a parent or grandparent who speaks Choctaw, you can call them and ask them to teach you some Choctaw. Billy says this is especially important for young people to do. "It's their connection to their identity, to the historical accounts that are in history books, to relate to the language to relate to your family."

Because of the way Natives and their culture have been looked at in the past, there's

a big gap in generations that speak the language. Often, elders were discouraged from speaking their Native tongue in the past for fear of discrimination or violence. The Nation has stepped up to combat this gap with the Choctaw Nation Language Department.

"Our purpose is to revitalize and get the language perpetuated in as many different avenues that we can," said Billy.

There are language classes available at several high schools in the Choctaw Nation. Southeastern Oklahoma State University offers a minor in the Choctaw Language with courses available online. There are also internet classes available for the community, so it doesn't matter where you live; the language is accessible.

Ayers believes an important step in increasing the number of speakers is by presenting the language to children in their early years.

"That's why I started going to the Child Development Center, telling stories, trying to teach the children the names of the animals, teach them words that have some meaning to them that they could remember," she said.

Billy emphasizes the importance of learning the language.

"No matter who you are or how little you know, it's just so important to begin to say it [Choctaw] out of your mouth, let your ears and your tongue get familiar with saying the sounds," Said Billy.

Chief Batton also emphasizes the need to protect our elders by continuing to wear masks, washing our hands and getting vaccinated when it becomes available to you.

"We need to make sure we're doing the best we can to protect them so that they can help us continue our traditions and our culture," said Batton.


Batton also adds some words of encouragement, "We always say that we're resilient, we're strong, we came across the Trail of Tears...this pandemic will fade, and we'll survive, we'll get past it, that's the Choctaw Spirit."

The lack of Native language speakers is not unique to the Choctaw people. No one spoke the Shinnecock or Unkechaug, languages of Long Island's Native tribes for hundreds of years. Now the few surviving members are in the lengthy and challenging process of attempting to revitalize their language. The Choctaw people are lucky that they still have their language but can look to their fellow Native tribes' struggle as a warning as to what could be.

By taking up the challenge to learn more Choctaw and take part in cultural activities, tribal members can help preserve the language and traditions before they are long lost, like an echo that fades away.

To learn more about the Choctaw language and how you can keep the echo alive please visit the new School of Choctaw Language facebook page at www.facebook.com/SchoolofChoctawLanguage.

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coronavirus.gov

Dr. Anthony Fauci, NIAID Director HHS.gov

Because there currently is no treatment for COVID-19, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the use of convalescent plasma therapy for people with the disease.

Plasma is the liquid portion of blood. About 55% of your blood is plasma; the remaining 45% of your blood are red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets suspended in the plasma.

If you've recovered from COVID-19, there are antibodies in your plasma that can be given to patients to boost their ability to fight the disease.

In a plasma-only donation, blood is drawn from one arm and sent through a machine that collects the plasma. The donor's red blood cells and platelets are then returned to the donor. The whole process only takes a few more minutes than donating whole blood.

You can do your part to help in the whole-of-America fight against the COVID-19 pandemic – find out if you are eligible and how to donate at www.coronavirus.gov.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Remembering those we've lost in 2020

Now that 2021 has begun, I have had a chance to reflect on the past year. Last year was challenging in many ways. One thing that has been weighing heavy on my heart is how many of our Choctaw tribal members we've lost.

My heart and prayers go out to each and every one of you who has experienced loss and grief this past year. Losing a loved one is always painful, and sometimes that pain seems to be more than we can bear. We at the Choctaw Nation want to do our best to help you during this time. I want to let everyone know there are many resources available to help in times of grief. I have felt the impact of grief this year as well. I have lost numerous friends whose memory I will treasure forever. Many of those were our tribal elders and culture keepers.

These were people who I looked up to and admired. I'm

honored to have had the opportunity to get to know them, build friendships and learn from their wisdom over the years. When we lose our elders, we lose another connection to our culture and our history. Of course, we didn't just lose tribal elders; we lost tribal members of all ages. In their own way, each person contributed to our cultural heritage, our traditions and our story.

In honor of those lost in 2020, I have decided to set aside February 18, 2021, as a National Day of Remembrance across the Choctaw Nation. I call on the Choctaw people to solemnly commemorate and pay respect to all those who have passed on.

Until we get this virus under control, we must protect each other. We can do this by washing our hands, wearing masks, getting vaccinated and practicing social distancing. I know that spending time with family and socializing is a big part of our culture. However, we must take steps to protect each other now, so we can spend time with those we love in the future.

I know this is a difficult time in our lives, but we must keep our faith in our Creator and our people. We are descendants of strong and resilient Tvshka Chahta, who passed down that resilience to us. Our ancestors endured many hardships and came out of each one even stronger than they were before. We will make it through this new hardship together thanks to our faith and Chahta spirit. It is up to us to ensure our culture and stories last for generations to come.

For more information on resources on coping with grief, and a special tribute to those we lost in 2020, visit www.choctawnation.com/honoring-those-lost.



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Speech

God places enormous importance on our speech. In Matthew 12:36, Jesus makes this statement, "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement."

In our society today, we are experiencing an outburst of vile and wicked speech. It is common to hear words of an ill nature spoken by people of all ages and races. Even in the Christian community, believers have become "desensitized" to the vulgarity of speech. We read, hear and are exposed to the wrong use of speech so often that we don't deem it as inappropriate.

James, in chapter 1 and verse 26, tells us, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is in vain." The Greek word for "bridle" means "to curb." The speech is actually an outward demonstration of the inward being. An unbridled spirit produces an unbridled speech.

Matthew 12:33-34 reads, "Either make the tree good, and

his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the heart the mouth speaketh." Sometimes even believers email or forward things online that they would never say in person. They seem to think this biblical command does not apply to texting, email or posting someone else's inappropriate speech on social media. Modern social media has taken anger, division and slander to levels never imagined. The cultivation of society to a higher standard is slowly being decayed by the unbridled speech being accepted. Yet, of course, God's standard has not moved.

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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Livestock show canceled

I hope you all are staying warm, healthy and safe in the New Year. The health and safety of our tribal members and communities have been of the utmost importance to us during the global pandemic. We've had to make tough decisions throughout the past year, the most recent being to cancel our annual livestock show. This wasn't a hastily made decision. We had to weigh out the pros and cons of hosting the event this year, and the health and safety of our communities took precedence.

The Choctaw Nation Livestock Show has always been one of my favorite events that we host. I love seeing the hard work and determination our tribal youth put into keeping these animals in tip-top shape and competition ready. Showing livestock and associated programs like 4-H and FFA help build life skills and develop character traits that will help young people in the future. Taking care of show animals is a lot of work. These students take on daily

responsibilities that come with showing animals. By showing livestock, they learn how to select, feed, fit, groom and properly show their animals. They learn how to vaccinate, keep records, add costs and weigh them against future profits. Showing livestock takes a lot of time and patience and helps to build life skills that will help young people in the future.

The show began in 1992 as one event held in Hugo. It started as a swine only show and was open to Native American youth living in the Choctaw Nation. The next year the show was held at the McAlester Expo—and a few years later in Wilburton at the Eastern Oklahoma State College Agricultural facilities. It wasn't long before heifers, steer, goats and lambs were added. The event grew so large that the show was split into a two-day show in Wilburton and Durant. Participants must be a member of 4-H or FFA; must be a student between third and twelfth grade; and must be no older than 19 on the day of the show. There are no boundary guidelines for the livestock show, and participants do not have to live or go to school within the Choctaw Nation's boundaries.

It is always so great to see our young people take an interest in showing livestock. I enjoy watching the families support the youth. Over the years, I've watched younger siblings help groom the animals. I've witnessed parents, teachers and students cheer each other on and encourage each other to succeed. There is a sense of community, which is always great to see.

To the youth who usually participate in this event, this year has been challenging and there have been many disappointments. I want you to know that we recognize and see all of the hard work you put into showing livestock. To the ag teachers, we are so thankful for the many hours you put in and the late nights you work to ensure your students are successful. To the parents, we also recognize the time and money you put in to help your children grow and succeed.

My hope for the future is to host this event next year in a healthy and safe environment. Though COVID-19 has taken us apart, together, we will persevere and continue to support each other through this.

For more information on the Choctaw Nation Livestock Show's history and highlights of some of the best and brightest in the world of livestock shows, check out the story on page 12 of this month's issue of the Biskinik.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program Now Available

By Rachelle Wood

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) assists Choctaw Nation tribal households who rent and are unable to pay their monthly rent payment and/or utilities (electric, water, gas, sewer, trash removal) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. ERAP can assist eligible households with rental and utility arrearages (no earlier than March 13, 2020), current rental payments and current utility payments. Telecommunication services (telephone, cable, Internet) delivered to the rental dwelling are not considered utilities.

This program is limited to one tribal member per household and does not apply to households with a mortgage or tribal members who currently own their home. Lease-to-own situations will be reviewed and eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Eligibility:

An eligible household is defined as a renter household in which at least one or more individuals meet the following criteria:

i. Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred signifi-

cant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19;

ii. Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and

iii. Has a household income at or below 80% of the area median.

Rental assistance provided to an eligible household must not duplicate any other federally funded rental assistance provided to such household.

Although eligible households will be served as applications are received, an applicant who has been unemployed for 90 days prior to application for assistance and households with income at or below 50 percent of the area median will receive priority.

Household income is determined as either the household's total income for calendar year 2020 or the household's monthly income at the time of application. For household incomes determined using monthly income, income eligibility must be redetermined every three months.

Available Assistance:

Eligible households may receive up to 12 months of assistance, plus an additional three months if determined that the extra

months are needed to ensure housing stability and funds are available. The payment of existing housing-related arrears that could result in eviction of an eligible household is prioritized.

Assistance must be provided to reduce an eligible household's rental arrears before the household may receive assistance for future rent payments. Once a household's rental arrears are reduced, grantees may only commit to providing future assistance for up to three months at a time.

Households may reapply for additional assistance at the end of the three-month period if needed and the overall time limit for assistance is not exceeded.

Application Process:

An application for rental assistance may be submitted by either an eligible household or by a landlord on behalf of that eligible household. In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords and utility service providers.

Interested households can apply online via Chahta Achvffa at <https://chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com>. For more information, contact the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation at erap@choctawnation.com or (800) 235-3087.



CASTING CALL

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE CHOCTAW PROUD TO PARTICIPATE IN UPCOMING COMMERCIALS, RADIO SPOTS AND VIDEO PROJECTS.

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Cult 70 Threads: Vintage for the future

By Shelia Kirven

Times have changed. Years ago, wearing second-hand clothing or “hand-me-downs” was necessary more than voluntary. Those who did so were not usually fond of it, as the popular rebranding of second-hand clothing as “vintage” had not come along yet. Today, however, vintage is all the rage. Why pay full price for something new when you can purchase “gently used,” make a statement and protect the environment all at the same time?

Jamila Hamidi, a Choctaw tribal member from Oklahoma City, has studied the clothing industry’s environmental effects and is convinced there is a better approach. She presents to her customers a way to shop that gives new life to discarded pieces. Her online business, Cult 70 Threads, promotes more than just clothing; it proves everything old can and should be new again.

Cult 70 Threads is a new and exciting online business that sells repurposed women’s clothing sourced from thrift and antique shops, spanning decades from the 60s through today. Items are styled together in unique and affordable collections.

According to a Dec. 18, 2018, New York Times article, “Nearly three-fifths of all clothing ends up in incinerators or landfills within a year of being produced. More than 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions are produced by the apparel and footwear industries. And around 20 to 25% of globally produced chemical compounds are utilized in the textile finishing industry.”

Hamidi’s commitment to reducing waste that ends up in landfills helped her start her own business.

She said, “This earth has been so kind to us, and it is far past time we repay it. That is the beautiful thing about vintage. Not only is it unique, expressive and full of life, but every purchase of a second-hand item keeps it out of a landfill for another 3+ years.”

She said a statistic that sticks with her is, on average, people only wear one item of clothing seven times before disposing of it.

“The pieces that wind up in thrift stores, and eventually landfills, have so much more life that they could be getting, and I like the idea of extending the life of that garment,” explained Hamidi. “That prevents it from being in the landfill, which in turn prevents the production of more methane gas, and so it’s a nice little circle when you can keep things moving that are already in existence.”

One of five children, Jamila said her parents “always expected that we all would go to college, and I think it is something we all wanted to do.”

She found that the University of Central Oklahoma had a Fashion Marketing program.

“That got me really excited, and I decided to go down that path,” said Hamidi. “As I was doing that, I was working in retail and educating myself as to what the fashion industry does, and how it affects our economy and environment. That inspired me to do something good with it, even if that was just opening a small business that had a give-back component or environmentally friendly products. As I worked through college and years after in retail, that developed on focusing more on sustainability in the fashion industry and how to make that more accessible to people. That is how I landed on vintage. That’s where the idea came from.”

Hamidi received scholarship money from Choctaw Nation’s Higher Education department while she attended college. “That is a big reason why I, like so many other people, do not have student debt right now, and I am very grateful. It’s such a blessing.”

She is proud of having a strong worth ethic, something her father passed down in her family, and she has quite a resume of retail experience before opening her own business.

In her first year of college, she landed a job in a trendy mall boutique, one she said was very sought after for a girl her age. She moved up quickly through other retail jobs, eventually becoming a store manager and even being called to go between states to help open stores.

“When Covid struck, that gave me the opportunity to begin to work for myself, and that’s how Cult 70 came about,” Hamidi explained.

Using the Choctaw Nation’s Small Business development website resources as a guide, Hamidi developed her business plan and registered her business.

Jamila spends 6-10 hours per week sourcing thrift and antique stores and admits she is highly motivated.

“You have to be committed to wading through a lot, so I’ll spend hours digging in detail through all the racks to find special pieces that I feel deserve another chance at life, another night out,” said Hamidi. “I am very driven when I walk into a store knowing that I am looking for treasure, and that is my objective.”

She says she looks for quality women’s apparel, which allows customers to be as casual or polished as they desire, ranging from everyday wear to professional business attire. She focuses highly on customer and personal service, delivering finely finished and styled garments, truly unique

finds and ensuring the best possible quality purchases.

After purchasing items for resale, Hamidi launders or dry cleans them, makes necessary repairs, and then enters them into inventory. Next comes a weekly drop of new arrivals to both her Instagram and website. Promotions are run regularly, and she makes it fun to come back to the sites to see what items have been added, new promotions, and sales. Each handpicked item is unique and styled together with other finds to present the perfect ensemble. There is even a special spot online where you can send in special requests of items you may be looking for. Hamidi does her own marketing, sales, inventory, shipping and hopes to be doing pop-up sales at various locations around the Oklahoma City metro when it is once again safe to do more in-person events, bringing with her not only clothing, but accessories, bags and shoes.

Hamidi admits, “I could honestly talk about it forever, the reasons I love vintage over new, but a lot of what I want to do is show women, especially younger women who are more brand focused in terms of fashion and style, how to wear second-hand clothing in more of a stylish and fashionable way, or at least use myself as an example. I always have a lot of fun getting dressed, and I much prefer finding one-of-a-kind unique pieces that I don’t expect other people to be wearing. So that is a really fun aspect of wearing vintage, that no one else is going to be caught wearing the same thing as you, and it just feels very expressive, as opposed to wearing one of twelve of the same shirts on a rack.”

Many shoppers are learning that the purchase of quality pieces that never go out of style, rather than pieces in quantity, are better.

Hamidi stressed, “That’s how clothing used to be. You would have a handful of suits or dresses in your closet, and they were really fine fabrics, and they were cared for. That’s why they lasted for years.”

Hamidi’s clothing selections range from affordable everyday wear to sleek and sophisticated classic wear.

Of the clothing offered, Hamidi said, “It



Photo Provided

Jamila Hamidi, owner of Cult 70 Threads, not only promotes fashion sustainability, she also emphasizes the urgency in helping save landfills from being filled with discarded clothing.

gives you the option of buying better, while still being financially savvy.”

Hamidi’s future plans are to eventually style photoshoots, get into film and have a brick-and-mortar location where customers can try on clothing in person, touch, see and feel the fabrics. Projects that promote overall sustainable choices, in general, are her goal. She also hopes to work in collaboration with other local retailers, vintage sellers, and community advocates in promoting events and special projects.

According to Hamidi, vintage is here to stay.

“It is one of many things that is easily accessible. It is financially savvy, and it gives you a more unique expression,” said Hamidi. “I think a lot of people value those things and are able to swap that one aspect of their life for something that’s a little bit more sustainable and environmentally conscious. It is just one more step to living a very conscious and earth-friendly lifestyle. It is kind of trendy, and something to aspire to, to have a second-hand closet.”

For more information on following Jamila on Instagram @cult70threads, or visit her website at <https://www.cult70threads.com>.

EnVision Center to help with tax returns

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation EnVision Center is once again offering the Internal Revenue Service’s free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) services to tribal members. The IRS has offered the service for over 50 years, providing tax help to low-income families, people with disabilities and limited English-speaking taxpayers.

The free VITA service is available to Choctaw tribal members with an annual 2020 household income of \$66,000 or less.

Due to the pandemic, the tax help being offered through the Choctaw Nation will be virtual. However, if you need to bring forms in, you can make an appointment to drop them off. You will not be able to be there while the taxes are completed in accordance with COVID-19 safety protocols.

Carrie Blackmon, Director of Service Coordination at the EnVision Center, said, “We’re really trying to do everything virtually, but there are some cases that they just don’t have Internet access or ways to scan things. We try to accommodate everybody, especially our elders.”

The free VITA services are a reliable and trusted way to get help preparing your tax returns. The volunteers working to prepare the tax returns must go through tax law training that often exceeds IRS standards. There is also a quality review check for every tax return prepared through the VITA program before filing.

A common question that is coming up more frequently is if tribal members are required to pay state income tax.

If you believe you may be entitled to tax relief, it is advised that you act as soon as possible in order to meet any applicable deadlines for filing an amended state tax return. The Choctaw Nation does not provide personal tax advice or preparation services that address potential tribal exemptions.

Tribal members who have questions about state income tax exemptions, amended returns, or other personal tax matters should contact a professional tax preparer or seek further information from the Oklahoma Tax Commission at ok.gov/tax or the Taxpayer Service Center at 405-521-3160 or by email at help@tax.ok.gov.

Will Prepare
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wages, salaries, etc. (Form W-2)• Interest Income (Form 1099-INT)• Dividends Received (Form 1099-DIV)• State Tax Refunds (Form 1099-G)• Unemployment Benefits (Form 1099-G)• IRA Distributions (Form 1099-R)• Pension Income (Forms 1099-R, RRB-1099, CSA-1099)• Social Security Benefits (Form SSA-1099) (RRB-1099)• Simple Capital Gain/Loss (Form 1099-B) limited• Sale of Home (Form 1099-S) limited• Self-employed Income (Form 1099-MISC) limited• Gambling Winnings (Form W-2G)• Cancellation of Debt (Form 1099-C) limited• Health Savings Accounts (Form 1099-SA) limited• Itemized Deductions limited• Education Credits (Form 1098-T)• Child Tax Credit • Earned Income Credit• Health Insurance Statements (Forms 1095-A, B or C)• Prior Year and Amended Returns limited• Form 8615 (tax on certain children’s unearned income) limited

Will Not Prepare

- Schedule C with loss, depreciation or business use of home
- Complicated Schedule D (capital gains and losses)
- Form SS-5 (request for Social Security Number)
- Form 8606 (non-deductible IRA)
- Form 8814 (child taxed at parent’s tax rate)
- Form SS-8 (determination of worker status for purposes of federal employment taxes and income tax withholding)
- Parts 4 & 5 of Form 8962 (Premium Tax Credits)

What to Bring

- For married filing joint, both spouses must be present
- Photo identification for you and your spouse (if filing joint return)
- Social Security cards or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number documents for you, your spouse, and dependents
- Birth dates for you, spouse, and dependents
- A copy of last year’s tax return
- All Forms W-2, 1098, and 1099
- Form 1095-A (Marketplace Health Insurance)
- Information for other income
- Information for all deductions/credits
- Total paid to day care provider and their tax ID number
- For direct deposit of refund, proof of account
- For prior year returns, copies of income transcripts from IRS if Form W-2 not available

To get help with your tax return you can contact the EnVision Center at 918-647-3665 or EnVisionCenter@choctawnation.com.

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GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

REVIVING AND SUSTAINING OUR CHOCTAW TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

By revitalizing our traditional crops and sharing related knowledge, the Growing Hope Program helps make it possible to revitalize traditional Choctaw foods. These foods are an important part of Choctaw heritage. Both tasty and healthy, they provide an opportunity to use our own culture to help us live healthier lives today.

To learn more about the Growing Hope Initiative and seed availability, contact Jacqueline Putman at 580-380-9397.

This program is funded in part through the US Department of Agriculture.

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services



James Dry

District 9

Halito. We are excited to be in the New Year and look forward to seeing what 2021 brings to our great Nation. Many of our activities have changed because of the pandemic, but we continue to provide our drive-thru lunches on Wednesdays at the Choctaw Community Center. Our center has served over 4,500 meals the past four months and supplied many masks, gloves and other items to help our seniors in District 9. I would like to thank all our staff and volunteers who help during our Wednesday lunches.

Our community center was able to host a convalescent blood drive with the Oklahoma Blood Institute in January, and 16 people were able to donate, which was the most donations received in one day across the state. My family and I had COVID, and it was a pleasure to be able to donate

convalescent plasma to help others. I would like to thank Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. and Councilman Anthony Dillard for donating as well.

We are very proud to announce that District 9 has 30 new homeowners who received keys through our LEAP program this past year. You may visit www.choctawnation.com/LEAP to apply through this program. Our expansion on the new casino is on track, and we look forward to the opening in late summer 2021. This project will also create over 1,000 new positions. Please visit www.careers.choctawnation.com/ or call 800-522-6170 and apply today. We also have our Cultural Center, Daycare and Independent elderly construction projects going on, and we look forward to these being completed in the very near future.

Our Durant Clinic has been very busy administering COVID vaccinations to our tribal members. Our health care workers have been doing an outstanding job! If you have any questions about testing or vaccinations, please call our Durant clinic at 580-920-2100.

We continue to pray for everyone who has lost a loved one this past year and who has been impacted by COVID. May God bless each and every one. Yakoke.



District 9 Councilman James Dry, Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr., Chief Gary Batton and District 10 Councilman Anthony Dillard show off their bandages after donating convalescent plasma.

Tribal departments receive intensive ICWA training

By Shelia Kirven

On January 13, over 100 tribal associates from Legal, Judicial, Children and Family Services, and Tribal Police participated in an intensive virtual training series on the Indian Child Welfare Act. Participants trained one day per week for four weeks.

The Continuing Legal Education (CLE) training was provided to assist departments that are involved in dealing with Indian children and the Indian Child Welfare Act. The Choctaw Nation worked with facilitators to ensure the training could proceed despite COVID-related roadblocks and that it was tailored to fit the needs of the tribe.

Conference participants ranged from tribal judges and criminal investigators to attorneys and caseworkers. Subjects for the conference included those surrounding the Indian Child Welfare Act, including understanding the Tribal Social Worker's role in state court, active efforts to prevent removal, removal proceedings, adjudication, foster care placement, intervention, permanency, guardianship, qualified expert witnesses, jurisdiction and emergency removal.

Appellate updates, the ICWA Statute, and ICWA regulations were used as reference materials, along with guidelines for implementing the Indian Child Welfare Act. Providing and participation in the training by the varying

departmental staff ensures that knowledge and practices remain consistent within Choctaw Nation. It ensures that the same goals are shared by all staff, which in turn the best care and services through Tribal Court for Choctaw Nation members and non-member Indian families.

The Choctaw Nation has seen an increase in the number of cases since the impact of the *McGirt v. Oklahoma Supreme Court* decision, which has, in turn, increased the need for additional staff to deal with caseloads. The training emphasized to new staff the extreme importance of the act, as well as its goals and enforcement.

The conference was conducted by Kathryn E. Ford, a nationally recognized leading expert in the field of ICWA. Ford is the current Director of the Indian Law Clinic at Michigan State University College of Law and a published author of articles in various publications, including the *Harvard Public Health Review*, *George Mason Law Review*, *Saint Louis University Law Journal*, and *American Indian Law Review*. She is the author of *American Indian Children and the Law*, published by Carolina Academic Press, and co-editor of *Facing the Future: the Indian Child Welfare Act* at 30.

The training was conducted through the Whitener Group, a team dedicated to the advancement and sustainability of Indian tribes.



Anthony Dillard

District 10

Halito, chim achukma from District 10. I hope all is well with you and your families. I am encouraged that we may be through the worst part of the pandemic. Lately, our numbers continue to decline, with fewer positive cases reported every day, and critical care beds are becoming more available throughout our region. A big shout out to our healthcare heroes who stepped up to the challenge of taking care of our health care needs throughout this trying time!

Staying on the pandemic topic, as we closely monitor federal resources to help mitigate the hardships faced by our families during this trying time, the newest opportunity for assistance is our ERAP (Emergency rental assistance program). The money was awarded to our Choctaw Housing Authority from the U.S. Treasury Department. This money can be used for rent and utilities of eligible applicants who have a household income at or below 80% of the area median income or who qualify for unemployment—maximum benefit up to 12 months of assistance, per eligible Choctaw Nation tribal member. A new application will be required for assistance. For more details, please contact the Choctaw Nation Housing Authority Toll-Free at 800-235-3087 or local at 580-326-7521.

We have been so blessed in District 10 with unemployment not being too bad this past year, although it did rise. The Highway 69/75 corridor helps keep us going stronger than some, although we should strive to create better jobs to grow our per capita income. Atoka's growth is exciting, and so much of this momentum seems to be the drone testing at our Daisy Ranch site. Everyone that the Atoka community's Economic Development team brings to recruit showcases the test site and the opportunity surrounding its future growth. Our Choctaw Economic Development department evaluates businesses and investment opportunities looking to bring more jobs to our area.

Some questions have come up regarding state income tax. The recent Supreme Court decision affirmed the Creek Nation's reservation status, which should transfer to all five tribal territories. The official statement of the Choctaw Nation is: "If you believe you may be entitled to tax relief, we advise that you act as soon as possible to meet any applicable deadlines for filing an amended state tax return. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma does not provide personal tax advice or preparation services. Tribal members who have questions about state income tax exemptions, amended returns, or other personal tax matters should contact a professional tax preparer or seek further information from the Oklahoma Tax Commission at Ok. Gov./tax or the Taxpayer Service Center at 405-521-3160 or by email at help@tax.ok.gov."

I want to take this opportunity to give a shout out to the Atoka Nutrition staff and the field office staff, along with volunteers across the Choctaw Nation who help us get the meals boxed and served every Wednesday of each week. Their efforts are very much appreciated to help serve our tribal members. We are all looking forward to when we can safely resume our weekly luncheons and community gatherings. Yakoke.

Chahta Foundation now accepting applications

By Christian Toews

Since its inception, the Foundation has been able to award over \$2.5 million in scholarships. These scholarships are made possible by the thousands of individuals who generously donate to support Choctaw students. Donor support has created multiple new scholarships with approximately \$370,000 to be awarded to students this upcoming 2021-2022 school year. The competitive scholarship opportunities are for high school seniors through doctorate-level Choctaw students pursuing a college or technical degree.

Despite everything going on in 2020, we continued to see many examples of generosity. We are so thankful to everyone who helps to make these scholarships available to our tribal members," said Seth Fairchild, Executive Director of the Chahta Foundation.

While providing scholarships is a large part of the Chahta Foundation's mission, they also work to connect scholarship applicants with job opportunities, according to Fairchild. He said they work with the Tribe's Human Resources department to project their hiring needs and keep students informed of these job opportunities.

"There are a lot of talented tribal members studying in many diverse fields. We try to at least make them aware of opportunities at the Choctaw Nation," he said.

The Chahta Foundation works with students each year to revise the application to make the process as easy as possible. Fairchild said, "ChahtaFoundation.com/Scholarships offers a variety of resources for students, including scholarship descriptions, step-by-step instructions, and resume templates.

To apply for the 2021 Chahta Foundation Scholarships, please visit ChahtaFoundation.com/scholarships and select the "Apply Now" button, which will take you to the universal application portal. All the scholarships listed on the scholarship tab are included when you fill out the application, and it automatically filters to match you with everything you qualify for.

The application will ask for general information, but Fairchild encourages students to take their time with their short answer responses. "The short answers are at most 250 words each and give the selection committee a way to get to know the student. These answers can have a significant impact on the selection process," he said.

Fairchild encourages those considering applying or having questions about scholarships to reach out to the Chahta Foundation. "Our team is here to help in any way we can. Whether you're trying to navigate funding opportunities, degree plans or college choice, please reach out and let us visit with you," explained Fairchild.

If you would like more information on the Chahta Foundation, the scholarships they offer or would like to apply for a scholarship, visit www.chahtafoundation.com.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Competitive scholarships
for all Choctaw students
from High School Senior
to Doctorate level degrees.

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**TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP
AND COVID-19 GUIDELINES**

The Choctaw Nation is taking numerous steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Tribal Membership Department has released important guidelines that we want all members to be aware of.

The safest option for obtaining a tribal membership application is through our online application access.

Guidance can be found at


choctawnation.com/contacts-applications/cdibmembership-information

All membership cards are being mailed to recipients until further notice. Unfortunately, this means same-day card obtainment will not be available. Applications, supporting documentation, and photos can be emailed or mailed to us at the address listed below.

800-522-6170 EXT 4030
CDIB-MEMBERSHIP@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA | ATTN: TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP
PO BOX 1210 | DURANT, OK 74702

Choctaw Nation Member Services

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

CHOCTAWCOUNTRY.COM

Choctaw Cultural Services honors memory of teacher Brian Moreland

By Ian Thompson

On Jan 29, 2021, our community unexpectedly lost a man who had touched many lives through teaching art to Choctaw tribal members in Oklahoma. Brian Moreland began contracting with Cultural Services in 2006, teaching at the first Culture Camp that Choctaw Nation offered. Since then, he had contracted with the Historic Preservation Department to teach hundreds of traditional pottery classes around the Choctaw Nation. In Atoka/ Antlers he taught a bi-weekly pottery class for a decade, developing close friendships with class participants from the community. Those who knew him remember his kindness and willingness to help anyone who needed it. His care for people was demonstrated through acts like the time he volunteered to move the sister of a regular class attendee from Tulsa to Poteau. Below are a few statements from students and people who worked with Brian:

“He was full of information and knew his pottery knowledge well and was always willing to share. My sister and I couldn’t have

asked for a better teacher or friend.”

-Sue Meshaya, long-time pottery student and friend

“Brian will be truly missed; he had a genuine passion for serving and his contribution to the Choctaw people will not be forgotten.”

-Vangie Robinson, Choctaw Nation pottery teacher

“Brian Moreland was committed and sensitive to teaching our Choctaw pottery class. He was a kind person and a friend to many. He will truly be missed. May the great spirit be with him in his heavenly journey.”

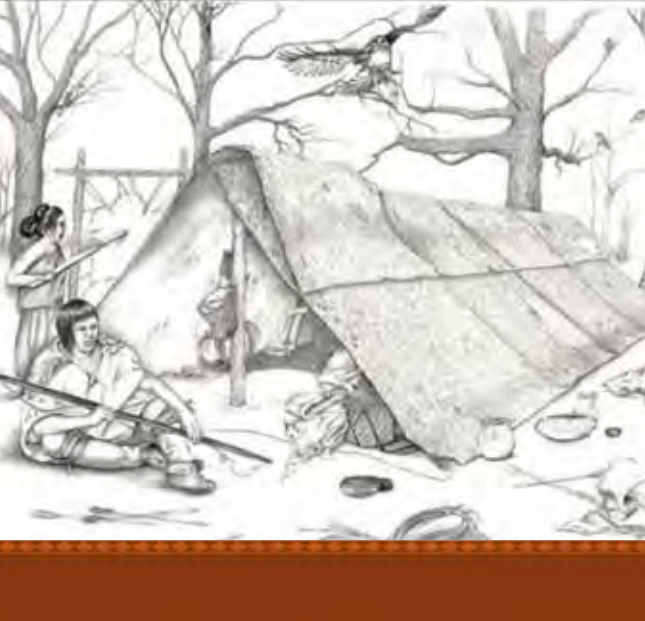
-Sue Folsom, Executive Director of Cultural Services



Brian Moreland
1968-2021

Did You Know?

Choctaw society developed out of a long and intimate relationship with the plants, animals, soil, and water of our homeland in the Southeast. Through this relationship, Choctaw ancestors engineered a food way that minimized their risk of going hungry by relying on a combination of four independent food systems: agriculture, gathering wild plants, fishing, and hunting. This food way was flexible enough to adapt to fluctuating conditions. For example, if it was a bad year for crops or wild plants, Choctaw communities relied more heavily on hunting and fishing to get their sustenance and vice-versa. (Iti Fabvssa Biskinik Dec 2015)



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
Chief*

*Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief*

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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.

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CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

February 13, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session January 9, 2021
 - b. Special Session February 1, 2021
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #5– Ken Davis, District #5 Mr. Davis served in the Army from 1966-1969 achieving the rank of Sergeant.
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
7. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. **Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Latimer County into Trust Status with the United States of Americ.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - b. **Approve Business Lease G09-1970 (4200238896) in Favor of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Latimer County, Oklahoma.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed.
 - c. **Approve the Funds and Budget for 2020 CARE Federal Funding: Hope for COVID: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Emergency COVID-19 Grant.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - d. **Approve Application for the Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG).** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed

Lin Ogg – Individual Speaker – Tribal Health/Diabetes Lin Ogg endorsed the benefits of natural remedies (including diet/nutrition) for health and well being. “I love my tribe, and want to see everyone healthy.” She also encouraged tribal members to trust their health to God.

David Hill – Individual Speaker – Importance of Sovereignty - Not in Attendance.

6. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Latimer County into Trust Status with the United States of Americ.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
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- d. **Approve Application for the Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG).** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed

8. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
9. OLD BUSINESS
10. ADJOURNMENT
11. CLOSING PRAYER

All Council Members present with the exception of Perry Thompson.

NOTES

Dear Chief,
Thank you and all of the Choctaw Nation for the help during this COVID-19 crisis. The Elder Food Program has been a blessing. Continue the good work you and our Nation have done.

Sincerely,
The Findley Family

I want to express my appreciation for the help I received from the Elder Food Program. It certainly helped our money go farther during the year of the COVID. It truly was a blessing; THANK YOU!

Sincerely,
Patricia Luecke

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

March 3	Idabel	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 5	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 9	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 10	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 12	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 16	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 17	Stigler	By Appointment
March 17	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 19	Crowder	By Appointment
March 23	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
March 25	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
March 30	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

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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:

Crowder Community Center
March 12, 2021
9:00 – 11:00



Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna March Language Lesson

KIL IKHVNA – LET'S LEARN

tolobli – jump
vlla nakni – boy
okchakko – blue
vlla tek – girl
tuklo – two
halito -hello

achvffa – one
lakna – yellow
vt/yvt - the
balili – run
homma- red
tuchina - three

MATCHING - Match the English word to the Choctaw word.

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|-----------|
| 1. vlla tek | _____ | a. the, a |
| 2. okchakko | _____ | b. yellow |
| 3. halito | _____ | c. boy |
| 4. lakna | _____ | d. blue |
| 5. balili | _____ | e. jump |
| 6. homma | _____ | f. run |
| 7. vlla nakni | _____ | g. red |
| 8. tolobli | _____ | h. girl |
| 9. vt /yvt | _____ | i. hello |

TRANSLATION - Circle the correct English translation.

1. Vlla tek vt tolobli.
a. The girl jumps/is jumping.
b. The girl runs/is running.
2. Vlla nakni yvt balili.
a. The girls are running.
b. The boy runs/is running.

NUMBERS – Write the numeral for each number name.

a. tuchina_____ b. achvffa_____ c. tuklo_____

Matching: 1.h, 2.d, 3.i, 4.b, 5.f, 6.g, 7.c, 8.e, 9.vt/yvt

Translations: 1.a, 2.b

Numbers: a.3, b.1, c.2

www.choctawschool.com

Clyda Jean Hunter

Clyda Jean (Sage) Hunter, 75, passed away Dec. 3, 2020.

Clyda was born Oct. 17, 1945, in Buffalo Valley, Okla., to Opal (Watson) and Clyde Sage.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and seven siblings.

Clyda is survived by her husband Vern; son Jeff Hunter and spouse Christie; grandchildren Rhett Hunter, Leah Hunter, and Zack Hines; brother Bob Sage; sister Claudean Erdner and spouse Bill; and many nieces, nephews, and a host of friends that she considered family.

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

**Patty Marie Davis**

Patty Marie Davis, 59, passed away Sept. 4, 2020.

Patty was born April 13, 1961, in Talihina, Okla., to Leonard and Mildred (Jones) Davis.

She was preceded in death by her father; grandson Maddox Sutter; grandparents Charley and Haley Davis, and Willie and Rebecca Jones; niece Brandi Davis; brothers Jerry Davis and Ted Davis; brother-in-law Glen Goff; and aunt Lucille Timmons.

Patty is survived by daughters Afton Otto and Haley Otto; mother Mildred Davis; sisters Pam Goff, Elwanda Wiggins and spouse Skip, and Peggy Rowe and spouse Jim; brother Charley Davis and spouse Kathy; grandsons Braylon Sutter and Braxton Bucracker; best friend JoNaile Owens; and a host of nieces, nephews, and friends.

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

**Robert Henry Westbrook**

Robert Henry Westbrook, 88, passed away Dec. 8, 2020.

Robert was born Jan. 22, 1932, in DeQueen, Ark., to Oscar Westbrook and Rena (Gardner) Westbrook.

He was preceded in death by his wife Patricia L. Westbrook; his parents; brothers Claud E. Welch Jr., Billy, O.B., and Donald Westbrook; sisters Patsy and Jonell; and great-granddaughter Harley Westbrook.

Robert is survived by brother David L. Westbrook; sons Robert H. Jr., Walter L., and Curtis W. Westbrook; daughter Virginia M. Pennington; nine grandchildren; and twelve great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Cashatt Legacy Funerals](#).

**Paula Louise Meadows**

Paula Louise Meadows, 56, passed away Dec. 3, 2020.

Paula was born Dec. 31, 1963, to Paul Lawrence Meadows Sr. and Thelma (Factory) Meadows.

She was preceded in death by her father; aunt Roberta Johnson; grandmother Helen Butler; and grandparents Oscar and Reba Factory.

Paula is survived by her mother; brothers Jerry Meadows, Gary Meadows and spouse Yuka, and Paul Meadows Jr. and fiancée Lori Weeks; sister Reba Nichols; aunts Mary Factory, Wilma Green, Marjorie Factory, Lillian Hawkins, and Valerie Alexander; uncles Samuel Butler, and Larry Butler and spouse; cousin Carolyn “Sue” Carter; along with numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and other family and friends.

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

**Larry Tommy Burleson**

Larry Tommy Burleson, 79, passed away Jan. 9, 2021.

Larry was born Feb. 14, 1941, in Clayville, Okla., to Opal (Isom) and Joshua Burleson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and his wife Betty Griggs Burleson.

Larry is survived by his children Rocky Burleson and spouse Cheryl, Youlonda Weems and spouse Kenny, Sandra Twaddle and spouse Terry, Rhonda Scott and spouse Johnnie, Dion Burleson and friend Patti Rowan, and Dawnda Palmer and spouse Scott; grandchildren Talena Womack, Keaton Womack, Sharena Bewley, Branda Davis, Shane Twaddle, Chad Twaddle, Joshie Scott, Jamie Moore, Landon Burleson, LeeAnna Burleson, Kalen Palmer, Keaton Palmer, and Katlyn Griggs; 20 great-grandchildren; as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of friends.

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

**Rozella Boyter**

Rozella (Ludlow) Boyter, 85, passed away Nov. 26, 2020.

Rozella was born Sept. 22, 1935, in Ludlow, Okla., to Rev. David Silward Ludlow and Annie Ludlow.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son Stuart Craig Boyter; granddaughter Olivia Rose Aldridge; brothers Samuel Ludlow and Joel Ludlow; sister Gladiola Ludlow Burch; sons-in-law Jerry Wayne Sadongei and Richard Looking Glass.

Rozella is survived by daughter Marsilla Dean Sampson Sadongei, Marva Jo Sampson, Dawn Renee’ Sampson Aldridge, and Annie Boyter Looking Glass; grandchildren Norman Bradley Sampson and spouse Jody, Justin Craig Boyter, Michael Ray Aldridge Jr., Lindsay Ryan Looking Glass, and Troy Dean Aldridge; great-granddaughters Alyssia Raine Sampson and Keira Nizhoni Sampson; brothers Nathan Paul Ludlow and spouse Frances, and David Ludlow Jr. and spouse Geraldine; sister Geraldine Ludlow Rowell and spouse Philip; and many family members and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

**Sandra Jo Southerland Lucas**

Sandra Jo Southerland Lucas, 42, passed away Dec. 23, 2020.

Sandra was born Jan. 2, 1978, in Spearman, TX, to Joe and Donna Southerland.

She is survived by sons Ashton and Connor Lucas; husband Shane; stepdaughter Katelyn Lucas; her parents; sister Stephanie Dodson and spouse Jeremiah; nephews Dalton and Lathan Dodson; father and mother-in-law Larry and Rita Lucas; sister-in-law Kristi Thelander and spouse Mike; nieces and nephews Kourtney and Grant Sacco, Kourtney and Noah Schniederjan, Justice Thelander, Emily Thelander; and great-nephew Shepard Thelander.

For the full obituary, please visit [McNeil’s Funeral home](#).

**KC Darnell Taylor**

KC Darnell Taylor, 37, passed away Nov. 23, 2020.

KC was born Sept. 11, 1983, in Ada, Okla., to Mary Taylor.

He was preceded in death by a nephew; uncle; aunt; two cousins; and his grandfather.

KC is survived by his mother; brothers Albert Thomas and Justin Taylor; sisters Sondra Willmond, Carmen Kinnard, and Makeshia Brown; ten nephews; five nieces; and numerous cousins.

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

**Vera Mae Eyachabbe**

Vera Mae Eyachabbe, 71, passed away Jan. 3, 2021.

Vera was born Jan. 21, 1949, in Wright City, to Hickman and Alzira (Columbus) Wallace.

She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Mary Alzira; brothers Mitchell Ray Wallace, Hickman “Slick” Wallace Jr., and Billy Wallace; and sister Helen Wallace.

Vera is survived by son Mark Eyachabbe; brothers Ricky Wallace and Tony Wallace and spouse Sarah; sisters Louise Laney and spouse Wyley, Patricia Wallace, Sandra Wallace, Susan Wallace, and Bobbie Wallace; special cousins Phebe Harley and spouse Billy, Joyce Watkins and spouse Lee, and Barbara Wallace; many special nieces and nephews; special friend Nancy Causey; along with many other special friends.

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

**Janice Lanetta Bitsoi**

Janice Lanetta (Frazier) Bitsoi, 58, passed away Dec. 14, 2020.

Janice was born Sept. 2, 1962, in Talihina, Okla., to Gilbert and Alice (King) Frazier.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Stella Walker; brothers Michael, Lonnie and Aaron Frazier; grandparents Lena and Isaac King; and nephew Dakota Walker.

Janice is survived by her husband Deswood Bitsoi; sister Lisa Frazier; niece Jayde Frazier; nephews Jordy Frazier and Jrue Frazier; special cousins Bryan Frazier, Vanessa Allen, Sonny Frazier, and Shelli Daley; along with other cousins and relatives.

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

**Lloyd Ray Loman**

Lloyd Ray Loman, 67, passed away Nov. 14, 2020.

Lloyd was born June 20, 1953, in Antlers, Okla., to Jimmie and Myrtle (Welsley) Loman.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Richard Loman.

Lloyd is survived by his wife Rebecca Loman; children Raymond Loman, Lisa Marie Bear and spouse Patrick, and Anthony Lloyd Loman; brothers James Loman, Terry Loman, and Howard Loman; sisters Clairra Battice, Paula Jones, Ruby Theophilidis, and Iwana Morris; grandchildren William Ray Bear, Wesley James Bear, and Lylee Marie Bear, Raina Loman; and great-grandson Xavier Martinez.

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

**Loretta Belle Thompson-Perigo**

Loretta Belle Thompson-Perigo, 72, passed away Dec. 26, 2020.

Loretta was born June 26, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to Jeremiah Thompson and Bernice Franklin-Thompson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Gary Perigo; her parents; and brothers Jeremiah Jr. Thompson and Tommy Thompson.

Loretta is survived by her children Patricia Wesley, Clinton Sago, and Dawn Perigo; grandsons Cody and Dakota Evans; sisters Janie Rice, Elsie Lena, Faye Sago, and Sandra Thompson; brother Herman Thompson; and numerous nieces and nephews, along with her friends.

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

**Nora Christine Johnico**

Nora Christine Johnico, 90, passed away Jan. 9, 2021.

Nora was born Dec. 3, 1930, in Bennington, Okla., to Isabel (Anchahubbi) and Isom Oshter.

She was preceded in death by her husband Franch Johnico; brother Lewis Frye; daughters Sandra Nowabbi and Verla Hatcher; and grandsons Michael Nowabbi and Miko Nowabbi.

Nora is survived by her children Billie Nowabbi, Sharon Polk and spouse Willard, Wanda Johnico, Lisa Melton and spouse Mike, Franch Johnico Jr., and Blake Johnico; son-in-law Chuck Hatcher; four granddaughters; seven grandsons; eight great-granddaughters; 11 great-grandsons; four great-great-granddaughters; as well as many nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of friends.

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

**Ron Brandy**

Ron Brandy, 53, passed away Jan. 6, 2021.

Ron was born Aug. 16, 1967, in Dallas, TX., to Lewis Brandy Jr. and Wilma (Billy) Brandy.

He was preceded in death by his father.

Ron is survived by his wife Rosalie Brandy; daughter Feather Brandy; stepsons Damon Damron and Nathan Parker; his mother; brothers Clint Brandy and Stacey Brandy; granddaughters Jillian Parker and Addison Parker; aunt Annie Rowe; uncle James “Sonny” Billy; niece MyKayle Brandy; nephews Kaleb “Bam” Brandy, and Isaac Brandy; and dachshund baby girl Bella.

For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

**Harolyn Mallett**

Harolyn (Roberson) Mallett, 69, passed away Jan. 8, 2021.

Harolyn was born Feb. 4, 1951, to Harold and Lueda Roberson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and daughter Shelley Mallett.

Harolyn is survived by long-time partner Tommy Lewis; children Brad Mallett and spouse Kristi, and Rodney Mallett; grandchildren Crystal Matthews and spouse Michael, and Bo Mallett; and brother Ellis Roberson and spouse Carolyn.

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

**Anna Lee Boone**

Anna Lee Boone, 96, passed away Jan. 9, 2021.

Anna was born March 15, 1924, in Wister, Okla., to Eli and Minnie Blue.

She was preceded in death by her husband Joseph Lee Boone; her parents; and daughter JoAnne Boone.

Anna is survived by her brother Jerry Blue; sister Christine Biddie; daughter Janet Rogers; grandchildren Jennifer Sebo and spouse Gary, Christopher Wall, and Eli Wall; great-grandchildren Jordin Wayt, Whitney Rabon, Taylor Langdon, Emily Wall, Kaitlynn Deans, Colton Wall, Madison Wall, and Jacie Wall; and great-great-grandchildren Chloe Langdon and Hudson Lee Rabon.

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

**Charles Burris**

Charles “Bob” “Huck” Burris, 77, passed away Oct. 2, 2020.

Bob was born June 5, 1943, in Wilburton, Okla., to John and Bernice Burris.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Huck, Kirk, Joe, and Forbus; sisters Christine Boone and Shirley Holt; grandson Cody Burris; and his best friend Pat Bolding.

Bob is survived by his dog Come On; daughter Gloria Starr and spouse Toby; sons Ed and Charles Burris; brothers T.J. “Jack” Burris, and James “Blue” Burris and spouse Jeannie; sisters Melba Vaughan and Helen Willis; 12 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and other family members and friends.

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

**Billy Darel Marris**

Billy Darel Marris, 62, passed away Dec. 31, 2020.

Billy was born July 9, 1958, in Clayton, Okla., to Ruth Ann Marris.

He was preceded in death by his mother; and grandchild Jade Marris.

Billy is survived by his children Robyn Marris, Tony Wells and spouse Crystal, Billie Dawn Briggs, Marissa Marris, Taz Marris, Brandon Marris, and Jaylyn Marris; 14 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; brother Gary Marris and spouse Karri; sister Anita Rock and spouse Robbie; daughter-in-law Elizzia McGregor; stepfather Bill Bender; and mother-in-law Mossy Love.

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

**Justin Craig Boyter**

Justin Craig Boyter, 33, passed away Dec. 25, 2020.

Justin was born Dec. 18, 1987, in Dallas, TX., to Annie Boyter and Michael Taylor.

He was preceded in death by his stepfather Richard Looking Glass; grandmother Rozella Ludlow Boyter; uncle Stuart Craig Boyter; and cousin Olivia Rose Aldridge.

Justin is survived by his mother; sister Lindsay Ryan Looking Glass; aunts Marsilla Sampson Sandongei, Marva Sampson, and Dawn Sampson Aldridge; cousins Bradley Sampson and spouse Jody, Michael Aldridge Jr., Tony Aldridge, Alyssia Sampson and Keira Sampson.

For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

**Randy Quin Hinton**

Randy Quin Hinton, 60, passed away Dec. 15, 2020.

Randy was born Jan. 30, 1960, in Ashdown, Ark., to Virginia Sue Matthews and William Elbert Hinton.

He was preceded in death by brothers Rodney, Pete, and Kirk Allen Hinton.

Randy is survived by his wife Dene’ Baker Hinton; daughter Mitzi Farchette and spouse John; stepdaughter Vanessa Baker and very special friend Robert Martinez; sisters Betty Brown and Sandra Dees; and grandchildren Hadley Farchette and Layne Sams.

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



Dennis Odell Owens

Dennis Odell Owens, 69, passed away Jan. 13, 2021.

Dennis was born March 3, 1951, in Spiro, Okla., to Verna Mae (Mackey) Owens and Rubin Livingston Owens.

He was preceded in death by his parents; infant daughter Angela Owens; two infant granddaughters; and brother Ruben Owens.

Dennis is survived by his wife Linda; daughters Lanell McGehee and spouse Paul, and Lisa Shipman and spouse Russell; son Robert Owens; grandchildren Miranda, Cheyenne, Lindsey, Raven, John, Donna, Gary, and Richard; great-grandchildren Maya, Lara, Lila, Liam, Lacy, Lana, Sidney, and Kylie; sisters Terry Grizzle and spouse Herbie, Debbie Welker, and Sharon Edwards; honorary brother Shiney Foyil; numerous nieces and nephews, other relatives and loved ones.

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

Martishia Reba Cathey

Martishia Reba Cathey, 83, passed away Jan. 4, 2021.

Reba was born Feb. 16, 1937, in Wilburton, Okla., to Alphas M. and Artemisia Redwine.

She is survived by daughter Leslee Cathey Quesada and spouse Oscar; sons Mitchell Cathey and Allen Cathey; daughter Arden Cathey and spouse Carla Hooks; sisters Elena Dolly Gaines and Eva Lee Rich; numerous nieces and nephews, cousins, and extended family, along with her beloved dog Gunner.

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

Ruth Elaine Kemp

Ruth Elaine Kemp, 85, passed away Dec. 24, 2020.

Ruth was born Feb. 9, 1935, in Weathers, Okla., to David L. Baker and Sisen (Muckintubby) Baker.

She was preceded in death by her parents; the father of her children Hubert Kemp Sr.; son Hubert Kemp Jr.; sister Cecelia Williams and spouse Joe; and infant granddaughter Kalyn Denise Kemp.

Ruth is survived by her children Doris Coley and spouse Bobby, Kenneth Kemp, Darla Accord and spouse Rodney, Michael Kemp Sr. and spouse Teresa, and Judy Sheets; 14 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; sister Christine Baker; brother Arnold Baker and spouse Patti; along with nieces, nephews, and other family and friends.

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

James Alfred Pamplin

James “Jim” Alfred Pamplin, 88, passed away Jan. 6, 2021.

Jim was born Sept. 16, 1932, in Bennington, Okla., to Arlo and Minerva Pamplin.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters JoAnn Frank and Phyllis Knight; brothers Claude Billy, Arnold Bully, and Charles Fobb; and son Mark.

Jim is survived by his children DeBeca Fox, Randy Pamplin, and Gary Pamplin; sisters Verna Peters, Bernice Williams, Louella Fobb, and Eleanor Palmer; grandsons Jeffery Pamplin and Travis Pamplin; granddaughters Randi Jo Cofer and Makayla Pamplin; great-grandson Preston Pamplin; and great-granddaughters Raleigh Cofer, Raegan Cofer, and Rebeka Cofer.

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

Benjamin Austin

Benjamin Austin, 45, passed away Jan. 11, 2021.

Benjamin was born June 8, 1975, in Talihina, Okla., to Diana Darlene Austin and Raymond Dwight Austin.

He was preceded in death by his mother; and sister F. Austin.

Benjamin is survived by his wife Pearl R. (Jones) Austin; his parents; stepchildren Jennifer and Michael Jones, Stephanie Jones and Rain Koepke, Shirley James and Nahali Phillips, Chipper, Traice, and Braxton; brothers Earl Austin, and Nathan Austin and Dawn and children Zach and Zoe Bolding, and Justice Austin; sisters Lavonda Montgomery and spouse Branden and children Arizona Taylor and spouse Micah, and Dakota Taylor; sister Melissa Austin and Daniel Clifford and children Avery, Zeck, and Logan Austin.

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

Mary Lou Meashintubby

Mary Lou (James) Meashintubby, 70, passed away Dec. 19, 2020.

Mary Lou was born Jan. 10, 1950, in Honobia, Okla., to Lena Ruth (Samuel) and Junior Ray James.

She was preceded in death by her husband Norman Meashintubby Jr.; sons Nathan Meashintubby and Norris Meashintubby; grandson Mark Meashintubby; brothers Mitchell James and Eugene James; and sister Martha James.

Mary is survived by her children Norval Meashintubby and spouse Deleesa, Neville Meashintubby and spouse Alicia, Archie Meashintubby, Sherry Balderas and spouse Isidro, and Shirley Meashintubby; grandchildren Anissa, Melanie, Brandon, Leticia, Marisela, Neville Jr., Amondo, Nehemiah, Jalonda, Nakoma, Delida, Davida, Deidra, Norris Jr., and Kyle; great-grandchildren Isiah, Neela, Kamron, Kai, Lily, Emmet, Chase, Layla, Joshua, and Nathan; sisters Brenda Trejo and Doretha James; brothers Richard James and spouse Lela, Calvin James and spouse Letha, Nelson Samuels, and Paul Samuels.

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



Shirley Geller

Shirley Geller, 86, passed away Jan. 17, 2021.

Shirley was born Oct. 5, 1934, in Wright City, Okla., to Aubrey and Clara (Watkins) Ballard.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husbands Earl Wilkerson, Leroy Montgomery, and Bill Geller; and half-brother Charles “Bus” Ballard.

Shirley is survived by son Larry Wilkerson and spouse Pixie; daughter Earlene Farley; stepchildren Clint Geller and Laura Johnson, Bill Wilkerson and spouse Pat; grandchildren Shawn White and Jason White; special great-grandchildren Paedon Blackard, Matthew and Andrew White; numerous other great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren; family members, and a multitude of friends.

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

Ruth Ann Pierce

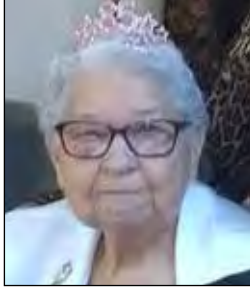
Ruth Ann Pierce, 82, passed away Jan. 17, 2021.

Ruth was born Sept. 24, 1938, in Bethel, Okla., to Timothy and Rena (Roberts) Samuels.

She was preceded in death by her parents and sister Rubye Samuels.

Ruth is survived by sons Justin Samuels, Bobby Samuels, Doyle Hotella, Leon Hotella, and Phillip Hotella; daughters Mary Hotella, Rose Hotella, Samantha Hotella, and Renee Combs; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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



Dorothy Jean Durant

Dorothy Jean Durant, 95, passed away Jan. 4, 2021.

Dorothy was born Dec. 3, 1925, to Gardner Wilson and Nicey (Nancy) Battiest Wilson.

She was preceded in death by her sister Gladys (Wilson) Lanphear; brother Walter Wilson; brother Emerson Wilson; and sister Laura (Wilson) Taylor.

Dorothy is survived by sons William Bailey and Robert (Bobby) Bailey; brother-in-law Roy Weeks Taylor; nieces Nancy Ellison, Korin Atwood, Beverly Ann Harjo; nephews David Lanphear, Roy Taylor Jr., Emerson Wilson, and Walter Leo Wilson; 12 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild; as well as a host of relatives and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Skylawn Memorial Park](#).

Robert Earl Mackey

Robert Earl Mackey, 78, passed away Jan. 14, 2021.

Robert is survived by his wife Violet; two children; five grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

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



Beatrice Williston

Beatrice (Parker) Williston, 72, passed away Jan. 23, 2021.

Beatrice was born Aug. 21, 1948, in Hendrix, Okla., to Lee and Betsy (Johnson) Parker.

She was preceded in death by her husband Angus Ray Williston; her parents; children Lance Williston, Sharon Williston-Bridges, and Ray Van Williston; and brother Johnny Parker.

Beatrice is survived by her children Lance Williston II, Diana Williston, and Tiffany Williston; siblings Rosalie Damron, Voncille Kasgnoc, Letty Harris, and David Parker; grandchildren Bradyn Batson, Blaze Batson, Kylee Williston, Emilee Williston, Khannor Williston, Milo Williston, Angus Williston II, Logun Williston, Grant Rethman, Tyler Bridges, and Dustin Willis; three great-grandchildren; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

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



Calvin Greenwood Beames Jr.

Calvin Greenwood Beames Jr., 90, passed away Jan. 14, 2021.

Calvin was born Oct. 29, 1930, in Kingston, Okla., to Calvin Greenwood Beames and Grace Loree Chestnut Beames.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Calvin is survived by sister Sammy Townsend and spouse Leroy; children Deborah Puckette and spouse Tom, Calvin G. Beames III and spouse Dorothy, Rebecca Bray and spouse Ivan, Tisha Meek and spouse Justin, Jessica McCool and spouse Gary; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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



Carol Sue Nease

Carol Sue Nease, 59, passed away Jan. 20, 2021.

Carol was born Jan. 7, 1962, in California, to John Columbus and Ida Haddock.

She was preceded in death by the father of her children Billy Scott; son Billy Joe Scott; her father; sister Sharon Summers; and brothers James David Haddock, Michael Columbus, and Lee Columbus.

Carol is survived by husband Daniel Nease; son Bobby Ray Scott II; grandsons Blake Scott, Bobby Ray Scott III, and Jaxson Scott; her parents James and Ida Haddock; brothers Johnny Columbus, Nicholas Columbus Jr., and Carlos Haddock; sisters Patsy Columbus, Malena Lewis, and Carla Brumett; along with many loved family and friends.

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



Russell Leland Hale

Russell “RL” Leland Hale, 91, passed away Jan. 14, 2020.

RL was born July 1, 1928, in Stonewall, Okla., to Russell Lee Hale and Eva Alton (Thompson) Hale.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Mary Louise Hale; and brothers Charles Homer Hale and Neville “Nick” Hale.

RL is survived by daughter Vannette McFatrige; grandson Justin McFatrige; daughter-in-law Emily McFatrige; great-grandchildren Jack and Lucy McFatrige; sister Jo Alice (Hale) Stall; and a number of beloved nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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



Melton Ray Caldwell

Melton Ray Caldwell, 70, passed away Jan. 22, 2021.

Melton was born Jan. 23, 1950, in Corrinne, Okla., to Coleman and Eliza (Aaron) Caldwell.

He was preceded in death by his wife Barbara.

Melton is survived by his parents; son Melton Dewayne Caldwell; stepson Ronald Bounds; daughters Mechele Reana Caldwell, Amy Elizabeth Foster, and Victoria Rae Caldwell; stepdaughters Melissa Dollins, Cecilia Caldwell, and Tina Lindley; brothers Cecil Caldwell and Hubert Aaron Caldwell; sister Alice Bishop; 20 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; along with a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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



Camelia O. Luman

Camelia O. (Steelman) Luman, 97, passed away Jan. 11, 2021.

Camelia was born May 28, 1923, in Reichert, Okla., to John Richard and Eliza Ann (White) Steelman.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Estes Luman; son Estes Leonard Luman; grandson Dwight Luman; brothers Hershel, Merrel, Delbert, Finis, Chief, and J.L. Steelman; and sisters Esther Ryburn and Pauline Rex.

Camelia is survived by sons Bill Luman and Ray Luman and spouse Pam; sister Ida Belle Moody; grandchildren Chad (Luman) Loper and spouse Kelly, Shana King and spouse Tim, Delana Ester and spouse Dustin, Nathan Luman and spouse Abbey, and Candace Luman; 19 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives, and a host of many friends.

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



William Louis

William Louis, 77, passed away Jan. 30, 2021.

William was born Jan. 19, 1944, in Glover, Okla., to William J. Louis and Pearley Mae (Franklin) Louis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; siblings Benjamin Franklin, Mary Davis, BC Louis, Nelson Louis, and Jesse Louis; and nephew Jeremy Louis.

William is survived by his wife Abbie Johnson; children Devonda Silvas and Rodney Johnson; grandchildren Priscilla Silvas, and Taylor and PJ Silvas; great-grandchild Angel Morales Jr.; siblings Dorothy Beller, Lillian Louis, and Ray Louis; nieces Terry Louis, Shelly Louis, and Kelli Louis; nephews Duane and Daryl Davis, Brandon Beller, Lance Beller, Micah Louis, and Alvin Davis; along with numerous great-nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).



Ronald Dale Davis

Ronald “Ronnie” Dale Davis, 41, passed away Jan. 24, 2021.

Ronnie was born Dec. 17, 1979, in Hot Springs, Ark., to Roy Davis and Deena Burgess.

He was preceded in death by his father; stepfather Bill Burgess; grandparents Delbert and Loretta Goss; and his aunt Lisa Goss.

Ronnie is survived by his mother; daughter Lexi Davis; son Colby Davis; brothers William Burgess and Roy Davis; sisters Ashlee Burgess and Crystal Davis Button; the mother of his children and dear friend Whitney Horne; and numerous aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Beasley-Wood 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 1210
Durant OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Munholland on dean's list at OSU



John Wyatt Munholland, Coalgate, Okla., has been listed on the Dean's Honor Roll for the Fall 2020 semester, earning at least a 3.5 GPA for the semester's academic work. Munholland is classified as a senior at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Okla., and is studying animal science within the Ferguson College of Agriculture.

Rickert celebrates 90 years

Annie Belle Rickert of Pauls Valley, Okla. turned 90 on Oct. 24, 2020.

Rickert is the oldest of six children and is the mother of Rick and Debbie Rickert.

She enjoys crossword puzzles, watching the OKC thunder, and John Wayne movies. She's been a member of Pauls Valley Church of Christ for over 60 years.



Davis veteran of the month

Argie Kenneth Davis, Stigler, Okla., was Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month for February.

Davis served in the United States Army from 1966 to 1969, where he achieved the rank of Sergeant.

He was stationed in Heilbronn, Germany, and after returning to the United States, was stationed at Fort Hood, Killeen, Texas.

The Choctaw Nation takes great pride in honoring Argie Kenneth Davis as February's Veteran of the Month.



Hardin turns 16

We would like to wish Hailey Hardin a happy 16th birthday. We are very proud of the young lady she is becoming. Love, Mom and Billy.

Collegiate basketball player Kamryn Gentry sets the standard



Submitted by Cedric Sunray

On paper, 28-27 reads like the score of a really competitive football game occurring on any given Saturday or Sunday in this country.

But this number doesn't represent such a game. These were some of the numbers put up by Kamryn Gentry (28 points; 27 rebounds) during a recent collegiate basketball game in Missouri.

During her first three years of high school in her hometown of Broken Bow, Oklahoma, 5'10", Gentry played behind another tribal member and eventual University of Oklahoma women's basketball signee, 6'4" Aspen Williston.

Those three years were a great learning experience for Gentry, who, in her sophomore collegiate year at Ozark Christian College, is averaging 15.3 points, 16.5 rebounds, and 2.4 assists per game to go along with 10 steals and 10 blocks during the season's first 13 games. Her team is currently 7-6 overall with a 3-1 conference record.

Ozark Christian Women's Basketball Assistant Coach Sarah Rhodes had this to say about her.

"Kamryn is a joy to have in our program. She is an excellent student and she has been a force for us inside the paint. We look forward to seeing all that she accomplishes throughout the rest of the season and are thankful to have her on our team."

With only two scholarship offers coming out of high



Straight A's for Sanders

Rhey'lyn Sanders made the Presidents Honor Roll at Western Oklahoma State College for scoring A's in all of her courses. Sanders, a junior at Olustee-Eldorado Public Schools, is concurrently enrolled at WOSC.

She is the daughter of Martin and Erica Sanders from Olustee, Oklahoma.

Sanders loves to cheer, and she has been cheering since her 4th-grade year. She attends the First Baptist Church in Olustee.

Rhey'lyn has also been in the STAR Program and Higher Education Program.

Rhey'lyn is a member of the Upward Bound Program at WOSC and is looking forward to continue her education.

Marhanka celebrates 30 years

Anthony Marhanka celebrated his 30th birthday on Feb. 4, 2021.

His family wishes him a very happy birthday. We are very proud of the outstanding man he has become.

Anthony lives with his wife Kristin in Woodinville, Washington.

His grandmother is Deedee Barker Rowe of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. His parents are Ed and Cindy Marhanka of Dallas, Texas, and his sister is Liza Marhanka, a student at OSU veterinary school.



Johnson advances to title game

Joey Johnson, 6' 3", 190 pound LB for Cedar Hill High School, 6A-II in Cedar Hill, Texas, had two sacks, helping his team advance to the State Title in a 27-17 win over Denton-Guyer.



Smith inducted to OACC Hall of Fame

WILBURTON, Okla. (Jan. 29, 2020) – Former Eastern Oklahoma State College President Dr. Stephen E. Smith was inducted into the Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges Hall of Fame on Jan. 29 during the organization's virtual annual

conference. Smith retired in June 2020 after serving as president of Eastern for 13 years.

The OACC Hall of Fame began in 2011, and since its inception, 19 individuals have been selected for the prestigious award. Smith was inducted along with the late Dr. Phil Birdine, former president of Western Oklahoma State College. Former Oklahoma Gov. George Nigh and Oklahoma Supreme Court Justice Tom Colbert, both Eastern alumni, are also members of the OACC Hall of Fame.

"I am honored to receive this recognition and I want to thank my colleagues for supporting this nomination. I am also proud to be inducted alongside my good friend Dr. Phil Birdine who was a great leader for Western Oklahoma State College and the state system," Smith said. "Community colleges do the yeoman's work of education. We take those students who may not have developed academic skills and we prepare them to go to university. We take that single-parent mother who may have lost her job or went through a divorce and needs to get an education, skills and degree to make a better life for herself and her children. To anyone who works at a community college, know that you are valued and appreciated. We are leading students to a different place in life and we can all be proud of that."

Eastern President Dr. Janet Wansick offered congratulations on behalf of the faculty, staff, students and administration of Eastern.

"There is no doubt that Dr. Smith left an impact on Eastern that will be remembered for many years to come. Among his accomplishments while president at the college are developing a \$1 million scholarship donation, creating the Small Business Development partnership, receiving grant awards of more than \$40 million, establishing the college's commercial radio station, and launching five fully online degree programs," Wansick said. "I thank Dr. Smith for all he has done for Eastern and wish him sincere congratulations on his induction into the OACC Hall of Fame."

Smith became Eastern's 20th president on Mar. 28, 2007. Upon his appointment as president, Smith was 38 years of age, making him the youngest college president in the state at that time. During his 13-year tenure as president, Eastern achieved several significant milestones, including more than \$3 million in donations and gifts to the EOSC Foundation and college, the establishment of Eastern's Sapphire Ball scholarship fundraising event, the development of the college's first study abroad program, and a 10-year reaffirmation of its accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. Smith also led efforts to construct, renovate and improve facilities at the Wilburton and McAlester campuses. He also led several efforts to improve community outreach in southeast Oklahoma with the establishment of the Four County Small Business Consortium, in partnership with the Oklahoma Small Business Development Center.

Before joining Eastern as the dean of the McAlester Campus in July 2005, Smith gained experience in both the public school and CareerTech systems. He began his career as a high school assistant principal and coach at Stigler Public Schools. Upon leaving Stigler, he was hired as an assistant principal at Stillwater High School, where he was named as a two-time finalist for Assistant Principal of the Year in the state of Oklahoma. After his tenure with Stillwater Public Schools, Smith remained in Stillwater and was named the director of Full-Time Instructional Programs at Meridian Technology Center.

A native of southeast Oklahoma and member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Smith graduated from Quinton High School and earned a bachelor's and master's degree in education from Northeastern State University. He also earned an education specialist and doctorate in educational leadership from Oklahoma State University.

The OACC is made up of 14 community colleges that serve the needs of more than 100,000 Oklahoma students each year. The OACC supports Oklahoma's community colleges by providing professional development opportunities, advocacy and connections with key stakeholders to improve higher education in the state.



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For questions: artistregistry@choctawnation.com

LAWN SERVICES

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Participants receive 20 vouchers, valued at \$25 each (no cash value, redeemable April 1 through December 31, 2021. Vouchers will be issued after April 1. Vouchers will be prorated on May 1 to October 1 for each calendar year.)



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Choctaw Nation Housing Authority





BREAK THE SILENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program wants you to know that you deserve to be safe and free from intimate partner violence in your home, relationships and communities. If someone you love is a victim of abuse or violence, reach out! Let them know they are not alone! There is help for victims through the Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program. Together we're more!

Know the signs of domestic violence, get involved. Visit choctawnation.com/domestic-violence or call 1-800-522-6170 for more information.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

ITI FABVSSA

A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1840-1850

Over the next year and a half, Iti Fabvssa is running a series that covers 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 be covering 1840-1850, a period when Choctaws dealt with the complications of incorporating Chickasaws into their territory, two new constitutions and the expansion of its economy and school system.

At the start of the 1830s, Choctaws began the process of removal to their new homeland. In 1837, they had to deal with another difficulty– that of the Chickasaw Removal. The Chickasaw Nation would be removed into the Choctaw Nation when they arrived in Indian Territory. In working to resolve this new, complex issue, Choctaws and Chickasaws passed a new constitution in 1838 that brought the two nations together under one government. Although Choctaws and Chickasaws were united under this constitution, the newly created Chickasaw District maintained its own financial separation. Another significant feature of the Choctaw-Chickasaw relationship was that they had to share ownership over the entire territory that Choctaw Nation had previously received by treaty with the US government. This meant that the two tribes had to agree and work together when negotiating with the U.S. government – a provision that is still in effect today when it comes to issues over land and water. Aside from this main difference, Chickasaw and Choctaw families could live in either the Chickasaw district or any of the three Choctaw districts and have full citizenship rights. This consolidation of the Choctaws and Chickasaw nations was pushed by the U.S. government in the hope that they would combine into one people. As time progressed though, this arrangement proved to be a source of strain between Choctaws and Chickasaws.

When Choctaws and Chickasaws revisited their constitution in 1842, they made several changes. At the urging of Choctaw leader Peter Pitchlynn, the legislature was divided into two parts: House and Senate – just like the U.S. Congress. Pitchlynn learned how Congress worked while working as a Choctaw representative in Washington D.C. and saw this bicameral legislature format to be a solution to a problem between the four districts. Because Choctaw laws stated that legislative representation was based on population, the smaller Choctaw districts felt that they did not have as much influence as the larger districts which had more representatives due to their populations. Another change was the creation of a national court system that would oversee the smaller district courts. As Choctaw Nation continued to grow, it eventually required further changes to its constitution in 1850, which we will learn about more in next month’s Iti Fabvssa.

Beginning in 1845, another significant wave of Choctaws arrived from the original homelands to Indian Territory. The 1830 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek had allowed Choctaw people to stay on their lands in Mississippi. This part of the treaty was not honored, and the 7,000 Choctaw people who had initially chosen to stay in Mississippi faced incredibly harsh conditions. Beginning in 1845, 1,280 of these Choctaw people emigrated to Indian Territory. Other federally operated removals would continue throughout the rest of the 1840’s. Throughout the 1840s, life in Choctaw Territory became increasingly prosperous through trading. Despite the U.S. government’s failure to provide items like looms and spindles as promised in their removal treaty, Choctaws made the best of their situation. Families with small farms produced enough food crops to sell their surplus at



Choctaw Female Seminary, four miles west of Tuskahoma, Oklahoma. Image courtesy of the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

markets while some prominent leaders and their families established plantations that grew cotton. Choctaw women contributed greatly with their spinning to create cloth for their families and sale. As Choctaw settled into their new homelands, they grew the local economy through the trading center of Doaksville. Located near Fort Towson, Doaksville also later became Choctaw Nation’s capital for a short period. Choctaw people did not just trade with Americans in Texas and Arkansas, some Choctaws traveled down as far as New Orleans by boat. While Choctaws developed their economic power, this also made them targets by less honest traders who used alcohol to take advantage of Choctaws. This led to the development of temperance societies that advocated for the banning of alcohol. This overall prosperity did not escape the notice of U.S. government administrators which noted Choctaw Nation’s economic and political successes.

Throughout the 1840-1850 period, the Choctaw/Chickasaw General Council passed a series of laws to regulate and expand the existing public school system. As early as 1833, Choctaws planned to spend

their 1830 treaty annuity on constructing new schools. In 1842, General Council passed “An Act regarding public schools,” which established its boarding school system. This included the establishment of Spencer Academy, Fort Coffee Academy, Koonsha Female Seminary, Iannubbee Female Seminary, Chuwahla Female Seminary, and Wheelock Female Seminary. Funding for these schools primarily came out of funds secured by treaties with the United States. The General Council also decided that various missionaries should run these schools – as they had already been doing at a smaller scale in the various communities. Each school had Trustees to examine the accounts of the schools. In this period, General Council also sent Choctaw students to American colleges and universities so they could come back and help lead Choctaw society. It also ensured that one-tenth of all pupils would be orphans, demonstrating how Choctaw Nation cared for its most vulnerable people.

Relatedly, by this period, the Presbyterian missionary Cyrus Byington had established his church circuit where he visited churches and preached in Choctaw. Elsewhere throughout the Choctaw Nation, Baptist and Methodist ministers also preached. Byington’s circuit was particularly important because his work preaching in Choctaw helped to normalize the usage of Choctaw language in the church – which is an uncommon experience outside of Indian Territory. After removal in these churches, Choctaw men became ordained as ministers and pastored some of these churches. This made churches into centers of Choctaw gathering. It was also from working with these Choctaw communities that Byington gained a better understanding of the language. This work led Byington to revise and improve the Choctaw dictionary that he first put together while at the mission in the original homelands – which he could not have done without the aid of Choctaw people. Choctaws further made significant contributions by translating parts of the Bible and created a number of songs that are part of the Choctaw Hymnal. Choctaws today still benefit from this work done by Choctaws working with Byington.

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. Next month, we will cover the period of 1850-1860 when Choctaws continued expanding their economy.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Section 184 Home Loan Guarantee Program is a home mortgage product specifically designed for American Indians to provide access to mortgage financing. Congress established this program in 1992 to facilitate homeownership and increase access to capital in Native American Communities. With Section 184 financing, borrowers can get into a home with a low down payment. Section 184 loans can be used, both on and off native lands, for new construction, rehabilitation, purchase of an existing home or refinance. Loans must be made in an area approved by HUD and deemed as an Indian Servicing area. All loans are approved by manual underwrite and not by an automated system. Fees are monitored and restricted to protect against predatory lending. Interest rates must be fixed, not adjustable, and based on the current market rate, not by credit score. By serving Native communities, Section 184 is increasing the marketability and value of the Native assets and strengthening the financial standing of Native communities. Section 184 is synonymous with homeownership in Indian Country.

Participating tribes determine the areas where the Section 184 loans can be used. Loans must be made in an eligible/approved area. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

requested to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Native American Programs, Office of Loan Guarantee, and has been approved for an expansion of eight counties in Arkansas to be deemed an Indian Service Area for Section 184 loans. Little River, Sevier, Polk, Scott, Howard, Montgomery, Logan and Yell are now Section 184 approved counties and available to Native Americans who reside there. Previously approved Arkansas counties are Benton, Crawford, Sebastian, and Washington. There are now 12 approved counties in Arkansas eligible for Section 184 loans.

Down payment assistance is offered with Section 184 loans to Choctaw tribal members who apply with Choctaw Home Finance and use a partner lender. The down payment loan is up to 2% assistance at a fixed 5% interest rate for up to five years. Borrowers must make a minimum investment of 1% from their own funds. There are no set income limits to be eligible. Credit guidelines must be met.

We understand the unique circumstance and want to assist with all homeownership goals. Let our knowledgeable staff assist you. Call us at 1-800-235-3087 or visit our website for more information at <http://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/housing/home-finance>.

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

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[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/COVIDRELIEF](https://choctawnation.com/COVIDRELIEF)



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2021

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QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT: [MCRESS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:mcress@choctawnation.com)



STUDENT SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY FUND

The Choctaw Nation offers a \$100 grant to Choctaw tribal students who are attending 3-year-old head start through high school. The grant is provided one time each funding year and will be on a Visa card specifically for clothing; it will be declined at ATMs, gas stations, restaurants, movie theaters, etc.

The Student School and Activity Fund Program current funding year is November 1 to May 1.
Applications can be submitted online.

APPLICATIONS OPEN NOVEMBER 1, 2020

CONTACT
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/STUDENT-SCHOOL-AND-ACTIVITY-FUND-SSAF](https://choctawnation.com/student-school-and-activity-fund-ssaf)
800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463

Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

Smart choices can save money and calories during Nutrition Month

By Chris Jennings

March is National Nutrition Month. First kicked off in 1973 by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, it has become a way to deliver nutrition education messages to the public. The message is even more important today. Good nutrition, physical activity and a healthy body weight are vital to a person’s overall health. When taken together, these things can help reduce a person’s risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Most Americans don’t eat a healthy diet and are not physically active enough to maintain proper health. According to the Centers for Disease and Control, adults in the U.S. consume fruit about 1.1 times per day and vegetables about 1.6 times per day; adolescents showed even lower intake. Those statistics stretch across age and gender gaps as well. In reports from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, average daily fruit and vegetable consumption does not meet intake recommendations. Compounding this, most adults (81.6%) and adolescents (81.8%) do not get the recommended amount of physical activity.

A primary culprit in poor nutrition is added sugars. Added sugars and syrups are put in foods during preparation, processing or added at the table. The American Heart Association recommends limiting your consumption of foods with high amounts of added sugars, such as sugar-sweetened beverages. Just one 12-ounce can of regular soda can contain eight teaspoons of sugar, or 130 calories and zero nutrition. If you live in the Choctaw or Chickasaw Nations, one way to help children improve their nutrition over the summer months is the Summer EBT for Children program. The federally funded program is open to both Native and non-Native students. Qualifying families will receive an EBT card, which works like a debit card, allowing parents to purchase healthy food for the summer. Each child will receive approximately \$30 to buy qualifying foods. Some of the food items that can be purchased are fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, whole wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta, cold cereal, hot cereal, peanut butter, eggs and cheese. Purchase periods each month run from May 1-Sept. 14, June 1-Sept. 14 and July 1-Sept. 14 with unused benefits rolling over each month, expiring at midnight on Sept. 14. Qualifying children must be enrolled in pre-K through 12th grade in a participating school and eligible for free or reduced lunches during the school year. The application deadline is Aug. 4, 2021. To see a full list of qualifying foods or to apply online, go to [www. Chickasaw.net/SummerEBT](http://www.Chickasaw.net/SummerEBT). To apply over the phone, call 580-272-1178 or 844-256- 3467 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday. Programs like this are one way to combat a statistic that Oklahomans shouldn’t be proud to lead. In a USDA report, Oklahomans (52.3%) were the least likely to eat at least five servings of vegetables four or more days a week. Louisiana followed at 53.3% and Missouri at 53.8%. The national average for eating produce regularly is 57.7%.

One significant factor in this is the cost associated with eating healthy. By following a few simple steps you can do more to eat healthy and save money.

- **Cook more, eat out less.** When you eat out, you add extra preservatives and sodium on top of the additional costs. Find a few simple, healthy recipes your family enjoys and save eating out for special occasions.
- **Plan what you’re going to eat.** Plan your shopping out by making a list to limit purchasing extra unhealthy snacks.
- **Make extra.** Making extra at dinner time means you have ready-made meals prepped for the next day’s lunch.
- **Watch portion sizes.** Eating too much of even low-cost food can quickly add up to extra dollars and calories. Using smaller plates can help to control portion sizes
- **Focus on nutritious, low-cost foods.** Make the most of your food budget by finding recipes that use the following ingredients: beans, peas, and lentils; sweet or white potatoes; eggs; peanut butter; canned salmon or tuna; grains such as oats, brown rice, barley or quinoa; and frozen fruits and vegetables.
- **Make your own healthy snacks.** Convenience costs money. Many snacks cost more simply because they’re packaged for you. By buying healthy snack items in bulk and separating them into containers, you save money and calories.
- **Quench your thirst with water.** Often you feel hungry because you’re thirsty. By drinking plain water, you stay hydrated and save money.

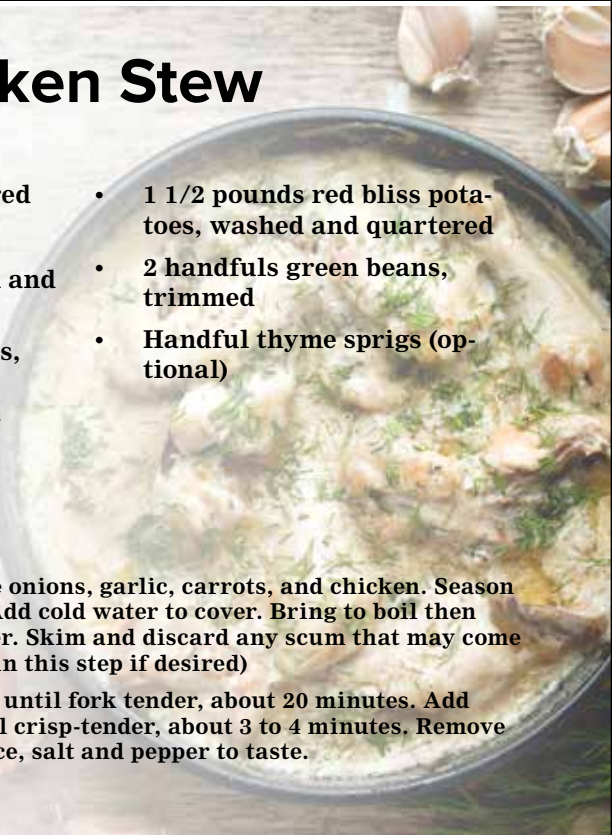
By thinking ahead and making smart decisions, you can take a big step in leading a healthier, more nutritious life.



Hearty Chicken Stew

- 4 small onions, quartered
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks
- 2 pounds chicken thighs, skin removed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 pounds red bliss potatoes, washed and quartered
- 2 handfuls green beans, trimmed
- Handful thyme sprigs (optional)

Preparation
1. In a large pot, combine onions, garlic, carrots, and chicken. Season with salt and pepper. Add cold water to cover. Bring to boil then reduce heat to a simmer. Skim and discard any scum that may come to the top. (add thyme in this step if desired)
2. Add the potatoes, cook until fork tender, about 20 minutes. Add green beans, cook until crisp-tender, about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat, add hot sauce, salt and pepper to taste.



StrongHearts Native Helpline launches 24/7 operations

(Eagan, Minn.) –StrongHearts Native Helpline (1-844-7NATIVE) recently announced an expansion of operations by offering advocacy services seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The expanded service launched on February 19 and coincided with the additional expansion of text advocacy. StrongHearts Native Helpline is a culturally appropriate, anonymous, confidential and free service dedicated to serving Native survivors, concerned family members and friends affected by domestic, dating and sexual violence. StrongHearts Native Helpline is a project of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center and the National Domestic Violence Hotline. “Our goal is to make caring support available to as many Native American and Alaska Natives as possible,” said StrongHearts Director Lori Jump (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians). “Victim-survivors need to be able to reach out when it’s safe for them, around the clock, through a variety of means.” According to the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Partner Survey, Native Americans and Alaska Natives experience some of the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the United States. The study found that more

than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women had experienced violence in their lifetime, and one in three had experienced violence within the past year. The study also examined how this violence affects tribal communities and Native survivors. For American Indian and Alaska Native people, the study found about half of women and nearly one in five men stated they needed victim services. With few options and supportive resources, Native American victims of abuse often go without assistance. To address these inequities and better serve Native Americans and Alaska Natives, StrongHearts has been rapidly expanding. In 2020, StrongHearts launched online chat advocacy and sexual violence advocacy. As the pandemic continues and victim-survivors in abusive relationships are forced to shelter-in-place with their abusive partners, it becomes even more vital to offer multiple communication options so victims can decide what is a safe and appropriate option for them. As American Indian and Alaska Native communities continue to navigate the isolating effects of COVID-19, 24/7 expanded operations and text advocacy will allow those experiencing domestic and sexual violence to connect with a highly trained advocate whenever they need free, anonymous and confidential support. Like online chat advocacy, text advocacy increases accessibility for individuals who may be hearing impaired and those who may be uncomfortable or unable to vocalize a call for support. “We are eager to expand our services to reach every Native victim-survivor who needs it,” Jump said. “StrongHearts will continue our work until all of our relatives have the resources they need and are safe from violence.”

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

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For more information:

Choctaw Nation Health Services Low-Dose CT Program

(800) 349-7026 ext. 6440

Choctaw Nation

Health Services



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.

Building Healthy Families Through Good Nutrition

Grab a cup of coffee in Choctaw Country

By Christian Toews

Nothing says good morning like a cup of coffee. Just about everyone has a favorite way to enjoy this delicious beverage. Whether it's a hot cup before work or a warm latte on a snowy day, there is no doubt that Americans love coffee – or at least its caffeine.

With the rise in popularity of gourmet coffee, we have come a long way from the cans of Folgers in our grandparents' cabinets. We now have coffee shops that provide espresso and specialty brews, and some of the country's best coffee shops are right here in Choctaw Country.

According to the National Coffee Association (NCA), Americans are drinking more coffee than ever. The NCA website states that seven in ten Americans drink



Ana Rivera serves a muffin at Opera House Coffee in Durant, Oklahoma.

coffee every week, and 62% of Americans drink coffee every day. That means that if you are reading this right now, the odds are that you have had a cup of coffee today, maybe even more than one cup.

According to the NCA website, most of the coffee sold in America is premium beans and espresso-based beverages rather than traditional coffee. Nearly 60% of coffee served in the United States is considered gourmet (brewed from premium beans). It's clear that we love specialty coffee.

According to Tammie Johnson, who owns The Coffee Cup in Poteau, Oklahoma, good coffee starts with good coffee beans.

"We source our beans from great local roasters. My main source, that I've been using for years, is Onyx out of northwest Arkansas. They are one of the top coffee roasters in the United States, but they are also known all over the world," she said.

Johnson also said that the difference between using premium coffee beans and a typical cup of coffee is noticeable.

"I would compare it to a garden-fresh tomato vs. a store-bought tomato," she said.

Shaun and Ami Rawlings, who own Opera House Coffee in Durant, Oklahoma, said many variables create a good cup of coffee.

"It's the details that make it," said Ami. The quality of water is also essential to a good cup of coffee.

"Coffee is mostly water, so you have to have great water. You can make bad coffee with good water, but you'll never make good coffee with bad water," explained Shaun. "All of our water is run through a carbon filter, then water softener, and then we have a reverse osmosis system. There should be nothing in the water. The water should just be a blank slate and then let the coffee do its work."

If you are a coffee lover, there is good news for you on the health and wellness front.

A recent study published in The New

England Journal of Medicine found that, among older adults, those who drank coffee (caffeinated or decaf) had a lower risk of dying from diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease and other medical complications than non-coffee drinkers. In the study, scientists concluded that two or more cups of coffee per day equated to a 10% reduction in overall death for men and a 15% reduction in overall death for women when compared with non-coffee drinkers. Researchers say there is a strong association between drinking coffee and living longer.

While the intricacies of making coffee and the health benefits are fascinating, most of us just love sitting in a coffee shop and enjoying our coffee because of the environment.

Tammie Johnson said that her favorite aspect of owning a coffee shop is the atmosphere and the platform for bringing people together.

"Having people connect, using this place for work, reading or studying, or just meeting up with people. That's the best part," said Johnson.

Shaun and Ami Rawlings said one of the benefits of going to a locally owned coffee shop is the community and relationships you build.

"Here (at Opera House Coffee), being a small town and a big space, you're building a relationship with the people you're meeting, the employees, and you're always



Photos by Christian Toews

A latte is created by adding steamed milk to espresso.

seeing friends that come by," said Shaun.

"I think it's kind of a neutral zone too. Here people feel comfortable to have meetings and just feel at ease," stated Ami.

One customer at Opera house said that he uses this space to be creative. Jimmy Tran is a freelance videographer and goes to Opera House Coffee to work.

"It's like a little escape for me, creatively. I feel like, especially in mainstream media, coffee shops have become synonymous with creativity. Whether that's real or not, there's something about writing, editing, hanging out at a coffee shop that feels vintage yet new, and it just gets the creative flow going," explained Tran.

It doesn't matter if you are a lifelong native to the area or just passing through. If you are looking for a good cup of coffee and a warm, friendly environment, look no further than right here in Oklahoma. Choctaw Country has some great coffee shops featuring specialty coffee. No matter what part of Choctaw Country you are in, coffee is never far away.

You can find a list of great coffee shops in southeastern Oklahoma at www.choctawcountry.com.

Estella Kirk's EP gives a look on the 'Bright Side'

By Christian Toews

Estella Kirk, a 15-year-old singer-songwriter from McAlester, Oklahoma, recently released her first EP, Bright Side.

Kirk, a proud Choctaw Nation tribal member, said that her goal as a Christian-pop artist is to create music that positively impacts her peers and provides more positivity to her generation.

"My hope is to inspire kids and teens to be closer to God and to focus on who they are surrounding themselves with," said Kirk.

She attributes her love of music to her grandfather. Kirk said his guitar playing was her first exposure to music.

Around the age of 12, her parents saw that she had some ability and begin helping her travel to Dallas, Texas. "And that's where it all started being more professional," she said.

Estella said Bright Side is inspired by Isaiah 22:22, which says, "I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open."

The EP's five songs were co-written with Kira Fontana, a former top LA celebrity vocal coach to major labels and TV shows like Glee and The Voice. Fontana is now a singer-songwriter, producer and the founder of Kingdom Sound.

When working on the EP, Fontana gave Estella a key necklace and referenced this very verse. According to Kirk, this key now holds a special place in her heart. It serves as a reminder that God is always there and walking with her every step of the way.

"On average, a teen spends over seven hours a day on their phones, and many studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and

an increased risk in depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm and even suicidal thoughts," explained Kirk.

Estella has seen the damage social media and can cause. Her most recent single Pretty Lies was inspired by a friend who called her and said she was thinking about ending her life.

"I wrote this song to expose the pretty lies in our society from social media so that we could all recognize our true value," says Kirk.

Kirk went on to explain how these songs are particularly relevant during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

"All of these songs were written before COVID-19 except Shelter in the Storm, but looking back, all of the songs apply for a time like COVID-19," stated Kirk.

Estella said the Choctaw Nation has helped her in many ways, and she is very thankful. She said her hopes and goals for this EP are the same as when she first began music. "My hopes and my goals have always just been to inspire as many people as possible and to tell as many people about God as I can. Through music, especially."

You can follow her journey at www.estellakirkmusic.com, or follow her on Instagram and YouTube.



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Choctaw Nation continues to support youth agriculture programs

By Kelsey Brown and Kellie Matherly

The Choctaw Nation’s annual livestock show has been a tradition for young and old alike since 1992. The event began as a swine show in Hugo, Okla. and was open to Native American youth living within the Choctaw Nation.

The show was such a success that it grew quickly to include heifers and steers, which also meant it needed to be held in larger arenas. In 2007, goats and lambs were added, and the show was expanded to a two-day event held at both Wilburton and Durant. In addition, young people no longer needed to live in the Choctaw Nation’s jurisdiction to participate. Anyone with a CDIB in grades three through twelve are encouraged to take part.

This year, Choctaw Nation leaders made the difficult decision to cancel the show because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the first time the show has been canceled in its nearly 30-year run, but the work of agriculture and livestock production does not stop for global pandemics. These young people have been hard at work caring for their animals and getting ready for the next opportunity.

Despite the show’s cancellation, however, Choctaw Nation leaders have expressed continuing support for these outstanding young people and their ag education programs.

Chief Batton, who was an avid participant in agriculture programs in his youth had this to say about the importance of livestock shows: “The livestock shows are critical in developing character and values that will help our young people be successful. Showing animals helps them learn to be responsible, accountable, respectful and hardworking along with helping them develop their financial management skills.”

District 9 Councilman James Dry believes in the power of youth agriculture programs for both students and their families. Dry says, “I believe our local livestock shows help our young students learn responsibility, teamwork, leadership skills, and most of all, they get quality time with parents. We would like to thank all of our local ag teachers and schools for all the hard work they do for our youth!”

Councilwoman Jennifer Woods stated, “District 6 supports our 4-H and FFA students and families who invest in showing animals. It teaches the students so many life skills, and it’s such a pleasure to get to support the livestock shows and students who work all year with their



Biskinik file photo

Casey Robinson holds his grandson, Maverick House, as a cow stretches for more attention at the 2019 livestock show.

animals. I love seeing the strong work ethic and pride in the animals during the shows. Hard work pays off!”

District 10 Councilman Anthony Dillard stated, “It has always been a pleasure to support our young people as they show their animals. The hard work and dedication it takes to exhibit their animals is evident. The show program is one that usually brings the whole family together to get the job done.”

Choctaw Nation leadership has certainly been instrumental in the success of the Choctaw Livestock Show, but that support starts long before the students ever get to the arena. Stephanie Behrens has plenty of praise for those who work in the Choctaw Nation’s Ag Outreach Program. Behrens states, “The people behind Choctaw Nation Agriculture and youth programs such as Jody House and Macy Cartwright pour out time and energy to educate and celebrate agriculture with the youth, not only to tribal members but to all youth who show interest in agriculture.”

Students who participate in the Choctaw Livestock Show are members of either the Future Farmers of America Organization (FFA) or 4-H. Both organizations stress the importance of leadership skills and a strong sense of responsibility in their members. Students who do well in their local chapters may be offered opportunities at the state and even national levels as well. Local school districts team up with FFA and 4-H to offer agriculture education programs that set students up for future success, not just in the agriculture field, but in fields adjacent to the agriculture industry.

According to the FFA Organization’s website, “Members are future chemists, veterinarians, government officials, entrepreneurs, bankers, international business leaders, teachers and pre-

mier professionals in many career fields.”

Through organized shows and programs, like the annual Livestock Show and Farm Summit, the Choctaw Nation can make a difference in the lives of our youth that will influence them for the rest of their lives. These are potential future leaders of our local communities, agricultural industry and even the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Stephanie Behrens has learned firsthand about the opportunities the Choctaw Nation’s agriculture programs offer to students who are interested in the field. Her daughter Merideth, a senior at Colbert High School, has participated in the Choctaw Livestock Show every year since she was in third grade. “Ag programs are needed for the development of young producers to grow and learn all aspects of the agriculture industry. We are honored to have Choctaw Nation in our county, and we are more so grateful for the programs that have been offered to not only adults in the agriculture industry but to the kids as well,” said Behrens.

Merideth Behrens shared that she enjoyed taking pictures with council members and visiting with them about her projects.

“My first year to show Chief Pyle attended, and I got to meet him,” remembered Behrens. “Last August, I had the opportunity to meet and visit with Chief Batton and thank him for his support. He shared with my brother Griffin and me about his time showing hogs when he was young and what he learned from it.”

The prizes aren’t too shabby either. Merideth is especially proud of her belt buckles, plaques and banners. “People comment on them all the time and say, ‘Wow! Are you Choctaw? How did you get that buckle?’” says Merideth. “I smile and say, ‘I am Choctaw, and my heifer and I won it at the Choctaw Livestock Show.’ It is a really proud moment.”

Participants also have the chance to win cash prizes or be offered premium sales. The money is often used to finance new projects, college, or feed and supplies for their livestock.

While student farmers are the primary focus of the annual livestock show, there are notable benefits to the communities that support them as well. For instance, participants rely on local feed and supply stores to keep their animals in tiptop shape. The same is true for local veterinarians who support these students through medical treatment and maintenance.

Perhaps less obvious, but just as crucial, partners in youth livestock programs are local financial institutions who help these students learn the importance of financial planning, budgeting, responsible money management and financial well-being.

Caring for livestock is hard work all the time, and it usually takes the whole family working together to handle the day-to-day chores. That may be most evident during this year’s historic winter weather event. With temperatures dropping into the single digits and several inches of snow on the ground, student farmers are finding their work is doubly difficult. Even in these uncertain times, one thing remains constant: we should all be grateful for our nation’s farmers—and future farmers.

GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

2021 APPLICATION FOR TRADITIONAL CHOCTAW SEEDS

Please check the three plants that you would like to receive seed for:

☐ **Isito**
Choctaw Sweet Potato Squash

☐ **Tvnishi**
Lambsquarter

☐ **Tanchi Tohbi**
Choctaw Flour Corn

☐ **Hakchuma**
Perique Tobacco

☐ **Tobi**
Smith Peas

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Mail this form to:
Growing Hope Project
163665 N 4355 RD
Tushkahoma, OK 74574

Contact:
Growing Hope Program Manager
580-380-9397

Seeds from the Growing Hope Project are intended for Choctaw people and family members. They will be given out on a first come, first served basis while supplies last.

YAKOKE!

COVID VACCINE READY



COVID-19 VACCINE FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS

Eligible Tribal Members can call for an appointment to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. To view current eligibility requirements, visit our website, **choctawnation.com/covid-19**

FOR APPOINTMENTS, CALL: 800-349-7026, EXT. 6

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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March 2021

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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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