



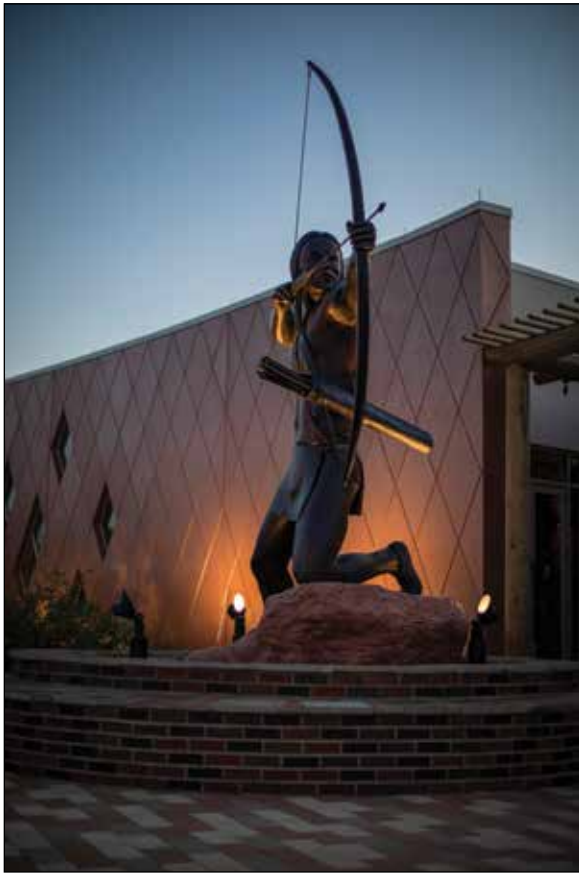
November 2020 Issue



From stickball stick door handles to the beaded light fixture, the Cultural Center is full of meaningful cultural references.



Luksi waits to greet visitors to the children's area located inside the Cultural Center.



As guests enter the driveway leading to the Cultural Center they travel through native Oklahoma prairie land. The landscape around the building also continues this theme.



Photos by Deidre Elrod and Mekayla Monroe

(left) A statue of Tvshkahoma greets visitors at the Cultural Center. (right) The mound outside of the Cultural Center is a near duplicate of the mother mound, Nanih Waiya, in Mississippi. It is 39 feet tall, 420 feet long and 300 feet wide at the base, 192 feet long and 63 feet wide at the top. The mound is made up of 85,356 cubic yards of earth.

Progress continues toward Cultural Center opening

By Chris Jennings

Construction continues on the 101,000 square foot Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Contractors and staff are at work, ensuring the Center is a place to preserve and teach visitors about the Choctaw culture.

The Center will be an immersive experience. Executive Director of the Cultural Center, Stacy Halfmoon, said, "You begin essentially at time immemorial, with Choctaw origin stories."

Before entering the building, guests are treated to a ¼-mile drive highlighting native Oklahoma prairie land. The landscaping closer to the building was also carefully planted to continue this native prairie feel.

After visitors enter the building and go through the admissions desk, they will be presented with an orientation gallery that consists of 12 vignettes, one for each district. These allow for each community to tell their story of what life is like in Choctaw Nation today.

Moving from there, visitors travel through four different areas or landscapes designed to be fully experienced rather than read. The landscapes are in chronological order, with landscape one starting in the Mississippian era and going to pre-European contact.

Featured in this area is a cave from the Choctaw origin story and a large diorama of Moundville, which was located on the Black Warrior River in western Alabama.

Throughout the journey, guests will see several life casts made using living Choctaw tribal members that now represent their Choctaw ancestors telling stories in each vignette.



Photos by Chris Jennings

All of the lifecasts in the Cultural Center were made using local Choctaw members. Bernie Davis served as a model for this one of a woman reading the Bible in landscape 2.

Landscape 2 is Shoma Takali (Hanging Moss) village from the 1700s. This area will represent the time after European contact and our government relations with the United States. A large display featuring several treaties between the U.S. and the Choctaw Nation is located in this area.

Here you'll find a popular exchange between General Andrew Jackson from then Chief Pushmataha on display. General Jackson put on all his dignity and thus addressed the chief: "I wish you to understand that I am Andrew Jackson, and, by the Eternal, you shall sign that treaty as I have prepared it." The mighty Choctaw chief was not disconcerted by this haughty address and springing suddenly to his feet and imitating the manner of his opponent,

he replied, "I know very well who you are, but I wish you to understand that I am Pushmataha, head Chief of the Choctaws, and by the Eternal, I will not sign that treaty."

All the treaties signed by the Choctaws eventually led to the Trail of Tears. Landscape 3 will tell the story of two different families during this time—the first family, who came in the 1830s, and another family in 1903. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn of the hardships during this time in three reflection galleries with content helping them visualize the Trail of Tears struggles.



The Warrior Gallery in the Cultural Center honors Choctaws who served their country.

Moving from this area, visitors will be presented with the final landscape, featuring the Choctaw Nation's life in Oklahoma, including the successful rise to the present day and where the Nation wishes to be in the future. This area also contains the warrior gallery, representing the tvshka spirit and Choctaws' long history of both men and women serving in the military.

After this, visitors can choose to move on to the Temporary Gallery, which will initially be an exhibit on Choctaw storytelling. This gallery will be changed periodically to tell different stories. "The changing exhibit gallery will give us an opportunity to rotate things in and highlight art and communities, to focus on particular elements in that space," said Halfmoon.

Visitors can also go outside to see the living village and mound. If timed right, they may also be able to watch stickball on either the practice field or tournament field.

Throughout the building, guests can find symbolic touches that represent the Choctaw culture. From the stickball stick door handles to the beadwork light fixtures, every design element was carefully thought out to help convey the Choctaw experience.

"There's not an element in the building or the exterior that wasn't really thought through, that doesn't have some kind of cultural significance. I think it says a lot about our staff and their knowledge and expertise," said Halfmoon.

The Cultural Center will be a place that people can learn about what it means to be Choctaw or to discover their own Choctaw heritage. "There's a lot of heart and soul in this building, and I hope everyone sees a little of themselves in the stories and exhibits and leaves feeling empowered," said Cady Shaw, director of curation at the Cultural Center.

"It's a significant investment the Choctaw Nation has made to build and develop this stunning Cultural Center. This means that Choctaw Nation will have a place to focus on perpetuating the culture, a place for guests and tribal citizens to come and learn about Choctaw culture and history, a place for classes, a place for presentations,"

emphasized Halfmoon.

These areas of the Cultural Center make up roughly 90% of the building. The remaining 10% contains what could be considered the most important part: the collections and archive area. This area will be dedicated to Choctaw objects, artifacts and archival items.

Shaw said, "This will be the first of its kind for the Choctaw Nation and will set a high standard of care and preservation for some of the tribe's most important historical and cultural documents and items."

The collections spaces were constructed with the security and safety of its content in mind. Access can only be gained through biometric scanning devices, and the area itself was built to withstand an EF3 tornado. Inside the collections space is a blessing room and a freezer room for items that may have been involved in a flood or have pest contamination. There are also digitization, photography, wet and dry processing, archival and storage rooms.

Guests will have access to collections digitally through the Chahta Impona database in the Learning Lounge. This database will feature items at the Cultural Center as well as the Capitol Museum, Wheelock Historic Site and other institutions across the globe.

The database and on-site collections will make Choctaw Nation's collections accessible to anyone who wishes to do tribal research.

"When someone wants to come in and perhaps do research, there would be a place for them to make an appointment and look at some of our archival documents related to the entire Choctaw experience. Whether that's political history, treaties, family documents, allotment records or maps," said Halfmoon.



Cady Shaw shows where flat items, such as large maps, will be kept in the archival area of the Center.

As this eight-plus year journey nears this phase of completion, both Halfmoon and Shaw have high hopes for what the visitors may get from the Center.

"Personally, I really hope that anybody coming to the Choctaw Cultural Center sees that there is a living culture and that these are living people. That they feel that cultural spirit that is the Choctaw spirit, they see, they smell, they experience what they can of Choctaw culture," said Halfmoon.

Shaw echoed that sentiment, "For community and tribal members, my greatest hope is they walk away proud. I would hope outside guests will come away feeling empowered with new knowledge and an affinity for Choctaw Nation. That they realize Choctaw Nation is alive, thriving and moving towards a bright future for everyone in Southeastern Oklahoma."

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

The impact of sovereignty

In my blog post on Sept. 28, I told you we were kicking off a long, slow research process designed to unearth everything we need to know about sovereignty: the costs, our capabilities, impacts on local governments, and what's already being done by tribes in other states.

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt also established a sovereignty commission for the state and is beginning to receive research results. One study we know about is a report on the potential impacts of tribal sovereignty on state finances. As Oklahomans, you'll want to know the impact is significant.

I'm now reviewing a first draft of a list of pros and cons of some of the major questions out there. As you're aware, we've been looking at Indian Child Welfare, taxation, regulation, law enforcement, and other aspects. I'm already seeing a clear pattern emerge: everything has possible downstream consequences that have to be considered, and everything is complex.

Next on our radar, we're looking at changes to our Traffic Code, and incorporating a Weights and Measures Code. All sovereign governments have this code to define the legal measure of weights and measures within their territories—modern commerce depends on it.

The first effects of increased sovereignty we'll feel are in the fields of law enforcement, justice and Indian Child Welfare. We've hired six of seven new social workers, and we are interviewing candidates to fill four new Tribal Prosecutor positions and two new Public Defender positions. Action has already moved to the courtroom, where our Choctaw Nation attorneys have been asserting our reservation status in state criminal cases. We've had two lower court judges find that our reservation continues to exist. As soon as the higher court rules on this issue, we'll begin prosecuting many of the dismissed state court cases in our tribal courts. Our Judicial Center was built with this in mind, and we'll be ready to handle the increase in cases.

On Oct. 14, United States Attorney Brian Kuester and First Assistant Attorney Chris Wilson briefed Tribal Council on views and activities of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. We'll be working closely with that court going forward and have already been establishing closer ties. Kuester and Wilson explained to Council the ways in which the Court is responding to the changes now underway. Seven Assistant United States Attorneys have been assigned to Oklahoma for the next six months, and an additional seven are supporting the Court's needs via telework. Caseloads are rising dramatically from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation—they now have 677 cases waiting. Their typical annual case load is only about 120.

We've now contacted or visited all the county jails with a view to possibly sending tribal prisoners their way. We're not certain we want to build jails of our own if there's plenty of capacity in nearby county jails. It's a question for future discussion.

Tribal Council passed several codes in its October session required for the functioning of any modern, sovereign government. These have the effect of strengthening our tribal sovereignty and our justice system. Council enacted codes dedicated to tribal prosecution, jury selection, criminal law and a public defender's office.

To ensure due process in judicial system proceedings, Council approved legislation defining how juries for trials will be formed. Potential jurors include tribal members, spouses of tribal members, employees of the Choctaw Nation and/or permanent residents within the territorial boundaries of the Nation. Exclusions from jury service include legal professions, law enforcement officers, elected officials and convicted felons.

Providing an opportunity for all defendants to have legal counsel, a bill establishing a Choctaw Nation Public Defender's Office received unanimous support from Tribal Council.

Something that's becoming increasingly evident is that sovereignty has to be built on a solid foundation. It's not just about having a flag. There's a lot of elbow grease that goes into establishing it, and that's what will be required to maintain it. We're in that phase of our work now—to put the nuts and bolts in place. Keep us in your prayers and please ask for God's guidance in our effort. I go into more detail on this subject on my blog, which you can read by visiting www.choctawnation.com/chief-blog-full. For information and updates on the issue of sovereignty, visit www.choctawnation.com/sovereignty.



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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services



CHRISTMAS FOOD VOUCHERS

2020 APPLICATION AVAILABLE BEGINNING OCTOBER 1 ON
CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS

Christmas: November 30 | 4:30 PM

Please fill out the Chahta Achvffa online application and attach a copy of income verification for all household members as well as a utility bill (water, natural gas or electricity only; propane will not be accepted)

Must live within the 10 ½-county service area.

Vouchers will be mailed: Wednesday, December 4

Please be respectful when redeeming vouchers. Services can be denied for inappropriate behavior.

877-285-6893 | 580-326-8304

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Virtual Veterans Day

Every year, the Choctaw Nation honors its veterans during the annual Veterans Day Ceremony at Tvshka Homma. It is an event that Chief Batton and I truly cherish. This year, due to the pandemic, a difficult decision was made not to celebrate together in person. Instead, to protect the safety and health of our veterans, we will honor our Choctaw veterans for their bravery, service, and sacrifices through a virtual Veteran's Day message online. Our veterans will receive their jackets through the mail as a way of honoring them, though not in person. You can find more information about our virtual Veterans Day on page 11 of this month's Biskinik.

Choctaws, along with other Native American tribes, have a long history of serving their country. According to the 2010 Census, over 150,000 veterans identified as American Indian and Alaska Native alone. The U.S. Department of Defense estimates there are currently over 24,000 active duty Native service members in the U.S. Armed Forces.

During World War I, Native Americans were not recognized as citizens of the United States, yet more than 17,000 Native American men registered with the Selective Service. The largest group of Native service members came from Oklahoma. In World War II, 44,000 Native Americans served their country. During the Korean War, approximately 10,000 Native Americans served in the military. An approximate total of 42,000 Native Americans served in the Vietnam War (90% of them volunteering). After 9/11, almost 19% of Native Americans served in the Armed Forces, compared to 14% of other ethnicities. We are so thankful for our Native brothers and sisters, who have always answered the call to defend their country.

During World War I, a group of Choctaws, now known as the original Code Talkers, used the Choctaw language to form code that the enemy couldn't decipher. The 19 known Choctaw Code Talkers include Albert Billy, Mitchell Bobb, Victor Brown, Ben Carterby, Benjamin Franklin Colbert, George Edwin Davenport, Joseph Harvey Davenport, James (Jimpson) Morrison Edwards, Tobias William Frazier, Benjamin Wilburn Hampton, Noel Johnson, Otis Wilson Leader, Solomon Bond Louis, Pete Maytubby, Jeff Nelson, Joseph Oklahombi, Robert Taylor, Charles Walter Veach and Calvin Wilson. These brave young men helped the U.S. and its allies win the war. Joseph Oklahombi was recently inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame, a long-overdue recognition. To read more about Oklahombi, check out page 11 of this month's issue of the Biskinik.

There have been countless Tvshka Chahta's who have bravely served and sacrificed so much to protect our freedoms throughout the years. On behalf of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, I say, "Yakoke!" to all who have and continue to serve. May God bless all of our warriors, past, present and future.



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Go On Anyway

Why is it that some people progress and some people regress? Some go forward and some stand still. Some stay in the fight, while others give up the fight. What are the sources to a successful Christian life? We shall look at two Bible examples.

First, in Acts, chapter 7, we find a man by the name of Stephen. He was a deacon. He was a faithful and dedicated Christian. At that time, hostility toward Christianity was growing. Christians were being put to death, were severely punished, and deprived of privileges. Yet Stephen stood and spoke to the hostile crowd about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 7, verses 48 through 60 records the final stand made by Stephen. "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will you build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming Just One; of whom ye have been betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

The Bible mentions another servant of God. His name was Demas. Demas is the opposite of Stephen. Instead of having a steadfast faith and staying true to Christ and the things of God, he turns and goes the other way. Demas worked with the apostle Paul and Luke the Physician in the ministry. He was with two of the greatest preachers at that time period. Yet he leaves the ministry. Paul, writing to young Timothy says in 2 Timothy chapter 4, verses 9 and 10, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me; for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica."

What is the difference between these two examples? They were both saved by the same gospel, and have the same promises of God. And yet one stayed on course to the end, and the other left for the greener pastures of the world. There could be many factors for quitting and departing. And what keeps one to stay and fight it out to the end? There are many reasons for that as well. The main difference is constraint. 2 Corinthians 5:14 and 15 tells us, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." It is not self-constraint but the constraint from the love of Jesus that makes a difference.

Temperature screening kiosks at CNO Child Care and Head Start facilities



Photo by Chris Jennings

Teresa Jefferson (right) helps Ivoreigh Elkins have her temperature taken at the Choctaw Nation Childcare in Durant using a new temperature kiosk.

by Shelia Kirven

Next time you visit one of the Choctaw Nation's Child Care, Head Start or Chahta Preschool centers, you will see something new at the door.

Temperature screening kiosks have been added to the facilities throughout the 10.5 counties, a total of 15 in all.

The kiosks were purchased through a portion of the CARES funding the Choctaw Nation received from the federal government due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff administration for the Child Care and Head Start centers looked at ideas on safeguarding and ensuring children and staff safety and health, while also stream-

lining the check-in process, taking every precaution necessary.

The idea came up to look at kiosks, whereby one walks up to a machine, and it automatically scans and reports body temperature.

By using the kiosks, it will help in the prevention of virus spread. With the pandemic, flu season approaching and everyday normal childhood viruses, the kiosks are a welcome tool in the Choctaw Nation's goal of wellness.

"They have been really great so far, and we are happy to have them," stated Amanda Johnson, Director of Choctaw Nation Child Care. "You simply walk up to it, and it takes your temperature. It can take a temperature with your mask on or off, and it actually sets an alarm if you do have a temperature."

Once someone stands in front of it, the kiosk will tell the person if their temperature is normal.

Everyone entering one of the facilities must use a kiosk.

"We are not letting anyone into our centers presently except for staff and children. We were doing hand-held temperature checks where a person comes and holds a thermometer near your forehead. This eliminates our staff having to go to the car with the parents and take temperatures," Johnson said.

The kiosks will be a permanent fixture to each facility, even after the pandemic is over, giving parents and staff confidence in knowing that no one will enter the facility if they have an above-normal temperature.

Census survey giveaway winner announced

By Kendra Germany-Wall

The 2020 census data collection deadline ended Oct. 31, bringing an end to the Choctaw Nation’s historic initiative to drive tribal members to respond.

In the 2010 census, 80% of Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal members weren’t counted. This massive undercount had a direct effect on the Tribe.

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

The 2020 Census in Oklahoma represents \$3,900 a year per person in federal funding – or \$39,000 over the 10 years until the next nationwide headcount.

The Nation set a \$1.25 million budget to promote participation in the Census, partnerships with cities and towns, billboards, ads, and sending workers out across the Nation’s service area.

Another way to drive tribal member participation in this year’s Census was the 2020 Census Survey Drawing. Tribal members were encouraged to respond to the 2020 Census and take the 2020 Census Survey attesting that they filled out the Census. By participating, tribal members were automatically entered into a drawing for a chance to win up to \$20,020.

The winners were announced Sept. 17 during a special Facebook live stream on the Choctaw Nation Facebook page.

Ten lucky winners won \$2,020, and one extra lucky winner won the grand prize of \$20,020.

Stacy Maloney of Yukon, Oklahoma, was the grand prize winner. Stacy says she was super excited when she found out she won the cash prize.

“When I found out I won, I was obviously super excited and shocked. When they called me, my kids were being loud, so I didn’t even know I was the winner until I watched the Facebook live that they were talking about,” Stacy said during the check presentation.

Winning this prize means a lot to Stacy and her family.



Photo by Krislan Turner

Stacy Maloney was announced as the grand prize winner of the Choctaw Nation 2020 Census Survey Giveaway Sept. 17.

“We’ve recently had a job loss in our family and are moving an hour and a half away from our home that we have lived in forever,” Stacy explained. “It came in just at the right time. It’s definitely a very pleasant surprise for us because there are lots of changes in our life, but this has been a helpful blessing.”

Stacy is thankful for the Choctaw Nation and the opportunity to take part in this giveaway.

“Thank you so much for this. I’m proud to be Choctaw,” said Maloney.

The 2020 Census ended at midnight on Oct. 15. The Choctaw Nation hopes its efforts helped to drive tribal members to complete their Census, not only for the greater good of their tribe but also for their country.

Choctaw Nation physician makes rare diagnosis

By Shelia Kirven

A Choctaw Nation physician recently played a major part in recognizing a potentially deadly disease for a tribal member patient, thus saving her life.

Dr. Domenic Canonico, Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) physician for the Choctaw Nation Health Care Services Authority, saw a patient, Melanie Henry, who had been referred to him for mouth ulcers. These ulcers had been bothering her with no apparent cause.

Dr. Canonico wanted to see if the ulcers might be present due to an underlying issue for something else and did some testing to find out. Results confirmed that a referral was needed for Mrs. Henry to see a hematologist after reviewing her red blood cells and inflammation levels around them.

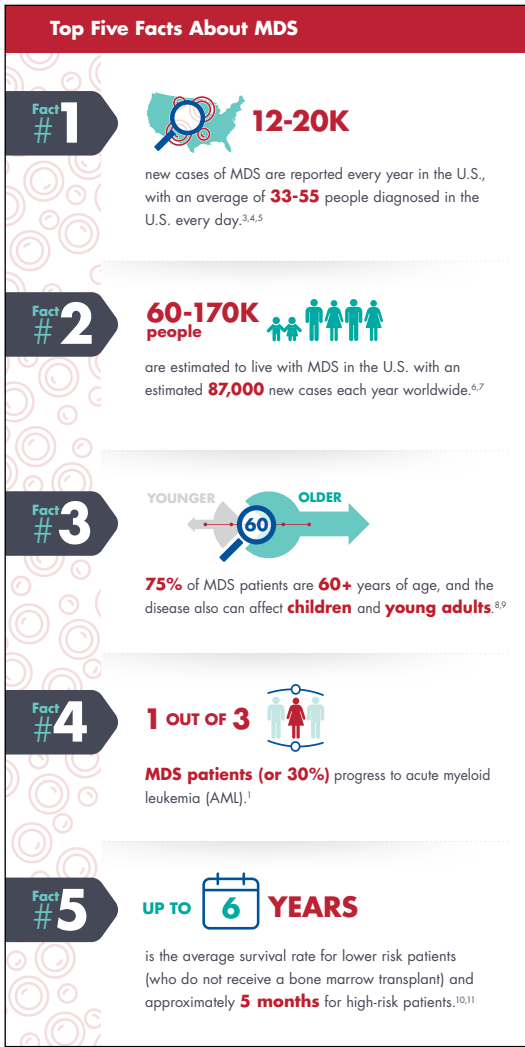
Henry said she is very thankful that the physician did the testing, saying, “It was just by the grace of God that he did.”

Her oncologist told her, “You need to go back and hug that doctor’s neck at Choctaw. He saved your life.”

She says she has called the ENT back and talked to him personally to thank him.

Once Henry saw the hematologist, she said that genetic testing was run, which showed she had three of four chromosomes for a blood cancer called Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS). She was informed that she would need extensive care that could not be received locally and was referred to a physician in Dallas. The diagnosis was confirmed, and a blood marrow biopsy was performed immediately.

According to the American Cancer’s website on Myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS), there are “conditions that can occur when the blood-forming cells in the bone marrow become abnormal. This leads to low numbers of one or more types of blood cells. MDS is considered a type of cancer.”



Henry’s treatment will require a blood marrow donation. Her son, Kenton, will be her donor, as testing on him resulted in a positive match. Had her son not been able to be her match, there could have been a struggle to find a donor, as Henry said when they ran her blood through the millions of donors in the donor bank, not one matched because of her Native American blood.

Henry and Kenton will go to Dallas, where Henry stated that her son would receive injections for four days, which will make his bones swell due to the bone marrow production in his cells. On the last day, they will start pulling his blood to spin out the bone stem cells and then pump his blood back, a six-hour process. They will test him for COVID-19 the first day, hold his blood for 14 days, then test it again for COVID-19 before they begin the bone stem cell transplant process to her. She will also start chemotherapy to completely kill her own blood stem cells, taking them to ground zero. From there, they will start transferring Kenton’s bone stem cells to his mother. Henry says she could be in the hospital for up to two months and then will need to stay in a nearby apartment or hotel in the Dallas vicinity for an additional three months.

Henry, the owner of Riverbend Counseling Services in Durant and Atoka, and a substance abuse counselor said, “If nothing else comes out of this, I want the Native people to realize how important it is to be tested to see if they can be a donor.”

If you would like to know more about becoming a donor of stem cells or joining a volunteer registry, visit with your health care provider or contact the National Marrow Donor Program to find your nearest donor center. Contact Be the Match (formerly the National Marrow Donor Program) toll-free at 1-800-MARROW-2 (1-800-627-7692) or visit their website www.bethematch.org.

Emergency Management Disaster Hotline

Choctaw Nation tribal members in need of emergency assistance due to wildfires, storms, hurricanes, flooding or other natural disasters may contact the Choctaw Nation Office of Emergency Management (CNOEM) Disaster Hotline at 844-709-6301.

For more information on the CNOEM, please visit www.choctawnation.com/cnoem.

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- Employment Development Plan
- Acknowledgement Form
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\$1,000 per year – need-based; for recipients who also qualify for Pell.

APPLICATION OPEN OCTOBER 1 - DECEMBER 1

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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Services

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

Spiro Community Center
November 6, 2020
9:30 – 11:30

District 6

Halito! I am very thankful for all that the Choctaw Nation has been able to do to assist our tribal members, and I would like to make our tribal members aware of what Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin, the Tribal Council members and SEOs have been working hard to provide through our CARES money. In addition to the programs that have already been provided, we will be adding more items to assist our tribal members during these difficult times.

There are new things already rolling out. The next phase of CARES applications includes the following programs.

The COVID-19 Child Care Support Program will provide eligible Choctaw Nation tribal member parents with a one-time \$200 allowance per eligible Choctaw dependent, that may be utilized for higher Child Care Costs associated with COVID-19 pandemic disruptions. To receive this assistance, Choctaw Nation tribal members will be required to attest that the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency has negatively impacted them and their children. Eligible Age: 0 to 12; Application Dates: October 21, 2020 to November 17, 2020; Benefit: \$200 per eligible Choctaw Nation tribal member; Service Area: National

The COVID-19 Food Security Program will provide eligible Choctaw Nation tribal members with the opportunity to receive a one-time \$200 grocery allowance to help them cope with higher prices and transportation costs associated with COVID-19 pandemic disruptions in the food supply and distribution chains on which they rely. Applicants will be required to attest that they have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency to receive this assistance. Eligible Age: 18 to 54; Application Dates: Nov. 2, 2020 to Nov. 30, 2020; Benefit: \$200 per eligible Choctaw Nation tribal member; Service Area: National

The COVID-19 Elder Food Security Program will also provide Choctaw Nation tribal members over 55 an additional allowance: All approved applicants for the program will receive a \$200 additional allowance (\$400 total) for December.

Also, we are still taking applications for the Thanksgiving and Christmas Food Vouchers. The deadline for the Thanksgiving applications was Oct. 23. The deadline for Christmas applications is Nov. 30 at 4:30 p.m. Please fill out the Chahta Achvffa online application, attach a copy of your income verification for all household members and a utility bill. They will only accept water, natural gas and electric bills. Propane will not be accepted. You must live within the 10.5 counties. Thanksgiving vouchers will be mailed on Wednesday, Nov. 6, and Christmas vouchers will be sent out on Wednesday, Dec. 4. If you need assistance filling out your online applications or do not have an email address, please come by the District 6 Community Center located at 1056 NW 1003 Avenue, Wilburton, Oklahoma, or call 918- 465-2389, and someone will assist you.

We would also like to encourage our tribal members to continue to apply for our LEAP homes, Independent Elder and Affordable Rental homes. We are anticipating building more of these homes in District 6 in the near future and would like to be sure that those who are interested have their applications submitted to be put on the waiting list. Be sure to specify District 6 Wilburton on your applications.

We will continue to make you aware of changes that are made. We want to assist our tribal members in receiving all benefits that are available to them. Our doors are open to assist you. Please call or come by if you have concerns or need additional information.

We will also be having our Thanksgiving Community Dinner on Nov. 18 at noon. We look forward to serving our community and spreading thankfulness to all who attend. Let's not forget to be thankful all throughout the year. Yakoke!



Jennifer Woods

Choctaw Development Fund awards \$15,000 in forgivable loans to three local small businesses

POTEAU, Okla., (September 14, 2020) – On Aug. 26, three local small businesses; Carmack's Garage, Lil' Ice Cream Truck and Pirate Nutrition Club were each awarded a \$5,000 Small Business Forgivable loan from Choctaw Nation Small Business Development and the Choctaw Development Fund.

The Choctaw Development Fund supports economic viability and sustainability by partnering with Choctaw small business owners, cities and municipalities to create long-term growth and job creation within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy and job growth," states Delton Cox, Choctaw Nation Councilmember District 4. "I'm so very proud of our Chaprenuers and look forward to seeing how they grow our local economy, become more innovative and create new jobs within our community."

Carmack's Garage: Carmack's Garage is owned and operated by Matthew Carmack and provides vehicle maintenance and repairs for Poteau and the surrounding areas. Offering a wide range of services, like oil changes, tire rotation, inspection and more, their goal is to be a one-stop facility to all auto servicing needs. The funds Carmack received will be used to help update his new facility. Upgrades will include, installation of air hose plumbing in the ceiling, wheeler balancer, power washer and carport for addition of wash and vacuum service to customers. Eventually, the shop plans to hire more staff members to better assist the growing business.



Left to right: Delton Cox, Choctaw Nation Councilmember District 4; Matthew Carmack, Owner of Carmack's Garage; Michelle Carmack and Kreg Haney, Small Business Advisor.

Lil' Ice Cream Truck: Lil Ice Cream Truck is a cute 1969 International Metro Mite Ice-Cream truck, owned and operated by Shirley Terry. The ice cream truck makes rounds throughout LeFlore County and can be booked for special events including weddings, car-shows, birthday parties and sporting events. The ice-cream truck sells classic ice-cream treats such as, push-ups, fudge bars, nutty cones, ice cream sandwiches and more.

"I remember the days when I would hear that iconic ice cream truck jingle outside, and I would drop what I was doing and chase it down for a treat. I want the kids of this community to feel that same joy from Lil' Ice Cream Truck," states Shirley Terry, Owner of Lil' Ice Cream Truck. The funds Terry received will be used to grow her business to better serve her customers.



Pictured: Shirley Terry, Owner of Lil' Ice Cream Truck and family and Delton Cox, Choctaw Nation Councilmember District 4.

Pirate Nutrition Club: Pirate Nutrition Club is owned and operated by Veronica Sisco. Sisco's new shake and tea club in Poteau offers a variety of protein shakes and energizing teas. Customers can add different boosters such as immune system, eye health, skin health and weight loss additives. The money Sisco received from the Choctaw Nation will be used to update and improve her building, like adding new floors.



From left to right: Angel Rowland, Choctaw Development Fund Manager; Veronica Sisco, Owner of Pirate Nutrition, Kaitlan Fout and Kreg Haney, Small Business Advisor.



Photo provided

District 6 show their support for Domestic Violence Awareness Month by taking part in the Purple Pumpkin Project.

FIND COLLEGE SUCCESS

Through the College Freshman Year Initiative, we look to unify the community of Choctaw students and empower them to make informed decisions about their academic futures. With the assistance of First Year Experience Coordinators and partnerships with various campuses across the state, Choctaw students will find the appropriate tools to achieve their goals through graduation.

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

CONTACT
800-522-6170 | COLLEGEFYI@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

[f](#)
[t](#)
[i](#)
[y](#)
[v](#)

HOME FIRE SAFETY

In the event of a fire, remember that every second counts. Escape plans help you get out of your home quickly. Twice each year, practice your home fire escape plan. Some tips to consider when preparing this plan include:

- Find two ways to get out of each room in the event the primary way is blocked by fire or smoke.
- A secondary route might be a window onto a neighboring roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper story windows.
- Make sure that windows are not stuck, screens can be taken out quickly, and that security bars can be properly opened.
- Practice feeling your way out of the house in the dark or with your eyes closed.
- Teach children not to hide from firefighters.

For more information, visit:
[Ready.gov/home-fires](https://ready.gov/home-fires)

Choctaw Nation Emergency Management

WE'VE GOT A DEAL TRIBAL MEMBERS!

Receive 5% Off & 3¢ Off per gallon

DISCOUNT AVAILABLE WHEN PRESENTING CDIB OR MEMBERSHIP CARD

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](https://choctawnation.com)

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA | ATTN: TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP

PO BOX 1210 | DURANT, OK 74702

Choctaw Nation Member Services

NOTES AND EVENTS

Thank you

Dear Chief Batton,
I want to thank you and the Choctaw Nation for all the help we are receiving during this unusual year.
I'm receiving money from the elder food program. My grandkids and great-grandkids are being helped with the school clothing and technical program.
We all appreciate this help very much.
Linda Sharp,
Proud member of the Choctaw Nation

To the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma,
I would like to thank the Choctaw Nation and the higher education program for supporting me with funds to help me achieve my goal. I graduated from St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas in December 2019 with a bachelors degree in Accounting. I also recently started my first job in the accounting field at the University of Texas.

Respectfully,
Katelyn Marie Burch

Send us your stories!

The Biskinik is a free service to our tribal members. We want to be an outlet for all members to share their successes with the rest of the tribe.

Please send your submissions to us at biskinik@choctawnation.com

NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation
Circulation Department

580.924.8280 x4028

Read the Biskinik online at
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS



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

The Official
Monthly Publication
of the
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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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.

Raising awareness of the impact of breast cancer

October was Breast Cancer Awareness month, which is usually highlighted by community outreach activities including mammogram drives, school-based activities, the Superhero Race and the Pink Pearl Luncheon. Due to COVID 19 precautions, many of these activities were canceled or changed to virtual events. Raising awareness of the impact that breast cancer has in our tribal communities remains more important than ever. Within the Choctaw Nation Health System, over 700 patients have a diagnosis of breast cancer with 110 being acute diagnoses. There is an average 30-40 patients on active chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer at any time.

Improvement in personalized treatments in combination with early diagnosis has led to a 40% reduction in the number of deaths related to breast cancer since 1989, according to the National Cancer Institute. Routine annual mammography for average risk women starting at age 40 is recommended by the American Society of Breast Surgeons. A clinical breast examination once a year is also recommended. These are actions you can take to decrease your risk of dying from breast cancer. Please discuss mammography with your physician or provider to get a mammogram scheduled, and encourage your family and friends to as well.

As a result of an initiative by Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin, state-of-the-art 3-D mammography and breast ultrasound are available at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina, the Choctaw Nation Regional Health

Clinic in Durant, the Choctaw Nation Clinic in Idabel, the Choctaw Nation Rubin White Clinic in Poteau and the Choctaw Nation Clinic in McAlester to increase accessibility. The Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina also provides breast MRI services.

For patients who require additional services, the Choctaw Nation Breast Clinic was developed in the CNHCC Surgery Clinic in Talihina to facilitate the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, non-breast cancers, and benign breast disease. At the Breast Clinic, we also conduct a High-Risk Cancer Clinic and a Survivorship Clinic. Specific services include clinical breast examination, incision and drainage procedures, lumpectomy, mastectomy, skin sparing mastectomy, axillary lymph node treatment, lymphedema treatment (through physical therapy), genetic testing, genomic testing, endocrine treatment, biopsies, port placement and removal. In addition, we also manage referrals for outside services within eligibility or insurance requirements for chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

Choctaw National Health Services Authority can be reached on the My CNHSA app or at (918) 567-7000. If you do not live near a CNHSA Facility or are not eligible for services, the National Cancer Institute will guide you to an accredited mammogram provider by calling 1-800-4-CANCER.

Amanda Chisum-Price, MD, FACS
Choctaw Nation Breast Clinic
CNHSA Chief of Surgery

OK Choctaw Tribal Alliance

5320 S. Youngs Blvd
Oklahoma City Okla. 73119
405-681-0869

www.facebook.com/OKChoctawTribalAlliance

Choctaw Language Classes ♦ Indian Taco Sales
Monthly Senior Activities ♦ Cultural Events and
Presentations ♦ Volunteer Activities ♦ Craft Classes

Veterans meeting first Saturday of every month at 10 a.m.
Scholarship Opportunities 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

Tribal Council holds October session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

October 10, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session August 8, 2020
5. WELCOME GUESTS
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Nellie Meashintubby, District #11 - Trans-parency
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve the FY2020 Budgets for the Indian Child Welfare Program and the Family Preservation Program. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - b. Approve Application for the 2020 Tribal Injury Prevention Cooperative Agreement. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - c. Approve the Family Violence Prevention Program for FY2021. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - d. Approve Application for the FY21 Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) Program: Competitive Grant Application. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - e. Approve a Council Bill Adopting the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Code. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - f. Approve and Enact the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Prosecution Code. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - g. Approve a Council Bill Adopting the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Juror Code. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - h. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Le-Flore County in Trust Status with the United States of America. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - i. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Haskell County in Trust Status with the United States of America. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - j. Approve Council Bill Adopting Amendments to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Criminal Code. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - k. Approve Electric Line Easement in Favor of Oklahoma Gas & Electric Company on Choctaw Fee Land in Bryan County, OK. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - l. Approve a Revolving Credit Facility between the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and BOKF, NA, and Other Lenders, and to Approve Related Matters. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
 - m. Approve a Council Bill establishing the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Public Defender's Office. **Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed**
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
10. OLD BUSINESS
11. ADJOURNMENT
12. CLOSING PRAYER

All Council Members were present. Speaker Williston was late and missed the first 6 votes.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

November 3	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 4	Atoka	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 5	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 6	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 9	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 10	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 12	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 13	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 16	Durant	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
November 17	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 18	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 20	Crowder	By Appointment

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna

November Language Lesson

Verbs

Here are some common verb pairs which have the same base word at the beginning of the word, but will have different endings expressing different results. The first verb will produce an 'action' and the second verb will serve as a 'passive participle' showing an 'action' which has already happened and is in that 'state' now.

Verbs showing action then Completed action

1. okpvni – to damage
okpulo – to be damaged or wrecked

Nicholos vt im ohoyo i kaa opkvni cha nukshopa tuk. Atuko, himakno ilap akosh
kaa okpulo isht anya ho e pisa beka tuk.

Nicholas damaged his wife's car and was afraid. And so, now sometimes we see Nicholas driving the wrecked car.

2. nuktalali – to calm; to soothe
nuktvla – to be calm; lulled

Vllosi ya nuktalali bvnna hosh, ishki yvt shukbo micha pishokchi ima tuk.
Himakno, vllosi yvt nuktvla taha cha washoha hosh antta.

The mother wanted to soothe the baby and gave her milk and a blanket. Now, the baby is calm and playing.

3. koli – to crack
koa – to be cracked

Akakoshi tuchina koli li cha nunnachi li tuk. Akakoshi koa mano, kani
pila li tuk.

I cracked three eggs and cooked them. I threw away the cracked eggshells.

www.choctawschool.com

CANCELLATION NOTICE

VETERANS DAY CEREMONY
NOVEMBER 11, 2020 | TVSHKA HOMMA

Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
the Veterans Ceremony has been canceled.

Information about gifts for veterans will follow soon.



Choctaw Nation

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CHOCTAWNATION.COM



ITI FABVSSA

Choctaws have long history of remembering and honoring loved ones



The Milky Way over the Choctaw homelands in what is now Mississippi.

November is a time of year when many Choctaw people gather together to celebrate family and food. In the past, Choctaw people referred to this time of year as Hochvffo Chito Hvshi or Big Hunger Month. It was probably called that because men were fasting for the success of their fall hunt. However, one important feast was held during this month, the Feast of the Dead. No one knows exactly how far back in time the origins of the Choctaw Feast of the Dead lie. A number of other tribes over a pretty wide geographic area practiced or still practice their own Feast of the Dead. This suggests that it is probably pretty ancient. No

longer practiced in Choctaw communities today, what we know about the Choctaw version of the Feast of the Dead mostly comes from a few things that were written down about it back in the 1700s. Choctaw traditional culture teaches us to love the people around us. We demonstrate this love by providing our children with the things that they need, respecting our peers, and taking care of the elderly. In the traditional way of thinking, you don't stop loving someone just because they have passed away, and you express this love by taking care of their physical remains. According to the story of the ancient Choctaw migration to find our homeland, following Iti Fabvssa (the leaning pole), our ancestors carried the bones of their deceased with them on their long journey, rather than leaving them behind. Upon arriving at Nvnih Waiya, they built an earth mound and buried them. In the 1700s, and probably long before, one of the ways that Choctaw communities honored the deceased was through the Feast of the Dead. Traditionally, death was viewed as a transition from this part of our life to the next. Choctaw people have both a Shilvp (spirit) and Shilombish (shadow). When an individual passed on, their Shilvp would travel west on the Ofi Tohbi Hina (White Dogs Road or the Milky Way) to the Shilvp Iyakni (Land of Spirits). Much of our traditional burial practice was centered around making sure our loved ones were prepared for their journey. To learn more, please look back to our December 2009 Iti Fabvssa on "Spiritual beliefs and rituals." The mourning process often lasted for months. At the end of it, a person's remains would be taken to the charnel house called a tvshka chuka (warriors' house). This acted as a temporary home and resting place for the recently deceased family member. Each iksa had its own tvshka chuka. To learn more, please look back at our February 2012 Iti Fabvssa on "Ancient Choctaw burial practice." Choctaw communities were traditionally divided into two moities or groups of people called iksa. One iksa was known as the Beloved People, Okla Ihulahta, and the other as the Divided People, Imoklasha or Kashapa Okla. The iksa was an important part of our traditional Choctaw lifeways; it kept our society in balance, both socially and politically. "A person inherited iksa membership from his or her mother and had to marry someone from the opposite iksa. Individuals born outside the community were sometimes adopted by Choctaw women into their own iksa..." (Thompson, 2019). During the Feast of the Dead, families and community members would gather together to remember those

who had passed away over the previous year. The event lasted at least two days. On the first day, one iksa conducted the appropriate rights to honor their deceased loved ones while the other iksa supported them. The next day, these roles switched. The remains were ultimately laid to rest in low, conical earth mounds located out away from the settlements. Once complete, the living members of the community would return to their settlement and hold the feast. The Feast of the Dead is an important part of traditional Choctaw burial custom that centered on the love we have for our people. This feast was a way that the community, as a whole could honor and remember their loved ones who had passed on. The Feast of the Dead was a common practice done by many other tribes in eastern North America. An anonymous Ojibwa traditionalist explained via personal communication, in their community the Feast of the Dead was the most important celebration of the year. It is a time when the entire community can set aside their differences and come together to eat, celebrate, and take care of their ancestors by feeding and honoring them. Wyandotte people also believe that the Feast of the Dead is the "most celebrated ceremony" they traditionally hold (<http://www.wyandotte-nation.org/>). The Feast of the Dead is also very similar to the Day of the Dead which is adapted from indigenous communities in Mexico. This November, let us remember our family, friends, and community members who have passed on. What can we do in our homes or communities to continue to honor and remember them?



A depiction of a Choctaw Earthen Burial Mound by Joseph Wolf.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

Despite the global pandemic, you don't need to feel isolated. We are here for you. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to domestic violence and needs assistance during this time, please contact:

Contact us at: **800-522-6170**, or visit: **choctawnation.com/domestic-violence**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

TOGETHER WE'RE MORE



INDEPENDENT ELDER HOUSING

1-800-235-3087 | Application available at your local Community Center

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

RENTAL ASSISTANCE



The Rental Assistance Program gives very low income applicants the opportunity to live in affordable, safe, decent, and sanitary housing.

- Rental Assistance**
Rental Assistance provides eligible low income tribal members the opportunity to live in affordable, safe, decent, and sanitary housing.
- Independent Elder Supportive Voucher**
Tenants who have not yet received a rental assistance certificate to subsidize their rent may receive this service to complete their rental agreement until rental assistance is available.
- Homeless Emergency Services**
Provides assistance to low income tribal members in the form of rent or utilities to prevent homelessness.
- Veteran Affairs Service for Housing**
Assists veterans who are homeless or near homeless receive housing services.

1-800-235-3087
Or visit the nearest Choctaw Nation Field Office to receive an application.

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Housing Headlines

By **Rachelle Holder**

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma offers our tribal elders the ability to live in a residential independent living community that is age-restricted with residents who are able to live on their own. In this type of community, seniors maintain independence for as long as is desired or possible.

Independent Elder Housing is comprised of units designed for one person or one person and their spouse. Each unit is equipped with energy star appliances: refrigerator, stove, central heat & air, washing machine and dryer. Some site locations offer a community building, available exclusively to residents and their guests. Each site is overseen by a Rental Manager and Maintenance Technician responsible for the overall operations and physical integrity of each unit and the property.

Eligibility requirements for the Independent Elder Housing program are as follows:

- Applicant must have a CDIB card.
- Applicant households must meet income guidelines.
- Applicants must be elderly or near-elderly. (age 55 or older)
- Household members must pass a nationwide background check.

Tenant rent in the Independent Elder Program is based on 15% of the gross adjusted income for the household; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rent is waived until January 1, 2021.

Independent Elder Housing is currently offered at the following locations:

Antlers	Hartshorne	Smithville
Atoka	Hugo	Stigler
Broken Bow	Idabel	Talihina
Calera	Poteau	Wilburton
Coalgate	Savanna	

Choctaw Nation Stay Connected
Housing Authority **CHOCTAWNATION.COM**

Facebook Twitter Instagram YouTube Snapchat



NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

FOR CHILDREN WHO WILL BE 3 OR 4 YEARS OLD BY SEPTEMBER 1

Providing educational, health and family services for eligible children and families, including children with special needs. Available to all children.

FOR AN APPLICATION, CONTACT
800-522-6170 EXT 2219

Choctaw Nation Head Start



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 funding year is **July 1 - May 1** of the following year. Applications can be submitted online.

CONTACT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/STUDENT-SCHOOL-AND-ACTIVITY-FUND-SSAF
800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463

Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

Choctaw members awarded at Red Earth Festival



Lauretta Newby-Coker, with her Cut Stained Glass piece titled “Like a Rock,” won the Dana & Terry Brown Grand Award Winner- Best in Show at the 2020 Red Earth Art Festival.

Other Choctaw winners at the festival were:

- Linda Kukuk, “Crow in Moonlight”- Scratchwork on Clayboard (President’s Award)
- Michael McCullough, “Colors of Southwest” (Awards by Division- 1st: Painting, Oil/ Acrylic)
- Dylan Cavin, “McCurtain County” (Awards by Division- 3rd: Painting, Oil/ Acrylic)
- Dylan Cavin, “Field Mouse” (Awards by Division- 3rd: Drawing/ Graphics/ Photography)

Wesley Invited to join Elite Team

Kendall Wesley is the 8-year-old daughter of Todd and Sarah Wesley of Broken Bow, Oklahoma. She was invited to play with the Softball Youth Elite Team and play in some national tournaments, following her performance in Round Rock, Texas, where she was nominated and accepted to play in the All-American games.

She competed with and against 68 other girls in the 9-year-old division. Kendall won the Defensive Wizard Award for her team, the Patriots. The Elite tournaments will be held in Ft. Myers, Huntington Beach, Las Vegas and Atlanta.

Kendall started playing with the USA Glory 1 travel softball team at the age of five. Her competitive spirit and determination run in her bloodline, coming from her great-great-grandfather, original Code Talker Ben Carterby and her great-great-great-uncle Code Talker Joseph Oklahombi. Kendall attends Benett Elementary, where she is in the third grade. Kendall is the granddaughter of Gary and Brenda Marshall, Solomon and Jackie Anna, and Bennie and the late Lisa Wesley.



Biskinik wins top NAJA awards

The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) recently recognized outstanding Indigenous journalism during their annual Indian Country National Native Media Awards ceremony, virtually on Oct. 15, 2020.

The annual competition recognizes excellence in reporting by Indigenous and non-Indigenous journalists from across the U.S. and Canada.

Choctaw Nation’s official newspaper, Biskinik, won awards in the following categories competing in Professional Division III:

- **FIRST PLACE** - Print/Online – Best Health Coverage “Mental health struggles met with help and hope” by Chris Jennings.
- **SECOND PLACE** - Print (General Excellence) – Choctaw Nation Biskinik Staff.
- **THIRD PLACE** - Print/Online – “Retired teacher recognized for servant leadership” by Chris Jennings.
- **HONORABLE MENTION** - Print (Combined Daily/Monthly Categories)– Choctaw Nation Biskinik Staff.
- **HONORABLE MENTION** - Print/Online – “Stickball Girl” by Chris Jennings.



From STEAM camp to Ivy League



Autumn Parrott recently began her freshman year at Stanford University in California. She is currently focused on biomechanical engineering. However, she says she is leaving the door open to other career fields relating to bioengineering. “Stanford gives us a lot of flexibility to give us time to explore what we want to study,” said Autumn.

Autumn also had a difficult time deciding what college to attend. She applied for 17 colleges and was accepted to an impressive list of colleges, including Notre Dame, Northwestern University, Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, Duke, Purdue, Vanderbilt and Rice University. Autumn said she had to work very hard to apply for that many schools while being a senior in high school. Despite the workload, she still managed to graduate valedictorian of her class.

Autumn is a Choctaw Nation tribal member and grew up in Texarkana, Texas. Her parents are Lisa and Kenneth Parrott. She said that she is very grateful for her Choctaw heritage and that her grandmother, Judith Farley, has passed on many Choctaw traditions to her, and she hopes to continue these traditions. Autumn said that going to college was very special because neither of her parents attended college.

According to Autumn, she was interested in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) fields from an early age. She was fortunate enough to attend an elementary school where they focused heavily on STEAM. She was able to attend STEAM camps offered by the Choctaw Nation in the summer. Autumn says the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma played a big part in developing her love of STEAM. These camps gave her opportunities that she would not have had otherwise.

“One year, we toured the University of Oklahoma, and there was an engineering conference that we attended. I was already looking at bioengineering, and when I saw that there were 12 people who were all majoring in bioengineering, I was so excited to ask them all the questions I had about the field. I met one of these students and ended up going to shadow him in his laboratory. I was able to learn what an undergrad would if they were interning in a lab. This really prepared me for what I’m doing now. This entire experience wouldn’t have happened without the Choctaw Nation STEAM camp,” she said.

Autumn encourages anyone considering attending a Choctaw Nation STEAM camp to go and ask questions.

“They should definitely try it. I was really shy going into some of those camps. It was difficult for me to approach some of the accomplished people because I didn’t think they wanted to talk to me, but these people want to talk to you and mentor you, so go and learn as much as you can,” she said.

Grateful for Nation and family



Dr. Seth Boydstun is an Oklahoma City Native and a Choctaw tribal member. He specializes in orthopedics and sports medicine at McBride Orthopedic Hospital. He has utilized many of the services offered by the Choctaw Nation throughout his life. “Growing up, we utilized the health clinic in Oklahoma City,” explained Boydstun. “Then again in

college, I was able to apply for scholarships that greatly helped me through all of college and into medical school. I even received a Chahta Foundation scholarship that really helped me through medical school.”

Boydstun is very accomplished in his field and holds positions with Oklahoma State University and Edmond North High school as the team physician. He also has membership with the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, the American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine, and American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons.

According to Boydstun, medicine is a gratifying career.

“It is a very enjoyable profession, and it is extremely rewarding to be able to help someone get back to some activity that they used to be able to do. If you have a passion for medicine, then absolutely pursue that,” said Boydstun.

Boydstun says he is so thankful for everyone in his life who has supported him through school and his career. He is specifically grateful for his parents Mike and Brenda Boydstun, in-laws David and Sally Ruhl, his wife Lauren, and their children Griffin and Noah.

Tallulah Liv La Rose

Tallulah Liv La Rose was born Sept. 14, 2020, at 6:11 p.m. in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, at Havasu Regional Medical Center. She was 8 pounds, 3 ounces and 20 inches long.

Tallulah is the daughter of Phillip La Rose and Crystal Clyde. She was named after Tula May, her great-great-great-grandmother, who married Choctaw lineage. She was named Tallulah to represent her culture and the women in her family.



Henry graduates Summa Cum Laude



Michelle Henry graduated with an Associate of Arts and Science degree in Liberal Arts, Summa Cum Laude, from Lord Fairfax Community College in Virginia in August of 2020. Michelle is a Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society member and completed her Honors Program Scholar work before graduation.

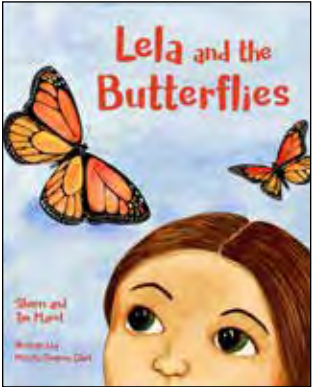
In Fall 2020, Michelle enrolled at Washington College in Maryland, where she now continues her studies and work towards a bachelor’s degree in the science and literary fields.

Michelle would like to thank all those who have supported her return to college and those professors who were instrumental in opening new avenues to her academic success. “With all of my heart I thank you!”

Lela and the Butterflies

Sherri Maret (author), Merisha Cark (illustrator) and Tim Maret (co-author) have released a new book called Lela and the Butterflies, ISBN: 9781630763824.

The book is about Lela, who takes a nature walk with Ranger Maggie and learns that butterflies need help. Lela’s small steps in butterfly conservation start with a butterfly garden of nectar and host plants, but she doesn’t stop there and ends up spreading her love for butterflies throughout the community. A simple guide to planting a butterfly garden is also included. The book is for ages 4-8.



Curbside Thanksgiving Dinners

All Thanksgiving meals will be served curbside at the corresponding community center in accordance with social distancing protocols. Contact your local Choctaw community center for more information.

Nov. 4	
Atoka Community Lunch	11 a.m.
Battiest Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Coalgate Senior Lunch	12 p.m.
Stigler Community/Senior	11 a.m.
Nov. 5	
Tuskahoma Community Dinner	5:30 p.m.
Nov. 9	
Battiest Community Dinner	4 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Nov. 10	
Antlers Senior Lunch	12 p.m.
Nov. 16	
Broken Bow Community Dinner	4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Nov. 18	
Crowder Community Lunch	11:30 a.m.
Hugo Community Lunch	11 a.m.
Spiro Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Wilburton Community Lunch	12 p.m.
Wright City Community/Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Durant Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Idabel Senior Lunch	12 p.m.
McAlester Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Smithville Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Broken Bow Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Poteau Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Nov. 19	
Talihina Community Lunch	11 a.m.

Are Virtual Medical Visits for you?

Virtual Medical Visit services enables healthcare access to patients who are not able to travel to the provider for specific, non-life threatening, injuries or illnesses.

The service is a video appointment with a healthcare provider, that is available to patients with specific symptoms. Patients may have 3 virtual visits within a 30 day period, then must physically see a provider.

Eligibility

To qualify for a virtual medical visit, patient must:

- Be a CDIB holder and have a current Consent to Treat on file.
- Live in Oklahoma and be age five (5) years or older.
- Have an active chart at any Choctaw Nation Health Services facility and have been seen within the last 12 months.

To qualify for Virtual Medical Visits, you must meet eligibility requirements and have one of the approved symptoms:

- allergies
- poison ivy
- sunburn
- head lice
- pink eye
- insect bite(s)
- cough/cold
- yeast infection
- cold sores
- recurrent genital herpes

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Please call (580) 916-9231 or visit us online at www.choctawnation.com/virtualvisits

COMPLETE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE ON: CHOCTAWNATION.COM/ADULT-EDUCATION

The Choctaw Nation offers High School Equivalency Diploma classes online for all Choctaw members across the United States. Traditional classes, with an instructor, are also offered within the Choctaw Nation area for all federally recognized tribes. Most students finish within 12 weeks of study. A \$250 incentive is available to students enrolled in the program upon completion. All books, supplies and testing fees are provided.

Students must fill out the application and provide the following documentation: CDIB or Tribal Membership, Social Security card, and Current Driver’s license or State Issued ID.

CONTACT: 800-522-6170 EXT 2122 | ADULTED@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

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Evelyn Mari Omelas

Evelyn Mari (Skelton) Beaty Omelas, 88, passed away April 26, 2020.

Evelyn was born Nov. 26, 1931, in Gay, Okla., to Anna (Skelton) Calhoun and Walter Beaty.

She was preceded in death by her parents; step-father Troy Lee Calhoun; husband John Omelas; and son Mark Omelas.

Evelyn is survived by her children Theresa Flores, Vicky Casteel and spouse Ron, Jon Omelas and spouse Luisa, Gail Cannon and spouse Tyler, and Lisa Linares; 17 grandchildren; and 28 great-grandchildren.

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

**Nikita June Palmer**

Nikita “Niki” June (Hulin) Palmer, 74, passed away Aug. 17, 2020.

Niki was born March 6, 1946, in Durant, Okla., to Troy Murrell and Bobby June (Enochs) Hulin.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Shelley Hulin; and many other relatives.

Niki is survived by her spouse Camille Palmer; sons Miquel Marler and spouse Mechelle, and Jeremy Marler and spouse Angela; daughter Bobby Wiggins and spouse Jason; grandchildren Estella, Mikayla, Alex, Blake, Jabe and Eowyn; and “fur kids” Taki and Sprout.

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

**Avis Marie Blackmon**

Avis Marie Blackmon, 56, passed away Aug. 19, 2020.

Avis was born July 8, 1964, in DeQueen, Ark., to Willis Maytubby Sr. and Cindy (Battiest) Maytubby.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Avis is survived by her husband Daniel Blackmon; children LaToya Blackmon, Chelsea Clark and spouse Tony, and Kolton Blackmon; brothers James Maytubby, Willis Maytubby Jr., Vince Maytubby, and Lance Maytubby; sisters Mayda Largo, and Liz Lee; grandchildren Titus, Landrie, Ryker, Paxton, Eastin, and Finley; several nieces and nephews; and numerous special friends.

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

**William D. West Jr.**

William “Billy” D. West Jr., 76, passed away Aug. 2, 2020.

Billy was born June 28, 1944, in Commerce, TX., to William D. West and Sue Marie Spring West.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Sandra M. West.

Billy is survived by his brother

Johnny L. West and spouse Lydia; sons William D. West III and spouse Marie, John Martin West and spouse Misy, and Timothy West; and six grandchildren.

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

**Nellie Myrl Luna**

Nellie Myrl Luna, 93, passed away Aug. 20, 2020.

Nellie was born Oct. 18, 1926, in a log house on Rattlesnake Hill, southeast of Pittsburg, Okla., to John Clayton and Gladys Wilkinson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Doug; sisters Emily Wilkinson and Edith Luna; and brothers Pete, Hailey, and J.C. Wilkinson.

Nellie is survived by her children Dr. Gregory K. Luna and spouse Melissa, Shelley M. Hill and spouse Britt, and Grant B. Luna and spouse Kris; sisters Phyllis Raleigh and Billie Marsh; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Ronald David Nichols**

Ronald David “Runt” Nichols, 60, passed away Sept. 4, 2020.

Ronald was born Oct. 27, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Edward Nichols and Pauline Billy.

He was preceded in death by his mother Pauline Fish and her husband Frank; and sister Earlene Dowell.

Ronald is survived by his wife Peggy Nichols; children Teela Walton and spouse Fred, Tamara Nichols, and RJ Nichols and spouse Shay; brothers Darrell Nichols and spouse Tammy, and Bobby Nichols and spouse Becky; sister Debbie Watson and spouse Eddie; and grandchildren Carmen, Evan, Billy, Kaden, Kanden, Dante, Tyreese, Zeke, Lailah, and Tiana.

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

**Geneva Rowe**

Geneva Rowe, 93, passed away Aug. 7, 2020.

Geneva was born May 10, 1927, in Rycle, Okla., to Isom and Elizabeth (Sumpter) Allen.

She was preceded in death by her husband James Rowe; three brothers; two sisters; grandchildren Ted Battles Jr., Jenny Rowe and Zack Kline; and two great-grandchildren.

Geneva is survived by daughters Ramona Battles and spouse Bill; Sandra Saulter and spouse Art; sons William H. Kline Jr., Davie Kline and spouse Deloras; grandchildren Jenice Smart, Leland “Shorty” Battles and spouse Teresa; Donald Battles and spouse Shelly; Kimberly Bunten and spouse David; Kristy Walstrom and spouse Scott, Melissa Kline-Smith and spouse Marshall, William Kline III, Danny Kline; 17 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren; brother Pete Nelson; and other relatives, loved ones and friends.

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

**Gregory Lee James**

Gregory Lee James, 52, passed away Aug. 29, 2020.

Gregory was born Oct. 28, 1967, in Tacoma, Wash., to Jackson Jesse James Jr. and Lucy Dorothy (Nanuk) James.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Gregory is survived by his brother Richards James; sister Dawn McLaughlin; nieces and nephews Derrick James, Alexa Welch, Emily McLaughlin, Trent McLaughlin, and Felicia James; great-nephew Jackson Curtis James; uncle Jesse Jackson James; several cousins and second cousins Elizabeth Renee (James) Campbell, Racyn Campbell, Ally Campbell, Matthew James, Jeffrey Folsom, and Regina (Folsom) Mabray; and numerous other family members.

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

**Lee James**

Lee James, 92, passed away Aug. 28, 2020.

Lee was born April 4, 1928, in Keota, Okla., to Charles Mac and Artemissa (Takkubbee) James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Daniel; sisters Dora Mae Cass, Katherine Ida Shoop, Inez Juanita James, Della Ruth James, and Vicky Minnie James; nephews Kyle Leach, Charles James, Ralph James, J.B. James, Daniel James, Stanley James, and Earl Wayne Moore.

Lee is survived by his sister Lisa James; nieces Artemissa Gail (James) Colwell and spouse Jacob, Wanda Leach, Tanya Leach, Mary James, Hellen Blankenship, and Della Colwell; and nephews Gary Leach, Chris Smith, Caleb Killough, Cooper James, Case Colwell, and Jacob Carson Colwell.

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

**Joann Sanders**

Joann (Russell) Sanders, 75, passed away Aug. 23, 2020.

Joann was born Jan. 25, 1945, in Los Angeles, Calif., to Aldon Neal and Juanita (Everett) Russell.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Aldon “Rusty” Russell; son-in-law Gonzalo “Nacho” Montero; and grandson Demous Paul Wayne Voyles.

Joann is survived by daughters Candice Montero, Roxanne Garrett, grandson Jesse Makepeace; granddaughter Arianna Allfree and Dalton Parsons; great-grandsons Stephen Wilson, Chris Degering and Daxton Jo James Parsons; father of her children John Carl Sanders; sister-in-law Cindy Russell; aunts Genevieve “Judy” Vails and Mary Nell Russell; niece Sarah Russell; nephew David Russell; many other family members, dear friends and her little dog Sugar.

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

**Wanda Jean Lingo**

Wanda Jean Wilson Lingo, 86, passed away Aug. 30, 2020.

Wanda was born Jan. 21, 1934, in Haworth, Okla., to Sarah Wilson and Caston Wilson Sr.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Betty Wilson, Annette Tillie, and Shirley Wilson; daughter Diana Lynn Naegele-Huie; brother James Wilson; and husband Thomas Lingo.

Wanda is survived by her children Anita Carlson, Michael Carter, David Carter, Wynnette Gentemann, and Cheryl Tucker; sisters Josephine Sacolo, Catherine Miller, and Ida Mae Young; brothers Kenneth Wilson, and Caston Wilson Jr.; sister-in-law Arlene Wilson; many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson.

For the full obituary, please visit [Crown Memorial Center](#).

**Daphana Elaine Cook**

Daphana “Dee” Elaine Cook, 51, passed away Aug. 17, 2020.

Dee was born Dec. 6, 1968, in Talihina, Okla., to Rose Marie Noah.

She was preceded in death by her husband Robbie Lynn Cook; daughter Julie Nicole Cook; grandparents Wilson and Nora (McGee) Lewis; her mother; aunts Vera, Sarah, Marie and Isabel; uncles David and Emerson Lewis.

Dee is survived by her aunt Ella “Nana” Going; many cousins; brother-in-law Richard Cook; Steve Cook and spouse Phyllis; and sister-in-law Laura Dudley.

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

**Barbara Jean Lair**

Barbara Jean Lair, 87, passed away Sept. 7, 2020.

Barbara was born Sept. 12, 1932, to Annice M. McGee-Bryan and William Telfair Wood.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers William Wesley Wood and Harold King Wood.

Barbara is survived by her husband Carl Lee Lair; son Randy Lee Lair and spouse Trish; daughter Denise Gail Knox and spouse Bob; grandchildren Julie Lair and Scott Pester, Matt Lair and spouse Jennifer; Mackenzie Maslanik and spouse Tyler, Greg Knox and spouse Molly McBride-Knox, Kim Aposhian and spouse Jason; 16 great-grandchildren and one on the way.

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

**Lyndol A. Impson**

Lyndol A. Impson, 86, passed away Aug. 31, 2020.

Lyndol was born Nov. 28, 1933, in Konawa, Okla.

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

**James Edwin Reeves**

James Edwin Reeves, 88, passed away Sept. 3, 2020.

James was born May 10, 1932, in Shawnee, Okla., to Dallas and Beatrice (Benton) Reeves.

He was preceded in death by his parents and half-brother Marian Booker.

James is survived by his wife Joan; son Larry Reeves; daughter Luanne Mosier and spouse Phillip; half-brother Randy Booker; grandchildren Christina Collins and spouse Brad, and Amanda Brackeen and spouse Craig; great-grandchildren Kayana Rhoton-Brackeen, Emma Collins, Lilian Brackeen, Andrew Collins, and Molly Brackeen; several nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

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

**Carl Claunts Collier Jr.**

Carl Claunts Collier Jr. passed away Sept. 6, 2020.

Carl was born June 17, 1930, and was raised in McAlester, Okla.

He was preceded in death by his first wife Patricia McLean Collier, and second wife E. Lenore Piekarsky.

Carl is survived by daughters Karen L. Collier and spouse John Calabro, and Kathryn A. Collier and spouse Kelly Pope; sister Mary Alice Collier; many cousins, in-laws, and friends.

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

**Edmond Talmadge Billy**

Edmond Talmadge Billy, 81, passed away Sept. 5, 2020.

Edmond was born Dec. 22, 1938, in McCurtain, Okla., to William and Rina (Griffith) Billy.

He was preceded in death by his parents; grandsons Steven Tyler Billy, Matthew Billy and Landon Shelton; along with numerous siblings.

Edmond is survived by his wife Addie Geraldine (Perkins); daughters Rhonda Thompson, Connie Younus and spouse Ezzeldin Mahmoyd, Tracey McBride, Glenda and Bill Needham; sons Shannon Billy, Shane Billy, Glenn Billy, Simon and Debbie Billy Lance Richardson, Davie and Chloe Torres; 27 grandchildren; 30 great-grandchildren; numerous brothers and sisters; other relatives, loved ones and friends.

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

**Ursula Lee Anderson**

Ursula Lee Anderson, 45, passed away Aug. 31, 2020.

Ursula was born Dec. 31, 1974, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Sheila Ann (Canary) and Jerry Lee Anderson.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents Lejah Elijah Anderson and Marie Anderson, and Jimmy and Joyce Canary.

Ursula is survived by her parents; and sister Reshinda Anderson.

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

**James Monroe Melton**

James Monroe Melton, 91, passed away Sept. 3, 2020.

James was born Jan. 2, 1929, in Lenox, Okla., to Lymon and Etta Mae (McCoy) Melton.

He was preceded in death by his wife Loretta Melton; his parents; son baby Melton; grandsons Justin Melton and Leonard Jackson; and six sisters and four brothers.

James is survived by daughters Elizabeth and spouse Hugh Morgan, Donna Melton, Cynthia Melton, Darlene and spouse Austin Ludlow, and Judy Melton; sons Ly-sander Melton, Jonathan Melton, and DeWayne Melton; twenty grandchildren; fifty-one great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren; sister Shirley James; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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

**Angelita Trent**

Angelita “Angie” Trent, 43, passed away July 24, 2020.

Angie was born April 7, 1977, in El Reno, Okla., to Wayne and Eunice Trent.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents Claud Trent and George and Remy Bustillo.

Angie is survived by her parents; sister Lonette Trent; grandmother Betty Shaffer; and many aunts, cousins and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [John Ireland 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

Dispose of unused medications at CNHSA pharmacies

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation is helping protect families and the environment by offering medication drop-off boxes at all Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority pharmacy locations. The bright green boxes can be found in the pharmacy waiting areas at Talihina, Poteau, McAlester, Stigler, Atoka, Hugo, Idabel and Durant.

According to the Food and Drug Administration, the best way to dispose of most types of unused or expired medicines is to drop it off at a drug take-back site immediately. Drug take-back boxes ensure medications that are no longer needed or are expired stay out of the hands of children and out of the environment.

While it used to be common practice to flush unused medications, the FDA advises against flushing many prescription drugs because water treatment plants cannot handle pharmaceuticals. The FDA guidelines allow for the flushing of drugs that are sought after for their misuse or abuse potential and medications that can result in death from one dose if inappropriately taken. The FDA flush list can be found at [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

Unused drugs placed in the trash or not disposed of properly can end up in the wrong hands or damage the environment. A study conducted by Geisinger Health Systems showed that of the 247 medications reported being left unused by patients, the most common drugs were pain medications at 15%, hypertension was next at 14%, with antibiotics and psychiatric medications at 11% and 9%. Approximately 15% of unused drugs were controlled substances such as opioids.

Morgan Drew Greutman, Pharm.D., BCPS said, “It is



These bright green medication drop-off boxes are available at several of the Choctaw Nation pharmacy locations.

important to dispose of unused opioids because it could lead to accidental poisoning, misuse, or overdose.”

After patients bring in their unused medication to dispose of in the bin, CNHSA staff send the unused medicine to be incinerated. The types of drugs accepted at the drop-off boxes are unused or expired prescription medications, unused or expired over-the-counter medications, and pet medications. Medications not accepted are illegal drugs, thermometers, inhalers, lotions, liquids, aerosol cans, needles or hydrogen peroxide.

“We encourage you to bring all unused medications for appropriate disposal, particularly unused pain medications,” said Greutman.

CNHSA pharmacy staff members can help with questions on how to dispose of unused medications.

Early diagnosis of lung cancer can save lives

According to the American Lung Association, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in America, with an estimated 228,820 new lung cancer cases in 2020.

About 150,000 people die from lung cancer every year. However, if lung cancer is detected before it spreads, the likelihood of surviving five years or more improves 59% when comparing stage 1 to stage 4 cancer.

Some possible signs and symptoms of lung cancer are:

- A new cough that does not go away or gets worse.
- Chest pain that is often worse when you breathe deeply, cough or laugh.
- A hoarse voice.
- Unexplained weight loss and loss of appetite
- Coughing up blood or rust-colored spit or phlegm.
- Shortness of breath.
- Infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia that do not go away or keep coming back.
- Wheezing.

It is important to remember that lung cancer doesn’t always present itself with symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the only recommended screening test for lung cancer is a low-dose computed tomography, commonly known as a CT scan. To be screened means testing for a disease with no symptoms or history of the disease present.

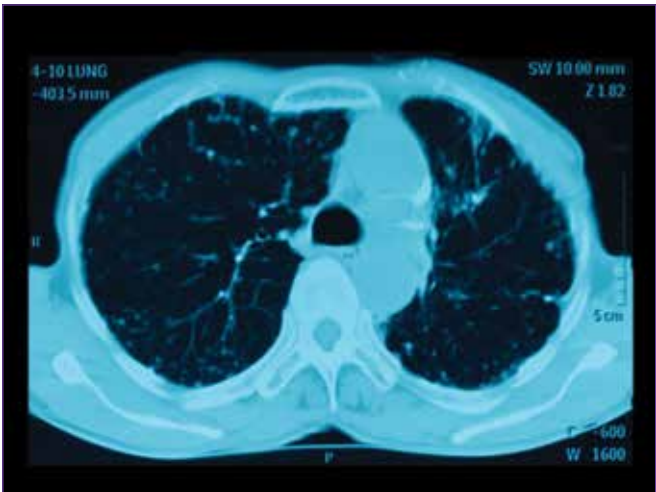
During a CT scan, an X-ray machine uses a low dose of radiation to take multiple images of your lungs as you lie on a table that slides in and out of the machine. The process takes just a few minutes and is not painful.

Because of the risk associated with any scan using radiation, certain guidelines should be followed.

- If you have a history of heavy smoking and you smoke now.
- Smoke now or have quit within the past 15 years.
- Are between 55 and 80 years old.
- A smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 years, etc.)

Lung cancer screening does have its risks. A low amount of radiation is used to perform the screening. The amount is roughly equal to what an average American gets in six months of natural background radiation. This radiation level is slightly higher than the amount women are exposed to through a mammogram.

Because of these risks and the importance of finding lung cancer early, it’s important to talk to your doctor to see if you are a candidate for a low-dose CT scan.



CT scan (computed tomography) of chest, coronal view, showing pulmonary metastasis, lung cancer

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

WAREHOUSES & MARKETS
Open 8:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
Thursday: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

November 2020
All markets open weekdays, November 2-24
Closed: November 11 and 25-30.
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 13, 10:00 - 1:00

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 19, 10:00 - 1:00

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 6, 10:00 - 1:00

MCALESTER 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 16, 10:00 - 1:00

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 8, 10:00 - 1:00

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Drinking water research study

Volunteers are invited to take part in a drinking water research study conducted by Dr. Tim Wade (EPA) and Jatin H. Mistry (EPA Region 6)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in partnership with the Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Services is conducting a research study to determine which waterborne pathogens are common in Choctaw Nation’s drinking water. This project can assist the Choctaw Nation’s Environmental officials in understanding potential sources of contamination and what actions can be performed to keep drinking water and the tribal population safe from waterborne infections.

The study involves measuring antibodies in saliva samples where these antibodies are naturally produced by the human body in response to waterborne pathogen infections. To take part in the study you must be:

- An adult of at least 18 years of age
- Reside in the Choctaw Nation counties of Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, Coal, Haskell, Hughes, Latimer, Le Flore, McCurtain, Pittsburg, and Pushmataha
- Have an overnight shipping address and ability to drop off package at an overnight shipping pick up location
- Phone/Smart device with text, internet and email functions.

For the study, a participant will be required to complete a very simple health questionnaire, collect saliva samples at home every 90 days for one year and drop off the package at an overnight shipping pick up location. Compensation for each successful sample collection event will be provided in the form of a Visa Gift Card.

For more information and enrollment, please contact the EPA Study Team at 1-855-946-4375 Monday to Friday 8 AM to 5 PM Central.

This research study has been reviewed by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Office of Human Research Ethics (Study Title: Waterborne Infection Risk Evaluation, IRB # 16-2034, Phone: (919) 966-3113) and the Choctaw Nation’s Institutional Review Board (CN IRB # 2020-008). For questions about this research study, please contact the principal investigator Dr. Tim Wade (US EPA Human Studies Facility, MD 58C, Research Triangle Park, NC 27711 at wade.tim@epa.gov or (919) 966-8900) or Mr. David F. Wharton (CNO IRB Scientific Co-Chair at DFWharton@cnhsa.com or (580) 286-4724).

THANKSGIVING SAFETY

"Keeping fire safety in mind during this joyous but hectic time is important, especially when there's a lot of activity and people at home."

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stove top so you can keep an eye on the food.
- Stay in the home when cooking your turkey, and check on it frequently.
- Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot and kids should stay three feet away.
- Make sure kids stay away from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from vegetables, gravy or coffee could cause serious burns.
- Keep knives out of the reach of children.
- Be sure electric cords from an electric knife, coffee maker, plate warmer or mixer are not dangling off the counter within easy reach of a child.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children — up high in a locked cabinet.
- Never leave children alone in room with a lit candle.
- Keep the floor clear so you don't trip over kids, toys, pocketbooks or bags.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

For safety tips and information visit:
nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Seasonal-fire-causes

Choctaw Nation Emergency Management

WIC van travel has been postponed. If you need assistance, please call 580-380-3628 or 580-380-9895 Ext. 83582.

SHOULD I BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

The more you smoke and the longer you smoke, the higher your risk is for lung cancer.

You should consider being screened using a Low-Dose CT Scan if you have all three of these risk factors:

1. **55 to 80 years old**
2. **Current smoker or former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago**
3. **A smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 years, etc.)**

If you are in the high risk category, talk to your physician about whether screening is beneficial for you.

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

Thank You Quesadillas

- Cooking spray
- 4 Tortillas, whole wheat
- 1/2 cup Mozzarella cheese, part skim
- 14 cup Cranberry sauce, jellied
- 1/2 cup Turkey, chopped
- 1 cup Spinach

Preparation

1. Spread 1 tablespoon of cranberry sauce on each tortilla.
2. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of cheese, 2 tablespoons of turkey and 1/4 cup of spinach on each
3. tortilla.
4. Fold in half.
5. Heat a skillet to medium heat. Spray with cooking spray.
6. Place the quesadillas in the skillet and cook for 3-4 minutes oruntil golden brown.
7. Spray the top of the tortilla, and cook again until golden brown.



Photos by Christian Toews and Chris Jennings

(Right) A starry night at Beavers Bend State Park is one of the benefits of camping in Southeastern Oklahoma. (Left and below) Adrianna Mandt and Stephen Graham enjoy a weekend backpacking and camping. Many people use short escapes into the wilderness as a way to reconnect, away from the distractions of home.

Choctaw Nation camping offers more than just great views

By Christian Toews

The cold air of the morning, the smell of smoke lingers, the sound of the zipper as you emerge from your sleeping bag. Maybe this brings back some of your best camping memories, or perhaps you have never experienced a morning like this. Waking up after sleeping in the great outdoors can be a refreshing experience.

Camping is a popular activity in southeastern Oklahoma. Some families go camping to reconnect and revitalize their relationships away from all the distractions at home. Some people go camping to escape their busy everyday life. Others want to

get close to the ways our ancestors lived. No matter your reason for going, camping is a truly unique way to break away from routine and experience the great outdoors.

It turns out that setting up a tent and sleeping under the stars has many health benefits too. One of these benefits is improved sleep cycles. In a study by Kenneth Wright at the University of Colorado Boulder, Wright set out to see how participants' circadian rhythms were affected when they were exposed to only natural light. He sent them on a week-long camping trip and measured levels of the hormone melatonin. Melatonin is the hormone responsible for telling our bodies when it's time

for bed and helps set a person's internal clock. Wright found that people's internal clocks were off by two hours in our modern environment with abundant electronics and artificial light. This isn't a good thing because a lack of sleep has been associated with many health problems. Wright was able to show that the participant's melatonin levels, and their internal clock, were able to recalibrate after only a week of camping in nature.

Another health benefit of camping is reduced stress. That is something we all want. Our lives have become so busy that we forget to slow down and enjoy the world around us.

Beavers Bend State Park near Broken Bow, Oklahoma, has spectacular lakeside camping spots and more wooded camping areas. Beavers Bend is unique and offers hiking and mountain biking trails, world-class fly fishing on the Mountain Fork River, excellent angling in Broken Bow Lake, and many great restaurants and activities just minutes from the State Park. This area has become a vacation destination for many people who want to escape the big city's hustle and bustle while still offering many restaurants and activities to enjoy. Beavers Bend, and the surrounding area, provides secluded and peaceful areas only minutes from great food, drinks and nightlife. It is truly one of Oklahoma's hidden gems.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

In a study published earlier this year, an interdisciplinary team from Cornell University was able to show that as little as 10 minutes in nature can help college students feel happier and lessen the effects of both physical and mental stress. Imagine what a weekend in the great outdoors can do for you.

The night sky has become lost to most people who live in a city. Light pollution has choked out the stars in much of the country. You may see a few stars at night in your neighborhood, but a single streetlight can make it difficult to see the night sky in all its glory. Oklahoma's Southeastern region still retains some of the darkest skies in the country. This is just another reason to get outside at night and look up at the unpolluted skies. On a clear night, you might even catch a glimpse of the milky way.

With beautiful scenery, diverse wildlife and plenty of terrain options to choose from, Southeastern Oklahoma has some of the midwest's best camping spots. Whether you enjoy camping near a lake, a river or near mountains, this region has it all.

Talimena State Park is the entrance to the Talimena Nation Scenic Drive. This meandering road through the Winding Stair Mountains is known for dazzling spring and fall displays of foliage. Visitors from all over the country come to experience this scenic drive. Talimena State Park offers camping spots, hiking trails throughout the Ouachita National Forest, Dirt Bike and ATV trails and more. With its breathtaking mountaintop views and steep hikes, you might not feel like you're in Oklahoma.

South of Talihina, another great camping spot, attracts campers year-round.



There are other unique places to camp in this region near Durant, Atoka, McAlester, Poteau and Hugo, to name a few. Oklahoma is a diverse and exciting landscape that everyone should explore.

With the many benefits camping has to offer, the beautiful locations, and outdoor activities, there are several great reasons to plan your next trip to Southeastern Oklahoma. Fall temperatures are here, and the holiday season is quickly approaching. Now is a great time to spend some time outdoors with your family and friends. Who knows, you might improve your health while you're at it.

To find more information about camping locations within Southeastern Oklahoma, you can visit choctawcountry.com and www.travelok.com.

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TO PRINT YOUR RENEWAL:

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The Honorable Rebecca Cryer's legacy lives on in and out of the courtroom



The Honorable Rebecca A. Cryer, 73, passed away on Sept. 29, 2020, in Norman, Oklahoma, after battling COVID-19. Judge Cryer presided over her docket up until she started to have trouble breathing and was taken to the hospital. Judge Cryer leaves behind a legacy that will last for generations to come.

Rebecca Alice Schoemann was born in Shawnee, Oklahoma, on Oct. 9, 1946, the daughter of DeLaine W. Schoemann and Frances F. Forrest-Schoemann.

She lived most of her young life in Wanette, Oklahoma, where she met the love of her life, David Cryer. They fell in love in high school and married on July 25, 1964, recently celebrating 56 years of marriage. She and David were blessed with three children—Eric, Aimie and Andrew.

Judge Cryer didn't start college until after the birth of their first child Eric. She persevered through the challenges of getting her education while taking care of a young family. After graduating with distinction from the University of Oklahoma in 1973, she continued her education by studying for her law degree. Daughter Aimie

came along in 1976, and Judge Cryer was awarded her Juris Doctorate from OU the following year. During her educational journey, she was admitted to the Oklahoma State Bar, the United States District Court for the Western and Eastern Districts of Oklahoma, and the Choctaw Nation Bar.

During her long legal career, she served as a staff attorney for Legal Aid of Western Oklahoma, worked in private practice and was an Assistant District Attorney for Cleveland and McClain Counties. She also served as an Enforcement Attorney with the Oklahoma Department of Securities, as Magistrate and then Appellate Magistrate for the Court of Indian Affairs (CFR), Southern Plains Region and finally as a District Judge of the Choctaw Nation District Court. She was a proud member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation of Shawnee, Oklahoma, and served as their Tribal Administrator from 1977 to 1978.

Judge Cryer was a warm and friendly person. She could quickly strike up a conversation with complete strangers and be genuinely interested in their stories. Judge Cryer was known as a compassionate person. From the friends and family in her life, the people she met through the legal system, to the smallest stray animal, she only wanted to help them succeed and live their best lives and be happy. Judge Cryer was also an adventurous person. She was ready at a moment's notice to see a movie with friends, to visit a local art festival, or to travel as often as she could. She was also a lifelong learner. She was always reading and loved talking for hours with people, discussing ideas and politics.

COVID-19 wasn't the first time Judge Cryer faced danger.

On the morning of Apr. 19, 1995, Judge Cryer was working inside the Journal Record Building in downtown Oklahoma City when a bomb went off at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building next door. The blast severely injured Judge Cryer, and her name is inscribed on the Survivor Wall at the Oklahoma City National Memorial.

For Judge Cryer's full obituary, please visit www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/norman-ok/rebecca-cryer-9382616. The New York Times also wrote an article about Judge Cryer's life. The article can be found at www.nytimes.com/2020/10/20/obituaries/rebecca-cryer-dead-coronavirus.html

Judge Cryer was loved and respected by many. Here are a few memories from her colleagues during her time with the Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch.

I had the privilege to work closely with Judge Cryer, beginning the day she was sworn into our CNO District Court in October of 2015. She was always very engaged and vested in assisting me in building a Court of sophistication and integrity. She loved her Choctaw guardianship families and worked day and night to protect our children. However, also supporting the many grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings whom she called our "heroes" for stepping up and taking care of the kids as guardians.

Judge Cryer and I became best of friends over these five years. I will dearly miss our conversations each night discussing strategy. She has instilled so much belief and knowledge in me. I believe she now is our guardian angel, and she is reliant upon on us to carry this knowledge forward, which is now my agenda on her behalf, and for our Choctaw families. Fly high, your honor.

Pam Young, Executive Officer, Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch

I knew Rebecca Cryer through my experience with the Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch. I came to look forward to seeing her since she was always upbeat and pleasant. She was a ferocious advocate for children. She will be missed by all.

Warren Gotcher, Appellate Court Judge of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

The untimely death of Judge Rebecca Cryer has had a profound effect on the entire Judicial Branch of the Choctaw Nation. We have lost a friend, treasured colleague and champion of children. Judge Cryer will never be replaced. She was a fierce protector of the children that came into her Court and all of her decisions upheld the integrity of the Indian families that she served within and without the Choctaw Nation. Judge Cryer exhibited unparalleled character and resilience in her life as a survivor of the OKC bombing and as a young lawyer and judge making her own way in a system that was not easy for a woman to navigate. If you were fortunate enough to get to spend time with Judge Cryer, you would quickly discover that she never complained about anything. She was always more concerned about the welfare of others. I was fortunate to have many discussions with Judge Cryer on Indian law and other issues. She always amazed me with her knowledge on the individual Indian tribes in Oklahoma and the Court decisions that impacted many issues concerning native people. May she forever rest in God's eternal arms and may peace with a flood of everlasting memories comfort her family and all that knew and loved her.

Mark A. Morrison, District Court Judge of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Judge Cryer was an amazing woman and judge, and her passing left a huge hole in the heart of our Judicial family. She had special compassion and concern for our Choctaw children, making sure they were healthy, happy and in a loving environment where they could realize their dreams. The children looked forward to seeing her at their hearings, and she never forgot to shower them with praises for their accomplishments. What a blessing she was to me and to all who knew her.

Sandy Stroud, District Court Administrator, Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch

Judge Cryer was a very special person to me. She was a staunch advocate for the Choctaw tribal members. Her convictions and practices, both in the court and in public, were the same. She was truth in all areas of her life. She was a friend to all and was always willing to listen and offer sound and true advice. I thoroughly enjoyed our office chats, and I will miss her immensely!

Paula Talley, Fiscal and Operations Administrator, Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch

Judge Cryer was a very kind and sweet lady, who always had a big smile on her face. She had a jovial personality and knew no strangers. When meeting and speaking with her, you could sense that her passion was to serve the people. Judge Cryer will be greatly missed by all her Judicial family.

Coleman Wright, Fiscal Coordinator, Choctaw Nation Judicial Branch

Veterans Advocacy assists on many levels



Biskinik file photos

The Choctaw Nation color guard lead the 2019 Trail of Tears walk.

annually. All previously scheduled Veterans dinners for 2020 have also been canceled due to the pandemic.

WALL MONUMENT - The Veteran's name on the wall must have been killed in action (KIA). Proof of Choctaw tribal membership must be provided.

Wall monuments at Tvshka Homma are designated for:

- Code Talkers
- WW1
- WW2
- Korea
- Vietnam
- War on Terrorism

CARE PACKAGE SYSTEM - To sign up for the care package list, one must submit the mailing address in an active war zone. Every three months, Veteran Advocacy mails care packages to service members in active war zones. The individual does not have to be a Choctaw member to sign up for the care package system.

CHOCTAW NATION COLOR GUARD - The Choctaw Nation Color Guard consists of 18 active members. The group has traveled to 127 events during the last year, including many funerals. If you are interested in becoming a Choctaw Color Guard member, please contact the Veterans Advocacy Department for more information.

CHOCTAW VETERANS CEMETERY (located at the Choctaw Capital at Tvshka Homma)

For questions or information on the above programs, please contact the Choctaw Nation Veterans Advocacy Program by calling 800-522-6170 or 580-924-8280, ext. 2369, 2735, 4337 or 2160. The department may also be reached by email at veteransadvocacy@choctawnation.com.

CLAIMS DEPARTMENT - Assists all Veterans with applications such as compensation, pension and all types of Veterans assistance. If a Veteran wishes to meet someone from the Veterans department at the closest Choctaw Nation Community Center to their residence, a meeting time will be scheduled.

VETERANS DAY EVENT – Each year, a Veterans Day Ceremony is held at Tvshka Homma. Unfortunately, the 2020 in-person event will not be held due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Choctaw Nation will release a virtual Veterans Ceremony video to recognize Choctaw Veterans, including a 21-gun salute. Veterans jackets will be mailed to all Choctaw tribal member Veterans nationwide. To sign up for this gift, please contact the Choctaw Veterans Advocacy Program. You must provide military documentation, and complete a profile form along with address verification and membership card. Over 1,000 gifts are mailed nationwide to Choctaw Veteran tribal members



The Code Talkers monument at Tvshka Homma.



Submitted photo

WWI Choctaw Code Talker, PFC Joseph Oklahombi, US Army, has been chosen to be inducted into the 2020 Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame. (Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society)

On Oct. 8, 1918, Private Oklahombi was at Saint-Étienne, France. He and 23 other soldiers attacked an enemy position, capturing 171 Germans while killing some 79 more. They held their position for four days while under attack. Oklahombi was awarded the Silver Star with Victory Ribbon and the Croix de Guerre from France's Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain. At the time, the members of the Choctaw Nation were not formally U.S. citizens.

Oklahombi was married and had a son. On April 13, 1960, he was killed when hit by a truck while walking along a road near Wright City, Oklahoma. He was buried with military honors at Yashau Cemetery in Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

Oklahombi honored

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw Veteran and World War I Code Talker, PFC Joseph Oklahombi, US Army, was chosen by the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame to be one of its 2020 inductees. The annual recognition of Oklahoma's heroes honors those who served their country with extraordinary heroism and courage. The nomination was officially submitted by John Farris, Ambassador, Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame after a suggestion came from Scott Schoner of San Antonio, who had done a vast amount of research.

Joseph Oklahombi was born May 1, 1895, in Bokchito community, McCurtain County, Oklahoma, and was an American soldier of the Choctaw Nation. He was the most decorated World War I soldier from Oklahoma. He served in Company D, First Battalion, 141st Regiment, Seventy-first Brigade of the Thirty-sixth Infantry Division during World War I, where he was one of the Choctaw Code Talkers.

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Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Choctaw Nation forms Sovereignty for Strong Communities Commission

By Bradley Gernand

Tribal sovereignty got a big boost this summer, as the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that is sure to be one for the history books. Its decision in the case of *McGirt v. Oklahoma* reaffirmed that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation continues to exist as a reservation and that the State of Oklahoma has no role in prosecuting major crimes there.

Experts believe the effects of the *McGirt* ruling, which currently only pertains to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, will soon be extended across all Five Civilized Tribes, due to the similarities in the language of their treaties with the United States. The ruling was based on legal precepts, which Choctaw officials believe over time apply to all five tribes.

The effects of the ruling could be wide-ranging. Managing the changes, and helping determine what those will be, is now a strategic imperative of the Choctaw Government.

Choctaw Chief Gary Batton kicked off planning for the post-*McGirt* era as soon as the ruling was announced in July, establishing a task force later formalized as the Sovereignty for Strong Communities Commission. Rather than selecting specific people to sit on a “blue-ribbon” commission, Chief Batton elected to include major competencies and functions from within the Choctaw Government. The commission has no set membership.

Because the commission meets biweekly and will do so indefinitely, the attendees change from week to week—but always include one or more people from the departments and programs impacted by sovereignty. The commission includes representatives from Choctaw government departments handling legal, personnel, education, communications, government relations, member services and quite a few other areas. In order to maintain social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings are conducted by conference call, with 30 or more attendees.

John Hobbs, Executive Director of Public Safety, chairs the meetings. Hobbs has established several subcommittees to research and report back on major topics pertaining to sovereignty, including law enforcement, justice, taxation, regulation, and Indian Child Welfare. “What we’re working to establish is a baseline for expanding our sovereignty while making sure implementation is cost-effective,” said Chief Batton. “On one end of the scale is the situation as it was before July, and at the other end of the scale is the scenario presented by much greater sovereignty.”

Research is now underway by the various subcommittees to establish potential costs and possibilities. Many tribes



Chief Gary Batton formally announced on Sept. 2 the formation of the Sovereignty for Strong Communities Commission in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark *McGirt* ruling, establishing an initial \$2 million budget to uphold law and order on its reservation.

in other states already exercise sovereignty in ways the Five Civilized Tribes have not. The Navajo Nation Highway Patrol is one such example. Discussions are underway with as many as 18 tribal governments elsewhere in the United States to identify what may work for the Choctaw Nation, and what may not.

Chief Batton has allocated \$2 million to fund the Choctaw Nation’s initial response. This includes hiring and equipping 10 new Tribal Police officers, seven new social workers, and future public prosecutors and public defenders. Most of the initial aspects of sovereignty will impact law enforcement and Indian child welfare programs, requiring an immediate plus-up of staff in these areas to be ready for future needs.

Tribal Council is also playing a key role. Members are briefed in full following each meeting of the sovereignty commission.

The October legislative session for the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council passed laws to strengthen tribal sovereignty and the nation’s justice system. Codes dedicated to tribal prosecution, jury selection, criminal law, and a public defender’s office were enacted by Council on October 10.

The tribal prosecution code sets the purpose, duties, and responsibilities of the Office of the Tribal Prosecutor. The office will prosecute criminal activity in the name of the Choctaw Nation to enforce the provisions of the Choctaw Nation Constitution, Choctaw Nation Tribal Code, United States Constitution and other applicable laws. Amendments to the criminal

code will allow the nation to prosecute offenses listed in the federal Major Crimes Act and allow for broader sentencing options of defendants found guilty in Choctaw Nation District Court. Major crimes include murder, assault, robbery, embezzlement and felony sexual offenses.

To ensure due process in judicial system proceedings, Council also approved legislation defining how juries for trials will be formed. Potential jurors include tribal members, spouses of tribal members, employees of the Choctaw Nation and/or permanent residents within the territorial boundaries of the nation. Exclusions from jury service include legal professions, law enforcement officers, elected officials and convicted felons.

Providing an opportunity for all defendants to have legal counsel, a bill establishing a Choctaw Nation Public Defender’s Office received unanimous support from the legislators.

An updated worker’s compensation code was passed as well. The code is designed to protect the sovereignty of the Nation and better provide medical and wage replacement benefits for workers who sustain compensable injuries.

Additional legislative matters for Tribal Council included approval of budgets for the Indian Child Welfare Program and Family Preservation Program, an application for the 2020 Tribal Injury Prevention Cooperative Agreement, approval for the Family Violence Prevention Program and an application to the FY21 Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) Program.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt has also established a state sovereignty commission. This body has no representatives from the Five Civilized Tribes, nor are its work or deliberations done collaboratively or in conjunction with those of the tribes. Its membership represents oil and gas interests in the state and other commercial interests.

To learn more about the Sovereignty for Strong Communities Commission, visit www.choctawnation.com/wsovereignty.

Choctaw Nation boundaries now on Google Maps

The reservation boundary lines of Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and five other Oklahoma tribes, are now visible on Google Maps.

The six tribes include the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Osage and Seminole nations.

The inclusion of tribal nations to Google Maps comes four months after the landmark Supreme Court ruling, which upheld that lands promised to the Creek Nation remained an Indian reservation.

The Supreme Court said that a large portion of Eastern Oklahoma, including Tulsa, is Native American land for federal criminal law purposes.

Justice Neil Gorsuch composed the 5-4 opinion, joined by liberals on the bench. “On the far end of the Trail of Tears was a promise. Forced to leave their ancestral lands in Georgia and Alabama, the Creek Nation received assurances that their new lands in the West would be secure forever,” said Gorsuch.

“Today we are asked whether the land these treaties promised remains an Indian reservation for purposes of federal criminal law,” said Gorsuch. “Because Congress has not said otherwise, we hold the government to its word.”

Choctaw Nation territory covers approximately 11,000 square miles in 10.5 counties in Southeastern Oklahoma.

Having this visible on Google Maps will make it easier for individuals to search and view the Choctaw Nation boundaries.

The boundaries seem to be accurate, according to GIS manager Cale Russell. “We were pleasantly surprised to see that the western boundary, as well as the southwestern corner of the boundaries, seem to be as accurate as we can tell in the detail that was given on the map,” said Russell.

Visit <https://bit.ly/2GyXkIV> to see the Choctaw Nation reservation boundaries on Google Maps.

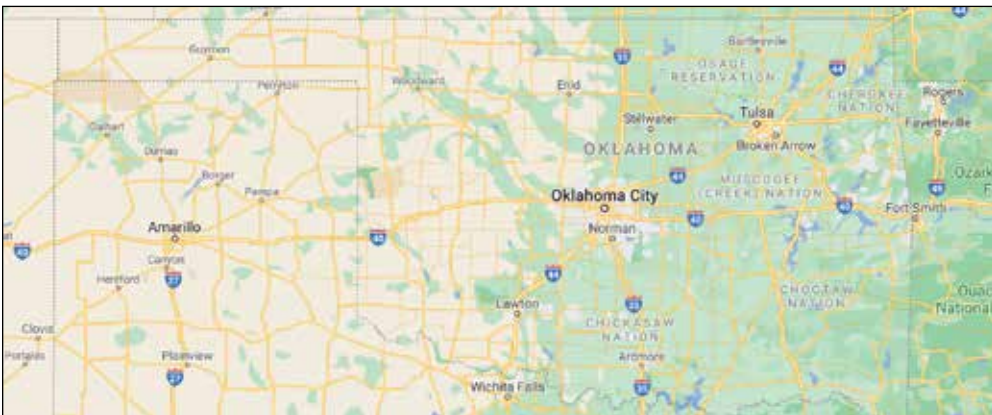


Photo from Google Maps

Six reservation boundaries for Native American tribes in Oklahoma are now represented on Google Maps.



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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma


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November 2020


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Construction continues on Choctaw Nation Cultural Center.



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Choctaw Nation camping offers more than just great views.



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WWII Code Talker, Joseph Oklahombi inducted into Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame.

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