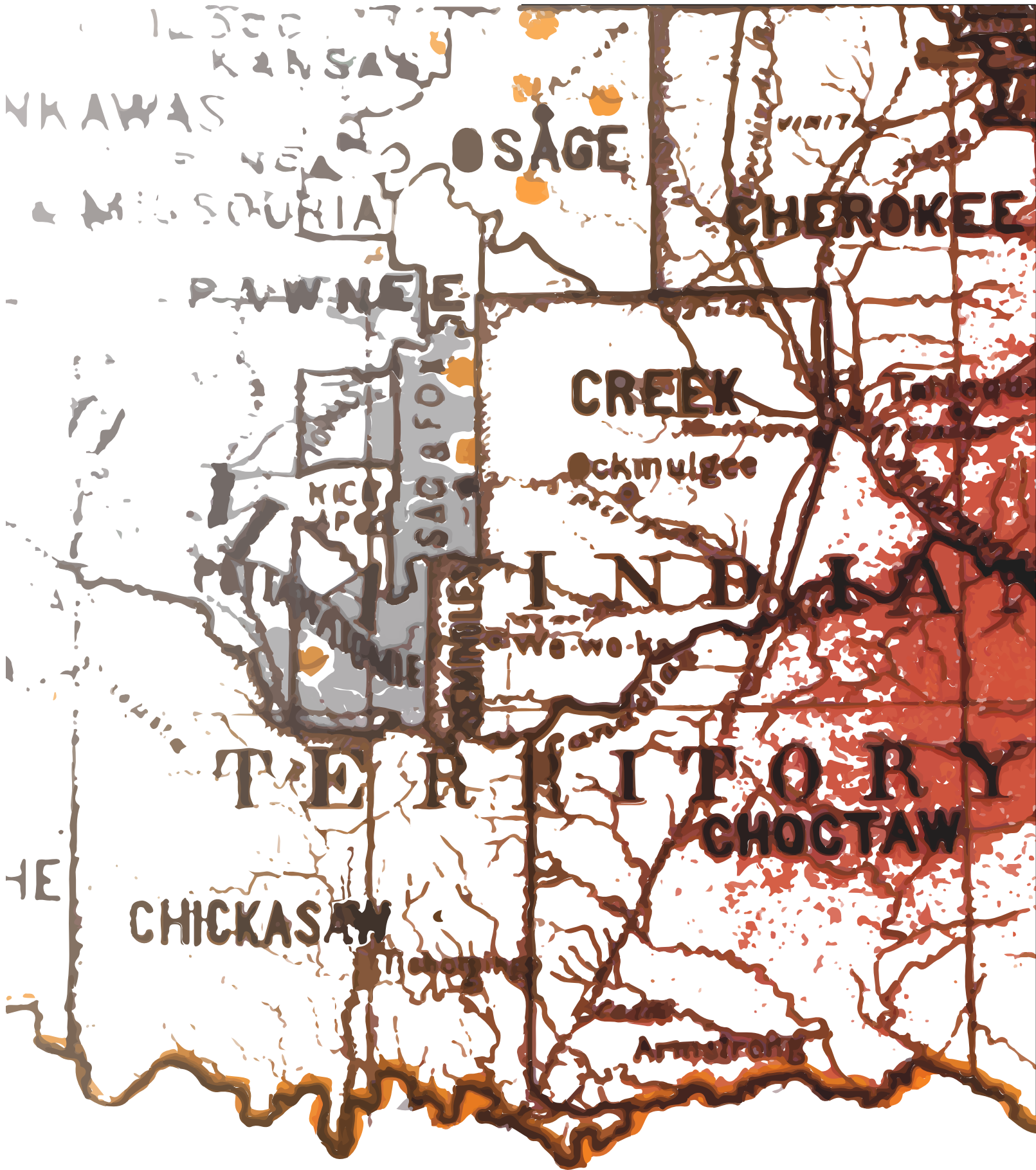




August 2020 Issue



Rule of law holds strong in McGirt case

By Bradley Gernand

Life for many members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is sure to change following a landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court on July 9. Its ruling in the case of *McGirt v. Oklahoma*—a historic win for American Indian rights at the Supreme Court—may also prompt changes to the role the state government plays in the lives of many Oklahomans.

With Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch authoring the majority opinion, the court found that, for purposes of the Major Crimes Act, the state of Oklahoma has no jurisdiction over Muscogee (Creek) tribal citizens who commit major crimes within their tribal nation. Muscogee tribal courts or the U.S. District Court will now have jurisdiction.

In addition, the ruling affirms a lower court’s ruling in a separate but associated case, *Carpenter v. Murphy*, finding that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is a reservation and has been one since at least 1866. Contrary to popular misconception, the Muscogee (Creek) reservation did not end with Oklahoma’s statehood in 1907.

What has changed for other tribes, including the Choctaw Nation, as a result of this landmark ruling? In a nutshell, everything—and nothing.

A Narrow Ruling

Justice Gorsuch, in authoring the court’s majority opinion, followed a conservative school of thought known as “textualism,” whose proponents believe judges should issue rulings based on precisely what the law says, regardless of how much time has passed since it was written, and without seeking to interpret it into present-day context. Gorsuch was nominated to the court by President Donald Trump in strong part due to his belief in textualism.

Gorsuch, the only Westerner on the court, clearly understood the importance of the ruling, which has been called the most important Supreme Court decision on Native rights ever. “On the far end of the Trail of Tears was a promise,” he wrote. “Today we are asked whether the land these treaties promised remains an Indian reservation for purposes of federal criminal law. Because Congress has not said otherwise, we hold the government to its word.”

Gorsuch’s ruling, many say, is classic textualism: he could find no evidence Congress disestablished the Muscogee (Creek) reservation in preparation for Oklahoma’s statehood, and he declined to act as though it had. Leery of upending longstanding constitutional arrangements, he and the court issued a narrow, focused opinion which manages to be one for the ages.

According to the majority’s opinion in *McGirt*, the ruling applies specifically to matters of criminal law, within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation only. It does not pertain to civil law anywhere, nor does it pertain to criminal law in any other tribe.

Examples of criminal law include crimes such as theft, assault, arson, trafficking in controlled substances, and murder. Civil law, by contrast, includes landlord/tenant disputes, divorce proceedings, child custody proceedings, property disputes, personal injury, etc. Much of what is often called “family law” is civil law.

The Supreme Court also took the opportunity, in releasing its ruling in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, to affirm an earlier ruling by the Tenth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver. The Denver court, whose jurisdiction includes Oklahoma, found in the case of *Carpenter v. Murphy* that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation was, and is, a reservation. While *Carpenter v. Murphy* represents a victory at the circuit court level, the Supreme Court’s

action allowed the lower court’s ruling to take effect.

Tribal legal experts note that the Supreme Court’s ruling is rooted in the Muscogee Treaty of 1866 with the federal government—a treaty whose major provisions and language were included in similar treaties signed that year by other tribes, including the Choctaw Nation. What applies to one may conceivably apply to all. But this is not automatically the case. In order for effects of the historic ruling to extend beyond the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, something will need to trigger its extension. Additional litigation could prompt such an event, as could congressional action.

Who Are Murphy and McGirt?

Neither case arose from ideal circumstances. Patrick Murphy was convicted of murder by the state and received the death penalty in 2000. Murphy, a Muscogee member, later challenged the state’s authority, saying the murder occurred within the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, which he claimed still existed, meaning Oklahoma didn’t have jurisdiction over him. This was considered a novel legal defense, as most assumed the reservations had ended in 1907.

Murphy’s challenge rose to the U.S. Supreme Court during last year’s term, after the Tenth Circuit Court in Denver found in his favor, but it elected to issue no ruling, saying the case would be argued again this year. Court observers believe the justices, of whom there were then only eight, deadlocked 4-4. With the appointment of a ninth justice the court tried again but chose to set aside *Carpenter v. Murphy* in favor of *McGirt v. Oklahoma*—a case whose fate rested on an eventual ruling in *Carpenter*.

Jimmy McGirt, a member of the Seminole Nation, was tried and convicted by the state of sex crimes against a child in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation in 1996 and was given a life sentence. When the Tenth Circuit Court in Denver delivered its verdict on Murphy’s case in 2017, McGirt appealed his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, saying if the circuit court was correct in Murphy’s case, the state had no authority to try him either, since his alleged crime took place in tribal territory. The Supreme Court heard McGirt’s case in May 2020.

Neither Murphy nor McGirt will be freed automatically as a result of the Supreme Court’s ruling. The U.S. Attorney is working on filing charges against them both, and they will be held in prison until their federal trials take place.

How We Arrived at This Point

The crux of the ruling centers on the fact that Congress, in passing the Enabling Act of 1906 paving the way for Oklahoma to become a state, did not terminate the tribal governments or their domains. This is one of the most surprising developments of the case for many laymen. But context is key and goes far in explaining the failure by Washington to snuff out the tribal governments.

Congress and the federal government began their campaign to disestablish the Indian Territory and admit it as a state—either paired with the Oklahoma Territory or by itself—as early as 1893. During that time it hammered out its policy toward the Five Civilized Tribes in sometimes disorderly leaps and bounds, centered variously around surveying and platting the Indian Territory; enrolling tribal members in final rolls; and negotiating agreements with the tribes for ending their governments. This took place across four presidential administrations—three Republican and one Democratic—and six successive Congresses.

Duplicity also clouded the picture. Tribal governments were not told of the federal government’s true intentions during negotiations to consider their future status. Secretary of the Interior Ethan Allan Hitchcock revealed only to Senator Henry L. Dawes, chairman of the Commission to the Five Civilized Tribes, that if the negotiations failed to achieve the government’s wishes to curtail tribal powers, the Indians’ wishes could be disregarded willfully. This led to a long and winding road.

One accident of history also complicated matters. The Indian Territory was unique in the history of the United States in that it had no central government, no capital city, and no territorial legislature. And, unlike every other territory, its reason for being was not to petition for American statehood. The opposite was true of the Oklahoma Territory, whose territorial governor and legislature sat at Guthrie, and whose citizens began petitioning for statehood as early as 1890.



Photo courtesy the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Oklahoma became a state on Nov. 16, 1907. In the ceremony a mock wedding was held between “Mr. Oklahoma Territory” and “Miss Indian Territory.” The ceremony was held at Guthrie, the capital of Oklahoma Territory.

In the end, the federal government appears to have stumbled by choosing not to eliminate the tribal governments in 1906, as it intended originally. Much tribal business was yet to be wound up, and it elected to continue the tribal governments so they might work to wrap up the final affairs of their peoples.

The government appears to have thought this would happen within a few years of statehood, but in the case of the Choctaws and Chickasaws, certainly, this never occurred. Federal government missteps meant the sale of the tribes’ lucrative tribal coal lands took decades to accomplish, and disputed royalty payments for timber remained unresolved for over 100 years. During this time the Choctaw tribe was governed by a presidentially appointed Chief, assisted by a National Attorney, a mining trustee, and an advisory council.

Choctaw Chief Gary Batton, in a televised address to the Nation on July 13, said, “The McGirt decision was a refreshing commitment to the actual law, upholding treaty obligations and rights, which have an unfortunate history of being ignored by both the federal government and the State of Oklahoma.” Justice Gorsuch, in the majority opinion, agreed, saying the government, having given its word, must keep it, because “the magnitude of a legal wrong is no reason to perpetuate it.”

The court was not unanimous in its finding. Its vote was 5-4, with the dissenting justices authoring a minority opinion in which they raise concerns about

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

McGirt Decision

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *McGirt v. Oklahoma* is important for the Creek Nation and the other members of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma. This landmark decision made national headlines and has sparked both concern and interest. The reality is sovereign Indian nations with treaty rights and land-based treaty territories—yes, reservations—have existed long before Oklahoma became a state in 1907. The *McGirt* decision affirms that those reservations still exist today and upholds the Major Crimes Act regarding crimes committed by Native people in Native territory.

What does this mean for the Choctaw Nation and southeastern Oklahoma? First, remember that this decision directly addresses the Creek Nation's reservation and criminal jurisdiction. Nothing has immediately changed for the Choctaw Nation or southeastern Oklahoma.

The *McGirt* decision does not change individual property ownership, business taxation or any citizen's responsibility to uphold the law. Please visit choctawnation.com/McGirt-vs-Oklahoma for a list of answers to frequently asked questions.

The Choctaw people have been governing our land base and exercising sovereignty since the 1830s. The *McGirt* decision supports tribal sovereignty. The decision was a refreshing commitment to the actual law, upholding treaty obligations and rights, which have an unfortunate history of being ignored by both the federal government and the State of Oklahoma.

When I think about the future of the Choctaw Nation, we want to explore all avenues to enhance our tribal sovereignty for our tribal members and the communities in which they live. It reminds me of the Scripture, "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for both yourself and for all." (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

The leaders of the Five Tribes will continue to work to bring clarity to any significant jurisdictional issues raised by this Supreme Court decision. I am proud to be Choctaw and to work with other tribal and state leaders for solutions that pursue what is good for all.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Annual Labor Day festival canceled

I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy during these uncertain times. My heart goes out to everyone who is sick and those that have lost loved ones from COVID-19.

This virus is still a serious situation, and we must continue to take the necessary precautions to slow the spread. Numbers have continued to surge across the country and right here in Oklahoma. We at the Choctaw Nation have continued to monitor the situation closely, as the health and safety of our tribal members, associates and visitors are still important to us. During this time, we have had to make difficult but necessary decisions to protect public health and safety.

We recently decided to cancel our annual Labor Day Festival. This would have been the 73rd annual festival. Our tribe is deeply connected to this festival, as it has always been a time for us to gather and celebrate our faith, family and culture. Our festival has changed drastically over the years. What started as a small gathering of Chahta families grew into a massive celebration with thousands of visitors and big-name entertainment. We all look forward to attending the festival every year and connecting. However, this year safety takes precedence over fun.

The decision to cancel wasn't made lightly. We felt that protecting each other from this virus was more important than gathering in person. No matter where we are or how we celebrate our heritage, the Chahta Spirit is within us. Chief will still give his State of the Nation address virtually this year. Even in times like this, we have so much to celebrate. We are a nation of strong and resilient individuals. I encourage you to remember that our ancestors passed their strength down to us. We will get through this together.

What About Fear?

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused fear to strike people all over the world. It has changed what was considered the American Dream. There are mixed emotions erupting in our society.

Fear of the unknown is a motivating force for behaviors to vent out of its suppressed state. Is fear a terrible thing? We normally look at fear in a negative tone. And we behave accordingly. What sayeth the Word of God concerning fear?

Proverbs 1:7 teaches, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." This is a fear viewed as a good quality. It is a reverence for God and His good intentions; it gives confidence in His being and trust in His providence. The fear of the Lord produces wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to use God-given talents, the realization of one's moral obligations and one's own intellectual maturity.

Wisdom has to have basic ingredients for its health and growth. First, there must be a clear understanding of the Word of God. There must be proper knowledge of biblical teachings concerning the relationship between God and mankind. Misconceptions can cause restlessness, uncertainty, spiritual doubt and apathy.

Next, there must be nourishment. Just as a baby never grows without food, so a Christian never develops without continued prayer and Bible reading. Some spiritual problems come because there is so much "giving out" that the giver runs dry. There must be much time "taking in" of spiritual nourishment.

Thirdly, there could be lack of giving. People who eat too much become overweight and in time become uncomfortable. Overfeeding on sermons, Bible studies, Christian radio programs, conferences and other activities can lead to spiritual bloating. Christians are not to be a sponge, soaking up and retaining everything. Instead, we are to be vessels used by God to bring instruction and blessing to others.

Next, there must be a balanced life. During his ministry, Jesus lived a balanced life. He ministered, interacted with individuals, rested, spent time in prayer and worship and relaxed with friends. He took care of himself spiritually, physically, intellectually and socially. Many of our modern people "run themselves ragged." Our efficiency and spiritual vitality run down when this happens.

For self-preservation purposes, we have a built-in emotion of fear, which is legitimate. We know to get away from a snake and avoid dangerous situations and people. The issue is to discern the difference between the fear of the temporal versus the fear of the eternal.



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Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

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Photos by Charlie Clark

Left and bottom right, fireworks light up the night sky at the Choctaw Resort & Casino's Fourth of July show. Top right, campers at the Choctaw KOA RV Park in Durant face their chairs toward the Resort & Casino's Fourth of July show about to start.

Summer Youth Employment Program goes virtual



Submitted photo

Lillian Burden watches a video at home. The Summer Youth Employment program offered real-life job shadowing videos to the students.

By Deidre K. Elrod

In response to the global pandemic, students living within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma were still able to utilize the Summer Youth Employment Program. They just did it virtually.

Beginning on June 8th and ending on July 3rd, 1,026 students started the Virtual Job Shadowing Program that allowed students to dive deeper into a career field they wish to pursue. The program offered authentic, real-life job shadowing videos to inform and inspire students to explore multiple career opportunities. Students were able to explore options that ranged from agriculture, education, business management, health sciences, information technology and public safety.

Audrey Johnson, a student in the Virtual Job Shadowing program, stated in her testimonial, "My experience with this summer's online work program was overall educational and informational. I expanded my knowledge of the American workplace and what my future will consist of."

As part of the program, students were given assessments, assignments and tasks that were regulated and monitored to confirm students were engaging in the curriculum and working towards earning the \$1200 stipend,

just as they would have if they were working on location.

Lucas Callicoat, another student who participated in the Virtual Job Shadowing Program said, "The change made to help keep everyone safe and earn wages has helped significantly and is greatly appreciated."

The virtual program was self-paced, but Employment Training Services staff provided weekly deadlines for assignments to be completed. With high school age and young adult students, the program reinforced due dates to help students learn the importance of meeting deadlines in their professional careers.

Johnson said, "I started the program wanting to go to a university and become a sports physician. Now having completed the program, I still want to pursue a career as a sports physician, but now I am more set on what I want for my future."

While the video portion replaced direct job shadowing, students were still encouraged to call or e-mail local businesses that correlated with their career interests to gain a better understanding of how their business operates. Also, there was a financial literacy requirement that required students to interview local banks to evaluate their services. This part of the program was to help students make informed decisions that will prepare them for future financial freedom.

Maggie Bruce, Assistant Director of Employment Training Services, said, "I believe this year's Summer Youth Program was a success because it kept the students engaged without risking their safety in these uncertain times. The program served as a preparation guide to help students navigate career paths and explore various options that will help them reach their goals. Not only did it provide career and education mapping, but it also emphasized the importance of time management, effective communication (with Summer Youth counselors) and responsibility, all of which are highly sought employability characteristics."



Submitted photo

Lucas Callicoat works on a project at home during the virtual Youth Summer Employment Programs.



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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.

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Choctaw Nation Member Services

District 6

We have been very busy since March with all the changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since March, we have served over 3,000 meals to our seniors during our weekly lunch by either curbside delivery or delivery to our homebound. We have also delivered over 1,050 meals to our Independent Elderly Housing elders in Talihina four days a week. These elders were homebound and asked not to go out of their homes from April to mid-June.

We have participated in the Children's Summer Food Program. This program gives each child a breakfast and lunch since the schools are no longer providing them. The program started out providing meals five days a week but are now giving one week's worth of food on Mondays until the end of July. This is a very essential program for children in our area, and we're sure it has brought much relief to most families' food bills. As of July 10, we have served over 17,550 meals. I would like to thank Julie Collins, Debra Queen, Debra Watts, Carla Noah, Starla Coley and all the other volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this program a success.

We have been able to provide 263 people with paper products which included toilet paper and paper towels. Bleach and cases of water have also been given out to those in need.

As we have been dealing with the pandemic, we have had to make many changes to the way we do things here in our district, but we have continued to support our seniors. Our drivers, Joe Williams and Claudia Hodge, have been picking up food distribution program participant orders and delivering them to seniors and the homebound. They also delivered food from the "Farmers to Families" food program hosted by New Life Church here in Wilburton. I appreciate all the help these bus drivers provided to our seniors.

We are now assisting tribal members with the Covid-19 Relief Fund Program. Starla Coley is the Covid Coordinator for our district and is available to assist tribal members with completing applications online or with paper applications. If you need assistance, please call or come by and see Starla for help.

Assistance with summer utility bills (LIHEAP) is now available for senior tribal members over 60. If you need assistance in completing an application, please contact the center.

Due to the current pandemic, we had to cancel our Princess Pageant. Our three princesses Cheyenne Holman, Aiana Holman and Summer Strickland, will remain as princesses until next year when new princesses can be elected. We appreciate their representation of our district.

We also had to cancel our Veterans dinner but will be rescheduling for a later date. We will announce that date when it is available.

Our 20 new Independent Elderly and Affordable Rental homes are now built and have families living in them. We are looking forward to the future when 20 more homes will be being built in 2021. We are encouraging everyone to get their applications in so you can find out if you are eligible, and to then be placed on the waiting list.

If you need assistance with any of the programs mentioned, or if you need help in completing program applications, please know that the District 6 Community Center is open, and we are available to assist you. You can reach our office by phone at 918-465-2389 or in person at 1056 N.W. 1003 Avenue in Wilburton.

You, our tribal members, are our highest priority. We are better together. We are Chahta Strong!



Jennifer Woods



Submitted photo

District 6 shows support for their Chahta heroes.

Supreme Court

Continued from Page 1

the precedent the case may create. It could, they fear, prompt other Indian tribes in Oklahoma to reclaim roles and responsibilities, which they worry may prove an expensive proposition. "It's hard to know what to make of this self-defeating argument," Gorsuch says. "Dire warnings are just that, and not a license for us to disregard the law," he writes. "By suggesting that our interpretation of Acts of Congress adopted a century ago should be inflected based on the costs of enforcing them today, the dissent tips its hand."

Oklahoma's future is no longer clear, and "we do not pretend to foretell" it, Gorsuch explains. "But it is unclear why pessimism should rule the day. With the passage of time, Oklahoma and its Tribes have proven they can work successfully together as partners."

A Future Framework Unfolds

On July 9, the state of Oklahoma and the governments of the Five Civilized Tribes issued a Joint Statement affirming their mutual interest in arriving at a united approach designed to streamline and clarify future arrangements between the state and tribes. It alluded to six-party talks already well underway, noting that the six parties "have made substantial progress toward an agreement to present to Congress and the U.S. Department of Justice addressing and resolving any significant jurisdictional issues."

An Agreement-in-Principle was released by the six governments on July 16. According to the press release from each government which accompanied it, the Five Tribes joined Oklahoma Attorney General Mike Hunter in presenting the Agreement-in-Principle to Oklahoma's congressional delegation to "facilitate enactment of appropriate Federal law in response to McGirt."

The Agreement-in-Principle addresses major areas of jurisdictional responsibility, including taxation, civil law, and criminal law. It serves as an overarching framework that will guide the drafting of the legislation. The future legislation may include steps Congress may wish to take in order to clarify which roles and responsibilities fall to the tribes or state.

By asking Congress to amend or tweak existing laws, the six governments are seeking to lock into place the strengths of their existing positions and eliminate the possibility of years of expensive litigation in lower courts. Tribal governments see the approach as a means to preserve their historic wins, most or all of which could be erased during future court rulings, should any of the six governments initiate them, or by broader congressional action.

Soon after release of the agreement, the governments of the Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole nations withdrew their support, saying action by Congress will not be necessary to achieve these goals. Afterward, the chiefs of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Cherokee nations issued a statement stressing that more unites the Five Tribes than divides them. "None of the leaders of the Five Tribes," they note, "support eroding our sovereignty or turning back the recognition of our reservation achieved through McGirt."

According to Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., the Five Tribes will be best served by working actively with the state and Congress, a view he shares with Chief Batton and Gov. Bill Anoatubby of the Chickasaw Nation. "We know from our history that if you're not at the table, you're on the menu," Hoskin told the Cherokees' Tribal Council.

Chief Batton, in his televised address, emphasized that the tribes approached the negotiations in good faith and for the wellbeing of everyone involved. "When I think about what lies before the Choctaw Nation, I am reminded of Scripture: 'See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.' This is not a moment to seek vengeance for past injustices, but to move forward toward a resolution that is good for all."

Oklahoma, the Chief says, works best as a partnership of peoples. It will continue to be a partnership according to information published by the Choctaw government on the day the court announced its decision. Oklahoma's borders remain inviolate, it says, and major aspects of life there continue uninterrupted—particularly for Oklahomans who are not tribal members. Ownership of property, and all existing contracts, leases, and title to property remain as they were before this decision.

History Must Be Rewritten

Joy Harjo, the Poet Laureate of the United States and a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, says of the Supreme Court's decision, "The impact is not only going forward. It's going backward, all the way through the trail to Georgia and Alabama, where it resounds. It goes out in all directions."

Harjo, who lives in Tulsa, was appointed to her position by the Librarian of Congress. She was speaking metaphorically but powerfully, because history itself has been rewritten. Generations of Oklahoma schoolchildren have been taught that the tribal governments and domains were swept away by the tide of history in 1907.

A case in point is "Our Oklahoma" by Muriel H. Wright, published in 1939. It served as the Oklahoma history textbook for schools across southeastern Oklahoma through the 1950s. Wright was born in the Indian Territory to a Choctaw father and white mother, and in 1857 married the Rev. Allen Wright, who served as Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation from 1866-1870, during negotiation of the Treaty of 1866. At the time of Wright's election he was in Washington with the Choctaw negotiating team.

Mrs. Wright believed the federal government had succeeded in its quest to disestablish the Five Civilized Tribes, writing in her textbook that many Indians had opposed statehood, but had been unable to stop it, with the former Indian Territory being carved into 40 counties of the new state. Oklahoma history textbooks both before and after have served up similar fare, including those in use today.

The issue lies not with the historians—and certainly not Mrs. Wright, who devoted her life to explaining the history of her people. It took legal scholars almost 115 years to determine that Congress never finished what it originally set out to do—a victim, itself, of the complexity it caused and created. The textbooks will need to be rewritten.

Of the Supreme Court's decision, Harjo says, "It's so momentous and it's immense. It marks a possible shift. Not just for Muscogee Creek people, for all Native people."

Perhaps the impact of this shift is best summed up by Supreme Court observer Eric Citron of the law firm Goldstein & Russell in Washington, D.C. "Among Indian law lawyers, particularly those who represent tribes," Citron says, "there is a dark joke that the 'real Indian canon' [or law] is that the Indians always lose." With this ruling the concerns of the past have been rejected forcefully, he says. "That might mark the real sea change that this opinion creates."

Or as Justice Gorsuch put it: any other decision would have represented "the rule of the strong, not the rule of law."

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- Loans available in Oklahoma only
- Must be an Oklahoma resident
- No income limits

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

NOTES AND EVENTS

Unclaimed funds

The Accounting Department of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is trying to contact the individuals listed below. Choctaw Nation is in possession of unclaimed funds (uncashed payroll checks) that may be due to these individuals. If you are an employee or former employee of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and your name is listed below, please contact:

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
Attn: Jeryn Hart, Payroll Accountant
Or Phone 580-924-8280 ext. 4323

SAMANTHA JILL RICH
JULIA MORGAN TURNER
TOSHA ANN GONZALEZ
CHELSIE RAYANN HEAD

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

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

Dara McCoy, Executive Director
Mary Ann Strombitski, Senior Director
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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 type-written 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.

Wilson Family Reunion

Saturday, September 5 at Smithville Community Center
Sunday, September 6 with a cookout at the river.

There will be a short business meeting after the pot-luck lunch Saturday.

Don't forget your items for the auction.

Contact Jody Hendrickson at 918-413-2084.

Tribal Council holds special session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL
SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA
June 26, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve a Service Line Agreement in Favor of Arkansas Valley Electric Cooperative, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in LeFlore County, Oklahoma; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-87-201
 - b. Approve and Enact the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma General Welfare Assistance Code; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-88-20
 - c. Approve the Expenditure of Coronavirus Relief Fund Money Received under the CARES Act from the United States Department of the Treasury; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-86-20
 - d. Amend RS-16-94 and All Prior Council Bills and Council Resolutions Prohibiting and Banning the Use of Cameras and Recording Devices During Any Regular or Special Session of the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: RS-16-94 Amended - CR-03-20
5. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

6. OLD BUSINESS
7. ADJOURNMENT
8. CLOSING PRAYER

All council members were present whether in person or by Webex technology

Tribal Council holds July session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

July 11, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session June 13, 2020
 - b. Special Session June 26, 2020
5. WELCOME GUESTS
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Nellie Meashintubby – Covid Relief and Assisting Tribal Members during the Pandemic
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve Application for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program for FY2021; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - b. Approve Application for FY 2021 Funding through the Department of Health and Human Services for the Community Services Block Grant; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - c. Approve Application for Head Start Continuation Funds for FY2020-2021; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - d. Approve the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA) Indian Housing Plan (IHP) for Year FY2021; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - e. Approve Oil and Gas Lease No. 4200218170 in Favor of Citizen Energy III, LLC, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Grady County, Oklahoma; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - f. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Choctaw County in Trust Status with the United States of America; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - g. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Atoka County in Trust Status with the United States of America; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - h. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets; Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - i. Amend Council Bill CB-85-20, a Council Bill Entitled: "To Approve Application for the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG)-Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES); 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 whether in person or by Webex technology.

Thank You

Thank you, Choctaw Nation, for all the care you have given Kenneth Battles during his illness. The Hugo clinic was always so good, as well as the nursing home in Antlers. He loved his Choctaw heritage. He was the best husband ever.

Mrs. Royce Battles and family

Moving day



I wanted to say thank you very much for the help that you all gave me in moving. I am proud and blessed to be a part of the Choctaw Nation.

Yakoke, Linda Robinson Romero

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

- Evaluations and Assessments
- Counseling and Guidance
- Referral Services
- On-the-Job-Training
- Physical and Mental Restoration

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

August 4	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
August 4	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 5	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 5	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 7	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 11	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 11	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 12	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 12	Crowder	By Appointment
August 14	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 14	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 18	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 19	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 19	Stigler	By Appointment
August 21	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
August 25	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 25	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 26	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
August 26	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

August Language Lesson

Time Markers – Future and Past -kma- and -ash/kash

In English, future and past time markers are expressed by saying 'in the morning', 'tomorrow morning', 'at noon', 'in the evening' with a verb change. The Choctaw language utilizes the same word and adds a suffix to show 'in the future' or 'in the past'.

-kma- in the future -ash/kash- in the past

tabokoli – noon

tabokolikma
tabokolikash

1. **Tabokolikma chukka ia la chi.**
I will go home at noon.
2. **Tabokolikash impa li tuk.**
I ate at noon.

chekosi – soon

1. **Chekosikma ia la chi.**
I will go soon.
2. **Chekosikash pisa li tuk.**
I saw her while ago.

onnahinli – morning

1. **Onnahinlikma hopona la chi.**
I will cook in the morning.
2. **Onnahinlikash omba tuk.**
It rained this morning.

oppia/obbia – evening

1. **Oppiakma sapuntak vt lawa chi.**
There will be a lot of mosquitos this evening.
2. **Obbiakash chukpalantak e haklo tuk.**
We heard tree frogs in the evening.

ITI FABVSSA

The Trail of Tears defined a generation of Choctaw ancestors profoundly. Last month, we featured the Wheelock Academy play from the 1930’s that commemorated the centennial of the start of removals from the Homelands. This month, we are featuring a poem written by a Choctaw person during their journey from the Homelands to Indian Territory along the Trail of Tears and Death. This poem, written as a song, expresses the hardships of the trail and sentiments towards leaders of the day. While the author is anonymous, a letter that accompanied the poem stated that the author was in Peter Pitchlynn’s moving party and that he likely attended the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, a Choctaw Nation-funded boy’s boarding school.

Throughout the poem, the writer references the route that they traveled. Starting their journey in early winter of 1831, a party from the Northeastern District of Choctaw country traveled by land to Memphis. The group continued from Memphis on the Brandywine steamship down the Mississippi River. Upon arrival at the Arkansas Post, they disembarked and waited for six weeks at the post until the river was navigable again. With thin clothes and no shoes, these Choctaws suffered through a blizzard with little shelter, blankets, clothing, or food. Once the water levels rose, the group departed again by boat and arrived at Little Rock. After camping there for one day, they sailed



“Louisiana Indians Walking Along a Bayou” (1847) by Alfred Boisseau. Image Courtesy of the New Orleans Museum of Art.

up the Arkansas River on the Reindeer steamship. Since the river water levels were too low, the party was forced to stop 90 miles below Fort Smith. The steamboat captain dumped the party on the shore. There they camped for one month enduring nearly record low temperatures for the area. Finally, water levels rose again and on February 20, 1832, the group arrived in Fort Smith.

A series of key players in the Choctaw removal are mentioned in the poem. Some of them are listed below:
Andrew Jackson – 7th President of the U.S.

John Eaton – Secretary of War
George Gaines – Choctaw Agent
Greenwood LeFlore – District Chief of Okla Falaia
David Folsom – District Chief of Ahepvt Okla
Wharton Rector – Removal Agent
John Fulton – Removal Agent
Captain Gordon – Captain of the Brandywine steamship
Thomas McGee – Removal Agent
Captain Brown – Dispersing Officer
Thomas Wall – Interpreter
Peter Pitchlynn – District Chief of Mushulatubbee district
Ellik McKee – probably a Choctaw in the party
Robert Jones – Choctaw politician, entrepreneur
Oklanowa – Captain & Acting Chief for Peter Pitchlynn
Henry Clay – Presidential Candidate against Jackson 1832

Note: The following poem is not the work of the ‘Iti Fabvssa’ writers. In this transcription of a document archived at the Gilcrease Museum, we have included notes and scratched out portions of this unfinished poem. Jaw bones have been used as musical instruments and this may have been based on a song style of the time period. For more contextual information about the genre, see Frank Kelderman, “Walking the New Jaw Bone: Song, Slavery, and the Literature of Choctaw Removal,” 2019.

A Trail of Tears song: The New Jaw Bone

1. Jackson send the Secretary War
To the Indians of the law
Walk o jaw bone walk I say
Walk o jaw bone walk away.
2. Eaton tells us go away
Here no longer you can stay
Walk o jaw bone walk I say
Walk o jaw bone walk away
3. On my way to the Arkansas
G_d_n the white man’s laws
O come and go along with me
O come and go along with me
4. Farewell now to our happy plains
And to you too Brother Gaines
O come and let us gang along.
O come and let us gang along.
5. Our only friend in time of time of need
He’s the man we love indeed
O blessings on his frosty pow
O blessings on his frosty pow
6. At Memphis town we took a draw
And over more dam’d old Uncle Sam
The die is cast and we are undone
The die is cast and we are undone
7. Be our fate good or bad
We have cause to be sad
The Indian question now is o’er
The Indian question now is o’er,
Down the River we did foam
White man, Be happy as you may
8. But When we have gone to the west
You will think it for us the best
You will say tis for the best
We shall never think it so.
We shall never think it so.
9. John H Eaton and Leflore
Can never rise any more
Never can rise any more.
They Withered laurels for their brows
Withered laurels for their brows.
10. John H. Eaton is a pup
With old nick he’ll sure to sup
Withered laurels for his brow
Withered laurels for his brow.
From the papers we have been

11. We hate the fool with all our might
He’d had better keep our sight.
It is Eaton we do meane
It is Eaton we do meane.
12. At Dancing Rabbit he did not speak smart.
But O his forked tongue and shallow hart
Was nough to make old jaw bone talk
quake
Was nough to make old jaw bone talk
quake
13. May Seatan’s pin lash him again
And keep him in eternal pain
To this we sing with louder noise
To this we sing with louder noise
14. Farewell now Secretary Johny
May his path through life be thorny
O Johny the Secretary Johny
O Johny the Secretary Johny.
15. Greenwood Leflore is Chief no more
The tyrant’s carrier is now o’er
The simplest chief of all the Clans
The simplest chief of all the Clans
16. He was the man that took a bribe
From uncle Sam’s clever little scribe
Ah walk jaw bone walk away
Ah walk jaw bone walk I say
17. He turned against the orphan boy
For one little negro boy
Heaven blast him I do say
Heaven blast him I do say
18. Should ever again he cross our path
We will give him the Devils wrath
For he is the man that took a bribe
For he is the man that took a bribe
Of all the men I ever saw
Folsom has the biggest jaw
Walk o jaw bone walk away
Walk o jaw bone walk I say.
19. Of all the Agents of the West
Rector and Foulton are the best,
O come and let us gang along
O come and let us gang along—
Of all the Agents of the East
On fire boats we [illegible] sail’d
On steam boats they crowded us

Our jaw bone song to them we’ll sing
20. The good old steamer Brandywine
We have now left behind.
Farewell to Captain Gordon & his crew
Farewell to Captain Gordon & his crew
21. The damd’st time we ever saw
Was at the Post of Arkansaw.
The meanest place in all the world
The meanest place in all the world.
22. Seventy sleeps there we laid
While it snow’d and upon us hail’d
Oh the hard times we did see
Oh the hard times we did see.
23. It snow’d it hail’d I do you tell
I thought it twould pelt us all to hell
O the hard times we did see
O the hard times we did see.
24. Look to the west our chief did say.
Every Dog will have his day
May ours be not far away
May ours be not far away.
25. The salted pork & damn poor beef
I nough to make the Devil a thief
This is hard times I do say
This is hard times I do say
26. Farewell now to old McGee
Him I hope to never see.
Walk o jaw bone walk I say
Walk o jawbone walk away.
27. I think at home he’d better say
And safe himself of a fray.
Walk o jaw bone walk I saw
Walk o jawbone walk away.
28. The Little Rock we did pass
The town is small but growing fast.
29. Captain Brown there resides
Over the Agents he presides.
He is a man that’s true to us
He is a man that’s true to us.
We wish him well with all our heart
30. Our interpreter is Major Wall,
He is the man that suits us all.
The jovialest fellow of all the crew

The jovialest fellow of all the crew
Chief Pitchlynn is our friend
Tis in him we do depend
The truest fellow in all the world
The truest fellow in all the world
Ellik McKee is our friend
In him sir we do depend.
The talest Indian of all our race
The tallest Indian of our race.
Robert Jones is of our Crew
He is a man that is true blue
In smart a man as we e’r knew
To him we sing our jaw bone song
To him we sing our jaw bone song
Oklanowa is the speaker
He is indeed a roaring ripper
Huzza now for the Choctaw Nation
Huzza now for the Choctaw Nation
Our jaw bone song is at an end
We shall wind with a shoot
The crookedest stream I ever saw
Tis the River Arkansaw.
Five hundred miles up it we have sailed
Of all the Agents of the East
Old McGee I like the least.
God bless Jackson we do pray
He’s a better man than Henry Clay

Source:
‘Poem regarding removal of Choctaw,’
Peter Pitchlynn Collection, 4026.8176
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

These eloquent words by a Choctaw person experiencing the hardships of removal 189 years ago reveal how different a time and world it was in 1831. This poem provides us a window into the mindset and sophisticated political awareness of Choctaw people during removal from the homeland against their will. If you have an old Choctaw poem, story, or song to share, please contact the Historic Preservation Department at <http://choctawnationculture.com/> or by phone at 1-800-522-6170.

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Choctaw Nation Victim Services Set-Aside



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

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What to expect from Camp Chahta:

- Move in early
- Experience cultural events
- Develop new friendships
- Access campus communications
- Earn orientation credit
- Resolve any enrollment and financial aid issues



AUGUST 3-6
Virtual Family Night
August 3



AUGUST 6-7
Virtual Family Night
August 6



AUGUST 10-11
Virtual Family Night
August 10

MOVE-IN DATE TO BE DETERMINED BY CAMPUS | VIRTUAL FAMILY NIGHT BEGINS AT 6:00 PM

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Choctaw Nation Head Start

Brantley Rowen Pearce



Brantley Rowen Pearce was born at Chickasaw Nation Medical Center on April 22, 2020 at 12:08 p.m. He was 7 pounds 9 ounces and 19 inches long. Brantley is the son of Jay and Christy Pearce and was welcomed by big brothers Brennan, Bricen, Braylin, and Braxton and big sister Lainy. He is the grandson of Connie and Bruce Click, Dajuana and Eddie Pearce, and Bob Caddell.

Erb turns 87

Bette Erb will turn 87 on September 2. She is the sister to 8 siblings and the daughter of deceased A.O. and Judy Gould from Po-teau. She is living outside Tacoma, Washington with her husband, Doug, and near her three children.



Miller turns 16

Rachel M. E. Miller turned 16 on July 12. Rachel is the daughter of Christina, granddaughter of Theresa, great granddaughter of Lewain and Laura, and great-great granddaughter of Willie Mae Guire and Wallace Wesley.



Cass earns black belt

Derick Cass, 10 years old, of Riverside, CA earned his black belt in Tae Kwan Do. He is the grandson of Rick and Sandy Rowe of Camp, CA.



Fields receives Juris Doctorate



Hannah Marie (Hale) Fields graduated with a Juris Doctorate degree from Oklahoma City University on May 16, 2020. While at Oklahoma City University, Fields served as Outreach Chair for the Organization for the Advancement of Women in Law and the Corporate Law Association. She was also a member of the Native American Law Student Association and

the Holloway Inn of Court. Her internships included Judicial Intern at the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals and Legal Intern at the Oklahoma Municipal Assurance Group. Fields also completed a summer internship in the office of Senator Jim Inhofe in Washington D.C. Fields is a 2017 graduate of East Central University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Legal Studies. While an undergrad student, she served as the secretary of the Legal Professions Association, and vice president of Zeta Tau Alpha. She was also a member of Pi Sigma Alpha Honor Society and Alpha Chi National Honor Society. A 2014 graduate of Dickson High School, Fields is the daughter of Larry and Christy Hale and the wife of Joshua Fields.



Ellis second in essay contest

Acelee Ellis placed second in the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame Red Ribbon Essay Contest. Acelee competed in the 8-10 year old group. She received a state medal and commendation from Governor Stitt. This is Acelee's second consecutive year to win first runner-up honors. She is the daughter of Jerren and Heather Ellis and great-grandaughter of Barbara McKee.

Roberts graduates from OU

The family of Sarah Roberts is very proud to announce her graduation from the University of Oklahoma College of Law with a Masters of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law. Sarah would like to thank her family, teachers, and the Choctaw Nation for all the love and support she received through her academic goals. She is the daughter of Richard and Brenda Roberts. Roberts is the great-grandaughter of Lesa Phillip Roberts and Jesse Roberts.



Barnett chosen for Chief's Leadership Class

Southeastern Oklahoma University Junior, Robi-Von Barnett has been chosen to be in the Choctaw Chief's Leadership Class. Barnett is majoring in Occupational Safety. He is the son of Vonda Barnett.



Allen, magna cum laude, to serve nation

Aaron Allen graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Hawaii (UH) at Manoa. Aaron majored in Korean for Professionals at the prestigious Korean Flagship Center. Aaron was awarded a four-year U.S. Air Force R.O.T.C. scholarship while in High School to attend UH. Upon graduating from UH Manoa last month, Aaron was commissioned a Second Lieutenant (2Lt.) in the USAF. Aaron is awaiting orders to report to Intelligence School at Goodfellow AFB in San Angelo Texas. Upon completion of Intelligence School, Aaron plans to become a Foreign Area Officer specializing in Asian affairs. Ultimately, Aaron plans to become an Air Attache and work in a U.S. Embassy overseas. Allen is the son of tribal member Scott R. Allen of Murray Kentucky. He is a great grandson of Elizabeth Jane Barnett and a direct descendant of former Chief Louis Durant. He was awarded academic scholarships from the Choctaw Nation during his entire pursuit of his undergraduate degree. Lt. Allen credits the tribe with assisting in his success and hopes to bring honor to the Nation.

Ragland wins Miss Pushmataha



Congratulations to Miss Pushmataha, Kylee Ragland. Kylee won Miss Pushmataha in June. She is also the current Choctaw Nation District #7 Junior Miss Princess. She is a candidate for Miss Teen Oklahoma and will compete for the title in December at The Grand Theatre in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Kylee is the daughter of Willard and Marcia Ragland of Clayton; granddaughter of Butch and Patricia Dawson of Clayton and the granddaughter of the late Jeff and Hattie Ragland of Electra, TX. Kylee will be a Senior at Clayton High School this fall as well as a concurrent student at Carl Albert State College. Kylee is a varsity cheerleader, a thrower on the varsity track team, FFA chapter reporter, a member of the Youth Advisory Board and an advocate for people with down syndrome and Murdered and Missing Indigenous People. Kylee loves traveling and learning about new places and cultures. She also enjoys having adventures with her family and friends.

Lucas graduates veterinary school

Blake Lucas graduated with Honors from Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree after completing his clinicals at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine. Blake is the son of Mike and Sharon (Britton) Lucas and the great-grandson of Walter and Pearl (Battles) Britton, grandson of Benny Britton and nephew of Juanita Easley Miller and Ann Stringer. He is practicing in Elizabeth City, NC.



Anderson graduates from OSU



Morgan Anderson has graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration Management and hopes to begin work in the Human Resources or related business fields. Anderson said, "I am thankful for Choctaw Nation for supporting me in earning my degree. I am grateful for the support of my parents, Shawn and Debbie Anderson, and my sister Lauren Anderson."

She is the granddaughter of Duane and Jean Anderson.

Herriman places 2nd, continues tradition

Stella Herriman, 4, completed her first dirt track race in beginner yard kart. She comes from a long line of racers. Her great-grandfather, grandfather, and father all have raced in the dirt track world. Her first race was in June at Winding Creek Speedway in Pink, OK where she took 2nd place. She is improving every day and is looking forward to following in her family's footsteps. She is the daughter of Jeremy Herriman.



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Jimmie Louise Riddle Neely

Jimmie Louise Riddle Neely, 90, passed away June 18, 2020.

Jimmie was born Oct. 23, 1929, in Flomont, TX., to William (Buck) Armstrong Riddle and Merle Pyron Riddle.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Erroll Wesley McFarland; son Eddie Wayne McFarland; brother Buddy Riddle; brother Johnny Austin; husband Dan Blackburn and husband Leon Neely.

Jimmie is survived by daughter Benita McFarland Turner and spouse Bob; son Lynn McFarland; step-children Wayne Blackburn and spouse Denise, Vicky Poskey, Melinda Powell and spouse Scotty, Preston Neely and spouse Sarah, and Frank Neely and spouse Marty; sisters Merlene Loving and spouse Edsel, Willene Bartley and spouse Clifford, Carole Cates and spouse Norman, and Linda Sanders and spouse Roger; twenty grandchildren; thirty-one great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren; and many cherished nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Caudle-Rutledge-Daugherty Funeral Home](#).

Theresa Johnson Oss

Theresa Johnson Oss, 64, passed away May 16, 2020.

Theresa was born June 9, 1955, in Corona, CA., to Robert and Shirley (McPherson) Johnson.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Theresa is survived by her husband Michael A. Oss; sons Christopher Benton and spouse Annette, and Dustin Benton and spouse Jessica; grandchildren Kelly and spouse Jonathan, Brian and spouse Terra, Jonathan, Zackary, Dylan, Brycen, and Austin and spouse Sandra; great-grandchildren Jackson, Gavin, Ava, and Marceline; siblings Annette Hester and spouse Steve, Marsha Bumgarner, Janice Drouin, Jimmie Johnson and spouse Connie, Paul Johnson and spouse Paula, David Johnson, Bobby Johnson and spouse Shelly; sisters-in-law Susan Schuler and spouse Doug, Pamela Gallagher and spouse David; father and mother-in-law George and Joann Oss; nieces and nephews Jason, Adrian, Robbie, Mendi, Fabian, Tasha, Mike, James, Christie, Shannon, Alicia, Melissa, Brianna and Amanda and spouse Rosie.

For the full obituary, please visit [Virginia Cremation Service](#).

Jincy Iva Wallace

Jincy Iva Wallace, 80, passed away June 21, 2020.

Iva was born Feb. 11, 1940, in Speer, Okla., to Joseph Ward Thompson and Josephine (Pisachubbe) Thompson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Jim D. Wallace Sr.; and brothers Joseph E. Thompson and Hansel J. Thompson.

Iva is survived by sons Jim D. Wallace Jr., and Kenneth Wallace and spouse Melissa; brother Perry Thompson and spouse Gail; several nieces and nephews; great nieces and nephews; great-great nieces and nephews; and many other relatives and friends.

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

Tade Joseph-Dale James

Tade Joseph-Dale James, 12, passed away June 25, 2020.

Tade was born April 12, 2008, in Emporia, KS, to Johnny Allen and Lindsay Ann (Williams) James.

He was preceded in death by his grandmother, Teresa Williams.

Tade is survived by his parents; brothers Carter James and Will James; grandmother Brenda Ross; grandfathers Steven Williams and Johnny Frank James; very special nurse Ashley Davis; and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

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

Emerson Wilson Lewis

Emerson “Louie” Wilson Lewis, 70, passed away June 12, 2020.

Louie was born Aug. 1, 1949, in Talihina, Okla., to Wilson and Nora (McGee) Lewis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Vera, Sarah, Marie, Rosie, and Isabel; and brother Milton David.

Louis is survived by daughters Angela Jackson and spouse James, Brenda Tate and spouse Phillip, and Darlene Neely and spouse Donald; mother of his children Carolyn Lewis; sister Ella Going; grandchildren Danielle Jackson, Zackary Carter, and Teagan Tate; and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

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

Leola (Wesley) Lester

Leola (Wesley) Lester, 85, passed away June 23, 2020.

Leola was born Oct. 7, 1934, in Blanco, Okla., and was raised by William Taft and Becky (Pickens) Wesley.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Charles William Lester Jr.; son Charles William Lester III; and great-granddaughter Kyler Scott.

Leola is survived by son Nathan Lester; daughter Rebecca Hawkins and spouse Neal; daughter-in-law Paula Lester; grandchildren Heather Anderson, Genci Hedgecock, Jesse Roy Lester, Rachel Lester, and MacKenzi Clapp; great-grandchildren Dakota Lester, Makayla Lester, Hailey Hedgecock, Fallon Anderson, Laura Anderson, Amaya Anderson, Kyndyn Clay, Kynlynn Clay, Kyleah Clay, Haden Charles Lester, Kyllah Deford and Fallon Lester; sisters Ramona Robertson and Loyce Wright; and nieces, nephews and other family members and friends.

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

Bruce Allen Jacob

Bruce Allen Jacob, 50, passed away June 28, 2020.

Bruce was born March 18, 1970 to Robert Jacob Jr. and Mable (Tisho) Jacob.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Teddy Jacob.

Bruce is survived by wife Tammy Baker; sons Casey Lane Baker and spouse Ann, and Jake Jacob; sisters Norma Jones and Liz Scroggins; grandchildren Paityn and Sage Baker, and Shacodah Baker; along with a host of other relatives and many friends.

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

Michael Allen Dyer

Michael Allen Dyer, 67, passed away June 29, 2020.

Michael was born Nov. 23, 1952 to Bobby Edsel and Zona Mae (Duree) Dyer.

He was preceded in death by his father; grandparents Otto and Zella Duree; and brother Robert William Dyer.

Michael is survived by wife Kathleen Dyer; son Michael Chad Dyer and spouse Melissa; daughters Candice Annette Hurlocker and Sheila Baden; grandchildren Chelsey and Conner Hurlocker, Bailey and Makayla Dyer, Brittany Beets, Thomas “TJ” James and Cara Baden; great-grandchildren Milo Dyer, Cheyanne, Charlsie and Tyler Baden, Stetson and Zayden Beets; his mother; sister Linda Carol Daniels and spouse Mark; sister-in-law Shirley Dyer; uncle Oliver Duree; and numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [ACS-OKC](#).

Nevaeh Hendrix

Nevaeh Hendrix, 14, passed away July 4, 2020.

Nevaeh was born Nov. 11, 2005, in Idabel, Okla., to Larry Hendrix and Candice (Pettyjohn) Hendrix.

She was preceded in death by her paternal grandfathers B.J. Schwemley and Les Reese.

Nevaeh is survived by her parents; sister Heaven Chapman; brother Cash Hendrix; maternal grandmother Tisha Reece; paternal grandmother Shirley Schwemley; great paternal grandfather Charlsie Hamilton; aunts Joni Campbell and spouse Jeremy, Tatum Broyles, Brandy Chapman and spouse Bobby, Latisha Mote and spouse Edward, Casey Pettyjohn, Cadye Nation and spouse Eric, and Torie Smiley and spouse James; uncles Sean Pettyjohn and spouse Vickie, and Levi Pettyjohn and spouse Joanie; numerous cousins; and many family and friends.

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

Lee A. Battiest

Lee A. Battiest, 68, passed away July 6, 2020.

Lee was born Aug. 24, 1951, to Willie Battiest Sr. and Kissie (Walls) Battiest.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Michael Allen “Stoney” Battiest; brothers Tom, Willie, and Leon Battiest; siblings Nellie Wade, Leo Battiest, Orie Battiest, Olena Orona, and Alice Boston; and sister Ethel McKinney.

Lee is survived by his wife Evelyn Wood; daughter Jessie Mackey and spouse Kameron; brother Lawrence Battiest; grandchildren Michaela, Alex, Aubrey, Mia, Mieiah, Acelin, Nenikko, Jasiah, Mahli, Tenefke, Okomba, and Hashonti; special nieces Marilyn Wilson and Linda Wade; along with a host of other relatives and many friends.

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

Robert Lee Moore

Robert “Santa Bob” Lee Moore, 66, passed away July 7, 2020.

Robert was born Oct. 12, 1953, in Shawnee, Okla., to Robert Harrison and Bertie Lee (Little) Moore.

He was preceded in death by his wife Bernice “Bunny” Wilson and son Robert Lee Moore Jr.

Robert is survived by wife Rose Marie Moore; son Michael Steven Moore and spouse Michelle “Mitch”; daughters Michelle Elaine Alzoubi, Sarah Apple, and Hanah Royal and spouse Josh; brother Willis Thomas Moore and spouse Paula; sisters Rose Davis, Jeanette McCarron, and Sharon Cain; grandchildren Brian Moore, Melissa Royal, Josh Levy, Daisy Moore, Chloe Moore, Gabby Royal, and Asher Royal; and three great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary, please visit [Kiesau-Lee Funeral home](#).

Wayland Wayne Davenport

Wayland Wayne Davenport, 79, passed away July 4, 2020.

Wayland was born March 29, 1941, in Soper, Okla., to H.L. “Hub” Davenport and Dora (Kendrix) Davenport.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Thurman “Buck” Davenport; sisters Bobbie Marsh and Georgia Stubbs; and son David Wayne Davenport.

Wayland is survived by his wife Linda Helen; daughters Cheryl Durlinger and spouse Phil, Dawn Pilani and spouse Ron, and Sheri Arbaugh; sons Lonnie Arbaugh, Randy Arbaugh, and Ricky Arbaugh; sisters Ruby Wiginton, Tommie Jones, Linda Garrison and spouse Jim and Brenda Splawn; brothers Jerry Davenport and spouse Dianna, Larry Davenport and spouse JoEllen, and Mike Davenport and spouse Teresa; grandchildren Nicholas Bonelli, Kimberly Adams and spouse Raul, Sarah Pilani, Ryan Pilani, Andrew Pilani, Carrie Agent and spouse Jeremiah, Tina Sain and spouse Greg, Jody Arbaugh and Ricky Arbaugh Jr. and spouse Katie; great-grandchildren Carson, Bethany, Eric, Bella, Derek, McKenzie and Aubrey; numerous nieces and nephews; and friends and loved ones.

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

Gerald Paul Jackson

Gerald Paul Jackson, 64, passed away May 28, 2020.

Gerald was born July 29, 1955, in Lubbock, TX., to Edward and Alma Faye Rainwater.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Ed Rainwater and Dwayne Jackson.

Gerald is survived by wife Carol; children Scott, Leslie and Brian; stepchildren Brandon, Bradley, Amber and Matthew; grandchildren Ashten, Maili, Hendrix, and William; sisters Linda Rainwater Monroe, Roma Rainwater White, Dorothy Giddens, and Tina Rainwater.

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

Johnna Lea Richards

Johnna Lea Richards, 52, passed away April 21, 2020.

Johnna was born September 20, 1967, in Denton, Texas to John and Minnie (Mason) Richards.

She was preceded in death by her father.

Johnna is survived by her mother; sister Staci Barnett and spouse Danny; nieces Morgan and Megan Barnett; nephew Clint Barnett and spouse Melissa; aunt Nelma Lacy; cousins Laura Pounders and Kathy Hawkins.

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

Victoria Denise Gonzalez

Victoria Denise (Baker) Gonzalez, 56, passed away July 3, 2020.

Victoria was born Sept. 4, 1963, in Tahlequah, Okla., to Houston and Cecilia (Lewis) Baker Jr.

She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Jessica Nguyen; niece Victoria R. Baker; and sister Monette Baker.

Victoria is survived by sons Lorenzo Gonzalez, Jose Luis Gonzalez, and Triston Gonzalez; daughter Juanita Rose Gonzalez; brother Jeremy Kemp; sisters Tamera Gonzalez and Tina Jones; five grandchildren; nieces and nephews Ly Baker, Jennifer Henry, Olivia Gonzalez, Ezekiel Gonzalez, and Alliyah Miller.

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

Athaline Lewis

Athaline “Mona” Lewis, 70, passed away July 6, 2020.

Mona was born March 4, 1950, in Talihina, Okla., to Randall and Emaline (Ebahotubbi) Lewis.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Marvin Lewis; and sister Rhonda Peters.

Mona is survived by her son Keith Lewis; daughter Chanda Goings and spouse Lance; brothers Virgil Lewis, Nathan Lewis and spouse Evelyn, Daniel Lewis, Matthew Lewis, and Ronald Lewis; sisters Rita Watson and spouse Randall, Thelma Smith, Regina Flanigan, and Doris Jones and spouse Ken; grandchildren Alexander Lewis, DeMario Lewis, and Alysia Lewis; great-grandchild Ezra Lewis; many nieces and nephews; other relatives and friends.

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

Kenneth Wayne Battles

Kenneth Wayne Battles, 82, passed away June 12, 2020.

Kenneth was born June 2, 1938, in Three Rivers, TX., to Melvin Battles and Lois Patrick.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brother John Battles.

Kenneth is survived by his wife Royce; children Tammy Battles Collins and spouse Eddie, Chuck Battles and spouse JoAnne, and Tony Battles and spouse Martha; brother Doyle Battles and spouse Linda; grandchildren Lindsay Collins Kearney and spouse James, Chad Collins and spouse Shawn, Derek Collins and spouse Rachael, Jake Collins, Chuck Battles Jr. and spouse Mykee, Kristen Johnson and spouse Bear, Meghann Tilford and spouse Shaun, Travis Williams and spouse Kaitlin, Justin Battles and spouse DaNae, Ryan Battles and spouse Whitney, and Vance Victor; 26 great-grandchildren; as well as many other cherished friends and family members.

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

JoLynda Boutwell-Loyd

JoLynda Boutwell-Loyd, 59, passed away June 29, 2020.

JoLynda was born Oct. 13, 1961, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Bill and Ella Boutwell.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her son David “DJ”.

JoLynda is survived by brother James Boutwell and family; sister Gayla Austin; niece Treda Pribnow and family; and numerous family members and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [AE 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.

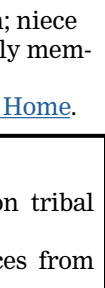
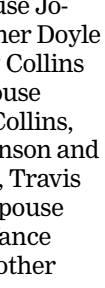
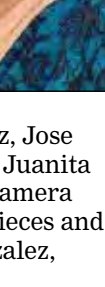
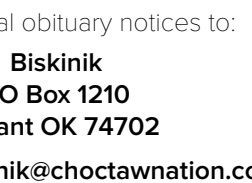
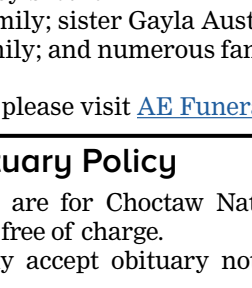
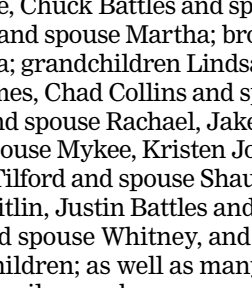
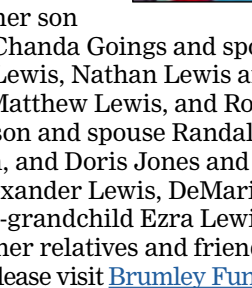
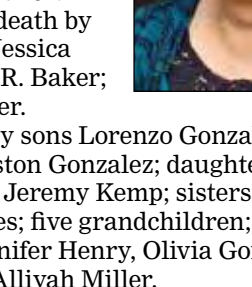
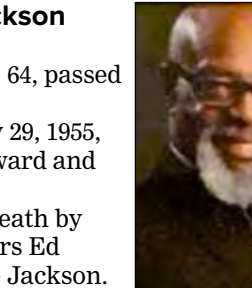
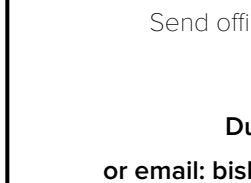
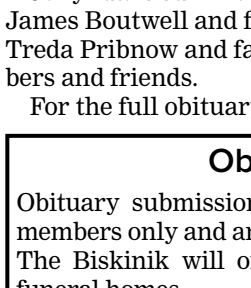
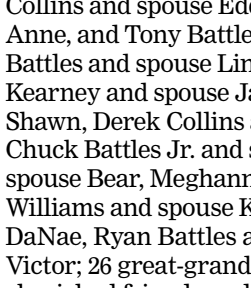
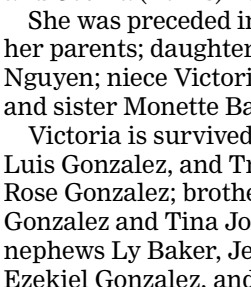
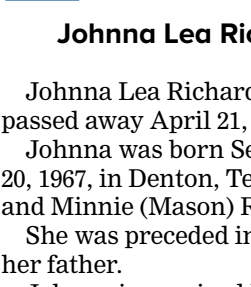
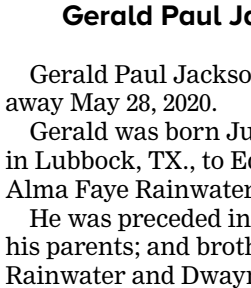
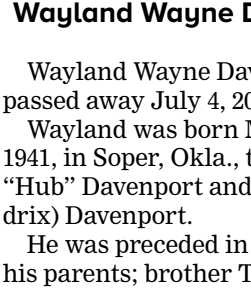
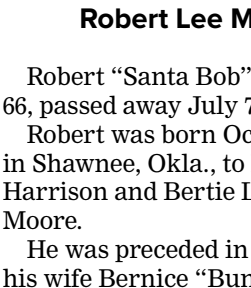
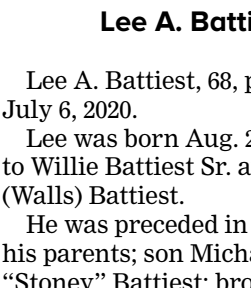
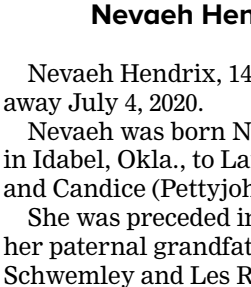
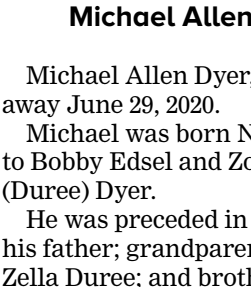
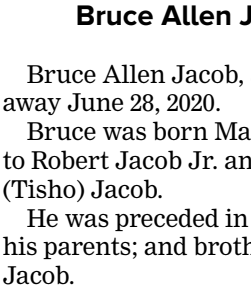
Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws, therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official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



Medicaid expansion victory to give health care coverage to more Oklahomans

By Shelia Kirven

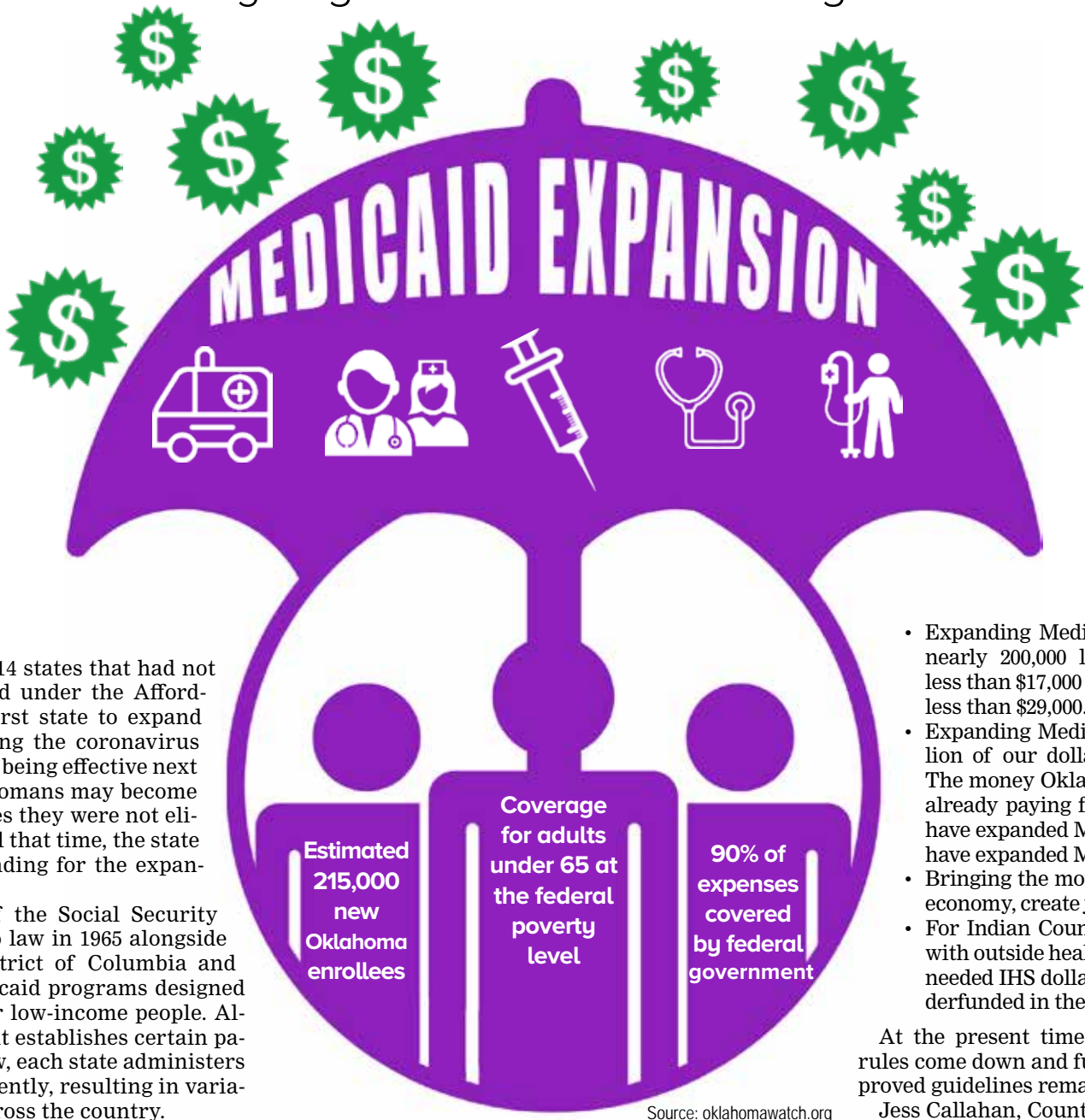
Oklahoma voters narrowly passed a Medicaid expansion ballot initiative on June 29, 2020. The decision, passing with 50.5% of votes in favor of the expansion, will go into effect in July of 2021. The state question was brought to the ballot by the request of the people. Valid signatures of 177,958 people were required to call for a vote, and a state record 313,000 signatures were reportedly submitted, with 299,731 signatures being declared valid. Supporters wanted not only to expand the state’s Medicaid but also to help save rural hospitals that were struggling to stay open.

Oklahoma had been one of 14 states that had not previously expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act and was the first state to expand their Medicaid program during the coronavirus pandemic. With the expansion being effective next year, many low-income Oklahomans may become eligible for health care services they were not eligible for before. However, until that time, the state has the task of allocating funding for the expansion.

Authorized by Title XIX of the Social Security Act, Medicaid was signed into law in 1965 alongside Medicare. All states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories have Medicaid programs designed to provide health coverage for low-income people. Although the federal government establishes certain parameters for all states to follow, each state administers their Medicaid program differently, resulting in variations in Medicaid coverage across the country.

Medicaid’s official webpage (www.Medicaid.gov) describes the program like this: Medicaid is a joint federal and state program, that together with the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), provides health coverage to over 72.5 million Americans, including children, pregnant women, parents, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Medicaid is the single largest source of health coverage in the United States.

In Oklahoma, an estimated 160,000 to 250,000 Oklahomans could be eligible for benefits under the new expansion. The help is needed now more than ever with job losses, increases in unemployment cases and increases in medical visits due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



past and ongoing efforts to expand access to quality care for our patients. The news is also extremely positive for the rural hospitals in Oklahoma, as many have had to close due to financial challenges.”

Jodi White, Choctaw senior from the Wilburton community center and Red Oak community volunteer said, “I think it’s a very good thing. I think those of low income, when they get Medicaid and they go to the Indian hospital and clinic, and the business office applies for reimbursement, that’s just extra money that will come back into the health system. Anytime we can get more money, that’s more health care services.”

Here are some things to remember:

- Expanding Medicaid will give health coverage to nearly 200,000 low-income Oklahomans making less than \$17,000 a year or a family of three making less than \$29,000.
- Expanding Medicaid could bring more than a billion of our dollars back to the state every year. The money Oklahoma pays in federal taxes now is already paying for healthcare in other states that have expanded Medicaid. Currently 36 other states have expanded Medicaid.
- Bringing the money back to the state will help the economy, create jobs and keep rural hospitals alive.
- For Indian Country, having more tribal members with outside healthcare coverage will free up much needed IHS dollars that have been consistently underfunded in the past.

At the present time, until new Medicaid expansion rules come down and funding is received, previously approved guidelines remain in effect.

Jess Callahan, County Director for District 16 (Leflore and Latimer counties) Department of Human Services, explained how one can apply for services. “The Department of Human Service is the determining agency for individuals who are declared disabled by the Social Security Administration, those who are considered blind and for those aged 65 and older. Please encourage readers if they have questions about eligibility, to contact their county DHS office, or call 405-522-5050. For individuals who do not meet the above criteria, DHS can help them apply through the OK Health Care Authority for possible other Medicaid services.”

You can also read more about the program at www.Medicaid.gov.

Livestreaming, the new future



Photo by Chris Jennings

Payton Guthrie runs the live streaming software for the Nation’s first ever live streamed press conference.

By Chris Jennings

Amidst the global pandemic, the popularity of video calls and tele-meetings using various formats has seen a rise in popularity. This includes within the Choctaw Nation. Choctaw Nation associates regularly use Microsoft Teams and Webex to conduct video meetings as they work remotely.

The Nation also recently held its first livestreamed press conference when Chief Gary Batton announced the planned distribution of CARES Act funds to tribal members.

Using Facebook Live, Batton made the announcement immediately after a special session of the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council where the distribution of the CARES Act funds had been voted on. Multi-media director Payton Guthrie said, “We decided it would be best to have a livestream event to get the word out quickly and directly

to our tribal members.”

Being able to livestream an event so quickly eliminates much of the confusion that can be caused by bits and pieces of news getting out before press releases can be written and distributed through the various news channels.

Another new feature enhancing the Nation’s transparency and accountability is the livestreaming of the Tribal Council meetings. Talking about this new feature of the Council meetings Chief Gary Batton said, “We believe in openness and transparency. We want to have an open and transparent government for all of our tribal members to feel like they’re involved.”

Tribal Council had previously discussed livestreaming their meetings, but due to the pandemic, the vote to do so was accelerated.

Guthrie believes in the power of video to serve as a record of what someone said. On top of that, watching a video can also help to clarify the tone and context of a statement. “You can hear someone give the answer instead of reading a cold paragraph,” said Guthrie.

“The pandemic has made us be more creative than in the past,” said Batton. Through Facebook, through Webex, through all of these technologies, the goal of the Choctaw Nation is to keep associates and tribal members connected.

“We’re going to continue using this technology into the future. We’re going to try our best to keep everybody informed as to what’s going on,” said Batton.

Trails for running and hiking

By Christain Toews

Beavers Bend State Park and the surrounding area is known for many outdoor activities. Whether it’s fly fishing on the Mountain Fork River, taking a boat out on Broken Bow Lake, or driving to one of many scenic lookouts, this area of Oklahoma has something for everyone. Hochatown, Oklahoma borders the state park and attracts visitors from all over the country with its luxury cabins and restaurants.

One of the lesser known features of this area is the extensive trail system. There are over 22 miles of trail between two main locations. Both of these locations have trail options for experienced or occasional hikers. Whether you want to go out on a one-mile hike, or spend all day on the trails, both the Hochatown and Beavers Bend portions of Beavers Bend State Park have options for you.

This trail system is broken into two main areas. The first is within the Beavers Bend portion of the state park. This area has approximately 12 miles of trail. The second area is located near the Lakeview Lodge in the Hochatown portion of the state park and has another 10 miles of trail available for use.

Hiking these trails, you will see amazing scenery and stunning wildlife. It’s not uncommon to see white tailed deer grazing or a bald eagle flying overhead. This is truly some of the most beautiful country in America.

Kendall Carter is an Ada, Oklahoma resident who has hiked the Skyline trail in Beavers Bend State Park. “These trails feel like you’ve left Oklahoma without having to drive five plus hours. It’s the best part of Oklahoma in my opinion and I will definitely



Photos by Christian Toews

Above, Sara Adams runs along the Lakeview Lodge trail in the Hochatown section of Beavers Bend State Park. Right, a hiker crosses a bridge on the Cedars Bluff trail in Beavers Bend State park.

go back,” he said.

Another activity that has gained popularity in recent years is trail running. Many runners who typically run on the road, find trail running to be a new challenge. “I love the feeling of running on trails. You have to pay attention to where your foot is landing; it makes the time fly by. I also like the challenge of running up steep climbs and feeling like I got a really good workout in,” said Sara Adams, a runner who has spent time on these trails. With multiple loops and distances, the trails in Beavers Bend State Park offer variety and are great for trail running.

There are a few different trailheads for the Beavers Bend trails. A comprehensive map can be found at the Forest Heritage Center and Museum located in the park. You can also find a trail map online at www.forestry.ok.gov/hiking-trails-in-beavers-bend-state-park.

There is a single trailhead for the Hochatown portion of the trails that makes it easy to access. The trailhead is located just outside of the Lakeview Lodge and features a map of the available trails. While both of these locations are great for hiking, the Hochatown trails also allow biking. More detailed descriptions and maps of both of these trails can be found on www.alltrails.com. Simply search for Beavers Bend State Park when you visit the site.

Whether you’re hiking with family, or looking for a challenging trail run, this Oklahoma state park has a trail for you. The next time you need to get away to a breathtaking location, look no further than the southeastern part of Oklahoma. If you would like more information about the different amenities within Beavers Bend State Park, visit www.travelok.com.



Trail head locations



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NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS AND VOUCHER BOOKLETS WILL BE ISSUED AFTER APRIL 1, 2020

Must be at least 70 years old or have an ambulatory disability

Participants receive 20 vouchers, valued at \$25 each (no cash value), redeemable April 1 - December 31, 2020

Must live in 10 ½ counties of the CND

Income requirement: Earn no more than 80% of the national median income as determined by HUD

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

800-522-6170

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LAWNCARE

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Housing Headlines

By Fred Logan

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

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

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

The ConnectHome Program started with a goal of 35% connectivity in the first year with 379 total units. HACNO now has over 870 units in the program. ConnectHome currently has 434 units connected to the internet. That is just under 50% connectivity with new sites currently under construction. The program currently has 368 children connected to the internet.

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

HOME LOANS AVAILABLE TO TRIBAL MEMBERS

THROUGH THE HUD SECTION 184

- Available to Choctaw Tribal Members
- No maximum income guidelines
- Credit guidelines apply
- Apply with Choctaw Home Finance Dept.
- Home site must be in a HUD 184 approved Indian service area
- Fixed current market interest rate up to a 30 year term

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

How the COVID-19 virus has affected me

As reported by six youth between the ages and 6 and 11

By Audie Johnson

The COVID-19 virus has taken its toll on everyone. To give a child’s prospective I interviewed youth ranging in age from six to eleven years. They were quite articulate and eager to contribute their points of view.

The youngsters all knew precautions to take to stay healthy, such as washing your hands often or using hand sanitizer often, wearing a face mask, staying six feet away from others and keeping your hands away from your face and mouth. Children are aware this virus makes some individuals very ill. They also understand some people die from getting sick with it. All the children knew that Coronavirus and COVID-19 were the same sickness.

Most of the children had similar complaints against this dreaded virus. Some of those are as follows: not getting to socialize with friends, having to stay home too much, the public pools and play parks being closed and knowing when the adults in their lives are uneasy or scared.

I was surprised to learn that, according to the children, there are benefits that go along with waiting for the virus to go away. Here are some quotes from a few

of the children:

“We get to spend time as a family playing board games and having family movie night.”

“We get to bake cookies.”

“Grandma is living with us now, so I get to see her every day!”

I guess the moral of the story is that Children are smart; they are capable of understanding what’s going on in their world; and they can find the good in any situation. Please stay safe and healthy. Take care of your physical health needs as well as your mental health needs.

If you, or someone you know, would benefit from counseling services contact your local Behavioral Health Clinic. Don’t let negative stigma and misconceptions prevent you or a loved one from seeking professional help.

Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Service
(918) 567-3065

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-8255

National Text Crisis Line: text “hello” to 741-741



File photo

Talihina Health Care Center reaches influenza vaccine goal

Forty-seven Oklahoma hospitals and hospital specialty units have met a challenge from the Oklahoma Hospital Association to achieve a health care worker influenza vaccination rate of 96% or higher during the 2019-2020 flu season.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Influenza places a substantial burden on the health of people in the United States each year. CDC estimates that influenza has resulted in between 9.2 million and 35.6 million illnesses, between 140,000 and 710,000 hospitalizations and between 12,000 and 56,000 deaths annually since 2010.”

“And the risk of complications from influenza is higher among the types of people who are admitted to our hospitals,” said LaWanna Halstead, Vice President of Quality and Clinical Initiatives, Oklahoma Hospital Association. “These hospitals have developed policies and processes that ensure their patients and employees are protected.”

Hospitalized patients are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of influenza because their immune systems are often compromised by the illness that caused their admission or by the treatments they are undergoing. Vaccination of health care personnel (HCPs) has been shown to prevent illness and death in patients and reduce influenza and absenteeism among HCPs. The CDC has recommended annual vaccination of HCPs since 1984.

Several key national professional organizations have endorsed mandatory policies for influenza vaccination as a condition of employment within health care facilities, including the Oklahoma Hospital Association. In 2011, the Oklahoma American Association board of trustees developed a position statement urging mandatory influenza policies.



Submitted photo

Jerri Sisk goes about her daily work at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina. Sisk recently has been named as the top pharmacy technician of the year by two professional organizations.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

WAREHOUSES & MARKETS

Open 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
Thursday: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

August 2020
All markets open weekdays, August 3-27
Closed: August 28 and 31.
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443
Nutrition ed. and food demo August 4, 10:00-1:00

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Nutrition ed. and food demo August 19, 10:00-1:00

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Nutrition ed. and food demo August 6, 10:00-1:00

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
Nutrition ed. and food demo August 18, 10:00-1:00

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Nutrition ed. and food demo August 3, 10:00-1:00

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Enjoy Full WIC Services and See If Your Child Qualifies for SoonerCare

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

Free backpack with every approved Connecting Kids to Coverage application.

Choctaw Country knows sometimes 24 hours isn’t enough girl time.

CHOCTAWCOUNTRY.COM

HOME VISITATION

WHAT WE DO

- Home Visits: Twice a month, a Home Visitor will meet with you and talk about whatever is on your mind and share information regarding your child’s development. We follow an evidence-based curriculum - Parents as Teachers.
- Assessments: A variety of assessments are conducted on schedule to make sure your child is developing on-track, checking for environmental safety hazards, and screening for postpartum depression along with other assessments to ensure complete health and wellness of the family.
- Resources: we are here to support you and your child in all needs. We have a variety of resources available to help meet those needs.
- Monthly Family Group Connections: Once a month, a meeting is hosted in various locations across the service area. Families are encouraged to attend and meet other parents who are expecting and parenting.

ELIGIBILITY

Required for all Home Visiting Programs:

- Live within the 10.5 county service area of the Choctaw Nation
- Be expecting or parenting a Native American child under the age of one year

Additional eligibility will be determined upon contacting the Case Manager. Each program is slightly different. These may include:

- Low income
- Parents under the age of 24
- Past or present history of child abuse or neglect
- Past or present history of substance abuse
- Tobacco users
- Low student achievement
- Developmental delays or disabilities
- Military family

800-522-6170 | CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

Maple-Peach milk shake

- 1 1/4 cups 1% low-fat milk
- 1 cup vanilla greek yogurt
- 6 tablespoons maple syrup
- 14 ounces chopped peeled peaches, frozen

Preparation

1. **Combine all ingredients in a blender; process until smooth.**
2. **Divide mixture into 4 glasses.**

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. 7 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

McGirt decision

DURANT, Okla., July 9, 2020 — Today, the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of McGirt v. Oklahoma. In a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Jimcy McGirt.

In response to the ruling, the leaders of the Five Civilized Tribes issued the following joint statement:

“The State, the Muscogee (Creek), Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole Nations have made substantial progress toward an agreement to present to Congress and the U.S. Department of Justice addressing and resolving any significant jurisdictional issues raised by the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in McGirt v. Oklahoma.

The Nations and the State are committed to ensuring that Jimcy McGirt, Patrick Murphy, and all other offenders face justice for the crimes for which they are accused. We have a shared commitment to maintaining public safety and long-term economic prosperity for the Nations and Oklahoma.

The Nations and the State are committed to implementing a framework of shared jurisdiction that will preserve sovereign interests and rights to self-government while affirming jurisdictional understandings, procedures, laws, and regulations that support public safety, our economy, and private property rights. We will continue our work, confident that we can accomplish more together than any of us could alone.”

To review the decision, please visit choctawnation.com/mcgirt-vs-oklahoma.



Photo courtesy of Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States

Census survey offers a prize

By Bradley Gernand

Choctaw tribal members recently received surveys asking whether they have completed the 2020 United States Census and, if not, why not. By returning the survey they entered a cash giveaway. The top prize is \$20,020. Ten smaller prizes of \$2,020 each are also being awarded.

“We don’t want to make light of such an important subject,” explains Melissa Landers, the tribe’s Senior Director for Membership, and coordinator of its 2020 Census Complete Count Committee. “The major reason for the cash giveaway is to attract attention to the survey we mailed and emailed.” If tribal members aren’t filling out the 2020 Census, the tribe needs to know why, she says. “If there are simple problems we can help resolve, we want to know what they are.”

At Biskinik’s press time almost 6,000 survey recipients had responded, representing over 13,000 tribal members. Of those, almost 500 said they have not completed the Census for several reasons. Of those, the most commonly listed reasons were they weren’t aware of it; they didn’t have time; didn’t receive it or didn’t know how.

The information gleaned through the survey has been helpful, says Landers, who has kept tribal leadership fully briefed.

Landers says the tribe is in process of hiring temporary workers to staff its public

facilities and explain the Census to tribal members. A large marketing campaign is underway, using television stations in three media markets—Tulsa, Fort Smith, and Sherman/Denison, radio stations, newspaper ads, billboards across the Choctaw Nation, social media, and direct mail.

Tribal leaders are interested in learning how the Census is going—hence the survey—because a successful count in 2020 may go far to reverse damage the tribe suffered as a result of a steep undercount of tribal members during the 2010 Census. Only 20% of the tribe were counted as members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in 2010.

The damage was driven home very recently as the tribe received the first disbursement of money from the federal government under the CARES Act program, which is designed to give money to state and tribal governments for use in stabilizing operations and vulnerable populations during the pandemic. The Choctaw Nation received \$136 million dollars during that first disbursement, but missed out on over \$100 million dollars more. The problem: the federal government’s funding formula relied, in part, on the inaccurate 2010 Census count.

“The results of the 2010 Census have reached back to bite us many times in the years since then,” Landers says. “In 2020 we plan to turn this thing around.”



Photo by Chris Jennings

The desire to help the tribe achieve its future goals--and cold, hard cash--are leading tribal members to participate in a survey designed to illuminate their participation in the 2020 United States Census. The more participation, the better. The top prize giveaway is \$20,020.”



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE’RE MORE ♦

STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

AVOID CLOSE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK

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

AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE AND MOUTH

CLEAN AND DISINFECT FREQUENTLY TOUCHED OBJECTS AND SURFACES

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

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

CDC.GOV/NCOV

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE’RE MORE ♦

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

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Living out the Chahta Spirit. FAITH ♦ FAMILY ♦ CULTURE

August 2020

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Oklahoma voters approve Medicaid expansion.

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Southeast Oklahoma trails offer variety for all levels, running or hiking.

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

Stay Connected to the Nation

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