



STIGLER ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2018

February 2019 Issue

Passage of the Stigler Act Amendments of 2018 a Huge Win for the Five Tribes

by BRADLEY GERNAND

Restrictions on land transfers which have troubled Choctaw families for decades have now been removed, eliminating a long-standing injustice.

Legislation signed into law Dec. 31, 2018 by President Donald Trump eliminates a restriction on land inheritance by members of the Five Tribes which dated from 1947.

The restriction, which was part of the Stigler Act, took away the right of tribal citizens possessing less than one-half degree Indian blood quantum from inheriting land from their forebears and retaining it as “Indian land.”

Until passage of the Stigler Act the government administered strict protections on land which had been allotted to original enrollees, limiting the ability to sell or transfer it, or for counties to tax it, without federal approval.

After passage of the Stigler Act these lands were no longer protected during probate proceedings if heirs of allotted land possessed less than one-half degree Indian blood quantum. Federal law did not dictate a minimum Native American blood degree requirement for any other Native American tribes.

During recent years more and more Choctaw citizens have been blocked from inheriting interests in lands allotted to their Choctaw ancestors because they did not meet the Stigler Act’s 50 percent blood quantum threshold.

As of early 2016, “after a century of staggering losses of Choctaw Indian lands,” the Choctaw Nation says, the number of allotted lands within its boundaries was reduced to 135,263 acres, down from almost 7 million acres following the original allotments.

As the members of earlier generations continued to pass, the problem deepened. Since the beginning of 2017, at least 40 Choctaw citizens who are heirs of original allottees lost their restricted interests in at least 2,800 acres as a consequence of the Stigler Act. Those lands then lost their protected status and the characteristics originally defining them as Indian lands and have now come under state and county taxation.

In July 2015, with the scope of the problem rapidly becoming apparent, Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton joined leaders of the other Five Tribes in calling on Oklahoma’s congressional delegation to address the injustices of the Stigler Act. The chiefs, during a meeting of the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, signed a unanimous resolution denouncing the impacts of the act.

Responding to the chiefs’ plea, Rep. Tom Cole, a Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Oklahoma, sponsored legislation in May 2017 designed to amend the Stigler Act. This effort, which was co-sponsored by other members of the House from Oklahoma, culminated Dec. 31, 2018, with President Trump signing the amendment into law.

Removal of these unfair restrictions “restores the Choctaw Nation, and its citizens, to the same parity treatment that the United States accords other Indian tribes and tribal members outside of eastern Oklahoma,” the Choctaw Nation said in a statement.

“This legislation is a tremendous win for all Oklahoma tribes and Native Americans in the state,” Chief Batton said, following the president’s signature. “Native people will be better able to protect tribal lands and maintain generation-to-generation ownership and connection to our land.”

Rep. Cole agreed, saying “Many of Oklahoma’s citizens have passed out of half-blood lineage, but remain vested in their Native American heritage. Removing the half-blood degree prerequisite and expanding its range to any degree will help preserve the rights and legacy of Native American tribes and their inheritance.” Cole is a member of the Chickasaw Nation.

The recently signed amendment does not reverse past injustices

caused by the 71-year-old Stigler Act, but prevents future ones from occurring, according to Donna Loper, the Choctaw Nation’s senior director of land titles and records. For original Indian land to still be restricted today it has to have “never been sold and never passed by probate to someone who is less than half-blood.”

President Trump’s signature on Dec. 31 was the latest development in a process which stretches back approximately 120 years.

During the waning days of the Indian Territory, as it became clear the lands inhabited by what were then known as the Five Civilized Tribes were—contrary to longstanding treaties—eventually to be part of a new state in the United States, Congress acted to begin the process known as “allotment.”

Lands in the Five Tribes had until that time been held by each tribe in common, with no individual ownership. In the United States, however, land is generally owned by specific individuals or entities and taxed by their governments. Congress established a commission to create membership rolls for each of the Five Tribes. Following completion, they divided tribal lands among tribal members. Oklahoma came into existence in November 1907 with lands within its borders allotted to these original enrollees protected at the federal level. The rest was taxed.

Potential negative impacts arising from the Stigler Act were not universally evident in 1947. An issue of Smoke Signals, the journal of the Indian Association of America, reported at the time that the Stigler Act was passed so Choctaws and Chickasaws “could sell their lands to the government.” This apparently was considered an advance or improvement. President Harry S. Truman, in affixing his signature to the act, the journal said, “wrote the happy ending to the story.”

But that was not the end, and it was not happy. A wrong has been righted, and the process continues. With faith, family and culture as their longstanding mainstays, the future continues to brighten for one of the world’s most historic peoples.



The Stigler Act Amendments of 2018 were signed into law by President Trump Dec. 31, 2018. The legislation applies to citizens of the Five Tribes: Chickasaw, Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole nations. These amendments end the requirement for holders of tribal allotment land from those tribes to have a certain percentage of tribal blood.

Staying Informed Essential to Sovereignty



Chief Gary Batton

the blood quantum requirements that have been an injustice since 1947. This legislation is a tremendous win for members of the Five Tribes. Native people will be able to protect tribal lands and maintain generation-to-generation ownership of lands, which have been passed down to us from the days of the original enrollees.

Another case to be aware of takes place in a Texas courtroom. In October 2018, a federal judge declared the Indian Child Welfare Act unconstitutional. The ICWA, created in 1978, addressed the predatory adoption of Native American Children and prioritized the placement of Native children with family, tribal or Native Homes. The federal judge ruled that the ICWA violates the 14th Amendment by treating Native children differently because of their race. Sure, we are Native by “race,” but that doesn’t mean we get “special” provisions just for being Native. We have these protections because the U.S. made agreements with our tribal governments to protect our tribes for generations. Because of this, the relationship between the United States and the Choctaw Nation is a political one, and not one based on race.

The ICWA was designed to protect the best interest of Native children and to safeguard the stability of Native culture, tribes, and families for generations to come. Our children are the future of the

As tribal members, we have the unique situation of being members of two nations. Even though we belong to a sovereign nation, legislation at the federal level can change the very essence of what tribal sovereignty means.

Being a sovereign nation means we have a governing responsibility to our citizens and our geographical area. Our sovereignty is an inherent right and the critical component in keeping the Choctaw Nation thriving.

I urge you, as tribal members, to stay informed on legislation affecting not only the Choctaw Nation but Indian Country as a whole.

Here are a few things going on at the federal level that affect the Choctaw Nation right now.

Congress unanimously passed the Stigler Act Amendments of 2018, which became law Dec. 31. This law overturns

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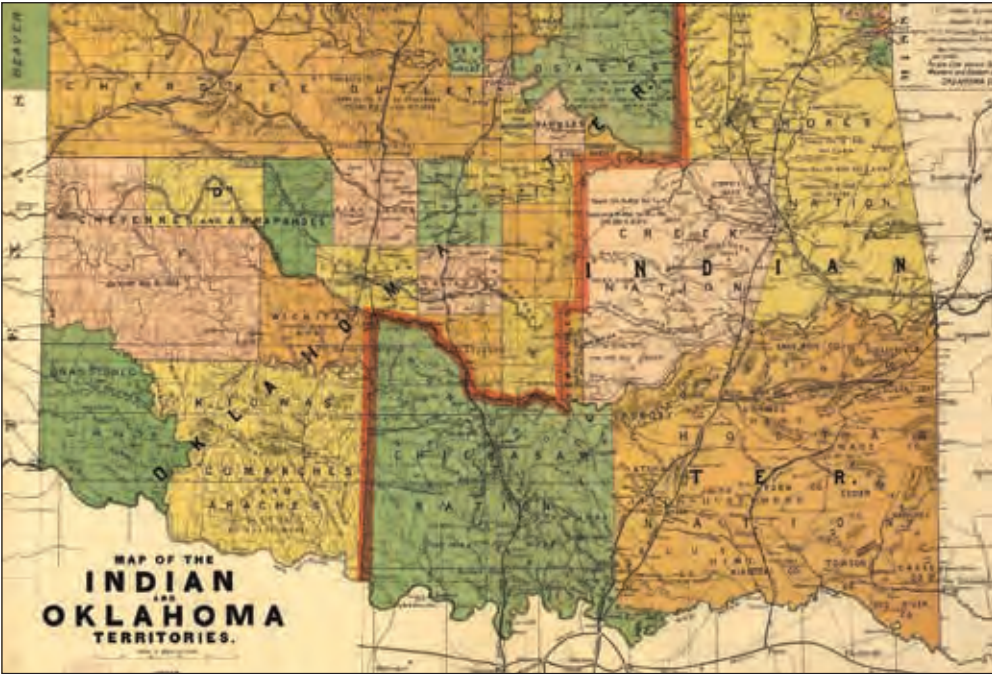


Photo Provided

H.R. 2606, more commonly known as the Stigler Act Amendments of 2018, was signed into law on Dec. 31. This law overcomes the blood quantum requirements that have been in place since 1947. There are many other cases, bills and pieces of legislation that could potentially impact the Choctaw Nation.

Nation. We will continue pressing for a positive outcome, and we hope you do the same.

The Carpenter v. Murphy case will soon make its way before the U.S. Supreme Court. In this case, a plaintiff from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation argues that Congress never extinguished the Five Tribes’ rights to administer their nations. He suggests Oklahoma doesn’t have jurisdiction over its eastern half, and that the Five Tribes remain the legally constituted governments in their regions. While we don’t believe a ruling in the plaintiff’s favor would produce the

drastic changes some pundits suggest, the Choctaw Nation would find itself newly empowered in certain respects. We at the Choctaw Nation will be monitoring this case closely, and I encourage you all to do the same.

There are many other cases, bills and pieces of legislation that could potentially impact our nation. I encourage you to seek out information and stay informed. Our ancestors worked extremely hard for us to have the ability to not only be members of a sovereign nation but to be voting citizens of the U.S. as well.

Tribal Members Encouraged to Get Healthy During National Heart Month



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

I hope everyone has had a fantastic start to 2019. The new year usually brings with it New Year’s resolutions. A good resolution is to make healthy lifestyle changes. February is American Heart Month. Heart disease does not discriminate. According to the CDC, heart disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women in the U.S. The CDC also states that about 610,000 people die of heart disease each year.

Though heart disease can be hereditary, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking are key risk factors that can affect anyone. Diabetes, weight, poor diet, physical inactivity and excessive alcohol use can all attribute to heart disease as well. There are many programs and services offered through the Choctaw Nation that can help you reduce your risk of developing heart disease.

First, you should always seek the help of a doctor if you think you might be at risk of having or developing heart disease. We have many knowledgeable physicians and health professionals at

our clinics and health facilities located throughout the 10 ½ counties. Our health providers can start you on your journey to living a healthy and productive life.

Our tribal members may also seek help on their journey to health at one of our Wellness Centers. Choctaw Nation Wellness Centers are currently located in Atoka, Antlers, Broken Bow, Coalgate, Crowder, Durant, Hugo, Idabel, McAlester, Poteau, Stigler and Wilburton. Tribal members and employees have the opportunity to work out with top-of-the-line fitness equipment and join a fitness class that works with their lifestyles. Our Wellness Center staff is knowledgeable and can help you choose a fitness plan that works for you.

Everyone can visit heart.org for tips and information on how to prevent heart



Provided by Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority

National Heart Month is a great time to set goals toward living a healthy and productive lifestyle. The Choctaw Nation offers many programs to help members reach their health goals.

disease and live a healthier life. If you think you might be experiencing symptoms of heart disease, please seek medical attention. Your health and well-being are important. Whether it is a part of your New Year’s resolution or medically necessary, getting healthy and active is an excellent goal to set. You can accomplish anything you set your mind to.

Pastor Olin Williams

Words



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Words are a gift from God to human beings. The ability to express ideas and emotions with words is the basis for all human relationships. Words are powerful. Words can attract attention or breed contention. They can prompt laughter or motivate tears.

There are references to words in the Book of Proverbs. In Proverbs 25:11, it reads, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

In the days of Solomon, who is the author, the ornament on the table was a silver woven basket or box. The simile is, words that are appropriate, seasonable and spoken at the right time and the right place are as beautiful as the golden apples seen through the delicate designs of a silver network basket. Sincere words of comfort, encouragement or endearment can bring joy and peace to one’s soul.

Words can also be abusive. When it is used in corruption, James 3:6-8 says, “the tongue is a fire, full of iniquity....an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

Proverbs 18:8 warns, “The words of a talebearer are as wounds and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

Words of gossip hurt not only the one spoken of, his credit and interest, but to whom they are spoken, his love and charity.

Words of deceit and flattery are another form of the abuse of words. Flattery is phoniness. Deception is evil. One of the marks of a Christian is to speak the truth.

Titus 2:7-8 teaches, “In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”

One day a house burned down. The occupants saved very little of their belongings. A neighbor came by and looked over the situation.

He shook his head and said, “If there’s anything I can do, let me know.” Then he drove away leaving only hollow words behind.

Another neighbor came by and looked the place over and saw all that needed to be done. He went back to town and returned with supplies needed to restore the family’s loss.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1). And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).



Choctaw Nation Farmers Market Program Begins May 1



Submitted by PEGGY CARLTON

The Choctaw Nation WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program begins on Wednesday, May 1. Senior Farmers Market participants will start receiving applications in the mail on Friday, Feb. 1. As in previous years, all seniors who were served the previous year will be on the mailing list. If you are a Native American senior, 55 years or older and meet income guidelines, go to the nearest Choctaw Nation Community Center on or after Friday, Feb. 1, and request an application be mailed. Seniors can contact Peggy Carlton at the number below and request an application be sent to them. WIC participants may start requesting Farmers Market checks from their

local WIC clinics on Wednesday, May 1. Participants do not have to wait for their WIC appointment to receive their checks. They can walk in and request their Farmers Market checks. To avoid long waiting periods be sure to call ahead and ask about a convenient time. Participants must be in a current certification with Choctaw Nation WIC and receiving benefits to qualify for Farmers Market checks. Per federal regulations, infants must be at least four months old on the day of their appointment to receive Farmers Market checks. Both WIC and Senior Farmers Market Programs are federally funded and are on a first-come-first-served basis until funding is depleted. For more information, questions or concerns, please contact Peggy Carlton at (580) 916-9140, ext. 83822.

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Injury Prevention Program Educates High School Students

Submitted by KEOSHA LUDLOW


The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Injury Prevention Program, a part of Choctaw Nation Outreach Services, seeks to educate and make a difference to youth and to reach out to as many members of the tribal communities as possible. One of the IP Program's main goals is focused on educating driving-age students about the dangers of distracted driving and the importance of using safety belts. The program works with three of the most rural high schools in the tribal service area – Battiest, Rattan and Wright City – where the Native American population is among the highest. One of the IP Program's goals is to work with other programs to educate youth and tribal members on as many subjects as possible. For example, as part of a partnership with Chahta Himmak Pila Pehlich, "Choctaw Future Leaders," the group educates students ages 14-24 who participate in the CHPP after-school tutoring program and archery activities at all three locations. Another partnership with David Lindly, Program Specialist from the Children Matter Program, resulted in the IP Program hosting a special event to reach out to the community and others in the local areas around these schools.



Photo Provided

High school students listen to an injury prevention presentation conducted by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Injury Prevention Program.

The partnerships with programs such as CHPP and the Children Matter Program give staff more opportunities to work with the students. IP staff say through sharing the activities with other programs, everyone learns more and discovers new ways to build partnerships.

		
Location	Days	Hours
Antlers 580-298-3161	Every Tue.	8:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Atoka 580-889-5825	Mon., Wed., Thurs. & Fri.	8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st & 2nd Tue. Every Month	8:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Boswell 580-380-2518	1st Thurs. of Every Month	8:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
Coalgate 580-927-3641	1st Wed. of Every Month	8:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Durant 580-920-2100 x-83517	Daily Mon. – Fri.	8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
Hugo 580-326-5404	Daily Mon. – Fri.	8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
Idabel 580-286-2510	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 Thurs. of Every Month	8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wed., Thurs. & 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	Mon., Tue., Wed. & Fri.	8 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.
Wilburton 918-465-5641	Every Thursday	8:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.

Building Healthy Families Through Good Nutrition


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.
Antlers: 400 S.W. “O” St., (580) 298-6443
Broken Bow: 109 Chahta Road, (580) 584-2842
Durant: 2352 Big Lots Pkwy, (580) 924-7773
McAlester: 3244 Afullota Hina, (918) 420-5716
Poteau: 100 Kerr Ave, (918) 649-0431

March 2019
ANTLERS Market open weekdays March 1-30, except for: Closed: March 27, 28 & 29.
BROKEN BOW Market open weekdays March 1-30, except for: Closed: March 27, 28 & 29.
DURANT Market open weekdays March 1-30, except for: Closed: March 27, 28 & 29.
MCALESTER Market open weekdays March 1-30, except for: Closed: March 27, 28 & 29.
POTEAU Market open weekdays March 1-30, except for: Closed: March 27, 28 & 29.
Cooking With Carmen: Cooking With Carmen is cancelled until further notice.

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Turkey and Kale Stuffed Spaghetti Squash Boats

Ingredients

- 1 medium spaghetti squash
- 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 3/4 lb ground turkey (extra-lean)
- 1 1/2 cups frozen chopped kale
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 can no-salt-added, crushed tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning blend (salt-free)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Cut the spaghetti squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and discard. Place halves cut-side-down in large baking dish. Add 1 inch of water to the dish. Cover with foil and bake 50 to 60 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, in a medium pot, warm oil. Add onions and saute 6 to 8 minutes. Add ground turkey and cook 5 to 6 minutes. Stir in chopped kale and garlic, cook about 1 minute. Add tomatoes, Italian seasoning blend, salt and pepper. Bring mixture to a boil; reduce heat to a simmer, cover and let cook 20 to 30 minutes.
4. When squash is done, carefully shred the inside. Then coat strands with tomato sauce.
5. Add the spaghetti squash shells onto a baking sheet. Transfer spaghetti squash strands into the 2 shells.
6. Return to oven and cook 10 to 15 minutes. Sprinkle with Parmesan and serve.

Nutrition Facts:
Servings: 4, Serving size: 1 boat (per serving),
Calories: 261, Trans Fat: 0 grams, Cholesterol : 37.3 milligrams, Sodium: 350 milligrams, Total Carbohydrates: 29.8 grams, Dietary Fiber: 7 grams, Sugars: 13.3 grams, Protein: 28.6 grams

Recipe by The American Heart Association

NURSERY NEWS



First Baby of the New Year Welcomed

Tarra and Breden Estel of Mena, Arkansas, welcomed their son Arthur Estel into the world on Jan. 2 at 9:53 p.m. Arthur weighed 5 pounds, 3.8 ounces and was 19 inches long. Arthur was the first baby born at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina in 2019.

Blake Winter Wright



Blake Winter Wright was born at 1:01 p.m. on Aug. 3, at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, Alaska. She weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces and was 20 ¼ inches long. Blake is the daughter of Brandon and Melanie Wright and the granddaughter of Larry and Deanna Henry and Mike and Pamela Divis.

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Fall awarding is January 1 – April 1

For more information, please contact (800) 522-6170 ext. 2175 or ext. 2463

APPLY ONLINE
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Paper applications NO longer accepted

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Burrage Headed Toward Bright Future

by APRYL MOCK

Truman Burrage is everything you would hope to see in the future of our youth. Intelligent, passionate, kind and exceedingly charming, but as humble as they come. The 22-year-old son of Sean and Carole Burrage grew up as a proud member of the Choctaw Nation and graduated Durant High School in 2015. From there, he made his way to Harvard College where he will graduate later this year with a degree in economics. Following graduation, he will spend two years in Boston, gaining some valuable work experience, and then will return to Harvard Law to march with the class of 2024. In his position, many would find themselves full of hubris (perhaps justifiably so) but, Burrage maintains a good-natured and often self-effacing sense of humor, which when paired with his bright smile, make him instantly likable. He recognizes how blessed he is and is not afraid to laugh at himself.

When discussing his first year at Harvard, Burrage said, “After my first Economics class I ran out of the building, violently crying, and called my father. I thought this is the end. I can’t do it. But it all turned out alright. These schools don’t leave you on your own. They really tailor the experience to each student.” It’s no secret that Native Americans are under-represented in Ivy League schools. Burrage feels passionate about changing this, from the inside out. Serving as both the President of the Native Americans of Harvard and as the undergraduate representative on the Harvard Council of Indigenous Peoples, Burrage had ample opportunity to create change. “I learned of the alarmingly high rate of mental health issues and lack of academic preparedness among Native Americans. I worked hard to bring this to the attention of the people who could remedy it. I think progress has been made, but there’s still a long way to go.” Though Burrage took

some Zero Level classes, (which aim to prepare a student for the level of work required) had tutors and took advantage of “all the office hours,” he’s never seen needing extra help as a negative thing. “It doesn’t show lack of intelligence. I was just coming from a different educational background. Unfortunately, a lot of Native Students get discouraged. I see them compare themselves to everyone else. But just because you didn’t go to a prep school like a lot of Harvard students, doesn’t mean you aren’t capable of succeeding,” Burrage said. Burrage is excited for the future of Native Americans at Harvard. “They recently hired an amazing Native American faculty member, Philip Deloria. The Native American Faculty is growing,” said Burrage. Dr. Philip Deloria, a Professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies (the first such professor at Harvard), met with Burrage last spring to discuss Native life at Harvard. “He is a forceful and



Photo by Chris Jennings

Truman Burrage will graduate from Harvard College later this year. After gaining work experience in Boston, he will return to Harvard Law and be a member of the 2024 graduating class.

charismatic advocate. I have no doubt good things are ahead for Truman. I know that he’ll be using his superpowers to advance the common good,” Deloria said. While Burrage is no doubt headed for a very bright future, he’ll always be a “small town kid” who grew up in the heart of the

Choctaw Nation. “When the Choctaw Nation says it wants its youth to succeed, that’s not an empty promise,” Burrage said. Burrage hopes his story will inspire and encourage other Choctaw teens to pursue the Ivy Leagues. “Being Choctaw is a valuable asset. You can pro-

vide a unique and valuable perspective. Don’t be afraid, the tribe will support you,” Burrage said, “Don’t think there are barriers, you can do it. “If you had told me four years ago that I’d be where I am now, I wouldn’t have believed you, but here we are and I couldn’t be more thankful.”

Huckaby Earns Masters Degree

Candra DeeAnn Daniel Huckaby graduated with a Masters in Education with a Principal Certification from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas on Dec. 15, 2018. Candra is the daughter of William Dee and Rebecca Ann Morris Daniel. Candra expressed her sincerest thanks for the scholarships she received each semester from the Choctaw Nation. “Without the support, this achievement would have been a dream delayed,” Candra said.



Essert Completes Bachelor’s Degree

The family of Phyllis Gail Essert wants to congratulate her on completing her college degree. Phyllis held a 40-year-old dream to graduate with a Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing. She completed this life goal during the December 2018 ceremony at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma.



Adams Earns Masters Degree

On Dec. 15, 2018, Alora Adams received her Master’s Degree in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University. Alora has served as an intern at the Choctaw Museum in Tvska Homma for the past two summers. In January, following graduation, Alora moved to Tahihina, Oklahoma. She hopes to continue her work with the Choctaw Museum in Tvska Homma.



Holt Honored for Academic Success

Trevon Holt was recently named a member of the Academic All-Frontier Valley Conference team as well as a Choctaw Nation Star Student. Trevon is a junior at Bixby High School and a starter on the Spartans’ 2018 Class 6A-II State Championship football team. Members of the team must maintain a grade point average between 3.5 and 4.0. He is the son of Chris and Darla Holt, the grandson of Ron and Becky Holt and the great-grandson of Gladys Bowden Holt.



Thomas Plans RN Career

Haley Thomas graduated from Emerald Coast Career Institute in 2018. She is employed at Emerald Coast Infectious Disease Clinic and will begin working toward her Registered Nurse degree soon. “During school, I experienced the death of my dad, my grandma and grandpa, and my best friend. It really pushed me to finish school. It has been life-changing. It pushed me to want to be a better nurse and a fighter,” Thomas said.

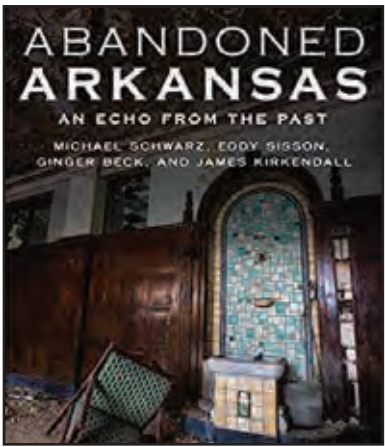


NURSING SCHOOL PREP CLASSES

will be held throughout the 10 1/2 counties during January and February 2019.

Hosted by Career Development Education Services, call for **Locations and Schedules,** Call **(866) 933-2260** www.choctawcareers.com

Photo Book Depicting Abandoned Places in Arkansas Released



James Kirkendall, Michael Schwarz, Eddy Sisson and Ginger Beck take readers on a visual tour through Arkansas in “Abandoned Arkansas: An Echo From the Past.” Stops include the Majestic Hotel in Hot Springs and the once-loved theme-park, Dogpatch USA. This vibrant book gives readers the history of abandoned structures throughout the Natural State alongside stunning photos. “Abandoned Arkansas” was launched on Jan. 28, and is now available at Target, Walmart, Barnes & Noble, Books A Million and online at Amazon.com. If you would like more photos from abandoned places around the state, please visit AbandonedAR.com.

Tribal Council Holds Regular Session

The Choctaw Nation Tribal Council met in regular session Saturday, Jan. 12, in their chambers at Tvshka Homma.

During the regular session, committee reports were presented.

The minutes of the regular session held Saturday, Dec. 8, 2018, were approved.

New business included approval of the following items:

- a) Administer oath of office for Election Board members Kay Green, Candace Perkins, Jennifer Johnson, Judy Ogle and Kitty Halcomb.
- Council bills approved:
- b) Rescind CB-106-18 and to approve funding for construction of Atoka Wellness Center Expansion.
- c) Approve funds and budget for the Year Four of Five Continuation for the Making Policy Outreach Wellness Equity Reality (MPOWER.)
- d) Approve the conveyance of land in Pushmataha County to the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation for Independent Elderly Housing.
- e) Approve the conveyance of land in Coal County to the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation for Independent Elderly Housing.
- f) Amend CB-8-08 and withdraw the approval to sell excess property in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- g) Approve grazing lease No. 4200158849 in favor of Ewing and Donna Downen on land held by the USA in trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations of Oklahoma in Atoka County, Oklahoma.
- h) Approve grazing lease No. 4200158852 in favor of Steven W. Church on land held by the USA in trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations of Oklahoma in Latimer County, Oklahoma.
- i) Approve grazing lease No. 4200158853 in favor of Fred James, Jr. on land held by the USA in trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations of Oklahoma in Latimer County, Oklahoma (160 acres.)
- j) Approve grazing lease No. 4200158854 in favor of Fred James, Jr. on land held by the USA in trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations of Oklahoma in Latimer County, Oklahoma (380 acres.)
- k) Approve a communication line easement in favor of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company d/b/a AT&T, on land held by the USA in trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma.
- l) Approve a revocable permit in favor of Calera Public Schools on Choctaw tribal fee land in Bryan County, Oklahoma.
- m) Approve fiscal year 2018 budget for the Choctaw Nation Child Care Development fund.

For detailed meeting information on these resolutions and Council bills, go to www.choctaw-nation.com/government/tribal-council/council-meetings-and-bills.

The next Tribal Council meeting will be held on Saturday, Feb. 9, at 10 a.m. in Tvshka Homma.

Biskinik Announcement Policy

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above.

Couples may send in announcements of their 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.

We apologize for any inconvenience. This is a necessary adjustment due to rising production and mailing expenses.

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

March 2019 Schedule

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Idabel and Broken Bow by appointment

March 6 • Talihina • 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

March 13 • Poteau • 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

March 20 • McAlester • 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

February By Appointment

Feb. 11 • Broken Bow Feb. 25 • Wright City

Feb. 22 • Atoka Feb. 27 • Wilburton

Feb. 22 • Coalgate

Phone: (580) 326-8304
Fax: (580) 326-0115
Email: ddavenport@choctawnation.com

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Legal Assistance

A licensed attorney will be available by appointment **ONLY** to provide assistance with simple legal documents free to all Choctaw members. Examples of matters that the attorney may be able to assist with:

- Family law (divorces, custody, child support)
- Guardianship and modifications

The office does not provide representation in court or assist in criminal matters. At this time the legal department is not providing assistance with wills and probate.

To make an appointment, or for any questions, contact Samantha Guinn at (580) 380-8149. Guinn will be available every Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. in the tribal headquarters building, located at 1802 Chukka Hina in Durant. Members with appointments for legal services should come to the front desk and ask for Kristi Phillips.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association and Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

The Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association offers small business, home, home improvement, and agriculture loans. To be eligible to apply, a person must reside within the 10½ county service area of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and must possess a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) from a federally recognized tribe. Micro-loans are available for emergency home improvements and small businesses. The loans are available up to \$2,500 and are to be repaid within 24 months. To be eligible to apply you must be Choctaw, possess a CDIB and reside within the 10½ county area of the Choctaw Nation.

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

If you are interested in applying for a loan from the SOICA or the Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund, there will be a representative from the Choctaw Nation Credit Department at the:

Talihina Community Center
February 11
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
Monthly Publication
of the
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Dara McCoy, Executive Director
Brad Gernand, Senior Director
Kendra Germany, Interim Managing Editor
Apryl Mock, Reporter/Photographer
Chris Jennings, Reporter/Photographer

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

The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal Members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double spaced. You must include an address or 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 Direct Member Communications would appreciate hearing from you.

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 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.



Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

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

EVENTS

Health Fairs

Feb. 13
10 a.m.
Stigler Choctaw Community Center

Feb. 27
10 a.m.
Coalgate Choctaw Community Center

March 6
10 a.m.
Hugo Choctaw Community Center

Free ACT Prep Workshop

Feb. 7
8:30 a.m. – Noon
Durant Kiamichi Technology Center
810 Waldron Road
Durant OK 74701

Choctaw Nation Educational Talent Search is hosting an ACT Prep Workshop for high school students. To attend the workshop students must be Choctaw or a Talent Search student. For a new Talent Search application check with your high school counselor or call the Talent Search office. New students may apply at this time.

To pre-register, please call (800) 522-6170, ext. 2711.

OKC Choctaw Veterans Association Post 319 Fish Fry

March 2
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Choctaw Alliance Center
5320 S. Youngs Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73119

Meals
Adults \$8 Kids \$5

Entertainment, Raffles and Vendors

For more information contact:

Steven Kessler Jennifer Robinson
phone: 405-291-0531 phone: 405-795-1333
email: usvet28@gmail.com email: lavender0424@aol.com

Choctaw Adult Community Language Class Phase 1

Tulsa
Feb. 4
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Tulsa Creek Indian Community Center
8611 S. Union Ave.
Tulsa, OK
Muskogee
Feb. 7
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Fife Indian United Methodist Church
1100 Eufaula St.
Muskogee, OK

Begins as scheduled one day a week for 16 weeks. Advanced sign up not required. Children should be accompanied by adult. Work book provided and Choctaw Dictionary helpful, but not required.

District 9 Events

Feb. 2 - Valentine's Day
Dinner Theater & Talent
Show 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Feb. 6 - Senior Lunch
White Buffalo Sale
State of the Center

Feb. 8 - Indian Taco Sale
9:30 a.m.

Feb. 13 - Officer
Candidate Forum
Announcements and
Speeches

Feb. 15 - Council Member
James Dry's Monthly
Breakfast 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Feb. 20 - Election of
Officers

Feb. 21 - Food Handlers
Class with Rinnah Wyatt

(Required for Seniors
working Taco Sales or any
food service activity)

Feb. 22 - Indian Taco Sale
10 a.m.

Feb. 27 - Installation of
Officers After Lunch

Senior Shuttle Service for
Regular Riders

Feb. 2 - Pickup for Val-
entine's Dinner & Talent
Show

Feb. 6 - Food Distribution
Pickup (After Lunch)

Feb. 6 - Monthly Dinner
at Butterfields

Feb. 13 - Monthly
Grocery Shopping

District 6 Events

Feb. 1 - Council
Member Jennifer Woods
Community Prayer
Meeting at 7 a.m.,
followed by breakfast.

Feb. 2 - Princess Pageant
Recruitment 11 a.m. to 5
p.m.

Feb. 5 - Food Handlers
Safety Course 2 p.m.

Feb. 6 - Food
Distribution pickup in
McAlester after lunch.

Feb. 7 - Durant Casino
Day Trip, bus leaves at
8:30 a.m.

Feb. 8 - Indian Taco and
Bake Sale. Yard Sale
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Feb. 12 - Workshop by
Emily Brad 6 p.m.

Feb. 13 - Valentine's Day
Lunch

Feb. 18 - President's
Day, Community Center
Closed

Feb. 21 - Food
Distribution pick up in
McAlester if needed.

Feb. 25 - Life Line
Screening 9 a.m.

Feb. 26 - Bingo Night
and Potluck. 6 p.m.

Weekly Events

Mondays

Senior Fitness Program
55 + at 9 a.m.

Wellness Center Chair
Volleyball at 9:30 a.m.

Language Class at 6 p.m.

Wednesdays

Lunch and Guest speaker
at 11 a.m.

Cake on the first
Wednesday of the month
for that month's birthdays.

Bryan County Conservation District Annual Tree Sale

Bryan Conservation District is currently
taking orders for a variety of fruit and
landscape trees.

Orders will be accepted through
Feb. 15, 2018.

For details, please stop by the office at
200 Gerlach Dr.

Durant, Oklahoma
or call Angela at (580) 924-5464



District 9 Seniors Open Up for Reba McEntire

Durant District 9 Choctaw choir was the opening act for Reba McEntire's concert at Durant Choctaw Casino Nov. 24, 2018.

This wasn't the choir's first performance on the big stage. The group also opened for the Million Dollar Quartet in November 2017.

The choir is directed by Gaylia Green, who is also the pianist for the choir.

Choir members pictured with Reba McEntire are:

Back row (left to right): Dennis Czapiewski, Glenn Estes (as Santa), Waymon Woods, Jim Plunkett, Don Owens, Dan Trujillo, Carol Trujillo, Peggy Estes.

Second row: Beatrice Bridges, Carole Ayers, Penny Czapiewski, Shirley McLaine, Tony Wunningham, Jo Selby, Geneva Shults, Judy Jackson, Brenda Woods.

Front row (left to right): Ann Kanitobe, Gaylia Green, Diane White, Georgia Smith, JoAnn Wunningham, Sue Price, June Sidle, Martha Plunkett, Gina Trato and Rozella Ludlow.

Biskinik Article Brings Two Generations of Choctaw Space Campers Together

In the February 2018 issue of the Biskinik, we told you the story of Penny Pettigrew.

Pettigrew is the NASA Payload Communications Manager. Young tribal member Noah Parker, 10, of Colorado read Penny's inspiring story.

He was already planning on attending Space Camp and knew he needed to get in touch with Penny. Noah wrote a letter to her May 1, 2018, hoping to connect with Penny while he was in Huntsville, Alabama. The catch was, Noah didn't have Penny's address, so he sent copies of the letter to three different locations in hopes of one reaching her. Two months later, on June 29, Penny received the letter, sent via the Marshall Space Flight Center. This left just enough time for Penny to respond before Noah's arrival at Space Camp.

The pair and Noah's grandparents finally met before he checked into Space Camp July 8, 2018. Two generations of Choctaw Space Campers, connected by more than just a love of space and science, but a heritage and culture as well.



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Derek Hines

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Iti Fabussa Crane Month

This article is part of a series titled “A Year in the Life.” Focusing on the time period around AD 1700, the series follows the traditional Choctaw calendar through a year, with each article providing a glimpse of the activities our ancestors were up to during each month. This information is excerpted from a book soon to be published by the Choctaw Nation entitled “Choctaw Food: Remembering the Land, Rekindling Ancient Knowledge.”

Watonlak Hvshi, Crane Month, roughly corresponds with February. This month may have gotten its name from the vast flocks of birds that came into Choctaw country during the winter.

Written descriptions from the period particularly note the appearance of ducks, geese, bustard and passenger pigeons. From today’s perspective, it is easy to miss how significant these flocks of migratory birds were to our ancestors. For example, one Choctaw town was named **Hanka Aiola**, Where the Canadian Goose Cries, because of a beautiful, tree-rimmed pond located next to the village that seasonally attracted flocks of birds.

On a larger scale, the passenger pigeon was perhaps the most numerous bird species on the planet 200 years ago. After nesting in the Great Lakes region during the summer, immense flocks headed south for winter. Described as



by Choctaw Nation

Watonlak Hvshi, or Crane Month, roughly corresponds with February. It may have gotten its name from the vast flocks of birds that came into Choctaw country during the winter. Written descriptions from the period particularly note the appearance of ducks, geese and bustard.

the greatest natural wonder on the continent, these migratory flocks were so large they darkened the sun for two days at a time as they passed overhead at a speed of 60 miles per hour.

During the winter, passenger pigeon roosts were a meat source of almost unlimited potential in the South. At these roosts, millions of passenger pigeons came together at night to rest after a day spent flying over the landscape in search of nuts and other food. Their numbers were so great they often broke the branches of the trees with their weight. **Pachanusi**, Where the Pigeons Sleep, was a notable passenger pigeon roost in Choctaw country.

Choctaw men and boys hunted the sleeping birds that perched on lower branches of such roosts. The technique was blunt but efficient. Arriving at night, aided by someone carrying a torch, the hunter simply clubbed as many sleeping birds as desired and let them fall into an open bag. Choctaw people also caught birds with snares, **hushi isht hokli**, or shot them with blowgun darts.

Besides migratory birds, the turkey also made a significant contribution to the diet. The season for hunting turkeys was the cool part of the year when they were relatively fat. Like their Alabama neighbors to the east, Choctaw hunters probably acquired turkeys as they roosted in trees or by stalking them with a decoy.

Choctaw women contributed to the winter diet by digging edible wild roots, including laurel greenbrier and American groundnut. In abundant years, these root plants made up a relatively smaller portion of the diet, but in years of poor crops and poor hunting, they served as a staple until the land began to turn green in the springtime.

During the cold parts of really bad years, communities sometimes turned to starvation foods like longleaf pine roots and yellow jacket larvae.

On days of suitable weather, during mid-to-late winter, the men and women who were already back in the villages began working to prepare agricultural fields to be planted later in the spring. These activities began with the appropriate dances. Choctaw workers cleared brush for the fields using fire – a process known as **bvlli**. Large trees were removed through a slow, patient technique known as **iti chant abi**. First, men girdled and killed the trees by chopping through the bark all the way around the tree’s base using stone-bladed axes. These girdled trees would be left to rot and fall to earth or to stand and dry out. Workers would return to the spot a year or more later, gather fallen limbs and brush, and cut down new saplings. They would pile this material at the bases of the standing dead trees and set it on fire. The fire would burn through the dry wood and fell the trees. Sometimes, parts of the fallen dry trees would be hauled off and used for firewood. Most of the rest would be burned on the spot. If new saplings popped up while the field was in use, workers would cut them down, pile them on living roots, and burn them. They would repeat the process until the roots quit sending up saplings. Ultimately, the traditional Choctaw method of clearing a field put a great deal of rotten wood, ash, and charcoal directly into the soil where it acted as a fertilizer and moisture-retainer. In the coming months, this would be crucial to the new crops.

Editor’s Note: For Iti Fabussa stories you might have missed please visit ChoctawNation.com and click on [History & Culture](#).

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

February Language Lesson

Nan vlhpoat nanta achi?

What do the animals say? Add your animal sounds.

1. Ofi yvt nanta achi? What does the dog say?
2. Wak vt nanta achi? What does the cow say?
3. Katos vt nanta achi? What does the cat say?
4. Issuba yvt nanta achi? What does the horse say?
5. Akanka yvt nanta achi? What does the chicken say?
6. Nashoba yvt nanta achi? What does the wolf say?
7. Fala yvt nanta achi? What does the crow say?
8. Okfochush vt nanta achi? What does the duck say?

Ofi – dog
Wak – cow
Katos – cat
Issuba – horse
Nashoba – wolf

Akanka – chicken
Fala – crow
Okfochush – duck
Nanta – what
Achi – say

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Available July 1, 2018 - May 1, 2019

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(800) 522-6170 ext. 2175 or 2463

Flag Flown at U.S. Embassy in Honor of Chief Batton



Micha Gilbert and her husband Major Matthew Gilbert present Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin with the flag that was flown over the Kazakhstan U.S. Embassy in honor of Chief Batton's birthday Dec. 15, 2018.

by APRYL MOCK

Chief Gary Batton received a birthday present from across the globe Dec. 15, 2018.

Micha Gilbert, an emergency management coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Astana, Kazakhstan, flew an American flag in honor of Chief Batton.

"I chose the date because of his birthday, but most importantly I wanted to say 'thank you!' for all the Choctaw Nation has done to help me get to where I am today," Gilbert said.

While in Kazakhstan, Gilbert takes great pride in sharing her heritage.

"As an American overseas we are frequently asked about our family lineage. Telling people I am Choctaw is a great conversation starter, and a wonderful way

to educate others about the Choctaw Nation," Gilbert stated.

She added that she especially enjoys sharing the stories of the Choctaw Code Talkers with military colleagues.

Gilbert and her husband, Major Matthew Gilbert have enjoyed their time overseas, although they have missed the local cuisine in Durant, specifically cheeseburgers and chicken nuggets from Sherrer's.

Though she sometimes gets homesick, the experience is something Gilbert would never change.

She said, "The opportunity to experience so many different cultures and meet people from all around the world is something that I will cherish forever. My time in Astana will come to an end in the summer of 2019, and then we will see where our adventure takes us next."



9

Stovall Demonstrates Chahta Spirit, Donates Toys to Children's Hospital

Shelby Stovall, a member of the Battiest Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board, exemplifies what YAB is and upholds the Chahta Spirit.

She has made a great contribution to the YAB program by exuding servant leadership with every meeting and project she attends.

Before Christmas, Shelby made the decision that she did not want anyone to buy her presents this year.

She chose to instead give presents to children at OU Children's Hospital in Oklahoma City.

She made the 3 hour trip from Bethel, Oklahoma to deliver the gifts.

She brought a little joy and hope into the lives of many children who were relegated to the hospital this holiday season.

Delivering gifts to children in the hospital is not the only thing Shelby did this holiday season.

She and her mother baked, packaged and deliv-



Courtesy Photo

Shelby Stovall of Battiest, Oklahoma, delivered toys to OU Children's Hospital for Christmas in lieu of asking for presents for herself. She is an active member of the Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board.

ered cookies to members of their community.

They even made a special delivery on Christmas Eve to a little boy that had

broken his arm.

Shelby is a strong leader in her community and indeed portrays the true Chahta Spirit.



Courtesy Photo

The SY Stars pose for a team photo after placing first in the All-American Games in Irvine California. Laney Emmert of Spiro, Oklahoma, was selected for the team and sponsored by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Emmert Plays for All-American Team

Laney Emmert of Spiro, Oklahoma, was selected to play in the All-American Games in Irvine, California.

Laney's team, the 2022-2024 SY Stars, consisted of 11 girls from across America. The team went undefeated during the tournament, winning first place.

Laney's batting average for the tournament was a .750 with 2 RBI's. Defensively she played both short stop and second base, making a total of 17 outs.

Laney and her family want to give a "huge thank you" to the Choctaw Nation for sponsoring Laney in this event.



BIRTHDAY WISHES

Austin Lee Edward Porter celebrated his first birthday on Nov. 25, 2018, surrounded by many loving family members.

He is the son of Randee (Bohanon) and Justin Porter of Poteau Oklahoma, and the grandson of Randel and Ruthie Bohanon of Smithville, Oklahoma, and Dennis and Chelli Porter of Watson, Oklahoma.

Chaplain Apela Visits Jones Academy to Share the 'True Meaning of Christmas'



In December 2018, the Chaplain Apela group spent an evening of fellowship with the Jones Academy students. Chaplain Olin Williams brought some helpers (apela) to share the good news of the meaning of Christmas. Chantelle Standefor sang Christmas carols with the students and performed 'O Holy Night'. Rebecca Good spoke to the students about the true meaning of Christmas.

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MAY 4 & 5, 2019

Year of Dancing

Saturday Dinner Provided
Cultural Games & Activities
Traditional Choctaw Social Dancing
Storytelling | Princess Contest

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- Completed Application

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long layer

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weather.gov/cold

COLD

2-3 layers

gloves

boots water proof

1-2 layers

EXTREME COLD

3+ layers

1 insulating

gloves

boots water proof

2+ layers

Choctaw Nation

Emergency Management

T2R

Teach To Reach

Teach To Reach is a program available to assist Native Americans who have been accepted into the teacher education programs at OSU, OU, ECU, NSU or UCO.

Benefits of Participation:

- Receive Funding for Tuition, Books & Fees
- Monthly Living Stipend
- Technology Allowance
- Mentor Teacher Support
- Professional Development & Culture Experiences
- Assistance with Job Placement
- Support for the First Two Years of Employment
- Funding for classroom school supplies upon employment
- Testing or Exam Fees

For program information and to apply contact:
Career Development: 866-933-2260
www.choctawcareers.com/T2R

*A portion of the total costs of the Teach to Reach program will be financed with Federal money.

Living Out the Chahta Spirit: 2018 in Review



Chief Gary Batton and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar try traditional Choctaw foods during Varadkar's visit March 12, 2018.



Pvt. Charles Kaniatobe arrives back in the U.S. after being MIA for nearly seven decades. Kaniatobe was laid to rest in his hometown of Idabel, Oklahoma.



The Choctaw Nation Color Guard leads the way during the 2018 Trail of Tears memorial walk.



Ground is broken for the Choctaw Nation Judicial Center Jan. 30, 2018. The Choctaw Nation Judicial Center will be located at 2250 Chukka Hina in Durant, Oklahoma.



Choctaw Chief Gary Batton cuts the ribbon at the Headquarters Grand Opening as Chickasaw Gov. Bill Anoatubby and 2017-2018 Miss Choctaw Nation BreAnna Jefferson hold it steady.



Chief Gary Batton joins a demonstration of the Raccoon Dance during the Portland, Oregon Community Meeting July 29, 2018. Social dancing is an integral part of Choctaw Culture.



The Choctaw Nation Trail of Tears Bike Team ends its 500-mile ride at Choctaw Nation Headquarters. Chief Batton, front, joined the bike team 12 miles out in Blue, Oklahoma.



Children enjoy the view from the Buffalo Tour bus at the 2018 Labor Day celebration.



Staff hang blue ribbons at the former Headquarters in honor of Child Abuse Awareness Month.

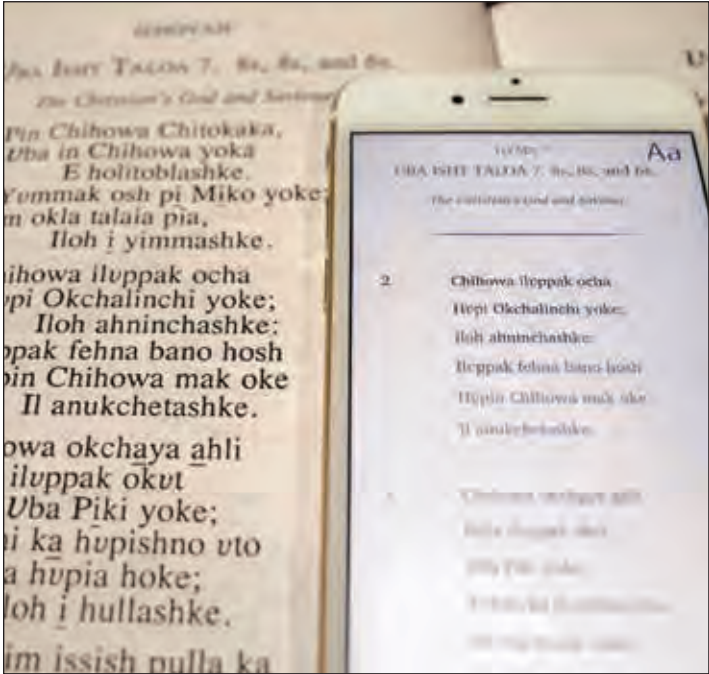


Nikki Schuth-Mitchell helps a student plant vegetables in the Edible School-yard garden at the Durant Child Development Center.



The Choctaw Nation Color Guard celebrates 20 years of service in 2018. The color guard was formed in 1998, thanks to the help of former Chief Gregory E. Pyle.

Photos by: Kelsey Brown, Deidre Elrod, Kendra Germany, Stacy Hutto, Apryl Mock and Krislan Turner.



The Choctaw Hymnal app is released in March of 2018. The app is available for both Apple and Android devices.



Members of the Choctaw Nation Tribal Police, who had been working in Florida following Hurricane Irma, prepare to board their flight to Puerto Rico to offer aid following Hurricane Maria.



The sunset lights up the sky behind the Ferris Wheel during the 2018 Labor Day celebration.



A friendly pirate helps Vanessa Anderson, 3, and Ethan Anderson, 6, spin the wheel to win a prize during the Fall Carnival.



Choctaw 2017-2018 Royalty smile and wave during the 30th annual Red Earth parade in Oklahoma City June 8, 2018.

Crawford Follows Martial Arts Dreams Thanks to Choctaw Career Development

by CHRIS JENNINGS

Two-time Taekwondo National Champion Ryan Crawford has learned from his life experiences. Now, with help from the Choctaw Nation Career Development Program, he’s using those experiences to teach others.

The CNCDP assisted Crawford in getting specialized martial arts training in muay thai. That training helped Crawford open Warriors Legacy Martial Arts school in Paris, Texas.

Crawford, who said he grew up with an abusive father, assumed a protector role in his family. “I wanted to protect people. That’s kind of always been my thing,” Crawford said.

That early desire to be a protector continued as he enlisted in the National Guard in April 2005.

Crawford served one tour in Iraq and two tours as search and rescue during Hurricanes Ike and Gustav.

It was in the National Guard that Crawford started paying attention to the other styles of martial arts.

“When I got back from basic training I started looking into kickboxing, boxing, jiu-jitsu, judo, krav maga, muay thai ... I wanted to absorb everything I possibly could,” said Crawford.

Crawford prefers muay thai, a form that uses the whole body along with kicks and punches. Crawford describes muay thai as “one of the most effective combat systems in the world.”

After the National Guard, Crawford felt like he was missing something. That’s when he opened Warriors Legacy martial arts. “It’s been a dream of mine since I was a 20 or 21-year-old kid,” said Crawford.

Crawford, who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, says the teaching helps him.

“This was my outlet and this helped me cope a lot with what I had going on. It really got me back to my center,” Crawford said.

Through his teaching, Crawford is able to pass along a few of the Choctaw core values to his students. Some of them are included in the Warriors Creed displayed on the wall of his school and recited before class.

When asked what some of the core values mean to him, Crawford was quick to reply, “Honor to me is facing an obstacle head front, honest, right in front of you ... facing your problems head-on.”

On family, Crawford said, “Warriors Legacy is my family. My students are my family. When they walk in here, I want them to be part of the Warriors Legacy family.”

Faith is where Crawford was firm. “I believe this is the path that God chose for me,” Crawford said. It was his faith and training that helped him survive through some rough times in his life.

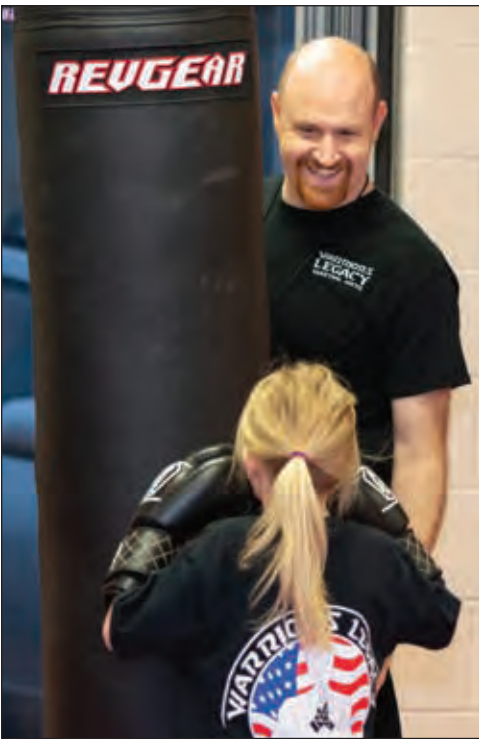
“God gave me the gift of muay thai to help protect those I care about and the ability to teach those that want to do the same,” said Crawford.

It took Crawford’s strong Choctaw faith to take the next step though. “The system is out there to help,” said Crawford.

The CNCDP’s purpose is to provide things like career guidance and skills development – things that helped Crawford be a better person.

“If you’re not spending every day trying to better yourself, just a little, then you’re not living any more, you’re just surviving,” said Crawford.

The unstrung bow on the Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation represents the desire for peace. If called upon though, the Choctaw are ready to string that bow and protect their family. Much like Ryan Crawford is ready to protect his family, friends and nation.



Ryan Crawford gives an encouraging smile to Charlotte Howell as she works out on the punching bag.



Ryan Crawford and his daughter, Sophie Crawford, spar at the beginning of class at Warriors Legacy. Photos by Chris Jennings



Ethan Krainiak, left and Ryan Crawford, center demonstrate proper stance to Logan Flanagan. This was Logan’s first trip to Warriors Legacy.

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