



January 2020 Issue

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Photo illustration by Chris Jennings

Operation Lady Justice to address Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Crisis

By Kendra Germany-Wall

On Nov. 26, 2019, President Donald Trump signed an Executive order announcing a task force, which will establish, “an interagency task force charged with developing an aggressive, government-wide strategy to address the crisis” of missing and murdered indigenous people in the U.S.

Operation Lady Justice, co-chaired by Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt and Attorney General William Barr, will develop protocols to apply to new and unsolved cases and create a multi-jurisdictional team to review cold cases. The multi-agency task force will include representatives from numerous national and state agencies, including the Director of the FBI, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior.

“An executive order such as this exemplifies how federal agencies coordinating together and listening to the concerns of communities result in long-term strategies to undertake complex issues. It will take continued efforts and cooperation between all stakeholders to improve response and investigative challenges and collect and manage data across jurisdictions. Greater clarity on the roles, authorities and jurisdiction will be helpful for all of those involved, with the goal of formal agreements and greater communication between agencies, with communities, and to the public,” said Genevieve Giaccardo with the DOI Department of Public Affairs.

The executive order also states that the task force must, “conduct proper consultation with tribes, collect

and share data among various law enforcement agencies, utilize existing criminal databases, develop and execute education and outreach campaigns for tribal communities most affected.”

Operation Lady Justice, was named after the artwork of renowned Choctaw Artist, DG Smalling. The artwork is currently displayed in the Department of Interior’s offices in Washington, D.C.

According to Smalling, he was approached by the Department of Interior to have his artwork as the title and image of the task force after taking part in a keynote speech in 2018.

Having his artwork represented in this way and being a part of such a monumental endeavor has been humbling for Smalling.

“There’s a part of me, the ego side, that as an artist goes, ‘that’s awesome’. But, more importantly, for me, I don’t think there’s any family, Native or non-Native, that doesn’t have issues of domestic violence, rape, or other things that have happened to women in their family,” explained Smalling. “For me, I feel like it is a way of hopefully acknowledging where I stand as it relates to the role of women in my society.”

Though this issue is being addressed by the U.S. government now, statistically, missing and murdered indigenous women has been a crisis in the indigenous community for years.

No one knows for sure how many MMIW cases there are in the U.S.

According to Olivia Gray, director of the Osage Nation Family Violence Prevention program and MMIW activist, uncertainty on how many cases there are is due to the complexity of the issue.

“Well, we really don’t know. There are some questions around that like, how far back would you like to go when looking? What about those who are misclassified or not reported? I mean, if we go back to removal, and even consider the Osage Reign of Terror in the 1920s, then the number increases drastically. If we look at how many were classified as runaways to the reports simply not taken at all then the number jumps up drastically. The fact is that we don’t know because no one outside of Indian Country has cared to know until this became a trending issue,” explained Gray.

Though the number of cases is hard to nail down, murder is the third leading cause of death among Native American women, according to the Center of Disease Control.

A 2018 study conducted by the Urban Indian Health Institute found that 5,712 cases were reported in 2016, but only 116 cases were logged into the Department of Justice database.

In the report, UIHI stated that “Due to Urban Indian Health Institute’s limited resources and the poor data collection by numerous cities, the 506 cases identified in this report are likely an undercount of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in urban areas.”

Oklahoma has the tenth largest number of MMIW cases in the nation.

Nationally, reported violence against Indigenous women has reached unprecedented levels.

The Native Alliance Against Violence, a non-profit organization serving as Oklahoma’s only tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalition, links the insur-gence of MMIW cases to abuse.

“The crisis of MMIW is linked to the disproportion-

ate rates of violence experienced by native females, including, but not limited to, domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking and dating violence,” said NAAV in a statement.

According to the CDC, nationally, 4 in 5 American Indian women, have experienced violence in their lifetime. To break that down, 84.3% have experienced violence, 56.1% have experienced sexual violence, 55.5% have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, 48.8 percent have experienced stalking and 66.5% have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner. Overall, 1.5 million American Indian women have experienced violence.

Though Indigenous women are at greater risk, Indigenous men have high victimization rates as well.

Nationally, more than 4 in 5 American Indian men, 81.6%, have experienced violence in their lifetime. That statistic includes 27.5% who have experienced sexual violence, 43.2% who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, 18.6% who have experienced stalking and 73.0% who have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner. An overall total of more than 1.4 million American Indian and Alaska Native men have experienced violence in their lifetime.

The executive order came days after Attorney General Barr announced the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Initiative on Nov. 22.

This initiative will establish coordinators, create specialized FBI rapid development teams and develop comprehensive data analysis.

The Department of Justice will also invest \$1.5 million to create coordinators in 11 states, including Oklahoma, that will work with protocols and procedures for responding to cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people.

For some, the formation of task forces and initiatives seem to fall short of a solution. But for others, it is a great start.

“We have a horrible situation in Indian Country that persists, in which outsiders are able to come into our spaces, violate, and then move with impunity to other jurisdictions. My hope is that we can bring the full force of the federal mandate upon local institutions that have turned blind eyes, are swamped or are politically unwilling, whatever that might be, that they are spurred. That they are compelled to do their job, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. Whether they like it or not, I don’t care, but they have to do their job,” explained Smalling.

Gray on the other hand isn’t holding her breath.

“Cautiously optimistic would be an overstatement. Am I glad that something is being done? Yes. Having said that, I feel like the timing of this was absurd. It’s close to Thanksgiving – oh yeah, Indians. Let’s do something for the Indians.’ I hope I am wrong about intentions, but with all that is happening with this administration right now, they needed to do something to improve perceptions. Like I said, it was around Thanksgiving,” pointed out Gray.

“As someone who actually works these cases every day, both on and off the clock, I can say that what the rest of the country doesn’t know is a lot. There are a lot of good Native people out here in the field that are considered boots on the ground that do this work and we have all learned a lot along the way.”



Photo provided by DG Smalling

Lady Justice, by Choctaw artist DG Smalling, carries a shield of inter-locking arms. Smalling uses the inter-locking arms to symbolism unity.

Faith, Family, Culture

Tribes still united in new year



Chief Gary Batton

In August, I released an op-ed that explained the facts of the Oklahoma Tribal Gaming Compact and its automatic renewal. It is now January, and my opinion on the matter still stands. Oklahoma tribes are rooted firmly in this great state, and we continue to help all Oklahomans every day. Tribal gaming continues to be a win-win for the state and tribal nations as it always has been.

Going forward, any threat to exclusivity could jeopardize billions in future dollars to the state of Oklahoma. In 2019, Oklahoma tribes paid the state \$148.2 million in gaming fees. However, the overall economic impact of tribal dollars on Oklahoma is one of the highest on any state in the country. Tribes funnel billions of dollars into this great state outside of gaming fees.

We will continue to pay our fees to the state as agreed upon through the existing compact and continue to give back to the people of Oklahoma, exceeding what the fees require.

As stated in the compact itself, “Following the effective date of this Compact, the Compact shall automatically renew for successive additional fifteen-year

terms.”

Tribes across Oklahoma are united on the fact that the compact automatically renews, and we are all operating our casinos, “business as usual.” We remain positive and united in our stance, and we will continue to do what is right for our people. We are not taking this stance out of greed or pride. We are doing this to protect the future of our tribe, our members and our state.

We have every right as a sovereign nation to take legal action, if necessary. It is our duty as tribal leaders to protect our sovereign rights and the well-being of our people. Many of our people rely on tribal programs, which are funded through our gaming funds. Our ancestors fought to get our tribes to the position they are today. Tribal gaming is a way for us to earn dollars to put back into not only our tribes, but our communities as well.

We help build and pave roads that benefit all Oklahomans and allow them to travel safer. We recently announced our partnership with local governments to help Antlers, Talihina and the Sardis Lake Water Authority to improve their water systems. This partnership will help Oklahomans have clean and safe drinking water. One of the key objectives of this grant is to ensure our region attracts new businesses and residents. These businesses will create jobs.

The Choctaw Nation, in collaboration with the Oklahoma State Department of Health, provides vaccines for all who qualify for free. Tribal dollars helped fund over 18,000 flu shots across Oklahoma and North Texas to tribal members and non-tribal members alike.

Oklahoma tribes are constantly and consistently helping others. It is a part of who we are as a people. Our roots run deep here are longstanding and deep, predating Oklahoma itself, which we have taken pride in helping build. We have worked hard for decades to create a great relationship with the state. We would love to continue that relationship; we are open to negotiations, but we want this done in a fair way, respecting the existing compact language agreed upon by the state, tribes and Oklahoma voters.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

The spirit of giving continues all year

Happy New Year! I hope that you and your family had a wonderful Christmas. My family was blessed to spend a great Christmas holiday together. I am always thankful for the true meaning behind Christmas and always blessed to be able to spend time with those I love.

It always touches my heart during the Christmas season to see our tribal members and associates spread goodwill and provide opportunities for others who are in need. The Choctaw people have always helped others. It is part of our nature. Most do not want a thank you or to even be recognized for their efforts, but I want to take time to express our sincere gratitude for all the hard work, generosity and love that is put into the extra projects our members and associates take on during the holidays. When Chahtas come together, we make great things happen.

Our Recycling Center had a toy drive and donation boxes were placed in all Choctaw Nation community centers. Hundreds of toys were collected and given to children in our communities.

Community dinners and children’s parties were held during the month of December in all counties of the Choctaw Nation. Our Tribal Council members and associates worked very hard to ensure that the children had wonderful parties, complete with gifts for all.

Our associates donated gifts and money for 93 Christmas gifts for our Jones Academy students. This is a tradition that the associates have had for several years.

The wellness centers throughout the 10.5 counties had coat/blanket, food and toy drives. Each center chose various tribal programs to share their collected items with that service Choctaws in need.

Our Head Start and childcare centers collected canned food and coats throughout the Choctaw Nation. A total of 70 coats and 3,269 canned food items were collected and donated. Coats even came in from California and Oklahoma City after viewers saw the post on our Facebook page and wanted to help.

The Public Safety Department conducted its annual “Santa Beard Fundraiser”. They raised over \$3,500 to help buy gifts for over 70 Chahta and Jones Academy children.

The Youth Outreach Program presented youth, ages 16 and under, with around 1,700 Christmas presents. Our Elder Advocacy Program provided 244 gifts to our elders in need in the 10 1/2 counties. Our Community Based Social Work Program gave out 3,328 holiday food vouchers for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our Outreach Services also distributed gifts to 250 Little Chahta.

One of my favorite things is when I see the Chahta Spirit being lived out by our younger members. Miranda Raney, a tribal member from Red Oak, found a way to display the Chahta Spirit on campus at her school, Oklahoma State University. She had an idea about making blankets for the needy, calling her project “All Tied Together”. She advertised for volunteers on social media and talked to different classes of students at OSU about her idea. She had a group of around 50 volunteers who came together and made over 180 blankets to donate to those in need. Miranda’s example is a great reminder that we can all make a difference and that no idea to help is ever too small.

It’s hard to believe that 2020 is here, a new year and the beginning of a new decade. This year, I challenge us all to keep the spirit of Christmas alive and to remember to help others all year long. We are blessed. Let us always remember to be a blessing to others as well. From my family to yours, I wish you a blessed, happy and prosperous new year.



Submitted photo

The Choctaw Nation Public Safety Department held a Santa Beards fundraiser by paying to grow beards at the end of the year. The money raised was used to buy toys for Christmas presents.



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

The first couple’s posterity possessed brilliant minds, but the dark depravity of fallen man was evident. We are told in Genesis 6:5: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

The mind of man by nature is now unregenerate and governed by his soulish and sensuous drives. First Corinthians 2:14 tells us: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

The natural human mind cannot communicate with God nor understand His thoughts. The serpent takes advantage of man’s unregenerate heart and blinds his mind or mental perception from seeing the light of the gospel. Jesus said, “Ye must be born again” in John 3:7.

Only a divine transformation can show the natural mind the need to repent. Why the emphasis on repentance? Repentance deals with the sinner’s mind which controls his attitude and actions. Repentance is from the Greek word “metanoia” meaning “a change of mind.”

This is a divine transformation within man’s spiritual understanding and not a fleeting natural exercise of the brain. Repentance is not mere sorrow. Judas was remorseful over the outcome of his betrayal, yet there was no change of mind or purpose. In true conversion, the sinner’s mind is dethroned, and the Lord Jesus Christ is enthroned as King. When this happens, one obtains a “renewed mind” (Romans 12:2) which can begin to think right and act accordingly.

New rules approved for public comments at Council Meetings

During the Tribal Council’s meeting on Dec. 14, Councilman Ronald Perry proposed a resolution outlining a set of rules for members who wish to address the Council during regular sessions. The resolution passed unanimously.

TO APPROVE THE STANDING RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT AT REGULAR AND SPECIAL SESSIONS OF THE TRIBAL COUNCIL IN THE TRIBAL COUNCIL OF THE CHOCTAW NATION

RONALD PERRY INTRODUCED THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL RESOLUTION

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION

TO APPROVE the standing rules for public comment at Regular and Special Session of Tribal Council.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Article IX, Section 9 of the Constitution of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (the “Nation”), “No ... rule shall be implemented unless approved by at least seven (7) members of Tribal Council;”

WHEREAS, in accordance with Article X, Section 4 of the Constitution, citizens of the Nation may make public comment with a majority consent of the Tribal Council Members present; and

WHEREAS, the Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the Nation that standing rules be adopted to facilitate public comment by the citizens of the Nation.

THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED by the Council that the following standing rules be adopted for public comment at Regular and Special sessions of Tribal Council:

Registering for Public Comment at Regular Session

- I. A person registering for public comment:
 - a. Must be a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.
 - b. Must register via email or telephone with the recording secretary in order to make a public comment;
 - c. Must provide the recording secretary with the following information:
 - i. Name;
 - ii. Age;
 - iii. Occupation;
 - iv. Physical Address;
 - v. A short, but descriptive, summary of the subject matter they wish to address the Council; and
 - vi. Whether the citizen is addressing Council as an individual (“Individual Speaker”) or representing a group of six (6) or more (“Group Speaker”).
 2. If the citizen is addressing the Council as a group representative of six (6) or more citizens, the Group Speaker is responsible for satisfying procedural guidelines 1 (c).
 3. Groups may either register together or the recording secretary, in consultation with the Speaker of Tribal Council, may group together individuals or groups who have similar interests on the same matter. The group is responsible for selecting a Group Speaker.
 4. The deadline to register for public comment each month is the first day of that month.
 5. **NOTE: REGISTERING AND BEING PLACED ON THE AGENDA FOR PUBLIC COMMENT DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT PUBLIC COMMENT WILL BE PERMITTED BY COUNCIL. COUNCIL HAS FULL DISCRETION IN APPROVING OR DENYING PUBLIC COMMENTS. SEE CHOC. CONST. ART. X, § 4.**

Guidelines During the Public Comment

6. The Sergeant-at-Arms will have authority to monitor the activity of the citizens while they address the Council. The Sergeant-at-Arms will have the responsibility of informing the citizens when it is their time to speak, as well as remind the citizens of the procedural guidelines set in place during their address.
7. There will be a maximum of five (5) public comments per regular session allowed unless Council determines otherwise.
8. The approved speakers will address the Council at the beginning of the regular session unless Council determines otherwise.
9. Time - Each individual speaker may speak for up to 3 (three) minutes. A group of six (6) or more must elect a representative to speak on behalf of the group and will have a time limit of five (5) minutes. A timer will be used, and the speaker should conclude their remarks when they are made aware of the time expiring.
10. Topics - All comments should address a matter related to the health and welfare of the Nation. The Council will not hear public comment that involves a complaint about an individual employee, a personnel action, or pending litigation. Such matters should be reduced to writing and sent to the appropriate authority.
11. Decorum - The Council expects that each speaker will be courteous. Speakers will address their comments to the entire Council and not to one individual Council member, nor to the Chief, Assistant Chief, legal counsel, nor to the audience. Speakers will not engage in personal attacks.
12. Written Comments - If a speaker would like to present written comments to the Council, fourteen (14) copies must be provided.
13. Violations - The Speaker of Tribal Council, or the Speaker Pro Tempore in the absence of the Speaker, may use discretion to ensure these rules are followed by each speaker or suspend any remaining time of those speakers who violate these rules.
14. These standing rules may be suspended, modified or replaced for the length of a meeting by Speaker of Tribal Council with consent of Tribal Council.

Choctaw Nation Reintegration Program helps Choctaws get back on their feet

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Imagine being released from prison. All you have are the clothes on your back, \$50 in your pocket and a bus ticket. This is a reality for many of the previously incarcerated individuals released from prison every day.

Oklahoma has the highest incarceration rates in not only the country but the world, according to a 2018 report released by the Prison Policy Initiative. The report also stated that in 2018 Oklahoma had an incarceration rate of 1,079 per 100,000 population.

According to Open Justice, Oklahoma’s Department of Corrections tracker, as of Dec. 9, 2019, there were 25,171 people in the custody of the DOC. There were also 31,895 people under the supervision of DOC, probation, GPS monitoring and community sentencing, as well as 546 people who were sentenced to state prison but were being held in county jails due to transportation issues or overcrowding. Many of these cases are drug possession charges and low-level property crimes.

On Nov. 1, 2019, a new law took effect, thanks to the passing of State Questions 780 and 781 in 2016. The new law reduced drug possession and low-level property crimes to misdemeanors. The intent of this law is to address the incarceration crisis.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma noticed this issue in 2015 and decided to take action to help in this cycle among its tribal members.

Thanks to an initiative by Chief Gary Batton, the Choctaw Nation Reintegration Program helps with rehabilitation through treatment programs, case management, referral assistance, emergency clothing and food. The program also offers mental health, and occupational consultation and referral.

“It was really the Chief’s initiative to help individuals who have had legal entanglements, such as felonies and misdemeanors, that are really affecting their daily lives. Many are unable to get a job or driver’s license,” said Kevin Hamil, Director of the Choctaw Nation Reintegration Program. “Chief Batton’s initiative was one of the best things we could do to try and put their lives back together.”

Though there are many individuals in custody, the fact is many will be released, and be faced with adjusting to life on the outside.

“What we know is, 90% of people who have been incarcerated will be released. So, only 10% are going to be there for life,” explained Hamil.

The program’s focus is to assist these individuals in their reintegration back into society.

“We offer a wide variety of services like transitional housing, rental assistance, and career readiness,” stated Hamil. “When you’re released from prison, you get \$50 dollars and a bus ticket. Unfortunately, in most cases, the number of people who are willing to help you are few and far between. We meet with individuals who have been released from prison and immediately start the process of trying to stabilize their lives.”

Hamil said that of the 90% of individuals who will eventually



Photo by Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation Reintegration Program helps with rehabilitation through treatment programs, case management, referral assistance, emergency clothing and food. The program also offers mental health, and occupational consultation and referral.

who start the program successfully complete it.

According to Hamil, recidivism, the tendency to reoffend, during the first year of Choctaw Nation’s program is only 2%, compared to the state and national level of 46%.

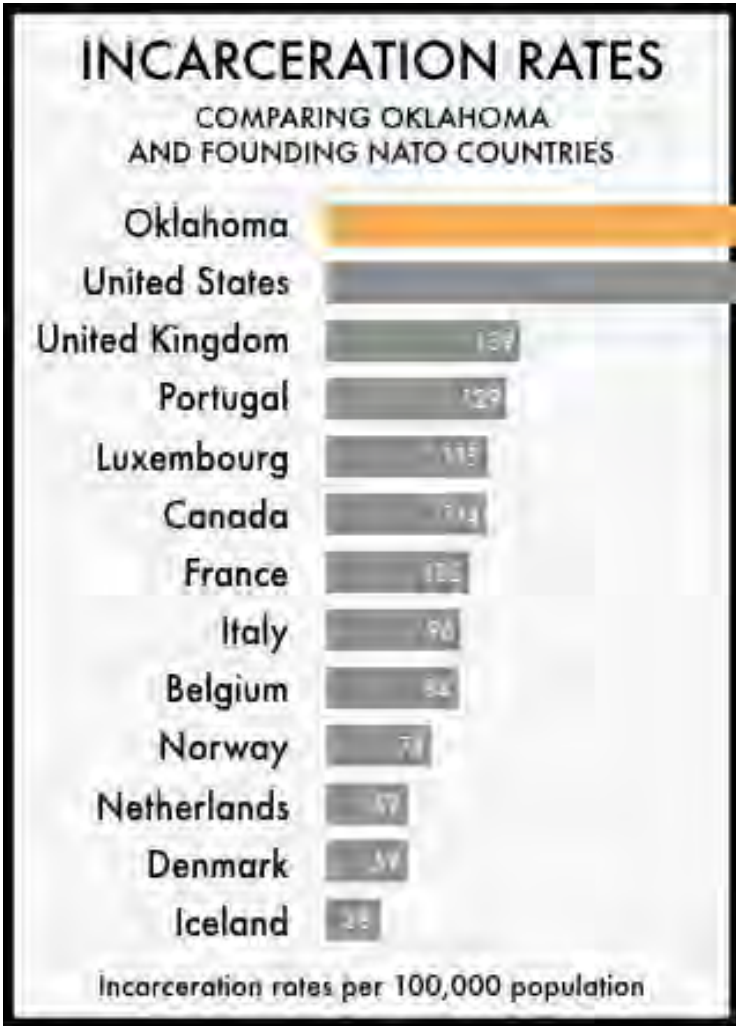
The number one offense that the program sees is drug and alcohol related crimes, followed closely by property crimes. We put the program together thinking we would just focus on individuals who were getting out of prison. What we realized quickly, is that we were missing a couple of populations,” explained Hamil. “The legal system oftentimes doesn’t want to incarcerate someone if there’s a chance that they can be rehabilitated. They look at how

To date, of 252 people has been through the reintegration and prevention programs during the past three years, and there is an average of around 84 participants a year.

“For a staff of four, that is a big workload,” explained Hamil. “When you’re talking about everything that the job includes. Fifteen people on your caseload is a lot of people when they have no other means to provide for themselves.”

The staff of the Reintegration Program has a combined total of over 50 years of experience in the field. Hamil, Doug Canant, Cynthia Mose, and Lisa Ainsworth work diligently to help these individuals succeed.

For those who are interested in using these services, the eligibility



Source: www.prisonpolicy.org/global/2018.

be released from custody, the first year is always difficult. In the first year, 46% will commit a new crime or go back to prison. At the third-year mark, about 62% will go back to prison. At the fifth-year mark, about 74% go back.

According to Hamil, the program has kept meticulous numbers and statistics to help prove that they are making a difference. Since its creation, there have been 100 who have successfully completed the program. About 50% of individuals

they can be punished for their crime, but not necessarily be hampered for the rest of their life.”

According to Hamil, one way this is accomplished is through community sentencing or deferred sentencing.

“We thought about these individuals, who are at risk of incarceration. How do we interact with them so that they have better support? So, we now also see supervised probation individuals through our program,” said Hamil.

Hamil also said that the program received a high volume of calls from individuals who have been out for three or more years and were still having problems transitioning to life on the outside. He explained that they work with these individuals on a case by case basis.

“We assist those individuals with things like getting their license reinstated and the drug and alcohol assessments that come with that if it is a part of their particular case,” said Hamil.

requirements are that you must reside within the 10 ½ counties and have no open cases or warrants. Sex offenders are prohibited from this program, but Hamil says that they can point individuals in the right direction to services outside of the Choctaw Nation that can help.

“We try to assist everyone with case management, no matter who you are. We will try to connect you with the right services,” said Hamil.

Hamil stresses the importance of self-motivation and determination as being the key to success in this program. “If someone wants to change their life, we will look at making that possible, regardless of their conviction. I feel like with our completion rate at 48% and our recidivism being so low, we’re saying you can succeed, you just have to want it,” Hamil said.

For more information on this program, please visit ChoctawNation.com or call 800-522-6170.

Missing and murdered

Continued from 1

Gray explained that though there is mention of creating a database, there are a few already in existence, like Sovereign Bodies and NameUS, that are quite extensive.

“Maybe they should talk to the boots on the ground to see what they need. I understand that may be a part of what the task force will do, but so far all I have been told about upcoming meetings is that we get only a few people, one hour, and one page to present. With a problem so enormous, that is simply insulting,” admitted Gray. “We need help now. We need to be able to provide services now and that means funding. While discussions are taking place and task forces are meeting, our people are still going missing and being murdered. I also think that most people are focusing primarily on the missing and not nearly enough is being done for the families of the murdered to bring offenders to justice.”

Gray urges lawmakers to enact real change. “Do something real. Do something that will make a real difference,” said Gray. “We have enough things out there that are just for show and literally accomplish nothing... If we are to substantially reduce the rate of MMIW then we need to have real consequences for traffickers, rapists and woman beaters instead of a series of deferred and

suspended sentences all while the offender continues to create new victims.”

NAAV also suggested action and accountability as the key to success of these task forces.

“In order to address this crisis, lawmakers should be informed about current and proposed legislation regarding criminal justice and community-based responses to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual assault. The ability to hold offenders accountable is vital to enhancing safety and protection for all of a sovereign nation’s citizens,” explained NAAV in their statement.

For those who are wondering how they can help this cause, Gray has suggestions.

“The first thing people can do to bring awareness and change things is to acknowledge that this is real and it has been real since colonization. You can’t fix a problem if you don’t even acknowledge it exists,” explained Gray. “To bring awareness, the narrative has to be ours; it has to come from Native voices. To bring change, let us tell you what we need changed and really listen and then act on that.”



Source: www.uih.com



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Chief Batton Signs FEMA Agreement

By Kellie Matherly

Southeastern Oklahoma is no stranger to severe weather. In fact, the National Weather Service reports 83 tornadoes in the state of Oklahoma during 2019, at least 61 of those occurring in May alone. On October 31, 2019, Chief Gary Batton signed an agreement with the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Region 6 office allowing the Choctaw Nation to apply for aid directly from the federal government when there is a disaster declaration from the state.

On April 30, 2019, an EF3 tornado passed through Bryan County near Blue and Bokchito, leaving one person dead and at least 10 others hospitalized. In addition, the mighty storm left significant property damage in its wake. The next morning, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt declared a State of Emergency for 52 counties affected by the destruction.

In the aftermath of the tornado, the Choctaw Nation provided individual assistance to affected communities as well as instituted protective measures to ensure the safety of community members. When the Nation applied for federal aid to help offset the cost of those efforts, there were multiple options. In the past, the tribe has applied as a sub-recipient of the state. Under this new agreement, however, the Nation can go directly to the federal government under a state disaster declaration.

Tony Robinson, FEMA’s Region 6 Administrator, was on hand for the signing and praised the Choctaw Nation’s youth preparedness programs as well as several other initiatives in the Nation’s Office of Emergency Management. “It’s setting an example for the rest of the country,” Robinson said. “Emergency management serves the whole community, and it only works if the whole community is working together,” he added.

Chief Batton also spoke on the importance of community: “We’ve always embraced community...we believe in these true partnerships,” said Chief Gary Batton. “Sure, we’re going to focus on our tribal members, but we’ve always been about the greater good for all, so we’re going to do all we can to help the greater good,” he continued.

The Choctaw Nation is the first tribe in Oklahoma to receive this type of aid, making this declaration historic. Jeff Hansen, Director of the Office of Emergency Management, facilitated the partnership and was present for the signing. Hansen also serves on FEMA’s National Advisory Council. “I think one of the greatest things about this program is the support from Chief and our senior leadership,” Hansen said. “The answer I always give is ‘Do what you need to help the community,’ and that’s what we strive to do. The entirety of the community is better off because of that support.”

As a symbol of this partnership, Robinson and Chief Batton exchanged ceremonial coins and handshakes. “I always say when we can put aside jurisdictional things, we can actually help people, and it’s been an honor to work with you all to make that happen,” Batton said in closing.



Photo by Christian Toews

FEMA funds will be easier to receive when it matters most after an historic agreement was made with the agency.

Holidays busy in District 3

Halito from District 3, I was honored to serve our Chahta people here at home these past three months. I had the privilege to host various community activities and to interact and become better acquainted with the needs of our Tribal members.

We kicked off October with the Outstanding Elders Banquet to honor our elders. This is a great opportunity to show appreciation to our Choctaw Seniors.

It was my pleasure to attend several ribbon cutting ceremonies for LEAP homes in Krebs and new affordable rental homes in Talihina. Both programs are geared to help tribal members have suitable and affordable housing.

Congratulations to Casey Lancaster and Steven Humphreys, recipients of Chahtapreneur forgivable loans for \$5,000 each. These funds are used to purchase equipment, materials and to expand their businesses. The loans help afford vital services and jobs to our community.

We had a great turnout for our first Halloween event at Smithville. Good food, lots of fun, great camaraderie and costumes!

November 7th was our Community Health meeting and Choctaw Nation Outreach Services held at Hodgen. Princesses, District 3 Little Miss Carmen Garcia, and District 3 Jr. Miss Madison Ludlow, attended and sang. Thanks, girls, for a job well done!

Smithville Community Thanksgiving dinner was held Nov. 20 and Talihina’s on Nov. 21. Both locations were well attended and had an abundance of food and great fellowship!

Jess and Jake Parnell were winners of the Choctaw Nation Youth Hunt for District 3. Congratulations to Jake on his first deer! I had the privilege of guiding and sharing in Jake’s successful hunt.

Congratulations to Vernon Himes, winner of the Choctaw Veterans Hunt. I had the pleasure of accompanying him on the hunt. Yakoke to all who have served our country!

Santa Claus came to town at Smithville Community Center Dec. 3, at Heavener School Dec. 5, and at Talihina Community Center Dec. 7. We had a great turnout at each location and a good time was had by all, especially the kids interacting with Santa.

Thanks to the Choctaw Nation associates, community center staff, and to everybody who helped to make each of these events a success; your hard work was appreciated. A special thanks to all our wonderful volunteers!

On behalf of myself, my family, and District 3, I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year!

Yakoke,
Eddie Bohanan



Eddie Bohanan

Housing Headlines

Halito! We are excited to include an article each month about our Housing services and how we can better assist our tribal members. This month I would like to discuss a service that is building home ownership within the tribe, our LEAP program.

LEAP is an acronym for Lease/Purchase. It is a 25-year program with the first 15 years being the lease portion. The lease is \$500/month for a 3 bedroom home and \$600/month on our 4 bedroom units. All the money paid during the lease term is applied to paying off the home. The Housing Authority will pay all taxes and insurance during this time period. At year 15, the principal balance that is left will then be financed, to include an escrow account that will include taxes and insurance so the payment will go up slightly at that point.

During the lease portion of the program, participants will receive homeowner and home buyer education classes from the Service Coordination Department of the Housing Authority. Property managers will also work hand in hand with participants to meet their needs and help guide the way to homeownership.

We make determinations of where we build on where approved applicants state they want to live. If you want LEAP homes in your community, please apply and encourage others to apply. There are income limits, both minimum and maximum with this program based on family size and since the first 15 years are a lease, those with bad credit are not disqualified. Background checks are required, however, and it must be at least 5 years since any criminal charges have been filed in order to qualify.

Applications are located at each community center and can be found online.

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Housing Authority

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Trailer type: ☐ Bumper Pull Trailer ☐ 5th Wheel ☐ RV Length of RV/Trailer: _____

Amperage required: ☐ 30 amp ☐ 50 amp # of Slide-outs: _____

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Choctaw Nation Summer Youth Employment Services
(Program funded by Public Law 102-477)



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JAN 07 - Caddo, Cannadian, Indianola, Crowder, Buffalo Valley, Coleman	JAN 21 - Arkoma, Cameron, Bokoshe, Atoka
JAN 08 - Allen, Tupelo, Wapanuka, Coalgate, Stuart, Kiowa, Calvin, Hugo, Boswell	JAN 22 - Durant, Keota, McCurtain
JAN 09 - Bennington, Choctaw Interlocal, Haileyville, Hartshorne, Kiowa, Clayton	JAN 23 - Ft Towson, Soper
JAN 10 - Rock Creek	JAN 27 - Spiro, Panama, Pocola
JAN 13 - Talihina, Wister, Howe	JAN 28 - Poteau
JAN 14 - Vision Academy, Achilles, Quinton, Panola, Wilburton, McAlester, LeFlore, Heavener	JAN 29 - Savanna, Pittsburg
JAN 15 - Stigler, Colbert, Stringtown, Kinta, Moyers, Rattan, Silo	FEB 03 - Valliant
JAN 16 - Caney, Tushka, Andlers	FEB 04 - Idabel, Haworth
	FEB 05 - Smithville, Battiest
	FEB 10 - Eagletown
	FEB 11 - Broken Bow
	FEB 12 - Wright City

APPLY ONLINE AT: 477ETSAPP.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

APPLICATION OPEN FROM JANUARY 1ST - APRIL 1ST

EVENTS

Oklahoma Indian Legal Services may be able to help tribal members who have received storm damage, but can't get assistance due to title problems.

Call 800-658-1497 for more information.

Veterans Association Members Needed

Choctaw Veterans Association is searching for new members. Most of our members are Vietnam Vets.

We need young Choctaw military men and women, active or retired. Members of different tribes are welcome as well. Veterans Association paper work is needed.

Meetings are 8 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month at the Spiro Choctaw Community Center.

Members attend funerals, and Disabled American Veterans and Marine Corp League.

For information call:
Ed Hendricks, Recruiter 918-962-5524
Paul Perry, Commander 479-353-2709

Send us your stories!

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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

<i>Gary Batton Chief</i>	<i>Jack Austin Jr. Assistant Chief</i>
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The Official
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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.

NOTES

Tribal Council holds December session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL
COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
December 14, 2019

- 1) CALL TO ORDER
- 2) OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- 3) ROLL CALL
- 4) APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a) Regular Session November 9, 2019
 - b) Special Session November 20, 2019
- 5) WELCOME GUESTS; Veteran of the Month - Wayne Scott
- 6) REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- 7) NEW BUSINESS
 - a) Approve Application for the Administration for Community Living/Administration on Aging Older Americans Title VI Grants for 2020 to Continue as a 3-Year Grant; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - b) Approve the Child Care Assistance Program Budget for FY2019; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - c) Approve the Designation of Eight Counties in Arkansas as Service Areas for the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation for the Purpose of the Section 187 Loan Program; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - d) Approve a Utility Relocation Easement in Favor of Cherokee Telephone Company, Inc. d/b/a Cherokee Communications, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, in Bryan County, Oklahoma; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - e) Approve a Utility Easement in Favor of AT&T Corp., on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, in Bryan County, Oklahoma; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - f) Approve a Utility 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 Bryan County, Oklahoma; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - g) Approve a Utility Easement in Favor of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Inc., on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Bryan County, Oklahoma; YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
 - h) Approve a Utility Easement in Favor of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Inc., on Choctaw Nation Fee Land in Bryan County, Oklahoma; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - i) Authorize the Chief to Place Property in McCurtain County in Trust Status with the United States of America; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed.
 - j) Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Pittsburg County in Trust Status with the United States of America; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - k) Authorize the Chief to Place Property at 2704 Choctaw Road, Pocola, LeFlore County in Trust Status with the United States of America; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - l) Approve Grazing Lease No. G09-1951, in Favor of Thomas Williston on Choctaw Nation Fee Land in McCurtain County, Oklahoma; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed. Thomas Williston recused himself from vote & Speaker pro tempore Dry oversaw vote on this bill.
 - m) Amend CB-94-19 on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation in Latimer County, Oklahoma (Kevin Burch); YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - n) Approve the Standing Rules for Public Comment at Regular and Special Sessions of the Tribal Council; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
 - o) Approve Amendments to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Adoption Code; YEAs- Unanimous, Bill passed
- 8) OTHER NEW BUSINESS
- 9) OLD BUSINESS
- 10) ADJOURNMENT
- 11) CLOSING PRAYER

Council Members Present:

Thomas Williston	Perry Thompson
Tony Ward	James Dry
Eddie Bohanan	Anthony Dillard
Ron Perry	Robert Karr
Jennifer Woods	James Frazier
Jack Austin	

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna
January Language Lesson

Check your Choctaw vocabulary knowledge. Match the English word to the correct Choctaw word.

1. ofi	_____	a. chicken
2. vlla nakni	_____	b. short
3. vlla tek	_____	c. eat
4. kawasha	_____	d. tall
5. omba	_____	e. wind
6. chaha	_____	f. potatoes
7. chito	_____	g. water
8. impa	_____	h. boy
9. balili	_____	i. beans
10. hattak	_____	j. man
11. ohoyo	_____	k. big
12. ossi	_____	l. bread
13. tanchi	_____	m. run
14. mahli	_____	n. rain
15. wak nipi	_____	o. steak
16. palvska	_____	p. corn
17. akaka	_____	q. woman
18. ahe	_____	r. little
19. oka	_____	s. girl
20. tobi	_____	t. dog

Answers: 1.t, 2.h, 3.s, 4.b, 5.n, 6.d, 7.k, 8.c, 9.m, 10.j, 11.q, 12.r, 13.p, 14.e, 15.o, 16.l, 17.a, 18.f, 19.g, 20.i

www.choctawschool.com



The Choctaw language class in Norman would like to express our gratitude to the Choctaw Nation and the Language Department for supporting opportunities for us to learn our language. Seated left to right, Alice and Matilda. Standing left to right, Perrin, Cora, Sherrie, Sherri and Cassie. Our language class is taught by Alice Taylor. For more information on community language classes please call 800-522-6170, Ext. 5163.

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Feb. 4	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 4	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 5	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 5	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 7	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Feb. 10	Durant	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Feb. 11	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Feb. 11	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Feb. 12	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 12	Crowder	By appointment
Feb. 14	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Feb. 14	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 18	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 18	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 19	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Feb. 19	Stigler	By appointment
Feb. 21	Atoka	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 25	Wilburton	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Feb. 26	Coalgate	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Feb. 26	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday		
Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment		

Chief Wright inducted into Oklahoma Hall of Fame

By Chris Jennings

Chief Allen Wright, also known by his Choctaw name Kiliahote, was inducted into the 92nd class of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame Nov. 21, 2019.

Allen Wright, great-great-grandson of Chief Allen Wright said, “Our family enjoyed one of our finest moments on November 21st when Reverend Allen Wright was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. As a member of the board, I was able to vote for Allen’s induction, which was an exciting honor. Chickasaw Gov. Anoatubby (also chair of the OKHOF) was very supportive and insisted on reading Allen’s nomination. Chief Gary Patton has also been an enthusiastic supporter of his fellow Chief’s nomination, and wrote a glowing letter of support. It is my hope that this recognition of our grandfather will enlighten a new generation of Oklahomans about this founding father of our state.”

Wright served as Chief of the Choctaw Nation from 1866 to 1870. Born in Attala County, Mississippi in 1826, Wright survived the Trail of Tears as a child, settling with his family near present-day Lufata, Oklahoma in McCurtain County.

At the age of 13, Wright relocated to Boggy Depot, Oklahoma to live with Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury. He made that his home for the remainder of his life.

Wright attended Pine Ridge Mission School near Doakville for four years, then Spencer Academy. Continuing his education, Wright traveled to New York where he attended Delaware College, Union College and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Despite not beginning his formal education until he was fourteen, Wright was able to earn his master’s degree. After finishing school, Wright was ordained by the Presbyterian Church.

Wright served as the principal instructor at Armstrong Academy during the 1855 to 1856 school term. He became a member of the Choctaw Council in 1856, was elected treasurer of the Choctaw Nation in 1859, and under a new constitution, became a member of the Choctaw Council in 1861. During that time, he married Harriet Newell Mitchell of Ohio in 1857.

He served as a civic and religious leader and was instrumental in helping the Choctaw Nation post-Trail of Tears, post-Civil War and before Oklahoma’s statehood.

Wright was known as Chief, minister, diplomat, linguist and rancher, but he was most proud of being a servant of Christ.

Some of Wright’s accomplishments included translating the laws of the Chickasaw Nation from English into their native language, compiling a Choctaw dictionary for use in tribal schools and translating the book of Psalms from Hebrew into Choctaw. He was editor of the Indian Champion and was a charter member of the first Masonic Lodge in Oklahoma.

Wright also suggested Oklahoma for the name for the state to the senate in 1866 with “Okla” meaning people and “humma” or “huma” meaning red.

He passed away Dec. 2, 1885, and was buried at Boggy Depot in Atoka County.

The Oklahoma Hall of Fame was founded in 1927, to educate Oklahoma’s youth on our rich history and heritage. The Gaylord-Pickens Museum, home of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, was opened in 2007, with the intent of honoring these and other inspirational Oklahomans. “The recognition of our state’s greatest asset—our people—is the foundation upon which our organization was created. Our mission is to instill state pride by telling Oklahoma’s story through its people,” said Shannon L. Rich, President and CEO of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and Gaylord-Pickens Museum.

Along with being honored at the formal induction ceremony, the 2019 Honorees will be recognized in November with the addition of their portraits at the Gaylord-Pickens Museum in Oklahoma City.



Submitted photo

Oklahoma Hall of Fame board member and great-great-grandson of Chief Wright with a portrait of the chief and the medal that was awarded to Chief Wright.

John Vietta recognized as instructor of the year

By Christian Toews

John Vietta was awarded the 2019 Instructor of the Year by the Fire Service Instructors of Oklahoma. Vietta is a proud Choctaw tribal member and a 22-year veteran of the fire service. He serves as a lieutenant in the fire department of Durant, Oklahoma.

Vietta said that winning Instructor of the Year was a great honor. “When they called my name and said that I won, it was very humbling. It was humbling that people thought that much of you and your hard work that you’ve put into it. Sometimes you question yourself. Are you doing a good enough job teaching people to save their life and others’ lives,” he said.

This isn’t the first time he has been recognized for his work in the fire service. In 2015, he won Fireman of the Year for the Durant region and Fireman of the Year for the entire state from the V.F.W. of Oklahoma, according to Vietta.

He said that teaching is very rewarding in the long run. “You may not get paid very well to teach, but where the pay comes through is when you receive calls, emails, or texts thanking you for something you taught a fireman and they were able to save themselves or save someone.”

Vietta said that he has chosen to stay in this position because he enjoys teaching. “I’ve been offered other jobs, but it would keep me from being able to go and teach. I do not want that. I believe God put me here for this reason”, he said.

He has also been an instructor with Oklahoma State University Fire Service Training for 13 years. He teaches vehicle extrication, structural collapse, ropes, confined spaces and other classes. Vietta said that he has taught classes all across the state of Oklahoma as well as in Arkansas, Louisiana, Kansas and Texas.

Vietta said that he would love to see other tribal members consider the fire service. “It makes me very proud that I am a Choctaw. Hopefully other Choctaws will see that there is a place for them in the rescue field.”

The Vietta name has a rich history with the Choctaw Nation. His mother, Virginia Vietta, has worked for the Choctaw Nation for 25 years. His wife, Debbie Vietta, also works for the Choctaw Nation and was recognized for 20 years of service this year. John and Debbie have two sons, John Michael, and Jacob Logan Vietta.



Photo by Christian Toews

John Vietta, a 22-year veteran of the fire service says God put him here to teach others how to save lives.



Submitted photo

John Vietta pictured with the 2019 Instructor of the Year award from the Fire Service Instructors of Oklahoma.



Submitted photos

Chief Allen Wright has 235 direct descendants, several of whom were able to attend the Oklahoma Hall of Fame induction ceremony Nov. 21, 2019.



STAR PROGRAM

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Alumni group donates \$500 to Jones Academy

From left, Jones Academy Superintendent Patrick Moore, Councilwoman Jennifer Woods, representatives of the Jones Academy alumni group Robert and Paulette Wilson and Seth Fairchild with the Chahta Foundation, pose for a photograph after the alumni group donated \$500 to the Jones Academy Alumni scholarship fund. The donation will be matched, dollar for dollar, by the Choctaw Nation making it a \$1000 scholarship that will be awarded to a student. Last year's recipient, Erin Willis, was able to use the scholarship to help with a criminal justice degree she's pursuing at Eastern Oklahoma State University.



Matching gift given to Idabel senior citizen group

A \$500 matching gift, by Dr. Ranjeet Pancholy, was presented to the Choctaw Senior Citizen group in Broken Bow. Receiving the gift are from left, Tony Ward, Tribal Councilman for District 2, Ivan Battiest, Ethyl Jacob and Howard Phillips. Battiest serves as the fundraising chairman for the group and Jacob serves as the treasurer. Dr. Pancholy matched the \$500 gift made earlier by Phillips to the Choctaw Senior Citizens group in Idabel.

Mike Snyder breaks all-time win record



By Christian Toews

Seminole High School football coach Mike Snyder won his 364th career game, beating Tulsa Webster 61-0. This win breaks the long-standing win record held by Bruce Hendrickson. Snyder now tops the list of the all-time winningest coaches in the state of Oklahoma.

Snyder is a proud Choctaw tribal member. He said he is a direct descendant of Chief Apuckshunnubbe, who was chief of the Choctaw Nation from 1830-1857. "My Choctaw heritage is something I'm very proud of, knowing that was the heritage that helped make me the person I am today," Snyder said.

Snyder reflected on his career and gave a lot of credit to Wayne Estes who was the first coach that Snyder worked under. He said that Estes really took him under

his wing and guided him up until he took the head coaching job.

Snyder has been the head coach at Seminole since 1980 and has worked at the school since 1972. He said he attributes his longevity in the position largely to his wife, Glenda Snyder. "My wife has had as much influence on my success as anyone else. I married a perfect coach's wife," he said.

Paul Perry named Veteran of the Month

Paul Perry, of Keota, Okla., was honored as Veteran of the month at the November Tribal Council meeting.

Perry served in the United States Navy from Nov. 1959 to Dec. 1969 and the United States Air Guard from Sept. 1979 to August 2000, where he retired as an E-7 Master Sergeant.

He has received the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Good Conduct Medal twice and the National Defense Service Medal.



Chief Gary Batton and District 5 Councilman Ronald Perry, along with Jim Frye, Senior President, present Paul Perry the citation honoring him as Veteran of the month.



Boyers celebrate 50 years

Vickie (Stultz) Boyer and Gwin Boyer celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with their children Karie Boyer and fiancé Justin Jackson, Todd Boyer and spouse Dawn, and Bryon Boyer and spouse Kimberley. They have 5 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren on the way and 1 great-great-grandchild on the way. They were married in Grand Prairie, Texas Oct. 13, 1969.

O'Roark presented Honor Quilt

Erin O'Roark was presented with a quilt from Gail Belmont, founder of the Quilts of Honor organization Sept. 22, 2019.

O'Roark was chosen for the honor because of her extensive volunteer work with the National Guard, the Christian Motorcycle Association and the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association. O'Roark is proud of her Choctaw heritage and hopes to do volunteer work with the tribe when she moves to Durant soon.

O'Roark said, "I constantly am telling people how proud of my tribe I am and the care it takes of its members. Through investments in education, health, and diversified businesses, it has grown and prospered as a nation ready for tomorrow. A nation celebrating and honoring its history by learning from it and integrating that knowledge into its future."



England runs sub-hour 5K

Chad England, 5, ran his first 5K at the Pocola Glow Run in Pocola, Okla. England was the only kindergarten to complete the run and did it in a time of 59:18.7.

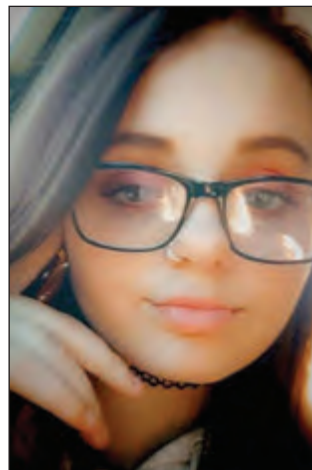
Chad's parents, Cliff and Gerianna England, and family are very proud of him and his achievement at such a young age.

16 for Queen

Michelle Queen, of Higginson, Arkansas, turned 16 in September 2019. She is the daughter of Mark and Carey Queen. She has a younger brother, Joseph Queen.

Michelle enjoys spending time with her family and friends and listening to music or reading. She is a talented artist and an accomplished photographer. She is a junior in high school and graduates May 2021. After graduation she plans to attend art school or study to become a child psychologist.

She is proud of her Choctaw heritage and has an extremely promising future.



Health Services receives award

Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority was honored at Oklahoma Quality Foundation's Eighth Annual Sharing of Best Practices Conference. Todd Hallmark, executive director of Choctaw Nation Health Operations, accepted the 2019 Award for Commitment to Excellence on Wednesday, Nov. 6 in Norman.

In his acceptance, Hallmark thanked Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. and the CNHSA staff for their support in pursuit of the award. Hallmark said, "This award lays the foundation for our pursuit of the National Baldrige Award and this process has given our health system a chance to reflect on our many accomplishments and ongoing challenges that we have in front of us."

This is the CNHSA's first application for the prestigious Baldrige award, one of the premier quality award programs in the United States. The examining committee noted that CNHSA's recognition is the highest ever achieved by a first-time applicant.

CNHSA manages health care services for thousands of tribal members, including inpatient, outpatient, nutrition, wellness, and community health programs in southeastern Oklahoma. Its service area is comparable in size to the state of Vermont.

At the conference, Hallmark also delivered a presentation on "Best Practice: Integrating a Comprehensive Health Care Model."



\$600 donation provides toys

Larry Marksberry with the Blast From the Past Car Club in Durant presents Kat Decaire of the Choctaw Nation Foster Care and Adoptions program with a check for \$600. The funds, raised during a car show hosted by the club, went toward Christmas presents for foster kids.

Help Choctaws get counted during the 2020 census

The U.S. Census, which is conducted every ten years, will take place in 2020. Field workers hired by the Census Bureau will be coming to neighborhoods between now and next spring to verify residential addresses. If they come to your home, please make sure they have your address correct.

The Census questionnaire, due to be mailed on April 1, 2020, will include a question about the respondent's ethnic heritage. Federal agencies use the official Census results to determine the amount of money made available to the tribe through grants. The first step to correctly filling out the Census will be to ensure every potential recipient receives it.

Only 24,000 Choctaw Nation tribal members indicated their tribal affiliation in the 2010 U.S. Census. The tribal membership is over 200,000.

Shape
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Census
2020

SCHOLARSHIPS

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

Individual scholarships can
have a yearly value up to
\$40,000

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Quenna Hope Hayes

Quenna Hope Hayes, 53, passed away Oct. 1, 2019.

Quenna was born Dec. 17, 1965, in Talihina, Okla., to Edward Sampson and Irene (Mose) Thomas.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Dennis Sampson, Ira Dale Sampson and Eddie Sampson; two husbands and the father of her children.

Quenna is survived by her children Amanda Holybee, Joshua Baptiste and spouse Kelly, and Vincent Baptiste; grandchildren BreAnna Holybee and King Holybee; grandchildren's father David Holybee; brothers Johnny Sampson and spouse Joyce, and Steven Mose; sister Barbara Shoemaker; and loving dog, Danica.

For the full obituary, please visit [Griffin-Hillcrest Funeral Home & Memorial Park Cemetery](#).

**William Eugene Freeze**

William Eugene Freeze, Sr., 78, passed away Sept. 13, 2019.

William was born Jan. 5, 1941, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Gene and Otha (Perkins) Freeze.

He was preceded in death by his parents; stepmother Marie Bryant Freeze; sisters Barbara Flowers and Dorothy Freeze; brothers-in-law Boyd Bryce and Curtis Tubb.

William is survived by spouse Judy; son William Freeze and spouse Teresa; daughter Debbie Myers and spouse Randy; sister Betty Tubb; stepbrothers Al, Jerry, and Don Bryant; grandchildren Aaron Bertholf and spouse Angel, Rachel and Austin Freeze, Adele, Ronald and William Myers.

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

**John Edd Shelton**

John Edd Shelton, 79, passed away Oct. 19, 2019.

John was born March 5, 1940, in Boswell, Okla., to R.E. and Bertie (York) Shelton.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

John is survived by his spouse, Joyce; daughters Nancy Shelton, Cheryl Schilt and spouse Wayne, and Teresa Williams and spouse Donnie; sisters Mary Lee Barfield and spouse Wesley, Joann Wynn, Helen Young, Charlene Harrison, Dorothy Martin, Paulene Castleman, Donna Sue Wood, and Sharon Barnett; brothers Jimmy Shelton, Ray Shelton and spouse Rita, Danny Shelton and spouse Gina, and Julius Shelton; and many devoted nieces and nephews.

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

**Harold E. McGuire Jr.**

Harold E. McGuire Jr., 60, passed away Nov. 6, 2019.

Harold was born March 22, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Harold Eugene McGuire, Sr. and Beatrice Marie (Bonaparte) Roy.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Patricia Hadley, Janice McGuire, Sherry McGuire; and nephew Brian Pham Sr.

Harold is survived by daughters Kristie McGuire, Jennifer Moore and spouse Blaze, Tara Bradley and spouse Clinton; nephew Sean McGuire Sr.; grandchildren Sean McGuire Jr., Maverick Bradley, Kynleigh Moore, Kenedi Moore; brother Charles McGuire and spouse Sophia; numerous other nieces, nephews, other relatives and loved ones.

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

**Gerald Atchley**

Gerald "Smokey" Atchley, 72, passed away July 22, 2019.

Gerald was born Oct. 31, 1946, in Guthrie, Okla., to James Beryl and Von Marie (Bench) Atchley.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Jackie Skinner and Virginia Huffman; and brother Charles Atchley.

He is survived by wife Joyce Kite Atchley; siblings Pat Reinholz Eberhart, Russell Atchley and Judy Roettger; children; grandchildren; nieces; nephews; and many lifelong friends.

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

**Ruth Moore**

Ruth Moore, 74, passed away Nov. 7, 2019.

Ruth was born May 10, 1945, in Coalgate, Okla., to Herman and Mary (Jones) LeFlore.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Juanita Holden; brothers Abraham LeFlore, Daniel LeFlore, Jimmy LeFlore and Thomas E. LeFlore; daughter Marcella LeFlore and great grandchildren Thomas S.L. LeFlore, Angel LeFlore, Jude Maxey and Jacob Maxey.

Ruth is survived by daughters Sandra Sims and spouse Butch, Sheila LeFlore, Yolanda Sarr, Shelanda Pitts and spouse Jerry of McAlester, Trisha Moore LeFlore and spouse Thomas, and Laura Moore; sons James Impson Jr. and Tuydale LeFlore; and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

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

**Wilmer Vann Kemp**

Wilmer Vann Kemp, 72, passed away Oct. 28, 2019.

Wilmer was born Feb. 17, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Joseph and Effie Kemp.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Warren Vann Kemp; and brothers Jess Kemp, Doyle Kemp and Jody Kemp.

Wilmer is survived by wife Lila Kemp; grandchildren Kimberly Dawn Kemp and Joseph Wilmer Kemp.

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

**Darlene Ward**

Darlene Ward, 71, passed away May 31, 2019.

Darlene was born June 7, 1947, to David Hatcher and Dena J. Hatcher, in Dothan, Ala.

She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings Donald Hatcher, Larry Hatcher, Cara Starkey, and Wanda Patterson.

Darlene is survived by husband, Richard Ward; Richard Daren Ward; daughter and son-in-law Stacey Lynn and Mark Golden; grandchildren Ashlye Cheateam, Kirk Golden, and Eric Golden; and great-grandson Jacob Golden.

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

**Edward Lloyd McKinney**

Edward Lloyd "Doc" McKinney, 91, passed away Nov. 25, 2019.

Edward was born August 15, 1928, in Okla. City, Okla. to Edward Lee and Ruby Kathryn (Brown) McKinney.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Kathryn Lee Parrish; wife Virginia Catherine (Richardson) McKinney; and daughter Karen Sue Baker Sanders.

Edward is survived by daughters Glenda Smith and spouse Benny, Paula Laxton, and Pamela McKinney; sister Almetta Sue Clark; brother-in-law Leon Richardson and spouse Dot; grandchildren Michelle White and spouse Daniel Smith, Jeremy Smith, Jason Smith, Brandon Laxton and spouse Miranda, and Jenilee Smith Lee and spouse Jon; great-grandchildren Taylor White, Trevor White, Maddox Brady Smith, Maren Catherine Lee, Benton Thomas Lee, Brody Laxton, Lakelynd Laxton, and River Laxton; great- great-grandchildren Karen White and Ryder White.; and almost thirty nieces and nephews.

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

**Dewayne L. Glover**

Dewayne L. Glover, 79, passed away Nov. 16, 2019.

Dewayne was born Dec. 15, 1939, in Idabel, Okla., to H.W. Glover and Jessie M. (Bailey) Glover.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brother Melvin Glover.

Dewayne is survived by wife Donna Glover; sons Cary Glover and spouse TaeRee, and Jacob Glover and spouse Melissa; daughters Clayalee Houston and Cathy Glover; sisters Elizabeth Watson and spouse Harold, Rose Marie Murr and spouse James, Ramona Berry and spouse Steve, and Robin Lepkie and spouse Allen; brothers H.W. Glover Jr. and spouse Rose, and Bruce Glover and Bruce Glover and spouse Marsha; 8 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

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

**Frank Michael Loman**

Frank Michael "Mike" Loman, 58, passed away Nov. 27, 2019.

Mike was born April 14, 1961, in Idabel, Okla., to Frank Benjamin and Evelyn Deloris (Bess) Loman.

He was preceded in death by his father Frank; brother Lonny Lee; grandparents J.W. and Lola Bess, and Carrie and Frank Loman.

Mike is survived by mother Evelyn Loman; sons Derek Loman, Devin Loman, and Kelly Loman; brothers Tommy Lee and spouse Linda, Jeff Loman, and Kirk Loman; sisters Jeanean James and spouse Mike, and Debbie Jeter and spouse Jimmy; granddaughter Lilli Loman; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Lucretia Adams**

Lucretia Adams, 91, passed away Nov. 20, 2019.

Lucretia was born Sept. 6, 1944, in Bokchito, Okla., to Grover and Aurilla Adams.

She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings Benny Adams, GA Adams, Nora Katherine Brown, and Noweta Skinner.

Lucretia is survived by children Linda Booker, Ernest Dry Jr. and spouse Pearl, James Dry and spouse LaDonna, Doug Dry and spouse Pat, Edward Dry and spouse Stacey, Joe Dry and spouse Shelly, and Kathy Dry; 23 grandchildren; and 32 great-grandchildren.

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

**Justin Shomo**

Justin "Shilup Stumpingbear" Shomo, 29, passed away Oct. 4, 2019.

Justin was born May 27, 1990 to Melvin Noahubi and Geneva Carol Shomo.

He was preceded in death by son Miko Shomo; brother Falcon Shomo; grandmother Juanita Bell Tonika; grandparents Mary and Battiest Noahubi; and uncles Shawn Shomo and Norvel Noahubi.

Justin is survived by his parents; son Justin Max Shomo Jr.; daughters Evangeline Chula Lewis and Mercedes Shomo; brothers Darren Noahubi, Timothy Noahubi, Ronelius Shomo, Tremain Shomo, Joseph Jones, Houston Shomo, Dustin Johnson and Fausto "BoBoy" Coyote; sister Sylvia Shomo; eight nieces; four nephews; numerous other relatives and a host of friends.

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

**Geraldine Brandy Tipps**

Geraldine Brandy Tipps, 77, passed away Nov. 3, 2019.

Geraldine was born January 21, 1942, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Rev. Lewis Henry Brandy, Sr. and Donna (Jack) Brandy.

She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings Mary Jane Sockey, Helen Wilson, Curtis Brandy, Lewis Henry Brandy Jr, Rebecca Sue Sant, Cassie Nichole Sockey, LaDonna June Wilson, and Garron Wayne Sant; and grandchildren Danny Wayne Tipps, Sabrina Marie Tipps, and Derrek Wade Tipps.

Geraldine is survived by her sons Wayne Tipps and spouse Sharon of Antlers, Oklahoma, and Cary Tipps and wife Letha of Wister; daughters: Tahwanna Jo Welge and spouse James of Garland, Texas, and Tahnya Lynn TwoCrow and spouse Will of Sachse, Texas; along with other relatives and friends.

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

**Jeanetta Betzen**

Jeanetta Betzen, 65, passed away Oct. 20, 2019.

Jeanetta was born May 4, 1954, in Duncan, Okla., to Janice Jean (Andrews) Peck and James Otis Peck.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Jeanetta is survived by husband Tom; daughters Rebecca Haynes and spouse Chris, and Elizabeth Betzen; sister Karen Louise Peck; brother James Robert Peck; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Todd Lance Long**

Todd Lance "Nunny" Long, 49, passed away Oct. 24, 2019.

Todd was born Sept. 9, 1970 in Durant, Okla., to William Bill and Beverly Sue (Elix) Long.

He was preceded in death by his parents and grandparents.

Todd is survived by sister Leigh "Lee-Lee" Long; brothers Vince "Chito" Long and Vance "Osi" Long; step father Mike Ghadianloo; aunts, Gwen Sissy Elix, Laura Elix, Liz Reeder, Tracey Elix, Tammy Elix and friend Wayne; cousin Sonya Orange; niece Shannon Long; nephew Eli Long and many other family and close friends.

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

**Johnnie Louise Hamilton**

Johnnie Louise (King) Hamilton, 92, passed away Oct.9, 2019.

Johnnie was born Nov. 25, 1926, in Buffalo Valley, Okla., to Lillie Foster and George King.

She was preceded in death by her husband George; her parents; sister Marcette Clemints; brother Robert King; daughter Susan Collins; and son-in-law Stan Collins.

Johnnie is survived by son Steve and spouse Dorothy; sister Monette Baggs; grandchildren Tammy Waggoner and spouse Jon, Gene Collins, Ginger Smock and spouse Mike, Gretchen Davis and spouse Chris; great-grandchildren Callie Hagelberger and spouse Andrew, Catelyn Grey, Chance Zernicek, Trevor Zernicek, Macy Smock, Steve Smock, Zane Davis, Mya Davis, Alisha Rider, Bo Waggoner, Brandon Waggoner; great-great-grandchild Emmry Hagelberger; many nieces, nephews, extended family, and a host of friends.

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

**Donald Ray Gibson**

Donald Ray Gibson, 85, passed away on Nov. 7, 2019.

Donald was born Sept. 4, 1934 in Calera, Okla., to Daniel and Lucille (Johnson) Gibson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sons Clifford Ray and Ronald Dewayne; infant brother Billy Joe; granddaughter Mindi Brock and the mother of his children Essie Mae Hernandez.

Donald is survived by sisters Rose LeFlore, Ella Buck and Edna Taylor; daughters Carolyn Vasquez and spouse Miguel, Mildred Louise Taylor, and Vicki Lechtenberg and spouse Tate; grandchildren Jason Gibson, Lela Diaz, Tony Gibson, Brian Trevino, Jeremy McCain, Kayla Davis, Clifford Ray Gibson Jr. and Penny Bechthold; 20 great grandchildren and numerous extended family and friends.

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

**Lee Roy Webster**

Lee Roy Webster, 65, passed away Nov. 4, 2019.

Lee Roy was born July 22, 1954, in Snow, Okla., to Janie Webster.

He was preceded in death by his mother; his grandparents Summie and Agnes Morris; and brother Harold Daniels.

Lee Roy is survived by his fiancée, Barbara Loudermilk; children Hashtula Webster and Priscilla Webster.

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

**Roy Randle Samis**

Roy Randle Samis, 73, passed away Nov. 11, 2019.

Roy was born March 20, 1946, in DeQueen, Ark., to Henry Frank and Mary Jean Wilson Samis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife; and five siblings.

Roy is survived by daughters Wynona Samis and Shonda Elrod; siblings Buddy Samis, Rose Samis, Dewey Samis, Raynell Serna, and Pauletta Samis; and grandchildren Jonathan Blackwolf, Colton Cusher and Micah Hicks.

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



Nation services can help with your New Year’s resolution

By Chris Jennings

New Year’s resolutions began as far back as 4,000 years ago with the ancient Babylonians. Resolutions during the new year continued with the Romans. Later John Wesley, founder of Methodism, created the Covenant Renewal Service, a time to pray and reflect on the year past and focus on doing better in the upcoming year.

Nearly half the population of the United States reports that they make a New Year’s resolution, but only 8% are successful. Any given year could see as many broken resolutions as years the tradition has been going on.

By setting vague resolutions, for instance by just saying you want to lose some weight, you could set yourself up for failure. Having a specific goal, like losing 10 pounds makes it more likely that you’ll stick with the goal. Making small changes like adding one more serving of vegetables to every meal will fill you up with healthier food faster. Setting a goal of walking a few blocks every day, then adding one block a week is a good way to gradually increase the amount of exercise you’re getting.

If you live in the 10 ½ counties you can take advantage of the Choctaw Nation Wellness Centers where



Photo by Christian Toews

Jordan Benson works out at the Wellness Center in Durant. Lifting weights has been shown to speed up metabolism helping to burn excess fat.

you can find top of the line fitness equipment, various fitness classes, nutritional counseling and free personal trainers.

Health resolutions aren’t the only difference you can try and make in your life. One good resolution for many Biskinik readers may be to learn more of the Choc-

taw language. There are lessons available online and community classes available across the state. You can get more information from the language department at 800-522-6170 Ext. 5163

If you’ve always wanted to finish your education there’s no better time than now. The Choctaw Nation Adult Education Program was designed to improve educational and employment opportunities for Native Americans who have not completed high school. High school equivalency classes are available at community centers for any CDIB cardholder who is 16 years old and not enrolled in school. Members who live outside the 10 ½ counties can take advantage of online classes to get their HSE.

If one of your resolutions is to get a better job, the Career Development department may be able to help. They can offer career guidance and assessment testing to help you find a job that is suited to your talents, financial assistance for quality training and employment services to help you find that job. For more information visit choctawcareers.com.

Maybe you’re a veteran and have a resolution of giving back to the community. One way would be to volunteer for the Choctaw Nation Color Guard.

If you have a loftier goal of giving back, the Choctaw Nation Adoption and Foster Care program is looking to recruit foster care resource homes for Choctaw children. Homes that can provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment that keeps the Choctaw heritage at the forefront can greatly impact a child’s life.

For more information on any of these programs, you can call 800-522-6170.

More affordable rental homes opened



20 new affordable rental homes were opened recently in the Choctaw Nation, 10 in Hugo, left, and 10 in Coalgate, right.

By Bobby Yandell

The Choctaw Nation’s affordable rental program expanded by 20 additional units on December 6, 2019 as ten units in both Coalgate and Hugo were opened with ribbon cuttings conducted by tribal leadership. Each of the homes is approximately 1,200 square feet with three bedrooms and washer/dryer hookups. They are open to tribal members who meet the income guidelines for the program, and rent will be based on 20% of their adjusted gross income with a \$200 deposit.

Chief Gary Batton spoke at each ribbon cutting and praised the Council for their work in planning and appropriating the money for these and other housing projects currently being built. Chief Batton also thanked the Council for their efforts to provide housing solutions for our tribal members, as 190 new rental units, both Independent Elder and Affordable Rental either have been built in the last two years or are currently being built,



with at least 60 more being planned for 2020.

Maykela and Linda Burchfield are one of the lucky ten families to get a brand new unit at the Hugo Affordable Rental site. Maykela has dealt with a plethora of medical issues over the years and her mother believes that a new home and environment will be beneficial to Maykela’s health. In the past, they have lived in older homes, usually in the country, where dander and other environmental issues have not helped with Maykela’s breathing problems. Now, in a new unit, not only are Maykela’s sinus issues better, but she has the opportunity for more socialization with her new neighbors!

Locations still to be opened this year for rental properties include: Stigler, Antlers, Idabel, Broken Bow, Wilburton, Savanna, Calera and Atoka. Applications for all rental properties can be picked up at any community center, at the Housing Authority office located at 207 Jim Monroe Road in Hugo or accessed online at the Choctaw Nation website.

Hearty Chicken Stew

- 4 small onions, quartered
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks
- 2 pounds chicken thighs, skin removed
- Kosher salt and freshly

- ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 pounds red bliss potatoes, washed and quartered
- 2 handfuls green beans, trimmed
- Handful thyme sprigs (optional)

Preparation

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

Nursery News



Kenzie Ann McCurtain

Angelita Diaz of Texas; and great-granddaughter of Jim McCurtain of Texas and the late Edna McCurtain. She is the great-great-granddaughter of the late Jackson Haskel McCurtain Sr. and the late Ernestine McCurtain.



Atara Dream Short

Atara Dream Short was born Oct. 29, 2019, at the Chickasaw Nation Medical Center in Ada, Okla. She weighed 9 lbs. and was 19 ½ inches long. Atara is the daughter of JoanaH Muska Harjo Tiger and Dillon Short; granddaughter of George Tiger and Jennifer Harjo, and Shonda Steele and Scotty Short; and great granddaughter of Jimsey and Betsy Harjo, Jeff and Marilyn Byington, Kathy and Gary Short, and Donna Byington.

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.

January 2019

All markets open weekdays, January 2-29,
Closed: January 1, 30 and 31.
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443
Nutrition education and food demo January 22, 10:00-1:00

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Nutrition education and food demo January 7, 10:00-1:00

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Nutrition education and food demo January 8, 10:00-1:00

MCALESTER 3244 Afulota Hina, 918-420-5716
Nutrition education and food demo January 21, 10:00-1:00

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Nutrition education and food demo January 14, 10:00-1:00

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation WIC & Connecting Kids With Coverage are Coming to a Location Near You


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

January Mobile Unit Schedule

2nd	Boswell - Across from Pushmataha Family Clinic
7th	Heavener
9th	Clayton - At the Choctaw Country Market
10th	Heavener
14th	Heavener
16th	Clayton - At the Choctaw Country Market
17th	Heavener
21st	Heavener
23rd	Clayton - Pushmataha Family Clinic
24th	Heavener
28th	Heavener
31st	Heavener

For More Information Call (580) 380-3628

Free backpack with every approved Connecting Kids to Coverage application.

		
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		

ITI FABVSSA

Enduring Legacy: Legal & Compliance

Over the next few articles, the Iti Fabvssa will reflect on each division of our executive branch of government: Legal and Compliance, Commerce, Strategic Development, Integrated Services, and Tribal Services. While our needs today are different from in the past, many of these services have deep roots in our Choctaw history. This article will focus on the Legal and Compliance Division of the Choctaw Nation. Of all the current divisions of government, Legal and Compliance may have the deepest roots. Within today’s Choctaw Nation, this division is made up of the Government Relations, Legal, Public Safety, Risk Management, and Land, Title and Natural Resources departments.

Before European arrival, our ancestors enjoyed God-given sovereignty within their Choctaw homeland. At that time, Choctaw society was made up of two iksa, or moieties. Social rules dictated that a Choctaw person could only marry someone from the opposite iksa, which meant that both iksa were present in each Choctaw community and household. Our ancestors maintained their own system of laws that reflected the greater good of the community and not one individual. The laws were enforced by the clan system and the concept of “an eye for an eye.” If someone committed a crime against a member of another tribe, or a member of another Choctaw clan, revenge might be taken against any member of that tribe/clan. When a crime was committed against another Choctaw person, the case was tried between the two iksa, with the person’s iksa acting as defense and the other as prosecution. When someone was sentenced to die for a crime, he never ran, because he knew that with the iksa system, his closest relative would have to die in his place if he sought to escape justice. Executed by a relative, a condemned man accepted that his death would prevent revenge from spiraling out of control within the community.

With the events of European contact that brought about military invasion, disease, and slaving raids, Choctaw sovereignty and system of governance were challenged. As more outsiders began to come into the Choctaw Nation, the iksa could no longer enforce the law as effectively. In response to the changes and to strengthen our communities, Choctaw leadership adopted a new system. During the mid to late 1700s, we shifted our three cultural regions into political districts: the Okla Hannali, Okla Falaya, and Okla Tannip, each led by a district Miko. There was also a Fvni Miko, or Squirrel Chief, who took on the role of a community ambassador, representing the interests of non-Choctaw individuals in the community during times of decision making. The three District Chiefs could more easily come together to represent a unified Choctaw people in negotiations with European nations. While our first constitution was passed in 1828, our three District Chief political system lasted until 1859.

In 1820, the District Chiefs organized the first Choctaw Lighthorsemen who had the authority to judge and carry out punishment within the Choctaw Nation. This continued through 1838 with the establishment of the Choctaw Court System, after which the Lighthorsemen carried out the punishments dictated by the Choctaw courts. The Lighthorsemen were members of the com-



Submitted photo

The new \$6.5 million facility will house the Choctaw Nation’s court systems, and can handle civil and criminal trials.

munities, who were chosen out of respect and involvement in the community. They assisted the community in times of need and served in various capacities.

When we look at our history, we can see that the Legal and Compliance division of the Choctaw Nation carries on these ancient functions today through the Government Relations, Legal, Public Safety, Risk Management, and Land, Title and Natural Resources departments. Brad Mallett, Senior Executive Officer of Legal and Compliance, states that “the mission of Legal and Compliance is to protect people, property, and sovereignty.”

Stepping forward into the present, the Land, Title and Natural Resources department comes from a community ethic of protecting our land and resources. As our ancestors had social rules within their communities, they also understood the rules of land stewardship they needed to follow to keep their way of life sustainable. Their agricultural fields were often planted on the most fertile soils alongside waterways. They understood that after so many seasons of planting, they would need to rotate to a new field. Fields were sometimes allowed to go fallow to let the nutrients and microbiology replenish before using the land again. They would use brush fires to clear areas for growth of river cane and other plants we used often. As with our fields, we also understood that hunting and fishing had to be carefully managed.

In the past, our ancestors held our land together as one people. As the land around them began to be managed by others, our people had to adapt. Today our Risk Management and Land, Title, and Natural Resources departments handle much of how we manage our land. Through these departments, the Choctaw Nation ensures that the land is managed sustainably and honors the preservation methods, policies of protection, passed down by our ancestors. Even in recent history we reached an historic water settlement between Choctaw Nation, Chickasaw Nation and the State of Oklahoma. Today the Choctaw Nation provides hunting and fishing licenses for tribal members to regulate the hunting activity on Choctaw lands, at the same time protecting

wildlife populations in the region. These departments also help maintain our land and natural resources that allow us to grow livestock like bison and cattle.

Today, we have representatives within the Choctaw Nation who carry on the basic roles of the Choctaw District Chiefs and Squirrel Chiefs. Our Government Relations department continues this tradition in working with our local, state and federal governments. This department negotiates and represents the Choctaw Nation on the frontline, engaging the White House, Congress, state and local governments. Joshua Riley, a Tribal Policy Analyst, explains that, “Sovereignty is our ability to be a self-governing nation. Sovereignty boils down to a group of people deciding for themselves, and free from external control, how their society should flow and function.”

While the Choctaw Nation’s Legal and Public Safety departments have been modernized, we still rely on the same ideals on which our iksa and lighthorsemen systems were built. Today, our Legal and Public Safety departments continue to strive to protect our Choctaw sovereignty and freedoms that our ancestors enjoyed in years past. We have a Probation Department that has improved

upon the state program, successfully allowing us to better mentor and grow our members who ask for help. Within Public Safety, Tony Bryant and Joe Hankins describe the Probation Department as being the “uncle” in the branch because they receive community members that are in need of assistance. They mentor, lead, and teach our members to follow a new track in life. Bryant and Hankins see sovereignty as a tool to protect our way of life and culture through their department.

Sustained by our long line of tradition, the Legal and Compliance Division is comprised of elders and young people, women and men with the mission to uphold, serve, and protect our sovereignty established by our ancestors. We have a Government Relations Department that is building relationships with members on a national scale, demonstrating the importance of what we are doing as a tribal nation.

Our sovereignty was given by God to us to give us the ability to live our fullest quality of life. Today, the Choctaw Nation’s sovereignty is acknowledged through the treaties we signed with the United States and other nations. The services that Choctaw Nation provides its membership demonstrate our sovereignty because we are able to operate independently for the good of the Nation. By looking at the way Choctaw people have governed ourselves throughout the history of our nation, we can see the way we used our sovereignty to better the lives of our people over time. In the words of Brad Mallett, “Legal and Compliance is here to support the Nation in effectively meeting those responsibilities so that sovereignty will continue to be protected.”

In upcoming articles, we will reflect more on the ways the divisions of the Choctaw Nation Executive Branch carry on ancient and important functions to the benefit of our community today. For more information, please contact Anthony Hill at 580-924-8280 ext. 2749 or at anthill@choctawnation.com. To read past issues of the Iti Fabvssa, including articles on the Lighthorsemen, visit <http://choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>

Thanksgiving Meals



Photo by Mary Ann Strombitski

District 11 Councilman Robert Karr poses with Choctaw Princesses at the McAlester Thanksgiving meal.



Photo by Casey Davis

Spiro community center members salute the flag before the Thanksgiving meal.



Photo by Payton Guthrie

Alyssa Willis plays with her daughter Lillian at the Tali hina Thanksgiving meal.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

Antlers Community Center
January 3, 2019
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



Photo by Diedre Elrod

Youth Advisory Board members and Chief Batton had a chance to visit during the Idabel Thanksgiving dinner. Seated left to right are Baleigh Harris, liNiyah Hornburger, Chief Batton, Mykah Beck, KaraLee Bundy. Standing left to right Paige Harris, Mattisyn Stone, Carson Sain, Tucker Bundy, Jaden Steaveson, Alexandra Gamez and Kolton Sain. Not pictured Kaelin Clay and Emmaleigh Kendrick.



Photo by Christian Toews

From left: Ashley Brown, Lucretia Urive and Kimberly Hill get ready to serve Smithville.



Photo by Christian Toews

From left Chayla Huggins, Carmen Garcia, Madisson Ludlow at the Smithville Thanksgiving meal.

Oklahoma First Lady Begins State Tour at Choctaw Nation

Oklahoma First Lady Sarah Stitt visited the Choctaw Nation Tuesday, Dec. 10, making it the first stop on her first statewide tour. The focus of her tour is to observe and share information on the care of Oklahoma's youth. Her visit began at the Choctaw Nation Child Development Center in Durant where a new \$20 million childcare center was announced.

Amanda Johnson, director of Choctaw Nation Child Care and Head Start, led the first lady and her group through the facility. From Infant Care to the Before-and-After School youth sections, and the colorful playground to the high-tech classrooms, Stitt got a firsthand view of the program.

Johnson made the announcement to the first lady and to the public that the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council has recently approved a new childcare center that will serve an additional 272 children. "Ground will be broken on the \$20 million center in January 2020," Johnson said. Construction will be on the Durant campus. Currently, the waiting list for admission to the existing Durant center is almost 500. The new center also means dozens of new full-time jobs in the childcare field.

"I am thankful for the investment that the Choctaw Nation makes in our early childhood programs," Johnson said. "We serve 620 children at 21 locations within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation. Our staff members are highly trained educators, who are passionate about our most precious resource, our children. From birth to preschool, our classrooms follow a research-based curriculum that promotes independence, resilience, language and literacy development."

Stacy Shepherd, executive officer of Choctaw Nation Member Services, which oversees tribal education, added about the program, "When I visit one of our Choctaw Nation Child Care facilities, I'm excited and want to be a kid again, back in school. Throughout history, the Choctaw Nation has placed a high value on education and understands the long-term impact of this early investment. Top priority is to provide a safe, learning environment with trained teachers to not only teach a curriculum for cognitive growth but also focus on building a creative, persevering, self-confident, self-controlled child ready for the school."



Photo by Christian Toews

Oklahoma First Lady Sarah Stitt began her first statewide tour Tuesday, Dec. 10 with a stop at the Choctaw Nation Child Development Center in Durant.

2019 Choctaw Pow Wow

By Shelia Kirven

The 15th annual Choctaw Pow Wow was held December 7-8 at the Choctaw Event Center in Durant. Over four hundred dancers from tribes all over the country and as far away as Canada came to participate in the weekend-long event of dancing, singing, foods, and crafts. Hundreds of spectators were also on hand throughout the weekend. Choctaw tribal member and dancer Michael Roberts served as Head Arena Director.

The Choctaw Color Guard and Tribal Council led the dancers into the arena at each Grand Entry. During Saturday evening's Grand Entry, Tribal Council Speaker Thomas Williston called for a dance of unity, inviting members of Oklahoma tribes present to join the Tribal Council on the arena floor. Many joined the Councilmembers in the arena for a time of solidarity in light of recent measures taken by Oklahoma Governor Stitt with regard to Oklahoma gaming compacts.

Over \$120,000 was awarded throughout the weekend in the different dance and drum categories. Each dancer's regalia was unique and as special as the dancers themselves, representing moments and events in their lives that they danced for. Categories of dance such as ladies' Shawl and Jingle dances, and men's Fancy and Chicken dances were among the various categories that kept the arena floor busy for two full days. Being one of the only tribes that includes a category for their tribal women, the Choctaw Traditional category is always highly anticipated. The dance is deeply connected to the matriarchal social structure of the Choctaw tribe, and women are honored as the givers of life.

Even the Tiny Tots participated, giving the young dancers the chance to dress in their regalia, line up and practice in preparation for the days they will enter the adult event categories.

Several food vendors were on hand serving traditional foods, and native crafters filled the areas outside the arena with beautiful hand-made items for sale.

The event was live streamed on powwows.com and watched by over 392,000 viewers in over 100 countries. Tentative dates for the 2020 Choctaw Pow Wow are December 5-6th.

Photos by Christian Toews, Shelia Kirven and Kellie Matherly



The Choctaw Nation Color Guard leads the dancers into the arena during one of the grand entries on Saturday, December 7th.



Choctaw artists, Jarvis and Sheila Johnson enjoyed the opportunity to set up a vendor booth at the weekend event.



Dancers make their way in during the grand entry.



A young Jingle Dress dancer dazzles the crowd during the Tiny Tots contest.



Dancers dress to honor their families and/or style of dance.



The kids danced in their regalia during the Tiny Tots contest.



Drummers keep the beat during the pow wow grand entries and dances with eight southern and four northern styles.



Dancers show the many styles of dance and regalia during the grand entry.



Erica Moore does some bead work on a pair of moccasins.



Over 400 dancers from the US and Canada participated. The event was watched live by over 392,000 in 100 countries.

Correct census count important for Southeast Oklahoma

By Bradley Gernand

A book of the Old Testament—the Book of Numbers—derives its name from two ancient censuses of the Israelites. The most famous census during Biblical times was taken at the time of Christ’s birth, as reported in Luke 2:1-5, and is a story known to generations of Christians. The need for countries to count their populations continues today.

The United States has conducted a census every ten years since 1790. This year, 2020, marks the twenty-fourth. In addition to counting residents, the upcoming census asks several questions designed to provide a glimpse of the health and well-being of the United States—a snapshot of life in the country at this particular point in time.

During the last U.S. Census in 2010, a worrying trend played out across southeastern Oklahoma, and was particularly pronounced in parts of the Choctaw Nation, which comprises all or parts of 13 counties. Large areas of the Choctaw Nation were categorized after the Census as low-response areas. In some places as many as 58% of households failed to fill out and return the Census.

Chief Gary Batton, seeking a better outcome in 2020, has convened a planning group to organize the tribe’s response to the challenge. These representatives from several departments and agencies of the Choctaw Nation have met weekly since July 2019. “We need to get the word out to all Choctaw tribal members, wherever they live, that we want them to fill out and return the Census,” said Melissa Landers, the group’s coordinator.

During the succeeding ten years the incomplete count from 2010 has made itself felt in several ways.

Southeastern Oklahoma has failed to qualify for the full amount of federal and state aid it would have received if all its residents had been counted in 2010. This aid typically translates into support for health care, public works, infrastructure and roadways, and education. The larger the number of residents appearing in the Census, the more money is typically made available.

For the Choctaw Nation, which derives a portion of its budget from the federal and

state grants it receives to carry out education, health care, and other programs, the funding shortfall has been particularly noticeable. In the case of one recent grant the Nation received \$200,000, rather than the \$1.2 million dollars it would have received had a full count of Choctaw tribal members living in its service territory been tallied.

Several of the affected programs service tribal members who live outside the Choctaw Nation’s boundaries, making it an issue of nationwide scope.

The 2020 Census is already in full swing. Thousands of census field workers, called enumerators, are already out canvassing neighborhoods to confirm physical addresses. On April 1, print forms will be mailed to every household in the nation and recipients may begin completing and returning them. The Census concludes on July 24.

The Census Bureau is expected to announce the new population counts by Dec. 31, 2020. It estimates the population of the United States will be approximately 333,546,000, an 8.03% increase from the 2010 Census. The number of Choctaw Nation tribal members is currently 226,000, and “We hope each of them will be counted in the Census,” Landers says.



Photo by Chris Jennings
Oklahoma Historical Society Archivist, Jon May examining Choctaw Nation censuses from the 1800’s.

Community, conversation, and coffee: Tipps serves them all

By Christian Toews

Wayne Tipps recently received the Chahtapreneur of the year award from the Choctaw Nation’s Small Business Development Department. This award comes after the opening of his new business, Sacred Grounds Coffee House in Antlers, Oklahoma. Every year, one Choctaw-owned small business from each district is recognized, and one of those exceptional businesses will win the Chahtapreneur of the Year award. Tipps was thrilled to win the award. “This award is not just about myself or my family but for Antlers and Pushmataha County. If we work together, just think about the things we can accomplish!” Tipps said in an interview with the Antlers American.

Tipps has been coming to Antlers since he was a child. He remembers spending almost every summer there with his grandparents. In May of 2000, Wayne moved his family to Antlers and became a permanent resident. Upon moving, he worked for several companies in the area doing electrical work. In 2006, he officially opened Tipps Electrical Service, Inc. He says that he found building a small business very challenging at first. “I found it very hard to build an electrical business that could support more people than just myself and a helper. Even though it was not a part of my plan, I started looking for bigger jobs in other cities: Ada, Ardmore, Hugo, etc., and we eventually grew to a crew of nine electricians,” Tipps said.

Tipps says his goal in opening Tipps Electrical Service, Inc. was to provide more opportunities for local tribal members. “I realized that something had to be done to help the Native people take back their future, retain an excellence in their work, and train the next generation up with a vision for the future.”

He turned this passion for helping the local community into action and became instrumental in starting the Antlers Business Association. “Since that time, the ABA has given money to the Antlers High School wood shop after someone broke in and stole equipment. We have bought body cameras for the sheriff’s department, paid for concrete work in front of the fair building, etc.,” Tipps said.

This passion for helping his community and local economy grow, led him to ask God for inspiration. “I did a lot of praying, and I know the Lord told me to start another business,” he said in his Chahtapreneur of the Year award video. That is when he decided to open Sacred Grounds Coffee House.

Since opening its doors, Sacred Grounds Coffee House has seen visitors from all over the country. Tipps says he wanted to build a place where people can come and connect. “Sacred Grounds is something that is beautiful, that is completely different from anything around here, where you can come, and you can relax and actually have a conversation with somebody. That’s the general idea behind this,” said Tipps.

Tipps says his love for coffee began when he was asked to make the coffee at church because it was a need at the time. “At the age of about 25 I asked my pastor, ‘how can I serve? How can I help?’ He thought for a minute and said, ‘I want you to learn to serve by making the coffee.’ Now, some 20 years later, I’m still serving coffee.”

Tipps continues to have a passion for his community and developing the area further. His two businesses have brought 13 new jobs to the Antlers area and continue to grow the local economy. You can visit Sacred Grounds Coffeehouse at: 206 SW B St. in Antlers, Oklahoma and online at www.sacredgroundstantlers.com.



Photos by Diedre Eldrod
Wayne Tipps stands outside Sacred Grounds Coffeehouse in Antlers, Okla. Tipps, who has been serving coffee to people for 20 years, started by serving at his church. Tipps has also served the Antlers area by bringing 13 jobs to the area through his two businesses helping to grow the economy.

BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

January 2019

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Page 3:
Chief Allen Wright inducted into Oklahoma Hall of Fame.



Page 11:
Pow Wow has nearly 400,000 viewers online.

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.

ACHIEVE YOUR DREAM OF BEING A DISTRICT PRINCESS OR TRIBAL ROYALTY

CHOCTAW PRINCESS IN TRAINING

JANUARY 4

WRIGHT CITY COMMUNITY CENTER
IDABEL, BROKEN BOW, BETHEL, ANTLERS AND WRIGHT CITY

JANUARY 18

DURANT COMMUNITY CENTER
ATOKA, DURANT AND HUGO

FEBRUARY 8

MCALESTER COMMUNITY CENTER
COALGATE, CROWDER, MCALESTER AND WILBURTON

FEBRUARY 15

TALIHINA COMMUNITY CENTER
POTEAU, SMITHVILLE, SPIRO, STIGLER AND TALIHINA

ALL TRAININGS ARE 11 AM - 2 PM | PARTICIPANTS AGES 8 - 22

CONTACT
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