



May 2019 Issue

## Firefighting just one part of Natural Resources

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation has long had a Natural Resources program. Over the years, that program and what it entails has changed in various ways. However, the goal remains the same – doing what’s best for the Choctaw people.

Whether that’s putting out a wildfire, better managing a tract of land or attempting to eradicate an invasive hog species, the scope of Natural Resources is large. Adding to the complexity, each resource can involve several departments in different aspects of its sustainability.

Forestry serves as a prime example of how sustainability can have a long-term effect.

Senior Director of Natural Resources Tom Lowry gives an example of harvesting timber. “It’s very simple, if you have 40 100-acre tracts, you could cut a 100-acre tract every year if it takes 40 years for your trees to grow.”

It’s when you have uneven management, when you, for example, cut two 40-acre tracts a year, that you don’t have long-term sustainability. That’s when it can have detrimental effects on generations to come because you eventually run out of timber.

Sometimes, that sustainability and its positive long-term effects can be a hard sell, though. Lowry says there’s more unity now, at least among the natural resource folks and those periphery programs.

“We can do and accomplish a whole lot more if we’re all pulling on the same rope in the same direction,” said Lowry.



# Three Decades

## Wildland firefighters continue the legacy

By Chris Jennings

Thirty years ago the Choctaw Nation began a wildland firefighter program in an effort to train young Choctaw tribal members in a marketable skill. After this training, Choctaw men and women traveled across the country to fight wildfires. That program is still going strong, with members fighting everything from large forest fires to small brush fires.

The unemployment rate for tribal members was 39% when the program started.

Senior Director of Natural Resources Tom Lowry said there was a lot of interest in the positions back then. “You sign up as a firefighter, and if you are available for every call, you might get three or four details a year.”

Each of those details was usually between two and three weeks long. Given the hazardous duty, and being away from home for long stretches at a time, firefighters were paid well for their work.

In 1989, the national minimum wage was \$3.35. That adds up to \$134 for a 40-hour week. In contrast, with each detail, firefighters could have earned between \$2,000 and \$2,500 when they returned home from a fire.

“To a lot of them that was the most money they had ever seen in their life,” said Lowry.

It wasn’t an easy job to get through. You had to go through an initial week-long training session at Tvshka Homma, competing against anywhere from 40 to 120 potential candidates.

Four days were spent in the classroom learning basic firefighting tactics and fire behavior. The final day was spent in the field doing the kind of hard work that would be expected on the job.

During the week there were also physical fitness tests. “Some people saw right away that it wasn’t for them and they just faded away,” said Lowry.

Others went on to complete the course and become a wildland firefighter. After that, it was a waiting game for the first call out. If you were available you were sent to wherever in the country you were needed.

The nature of a wildfire means they were usually in a secluded area. Accommodations were not always available.

To say the conditions were hard is an understatement. Oftentimes firefighters were sleeping shoulder to shoulder on the side of a hill with nothing but a tarp as their only shelter from the elements.

It’s those tough conditions that forged a good team, though.



Photo submitted

The first Choctaw Nation fire crew at Ocala National Forest in Florida.

**“They built a camaraderie that you really only ever see in either survivors of a catastrophe that were together, or the armed forces that were in combat.”**

– Tom Lowry

“They built a camaraderie that you really only ever see in either survivors of a catastrophe that were together, or the armed forces that were in combat,” said Lowry.

Not much has changed in the conditions wildland firefighters are forced to operate in. The tools are also about the same. Firefighters still use the shovel, the Pulaski and the rake to fight the spread of fire.

The technology has changed some. Lowry says radios are a little better and firefighters can use unmanned aerial reconnaissance, or drones, to safely observe fires from above.

A better understanding of the fuels has led to a better understanding of wildfires. “The fuels, nationwide, have been cataloged now as to what conditions they burn in, how they burn. We’ve kept really good records as far as fire histories,” said Lowry.

Now all of the information can be fed into a model to get a better understanding of how

a fire will behave.

Firefighters are better able to predict what a fire will do now.

“Maybe there’s some fuel down here that we know it’s not going to burn through. So why would we put people and equipment and all that down there,” said Lowry.

It’s not all about fighting fires, fire prevention is also a main focus of the wildland fire program.

Education is a big step in preventing wildfires. Things like the Smokey the Bear program and fire danger signs serve to educate the public. Youth education and public awareness are a big part of prevention.

Firefighters will also do control burns as part of a prevention program. Without enough natural fire, the ground can get covered with leaf litter and dead wood. Over time that can serve as a highly volatile fuel in the case of a wildfire.

By controlling the burns in certain areas fire managers are able to recreate the beneficial effects of naturally occurring fires. This, in turn, limits the effects of uncontrolled or unwanted fires.

From fighting to prevention, the Choctaw Nation firefighters continue a 30-year tradition of protecting both Choctaw and American resources, serving as a showcase of Choctaw values.



Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Choctaw Nation Judicial Center opening a historical event

Springtime has proven to be one of the busiest times of year for us here at the Choctaw Nation. We have held numerous groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings for projects such as the Choctaw Country Market in Boswell, and the Choctaw Travel Plaza/ Rustic Roast in Talihina. The Nation currently has 17 active construction projects in progress. The growth of the Nation has been nothing less than amazing to witness. We have come so far as a nation, and we continue that growth every day. It is an honor to bring our services to all of our tribal members.

We held a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 25 for the Choctaw Nation Judicial Center, located at 2250 Chukka Hina, Durant, east of the Wellness Center. This 15,389-sq.-ft. state-of-the-art facility houses two hearing rooms and one ceremonial courtroom “Ishahli”, meaning main, superior, better, principal,

and sovereign greater. Additional offices will accommodate three justice chambers, the Judicial Executive Administration, the Court Clerk Administration and the Probation Division of the judicial branch. The new building is the first Choctaw courthouse to be built since 1883.

The history of the court system is plentiful. In the 1830s, our ancestors traveled the Trail of Tears to a new home full of uncertainty. They set up their own three-branch government, which implemented the Judicial Branch Courts, and paved the way for our Nation’s judicial system today. Our tribe is still governed by the Choctaw Nation Constitution, which was ratified by the people June 9, 1984. The Constitution provides for an executive, legislative and judicial branch, operating as three separate powers of government, under one nation.

The judicial branch and system are structured to diligently interpret the laws and to provide justice, as well as to develop and sustain the integrity of the courts. The Court of General Jurisdiction consists of the District Court and the Court of Appeals, with the Peacemaker Court utilized as an Alternative Dispute Resolution resource. The Choctaw Constitutional Court is the highest level of Court, seating the Chief Justice of the Judicial Branch, and two Tribal Judges, with exclusive jurisdiction to hear disputes arising under any provision of



Photo By Chris Jennings

the Choctaw Nation Constitution, any rule or regulation enacted by the tribal council, and any other matters on appeal from the Court of General Jurisdiction. The judicial branch also consists of an Executive Administration, Court Clerk Administration and the Probation/Community Service Division.

In 2015, our legislation enacted the Tribal Law and Order Act. Our Nation has taken advantage of this authority by not only providing justice to victims, but also focusing on rehabilitation and sobriety for the offenders. Non-violent offenders often receive probation or community service and are often given the opportunity to work off court costs and fines by reporting to the Judicial Probation Division.

For more information on the Judicial Branch and Court System, please watch for the future website now being constructed at choctawnationcourt.com.

Choctaw Nation strives to raise awareness for mental health



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

May is national mental health awareness month. Mental health awareness is an issue that I am very passionate about. I currently serve on a national board for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and am an advocate for mental health.

Mental illness does not discriminate. It is something that affects communities and families of all races. Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in behavior, emotions and thinking. Mental illness can take many forms and it’s not always clear to understand.

However, we shouldn’t be afraid or ashamed to talk about our mental health. To truly help each other, we need to shake the stigma around mental health. The first step in doing that, is talking about it.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 1 in 5 adults experience mental illness, nearly 1 in 25 adults live with serious mental illness and half of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14 in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

states that depression affects 20 to 25% of Americans ages 18 and up. Those are staggering statistics, and Native Americans are at higher risk than other races. According to SAMHSA, 1.2% of the U.S. population identified as Native American or Alaskan Native in the 2014 census. Of those, 21% had a diagnosable mental illness in the past year.

Sadly, many individuals do not seek treatment or help. According to NAMI, nearly 60% of adults with mental illness didn’t receive mental health services in the previous year, and nearly 50% of young people ages 18 through 25 didn’t receive help.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death in ages 15 through 24 and the fourth in adults ages 18-65 in the U.S. Shockingly, according to a recent study by JAMA Pediatrics, the number of children and teens visiting the emergency for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts nearly doubled between 2007 and 2015. The same study found estimated annual emergency room visits for suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts increased from 580,000 to 1.12 million in that time period, 43% of which were reportedly for ages 5 to 11.

The statistics are shocking, but here at the Choctaw Nation, we want to help reduce those numbers. We are committed to helping our tribal members who are struggling with these issues. Our Zero Suicide Team works to raise awareness, provide prevention and intervention for individuals at risk. Our Behavioral Health department provides a variety of services for tribal members ranging from counseling, case management, psychiatric evaluations, management crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

These services are available at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center and all Choctaw Nation clinics by appointment. If you feel like these services could benefit you please reach out by calling 918-567-3065.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, I urge you to call the National Suicide Hotline at 800-273-8255.

Why Care?

60 Million

Approximately 60 million people in the United States face the day-to-day reality of managing the symptoms of a mental illness.

nami.org/whycare

NAMI

Faith Is Pleasing

PASTOR OLIN WILLIAMS



Pastor Olin Williams Employee Chaplain

Humility is a wonderful trait. In Matthew 8: the centurion came unto Jesus and asked Him to heal a servant who was sick. Jesus said, “I will come and heal him.” The centurion answered, “I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof. Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed.” Then Jesus said, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

In Matthew 15, the Gentile woman persevered in asking Jesus to cleanse her daughter from the vexation of the devil. Finally, Jesus answered her, “Woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt.”

Perseverance is a good trait. In Mark 10, the blind man was earnest in his request to have his sight restored. Many people tried to discourage him from crying out to Jesus, but he cried the more to receive mercy from the Lord. Jesus answered unto him, “Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.” And immediately, the blind man received his sight.

Earnestness is also a powerful trait. In each situation, Jesus saw faith and rewarded that. In faith all the other graces find their source. Hebrews 11:6 states, “But

without faith it is impossible to please him.” It is not faith in the traits. Faith is not believing a thing without evidence: on the contrary faith rests upon the best of evidence, namely the Word of God. Jesus is the Word. Faith always has the idea of action – movement towards its object. It is the consent of the will to the assent of the understanding. A man may believe with his head without believing with his heart; but he cannot believe with his heart without believing with his head too. The heart means the whole man – intellect, sensibilities, and will. It was the faith in Christ which created the humility, perseverance and earnestness in each case.

Trail of Tears Bicycle Ride is May 17-24

Team members ride to remember removal

The Choctaw Nation Trail of Tears Bicycle Team will embark on the eighth annual Trail of Tears bicycle ride May 17-24. Team members are slated to ride approximately 500 miles along portions of the removal route that marks the 1830s’ migration from Philadelphia, Mississippi, to Durant, Oklahoma.

The purpose of the journey is to retrace the steps of our Choctaw ancestors on two wheels, honoring them via spiritual, physical and mental means. The group also seeks out Choctaw heritage sites within the states of the removal.

The Choctaw Nation Bicycle Team is a group of individuals invested in honoring their ancestors’ hardships on the Trail of Tears and many other struggles throughout history; while maintaining a healthy lifestyle, staying active and balancing the mind, body and spirit.

Bicycle team members work throughout the year to raise funds to cover the costs of the seven-day ride for 20 people. Fundraisers include the sale of food items at the Boom in the Valley celebra-



tion July 3 at Tvshka Homma and the Labor Day Festival, as well as hosting a Veteran’s Day 15K and Youth Bike Ride every year. Various departments and individuals throughout the Choctaw Nation generously supply additional donations of food, drink and transportation that make up the difference. Join the celebration as Chief Batton joins the team to conclude the journey in Durant on Friday, May 24, at the tribal headquarters, 1802 Chukka Hina, next to the Choctaw Nation Regional Medical Clinic.

SATURDAY May 18

Trail of Tears Walk

Living out the Chahta Spirit ♦ 2019

10:00 a.m.

Capitol Grounds ♦ Tvshka Homma Council House Rd ♦ Tuskahomma, OK 74574

Choctaw Nation



Photo by Deidre Elrod

The 2018 Trail of Tears Bicycle Team ends their ride at the Choctaw Nation headquarters in Durant.



# Easter Celebration



Photo by Judy Allen  
Raynie and Ace Tom having fun.



Photo by Lisa Reed  
Paisley, Jaycee and Meshaya Kennedy find the Easter bunny.



From left: Carson Hammonds and Madeline Clay with her stuffed animal and cornhusk doll; 1-month-old Aaron Castillo at his first Easter celebration; and, children line up for their goody bags.

Families, young and old, ignored the cold, rainy weather to attend Chief Gary Batton's Annual Easter Celebration April 13 at Tvshka Homma. Groups arrived early to celebrate spring, their faith, and the Choctaw culture. Eggs would have to be hunted another year; however, each child was given a bag with Easter goodies and a stuffed animal. The Easter bunny was in attendance and tables around the room provided cultural demonstrations, program information, and lunch.

With lunch were napkins. Choctaw Nation Employee Chaplain Olin Williams shared a message with a promise that we would never look at our napkins the same way again. He began reading from the 20th chapter of the book of John.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was still dark unto the sepulchre and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

"Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

"Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

"And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

"Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie.



Photo by Lisa Reed  
Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin listen while Olin Williams brings an inspirational message during the annual Easter celebration.

be about the napkin. A while ago you had to wipe your face with a napkin. Everywhere you go there are napkins. After today, you will realize every time you use a napkin you are going to be reminded about the resurrection.

"In verse 7 when he says, 'the napkin that was about his head' – picture when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, they put a crown of thorns on his head. His head was bloody. His back was bloody. And so after he died, they buried him.

"The Lord had said he would rise again. And so they came to look in the tomb – the sepulchre – and they didn't see the body of the Lord Jesus Christ there. All they saw were the linen clothes he had worn. The thing that really got their attention was the napkin or the piece of cloth that was wrapped around his head. It was neatly folded and lain there by itself. What's the message?

"To understand the message we must go back to the Hebrew tradition. It's about the way the master and the servant functioned in those days. When the master of the house had a servant, the servant would prepare the food, set the table, do everything that is necessary and when he's through would motion to the master that everything is set. And the master would come and eat, and the servant quietly left the room and would wait in the other room. Once in a while he would peak in to see if the master had finished eating. When the master was through eating he would wad up the napkin and lay it on the table and leave. That was a sign that he was through. That was a sign for his servant to come and clean up the table. If for some reason, the master was going to leave but was going to be coming back, instead of wadding the napkin he would fold it up in a nice fold and place it next to the plate. And so when the servant looked in it was a sign he's not through. He is coming back. So when the disciples looked in the sepulchre and they saw that the napkin had been neatly folded the message was, 'I'm not done. I am coming back.'

"You see we serve a risen Savior today. He will come back. And so every time you use a napkin be reminded of the message of the resurrection of Christ."

## Inspire What's Next – Make a difference in the world

Throughout the years, the Biskinik has introduced readers to countless inspiring tribal members who are out there making a difference in the world. Phase two of the Together We're More advertising campaign will highlight many of those special individuals.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has once again partnered with the Dallas-based Richard's Group Inc. to introduce the second phase of Together We're More, Inspire What's Next.

In 2017, the Together We're More campaign

launched. The first phase informed views of the impact Choctaw business has on the communities within the 10 ½ counties, and how the Choctaw Nation is more than just casinos.

The goal of Inspire What's Next is to tell the story of the Choctaw Nation through the inspiring stories of tribal members, employees and tribal members who are employees.

These stories are about cultivating leaders, strengthening families, supporting our neighbors and building economic

opportunities.

The second phase was designed with creating a unified sense of pride among employees, tribal members and surrounding communities in mind. This phase shines a light not only on what the Nation is achieving as an entity but as a tribe of people.

Inspire What's Next will introduce viewers to tribal members like Angelina Cortez.

Cortez held a book drive in her hometown of Weatherford, Texas. She collected book donations for the Choctaw Nation

Head Start and Early Childhood Development programs. Cortez volunteers at the Weatherford Public Library and is an avid reader. She understands the importance of reading and having access to books.

Cortez drove 3 hours to deliver the books to the Choctaw Childhood Development Center in Durant March 11. She read a story to students and helped them create a craft based on the book.

Cortez draws inspiration from her grandmother, who also enjoys volunteering and helping

others. Cortez is living out the Chahta spirit and inspiring what's next.

Cortez is just one of many out there representing the Choctaw Nation to the best of their ability.

Much like the previous phase, Inspire What's Next will feature traditional advertising tools such as billboards and television commercials.

However, it will also utilize nontraditional aspects that the Nation is excited to roll out.

Social media is a fantastic advertising tool. According to a recent study, over 3 billion people

worldwide use social media. The Choctaw Nation itself has a strong social media presence. With this in mind, the campaign will launch #Inspire-WhatsNext.

Users are encouraged to share their own story of how the Choctaw Nation has impacted their lives, and how they are living out the Chahta Spirit.

Users are encouraged to use the hashtag and share their own story of how the Choctaw Nation has impacted their lives, and how they are living out the Chahta Spirit.

## Tie a blue ribbon



### Groups commit to prevent child abuse

"Wear Blue Day" is a day for individuals and organizations across Oklahoma to come together to make a visible commitment to preventing child abuse and supporting strong families and healthy children throughout the state. The Choctaw Nation participated with signs lining the drive and the lobby of the headquarters and other facilities, blue ribbons in the trees, and people wearing their blue. #ChoctawsMakingADifference photos have been uploaded to show support throughout the Nation. Several

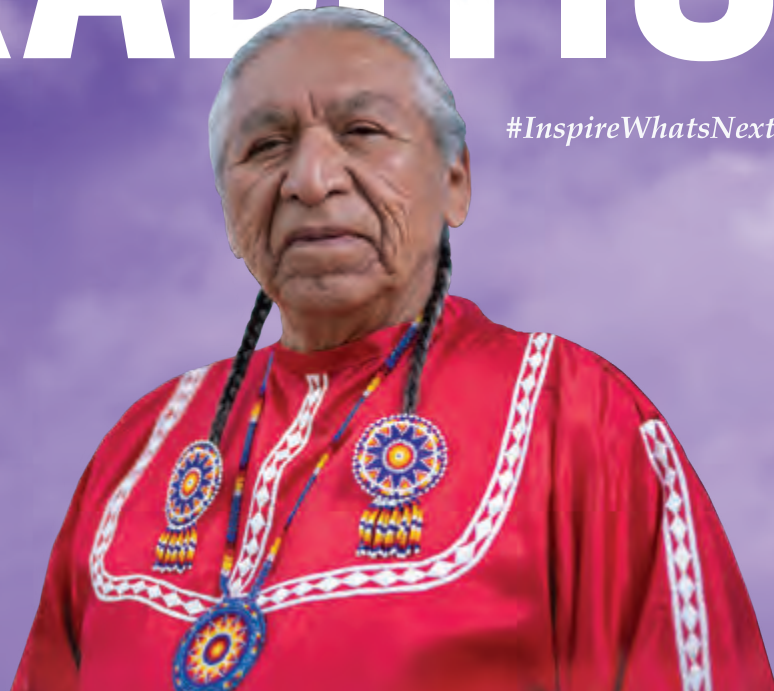
awareness events were also held during April including the towers of Choctaw Casino & Resort - Durant going blue in support of Child Abuse Awareness Month. Circling the towers of light was the hashtag, #Keep-KidsSafe.

A training for those who work in the field of crimes against children was scheduled in Atoka. Choctaw Nation Family Preservation also held a Commit To Prevent 2 mile fun run/walk on April 27 in Durant.

Within Oklahoma, if someone suspects child abuse and neglect, please call Oklahoma's child abuse and neglect hotline at 800-522-3511. If a child resides within the 10 ½ counties, they may also call Choctaw Nation Children and Family Services at 580-298-5289.

# INSPIRE TRADITION

#InspireWhatsNext



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

◆ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ◆



Council Corner



Jennifer Woods, District 6

Programs benefit District 6 tribal members

Halito, District 6 Latimer County is ready for spring and we are still accepting LEAP Home, Senior Housing, and Affordable Housing applications with more homes set to start construction soon. Please, don't pre-judge your approval. Send it to Bobby Yandell, executive director of Choctaw Nation Housing. His employees are doing an outstanding job in assisting you in determining your status/need. Homes are very important for all people to have a safe and clean place to live. It's a blessing to drive by LEAP homes throughout the 10 ½ counties and see the families living in nice homes. District 6 continues to experience growth with the new Travel Plaza and Rustic Roast coffee opening and the Child Development /Day Care opening in June.

The jobs and services provided to the community are just some of the many blessings we are thankful to Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin, and all of Tribal Council for allocating the dollars and support in meeting the needs in our communities.

Choctaw Nation has many, many wonderful programs, but one I would like to spotlight that we get daily contact and feedback about is Job for the Day. Our representative for District 6, Kim Hill, and Mike Fryer, director of JFTD, support finding jobs for our Tribal members. There are so many success stories, but want to share a combination win for District 6 – Buckley Anderson, general manager of Travel Plaza/Casino, and Kim Hill have placed nine Choctaw tribal members at Wilburton Travel Plaza and



Photo submitted

Choctaw Travel Plaza & Casino Too in Wilburton is "Most Improved Travel Plaza." Pictured from left are employees Kim Hill, Jaclyn Sutton, Amanda Williams, Kristen Renne, Tommy Hammonds and Buckley Anderson.

they are now permanent employees. These two workers have shown their commitment to helping our tribal members becoming self-sufficient and having pride in having a job and being able to have a better life. JFTD is one of my favorite programs. When they share about working and being able to buy tires, or shoes for their children, to pay rent or so many opportunities that come with having a job, you know that your work is helping others. It truly shows from Buckley Anderson on down to every shift and position because Wilburton Travel Plaza was awarded the Most Improved Travel Plaza. It took all the employees to win that award

from the clean parking lot to walking in and being greeted with a "Halito" and smiles on their faces. The true Chahta spirit is displayed. If you need more information on this wonderful program or know someone that is looking for work please contact Kim Hill at Choctaw Nation. Summer Youth will be working all over District 6 and this is a terrific opportunity for our youth to learn strong work ethic and skills that can help them later and earn some money also and how to budget and save wages. District 6 is looking forward to working with our Summer Youth

We have staff from a Choctaw Nation program attending our Wednesday lunch every week, sharing information about programs. We learn so much. Please watch the weekly News Tribune for the schedule of programs. The District 6 Choctaw Seniors' activity calendar is in the weekly News Tribune and in the Biskinik monthly. We want all Choctaw Seniors to participate.

Hugo WILD ONION DINNER



A gathering April 16 at the Community Center in Hugo kicked off this spring's round of wild onion dinners. Sisters Evelyn and Wynona James, left photo, and Chief Gary Batton and Adeline and Loren Hudson are enjoying the fellowship.



Henry Rodriguez and Dena Hunter, left photo, and Councilman Perry Thompson, and Tiger and Misty Moore look forward to the traditional wild onions and eggs.



It was a full house and servers were ready to hand out the meals quickly and efficiently, with smiles for everyone. Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., right photo, visits with friends.



Photos by Lisa Reed

District 8 senior singers share two hymns during the program.



Ron Perry, District 5

Choctaw Nation active in Haskell County community

Halito, District 5 has seen many improvements over the last year which will ultimately benefit many generations of Choctaw Nation members to come. District 5 received 10 new LEAP homes and was able to provide 10 families in our area with housing. We are planning to build 10 more elderly housing units and 10 rentals in the near future. Choctaw Nation has partnered with the Haskell County Chamber of Commerce in the construction of a brand new sports complex. The complex will consist of four softball and baseball fields and a soccer/softball field. This addition to the community will bring in growth and revenue to the district.

Our district offers many services to our members. We have a facilities maintenance hub, Choctaw Nation daycare and Head Start, travel plaza, casino, wellness center, community centers in Spiro and Stigler, and a health and dental clinic. District 5 has contributed to several roads getting paved and the McCurtain school parking lot.

District 5 also received the Business Community Involvement Award for the involvement and contribution to the Haskell County community.

Our senior citizens participate in a number of activities throughout the year at the community centers. They participate in day trips, fundraisers, senior fitness challenges, bingo, silent auctions, beading, and shopping trips.

They enjoy exercise and chair volleyball on Mondays and Thursdays.

We have our senior lunches every Wednesday at 11:30 for anyone interested in attending.



Photos submitted



Beading and volleyball are regular activities for District 5 seniors.



Photo submitted

District 7 students place at Oklahoma Youth Expo

Several District 7 Choctaw youths participated in the 2019 Oklahoma Youth Expo livestock show. Hunter Hawkins, top right, raised the Breed Champion Duroc Gilt, placed fifth in class 14 and 12th in division II with his Commercial Gilt. He was 6th in class 3 with his Duroc Barrow and 4th in class 3 with his Yorkshire Barrow.

Gabby Marsh, Antlers 4-H, below, was Class 7 winner and 4th overall Hampshire Barrow 2019 OYE. Marsh collected four grands, five reserve grands and nine breed champions.

Christian Hammond, Antlers FFA, below, had the Champion Duroc Gilt. Shaelynn Hokett, Rattan 4-H, top left, was class 6 winner with her Duroc Gilt.





Notes to the Nation

EVENTS

District 5 Events

SPIRO

**May 2:** Indian Taco Dinner Fundraiser  
**May 8:** Senior Day, Event Center, Durant  
**May 18:** Trail of Tears Walk, Tvshka Homma  
**June 6:** Indian Taco Dinner Fundraiser  
**June 12:** Veterans Dinner, 11:30 a.m.

**Weekly/Monthly events:**  
Senior Citizen Lunch - Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m.  
Exercise Class - Mondays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

STIGLER

**May 8:** Senior Day, Event Center, Durant  
**May 16:** CN Head Start Graduation 6 p.m. (tentative)  
**May 18:** Trail of Tears Walk, Tvshka Homma  
**June 5:** Veterans Dinner, 11:30 a.m.

**Weekly/Monthly events:**  
Senior Citizen Lunch - Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m.  
Volleyball Class - Mondays and Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.  
Choctaw Language Class - Tuesdays, 6 p.m.  
Beading - Wednesdays, 1 p.m.  
Silent Auction - 1st Wednesday of the month, 10-noon  
Pocola Casino - 3rd Wednesday of the month, 3 p.m.  
Bingo - 4th Wednesday of the month, 10:30 a.m.

Parnell Family Reunion

**June 1 • 10 a.m.-3 p.m.**  
Choctaw Community Center, Smithville.  
Bring a covered dish and enjoy your day.  
Contacts: Louise Hamrick 580-244-3478  
Sharon Youngblood 580-244-7372 or  
Doylene Vaught 580-244-7276

Baker Family Reunion

**June 8**  
The Noel Baker and Roxie (Loman) Baker family reunion will be June 8 at the “Old Choctaw Nation Community Center,” SW O Street in Antlers. Meat will be provided. Please bring a side dish and refreshments.  
Contact: Mary Hayes 918-698-0583  
Georgia 580-236-4402 or Mary D. 580-982-6300

Brokeshoulder Family Reunion

**June 14-15**  
The 15th annual Brokeshoulder family reunion will be held June 14-15 at the  
Sac and Fox Community Center in Shawnee.  
For more information:  
Kenneth Johnson 580-924-8922 or 580-740-9977  
or email Wynona Lumpmouth at  
absenteeshaw@yahoo.com.

Biskinik  
Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above. Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.  
News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.  
We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.  
All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

**Mail to: Biskinik  
P.O. Box 1210  
Durant, OK 74702  
or email: biskinik@ChoctawNation.com**

*Gary Batton  
Chief*

*Jack Austin Jr.  
Assistant Chief*

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The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal Members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double spaced. You must include an address or phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

**If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Direct Member Communications would appreciate hearing from you.**

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation.

Circulation is monthly. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run the following month.

Editor's note: Views and opinions in reader-submitted articles are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Choctaw Nation.



District 6 Events

**May 2:** Parenting Class, 2-4 p.m.  
**May 3:** Community Prayer Meeting & breakfast, 7 a.m.  
**May 7:** Parenting Class, 2-4 p.m.  
**May 8:** Senior Day, Event Center, Durant  
**May 9:** Senior Day Trip, Durant Casino (bus leaves 8:30)  
**May 9:** Small Business Class, 9 a.m.  
**May 9:** Parenting Class, 2-4 p.m.  
**May 14:** Parenting Class, 2-4 p.m.  
**May 15:** Mother's Day lunch  
**May 16:** Parenting Class, 2-4 p.m.  
**May 18:** Trail of Tears Walk, Tvshka Homma  
**May 27:** Memorial Day-Tribal Holiday - Center closed

Bingo Night – May 3

A Bingo Fundraiser will be held May 3, at the District 6 Community Center, 1056 NW 1003rd Ave., Wilburton. The doors will open at 6 p.m. and Bingo will begin at 7 p.m. The seniors have been working diligently, collecting door prizes, as well as game prizes. A few of the packages to be given away include a 50" VIZIO 4K-HDR Smart TV, fishing package, Pioneer Woman package, and the grand prize is an overnight package which includes two tickets to the Hank Williams Jr. concert at the Grand Theater. There will be a silent auction as well as a drawing for an eagle-design queen-size quilt made by the seniors. Concession will be available.

Appreciation Dinner – May 23

District 6 Choctaws and Councilwoman Jennifer Woods will be hosting an Appreciation Dinner at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 23, at the District 6 Choctaw Community Center.

Weekly Events  
Mondays

Senior Fitness Program 55 + at 9 a.m.  
Wellness Center Chair Volleyball at 9:30 a.m.  
Language Class at 6 p.m.

Wednesdays

Lunch and Guest Speaker at 11 a.m.  
Cake will be served on the first Wednesday of the month for that month's birthdays.

Veterans Lunches

The Choctaw Nation honors the veterans in its districts each year with a special lunch ceremony at the veterans' respective community centers.

June 5

- Hugo Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Wright City Community Center – Noon
- Coalgate Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Stigler Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Poteau Community Center – Noon
- Broken Bow Community Center – 11 a.m.
- Smithville Community Center – Noon
- Idabel Community Center – 11:15 a.m.

June 12

- Wilburton Community Center – Noon
- Antlers Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Spiro Community Center- 11 a.m.
- Bethel Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Durant Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Crowder Community Center – 11 a.m.

June 19

- Talihina Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Atoka Community Center – 11:30 a.m.

June 21

- McAlester Community Center – 11:15 a.m.

Gospel Singing

**May 11**  
Supper starts at 5:30 p.m.  
Blackjack Church, 11 miles east of Rattan on Hwy 3  
Contact Mary Jo Woody for more information.  
580-372-5114

Annual Singing

**May 19**  
Hampton Chapel Church  
5:30 p.m. Wild Onion Supper; 7 p.m. Singing  
Emcee: Israel Tims; Soundman: Lee Noah  
2 miles East of Spencerville  
Contact Wynona James 580-317-3320

Chilocco Reunion

**May 30-June 2**  
Chilocco Campus and First Council Casino Hotel  
Event Center For more information,  
please log onto chiloccoalumni.org.

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 interesting in applying for a loan a representative will be available at the:

**Wright City Community Center  
May 10, 2019  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**



Tribal Council  
Monthly Regular Session

The Choctaw Nation Tribal Council met in regular session April 13 at Tvshka Homma, Oklahoma.

Minutes of the March 9 regular session were approved.  
New business included:

a) A Resolution to Proclaim the Month of April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

b) Approve the Proposed FY19 Budget for Jones Academy – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

c) Approve the FY19 Budgets for the Consolidated Tribal Government Programs for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

d) Rescind CB-117-17 and Approve Funding for Remodel and Reimage of Choctaw Village Shopping Center in Idabel – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed

e) Approve Funding for Construction of New Travel Plaza and Casino Too in Durant, Oklahoma – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

f) Approve Grazing Lease No. 4200166965, in Favor of Kevin Burch on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation in Latimer County, Oklahoma – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

g) Approve Grant Right of Way No. 4200167987, in Favor of Oklahoma Natural Gas Company, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, in Bryan County, Oklahoma – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

h) Approve the Application for Head Start Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) Funds – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

i) Approve a Revised Budget Proposal for the FY19 Budget for the Early Head Start Program of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma – Vote counts: YEAs-unanimous; vote result: bill passed.

Other new business:

Hire councilor for tribal council – Vote counts: YEAs-11; Abstain-1.

Council members present: Thomas Williston, Tony Ward, Kenny Bryant, Delton Cox, Jennifer Woods, Ronald Perry, Jack Austin, Perry Thompson, James Dry, Anthony Dillard, Bob Pate, James Frazier.

The next regular scheduled council meeting will be 10 am, May 11 in Tvshka Homma. For detailed meeting information on these resolutions and Council bills, go to [www.choctawnation.com/government/tribal-council/council-meetings-and-bills](http://www.choctawnation.com/government/tribal-council/council-meetings-and-bills).

NOTES

I write this letter with gratitude in my heart to the Choctaw Nation for the emergency assistance with my utility bill during the coldest, longest winter in the Pacific NW. In addition to the long winter I got sick while out of town and needed emergency assistance; my insurance covered only a portion of the bill. With humility and respect I contacted the Health Care Services office and received the help I needed. When the storms rise up in our life we never know where the blessing is going to come from, the wind carried the Choctaw Nation all the way to Vancouver, Washington to bless me and I say, “Yakoke”.

**Angela Guess Westbrooks, descendant of Sophia Miller and Theodore Guess**

I am reaching out with hope in reconnecting with members of the Watson family. My oldest sibling is Jennifer Watson. Our father is Ronald Watson. Our grandmother is Juanita Watson. Anyone reading this message, please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is missarh2018@gmail.com, and contact phone number is 626-378-2903. Thank you.

**Alexis R. Hernandez**

2019 District Princess Pageants

Pageants will take place at 6 p.m. at the corresponding Choctaw Community Center unless otherwise listed.

**May 16 - Antlers  
May 16 - Atoka  
May 16 - Hugo  
May 23 - Coalgate  
May 23 - Idabel  
May 23 - Talihina  
May 31 - Durant at the Choctaw Event Center**

[www.choctawnation.com/2019-2020-district-princess-pageant-information](http://www.choctawnation.com/2019-2020-district-princess-pageant-information)



Choctaw  
Nation  
Vocational  
Rehabilitation

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

**Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday**

**June 3** Atoka • 11 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 4** Wright City • 10 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 5** Antlers • 10 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 5** Poteau • 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 7** Crowder • 10 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 10** Coalgate • 11 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 11** Idabel • 10 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 11** Talihina • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
**June 12** McAlester • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
**June 12** Stigler • by appointment  
**June 14** Wilburton • 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m.  
**June 25** Broken Bow • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
**June 25** Talihina • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
**June 26** Poteau • 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**June 26** McAlester • 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
**June 28** Antlers • 10 a.m.-1 p.m.



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 14, 2019**

**Notice is Hereby Given,** That the Election Board office is primarily maintained by the Director of Voter Registration ex officio Secretary of the Election Board. The office is located at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters, 1802 Chukka Hina, Durant, OK 74701 in the Voter Registration Suite, Office #1253. The office hours shall be Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and will close to observe all holidays recognized by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

The election schedule shall follow as:

### PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE FILING PERIOD

Elective offices are Council District 1, Council District 2, Council District 3, Council District 5, Council District 8, Council District 11, and Chief.

Mon, April 22, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaiahcvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701
Tues, April 23, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaiahcvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701
Wed, April 24, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaiahcvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701

### CONTEST OF CANDIDACY PERIOD

Thurs, April 25, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaiahvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701
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## CANDIDATE INFORMATIONAL SESSION

Thurs, April 30, 2019	4:00 P.M.	Location to be announced to Candidates.
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## PUBLIC NOTICE OF GENERAL ELECTION CALENDAR

## GENERAL ELECTION

Sat, June 22, 2019		Deadline for the distribution of Mail-in Ballots to all active voters. Ballots will continue to be issued through Election day for new or updated voters.
Fri, July 12, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	*Early Voting / Same Day Registration
	4:30 P.M.	Deadline that all Mail-in Ballots must be received and processed by the U.S. Postal Service in Durant, OK in order to be counted. The Election Board will not accept Mail-in Ballots at its office.
Sat, July 13, 2019	7:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M.	Same Day Registration
*Voting locations to be announced later.	*General Election	

### CONTEST OF IRREGULARITIES, DEATH OR FRAUD PERIOD

Mon, July 15, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaichvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701
Tues, July 16, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaichvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701
Wed, July 17, 2019	8:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.	Ibaichvffa (Membership) Room #1251 at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters 1802 Chukka Hina Durant, OK 74701

To update your Voter information, visit [www.choctawnation.com/vote](http://www.choctawnation.com/vote) to print a Voter Registration Form and return to the Voter Registration Department.

General instructions are located on the back of the form.

For more information about tribal elections, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/elections> or contact us by email at ElectionBoard@choctawnation.com.

Talihina Public School's Johnson-O'Malley program

“ ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world,’ ” said JOM Program Coordinator June Praytor as she announced the group. “ ‘Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever does.’ ” The Margaret Mead quote describes Talihiina’s JOM Program which currently serves 267 eligible JOM students.

Also awarded during the banquet were: Jenks Public School (Muscogee-Creek Nation), Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes (BIA), Grove Public School (Cherokee Nation) and Dickson Public School (Chickasaw Nation).



Front row from left, Councilmember Jennifer Woods, Chairperson Christine Ramirez; Talihiina JOM Vice Chairperson Kandice Thompson, JOM Secretary Tracy King, JOM Committee Members Nakisha Garcia-Mejia and Vicki Moses, and JOM Coordinator Imogene Bugos. Back row from left, Councilmembers Tony Ward, Pery Thompson, Ron Perry, Anthony Dillard, James Dry, Thomas Williston and Delton Cox, Talihiina School Superintendent Jason Lockhart, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., Choctaw Nation JOM Director Shane Haddock and Chief Gary Batton.



# Choctaw Nation

Education Services  
College Freshman Year Initiative

**CH**  
FOR INCO  
Contact

**What to expect from**

- Move in early
- Resolve any enro
- Experience cultu
- Develop new frie
- Access campus o
- Earn orientation

**CARL ALBERT**  
STATE COLLEGE

**AUGUST**  
**6 — 8**

**Move in: August 5**

**Ea**

**AI**  
**8**

**Move**

COLLEGEFYI@CHOCTAW

**Continued from Page 1** but important for the tribe's sovereignty because we

That investment is not just important for individuals who may be affected by specific issues

Executive Director of Tribal Policy Brian McClain said, "As a nation, us protecting our natural resources is the greatest ability of sovereignty."

“Being sustainable and developing systems and developing rules or laws or code or our policies... is the greatest form of

What defines a natural resource and which program that resource falls under may be confusing, but the outcome of properly managing the different resources under the Nation's control is not.

"It's quality of life, it's generational and it's long term," said McClain. It may not necessarily be today's tribal member, but their grandkids, their great-grandkids and many future generations. All benefit from the cohesive efforts to be good stewards of our natural resources.



Photo by Christian Toews

A group of deer can be seen at the Choctaw Hunting Lodge. Deer are just one of the many natural resources the Nation is responsible for.



# Tieu, Sanford complete three-year residency

Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency is proud to announce the upcoming graduation of two family medicine physicians, Laura Sanford, D.O., and Quinton Tieu, D.O.

After successfully completing three years of residency training, these physicians will be eligible for board certification in family medicine.

Dr. Laura Sanford grew up in Okmulgee. She attended Oklahoma State University then completed medical school at Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. During her residency at Choctaw Nation, she was elected chief resident.

Upon graduation, Dr. Sanford will continue to serve Choctaw Nation as a family medicine physician in Talihina, joining her parents, Drs. Tim and Tracy Sanford who also practice family medicine.

Dr. Quinton Tieu's hometown is Union City, California. He attended the University of California, Davis for his undergraduate education where he met his wife, Allison. They have one daughter, Ava Grace.

Dr. Tieu completed medical school at Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Upon graduation, Dr. Tieu will serve Choctaw Nation in the Regional Medical Clinic in Durant.

The graduation ceremony will be at 6 p.m. June 29, at the Choctaw Casino & Resort-Durant.



Drs. Quinton Tieu and Laura Sanford



Photo submitted

From left: Norma Wesley, Lane's grandmother and Assistant Scoutmaster, Troop 6332; Lane Morris, Eagle Scout; and Kenneth Wesley, Morris' grandfather.

# Morris soars to eagle scout rank

Lane Morris of Valliant, Oklahoma, a member of Boy Scouts of America Troop 6332, has earned the honor of Eagle Scout, the highest rank BSA offers. Only 3 to 4% of BSA members attain this honor.

Morris, a member of the Choctaw Nation, is a senior at Rattan High School. He worked very hard to earn his Eagle rank, earning more than the 21 merit badges required for the award.

In addition, he received five Eagle Palms which are awarded for earning merit badges beyond the 21 required for Eagle rank.

Morris' Eagle project included building and installing two hitching rails and starting a cactus garden for his church, the Sobol Old Country Cowboy Church.

He was assisted in this project by his troop and church members.

Morris is very grateful for all the encouragement and assistance received along the scouting trail from Tiger Cub to Eagle Scout. Morris earned his Eagle rank in late November 2018. He recently attended Circle Ten Council's annual awards banquet in Plano, Texas, where he was honored as a member of the Eagle Class of 2018.



# Kannadys celebrate 60th Anniversary

Burr and Barbara Kannady of Tulsa celebrated their 60th anniversary Feb. 7. They were married Feb. 7, 1959, in Zoe, Oklahoma.

Barbara is the daughter of the late John and Esther Dedmon, the granddaughter of Richard and original enrollee Eliza Ann Steelman, and great-granddaughter of Livingston Buck and Angeline Mitchell.

The Kannadys have three children and six grandchildren.



# 80 years young

David Large of Boswell, Oklahoma, turned 80 years young March 29. He is a descendant of enrollee David F. Pebworth.

The family settled in Boswell where David and Margaret Pebworth raised seven sons and one daughter. David Large is the first-born of Ola Pebworth.

# Bohanan receives OHP award

During the Oklahoma Highway Patrol's Trooper of the Year awards in April, everyone learned how the OHP tactical team faced a critically dangerous situation during the execution of a search warrant in Talihina May 11.

Lt. Eddie Bohanan of Muse, originally from Smithville, played an important role in that operation by offering advice to the Chief of Police in Talihina concerning the apprehension of an armed and dangerous criminal who was known to have violent tendencies and a strong hatred for law enforcement – a convicted felon who was believed to be heavily armed.

Knowing the suspect and his history, Bohanan offered the assistance of the OHP Tactical Team and urged the Chief to allow them to execute the warrant, since they were well-equipped and trained for this kind of encounter.

The Chief did make the request, and Lt. Bohanan continued to monitor the situation, gathered information on the suspect (including his location), and passed it along to the Tac Team members, providing them with vital information.

OHP Tactical Team deployed to execute the warrant and make the arrest.

During the encounter, the subject engaged the Troopers in a violent gun battle, resulting in several injuries and the death of the suspect himself.

Lt. Bohanan's good relationship with this Chief, his ability to evaluate a dangerous situation, and his sound advice undoubtedly saved lives, not only of law enforcement officers, but possibly other local citizens as well.

For his wise advice and the crucial role he played in this treacherous and unpredictable situation, Lt. Bohanan was awarded the 2018 Chief's Award during the OHP's banquet.



Lt. Eddie Bohanan

# Class of 2009 panther alumni finishes strong

Cesalea Osborne, the daughter of Rebecca Hardin, Tyra Parker-Hobbs and Patrick Osborne, is a 2009 graduate of Pauls Valley High School.

After graduating high school, Cesalea chose to take her studies to Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. Haskell is one of six indigenous colleges in America and the oldest. She is a third generation Haskell graduate behind her great-uncle, Bill Parker, and her mother, Tyra Parker-Hobbs. While she was at Haskell, she received an Associate of Applied Science and a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science.

Before she graduated from Haskell, she had her next college picked out and she was ready to go to Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky, to finish her master's degree. Cesalea finished graduate school at WKU in December 2018. She was honored in two graduation ceremonies. Cesalea was the only Indigenous Student to finish a Geo Science Masters Degree and one of 15 Geo Science graduate students.

While at WKU, she finished her Master's Degree in Karst Hydrogeology and a Master's Minor in GIS. The last eight years have been an incredible journey. While at Haskell, she represented the college in the field of science traveling all over the United States to various conferences. She was recognized by ASIS, had two NASA internships, and an internship at KU.

While at WKU, she also represented the Geo Science Department at many conferences, studied abroad in Ireland in 2017, and just returned from two weeks studying the islands in Hawaii. Cesalea has already accepted her first job as a Geo Science/GIS Analyst in Kansas.

She wants to extend several appreciations of thanks to those who helped along the way including Paul's Valley Women Auxiliary for her time at Girls State, Paul's Valley Rotary for her week being a page for Lisa Billy, Shirley Prince for all her love while at Sonic, the Choctaw Nation for its help through college, her moms, Rebecca Hardin and Tyra Parker, her Uncle Lee Hardin, Ross Alumbaugh, John Morgan and Erick Hobbs.



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STORE

# EXPAND YOUR HORIZON

The Choctaw Nation offers High School Equivalency classes for all members. Classes meet each week for 12 weeks with all books, supplies and testing fees provided.

Must have:

1. A tribal membership or CDIB card
2. A Social Security card, driver's license or state issued ID

Classes will be at the following times and locations:

**Wilburton**  
Begins April 2, 2019  
Tuesday & Thursday  
9:00 am to 12:00 noon  
Choctaw Community Center  
515 Center Point Road

**Idabel**  
Begins April 2, 2019  
Tuesday & Thursday  
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm  
Room 303  
SOSU Campus-Idabel  
2805 NE Lincoln Road

**Durant**  
Begins April 1, 2019  
Monday & Wednesday  
9:00 am to 12:00 noon  
**OR** 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
New Choctaw Nation Tribal  
Headquarters  
1802 Chukka Hina



**Choctaw Nation**  
Department of Education

800-522-6170 EXT. 2122  
**WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM**



Obituaries

Hiawatha Jimenez

Hiawatha Leah Jimenez, 63, passed away Feb. 26. Hiawatha was born March 5, 1955, in Oklahoma City to Isaac Juzan Jr. and Fern (Wesley) Juzan. She was preceded in death by her father Isaac Juzan Jr.; daughter Lisa Lihyaouh; brothers Larry Juzan and Isaac Henry Juzan, III.

Hiawatha is survived by her mother Fern Juzan; daughter Haley Jimenez; brothers Glen Juzan and DeWayne Oloff; sister Angela Tollison; four grandchildren along with many loved family and friends.

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

Wana Paulsen

Wana Paulsen, 94, passed away Jan. 17, 2019. Wana was born June 12, 1924, in Oklahoma to James Lee and Mary Ann Pebworth.

She was preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by her son Terry (Jessie); and granddaughter Jennifer.

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

Stevanna McElreath

Stevanna “Stevie” McElreath, 87, passed away Jan. 23, 2019.

Stevanna was born Oct. 16, 1931, in Durant, Oklahoma to Maude Kate (Miller) and Raymond W. Harrison.

She is survived by her husband Mack McElreath; daughters Linda Westfall and Leigh Anne Burkhart; sister Betty Capshaw; granddaughter Megan Leigh Melendez; and three great-grandchildren.

For the full obituary please visit Grantham Funeral Homes.

Cecil Flowers

Cecil Flowers, 83, passed away Feb. 21.

Cecil was born Sep. 1, 1935, in Lawton, Oklahoma to Cecil Sr. and Janie (Williams) Flowers.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Norma; grandson Brandon Flowers; brother Jerry Flowers; sister Joy Flowers; and sisters-in-law Kathy Baxla, Roberta Holthaus and Mary Alice Johnston.

Cecil is survived by daughters Cynthia Harvey and spouse Blu; Debra Wood and spouse Don; sons Dennis Flowers, Steve Flowers, and Bruce Flowers and spouse Glenda; grandchildren, Paislea Flowers, Nicole Wood and spouse Jared, Victoria Orbeck and spouse Jeremy, Adrienne Bowers and spouse Tim, and Levi Bolgrien and spouse Brooke; sister Roxie Flowers; brothers Ronald Flowers and spouse Shirley, Gale Flowers and spouse Leslie; sister-in-law Karen Flowers; brothers-in-law Larry Baxla and spouse Rosemary; Philip Baxla, Ronald Baxla, Donald Baxla; and numerous great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and other relatives.

For the full obituary please visit [Gary Kelley’s Funeral Service](#).

Nancy Sue Garcia

Nancy Sue (Spring) Garcia, 74, passed away Dec. 30, 2018.

Nancy was born March 5, 1944, in Armona, California to Wilburn and Corrine (Oakes) Spring.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her in-laws Frank and Lorraine Garcia; sister Cora Lee Thomas; and brother-in-law Darrell Winfield.

Nancy is survived by her husband; son Kevin; grandson Dylan Garcia; sisters Lennie Winfield Bealy Joaquin and spouse Tony; brother Dean Spring and spouse Wendy; godmother Mary Ann Toste; brother-in-law Manuel Thomas; and many cousins, nieces, nephews and a host of lifelong friends.

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

William Joseph Paolino

William Joseph “Bill” Paolino, 54, passed away Feb. 15.

Bill was born Jan. 2, 1965, in Denver, Colorado to William H. Paolino and Kathleen (Turnbull) Paolino.

He was preceded in death by his father, William (Bill) Paolino; maternal grandparents Douglas and Myrtle Turnbull; paternal grandparents Joe and Janie Paolino; uncle Douglas Turnbull; and special cousin/friend Jeff Bollig.

Bill is survived by his wife Lori; his mother and stepfather Kathleen and Rocky Wells; siblings Shawn and spouse Demi, and Valerie and spouse Ben; children Shelby, Jacob, Summer and Raquel; grandchildren Porter, Paislie, Dalilah, and Jerrico; nieces Eden and Sophia; and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

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



Betty Lou John

Betty Lou John, 72, passed away February 16. Betty was born Sept. 11, 1946, in Wister, Oklahoma to Cecil and Georgia (Curtis) Jernigan.

She was preceded in death by her father; grandparents George and Ollie Curtis, and Clyde and Ida (LeFlore) Jernigan.

Betty is survived by her mother Georgia Jernigan; son Robert Ray John; sister Nita Jernigan Caudell and spouse Stanley; grandsons Hunter Ray John and Holten John; nephews Clay Caudell, Mark Caudell and spouse Joani; great-nieces Alia Caudell, Halli Caudell; great-nephews Lane Caudell, Evan Caudell; uncle J.C. Curtis; aunts Mary Gibson, Carolyn Curtis; and many other relatives, loved ones and friends.

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



Nelson Wesley

Nelson Wesley, 91, passed away Jan. 16, 2019.

Nelson was born June 27, 1927, in Finley, Oklahoma to Alice Watson (Choate).

He was preceded in death by his mother; wife Val Jean Wesley; son Michael (Mitch) Wesley; and brother Buck Ishcomer.

Nelson is survived by his sons Bryan and spouse Cheryl, and Mark and spouse Chana; grandchildren Josh Wesley, Cassie Wesley and Michael Wesley; along with numerous nieces, nephews and a host of friends.

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



Robert Wayne Sherrill

Robert Wayne Sherrill, 72, passed away Dec. 25, 2018.

Robert was born March 29, 1946, to Robert and Florence (Miller) Sherrill in McAlester, Oklahoma.

He is survived by his wife Marian; sons Reece, John and Steve Sherrill; stepchildren Christie Boyd and Erik Hyatt; grandchildren Tyler, Ryan, Konner and Katelyn Sherrill; sisters Karen Montross, Beverly Ottermann and spouse Steve; and nieces and nephews Scott, Eric, Lee and Allison.

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



Dwight Schyler Blevin

Dwight Schyler Blevin, 69, passed away March 4.

Dwight was born May 4, 1949, in Talihina, Oklahoma to Stephen Belvin and Evelyn (Samuel) Belvin.

He was preceded in death by his parents and wife Imogene.

Dwight is survived by his daughter Regina Belvin; sisters Bettie Belvin and Bea Belvin Hallman; several nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins and a host of other family and friends.

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



Flora Thornburg

Flora Thornburg, 87, passed away Jan. 27.

Flora was born Aug. 18, 1931, in LeFlore, Oklahoma to Jeff and Dora (Farley) Hickman.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Hubert; and sister.

Flora is survived by her daughter Linda Reeves and spouse Charles; sons Leonard Thornburg and spouse Kathy Jo, and Frank Thornburg and spouse Dana; 10 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren and 29 great-great-grandchildren; sisters Stella Thornburg and her twin sister Dora Hansen; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, family members, friends and loved ones.

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



Wyllie Sue Black

Wyllie Sue Black, 95, passed away Feb. 21.

Wyllie was born March 30, 1923, in Poteau, Oklahoma to William J. and Ada V. (Holson) Harris.

She was preceded in death by her husband Arlin Black; and her parents.

Wyllie is survived by her daughter Janna Kearns; granddaughter Cami Smith; grandsons Damon Kearns and Darren Kearns; great-granddaughters Lexi Smith Katelyn Smith, Sydnee Smith, and Layla Kearns; great grandson Jacob Kearns; and many other relatives and loved ones.

For full obituary, visit [Evans Funeral Home](#).



Myra Bettes

Myra Bettes, 79, passed away Feb. 20.

Myra was born March 1, 1939, in Lawton, Oklahoma to Major Lee and Audrey May Odom.

She was preceded in death by her parents; two brothers; and a granddaughter.

Myra is survived by two sons; a daughter-in-law; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren; three sisters; a brother-in-law; and two sisters-in-law.

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

Jack Elwood Hattensty

Jack Elwood Hattensty, 91, passed away Jan. 22.

Elwood was born April 6, 1927, in Ardmore, Oklahoma to Thomas Paul and Lola Pearl (Hargrave) Hattensty.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers T. P. Hattensty, James R. Hattensty and LeRoy B. (Tidodi) Hattensty; three sisters, Helen Sekavec, LaVoice Gist and Joyce Faircloth.

Elwood is survived by his brother Louie A. (Toody) Hattensty Sr.; nephew Louie Hattensty Jr. and spouse Kathleen; nieces Barbara Sekavec Awbrey, Becky Hattensty Graves and spouse Jerry, Dale Hattensty Jones, Jean Gist Powell, Jenell Gist Noel, and Claudette Gist Sizemore and spouse Allen; and many other extended family members and a host of friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Harvey Douglass Funeral Homes](#)



Miko Lee Nowabbi

Miko Lee Nowabbi, 43, passed away Feb. 28.

Miko was born July 7, 1975, to Sandra Lee Nowabbi in Talihina, Oklahoma.

He was preceded in death by his mother; brother, Michael Paul Nowabbi; grandfather Franch Augustine “Red” Johnico Sr.; aunt Verla Johnico-Hatcher.

Miko is survived by wife Amber Nowabbi; children Gwenyth Brianna Brown, Emily Kay-Lynne Brown, Bryce Wendell Brown, Augustine Joel “AJ” Nowabbi, and Haley Nowabbi; grandmother Nora Christine Johnico; aunts Billie Nowabbi, Sharon and Willard Polk; Wanda Johnico, and Lisa and Michael Melton; uncles Franch A. Johnico Jr. Blake Johnico, and Charles Hatcher; in-laws, Gwen and Joe Dunham; brothers-in-law Brandon Samuel, Timothy Burgin, and Dustin Burgin; sisters-in-law Brittany Burgin, and Holly Burgin; many nieces, nephews and cousins.

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



Elizabeth Charlene Dodson

Elizabeth Charlene Dodson, 84, passed away Feb. 14.

Elizabeth was born Dec. 10, 1934, in Bokchito, Oklahoma to Charles and Beatrice Benton.

Dodson was granted a patent in 1988, for a method of transferring images onto fabric. In 1989, she was appointed by Texas Governor Bill Clement to the Texas Indian Affairs Commission. In 2000, Dodson founded the Native American Cultural Center in Sunset Center. Dodson also had art displayed at the U.S. Embassy at Baku, Azerbaijan.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Charlene is survived by longtime companion Clay “Tex” Dodson; brothers Gene (Lue) Benton and Eddie Benton; children Bobby and Marilee Bulls, Brian and Gina Gillispie, Tim and Tracy Randall, Jamie Bulls, and Ross Bulls; grandchildren Grace and Ashley Pshigoda, Charles Davis, Mattie and Cody Mac Been, Claire Randall, Mary and Adam Milne, Ellie Randall and Michael Elphick, Joey Randall, Bailey Bulls, Barrett Bulls, Rossilyn and Andy Reed, Roy John Bulls and Ray Bulls.

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



Judy Davis-Thompson

Judy Elaine Davis-Thompson, 69, passed away Feb. 22.

Judy was born Sept. 12, 1949, in Telephone, Texas to Leo and Eleanor (Cooper) Caldwell.

She was preceded in death by her father Leo Caldwell; brother Ernie (Bud) Caldwell; and sister Earlene Willis.

Judy is survived by her mother Eleanor Caldwell; daughter Monica Davis-Cortez and spouse Victor Cortez Jr.; brother A.L. Caldwell and spouse Loretha; sisters Ruth Ann Frazier and spouse Michael, and Pamela Kay Wilson; grandchildren Venessa Garcia, Delicia Garcia, Juliahna Reeves, Marcella Reeves, Alyssa Cortez, and Victor Cortez III; great-grandchild, Izmarie Carrillo; many nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and many friends.

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



Obituary Guidelines

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation tribal members only and are free of charge. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

Family members/individuals may submit funeral notices as long as the notice is from the funeral home or printed in their local newspaper through a funeral home service.

Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws, therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official notice. Due to space limitations, there is a 150 word limit for obituaries. The online issue of the Biskinik will contain links to the full obituaries.

Send official obituary notices to:

**Biskinik**  
**PO Box 1210**  
**Durant OK 74702**  
or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)



ITI FABVSSA

Bihi Hvshi: Mulberry Month corresponds with spring

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

In the Choctaw calendar, Bihi Hvshi, Mulberry Month, roughly corresponds with May. As the name implies, this is the time of year when the Choctaw homeland begins to abound in sweet, edible spring treats. Mulberries are one of the earliest fruits to ripen. As the days lengthen and warm, other fruits come into season, including bisσα, blackberries, sheki ifvnnvsh, blueberries, biuko, strawberries, and isi itakkon, wild plums. In the past, Choctaw women, girls, and elders went out to gather these fresh fruits and bring them back to their families. The best spots to find many of these fruits were the community’s old agricultural fields that had been allowed to enter a long fallow period. Without tree cover and aided by range fires, the fruit-bearing bushes and shrubs thrived. The productivity of these old fields was so high that, in the right season, a person could collect a meal’s worth of strawberries growing within arm’s reach. Planned fruit orchards were also planted next to some villages, or between groupings of houses. Fresh fruits were eaten raw as a welcome addition to the foods stored dry over winter. Fruits were also dried for later use and cooked in dishes like walakshi. Not only did Choctaw women pick mulberries during the month, they also stripped off the



Photo courtesy Jennifer Byram  
Traditional fiber and yarn made from processed mulberry bark.

inner bark of mulberry saplings and began to process it into thread for making textiles. May is also the season when bison really begin shedding their thick winter coats in preparation for the heat of summer. Choctaw women collected the shed wool stuck in bushes or on rough-barked trees, where the bison had rubbed it off. The wool would be cleaned, spun, and made into clothing or bags. As mentioned last month, Choctaw communities traditionally planted three different types of agricultural fields each year. During Mulberry Month, the largest of these fields were planted. They were known as tanchi aholokchi, places where corn is sown. In English, they are often referred to as communal fields, because of the way they were planted and harvested. The favorite location for communal fields was terraces and ridges with loamy soil. Based on surviving descriptions of the layouts of particular Choctaw towns, many of them had multiple community fields. In fact, accounts from the late 1700s describe the landscape between concentrated Choctaw settlements in all three districts as being mostly cornfield. Fields

were sometimes irregularly shaped so that growers could make the most efficient use of patches of fertile soils regardless of the shapes and sizes they happened to be. Ideally, a family worked in a section of field close to their house, but sometimes they had to walk as far as a couple of miles to get to it. At these locations, it was more of a challenge to keep an eye out for deer and other crop predators than at the house gardens. This is the reason Choctaw farmers chose to wait to plant the communal fields until around the first day of May, when the woods had plenty of fruits and other wild edibles to take the pressure off of their fields. Based on what has been recorded for other Southeastern Tribes, it is likely that the women from each Choctaw family had their own section that they worked in the communal field, separated by a strip of unworked land, or some other recognized marker. Unlike the house garden, there were no fences in these fields. Had a family attempted to construct one, their actions would have been viewed as childish, since these crops were for the community. Communal fields were

planted and worked in a spirit of cooperation. Social distinctions were set aside, and people labored as equals. On the day of planting, work began about an hour after sunrise, with the community moving from section to section of the field, getting the seeds in the ground. Men helped the women to plant. The work was accomplished cheerfully, sometimes with storytelling and singing. First, small hills were made in which to plant the corn seeds, a process known as hopolichi. These corn hills were called ibish. They were approximately three feet wide at their bases and set in rows, with the centers of the hills about 6 feet away from each other. The evenly spaced rows created between the hills were known as bachali. Within the communal fields, three different varieties of corn were planted. Tanchi Hlimishko, smooth corn, was a yellow flint corn used to make hominy. Tanchi Tohbi, white corn, was used in making bread. Tanchi Bokanli, breaking open corn, was a popcorn, used to entertain visitors. Because corn is wind pollinated, different varieties growing within 1/2 mile of each other will cross-pollinate, and lose their distinctiveness. To prevent this, Choctaw farmers of later years (and probably during this time period as well) grew the different varieties in fields located in different places. Alternatively or, probably, in addition to that, the planting of the three corn varieties was carefully timed so that the pollination of each variety was staggered. On the day of planting, Choctaw field workers pushed four or five seeds into each corn hill and then added a layer of clay on top. This clay layer helped to prevent the corn hills from eroding during a heavy spring

rain and washing out the seeds. Through the coming weeks, the community fields would be sown with the seeds of other types of plants. Today, this is known as “sequential intercropping,” a practice recognized for its productivity and efficiency. The third type of Choctaw agricultural field, consisting of patches of winter squash, pumpkin, and African melon, was probably planted about the same time as the communal fields. These were sometimes located quite some distance from the houses. Elevated, shaded platforms, known as fvla atoni, crow-watcher, were set up. Older women sat on these platforms during the day, working on artwork and scaring away birds, animals, or hungry boys that tried to enter the patch. The Choctaw varieties of squash grew so vigorously that, even on poor ground, they would outcompete the grass. This made weeding these patches unnecessary. Soon after planting, the corn in the communal fields would sprout, a process known as abasali. When these shoots grew to about 6 inches tall, the number of stalks was thinned down to three per hill, so that competing plants didn’t limit the harvest. The young corn was particularly vulnerable to damage. By late May, the corn in the communal fields would be about one foot tall and ready for the first hoeing. This activity was called leli. Weeds between the corn hills were chopped up and their roots exposed to the sun. Some of the loose soil with weed mulch would be added to the corn hills to add additional support to keep the growing plants from blowing over in the winds of a summer storm. This work of mounding up the corn hills was referred to as apul-lichi. Fieldwork would continue through the growing season.

Youth Outreach holds Safety Camp



Youth Outreach Safety Camp had a total of 153 Choctaw youth in attendance March 19. The youth rotated through 19 different safety-themed classes such as: Boat Safety, Gun Safety, Emergency Management, First Aid, EMS, Fire Prevention, D.A.R.E., Choctaw Language, Healthy Relationships, Bullying, Self-Esteem, and Behavior. Other classes the youth enjoyed were: Fishing, Inflatable Obstacle Course, Archery, Choctaw Weapons, Choctaw Stickball and Wellness Center Activities. Yakoke to the Choctaw Nation and Oklahoma Highway Patrol programs who helped make this year’s camp a success.

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna  
May Language Lesson

Names of Household Items  
Aboha Aiasha Na Hochefo

bottle - kotuba	broom – isht pashpoa	bucket – isht ochi
chair - abininli	coffee pot – kafi ahonni	comb - shalintak
cup – isht ishko	dish - ampo	knife - bashpo
hammer – isht boa	mirror – apisa	bag - bahta
1. Kotoba ma katima ish aiishi tuk?	Where did you get that bottle?	
2. Isht pashpoa yvt katimma hikiya?	Where is the broom (standing)?	
3. Isht ochi ma oka isht alotoli.	Fill the bucket with water.	
4. Abinili homma mvt hlipa chiyoyhmi.	That red chair is very worn.	
5. Kvta hosh kafi ahonni ikachefo tuk?	Who didn’t wash the coffee pot?	
6. Shalintak a katima bohli li tuk?	Where did I place the comb?	
7. Isht ishko himona ishi li tuk.	I got a new cup.	
8. Ampo ilvpvpt koa.	This plate is cracked.	
9. Bashpo ya haluppvchi.	Sharpen the knife.	
10. Isht boa hoyo li.	I am looking for the hammer.	
11. Kvna yvt apisa kanvllichi tuk.	Someone moved the mirror.	
12. Nanta ho bahta ma ish foki tuk?	What did you put in the bag?	

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# Choctaw Nation

## Emergency Management

# YOUNG WARRIORS

# YOUTH PREPAREDNESS CAMP

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**#R6PREPARES**







# Boundaries are important for mental health

Boundaries – what are they and why are they important for our mental health? To understand we must define “What is a Boundary?” Boundaries are guidelines, rules or limits that we all must create to identify what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for us to behave when around people or how we will respond when others step outside of those limits.

Setting boundaries is essential and must be practiced daily if we want to be both physically and emotionally healthy. Creating boundaries is empowering when we recognize the need to set and enforce limits. We protect our self-esteem, maintain self-respect and enjoy healthy relationships.

Why is it important to set boundaries? Setting boundaries can allow us as individuals to practice self-care and self-respect. Showing others that we have the confidence in our abilities to honor our bodies by being able to decide what types of communication, behavior and interactions are acceptable. Practicing self-care allows



us to say “no” to others and “yes” to ourselves. Ways to practice self-care are practical ideas, getting enough rest, eating healthy, exercising daily. We must respect our minds and bodies to allow healthy habits to be established. Communicating our needs in relationships gives us protection by separating our needs, thoughts, feelings and desires from others, and understanding and recognizing that our needs may be different from others. Physical boundaries include our bodies, personal space and privacy. Unhealthy boundaries cause emotional pain that can lead to depression, dependency, anxiety and stress-induced physical illness.

What are the barriers to boundary setting? We all have a fear of rejection and abandonment. Being the person who is not accepted leads to isolation for many, therefore positive interactions are not made leading many to react in an unhealthy way. While we may be wary about talking about mental health and suicide, experts say it is important. Death by suicide has increased every year since 1999 in people ranging in age 10 to 74.

Setting limits helps build respect for our parents, teachers or others who are in our lives and giving us direction for living a healthier lifestyle that encourages emotional, physical and mental well being. Boundary setting teaches us how to set limits – maturing as a person who can gain self-control, which in turn shows other behaviors that are socially acceptable. This allows

us to empower ourselves to make healthy choices and take responsibility for ourselves.

Mental well-being is an essential part of who we are as a person. If you find that you are struggling with issues, please contact Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health at 918-567-3065. Counseling services are offered throughout the 10 12 counties of Choctaw Nation in our outlying clinics. Our caring staff of professionals will assist with providing you with the most effective treatment and resources to help with your situation.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255  
Text Crisis Line: Text “hello” to 741-741

*This newspaper article was developed, in part, under grant number 5H79SM062902-04 from SAMHSA. The views, opinions and content of this publication are those of the authors and contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of CMHS, SAMHSA, or HHS, and should not be construed as such.*

## Eating disorders could be related to mental health

Eating disorders affect over 30 million people in the United States, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Eating disorders are serious, and sometimes fatal illnesses caused by severe disturbance to a person’s eating behaviors. Obsessions with foods, body image and weight can be signals of an eating disorder. These behaviors can have a negative impact on your health, emotions, and ability to function in important areas of life.

“While eating disorders can be caused by genetic, biological, behavioral, social and emotional factors, you can help your child by teaching and modeling healthy eating and exercising habits,” said Suzanne Johnson, Oklahoma City Indian Clinic’s Behavioral Health Director.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, instead of focusing on the unhealthy food you shouldn’t eat, focus on the new food you can, things like fresh, frozen or canned fruit, vegetables and Calcium-rich foods, such as low fat or fat-free yogurt. You can also try twisting up old recipes. Instead of frying fish or breading chicken, try healthier variations using baking or grilling.

Healthy eating is all about balance. According to the CDC, it is still okay to indulge in your favorite foods every once in a while. The key is to keep them in a balance between healthier foods and physical activity.

“Remember eating disorders are about more than food,” Johnson said. “Often times people with eating disorders may also have other mental disorders such as depression or anxiety.”

If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs immediate help, call National Suicide Prevention Lifeline toll-free 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

### NURSERY NEWS



**Grayson Lewis Curtis** was born Oct. 16, 2018, in Dallas, Texas. He weighed 7 pounds 15 ounces and was 20 inches long. Grayson is the son of Evan and Kelly Curtis and the grandson of John and Sheila Hampton Curtis.



**Haven Lorraine Boston** was born at 12:52 a.m. March 14 at Siloam Springs Regional Hospital in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. She weighed 7.1 pounds and was 20 inches long. She is the daughter of Byron Boston and Amanda Morgan and the granddaughter of Ada Kyser and the late Janet White.



**Abbie Lynn Bell** was born at 8:46 a.m. on Aug. 31, 2018, at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina. She weighed 6 pounds 7.2 ounces, and was 17 3/4 inches long. Abbie is the daughter of Robert and Lacie Bell, sister to Jodie and Robby, granddaughter of Deborah Chamberlain and Brenda Bell and great-granddaughter of Colleen Ragains.



**Wyatt Thomas Scott** was born at 3:46 p.m. on Feb. 5 in Ada. He weighed 9 pounds and was 21.5 inches long. Wyatt is the son of Joe and Amanda Scott and little brother to Eli. He is the grandson of Mark and Julie Scott and Greg and Donna Goff.

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7th	Heavener - CV's Grocery
8th	Coalgate - Community Center
9th	Heavener - CV's Grocery
14th	Clayton - Pushmataha Family Clinic
15th	Hartshorne - Caring Hands Clinic (A.M.)
	Quinton - Community Center (P.M.)
16th	Clayton - Country Market (A.M.)
	Nashoba - Community Center (P.M.)
22nd	Antlers - Pruett's Grocery Store
23rd	Heavener - CV's Grocery

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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 580-916-2100 x 83517	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 580-286-2510	Mon., Wed., & 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.
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**Antlers:** 400 S.W. “O” St., (580) 298-6443

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**Durant:** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy, (580) 924-7773

**McAlester:** 3244 Afullota Hina, (918) 420-5716

**Poteau:** 100 Kerr Ave, (918) 649-0431

#### May 2019

**ANTLERS**

Market open weekdays May 1-31, except for:  
**Closed:** May 27, 30, 31.

**BROKEN BOW**

Market open weekdays May 1-31, except for:  
**Closed:** May 27, 30, 31.

**DURANT**

Market open weekdays May 1-31, except for:  
**Closed:** May 27, 30, 31.

**MCALESTER**

Market open weekdays May 1-31, except for:  
**Closed:** May 27, 30, 31.

**POTEAU**

Market open weekdays June 3-25, except for:  
**Closed:** June 26, 27, 28.

**Cooking With Carmen:** Cooking With Carmen is cancelled until further notice.

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*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*



### Chocolate Chip Yogurt Cookies

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar (firmly packed)
- 1/2 cup margarine
- 1/2 cup yogurt (non-fat, plain)
- 1 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

- 3/4 cups flour (all-purpose)
- 1 cup flour (whole wheat)
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips (miniature, or carob chips)

#### Preparation

1. Heat oven to 375 F.
2. In a large bowl combine sugar, brown sugar and margarine; beat until light and fluffy.
3. Add yogurt and vanilla; blend well. Stir in flour and baking soda; mix well. Stir in chocolate chips.
4. Drop dough by rounded teaspoonfuls 2 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheets. Bake at 375 for 8 to 12 minutes or until light and golden brown.
5. Cool 1 minute, remove from cookie sheets.

**Nutrition Facts:**

Servings: 36, Serving size: 1 cookie, Calories: 80, Trans Fat: 0 grams, Cholesterol : 0 milligrams, Sodium: 50 milligrams, Total Carbohydrates: 12 grams, Dietary Fiber: 1 grams, Sugars: 7 grams, Protein: 1 grams

*Recipe by usda.gov*



# Choctaw Wellness Centers offer paths to better physical and mental health

By Chris Jennings

With 13 Wellness Centers across the 10 ½ counties, it’s evident that the Choctaw Nation prioritizes the health of its members.

With top-of-the-line cardio and weight machines at each facility, members are able to take charge of their health, both physically and mentally.

For people of any age, if you’ve never exercised before Dalton Smith, a supervisor at the Durant Choctaw Wellness Center, says the best way to get started is just to come into the gym. “When people come in for the first time, their biggest issue isn’t so much trying to start exercising as they just don’t know what to do,” says Smith.

The Wellness Centers are geared towards helping members get started. Associates can show members how to use any of the equipment and personal trainers are provided at no charge to help members build a personalized training program.

Training programs cover the basics of what to do and how often, as well as nutrition programs geared towards specific goals.

Wendell Gomez is one member that took advantage of these services.

Gomez was 310 pounds and borderline diabetic when he started going to the Wellness Center. “I’m raising two grandsons by myself and my doctor told me that if I didn’t do something about my health I wasn’t going to be here to raise them. That was my



Photo by Chris Jennings

Wendell Gomez does a tricep workout at the Choctaw Wellness Center in Durant. Gomez has lost 50 pounds since he’s started going to the Wellness Center.

motivation,” said Gomez.

He’s lost 50 pounds since starting his path to better health.

Gomez says it wasn’t easy to take that first step, but when he finally did, things were easier than expected. “I had a trainer that would work with me through my physical conditions and put me on a diet,” said Gomez.

The results to date for Gomez are evident. “When I first moved to Durant I was using a cane. There were times when I was at a department store where I would use their scooters, now I walk everywhere I go. I used to park in a handicapped parking spot, now I don’t,” said Gomez.

Wellness Centers can help with more than physical health. Mental health can also be greatly affected with regular exercise. More and more studies are increasingly showing that exercise can have a positive effect on depression.

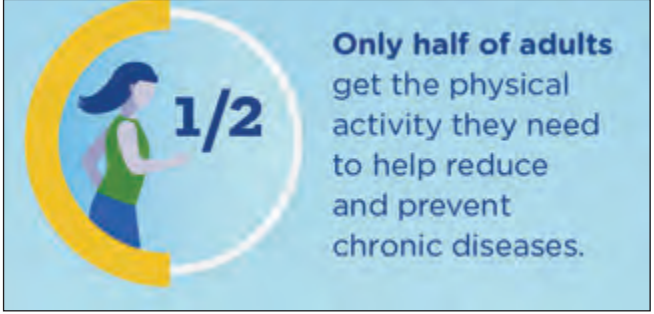
Depression and other mental illnesses have been ranked as a leading cause of disability in the United States and while exercise isn’t a cure for clinical depression, many are choosing to supplement their medication with exercise.

Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority Psychiatrist Kelly Andrzejczyk-Beatty says, “It’s multiple things it [exercise] can help, not just with depression, but symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Sleep problems are one of the biggest complaints doctors hear from patients with depression. One report said just daily exercise can have small benefits on the total sleep duration, which as we know, sleep can greatly be affected by mood and depression.”

Andrzejczyk-Beatty says that while antidepressants are quicker acting in making a patient feel better, one study showed that after 16 weeks, exercise was equally as effective at reducing depression. That case is particularly strong in seniors.

The Choctaw Nation Wellness Centers offer the Silver Sneakers program



Source: Centers for Disease Control

for anyone over 65. “It [Silver Sneakers] isn’t just for people that are new to exercise. If they have arthritis, it’s a low-impact style of training. People that may be wheelchair-bound, maybe suffered through a stroke, can utilize the classes to help better their life, improve their health and fitness, improve range of motion, stability, balance,” said Smith.

Andrzejczyk-Beatty said aerobic and strength training were the two most common activities studied.

“Doing an interval type workout on a treadmill, one where you vary the effort for different time periods, for just 30 minutes for 10 days can show an improvement in mood,” said Andrzejczyk-Beatty.

Smith says the best thing to do is start with 21 days. “Give me three weeks. “When you come in three days a week, four days a week, it starts to become a habit,” said Smith.

Once a habit, the path to being healthier and physically fit becomes easier to travel. Along the way, the body starts to change. Given the multiple positive side effects to a regular exercise routine, it’s hard

to pinpoint a single reason why exercise has an effect on depression.

“There’s something with releasing the endorphins and feeling better. A lot of people are losing weight and getting more energy and sleeping better. All that ties into your mood and your self-confidence, it’s a chain reaction,” said Andrzejczyk-Beatty.

Because of this chain reaction, when it comes to medication, it’s possible that regular exercise can reduce the amount you take.

“I would say that my patients that are more physically fit, if they do go the medication route, have very little need for medication dosage-wise,” said Andrzejczyk-Beatty.

It’s the first step that’s the hardest for many. Gomez offers advice, “Just do it, just come in and do it. You just got to do it to live.”

## Hina Hanta Bright Path

This article on physical and mental health continues the Biskinik series highlighting awareness and paths to better health.



Broken Bow seniors sing Choctaw hymns during an appreciation dinner on March 14.

### Broken Bow

APPRECIATION DINNER





Benjamin and Brooklyn Frazier are among the younger ones attending the dinner at Broken Bow.

Broken Bow youth perform the Lord’s Prayer.

Photos by Lisa Reed



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# Tvshka Balili runners complete first Trail of Tears run



Photo by Deidre Elrod

The Tvshka Balili Trail of Tears runners finish a 500-mile relay run at the Choctaw Nation headquarters Thursday, March 21.



Photo by Chris Jennings

Joe Wolf leads the Tvshka Balili Trail of Tears runners in prayer at the Durant headquarters. The group ran the entire Trail of Tears distance in a week as a relay.

## Over 500 miles in five days

By Chris Jennings

A group of runners completed the first annual Trail of Tears run Thursday, March 21, at the Choctaw Nation headquarters in Durant.

The Tvshka Balili (Running Warrior) runners ran over 500 miles as a relay over five days. By running as a relay, with runners stationed approximately every 10 miles, the group was able to complete at least 100 miles every day.

As family and friends gathered at the headquarters waiting on the arrival of the runners, word began to trickle in on their location. Finally, the group could be seen coming in front of the headquarters building on Chukka Hina.

Doris Winlock was on the front row, triumphantly making a fist as the five-day journey came to an end.

Winlock, who just recently discovered her Choctaw heritage, was emotional after completing the run. “I did it for my ancestors,” said Winlock.

Winlock’s fifth great-grandparents traveled the Trail of Tears and being able to cover the distance for herself



Photo submitted

Runners put their feet together at the end of the run.

meant a great deal to her.

Participating in an event like this can forge lasting memories. For Carly Blemmel those memories are the community and sense of family she got from the other runners.

“Their commitment to seeing this thing through, seeing how dedicated they were to making this happen...

They came into this expecting to work hard for it, and so it was guaranteed to be a success,” said Blemmel.

Unexpectedly, some runners were not able to make the trip. That’s when Winlock stepped in to help. Originally, she was scheduled to be a support driver, but being a runner, she knew she could help out where needed.

The hardest day for Winlock was the first day, “When we traveled along the [Natchez] Trace, and I had done about six and a half miles, they had told me along the trail was the original path. So I actually got off of where we’re supposed to be running and I got on the original trail,” said Winlock.

Eleven runners completed the first annual Trail of Tears Run – Carly Blemmel, Amber Arnold, Mary Barrs, MaryAyn Tullier, Kayla Himes, Doris Winlock, Nathan Smith, Kyle Tisho, Curtis Hale, David Hale and Taryn Carey. Support drivers were Greg Barrs and Keri Himes. Josh Carney and Dusty Stanton came in to help run one day each.

Both Winlock and Blemmel plan to do the event next year. Winlock says she plans to focus more on training and Blemmel says she learned some things about organizing an event like this that will make next year better.

If you would like to participate in the Trail of Tears Run next year you’re encouraged to contact the Tvshka Balili group on Facebook.

## Choctaw athletes to play basketball at Bacone College

Two Choctaw cousins, Tayshia Twitty and Eton Smith, signed scholarships with Bacone College to continue their basketball careers after graduation from Norman High School.

Tayshia is the daughter of Shanda and Omar Twitty and granddaughter of Barbara Smith. Eton is the son of Chris Smith and Brandi Martin and another grandchild of Barbara Smith. Both student-athletes are the direct descendants of original full-blood Choctaw enrollee William Roebuck.



Eton Smith



Tayshia Twitty

Submitted photos



Photo by Chris Jennings

Destiny Jasso holds several of the belts she has won boxing. The 19-year-old has her sights set on qualifying for the Olympics.

## Fighting for Olympic dreams

Jabs and Hooks and Cakes, Oh My!

By Chris Jennings

Mike Tyson famously said, “Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face.” Destiny Jasso’s been punched in the face, and she still has a plan.

The 19-year-old, 125-pound, 2019 Dallas Golden Gloves Champion and five-time national champion has her sights set on competing in the 2020 Olympics, but she’s not picky.

“I want to make the Olympics first. It doesn’t matter which one I just want to make it to one of them,” said Jasso

Jasso, who started boxing with her father and sister when she was 14, says discipline is the biggest lesson she’s learned. “We have to maintain our weight, we have to watch what we eat, the training,” said Jasso. All things many adults have a hard time with.

It’s not just discipline that makes a good boxer, though. Jasso’s not afraid of work. She has two hard workouts a day. A two-hour training session in the morning. Then another, with her father at her home gym in the evening.

Before and in between those workouts, she takes her siblings to school, cleans the house and cooks for her family.

The fact that Jasso cooks for the family on top of everything else doesn’t come as a surprise when she talks about her backup plan for life. “I’m going to college to become a baker,” said Jasso.

Whether it’s baking or boxing Jasso’s mother, Sherrill, says, “As her mom, I’m going to support her for what she wants to do.”

It’s when Sherrill talks about what her daughter’s done that you see how proud she is. “It means everything to me because she has worked so hard to get where she’s at today. She’s made huge

sacrifices in her life becoming a boxer.”

Jasso, who was bullied in school, started boxing so that she could stand up for herself if it came to that point.

Sherrill says what happened was unexpected. “We got something different from her that we didn’t think we would get... she said that she was just going to, you know, stay to herself,” said Sherrill.

It’s that inner self that is one of the attractions to the sport for Jasso. “You get to find yourself and push yourself to do things that you didn’t know you could do, just push yourself to the limit,” said Jasso.

Jasso still gets a little nervous before a fight, even with countless hours of training and pushing herself. When that first punch lands, though, Jasso says all the training kicks in and the nervousness goes away.

“Once I feel that first punch, when they hit me, then my nerves go away because, I’m like I gotta get in there and do something,” said Jasso.

Mom still gets nervous, too. Jasso’s good at calming her down, though.

“Every competition she sees that I get a little nervous and she just tells me, ‘We’ve been here before, Mom, and I’m going to be okay.’ She always lets me know that she’s going to be okay,” says Sherrill.

Boxing has taught Jasso to be a humble person. She speaks quietly and never jumps to the front of the group. When she is called forward, you can see the lessons she’s learned through the tough sport.

You see the strong Chahta woman she’s become in the way she carries herself with confidence and pride.

Whether it’s with a jab and a cross. Or with a cake and muffins, Jasso may just knock you out.

## Heath Gray named All-American wrestler

Heath Gray was named an All-American after a third-place finish at the NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships in Cleveland, Ohio, Saturday, March 9.

The University of Central Oklahoma wrestler finished the consolation round strong after a 19-match winning streak was broken in the 184-pound semifinals in a close 3-2 match.

“It wasn’t the finish I wanted, but after getting beat I had the mentality to finish as high as I could,” said Gray. “I just focused on finishing strong and coming back to get third.”

Gray finished the season 36-2 with 21 bonus point wins.





# Extensive collection now online

## Indian-Pioneer Papers provide priceless info

By Bradley Gernand

A priceless collection of information – oral tradition at its very finest – has been preserved and is now online, and promises to unlock many decades of folk life, folklore, and history for the Choctaw people.

The Indian-Pioneer Papers, a large collection of oral history interviews held by the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Historical Society, has been digitized and placed online by the university. The collection has long been available for research, but only in print, and without a useful index.

The Indian-Pioneer Papers project was a Works Progress Administration program launched during the Great Depression to employ out-of-work writers. It began in 1936 and was one of many such programs designed to boost employment and, it was anticipated, produce something of value. The oral histories collected by the writers offer a rich and unparalleled look into a lost time.

Over 100 writers canvassed Oklahoma’s 77 counties, interviewing senior citizens and tribal elders, Indian and non-Indian alike, to record the stories of their lives. Their official mission was to “call upon early settlers and (record) the story of the migration to Oklahoma and their early life here.” The writers asked detailed questions designed to unearth how people lived in what is now Oklahoma during the 1800s and early 1900s – how they gathered food, provided for their families, built their homes, and educated their children.

Tribal elders were



Photo provided

The University of Oklahoma’s Western History Collections library, where the Indian-Pioneer Papers are housed.

interviewed across the 10.5 counties comprising the Choctaw Nation. Oral tradition has long been important to Choctaws, and their easy familiarity with this tradition allowed the resulting interviews to include a great deal of information of value to genealogists, cultural and social historians, anthropologists, and anyone interested in the history of area towns and counties.

Certain themes emerge. By the time the interviews were conducted in the 1930s, a great many things had changed, some irrevocably. Farms and farming had failed, puzzling the older Choctaws, for whom the land had been bountiful. And certain local species, such as bears and deer, had been hunted to extinction. (The state later reintroduced deer into southeastern Oklahoma and keeps the herd viable through scientific management techniques.)

Many describe their arrival in the Indian Territory and the lives they established there. It came to be seen in later years as a pastoral and sylvan time for them. Choctaws

## HOW TO USE THE INDIAN-PIONEER PAPERS

The Indian-Pioneer Papers consist of approximately 80,000 indexed entries. These are found at <http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/>.

Each interview consists of multiple pages and each has been scanned and is available for download as a single PDF. The search box is the best means of accessing the collection. Use it to search for individuals, place names, or subjects.

Place names are particularly easy to search. Searching for Tuskahoma (the official federal spelling of Tvshka Homma) will yield over 60 search results, some of which provide only passing mentions of the town. Others, however, provide a great deal of information. Searches for place names within Pushmataha County yield over 118 files, many of them offering substantial information about life in those towns and settlements. The same is true for each of the 10 1/2 counties comprising the Choctaw Nation.



often lived on five-acre plots, usually in the woods or adjacent to woodlands, on which they raised corn and other vegetables. Game was abundant – so much so that capturing it meant one never had to venture far from home.

The Indian-Pioneer Papers are a boon for local history. The papers are now available online, and a search box is provided.

The university’s collection of Indian-Pioneer Papers, housed in its Western History Collections, originally consisted of 116 bound volumes. A duplicate collection held by the Oklahoma Historical Society comprised 112 volumes, with the chief difference between the two being how each was organized and bound. Index cards prepared as

part of the original project only cataloged mentions of cooking, dancing, and other aspects of social and cultural life. These did not include mentions of place names, making it impossible to use them to conduct local history research. The online research box, however, is a portal to the full contents – and many hours of wonderful reading.

Events are also chronicled. A number of interview transcripts cast light on the effects of the Civil War in the Choctaw Nation. As the war opened in 1861, Captain William Atoka, for whom Atoka is named, led a local effort to prepare area residents for the dangers and difficulties ahead. Their plans were successful, and they made it through the war years unscathed. However, post-war issues threatened their way of life when a band of Creek Indians who had sympathized with the Union during the Civil War fled their nation and came to present-day Atoka County. A battle was fought between the Choctaws and Creeks, and the Creeks withdrew.

A visit by Confederate troops to the grounds of Spencer Academy, then located south of present-day Rattan on the Pushmataha-Choctaw County line, is described as causing the faculty and students consternation. The troops claimed they were authorized to raid the facility, but withdrew peacefully after learning everyone on the grounds were Southerners.

Customs – some of them ancient – are also highlighted by these interviews. Accounts by white store owners in the old Indian Territory give interesting perspectives on their Choctaw customers, who usually brought their entire families for the day. The Choctaws often arrived with handpicked snake

root, which they traded for credit or money. The process of buying goods could take the Choctaws all morning. After arriving at the store they generally tarried outside for a while. Once inside, they paid for only one item at a time. After money was paid and change was given, they would then purchase the next item. Each item was a separate transaction, and these were often separated by long periods of waiting.

Basket weaving – another ancient custom—is described in detail. It was an important ritual in many families. The process of getting young cane, soaking it, and weaving it into baskets is described. Numerous accounts describe the four kinds of baskets: one for cornmeal; one for hominy; one for small corn meal; and one for general use.

A decade of political instability ending in about 1902 left its mark on those who lived through it, and many recount the events of the Locke-Jones War and the national election of 1902, in which competing political parties came to blows, custody of the Choctaw national government and Council House was contested, and federal troops had to forcibly quell the disturbances.

Doctors also provided detail regarding medical care and Choctaw customs. Full-blood Choctaws were happy to take their medicine in the presence of the physicians, but refused to do so after they were gone.

This was confounding to the doctors, who were almost always white. And one, who practiced northeast of Hugo and served as the house physician for Spencer Academy, remembered a full-blood woman who kept a live frog tied to her toe to cure rheumatism (arthritis). But, he said, “she took her medicine.”

# Texas, Louisiana Choctaws learn about history, culture

By Bradley Gernand

Ireland’s Consul General was a surprise visitor—and special guest—during a community meeting hosted April 5 in Austin, Texas, by Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. The meeting, convened to allow Choctaw residents of the Austin area to engage with tribal leadership and learn more about our history and customs. It also allowed the Choctaw Nation to reaffirm its special relationship with Ireland.

Adrian Farrell, Ireland’s Consul General to the American Southwest, and Vice Consul Paul Green greeted Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin warmly. They recalled with pleasure the visit by Ireland’s prime minister, or Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, to the Choctaw Nation’s headquarters in 2018. It was, Farrell said, a moment of significance for both peoples.

In Ireland, as in the Choctaw Nation, efforts are underway to preserve and expand the use of the indigenous, or original, language. The Irish, who like the Choctaws generally use English as their working language, have made great strides in recent years to teach their native language, a Gaelic tongue which came close to being displaced by English during Britain’s administration.

Approximately 160 Choctaws from the Central Texas area attended the community meeting. At least two attendees drove from McAlester and Antlers, taking the opportunity to visit a local friend.



Photo by Casey Davis

In Austin, Chief Gary Batton presents a Challenge Medal in appreciation of Robert Burbridge’s service during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

For a number of them the meeting was their first interaction with the Choctaw Nation, and also the first opportunity to learn about Choctaw culture, language and history.

Justin Myres of San Antonio, Texas, took half a day off work to drive his family to Austin. “I wanted the kids to learn about their heritage,” he explained. “This is their first time to ever be around it.” Parts of the meeting were devoted to Choctaw language instruction, dancing, and a presentation by Chief Batton on the current activities of the Choctaw Nation. The evening provided Myres and his family a crash course in faith, family and culture... and also the means for learning more about these important aspects of the Chahta way.

Another attendee, Ellen LeBlanc, has been taking Choctaw language classes for four years. “It’s a challenging course but Miss Lillie is such a great teacher,” she said, referring to Lillie Roberts, who led the group in an interactive lesson on the Choctaw language. “The more you practice, the easier it is,” LeBlanc said.

During the Austin meeting Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin spent some time getting to know Wayne Lane, who appreciated being able to reconnect with his heritage. Lane



Wayne Lane

left Durant after graduating from high school there to serve in the armed forces in Vietnam. He is looking forward to returning to Durant for his 50th high school reunion, and to reconnecting with his heritage.

A community meeting hosted by the Chief and Assistant Chief two days later in Bossier City, Louisiana, attracted a large number of Choctaws living in the area. Over 90 braved torrential downpours and flood-



Photo by Casey Davis

Ross Green selects a member of the audience to join the Stealing Partners Dance in Bossier City.

ing streets to be present. One attendee, 80-year-old Tom Colvin of Washington Parish, Louisiana, drove several hours from his home to share with the group a variety of baskets he weaved using traditional Choctaw methods.

Colvin began learning the ways of the river people, or Chahta, at an early age. An old Choctaw woman, Matilda Johnson, who lived nearby, showed him the key to making baskets: river cane. Specifically, the right river cane. “River cane isn’t all the same,” he says. “Some works well and some does not. The first step is to pick what you want to work with.”

Colvin points out that where you live dictates what you use. In his area the Choctaws used a mix of palmetto and river cane. “Each is different but I like them both,” Colvin said. Choctaw Nation Cultural Services employee Ross Green has watched Colvin work, and is impressed by the speed at which he selects and prepares the cane for weaving. “Over six, under three, over six, under three,” Green’s eyes followed the technique used by Colvin in one of his double-woven baskets. “Tom’s baskets are always expertly made.”

Age is no deterrent—Colvin joined the larger group in traditional Choctaw dancing, and enjoyed the experience. “I’m so pleased I was able to be here,” he



Photo by Bradley Gernand

Tom Colvin describes learning to weave Choctaw baskets from his neighbor, a Choctaw elder, in Louisiana.

said, gesturing at the Bossier City-area Choctaws interacting with the Choctaw artists, dancers, and leadership. He is already looking forward to the next such community meeting held in the area.



# Talihina Travel Plaza, Rustic Roast Café ready to serve



District 6 Councilwoman Jennifer Woods cuts the ribbon as tribal leaders and locals celebrate the grand opening of the Choctaw Travel Plaza and Rustic Roast Coffee Café.

## New businesses add 42 jobs to area

By Chris Jennings

Forty-two was the number of the day on April 4 in Talihina, Oklahoma. That’s how many new jobs were created at the recently opened Choctaw Nation Travel Plaza and Rustic Roast Coffee Cafe located on Highway 63 in Talihina.

District 6 Councilwoman Jennifer Woods said, “We are so thankful, and we just give God all the glory for us to have the Chief, Assistant Chief and our commerce department working so hard so we can have these abilities to serve our people and to help their life be better.”

Outside of the jobs and benefits to the local communities, the travel plaza provides clean restrooms, fuel, food and snacks for travelers.

Items like fruit pies, fried catfish, fried chicken, sausages and corn dogs are available to fuel you as you fill your car up at one of the four fuel pumps.

Along with representation from the different Choctaw districts at the ribbon cutting were the Secretary of Native American Affairs, Lisa Billy, and Secretary of Agriculture, Blayne Arthur. Both said they were excited to see what’s happening in the area and the high bar the Nation was setting.

Chief Gary Batton said, “In southeastern Oklahoma we think there are opportunities for growth, and we want to grow our areas and our communities so we can provide opportunities for tribal members... It’s everybody pulling together from the state to our council to our cities to our employees and it’s such a great day when we’re able to pull all these projects together.”

The travel plaza will be open 24 hours and Rustic Roast will open 5 a.m. daily and close at 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 on Friday and Saturday nights.



Payton Hoyer serves fried chicken at the Choctaw Travel Plaza in Talihina. Photos by Chris Jennings



Rustic Roast Café offers signature drinks such as a Choctaw Pecan Latte and Turtle Mocha Latte. Photo by Christian Toews

## Rustic Roast offers glimpse into possible Choctaw future

By Chris Jennings

Nestled in the mountains that surround Talihina is a glimpse into the possible future of the Choctaw Nation.

With the opening of the Nation’s first Rustic Roast Coffee Cafe in Talihina, Chief Gary Batton once again expressed the nations desires to expand its business ventures outside of the 10 ½ counties.

Rustic Roast Coffee Café is a big-town-style coffee shop set in a small-town environment. The café offers the usual coffee items like americanos, mochas and lattes as well as signature drinks like Chocolate Pecan Latte and Turtle Mocha Latte.

The quick-serve restaurant features a full menu with breakfast items like chicken and waffles, a donut sandwich and the more traditional eggs and bacon plate. During the rest of the day, you can order appetizers like nachos and wings, craft-style pizzas, specialty salads, and several different burgers and sandwich combos to choose from.

The original concept for the Talihina location was to franchise with a traditional fast-food chain restaurant, but the executive officer of Food and Beverage and Retail for the Choctaw Nation had a different idea. “I don’t like to pay franchise fees. I believed that I had another concept in mind that would make more sense for the Choctaw Nation,” said Jeremy Hammons.

That’s when the marketing team, operations team and architecture team came to-

gether to create what would become the first Rustic Roast Coffee Café.

The reception from the public has been great so far, said Hammons. “We all know food brings us together as a community, it’s our entertainment.”

“As U.S. citizens, food and sitting around the table and being out – that’s how we connect with our families. That’s how we connect with each other and friends,” said Hammons.

Hammons believes the misconception about providing that type of experience and environment in a small town is not correct.

Hammons has seen small communities embrace businesses like this, taking a sense of pride in its success unlike what you would get from a location that may seem more demographically pleasing.

The combination of specialty coffee, quick-serve menu items and community pride are what the Nation is banking on in this rural area. Opening the first Rustic Roast in Talihina is a true test of the marketability of the concept.

Chief Gary Batton said, “Talihina is fairly remote. If we can make this successful in Talihina then it’s a model that we can replicate throughout the Choctaw Nation, as well as throughout the United States.”

The most important part says Batton is that by expanding Rustic Roast into a national brand it’s going to provide more dollars and in turn, more opportunities for tribal members.

# BISKINIK

## May 2019

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



**Page 1:**

*From fighting to prevention, the Choctaw Nation firefighters continue a 30-year tradition.*



**Page 3:**

*Bicycle team to begin eighth annual ride in conjunction with Trail of Tears commemorative walk.*

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