



May 2020 Issue



Photo by Aaron Ragsdale

John Hutchings and Megan Anderson work on refilling prescriptions at the Poteau Refill Center.



Photo by Chris Jennings

Volunteers from the Choctaw Nation pickup containers that hold lunches to be delivered as part of the Meals-on-Wheels program in Durant.



Submitted photo

Signs direct traffic to COVID-19 testing at the McAlester Health Care Center.



Photos by Aaron Ragsdale

Sonia Jones delivers meals to a car at the Stigler Community Center. During the pandemic, community centers switched to a drive-thru service for their senior meals program.



Photo by Chris Jennings

A truck driver from Iowa reads the closed signs on the door at the Welcome Center in Colbert, Okla.. Several Choctaw Nation offices and businesses had to close or adjust schedules because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Submitted photo

Stephen Yochum cleans one of the gas pumps at the Durant East travel plaza.



Photo by Christian Toews

Volunteers bag donated fruits and vegetables at the Choctaw Nation Durant Casino. Walmart partnered with the Choctaw Nation to provide thousands of pounds of fruit and vegetables that were then provided to CDIB card holders throughout the 10.5 counties. The food was distributed at the Durant, Grant, McAlester, Broken Bow and Pocola locations as a drive-thru food pantry service.



Photo by Chris Jennings

The Bryan County Health Department, The City of Durant, Durant/Bryan County Emergency Management, the Choctaw Nation and other community partners came together to offer 100 free drive-thru COVID-19 tests at the Choctaw Nation Casino and Resort in Durant.

# Apalvmmi Ittintakla ka Chahta Imih Shilombish vt Tohwikeli

## Chahta Spirit Shines During Tough Times

By Chris Jennings and Kellie Matherly

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Choctaw Nation has taken steps to ensure the safety of its associates while keeping essential services like travel plazas, Choctaw Country Markets and food distribution facilities open so tribal and community members all can continue to get the supplies and support they need. Healthcare facilities have also remained open, ensuring that necessary care is available to tribal members. One thing has become apparent during this pandemic: the Choctaw Nation has many associates who live and breathe the core values of faith, family and culture. Several core services put out a call for volunteers, and many Choctaw Nation associates answered that call without hesitation.

### Volunteers

As most of the staff of the Choctaw Nation was sent home, several other programs continued to provide vital services to tribal members. In order for these operations to continue, there was an urgent need for volunteers to help ensure these services were still available. Places like travel plazas, Choctaw Country Markets, community centers, food distribution centers, clinics, and the Prescription Refill Center all remained open with the help of volunteers from several departments within the Choctaw Nation. Volunteer coordinator, Trevor Mullins said of the associates that are volunteering, “Their efforts help support the hardworking staff who have been deemed mission critical to the support of our tribal members and communities in Southeastern Oklahoma.” Some things volunteers helped with were cleaning and stocking at travel plazas and country markets. At the clinics and refill center they helped with cleaning and packing prescription orders for patients and associates and at the community centers. At food distribution centers associates helped by filling food orders for clients and delivering curbside to make sure those in need have food to eat. The chance for associates who may never be able to see how one department might work is exciting for some. “Commerce associates volunteering in the prescription refill center were so excited by the refill center and the number of tribal members and associates it can serve through its use of technology to fill prescriptions orders,” said Mullins. This glimpse inside other operations also brings to the forefront the hard work of these mission critical associates who are such a regular part of our everyday life. “Pearl Seaboy, along with others in the Durant area working multiple shifts at our Durant East and West Travel Plazas, were so appreciative of the team there that they couldn’t stop talking about how impressed they were with the team and how hard they work every day to provide our guests with great service,” Said Mullins. Organizing this volunteer effort across multiple departments has given Mullins a unique insight into the efforts of the Nation and its associates. “If this experience has taught us anything, it is that we are stronger together. We are One Nation, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, committed to the service of not only our tribal members but to all those in Southeastern Oklahoma,” Said Mullins.

### Food Distribution

Food Distribution is one of the programs that could have a huge effect on tribal members if services were to stop. Without their regular pick-up, some clients would go hungry. During the pandemic, Food Distribution had to stop allowing clients in the store. Instead, they went to a drive-thru service. Staff are picking and packing orders and placing them outside the door for clients to load. The whole process is very labor intensive. Food Distribution Program Director, Jerry Tonubbee had praise for his staff, saying, “Our staff has really stepped up and worked hard to ensure that our participants get the food they need to sustain their families. They understand that many of our tribal members would go hungry if they do not continue to come in and provide the service they do to our tribal members.” Tonubbee added, “We are very proud of all of them for the efforts they have put forth during this crisis.”

While services do continue, wait times can be longer if clients don’t call ahead or fax in their orders. The process of recertification can also take longer as some outside services like Social Security and Unemployment have longer wait times as well. However, Tonubbee said, “We do occasionally get a heartfelt thank you from some of our clients as they understand what our staff is going through to provide them their food.”

Clients can request a shopping list via email, where the orders can then be sent back in to help speed up the process. Recertification paperwork can also be emailed in ahead of time. **Antlers:** mgates@choctawnation.com or rsorrells@choctawnation.com Fax: 580-298-6445 **Broken Bow:** tadams@choctawnation.com or eshomo@choctawnation.com Fax: 580-584-2826 **Durant:** ryandell@choctawnation.com or spence@choctawnation.com Fax: 580-924-8119 **McAlester:** jalexander@choctawnation.com or chhudson@choctawnation.com Fax: 918-420-5040 **Poteau:** jamiea@choctawnation.com or twarren@choctawnation.com Fax: 918-649-0435

### Poteau Refill Center

The staff at the Rubin White Refill Center in Poteau had just moved into their new building when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. They hadn’t even had time to get all their equipment installed. Candice Vaughn, a pharmacist at the center, knew immediately she and her staff would be deemed essential employees. “We knew we would be needed to maintain, and even increase, our production during this time of social distancing to keep our patient base as safe and healthy as we can while we all fight the virus,” she said. In an average month, the Poteau Refill Center staff fills about 75,000 prescriptions for 22,000 CDIB cardholders. In order to keep up that pace in the pandemic, they needed support. Some associates who were temporarily displaced when the casino closed stepped up to help. Associates from other departments also volunteered their time at Rubin White. “I call all of them volunteers,” said Vaughn, “because they could have chosen to stay home as various departments have closed or scaled back services. They have all been a tremendous help.” Most of the volunteers have been packing medications for shipping, but some have been helping with curbside delivery. “Truly, you can see that Chahta spirit everywhere you look as we all pull together to fight COVID-19,” said Vaughn. Thanks to good planning, the center has not run out of any high demand items that other health systems are struggling to find. One thing the center has been short on, however, is hand sanitizer, so the staff started manufacturing it onsite. Vaughn encourages all members to use the mail option to keep unnecessary trips into the public at a minimum. “Staying home and staying safe, especially if they are part of a vulnerable population, is the most important thing for our patients right now,” she said.

### Procurement

The Procurement Department is used to finding and purchasing things for the Nation, but when everyday supplies like paper towels and toilet paper became scarce because of the pandemic, the department stepped in to make sure Choctaw elders had what they needed. “I am just doing what any teammate would do,” said Jodi Morgan, who helped organize a team of Choctaw Nation associates to find and distribute the supplies. Morgan worked with Logistics Manager Darrin Coverstone to find paper products and cleaning supplies the Nation had in its Durant warehouse. The Procurement team also found masks, hand sanitizer, bottled drinking water, and bleach, which have been hard to come by. Once the items were located, Randy Hammons and his team handled their distribution. “Mr. Hammons and his team are the real bright star in the story by making sure that these items have been distributed to the Choctaw elders and others in need during this unprecedented event,” said Morgan. Morgan also thanked Melissa Kindred and her team for sourcing some of the high-demand items. With their help, and assistance from some key suppliers, they hope to have more supplied delivered soon. “It’s times like these that test the strength of the Choctaw Nation, and being able to do my part in making sure crucial supplies make it to the elders is rewarding in itself, but more importantly, it’s proof of the core values and mission: faith, family and culture,” said Coverstone.



Faith, Family, Culture

Sense of community essential during global pandemic



Chief Gary Batton

As you all know, a lot has changed in the world over the past few months. COVID-19, a new and highly contagious virus, has changed the way we live our daily lives. The global pandemic has forced leaders around the world to make difficult, but necessary, changes to protect the health and safety of everyone.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has taken numerous steps to respond to the ever-evolving situation. Our top priority has always been the health and safety of our tribal members, associates, guests, vendors, entertainment partners and local communities. Choctaw Nation has been closely monitoring the situation based on the latest information from local, state and federal officials. We feel that we have an obligation to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

On March 16, we decided to temporarily suspend operations at all of our Choctaw Casino & Resort locations as a health precaution. Soon after, we closed all of our wellness centers, community centers and administrative offices. We’ve also had to make the difficult decision to cancel or postpone many of our events, including our annual Trail of Tears Walk. We began issuing work from home orders for associates who are not mission-critical and able to do so. Even though our doors may be closed, our programs are still working remotely to make sure our tribal members get the services they need during this uncertain time.

On April 21, leadership announced the extension of pay and benefits to all employees through May 16. We will reevaluate the situation as that date approaches. We make these decisions knowing we must balance health and safety with the tribe’s long-term financial sustainability and the economic needs of our tribal members, associates and communities.

While many of our facilities have been closed since mid-March, our mission-critical facilities have remained open to help serve our communities. Our healthcare facilities have remained open to bring vital care to our tribal members. Travel plazas, Choctaw Country Markets and food distribution facilities have remained open to provide necessary services to keep our communities going.

We are still able to feed our seniors through our nutrition program and deliver Meals-on-Wheels to our communities, thanks to our associate volunteers. I’m so thankful and proud of our associates and how they have handled this situation. I want to give a huge shout out to everyone who has volunteered to prepare or serve meals, work in our refill



Photo by Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation front line employees are doing their part to make sure the entire South-eastern Oklahoma community has access to essential services and that the Nation is still able to operate during the pandemic.

center or stock shelves in our Country Markets. Yakoke to our health workers who are putting their own health on the line to provide care to others. Yakoke to our Country Market and travel plaza employees who are on the front lines working tirelessly every day to provide food and other essentials to our communities. Yakoke to our tribal police and security officers who are protecting our communities and facilities every day. Yakoke to all of our associates who are working onsite or from home. I want you all to know that your hard work and dedication are not going unnoticed.

This is a difficult time, but we will get through this together. As Chahta people, the blood in our veins is that of our strong and resilient ancestors. They endured hardships, sickness and suffering. But they were strong-willed and determined. They overcame everything that was thrown at them. We can draw from the strength of our strong Chahta ancestors to overcome our struggles today.

The COVID-19 situation is constantly changing. By the time this message reaches you, I’m sure there will be many more updates. But one thing is certain: we must continue to help each other, and keep our faith. Things will get better in time. We must do our part to help our communities until they do. I encourage you to call your families, check on your neighbors and support local businesses. We will get through this together as a community.

One thing I wanted to ensure through all of this was clear communication. On March 24, we began releasing COVID-19 special reports on social media. On March 26, I began releasing my daily COVID-19 reports to show the numbers of cases and testing in our area. For more information on closures, postponements and Choctaw Nation COVID-19 updates, please visit [www.choctawnation.com/covid-19](http://www.choctawnation.com/covid-19), and follow us on Facebook.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Keeping faith in uncertain times

COVID-19 has changed nearly every aspect of our daily lives almost overnight. In order to protect ourselves, our families and others, we began to practice social distancing guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At the Choctaw Nation, we have had to make many difficult decisions to help keep our people safe. The health and safety of our tribal members, associates and patrons are of the utmost importance to us. With that in mind, we decided to temporarily close our casinos for the first time in 32 years. We also made the decision to close the doors of our wellness and community centers as well as our tribal headquarters and other facilities. In addition,

we have encouraged work from home policies for our employees where applicable. We rescheduled concerts and made the decision to cancel and postpone many of our annual tribal events. One of those events was our annual Easter Celebration in Tvshka Homma.

Everyone had to celebrate Easter a little differently this year, but that didn’t stop us from participating in the holiday. It was so great to see churches live stream services and hold drive-in worship. Many families were able to spend time with each other virtually via video chat. Some communities were able to celebrate Easter in creative ways while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Durant held a drive-by Easter egg hunt downtown. Local fire departments held Easter egg events where they helped the Easter Bunny bring eggs right to people’s front yards. Communities like Wilburton held social distancing Easter egg hunts, where individuals place pictures of Easter eggs on their front porches for children to spot on walks. Even though a global pandemic was taking place, it didn’t stop our communities from celebrating. The true meaning of Easter isn’t gathering in groups, it is honoring the resurrection of Christ and his gift of sacrifice.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

The story of Easter is one of sacrifice, rebirth, restoration, and a message we can all find comfort in at this time. When all is said and done, there is hope in the wake of the storm. Life always finds a way in the end. Keeping faith during times of uncertainty is helpful. At the moment, we don’t know what the future holds. People are sick and dying. Many have lost their jobs or are uncertain about their future. My heart goes out to everyone affected personally by the pandemic. We must have faith, stay strong and take care of each other. We can and will get through this. I would encourage everyone to hold on to God’s promises that are true every day, not just the one day on the calendar when we celebrate Easter

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Romans 8:18.



# FOOD DISTRIBUTION

## NOW SERVING ARKANSAS AND TEXAS COUNTIES

Choctaw Tribal Members in the following counties can now participate in the CNO Food Distribution Program

Arkansas: Sebastian, Scott, Polk, Sevier and Little River  
Texas: Fannin, Lamar, Red River and Bowie

Eligibility Requirements apply  
Participant must be willing to travel to one of the pickup sites in Oklahoma (Antlers, Broken Bow, Durant, McAlester and Poteau)

**CONTACT**

ANTLERS: 580-298-6443 | BROKEN BOW: 580-584-2842 | DURANT: 580-924-7773  
MCALESTER: 918-420-5716 | POTEAU: 918-649-0431 | MAIN NUMBER: 800-522-6170

Choctaw Nation

Food Distribution

Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Love letter from jail



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

The coronavirus pandemic has slowed down the world from its usual pace down to a crawl. Citizens feel confined to a limited space of living. Something that is unseen has taken away much of our freedom, which is our modern life. Feeling confined and with limited and controlled activity, one may compare this to being in jail. We shall look into the Bible and learn from Paul the Apostle how he endured during his stay in a jail. Paul was in a Roman jail when he wrote the epistle to the church at Philippi. “Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:1-2). In the salutation of his letter, Paul notes that he is offering grace and peace from God our Father. He is concerned about others even in imprisonment. Paul knows the mercy of God the Father, and he requests peace and grace to others from His great mercy. Next, Paul has a prayer list. He prayed for other people every day. He found joy in praying for others.

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy” (Philippians 1:3-4). In the closing chapter of this letter, Paul reaches into the inner soul, giving the deep things which outward stimuli cannot reach. This is in the mental self-governing element of our being. It is the thought process. Paul writes, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever thing are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you” (Philippians 4:8-9). Opinions, statistics, rumors, biased reports and emotions can distort the mind to develop untrue, dishonest, unjust, unlovely and bad reports with no virtue, no praise, and cloud the thoughts of peace and contentment and their relationship with the mind of God. Fear without proper thought process results in behavior that is negative and produces no solution directive. It may enhance the problem. Paul set a powerful example of how to have, when you seemingly don’t have, just by faith alone.

# CANCELED

MAY 16, 2020 | TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS

Due to the global pandemic, the event is canceled in the interest of safety for our tribal members and associates.

**CHAHTA HVPIA!**

## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



# Chahta Anumpa Ikhvnanchi Yvt Im Okla Isht Atokoli Okchalinchi

## Choctaw language teachers preserve tribal identity

By Shelia Kirven

Part 2 of a 3-part series on Choctaw culture bearers, this month we explore how the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna School of Choctaw Language carries the history and culture of the Chahta people into the future.

*Culture bearer: any individual, especially a migrant, who carries, and thus diffuses, cultural values and traits between societies. The role of culture bearers is particularly important within those cultures undergoing transition or experiencing threat from outside the culture. (Collins Dictionary of Sociology, 3rd ed. 2000).*

The need for the Choctaw language to be preserved and passed on was first recognized by Presbyterian missionary Cyrus Byington in the early 1800s. He came to Mississippi to live with the Choctaws, traveling with them over the Trail of Tears, teaching them to read and write in Choctaw, creating the first Choctaw dictionary and translating the New Testament into the Choctaw language.

Modern-day attempts to save and teach the language began in the early 1970s. According to Teresa Billy, Assistant Director of the tribe’s Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna School of Choctaw Language, Southeastern Oklahoma State University implemented a Choctaw Bilingual Education Program into which Choctaw speaking college students were recruited. At that time, Choctaw speaking children were still experiencing language barriers in public schools. The goal was to place Choctaw teachers in the classroom to assist children and families and to be visible role models. “Several of us became teachers and retired from the public school system. We went from helping children who were bilingual and at the end of our careers working for the language department to revitalize the language,” said Billy. She went on to explain that the language was taught at Broken Bow High School and Wright City High School in the mid-70s as well and that under Chief David Gardner’s administration, the Choctaw language was taught to associates and in a couple of communities.

As part of Chief Greg Pyle’s 100-year vision, the tribe established the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna School of Choctaw Language in 1997 to promote and preserve the language, history and culture of the Chahta people. Joy Culbreath, Executive Director of Education at that time, said that Chief Pyle came to her, asking her to start the program. “He said if we lose our language, we will lose our identity for the tribe. We wrote our own state approved curriculum. By the time Chief Batton took over, we were in full swing. Chief Batton has continued to support the program into the number one tribal language program in the nation.”

The program’s mission became to instill and encourage the desire to learn the Choctaw language in the old, young, tribal and non-tribal by providing the highest quality educational environment for first speakers, teachers and learners while striving to promote and enhance cultural awareness by teaching traditional customs and historical facts.

James Parrish, the program’s senior director, said, “The Language Department teaches the language and keeps it alive by offering different types of classes. Your language identifies who you are. When we say ‘Halito’ we are telling everyone in the world that we are Choctaw. Our language is our lifeblood.”

The program works side by side with first language speakers. Our first and second Choctaw language speakers serve as culture bearers, preserving and teaching a language that has been spoken for many generations by our ancestors.

The program consists of 27 staff members, twelve being fluent speakers or first language speakers with nine teaching language classes. Eleven staff members are second language speakers who also teach the language. Each teacher is certified and credentialed through the Oklahoma State Department of Education with the credentials being in their native language, the first tribe to do so in the state of Oklahoma.

A first speaker is someone who was raised in a home in which their first spoken language was Choctaw. Most first speakers live in the eastern half of the Choctaw Nation and are in their 60s and older. There are also those, ages 45-60, who were raised where the Choctaw language was spoken in the home, but because of dominant societal influences, many did not verbally respond in Choctaw, but in English. That age group can understand the language but are not able to speak the language themselves. Second language speakers may or may not have heard the language in their home but have taken an active role in learning the language through classes or independent study.

Thanks to these Choctaw language experts, we have a newer version of the dictionary.

Parrish explained, “The language evolves, and these are the most current words used in Choctaw. We wanted to do something that second language speakers could look at and it not be so difficult in reading. It was hard to read the original dictionary, so we wanted to do something with the most common words that are used.” The

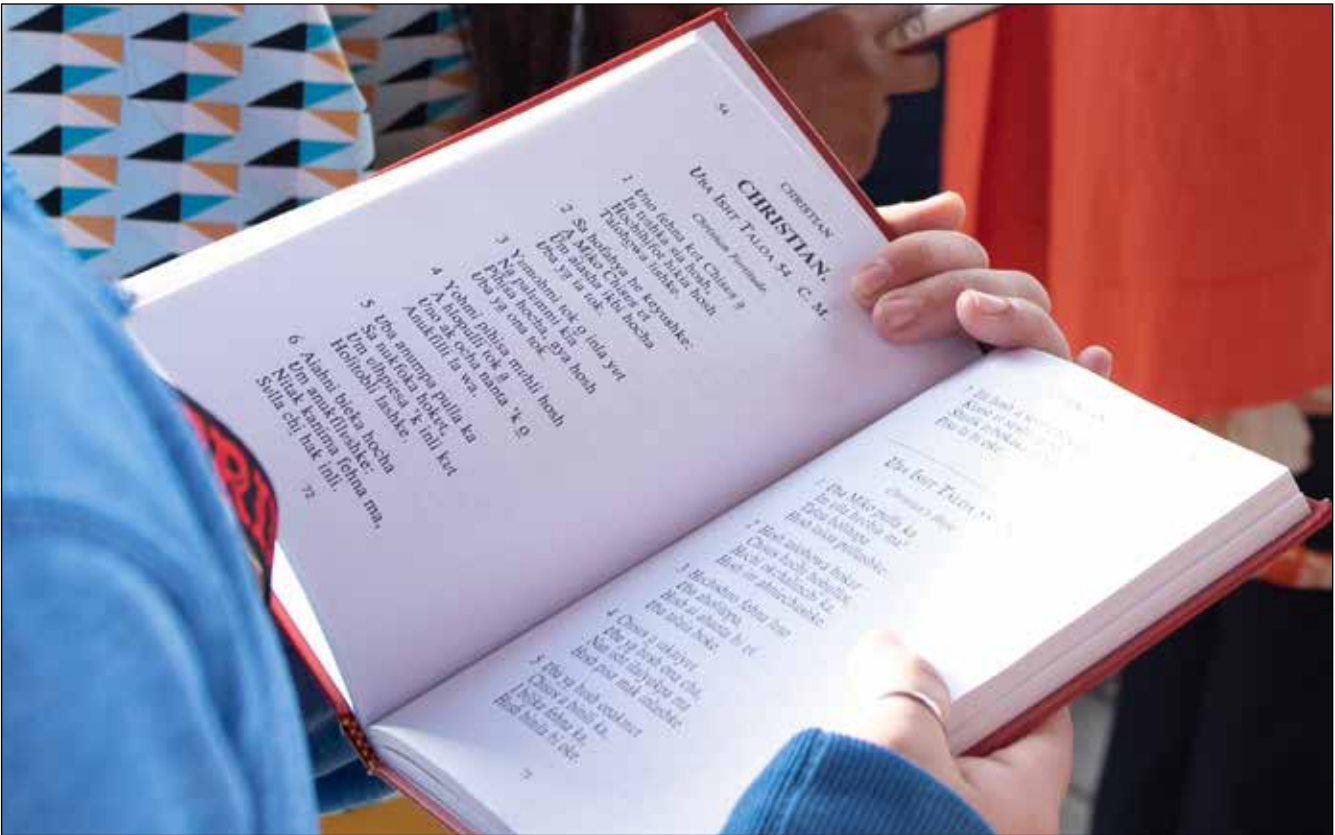


Photo by Chris Jennings

The Choctaw hymn book is one of the important items in continuing the language tradition. Recently a project was undertaken to write sheet music for the hymns.

new dictionary was never intended to replace the old one, but instead serves as a tool to assist second speakers and readers.

Another important book of history and culture is the Choctaw Hymnbook. The hymns were written by those facing incredible life and death challenges, leaving their homelands and walking the Trail of Tears. The words of the hymns by those who came before us show us the strength and hope they had. Recently, sheet music was created to go with the hymns, a project undertaken by Gaylia Green. The original hymnbook has only words, no music. The tunes to the hymns have just been passed down through generations of Choctaws. Green saw the need and felt that the hymns would be lost if the tunes were not written down.

Parrish said, “We have a lot of things we’re working on, one being a responsive website that people can use with cell phones. On our website, we have many files stored from first speakers. We wanted to record as much as we could of them speaking so we would never lose the first speaker voice.

Another project is online high school classes for credit. It’s how schools are evolving into what they call blended learning.”

The Current program is available in 44 public high schools through distance learning and has an enrollment of over 600 students. The textbook the program produced is one of the first ever Native American Language textbooks.

Current projects also include online university accredited classes through Southeastern Oklahoma State University. One can even minor in Choctaw, which is unique among tribal language programs.

Children in Choctaw Nation Head Start programs have weekly Choctaw language lessons and are taught by a Choctaw teacher through distance learning. There are 22 classes of three and four-year-olds who by the end of the year will have been exposed to 40 Choctaw words and a few phrases. Jones Academy elementary students are taught the Choctaw language via distance learning as well.

Community classes are conducted throughout the Choctaw Nation with an approximate enrollment of 230 students. One class is even offered in California. A monthly language lesson is also printed in the Biskinik newspaper each month which is mailed to tribal members nationwide.

A popular website feature is the Lesson of the Day. Subscribers can get a daily lesson delivered by email. Through the website, users can also access lessons, PDF downloads, MP3 sound clips and videos to suit different learning methods. The website serves as a gateway for locating community classes and for logging in to the internet language classes.

The program is often called upon to research and translate, adhering to the Tribal Council mandate and policy which states that “any translation leaving the

department must have the signatures of three fluent speakers.”

Another important function of the program is developing teachers.

Parrish stated, “It is a very important skill that first speakers want to leave their second language peers. You can’t start teaching the language without knowing how to teach.”

Second language instructors have attended summer immersion sessions since 2005.

Teresa Billy explained, “This has been very important to us because the fluent or first language speakers range in age from early 60s to 70 plus. We have been preparing them as we will soon begin to exit the program and they step up to take our places to pass on the language. Our purpose is to ‘teach the teacher’ and undergird them with the support of materials, resources, and knowledge, so they may teach new language learners with an emphasis on speaking.”

Billy went on to say, “We would like to see Choctaw members make a sincere effort to learn the language. We encourage everyone to use what they know and build on it. Take a class, learn phrases and teach others what you know.”

When asked what would happen if the language died, she said, “We would lose our tribal identity and language which identifies us a sovereign and unique nation, which we have maintained for thousands of years.”

Parrish added, “You don’t have to be a fluent speaker. Speak as much of the Choctaw language as you know and use it every day.”

Billy explained, “Language is the tribal identity which separates one from all other spoken languages. Its distinctness of structure and expression is heard in all the ways it is communicated, in everyday living from knowing your family name, kinship terms, origin and traditional stories, history, participating in cultural dances and games, songs, prayers and food. Language connects you to an ancestral heritage which continues to express itself through today’s traditional and contemporary social settings. As a sovereign nation, it is important to revitalize and perpetuate the language for future tribal members.”

Visit the Choctaw Language Department website at [www.choctawschool.com](http://www.choctawschool.com) for classes, to sign up for the Lesson of the Day and other language lessons and to read years of collected information.

The Choctaw Dictionary and hymn books may be purchased through the Choctaw Store online at [www.choctawstore.com](http://www.choctawstore.com). To reach the program, call 800-522-6170.

**Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund**

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

**Crowder Community Center**  
**May 29, 2020**  
**9:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.**

## CHOCTAW LANGUAGE COMMUNITY CLASSES

FOR ANYONE WANTING TO LEARN CHOCTAW

- FREE TO EVERYONE

- NO ENROLLMENT NEEDED

- MATERIALS FOR CLASSES ARE FREE

- 16-WEEK LONG SESSIONS

**VISIT WEBSITE FOR CLASS LOCATIONS IN:**

ADA, ANTLERS, ARDMORE, BROKEN BOW, CLAREMORE, COALGATE, DEL CITY, DURANT, HUGO, IDABEL, MCALESTER, MUSKOGEE, NORMAN, OKC, POTEAU, TALIHINA, TULSA, WILBURTON, NEWCASTLE & SOUTH GATE, CA.

**CHOCTAWSCHOOL.COM/CLASSES/COMMUNITY-CLASSES.ASPX**  
**CHOCTAWSCHOOL.COM • 800-522-6170**

**Choctaw Nation** Department of Education

## VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

If you are at least ¼ Native American, enrolled in an approved two-year college or a career tech center and live within the Choctaw Nation boundaries, Vocational Development may offer financial assistance to help with training and education.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL: (866) 933-2260**

## FATHERHOOD

GUIDING ADOLESCENT PARENTS

**403 CHAHTA CIRCLE, HUGO OK 74743**  
**580-326-8304 EXT 6057**

**Choctaw Nation** Outreach Services

## SUMMER YOUTH CAMPS

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE ON  
**WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA**

**Choctaw Nation** Youth Events & Activities



# The Chahta Spirit is still strong

The month of April, and now, May have proven to be trying months for all of us. With the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the closing of schools, canceling the annual Trail of Tears Walk, Choctaw Princess Pageants, graduations, churches and some businesses, it has left many people searching for answers, feeling unsure of the future.

I'm here to encourage you today that you are not alone. We are all in this together and are Choctaw strong.

Our Choctaw people are known for strength and resilience. Our ancestors survived the Trail of Tears. During the famine in Ireland, the Choctaws helped by sharing what they had. We have a great warrior spirit, and again during this historic pandemic, we are stepping up and taking care of our people and our communities, taking precautions for the safety of all. Our casinos and most businesses are closed, and our at-risk employees are working from home, but we continue to see the Chahta spirit in our cooks, drivers, DHR's and social workers, our tribal police, all of our health care employees, the front line workers at the travel plazas as they are still providing services to the people. We are providing the most vulnerable tribal members, our elders, with meals through curbside and home deliveries. We will get through this difficult time as a team.

We, Tribal Council, Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Austin, and the Executive Officers, have continued to work and have conference calls and WebEx meetings weekly to address tribal member needs as they arise. Many students are learning from home with parents and grandparents teaching; Youth Outreach is continuing to provide services to the youth and check on them. We have seen so many heroes through this safer-at-home order with volunteers helping to get meals out, get paper products and picking up food and commodities for those who are homebound.

Services are still being provided, and Summer EBT is one of the programs that provide food for children out of school. Even though you may be staying home, still apply for all the programs that are amazing in taking care of our people. There are farmers' markets, housing, lawn care, and many other helpful programs. We are trying to call and check on tribal members who live alone or those at risk. If we missed you or don't have a working number, please reach out to us if you need help. Please call headquarters at 1-800-522-6170, CHR at 918-448-7340, or CBSW 580-775-7895.

If you have not filled out the 2020 Census, please do so. It is so very important that we are counted. It affects our funding and eligibility for grants that provide so many of the wonderful programs we can offer. You count; you matter. Fill out the census!

We miss seeing our people, but in the meantime, continue to do what we have been directed to do: wash hands often, stay home, exercise social distancing and remain calm. Let's pray for our communities and country and for our health care workers as well as all the essential workers and those who have been directly affected by this pandemic. Keep the faith, family and culture. That's who we are. We still have so much to be thankful for. Together we're better and stronger. Encourage one another and check on each other.

We will come out of this pandemic stronger and closer than before. Choctaw Nation is strong and serving. Yakoke to all serving and helping each day. God bless you all. We are still here if you need assistance.



Submitted photo

District 6 works in full force with Councilwoman Jennifer Woods getting senior meals out.



Submitted photo

The Easter Bunny made an appearance at the Wilburton Community Center.



Photo by Christian Toews

Chef Leonel Ducharme, Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant, hands off perishable food items to Sheila Penn, Executive Director of the Grayson County Shelter.



Submitted photo

December Pitman wears mask and gloves as she rings up a customer at the Coalgate travel plaza.



Submitted photo

Front line workers prepare for Covid-19 testing in McAlester.

## EVENT UPDATES

If an event you're interested in is not listed, please call 800-522-6170 to confirm its status.

### Canceled events

- Princess pageants in Broken Bow, Poteau, Idabel, Wright City, Atoka, Crowder, Hugo and Talihina have been canceled.
- GED Graduation scheduled for May 8 has been canceled.
- Elder Appreciation Day scheduled for May 13 has been canceled.
- Summer Youth Golf Camp: The South Camp scheduled for May 26-27 and the North Camp scheduled for May 28-29 have both been canceled.
- POSSE Choctaw Nation Professional Learning Conference May 28-29 has been canceled.
- Meet and Greet the SE President on May 29 has been canceled.
- Summer Internship Programs have been canceled.

### Postponed events

- Herndon, VA Community Cultural Meeting has been postponed
- JOM Conference has been postponed
- Conscious Discipline has been postponed



Submitted photo

Justin Rhoades delivers a meal to a car at the Spiro Community Center



Photo by Chris Jennings

Bradley Gernand delivers a Meal to Shirley Gosnell in Durant.



Photo by Judy Allen

A curbside lunch is delivered in Durant as community centers switched to a drive-thru service for senior meals.



Photo by Judy Allen

Volunteers get senior meals ready for the drive-thru at the Durant Community Center.

## Veteran Lunches

**June 3**

- Hugo Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Stigler Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Crowder Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Wilburton Community Center – Noon
- Smithville Community Center – Noon

**June 10**

- Coalgate Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Antlers Community Center – Noon
- Spiro Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Bethel Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Durant Community Center – 11:30 a.m.
- Poteau Community Center – Noon
- Idabel Community Center – 11:00 a.m.
- Atoka Community Center – 11:30 a.m.

**June 17**

- Wright City Community Center – Noon
- Broken Bow Community Center – Noon

**June 18**

- McAlester Community Center – 11:30 a.m.

**June 19**

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

## CONGRATULATIONS ADULT EDUCATION 2020 MAY GRADUATES

Hayley Baxter	Spiro, OK	Scott Holt	Idabel, OK	Jenna Owens	Talihina, OK
Adelina Billy	Durant, OK	Ethan Hooper	Albuquerque, NM	Terrell Patton	Piedmont, OK
Errika Black	Mead, OK	Steven Hunter	Ardmore, OK	Kevin Payne	Cove, AR
Peyton Bright	Ardmore, OK	Destiny James	Ada, OK	Taylor Payne	Pittsburg, OK
Christopher Brown	Durant, OK	Allison Kincheloe	Spiro, OK	Marci Petit	Clayton, OK
Jasmine Brown	Howe, OK	Stephen Kincheloe	Spiro, OK	Tony Ray	Purcell, OK
Matthew Brown	Ada, OK	James Lambert	Reno, NV	Terry Ripley	Durant, OK
Ashley Butler	Clayton, OK	Laura Lambert	Muldrow, OK	Bradley Robertson	Idabel, OK
Justin Clark	Mustang, OK	Brooklen Lafore	Hugo, OK	Mary Robinson	Boswell, OK
Laken Crane	Norman, OK	Justin Lawson	Antlers, OK	Virginia Ryan	Durant, OK
Mark Dedmon	Heavener, OK	Justin Mayes	Tulsa, OK	Billy Sharp	Kingston, OK
Nocona Detten	Arthur City, TX	Kara Mayhall	Bokoshe, OK	Courtney Shipman	Spiro, OK
Kimberly Fixico	Lone Grove, OK	Felicia Melton	Howe, OK	Ashley Sober	Hugo, OK
Robin Ferrell	Caddo, OK	Autumn Miller	Mead, OK	Madison Sonaggera	Wilburton, OK
Roarke Ford	McAlester, OK	Heather Mitchell	Eagletown, OK	Makayla Stricklin	Keota, OK
Josephine Gilmore	Durant, OK	Jessie Moore	The Woodlands, TX	Cassandra Turner	Durant, OK
Alivia Hankins	Durant, OK	Daniel Morris	Calera, OK	Sarah Wackerly	Wilburton, OK
Gina Harris	Lindsay, OK	Mitchel James Mullin, II	Wilburton, OK	Amy Ward	Broken Bow, OK
Mariah Harris	Stigler, OK	Stormy Muns	Shawnee, OK	Kathrine Wallace	Ardmore, OK
Ashley Hess	Calera, OK	Lauren Nelson	McAlester, OK	Nashoba Wesley	Kiowa, OK

FOR YOUR NEXT STEP, CONTACT CHOCTAW NATION CAREER DEVELOPMENT:  
866-933-2260 | WWW.CHOCTAWCAREERS.COM



NOTES AND EVENTS

Noel and Roxie (Loman) Baker  
Family Reunion

June 27, 2020 (previously scheduled for June 2)

Choctaw Nation Community Center  
2746 Big Lots Parkway, Durant, Okla.  
Potluck lunch begins at 11 a.m.

For questions, please contact Lillie Dusenberry at  
580-320-1039.

Unclaimed funds

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

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

ERIC JAMES THOMAS  
SAMANTHA JILL RICH  
JULIA MORGAN TURNER  
TOSHA ANN GONZALEZ  
LEAH D BUTTS  
CHELSIE RAYANN HEAD

NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation  
Circulation Department  
**580.924.8280 x4028**

Read the Biskinik online at  
**CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS**



Biskinik  
Announcement Guidelines

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

Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.

We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.

All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

Mail to: Biskinik

P.O. Box 1210

Durant, OK 74702

or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

Gary Batton  
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.  
Assistant Chief

The Official  
Monthly Publication  
of the  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**Dara McCoy, Executive Director**  
**Mary Ann Strombitski, Senior Director**  
**Kellie Matherly, Managing Editor**  
**Chris Jennings, News Reporter**  
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The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be type-written and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Circulation Department would appreciate hearing from you at ext. 4028.

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation. Circulation is monthly. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run in the following month.

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

OK Choctaw Tribal Alliance

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

[www.facebook.com/OKChoctawTribalAlliance](http://www.facebook.com/OKChoctawTribalAlliance)

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

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

Veterans Association Members Needed

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

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

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

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

**For information call:**

**Ed Hendricks, Recruiter 918-962-5524**

**Paul Perry, Commander 479-353-2709**

Send us your stories!

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

**Please send your submissions to us at**  
**[biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)**

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

*April Language Lesson*

Choctaw Phrases  
Who's That?

**Yämmät kätä? - Who's that? Who is that?**  
pronunciation: Yahm-maht kah-tah

**Mvt kvta? - Who's that? Who is that?**  
pronunciation: Maht kah-tah

**Yvmmvto kvta? - Who's that? Who is that?**  
pronunciation: Yahm-maht-oh kah-tah

**Mvto kvta? - Who's that? Who is that?**  
pronunciation: Maht-oh kah-tah

Word Meaning

yvmmvt - that

mvt – that - shortened form of yvmmvt

yvmmvto – that one; specifically

mäto – that one; specifically - shortened form of yvmmvto

There are several ways you can ask 'who' someone is, practice and try out these questions.

[www.choctawschool.com](http://www.choctawschool.com)

Thank you

I wanted to say a big THANK YOU to the Choctaw Nation! Thank you does not even come close to the gratitude I have for the assistance I received for both my Bachelor's and Master's in Nursing degrees. I received my BSN in June 2010 and my MSN in February 2020. The financial assistance that I received allowed me to focus on my academics and my family rather than worrying so much about how to pay for school.

Blessings,  
Tanya Crabtree-Beach

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

Call 800-658-1497 for more information.

Ritter Family Reunion

May 23, 2020  
Quarry Island, Wister, Okla.

For relatives of Isaac and Georgia Ritter or Frank and Tennie Ritter: Please bring covered dish and something to drink. Any donation to help with the reunion is appreciated.

For more information: Imogene (McCoy) Odell  
507 Chickasaw, Poteau, Okla. 74953 or  
(918) 647-3791 mobile (918) 647-7596

Annual Gospel Singing

Hampton Chapel Church  
May 16, 2020  
5 p.m. wild onion supper  
7 p.m.. singing

2 miles East of Spencerville, Okla.  
Emcee – Lena Priddy  
For more information call (580) 317-3320

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

Evaluations and Assesments - Counseling and Guidance - Referral  
Services - On-the-job Training - Physical and Mental Restoration

<b>May 4</b>	<b>Durant</b>	<b>8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.</b>
<b>May 5</b>	<b>Poteau</b>	<b>11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 5</b>	<b>Idabel</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 6</b>	<b>Antlers</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 6</b>	<b>Coalgate</b>	<b>11 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 8</b>	<b>Talihina</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 11</b>	<b>Durant</b>	<b>8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.</b>
<b>May 12</b>	<b>Wright City</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 12</b>	<b>Talihina</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 13</b>	<b>Atoka</b>	<b>11 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 13</b>	<b>Crowder</b>	<b>By appointment</b>
<b>May 15</b>	<b>Antlers</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 15</b>	<b>Wilburton</b>	<b>10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 19</b>	<b>Poteau</b>	<b>10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 19</b>	<b>Broken Bow</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 20</b>	<b>McAlester</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 22</b>	<b>Coalgate</b>	<b>11 a.m. - 1 p.m.</b>
<b>May 26</b>	<b>Wilburton</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 27</b>	<b>McAlester</b>	<b>10 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>
<b>May 29</b>	<b>Atoka</b>	<b>11 a.m. - 2 p.m.</b>

**Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday**  
**Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment**

Tribal Council holds April session

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA REGULAR SESSION

April 11, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Regular Session March 14, 2020
5. WELCOME GUESTS/RECOGNIZE VETERAN OF THE MONTH: John Burleson District #10 (not present) was recognized by Speaker Williston. "Congratulations John Burleson and thank you for your service."
6. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES – No reports of committees.
7. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Approve Funds and Budget for Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) Grant – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - b. Approve Funds and Budget for FY18 Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - c. Approve Funds and Budget for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - d. Approve Funds and Budget for the Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Grant Program – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - e. Approve Funds and Budget for the FY19 Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program – Nana Yuhmahe Alhpesa – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - f. Approve Funds and Budget for Vocational Rehabilitation Services Project for American Indians with Disabilities Year One of Five – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - g. Approve Funds and Budget for Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP) – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - h. Approve Application for the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) – Part B: Imminent Threat Grant – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - i. Rescind Council Bill CB-51-20 and Approve the Sale of the Magnetic Resonance Imaging Machine (Serial Number R1050) Located in the Talihina Hospital – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - j. Approve the Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma to Enter into Business Transactions and/or Indebtedness for the Purpose of Providing Letters of Credit on Behalf of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma with Banks Headquartered Within the Boundaries of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and to Approve a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - k. Approve to Dispose of Surplus Capital Assets – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - l. Declare the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma a Disaster Area – Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
8. OTHER NEW BUSINESS: No new business.
9. OLD BUSINESS: No old business.
10. ADJOURNMENT
11. CLOSING PRAYER

All Council present (Speaker Williston and Sec. Ron Perry were present at the Council House) all other council members were present via Webex/phone.



# Growing Hope vt Chahta im Akshish a Okla Falvmmvt ia ka Apela

Growing Hope helps Choctaws return to their roots



Photo by Chris Jennings

Jacqueline Putman gives a tour of the greenhouse located on the capitol grounds during the Labor Day festival.

By Kellie Matherly

The Choctaw people started out as hunter-gatherers whose diet relied mainly on game and wild plants. By the time they were forced to leave their ancestral lands in Mississippi, however, Choctaws had learned to farm and had even developed several of their own varieties of corn and beans. “Sources from the 1700s tell us that Choctaw farmers grew a wider variety of beans than any other Southeastern tribe,” said Dr. Ian Thompson, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Senior Director of the Historic Preservation Department for the Choctaw Nation. When the Choctaw people came to Oklahoma from Mississippi on the Trail of Tears, they brought with them the seeds they needed to start farming in their new home as well as the knowledge of how best to cultivate those crops.

Unfortunately, not all of that knowledge has survived over the years. The good news is that, through the efforts of the Growing Hope program, the Choctaw Nation is recovering much of what was lost.

Thompson says the idea for Growing Hope sprouted from a health problem close to home. Several years ago, Thompson’s wife Amy was diagnosed with diabetes. Rather than turn to medication, which would treat Amy’s symptoms but not her condition, the couple chose to change their diet.

Amy’s diagnosis is not uncommon. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Native Americans are at a greater risk for developing diabetes than any other racial group. In fact, Native Americans are twice as likely as Caucasians to develop diabetes. Although better access to medical care and education on diabetes prevention has helped improve the health of Native people, diabetes remains one of the most common medical problems in tribal communities.

The Thompsons began a strict diet, eating mostly Indigenous Choctaw foods in the hopes of improving Amy’s condition. According to Thompson, Amy was out of diabetic range within three months. As an added bonus, the Thompsons lost 70 pounds between them. “The foods were tasty and light on the stomach,” said Thompson. “In the time that we were on that diet strictly, our energy was through the roof, and our health was vibrant—we never got so much as a sore throat.”

Tribal people from around the world who adopted their own traditional diets have reported similar health benefits.

A lot of research went into learning the Choctaw traditional foodways. Dr. Thompson visited with elders and searched every historical document he could find to gather detailed descriptions of plants Choctaws used before the Trail of Tears.

Once the research was complete, Thompson started tracking down seeds for heritage plants. Several requests went out asking for seeds from anyone willing to share. Choctaw people responded from all over. Seeds also came from members of other tribes who had Choctaw seeds.

Some of the seeds gathered were from rare crops. Dr. Thompson was able to find

the Meshaya family in Antlers who grew one rare variety of beans 30 years ago. “It took some time, but the family miraculously found some of the 30-year-old seeds and donated them to the program. It was 11 seeds, to be exact,” said Thompson.

The program tried to grow two of the seeds, but because they were so old, they did not germinate. This year, Growing Hope will partner with Oklahoma State University to try again. “The Choctaw ancestors grew beans for 800 years, each season selecting the ones with the best genes to plant. When you think about the fact that all of that work is now down to less than ten seeds that we know of, their value is inestimable,” said Thompson.

Seeds from two special varieties of corn were also submitted to the program. Apparently, they had survived in the freezer of a Choctaw/Chickasaw man for 30 years. Thompson was able to identify the seeds as belonging to the two most important varieties of Choctaw corn—hominy corn and flour corn—dating back at least to the 1700s.

The Thompsons began growing some of these heritage corn plants in their own garden, sharing seeds with other growers and talking with others with more knowledge about how to have successful crops. The corn seeds produced stalks 18 feet tall, but no viable seeds. The Thompsons later learned it was because the climate in Oklahoma is different from that of Mississippi, so it was necessary to make adjustments to planting and harvest times.

In 2014, the Agricultural Business Department approached the Choctaw Nation’s Historic Preservation Department with a proposal to expand the heritage seed work through a USDA NIFA grant. The project allowed the Choctaw Nation to build a greenhouse at Tvshka Homma and hire a full-time staff, including Jackie Putman, who cares for the seeds and the plants at the greenhouse. During the annual Labor Day Festival, Putman shows guests around the greenhouse and teaches them about the traditional plants of the Choctaws.

Although the Agricultural Business Department was eventually dissolved, the Historic Preservation Department took over managing the grant to keep the Growing Hope program alive.

“The goals of the program are to work with the community to revitalize our heritage crops and Indigenous foods in a way that can lead to a higher quality of life,” says Thompson. “The program has worked to grow Choctaw heritage plants from highly threatened seeds, so they don’t go extinct, distribute Choctaw heritage seeds to Choctaw growers, share information on traditional agriculture and traditional food preparation and build a market for Choctaw traditional agricultural products.”

With the help of Growing Hope staff and Evan Rowland, a Choctaw organic farmer, the 30-year-old hominy and flour corn seeds that sat for so many years in a freezer eventually produced two successful harvests, which expanded the seed base, but Dr. Thompson says there is still work to be done. “After more than a decade of searching, we’re still trying to find seeds for some missing varieties of Choctaw heritage plants,” he said. One of those seeds is Tanchusi, a small-statured variety of corn that is ready for harvest just eight weeks after planting. Another is a gray-colored, sweet-tasting winter squash that some elders remember.

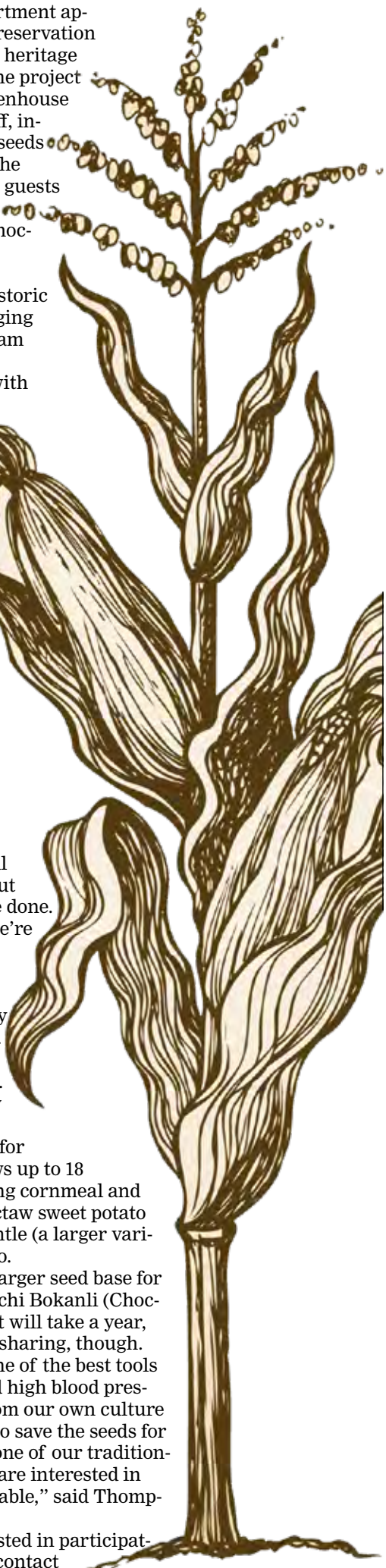
Any Choctaw tribal member or Choctaw family can participate in Growing Hope.

This year, the program is offering seeds for Tanchi Tohbhi, a variety of corn that grows up to 18 feet tall and is traditionally used for making cornmeal and flour. Members can also get seeds for Choctaw sweet potato squash, Smith peas, lambsquarter, Huazontle (a larger variety of lambsquarter), and Choctaw tobacco.

The program is currently developing a larger seed base for Tanchi Hlimishko (Choctaw hominy), Tanchi Bokanli (Choctaw popcorn), and Tobi (Choctaw beans). It will take a year, possibly two, to build up enough seeds for sharing, though.

“Our traditional Indigenous foods are one of the best tools that we have to battle obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure. They don’t come from outside but from our own culture and community. This program is helping to save the seeds for the agricultural plants that are the backbone of our traditional food and empower tribal members who are interested in bringing these foods to the family dinner table,” said Thompson.

Choctaw tribal members who are interested in participating in the Growing Hope program should contact Jackie Putman at [jputman@choctawnation.com](mailto:jputman@choctawnation.com).



## CAMP CHAHTA

### FAMILY NIGHT AND MOVE-IN

**What to expect from Camp Chahta:**

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

**CONTACT**

**800-522-6170 EXT 2292 | [COLLEGEFYI@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:COLLEGEFYI@CHOCTAWNATION.COM)**

**Choctaw Nation** College Freshman Year Initiative

## STUDENT SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY FUND

The Choctaw Nation offers a \$100 grant to Choctaw tribal students who are attending 3-year-old head start through high school. The grant is provided one time each funding year and will be on a Visa card specifically for clothing; it will be declined at ATMs, gas stations, restaurants, movie theaters, etc.

**Eligibility Requirements**

- Students must possess a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal membership card (This is not the CDIB).
- Students must be at least 3-years-old in head start/daycare setting through 12th grade.
- If the student is 19 or older and still in high school, please submit a paper form via mail, email, or fax and include school documentation verifying enrollment.

The Student School and Activity Fund Program funding year is **July 1 – May 1** of the following year.  
Applications can be submitted online.

**CONTACT**

**[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA)**  
**800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463**

**Choctaw Nation** Student School & Activity Fund

## NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

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

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

**FOR AN APPLICATION, CONTACT**

**800-522-6170 EXT 2219**

**Choctaw Nation** Head Start



## Zimmer passes bar



Daniel Kirk Zimmer has passed the California bar exam. He follows in the footsteps of many Choctaw ancestors and relatives who have contributed to our legal system, including his great-great-great-uncle, a Choctaw Lighthorseman, his great-grandfather, original enrollee Edward Paul Snead, Sr., a court reporter in Idabel, his grandfa-

ther, Judge Edward Paul Snead, Jr., a district judge in New Mexico, and his cousin, Judge Ada Brown, recently sworn in as US District Court Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

Daniel holds degrees in philosophy from Salisbury University, in law from Rutgers University, and in Music Business and Entertainment from Miami University in Florida. He lives in Los Angeles where he plans to pursue a career in entertainment law.



## Shomo 40 under 40

Trista Shomo, Choctaw tribal member from Oklahoma City, Okla., has been named in the Journal Record's 17th class of Achievers Under 40. Shomo will be honored in Oklahoma City on May 29 and will appear in a

special publication of the Journal Record.

One of 45 honorees, Shomo is the Oklahoma City Senior Safety Manager for Manhattan Construction Company and is a graduate of Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Okla.

## Lucille Absher turns 90

Lucille (Taylor) Absher will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 26, 2020.

Lucille is the daughter of original enrollee Beulah (Platt) Taylor. After graduating from Moyers High School in 1947, she moved to Modesto, Calif., where she has continued to reside.

She has three children Cynthia Kay Anderson, Michael Absher, and David Absher; six grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

Lucille is very proud of her Choctaw heritage and enjoys the publications she receives from the Choctaw Nation. She retired as a librarian from the Modesto Junior College.



## Louise Amos turns 93

Louise Amos turns 93 on May 6th. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren would like to wish her a very happy birthday.

Louise is a prayer warrior and her family is thankful for her good health. In the summer, she picks tomatoes, gathers blackberries and makes

jelly. She enjoys writing letters to keep in touch with her friends. She reads her bible every morning and says she has her phone, television and her katos to keep her busy.

She enjoys being with her Choctaw seniors, and in October, was selected as Outstanding Senior Choctaw Woman for District One.



## Battiest Wright City HS Queen

Mahala Battiest was crowned 2020 Wright City High School queen by her cousin, Emily Rodriguez, outgoing 2019 Miss WCHS Queen.

She also won Miss Congeniality and the Crowd Pleaser award. For her talent, she sang a Choctaw hymn, wearing her traditional Choctaw attire.

Mahala is the 18-year-old daughter of Rachel Roberts-Battiest and Scott Battiest; granddaughter of Virginia and Melvin McCleskey, and Darla and Ryman Battiest Jr. She is Co-Valedictorian of her 2020 senior class and is enrolled concurrently at Eastern Oklahoma State College. She was the 2010 Little Miss Choctaw Nation and plans to compete in the Choctaw Nation District Princess Pageant for the title of 2020 Miss Choctaw Nation.

Emily Rodriguez, the 2019 Miss Wright City High School, is the daughter of Algenis Rodriguez and Aletha Morris; and granddaughter of Donna and Domingo Rodriguez, and Georgia Boles.



## Glenn Mitchell March Veteran of the Month

Glenn Junior Mitchell, Ardmore, Okla., is March's Veteran of the Month.

He served in the United States Marine Corps Reserve from July 26, 1943, to May 11, 1946, achieving the rank of Corporal.

Corp. Mitchell participated in the battle of Iwo Jima where he was in communications and a forward observer, laying down artillery fire for the infantry. He also watched the American flag go up on Mount Suribachi. He was then stationed in Nagasaki, Japan where he performed guard duty at the second atomic bomb blast area.

He received numerous awards and decorations which include an American Campaign Ribbon, Occupation of Japan Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Area Medal with one battle star, World War Victory Medal, Marksman Rifle and Good Conduct Medal. He was inducted into the Military Memorial Museum Hall of Honor in Ardmore, Okla. on June 13, 2016.

## EagleRoad wins first for presentation

Dr. Nikki EagleRoad recently presented a quality improvement project completed in the CNHSA Family Medicine Residency Clinic at the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association's Winter Seminar, a statewide conference for physicians.

The project entitled "Overcoming Barriers to Promote Advance Care Planning Discussions in the Outpatient Setting: Is There a Better Way?" won first place among 30 submissions.



## Dedmon UAFS homecoming queen



Taely Dedmon was named the 2020 University of Arkansas Fort Smith Homecoming Queen.

Taely is the daughter of Keith and Tracy Dedmon; granddaughter of Eugene Dedmon and the late Irma Brown; and direct descent of John Dedmon, Esther Steelman-Dedmon-Ryburn, John and Eliza White Steelman, and Buck and Angeline Mitchell White.

## Johnnie Burleson April Veteran of the month

Johnnie Burleson, District #10, was recognized by the Tribal Council as April's Veteran of the Month.

He served in the United States Army from 1971 to 1991, achieving the rank of First Sergeant. First Sergeant Burleson was stationed in Germany, Fort Hood, Fort Knox, Fort Harrison and Fort Sill. He also served as a recruiter in South Dakota, Wyoming and Nebraska.

First Sergeant Burleson was a founder of the Choctaw Nation Color Guard in 1998 and was one of the original eighteen members. He has been an active member for twenty-two years and is still active today.



## Rogers turns 5

Mia K. Rogers, Moore, Okla., turned 5 years old on April 28, 2020.

Mia is the daughter of Larry Rogers and Kendra Woodward, and granddaughter of Nita James.

Her siblings are Larry Jr., Emily Nicole, Ricky, Amy and Jamie.



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**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**



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**Choctaw Nation** Housing Authority



## EMPOWERING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

**Choctaw Nation** Youth Advisory Board



### Jacqueline Marie Sutton

Jacqueline Marie Sutton, 51, passed away Feb. 24, 2020.

Jacqueline was born Oct. 31, 1968, in Lawton, Okla., to Donna Abila Sutton and Lawrence “Flint” Sutton.

She was preceded in death by her mother; grandparents Vernie and Flossie Abila; and special cousins Brandi Son and Tammy Abila.

Jacqueline is survived by her father; daughters Marissa Hoover and Madissan Sutton; sisters Jennifer Carr and Kristi Sutton; aunt Debra Son; uncle Steve Abila; nieces and nephews Donna Murillo, Tyler Sutton, Becky Sutton Berrera, Junior Ortiz, Mikey Ortiz and Casey Carr; best friend Lisa Hurley; and eight great-nieces and nephews.

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



### William G. Guthrie

William G. “Bill” Guthrie, 78, passed away Oct. 20, 2019.

Bill was born August 4, 1941, in Pauls Valley, Okla., to William Charlie “Bill” and Helen Roberta (Haney) Guthrie.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers-in-law Edward Lauderdale and Harold Young.

Bill is survived by wife Carolyn; son Roger Guthrie and spouse Melany; grandson Andrew Guthrie; sisters Rochelle Lauderdale and Charlotte Young; many nieces, nephews and a host of friends.

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



### Chad Hobgood

Chad Hobgood, 45, passed away March 2, 2020.

Chad was born May 15, 1974, in Hugo, Okla., to Larry Hobgood and Velma (Rutherford) Hobgood.

He was preceded in death by his father.

Chad is survived by wife Tajua-na; daughter Courtney Hobgood and fiancé Jeremiah Taylor; sons Garry Hobgood and fiancé Michelle Beason, and Colton Hobgood; stepson Geoffery James; his mother; grandchildren Jaylee, Jayci, Jeremiah Jr., and Allyson Taylor, Brantley and Rylan Hobgood, and Keaton Beason; sister Cheryl Hobgood; brothers Bert Hunter and James Hunter; many other relatives and friends.

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



### Lee Lawrence Jr.

Lee “Roy” Lawrence Jr., 59, passed away Dec. 13, 2019.

Roy was born March 14, 1960, in Modesto, Calif., to Lee Roy Lawrence Sr. and Jessie Mae (Lung) Lawrence.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Kennedy Lawrence and Russell Lawrence.

Roy is survived by sisters Charlotte Heady, Dora Carlile, Betsie Hunter, and Loretta Manasco; brother David Lawrence; numerous nieces and nephews, along with many other relatives and friends.

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



### Cecil Loren James

Cecil Loren James, 61, passed away Feb. 18, 2020.

Cecil was born Nov. 19, 1958, in Globe, Ariz., to Ellis Edgar James Jr. and Margaret Cox James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Tera Marie James; sister Tenita Ritter; and brother Ronnie Waltrip.

Cecil is survived by son Joshua James and spouse Nicole; daughter Katrina James; partner of 19 years Roberta Parsons and children Julia Kirkland, Cristle Moore, Adrian Muncrief, Russell Parsons, and Bonnie Parsons; brothers Ellis James and spouse Nancy, Paul James and spouse Dori, David James and spouse Dawn, and Robert “Wes” James.

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



### Lena Carroll

Lena Impson-Carroll, 98, passed away Feb. 23, 2020.

Lena was born Dec. 15, 1921, in Comanche, Okla., to Isaac and Lillie Impson.

She was preceded in death by her parents and five siblings.

Lena is survived by daughter Patricia Harp and spouse Doyle; son James Allen Carroll Jr. and spouse Kelly; grandchildren Holly Nogol and spouse Alex, Ivy Lee and spouse Rick, Camilla Harp, Carson Carroll and Colton Carroll; six great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

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



### Michael Edward Smith

Michael Edward Smith, 56, passed away Feb. 14, 2020.

Michael was born July 7, 1963, to William “Bill” M. and Elaine Smith.

He was preceded in death by his parents and sister Celeste.

Michael is survived by his siblings Mary, Barbara, Bernie; Dennis and spouse Mattie; nieces and nephews Tammy, Michelle, Andrew, Davy, Lindsay, Lauren, Hanna and Macklin; and many special grand nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [La Paz – Graham’s Funeral Home](#).



### James Ward

James “Jim” Ward, 97, passed away Jan. 5, 2020.

Jim was born Dec. 31, 1922, in Idabel, Okla., to Harris and Rena Ward.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Florence Ward; sister Pauline Galston; and granddaughter Erika Ann Ragsdale.

Jim is survived by daughter Jana Flaniken and spouse Kenny; grandchildren Stephanie Riddle and spouse Tyler, and Matt Ragsdale and spouse Tiana; great-grandchildren Avery and Addison Riddle; great-nephew William Wright; and longtime special friend Fran Stephens.

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



### Bryan Casey Belvin

Bryan Casey Belvin, 33, passed away March 16, 2020.

Casey was born Dec. 3, 1986, in Durant, Okla., to Bryan Belvin and LaDonna (Mock) Belvin.

He was preceded in death by grandfather John Belvin, and aunt Michele Yates.

Casey is survived by his parents; girlfriend Brittney Hobbs; son Caseyn Ray; granddaughter Briley Lynn; brother Dusty Belvin; sisters Maegan Belvin and Mattie Busby; grandfather Dub Mock; grandmothers Anna Mock and Laura Sue Belvin; aunt Melissa Mock Bacon; uncles Zach Belvin and Johnny Belvin; niece and nephew Navelly and Nash; and numerous other family members and friends.

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



### Mark James

Mark James, 52, passed away March 12, 2020.

Mark was born April 25, 1967, in Talihina, Okla., to Andrew James and Kathrine (Baker) James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Kelly James; and brother Michael James.

Mark is survived by daughters Ashton Farley and spouse Douglas, and Whitley James; grandchildren Caraline Harley, Aspen Harley, Makyna Bond and Haidyn Tom; brothers Patrick James and Andrew “Sonny” James Jr.; sisters Jackie Jennings and Donna James; aunts Evelyn James and Wynona James; and many loved family and friends.

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



### Kent Eugene Phillips

Kent Eugene Phillips, 59, passed away March 5, 2020.

Kent was born Jan. 19, 1961, in Talihina, Okla., to Tige and Alta Phillips.

He is survived by son Ross Phillips and spouse Savannah; grandchildren Callahan, Vivian and Bowen; sisters Brownie Fairless and spouse Robert, sister Janice Hedrick and spouse Bobby, and Terry Beck and spouse Rickey; brother Quinton Phillips; numerous nephews, nieces, and cousins; best friends Greta Linker, Laniell Warren, Pam Brown, Melody Maxey, and Leaann Henry.

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



### Velma Marie Angel

Velma Marie Angel, 84, passed away Feb. 29, 2020.

Velma was born June 19, 1935, in Talihina, Okla., to Tobias Frazier and Ancey Hampton.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Toby Frazier Jr.; sisters Doris Pettyjohn, Helen Hatton, and Carol Frazier; and her husband Kenneth Angel.

Velma is survived by son Anthony King and spouse Lynnidean; daughter Teresa Eagle Road and spouse Bill, grandchildren Tracy King, Toni King and spouse B.J., Kenneth King and spouse Jamie, Nikki Eagle Road, Billy Eagle Road III, and Jordan Eagle Road and spouse Makenzie; great-grandchildren Desmine King, RaeLynn King, Kennie King, Emalyne King, Lydia Dean, Kailie King, Brendine King, Tomi Ludlow, Raben King, Tiger King, Kojah King, and Nakaiah King; great-great-grandchildren Jordan Eagle Road II, Oakleigh Duncan and Addison Samson; sisters Betty Novak and spouse John, and Sue Daney; many nieces, nephews, cousins and a host of friends she considered family.

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



### Benjamin Franklin Sr.

Benjamin Franklin Sr., 89, passed away April 3, 2020.

Benjamin was born March 6, 1931, in Glover, Okla., to Pearlle Mae (Franklin) Lewis.

He was preceded in death by his mother; brothers B.C. Lewis, Nelson Lewis, and Jessie Lewis; sister Marie Davis; two daughters Connie Franklin and Nawatha Baker; granddaughter Rendi Franklin; grandson Kevin Raymond; and nephew Jeremy Lewis.

Benjamin is survived by wife Virginia; sons Ben Franklin Jr, Brian Franklin, and Edmond Brent Franklin; daughters Marietha Bond and spouse Larry, Valeria Franklin, Thelma Kaniatobe and spouse Rick, Wahneeta Ferguson and spouse Richard, Tracie Willis and spouse Elesten Jr, Inese Mitchell and spouse Shawn, Neomi Franklin, and Rowena Franklin; son-in-law Billy Baker; brothers Horton Ray Lewis, and William Lewis and spouse Abby; sisters Lillian Lewis and Dorothy Beller; thirty grandchildren; 58 great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; special friend Chuck Ishcomer; and a host of other relatives and other friends.

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



### Kimbel E. Hice

Kimbel E. Hice, 56, passed away Jan. 16, 2020.

Kimbel was born Nov. 24, 1963, in Wichita Falls, Texas, to Rita Hice.

He was preceded in death by grandparents Les and Viola Impson Smith; great-grandparents Isaac Impson and Lillie Driver Impson; and aunt Yvonne Streatly.

Kimbel is survived by his wife Darla; his mother; sister Deborah Hice Rollins; cousins Deborah Hunter, Sandra Smith, John Hunter, David and Kellie Smith, Michael and Jane Ann Smith, JP Smith, Justin Smith, Jody Smith, Jacey and Nick Dobbins, JC Hunter; step-son Ashton and spouse Alora; granddaughter Brooklyn; brother-in-law Eric and spouse Titiana; nephews Nick Smith and Sage; uncles Sonny and Alton Smith; good friend Austyn Fury; and many other loved ones and many friends.

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



### Judy Newport

Judy Newport, 87, passed away March 11, 2020.

Judy was born Dec. 20, 1932, in Quinton, Okla., to Jefferson Silmon and Millie Pope.

She was preceded in death by her spouse John Newport and son Ronnie Silmon.

Judy is survived by children Nancy Barton and spouse Jim, Ann McCraw, John Newport, Henry Newport, Paul Newport and spouse Sherry, Bill Newport and spouse Cynthia, Mary Harmon and spouse Randy, Larry Newport and spouse Ngoc, and Jeffery Newport; numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other family and friends.

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



### Rosemary Sheppard

Rosemary Sheppard, 74, passed away March 12, 2020.

Rosemary was born June 12, 1945, in Tulsa, Okla., to Roy and Desa (Crawford) Sheppard.

She was preceded in death by sons Timothy Clark and Mark Daniel Sheppard; a grandson; her parents; and siblings Rowena Jenkins, Carol McNeese, Beverly Dodd, Roy Gary and Ray Gene Sheppard.

Rosemary is survived by daughter Tammy Woolbridge and spouse Darren; son Tommy Sheppard; sister B.L. Rhoades; eight grandchildren; one great-grandson; numerous nieces, nephews and friends.

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



### Melissa Kay Underwood

Melissa Kay Underwood, 54, passed away Feb. 28, 2020.

Melissa was born July 5, 1965, in Hugo, Okla., to Victor and Evelyn Faye (Forwoodson) Underwood.

She was preceded in death by her mother; uncle James Underwood; grandparents Victor L. Underwood Sr. and Lila Underwood; great-grandparents Kennedy and Lula Underwood.

Melissa is survived by her father; daughters Victoria Underwood, and Jessica Underwood and spouse Amanda; brothers Stephen Underwood and spouse Kathy, Phillip Underwood and spouse Kimberly, and Kennedy Underwood and spouse Marni; grandchildren Arabella Underwood and Victor Eugene Underwood; and many other relatives and a host of friends.

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



### Janice Marie Walker

Janice Marie Walker, 81, passed away March 30, 2020.

Janice was born March 5, 1939, in Lawton, Okla., to Cecil Eugene Griggs and Inez Hunt Griggs.

She was preceded in death by husband Carl D. Walker; son Shawn Tallant; grandsons Rocky Walker, Kenny Rickey, and Dustin Walker; sister Sharon Griggs; and brother Pete Duncan.

Janice is survived by daughters Joyce Tallant, Shawndra Walker and Roberta Walker; sons Harold Walker, and Robert Walker and spouse Tina; sisters Kay Bishop and Michelle Hatfield; brothers Carrol Griggs, Chuck Duncan, David Duncan, and Mike Duncan; numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren; several nieces, nephews and great-nieces and nephews.

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



### Jeanne Ellen Warren

Jeanne Ellen Warren, 96, passed away March 12, 2020.

Jeanne was born Oct. 3, 1923, in Howe, Okla., to Claudia (Johnston) Beavers.

She was preceded in death by her mother; step-father Oscar Beavers; her first husband Louis DeMott; second husband Charles “Ed” Warren; daughter Carolyn (DeMott) Smith; brother Charles Freeman and spouse Mary; sister Margie Copeland and spouse Vernon; nephews Charles Michael Copeland and Charles “Buzz” Freeman; and niece Kay Freeman.

Jeanne is survived by daughter Susan Baker and spouse Mackey; granddaughters Jennifer Casey and spouse Brett, Micah Reidy and spouse Jack, Kim Kramer and spouse Kenny, and Jeana Allen and spouse Oliver; grandson Wesley Baker; great-grandchildren Justus Brown, Jentry Brown, Louis Baker, Christian Kramer, Kinsler Baker, and Kaiser Baker; niece Sherry Copeland; and several other relatives and a host of friends.

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





## ITI FABVSSA

# Tribal Services support every stage of Choctaw life

Since the beginning of this year, Iti Fabvssa has run the series Enduring Legacies, where we reflect on the history of each division of our executive branch of government. This includes the divisions of Commerce, Integrated Services, Legal & Compliance, Strategic Development, and Tribal Services. This article is the last in our series and focuses on Choctaw Nation's Division of Tribal Services.

After Choctaw people arrived in Indian Territory from the Trail of Tears, they immediately began to rebuild our government. Living in the aftermath of displacement from our ancestral homelands, Choctaw leaders created sets of laws aimed at protecting Choctaws' land base in Indian Territory. They were particularly concerned about trespassers, especially those who intruded into Choctaw ancestral homelands for hundreds of years, abused community relationships, and caused violent unrest that eventually led to the removal of the Five Tribes. This history later informed Choctaw General Council decision-making, particularly its laws aimed at preventing white settlers from gaining land in Indian Territory.

In October 1836, the Choctaw General Council (what we today call Tribal Council) passed two laws regarding outsiders. One law required white men who wanted to work in Choctaw Nation's territorial boundaries to have a permit. The other required non-Choctaw Indians to get permission from General Council to settle in Choctaw Territory. By regulating who could live and work on Choctaw lands, Choctaw Nation asserted its sovereignty to protect its lands, people, and way of life. At first glance, this might seem like an exclusionary tactic that countered Choctaw values of generosity. But if we take a closer look and consider other laws passed by General Council as a response to historical patterns of intrusion on Choctaw territories, we can see how Choctaw leadership's regulation of outsiders was a way to protect our people and culture.

Connected to Choctaws' concern for the maintaining control of their lands and its borders was a deep concern for Choctaws' ability to live as our ancestors did. Intrusion by white settlers in Choctaw territory often meant the introduction of foreign ideas that attacked important parts of Choctaw lifeways. American settlers looked down on Choctaw ways of life such as the importance of women in society, playing stickball, sharing traditional knowledge, and land management practices. Across North America, Americans restricted Indigenous ways of life and even created oppressive laws like outlawing Native Americans' religions and dances. Despite the oppression of Choctaw culture, these traditions continue to be important to our lives in the present. Sue Folsom, Executive Director of Cultural Services, reminds us, "Without our culture, we won't have a Choctaw Nation, we won't have this identity of showing who the Choctaw people are." Recognizing the significance of Choctaw culture, we understand why it is critical for us to have control over our lands after removal. Choctaws wanted to live in peace with our god given sovereignty and carry on living as a whole community of Choctaw people during a time when others tried to strip that away.

Our concern for community also informed some of General Councils' other laws regarding outsiders. Throughout the 1800s, General Council also passed laws that granted Choctaw citizenship to individuals with no Choctaw blood. Prior to Choctaw removal to Indian Territory, Caddo people called the region that is now Choctaw treaty territory their homelands. Recognizing this, General Council created permits that allowed Caddo families to continue living in Choctaw Nation's boundaries. General Council also passed laws that allowed Creek, Cherokee, Shawnee, and Quapaw families to live in Choctaw territory on a case-by-case basis. Individuals who were granted citizenship and lived in the territory were expected to follow Choctaw laws and abide by Choctaw sovereignty. In 1853, the General Council naturalized fourteen non-Choctaws, giving them all the rights that come with Choctaw citizenship. Naturalization



Choctaw women at a camp meeting where Choctaw communities came together. Photo circa 1907 and courtesy of the E.A. Coleman Photo Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

can be understood as part of a long tradition of adopting and integrating outsiders into Choctaw society. Given this variety of ways that Choctaws brought in and accepted outsiders, this helps us understand the strict regulation of Choctaw territory differently.

Protecting Choctaw land was of the utmost importance since that is the place where we lived together as a nation. This is in part why Choctaw Nation owned the land collectively, giving parcels of land to families as they needed. Up until the late-1800s, private property was not a common practice among Choctaws – particularly because it countered Choctaw understandings of our relationship to the land which emphasized collective care for our lands by the whole community. In the face of American settler encroachment on Choctaw lands, Choctaws integrated some aspects of the private property system into Choctaw governance in order to prevent American settlers from stealing Choctaws' lands further. By adapting a legal system like the Americans, Choctaws tried to force Americans to respect our sovereignty over our lands. Unfortunately, that was not

the outcome.

In 1898, the Curtis Act ended the Choctaws' practice of holding land title communally. Choctaws were then forced to take allotments, which made individual Choctaws into landowners. Unlike the reservation system that many other American Indian nations had to deal with, Choctaws owned their individual tracts of land with the Bureau of Indian Affairs also monitoring and managing on behalf of some Choctaws. This eventually created a complicated system of land ownership that still affects the lives of Choctaws across the ten and a half counties today. Over decades, conditions created by allotment policies caused Choctaw families to lose their homes and land. To counter these negative effects, Choctaw leadership demanded the federal government to honor treaties by paying treaty annuities and per capita payments, so Choctaw people could live together with all that they needed. Overall, allotment divided our communities and took away some of our ability to care for one another.

Today, Choctaw Nation continues to provide for Choctaw people, and we see this prominently through the work of the Division of Tribal Services. Under the umbrella of this division are Health Services and Member Services, which includes: Chahta Foundation, Chaplain, Cultural Services, Education, Housing, Outreach Services, and Special Services. Reflecting on Choctaw Nation's status as a sovereign nation, Executive Officer of Member Services Stacy Shepherd reminds us "sovereignty allows us an opportunity to govern ourselves." As a result, Choctaw government provides a wide range of programs and services aimed at empowering its citizens. These programs include (but are not limited to): healthcare, housing assistance, Olin William's chaplain services, support for veterans, scholarships, and opportunities to learn about our Choctaw culture. From the time a Choctaw child is born to the time they return to our ancestors, Choctaw Nation offers services that support every stage of a Choctaw person's life. Furthermore, in the spirit of Choctaw generosity and leadership's philosophy that uplifting Choctaw people also means uplifting others along with them, Tribal Services also has programs with opportunities for non-Choctaws. For instance, Choctaw Nation allows any child living in the 10.5 counties to attend Choctaw Nation's summer school program and join the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), a high school leadership program. While Choctaw citizens are the focus of member services, Choctaw Nation carries on the Chahta spirit and its values of inclusion and generosity towards all people with whom we share our lands.

This concludes our Enduring Legacy series. For more information, please contact Megan Baker at 580-924-8280 ext. 2377 or [meganb@choctawnation.com](mailto:meganb@choctawnation.com). To read previous Enduring Legacy articles or read past issues of Iti Fabvssa, visit <http://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>.

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**Choctaw Nation** Housing Authority

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# Did you see that?

By Christian Toews



Bigfoot. Some say this creature is only a figment of our imagination, a legend created by misidentifying an animal or naming a shadow. Other people wholeheartedly believe in the existence of an unidentified species living throughout North America and possibly in other locations around the world.

According to the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO), sightings of Bigfoot in North America go back as far as 400 years. While the sightings happen in different locations and have slightly different descriptions, many of them claim the same basic features. Bigfoot is almost always described as a very tall, hairy, creature resembling a primate walking on two feet. Another distinct feature are his big feet which leave footprints often discovered in remote areas.

The eastern part of Oklahoma is a hotbed for Bigfoot activity, especially in and around the Ouachita Mountains and Ozark National Forest. While the majority of sightings in North America happen in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States, according to BFRO, Oklahoma has had over 100 reported sightings. The Ouachita and Ozarks cross the Oklahoma border into Arkansas and there have been over 100 sightings in the Natural State as well.

The Mid-American Bigfoot Research Center (MABRC) is an organization with the goal of proving Bigfoot’s existence and to educate the public on the gathering of Bigfoot experts and enthusiasts alike. The event is an opportunity for people who might be interested in Bigfoot to learn more. It also provides an opportunity for researchers to share evidence and collaborate on investigation, said Lee.

The difficulty in researching a creature whose existence has yet to be proven is sifting through all of the hoaxes, Lee explained. He said the MABRC is focused on the science of Bigfoot and doesn’t really focus on the sensational side of Bigfoot. “We like to try to educate the public about the true information that’s out there. You have so many TV shows that are putting garbage out there and nobody knows for sure what is real and what’s not real,” he said.

One thing is for sure, if you visit anywhere in the southeastern region of Oklahoma, you will see Bigfoot. At least on a sign or a souvenir t-shirt.

Bigfoot has become part of the culture in places like Broken Bow, Hochatown, and Honobia. Honobia’s relationship with Bigfoot runs so deep that they hold one of the largest Bigfoot festivals in this part of the country. Every fall, people from all over the world gather to attend the Honobia Bigfoot Festival.

Jolly Winsor is the president of the Honobia Bigfoot Organization, the group responsible for organizing the annual Bigfoot festival. “There have been stories about the Bigfoot in this area for many years with numerous sightings and encounters,” said Winsor.

“This area has had several researchers that have come to look and observe the Bigfoot. We have had TV programs come and do shows here. We also have a group that conducts Bigfoot expeditions throughout the year here,” Winsor said in an interview with the Ada News.

While some gather to share Bigfoot stories and research they have conducted, many people attend the festival for the novelty. With food, music and vendors, there is something for everyone. The festival now attracts around 5,000 people every year, according to Winsor.

While you are not guaranteed to actually see Bigfoot in the wild at the festival, you are sure to have a good time.

If you travel southeast from Honobia, you’ll find the towns of Broken Bow and Hochatown. These towns are located near Beavers Bend State Park. This area is another part of Oklahoma that has multiple sightings of Bigfoot according to BFRO.

Dian Jordan is a local cabin owner. She also holds a PhD in sociology and is an online professor of sociology at the University of Texas Permian Basin in Odessa, TX.

Jordan said that her family has been in the area for generations and she remembers hearing stories about Bigfoot as long as she can remember. She bought her first cabin in Hochatown in 1999. She said many people who have stayed in her properties report strange things around the area. “We’ve had campers in the cabins all the time that talked about hearing noises and seeing strange things in the woods,” she said.

Jordan said she has never seen Bigfoot, but she believes he could be out there. “Bigfoot is bigger, stronger and more forest wise than we are. The Choctaw Nation is full of difficult terrain. Bigfoot loves this area,” she said.

Janet Cress is the owner of a store in Hochatown called Janet’s Treasure Chest. You can find an entire section of her store dedicated to Bigfoot. “We have bigfoot shirts, stickers, pens, just about anything you can think of,” she said.

Cress said she grew up in Hochatown and stories of Bigfoot have always been around. “As long as I can remember, there has always been the story about Bigfoot. It’s something that has always been here,” she said.

She went on to say that people come in her store all the time and share stories about seeing Bigfoot. There was a sighting on Broken Bow Lake that was talked about all around the area in 2019, she said.

The Choctaw Nation area in Southeastern Oklahoma has grown more popular in recent years. People are traveling from surrounding cities and states to visit the pristine country it has to offer. From trout fishing on the rivers to hiking in the mountains, Oklahoma has some truly unique gems to uncover. So, the next time you are in this area, keep an eye out, you never know what you will find.

## Health still a priority for Nation’s wellness centers during pandemic

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation’s wellness centers have been helping people improve their health since 2005. Offering state-of-the-art exercise facilities to tribal members and associates has had many benefits across the Choctaw Nation. Better physical and mental health have impacted the Nation as a whole since these wellness centers were opened.

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the wellness centers, along with almost every other fitness facility across the country, have closed. This is a necessary safety precaution but has left many people without a place to carry on their typical fitness routines.

The Choctaw Nation’s staff have been deep cleaning their facilities and making planned upgrades while they are closed to the public. “We have been able to make upgrades and improvements during this time, so the centers are going to look their best when we reopen,” said Chase Henson, Wellness Director at the Choctaw Nation.

Although the facilities are closed, Henson says you can still focus on your health. “Now is the time to focus on maintaining your fitness. Focus on nutrition and at-home workouts. On the mental health side, make sure you are doing some of these workouts outside and just spending time outdoors, too,” he said.

The wellness centers are utilizing social media to encourage people to work out during this time. They have been releasing daily exercises via their Facebook page since closing.

Michaela Winyninger and Tashona Burcham have been planning and recording the daily videos. Winyninger said the idea was born out of necessity. “Many people don’t have access to fitness equipment now, so we wanted to

give them something they could do at home without equipment. Exercise is therapy for a lot of people and we really care about the health and wellness of our members,” she said.

These daily videos show viewers exercises they can do almost anywhere. They focus on using body weight or common household items. A few of them even use things like gallon water jugs to add some weight to the workout.

Wyninger said they really want people to feel as involved as possible in the videos. “We know the social aspect of the gym is really important to people, so rather than just typing out a suggested workout, we wanted to have someone show them and make it feel more like they were working out with someone,” she said.

When asked what advice she would give to people wanting to workout at home, Burcham said “Get creative. You can work out with almost anything outside or around your house. The important thing is to stay focused and keep working toward your goals.”

Wyninger said people have been reaching out to let them know how much they appreciate the daily exercise videos.

Henson, Winyninger and Burcham all said they are ready to see members back in the facility and have missed seeing their regular visitors. They want to encourage everyone to stay active during this difficult time, and they hope to see everyone soon.

If you want to follow along with the daily workout videos head over to <https://www.facebook.com/ChoctawWellnessCenter> to see the daily videos.

If you don’t have access to the online workouts, the staff at the Wellness Center put together a few workouts for you to try at home (right).

## At home workouts

1



**WORKOUT #1**

Time - 40 min

2 rounds

- Air squats 5 min = 33 calories
- Jumping jacks 5 min = 60 calories
- Lunges 5 min = 40 calories
- Burpees 5 min = 50 calories

2



**WORKOUT #2**

Time - 30 min

As many rounds as possible

- 10 Pushups = 10 cal
- 10 situps = 10 cal
- 10 plank jacks = 10 cal
- 10 inchworms = 10 cal

Calories per round = 40

3



**WORKOUT #3**

Repeat 5 Times = 35 min workout and approx. 330 cal burned

- Run 5 min = 60 cal
- Walk 2 min = 6 cal

## Housing Headlines

By Leah Williams

The Section 184 Indian Home Loan Guarantee Program is a home mortgage product specifically designed for American Indians. Congress established this program in 1992 to facilitate homeownership and increase access to capital in Native American communities. With Section 184 financing, borrowers can get into a home with a low down payment. Section 184 loans can be used both on and off Native lands for new construction, rehabilitation, purchase of an existing home, or refinancing. Loans must be made in an area approved by HUD and deemed as an Indian servicing area. All loans are approved by manual underwriting and not by an automated system. Fees are monitored and restricted to protect against predatory lending. Interest rates must be fixed, not adjustable, and based on the current market rate, not by credit score. By serving Native communities, Section 184 is increasing the marketability and value of Native assets and strengthening the financial standing of Native communities. Section 184 is synonymous with homeownership in Indian Country.

Down payment assistance is offered with Section 184 loans to Choctaw Tribal Members who apply with Choctaw Home Finance and use a partner lender. The down payment loan is up to 2% assistance at a fixed 5% interest rate for up to 5 years. Borrowers must make a minimum investment of 1% from their own funds. There are no set income limits to be eligible. Credit guidelines must be met.






We understand unique circumstances and want to assist with all homeownership goals. Let our knowledgeable staff assist you. Call us at 1-800-235-3087 or visit our website for more information <http://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/housing/home-finance>.

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

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## HOME LOANS AVAILABLE TO TRIBAL MEMBERS THROUGH THE HUD SECTION 184

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

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority



# May is National Foster Care Awareness month in America

By Kendra Germany-Wall

National Foster care month is observed every May in the U.S. Chief Gary Batton recently officially declared May as Foster Care Month for the Choctaw Nation.

Foster care is a temporary living arrangement for children when their parents are unable to care for them. While in foster care, children may live with relatives, in group homes or in foster homes. The goal in nearly all cases is the reunification of children with their families. However, foster homes are a necessary part of the process and desperately needed.

Each year, an increasing number of children enter foster care in the U.S. According to the Children’s Bureau, there are over 437,000 children and youth in foster care.

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services reports that there are currently 387 Choctaw children in foster care, but according to Amanda Bobb, a recruiter for Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Foster Care, the Choctaw Nation only has 60 licensed homes in Oklahoma.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is asking anyone who is qualified and feels led to help to consider becoming a Choctaw Nation foster parent.

To become a foster parent, individuals must meet the eligibility requirements.

The individual or their spouse must be an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation or another federally recognized tribe, must be at least 21 years of age and must have the emotional, physical, and financial abilities to provide for a child’s needs. The individual and family members must submit to a background search of all state and national criminal history records and ensure that no household member has a prior conviction of a sexual offense. Individuals must attend pre-service training and ensure that no household member has a confirmed child welfare history. Currently, Choctaw Nation is only licensing tribal homes in the state of Oklahoma.

For those who are unsure if traditional foster care is the right fit, but still want to help, there are two other variations of foster care that provide more flexibility.

The first variation is emergency foster care.

“Emergency fostering plays a significant role in helping children overcome anxiety and fear. This short-term placement is ideal for households and families that exhibit an atmosphere that is calm, caring and attentive to the individual needs of the child. Emergency foster care is usually just for enough time for us to locate a family member and ranges usually from one night to a few days,” said Bobb.

The second variation of foster care is respite.

“Respite foster care is ideal for those who are unable to devote themselves full-time to foster parenting. Those taking part in respite care will be able to provide relief care for children, in short, scheduled periods of time depending on the needs of the foster family. The time periods typically occur during weekends and vacation time,” explained Bobb.

Foster care, like many government programs, has been directly affected by COVID-19.

Choctaw Nation Foster Care is handling the situation by moving forward with the recruitment of homes by utilizing technology, according to Angela Connor, director of Choctaw Nation Foster Care and Adoption.

“As we know, so many of us are now looking to our computers and televisions and other forms of social media to stay up with what is going on,” said Connor. “We are conducting our home study assessments via the telephone. We are doing virtual walk-throughs to assess the safety of potential foster and kinship relative placements. Children



## MAY IS FOSTER CARE AWARENESS MONTH

FOR MORE INFORMATION

800-522-6170 EXT 2141 | [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/FOSTERCARE](https://choctawnation.com/fostercare)

**Choctaw Nation** Foster Care

dren are being visited through Facetime and Skype. Court hearings are being held virtually as well, with the option still available in some courts to attend in person.”

According to Connor, the virtual process allows Choctaw Nation Foster Care and Adoption to keep moving forward in a time when homes are needed even more.

“The value of meeting our new foster home candidates in person is always the best avenue, but we as a tribe are accustomed to adversity. We will continue to meet challenges head-on,” explained Connor. “We hope Native associates and other tribal families will help us during this time. We hope they consider and take action to contact us. We hope that they inquire more about the opportunity to become a respite, emergency, or traditional home and help our children in this time of need.”

To inquire about becoming a Choctaw foster parent, please contact Amanda Bobb at 580-380-0246 or [amandab@choctawnation.com](mailto:amandab@choctawnation.com).

## MMIW day of awareness May 5

May 5 is the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and Girls. According to the 2018 report from the Urban Indian Health Institute, 506 MMIW cases were identified across 71 selected urban cities; 128 were cases of missing Indigenous women; 280 were cases of murdered Indigenous women; 98 were cases with an “unknown status” and 29 is the median age of MMIW and girls victims.

We wear red May 5 to bring awareness, raise concern for the crisis and refocus attention on issues affecting Indigenous women. In hopes to improve relations between the federal and tribal governments, Choctaw Nation Victims Services will display red ribbons on the trees outside the Tribal Services building in Hugo during the month of May.



# WEAR RED

BRING AWARENESS FOR MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

# MAY 5

JOIN US ON THE NATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS

## CHOCTAW NATION TRIBAL VICTIMS ASSISTANCE

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Thursday: 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

**May 2020**

All markets open weekdays, May 1-27

**Closed:** May 25, 28 and 29.

Participants can request a calendar at their location.

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443  
Nutrition ed. and food demo May 6 and 18, 10:00-1:00


**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
Nutrition ed. and food demo May 8 and 14, 10:00-1:00

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
Nutrition ed. and food demo May 13 and 27, 10:00-1:00

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
Nutrition ed. and food demo May 15 and 26, 10:00-1:00

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
Nutrition ed. and food demo May 5 and 22, 10:00-1:00

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*



Location	Days	Hours
Antlers 580-298-3161	1st & 2nd Tue. Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Atoka 580-889-5825	Mon., Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tue. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Tue. & Thur. (except for Battiest & Smithville days)	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Durant 580-920-2100 x-83582	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Hugo 580-326-9707	Daily Mon. - Fri	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Idabel 580-286-2600 x-41113	Daily Mon. - Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thur. of Every Month	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wed., Thur., & Fri.	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Stigler 918-867-4211	Mon. & Tue.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Talihina 918-567-7000 x-6792	Daily Mon. - Fri	8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Wilburton 918-465-5641	Mon. 7 Fri.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Mobile Clinic	Tues., Wed., & Thurs.	8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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## Broccoli and Corn Bake

- Cooking Spray**
- 1 can low-sodium cream style corn**
- 1 package frozen broccoli,**
- cooked**
- 1 egg, beaten**
- 1/2 cup crackers**
- 1/4 cup margarine**

### Preparation

- PREHEAT** oven to 350°F.
- Spray** a 1 1/2 quart casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray.
- Mix** cor, broccoli and egg together and place in casserole dish.
- Mix** crackers and margarine together in small bowl then sprinkle over corn mixture.
- Mix** topping ingredients together in small bowl, Sprinkle over corn mixture.
- Bake** for 40 minutes. Serve warm.





## Where to Hike in Choctaw Country



Take a stroll through Broken Bow, Robbers Cave, and more.

[CHOCTAWCOUNTRY.COM](https://choctawcountry.com)



# High tech maps give Nation insight to real time census count

By Bradley Gernand

Scholars used to spendw years drawing and coloring maps for use by kings and explorers. In more recent times, maps played a crucial role in helping Choctaw national leaders lay out their new nation in the Indian Territory, after arriving on the Trail of Tears. And, as territorial days wound down in a slow transition to statehood, cartographers surveyed and platted the Choctaw Nation—then owned in common by the tribe—so that land could be owned in parcels by individuals.

Maps are as important as they have ever been, but the creation of them has become high-tech. Many maps prepared for the Choctaw Nation are interactive and never see the light of day outside of a computer database.

As the Choctaw Nation’s government moves forward in exercising sovereignty and serving the Chahta people, maps have played an increasingly important role. And not every map is of roadways or terrain.

Space management is the art and science of managing physical facilities, both indoors and outdoors. At the new Tribal Headquarters in Durant, for example, the lawns and trees are kept watered via an irrigation system comprised of over 3,000 sprinkler heads. The location of each one was painstakingly charted and is kept up to date in a database. It is just one of many layers of information or data that is charted and mapped. Other layers include trees, electrical conduits, and other infrastructure. Indoors, the data includes air ducts, piping, telecommunications lines, and other important information.

“I never thought I’d become a cartographer,” said Devin Lindley, a member of the Choctaw Nation’s Geographic Information Systems staff. “It’s not a career choice anybody ever mentions to you in high school or college.” But, he said, those who possess a certain mindset—mindful of detail, with a certain capacity for spatial mechanics—are often drawn to it.

“I definitely never dreamed of mapmaking, even though I loved maps when I was growing up,” said Cale Russell, one of Lindley’s colleagues on the GIS team. Russell enjoyed school but it was not until college that he realized cartography continues as a viable profession. His alma mater, East Central University in Ada, is one of only three



Chris Maytubby, left, and Austin Joines look over a map showing the percentage of people who have completed the 2020 census by county. The map is part of a software tool developed by the Choctaw Nation’s mapmakers to help Chief Batton and the Nation’s leadership determine the success or failure of the ongoing 2020 United States Census. The map is available at <https://bit.ly/census-response>.

Photo by Chris Jennings

universities that offer a Bachelor of Science in GIS Technologies in Oklahoma. It is often a profession one reaches, even today, through apprenticeship—something Christopher Maytubby has been doing since joining the GIS staff.

“We’ve got all the fun toys,” said Maytubby, explaining that today’s cartographers rely on a variety of equipment to get the information they need. A sandbox constructed by the GIS crew allows them to model the effects of terrain on water displacement—a matter of key importance when designing a new building, parking lot or addition. The cartographers sculpt actual sand into specific landforms to match real ones and apply a software program via an overhead camera to model what will happen during heavy rains.

Critical to any toolset in map-making today is aerial photography. The Choctaw Nation’s GIS department operates several drone aircraft, as well as a Cessna 172 aircraft with a mounted camera pod that is stationed at Durant’s city airport. The small but sophisticated drones can tease out details of local terrain that are difficult to understand from the surface, Russell said. “A lot of the Choctaw Nation is rugged and mountainous, making small drones ideal for carrying

out some of our work,” he noted.

The Choctaw Nation’s GIS department may be the most advanced among the Five Civilized Tribes. During last year’s heavy flooding along the Arkansas River, the team assisted multiple tribal governments by making frequent overflights of the river, capturing recent changes in flood levels for monitoring by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as well as by the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management.

Very recently the GIS team built an online map for use by Choctaw Nation authorities in determining the potential success of the 2020 Census across the 10½ counties, the state, and the nation. The interactive map is fed by data received from the U.S. Census Bureau every day and depicts the local response rates for every city and county in the Choctaw Nation.


“This is amazing,” said Chief Gary Batton recently, looking at the daily Census response rates displayed on the GIS mapping software. “Literally, we had a need, and the map folks came right to the rescue,” he said. “They never cease to amaze me.”

Chief Batton pointed out their flexibility, noting their successful efforts to map on a daily basis the spread and incidents of the COVID-19 pandemic within the tribe’s 10.5 county service area as well as throughout Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas. The GIS group also created a mobile dashboard incorporating several layers of data to show, in real-time, which areas may be at a higher risk based on both health indicators and economic data.

“The locational intelligence we create has become a new frontier of opportunity for the Choctaw Nation,” said Dustin Holt, Senior GIS Manager. “Our future plans are to continue meeting the everyday needs of the Nation and prepare for the future. As technology advances, big data gets bigger, and artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) becomes ubiquitous.”

# CENSUS 2020

## #CHOCTAWSCOUNT



### HOW TO RESPOND

For information on phone and mail options  
**VISIT: CHOCTAWNATION.COM/2020CENSUS**  
**YOU CAN ALSO RESPOND AT CENSUS.GOV**

#### HOW TO FILL OUT TRIBAL AFFILIATE FORM SECTION

What is this person's race? Mark ☒ one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.

☒ American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name or enroller or principal tribe.

#### WHEN TO COMPLETE THE CENSUS: APRIL 1, 2020 — JULY 24, 2020

Federal law protects your census responses. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics.

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

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

#### Eligibility

To qualify for a virtual medical visit, patient must:

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

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


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

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

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please call (580) 916-9231 or visit us online at [www.choctawnation.com/virtualvisits](http://www.choctawnation.com/virtualvisits)



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### May 2020


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Volunteers show Chahta spirit during pandemic



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Bigfoot kind of a big deal in Southeastern Oklahoma.



#### Page 11:

May is Foster Care Month for the Choctaw Nation.

*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.

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