



November 2022 Issue



In the U.S., November is recognized as Native American Heritage Month. The month is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories and acknowledge Indigenous people's essential contributions to this country. Native American Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about tribes, to raise general awareness about the unique challenges Indigenous people have faced both historically and in the present, and how tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges. In a 2021 proclamation, President Joe Biden said, "The United States of America was founded on an idea: that all of us are created

equal and deserve equal treatment, equal dignity, and equal opportunity throughout our lives. Throughout our history — though we have always strived to live up to that idea and have never walked away from it — the fact remains that we have fallen short many times. Far too often in our founding era and in the centuries since, the promise of our Nation has been denied to Native Americans who have lived on this land since time immemorial. Despite a painful history marked by unjust Federal policies of assimilation and termination, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have persevered. During National Native American Heritage Month, we celebrate the countless contributions of

Native peoples past and present, honor the influence they have had on the advancement of our Nation, and recommit ourselves to upholding trust and treaty responsibilities, strengthening Tribal sovereignty, and advancing Tribal self-determination." This month, the Biskinik has chosen to highlight just a few of the many Choctaw tribal members making a difference in the communities and representing the Choctaw Nation as they accomplish their goals and dreams. If you or someone you know is a Choctaw tribal member doing great things, feel free to share their story with us at <https://www.choctawnation.com/news/biskinik/>.

## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and Southeastern Oklahoma State University team up

By Christian Toews

Southeastern Oklahoma State University (SOSU) recently invited Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO), to the university to unveil their new basketball jerseys.

### SOSU Athletics Partnership

The SOSU men's and women's basketball teams will represent Choctaw culture by wearing alternate jerseys with the words "kucha okpulo" displayed on the front of the jersey. This phrase means Savage Storm in the Choctaw language.

"It is so exciting that my alma mater is honoring our heritage and culture and our people by the design on their jerseys. It makes me so proud to have attended SOSU and for the great education I received there," said Chief Batton.

According to Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, Keith Baxter, the inception of the jerseys came from the Women's basketball program.

"Coach Grover and his staff came up with the idea, and then we expanded it to the men's program, but full credit goes to Coach Grover and his staff," said Baxter.

Darin Grover has been the Head Basketball coach at SOSU for 18 years. According to Grover, Choctaw language and culture have been a part of the women's basketball program for almost the entire time he has been at the university.

The words "niyimmi" and "tahali" are proudly displayed above the lockers in the women's locker room. These words are the team's motto, "believe" and "finish," in the Choctaw language.

Grover said the students are very familiar with the words and their meanings because they use the Choctaw words every day in practice. Grover said they also printed the Choctaw words on their practice shirts and other items used by the team. He commented that many people ask the team about the phrase because they have never heard the Choctaw language before.

The partnership between SOSU and CNO has existed for many years and has only grown. "The partnership has existed as long as I've been here, and it started at a grassroots level but has grown tremendously. I remember when they (CNO) allowed us to use their busses as early as 2002 or 2003," said Keith Baxter.

Baxter said that the ripples of this partnership reach far beyond athletics and profoundly affect the lives of students and the surrounding area.

"The big picture is that, yeah, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and the Choctaw Casinos are our title sponsors, but that's kind of superficial. To me, it gets a lot deeper than that. The opportunity that our students have within the nation and the potential that it brings to change lives to change careers, to change their family's future. That's beyond signage; that's beyond jerseys. I mean, it affects lives, and it affects them on a daily basis," Grover said.

When speaking about the partnership, Chief Gary Batton said, "Their (SOSU) partnership with Choctaw Nation, to me, is extremely important so that we can still advance our tribal members and the people who reside in our communities."

Baxter said that he hopes these alternate jerseys and partnerships with CNO not only grow student-athlete opportunities at the school but also raise a more profound awareness around the Choctaw Culture and the people represented.

"If you are a visitor from out of town, you might see the casino resort and think that's all the Choctaw Nation offers. This has allowed us to showcase the culture, education, and other opportunities for the surrounding community," said Grover.

The newly unveiled basketball jerseys represent a much



Chief Gary Batton and SOSU president Dr. Thomas Newsom hold up the alternate SOSU basketball jersey with Choctaw language incorporated into the design.

more significant connection to the Choctaw Nation and a partnership cultivated over many years to provide opportunities to SOSU students, potential students, and future generations of Choctaw tribal members and associates. Seth Dutton is the Associate Athletic Director/ External Operations with SOSU.

Dutton said that being an alumnus of SOSU and seeing this partnership, and the opportunity it provides the student-athletes, makes him very proud of his alma mater.

"When you look at our partnership, this is a partnership and not simply a transactional deal. As an alum, I love being able to brag about some of the things that we can do because of this relationship we have. It's awesome that we are able to do stuff like the jerseys. It really highlights our student-athletes and enhances their experience here," Dutton said.

To stay up to date on SOSU Athletics, visit <https://gosouth-eastern.com/>.

### CNO and SOSU's Educational Partnership

In September, CNO hosted a large group of SOSU students from various degree paths at the CNO Headquarters. During their visit, these college students connected with CNO associates who were alumni of SOSU and talked to them about their experience working at CNO and the opportunities within CNO, from internships to full-time positions after graduation.

"What an excellent opportunity for those students to come and be involved in that. You have what I consider the greats of the Choctaw Nation, the Chief, the CEOs, and the EOs who are willing to share their time and give back," said Johnson. "How cool is it that so many of those people in those positions are actually graduates of Southeastern? You know, they say you can go anywhere from here; you really can. We had pilots, lawyers, marketing, social media, our drone program, just about anything you are interested in at the event."

For more information on SOSU, visit <https://www.se.edu/>.

### CNO Higher Education Mission

CNO places a high priority on providing opportunities for their tribal members and employees to seek higher education.

One of the many higher education programs offered by CNO is the College Freshman Year Initiative (FYI). The College FYI aims to create a community among Choctaw students, their college campus and staff wherein freshman students are empowered to make informed decisions and develop academic and life skills to become confident, proactive and accountable participants in their college education.



Photos by Christian Toews

Brian Danker and Kara Bacon meet with SOSU students to share their experiences and explain opportunities with Choctaw Nation's legal department.

"Through the College FYI Initiative, we've placed a First Year Experience Coordinator at SOSU to closely assist Choctaw students throughout their freshman year and foster success through graduation," said Amanda Johnson, the Executive Director of Education at the Choctaw Nation.

Kelsi Rainwater is the College Counselor on the SOSU campus.

According to Rainwater, the program has grown while working there, but its mission has remained the same.

"I think that we stay very true to who we are in helping Choctaw Freshman. Each year we have a different group of freshmen who have different needs, so we try to meet them where they are," said Rainwater. "Some students are trending toward virtual hours or part-time, and we help them with those decisions and how that will impact their college success."

Rainwater stated that the program has been highly successful in helping students to achieve their higher education goals.

According to Rainwater, 86% of students who participated in College FYI completed a degree or certificate program and started their careers following their participation in the program.

The program has a 90% retention rate from freshman to sophomore year with the 2021-2022 class.

"College can be very confusing, and most of the time, it's the first time you've encountered a lot of these things, so my job is to help these students navigate this process," said Rainwater.

CNO offers its employees a robust benefits package that includes the Employee Education Assistance Program (EEAP).

The EEAP will provide financial assistance to an accredited college or university for associate's, bachelor's, master's or doctorate degrees with a specific concentration in disciplines that could reasonably be expected to lead to job advancement within CNO.

This program provides up to \$5,000 per calendar year to reimburse approved educational expenses, such as tuition, administrative fees, required textbooks and materials and programs designed to give credit for work experience.

According to Johnson, many employees attend SOSU on the EEAP because it is close to their place of employment. There are many more opportunities for tribal members, employees and the local community, from Choctaw language classes to scholarships, sponsorships and incentive programs.

For more information on CNO's higher education programs, visit [www.choctawnation.com](http://www.choctawnation.com).

## Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

### Every Voice and Vote Counts

Halito,

I take great pride in not only being a Choctaw tribal member but also an American citizen. That's why the right to vote is so important to me.

I designated the first full week of October as "Choctaw Nation Voter Registration and Voter Education Week" because it's our responsibility to participate in the democratic process and hold elected officials accountable for the decisions they make on our behalf.

Early voting begins November 2 and ends November 5. Election Day is November 8. I want to encourage all of you to exercise your right to choose your representatives in all levels of government. In elections, every voice and every vote matters.

If you need help finding information about the candidates or finding your polling place, the Choctaw Nation's website has resources for you.

Yakoke and God bless!



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

### The Shepherd

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1) This is a popular psalm of comfort and security to many.

To fully understand the message of the song, it is essential to know the shepherd personally. And to know the setting of the song adds to the fulfillment of the symbolic message of the writer.

The writer of the 23rd psalm is David. It is written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The terminology is in the rural language of the day, dealing with subjects of the outdoors and the natural life of the nomadic shepherds and their sheep.

David refers to Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, when he says, "My Shepherd." When he was God incarnate among men, Jesus Christ declared himself, "I am the good shepherd." But who is this Christ?

Most of the time, we view Him as too human

and often too small. But it was He who was responsible for the creation of all things, both natural and supernatural.

Colossians 1:16 reads, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

On his power and demonstration by the creation of the world, both natural and supernatural, he is the Lord and Shepherd of his pasture.

If we pause to reflect on his being, we too can say he is the shepherd. But the message of this song goes deeper than recognizing his greatness. It is to call him Lord. It is comparable to the relationship of the sheep to his shepherd. The sheep was totally dependent on the shepherd for his supplication. The shepherd had total authority and control and ownership of the sheep.

To place ourselves under the Lordship of this Good Shepherd, we must search for deep and penetrating questions. Who is this Lord? What are his credentials? Is he qualified to manage my life? And how do I come under his control?

In our search for answers, we often create our own shepherd from this world we live in. We create our own religion. It seems to suffice for the time being but will not sustain us in questions of eternal substance.

Matthew 7:21-23 tells us, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Jesus tells us in John 3:5-7, "Ye must be born again to enter the kingdom of God." Being born again lets us come under his ownership and authority and management.

### Choctaw tribal member Kelbie Kennedy sworn in as first-ever National Tribal Affairs Advocate

By Kendra Germany-Wall

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has appointed a Choctaw tribal member as the first National Tribal Affairs Advocate.

Kelbie Kennedy was sworn in on October 11 and was formally announced as the first tribal political appointee in FEMA history on October 12.

Kennedy was sworn in on a Choctaw bible, with her mother, Brenda Strange, proudly looking on.

In this role, Kennedy will advise the agency and its Administrator on tribal affairs while working to ensure that FEMA lives up to its treaty and trust responsibilities to tribal nations.

Kennedy's appointment is a result of FEMA's history-making national strategy addressing its responsibilities when preparing for and responding to disasters on tribal lands.

The "2022-2026 FEMA National Tribal Strategy" provides FEMA, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security, with a roadmap to help Native communities deal with disasters, including situations created by climate change.

"Tribal Nations and communities deserve to have their voices heard, especially when it comes to preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters," FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said in a prepared statement. "Ms. Kennedy has spent her career working on issues related to tribal emergency management and resilience, homeland security, and public safety. FEMA and the Biden-Harris Administration will benefit greatly from her compassion and competence."

Criswell went on to affirm her confidence in appointing Kennedy to this role.

"I am confident that Ms. Kennedy will be a key advocate for Indian Country given her extensive experience representing their interests and priorities, as well as her lived experience as a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma," Criswell said.

Before joining FEMA, Kennedy worked as the policy manager for national security and community safety initiatives for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

At NCAI, she worked on national policy issues surrounding tribal emergency management and resilience, tribal homeland security, tribal border issues, violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women, public safety and justice, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and international Indigenous rights.

Kennedy has long been a champion for



Photo Courtesy of FEMA

Choctaw tribal member Kelbie Kennedy makes history as she is sworn in as first-ever FEMA National Tribal Affairs Advocate.

not only Choctaws but Indigenous people worldwide.

She also played a pivotal role in the effort to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act earlier this year, restoring tribal nations' criminal jurisdiction over certain crimes.

"I am honored to be the first tribal political appointee in FEMA history and will work hard to ensure that Tribal Nations and tribal sovereignty are at the forefront of our efforts," Kennedy said in a statement. "Growing up on my tribal nation's reservation in Southeastern Oklahoma, I learned firsthand that tribal nations are the first—and many times the only—line of defense when disaster strikes Indian Country. When tribal nations have the necessary resources and support they need, the entire community is better prepared and able to respond to disasters."

Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, praised Kennedy and her appointment to FEMA.

"Kelbie's commitment to Indian Country and all tribal nations is next to none. Over the course of her illustrious career, she has helped ensure that tribal nations have a seat at the table, and her appointment to serve as the first National Tribal Affairs Advocate is a continuation of that noble effort," Batton said. "We are so proud of everything Kelbie has done and will continue to do on behalf of Indian Country, and we look forward to seeing her continued efforts to make sure that Indian Country is ready when disaster strikes."

Kennedy was born and raised on the Reservation Lands the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She received her Juris Doctor and certificate in American Indian Law from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law.

For more information on FEMA's tribal affairs and the 2022-2026 FEMA National Tribal Strategy, visit <https://www.fema.gov/about/organization/tribes>.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

### Celebrating Veterans Day

It's November, which means that we will have the privilege of honoring our Choctaw veterans and those who have served in our United States Armed Forces!

Whether it's during our regular session of Tribal Council, when a veteran is recognized from their respective district or ensuring that our veterans have designated parking sites at Choctaw Nation offices and businesses, we are proud to honor our veterans. These are small gestures compared to the sacrifices made by our Chahta Tvshkas.

Additionally, our Choctaw Nation Veterans Advocacy Program ensures that our veterans are treated with respect and dignity by VA service providers. Many times, having that advocate makes

the difference in obtaining the services our veterans deserve and need.

The Choctaw Nation is here to recognize, serve, and honor our veterans. If you are a veteran and need assistance, please call (800) 522-6170.

God bless.

### Hotshot Baken Memorial Rodeo held in Durant



Photo by Kendra Sikes

The 5th annual Rodeo, which was recently renamed the Hotshot Baken Memorial Rodeo for Byars "Hotshot" Baken, who lost his life due to COVID-19, was held Friday, October 6-7. Five drivers placed in the competition.

The winners were First Place: Watta James, Second Place: Jon Lytle, Third Place: William Frazier, Forth Place: Robert Shomo and Fifth Place: Neil Billy. Watta James will go on to the state-level competition.

### CNHSA Behavioral Health Photo Contest Winners

**DURANT, Okla.** – CNHSA held its first-ever photography contest this year with a mission to share a message of hope and enlighten the public about the reality that recovery is possible. In the process, the goal was to destigmatize the endeavor of seeking help and recovering from substance abuse. The program wanted to underscore that communities within the Choctaw Reservation care about those involved with the challenge of substance abuse and addiction.

The contest judging was based on a points system in theme, creativity, editing, composure and lighting. Students and adults living within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma were able to participate in the contest.

The winners were as follows:

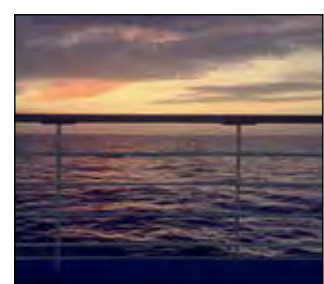
Student Category:

- First Place, Matthew Doyle, Age 11, 4th grade, Leflore Elementary School
- Second Place, Ayden Doyle, Age 12, 7th grade, Leflore Middle School
- 3rd Place, Joslin Standridge, Age 14, Epic Charter School – Latimer County
- Adult Category:
- First Place, Rachel Estep, Age 30, Leflore County
- Second Place, Chayla Huggins, Age 22, Leflore County
- Third Place, Steph Granger, Age 38, Atoka County



First Place, Rachel Estep, Age 30.

### Winning Contest Photos



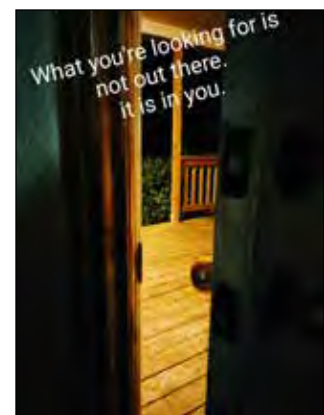
Second Place, Chayla Huggins, Age 22.



Third Place, Steph Granger, Age 38.



First Place Student, Matthew Doyle, Age 11.



Second Place Student, Ayden Doyle, Age 12.



Third Place Student, Joslin Standridge, Age 14.

## WHEELOCK ARTS AND CRAFTS FAIR

NOVEMBER 19 | 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Shop for items handmade by Choctaw artists and learn more about Choctaw history in the Wheelock Museum.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## Kidwell earns lifetime achievement award

By Chris Jennings

On September 10, 2022, the American Society for Ethnohistory awarded Dr. Clara Sue Kidwell, PhD., a Lifetime Achievement Award during its annual meeting in Lawrence, Kansas.

Dr. Kidwell is a Native American academic scholar, historian, feminist and author. Her paternal grandmother, Susie E Thompson-Kidwell, was a Dawes enrollee. She is the daughter of H. Milton and Martha Kidwell and is also of White Earth Ojibwe descent on her mother's side.

Born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 1941, Kidwell grew up in Muskogee, Oklahoma. In 1959 she graduated from Central High School and attended the University of Oklahoma. As an undergraduate, she represented OU on their College Bowl Team which led to her receiving a fellowship in the history of science after she graduated with her bachelor's degree in 1963. She earned her master's degree in 1966 and received her PhD. from OU in 1970.

Her path to this lifetime achievement award was not always clear, though. "My parents had it all laid out for me. When I went to college, I was supposed to get a teaching degree, teach high school for a few years, and then get married and have grandkids for them," said Dr. Kidwell.

That changed when she took some history courses and enjoyed them. It made sense, particularly because of her Choctaw heritage. "That's what sort of got me into it [ethnohistory] because of my own background in the Choctaw tribe...so that's kind of a roundabout way of how I got to be an ethnohistorian," Dr. Kidwell said.

Since then, Dr. Kidwell has had an extensive career with history always at the forefront. Her academic career began at the Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri as an instructor in history from 1968-69, then to the University of Washington, Seattle, as coordinator of publications in the Experimental Education Unit. After receiving her PhD., she became an instructor of American Indian studies at Haskell Indian Junior College (now Haskell Indian Nations University).

1972-74 was spent at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Minneapolis, as the assistant professor of American Indian studies. From there, she left to be an associate professor at the University of California at Berkeley, where she worked until 1993, gaining notoriety in research and publications.

She received fellowships from the Newberry Library and the Smithsonian Institute, and in 1980, she was a visiting scholar and associate professor at Dartmouth College. After she departed Berkeley, she took her career in a new direction as the assistant director for cultural resources at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), where she helped move one million different pieces from the George Gustav Heye's Museum of the American Indian in New York to the NMAI in Washington, D.C.

In 1995, she chose a tenured position at the University of Oklahoma as the director of the Native American studies program. In 2007, Dr. Kidwell started the American Indian Center (AIC) at the University of



Photo Provided

The American Society for Ethnohistory awarded Dr. Clara Sue Kidwell, PhD., a Lifetime Achievement Award. Kidwell is a Native American academic scholar, historian, feminist and author.

North Carolina (UNC) with a major goal to reach out to the many eastern tribes, such as the Lumbee and Coharie, who are unable to qualify for federal recognition with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for various reasons.

Under Dr. Kidwell's leadership, AIC has had success in North Carolina, increasing programs that address education, health and child welfare for these kinds of unrecognized tribes. She has also helped increase the visibility of Native history and culture on the UNC campus.

Dr. Kidwell left her position as director of AIC in June 2011 to assume a faculty position at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, which brought her closer to family and the Choctaw Nation. After a short stint at Bacone, she assumed an interim Operations Director role with the Five Civilized Tribes Museum in Muskogee before retiring full-time and moving to her current residence in Owasso, Oklahoma.

In that long and storied career, there is a trend—a call to teach, which partly satisfies some of her parents' desires for her future. "Teaching kids has kept me in touch with the younger generation. And I think it's important for especially young Indian people to know where they came from and why things are the way they are for Indian people today," said Dr. Kidwell.

As with many people who deserve a lifetime achievement award, Dr. Kidwell was surprised to learn of the honor. "I don't consider that I've accomplished a great deal in my lifetime, but to be acknowledged with a lifetime achievement award was kind of a surprise and rewarding at the same time," said Dr. Kidwell.

Among the many books Dr. Kidwell has authored or co-authored are "The Choctaws: A Critical Bibliography," "The Choctaws in Oklahoma: From Tribe to Nation, 1855-1970," "Choctaws and Missionaries in Mississippi, 1818-1918" and "Native American Studies (Introducing Ethnic Studies)".

The American Society for Ethnohistory's Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes her as a major figure in the development of American Indian Studies programs and for her overall contributions to the Organization's mission.

## Stovall passionately serves her community

By Christian Chaney

Choctaw tribal member Shelby Stovall of Buffalo, Oklahoma, is the daughter of TJ and Amanda Stovall. She graduated from Battiest High and is currently a freshman at Murray State College in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, working towards becoming an Occupational Therapy Assistant.

Stovall has always had a passion for serving others and her community. She attributes her success and love for community service to Choctaw Nation's Youth Advisory Board. However, her devotion to community service is not the only thing that sets her apart from her peers.

Stovall faced obstacles during her time with YAB that ultimately forced her to make the difficult decision to step away from the organization during her senior year of high school. She was diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND). This disorder causes her to have nonepileptic, uncontrolled seizures.

Her medical diagnosis makes serving her community challenging, as she cannot drive herself. She must rely on family and friends to get her to and from events and assist with collecting the supplies needed to complete her projects. Nevertheless, she did not let this diagnosis prevent her from doing what she loves.

"It is very hard to do community service, but every chance I get, I try to raise money or find a way to make a difference in my community," she said.

Stovall joined YAB at the end of her eighth-grade year and was a member for four years. She completed 900 hours of community service during her time with the organization. She organized various events and fundraisers to raise money for her community.

One of Stovall's most notable events is the Annual Christmas Project. Instead of asking for Christmas presents, she asks for donations to buy gifts for families in need. She then delivers the presents during the holidays. Stovall has completed this project for four years, with last year being her most significant, raising nearly \$4,000.



Photo Provided

Stovall poses for a photo with containers filled with gifts for patients at the Oklahoma Children's Hospital. These gifts were donated through Stovall's Christmas Project.



Photo Provided

Shelby Stovall has dedicated much of her young life to helping others through community service and outreach.

Though Stovall has graduated high school and is no longer affiliated with YAB, she still uses the tools she learned throughout her time with the organization in her day-to-day life.

"I try to represent YAB every day now," Stovall said.

She is currently working with Battiest Elementary School to start the Kindness Project, focusing on spreading positivity and happiness among the students. Stovall plans to paint rocks with various uplifting quotes to distribute across the playground. Students can then take photos with the rocks or pass them along to friends.

When asked what draws her to community service, Stovall said, "I love to help people. I try to make a difference in one's life. Not only does it help them, but it makes me feel better too."

Stovall encourages students to join Choctaw Nation's Youth Advisory Board.

"Give it a try. YAB completely changed my life, and I know it can change yours too. The little things, going to the meetings, the community service projects can really affect your social life in general," said Stovall. "YAB is the best decision I have ever made in my life. It completely turned my life around. I wouldn't be where I am today without it, and give full credit to YAB."

Stovall says she will continue carrying out her passion for serving her community and dreams of increasing the number of individuals involved in her projects.

According to www.choctawnation.com, The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) empowers youth to become leaders with a servant attitude toward others. This program utilizes a leadership curriculum to develop students' potential through creative thinking, presentation, planning and team building to foster success as tomorrow's leaders. Students are inspired to use their service leadership skills through community service projects to promote positive change within their communities.

For additional information about joining YAB, please visit [www.choctawnation.com/services/yab](http://www.choctawnation.com/services/yab).

## Leaders of state's largest tribal nations endorse Joy Hofmeister for Oklahoma Governor

**OKLAHOMA CITY (October 11, 2022)** – Leaders of the five largest tribes in Oklahoma announced today they officially endorse State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister as Oklahoma's next Governor, citing her respect for tribal sovereignty and her commitment to work with the state's nearly 40 federally recognized tribes for the betterment of all Oklahomans.

Leaders of the Five Tribes – including the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee, Choctaw and Seminole Nations – announced their endorsement of Hofmeister during a press conference at the Petroleum Club Event Center in Oklahoma City.

The Five Tribes represent a total of more than 800,000 citizens of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee, Choctaw and Seminole Nations living around the country.

"As a gubernatorial candidate, Joy Hofmeister recognizes that we all want the same things: safe communities, a strong economy, a stable workforce, well-funded education, investments in our infrastructure, and a continued focus on health and wellness, family, and community. When it comes to working with the tribal nations in Oklahoma, she understands our sovereignty is not a partisan issue or a threat, but instead is a chance to forge new partnerships while strengthening those that already exist because Oklahomans thrive together when we all work together. This year's Oklahoma gubernatorial election is the most important in generations for all Oklahomans, and that's why leaders of the Five Tribes are endorsing Joy Hofmeister to be Oklahoma's 29th Governor," the Five Tribes leaders said.

Leaders of the Five Tribes said the following of their endorsement of Hofmeister:

"The Cherokee people have long believed that laying the groundwork to a great education instills confidence and empowers our citizens. As early founders of education in this region – starting the first institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi River and still today investing millions into our public schools – we live by this same strong drive and commitment to education as Joy Hofmeister. Joy is as dedicated to ensuring our public-school classrooms have the tools that our children need to better compete and succeed in life. Joy also supports our teachers and growing these dedicated men and women to serve in the classroom helping shape our future workforce and leaders across this great state. Joy believes in 'gadugi,' the Cherokee word for 'working together.' For all of these reasons, and more, Joy Hofmeister



Photo Provided

The Five Tribes have announced their endorsement of Joy Hofmeister for Oklahoma Governor.

has our full endorsement for governor," Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. said.

"The 39 federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma collectively make a significant impact on the economy, health, education, and infrastructure of this state. It's important that our elected officials recognize this impact, as well as respect and understand the sovereign status of our governments. The Governor of Oklahoma should value the importance of tribal sovereigns, who are beyond capable of self-governance. Joy Hofmeister values tribal sovereignty and views us as equals, with a willingness to advance our partnerships for the good of all Oklahomans. Any governor that postures and attempts dominion of tribes, is detrimental to the tribes and the state. We look forward to a bright future where collaboration, not division, is the standard. To achieve this, we must let our voices be heard with a strong presence at the polls," Muscogee Nation Principal Chief David Hill said.

"Throughout her career, Joy Hofmeister has always been a dedicated public servant who has demonstrated Oklahoma's conservative values. She shares our Tribal values of doing what is best for all communities and families, and showing her faith. She supports extending an olive branch to unite everyone, rather than always creating divisiveness," Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton said.

"Joy Hofmeister has long demonstrated a consistent commitment to collaboration and cooperation with tribes in Oklahoma. She understands that access to quality health care in rural communities is needed to help sustain the significant role that agriculture, tourism, and local businesses play in the growth and development of our local and state economy. Her commitment to cooperation and collaboration among tribal, state, and federal governments enhances our ability to offer more affordable access to quality health care, promote healthy lifestyles, and reduce health care costs for all Oklahomans," Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby said.

"Oklahoma deserves a Governor who will respect and represent all Oklahomans," Seminole Nation Chief Lewis J. Johnson said.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO  
**LEARN THE CHOCTAW LANGUAGE,**  
BUT DON'T HAVE TIME OR ACCESS TO ATTEND A CLASS?

NO IN-PERSON CLASS TIME REQUIRED  
COURSE IS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE  
ALL CLASSES ARE SELF-PACED AND ONLINE FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO GET STARTED WITH  
THE CHAHTA ANUMPA AIHKVNA COURSE!



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



**SPIRIT MEDICINE Drum Circle Recovery Group**  
LEARN MORE: <https://bit.ly/recovery-drum-circle>



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAWNATION.COM



# District 6



Jennifer Woods

Halito!  
It's finally fall, and we are enjoying the cooler evenings and mornings and are looking forward to embracing all the upcoming holidays and events of the season.

The past three months seem to have flown by with all the activities, events and constant meetings we are all in.

We have been keeping our seniors busy with many activities, such as the CHR Fall Festival that was held at the McAlester Expo on September 28, as well as lunch and a Drone demonstration on October 4 in Daisy. They enjoyed not only getting to watch them but also holding the controls and flying the drones. This was an exciting event that our seniors loved being a part of.

We also want to congratulate two of our District 6 seniors who have been awarded the Choctaw Nation Outstanding Elders Awards. Paul Sockey and Sharon Moore are the recipients of this award, and we know they will represent District 6 and the Choctaw Nation well.

We are continually putting people to work through our Job For The Day Program in our Travel Plazas and Community Center. There are great opportunities for those who are looking for employment.

Our Small Business Chahtapreneurs Program recently held ribbon cuttings for the Serendipity Event Center in Wilburton and the Raising Arrows Day Care Center in Panola, Oklahoma. We are very excited to assist new businesses in getting launched in our communities.

We continue to take applications for our LEAP homes, Affordable Rentals, and Independent Elderly homes. We are ready to begin building in Red Oak and Buffalo Valley, but we must have completed applications before beginning the building process, so please get your applications in.

We had a representative from our Healthy Aging Program and a representative from the Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma (KEDDO) visit with our seniors recently with information regarding the Respite Program. The organizations are working together to help our seniors 55+ with chore services and personal care assistance to keep our elders living in their homes own longer. The program also helps grandparents who are raising or caring for their grandchildren.

Both programs are working to help provide assistance so that caregivers can take time out for themselves, for often, a much-needed break.

We continue to support the Latimer County communities through the Community Development Programs and were so excited to be a part of the new Splash Pad built in Wilburton.

The Choctaw Nation awarded the City of Wilburton \$49,900 that was used in partnership with the Wilburton Lions Club and the City of Wilburton to install the new Splash Pad at Rosebure Park in Wilburton.

The 2,415 square-foot animal-themed splash pad will enhance the community by offering interactive recreational space and opportunities for children's sensory and mental growth while also allowing families to grow together and socialize.

We are also still supporting our city and county with quarterly check presentations. These funds help with maintaining our roads and other projects. Our third quarter total given to the City of Wilburton and Latimer County was \$32,900.

We would like to recognize Kelbie Kennedy, who was sworn in by FEMA Deputy Administrator Erik Hooks as National Tribal Affairs Advocate. Her mother, Brenda Strange, was in attendance. Kelbie is a Choctaw tribal member and was sworn in using a Choctaw language Bible.

November is Native American month, so we will be serving our seniors traditional Choctaw meals throughout this month.

Our community Thanksgiving meal will be served on November 16. We invite all to come and celebrate with us. Our new community center building is now being worked on, and we have a projected opening date of February 2023. The larger community center will allow us to have more departments available to service our tribal members.

If there are services that you would like to get more information about, please contact our District 6 Community Center at 918-465-2389. We are here to assist our tribal members in any way that we can.

Yako!



Photos Provided

Top Left: Kelbie Kennedy is sworn in as FEMA's National Tribal Affairs Advocate as her mother looks on.

Top Right: District 6 celebrates the ribbon cutting of the Raising Arrows Day Care Center in Panola, Oklahoma.

Bottom Right: District 6 celebrates the ribbon cutting of the Serendipity Event Center in Wilburton, Oklahoma.



# Arts and Culture at Choctaw Cultural Center



Photos by Kendra Germany-Wall

Top Left: Award-winning Choctaw musician Samantha Crain performs for the crowd at the September Arts & Culture event at the Choctaw Community Center.

Top Right: Samantha Crain signs the shirt of a young fan during her meet and greet.

Middle: Visitors check out one of the many booths at the Arts & Culture event on September 24.

Bottom Left: Samantha Crain smiles as she talks to fans after her show.



# Choctaw Development Fund Partners with the City of Stigler to Fund the Stigler Lake Dam Engineering Analysis Study

STIGLER, Okla., (September 29, 2022)

On August 24, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) and the Choctaw Development Fund (CDF) awarded the city of Stigler \$175,790 to conduct an engineering analysis to study and survey the Stigler Lake Dam.

"A proper engineering analysis ensures fewer mistakes and errors are made," states Bobby Mouser, Stigler City Manager. "This analysis study will help address several issues we have with the current Stigler Lake Dam and will prevent costly mistakes down the road. We are appreciative of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for their assistance, if it wasn't for them, this study wouldn't be possible."

The engineering analysis study will include the following:

Surveys of the dam site. No drawings exist for the dam and topography of the dam and its immediate surroundings, a survey is needed to evaluate slope stability and hydraulic adequacy.

Investigate top-of-rock surface below the dam, embankment zoning and foundation soil types, and preferential water flow pathways.

Perform tests and collect samples of embankment and native soils for geotechnical testing.

Perform slope stability analysis of the dam.

Perform seepage analysis in support of slope stability analysis and to assist in determination of seepage control/cutoff design.

Perform hydrology and hydraulics analysis to determine the dam and spillway capacity.

Prepare a report which includes all the above investigations and analysis, evaluates alternatives for mitigation of dam safety deficiencies including concept level drawings.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

From left to right: Bobby Mouser, Stigler City Manager; Cheryl Monks, Stigler City Clerk; Ron Perry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 5; Janice Williams, Stigler Chamber of Commerce; Amber Hamilton, City of Stigler Representative and Bonnie Marcy, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor.

"Dams are critical structures and the safety of the residents of Stigler is of utmost importance to us," states Ron Perry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Council Member District 5. "The engineering analysis to the Stigler Lake Dam is important not only for water supply in Stigler, but flood control and recreational use. The analysis will provide great insight to our city for years to come."

The CDF supports economic viability and sustainability by partnering with Choctaw small business owners, cities, and municipalities to create long-term growth and job creation within the territories of CNO.

The city of Stigler expects to complete the engineering analysis study by the winter of 2023.

## CHOCTAW VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

### NOVEMBER 11 10AM

Arts and Crafts Building | Tvshka Homma, OK

PLEASE JOIN US AS WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE AND HONOR OUR CHOCTAW VETERANS THAT SERVED AND SACRIFICED FOR OUR COUNTRY.

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

## Submitted Public Notice

BEFORE THE CORPORATION COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

APPLICANT: CAPSTONE LAND COMPANY }  
 RELIEF SOUGHT: POOLING } CAUSE CD NO.  
 LEGAL DESCRIPTION: SECTION 30, TOWNSHIP 6 NORTH, RANGE 1 WEST, CLEVELAND AND MCCLAIN COUNTY, OKLAHOMA } 2022-003681

NOTICE OF HEARING

STATE OF OKLAHOMA TO: Alex Singer & Joe Singer, partners, d/b/a Singer Brothers; Amaying Enterprises, Inc. c/o Christopher Mayes; Blair Royalties, Ltd.; Buffalo Creek Minerals LLC; Byron Lynn Burkett c/o Thomas A. Burnett; Charter Oak Production Company, LLC; Cheryl S. Foster; c/o R. Foster; Chickasaw Agency Superintendent; Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma c/o Real Property Management Office; Conrail Properties LLC; Dallas Boatright; a/k/a David Russell Boatright; Don Alwood, a/k/a Don W. Alwood, a/k/a Don Wayne Alwood, E. P. Kirschner, Deceased; c/o Heritage Trust Company; Eric Olson; Florence Kelly, nee Johnson; Golden Creek Minerals, LLC; J.D. Easley; James Allen Fimmel, Jr.; Janice Wallace, a/k/a Janice Ruth Wallace; Judy Emerson; Katherine Elizabeth Gorman, nee Johnson; Kathy Mayes Ballenger, a/k/a Kathy L. Mayes; Ladd, LLC; M.A. Blair Revocable Living Trust - M.A. Blair, Trustee; Michael David Carmichael; P.J.B. Revocable Living Trust - Patricia J. Bender, Trustee; Patricia A. Howard, nee Weber; Ruby Joann Boatright; Russell Kelly Johnson, III; Shannon Gandy; Spector Family Partners; Steven Lee Carmichael; TCD Exploration, L.L.C.; The Margaret A. Blair Revocable Living Trust - Margaret A. Blair, Trustee; The Thomas A. Burnett Living Trust Dated May 28, 2020 - Thomas A. Burnett, Trustee; TRP Minerals, LLC; Vicki L. Hoffman, formerly DeNouon; Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.; William K. Howard; William Thomas Johnson; Andrew Gentry Henderson, Deceased; Alicia Lucille Fimmel, nee Alwood, Deceased; Bobbe Burkett, a/k/a Bobbie Joe Burkett, Deceased; Carrie Henderson, formerly Olson, a/k/a Carra Gentry Henderson, Deceased; Charles F. Johnson, Deceased; Chester A. Burkett, Deceased; Clyde Newton Johnson, Deceased; Darrel M. Burkett, Deceased; Dolly Grace Alwood, nee Johnson, Deceased; Elsa York, Deceased; Florida Duffy, formerly Olson, Deceased; Frances T. Burkett, a/k/a Franmie Tennessee Johnson, Deceased; Helen Louise Luttrell, a/k/a Helen Luttrell, a/k/a Helen L. Luttrell, Deceased; James Honer Johnson, Deceased; James, a/k/a Jim Honer Johnson, Jr., Deceased; John Olson, Deceased; Lillian G. Johnson, Deceased; Lois Alma Johnson, a/k/a Lois Alma Helton, Deceased; Luther E. Mayes, Deceased; Marie E. Carmichael, a/k/a Evelyn Marie Carmichael, nee Johnson, Deceased; Marlon Wesley Alwood, Deceased; Marvin Colle Alwood, Deceased; Maude M. Dean, Deceased; Maxine Allen, Deceased; Mildred W. Johnson, nee Johnson, Deceased; N. C. Burkett, Deceased; Ronald Boatright, Deceased; Ruby E. Lindt, a/k/a Ruby E. Lindt, Deceased; Ruby Olson, a/k/a Ruby E. Olson, Deceased; Russell Kelly Johnson, Sr., Deceased; Ruth L. Brush, Deceased; Ruth O. Arnold, a/k/a Ruth Arnold, Deceased; S. M. Bokles, Deceased; Thurman Burkett, Deceased; Tom Burkett, Deceased; Victor Olson, Deceased; Victor Charles Carmichael, Deceased; Alma Leona Johnson, nee Honer, Deceased; Alvin Olson, Deceased; Andrew Louis Olson, Deceased; Bernice Henderson, Deceased; Carl Olson and Diane Olson, E. Phil & Roberta Kirschner Affiliated Fund of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation c/o Heritage Trust Company; Gary York; Helen York, Deceased; John Wesley Alwood, Deceased; Matthew A. Cole; Robert A. Cole; Robert A. York; Robert Edgar York a/k/a Robert E. York, Deceased; William Bernard Carmichael, Deceased; and all persons, owners, producers, operators, purchasers and takers of oil and gas and all other interested persons, particularly in Cleveland and McClain County, Oklahoma, and if any of the individuals are deceased, or if any of the companies are no longer in existence, the unknown heirs, executors, administrators, devisees, trustees, successors and assigns, immediate and remote, of the named parties.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Applicant/Operator in this cause is requesting the Commission pool the interests, designate an operator, and adjudicate the rights and equities of oil and gas owners in the Basal/Pennsylvanian Unconformity, Woodford, and Hunton common sources of supply underlying Section 30, Township 6 North, Range 1 West, McClain County, Oklahoma.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the Applicant/Operator in this cause is requesting the following special relief: to designate the Applicant/Operator or some other party as Operator of the unit well. Applicant/Operator is further requesting that the Order be entered in this cause be made effective on a date prior to the date of the Order. Applicant/Operator may request up to one year from the date of the Order to enter in this cause, with which to commence the initial well.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that this cause be set before an Administrative Law Judge for hearing, taking of evidence and reporting to the Commission.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that this cause will be heard before an Administrative Law Judge on the Initial Hearing Docket at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, Jim Thorpe Building, 2101 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73105, at 8:30 a.m., on the 4th day of October, 2022, and that this Notice be published as required by law and the Rules of the Commission.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to the Jim Thorpe Building is restricted. The referenced hearing may be conducted via teleconference or video-conference. Before coming to the building for this hearing, please visit the Oklahoma Corporation Commission website at www.occweb.com to determine the status of building access. Instructions for participating via teleconference or video-conference are available on the Commission's website.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the Applicant and interested parties may present testimony by telephone. The cost of telephone communication shall be paid by the person or persons requesting its use. Interested parties who wish to participate by telephone shall contact the Applicant or Applicant's attorney, prior to the hearing date, and provide their name and telephone number.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that all interested persons may appear and be heard. For information concerning this action, contact: JOSHUA C. HYLTON, Capstone Land Company, PO Box 917, Mustang, OK 73064, (405) 484-9191, or Eric Huddleston, Attorney, Two Leadership Square, 211 North Robinson, Suite 1300, Oklahoma City, OK 73102, Telephone: (405) 232-3722.

CORPORATION COMMISSION OF OKLAHOMA

Dana L. Murphy, CHAIRMAN  
 Bob Anthony, VICE CHAIRMAN  
 J. Todd Hill, COMMISSIONER

DONE AND PERFORMED THIS 8th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2022.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION  
 Amy Cummings, Secretary

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma announces its participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All participants in attendance are served meals at no extra charge to the parents. In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
  - (2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
  - (3) email [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).
- This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**CHOCTAW VETERAN ADVOCACY PROGRAM**

Are You a Choctaw Veteran?

Let us help guide you to the benefits and services that you have earned.

580-642-8451 | [BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY](http://BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**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

**Shauna Williams, Executive Director  
Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director  
Kellie Matherly, Content Development Director  
Kendra Wall, Content Development Manager  
Chris Jennings, News Reporter  
Christian Toews, News Reporter**

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

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

**YAKOKE**

The family of the late Cecil Watson of Talihina, wishes to acknowledge the many expressions of sympathy and kindness shown to us following the loss of our dad.

We offer our heartfelt thanks to the many family, friends who attended the wake, funeral service, and burial. For those who telephoned, traveled far distances, sent floral tributes, cards, and messages of condolences, we are truly grateful. Minister Kenny Bryant, Pastor Raymond Johnson & Grace Indian Baptist Church members provided the most beautiful service and music.

A special word of thanks to the USMC, Choctaw Nation Color Guard and Veterans Cemetery personnel for their honorable military tribute at the gravesite. Finally to Jones-Harkins Funeral Directors, we are appreciative to their sensitive and professional handling of arrangements.

To those who helped in any way, your contribution made our loss more bearable. As it would be impossible to thank everyone individually, please accept this acknowledgment as an expression of our deepest gratitude, yakoke and mvto.

**NOTES**

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Talihina Agency is now located at the Choctaw Nation Tribal Headquarters in Durant Oklahoma.

Contact Benjamin Daniels, Superintendent of the Talihina Agency at (918) 781-4622 (Office), or (918) 616-8241 (Cell) or [BenjaminL.Daniels@bia.gov](mailto:BenjaminL.Daniels@bia.gov).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Talihina Agency proudly services the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Please visit the Choctaw Nation's website for further information regarding the latest programs, services, events, facilities, history, and culture offered by the Nation. <https://www.choctawnation.com>

**Mailing Address:**  
Talihin Agency  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
P.O. Box 1430  
Durant, Ok, 74702

**Physical Address:**  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
C/O BIA-Talihina Agency  
1802 Chukka Hina  
Durant, OK, 74701

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL  
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA  
October 8, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a. Regular Session September 10, 2022
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
  - a. Veteran of the Month, District #1 – Debra Mooney
  - b. First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #1 – Matilda Paxton
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
  - a. Nellie Meashintubby – Individual Speaker – ARPA Funds
  - b. Pearl Seaboy – Individual Speaker – Indian Child Welfare Program
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Rescind CB-22-22 and Approve the Capital Expenditure for the Renovation for the New Wilburton Community Center
  - b. Approve the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Participation in Nationwide Title VI Elder Needs Assessment
  - c. Approve Application for the FY23 Administration on Community Living/Administration on Aging Older Americans Title VI Grants
  - d. Approve Funding for the Construction of a New Talihina Fire and Forestry Facility
  - e. Approve Funding for the Development and Construction of a Multi-Family Housing Development in Broken Bow, Oklahoma
  - f. Approve Application for the FY23 Tribal Tourism Grant Program Competitive Grant Application
  - g. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
  - h. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
  - i. Approve the Rescission of CB-89-22 and Approve Funding for the Renovation and/or Repurposing of Certain Areas within the Nation's Casino Resort in Durant, Oklahoma
  - j. Approve Funding for the Design and Construction of a Food Hall within the Nation's Casino Resort in Durant, Oklahoma
  - k. Approve Application for the 2022 United States Department of Agriculture Rural eConnectivity (Reconnect) Program
  - l. Approve a Representative-Signature-Certifier and Administrators for the 2022 United States Department of Agriculture Rural eConnectivity (Reconnect) Program
  - m. Approve a Net Neutrality Commitment for the 2022 United States Department of Agriculture Rural eConnectivity (Reconnect) Program
  - n. Council Bill Authorizing Expanding Criminal Jurisdiction and Amending the Choctaw Nation Criminal Code
  - o. Approve the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Leadership 401(k) Plan
  - p. Approve the Amended and Restated Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Supplemental Retirement Income Plan
  - q. Approve a Resolution Supporting Jeff Hansen to Serve on the Tribal Homeland Security Advisory Council
  - r. Proclaim the Second Monday of October as Indigenous People's Day
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
10. OLD BUSINESS
11. ADJOURNMENT
12. CLOSING PRAYER

All bills pass unanimously

**EVENTS**

**Choctaw Veterans Association Recruiting New Members**

Meetings are second Saturday of the month at Spiro Community Center at 8:00 a.m.

For more information contact Ed Hendrix 918-962-5524.

**Join the Oklahoma Indigenous Nurses Association**

The Oklahoma Indigenous Nurses Association (ONIA) is searching for new members. ONIA is a chapter of the Oklahoma Nurses Association.

ONIA hosts meetings on the first Wednesday of the month at noon. All nurses serving Oklahoma Indigenous community are invited to join the ONIA circle of healing at <https://ona.nursingnetwork.com> or like us on Facebook at Oklahoma Indigenous Nurses Association.

To receive emails about these specific meetings, join ONA by going to [www.oknurses.com](http://www.oknurses.com).

**Celebrate Recovery Native Nations Night**

"Hurts, habits or hang-ups, you will leave better than you came."

Join us on November 14, 2022, at 6 p.m. (a meal will be served at 5 p.m.) at the First Baptist Church-Student Worship Center 1st Avenue and Beech Street, Durant, Oklahoma.

This free event will feature native food, music and speakers. Families are welcome.

"Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you, he will never let the righteous be forsaken." Psalm 55:22.

For more information, call 580-924-3573 or email [crdurant@fbcdurant.org](mailto:crdurant@fbcdurant.org).

**Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation**

November 1	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 2	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 4	Crowder	By Appointment
November 4	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 8	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 9	Atoka	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 15	Broken Bow	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
November 16	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
November 16	Stigler	By Appointment
November 18	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
November 18	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
November 29	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an Appointment

**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:

**Stigler Community Center  
November 10, 2022  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna November Language Lesson**

**Makash inli**  
Meaning: the same thing, way, kind, sort

Makash inli vpa sv bvna.	I want to eat the same thing.
Makash inli chompa li tuk.	I bought the same thing.
Makash inli ho vm anoli tuk.	She told me the same thing.
Ilefoka makash inli ho fokka la chi.	I'm going to wear the same thing.
Ilefoka makash inli ho fokka ho?	Is he/she wearing the same clothes?
Makash inli ho ish chompa chi ho?	Are you going to buy the same thing?
Makash inli ho hahanklo li.	I keep hearing the same thing.
Chi kaa holba makash inli ho chompa sv bvna.	I want to buy the same kind of car like/as yours.
Holbattoba makash inli ho pisa sv bvna.	I want to see the same picture
Makash inli ho im anoli li tuk.	I told him/her the same thing.
Aiittatoba makash inli ho falamvt ish ia chi ho?	Are you going back to the same store?
Makash inla chi hokmano, ia ik sv bvno.	If it's going to be the same thing, I don't want to go.

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



### Golden wedding anniversary

Olin Williams and Cynthia Bernice Fobb said "I do" on July 23, 1952, at Sulphur Springs Methodist Church in Bennington, Oklahoma. Fifty years later, they are still happily married and reside in Bennington, where Olin is the Pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Bennington. Bernice serves as the Sunday school teacher. Mr. and Mrs. Williams have five children and 17 grandchildren. Olin has been employed with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for 25 years and has served as the Employee Chaplain for the past seven years. Bernice dedicated 22 years as RN at the Hugo Clinic and then to Durant Regional Medical Clinic before retiring two years ago.

On August 20, 2022, friends and family gathered at the Choctaw Nation Community Center in Durant, Oklahoma, to celebrate their anniversary. The couple was showered with love and plenty of laughter. Entertainment was provided by four granddaughters playing Amazing Grace on their clarinets, a gospel singing, and a video tribute was also shown that included pictures of their lives and special moments throughout their marriage. Words of congratulations, encouragement and fun memories were shared from the guests for the happy couple.

### Chandler Sage Crenshaw



Chandler Sage Crenshaw was born at the Choctaw Nation hospital in Talihina on August 18, 2022, at 9:49 p.m. Chandler weighed 7lbs 1.1oz and was 19 inches long. Chandler's parents are Bailee and Micha Crenshaw of Red Oak, Oklahoma. Chandler is the grandchild of Cindy and Mike Crose (Gigi and Pops), Kristen and James Crenshaw (Nana & Pa) and Wayne Davis (Papa).



### Bradley graduates from CSU, Fresno

Emily Colleen Bradley, 22, of Porterville, California, will receive her undergraduate degree this month in psychology after four years at California State University, Fresno. She majored in psychology, pre-med and minored in philosophy.

Emily is now pursuing her master's degree in Clinical Psychology. She has completed research on anxiety disorders in college students and eating disorders in college students. Her passion is research in conditions such as Dementia and Alzheimer's. She would like to thank her family, friends, and the Choctaw community for being amazing guides through her journey in higher education. She would also like to give a special shout-out to the department chair of psychology at Fresno State, Dr. Lorin Lachs.



### Turney family announces the adoption of sons

Justin and Ashley Turney would like to announce the blessing of the adoption of their sons, Thaddeus and Theodore. The twins, 2, join big brother Quaid, 6, and big sister Clara-Mae, 5, who, along with their proud grandparents Larry and Lisa Turney and Dean and Melanie Lanning, are so

happy that their baby brothers are officially Team Turney. "We would like to say a huge thank you to the Choctaw Nation Foster Care and ICW workers whose tireless efforts assisted us and our boys along this journey. Special thanks to Kelsey Allen (DHS), Brenda Hopkins, Blair Christenberry, Brittany Goff, Jeremy Lalli, Lawanna Thompson and Talynn Parks. We thank you for your servant hearts for these children and encourage others to look into what you can do to get involved with Choctaw Nation Foster Care. We are so grateful for two more arrows! Psalm 127:3-5"

### Hale celebrates 99th birthday



Walter Osburn Hale, of Dale City, Oklahoma, celebrated his 99th birthday on August 20, 2022. Walter was married to his wife Juanita for 74 years until she passed away in March 2019. Walter has five children, Walter Edwin "Ed" Hale, Rodney Hale (deceased), Bonna (Hale) Malone (deceased), Dena Hale and Mickey Hale. Walter also has four grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.



### Potts graduates from FHSU

Dr. Tisa Mason, President of Fort Hays State University, congratulates Colton Taylor Potts as he graduates from FHSU with a bachelor's degree in business management this past spring semester. Colton would like to thank his family, USD 112 Central Plains, Barton Community College, Fort Hays State University and the Choctaw Nation for their support throughout his academic journey. Currently, Colton is working as a graduate teaching assistant to Assistant Professor of Informatics David Schmidt while working toward his master's degree in digital marketing at FHSU.



### Burkhalter signs with Langston University

On August 18, 2022, Shania Burkhalter signed a letter of intent to play softball at Langston University, Langston, Oklahoma. Burkhalter was seen by Langston University's assistant coach at a Dallas Christian University (College Bureau Scout) Camp in July 2022, who was impressed by Burkhalter's athletic abilities. She will be starting her freshman

year in the position of first base. Burkhalter will be majoring in sports medicine/PT/athletic training. She has a high school GPA of 4.0. She is also on the National Honor Roll Society and Superintendents Honor Roll. Burkhalter recently received a certificate of nomination for an award in the Congress of Future Medical Leaders Award of Excellence by Mario Capeechi, Ph. D., to be given in June 2023 in Boston.

Burkhalter's high school years had great wins; her positions ranged from first base to third base and all outfield positions. On September 10, her high school softball team won the Mounds Tournament Championship, and her coach won the coach award.

2021-2022 team successes included Fast Pitch District 2A Champions Runner-Up, Slow Pitch District 2A Champions and Regionals OSSAA 2A Champion Runner-up. Her travel team Oklahoma Intimidators 14,16 & 18U, brought Championship Rings to add to her collections like 2022 USSSA Plano Texas Champion Reg., 2022 Top Gun Tournament Champion Runner-up, Shawnee Oklahoma, 2022 Perfect Game Tournament, Norman Oklahoma Champions. The Haskell Lady Haymakers finished the 2022 season with a 5-3 State Tournament quarterfinal loss.

This past August, she was recognized in the Softball Poll of Three Rivers, Muskogee Oklahoma Sports VYPE placing third in the poll, and her freshman year, placing 10th in the poll.

Burkhalter is also credited with her accomplishments and is the Haskell Football Team Management. She also won first place in Oklahoma City in Choir State Competition for her solo age group 8th and High School Group placed first in State Champions (Lexington School). She also has placed in the top 20 in Archery State 2020. She participated in the Choctaw Star Program and now belongs to the FCCLA member, Oklahoma Talent Search, Oklahoma Promise and her Supervisor is Becky Scott from Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Shania wants to thank her family, friends and others for their support throughout her Jr and High School years and what an Honor to be Choctaw and represent her heritage as she goes on playing the love of her Sport and the future of her success. She has two people that were her best friends that passed away the past year, and she played her heart out for these two. Those individuals were her Choctaw grandmother, Ella Haskins and junior high classmate from Lexington, Oklahoma, Riley Boatright, whom she carried the banner of her travel team OKI to all her games honoring him. He passed away with injuries sustained playing a junior high football game and the lack of medical transportation issue, which transpired in the Riley Boatright Act passed this past year to protect and have quick medical response for children playing contact sports. She will always have him in her heart, and he's the one that has given her ambition to be an athletic trainer to help injured players.

# HEALTHY AGING LENDING CLOSET

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**Choctaw Nation Health Services**

# THE ELDER & COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING MEALS

ATTEND YOUR LOCAL MEAL THIS NOVEMBER

November 2, 2022 - Wednesday		
Battiest Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Battiest Community Center
November 3, 2022 - Thursday		
Tuskahoma Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Tuskahoma Cafeteria
November 8, 2022 - Tuesday		
Durant Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Choctaw Event Center at Durant
November 9, 2022 - Wednesday		
Antlers Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Antlers Community Center
Atoka Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Atoka Community Center
Broken Bow Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Broken Bow Community Center
Coalgate Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Coalgate Community Center
Hugo Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Hugo Community Center
Idabel Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Idabel Community Center
Poteau Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Poteau Community Center
November 10, 2022 - Thursday		
Battiest Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Battiest Community Center
November 15, 2022 - Tuesday		
Talihina Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Talihina Community Center
November 16, 2022 - Wednesday		
Crowder Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Crowder Community Center
Durant Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Durant Community Center
Idabel Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Idabel Community Center
McAlester Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	McAlester Community Center
Smithville Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Smithville Community Center
Spiro Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Spiro Community Center
Stigler Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Stigler Community Center
Wilburton Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Wilburton Community Center
Wright City Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Wright City Community Center
November 17, 2022 - Thursday		
Broken Bow Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Broken Bow Community Center
McAlester Community Dinner	6:00 PM	McAlester Community Center

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

# LOCATE CHOCTAW-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

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Help support our Chahtapreneurs by downloading the app today.

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**Choctaw Nation Small Business Development**

### McCorkle celebrates 70th birthday

Nannette Currie McCorkle, born Friday, June 13, 1952, in Needles, California, celebrated her 70th birthday as the guest of her siblings, John and Valerie Frahm, on a cruise to Catalina Island and Ensenada, Mexico. She is the great-granddaughter of the original Dawes enrollee, William Henry Secor Sr.



### Pope turns 83

Charles Pope of St. Charles, Missouri, turned 83 on October 15, 2022. He is a former Air Force sergeant. Charles also retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 2003 after 41 years and 10 months of service. He is proud to be a Choctaw veteran.



### Julissa turns 18

Happy 18th birthday Julissa! I'm so proud of you and the young lady you're becoming! Continue to chase your dreams! We love you so much!  
-Mom

### Lane Cutter Wilson

Lane Cutter Wilson was born July 4, 2022, in Paris, Texas.

Lane's parents are Curtis and Kelley of Pattonville, Texas. Lane's grandparents are Harold and Helen Wilson of Pattonville and Donny and Shelia McHam of Blossom, Texas. Lane has two brothers, Kade and Elijah and one sister, Chloe.

The Wilsons are proud members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



### Haney awarded for pandemic heroism

Niki Haney, Pharmacy Informaticist for the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority, was awarded the Indian Health Services Director's (IHS) Award for Pandemic Heroism for exceptional initiative and leadership in carrying out COVID-19 projects to improve the quality of care and the service delivery processes. She also displayed exceptional, dedicated work and selfless responses in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Huggins is JEC Archives Fellow at Davidson College

Ellen Huggins was recently named a Justice, Equality, and Community (JEC) Archives Fellow at Davidson College. In this role, Ellen will help to advance research on Davidson's nineteenth-century involvement with enslaved peoples and its role in justice movements in the twentieth century

by processing relevant collections, revitalizing digital resources for use in the JEC college curriculum and collaborating on campus-wide research projects. As the JEC fellow, she'll also be joining a cohort of researchers from Duke University, Furman University, and Johnson C. University in their second year of exploring the racial history of their respective institutions.

Ellen is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa, Fall 2021, earning her B.A. in Creative Writing with minors in American Studies and Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies. At Iowa, Ellen participated in organizations that promoted local labor rights by highlighting worker voices from the past and present, including the Iowa Women in Trades Network and The Iowa Labor History Oral Project. After completing her fellowship at Davidson, Ellen hopes to attend graduate school in American Studies.

### Williams is Smithville basketball coach

By Chris Jennings

Ashten Williams has been named the boys' basketball head coach at Smithville High School. Williams graduated from Smithville in 2006, averaging 18 points per game and scoring 1954 career points.

She was selected as a 4-time MC6 basketball all-conference pick and MC6 MVP in her junior and senior years. She was selected for the Oklahoma Girls Basketball Coaches Association and Oklahoma Coaches Association all-state team.

Williams started her coaching career in Nashoba, coaching there for five years. She's been coaching first through eighth grades at Smithville for the last three years and was the assistant coach for Smithville High School girls' basketball and softball for the last year.

"I enjoy having the opportunity to coach in my hometown and give back to my community," said Williams.

During her successful playing career, Williams says she learned some things from her coaches that she wants to pass along to her players. "The most valuable lesson I learned from my own coach is to invest in what you love, work hard and be accountable," said Williams.

Williams will continue to coach third through fifth-grade girls and boys basketball and seventh and eighth-grade boys basketball. She will also be the softball junior high and high school assistant coach.

Williams said that there's an adjustment to be made at the high school level, with much more time spent in preparation for practice and games.

She's committed to her athletes, though, "Investing in athletes, passing on my love for the game and seeing them find success through their own hard work is what makes it all worthwhile," Williams said.



### Santer turns 18

Cameron Santer of Lubbock, Texas, celebrated his 18th birthday on October 20, 2022.

He is a senior honors student at Coronado High School and will graduate in May 2022.

He celebrated his birthday with his brother Michael, sister Makenna and parents Charlie and Tausha Senter.

He is the grandson of Jeanne Hartsfield, great-grandson of Eugene Wilson and great-great-grandson of Noel Wilson, original enrollee of the Choctaw Nation.

Eugene Wilson and great-great-grandson of Noel Wilson, original enrollee of the Choctaw Nation.

### Hawkins graduates from OU



Grant Hawkins graduated with a 3.6 GPA from the Price School of Business at the University of Oklahoma with a bachelor's of business administration on May 14, 2022.

After graduation, Grant accepted a position with the Choctaw Nation as a performance analyst in the Reporting and Analytics in the Strategic Development department. Grant has enjoyed working at tribal headquarters and is so thankful for the opportunities that were afforded to him to be able to attend college and graduate debt free.

### Humelsine graduates from RPI



Ryan Humelsine of Neptune, New Jersey, graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, New York, in May 2022. Ryan was enrolled in RPI's Co-Term program, which allowed him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering with cum laude honors from RPI in May 2021, followed by a master's of engineering degree in 2022. During his five

years at RPI, Ryan participated in cross country and indoor/outdoor track. He is currently employed by Cyient in Hartford, Connecticut as an aeronautical test engineer.

Ryan is the son of James and Mary Humelsine of Neptune, New Jersey, and the grandson of Frances Dean Humelsine of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, previously of Durant, Oklahoma.

Ryan and his family would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for his contributions from the Higher Learning Education Program during high school and college. We are grateful for your support, and we hope we can visit Durant someday soon to convey our thanks in person!



### Hilliard named grand marshal

Jean Hilliard Hardy, granddaughter of original Choctaw enrollee Daisy Dean Callahan was chosen the Grand Marshall of the Harvest Festival and parade in Kerman, California. Jean has been a resident of Kerman for over 80 years. She was honored for her love of farming, hard work, devotion to family, and support to her community.

## Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma offers our tribal elders the ability to live in a residential independent living community that is age-restricted with residents who are able to live on their own. In this type of community, seniors maintain independence for as long as is desired or possible.

Independent Elder Housing is comprised of units designed for one person or one person and their spouse. Each unit is equipped with energy star appliances: Refrigerator, Stove, Central Heat & Air, Washer Machine and Dryer. Some site locations offer a community building, available exclusively to residents and their guests. Each site is overseen by a Rental Manager and Maintenance Technician who are responsible for the overall operations and physical integrity of each unit and the property.

Eligibility requirements for the Independent Elder Housing program are as follows:

- Applicant must have a CDIB Card.
- Applicant household must meet income guidelines.
- Applicants must be elderly or near elderly (age 55 or older).
- Household members must pass nationwide background check
- Tenant rent in the Independent Elder Program is based on 15% of the gross adjusted income for the household.

Independent Elder Housing is currently offered at the following locations:

- |              |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| • Antlers    | • Hartshorne | • Smithville |
| • Atoka      | • Hugo       | • Stigler    |
| • Broken Bow | • Idabel     | • Talihina   |
| • Calera     | • Poteau     | • Wilburton  |
| • Coalgate   | • Savanna    |              |

Choctaw Nation College FYI and High School Student Services programs encourage current and future college students to apply for FAFSA

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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

**GIVE BLOOD TO HELP YOUR TRIBE AND COMMUNITY**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**Margaret Ann Dodson Findley**

Margaret Ann Dodson Findley, 92, passed away July 10, 2022.

Margaret was born Aug. 2, 1929, in Durant, Okla., to William E. "Willie" and Maggie (Crowell) Dodson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings J.W. Dodson, Cleo Dodson, and Berniece Melton.

Margaret is survived by her son Brock Charles McKinney; daughter-in-law Wendi Michelle McKinney; daughter Sara Beth McKinney Block; son-in-law Paul Allan Block; granddaughters Ada Marion McKinney and Emma Katherine Block; nephews Howard Melton, John Melton, and David Dodson; and caregiver Martha Ann Logan.

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

**Noel Lee Belvin**

Noel Lee Belvin, 79, passed away Sept. 10, 2022.

Noel was born Nov. 17, 1942, in Boswell, Okla., to Hattie Belvin Robinson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; grandparents; daughter Natalie; grandson Joshua; siblings Cordelia, Betty, Norma, Cinderella, Eli, and Thurman.

Noel is survived by his wife Della; grandson Nathaniel; daughters Brenda Nicholson, Cindy White, Susan Reid, and Diana Johnson; sisters Virginia Espinoza and spouse Pat, and Lelda Vanoski; brothers Roy Robinson Jr. and spouse Evangeline, Skylar Robinson, Raymond Robinson, and James Robinson and spouse Christie; and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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

**Shirley Ann Nale-Drummonds**

Shirley Ann Nale-Drummonds, 84, passed away Aug. 11, 2022.

Shirley was born Jan. 23, 1938, in Hulbert, Okla., to Robert and Ruby Nale.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings Dean Nale and Nelda Nale-Busby.

Shirley is survived by her husband Harold Lee Drummonds; sons Steve and Mark Drummonds; grandchildren Shawn Drummonds, Melissa Nichols, and Tanner Drummonds; great-grandchildren Hunter and Colson Drummonds, and Hagen Nichols.

For the full obituary, please visit [Westfield Chapel Funeral Home & Cremation Service](#).

**Nettie Frances Taylor**

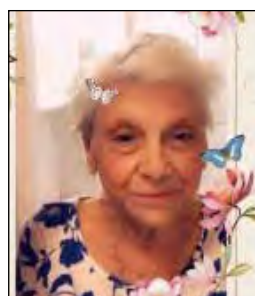
Nettie Frances Taylor, 81, passed away Aug. 25, 2022.

Nettie was born Dec. 6, 1940, in Nelson, Okla., to Allen Lee Taylor (Hunter) and Abbie (Roebuck) Taylor.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Jack and Henry Taylor; sisters Mary Belle Taylor Smith and Lena Dell Taylor; son David Morehead; and grandson Robert Morehead.

Nettie is survived by sons Bil Morehead (Charley), and Ted Emig (Pamela); and grandchildren Krystal and William Morehead, Liz Paradise Zulaski, Rachel Morehead, and Bethany and Amy Emig.

For the full obituary, please visit [Greer's Mortuary of Winslow](#).

**Michael Dean Oliver**

Michael Dean Oliver, 53, passed away Sept. 13, 2022.

Michael was born March 31, 1969, in Lubbock, Okla., to Vance C. and Mary Dean (Trostle) Oliver.

He was preceded in death by his parents; paternal grandparents E.L. Oliver and Ruby Oliver, Rev. Roscoe and Mary Beth Trostle, and Coy and Emma Stafford; and great-grandparents Sibby Loring-Hunt and John Hunt.

Michael is survived by his daughter Samantha Ann Miner; brothers Vance Oliver II and spouse Debbie, and Jay Kerry Oliver and spouse Stephanie; beat friend Eric Williams; nieces Brandi Cardenas, Nicole Ritchie, Caitlin Gresham, Tatum Thompson, and Kinzy Kennedy; nephew Blake Kennedy; as well as numerous other family members and a host of friends.

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

**Linda Carolyn Dyer-Daniel**

Linda Carolyn Dyer-Daniel, 74, passed away Sept. 11, 2022.

Linda was born Oct. 19, 1947, in Anadarko, Okla., to Bobby "Bob" Edsel and Zona Mae (Duree) Dyer.

She was preceded in death by her parents; grandparents Robert and Jewell (Avants) Dyer, and Otto and Zella Dupree; stepfather Paul "Sugar Buddy" Clark; brothers Robert and "Mike" Dyer; sister-in-law Mary Keller; and in-laws "Pete" and Maxine Peterson.

Linda is survived by her husband Mark Daniel; daughter Melissa Dyer-Billings and spouse Craig; son "Randy" Anderson and spouse Kara; son "Chip" Anderson and spouse Debi; sisters-in-law Shirley Dyer, Kathie Dyer, and "Ginny" Estervig and spouse "Ron"; brothers-in-law "Pat" Daniel, and John Daniel and spouse Mary; beloved grandchildren J. Sydney Purcell, Devon Moseley, Halle Moseley, Colton and Tiffany Anderson, Colby Anderson, Kyrie and Warren Gelling, "J.J." and Lynnea Anderson, and Sara Anderson; along with five great-grandchildren.

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

**Rev. Rick Dean Floyd**

Rev. Rick Dean Floyd, 68, passed away Sept. 13, 2022.

Rev. Floyd was born Dec. 24, 1953, in California, to H.P. and Wanda Floyd.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Cindy Floyd; and grandson Randy Kessler.

Rev. Floyd is survived by wife Paula Floyd; children Brenda (Vince), Stephanie (Dustin), Tammy (Nathan), Brian, Allyson (Matthew), and Ben; 19 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and brother Randy Floyd.

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

**Bobbie Ray Hendrix**

Bobbie Ray Hendrix, 52, passed away Sept. 6, 2022.

Bobbie was born March 24, 1970, in Corning, Calif., to Bobbie Lee Hendrix and Mahela Inez Pulliam.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Bobbie is survived by his wife Carla Lovelle (Hall) Hendrix; son Travis Whitman; daughter Makayla White and spouse Hayden; aunts Abigail Williams, and Lenora Roberts and spouse Bill; sister Bonnie Jean Tumino and spouse John; cousins Janita, Becky, Richard, Walter, and Donald Ray; as well as numerous other friends and relatives.

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

**Jeffrey Lynn Davis Jr.**

Jeffrey Lynn Davis Jr., 48, passed away Aug. 30, 2022.

Jeffrey was born Sept. 23, 1973, in Talihina, Okla., to Jo Ellen Scroggins and Jeffrey Lynn Davis Sr.

He is survived by his mother and her spouse Carey; his father; children Winston Davis, Donaven Davis, and Joel Davis and spouse Hailey; brother Jonathan Davis and spouse Jeannine; stepbrothers Colby Scroggins, and Carey Scroggins Jr. and spouse Jessica; grandmother Margaret Billy; grandchild Katie Lynn Davis; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and other relatives and friends.

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

**Jerry William Work**

Jerry William Work, 65, passed away Sept. 26, 2022.

Jerry was born Oct. 24, 1956, in Pauls Valley, Okla., to Lige Work and Jonnie Ann (Colwell) McCaleb.

He was preceded in death by his wife Ann Elizabeth Work; and daughter Leah Irene Work.

Jerry is survived by his parents; son Chad Work and spouse Michelle; granddaughter Mariah Mundell; brothers Kenneth Alvin Work and Faye Roller, and Stanley Work; and the mother of his children Laura Mackey.

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

**Doris Oleta Moffatt**

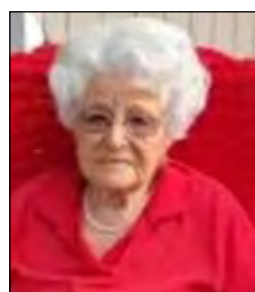
Doris Oleta Moffatt, 100, passed away July 30, 2022.

Doris was born May 3, 1922, in Atoka, Okla., to Edward and Lucy (Willard) Buckholts.

She was preceded in death her parents; husband Harry Moffatt; daughter Pricella Mayton; and sister Ilene Buckholts.

Doris is survived by her daughter Ketrena Grosse and spouse Steve; son George Moffatt and spouse Susan; grandchildren Joe Moffatt, Julie Dikeman, Mike Wheeler, Melodie Pardue, Scott Wheeler, and a lengthy list of great-grandchildren from many generations.

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

**Jeffrey Carter Smith**

Jeffrey Carter Smith, 59, passed away Sept. 15, 2022.

Jeffrey was born to Judy and Joe Smith.

He was preceded in death by his brother Joe Loftin Smith; and grandparents Joe Wade and Lois Smith, and Bill Loftin and Marie Loftin Smith.

Jeffrey is survived by his parents.

For the full obituary, please visit [A Natural State Funeral Service](#).

**Walter Charles Woolard Jr.**

Walter Charles Woolard Jr., 54, passed away Sept. 23, 2022.

Walter was born Feb. 11, 1968, in Fort Hood, Texas, to Melba Lois (McNoel) Woolard and Walter Charles Woolard Sr.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Ramona Lewallen; and niece Christina Smith.

Walter is survived by his sister Sandy Masterson and spouse Jeff; brother Alan Woolard and spouse Jennifer; nieces and nephews Aniya Woolard, Emry Woolard, Kinlee Woolard, Desiree Whitehead and spouse Jace, Charles Moore and spouse Tessa, Christina Steward and spouse Jason, Hillary Priddy and spouse Ryan, and Brian Woolard and spouse Sarah; numerous great-nieces and great-nephews; cousins; and other relatives and friends.

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

**Thomas Allen Hendricks**

Thomas Allen Hendricks, 70, passed away Sept. 21, 2022.

Thomas was born Dec. 8, 1951, to Thomas Donald and Lois Maxine Wardlow Hendricks.

He was preceded in death by his parents; stepson Allen Treadway; brother Jack Hendricks; and sisters Theresa Peebles and Patti Hendricks.

Thomas is survived by his wife Peggy Sue Sweatman Hendricks; daughters Tara Heinley and Angela Snavley and spouse Barry; brother Donnie Hendricks; sisters Yvonne Emerson and spouse Mike, and Jan Hay; grandchildren Hunter Heinley, Chance Heinley, Gillian Heinley, Riley Heinley, Regan Snavley, Brittany Treadway, and Dylan Treadway; and great-grandchild De'Angel Heinley.

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

**Jeremy James**

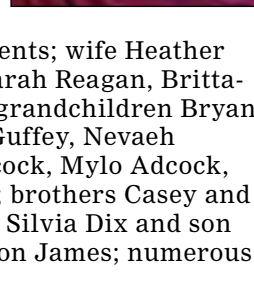
Jeremy James, 49, passed away Sept. 26, 2022.

Jeremy was born April 13, 1973, in Talihina, Okla., to Margaret and Warren James.

He was preceded in death by his brother Joshua "Sox" James; and granddaughter Emma Atkins.

Jeremy is survived by his parents; wife Heather (Guffey) James; stepchildren Sarah Reagan, Brittany Reagan, and Crista Reagan; grandchildren Bryan Guffey, Kadence Guffey, Abby Guffey, Nevaeh Reagan, Alex Reagan, Felix Adcock, Mylo Adcock, Rhea Atkins, and Brody Atkins; brothers Casey and Seleetka; uncle Nic Billey; aunt Silvia Dix and son Jamey Dix; nephew Faron Carson James; numerous cousins; and friends.

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

**Sharon L. Owens**

Sharon L. (Thompson) Owens, 81, passed away Aug. 3, 2022.

Sharon was born Aug. 25, 1940, in Cushing, Okla., to Garnett and Rita Dowty.

She was preceded in death by parents; step-father William "Buck" Nobles; siblings Frank Dowty, Danny Nobles, Larry Replogle, and Sandy Allen; and niece Teresa Blendon.

Sharon is survived by her children Rick and Brynn Thompson, Robin and Tim Dulaney, and Rhonda and Dennis Blackburn; grandchildren Ronnie Blackburn, Stryder Blackburn and spouse Autumn, Rylee Dulaney and spouse Rachel, Jaden Dulaney, Rikki Hedgespath and spouse BJ, Keeper Castillo and spouse Kevin, and Cutter Thompson and spouse Maria; eight great-grandchildren; siblings Serita and Don Scifers, Billy and Lorette Nobles, and Susie and Michael Adams; as well as many nieces and nephews.

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

**Darrell Garnet Taylor**

Darrell "Little Dude" Garnet Taylor, 5, passed away June 13, 2022.

Darrell was born June 8, 2022, in Durant, Okla., to Mitchell Lindsey Taylor and Susanna Marie Patterson.

He was preceded in death by his great-uncle Garnet Butler.

Darrell is survived by his parents; honorary parents Owen and Bekka Standridge; honorary brother Benjamin Standridge; honorary sister Penelope Standridge; and grandparents Paul and Mary Patterson.

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

**Roscoe William Lloyd**

Roscoe "Rocky" William Lloyd, 84, passed away Oct. 7, 2022.

Rocky was born Aug. 3, 1938, to Charlie and Lee Lloyd.

He was preceded in death by his wife Penelope Irene Lloyd; daughter Kelly Leigh Lloyd; granddaughter Jessica Farrell;

grandson Dallas Lloyd; his parents; brother John Lloyd; and all his sisters-in-laws and a brother-in-law.

Rocky is survived by daughter Tammisue A. Lloyd-Robbins; sons David Lloyd and spouse Rhonda, and Billy Lloyd and spouse Lisa; siblings Irvin Lloyd, Mary Ida Chalkee, Jim Lloyd, and Anthony Lloyd; grandchildren Micheale Jenkins, Michael Lloyd and spouse Hope, Renee Lloyd Roland, Alexander Lloyd, Kendi Lloyd, and Mason Lloyd; great-granddaughter Alexis; and a host of other family and friends.

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

**Obituary Policy**

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation tribal members only and are free of charge.

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

Due to space limitations, there is a 150 word limit for obituaries. The online issue of the Biskinik will contain links to the full obituaries.

Send official obituary notices to:

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



ITI FABVSSA

# Ishtaboli Between the Two Removals

By Jason Lewis

This month, Iti Fabvssa is featuring a guest article written by Jason Lewis, an independent researcher and enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. During the pandemic, he reviewed old newspaper articles and researched how Choctaws played stickball games throughout the Southeastern U.S. and its popularity in the region. He recently gave a presentation at the Choctaw Cultural Center on this topic.

Nineteenth-century scholarship often claims that the Choctaw people who remained in our homelands after the removals hid in swamps with few resources and little agency. Yet, an in-depth survey of newspaper articles from that same time period tells a different story—one where Choctaw stickball was a pre-eminent sport with teams, tournaments, and tours that were featured for over half a century in southern U.S. newspapers. The following is an account of a touring Choctaw stickball team that was reported on in three southern states during the summer of 1897.

In August 1897, Chief Phillip's Band of Choctaw stickball players traveled by train to play a series of "Indian Ball" exhibitions at three major cities along the Gulf Coast in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. That year, Choctaw stickball games made newspaper headlines throughout the southeastern United States. In fact, over thirty newspaper articles about Choctaw stickball appeared in major syndications and local papers alike. The tour featured Chief Phillip's Band and started to 'trend' just as the team embarked; they even gained notoriety after an unfortunate event on the last day. The coverage provides a fascinating glimpse of the sport as a truly popular pastime – not just for our Choctaw ancestors but for the entire southeastern United States.

Chief Phillip was Williamson Phillip, an elder who lived in Cushtusa, Mississippi (an ancestral Choctaw settlement known originally as K shtasha, or K shtih asha, which translates to Fleas Are There). Riley Phillip, possibly Williamson's son or nephew, was named as one of the players. Riley was a credentialed school teacher for one of the state-sponsored Choctaw schools in Mississippi, most likely at Cushtusa. The touring band was reported to be a group of 32 players from Neshoba and Newton counties, a few Choctaw women who cooked for the band and two non-Choctaws, Messrs. Jones and Philyen of Neshoba County, Mississippi.

On August 18, The Times-Democrat of New Orleans reported that the ball players arrived in Meridian, Mississippi, on August 17 and played an exhibition before embarking on their Mobile and Ohio Railroad tour. Their first stop was in Mobile, Alabama.

On the morning of August 18, the Choctaw ball players were supposed to ride a different train to Biloxi, Mississippi, for exhibition games on August 18 and 19. But, according to

the local Biloxi Herald, "[t]he noble red men who were billed to appear in B'loxi this week and give an exhibition of their skill in Indian ball playing, failed to show up" (August 21, 1897). The team went on to play games on Friday and Saturday, August 20 and 21, at Monroe Park, a once-popular bayfront amusement park in Mobile, Alabama.

On August 25, The Times-Democrat reported Chief Phillip's Band embarked on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad from Mobile towards New Orleans with a stop in Biloxi. The Biloxi Herald ungraciously wrote, "a band of worthless representatives of the 'noble red man,' took up station for two days of ball-play at Gulf View Park on August 25 and 26 (August 28, 1897).

On August 26, Chief Phillip's Band arrived in New Orleans. Upon disembarking, the team was sent by local rail car to a popular sporting and entertainment venue called Athletic Park. They were to be featured for the final week-end of the summer season. Both major New Orleans newspapers, The Times-Democrat and the Times-Picayune advertised it. The Times-Democrat described the play: "King Philips' band...gave an exhibition of Indian ball that opened the eyes of some of the racquette players of New Orleans...The two games are almost identical, with the exception that the Indians have fewer rules...all of them played such quick, snappy, aggressive ball as to win the admiration of all who saw them...the local players...would have to get axes to be in the same class with the copperskins."

In the 1840s, Black and white New Orleans residents appropriated a version of Indian Ball-Play and called it "racquette." Before the US Civil War, the city had common games of racquette between Choctaw and Creole (Black) teams. In 1868, a band of ball players from the Indian Territory were commissioned to compete with local teams at the New Orleans Fairgrounds Race Course. They arrived by steamboat in April of that year. Interestingly, this Indian Territory team was composed of Choctaw, Creek, Osage and Comanche stickball players.

At the end of Chief Phillip's gulf coast tour, the band was reported to have \$42 on hand and camped out in the Louisville and Nashville train depot, ready to return home via train on August 30. But that night, they were robbed in their sleep and left stranded. This unfortunate circumstance also became Gulf South news, best summarized in The Clarion-Ledger of Jackson, Mississippi. It stated that after playing in New Orleans, "someone pocketed the gate receipts, and the poor Red Man was left high and dry, penniless in a strange city." As a result of this, "the mayor had a collection taken up to get the Indians to their homes, the Queen and Crescent route generously agreeing to haul them for one-fifth fare."

By September 1897, twelve articles, not including the advertisements for the Athletic Park 'Whoop-La' exhibition, outlined the

events of Chief Phillip's Band's 15-day tour.

These articles covering Chief Phillip's tour are just a few of the 100+ articles published about Choctaw stickball from 1845-1898. After the U.S. Civil War, Choctaw stickball teams from Indian Territory and Mississippi were recruited to play for county and state fairs, to go on interstate tours, or to provide exhibitions in towns large and small, which in turn stoked local economies. Whether this was out of local pride or to help wash away the sorrows of a region facing tremendous turmoil, Choctaw ball plays were a genuine salve; and they need to be recognized as such. No doubt, they also provided an enticing source of revenue and agency for the ball players.

Although this helped encourage stickball playing, it came at a cost. The interest was so high in Mississippi rural communities that local non-Choctaws encouraged and increased alcohol consumption and gambling at games. By 1890, state legislation was proposed to ban ball plays for "Indians or white men." In January 1898, gambling at Indian ball plays was banned. Perhaps the fever of 1897 was the last hurrah before the state of Mississippi pulled the reins on this ancient sport.

After a singular unfinished tournament between the Bogue Chitto, Turkey Creek, and Red Water teams on February 4, 1898, newspaper reporters soon lost interest. Though it is important to know the game itself was never completely banned, and ball-play among Choctaw communities in Mississippi contin-

ued as it does now and has for hundreds – if not thousands of years.

1898 was also the beginning of the era known as the Second Great Removal of the Choctaw. In the early 1900s, thousands of Mississippi Choctaws were promised land allotments by the Dawes Commission. Families were removed to Indian Territory either by the U.S. government or by private land speculators. Choctaws who ended up leaving with the latter were often tricked out of their allotments and many walked back to Mississippi.

Chief Williamson Phillip and his family were counted among those removed by government-sponsored train from Meridian, Mississippi, to Atoka, Indian Territory, from August 12-13, 1903 – six years after their grand ball-play tour. Today, many of his descendants are members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Iti Fabvssa seeks to increase knowledge about the past, strengthen the Choctaw people and develop a more informed and culturally grounded understanding of where the Choctaw people are headed in the future.

For more Iti Fabvssa content visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/iti-fabvssa/>.

If you have questions or would like more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at [meganb@choctawnation.com](mailto:meganb@choctawnation.com).

**AMUSEMENTS.**

**WHOO-LA!**

**CHIEF PHILUP'S BAND**

—OF—

**32—CHOCTAW INDIANS— 32**

IN NATIVE COSTUME.

WILL PLAY INDIAN BALL

From 4:30 to 6 o'clock p. m.,

**FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY,**

**AUG. 27, 28 AND 29,**

**AT ATHLETIC PARK.**

ADMISSION, - - - - - 25 CENTS.

**ATHLETIC PARK**

WILL CLOSE ITS SEASON

**Sunday, Aug. 29th,**

With the following:

Chicago Marine Band,  
Miss Sibyl Sammis,  
Van Auker, McPhee and Hill  
and the Indian War Dance.

**SPECIAL—TO-NIGHT:**

**Professional Bicycle Race.**

**INDIAN GAMES AND DANCES AT THE FAIR GROUNDS.**—Those who were unable to witness the grand display, at the Fair Grounds, on Sunday last, in the way of Indian ball play and dances, will have an opportunity of attending, on Thursday afternoon next, at 4 o'clock. At that time this delegation of Indians from the tribes of Choctaws, Creeks, Osages and Comanches will play the Indian national ball game and dance the various dances of the tribes in their wild state. On Sunday next they are to play a match game with the Creoles, which will be exceedingly interesting. Admission fifty cents.

A gang of Choctaw Indians of Newton county went down to New Orleans to make a fortune playing "Indian-ball." They played one game, some one pocketed the gate receipts, and the poor Red Man was left high and dry, penniless in a strange city. Becoming a charge on the city, the mayor had a collection taken up to get the Indians to their homes, the Queen and Crescent route generously agreeing to haul them for one-fifth fare. And Lo returns to his happy hunting ground, a wiser if not a richer man.

Photo provided

Various newspapers clippings advertising "Indian Ball" along the gulf coast the author found while doing research.



Choctaw men playing stickball near Philadelphia, Mississippi, in July 1925. Photograph by Hermes H. Knoblock. Image courtesy of the Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives.

## CNO Powwow to Launch Native American Heritage Month

**DURANT, Okla.** – The 17th Annual Choctaw Powwow will kick off Native American Heritage Month with what is regarded as one of the nation's largest and best powwows. Set for Nov. 4 – 6, it also is offering the largest purse in its history for dancers and drums, almost \$177,000. More than 600 dancers are expected to be joined by drummers and singers, and an estimated 13,000 visitors for the festivities.

The Choctaw Cultural Center will host Choctaw Day, showcasing Choctaw heritage and a Gourd Dance Friday, Nov. 4. The Choctaw Powwow will then move to the Choctaw Event Center for its two days of dance and drum competitions, Saturday, Nov. 5 and Sunday, Nov. 6.

Kerry L. Steve, executive assistant of Cultural Services, said, "Last year's dancers represented 65 tribes from across the United States and Canada. It was truly an international event with last year's live internet coverage reaching 640,000 views from 111 countries."

On Friday, Nov. 4 the Choctaw Gourd Clan will have its official debut on the Outdoor Dance Arena in the Living Village of the Choctaw Cultural Center. Gourd dancing begins at 3 p.m. Choctaw cultural activities will be held throughout the day, such as singing in the Choctaw language, social dancing, and stickball demonstrations. There is no charge to attend the Gourd Dance or stickball games, but regular cultural center admission prices apply for Choctaw Day activities and other center activities.

On Saturday, Nov. 5 at the Choctaw Event Center, the Powwow's first Grand Entry of the day will begin at noon with dancing beginning immediately afterwards. "Specials" with gifting and recognition will run 4 – 6 p.m. The evening Grand Entry will begin at 7 p.m., followed by dancing.

Contests will be offered for seven different age groups



Choctaw Nation Photo

The 17th Annual Choctaw Powwow will kick off Native American Heritage Month on Nov. 4 through Nov. 6.

from Senior Golden Age to Tiny Tots. Various categories for dancers include Northern Traditional, Straight, Grass, Fancy Feather, Chicken, Southern Cloth, Southern Buckskin, Jingle, and Fancy Shawl. The Women's Choctaw Traditional will return for its sixth year. Competitions are open to both Northern and Southern Drums. Dancers and drums planning to compete may register onsite.

On Sunday, Nov. 6 the Grand Entry will be at Noon with dance and drum contests following immediately. The drums will have their final competition with first-place Southern and first-place Northern going head-to-head with an additional money purse sponsored by Discover Durant.

Admission is free to the Choctaw Powwow at the Choctaw Event Center and doors will open at 10 a.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The Choctaw Cultural Center is located at 1919 Hina Hanta Way and the Choctaw Event Center at 3702 Choctaw Rd. in Durant. For the complete schedule and activity updates to the 17th Annual Choctaw Powwow, visit Choctaw social media or [bit.ly/cno-pow-wow](http://bit.ly/cno-pow-wow).

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## CNHSA strives to help those with diabetes and prediabetes

By Chris Jennings

Every year, the American Diabetes Association uses the month of November to bring awareness to diabetes and its effect on our lives.

Millions of Americans are at risk for or have diabetes. The statistics hit even harder for Native Americans. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Native Americans are nearly three times more likely than non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes.

There is no simple answer to what diabetes is. In its most basic form, diabetes is a chronic disease caused by the pancreas' inability to produce enough insulin to meet the body's needs.

There are two kinds of diabetes, type 1 and type 2. With type 1 diabetes, the pancreas doesn't make insulin. Type 1 diabetes is less common, with only 5-10% of people with diabetes having this form. It can start at any age but is often first diagnosed during childhood or teen years.

Type 2 diabetes can develop at any age but is more common in people older than 40.

Carol Ayers says she was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at around 58. She's spent the last 20 years learning how to control it. "I think the secret is keeping track of your blood glucose level; most people with diabetes don't do that often enough," said Ayers.

Ayers uses a constant glucose monitor (CGM). A CGM is a device that monitors your glucose levels 24 hours a day, so she must do fewer finger sticks to draw blood and check her glucose. "I think it's the biggest thing, and it's a modern miracle for me. I think if more people with diabetes had CGMS, we would get better compliance," said Ayers.

CGMs will monitor trends in your glucose level and tell you when you need to check your blood glucose levels manually.

Knowing your glucose levels allows you to make better decisions on what you eat. Eating poorly and not controlling your diabetes can cause various health problems such as heart disease, nerve damage, kidney, foot, eye, gum and other dental problems.

Ayers has firsthand experience with the problems diabetes can cause. Her mother had three strokes and a heart attack which Ayers says was due to controlling her diabetes poorly.

Ayers herself has neuropathy. Neuropathy is nerve damage caused by diabetes. Over time, high blood glucose levels and high levels of fats, such as triglycerides, in the blood from diabetes can damage your nerves.

Damage caused by neuropathy can lead to a loss of feeling in the part of the body with the damage. "I know people that have stepped on a piece of glass and didn't know it and nearly lost their whole foot over it," said Ayers.

Lee Ann Sherrill, RN, CDE with the Choctaw Nation, reinforces the seriousness of diabetes. "It affects the nerves of the whole body, can cause a heart attack, stroke, blindness, person to be on dialysis or lead to amputation," she said.

It doesn't have to be like that, though. Diabetes and prediabetes can both be diagnosed with an A1C test. A higher A1C

means your body isn't controlling your blood sugar as well as it should. A normal A1C level is below 5.7%, a level of 5.7% to 6.4% indicates prediabetes, and a level of 6.5% or more indicates diabetes. The good news is that high A1C numbers can be brought down.

And if you have prediabetes, it doesn't automatically mean you will develop type 2 diabetes. Some people with prediabetes can bring their A1C numbers to normal range.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), you can lower your A1C and risk of type 2 diabetes by losing 5% to 7% of your body weight, or 14 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds, and exercising moderately for 30 minutes daily. You don't have to run a marathon to see results. This activity can be taking a walk every day with the dog or even chair exercises if you're elderly. "It's small choices, small steps every day that help to control diabetes," said Sherrill.

Sherrill says you can start with 10-minute increments for people who never exercise. Do those three times a day, working up to your 30 minutes of physical activity. If all you can do is 10 minutes three times a day, Sherrill says don't stop; something is better than nothing.

Nutrition is also a big part of controlling diabetes. Pick foods that are high in fiber and low in fat and sugar. Build a plate that includes a balance of vegetables, protein, and carbohydrates. Drink water instead of sweetened drinks.

Controlling diabetes is a multi-pronged approach. Many people can get their diabetes under control with diet and exercise. For others medication may be required.

Ayers stresses that medicine is not a cure, "You just can't expect medicine to cover it; it's like putting a Band-Aid over a dirty wound. You're not attacking the problem itself, which is nutrition. It sounds very simplistic, but it is so complex," she said.

When faced with bad nutritional choices, Ayers asks herself a question, "I just think of it as poison. I say to myself, would I pick up this bottle of poison and drink it if I knew it was poison," she said.

Gradually switching to smaller portions is also a good way to reduce calories.

Ayers said that's not always easy to do. "You'd like to eat with family and friends, but everywhere we go, everybody's eating frybread, and they're having sweet tea," said Ayers.

According to Ayers, the social aspect is hard, but asking herself if she "wants that poison" helps.

Stopping diabetes before it becomes a problem is the best first step. In 2013 the Choctaw Nation started the Diabetes Prevention Program to help people at risk of diabetes. The one-year program is geared towards those with prediabetes or an A1C between 5.7% and 6.4%.

The program is designed around a group of people, or cohorts, that can work toward a common goal and support each other in lowering their A1C, body weight and increasing physical activity.

"Throughout the one-year program, each session is designed to build on the other and reinforce prevention through



the year," said Sherrill.

The program starts by discussing what type 2 diabetes is and why you want to prevent it. Then moves into counting fat grams, incorporating physical activity and even touches on some of the mental health aspects of prediabetes and diabetes.

For the first 16 weeks, cohorts meet once a week, either virtually or in person, then move into a monthly meeting.

"The first six months is the core part that gives us the tools to work with. Then the second six months are maintenance cohorts to help maintain this healthy lifestyle and reinforce the tools needed to continue to live a healthy lifestyle," said Sherrill.

Education is important for those diagnosed with diabetes to keep some common misconceptions at bay. Mary Ayn Tullier, RN, a Lifestyle Coach with the Choctaw Nation Diabetes Prevention Program, says she often hears misconceptions concerning diabetes. One of those is that the medication will take care of it.

"That's a really big misconception because it can still affect their organs, their body systems...even though they're on medication, it's not going to handle the whole cure of it," said Tullier.

Ayers has also seen this with other people with diabetes: "Some people think they can take some insulin and then go to eat that big piece of pie. That's not what they should be doing; they should be eating better," said Ayers.

Sherrill adds, "A lot of times we hear, well, I have a family history of diabetes. Mom, dad, grandma, aunts and uncles, they all have diabetes, so I'm just going to get it. It's inevitable that I will have it in my lifetime," she said.

Sherrill says this isn't true. "We know now, with the Diabetes Prevention Program, that it can be delayed or prevented. And the longer it's delayed in a person's lifetime, the less complications they're likely to develop," said Sherrill.

For more information on the Diabetes Prevention Program, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/dpp/>.

## CNHSA Behavioral Health holds Chalk the Walk Competition

By Courtney L. Akins, MS, LPC

During the initial outbreak of COVID, Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Suicide Prevention grants had to devise ways to provide outreach education messages without face-to-face contact and interaction.

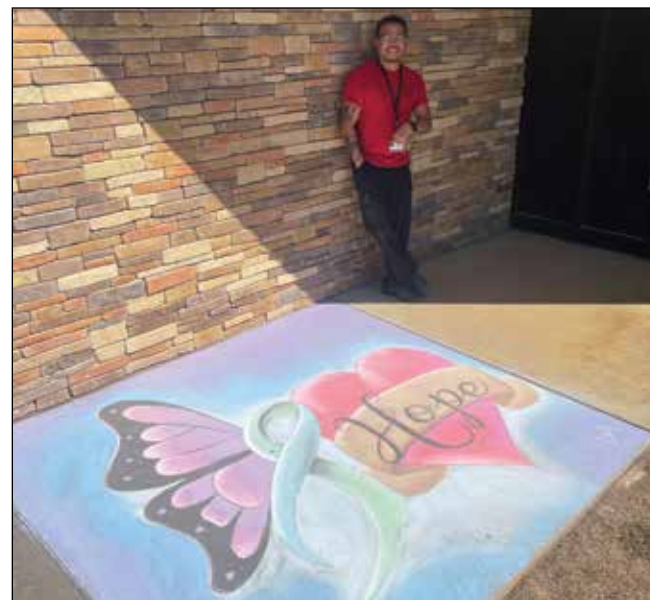
That is how Chalk the Walk came about, and it has become an annual event at the Choctaw Nation Health Services clinics and hospital. September was suicide prevention month, and to reduce the stigma around seeking mental health assistance and encourage others, this contest asked that everyone "Don't just talk the talk, Chalk the Walk".

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, suicide was the second leading cause of death for Native Americans aged 10-34 in 2019. Behavioral Health grants awarded through the Indian Health Services (IHS) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) raise awareness about mental health, suicide signs and symptoms and resources available through Choctaw Nation.

The Behavioral Health department has counselors at seven clinics, the Talihina hospital campus and integrated therapists that assist with needs throughout the medical clinics. For more information on services available, please call 918-567-7000.

The winners of this year's contest are:

- First Place: Poteau Clinic, Dustin Mathis
- Second Place: Talihina, Aiyana Hernandez, Calixta Guerrero and Charlea Jones
- Third Place: Chi Hullo Li, Clients



Dustin Mathis, an EVS worker at the Ruben White Clinic in Poteau, won first place in the Chalk the Walk contest. Mathis was so excited to participate in the project that he purchased extra chalk colors and even worked through his lunch hour.

## WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
<b>Antlers</b> 580-298-3161	Every Tuesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Atoka</b> 580-889-5825	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Battiest</b> 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Broken Bow</b> 580-584-2746	Monday - Friday (except 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Durant</b> 580-920-2100 ext 83852	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Heavener</b> 918-974-1820	Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Hugo</b> 580-326-9707	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Idabel</b> 580-286-2600 ext 4113	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>McAlester</b> 918-423-6335	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Poteau</b> 918-647-4585	Mon, Wed & Friday Tuesday & Thursday	8am - 4:30pm 8:30am - 5pm
<b>Smithville</b> 580-244-3289	2nd Thursday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Spiro</b> 918-962-3832	Thursday & Friday (3rd, 4th & 5th Wednesdays of the month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Stigler</b> 918-967-4211	Monday - Tuesday (the first two Wednesdays)	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Talihina</b> 918-567-7000 ext 6792	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Wilburton</b> 580-642-7588	Monday and Wednesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Mobile Van</b> 580-380-5679	Dates & times vary due to weather & travel (Service in Boswell, Coalgate and Clayton)	

Choctaw Nation Health Services

## Food Distribution Headlines

By Chase Ward

During this season, we crave comfort foods high in carbohydrates and sugar. However, we need to think about the difference between foods that satisfy us short-term versus foods that are healthy for us in the long run.

The good thing is there are healthy foods you can still enjoy, like sweet potatoes, turnips, winter squash, greens and brussel sprouts.

### Spinach

Spinach consumption may help reduce blood pressure levels, oxidative stress and benefit eye health.

Spinach is very low in calories.

Most of the carbohydrates in spinach are insoluble fiber, which aids in digestion.

Spinach is loaded with vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K1, folic acid, iron and calcium.

### Sweet Potatoes

Sweet potatoes are rich in nutrients such as fiber, vitamins and minerals and high in antioxidants, which help the body fight chronic illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and aging.

Sweet potatoes are also high in Vitamin A and beta-carotene which is good for vision, as well as rich in Vitamin C, which benefits our skin and hair and helps protect our immune system.

The complex carb that is high in fiber allows the feeling of fullness longer and sustained energy.

## Sugar-free baked apples

- 8 medium to large apples
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- ½ cup dried unsweetened fruit (cranberries, raisins or cherries)
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup 1% or fat free milk

### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Wash, core and slice apples.
3. In a large mixing bowl combine the oats, nuts, dried fruit, cinnamon, vanilla, salt, butter and 3 tablespoons water.
4. Mix together, pressing the butter into the oats until it becomes sticky.
5. Put apples in a deep baking dish and pour one cup of water in the pan.
6. Liberally spoon the filling on top of the apples. Cover the pan with foil. Bake for approximately one hour, or until fork tender.
7. Serve warm and top with low fat vanilla ice-cream or vanilla yogurt.



### FLU VACCINE CLINICS

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	CITY
10/20/2022	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION COMMUNITY CENTER	POTEAU
10/20/2022	1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION INDEPENDENT ELDER HOUSING	HUGO
10/20/2022	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION COMMUNITY CENTER	SMITHVILLE
10/20/2022	1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION INDEPENDENT ELDER HOUSING	SMITHVILLE
10/20/2022	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION COMMUNITY CENTER	WRIGHT CITY
10/20/2022	10:00 AM - 12:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION COMMUNITY CENTER	HUGO
10/20/2022	1:00 PM - 3:00 PM	CHOCTAW NATION INDEPENDENT ELDER HOUSING	HUGO

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

### CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

MARKET HOURS

Open 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

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

*Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.*

**November 2022**

All markets open weekdays, November 1-28  
**Closed:** November 24, 25, 29 and 30.  
 Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation  
 Participants can request a calendar at their location.

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443  
*Food demo November 3*

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
*Food demo November 10*

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
*Food demo November 15*

**MCALISTER** 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716  
*Food demo November 17*

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
*Food demo November 22*

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

## Smith breaks three world records in the sport of powerlifting

By Christian Chaney

Wesley Smith, a 52-year-old Howe, Texas resident and Choctaw tribal member, recently broke three world records in powerlifting.

In 2010, he was introduced to powerlifting by a man he met at his local gym, which changed his life forever. Little did he know that 12 years later, he would set three world records in the sport.

Smith began lifting at age 14 after his parents bought him a small weight set. He always had the desire to get bigger and stronger. Smith remained active and continued to work out during his teen years. Between the ages of 19 and 21, he competed in the AAU Bodybuilding Contest. Smith's love for competing and fitness grew, but as he started a family, he had to take a break from his passion.

Smith is happily married and the father of three girls. He graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice. Smith served as a Probation and Correctional Officer for 25 years before joining the Choctaw Nation in September 2021 as a Juvenile Coordinator.

He worked two jobs to support his family and did not have a gym membership during this time. Smith wanted to remain in shape, so he worked on his relative's farm, lifting anything he could find. He used makeshift weights, like concrete slabs and trailers, to help him maintain his strength. Smith eventually rejoined a gym and was introduced to powerlifting at age 40.

Smith researched the sport for two years before his first competition at age 42. He won his division in the 2012 Dallas Fair Park Meet, and there was no turning back.

"I was just kinda hooked," said Smith.

He began competing in meets across the United States. In October 2019, Smith competed in the WPA World Cup in Bremerton, Wash. He was up

against many countries and countless competitors but won the 45-49 Master's Division, deadlifting 622.81 lbs. July 9, 2022, Smith competed in Clash of the Iron Warriors in Blue Springs, Missouri. He set three world records in the 50-54 super heavyweight division. He broke the original squat record of 600 lbs., squatting 628.32 lbs. The second record Smith set was the deadlift category, originally 600 lbs., lifting 644.85 lbs. The final record Smith set was a total weight lifted, originally 1540 lbs., surpassing that with a total of 1670 lbs. lifted. When asked where his strength comes from, Smith says it comes from his Native American roots.

Smith shared that this is not an easy lifestyle. "You have to devote your life to it," he said. According to Smith, you must be highly dedicated to compete at this level.

When he is training, there are no vacations because you cannot miss a workout. Smith is in the gym at least three days a week for two-and-a-half hours each session. He follows a strict diet when he is not in the gym, eating rice, potatoes, chicken, beef or pork six times a day. Occasionally, he would wake up in the middle of the night to make a protein shake to reach his daily goal. Smith says it is crucial to get plenty of sleep and allow your body time to heal after lifting this kind of weight, giving yourself one to two days rest after each session.

When asked how he stays motivated and disciplined, Smith said, "You just become addicted."

He sets goals and surrounds himself with people who are also working towards a goal. He looks at the world records and focuses solely on breaking them. Smith lifts heavy four to five days before his competition, then gives himself two to three days to rest and mentally prepare for the meet. He admits he does get nervous, but once he is at the competition surrounded by people who are ready to give it their all, he locks in.



Photo Provided

Choctaw tribal member and employee, Wesley Smith recently broke three powerlifting world records.

"You have to block everything out, any kind of stress or distraction," said Smith.

According to Smith, one of the most important things to remember when competing is to stay positive.

"Your mind is stronger than your body, so once you start doubting yourself, it mentally affects your ability to do it," Smith said.

Smith shared that one of the most common misconceptions about getting into this sport is that you must be at a particular strength level to compete. However, he said just getting out there and competing is so beneficial, as it serves as not only an experience but an educational opportunity.

"Don't doubt yourself. Everybody starts somewhere. Find a local meet and just compete. You are going to find out that you are a lot stronger than you think you are," said Smith.

You can find more about Wesley Smith's powerlifting journey and training history on his YouTube channel, Yetti Strength.

## Wroblewski named Bureau of Diplomatic Security deputy assistant secretary and assistant director of diplomatic security service domestic operations

By Chris Jennings

Andrew Wroblewski was named deputy assistant secretary and assistant director of the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) for domestic operations on October 3, 2022.

As deputy assistant secretary and assistant director for domestic operations, Wroblewski is responsible for all DSS protective operations, counterintelligence, criminal investigations, domestic facility protection, and operations at all DSS Field and Resident Offices throughout the United States. He also serves as the interagency chair of the International Security Event Group – coordinating all U.S. security and law enforcement planning for major overseas events such as the Olympic Games.

Wroblewski didn't grow up close to his Choctaw roots, and it wasn't until his mid 20's that he started researching his Choctaw heritage. The information wasn't easy to come by. Wroblewski started with his grandmother. "I talked to her, and she actually wouldn't tell me anything. She had passed for white her whole life, and that's how she wanted to be seen. Her sister, however, was the one who turned me on to it and was telling me family stories and everything else," said Wroblewski.

During his research, he found that his grandmother didn't have a birth certificate, but she did have a passport, so he filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to begin the process of getting a delayed birth certificate for his grandmother so that he could complete his citizenship paperwork. Now he and his children are all registered tribal members.

Wroblewski has proudly served his country all over the world as a DSS agent and a Choctaw tribal member. He said that working for the DSS has been an extremely rewarding career.

"We're the law enforcement and security arm at the State Department. Our closest counterpart that [most] people have heard of is the U.S. Secret Service," said Wroblewski.

Wroblewski said that while most people assume the motorcades they see in Washington D.C are the Secret Service, it's most likely DSS. "Everybody just assumes that's secret service because we have the black Suburbans, little wireless earpiece and everything else," said Wroblewski.

While the Secret Service is tasked with protecting heads of state, investigating credit card fraud and

counterfeit money, the DSS is charged with safeguarding embassies, diplomats and other Americans overseas, as well as investigating fraudulent passports and visas, serving as a front line to those trying to enter the country illegally.

"Basically, at every Embassy and Consulate in the world, there will be at least one, if not multiple Diplomatic Security Service Special Agents assigned to liaise with the host government and then to ensure our embassy or consulate and other diplomatic facility are protected," said Wroblewski.

Before being named deputy assistant secretary and assistant director of DSS, Wroblewski was the special agent in charge of the Washington Field Office. His responsibilities included establishing criminal investigative priorities in the national capital region and DSS resident offices in adjacent states. He also provided support for the DSS's broader mission of protecting foreign dignitaries and U.S. diplomats both domestically and abroad.

Wroblewski started working with DSS in 1998 and has since served in various overseas assignments focusing on counterintelligence, counterterrorism, criminal investigation, and technical security programs in Ankara, Turkey; New Delhi, India; Asmara, Eritrea; and Nassau, Bahamas.

Before returning to the United States, Wroblewski was the minister-counselor for Diplomatic Security for the U.S. Mission to China. As the senior U.S. law enforcement representative in China, Wroblewski served as the principal advisor to the ambassador on all security issues. He also led all DSS counterintelligence, counterterrorism, criminal investigations and technical security programs.

Wroblewski always says that whatever his last post was is his favorite, but he does have a couple that stand out. He assisted with evacuating Americans from Wuhan, China, as COVID spread. "I helped coordinate that as part of our protection of Americans overseas; it was one of the largest evacuations that the State Department's done," said Wroblewski.

In 2013, he was named the Diplomatic Security employee of the year. "That was because we had a suicide bomber walk into the embassy outer perimeter where we do our guard screening and blew himself up," said Wroblewski. Because of the programs and procedures Wroblewski put into place, he wasn't able to access the compound and do more damage.



Photo Provided

Andrew Wroblewski was recently named deputy assistant secretary and assistant director of the U.S. Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) for domestic operations.

Wroblewski was most recently awarded the Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Executive, an award that's given to no more than 5% of the career members of the Senior Executive Service.

Growing up in Kansas, Wroblewski always wanted to work in federal law enforcement; he briefly considered becoming an English teacher but is glad he ultimately landed with DSS. Wroblewski encourages anybody considering a career in law enforcement to look into DSS.

"You get to be a federal agent; you get to live and work overseas; the government sends you to learn foreign languages and you get paid while you're doing it. I've spent a year learning Turkish and another year learning Chinese. You learn the language and then you go work in the country for three or four years. [You] see the world, get paid for it and get well taken care of," said Wroblewski.

For more information on DSS, go to <https://careers.state.gov/career-paths/worldwide-foreign-service/specialist/law-enforcement-and-security/diplomatic-security-special-agent/>.

## National FFA Organization names Eastern's Victory American Star finalist

**WILBURTON, Okla.** – Eastern Oklahoma State College sophomore Emma Victory was recently named one of four National FFA American Star finalists in the area of agricultural placement. Her beef production supervised agricultural experience consists of working for Victory Farms, located in rural Ninnekah, Okla. In addition to raising commercial cattle, the operation also raises seedstock bulls and replacement heifers for other producers to incorporate into their herds.

Victory became a paid employee in 2017 during her freshman year of high school. She began with fairly simple responsibilities that included feeding stocker calves, assisting chute-side during all workings and other basic animal husbandry needs. Now, Victory performs and assists in more complex tasks such as making breeding decisions, as well

as artificially inseminating cattle. She has learned to evaluate and read Igenity beef genomics and expected progeny differences to improve the genetic quality of the herd in order to meet production goals at Victory Farms. She oversees all the marketing at Victory Farms, including taking photos, videos, and making advertisements for bulls and heifers for sale. Additionally, she oversees all marketing of steers that are sold for beef processing by the half and quarter. A sophomore pre-veterinary and agricultural communications double major, Victory is also working to complete a certificate in ranch management. She is the Eastern Student Government Association vice president, and an Ag Ambassador. She is also an officer for Eastern's Aggie Club and Phi Theta Kappa, and is an integral part of the Eastern meats judging team. After graduating from Eastern in the



Photo Provided

Emily Victory was recently named an Future Farmers of America American Star finalist.

spring of 2023, she plans to continue her education at Oklahoma State University and eventually attend veterinary school. Victory continues her work with Victory Farms and plans to transition from being an employee to eventually becoming an owner once she completes veterinary school. The results for American Star in Agricultural Placement will be announced at the 95th Annual National FFA Convention to be held in Indianapolis on October 28, 2022.



## UPDATE REQUIRED FOR SOONERCARE CASES

The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority will soon require all SoonerCare recipients to update their information to continue coverage. Contact a Patient Benefit Coordinator at your local Choctaw Nation Health Clinic to update your information to avoid termination or lapse in coverage.

**Choctaw Nation** Health Services

## Cavin’s artwork on display at Oklahoma Capitol

By Christian Toews

Dylan Cavin stands with his arms crossed, looking at his artwork on the wall. “I think my favorite thing about this piece is how detailed the clothing turned out,” said Cavin.

Cavin’s painting “Anumpa Luma Anumpuli” hangs outside the Supreme court’s chambers in the Oklahoma Capitol Building. This painting is part of almost 20 newly commissioned monumental and life-sized works displayed for the first time in the Oklahoma Capitol Building.

According to the Oklahoma Arts Council, these new empowerments are part of more than 500 works of art that are finally returning to the Oklahoma State Capitol after nearly six years in storage.

Most of the new works were made possible through the Oklahoma Art in Public Places Act, which requires the state to invest 1.5% of eligible capital improvement project budgets in public art. The Oklahoma Arts Council manages state public art commissions.

Cavin is a Choctaw tribal member and was born in Chickasha, Oklahoma. He said that his heritage holds a special place in his heart. Cavin attended the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma on an Art Talent scholarship. It was here that he found his passion for painting and figure drawing. He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree emphasizing graphic design.

Cavin said he began working in design and had designed several successful pet products but felt unfulfilled. He was in a bad relationship and went through a divorce, then decided to join the Army.

“I was just burnt out doing design work, and I just wanted something else,” he said.

Cavin joined the Army, and about nine weeks into the Army, he broke his hip and had to go through a rehabilitation process. He said he spent six months in rehab to get back to one hundred percent. Finally, after those six months, the Army decided to discharge Cavin medically.

At this point, Cavin said he had some time on his hands, which is when he rediscovered his love for creating art. “I just kind of relaxed and got back into watercolors and started drawing and painting again,” he said. Cavin began working at a sign shop designing and laying out signs and banners and storefront signs. He said that his job allowed him to have time to paint on nights and weekends while still working at something he enjoyed.

He said after he began to paint again, he quickly received two offers from two galleries and sold some artwork in 2007. One of these galleries encouraged him to pursue his heritage and paint some historical portraits. He completely sold out at his first show at this native-owned gallery. “I began showing work at Standing Buffalo gallery in Norman, but it closed its doors after a few years. Since then, I have shown at Tribes Gallery in Norman, which I’ve shown at the longest,” he said.

Cavin has many works that were commissioned and displayed inside the Choctaw Casino and Resort in Durant, Oklahoma. He’s won numerous awards over the years from shows such as Santa Fe Indian Art Market, Red Earth Arts Festival, Cahokia Mounds Art Show, SEASAM and Choctaw Labor Day Art Show.

He was featured on the cover of Oklahoma Today in both 2012 and 2016. He has been featured in articles in publications, including Native Arts Magazine, Fine Arts Connoisseur and Southwest Arts Magazine.

Cavin said it was very flattering to have his artwork displayed in the capital. He said it was also an honor to work on this particular piece as an Army veteran and a Choctaw.

“It really wasn’t until I got into the art world and until I started exploring native art and being a Choctaw artist that I began to explore more sides of my heritage, and this code talkers piece is a great honor for me to develop, and I hope it brings more awareness to the code talkers and their legacy,” said Cavin.



Photos by Christian Toews

Pictured is Dylan Cavin’s painting “Anumpa Luma Anumpuli,” hanging outside the Supreme court’s chambers in the Oklahoma Capitol Building.



Dylan Cavin is an accomplished Choctaw artist who’s artwork is currently on display at the Oklahoma Capitol Building.

## Hoshont’omba shows her culture on the runway

By Shelia Kirven

Twenty-six-year-old Bridgette Hoshont’omba is making a name for herself in design and modeling.

Hoshont’omba recently modeled for the Teton Trade Cloth Fashion Summit at the First Americans Museum (FAM) in Oklahoma City and a recent Inter-Tribal Council fashion show. The creator of Issitohbi Designs, she is also a print, accessory, and beadwork artist.

Her designs will debut at this month’s Oklahoma 4 Directions MMIP Conference in Lawton for their Red Gala & Fashion Show.

She is also involved in Matriarch, promoting the social welfare of Native women through a cooperative learning experience called Creative Indigenous Challenge. She works with NOISE (Northeastern Oklahoma Indigenous Safety and Education) to design missing person flyers and creates social media content on a volunteer basis. Hoshont’omba is also a student of Fashion Design Essentials at Parsons Fashion School.

A resident of Shawnee, Oklahoma, she describes herself as a proud woman from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma who wants to represent her people through a modern lens. She hopes to continue learning new skills, grow her audience, and create Choctaw learning materials for small children. “While I design and model because I love doing it, I also want to do work that means something.”

When asked what advice she would give Choctaw youth who want a future in the arts, she said, “Just go for it. You’ve got this. I know it sounds cliché, and as a youth, I absolutely hated it when people would tell me things like that because I wanted to know in-depth, how. But now that I’m older I get it.” She continued, “We all start somewhere. We all work on different timelines. Social media is a great place for sharing what you’re doing and getting advice from your peers, especially the groups on Facebook. DeviantArt is wonderful as well. Reddit has forums for just about everything.” She encourages readers to reach out to people they admire. She said, “Not everyone will reply, and sometimes you might get a dismissive response from someone you really admire; but there is no shortage of kind people out there in the niche you create art in. You just have to find them.”

Hoshont’omba stressed, “Really, I just want to show the youth that they can do what I’m doing because when I was younger, I needed someone like me to show me I could do these things; now I can be that for someone else.”

Issitohbi Designs can be found on Instagram at @issitohbi, on Facebook or at www.issitohbi.com.



Photos by Christian Toews

Bridgette Hoshont’omba recently modeled for the Teton Trade Cloth Fashion Summit at the First Americans Museum.

## Choctaw Nation hosts all Indigenous fashion show during the October Inter-Tribal Meeting

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma hosted a Native American fashion show for the first time on October 6, 2022.

The event occurred during the Thursday night banquet as part of the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes.

The fashion show featured pieces from two Oklahoma-based designers, Jessica Moore Harjo, Ph.D., with Weomepe Designs and Isabella Aiuikli Cornell with Aiuikli Designs.

During the show, models walked a runway that extended into the banquet tables where guests could view the designs. There were about 30 models between both designers.

Cornell is a Choctaw artist, scholar and advocate. She is the firstborn daughter of Sarah Adams and the granddaughter of Tami Adams. Her business is Aiuikli Designs, where she indigenizes wearable art for the modern warrior woman. Cornell specializes in ribbon skirts, beadwork and dentalium jewelry. She has been beading since she was 13 and sewing since she was 16. Her mother and grandmother taught her. Her art has been featured in various fashion shows, including the grand opening of the First Americans Museum a year ago. Cornell’s work has also been featured in Vogue.

Harjo is the founder and owner of Weomepe Designs, a small business that provides graphic design services and operates as an online design shop with jewelry, wearable art and other creative design products. Weomepe Designs has products in various museums, shops, and centers across Oklahoma. Jessica was a featured designer in the 2021 First Americans Museum Grand Opening, the 2021 Winter Art Market (FAM-WHAM) Fashion Show, and the Teton Fashion Summit in June 2022.

To learn more about these designers and their work, please visit www.weomepedesigns.com and Aiuikli Designs on Instagram.



Photos by Christian Toews

Isabella Aiuikli Cornell waves at the end of her portion of the fashion show, where items from her brand, Aiuikli Designs, were modeled.



Danielle Campbell walks the runway during the Native American fashion show.

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## Historian receives prestigious award for first book

By Shelia Kirven

A.S. Dillingham has been awarded the American Society for Ethnohistory's best book prize for 2022 for his book, *Oaxaca Resurgent: Indigeneity, Development, and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2021).

Dillingham, a Choctaw tribal member, is a historian and assistant professor in the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University. His research focuses on the histories of Native peoples of the Americas.

According to his website, Dillingham focused his book on the intersection of anticolonial politics and education and development policy, and labor and youth-led social movements.

Dillingham was in southern Mexico in 2006 during a time when a teacher's strike was met with violent repression and outrage, and the governor was asked to resign. He said, "As a historian, one way we try to understand current issues is by looking at the past and what led up to that." He looked at the twentieth century, paying attention to bilingual teachers and telling the story of how teachers fought for education that respects Native culture and tradition and valorizes Native languages. He says this is an issue that Native people face across the Americas in preserving culture, language and customs and that there are parallels between the language used in Oklahoma by Native American tribes and the older generations who try to preserve the language. "It is a really important issue," he said.

Dillingham was born in Bloomington, Illinois; his mother was from central Illinois, and his father was from Oklahoma. His Choctaw grandfather, John Dillingham, left home to work as a welder in Corpus Christi, Texas, and served as a minister. "He wasn't raised by his biological father and his mother died when he was young," Dillingham said this elder became interested in family history and Choctaw in part because he had lost that connection. "He was really influential to me, and he was someone, in part because of his training as a minister and as a chaplain, [who] was a really good listener and would listen to me and also ask me questions. He would have us think about our family history and think about U.S. history from a bit of a different perspective,

U.S. history from a Choctaw perspective, a Native American perspective. That was really important for me when I started studying history in college."

During high school at age 16, Dillingham spent a summer in Mexico through a student program, immersing himself in the culture and language and living with a Mexican family with children his age. He said growing up in a small town and seeing Mexico City was a big deal to him. He was there during the 1990s during an Indigenous rebellion in Southern Mexico of Mayan activists and rebels, which he says was all over the news. He said it sparked his interest in Native and Indigenous politics in Mexico and the United States. "That was the key moment for me in terms of getting hooked on Mexican studies," Dillingham. He returned to Mexico for subsequent summers and applied for fellowships putting him there for longer stretches of time.

Dillingham completed his Ph.D. in history in 2012 at the University of Maryland.

He taught at Springhill College in Mobile, Alabama, and Albright in Redding, Pennsylvania, before settling at Arizona State University. "The reason why I accepted the job here is because Arizona State is trying to deliberately grow their Native American and Indigenous history course offerings."

Dillingham is working on a second book, a transnational analysis of land, labor and development initiatives in North American "frontier" settlements that focuses on Native peoples across the Americas who have confronted similar and parallel issues. It will examine racialized conflicts over twentieth-century land reform, policies of Native resettlement and the multiple legacies of slavery. He intends to focus on how Native American history in Oklahoma is connected to African American history and would like to study them together. "Rather than studying different groups in isolation, what can we learn if we look at Native peoples together?"

"One parallel between my research on Native youth in Mexico in the 1960s and Choctaw history is of course the Choctaw Youth Movement, which fought against termination and involved Choctaw youth in Oklahoma City and other places. The connection is really that Native youth in Mexico and the United States were engaged in growing political activism and cultural resurgence during this period. This is also the period where one sees the growth of groups



Photo Provided  
A.S. Dillingham has been awarded the American Society for Ethnohistory's best book prize for 2022.

like the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the U.S."

Dillingham plans to visit archival collections, research in Oklahoma with the Choctaw tribe and at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and do oral interviews on Mexico's Pacific coast. He also plans to utilize existing recorded histories and information.

After working on his second book, Dillingham said he looks forward to continuing to mentor students, which is an integral part of his work. He would also like to work on writing his family's history that connects with the history of the Choctaw Nation and its removal to Indian territory and his family's veterans. His wife Frida, whom he met in southern Mexico while researching his book, also comes from an Indigenous family on both sides. He plans to record her family history as well.

Readers can follow A.S. Dillingham on his website, [www.alanshandedillingham.com](http://www.alanshandedillingham.com) or Twitter.

*Oaxaca Resurgent: Indigeneity, Development, and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2021) can be purchased from Stanford University Press, Amazon or any online bookseller.

## A Long road home: NAGPRA efforts facilitate return of cultural objects to Choctaw Nation

By Kellie Matherly

For centuries, the graves of Indigenous people have been subjected to questionable collection methods, looting and other disruptive practices. Thankfully, however, the tide seems to be turning away from the colonialist attitudes of the past toward a future where tribes and federally-funded institutions work together to return tribal ancestors and their belongings to their rightful owners.

In 1990, Congress signed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, into law. NAGPRA requires certain institutions to repatriate or transfer human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and objects of cultural patrimony to lineal descendants, Native American tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and Native Hawaiian organizations. Federal agencies, museums, universities, state agencies, local governments and any other institution that receives federal funding are bound to comply with the law.

One of the catalysts for the establishment of NAGPRA was the excavation of a cemetery where people from various ethnic groups were buried. Most of the remains were exhumed and ultimately reburied, but many of the Native American remains were placed in a collection and never reburied.

"It's because of that different standard that NAGPRA was ultimately created," said Dr. Ian Thompson, Senior Director of Historic Preservation for the Choctaw Nation.

For the past 32 years, tribes and Indigenous organizations across the United States have worked to reclaim important cultural objects and bring the bodies of their ancestors home for reburial, but the road home has not always been a smooth one.

According to Tribal Chaplain and Choctaw elder Olin Williams, "NAGPRA opened our eyes to what history did to our people."

In the beginning, it was common for objects or human remains to be labeled "culturally unidentifiable," meaning they could not be linked to a specific Native culture and therefore could not be returned. In addition, communication and collaboration between tribes and the institutions housing these artifacts and remains could be inconsistent or downright nonexistent.

Changes are on the horizon for NAGPRA, though. Lawmakers have acknowledged an imbalance of power in the original law that made repatriation more difficult for tribal nations. Revisions to timelines and communication policies will require institutions to work more closely with tribes in the future.

The Choctaw Nation's NAGPRA efforts are coordinated through the office of the NAGPRA Liaison and the No Stone Unturned project. Established in 2018, the No Stone Unturned project set out to locate and repatriate any Choctaw objects or human remains located in institutions across the United States.

Deanna Byrd is the NAGPRA Liaison for the Choctaw Nation's Historical Preservation Department. A large part of her job is to build relationships with institutions that may house Choctaw items. These relationships encourage open dialogue and collaboration on NAGPRA cases and to help institutions understand items in their collections that do not fall under the NAGPRA umbrella.

According to Byrd, NAGPRA was "essentially legislation that opened up conversations that Native American communities were never able to have before, so that we could understand exactly where our ancestors are."

During Phase 1 of No Stone Unturned, Byrd went state by state, contacting every federally-funded institution to set up consultations and do research into any Choctaw holdings the institutions may have. As of publication, she has completed all but six states and established hundreds of relationships over the past few years. Currently, Byrd is working with 66 institutions through the

NAGPRA process.

Many of the items returned to the Choctaw Nation are related to human remains and funerary objects, but some artifacts fall into the categories of sacred objects or objects of cultural patrimony. Recently, the NAGPRA committee worked with the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa to transfer ownership of the pipe Chief Greenwood LeFlore smoked at the signing of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek in 1830 to the Choctaw Nation permanently. The pipe is considered an object of cultural patrimony, meaning it cannot be separated from the tribe as a whole.

The No Stone Unturned project has also led to the development of a Care and Trust Agreement document specific to the Choctaw Nation. This document, which is an important exercise in tribal sovereignty, identifies protocols and policies dealing with the treatment of Choctaw human remains that align with traditional spiritual and burial practices.

"It's heavy work," said Byrd in a blog post from October 2022. She added that it is easy to get caught up in the passion of the project and forget that this is multi-generational work that will not be completed in our lifetime, or even our children's lifetime.

Choctaw elder and tribal traditionalist Les Williston said, "The process itself is meticulous; it's mind boggling. There's roadblocks; there's papers with i's to dot and all of that stuff."

The time commitment is only one facet of NAGPRA work. The mental, emotional and spiritual impact of repatriation is also significant.

Williston commented on the devastating effects of disturbing the graves of Choctaw ancestors: "As our ancestors lay in rest, they got their bones disturbed. Their earthly remains are not being respected, not being left to rest."

Initially, the reburial process raised some important questions. Since the dead were never meant to be disturbed, the Choctaw people had no traditional ceremony for reburial.

"It wasn't something we thought we were going to have to do. I mean, who grows up thinking that they're going to have to rebury their grandma?" said Misty Madbull, Program Manager for the Historic Preservation Department.

The solution was to leave the matter to the traditional religious leaders who were conducting the burials. A NAGPRA advisory board made up of Oklahoma Choctaw elders, spiritual leaders and cultural experts has been in place since 2009 to guide the Historic Preservation Department on NAGPRA cases and to ensure Choctaw human remains and artifacts are handled properly.

In describing what it felt like to be part of the reburial process, Williston said, "I didn't know when I climbed into that grave what it was going to feel like to take these bones of our ancestors and put them in the grave, one by one. When you get them handed to you and you pick them up, you feel that energy."

The weight of the situation was certainly not lost on Williston. "I broke down. I couldn't help it. I couldn't stop it," he said. "It was a powerful time, and I'll never forget it."

One goal of the Choctaw Nation's NAGPRA effort is to bring peace to Choctaw ancestors by returning them to their original burial sites with their funerary objects in place, but this goal sometimes presents a daunting challenge.

"Our sacred objects were taken out of our sacred sites and held in institutions," said Williams. Funerary objects were often separated from the people when graves were excavated, and while some can be returned, others have gone missing.

Going through an inventory is a profound experience for Byrd and Madbull, and they are grateful to have each other to lean on during the process.



Photo by Christian Toews  
The pipe Chief Greenwood LeFlore smoked at the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek is on display now at the Choctaw Cultural Center.

"It's something that I don't think you could do alone," said Madbull. "We sit, we talk, we cry and then we pray. Really just to let the ancestors know that we're trying our best, and we're going to do our best to help them have peace."

Byrd added, "Praying with Misty in the repositories with our ancestors and keeping our promise to bring them home, that's the best part of our work."

There is still a lot of work to be done on the NAGPRA front for the Choctaw Nation, but Dr. Thompson recognizes that there has been significant progress as well, including coalitions between tribes and the repatriation of many ancestors for reburial.

Byrd also acknowledges the efforts of those who work for the institutions that have housed these items. She noted that "those on the other end of the telephone and email correspondence come to the conversation with deep sadness for the past, willingness to work with the tribes and the passion to move forward with consultation leading to repatriation." She is encouraged to see the changing attitudes toward NAGPRA work and that institutions are willing to work on new policies that help ensure nothing like this ever happens again.

The Choctaw people have always placed great emphasis on the care of loved ones, even after they have passed away. Byrd mentioned

that people are constantly asking what they can do to help the NAGPRA efforts at the Choctaw Nation. While the reburial ceremonies are closed to the public to protect the dignity of the ancestors and honor the sacred nature of the ceremony, there is one simple, yet powerful thing people can do.

"Pray," says Byrd. "Pray for the process. Pray for the ancestors that they will be at peace."

For more information on NAGPRA and the efforts to repatriate Choctaw remains and cultural objects, see the NAGPRA: No Stone Unturned video on YouTube or visit the U.S. Bureau of Land Management at [blm.gov/NAGPRA](http://blm.gov/NAGPRA).

Another resource is the NAGPRA Community of Practice, whose mission is "to share experiences, concerns, and successes to decrease misunderstanding and hesitancy and to foster relationships and healing." This group hosts video calls on the second and fourth Fridays of each month to share developments and create connections among practitioners. Learn more about this organization at [nagpracommunityofpractice.com](http://nagpracommunityofpractice.com).

The Choctaw Cultural Center also hosts the online database Chahta Imponna at [hinahanta.choctawnation.com](http://hinahanta.choctawnation.com), where visitors can browse through cultural collections and see photos of non-funerary cultural items.

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## Interior Department takes next steps to update Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

**WASHINGTON (October 13, 2022)** — Following extensive Tribal consultation and review, the Department of the Interior today announced that proposed revisions to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act's (NAGPRA) regulations are now available for public comment.

NAGPRA regulations provide a systematic process for returning human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony to Native American and Alaska Native Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations. The proposed changes would streamline requirements for museums and federal agencies to inventory and identify human remains and cultural items in their collections.

"The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is an important law that helps us heal from some of the more painful times in our past by empowering Tribes to protect what is sacred to them. These changes to the Department's NAGPRA regulations are long overdue and will strengthen our ability to enforce the law and help Tribes in the return of ancestors and sacred cultural objects," said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland.

"Repatriation is a sacred responsibility for many Indigenous communities. After consulting with Tribal Nations across the United States, the National Park Service welcomes additional input on improvements to the NAGPRA regulations," said National Park Service Director Chuck Sams. "We hope these changes will make it easier for proper repatriation and reburial of Indigenous ancestors and cultural items."

The Department of the Interior consulted with 71 Tribes and Native Hawaiian



organizations on the draft proposal and received more than 700 specific comments. Key feedback from these consultations is now reflected in the updated proposed revisions, including:

- Strengthening the authority and role of Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations in the repatriation process

- Addressing barriers to timely and successful disposition and repatriation

- Documenting and addressing requests of Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations when human remains or cultural items are discovered on federal or Tribal lands before items are further disturbed, and increasing transparency and reporting of holdings or collections.

Enacted in 1990, NAGPRA requires museums and federal agencies to identify Native American human remains, funerary items, and objects of cultural significance in their collections and collaborate with Tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations to repatriate them.

The public can comment on the proposed rule until Jan. 12, 2023, at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

Visit the National Park Service's NAGPRA website for more information.

## CNO breaks ground on new Wellness Center

**WRIGHT CITY, Okla. (September 29, 2022)** – The Choctaw Nation held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Wellness Center in Wright City, Okla. The 10,000-square-foot facility will include cardio equipment, free weights, a half-court basketball gym and a multi-purpose classroom. A walking track will be outside the facility.

"We as Choctaw people stand on the shoulders of our ancestors," says Thomas Williston, Tribal Council Member and Speaker. "It's nice to see our elders and our children both celebrating this new facility."

"Being able to offer these services to the Wright City community is progress towards our mission to bring health and wellness to all the Choctaw Nation Tribal Members," says Chase Henson, Wellness Director.

Wellness Center membership is available to Choctaw tribal members, Choctaw Nation associates/employees, CDIB card-



Photo by Kelsey Brown

Several elders, health leaders, Wright City leaders and children from the Choctaw Nation Head Start – Wright City stand with Chief, Assistant Chief and Tribal Council as the dirt is turned ceremonially.

holders of a federally recognized tribe, and their spouses and dependents up to age 26. Military and their spouses and dependents up to age 26 are also eligible.

The new Wellness Center will be the 14th for Choctaw Nation and is anticipated to open in April 2023. For more information on Choctaw Nation Wellness Centers and eligibility, visit the Wellness Center's webpage.

## FAFSA now available to Oklahoma students

**OKLAHOMA CITY, (October 4, 2022)** – Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is your gateway to access federal financial aid, including grants, scholarships, and work-study programs. If you are a high school senior or college student, it is important to submit your 2023-24 FAFSA as soon as possible.

The FAFSA is used to determine how much financial aid you may be able to receive to help pay for college. A completed FAFSA is also required for some state aid, including the Oklahoma's Promise scholarship and the Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant program. Many students underestimate their financial need or assume they won't qualify for financial aid, but every student should complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after Oct. 1 of their senior year of high school and every subsequent year that financial aid will be needed during college.

"We encourage high school seniors and our current college students to complete the new FAFSA as soon as it becomes available, as some types of state and federal financial aid are awarded to eligible students on a first-come, first-served basis," said Chancellor Allison D. Garrett. "Students who complete the FAFSA have access to numerous state and federal scholarships, grants, and work-study programs."

You can complete the 2023-24 FAFSA online at [StudentAid.gov](http://StudentAid.gov). The online FAFSA features skip-logic technology that eliminates irrelevant questions based on your previous answers, and you can choose to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, which will automatically transfer your 2021 tax return information to your FAFSA.

To complete and submit the FAFSA online, students and one parent will each need to create a Federal Student Aid ID, which serves as your electronic signature on the FAFSA and certain student loan applications and allows you to access other federal student aid websites. It is beneficial for families to create FSA IDs before starting the FAFSA to speed up the application process. The U.S. Department of Education estimates the form will take most families less than one hour to complete.

Campus financial aid offices can confirm school-specific deadlines and provide assistance to families during the application process. There is no charge to complete or submit the FAFSA, so you should be wary of organizations that charge a fee for these services.

The Oklahoma College Assistance Program (OCAP), an operating division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, offers free FAFSA materials, tools and workshops to support school- and campus-based FAFSA education for families across the state. For more information about the FAFSA process and to access free educational resources, including tutorial videos in English and Spanish, visit OCAP's FAFSA completion website, [startwithfafsa.org](http://startwithfafsa.org).

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As Choctaw people, celebrating and living out our culture is something we do every day. But every November, we plan many extra special events. Please join us to enjoy some of the best cultural experiences that Choctaw Nation has to offer.

Point your phone camera at the QR code and tap the pop up to learn more!

**Choctaw Nation Cultural Services**

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2022

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