



Photos by Chris Jennings

December 2022 Issue

Weylin Thompson and his wife, Sharon, set up the drum for the drum circle recovery group at the Choctaw Nation headquarters. The recovery group meets at several locations throughout the Nation, with Antlers and Durant being open to everybody regardless of tribal affiliation.

## Drum circle recovery group gives culture-based option for everyone

By Chris Jennings

Addiction and substance abuse are significant issues in the Native American community. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the rate of drug overdose deaths among Native Americans is above the national average.

There are several options for tribal members to get help with substance abuse and their recovery through services provided by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Now there's a culture-based option to help people with healing and potentially learn more about the Choctaw culture.

Weylin Thompson, a peer recovery support specialist with Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health, is helping both tribal members and non-tribal members get the recovery support they need with a monthly drum circle recovery group.

The group utilizes language and culture with the drum to help people along their path of recovery, no matter where they are on it. Currently, Thompson goes to the Stigler jail, the juvenile detention center, the men's recovery center, Chi Hullo Li in Talihina, the Antlers Community Center and the Choctaw Nation headquarters in Durant. The Antlers and Durant drum circles are open to anybody who wants to attend.

The sound of the drum calls to many; it pulls at their heart and gives them a sense of comfort. The statement holds true not only for Native Americans, who have an ages-old relationship with the drum but anybody who feels the beat of the heart in the sound of the drum. "The drum has been around for ages, it's the sound of a heart-beat, and that's what it represents," said Thompson.

Whether you envision each strike of the drumhead as the beat of an ancestor's heart; or as a step along the Trail of Tears, or maybe to you, each strike of the drumhead represents each time the brothers Chata and Chicksah placed the pole in the ground as they traveled to find a new homeland. What matters is the carrying on of tradition and culture.

Thompson says this is important.

"The ancestor aspects of it is really important to me. Honoring the ancestors that paved the way for us to live

like we do today, with flourishing and prospering people," he said.

Thompson, who grew up in a foster home, was disconnected from his culture while he was growing up. He knew he was Choctaw and was around the culture a little but never really connected with it.

It wasn't until Thompson started his journey with recovery that he found that piece that was missing in his heart.

Thompson said, "My counselor basically said you have to find something you're more passionate about than drinking." Now that he's found that passion, he wants to share it.

Thompson says he wanted to start the drum circle recovery group to give people a safe place to heal.

"People with addiction need a place to talk, to share whatever's on their heart... It [the drum] just speaks to your spirit; we want everybody to feel like they belong and that there is a safe place to recover," said Thompson.

The last few years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been rough for the world.

According to a July 2022 CDC report, overdose deaths among Native Americans were disproportionately higher during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, outpacing whites during the same period. The report found that the disruptions in treatment and recovery services were behind the surge in overdose deaths.

The CDC report highlights the importance of recovery programs and how access to them can help in the recovery process.

The recovery drum circle is just one option to aid that recovery process.

The evidence of the effectiveness of drum circles is largely anecdotal. However, there are some clinical studies on using drums as complementary therapy.

One study found drumming enhanced recovery by increasing relaxation and helped with the release of emotional trauma.

Thompson says he sees the drum circle make a difference, and you don't have to be Indigenous or active in the culture to benefit from the drumming.

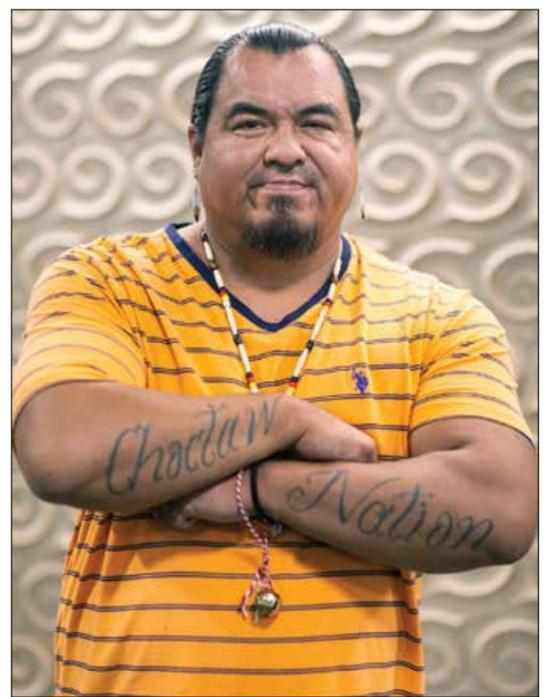
"A lot of our clients aren't connected culturally, and it's something missing in their lives. When they hear the drum, and when they start learning songs in their language, it uplifts their spirit, and something makes a change in them," he said.

Chad Coleman is a regular participant of the drum circle recovery group. He says that participating in sweat lodges and drum circles has positively changed him.

According to Coleman, he struggled over the years with various things, but that has changed.

"It's really made me happier than I've ever been," said Coleman. "Everything has just kind of come together; my heritage, my culture, my belief, it's all come together."

Coleman is a Christian and says he was saved in



Weylin Thompson grew up knowing but not connecting with his Choctaw heritage. Now he wears that heritage with pride on his arms.

his 20s. Since then, God and the Bible have been an important part of his life.

Coleman says he struggled at times with being a Native Christian, though. "We were kind of raised to believe that some of the Native traditions like drum circles, sweat lodges and things like that aren't Christ-based or Christian-based, that they're some kind of Native Voodoo. It isn't that at all," said Coleman.

Thompson says the drum circle recovery group would be impossible without the help of Pastor Olin Williams, first speaker Dora Wickson and other elders.

"Without their help, without the elders and first speakers, I couldn't be doing what I'm doing today," Thompson said.

It was a higher calling that encouraged Thompson to sing the drum circle songs in Choctaw. He first attended drum circles sung in Lakota, and that's how he knew to do them, but it was Chihowa (God) who he felt wanted him to sing Choctaw songs.

"I feel like Chihowa put it in my spirit. He said, you're Choctaw, sing Choctaw songs," said Thompson.

Coleman says he has felt empowered to help others by participating in the drum circle.

"It just gives me hunger to be strong for others; it makes you strive to be a better citizen on the daily," said Coleman.

That desire to be a stronger and better citizen doesn't just help Coleman; it helps everybody he comes into contact with and helps the Nation. By participating in the drum circle recovery group, Coleman, Thompson and everybody else involved are helping the Choctaw Nation be better and stronger by keeping its culture, traditions and language alive.



Drumsticks are placed out for participants to use during the recovery group drumming.

# Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

## Lending a helping hand

Halito, I love this time of year because the true spirit of giving is in the air.

Choctaw Nation Head Start held a canned food drive and a coat drive. Food and coats collected were given to local families in need, churches and food banks.

The Choctaw Wellness Center also held winter apparel and toy drives. New socks, gloves, beanies, scarves, jackets blankets and toys were collected at Wellness Centers throughout the Choctaw Nation.

Outreach Services also distributed holiday food vouchers to low-income elders and families who live within the Reservation boundaries.

In November, the Choctaw Nation truly embodied the spirit of helping others by assisting Idabel residents impacted by the storm.

Around 30 tribal officers went to Idabel the night of the storm to assist with search and rescue efforts. Choctaw Nation Housing, Emergency Management, Behavioral Health and Community Based social workers were at the Multi-Agency Resource Center on November 12 to offer information and services to tribal members affected by the tornado.

After the storm, CNHSA Community Health Nurses gave tetanus shots to anyone who needed them using their caring van, and volunteers from various departments from the Choctaw Nation prepared meals and provided other services.

These are just a few ways the Choctaw Nation has helped its communities and tribal members this holiday season. Look for more ways the Choctaw Nation helped spread holiday cheer in the January issue of the Biskinik.

I am so proud to be a part of a community filled with such caring people who come together during tough times to help their neighbors.

As you enjoy the holiday season with family and friends, cherish the moments and blessings this year has afforded you.

Yakohe and God bless!



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

## The untold Christmas story

The Christmas story is about the birth of Christ Jesus. Mary is the key person in this story. However, there is another key person in this story who has been overlooked. That person is Joseph.

The story begins in Matthew 1:18. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

Joseph stayed engaged to Mary, although he knew he was not the father of the child.

"Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."

According to the law of his day, Joseph could have her stoned or write a bill of divorce.

While he was meditating on these options, an angel appeared in a dream and said to him, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee, Mary, thy wife; for she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife. And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and called his name JESUS."

Imagine the great thwarting temptation Satan placed on Joseph. One mistake and the whole plan of God to come to mankind in the form of flesh through a virgin would have been diverted.

Joseph faced ridicule from the people. Yet he obeyed instructions from God. Against laws of nature, laws of civil government and peer pressure, Joseph remained a just man and stayed true to his character so the scripture would be fulfilled.

To complete the Christmas story, all depended on one man, Joseph. To fulfill the salvation story, one man, Jesus Christ, was the one to complete, and it was finished. God is calling all men to stand and retrieve the divinity of Christmas back from the commercialism that has thwarted the true message.

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**Choctaw Nation** Food Distribution



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

## Christmastime traditions

It's December 2022, and it has been a wonderful year getting back to things that feel more normal.

My family and I are looking forward to celebrating the Christmas holiday and the birth of our Lord and Savior. Spending time with family and friends and participating in the traditions we enjoy is much anticipated.

We have so much to be thankful for, and although the season can be stressful, I encourage you to focus on simply making memories that will last a lifetime.

One tradition my family looks forward to is going together to cut our Christmas tree from our land. Cooking, eating, games and lots of laughter fill our time together.

Whatever your holiday looks like, make it special with those you love. May God bless you, each and every one.

## CNO Development Fund awards \$5,000 forgivable loans to small businesses in LeFlore County

**LE FLORE COUNTY, Okla. (October 26, 2022)** – On September 30, Cooper's Furs & 6th Day Creations, C.M.F Enterprises, Duncan Trail Taxidermy and KD Consulting Services were each awarded a \$5,000 Small Business Forgivable loan from Choctaw Nation Small Business Development and the Choctaw Development Fund.

The Choctaw Development Fund supports economic viability and sustainability by partnering with Choctaw small business owners, cities and counties to create long-term growth and job creation within the territories of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

"Providing \$20,000 in forgivable loans within LeFlore County to these four small businesses is a huge win for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma," states Jess Henry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 4. "These District 4 Chahtapreneurs are not only fostering our local economy, but they're keeping money close within the reservation and supporting our neighborhoods and community members."

Cooper's Furs & 6th Day Creations, owned by Matthew Cooper and located outside Bokeshe, Okla., offers customers taxidermy and tannery options in the LeFlore County region. With over 16 years of fur handling experience, Cooper caters each piece to his client's needs by preserving the beauty of nature.

Funds received from the Choctaw Nation will be used to assist Cooper in improvements to his shop.

C.M.F. Enterprise is owned and operated by Kinsey Akers in Poteau, Oklahoma. C.M.F. Enterprise offers delivery of cargo to anywhere that does not require a passport.

Funds received from the Choctaw Nation will be used to assist C.M.F. Enterprise with purchasing a hotshot cargo van for the company.

The cargo van holds up to 3,000 pounds and C.M.F Enterprise will contract with businesses to deliver products.

For more information on C.M.F Enterprise call, (918) 413-1968.

Duncan Trail Taxidermy, owned by Jennifer Duncan, specializes in taxidermy services. Duncan Trail Taxidermy produces products that she would be proud to display herself.

Funds received from the Choctaw Nation will be used to purchase taxidermy equipment such as an auto tanner, cape stretcher, mounting stand, bird flesher and a mini flesher.

KD Consulting Services, owned by licensed professional counselor Kristi McConnell, provides consultation services to individuals and families in the Poteau, Oklahoma area. KD Consulting Services provides the high-quality, behaviorally-based therapeutic outpatient



Photos by Choctaw Nation

From left to right: Jess Henry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 4; Matthew Cooper, Owner of Coppers Fur's & 6th Day Creations and Brittany Rice, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor.



From left to right: Jess Henry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 4; Kinsey Akers, Owner of C.M.F Enterprises and Britany Rice, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor.



From left to right: John Tims; Jennifer Duncan, Owner of Duncan Trail Taxidermy; Britany Rice, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor and Jess Henry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 4.



From left to right: Jess Henry, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 4; Kristi McConnell, owner of KD Consulting and Britany Rice, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor.

services to individuals, couples, children and adolescents in the most caring environment possible.

Funds received from the Choctaw Nation will be used to purchase a computer, printer and scanner.

For more information on KD Consulting Services call, (918) 658-4812.

## Choctaw Nation Development Fund awards \$5,000 forgivable loan to OklaTex Hauling

**IDABEL, Okla. (October 10, 2022)** – OklaTex Hauling was awarded a \$5,000 Small Business Forgivable Loan from Choctaw Nation Small Business Development and the Choctaw Development Fund. Owned by Shareece Columbus, OklaTex Hauling is a hotshot trucking company based in Idabel, Okla.

Operating in Southeast Oklahoma and the Texas/Arkansas border region, OklaTex Hauling offers expedited and flexible trucking loads such as construction materials, heavy equipment and farm materials. OklaTex also offers local junk removal services when their schedule permits it.

"We're grateful to the Choctaw Nation for the forgivable loan as we'll be able to purchase a 24' goose-neck trailer. This will allow OklaTex Hauling to haul larger equipment and give us the opportunity to expand our customer base," states Shareece Columbus, Owner of OklaTex Hauling.

The Choctaw Development Fund 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 the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

From left to right: Julie Arrieta, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor; Thomas Williston, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 1; Kalli Battiest; Choctaw Nation Senior Princess; Amy Ward, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor and Shareece Columbus, Owner of OklaTex Hauling.

"OklaTex Hauling is in the start-up phase of their business, but Shareece is eager to hit the ground running and we're honored to provide the tools to her to start, grow and maintain her small business for years to come in McCurtain County area and beyond," states Julie Arrieta, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor.

## Sundrop Books is becoming a ray of sunshine to local readers

By Shelia Kirven

David and Taylor (Walker) Batton are the proud owners of a new business in Durant. Sundrop Books, a long-time dream of the couple, opened its doors July 23 to a large grand opening crowd and had its Chahtapreneur ribbon-cutting July 28.

Taylor grew up in Sherman, Texas and David is originally from Clayton, Oklahoma. They met in 2015 while attending Southeastern Oklahoma State University and have been married for four years.

In addition to co-owning the bookstore, David is also employed as a GIS/GPS Specialist for the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department.

David and Taylor found a prospective location in downtown Durant and visited with the Choctaw Nation Small Business Department. They were given helpful tips and general information about opening a business, including information on writing a business plan, contact and grant application information, and leads on who they needed to talk to to get the ball rolling.

“The business plan was a lot of help,” Taylor said.

The couple has a sweet story about how the name of the bookstore came about.

Both wear a necklace with an emblem of the sun. David originally purchased a red and silver sun pendant necklace at age 10 in Florida. He wore the necklace constantly until the day he decided to put it around Taylor’s neck upon their first dating anniversary, and it became very special to her as well.

According to David, the symbol on the necklace means “determination” and “strong spirit.” On their wedding day, Taylor gifted David with a new necklace like the original.

“It’s our symbol,” David said. “It’s part of our personality and who we are, kind of in a way our crest.”

According to Taylor, she thrives off sunlight and knew when they opened the bookstore she wanted to name it something related to the sun.

When playing around with the wording for the potential name, Taylor caught herself thinking of a song from the Sound of Music and the line “Re - a drop of golden sun” was part of the lyrics she liked. The name Sundrop Books was born.

Sundrop Books, the only generalized independent bookstore in the county, carries a large variety of genres, authors and best sellers. The store has new and used books and a growing variety of Native American books.

“I knew that I wanted to promote Native voices, Native topics, cultures, histories, and languages. I wanted that

to be a whole section in our store early on,” Taylor said.

The store also highlights many authors who are not readily available elsewhere.

“There are a lot of good authors out there, a lot of good stories out there that are overshadowed,” said Taylor.

Special orders are available if a reader is looking for something they cannot find on the store’s shelves. The Battons encourage local authors to reach out to the store for information on how to get their books on the shelves.

Those who prefer audiobooks purchase them from the store’s website or by going online to Libro.fm. When purchasing from Libro.fm, the customer designates a local bookstore to receive a share of the profits from the sale, or if going to Sundrop Books’ website to make an audiobook purchase, it will go directly to Libro.fm and automatically credit the sale to Sundrop Books.

A trade-in program is also available. Customers can bring in as many as 30 used books per week for store credit. Books in good condition earn up to 25% trade credit of the price on the back of the book. Customers can then use store credit to purchase books. In-store purchases also accrue points.

A 10% discount is given to school employees, first responders, firefighters, police, medical EMTs, Choctaw Nation tribal members and associates, and students.

The store has hosted several events since its opening, with more being planned, including author talks and book signings.

There is already a very active monthly book club.

“We have a fairly diverse group of people. It’s all age ranges, all different sorts of backgrounds. We get a good discussion going,” Taylor said.

According to Taylor, the books are chosen from a wide variety of genres, and readers seem to enjoy that because they are saying they may not have necessarily chosen the book to read unless the book club recommended it, and that makes it the discussion fresh and new each time. The store carries the selected books for book club events, or readers can purchase them online.

Mary Ruth Barnes’ book, *Little Bird*, will be December’s book club title, and the author will attend the club meeting to speak.

88 Straight author Stanley Nelson will also be on hand when book club members review his book in February. His novel tells the true story of the depression-era basketball team from the Oklahoma Presbyterian College (former headquarters of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) in Durant.

Kids’ events are also important at Sundrop Books.

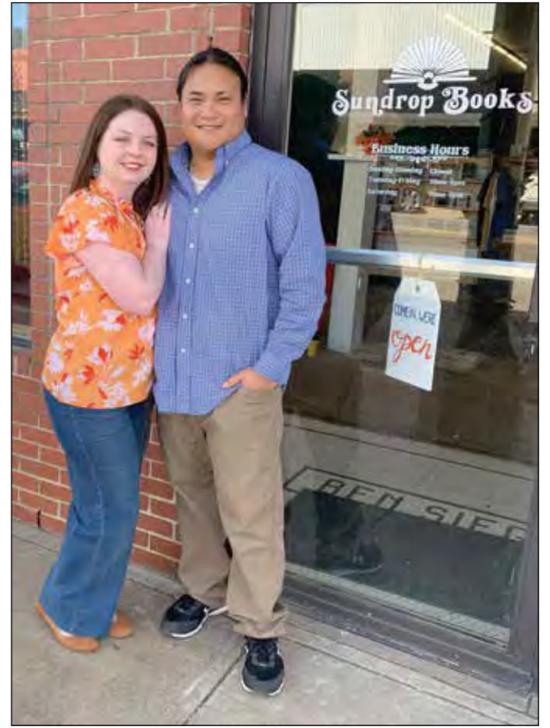


Photo by Shelia Kirven

David and Taylor Batton stand at the entrance to Sundrop Books which they recently opened in downtown Durant.

Recently Trey Hays, author of *Little Loksi* (published through Chickasaw Press) had an in-store book signing and story time. More book signings and story times are being scheduled for future dates.

Even Santa Claus is on Sundrop Books’ calendar of events for Saturday, December 10, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., when he drops by to take photos with young customers.

Future plans include additional store shelving, more Choctaw and local artists, local club meetings (local clubs are encouraged to reach out to the store for a possible meeting space), a coffee cart and YouTube posts.

Sundrop Books is located at 137a West Main, Durant, OK 74701.

To keep up with all the events scheduled at Sundrop Books, visit <https://sundropbooks.com/>. Those interested in the bookshop can also follow them on Facebook, TikTok and Instagram by searching sundropbooks or signing up for emails.

## Code talker monument dedicated in Broken Bow

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Code Talkers Association dedicated a six-foot black granite monument that tells the story of the Choctaw Code Talkers on November 8, 2022.

This monument is the second to be placed along the portion of State Highway 3 between Antlers and Broken Bow that is designated as the “WWI Choctaw Code Talkers Highway” by the Oklahoma State Legislature.

The first monument, dedicated on July 6, 2018, is located near the Choctaw Travel Plaza in Antlers, Oklahoma. 2018 was the 100th anniversary of the Choctaw Code Talkers’ participation in WWI.

Chief Gary Batton said during the ceremony, “Today is about honoring our history, our culture, and our Code Talkers. I always say they set the example of who we should be today – People who sacrificed for God, for country, when we were not even considered citizens of these United States. That’s true servant leadership. I am so thankful that we are honoring them today.”

Choctaws were the first Native Americans to use their language on battlefield radios providing an unbreakable code for American troops and their Allies.

According to the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department, within 24 hours the tide of the battle had turned. The Germans were retreating in less than 72 hours, and the Allies were on full attack. The achievements of the code talkers were sufficient to encourage a training program for future Code talkers. The Choctaws helped to establish the standard for all future code talkers in WWI and WWII.

During the dedication ceremony, Nuchi Nashoba, president of the Code Talkers Association, introduced the Choctaw Code Talkers Association members and descendants of the Code Talkers.

Robert Baker, the great-great-grandson of Ben Carterby, who served in WWI, was among the descendants who attended the dedication.

Baker said that this monument makes him feel very proud that the memory of his family is being honored.

“Seeing the monuments now, I think it cements a legacy that will never be forgotten,” he said. “I hope that people see the Chahta Spirit, servant leadership, they were asked to fight at a time when our language was trying to be extinguished, you know, this language saved America, maybe even saved the world. I hope these monuments encapsulate the servant leader aspect of it.”

District 2 Singers performed hymns during the dedication ceremony.

“Hearing those songs in our Choctaw language made me think. That language was not supposed to be heard today, they were trying to take it away from us. Yet, that language saved this country,” said District 2 Tribal Councilman Tony Ward.

The art on the sculpture is taken from an original watercolor by Choctaw artist Gwen Coleman Lester.



Photo by Christian Toews

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma officials, Choctaw Code Talkers Association members, and descendants of the Code Talkers gather to dedicate the monument honoring Choctaw Code Talkers of World War I and World War II.

# COMMUNITY CENTER CHRISTMAS MEALS 2022

December 7, 2022 - Wednesday		
Antlers Elder Lunch	12:00PM	Antlers Community Center
Battiest Elder Lunch	11:30AM	Battiest Community Center
Coalgate Elder Lunch	12:00PM	Coalgate Community Center
Smithville Community Lunch	12:00PM	Smithville Community Center
Spiro Elder Lunch	11:00AM	Spiro Community Center
Wilburton Elder Lunch	12:00PM	Wilburton Community Center
December 12, 2022-Monday		
Idabel Community Dinner	6:00PM	Idabel Community Center
December 13, 2022-Tuesday		
Talihina Elder Lunch	11:00AM	Talihina Community Center
December 14, 2022-Wednesday		
Atoka Elder Lunch	11:00AM	Atoka Community Center
Broken Bow Elder Lunch	11:30AM	Broken Bow Community Center
Crowder Elder Lunch	11:30AM	Crowder Community Center
Hugo Elder Lunch	11:30AM	Hugo Community Center
McAlester Elder Lunch	11:30AM	McAlester Community Center
Poteau Elder Lunch	12:00PM	Poteau Community Center
Stigler Elder Lunch	11:30AM	Stigler Community Center
Wright City Elder Lunch	12:00PM	Wright City Community Center
December 21, 2022-Wednesday		
Durant Elder Lunch	11:00AM	Durant Community Center

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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## District 10

Halito, Chim Achukma from District 10. I hope all is well with you and your families and everyone is ready to enjoy the Holiday season.

We just celebrated the Thanksgiving holiday at the Senior Nutrition Center in Atoka, where we reflected on the many blessings we enjoy but easily take for granted. We had an excellent turnout for our thanksgiving lunch; a big shout out to our Senior Nutrition staff for the great meal and all the tribal employees who came and helped serve our seniors.

We hosted the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11 at Tvshkahoma. It was an honor to show appreciation to our veterans for their sacrifices and

service to our country. In addition, the Choctaw Nation sent a delegation to the Native American Memorial Exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. The representatives from District 10 included John Bureson and Willard Harrison. Thank you both for your service and participation in this event. Yakoke to all veterans and their families for your sacrifices.

As we concluded the election season, we elected our representatives for Oklahoma. We, as tribal leaders, worked together to select our candidates to support this election. The Tribal Nations considered how each candidate viewed our tribal sovereignty and their willingness to partner and make our reservation and Oklahoma the best place to live and raise a family. We support those who won and continue to look for opportunities to work together for the betterment of all.

Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas to all. Yakoke!

## Remembering former Councilmember Jack Austin Sr.

The Choctaw Nation mourns the loss of a great man and leader, former Councilmember Jack Austin Sr., who served on the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council for 20 fiscal years.

In addition, he also served his country in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, where he served in the 25th Infantry Division Artillery Battalion. Austin Sr. served as a board member of his church for over 30 years and worked for Indian Health Services in the Office of Environmental Health for 32 years. He and his late wife Norma have four children, 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. His son, Jack Austin Jr., is the current Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Our condolences are with his family and loved ones. We ask that everyone please respect their privacy and keep this family in your thoughts and prayers during this time.



## New Cinnabon Bakery Opening This Winter at the Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant

**DURANT, Okla., (November 8, 2022)** – Something sweet is coming to Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant this winter! Cinnabon is baking up a new location, opening in The Link Casino Food Court across from The District.

Famous for their signature cinnamon rolls made with Makara® cinnamon and cream cheese frosting, the bakery will be the newest addition to Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant since opening the Sky Tower in 2021. In addition to the beloved cinnamon rolls, guests can also enjoy treats like Center of the Roll, the ooey-gooey center of the Classic Roll, or Cookie BonBites, a bite-sized cinnamon roll stuffed inside a warm chocolate chip cookie, alongside beverages including cold brews, lemonades and blended Chillattas.

“At Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant we always want to offer guests something unique and different, and that includes our dining options,” said Harold Johnson, Regional Director of Food & Beverage at Choctaw Casino & Resort - Durant. “Adding Cinnabon to our Link Casino Food Court is an exciting opportunity for us. When the new bakery opens this winter, it will be the only Cinnabon located inside a casino and resort in Oklahoma.”

Cinnabon at Choctaw Casino & Resort - Durant, located in The Link Casino Food Court, across from The District, is scheduled to open this winter. For more information and updates, please visit <https://www.choctawcasinos.com/durant/eat-drink/cinnabon/>.



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**Choctaw Nation** Land Title & Natural Resources



## District 11

Halito Chim Achukma!

Season greetings from District 11! I love this time of the year. Thanksgiving reminds us to be thankful for our family and all of God's blessings He has given during the year. While at Christmas, we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We had some great news this fall with the announcement of the Choctaw Health Clinic's \$70 million expansion in McAlester. I, along with our health-care administration, have been advocating for this much-needed project so we can meet the healthcare needs of our tribal members in D-11. Yakoke to the Council, Chief Batton, Asst. Chief Austin and all the Administration for supporting and allocating funds for the new clinic. The expansion will more than double the size to 98,260 sq ft. and bring 56 full-time employees. This investment will allow our clinic to see 65% more patients while offering new services such as gastroenterology, cardiology, otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat), endocrinology, orthopedics, an Employee Health Clinic and speech therapy.

It's been exciting to gather in person at meetings and events over the last several months. Once again, it was wonderful to see all the families at the Labor Day festival in September. Our new D-11 Princesses represented us well at the pageant. Congratulations to Little Miss Alexandria McFarland, Jr. Miss Raina Meashintubby and Sr. Miss Tenaya Perkins. The Outstanding Elder banquet is a very special event every year for two elders from each district. Our D-11 recipients were Maudie Stubblefield and Troy Johnson. Our seniors enjoyed their first trip together since the Covid pandemic when they traveled to Tennessee and Kentucky. The Thanksgiving senior meal was held on the Nov. 16, and the community meal was held on the 17 at the community center.

District 11 always supports our young people, and we have some of the best. Yakoke to the YAB kids who worked on our community center garden. They cleaned out the plant containers and put new soil and compost back in. The Choctaw Career Development department held a Career Expo for 1700 students from 36 schools in SE Oklahoma on October 26. The event was held at the SE expo building in McAlester, and it provided our students with so many opportunities to check out for their future education and careers. Trunk or Treat at the center and the Head Start on the 27 and 28 of October was fun, with lots of neat costumes and plenty of candy given away.

Tammy and I would like to wish you and your family a Nittak Hullo Chito Na Yukpa (Merry Christmas) and a Happy New Year! Upcoming events are the Christmas kids' party on December 8 and the Christmas meal for our seniors on Dec. 14.

I am both humbled and honored to serve all the Okla Achukma (good people) in the Choctaw Nation and District 11. Let's continue to work together to bring improved opportunities and prosperity for our Chahta people!

Yakoke and God bless.

## Honoring first language speaker, Betty Jacobs



During the Nov. 12 Tribal Council meeting, Councilmember Tony Ward recognized Betty Jacobs as the District 2 first language speaker of the month.

## Reba's Place coming soon



Chief Batton had the opportunity to tour the new Reba's Place restaurant in Atoka on Nov. 14. Chief visited with associates during their new hire orientation. Reba's Place is projected to open before Christmas.

## Celebrating Choctaw Day



Above: In honor of Native American Heritage Month, Chief Gary Batton, Councilmember James Dry and elders from District 9 greeted children as they were dropped off for school at Durant's Robert E. Lee Early Childhood Center on Nov 4.

Below: Dancers participating in the 2022 Choctaw Powwow show students a few dances.



NOTES

**BIA, Talihiina Agency Has New Location**

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

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

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

**Mailing Address:**

Talihiina Agency  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
P.O. Box 1430  
Durant, OK, 74702

**Physical Address:**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma C/O BIA-Talihiina Agency  
1802 Chukka Hina  
Durant, OK, 74701

**WAR 1950 - 1955**

**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](https://bit.ly/cno-veterans-advocacy)

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**  
TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**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.

**University of Tulsa Seeks Psychology Candidates**

The Department of Psychology at The University of Tulsa (TU) seeks candidates to fill a full-time tenure-track position in Clinical Psychology at the rank of Assistant or Associate Professor, beginning August 15, 2023. Successful candidates are expected to develop a funded research program, teach undergraduate and graduate level courses, and supervise the clinical work of graduate students.

Information about the Department, the clinical MA and PhD programs, and our I-O graduate programs can be found at: <https://artsandsciences.utulsa.edu/psychology/>. Information about the Kendall College of Arts & Sciences can be found at <https://artsandsciences.utulsa.edu>.

All application materials must be submitted at: <https://universitytulsa.peopleadmin.com/postings/6758>. Inquiries should be sent to the search committee chair, Jamie Rhudy (jamie-rhudy@utulsa.edu).

**UNCLAIMED FUNDS**

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

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
P.O. Box 1210, Durant, OK 74702  
Attn: Jennifer Harmon, Accountant  
Phone: 580-642-7013

- Abigail Hulme
- Alexandra Miles
- Amber Garrett
- Audreanna Thomas
- Brookelyn (Ussery) Harrison
- Charles Cowan
- Christian Zida
- Dezaray Donelan
- Glenda Morgan
- Haylee Hampton
- Hunter Erwin
- Jarine Martin
- Jeremy White
- Jessica Hackler
- Korina Schiller
- Markendrick Stanley
- Mary Gilmore
- Ronald O'Brien
- Steven Nabors
- Suzanna DeLay
- Victoria Reyes

**TASTE THE TRADITION**

Located in the Choctaw Cultural Center

Lunch Served  
Tuesday – Saturday | 10:30am-4:30pm  
Paid admission is not required.

**CHAMPULI CAFE**

**CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL**

**REGULAR SESSION AGENDA**

November 12, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER
  2. 2) OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
  3. ROLL CALL
  4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
    - a. Regular Session October 8, 2022
  5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
    - a. Veteran of the Month, District #2 –
    - b. First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #2 –
  6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
    - a. Roland Wade – Group Speaker – Celebrate Recovery Native Nations
  7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
  8. NEW BUSINESS
    - a. Approve the Chief’s Designation of Certain Employees of the Nation to Execute Federal Indian Preference Forms and to Rescind CB-03-19
    - b. Approve Funding for the Construction of 300 Lease Purchase Homes, 240 Affordable Rental Housing Homes, and 60 Independent Elder Homes
    - c. Enact the Choctaw Nation Environmental Laws
    - d. Approve the Acquisition of 260 Acres of Real Property Located in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, through Private Donation
    - e. Grant a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in Connection with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Executive Deferred Compensation Plan
    - f. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Martin Tucker to Serve on the United States Department of the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee
    - g. Approve the Purchase of up to 11 Individual Parcels of Real Property Located Adjacent to Affordable Rental Housing Sites
    - h. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
    - i. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets (Furniture)
    - j. Approve Funding for Renovations at Choctaw Village Shopping Center in Idabel, Oklahoma
  9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
  10. OLD BUSINESS
  11. ADJOURNMENT
  12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All bills pass unanimously

**JUROR SUMMONS**

Choctaw Nation tribal members, spouses of tribal members, and any Choctaw Nation associate residing within Choctaw Nation territory may be summoned to jury duty with the Choctaw Nation court system.

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

**Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation**

December 1	Crowder	By Appointment
December 5	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 6	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 7	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 7	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 9	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
December 9	Coalgate	12:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
December 20	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 21	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
December 21	Stigler	By Appointment
December 27	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
December 29	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an Appointment



**HONOR GUARD**  
— POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

[VETERANSADVOCACY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:veteransadvocacy@choctawnation.com)

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**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:

Antlers Community Center  
December 16, 2022  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



**Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna  
December Language Lesson**

**Makash inli**

To allow; to permit

Chukkowa hinla ka ish im issa tuk o?	Did you give them permission to come in?
Chi kaa isht aya hinla ka ish im issa ha?	Did you allow him/her to drive your car?
Sia want ia bvanna na im issa li tuk.	She wanted to go with me, so I let her.
Ish im issa tuk o?	Did you let him/her go?
Im issa li tuk.	I gave permission.
Im issa li tuk kiyo.	I did not give permission.
Ak im isso tuk.	I did not give permission.
Sioshitek vt nowvt aya chj ka imissa li tuk.	I allowed my daughter to go visiting.
Okla iihkola hinla ka im issa tuk.	They received permission to go.
Chik im isso tuk o?	You didn't let them go?
Im issa la chj kiyo.	I will not allow or give permission.
Kvta hosh hvchim issa tuk?	Who gave you all permission?

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

**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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Durant, OK 74702  
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170  
[www.ChoctawNation.com](http://www.ChoctawNation.com)  
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.

### Champ Florie runs the Army Ten-Miler

Champ Florie, Choctaw Nation tribal member, son of Keith and Angie Florie, grandson of the late EB and Charlesetta Florie of Holdenville, Oklahoma and Sam and Ginger Vernon of Bethany, Oklahoma, ran in the Army Ten-Miler, in Washington D.C., Sunday, October 9, 2022.



The Army Ten-Miler takes place each October in Washington, D.C., to promote the Army, build esprit de corps, support Army fitness goals and enhance community relations.

There are over 35,000 runners and 900 teams from around the world. Champ has been training all summer for the Ten-Miler. Champ is currently a sophomore at the University of Oklahoma and a cadet in the OU Army ROTC.

### Lt. Hobbs awarded for excellence

Lt. Jason Hobbs was recently awarded the 2022 Law Award for Excellence in Action Against Domestic Violence at the Oklahoma State Capitol on October 20, 2022.



Lt. Hobbs was awarded by the Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. He was the only Officer Awarded. Lt. Hobbs' office is located at the CNHSA in Tahihina.

Lt. Hobbs was nominated by Choctaw Nation Associate Marcia Ragland, CFS Operations Trainer.

### Cannon turns 90

Herschel Leon Cannon turned 90 years old on October 10, 2022.

In June 2022, Cannon and his daughter Candice Cannon Watson, both Choctaw tribal members, visited the Kindred Spirits sculpture with their spouses.

"It was very moving and beautiful, and our personal tour guide was very happy to take us there. He was well-versed about its meaning and history," said Candice.



### Byars is 2022 Seminole baby pageant queen

Layla G. Byars was recently crowned the 2022 Seminole Nation Baby Pageant Queen.

Layla is the daughter of Harrison Byars and Kara Byars. She is an enrolled Choctaw Nation tribal member and is in Kindergarten at George Washington.

Layla is five years old and has three older brothers. She loves to go to church, sing and dance and loves going on vacation with her family!



### Belvin thanks the Choctaw Nation

Maegan Rane Belvin of Boswell, Oklahoma, recently obtained her associate of applied science degree and office management with medical coding billing from Paris Junior College in 2020, a feat she credits to the help of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Paris Junior College.

"I had two children at the time and got help with childcare the entire time. I just want to give a public thank you to my tribe," said Belvin.



### Rodrigues' celebrate 50 years of marriage

Thomas and Nancy (Jones) Rodrigues celebrated their golden anniversary in November. The couple married on November 25, 1972, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Oakland, California. They have resided in Florence, Arizona, for the last 18 years.



### Ethan Robert Aldridge

Kevin and siblings Sterling, Cody and Jayden Aldridge welcomed a baby boy, Ethan Robert Aldridge, on June 15, 2022, in San Angelo, Texas. He weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces and was 19.25 inches long.

Ethan is the grandson of Robert Aldridge of Tulsa, Oklahoma.



### Sells earns masters from Texas A&M

Amber Sells will graduate from Texas A&M University at College Station with her masters in agribusiness on December 17, 2022.

"I would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for the financial help she received through scholarships," said Sells' mother, Nanette.



### Edwards turns 90

Wilma (McClure) Edwards recently celebrated her 90th birthday in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Wilma is enrolled on the James Dyer roll. She has proudly displayed the blanket with the Choctaw seal - a gift for her 90th birthday from Chief Gary Batton.



### Wade is Veteran of the Month



Roosevelt Wade was born in Broken Bow, Oklahoma, in 1937 and attended Broken Bow Public Schools. He enlisted in the United States Navy on April 30, 1958.

Wade was sent to MEPS in Dallas, Texas and did basic training in San Francisco, California. Upon completion he was given orders to Hawaii, where he served some of his time on the USS John S. McCain DL-3 destroyer ship. During this time, the U.S. received intel that a Russian vessel with weapons was headed to Cuba. The USS McCain was ordered to sail to Cuba and intercept the Russian ship if found. The intense mission lasted for several weeks. He spent the next two years on the same ship before receiving orders to Japan.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Wade flew to Tokyo, Japan and spent a year there. He served on the USS Peacock, a mine warfare vessel. Upon completing his duties there, Engineman 3rd Class Wade returned to the United States to serve on the USS Conquest mine sweeper ship.

He returned to Chicago, Illinois and attended diesel mechanic school before ending his enlistment.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma holds our Veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates the sacrifices and contributions they have made to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.



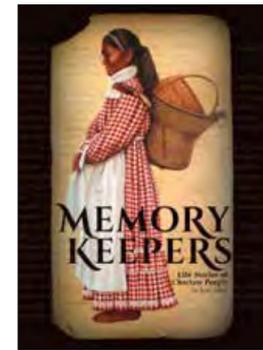
playing on the Oklahoma Choctaws Basketball Team.

Joining Emily at her signing was Choctaw Tribal Councilman James Dry and two of her Oklahoma Choctaw Travel coaches, Kevin Gwin and Javen White, from Choctaw Youth Events and Activities. Emily is the daughter of tribal members David and Jodi Robinson.

### Robinson signs with ORU

Congrats to Emily Robinson from Caddo High School on signing with Oral Roberts University. Emily is a standout basketball and softball athlete for the Caddo Lady Bruins. Emily also represented the Choctaw Nation

### "Memory Keepers" now available at CNO headquarters gift shop



The new book published by Choctaw Nation, "Memory Keepers," is now in the Choctaw Nation Headquarters gift shop, just in time for Christmas shopping.

"Memory Keepers: Life Stories of Choctaw People" is a collection of life stories of Choctaw people. Through their memories, readers are introduced to Choctaw culture, learn how they grew up, and read how what they learned during a lifetime of experiences. The book allows readers to meet a "Rosie the Riveter," veterans of WWII, Korean War and Vietnam, men and women who share their faith in God, the first Choctaw princess, a woman who fostered 52 children in addition to raising six of her own, artists and elders. This book is an important archive of Choctaw Nation history of the past 100 years, straight from the people who have lived it. "Memory Keepers" is available at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters Gift Shop (580) 924-8280 for \$59.

The author is Judy Allen, and the photographers include Allen and Deidre Elrod, both Choctaw tribal members. The book's design was by Kevin Wingfield, also a tribal member. Cover art is by Karen Clarkson, an award-winning Choctaw artist whose story is among the more than 60 featured in the book.

### Kannady honored for 48 years of service with Meals on Wheels

Barbara Kannady, great-granddaughter of original enrollee Livingston Buck White, was recently honored in Tulsa by local and state dignitaries for 48 years of volunteer service to Meals on Wheels.

In an interview with 2 News in Tulsa, Kannady said her favorite part of working with Meals on Wheels is being with the people and helping. "They become friends and like family," said Kannady.



## HEALTHY AGING LENDING CLOSET

THROUGH THE HEALTHY AGING LENDING CLOSET PROGRAM, GENTLY USED MEDICAL EQUIPMENT DONATIONS ARE REPAIRED, SANITIZED AND DISTRIBUTED TO THOSE IN NEED. THE LENDING CLOSET IS A WAY FOR PEOPLE TO DONATE GENTLY USED MEDICAL SUPPLIES THEY NO LONGER NEED AND PROVIDE THEM TO PEOPLE WHO NEED THOSE ITEMS.

**DONATE TODAY TO HELP THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST IN YOUR COMMUNITY.**

**Choctaw Nation** Health Services

## LOCATE CHOCTAW-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

### DOWNLOAD THE CHAHTAPRENEUR APP TODAY!

There are hundreds of Choctaw-owned businesses within the Choctaw Nation and even beyond our borders. The Chahtapreneur app can help you find just what you're looking for.

Help support our Chahtapreneurs by downloading the app today.

**SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD TODAY**

**Choctaw Nation** Small Business Development

## Choctaw Nation Health Clinic in Stigler expands

**STIGLER, Okla. (Oct. 27, 2022)** – Several Choctaw Nation Health departments have a new home in Stigler, Okla. On October 27 the Choctaw Nation Health Clinic held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the new extension location in the Stigler Office Building.

“I’m thankful that we can provide this service here in Stigler,” says Chief Gary Batton. “This is home for us and we want to grow it.”

The \$3.4 million renovation project began in early 2020, completing in October 2022 due to the slowdowns caused by the pandemic. The extension adds another 5,647 square feet in addition to the main Stigler Health Clinic which currently provides services, such as family practice, laboratory, pharmacy, and optometry.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

Stigler County and City Officials join Choctaw Nation Leadership and Stigler Health Clinic staff in cutting the ribbon to celebrate the opening of the Stigler Health Extension.

Choctaw Nation Health moved the dental services from another building as the extension provides space for more equipment, a second dentist and an additional dental hygienist. By increasing the space and headcount, the patient care team will be able to double the number of patients daily than at the previous location.

Radiology was also added to the extension. “Patients were driving 45 to 60 minutes away for an x-ray, resulting in longer times before a diagnosis was possible,” says Janet Sharp, facility director.

“Having this available for our patients will significantly improve the treatment times.”

Other services moving to the newly renovated facility include Behavioral Health and Community Health Nursing. “We are truly blessed,” says Choctaw Tribal Council Speaker Thomas Williston. “I am proud that we can do what we are able to do today. I think of the things our families before us did not have and think about the future – of what our children and grandchildren will have.”

## OGE Positive Energy Scholarship applications now open

Electric company encourages students to apply for four-year scholarship

**OKLAHOMA CITY (Nov. 4, 2022)** – From now until Feb. 15, 2023, Oklahoma and Arkansas high school seniors are encouraged to apply for the 2023 OGE Positive Energy Scholarship. With its administrative partner the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, OGE Energy Corp. Foundation awards this scholarship to three deserving students and provides them with \$15,000 per year, renewable annually for up to four years, or a total of \$60,000 to cover tuition, books, fees and on-campus room and board.

Applicants are selected based on their academic achievements, volunteerism, community service, extracurricular activities and strength of character. Students with financial need who plan to major in STEM or pursue a degree that promotes and leads to a future career in the energy field will be given preference during the selection process.

“Building a better future for our communities is one of the guiding principles of OG&E, and supporting education is critical to this mission,” said Lindsay Laird, manager of community outreach and engagement at OG&E. “By investing in students of strong character with an interest in STEM, we are enhancing our region’s future workforce and empowering the next generation of leaders. It’s an honor to help these students achieve their full potential.”

Grace Voth, a 2019 OGE Positive Energy Scholar, credits the electric company with energizing her college career. Voth is currently a senior at Oklahoma State University pursuing her industrial engineering and management degree. Following graduation, she will begin working as a logistics engineer and is looking forward to contributing her exceptional industry skills to our state’s energy field.

“Because of this scholarship, I was able to obtain an engineering degree from a great university and an even better engineering college without having to worry about accruing financial debt,” said Voth. “I cannot thank OG&E enough for this opportunity.”

Established in 2019, the OGE Positive Energy Scholarship encourages worthy students to pursue a degree in higher education. Eligible students must meet specific criteria to be considered, including:

- Be a graduating high school senior from the OG&E service area;
- Plan to attend a college in the states of Oklahoma or Arkansas;
- Have an unweighted GPA greater than or equal to 3.25; and
- Achieve an ACT score of greater than or equal to 25 and/or SAT score greater than or equal to 1200.

The OGE Positive Energy Scholarship is renewable for up to four consecutive years; an unweighted GPA greater than or equal to 3.0 is required to be considered for renewal.

The award may be used for tuition, fees, books and on-campus room and board. Payments are made in two installments (fall and spring semester) each academic year directly to the student’s school after proof of enrollment has been provided. Payments are issued in the following academic year. No more than six credit hours may be completed online each semester.

OG&E’s dedication to education investment is evident in the company’s continuous support to deserving students, teachers and schools. In addition to scholarships, the company also funds teacher projects, offers energy efficiency grants, provides classrooms with energy education materials and partners with educational institutions to cultivate a pipeline of strong industry professionals. Since launching the program, the OGE Energy Corp. Foundation has awarded 12 Positive Energy Scholarships – totaling \$720,000 – to high school seniors.

To apply for the 2023 OGE Positive Energy Scholarship, visit [occf.academicworks.com](http://occf.academicworks.com). To learn more about how OG&E invests in education across its service area, visit [oge.com/education](http://oge.com/education).

## Broken Bow Wellness Center is number one in member satisfaction for the second year in a row

By Nick Robinson

The Choctaw Nation is excited to announce for the second year in a row, the Broken Bow Wellness Center has come out on top as the highest performing location in overall satisfaction with a score of 98.7.

An honorable mention should be given to Atoka Wellness Center, who came in a close second in satisfaction, scoring a 98.3. Broken Bow worked very hard during FY22 to capture feedback from their members and was able to collect a total of 611 surveys.

The Operational Excellence Department, a part of the Division of Strategic Development, hosted a celebration on Tuesday, November 1, to recognize Wellness Center Director, Chase Henson and his team at the Broken Bow



Wellness Center, including Cassie Tisho (Supervisor), Don Tsosie, Marsha Harley, Jason White and Senior Fitness Leader, Carrie Ward.

The event was attended by special guests, District 2 Council Person, Tony Ward, District 7 Council Person, Joey Tom, SEO of Member Services, Teresa

Jackson and Todd Hallmark, Executive Officer of Health Services. In addition to a luncheon and speakers, around 20 of the senior Broken Bow Wellness Center members attended the celebration and had fun playing chair volleyball, corn hole and fellowshiping with the team and guests.

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- Plan to attend a college in the states of Oklahoma or Arkansas;
- Have an unweighted GPA greater than or equal to 3.25; and
- Achieve an ACT score of greater than or equal to 25 and/or SAT score greater than or equal to 1200.

The OGE Positive Energy Scholarship is renewable for up to four consecutive years; an unweighted GPA greater than or equal to 3.0 is required to be considered for renewal.

The award may be used for tuition, fees, books and on-campus room and board. Payments are made in two installments (fall and spring semester) each academic year directly to the student’s school after proof of enrollment has been provided. Payments are issued in the following academic year. No more than six credit hours may be completed online each semester.

OG&E’s dedication to education investment is evident in the company’s continuous support to deserving students, teachers and schools. In addition to scholarships, the company also funds teacher projects, offers energy efficiency grants, provides classrooms with energy education materials and partners with educational institutions to cultivate a pipeline of strong industry professionals. Since launching the program, the OGE Energy Corp. Foundation has awarded 12 Positive Energy Scholarships – totaling \$720,000 – to high school seniors.

To apply for the 2023 OGE Positive Energy Scholarship, visit [occf.academicworks.com](http://occf.academicworks.com). To learn more about how OG&E invests in education across its service area, visit [oge.com/education](http://oge.com/education).



Photos by Choctaw Nation

## CNO hosts annual career expo

The Annual Choctaw Career Expo was held at the Southeast Expo Center in McAlester on October 26. Students from across the Choctaw Reservation were able to attend the event. The Career Expo focuses on connecting future job seekers with regional employment and training opportunities.

Chief Batton, Tribal Council Members and other Choctaw representatives were in attendance to share information about the Choctaw Nation and speak to the youth about their futures.



# Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

This month I would like to highlight our rental assistance service. Rental assistance provides tribal members the opportunity to rent safe and sanitary housing outside of Choctaw Nation-owned rental properties.

Rental assistance is available throughout the reservation area of the Choctaw Nation. Applicants must submit a completed application along with their tribal membership card and income verification (other documents may be required). Those under the income guidelines may then be eligible to receive rental assistance for one year. After one year, applicants must come off the program for one year, allowing the Housing Authority the opportunity to serve as many tribal members as possible with rental assistance. Exceptions to the one-year rule are elders (55 and older), disabled families and college students, who may be served for up to four years as long as they are enrolled full-time and maintain at least a 2.50 GPA. Currently, there is no waiting list for rental assistance as the Tribal Council appropriated additional funding this year to alleviate the backlog.

Each rental unit must undergo a Housing Quality Services (HQS) inspection prior to being placed on the program, ensuring the landlord keeps the unit maintained in a safe and sanitary condition. Units will be inspected at least annually.

The Rental Assistance program also administers the Veteran’s Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program. VASH is a collaborative effort between two federal entities, HUD and the VA, to provide housing vouchers to Native American tribes to house homeless veterans. Currently, the Choctaw Nation has 20 vouchers.

Applications for all Housing programs are located at each community center and can be found online.

**Choctaw Nation**
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Housing Authority

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[i](#)
[v](#)
[s](#)

# FAFSA

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

**APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN**

**STUDENTAID.GOV**

**Choctaw Nation** High School Student Services

## 2023 LABOR DAY TRIBAL MEMBER RV RESERVATION

ONE REQUEST PER ADDRESS | ELECTRIC AND WATER HOOKUP RESERVATION FORM  
RESERVATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED PRIOR TO JANUARY 2, 2023

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

RV/Trailer description: (All information must be complete for reservation consideration)

Trailer type:  Bumper Pull Trailer  5th Wheel  RV

Length of RV/Trailer: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Slide-outs: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
Attn: Janita Jeffreys, Labor Day RV Reservations  
PO Box 1210 | Durant, OK 74702

No phone reservations will be accepted  
Please include a copy of your CDIB card only  
Sites will be assigned by lottery | DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY AT THIS TIME  
All applicants will be notified by mail

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**Cornelius Ray Tonihka**

Cornelius Ray Tonihka, 68, passed away Sept. 14, 2022.

Cornelius was born March 6, 1954, in Talihina, Okla., to Owen Baker and Rosie Samuel.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Eugene Tonihka and Bill Tonihka; and sisters Louise James, Juanita Spanke, and Virginia Hudson.

Cornelius is survived by his wife Janice; sons Sandy Goodwin, Chuck Goodwin, and Titus Goodwin; daughter Penny Qualls; sisters Rhodie Salazar and Theresa Maytubbi; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Shelley Kelley**

Shelley Kelly, 58, passed away Oct. 15, 2022.

Shelley was born Feb. 13, 1964, in Nowata, Okla., to Cecil and Claudette (Welch) O'Neal.

She was preceded in death by her father; husband Chris Kelley; and nephew Jacob Hollan.

Shelley is survived by her mother; daughters Alicia Herrell and spouse Jason, Christie Branscum and spouse Aaron, Cari Kothenbeutel and spouse Zach, April Elliott, and bonus daughter Kim Davison and spouse Nate; son Eddie Kelley; brothers Keith O'Neal and spouse Deanne, and Robert Hamner; sisters Shelia Hollan and Melissa Partin; brother-in-law Mike Kelley; special work buddy Mitchell Hornback; beloved friend Debra O'Neal; grandchildren Raelyn Herrell, Luke Herrell, Kinley Belle Branscum, Lillie Branscum, Maggie Branscum, Nashoba Kelley, Clarey Davison, Dillion Shetrone, Kaylee Molnar, Zachary Kelley, Arabella Pyle, Matthew and Andrea Kelley, Justin Kelley, and Jessica Kelley; six great-grandchildren; numerous nieces, nephews and cousins; other loved ones; and a host of friends.

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

**Patricia Ann Carney**

Patricia Ann "Peaches" Carney, 65, passed away Oct. 13, 2022.

Peaches was born Nov. 20, 1956, in Talihina, Okla., to Jim Lee Bob and Anna (Taylor) Bob.

She was preceded in death by her father; son Waylon Carney; and maternal grandparents Erie and Lillian Taylor.

Peaches is survived by her common-law spouse of 35 years Calvin Carney; her mother; brother Alfred Bob Sr.; nephews Alfred Bob Jr., Jaylon Bob, and Devon Bob; aunt Pearl Marris; canine companion Bud; and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, family, and friends.

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

**Mattie Lovewell**

Mattie "Tincy" Lovewell, 75, passed away Oct. 17, 2022.

Tincy was born June 6, 1947, in Foreman, Ark., to Mary LaVerne and Bootley Pond.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Clyde Henry Lovewell Sr.; son Clyde "Kawlija" Lovewell Jr.; daughter Marsheila Lovewell; sisters Sissy Lovewell and Mary Hoover; brothers J.W., Paul, Walter, James, and Earl Pond.

Tincy is survived by her son Donnie Lovewell and spouse Melissa; daughter Tina Thompson and spouse Allen; grandchildren Shelby Thompson, Amber Lovewell, Shabree Lovewell, Colt Lovewell, Nicole Pollard, Jessie Pollard Jr., and Justin Gregory; great-grandchildren Madilyn Bannister, Griffin Chilcoat, Grant Salazar, Piper Derrick, Hallie Sims, Bryson Rains, Hayden Pollard, Jase Pollard, Abby Lovewell, and Braxton Lovewell; brothers Robert Pond, and Mark Pond and spouse Gwen; sister Martha Braddock and spouse Jerry; many nieces and nephews; and other relatives and friends.

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

**Peggy Lynn Folsom**

Peggy Lynn Folsom, 79, passed away Aug. 10, 2022.

Peggy was born Oct. 1, 1942, in Oklahoma, to Rudolph Stanton Folsom and Helen Alice Fisher Folsom.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Tandy, Jerry, and Jimmy Folsom; son Charles Dale Stanley; and husband Jack Ronald McPherson.

Peggy is survived by sisters Mona Bland and Beverly Thomas; daughter Denna Hill and spouse James; granddaughter Sarah Taylor and spouse Justin; great-grandchildren Jackie and Caleb Taylor; and many nieces and nephews.

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

**Luke A. Homer Sr.**

Luke A. Homer Sr., 42, passed away Oct. 16, 2022.

Luke was born July 29, 1980, in McAlester, Okla., to Joseph and Melita Homer.

He was preceded in death by his father; brother Joseph M. Homer; maternal grandparents Doris and Bob Cargill, and Hugh Bennett; paternal grandparents J.F. and Francine Homer; and special uncle Robert Wolf.

Luke is survived by his wife Christi Homer; daughter Akaysha Wolf; sons Luke A Homer Jr., and Jake L. Homer; special nephew Joseph A. Homer; granddaughter Arayah B. Stacey; his mother; brother Stephen Homer; sister Bonnie Gourdin and spouse Travis; special sister-in-law Missy Homer; his lifelong best friend Erik Williamson; numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, and uncles; along with other extended family members and friends.

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

**Charles Douglas House**

Charles Douglas House, 72, passed away Oct. 20, 2022.

Charles was born July 7, 1950, in Hugo, Okla., to Cliff House and Boodie Jo (Oakes) House.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Linda House Allen; and brother-in-law Don Allen.

Charles is survived by his wife Faye House; daughters Keri Emery and Kelli House; grandchildren Kyle Emery, Hannah Richard, and Connor Richard; brothers Tommy House and spouse Linda, and Gary House and spouse Janet; numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins; and a host of other friends, family, and loved ones.

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

**Timothy Andrew Riddle**

Timothy Andrew Riddle, 63, passed away Oct. 24, 2021.

Timothy was born June 11, 1958, in Jacksonville, Ark., to Zella Jean Armstrong Riddle and Euclide Marvin McGinnis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; adopted father Floyd LaVarro Riddle; son T.J. Riddle; sister Randie Fraley; and brother-in-law Johnny Fraley.

Timothy is survived by his daughter Natasha Riddle; grandchildren Kelsie, Raevan, and Bentley; three great-grandchildren; sisters Dana Riddle and Diane Jones; brother Michael Riddle; and a host of nieces, nephews, and other extended family members and friends.

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

**Kobi Oakes Wood**

Kobi Oakes Wood, 31, passed away Oct. 19, 2022.

Kobi was born Oct. 29, 1990, in Hugo, Okla., to Robert Oakes and Tammie (Spear) Oakes.

She was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents Robert Dale "Scooty" Spear and Linda Sue Coffman; and her paternal grandparents Sam and Cecelia Oakes.

Kobi is survived by her husband Matthew Wood; son Karson James Cody; her parents; sister Brittany Brown and Rusty Cooper; sisters-in-law Alisha Anderson and spouse Shaun, and Rebecca Wood; maternal grandfather Gary Dale Coffman; mother-in-law Karen Wood; nieces Avery Anderson, Ja'Miya Johnson, and Addison Cooper; nephews Jayden Brown, Easton Brown, Caleb Allen, and Jace Cooper; along with a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Nocona M. Brinkley**

Nocona M. "Susan" Brinkley, 77, passed away Jan. 24, 2022.

Susan was born Feb. 6, 1944, in Cade, Okla., to Richard and Mattie James.

She was preceded in death by her parents; three infant brothers; three older brothers; her sister; sister-in-law; niece; and her son Jonathan.

Susan is survived by her children Samantha and Phillip; brothers Tom James and spouse Charlotte, and Benny James and spouse Barbara; sister Mickey Umsted and spouse Kenneth; four grandsons; four great-grandchildren; friends Betty Jo and Bonnie; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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

**Hampton Wade Anderson Jr.**

Hampton Wade Anderson Jr., 94, passed away Oct. 7, 2022.

Hampton was born July 19, 1928, in Seminole, Okla., to Rev. Hampton W. and Tessie Arbuckle Anderson.

He was preceded in death by his wife Mary; his parents; sisters Minnalettha (Charles) Reeder and Leta Jane (Jack) Ligon; and granddaughter Jennifer Marie Spencer.

Hampton is survived by his children Celissa Stephens and spouse John, Hampton W. Anderson III and spouse Jill, and David W. Anderson and spouse Colleen; grandchildren Kelly Myers, Todd Myers and spouse Ann, Chase Stephens and spouse Alexa, Marcy Carpenter, Connor Mayes, Brooke Cole and spouse Josh, David Anderson and spouse Bobbi; great-grandchildren Remington, Kale, Kylee, Isaac, Emily, Kennedy, John, Jeremy, Jacob, Amelia, Liam, Logan, and Luke; beloved cousins Clyde and Martha Evans; Georgia nieces and nephews; lodge brothers and friends across the country.

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

**Jennifer Kristen Manuelito**

Jennifer "Babe" Kristen (Nelson) Manuelito, 48, passed away Oct. 27, 2022.

Jennifer was born Jan. 1, 1974, in Lawton, Okla., to James Eli Sr. and Esther Vera (Peters) Nelson.

She was preceded in death by her mother; brother James Nelson Jr.; maternal grandparents Tracy and William Peters; paternal grandparents Theodore and Carrie Nelson; and nephew Wayne Bailey.

Jennifer is survived by her husband Brandon Manuelito; son Dylan James Manuelito; daughter Kyla Lu Ester Manuelito; her father; sisters Shelley Cromer, Lucy Nelson, Jacqueline Lyles, and Carl Hayes and spouse Robert; brother William Nelson; numerous nephews and nieces; and many dear and loved friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Home – Atoka](#).

**Jack Clarkson Austin, Sr.**

Jack Clarkson Austin Sr. age 88 of Clayton, Oklahoma passed away from this life on November 6th, 2022, in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Jack was born on December 31st, 1933, in Valiant, Oklahoma to Margaret (Dickerson) and Samuel Austin.

He proudly served his country in the U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division Field Artillery in the Korean War.

Jack was in the Choctaw Nation Health Service for over 30 years and served as a Choctaw Nation Council member over District 7 for 20 years. He took great pride in his Choctaw heritage and served his people with a Servant's heart.

Jack served as a board member for the Lighthouse Cathedral Assembly of God Church for 37 years. Jack played football for Tyler Junior College in Tyler Texas, where he played for the National Championship in Pasadena, CA at the Rose Bowl Stadium. After Tyler, he played football at Southeastern University and made the tryouts with the Cincinnati Bengals, but however was not able to attend due to a family emergency. Jack will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Jack is survived by his son, Jack Austin Jr and wife Philisha; grandson, Clark Austin and wife Tara; granddaughter, Malacha Sisk and husband Ethan; grandson, Samuel Austin; great grandchildren, Dawson, Drake, and Legacy Sisk, and Raya Austin; daughter, Trina Cain and husband Tony; daughter, Tonya Fowler and husband Rick; son, Louis Holstead and wife Mandy; grandchildren, Zachary Fowler and wife Katherine; Josh Fowler and wife Paige; Hunter Holstead, Hayley Holstead, Amanda Cain, Matthew Cain, Melissa Cain and son Lucas, sister; Hiwannah Kimzey; as well as numerous extended family and friends.

Jack is preceded in passing by his parents, Samuel and Margaret Austin; brothers, Sam Austin, Frank Loman, and Wilson Loman; sisters, Malacha Gaddy and Wauhilla Gale; wife, Norma Austin.

Please visit [McCarn Funeral Service](#).

**Rhoda Aline Sullivan**

Rhoda Aline Sullivan, 98, passed away Oct. 29, 2022.

Rhoda was born Dec. 5, 1923, in Smithville, Okla., to Nicholas Edison and Rosanna Jones Jefferson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; first husband Mark Lewis; second husband Herschel Sullivan; daughter Dora Barrett; brothers Lee Jefferson, David Jefferson, and Raphael Jefferson; sisters Minnie Edwards and Minnie Barnes; three grandsons; and a granddaughter.

Rhoda is survived by sons Travis Sullivan and Charles Lewis; daughters Julia Watson, Martha Watson, and LaDonna Johnson; 16 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Thomas Gene Jefferson**

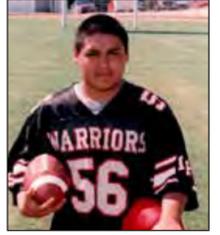
Thomas "Prez" Gene Jefferson, 40, passed away Nov. 2, 2022.

Thomas was born Nov. 6, 1981, in Idabel, Okla., to Franklin Eugene Jefferson and Valeria Jo Franklin.

He was preceded in death by his father; brother Anthony Ishcomer; sister Rendi Franklin; aunts Teresa Colbert and Nawatha Baker; grandparents Ben and Virginia Franklin, and Esias Jefferson; and cousin Bill Tonihka.

Thomas is survived by his mother; special friend Albert Shomo; grandmother Mary Jane Jefferson; sisters and brothers-in-law Bobbie and Jeremie Jackman, Amber, Bohannon, Abby and Julio Olvera; brothers and sister-in-law Brian and Alicia Ishcomer, and Zachary Jefferson; aunts and uncles Marietta and Larry Bond, Thelma and Rick Kaniatobe, Tracie and Elesten Willis Jr., Phyllis and Elias Roberts, and Ramona Willis; six nephews; 11 nieces; numerous cousins; and other relatives and friends.

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

**Clay Mason Collins**

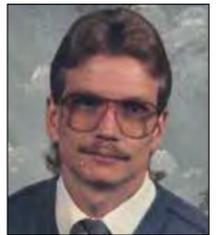
Clay Mason Collins, 59, passed away Oct. 17, 2022.

Clay was born April 13, 1963, in Flint, Mich., to Cecil and Mozelle Collins.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brother Randy.

Clay is survived by his daughter Christina Collins and Jarrad Hadley; siblings Janice Fielding, Kaye Crawford, and Mark Collins; and grandson Lucas Hadley.

For the full obituary, please visit [Jansen Family 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

# Reuniting Makers and Masterpieces: Introduction

The Choctaw ancestors made most of the tools and objects that they needed for everyday life by hand. Using skills passed down from previous generations, raw materials from the land around them, and their own creativity. They put a lot of themselves into these traditional arts - things like basketry, cloth, and silverwork. Objects of Choctaw traditional art that have survived from a long time ago can connect us with earlier generations of Choctaw people and deep traditional culture that we may not experience every day today. Because many of these traditional arts were designed to go back to the earth after they had served their purpose, and because of the history of colonization, today, museums are an important place for community members to reconnect with early Choctaw traditional arts.

In the summer of 2015, the Historic Preservation Department gained the ability to take a proactive approach to our ongoing Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAG-PRA) work, searching for our ancestor's remains and funerary objects in museum collections. Many readers may remember the No Stone Unturned project that was mentioned in last month's Biskinik. This project worked to systematically search state-by-state through collections for our ancestors and their funerary objects. As we were contacting these institutions, we also asked them if their collections contained non-funerary objects of Choctaw traditional art. Historic Preservation put together a simple online database to begin sharing these pieces of traditional art held in institutions all over the country with community members.

With such a database, Tribal members have the opportunity to go and research these items for their own revitalization efforts. We had no idea what we would find, but the past seven years have proven to be a genuinely heartfelt journey. Not only are we honored to work on behalf of our ancestors, but we are also deeply committed to sharing our discoveries with each of you. We invite you to explore the Chahta Imponna (Choctaw Skill) database to learn more. Visit Hina Hanta - The Bright Path at [www.hinahanta.choctawnation.com](http://www.hinahanta.choctawnation.com)

Museum collections were often assembled as part of the colonial process. This history would take a series of articles all on its own. However, to introduce our new series, we want to share about one institution in particular, the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History is now home to many Choctaw items that were collected in the early days of museum collecting. This history is very much tied to the development of the academic discipline of anthropology. Early anthropology



Pictured is a Choctaw rivercane basket (195824.000) from Oklahoma that is part of the National Museum of the American Indian collection.

held racist beliefs that undermined the sovereignty of Indigenous nations by advancing the idea that Native people and their cultures were disappearing with the expansion of western society. Anthropologists responded to this idea by going out into Indigenous communities all over the world to document them.

This documentation often sought to bring back "arterial culture," or artisan items, from communities, including pieces of traditional art from Choctaw families. These cultural items tell us about the materials and techniques used to create items in a specific moment and place, as well as the reasons why pieces might have been made. But more importantly, these pieces tie Choctaw people to one another. They hold family stories and memories and are incredibly meaningful to those connected to individual pieces. These items were winnowing baskets used to prepare tanchi (corn), bowls once part of family meals and hair combs worn by a Choctaw woman. While anthropologists and museums might see them as rare "objects," we do not view them as such, and this is why we seek to reunite the broader Choctaw community with them when we can. While seemingly simple, this can

be challenging at times. Photographs, finding aids and virtual collection visits are incredibly helpful in understanding what exactly is in a museum's collections, but they might be missing important cultural information regarding the purpose of an object and how it was made. There is a chance that finding aids are incorrect because they are based on field notes that have mistakes or lack key cultural information from the artisans. Sometimes, items that were collected should not have been for a variety of reasons. When we find such instances, we often work with museums to note the proper cultural protocol for such items because sometimes it is not appropriate for certain cultural items to be viewed at all, particularly sacred items. Ultimately, finding solutions to problems in museum collections lies in viewing collections within a culturally rooted framework. Despite some challenges in finding items, when the opportunity arises to view them in-person, it can be an invaluable experience for both the institution and the visitors. Choctaw cultural items not only contain evidence of the artisan's skillset but of the traditions, values and knowledge that accompany them passed down as generational knowledge.

Collection practices have changed over time and have increasingly recognized contemporary communities' input on older collections. The climate for Indigenous collaboration has changed too. Today, museum professionals are increasing their invitations to Indigenous communities to visit their collections in hopes of learning more about their cultural items and how to care for them. It has become viewed as best practice. As part of her graduate fellowship, tribal member Ph.D. student Jennifer Byram invited the Historic Preservation staff and two elders from our community who have worked with rivercane and are connected to these collections to view Choctaw material culture in the Smithsonian Institution collection. Spirits were high, and tears were shed. We cannot express in words the joy these makers experienced when reunited with pieces made by family and friends from years ago, many of whom have since passed on. In their words, "it was a trip of a lifetime." We were grateful for this unique opportunity to continue to build Choctaw Nation's relationship with the Smithsonian.

Over the next few months, we will be running a short series titled "Reuniting Makers and Masterpieces" to discuss how the artisan items that we recently viewed in the Smithsonian are part of a larger, ongoing effort to reconnect Choctaw people with the makers of the past. We hope that by sharing these items with you, we can pay tribute and honor to the makers of the past while celebrating modern artisans today. In doing this, we aim to highlight the deep knowledge developed by generations of Choctaw makers needed to create pieces like baskets, textiles, and metalwork and the present revitalization efforts underway.

Next month, we look forward to sharing with you about the basket collection at the Smithsonian and insights from two rivercane basket makers who have maintained and taught this skill to new generations of Choctaw basket makers. Later, we will share the silver work in the collection and highlight artists from the past and those carrying on this tradition today. Finally, we will finish this series with a broader look at textiles and other material culture at the Smithsonian. If you or someone you know is revitalizing Choctaw traditional arts, we would love to learn from you. If you know of a museum that holds pieces of Choctaw traditional arts, please contact the Historic Preservation Department. We would love to add it to our growing Chahta Imponna Database for our Tribal members to use as a resource.

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

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CHANGING EXHIBIT GALLERY OPENS JULY 23

## CNO lends a helping hand after EF4 tornado hits Reservation land

By Kendra Germany-Wall

The National Weather Service (NWS) has officially determined that the tornado that hit Idabel on Nov. 4 was an EF4.

Preliminary damage reports indicated the deadly storms that moved through parts of Northeast Texas produced an EF4 tornado with 170 mph winds in Red River County, Texas, before crossing into McCurtain County, where it ultimately hit the town of Idabel.

After Idabel, the storm moved east toward Eagletown, Oklahoma, on the East side of Broken Bow on U.S. Highway 70.

The path of this tornado continued on the ground for 58 miles.

More than 130 homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged.

Electrical power was still out for many residents in the area as late as Nov. 9.

According to officials, there was significant damage to Kiamichi Medical Clinic, Idabel Trinity Baptist Church and Catfish King Restaurant east of Idabel.

A damage survey team from the NWS in Tulsa confirmed an EF-2 tornado also touched down in northwestern McCurtain County near Pickens, with winds of up to 125 mph.

McCurtain county wasn't the only area to receive damage on Nov. 4. Storms caused damage in Byan, Pushmataha, LeFlore and Choctaw Counties.

Chief Batton spent time on Nov. 5 assessing the damage and visiting with those affected by the storm's destruction.

On November 5, Chief Batton also declared a State of Emergency for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma reservation, including but not limited to structures and roads entitled to aid, relief and assistance. The Executive Order took effect immediately and Choctaw Emergency Management teams immediately deployed to assess all storm damage and help where they were needed.

When disaster strikes, the Choctaw Nation steps into action to help not only tribal members but the communities affected as well.

One of the most immediate services offered by the Choctaw Nation is Emergency Management.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

Chief Batton spent time on Nov. 5 visiting with those whose property suffered damage during the Nov. 4 storm, which produced an EF4 tornado with wind speeds of 170 mph.

Choctaw Nation's Office of Emergency Management is often among the first on the scene of natural disasters within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. They even help in situations across the country, like hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

The key directives for Emergency Management are recovery, planning and hazard mitigation.

In a previous interview, Jeff Hansen, Director of the Choctaw Nation Office of Emergency Management, said that recovery is what the department provides after disasters.

According to Hansen, around 30 tribal officers went to Idabel to assist with search and rescue efforts.

During events like the Nov. 4 tornado, Emergency Management coordinates with other response teams, helping with communication, which helps keep everyone up-to-date on the conditions at the scene of the disaster.

The team also delivers water and supplies, all while guiding individuals through the FEMA process following the disaster.

Tribal members affected by the storms are encouraged to call the toll-free Choctaw Nation Disaster Hotline, 1-844-709-6301. When they call, they are instructed to leave their name, number and a description of their damage. An Emergency Services staff member will then contact the tribal member to assist them to the best of their ability.

After a natural disaster, debris can be a hazard for those helping with recovery and those who are trying to sort through their belongings. This makes diseases like tetanus a major health concern.

On Nov. 6, Choctaw Community Health Nurses set up outside the Idabel Choctaw Community Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to administer tetanus shots to anyone who needed them.

Volunteers from various departments at Choctaw Nation prepared meals and provided other services.

"I am so proud to be a part of a community filled with such caring people who come together during tough times to help their neighbors," said Chief Batton.

For more information on the services provided by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/>.



Large trees are left uprooted after the Nov. 5 EF4 tornado with wind speeds of 170 mph.

## CNO Breast Center designated as Center of Excellence

**TALIHINA, Okla. (Oct. 31, 2022)** – The Breast Cancer and Cancer Survivorship Clinic, residing in the Surgery Clinic of the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina, Okla. received the Joint Commission's Center of Excellence designation. The Breast Center has made strides in both prevention and the care of breast cancer for several years resulting in the designation.

The Breast Center's goal is to improve the quality of care and monitor outcomes of patients with breast disease. One of the advancements made in breast cancer care is the introduction of the Magseed® and Magtrace® surgeries to remove cancerous nodules within the patient's breast. The Center follows patients throughout their treatments, including visits to other facilities for radiation or chemotherapy not yet provided by the Choctaw Nation.

"We are thrilled to receive the Center of Excellence designation," says Dr. Amanda Chisum-Price, Physician Program Leader of Breast Cancer Services. "The department has worked hard to implement tracking procedures to see the progress of our patients and provide data to the physician team to be able to make educated decisions on patient care."

The Breast Center also works with the Physical Therapy department for lymphedema prevention and will pilot a new program next spring with the Choctaw Wellness Centers. "Taking the patient's entire health in consideration is our goal," says Chisum-Price.

The Joint Commission works to improve health care for the public by setting and holding health care organizations to the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission audits hospitals for accreditation programs. Special programs are evaluated to discover top tier performance and outcomes. For more information, please visit The Joint Commission website.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

Breast Clinic Team (from left to right): Rachelle Allen, LPN; Jennifer Roberts, LPN; Dr. Amanda Chisum-Price, Physician Program Leader; Kayla Price, PA-C; Wendy Brown, RN, BSN; Renee Robinson, RN, BSN.

### 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

## Keep your skin healthy during colder weather

**OKLAHOMA CITY (November 3, 2022)** — Oklahoma City Indian Clinic (OKCIC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit clinic providing health and wellness services to American Indians in central Oklahoma, wants to help you maintain healthy skin throughout the upcoming colder months.

National Healthy Skin Month is observed every November to highlight the importance of skin care. As we head into the colder months, our skin may face unique challenges.

"Turning up the heat in your home can make the air drier than other seasons, causing your hands and lips to become chapped or itchy," said Dr. Janice Hixson, OKCIC's Chief Medical Officer. "This is particularly uncomfortable for those who suffer from skin conditions, like eczema."

Dry skin is uncomfortable, but it can be prevented with the following methods:

- Use fragrance-free hand cream or ointment every time you wash or sanitize your hands
- Choose lotions that contain lipids (like ceramides), humectants (like glycerin or hyaluronic acid) and occlusives (like mineral oil or petrolatum)
- Use a humidifier
- Use unflavored lip balm with SPF 30 several times per day to heal chapped lips
- Look for lip balms that contain castor seed oil, ceramides, dimethicone, hemp seed oil, mineral oil, petrolatum, shea butter or white petroleum jelly
- Drink plenty of water
- "Remember to apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 before going outdoors," Hixson said. "Dry skin experiences sun damage more easily."

Applying sunscreen regularly becomes even more important in snowy weather. Snow reflects the damaging UV rays of the sun, which could further increase your chances of a sunburn. Reduce your risk of sunburn, skin cancer and premature skin aging by applying sunscreen to exposed skin before going outside and every two hours, if you are not indoors.

Cold weather can present some skin care challenges, but there are ways to keep your skin looking and feeling healthy all year round.

### About Oklahoma City Indian Clinic

Oklahoma City Indian Clinic was established in 1974 to provide excellent health care and wellness services to American Indians in central Oklahoma. The clinic staff cares for more than 22,000 patients from over 200 federally recognized tribes every year. American Indians can receive a range of services, including medical, dental, pediatrics, prenatal, pharmacy, optometry, physical fitness, nutrition, family programs and behavioral health services. For more information, please call (405) 948-4900 or visit [www.okcic.com](http://www.okcic.com).

### Food Distribution Headlines

By Chase Ward

The Holiday Season is in full swing, and along with the holidays come numerous celebrations with platters of delicious seasonal foods! These foods are often very high in calories and fat content, which could destroy your nutritional goals, so we want to provide some tips for you to use during this time.

You have plenty of options if you are hosting a gathering this holiday season and want to lighten up your offerings without sacrificing taste. With the following tips, you can swap out a few ingredients in your favorite recipes.

- Try low-sodium vegetable broth in your mashed potatoes to add flavor and cut back on butter or margarine.
- Substitute applesauce for oil, margarine or butter in muffins and quick bread such as banana bread. Try substituting a small amount at first, as too much may change the texture of the finished product.
- For dips and sauces, try using fat-free yogurt instead of sour cream or mayonnaise.
- Try sliced or slivered almonds as a delicious, crunchy topping in place of fried onion rings.
- Choose reduced-fat or fat-free cheeses for salads and casseroles. If you are a guest at a dinner party or other gathering, consider these tips to keep your night healthy and happy!
- Try starting your day with a small meal that includes whole grains, fruit, vegetables and some lean protein. Skipping meals before the event may tempt some people to overeat later.
- Socialize and settle into the festivities before seeking out the buffet.
- Savor foods you truly enjoy and pass up on those that don't interest you.
- Move your socializing away from the buffet tables or appetizer trays. This will minimize unconscious nibbling.

\*Tips courtesy of the article "Helpful Tips for Healthy Holiday Parties" from eatright.org.

### CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

#### MARKET HOURS

Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 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.

#### December 2022

All markets open weekdays, December 1-28

**Closed:** December 15, 23, 26, 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 December 6

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
Food demo December 13

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
Food demo December 22

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
Food demo December 8

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
Food demo December 20

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### 5-Minute Cranberry Fluff

- 2 cans pineapple tidbits, well-drained
- 1 can cranberry sauce
- 2 cans mandarin oranges, well-drained
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 2 cups miniature marshmallows
- 1 (8-ounce) carton of Cool Whip, thawed

#### Preparation

1. Drain pineapples and oranges to be sure there is no excess juice in the salad, which will make it watery and less fluffy.
2. In a large bowl, combine pineapple, cranberry sauce, oranges, pecans and marshmallows. Gently fold in Cool Whip.
3. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.



# Dearmore, McGee named CNO's 2022 Outstanding Elders

**DURANT, Okla. (October 27, 2022)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma recently hosted the 2022 Outstanding Elder banquet to honor the 17 males and 17 females who were nominated by their local Community Center as an Outstanding Elder.

The recipients of the Outstanding Elder for Choctaw Nation are Ricky Dearmore of Smithville, Okla. and Diane McGee of Atoka, Okla.

Since 1999, Choctaw Nation has recognized elders who go above and beyond for their peers at the annual event. This year's festivities were held on October 20 at the Choctaw Casino and Resort – Durant. Cultural and traditional activities, including the Lord's Prayer performed by the reigning Choctaw Nation Princesses, opened the ceremony.

"Our Choctaw Nation elders are our connection to the past and to our culture," says Kayla Williams, Director of Patient Relations for Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority. "Being able to keep aspects of our Choctaw culture is important to us as it honors their dedication and their legacy."

Dearmore moved into the Smithville Independent Elder Housing in 2016 with nothing but the clothes on his back. Despite that

challenge, it didn't take him long to become involved in the community. He can often be found cooking for his neighbors or delivering meals to the homebound. "Ricky has such a servant's heart," says Eddie Bohanan, Choctaw Tribal Council Member, District 3. "He reminds me of the quote, 'leave the world a little better than you found it.'"

McGee has been a part of the Atoka community her entire life, graduating from Atoka High School in 1978. In 2011, she retired and became more involved with the Choctaw Nation elders at the behest of her father. While writing her father's biography for his nomination for Outstanding Elder, McGee promised him she would be involved and upon turning 55, she did just that. McGee has been involved with a range of activities from taco sales to trips with the Elders. "She tries to ensure that all Elders are treated as equals," says District 10 Tribal Council Member Anthony Dillard.

"The Outstanding Elders bring us great pride and celebrating them gives us great joy," says Williams. "We are thrilled to resume the 'usual' banquet to be able to acknowledge all of our nominees from all across the reservation."



Photo by Choctaw Nation

Left: Outstanding Female Elder winner Diane McGee receives her acrylic plaque with (from left) Tribal Council Member Anthony Dillard, and Chief Gary Batton Right: Eddie Bohanan, Tribal Council Member (left), pauses as Chief Gary Batton hands Outstanding Male Elder Ricky Dearmore an acrylic plaque with Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.

## Choctaw Nation's Grimsley Joins Federal Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee

**DURANT, Okla. (October 24, 2022)** – U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg has appointed Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Executive Director of Advanced Technology Initiatives James Grimsley to a federal committee.

Grimsley will serve a two-year term on the Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee (AAAC), which provides advice to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on issues facing the aviation community as it integrates drones and advanced air mobility (AAM) operations in the national airspace system (NAS).

All seven members of Oklahoma's congressional delegation recommended Grimsley for the position. In their letter of support, they noted his track record in the aviation industry, strong background in university research related to unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and a unique ability to engage in government advocacy in support of the UAS community.

Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton praised the selection of Grimsley, who has also served on the Oklahoma Transportation Commission. "As Choctaw people, we are proud Oklahomans and proud Americans," Batton said. "We are grateful the federal government recognizes James Grimsley's expertise, and we will enthusiastically support his work on the AAAC."

Grimsley said he will use his experience to benefit all stakeholders.

"Drones and other UAS will bring about important benefits for agriculture and many other sectors in the coming years, and we must think carefully about integrating existing



Photo by Choctaw Nation

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Executive Director of Advanced Technology Initiatives James Grimsley was recently appointed to a federal committee by U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

systems with new technologies to ensure safety for industry and our communities," Grimsley said. "I would like to thank the Choctaw Nation and our representatives in Washington, D.C., for their trust and support."

For more information on the Federal Aviation Administration and the Advanced Aviation Committee visit their website.

## Interior Department announces \$21.53 billion in FY-2022 Energy Revenue, highest-ever disbursements from clean energy from Federal Lands and Waters

**WASHINGTON (November 4, 2022)** – Today, the Department of the Interior's Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) disbursed \$21.53 billion in revenues generated in fiscal year 2022 from energy production on federal and Tribal onshore lands, and federal offshore areas, including the record \$4.37 billion generated from the New York Bight offshore wind lease sale. This year's disbursements include the highest-ever revenues from renewable energy programs on federal lands and waters, driven by President Biden's efforts to jump-start the American offshore wind industry and make the U.S. a magnet for clean energy investments.

This year's overall disbursement is the second largest since 1983 and provides funds for states and Tribes to pursue a variety of conservation goals, including irrigation and hydropower projects, historic preservation initiatives, efforts to protect public lands and waters, and investments in much-needed maintenance for critical facilities and infrastructure on our public lands. This year, \$1.59 billion was distributed to Tribes and individual Indian mineral owners; \$3.32 billion to the Reclamation Fund; \$1.02 billion to the Land and Water Conservation Fund; \$150 million to the Historic Preservation Fund; \$460 million to federal agencies; and \$10.64 billion to the U.S. Treasury. ONRR also disbursed \$4.36 billion in fiscal year 2022 funds to 33 states. This revenue was collected from oil, gas, renewable energy and mineral production on federal lands within the states' borders and from offshore oil and gas tracts in federal waters adjacent to four Gulf states' shores. The states receiving the highest disbursements based on that activity are:

- New Mexico - \$2.74 billion
- Wyoming - \$785.73 million
- North Dakota - \$163.65 million
- Colorado - \$142.60 million
- Louisiana - \$118.88 million
- Utah - \$89.59 million
- Texas - \$77.31 million
- California - \$54.19 million
- Alaska - \$45.06 million
- Alabama - \$40.89 million
- Mississippi - \$37.81 million
- Montana - \$35.07 million

The revenues disbursed to 33 federally recognized Tribes and approximately 31,000 individual Indian mineral owners represent 100% of the revenues received for energy and mineral production activities on Tribal lands. Tribes use these revenues to develop infrastructure, provide health care and education, and support other critical community development programs, such as senior centers, public safety projects and youth initiatives.

Energy and mineral revenues collected, accounted for, analyzed, audited and disbursed by ONRR are generated from energy and mineral leases and other monies owed for the use of public resources on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf and onshore federal and Tribal lands. Since 1982, the Department has disbursed more than \$353.1 billion in mineral leasing revenues. ONRR makes most of these disbursements monthly from the royalties, rents and bonuses it collects from energy and mineral companies operating on federal lands and waters.

A complete list of states receiving revenues and FY 2022 disbursement data is available on the Natural Resources Revenue Data portal.

# PREVENTATIVE SCREENINGS



**DISCUSS RISK FACTORS AND SCREENING OPTIONS WITH YOUR PROVIDER TODAY**

Participating in preventative health screenings is one way to take charge of your health. These measures and tests identify diseases before symptoms are present. Some conditions show no warning signs, and these screenings can detect problems earlier when the conditions are possibly preventable or more treatable.

The first step in screening is to schedule an appointment with your primary care provider. At this appointment, you can discuss the benefits and risks of the screenings as well as develop a screening plan tailored to you and your unique health needs.

To reach your end goal of aging with grace, you should stay as healthy as possible. Participating in health screenings is an essential part of achieving this goal.

## Choctaw Nation Health Services



# 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

# 2022 Choctaw Day and Powwow

The 2022 Choctaw Powwow was held on the first weekend of November, kicking off Native American Heritage Month.

Dancers from across the nation gathered to compete in this year's powwow. This year's grand prize was the largest in the event's history, almost \$177,000.

More than 600 dancers, joined by singers and drummers, participated in this year's event.



Photos by Christian Toews and Mallory Jackson



## “Cowboy” Bill Parker Awarded France’s Highest Honor

by Kellie Matherly

On October 20, Choctaw tribal member Bill Parker received France’s highest award, the French Legion of Honor Medal. The ceremony took place at the Military History Museum in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

Fellow veterans, friends, family and community members attended the pinning ceremony, performed in French as is tradition, by Honorary Consul of France for Oklahoma Grant Moak. “The Legion of Honor is the most prestigious recognition that France gives anyone; it’s only given to those who have made a major contribution to France and its values,” said Moak. The French Legion of Honor award was signed off by French President Emmanuel Macron.

Parker, called Cowboy Bill since birth, grew up on horseback, working cattle and riding in rodeos near his

home in Shady Point, Okla. Years later, his rough-and-tumble upbringing would come in handy as a member of the U.S. Army’s Company E, 2nd Battalion of the 116th Regimental Combat Team of the 29th Infantry Division. He joined the army just in time for the allied invasion of France.

Parker’s unit landed as the first wave at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France on June 6, 1944. At 20 years old, Parker was the leader of the wire cutting team and was the first man off his landing craft. Under heavy fire from German soldiers, Parker’s team made their way to their assignment and blew the wire as instructed, but they became pinned under a pillbox near the beach where they endured shelling from U.S. Navy ships.

The 116th had the highest number of casualties of any unit on D-Day, but Bill Parker survived and led other soldiers to safety. He was promoted to Staff

Sergeant in the field and served the rest of the war through V-E Day on May 8, 1945.

Parker lost most of his hearing in the Navy shelling at Omaha Beach, and he was twice wounded in the war, but living for almost 80 years with the carnage he witnessed has been the hardest part. For decades, Parker suffered from terrible nightmares.

This summer, Parker returned to Omaha Beach for the first time since D-Day.

Seeing the families and children enjoying themselves at the beach in peace helped cure him of those nightmares. While in France, several people approached Parker to thank him for his part in liberating their country from Hitler during the war.

On receiving the medal, Parker told the crowd, “I never expected any of this for me, but I think it needs to be told, and I’m just glad it happened.”



Photo by Kellie Matherly

Bill Parker, center, was awarded the French Legion of Honor Medal on October 20. During a recent trip to France, several people approached Parker to thank him for his part in liberating their country from Hitler during the war.

## Veterans Day Ceremony honors those that served



Bruce Jesse leads the way as the Choctaw Nation Color Guard presents the flags at the Veterans Day Ceremony.



Photos by Kellie Matherly

Taps is played during the Veterans Day Ceremony.



District 2 Choctaw singers help with the opening ceremonies.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. speaks to the crowd gathered at the Veteran’s Day Ceremony.



Chief Gary Batton addresses the crowd during the Veteran’s Day ceremony at Tvshka Homma.



Choctaw Royalty perform the Lord’s Prayer for the crowd.

## Foster Care and Adoption highlighted at CNO Powwow

By Kellie Matherly

On November 4-6, the Choctaw Nation held its annual powwow at the Choctaw Event Center in Durant, Okla. The event drew thousands of people who came to participate in Native American culture through dance, drumming, singing and craftwork.

On Saturday, the powwow held a special honor song for Native Americans who were part of the foster care or adoption systems.

The following song was read over drumming provided by Full Metal Jacket.

“It is a heartbreaking fact that in our Indian communities we have lost many family members over the years because they were taken, put in foster care, or adopted out to non-Native families. We know that these children grow up to be adults that sometimes come looking for us. They return and attend cultural events like powwows to see if they can connect with their lost family and culture.

If anyone like that is here today, we see you. We want to honor you and welcome you home. To anyone whose life has been touched by family loss, whether you were in foster care, or an adoptee, or a birth parent, or adoptive parent, or if you were never even adopted at all, we see you. You are part of our Chahta family, and you are part of our hearts, and you deserve to share in our beliefs of faith, family and culture. To each of you, we say WELCOME HOME. We honor and love you.

To our Chahta foster children, whether you aged out or if you were adopted, and to our birth parents, and adoptive families, please come into our circle as we honor you with this song. You are welcome here. We know that there are those who could not be here today, and to represent them, we have some of our tribal leaders, our Children and Family Services workers and tribal prosecutors who will come stand in the circle to represent the ones who are not here. To our extended Chahta family, *chi hullo li*. Welcome home.”

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CHOCTAW  
TRAVEL PLAZA

# USA Lacrosse offers free ‘Pick Up & Play’ stickball and lacrosse clinic to local youth

By Shelia Kirven

Pick Up & Play, a youth lacrosse and stickball clinic, was held on November 10 at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant. As a part of National Celebrate Lacrosse Week, USA Lacrosse offered the free experience at locations throughout the country.

Approximately 40 youths ages 6-16 signed up and traveled to the three-hour clinic from areas such as Dallas and Tulsa. Participants were taught the fundamentals of lacrosse and stickball, enjoyed watching exhibitions and participated in playing.

Mike Delloro, Durant Lacrosse Association coach, said that USA Lacrosse celebrates Indigenous people and the roots of lacrosse being native to the northern tribes, Canada and upstate New York. USA Lacrosse was founded in 1998.

“We appreciate the opportunity to showcase lacrosse and stickball; these sports have Native ties, and the collegiate scholarship opportunities are substantial. More and more colleges are considering the sport of



Photos by Chris Jennings

Approximately 40 kids between the ages of 6 and 16 attended a lacrosse clinic at the Choctaw Cultural center. As a part of National Celebrate Lacrosse Week, USA Lacrosse offered the free experience at locations throughout the country.

lacrosse as a new sport to offer. Now is a great time for newer players to learn lacrosse and enjoy some of the similarities to stickball,” Delloro commented.

Durant’s lacrosse team is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was founded in 2015. Delloro said that up to ninety-six percent of participants

have chances for college scholarships in lacrosse after participating. Senior Mekiah Carey is one of them.

“I’ve been playing stickball since I was little when I came to Durant. Coach Mike found me and said I was a really good stickball player, and when he showed me how to play lacrosse,” said Carey, “it was really similar, and I felt in love with it.”

Carey has already received several offers to play at universities in Texas and Kansas.

“Mekiah is a fantastic lacrosse

player; her stickball skills have propelled her to be one of her class’s top recruits. Mekiah was a part of our Texas summer travel team that climbed to No. 5 in the national rankings,” Delloro said. “Her speed, tenacity, toughness and awareness are why she is being recruited to play lacrosse in college. We are proud that she represents the Choctaw Nation and Durant Lacrosse.”

To learn more about the sport and get involved, follow Durant Lacrosse on Instagram or Facebook.



Mekiah Carey helps a group of boys work on their ground game at the free lacrosse clinic.

## Tribal Membership ID cards expiring soon

By Christian Chaney

Tribal Membership ID cards will begin expiring in Jan. 2023.

The expiration date on tribal membership cards are for ID purposes only.

An expired card does not impact tribal membership status. However, once the card expires, it can no longer be used as a form of ID.

Tribal Membership ID cards are federally recognized identification. This means the photo, security features and ID expiration date on your Tribal Membership Identification Card are within federal compliance to meet security standards as an official ID.

The Tribal Membership ID cards are considered an all-in-one card and include the individual’s tribal membership information, CDIB and photo for identification purposes.

According to the Choctaw Nation Tribal Membership Department, owning a Tribal Membership ID card is vital to exercising tribal sovereignty.

To renew your Tribal Membership ID card, tribal members must complete an application and submit a valid photo identification and passport-style photo.

Valid photo identification includes, but is not limited to, a non-expired Tribal Membership Identification card, state-issued identification card, state-issued Driver’s License, Military ID, student/school ID, passport and SmileSafe photo card.

Tribal members are welcome to renew their cards in person in the Membership Department at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters.

For questions regarding your Tribal Membership ID card, please contact the Tribal Membership Department at 580-634-0654.

# CHOCTAW NATION LIVESTOCK SHOW



**FEBRUARY 4-5, 2023**

800-522-6170 | [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LIVESTOCKSHOW](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LIVESTOCKSHOW)

Choctaw Nation Natural Resources



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# CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK

DECEMBER 2 - DECEMBER 31



Come enjoy our light display. Hot chocolate will be available on Friday and Saturday nights from 6pm-9pm.

Christmas in the Park is a drive-through light display at the Choctaw Capitol Grounds. This event spreads Christmas cheer throughout the Choctaw Nation.

SERVING HOT CHOCOLATE ON THE FOLLOWING WEEKENDS:

DECEMBER 2 - 3  
DECEMBER 9 - 10  
DECEMBER 16 - 17

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

## December 2022

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

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