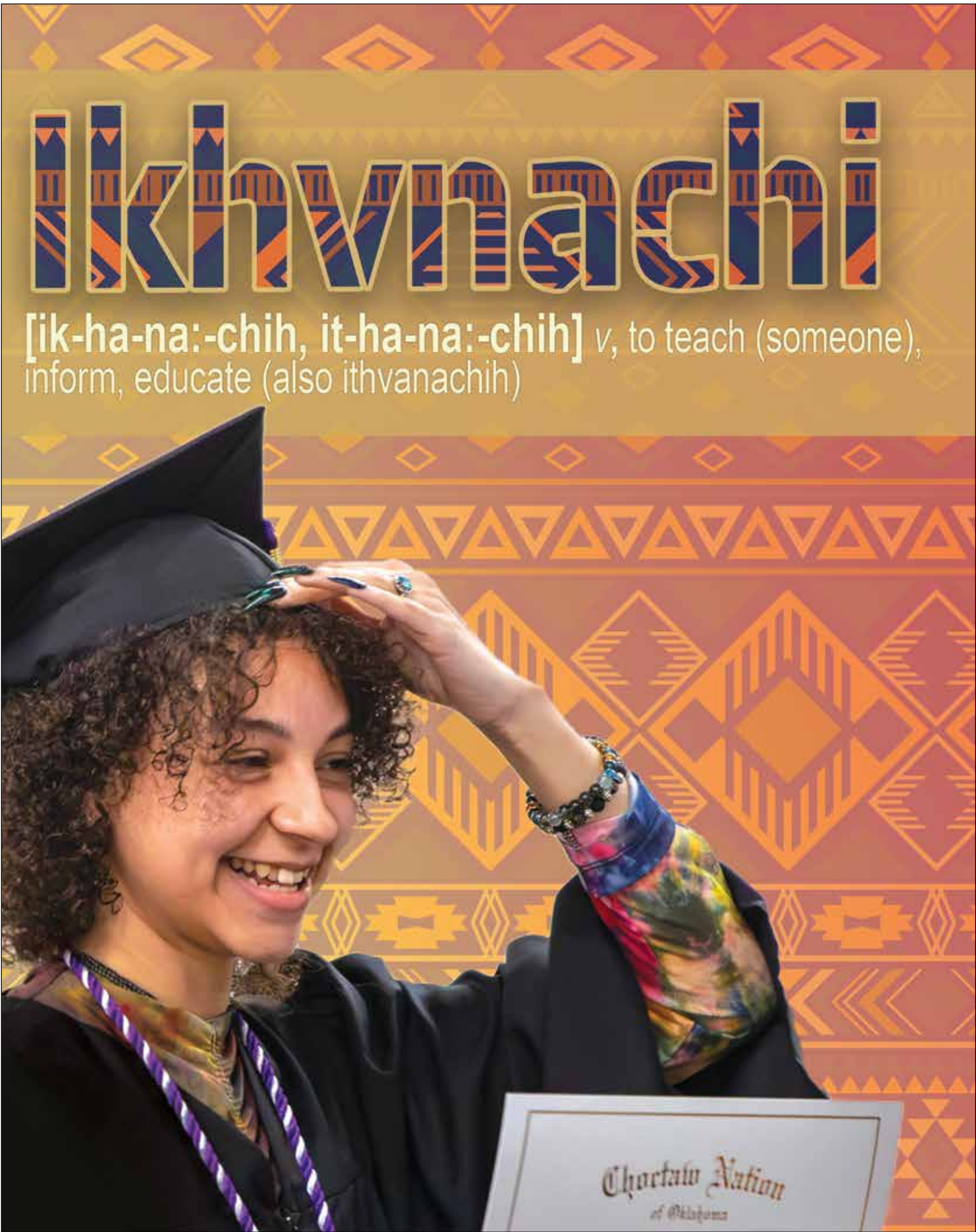




February 2024 Issue



CNO supports academic success as a new semester kicks off

By Christian Chaney

As a new semester begins, Choctaw Nation's Education Programs are in full swing, providing comprehensive assistance to students of all ages. From facilitating academic excellence reimbursement to extending grants for school supplies and offering higher education guidance, the Education Department is dedicated to supporting the educational journey of Choctaw Nation tribal members. In the last funding cycle, Higher Education and Career Development awarded 14,666 students for a total of \$20,031,079. In line with the mission statement, "To the Choctaw Proud, ours is the sovereign nation offering opportunities for growth and prosperity," the education programs empower and serve students across the United States and epitomize the Choctaw Nation's commitment to educational success. Ashley Adams, Success Through Academic Recognition (STAR) Program Manager, explains what the STAR program means to her team and the importance of education to the Choctaw people. "The STAR program transcends grades and attendance. It illuminates the profound truth that, as Choctaw tribal students, we are not just acknowl-

edged but celebrated for our inherent potential for success. For too long, we stood in the shadows, perceived as unequal," said Adams. "Today, through the STAR program, we not only stand shoulder to shoulder with our peers, but soar above, proving that equality is not just a principle, but a reality. In our pursuit of academic excellence, each day becomes a testament to our resilience, and it's an honor to play a small part in recognizing and nurturing the brilliance that shines within every Choctaw student." Hope Storey, who currently works for Higher Education's Technology Allowance Program, utilized the various programs Choctaw Nation offers students during college. "Not only did that money help me buy a good laptop that would be reliable to do all of my work on, it has lasted me five years to my master's program. Along with the help I have received from Choctaw for my bachelor's, they are also helping me with my master's degree," said Storey. "Career Development and Higher Education have been nothing but a blessing to me and a weight off my shoulders when it comes to paying for school, and I am thankful to everyone who has been a part of that. I would have never thought in a million years that I

would be working for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and it has been a full circle moment coming to work for one of the programs I took advantage of when continuing my education." While several programs have a deadline of March 1, 2024, others, like Career Development and High School Student Services, are accessible to students year-round. Career Development enables CNO tribal members to obtain recognized certifications. Services offered under Career Development include career counseling, career planning, job and salary outlook, financial aid counseling, tuition assistance and more. High School Student Services serves students in grades 9-12, providing them with academic information promoting their education and career paths after high school. HSSS services include school visits, student advising, parent-teacher conferences, scholarship information, student success planners, ACT prep workshops, pre-approved reimbursements and more. Applications for each program are available on the Chahta Achvffa Member Portal. For more information about eligibility requirements, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/>.

CNO education programs with applications currently open:




HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM APPLICATION

The Higher Education Program offers financial assistance to eligible Choctaw tribal members actively pursuing a higher education degree at an accredited college or university.

To qualify, individuals must be a CNO tribal member, actively working towards at least an associate degree, enrolled in a minimum of three credit hours, and maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher in the previous semester.


The program is also open to concurrent high school students taking college courses. Applications for the spring semester close on March 1, 2024.



HIGHER EDUCATION COLLEGE CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

The College Clothing Allowance is a one-time financial assistance program offered to Choctaw tribal members nationwide who are currently enrolled in accredited colleges or universities.

Eligibility criteria include being a CNO tribal member with a high school diploma or equivalency, having completed a minimum of 12 cumulative credit hours at an accredited institution, maintaining a minimum GPA of 2.0 in the most recently completed semester, and being actively enrolled in a minimum of 3 credit hours for the current semester. Applications close on March 1, 2024.




HIGHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY ALLOWANCE

The Technology Allowance program extends a one-time payment of \$500 to Choctaw tribal members nationwide currently enrolled in accredited colleges or universities.

Eligibility requirements include a CNO tribal membership, possession of a high school diploma or equivalency, completion of a minimum of 12 cumulative credit hours at an accredited institution, and active enrollment in a minimum of 3 credit hours with a minimum GPA of 2.0 in the most recently completed semester.

Applications for the spring semester close on March 1, 2024.



STAR
CHOCTAW STUDENT

Get Cash Rewards for Good Grades & Perfect Attendance

The Success Through Academic Recognition (STAR) program is an incentive initiative designed to reward and encourage academic excellence for Choctaw members in grades 2 through 12.

Eligible students must be enrolled in the specified grades and possess a CNO tribal membership card. Incentives are distributed at the end of each semester, including a \$50 gift card for all A's, a \$25 gift card for all A's and B's, and an additional \$25 for perfect attendance. The STAR program serves as a motivating force, recognizing and celebrating the academic achievements of Choctaw students.

Applications for the previous fall semester close on April 1, 2024.



OTHER CNO EDUCATION PROGRAMS

For more information, visit www.choctawnation.com.

Johnson-O'Malley Program (JOM)

Provides funding for supplemental programs through contracts with public schools within the Choctaw Nation service area to meet the specialized and unique educational needs of eligible students.

Adult Education

Providing a variety of services to employers and childcare providers including, but are not limited to, workforce planning, recruitment and assessment of potential employees.

477 Program

Providing a variety of services to employers and childcare providers including, but are not limited to, workforce planning, recruitment and assessment of potential employees.

Student School & Activity Fund (SSAF)

Offers an annual \$100 grant to purchase school supplies and clothing for Choctaw students possessing a tribal membership card.

Career Tech Concurrent Assistance

Assists high school juniors and seniors residing in Oklahoma with required expenses to attend training.

HEROES

Assists Choctaw tribal members who are interested in pursuing a career in healthcare by providing support, funding, educational and career opportunities.

Graduation Stoles (College)

Presented as a memento to Choctaw tribal members who are completing a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree program.

Project RISE

Connecting Native American students to college and career opportunities.

Head Start

Provides educational, health, nutritional, social and other services deemed necessary to promote school readiness in children aged 3-5.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

Get involved in the Choctaw Nation

Halito,

Each year, following the holiday season, it gives me a chance to not only reflect on the past year, but to look forward and ponder where we are going as a Nation.

Our sovereign rights as a recognized tribal nation have come under fire in the political arena, and it is our duty as Chahtas to do all we can to educate people on what our Nation stands for. We must take steps to ensure that our Nation will always maintain its sovereign status. A good first step to become more involved in our Choctaw Nation is learning more about our Choctaw language. We desperately need more Chahta in our language programs so that our native tongue will always be heard on the reservation.

We talk about Chahta pride and sovereignty, but we always must be willing to ask ourselves if we can be doing more to show that the Choctaw Nation is here and will be here for generations to come. To help with this answer, we must be razor sharp in our focus on maintaining our sovereignty. We must take the steps necessary to maintain Chahta pride and remain a sovereign nation. For many the first step is getting more involved in our tribe by helping us maintain our culture, heritage, and language.

I challenge you to do more this year. Become more involved in the classes and cultural aspects of the Choctaw Nation. You will never regret being more educated on who you are and how you got here, so I urge you to become more involved in this great Nation. Promote our programs, invite people in to see what the Choctaw Nation has to offer, and become an ambassador for the Choctaw Nation. Without you, the Choctaw Nation will cease to grow and prosper; so, involve yourself and your family and discover what Chahta pride and sovereignty really mean.

We have a lot to be proud of in the coming year. Our associates have worked hard to grow the Choctaw Nation into what it is today – a thriving, vital economy that provides for its tribal members and state. The accomplishments of 2023 that I talked about in my last letter were great, but we also have a great number of things to look forward to in 2024.

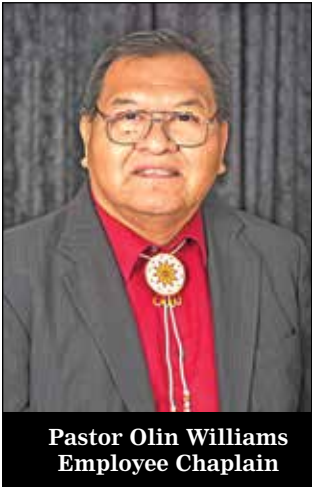
First, I urge everyone to tune into Disney+ or Hulu and watch the Marvel series “Echo.” The hero of the story is a young Choctaw woman who is fighting against an evil crime syndicate that she broke away from. The Choctaw Cultural Center and Choctaw language department played a huge role in this worldwide series. The series creators wanted an authentic Choctaw experience, and our associates were up to the task. The series is TV-MA rated, so keep that in mind when viewing. I think you will be pleasantly surprised by the Chahta language being spoken as well as some surprising Choctaw actors and highlights.

There are some exciting developments coming in 2024 as we continue to grow and expand services within the Choctaw Nation. Here are just a few new projects coming in 2024:

- Three Rivers Meat Processing (Investment Partnership) – January 2024
- Talihina Forestry/Fire Hall – March 2024
- Durant Multi-Family Apartments – March 2024
- Choctaw Landing – Hochtatown – March 2024
- Broken Bow Multi-Family Apartments – March 2024
- Tvshka Homma Council Building – April 2024
- Housing Development Playgrounds – June 2024
- Hugo Tribal Services Building Expansion – August 2024
- Daisy Ranch Makerspace – August 2024
- Broken Bow Park and Walking Trails – September 2024

We have a lot to be proud of as Chahta. We continue to grow, expand and promote our culture on a global scale. I am excited to see what the future has to offer, and, with your help, there is no obstacle we can’t overcome as a proud, sovereign nation.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

The Two Covenants

Galatians 4:22, “For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.”

In Genesis 12:2, God promises to make a great nation from Abraham. Sarah was his wife. The Messiah was to be born through Abraham’s line. But time passed, and no son was born. Sarah began to believe that Abraham and she would not bear the promised son and began to take it upon her own suggestion of having the promise fulfilled. She suggested Abraham bring in a concubine and have a son by her.

Abraham took her advice and brought in an Egyptian slave by the name of Hagar. From this union, Ishmael was born. Abraham hoped God would keep his promise through Ishmael.

But in Genesis 17:19, “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and shalt call his name Issac; and I will

establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”

There is a spiritual lesson in this account. Verse 24 tells us that this is an allegory.

These two sons symbolize two covenants, one of works (or law) and the other of grace. Thus, the word of God shows us that the one who expects to live by what he does is under the law of works. And belongs to the tribe of Hagar and Ishmael, her son.

Those who are saved by believing in the works of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and have the righteousness of Christ imputed unto him are like Isaac, the child of promise.

Ishmael was born to Hagar, an Egyptian slave, after the works of the flesh. It gendereth to bondage. Isaac was born to Sarah, a freewoman, and was by promise.

Abraham and Sarah were young enough to bear children, so they worked to help God fulfill his promise of a son. But God waited until they were too old to bear children before He performed a miracle and gave them a son.

Often, we produce Ishmael Christians by works and not Isaac Christians by waiting on God to save them by his grace.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Take a beat to love your heart during heart month

Matters of the heart tend to be emphasized more during the month of February. Valentine’s Day is a day set aside to express from your heart how much your loved ones mean to you. It is also a time to give some love to your heart, during American Heart Month.

February is American Heart Month, a time to pay special attention to understanding, preventing, and treating heart disease – the leading cause of death in the nation.

Over 874,000 Americans died of cardiovascular disease in 2019, according to the American Heart Association. American Heart Month brings awareness to the factors surrounding heart disease, like symptoms, complications, and risk factors.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States.

According to the CDC, Native Americans / Alaska Natives were 50% more likely to be diagnosed with coronary heart disease than their white counterparts. Choctaw Nation numbers for 2023 include: Hypertension was the No. 2 diagnosis (Diabetes No. 1) with over 36,000 visits being attributed to that diagnosis, which is a 6% increase from the prior year. Over 21% of all CNHSA patients have hypertension as a primary diagnosis.

For American Heart Month, the Choctaw Nation and other organizations reinforce the importance of heart health, the need for more research and efforts to ensure that millions of people live longer and healthier.

According to the American Heart Association, here are just a few examples of how you can reclaim your health:

Doing at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week. The Reservation’s Wellness Centers is a great place to do that!

- Eating healthy.
- Not smoking or vaping.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Controlling blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure.
- Getting regular checkups.
- Learning Hands-Only CPR.
- Following COVID-19 safety protocols .
- Finding ways to relax and ease your mind, such as meditation.

Taking care of your heart also pays dividends for your brain. That’s because many of the risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity, are also related to brain diseases such as stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, experts note.

Many people have delayed or avoided seeking medical care. Unhealthy use of alcohol and other substances has been on the rise. All these things can increase the risk of heart disease.

President Lyndon B. Johnson, among the millions of people in the country who experienced heart attacks, issued the first proclamation for American Heart Month in 1964 to spotlight heart disease. Since then, U.S. presidents have annually declared the federally designated event for February.

The first Friday of American Heart Month, Feb. 4, is also National Wear Red Day to bring awareness. The Choctaw Nation observes this day and urges associates to wear red that day.

Go red to raise awareness and support the fight against heart disease – the No. 1 killer of women, causing 1 in 3 deaths. That’s more than all forms of cancer combined.

For more information on the event and other activities during the month, go to www.choctawnation.com/about/health or go to choctawnation.com . Click on about and scroll down to health.

Your heart is the motor for your body and in order for your body to operate like it should you have to pay attention to your heart health before it’s too late.

Leaders of the Five Tribes issue statement to Governor Stitt declining participation in the One Oklahoma Task Force

The INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL
of the FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES
Organized February 3, 1950

(January 9, 2024)

Dear Governor Stitt,

As the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (ITC), an organization that unites the tribal governments of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole Nations, we are dedicated to advancing public safety for our citizens and all of our neighbors in Oklahoma. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with state, federal, local, and tribal governments towards this goal. We have a long track record of this collaboration, both before and after the McGirt v Oklahoma decision.

While we hope the State of Oklahoma will join our collaborative approach, we must stand in opposition to Governor Kevin Stitt’s task force on McGirt as presented in Executive Order 2023-32. After reviewing the language of the Executive Order and structure of the proposed task force, we conclude that it is designed to divide rather than unify and to make political points rather than seek genuine solutions. This task force cannot adequately serve the public good unless these flaws are corrected.

At its core, the McGirt v Oklahoma decision is a pro-public safety ruling. By restoring tribal jurisdiction that the State had illegally usurped for well over a century, the decision has increased police and prosecutors and empowered tribal courts to enforce the law and deliver justice for victims. Rather than cause uncertainty and wreak havoc, as the Executive Order claims, the McGirt decision has finally restored legitimate legal jurisdiction under clear federal laws and the U.S. Constitution.

Unfortunately, rather than focusing on how to incorporate tribal authority to benefit the public, the State has wasted time and energy trying to evade, reject, or delay compliance with the law.

We call on you and the State of Oklahoma to make a good faith effort at practical solutions for working with tribes to improve public safety. That means setting aside politicized rhetoric and denials of tribal sovereignty. The structure of any task force must also reflect respectful government-to-government dialogue with each of the 38 unique tribes in Oklahoma. The State has no authority to mandate any Tribe to defer to another Tribe to speak on its behalf.

When we have a willing partner at the State of Oklahoma, we are fully prepared to move forward. We are eager to work with our friends and neighbors to improve coordination in public safety efforts. What we cannot do is participate in an effort that spreads falsehoods about the law, attempts to minimize tribal voices, and engages in political attacks instead of constructive government-to-government dialogue.



CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

NEW EXHIBIT

BOK ABAIYA: PRACTICED HANDS AND THE ARTS OF CHOCTAW BASKETRY



SCAN OR GO TO:
[BIT.LY/CCC-EXHIBITIONS](https://bit.ly/ccc-exhibitions)

JULY 22, 2023 - MARCH 30, 2024



HIGHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY ALLOWANCE

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FROM JANUARY 2 - MARCH 1.

The one-time payment of \$500 is available to eligible Choctaw tribal members nationwide attending an accredited college or university.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/TECHNOLOGY-ALLOWANCE](https://choctawnation.com/services/technology-allowance)

Choctaw Nation of OklahomaCHOCTAWNATION.COM

Attendees all abuzz after beekeeping workshop

By Shelia Kirven

A full-day beekeeping workshop was held on January 6, 2024, at the Choctaw Nation Community Center in Durant. The free event, sponsored by the Choctaw Nation Environmental Compliance Department in cooperation with an EPA cooperative agreement, was open to the public and drew a crowd of 108 eager and excited attendees.

Madill, Oklahoma, beekeeper Pat Tickle (tickelbees@gmail.com) displayed supplies and equipment, discussed beginning steps, and the health and safety of bees, along with how to construct your own bee house.

Tickle has worked with bees for around 15 years and currently has around 40 hives. He said it all started when he heard about a swarm of bees entering a cinder block and decided he wanted to capture them. His father had beehives when he was growing up after Tickle’s asthmatic brother’s doctor told his parents to give him local honey.

Tickle was very happy with the turnout at the Durant class. “I have never had a class that large and people so engaged,” said Tickle. “It was very gratifying to see that kind of response for what the Tribe was offering.”

He advised how to begin working with bees. “You need goals, obviously. And if you are going to set those goals, be realistic with them,” Tickle said. “I always tell people it’s best to start small. Learn all you can, see how it goes and grow as your experience allows you to.”

Sarah Garrett, a tribal member from Bokchito, Oklahoma, found out about the class on Facebook. She said her husband made her a deal. If she attended the class and cared for their bees, he would buy her the supplies.

According to Garrett, she’s taking him up on that deal and learning all she can. She plans to get started in the spring.

So, what is all the buzz about bees anyway?

Bees are incredible creatures, and beekeeping is a great outdoor hobby that pays off in sweet, organic goodness. You can



Photos by Shelia Kirven

Workshop attendees had the chance to view all the tools needed for beekeeping.

reap the benefits of a healthy product and know you are playing a part in helping bees have a safe place to live and work, helping local pollination and improving the environment.

Before you decide if beekeeping is right for you, remember that it can be costly to purchase equipment and protective gear, and you need to be able to dedicate the necessary time.

According to The American Bee Journal (July 2020), the best way to learn beekeeping is “through hands-on experience under the guidance of a knowledgeable mentor.”

If you don’t plan to become a beekeeper yourself, learning about the amazing world of bees is fascinating. Countless books, magazines, podcasts, websites, social media pages, classes, and societies exist. Great places to begin researching are the American Bee Federation’s website, www.abfnet.org, the Oklahoma State Beekeepers Association (www.sooner-bees.org) and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture for bee registration and laws (<https://ag.ok.gov/divisions/consumer-protection/>).

If you find yourself “bee-ing” excited about working with bees, check into one of the upcoming workshops sponsored by the Tribe. The next workshop will be on February 24 at the Poteau Choctaw Community Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, email Ron Workman at rworkman@choctawnation.com.

Workshops are free and open to the public.

10 “Sweet” Facts About Bees and Honey

01

Honey is a natural sweetener and has also been used for centuries for medicinal purposes.

02

Honey was used as a natural preservative in early embalming fluid, and vessels of honey were found in ancient Egyptian tombs.

03

Cave paintings at Arana Caves in Spain depict human use of honey 8,000 years ago.

04

The honeybee’s wings stroke 11,400 times per minute, which creates their characteristic buzzing sound.

05

Honey does not expire. Even crystallized honey is good for eating.

06

There are over 20,000 known bee species in the world, and 4,000 of them are native to the United States. They range from the tiny (2 mm) and solitary *Perdita minima*, known as the world’s smallest bee, to kumquat-sized species of carpenter bees.

07

Each beehive has one queen, worker bees (females), and drones (males.) The queen is the only bee with fully developed reproductive organs. The male’s job is to pass on genetics. None of the bees rule over the others, as they all have jobs.

08

Bees feed exclusively on sugary nectar and protein-rich pollen from flowering plants, unlike the carnivorous wasps from which they evolved.

09

Native bees are the primary insect pollinator of agricultural plants in most of the country. Native bees were here long before European honeybees were brought to the country by settlers (honeybees are not native to North America).

10

Our bees come in as many sizes, shapes, and colors as the flowers they pollinate. There is still much that we don’t know about native bees—many are smaller than a grain of rice and about 10% of bees in the United States have yet to be named or described—but all of these bees have jobs as pollinators.

For more about bees, visit www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Invertebrates/Bees.



Tia Haislip, 4, attended the class with her family. Tia was busy as a bee working with magnetic blocks while Mom and Dad caught up on information.

Choctaw tribal member’s legacy honored during 135th Rose Parade

By Christian Toews

Linda Carroll Dean’s life was honored during the 135th Rose Parade on January 1, 2024, in Pasadena, California.

A floragraph of Dean was featured on the trophy-winning OneLegacy Donate Life float titled “Woven Together- The Dance of Life.” The float was designed to celebrate Native American culture and serve as a tribute to life-giving donors. It featured a Hopi butterfly dancer in a full headdress with floragraphs of the selected organ and tissue donors on large traditional woven baskets.

Dean’s daughter, Sherri Eades, was invited to attend the Rose Parade and to participate in placing the floragraph of her mother on the float. She said that words can’t express her gratitude for the opportunity to be involved in the parade.

“I’m so proud of my mom and her donation,” she said. “She overcame all the obstacles that were thrown at her.”

Dean grew up in Leon, Oklahoma, and later moved to Ardmore. She was very proud of being a Choctaw tribal member.

According to her family, she was forced to speak English in school but continued to speak the Choctaw language with her family and elders in her community.

Dean was a hairdresser for 20 years and had a far-reaching impact on her local community. At the age of 40, she was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy.

This aggressive heart disease ended her career in cosmetology due to long hours of standing and the physical stress on her body. However, this didn’t stop her.

She attended Southern Oklahoma Vo-Tech school, where she studied medical coding. After completing the program, Dean began a new career path in medical records with the Chickasaw Nation.

According to her family, when she wasn’t working, you could find Dean attending local powwows, sewing, visiting local arts and crafts shows, or spending time with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Dean passed away in January 2018 from chronic heart failure. Even though she thought she would not be a candidate because of her health, her family was able to honor her previous wishes of donation.

Her family said it is comforting to know that Linda can continue blessing those around her.

Eades said her mom was always giving and constantly looking for opportunities to help people. This spirit of giving was passed on to her children and grandchildren.

“Giving is part of the Choctaw culture, and she taught us to give and not expect anything in return,” said Eades.



Photos Provided

Pictured is the OneLegacy Donate Life Rose Parade float titled “Woven Together-The Dance of Life.” The float celebrated Native American Culture and honored the lives of several Native American organ donors, including Choctaw Nation’s Linda Carroll Dean.

According to Eades, her mother’s decision to be an organ and tissue donor allowed two people to see, and three people were able to recover from a mastectomy surgery because of her donation.

The organ and tissue donation recipients were invited to ride on the float and walk beside it during the parade.

Seeing the recipients of her mother’s donation was one of the most meaningful experiences of her time in California for Eades.

“It’s truly a gift of life. When you can see the whole circle, come back around and see what your donation helps,” she said.

Eades is passionate about spreading the word about organ and tissue donation to Native American communities.

She hopes that stories like her mother’s will inspire more Native Americans to sign up to be organ donors.

“The outcome I want from this is for Native Americans to be more aware of their choices about being an organ donor and then letting their family know their wishes,” said Eades.

To learn more about organ and tissue donation or to read other donor stories, visit www.lifeshareoklahoma.org.



Linda Carroll Dean’s likeness displayed on the intricate float.



“Woven Together - The Dance of Life” prepares for take off.



Linda Carroll Dean’s daughter, Sherri Eades.

CHOCTAW NATION FILM FESTIVAL

SUBMISSIONS: FEBRUARY 1 - MAY 31

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
SHOW OFF YOUR CREATIVITY IN THE LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT’S 2024 FILM FESTIVAL.

Scan QR code for more information.

Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

HIGHER EDUCATION COLLEGE CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FROM JANUARY 2 TO MARCH 1.

This one-time payment is available to eligible Choctaw tribal members nationwide attending an accredited college or university.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/COLLEGE-CLOTHING-ALLOWANCE

Choctaw Nation Education Services

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

OHoyo Hlampko VHLEHA:
THE INFLUENCE OF MATRIARCHS

TEMPORARY ART EXHIBIT – BRAD JOE

OCTOBER 31, 2023 – MARCH 16, 2024



Jennifer Woods

District 6

Halito and Happy New Year from District 6!
We ended our year celebrating Christmas with parties for our children and seniors. But the most exciting news is that we were able to move into our new community center!

We had a very busy day on January 9 when we held our ribbon cutting and open house with Chief Gary Batton, several members of the tribal council and many tribal members who had the opportunity to tour the building.

We also hosted a job fair on the same day for our new Call Center, which will be located in our Community Center. We had over 60 people show up to apply for the positions.

We also held our ribbon cutting for our LEAP homes in Red Oak that same day. The ribbon cutting was moved to the center due to the possibility of inclement weather. The new homeowners were so excited to receive the keys to their new homes. It is truly an honor to see our tribal members moving into homes that are safe and warm when so many are living in conditions that are unsafe to live in. Please fill out the housing application for LEAP homes, Independent Elder or Affordable Rental, as we are required to have ten applications to build in that area.

February brings many activities. We are always happy to support all of our students who show their animals and participate in the Choctaw Nation Livestock Show, which takes place on February 3 and 4. It takes a whole family and the teachers to support and help teach the responsibility of taking care of livestock 24-7.

Our seniors will also celebrate Valentine's Day, and we will crown this year's Valentine's King and Queen.

Our District 6 CHR and CBSW workers are set up in Quinton Community Center on a monthly basis to provide services to tribal members in the area. They will be there on February 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.. If you are in need of services or are unsure what services are available, please make note of the date and attend these meetings.

Once a month, the Veterans Tushka Coffee Club-Warrior Wellness Veteran Support Program meets at the District 6 Community Center. Please come and join other veterans for a cup of coffee and good conversation. For more information, call Paul Roberts at 580-920-2100. Yakoke to all our veterans.

Chahta Toksali is a new program to help place tribal members with outside businesses, such as the County Barns, City Hall and Courthouse, for on-the-job training. We are so appreciative of being able to work with our community partners and look forward to seeing the success of this program. For more information, contact Kim Hill, Program Manager, at 580-642-6859.

District 6 Princess Pageant will be held on April 16 at 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in representing your district as a Choctaw princess, please come to the Community Center to pick up an application.

We are so excited to have 41 employees officed in our new center to provide you with services from Housing, Job For The Day, Small Businesses, Community Based Social Workers, Certified Health Representatives, Computer Lab, Children and Family Services, Indian Child Welfare, and many more. Please come and check it out.

It is always my pleasure and honor to serve District 6. Come by and visit me! Yakoke.



Bill Logan is January Veteran of the Month

William "Bill" Logan is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month.

Logan was born in Albion, Okla., attended high school through 10th grade, and then went to Portland, Oregon to build ships. At age 18, he was drafted into the Marines. After two days, he boarded a train to San Diego, Calif., where he attended boot camp at Camp Elliott.

He traveled to San Francisco and boarded a ship. He had trained as a machine gun operator with mortars

and changed to a rifle platoon. The first Provisional Marine Brigade was formed and invaded six islands before the battle of Okinawa.

Logan arrived in Okinawa on April 1, 1945, and was wounded April 13, 1945. He was placed on a transport ship with other wounded and treated by a dentist, the only doctor aboard. He spent three weeks in a hospital in Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands. A transport plane took several soldiers to Guam to catch a troop ship carrying replacement troops to Okinawa, and Logan was back in action again. With many people in his regiment gone, wounded, or killed, replacements arrived every few days.

Okinawa was the last great battle of WWII and lasted 82 days, with 12,000 American troops killed and 400,000 wounded. Over 100,000 Japanese troops died, along with 150,000 civilians. When the island was secured, the division returned to Guam, where tents were set up and ready. New equipment and replacements were available, and training began for the landing on Mainland Japan.

Logan's division went to North China (Tsingtao), where 60,000 Japanese troops and many civilians had been stranded when the war broke out. He helped in getting them sent back to China.

Logan returned to civilian life after the war and worked in the log woods. He and his wife, Opal Estella Miller-Logan, had three children: Nick, Sally Ann, and Nancy Gale. They were married for 72 years when she passed away. He has three grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and three great-great-grandchildren.

The Choctaw Nation holds our veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates their sacrifices and contributions to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.

Not present, but also recognized during the January 13 Tribal Council Meeting, was Mrs. Marie Jackson who was named this month's First Speaker.



Upcoming Events



ACT Workshop – Idabel

A chance to learn about the skills and content covered on the ACT to improve your score and feel confident taking the exam.

📍 Kiamichi Technology Center - Idabel



Happy Heart 5k and 1-mile

The race is open to the public with free registration. Sign up now!

📍 Talihina Choctaw Nation Youth Center



The Choctaw Nation Livestock Show

A day of farm-based food, fun and festivities!

📍 Multiple Locations



Outlaw 100

Run in the footsteps of real outlaws at the Outlaw Course in Robbers Cave State Park. With 8,246 acres of scenic views, bluffs overlooking lakes, rock formations, and caves, it's an adventure waiting to be enjoyed.

📍 Robbers Cave State Park



Presidents' Day Tribal Holiday

All Offices will be closed for a tribal holiday in observance of Presidents' Day.

📍 All Locations



Community Cultural Meeting – Reno

Helping to bring our Chahta family closer together. Attend to meet other Chahtas in the Reno area, visit cultural, artist, and services booths.

📍 Peppermill Resort Spa Casino



Community Cultural Meeting – Phoenix

Helping to bring our Chahta family closer together. Attend to meet other Chahtas in the Phoenix area, visit cultural, artist, and services booths.

📍 Gila River Resorts & Casinos - Vee Quiva



Moyers Valley 5k

Start the new year off by achieving your fitness goals. Sign up now!

📍 Moyers Baptist Church



Navigating Mental Health and Substance Abuse Conference

Choctaw Nation's Behavioral Health team is hosting a conference designed for mental health professionals, law enforcement officers and anyone who would like to understand the impact of mental health and substance abuse in our society.

📍 Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant - Magnolia Ballroom

New Chahtapreneur Business Center opens in Durant



Choctaw Nation Photo

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was recently held for the Durant Chahtapreneur Business Center. Located at the Gregory E. Pyle Tribal Complex, the center will provide a coworking space for Choctaw tribal members enrolled in programs through Choctaw Nation Small Business Development . In addition, the center will offer business advising, training and seminars, and more.

CAFETERIA CLOSE-DOWN

The Ironroad Café will be closing temporarily to undergo renovations to provide a bigger cafeteria with faster flow and expanded seating for our customers.

To keep up with the progress and any special offers, visit the link in the QR code.

Also included online are other restaurant options in the area.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

NOTES

Indoor Air Quality Assessment

Request your free Indoor Air Quality Assessment! Public Health is partnering with Environmental Protection Services to provide a free air quality test for all tribal members living on the reservation. If you suspect issues like mold, moisture or radon in your home, contact Choctaw Nation Public Health today at 580-916-9140 ext. 83851. Any CDIB cardholder in the household makes the home eligible.

Native Test

Native Test promotes the importance of awareness, education and prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Text "NATIVE TEST" to 55251 to get a rapid HIV and STI self-test kit mailed to you for free.

If you are concerned about your results or symptoms, please seek medical advice from a licensed professional. If you have an established primary care provider, schedule an appointment. If you don't have one, below is a list of health departments and their contact information.

Atoka County Health Department
932 W 13th Street, Atoka, OK 74525
Phone: 580-889-2116

Bryan County Health Department
1524 W. Chuckwa, Durant, OK 74701 (behind the hospital)
Phone: 580-924-4285

Choctaw County Health Department
103 S 4th, Hugo, OK 74743
Phone: 580-326-8821

Coal County Health Department
1404 S Broadway St #0365, Coalgate, OK 74538
Phone: 580-927-2367

Haskell County Health Department
901 NW 6th St., Stigler, OK 74462
Phone: 918-967-3304

Hughes County Health Department
200 McDougal Drive, Holdenville, OK 74848
Phone: 405-379-3313

Latimer County Health Department
201 West Main, Wilburton, OK 74578
Phone: 918-465-5673

Leflore County Health Department
1204 Dewey Avenue, Poteau, OK 74953
Phone: 918-647-8601

McCurtain County Health Department
1400 Lynn Lane, Idabel, OK 74745
Phone: 580-286-6628

Pittsburg County Health Department
1400 East College Avenue, McAlester, OK, 74501
Phone: 918-423-1267

Pushmataha County Health Department
318 W. Main, Antlers, OK 74523
Phone: 580-298-6624

CNHS Facility List
Atoka Health Clinic
Durant Regional Medical Clinic

Hugo Health Clinic

Idabel Health Clinic

McAlister Health Clinic

Rubin White Health Clinic

Ruby Choate Health Clinic

Talihina Healthcare Center (CNHS Hospital)

LIFE IS BETTER WITH BLOOD DONORS

Every two seconds, someone in our community urgently needs blood. This could be a child battling cancer, a trauma victim, a patient undergoing surgery, or someone with a chronic illness.

Imagine the hope, relief and second chance your donation can bring them – and their families.

By becoming a blood donor, you can become a lifeline for those who desperately need it.

Join the Annual Blood Drive Challenge and help save a life.



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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

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

P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170
www.ChoctawNation.com
email: 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.

ACP Affordable Connectivity Program

Save up to \$75 a month on your internet service bill

580-642-2499

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a new federal program that helps low income families afford the cost of having internet service at home.

ACP Participants Receive:

- Up to a \$75/month discount if your household is on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)

Who Qualifies?

There are four ways your household can qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP):

- Based on your household income
- If you or your child or dependent participate in certain government assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, or other programs
- If you or your child or dependent already receives a Lifeline benefit
- You may also qualify for the ACP through a participating internet provider's existing low-income program.

Enroll Today acp.choctawnation.com

If you or someone in your household participates in one of these programs you are automatically eligible for ACP:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
- Free and Reduced-Priced School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Head Start (only households meeting the income qualifying standard)
- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations



CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

January 13, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session December 9, 2023
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #4 – William “Bill” Logan
 - b. First Language Speaker of the Month, District #4 – Marie Jackson
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Nellie Meashintubby – Individual Speaker – Picking up the Pieces after COVID
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Letter of Appointment for Fob Jones to be Appointed to the Position of Appellate Court Judge
 - b. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of James Grimsley to Serve on the Texoma Semiconductor Tech Consortium Executive Board
 - c. Rescind CB-15-24 and Approve the Purchase of 62 Lots in Durant, Oklahoma
 - d. Approve the Purchase of a Building and 0.83 Acres in McAlester, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma
 - e. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
 - f. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
 - g. Approve Additional Funding of a Meat Processing Facility to be Located near Octavia, Oklahoma
 - h. Approve the Formation of Choctaw Global Ventures, LLC and the Inclusion of a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in its Articles of Organization Allowing it to Sue and be Sued, and to Authorize the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration's 8(A) Business Development Program Participant
 - i. Approve the Formation of Choctaw Missions Operations, LLC and the Inclusion of a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in its Articles of Organization Allowing it to Sue and be Sued, and to Authorize the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration's 8(A) Business Development Program Participant
 - j. Approve the Formation of Choctaw Manufacturing Resources, LLC and the Inclusion of a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in its Articles of Organization Allowing it to Sue and be Sued, and to Authorize the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration's 8(A) Business Development Program Participant
 - k. Approve the Formation of Choctaw Advantage Solutions, LLC and the Inclusion of a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in its Articles of Organization Allowing it to Sue and be Sued, and to Authorize the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration's 8(A) Business Development Program Participant
1. Approve the Formation of Choctaw Logistics Solutions, LLC and the Inclusion of a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in its Articles of Organization Allowing it to Sue and be Sued, and to Authorize the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration's 8(A) Business Development Program Participant
- m. Approve the Formation of Choctaw Comprehensive Resources, LLC and the Inclusion of a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in its Articles of Organization Allowing it to Sue and be Sued, and to Authorize the Submission of an Application for Certification as a Small Business Administration's 8(A) Business Development Program Participant
- n. Approve Grazing Lease No. 4200416228 (G09-2063) in Favor of Brody Adams on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Latimer County, Oklahoma
- o. Approve the Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity for the FY23 Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) Fiscal Year 2023 Grant Agreement

9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

10. OLD BUSINESS

11. ADJOURNMENT

12. CLOSING PRAYER

All votes passed unanimously

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna February Language Lesson

Kafi Lawa Ishko – Nan Vnnoa

A short story about getting up, going to work, consuming large amounts of coffee and the effects of drinking too much coffee.

1st Person – ‘li’ (I)

1. Onnahinli siokcha. Hawa li.
2. Sv tikambi chiyoyohmi. Kafi ishko sv bvnna.
3. Atoksvli ona li. Kafi pokkoli ishko li. Noshkoboka ya tushpa hosh im anumpuli li.
4. Si abeka cha chukka ia li. Ik sv nuso ho hvshi tuklo ona.

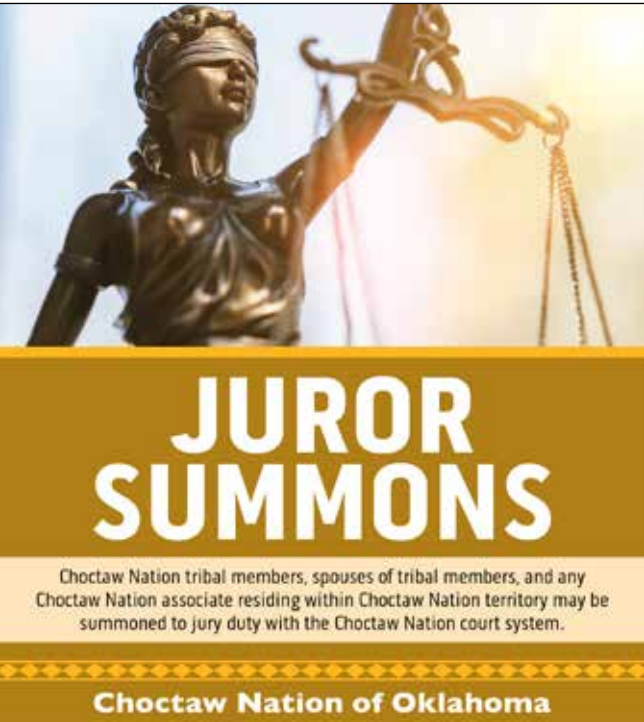
2nd Person – ‘ish’ (you)

1. Onnahinli chiokcha tuk. Ish hawa tuk.
2. Chi tikambi chiyoyohmi tuk. Kafi ishko chi bvnna tuk.
3. Atoksvli ish ona tuk. Kafi pokkoli ish ishko tuk.
4. Noshkoboka ya tushpa hosh ish im anumpuli tuk.
5. Chi abeka cha chi chukka ish ia tuk. Ik chi nuso ho hvshi tuklo ona tuk.

3rd Person – Person identified and/or unmarked subject (John-Chan)

1. Chan vt onnahinli okcha cha hawa tuk.
2. Tikambi chiyoyohmi hatukosh kafi ishko bvnna tuk.
3. Atoksvli onah mvt, kafi pokkoli ishko tuk. Noshkoboka ya tushpa hosh im anumpuli tuk.
4. Chan vt salaha hosh i chukka ia tuk. Ik im achukmo hosh i topa ya tvshki tuk.
5. Ihkia, nusa hekiyo hatukosh okhlibilit ittoyula hosh hvshi tuklo ona tuk.

www.choctawschool.com



HONOR GUARD — POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

VETERANSADVOCACY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

ITI FABVSSA

The Length of Our Story: History of Long Hair in Choctaw Culture

Under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAG-PRA) the Choctaw Nation has the authority to work with institutions around the United States for the respectful return of our ancestors and their funerary belongings.

This year, we were contacted by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University (PMAE) for a unique case - hair clippings of known Choctaw ancestors. During the early 1930s, hair clippings were collected from three Choctaw students at the Chilocco Indian Agricultural Boarding School located in Kay County, Oklahoma. They were later donated to the Peabody Museum in 1935. We were able to locate the students' descendent families and ask them their wishes. Each family let us know that they would like to have these clippings returned to them.

This January, Chief Gary Batton welcomed the families, a Peabody Museum representative, and the Historic Preservation Department staff to a quiet repatriation at the Headquarters in Durant.

As a longstanding tradition, Choctaw people have worn their hair long for generations. The earliest European accounts from the Choctaw homeland (1540-1720) indicate that neighboring tribes called us Pashi Falaya, or the Long Hairs (Rangel 1993[1557]:296; Adair 1775:192).

Choctaw people were given this name because, while unusual among the other Southeastern tribes, it was common for Choctaw men to wear their hair long. Many men wore their hair to their shoulders with a longer lock of hair in front of their right ear. When traveling, this hairstyle aided in identifying the man as being Choctaw.



Top Left: Kút-tee-o-túb-bee, How Did He Kill?, a Noted Brave, 1834. George Catlin. Smithsonian American Art Museum
Top Right: Annabé was sketched on April 6, 1830, in Memphis. Charles Alexandre Lesueur. Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Le Havre.
Bottom Left: Tshanny, A Choctaw Man, 1833. Karl Bodmer. Joslyn Art Museum.
Bottom Right: Sauvages Tchaktas Matachez en Guerriers qui portent des chevelures, 1735. Alexander de Batz. Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology.

Choctaw people have adopted new hairstyles as our culture has changed through time. By the late 1700s, some Choctaw men had started wearing their hair shaved on the sides, with a longer part in the middle (Romans 1775:82).

It was common for Choctaw women to have their hair extend as far down as their calves; however, it was generally worn as a bun, see Figure 2.

Choctaw men and women used bear fat to oil their hair.



David Bushnell. Ancient Method of Wearing the Hair-Photograph of Heleema (Louisa), 1909. National Anthropological Archives.

An old tradition for Choctaw men and women is shaving, cutting, or clipping a lock of hair when a loved one passes away (Halbert 1900: 365).

After the loved one passed, Choctaw women were known to wear their hair down throughout their mourning process (Ibid).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, paintings and drawings by European artists depicted Choctaw men and a few Choctaw women with long hair. Examples of this can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

The tradition of wearing long hair continued well after removal to Indian Territory in the 1860s and later.

Many pictures of Choctaw people in Oklahoma, Mississippi and Louisiana show Choctaws having long hair up into the 20th century.



Two Typical Choctaw Indians, Talihina, Oklahoma, Oklahoma Historical Society.

Unfortunately, with the systematic deployment of boarding schools by the US Government, the tradition of long hair was taken, often without the consent of the family. The practice of cutting long hair upon entrance to boarding school was one of many tactics aimed to strip students of their own culture. In addition, some Choctaw people wanted to prove we could assimilate into American culture as “civilized” citizens capable of managing our own affairs. This assault on Choctaw identity would bring lasting consequences to our community.

Many Choctaw men and women today make a choice to wear their hair long. The association of the length and care we give to our hair was not lost in our community. Modern Choctaw people have led their communities on a journey of healing by embracing the sacredness of their own hair. Our hair carries our life story. We recognize that its length connects us to our ancestors through distant generations and its length is a reminder of our resilient spirit.

Adair, James. *The History of the American Indians*. United Kingdom, E. & C. Dilly, 1775.
Bushnell, David Ives. *The Choctaw of Bayou Lacomb, St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909.*
Halbert, Henry S. *Funeral Customs of the Mississippi Choctaw. Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Volume 3., edited by Franklin Lafayette Riley, United States, 1901.*
Rangel, Rodrigo. *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-1543. United Kingdom, University of Alabama Press, 1993.*



CHOCTAW
CULTURAL CENTER

GROUPS & TOURS

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FOR MORE INFO

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CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER!

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Jordan Grotts

Less is more when it comes to maintaining your garden or yard to benefit wildlife and pollinators during the winter. Although it can be tempting to clean up your yard in preparation for spring, appreciating the beauty of a natural yard can benefit wildlife and plants in the winter and prepare it for spring. Leaving your leaves and other plant material to decompose will add necessary nutrients to the soil, retain moisture, and provide shelter for small animals and beneficial insects during winter months.

Two of these insects are fireflies and the luna moth, which are well-loved species in the reservation. Fireflies will spend 95% of their life as larvae in leaf litter, logs, and other moist, protected areas. The luna moth, a bright, pale-green moth that can have a wingspan of up to 4.5 inches, is one of 1,809 species of moth that can be found in Oklahoma. This species requires leaf litter to create a cocoon, inside which they will spend the winter. However, they are very well camouflaged and may be raked away when tidying up your yard.

Additionally, now is the ideal time to plant native milkweed in your garden because their seeds require fluctuating freezing temperatures to soften and bloom in the warmer months. Milkweed will benefit many butterfly species, such as the Monarch, which has a declining population. A great resource for native seeds is the Tribal Alliance for Pollinators (TAP) website, <https://triballianceforpollinators.com/>, which can send seeds or seedlings of over 100 locally sourced plants to tribal members at no cost and is a wealth of information.

It's also beneficial to leave parts of wildflowers that remain until spring because the seeds will provide a food source for wintering birds. You can supplement a bird's natural diet by placing a bird feeder in an open area of your yard. The best bird feeds for winter will have a mix of mealworms, fruits, and cracked corn because these foods are calorically dense and will help birds retain weight during the season. By placing bird feeders, you can expect to see Northern Cardinals, Tufted Titmice, and Dark-eyed Juncos, among many others. It's recommended that feeders be thoroughly cleaned between refills to avoid perpetuating any diseases that may be spread by different species congregating.

Winter can be a harsh season for wildlife, and we hope that you're feeling inspired to help attract native wildlife and insects to thrive and establish in your own backyard.

Choctaw Nation

Wildlife Conservation

Norma Sue Stanley

Norma Sue (Farmer) Stanley, 80, passed away Dec. 4, 2023. Norma was born July 26, 1943, in Wilburton, Okla., to Minnie Belle (McFerran) and Mathew Farmer. She was preceded in death by her parents; and brother Harold. Norma is survived by her husband Kenneth; her daughter Michele Gozley and spouse Michael; and grandsons Austin and Travis Gozley. For the full obituary, please visit [Lucas Funerals & Cremations.](#)



Mary Jean Hair

Mary Jean (Bertis) Hair passed away Jan. 2, 2024. Mary was born March 23, 1946, in Talihina, Okla., to Thomas and Leona Bertis. She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Lilly Jackson; brother Wilson Bertis; and her husband Wallace Hair, Jr. Mry is survived by daughters Karen Mitchell and Barbara Hair, granddaughter Stephanie Lopez; and a host of nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home.](#)



Wilma Ann Ford

Wilma Ann Ford, 87, passed away Dec. 5, 2023. Wilma was born June 10, 1936, to Harvey and Beulah Johnson. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Monty Dale Ford; and brother Paul Johnson. Wilma is survived by sons Carter Ray Fairless and spouse Carolyn; and Tracy Paul Fairless; and grandchildren Stephanie Fairless, Kevin Fairless, Lee Fairless, and Dr. Elizabeth “Libby” Fairless. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik.](#)



Eve White Stovall

Eve White Stovall, 95, passed away Nov. 11, 2023. Eve was born March 25, 1928, in Borger, Texas, to Clyde White and Ruby Hattox White. She is survived by son Charles and spouse Nancy; granddaughter Melanie; grandson Chandler and spouse Rose; and nephews Shawn Riden, Craig Davis, and Carey Davis. For the full obituary, please visit [Dignity Memorial.](#)



Wanda Joyce Thompson

Wanda Joyce Thompson, 67, passed away Nov. 20, 2023. Wanda was born May 7, 1956, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Isaac Hicker and Susan (Henry) Hicker. She was preceded in death by her mother; husband, Jay Thompson; son Shawn Hicker; and sisters Peggy Warledo and Margaret Hicker. Wanda is survived by son Weylin Thompson and spouse Sharon; daughter Crystal Passmore and spouse Josh; son Jay Thompson; daughter Kim Enloe and spouse John; and five grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Brown’s Funeral Service.](#)



Inez Cude Petrie

Inez Cude Petrie passed away May 5, 2023. Inez was born in 1936, in Fittstown, Okla., to Lavelle and Anna Bee Cude. She was preceded in death by her husband Jim; her parents; a granddaughter; and her siblings. Inez is survived by her son Terry and spouse Toni; granddaughter Whitney; grandson Jesse Martinez; stepdaughter Barbara Hunt; sisters Frances and Shirley; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Legacy.com.](#)



Galen Ernest Fout

Galen Ernest Fout, 75, passed away Oct. 25, 2023. Galen was born March 4, 1948, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Delbert Fout and Patricia Prince (Roberts). He is survived by wife Elizabeth; daughters Kari, Shari and Tracy; sons Christopher and Travis; 16 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; sister Dee Cox; numerous nieces and nephews; and countless military buddies and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Bill Eisenhower Funeral Home.](#)



Thomas Cummings Jr.

Thomas Lee Cummings, Jr., 60, passed away Dec. 29, 2023. Thomas was born Nov. 28, 1963, in Hugo, Okla., to Thomas Lee Cummings Sr. and Shirley Ann (Springs) Cummings. He is survived by his wife Rena Cummings of Hugo, OK; daughter Tawny Lane Cummings and Tyler Stamm; granddaughter Finleigh Stamm; his mother; sister Patty Payne and spouse Steve; brother Michael Cummings; mother-in-law and father-in-law Alberta and David Morrow; brother-in-law Wil Morrow and spouse Jovan; sister-in-law Tammy Cohen and spouse Assi; along with a host of cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and other family, friends, and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit Miller and Miller Funeral Home – Hugo.



Derek Ray Wesley Jones

Derek Ray Wesley Jones, 32, passed away Dec. 16, 2023. Derek was born Feb. 25, 1991, to Danny Ray Sr. and Edith Faye Wesley Jones. He was preceded in death by his grandparents Williston and Delia Wesley, and Gilbert Jones and Susie Jones; uncles Williston Wesley, Jr. and Bobby Wesley; aunts Charlene Columbus and Lisa Wesley; cousins Billy Joe Davis, Kirstie Wesley, and Brittany Wesley; and great-grandparents Ben and Sema Carterby, and Isaac and Helen Battiest. Derek is survived by his parents; brothers and sisters-in-law Joey Wade, Kyle and Ashley Jones, Danny Jones, Jr., Dillon and Kendra Jones, and Dusty Jones; uncles and aunts Arita and Sherrill Battiest, Gary and Nahmee Jones, Tracey and Robbie Tisho, Joseph Jones, Geraldine Wright, Jimmy and Debbie Wesley, Bennie Wesley, Janelle Wesley, Frank Tonihka, Jolene and Greene Dale Davis, Howard and Lemanda Wesley, Johnny Columbus, Louise Laney, and Glenda Wesley; grandmother Minnie Jones; nephews Bryson Jones and Jackson Jones; nieces Danielle Jones and Brianna Jones; special friends Pat Ashton, Rayson Gibson, Morgan James and John Smith; and several other family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Funeral Home.](#)



Melissia Bohanan

Melissia Bohanan, 90, passed away Jan. 3, 2024. Melissia was born June 2, 1933, in Bethel, Okla., to Ed and Melcie Bond Peters. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Robert Bohanan; son Virgil Bohanan; daughters Margaret Ludlow, Eunice Bohanon, Mary Bohanan, Linda Jefferson, Emmy Lou Baker, and Betty Tom; grandson Bryan James; granddaughter Margo Tom; and sisters Virginia Jefferson, Jasney Wade and Effie Shomo. Melissia is survived by her son Herb Bohanan and spouse Marvada; daughters Brenda James and spouse Tony, and Lois Bohanan; brother Sam Peters; sister Francine Howell; daughter-in-law Carolyn Bohanan; sons-in-law Austin Jefferson and Jimmy Tom; three special grandchildren Vanessa Jefferson, Melinda Ludlow and Amber Bohanan; 36 grandchildren; 72 great-grandchildren and 30 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.](#)



James Wayne LeFlore

James “Sonny” Wayne LeFlore 81, passed away Nov. 16, 2023. Sonny was born Aug 13, 1942, in Weiner, Ark., to Jesse James and Frances Ellen (Raines) LeFlore. He was preceded in death by his wife Barbara (Turner) LeFlore; brother Gary LeFlore; sisters Love Joyce Schuster and Janie Molden; and his parents. Sonny is survived by his stepson Roger Faust and spouse Nuray; daughters Tammy Wood and spouse Chris, Crystal Candler and spouse Ty, and Angela Cissell and spouse Judd; grandchildren Natasha Faust, Roger Faust III, Bo Hutchinson, Ty Faust, Hunter Wood, Grace Hutchinson, Macey Faust, and David Cissell; great-grandchildren Tizinia, Sophia, Blize, Ella, Arden, Wyatt, and a new great-grandchild on the way; brothers Guy LeFlore and spouse Donna, and Ernest “Butch” LeFlore; a host of nieces, nephews, and family members; and a lifetime of friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Jackson Newport Funeral Home.](#)



Hal Gene Mowdy

Hal Gene Mowdy, 88, passed away Jan. 3, 2024. Hal was born Oct. 17, 1935, in Durant, Okla. to Charle W. Mowdy and Mary E. Bell Mowdy. He was preceded in death by his parents. Hal is survived by his wife Betty Mowdy; son Hal Clark Mowdy and spouse Lenora; daughter Susan Mowdy Hardegree and spouse Troy; and grandchildren Brittany Mowdy, Jay Clark Mowdy, Kaitlyn Hardegree, and Kyle Hardegree and spouse Darcie. For the full obituary, please visit [Grace Funeral Home.](#)



Atreyus Nashoba Lee-Fox

Atreyus Nashoba Lee-Fox passed away Jan. 1, 2024. Atreyus was born Jan. 1, 2024, in Plano, Texas, to Taylor Fox of Durant. He was preceded in death by his grandfather Brandon Fox; and great-grandparents Brenda Robison, Ina Robison, Colbert Robison, and Scott Philyaw. Atreyus is survived by his father Taylor Fox; grandparents Tanya Fox and Angela Crockett; great-grandparents Gary Sprabary and Patricia Philyaw; aunt Lainie Fox; uncle Kristofer Fox; great-aunts Misty Fox and Nichole Sprabary; cousin Brandon Jackson and numerous other cousins. For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home.](#)

Bonnie Louise Friday

Bonnie L. Friday, 81, of Haileyville, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024. Bonnie Friday was born Jan. 23, 1942, in Talihina, Okla., to Jack Russell and Annie (Sam) Capitano. She was preceded in death by her parents; son Elliott Friday; sisters Shirley Kitchell and Coleen Capitano; and significant other John Purvis. Bonnie is survived by her children Wanda Nunez, Lee Ragains, and Troy Friday; grandchildren Juan Nunez, Vanessa Nunez, Travis Ragains, Jennifer Friday, and Daniel Friday; great-grandchildren J. D. Nunez, Evelyn Nunez, and Ernie Nunez; brother Stevie Capitano; and sisters Stephanie Smallwood, Gloria Meek, and Tracy Christian. For the full obituary, please visit Brumley-Mills Funeral Home.

Michael Louis Bedford

Michael Louis Bedford, 71, passed away Jan. 5, 2024. Michael was born Sept. 19, 1952, in Denison, Texas, to Ben and Bobbye Bedford. He was preceded in death by his parents; and siblings Tully Bedford, Deborah Strange and Dawn Ketchum. Mike is survived by his daughter Bobbye Jean Carter and spouse Kent; grandchildren Hannah and July; nieces Misty Strange and Brandi Bedford; nephews Brule Bedford, and John David Ketchum and family; great-nephew Blade Strange and family; great-niece Catlyn Strange; along with a host of other family, friends and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit Miller and Miller Funeral Home – Hugo.



Madell Henderson

Madell (Jones) Ricks Henderson, 90, passed away Jan. 1, 2024. Madell was born Jan. 21, 1933, in Waurika, Okla., to W.B. and Willie Jones. She was preceded in death by husbands Nathaniel Ricks and Royce Henderson; her parents; sister Gwen Baldrige and spouse George; brother Gene Jones and spouse Mary; brothers-in-law Bill Redwine and Clyde Boutwell; uncle Calvin (Fat) Stowe; and nephew Donovan Boutwell. She is survived by her children Trisha Baldwin and spouse Tom, Meliah Ratcliff and spouse Allen, Todd Ricks and spouse Randy, Carlin Henderson and spouse Glenda; grandchildren Danica Kramer and spouse Kolby, Miranda Compton and spouse Bobby, Alyssa Tarpley, spouse Darin and children Adelaide, Racen, Emmalynn and Lane; great-grandchildren Kai, Nico, and Chason Compton; great-great-grandchild Kaylynn Mae Guerrero; sisters Madeline Redwine and Lavenia Boutwell; numerous nephews and nieces; several maternal and paternal cousins; as well as many treasured friends in the Kingfisher community. For the full obituary, please visit [Wilson Funeral and Cremation Service – Kingfisher.](#)



Curtis Dewayne Billy

Curtis Dewayne “Tody” Billy passed away June 18, 2023. He was born Feb. 20, 1951, in Talihina, Okla., to Ed Wallace Billy and Cynthia Mae (Wilson) Billy. He was preceded in death by parents; maternal grandparents Sweeny Wilson and Mary Mae (Ward) Wilson; paternal grandparents Simon Billy and Mary (Amos) Billy; daughter Deana “Gina” Billy; sister Nelda Diane (Billy) Jacob; brother-in-law Ray Hicks; and nieces Kathi Hicks and Jennifer Billy. He is survived by his wife Teresa “Teri” (Gibson) Billy; sons Bryon Mahli Billy, and Jimmy Billy and spouse Kerlissa; daughter Nicole (Billy) Roberts and spouse Jake; grandchildren Brenner Billy, Marni Billy, Minko Billy, Trayvian Billy, Logan Billy, Nazbah Billy, Jacoby Roberts, and Jireh Roberts; great-grandchildren Warren Billy, Dionne Billy, and Ella Billy; sisters Elsie Hicks and Meredith Billy; brothers Eric Billy and spouse Debra, Wendall Billy, and Phillip Billy and spouse Lisa; brother-in-law Donald Jacob; along with a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Bunch-Singleton Funeral Home.](#)



Maxine Taylor

Maxine Taylor, 102, passed away Nov. 11, 2023. Maxine was born July 30, 1921, in Bokoshe, Okla., to Mabel Pauline (Folsom) Powell and Rufus Augustus Powell. She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Glenna Taylor; nephews R.C. Gamble Jr., Robert Todd Gamble, Dan Powell Gamble, and Lincoln Derek Gamble. Maxine is survived by her sister Eloise P. Gamble; nieces Kiawana Altman, Gayle Anne Schardt, Teresa Norris; numerous great-nieces, great-nephews, cousins, and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory Martin Funeral Home – Spiro.](#)



Anthony “Tony” David Miller

Anthony “Tony” David Miller, 63, passed away Jan. 2, 2024. Tony was born Sept. 22, 1960. He is survived by his son Michael (Lily); grandchildren Katie and Neomah; sisters Joni Miller Wilkinson, and Nancy Miller Dickeson (Blake); aunt Jane Ward Biggs; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews he adored. For the full obituary, please visit [Bill Eisenhower 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

Cheshewalla featured in documentary

Oklahoma Choctaw member Debbie Cheshewalla is featured in the American Battle Monument Commission's Centennial documentary Our Promise: 100 Years of the American Battle Monuments Commission where she visits the grave of her uncle Army Private Andrew Perry. Perry entered the military from Oklahoma and became one of the famed Native American Code Talkers who served as radio operators to confound the enemy.

In November 2023, Debbie participated in the documentary screening at the National Museum of the American Indian at the U.S. Customs House in New York City.

Check out Cheshewalla's story at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIHcQQc-nM&t=2596s>.



Ramos Gomez graduates from UIW San Antonio

Evan Tomas Ramos Gomez graduated with a Biology degree from University of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Saturday Dec.9, 2023.

He is the great-great grandson of Choctaw Elder Clarence Perteet.



Harvey Wayne Butler

Harvey Wayne Butler was born on October 23, 2023, weighing 7 pounds and 8 ounces and 21 inches long in Sun City West, Arizona.

Harvey is the son of Christopher and Kelsey Butler and the great-great-great-grandson of original enrollee Mary McCre, great-great-grandson to Lizzie Carnes Moore, great-great grandson of Helen Micey Moore, and the great grandson of Mary Hayes Puckett (living) and grandson to Linda Puckett Butler (living).

The family is overjoyed for Harvey's arrival.



Stout graduates from TLU

Madison Stout from Atascosa, Texas graduates from Texas Lutheran University on December 16, 2023.

She graduates with a Bachelor of Science in kinesiology with a specialization in exercise science.

"Thank you Choctaw Nation for all the support."



Yakoke from Freelon

Dear Choctaw Tribe,

I hope this letter finds you all in good health and spirits. My name is Matthew Freelon, a proud member of the Choctaw tribe, and a recent graduate. I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for the generous scholarships I have received from our tribe throughout my academic journey.

From my undergraduate studies and now to the completion of my master's degree in education, your unwavering support has been instrumental. This past Friday, I graduated with a master's degree in education. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the financial assistance and the unwavering moral support that our tribe has provided me.

In recognition of this support, I have attached a photo of my mother and me, with my Choctaw stole on. I wanted to share this moment with you, to express how your support has not just benefited me, but also my family and our community.

I am currently a high school biology teacher, and this marks my fifth year in the teaching profession. My career goal is to move up and become a district science coordinator. Receiving this education has not only broadened my knowledge and skills but has also deepened my appreciation for our community and heritage. I am proud to be part of the Choctaw tribe that values education and supports its members in such a profound way.

As I continue to pursue my career, I will carry with me the lessons learned and the spirit of the Choctaw tribe. It is my hope to give back to our community someday, just as you have given to me.

Once again, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the contributions you have made towards my higher education. Your support has been a crucial part of my success, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Thank you, Choctaw Tribe. I look forward to continuing to make you proud.



Best regards,
Matthew R Freelon, M.Ed

Davidson creates new ministry

As part of Native American Heritage Month on November 12, 2023 Faith Community Church of the Nazarene in Poteau, Oklahoma launched a new Native American Ministries program. The program started with an Indian taco fellowship meal followed by a worship service which included local Choctaw Princesses performing the Lord's Prayer, the singing of Choctaw hymns, and a special message on bringing hope, love and unity to all people regardless of their background or circumstances.

"As an ambassador for the Choctaw Nation this new ministry has been a dream of mine for a long time and is a big part of my efforts to share and spread our culture and heritage with others. I hope that it can be used to reach people in our community that may not be reached by traditional church services or activities and I hope to use this ministry as not only a way to reach people for Christ but to also share and grow our Native American culture" said Micah Davidson who is the Choctaw Nation District 4 Junior Miss and creator of the new ministry at Faith Community Church.

"I am extremely proud of Micah and all that she is doing to share the culture that she loves and to find ways to use her efforts to also share Christ with others. This new ministry has the full blessing of our church and in the first meeting we had almost 70 people present for a Sunday evening service which is remarkable. It shows that when the church is willing to think outside the box of normal church activities we can see great results for God's kingdom. I and the church are looking forward to seeing the fruits of this new ministry," said the churches senior Pastor Michael Davidson.

The Native American Ministries at Faith Community plan to have a monthly worship and fellowship services starting on the third Sunday in January and they are planning other activities such as cultural events, Choctaw hymn lessons, and a mission trip to a reservation in the southwest US.

For more information of Faith Community Church and the Native American ministries call the church office at (918) 647-3470.



Stafford is only Native PTA director

According to 2022 PTA Program Data released by the Commission of Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), Shakira Stafford, PT is the only Native American PTA Program Director in the Nation.

<https://www.captionline.org/about-capte/data-and-research/aggregate-program-data>.



She earned her Associate of Science Degree at Eastern Oklahoma State College in 1993, Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Central Oklahoma in 1995 and Master of Physical Therapy Degree at Wichita State University in 1997.

Stafford served as a Commission Corp Officer from 1998-2002 earning the rank of Lieutenant and Duty station Gallup Indian Medical Center (Gallup, New Mexico).

Stafford returned to Oklahoma and worked in outpatient, home health, skilled nursing and the school systems in central Oklahoma until beginning employment in therapy education.

She began employment with Gordon Cooper Technology Center and Seminole State College in 2016 to write and develop a Physical Therapist Assistant Program. She received full accreditation by CAPTE in April of 2019 to deliver the Associate of Applied Science in Physical Therapist Assistant Degree.

Stafford has served as Program Director and Assistant Professor, and recently started the 6th cohort of PTA students and is now serving the dual role of Program Director and Director of Clinical Education.

She is married to Adam Stafford, Undersecretary of Finance Operations for the Chickasaw Nation. Her daughter, Chiara Carpenter, is a current Freshmen at the University of Oklahoma majoring in Biomedical Engineering with a Pre-Med emphasis and minoring in Music.

Stafford's father is 90-year-old tribal member Walter F. Strickland of Shawnee, Oklahoma and her grandmother is original enrollee Rhoda Hancock.

Pipes turns 30 and graduates

Devin Redford Pipes celebrated his 30th birthday one week before graduating with a 4.0 GPA from the University of North Texas and a Master of Science, Library Science - Archival Studies and Imaging Technology degree.

Devin would like to thank his family for their support throughout his education and let them know he loves and appreciates them.

Devin also said he could not have graduated without the assistance of the wonderful people at the Choctaw Nation Higher Education Program.



Roy turns 90

Dorothy Pearl Roy just celebrated her 90th birthday December 31, 2023, and was surprised and touched to receive a beautiful blanket from the tribe as a gift.

She says "thank you" for the thoughtful gift and the honor of being designated a tribal elder now.



Her son, David Roy, shares the same birthday and they got to celebrate together.

Dorothy is pictured standing next to her Christmas tree decorated with her Choctaw ornament collection at her home in Pryor, Oklahoma. She is also pictured celebrating her shared birthday with her son.

Spinks turns 81

Pat Spinks of Muskogee, Oklahoma, celebrated her 81st birthday on December 23, 2023.

Spinks wants everyone at Life Indian Church to know shes happy to have another birthday.



New addition makes five generations

JP and Ciara Watt proudly announce the birth of their second child, Cassandra Lynn.

Cassandra was born October 16, 2023, weighing 6 lbs 14 oz and was 20 1/2 inches long in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Cassandra was welcomed home by her parents and her older brother,

Jerry Paul 'Bubba'. Maternal grandparents, Heath and TaRonda Webb, maternal great-grandmother and late great-grandfather, Sherry and Ronald Tedder, and maternal great-great-grandfather George M. Human and late great-great-grandmother, Mary E. Human.

With the birth of Cassandra, there are five living generations in this family.



Laws-Rodriguez graduates from Louisiana State-Shreveport

Tim Laws-Rodriguez of Chicago, Illinois (formerly Harrah, Oklahoma) graduated from Louisiana State University-Shreveport in December 2023.

He earned a Master of Business Administration with a specialization in Project Management.

His family is incredibly proud of all the hard work and dedication it took to graduate with a 3.5 GPA and a route to completing his project management professional certification.

"Best of luck on the job hunt! You've got this!"



Senter turns 18

The family of Makenna Senter wishes her a happy eighteenth birthday.

Makenna turned 18 on January 20, 2024.

A fifth-generation Choctaw, Makenna is the daughter of Charlie and Tausha Senter; the granddaughter of Jeanne Hartsfield; the great-granddaughter of Gene and Flo Wilson; and the great-great-granddaughter of Starlie and Noel Wilson, original enrollee.



LAWN CARE SERVICES FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS

APPLICATION NOW OPEN

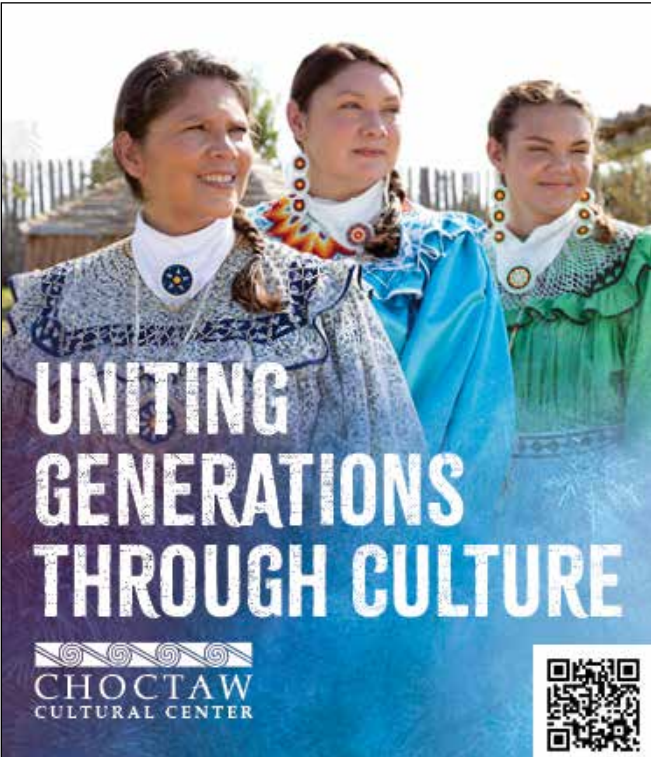
- Must be between 18 and 64 years old with an ambulatory disability or 65 and older at the time the application is submitted
- Must meet income guidelines for the household
- Must be a tribal member residing in the Choctaw Nation's reservation boundaries
- Must be a homeowner or rental tenant; must be responsible for own lawn care
- Other restrictions may apply

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHVFFA

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority


CHCTA/NATION.ORG





UNITING GENERATIONS THROUGH CULTURE

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER





SUMMER 2024 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Want to be a part of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma team this summer?

Go to [Careers.ChoctawNation.com](https://careers.choctawnation.com) to see the 2024 internship opportunities and apply.

Deadline to apply is March 4, 2024.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Cora Ashlynn Flessing



Cora Ashlynn Flessing was born on December 1, 2023, at 4:39 a.m. to Kevin and Heather Flessing. Cora weighed in at 7 pounds, 7.9 ounces and was 20 inches long.



Bowman turns 99

Choctaw tribal member Melba Marie Boman is 99 years young! She celebrated her birthday on December 13. Many family members and friends called to convey birthday wishes. Yakoke! She especially enjoyed a birthday video made by her three-year-old great-great-granddaughter and namesake, Ava Marie Ganote. Melba is the daughter of Choctaw original enrollees Roosevelt Bacon and Josie (Woods) Bacon. She retired from I.H.S. and is a lifetime resident of the Choctaw Nation. “She is such a blessing to our family!”

Kash Alan Parker



Landry and Kory Parker would like to announce the birth of their son Kash Alan Parker. Kash arrived on August 3, 2023, at 1:27 a.m., weighing in at 7 pounds, 15 ounces, and 20 inches long. Mommy and Daddy are over the moon.

Oliver Elijah Ludlow



Quincee would like to announce the arrival of her Baby Brother. Oliver Elijah Ludlow was born November 4, 2023, at the Choctaw Nation Health Service Authority in Talihina, Oklahoma. He weighed 5 pounds, 8 ounces and 18 inches long.

Oliver is the son of Quintin & Olivia Hoylman (Ludlow) of Talihina. He is the Grandson of Naomi Ludlow of Talihina, Oklahoma and Johnny and Barbara Hoylman of Dublin, Ohio. The Great Grandson of Boyd and Floradean Ludlow of Talihina, Oklahoma and Marjean Hoylman and Kathryn Nestor of Dublin, Ohio. Oliver is the nephew of Reba Ludlow, Marlena Montes and Abbi-Gail Ludlow of Talihina, Oklahoma and Jacob Hoylman of Dublin, Ohio. Great Nephew of Rachel Ludlow and Stephen Ludlow of Talihina, Oklahoma.



McGilberry turns 103

“Papa” Stephen McGilberry will celebrate his 103rd birthday on January 28. He was born in 1921 and attended school at Jones Academy in Hartshorne, Oklahoma. McGilberry served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War and WWII.

Upon returning home, he became a welder. He is the father to five sons and one daughter. His daughter is his only remaining child. He has numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. McGilberry lives alone and is very independent. He is in good health and still drives. He enjoys Sunday dinners with family and especially eating good desserts.



First Baby of 2024 at Choctaw Nation Health Care Center

TALIHINA, Okla. – The Choctaw Nation Health Care Center welcomed the first baby of the new year on Tuesday, January 2. Christian and Baley Melton, from McAlester, Okla., embraced baby Hoyt Garner Melton at 12:42 am. The first born to the couple, the family expressed how pleased they were with the facility. “We couldn’t have asked for a better staff; they treat you like family and made the whole experience very comfortable.” Baby Hoyt and his parents were sent home with various items from the hospital and its partners in celebration of being the first born in 2024.

CNO Community Partnership Fund awards \$165,200 to Bryan County for infrastructure and development

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma awarded \$88,000 to Bryan County and \$77,200 to Durant from the Choctaw Nation Community Partnership Fund for the final quarter of the fiscal year, which ended in September. The Choctaw Community Partnership Fund voluntarily contributes quarterly to towns, cities, and counties where the Choctaw Nation operates non-gaming businesses. The Fund aims to foster collaboration and growth within these communities by providing financial support for various projects. The communities have the flexibility to utilize the funds immediately for maintenance, road improvements, beautification, recreation, public safety, equipment needs or save the funds for more extensive future projects. “The Choctaw Nation is proud to give back to local communities and watch how they use these funds to create a better quality of life for tribal and non-tribal citizens alike,” said Angel Rowland, Choctaw Nation Development Fund manager. In the 2023 fiscal year, Bryan County was awarded \$34,000 from the partnership fund, and Durant was awarded \$297,900. In total, the Choctaw Nation Community Partnership Fund donated nearly \$2.5 million in FY23.



Choctaw Nation Photo
Bryan County (pictured from left to right): Bryan County representative and District Nine Tribal Councilman James Dry.



CNHS celebrates 75 years of membership
The Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina received a commemorative plaque to celebrate 75 years of membership with the American Hospital Association. The American Hospital Association (AHA) is the national organization that represents and serves all types of hospitals, health care networks, and their patients and communities. Nearly 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, other providers of care and 43,000 individual members come together to form the AHA.



Did You Know?
Alligators use a survival method called “icing” to survive freezing temperatures. Icing is tied to brumation, which is the reptile version of hibernation. They will lower their metabolic rates, becoming lethargic and keeping their snouts above water, this allows them to survive brief periods of freezing weather.

MY SCREENING MAMMOGRAM SAVED MY LIFE

I get to continue enjoying family. -Stephanie

American Society of Breast Surgeons guidelines recommend women with an average risk get a mammogram annually beginning at age 40.

To schedule an appointment, call 918.567.7000 or 800.349.7026

Choctaw Nation Health Services

ACT & SCHOLARSHIP WORKSHOPS

IN-PERSON DATES

- Friday, October 20, 2023 | Durant Headquarters | 1802 Chukka Hina Drive, Durant, OK
- Thursday, Nov 30, 2023 | McAlester Kiamichi Technology Center | 301 Kiamichi Drive, McAlester, OK 74501
- Thursday, February 1, 2024 | Isabel Kiamichi Technology Center | 3205 Lincoln Road NE, Idabel, OK 74745
- Thursday, April 4, 2024 | Hugo Kiamichi Technology Center | 107 S. 15th Street, Hugo, OK 74743

VIRTUAL DATES (ON ZOOM)

- Wednesday, October 11, 2023
- Saturday, January 20, 2024
- Tuesday, March 19, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 580.924.8280

FREE WORKSHOPS FOR HSS MEMBERS. LUNCH PROVIDED FOR IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS.

Scan Here to Register

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

STAR PROGRAM APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Choctaw Nation's STAR Program applications are now available. Parents and guardians can apply for rewards on behalf of their students in grades 2 – 12 in the spring and fall semesters.

ALL A'S - \$50 GIFT CARD
ALL A'S AND B'S - \$25 GIFT CARD
PERFECT ATTENDANCE - \$25 GIFT CARD

APPLICATION PERIODS	
FALL JAN 1 - APR 1	SPRING JUN 1 - SEP 1

APPLY WITH CHAHTA ACHVFFA AT CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/STAR 800.522.6170

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

FAFSA

CURRENT AND FUTURE COLLEGE STUDENTS CAN APPLY

APPLICATIONS OPEN IN DECEMBER

STUDENTAID.GOV

Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

ACP Affordable Connectivity Program

THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP) IS A NEW FEDERAL PROGRAM THAT HELPS LOW INCOME FAMILIES AFFORD THE COST OF HAVING INTERNET SERVICE AT HOME.

ACP PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE:

- Up to \$75/Month discount if your house is on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)

WHO QUALIFIES?

THERE ARE FOUR WAYS YOUR HOUSEHOLD CAN QUALIFY FOR THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP):

- Based on your household income
- If you or your child or dependent participate in certain government assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, or other programs
- If you or your child or dependent already receives a Lifeline benefit
- You may also qualify for the ACP through a participating internet provider's existing low-income program

IF YOU OR SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATE IN ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS YOU ARE AUTOMATICALLY ELIGIBLE FOR ACP:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
- Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Head Start (only households meeting the income qualifying standard)
- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Enroll Today acp.choctawnation.com

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

EPA awards nearly \$2 Million in cleanup and climate grants to Choctaw Nation

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation has been awarded \$2 million in federal grant money from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Nation received \$1.57 million in Brownfields funding to assess and clean up abandoned properties and a \$400,000 Climate Pollution Reduction grant to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“The Choctaw Nation is a reliable partner with a strong environmental program that is well prepared to leverage these grants, made possible by the historic amounts of funding available through the Biden-Harris Administration’s Investing in America agenda,” said Regional Administrator Dr. Earthea Nance. “EPA is proud to continue working with the Nation on restoring abandoned Brownfields properties and finding solutions for the climate crisis.”

One of the grants received is specifically targeted to cleaning up Brownfields properties.

A brownfield property is a location where its reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant.

The Choctaw Nation will use the Brownfields grant for several projects, including site assessment and cleanup of the Old Talihiina Indian Hospital Campus.

The old hospital in Talihiina contains several of these types of hazards, including lead-based paint and asbestos used in the insulation.

The hospital was built in 1937 as a tuberculosis sanatorium for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. The Choctaw



Photo by Christian Toews

The Old Talihiina Indian Hospital, a former tuberculosis sanatorium built in 1937, will be a part of the assessment and clean-up process of the Brownfields grant. The 87-year-old facility contains hazards such as lead-based paint and asbestos, a material commonly used in construction in that time period.

Nation took over the administration of the hospital in 1985. The Choctaw Nation opened a new hospital in 1999, and now the old hospital sits empty.

Another main goal of these grants is to develop plans and set goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A big part of this will be community engagement, informing them of ways they can help with GHG emissions.

A small family can have a big impact by switching to LED lights. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the use of LED lighting has a large potential impact on energy savings in the United States.

By 2035, most lighting installations are expected to use LED technology, which would be equal to the annual energy output of over 92 different 1,000-megawatt power plants.

Recently, the Choctaw Nation has begun implementing some energy-saving conservation methods among its buildings.

Some steps include setting heating and cooling temperatures in Health, Commerce and Government buildings. This is especially important when those buildings are not in use and could result in a 3% yearly savings for each piece of equipment, resulting in greater overall savings annually.

By working with the EPA, the Choctaw Nation ensures its residents have clean air and water. It also shows the Nation’s dedication to the healthy future of not just its tribal members but everyone who resides in the Choctaw Nation.

“Choctaws understand the importance of being good environmental stewards,” said Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton. “Support from the EPA enables us to continue implementing sustainable practices that benefit both our tribal members and the surrounding communities, making a lasting impact on the well-being of our people and the land we call home.”

Winter weather safety tips from Ready.gov

Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning and heart attacks from overexertion. Winter storms including blizzards can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice and high winds.

A winter storm can:

- Last a few hours or several days.
- Cut off heat, power and communication services.
- Put older adults, children, sick individuals and pets at greater risk.

How to Protect Yourself from Winter Weather

If you are under a winter storm warning, find shelter right away.

Know your winter weather terms:

Winter Storm Warning

Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet is imminent or occurring. Winter Storm Warnings are usually issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin.

Winter Storm Watch

Alerts the public to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet. Winter Storm Watches are usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the beginning of a Winter Storm.

Winter Weather Advisory

Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and sleet which will cause significant inconveniences and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.

Know Your Risk for Winter Storms

Pay attention to weather reports and warnings of freezing weather and winter storms. Listen for emergency information and alerts. Sign up for your community’s warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.

Preparing for Winter Weather

Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking and weather stripping. Learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups. Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power. Keep in mind each person’s specific needs, including medication. Remember the needs of your pets. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights. If you are unable to afford your heating

costs, weatherization or energy-related home repairs, contact the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for help.

In Case of Emergency

Be prepared for winter weather at home, at work and in your car. Create an emergency supply kit for your car. Include jumper cables, sand, a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water and non-perishable snacks. Keep a full tank of gas.

Stay Safe During Winter Weather

- Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows. Never heat your home with a gas stove-top or oven.
- Stay off roads if at all possible. If trapped in your car, then stay inside.
- Limit your time outside. If you need to go outside, then wear layers of warm clothing. Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Reduce the risk of a heart attack by avoiding overexertion when shoveling snow and walking in the snow.
- Learn the signs of, and basic treatments for, frostbite and hypothermia.

Hypothermia



Hypothermia is an unusually low body temperature. A temperature below 95 degrees is an emergency.

Signs: Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech or drowsiness.

Actions: Go to a warm room. Warm the center of the body first—chest, neck, head and groin. Keep dry and wrapped up in warm blankets, including the head and neck.

Frost Bite



Frostbite causes loss of feeling and color around the face, fingers and toes.

Signs: Numbness, white or grayish-yellow skin, firm or waxy skin.

Actions: Go to a warm room. Soak in warm water. Use body heat to warm. Do not massage or use a heating pad.

For more information, visit <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>.

Choctaw Landing is now hiring.

There’s something for you here.

Visit one of our upcoming job fairs.
For more information about job fairs, open positions or to apply today, scan the QR code or visit [Careers.Choctawnation.com](https://careers.choctawnation.com).

Choctaw CAREERS

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES APPLICATION PERIOD

DO YOU NEED A JOB?

Applications are open from **November 30 - March 1**

Scan to learn more on how to apply for the program.

Choctaw Nation 477 Programs

2024 LABOR DAY TRIBAL MEMBER RV RESERVATION

Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone Number:		
Email address:		
RV/Trailer description (All information must be complete for reservation consideration)		
Trailer type:	Length of Trailer:	# of slide-outs:
<input type="checkbox"/> Bumper Pull <input type="checkbox"/> 5th wheel <input type="checkbox"/> RV		
Additional information:		

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

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT,
LABORDAY.CHOCTAWNATION.COM**

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 OR EMAIL IN MARCH 2024.

#CHAHTALABORDAY
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

JONES ACADEMY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

Did you know the Jones Academy Residential Program provides housing in the dormitories for up to 188 students? The dormitory program serves as more than just housing. The program is designed to aid students in developing habits and routines, while instilling essential life skills and social habits. Jones Academy’s commitment goes beyond traditional housing, fostering an environment that prioritizes student growth and community involvement.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JONES ACADEMY, PLEASE VISIT: [JONESACADEMY.ORG](https://jonesacademy.org)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES

Do you need assistance finding a job or paying for job training?

The 477 Employment Training Services aim to help people succeed in the workforce by providing opportunities for employment, education and training.

Services are available within **Choctaw Nation Reservation.**

Choctaw Nation 477 Program

Tick borne illnesses can be prevented with a few easy steps

By Chris Jennings

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Tick-borne illnesses have more than doubled in the U.S. in the past two decades. Tick-borne illnesses are diseases spread from the bite of a tick carrying a pathogen that causes human disease.

Some reasons for the rise in the tick population are rising heat and humidity, allowing them to thrive longer in more places and improved tracking of the diseases.

The Choctaw Nation is conducting a tick-borne illness survey to better identify exactly what ticks are currently present in the Nation and develop a course of action to inform the public of how to avoid them and what to do if they are bitten.

Mason Emert, an epidemiologist with the Choctaw Nation, says the most common tick they see in the area that causes Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) is the American Dog Tick. That's part of what Choctaw Nation's tick-borne disease surveillance project is for, though.

"We'll be identifying which specific ticks and which specific diseases are prevalent within Choctaw Nation," said Emert.

The voluntary survey is open to anyone living in the Choctaw Nation, both tribal and non-tribal members. The survey will collect information to see which communities are experiencing tick bites, What individuals do when they recognize a tick bite, whether they have heard of tick-borne diseases, and whether they know the symptoms to watch out for and how to prevent tick bites around their home.

Emert said that the most common tick-borne illness across Oklahoma and the Choctaw Nation in general is Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF). Most counties within the Choctaw Nation reservation historically rank among the highest for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever incidents across the state.

TICKS THAT COMMONLY BITE HUMANS

AMERICAN DOG TICK

FOUND: Widely distributed east of the Rocky Mountains and has recently been found west of the Rocky Mountains.

CONDITIONS: Tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever

INFO: Greatest risk of being bit during spring and summer. Adult females are more likely to bite humans.




BLACKLEGGED TICK

FOUND: Widely distributed across the eastern United States.

CONDITIONS: Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis, Relapse Fever, Ehrlichiosis, Babesiosis, and Powassan virus disease.

INFO: Adult ticks may be out searching for a host any time when temperatures are above freezing—higher risks of being bit during spring, summer and fall months.




LONE STAR TICK

FOUND: Widely distributed in the eastern United States but more common in southern regions.

CONDITIONS: Human ehrlichiosis, Tularemia, Heartland virus disease, Bourbon virus disease and Southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI).


INFO: Greater risks of being bit between early spring and late fall. The lone star tick is a very aggressive tick that bites humans. Adult females are distinguishable by a white dot "lone star" on their back. the nymph and adult females most often bite humans. Increased evidence suggests alpha-gal syndrome (AGS) may be triggered by the bite of lone star ticks.





YARD

Ticks are found in yards, often hiding in brush piles and wooded areas. Knowing where ticks live is a key step in bite prevention.



YOU

Remember to check for ticks daily, especially under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and on the hairline and scalp.



PETS

Check your pets for ticks in and around the ears, tail, eyelids, under the collar, under and between the legs and between the toes.

It can be hard to identify if a tick bit you if you don't find the tick on you, and sometimes the symptoms can be hard to distinguish from other things.

"Common symptoms are usually fever, headache, or rash around the area where you were bitten. It could become systemic across your body, causing nausea, vomiting, stomach or muscle pain, and a lack of appetite," said Emert.

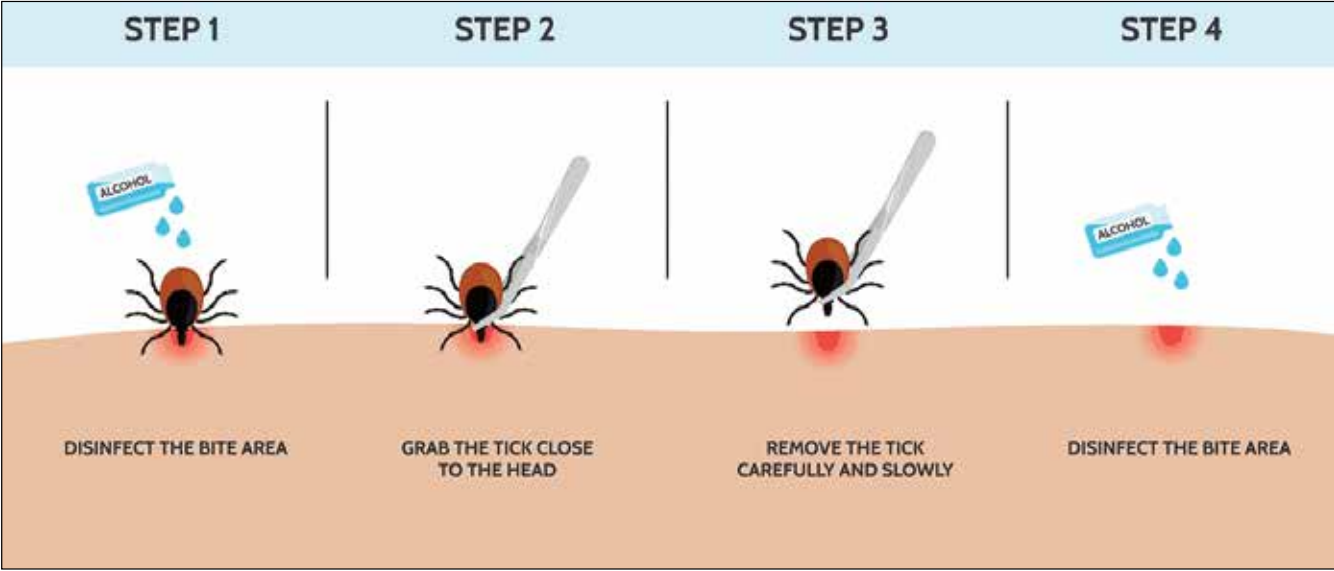
In December 2023, the CDC issued a warning related to RMSF. The health advisory was issued to notify health-care providers and the public about an outbreak of RMSF among people in the United States who have recently traveled to or resided in Tecate, Baja California, Mexico.

Five hospitalizations and three deaths were linked to RMSF since July. However, all those cases originated with travel to Baja California, Mexico. The health advisory highlights the seriousness of checking for ticks and finding treatment in any area where the disease is known to be.

Ticks are small and sometimes hard to find; it's important to recognize the symptoms and get the treatment needed. If that doesn't happen, it can have devastating lifelong effects.

Melissa Wilson says it always took her longer to recover from things when she was a kid, and things worsened as an adult.

"I was just always a little tougher to get well than other people. Things like routine dental appointments would al-



Despite internet misinformation, including fire, petroleum jelly and rubbing alcohol, the best method to remove a tick is to use tweezers and remove the whole tick, including the head.

ways take me a week to get over where most people are okay the next day," said Wilson.

That's how things went for most of Wilson's life: fatigued and illnesses hard to get over, but nothing that raised serious alarms until seven years ago. That's when Wilson said things started to go drastically downhill.

She took several trips to different doctors and emergency rooms, and the diagnoses always ranged from just having the "crud" to one visit where they thought she was on drugs.

Wilson says a few hours after one of those trips where she was given IV steroids, things started happening to her face.

"I started doing all kinds of weird things like my face was contorting and doing a lot of weird stuff. The right side of my face would drop way down like I had a stroke. And the next thing you know, my left eyebrow would be up way high. And it was like my whole body was doing all these weird things, and nobody had any idea what on earth was wrong with me," said Wilson.

Things didn't get better for Wilson, and she says her family was really affected by it.

"My husband would get to a place where he thought, Lord, she's gonna die, and he would take me to an emergency room," Wilson said.

Still, none of those trips resulted in any answers as Wilson continued to decline.

"I got to the point where my muscles were wasting; I couldn't walk myself to the restroom from my bed. My kids would sit at my bedside and cry," said Wilson.

That's when her mother took her to her primary care doctor, where a nurse practitioner looked at her and immediately said she had Lyme disease.

She was then put on antibiotics and has since gotten slightly better to what she calls a base level. Wilson said, "After we pinpointed what it was, I got back to what she called a base level, which is where we're going from here."

While initial blood work did not find any evidence of Lyme disease, Wilson said a more thorough test found evidence of the disease in her DNA.

After initial treatment, Wilson did get a little better. "I was able to walk to the bathroom; I was able to get up and get around, and I didn't have the constant facial stuff," she said.

According to the CDC, symptoms like Wilson experienced on her face can be signs of neurologic Lyme disease. Neurologic symptoms of Lyme disease occur when the Lyme disease bacteria affect the peripheral or central nervous systems.

According to the Oklahoma Health Department, Lyme disease in Oklahoma is rare. Still, ticks carrying the bacteria known to cause Lyme disease have been found in the state.

With the help of the nurse practitioner, Wilson was able to narrow down the time frame where she thinks she contracted the disease. When she was 10 years old, Wilson was hospitalized with what they thought was mono and hepatitis.

This was all about a week after she was at a swimming beach near Beavers Bend, and that's where Wilson thinks she contracted the disease.

Wilson stresses the importance of checking for ticks and seeing a doctor if you start having any symptoms. Tick-borne illnesses are treatable if caught early, but as in Wilson's case, they can have life-changing effects if not caught in time.

Wilson says her goal now is to have more good days than bad.

"Sometimes I make it, sometimes I don't, but I don't dwell on it," she said.

Wilson's story highlights the importance of taking steps to prevent tick bites and searching for them after frequenting areas where ticks may be.

Emert also says taking steps to prevent tick bites is important.

"One of the biggest key components of it is wearing repellent. Also, wearing long sleeve clothing or long pants, along with shoes or boots that go up to where the tick can't necessarily bite onto the skin, are good preventative measures," he said.

Another big component is ensuring you mow your yard and keep it debris-free.

"But then also looking around your yard, identifying brushy areas, staying away from those, and walking in a clear path" said Emmert. "If you're hiking or doing outdoor activities like that."

Emmert also suggested checking your pets to ensure they're not carrying ticks inside, which is a good idea.

As with anything, Emmert says, there are also misconceptions about ticks and tick bites. A couple of common ones are that you can cover the tick in petroleum jelly or hold a flame near it to make it release its bite. Emmert suggests not doing either because they can cause more harm than good.

"It's recommended that you use a pair of tweezers and grasp it by the head and not the body so that you pull the whole tick off your body and the head doesn't stay attached. Then, collect it and discard it to where it can't bite, or put it in a container and throw it away," Emmert said.

Another misconception is that ticks don't bite in the winter.

Emmert says, "There certainly are, and certain ticks prefer colder weather, or those environments compared to warmer climates."

Emert hopes the tick survey being done by the Nation can help create awareness about how to avoid ticks and make more informed decisions about what ticks are in the area and what the Nation can do to help.

"We're very proud of it. It's expected to be one of Oklahoma's largest tick-borne disease surveillance operations," Emmert said. "So, the Choctaw Nation is leading the way with that, and we're really gearing up to improve our disease surveillance across Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority as a whole."

SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST TICKBORNE ILLNESSES

Take a moment to help combat tickborne illnesses by completing this brief survey. Your participation could help track down tick hotspots within the Choctaw Nation.



Scan to complete the survey.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS			
LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS	
Antlers 580-916-5609	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm	
Atoka 580-889-5825	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm	
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Daily Monday – Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Durant 580-916-2100 x83517	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Heavener 918-974-1820	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Hugo 580-326-9707	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:00 pm	
Idabel 580-286-2510	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm	
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Stigler 918-967-4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm	
Talihina 918-567-7000 x6792	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	
Wilburton 580-642-7588	Wednesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm	
Mobile Van 580-380-8193	1st Tuesday – Boswell 3rd Tuesday – Coalgate 4th Tuesday - Clayton	9:00 am – 3:00 pm	
Choctaw Nation Health Services			

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 moth for inventory.

February 2024
All markets open weekdays, February 1-29
Closed: February 19
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 February

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Food demo February 8

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Food demo February 20

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
Food demo February 13

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
Food demo February 15

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation		
February 2	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
February 2	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
February 6	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 7	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 9	Crowder	By Appointment
February 13	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
February 14	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
February 16	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
February 16	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
February 20	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 21	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
February 21	Stigler	By Appointment
February 27	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday Call 580-326-8304 for an Appointment		

Newby-Coker’s art featured in ECHO, Stanford University and Colorado Museum

By Shelia Kirven

Award-winning Choctaw artist Laurretta Newby-Coker is well known for her beautiful stained-glass mosaic art. She is also one of many Choctaws who contributed to the recently released Disney+ Marvel series, Echo.

Newby-Coker was contacted by Disney+ and told they were interested in purchasing one of her pieces to use in a film, which she later found out was Echo. She was told Disney+ had researched her art, and she was asked to send photos of all available artwork she had for sale, and the purchase was made.

Newby-Coker is still excited when she talks about it.

“I was thrilled to death. It was quite the honor,” she said.

The artist was also recently chosen, along with over 25 other artists, to participate in the upcoming Women’s Work exhibit at the A.R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art in Trinidad, Colorado (www.armitchellmuseum.com.) Participating artists were chosen from 120 artists who sent in images of over 1,000 examples of artwork. The exhibit is sponsored by COWGIRL ARTISTS OF AMERICA.

According to the museum website, Women’s Work will connect juried artists with women on working ranches and Native artists with their tribes. Juried artists will create work for the show inspired by the people and places they are connected. Native artists have the option to partner with their tribe, allowing them to create works that genuinely reflect their own stories, traditions, and culture. The show will be open from August 2 – September 30, 2024.

Newby-Coker will submit two mosaics for the show, a 4’x4’ stained-glass mosaic of the endangered Choctaw Ponies and a 4’x4’ piece representing the rare Oklahoma white buffalo from northeastern Oklahoma. She plans to visit locations with the ponies and the buffalo for inspiration.

Stanford University has also commissioned her for a stained-glass mosaic landscape of Yosemite National Park. The piece will be installed in 2025.

Her love for art began as a child. She completed a Fine Arts bachelor’s degree and became a teacher, retiring after 26 years in 2021.

Newby-Coker has worked with many art mediums and is proficient in oil and



Photos Provided

Left: Newby Coker’s stained-glass mosaic, “Waiting by the Window“ was used in the new Disney+ ECHO series.

Right: Choctaw artist Laurretta Newby-Coker specializes in stained-glass mosaic art.

acrylics, coffee and ink wash, pencil drawing, stained-glass mosaics, sculpture, watercolors, printmaking, book illustration, murals, scrimshaw and forensic arts. She likes to choose portraits, landscapes, wildlife, floral compositions and figures from the Native American experience. Newby-Coker teaches art to Chickasaw students during the summer.

Her art has been on display across the United States and Finland. She has had pieces displayed at the Oklahoma State Capital, the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and the U.S. Capital at The White House.

You can see more of Newby-Coker’s art by visiting her website: <https://www.newbycoker.art/home>.

Woolley wins Tulsan of the Year award

By Kellie Matherly

Choctaw tribal member Stacey Woolley has been named Tulsan of the Year by Tulsa People magazine. The award is given annually based on issues that are important to Tulsa residents and how Tulsans are actively involved in them. Her standout work as the president of the school board for Tulsa Public Schools captured the attention and the hearts of her community.

Woolley, the middle child of five, grew up on the Choctaw Nation Reservation. From age four until she finished college, she lived in Durant. Because her grandfather was sent to boarding school as a child and was discouraged from keeping his Choctaw cultural traditions, the family was somewhat disconnected from their roots until later.

Woolley related a story to Tulsa People’s Tim Landes about attending a family gathering on her mother’s side where she was the only brown-skinned person in attendance. At four years old, she realized that she was different from others in the room, and she began to cry.

“Just the idea that we, as four-year-olds, internalize things like that and get upset about not feeling a place of belonging. It just reiterates to me how important it is for the kids who we serve to see people they look like in their schools, to have teachers, to have principals who look like them,” she said.

At age 17, Woolley became pregnant with her first child. Being a single mother, as well as a teenager, put her up against some tough odds. Rather than give up on her hopes of success and become dependent on government programs to survive, however, she pushed

herself even harder. Today, she attributes her success to an innate stubbornness and her Choctaw heritage.

“Getting the idea that I couldn’t do something because of a situation or something that made me different made me feel more compelled to do it,” Woolley said.

By the time she graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Woolley had a husband and two young children, but she was not done with her education. She headed to the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond to earn her master’s in speech language pathology, an area she had been interested in from childhood.

“I remember being in elementary school and having a teacher who kind of made fun of a student in my class who stuttered,” Woolley recalls. “I remember first being so offended and second taking up for him. I think that’s probably the genesis of my interest in speech pathology and working with kids who have different abilities and needs.”

When she finished her master’s degree, Woolley returned to Durant and worked as a speech pathologist in the Achille and Kingston public school systems. Since that time, she and her family have moved to Tulsa, where she serves the school system in a different capacity as school board president.

Her drive to stand up for students who need it most is what led Woolley to run for school board.

“I’m one of five kids in my family, and I think it’s just kind of who I am. I’m just inherently kind of a fighter,” she said.

When she was elected in 2019, however, she could not have imagined the fight looming on the horizon.

According to the Tulsa Public Schools website (tulsaschools.org/facts) TPS serves over 33,000 students city-wide, and 84% of those students are economically disadvantaged. Success rates in schools with similar demographics tend to fall behind those of wealthier districts across the board. For poor students, learning can often take a back seat to problems like finding transportation to school, eating nutritious meals and having a safe place to stay.

“Anyone who is an underdog, I’m going to have a tendency to want to protect,” said Woolley.

And protecting TPS students from their own state government has been a battle for the school board. State superintendent of schools Ryan Walters has targeted TPS for state takeover, a move that Woolley believes would be detrimental to the students and the community.

“Tulsans, as a community, everyone from parents to business owners to educators and everyone in between have united around the idea of the need for lo-



Photos Provided

Tulsa Public Schools has a highly diverse student population with 36% being multilingual. Woolley strives to ensure all students have the resources they need to succeed.

cal control of our schools,” said Woolley, who believes in the power of being able to pick up the phone and call a neighbor who is on the school board when there is a concern. “If our schools were to be taken over by the state, then we lose that direct connection to people within our community who are working on behalf of the schools.”

In addition to the threat from Walters’ office, Oklahoma governor Kevin Stitt recently rejected funding from a new USDA program that will help feed students throughout the summer if they qualify for free or reduced lunches. The program would serve roughly half a million students in Oklahoma by providing an estimated \$60 million in federal dollars.

Woolley believes summer lunch programs are crucial for students in her district and many other poorer districts across Oklahoma.

“I just think it’s really important for Oklahomans to recognize that something that feels as ‘small’ as \$40 a month to help pay for food for children while they are home in the summer literally can be the difference between feeding someone and having electricity. It can be the difference between having gas to go to a doctor’s appointment or buying baby formula,” she said. “We have to do all we can to protect these kids year-round, not just when they’re in school.”

Ensuring that students’ most basic needs are met allows the school system to direct its energy toward what Woolley says is “the really hard work of improving academics” that TPS has been focused on for the past several years.

“We’re going to keep staying focused on what matters, which is literacy for our kids and college and career readiness.” To help identify its most important goals and work toward meeting them, TPS


released a new strategic plan in 2022 that will be in place through 2027.

Native American tribes in the Tulsa area have done much to help bridge the gap for students who need nutritious meals and other academic support programs for economically disadvantaged students in the summer. Any child, regardless of tribal status, who lives within the service area of the tribes and meets the eligibility requirements for assistance can benefit from these programs.

The Choctaw Nation also serves students in the summer through partnership grants from the USDA. The CACFP program (<https://www.choctawnation.com/services/at-risk-program/>) provides shelf-stable meals to children who visit one of distribution sites. In addition, CNO partners with the Chickasaw Nation to offer qualifying families \$40 worth of free food per child for May, June and July. For more information on the Summer EBT program, visit chickasaw.net/summerebt.

The Tulsan of the Year Award is especially significant to Stacey Woolley, who sees the diversity and vibrancy of the community every day through the eyes of students, parents, teachers and administrators.

“What [the award] reinforces to me is that the people of Tulsa believe in what we’re doing in Tulsa Public Schools and don’t want divisive political stunts to be the center of what’s actually happening with our kids. We have a very diverse student population, and the community of Tulsa supports every single student in our buildings and recognizes that not everyone does. That’s really what this award is symbolic of. They want to elevate every kid, and they want to see people in positions like mine who agree with that.”




HUNTING LEASE AUCTION

JANUARY 25, 2024 | 1:00 PM

JOIN US FOR CHOCTAW NATION’S SALE OF HUNTING LEASES ON RESTRICTED LAND. The sale will be held at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Big Rooms 1 and 4.

bit.ly/cno-lease-auction
FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
MCCANN@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
580.642.8988



Leases are for the Restricted interest only and bidder is responsible for negotiating a lease with the Unrestricted owners.

PLACE YOUR ONLINE BID NOW

Choctaw Nation Land & Title



ENVISION CENTER

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

- Free basic tax preparation for tribal members with a combined household income of \$60,000 and below
- Virtual tax preparation by appointment only

We are able to prepare the following tax forms:
W-2, W-2G, SSA-1099, 1099-R, 1099-G, 1099-C, Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Credit

We cannot prepare the following tax forms:
Itemized deductions, Schedule C, Schedule D, Self Employment

ENVISIONCENTER@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
580.380.9370 OR 580.642.7727



Scan here to schedule an appointment

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

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’re interested in applying for a loan, a representative will be at the:

McAlester Community Center
February 16, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



Tvshka Homma hosts first community lunch

By Christian Toews

District 7 held its inaugural community lunch on Thursday, December 7, 2023, at the Tvshka Homma cafeteria.

According to Joey Tom, this is a great advantage to everyone in the surrounding area. Because much of the area surrounding Tvshka Homma is rural, many tribal members have to drive quite a distance to attend a community lunch, he said.

“This is an opportunity for them to come out of the small rural areas and come eat and fellowship with one another,” said Tom.

Visiting with tribal members is one of the ways Tom learns about the needs within his district and the Choctaw Nation as a whole.

Tom has often heard the desire for a community lunch in this area.

“It’s truly about our elders because they help pave the way. They want to come together and eat and fellowship, share ideas, and know more about the success of the tribe and the services available,” he said. “We hope to grow it and bring some classes up here and really provide a place for people to fellowship similar to a community center.”

The cafeteria in Tvshka Homma plans to host a community lunch every Thursday. For more information on the program or to receive assistance in attending, please call Senior Nutrition at 918-426-4125.



Photos by Christian Toews

The first ever Tvshka Homma community lunch was held on December 7, 2023. Those in attendance enjoyed food, fun and fellowship with members of their community.



Echo brings Choctaw culture to the Hollywood red carpet

Kendra Germany-Wall

Cast and crew from Marvel Studios’ “Echo” joined guests, fans and tribal leaders on the red carpet outside the Regency Village Theater in Westwood on January 8, 2024, for a special launch event.

All five series episodes began streaming on January 9, 2024, on Disney+ and Hulu.

In attendance were Alaqua Cox, Chaske Spencer, Tantoo Cardinal, Devery Jacobs, Zahn McClarnon, Cody Lightning, Vincent D’Onofrio, Darnell Besaw, Wren Gotts, Morningstar Angeline, Dannie McCallum, and Katarina Ziervogel, filmmakers Sydney Freeland (director and executive producer), Catriona McKenzie (director), Dave Porter (composer), Ambre Wrigley (costume designer), and Kevin Feige, Louis D’Esposito, Brad Winderbaum, Stephen

Broussard and Richie Palmer (executive producers). Choctaw Nation’s Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. and other CNO representatives also walked the red carpet.

Marvel Studios’ Echo brings a powerful and authentic representation of Native American culture to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Echo filmmakers worked with the Choctaw Nation during all stages of production to ensure the Choctaw culture, language and history were accurately represented.

The CNO is proud to announce the launch of a new website dedicated to Echo and the Choctaw cultural representations showcased throughout the story.

This website serves as a resource for tribal members and fans seeking to delve deeper into the Echo series and CNO’s contributions to the Marvel Universe.

The website provides information about CNO’s history, traditions and language, allowing visitors to explore the significance of the various cultural symbols, practices, and beliefs that are woven into Echo’s narrative.

The website also features exclusive interviews with the tribal leaders behind Echo, shedding light on the collaboration that went into authentically portraying Choctaw culture and the importance of accurately depicting Native culture.

Audiences can watch Marvel’s Echo series on Hulu and Disney+ now.

Visit the website <https://echo.choctawnation.com> and learn more about the partnership between Disney, Marvel and CNO.

More photos of the red carpet event will be available on the online version of this story at <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik>.



Photos by Christian Toews

I spy with my little eye, a couple of biskiniks on the red carpet event for Marvel Studios’ “Echo” on January 8. Devery Jacobs’ jacket wasn’t representing the Biskinik at the event, though. Biskinik’s own Christian Toews was in attendance to take some awesome photos of the event.



Choctaw Nation Photo

Assistant Chief, Jack Austin, Jr., Terri Billy, Assistant Director of the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna, Stacy Shepherd, Executive Director of Member Services, Shauna Williams, Executive Director of Communications and Chief Gary Batton represented the Choctaw Nation on the red carpet.



Alaqua Cox, Maya Lopez



Devery Jacobs, Bonnie



Darnell Besaw, Young Maya



Wren Zhawenim Gotts, Young Bonnie

Lily Gladstone wins Golden Globe for best actress

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Lily Gladstone, the female lead in Martin Scorsese’s “Killers of the Flower Moon,” made history Sunday, January 7, becoming the first Native woman to win the Golden Globe award for Best Actress in a Dramatic Film.

Gladstone comes from Kainai (Blood), Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet) and Niimiipuu (Nez Perce) tribal nations.

Gladstone became the first Native woman nominated for the award for her role in “Killers of the Flower Moon.”

The movie, based on a book of the same name by David Grann, stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone and Robert De Niro. The story covers a series of murders committed against the Osage tribe as predatory prospectors moved in on the rights to Oklahoma oil fields in the 1920s. Gladstone plays Mollie Burkhart, an Osage woman whose relatives are systematically murdered by her husband and his uncle in a bid to seize her family’s oil-rich Oklahoma land.

The winners were announced on January 7 at the Golden Globe award ceremony held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles.

In her speech, Gladstone spoke the Blackfeet language and thanked those who helped her reach this historic moment.

“I’m so grateful that I can speak even a little bit of my language, which I’m not fluent enough up here. Because in this business, Native actors used to speak their lines in English and then the sound mixers would run them backwards to accomplish Native languages on camera,” Gladstone said. “This is an historic win. It doesn’t belong to just



AP Photo/Chris Pizzello

Lily Gladstone poses in the press room with the award for best performance by an actress in a motion picture.

me. I’m holding it right now I’m holding it with all of my beautiful sisters.”

Gladstone went on to recognize the Native children who might be watching.

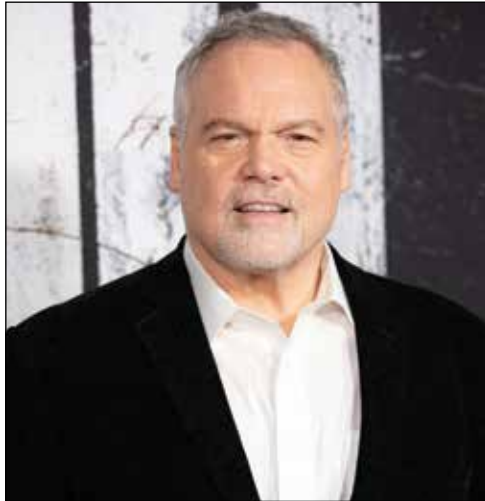
“And this is for every little rez kid, every little urban kid, every little Native kid out there who has a dream, who is seeing themselves represented in our stories, told by ourselves, in our own words, with tremendous allies and tremendous trust,” Gladstone added.

At the ceremony, Gladstone wore a white strapless Valentino gown, a black opera coat and earrings from Blackfeet designer Lenise Omeaso of Antelope Women Designs, according to InStyle.

You can watch “Killers of the Flower Moon” on Apple TV+.



Steven Paul Judd, Writer



Vincent D’Onofrio, Wilson Fisk/Kingpin



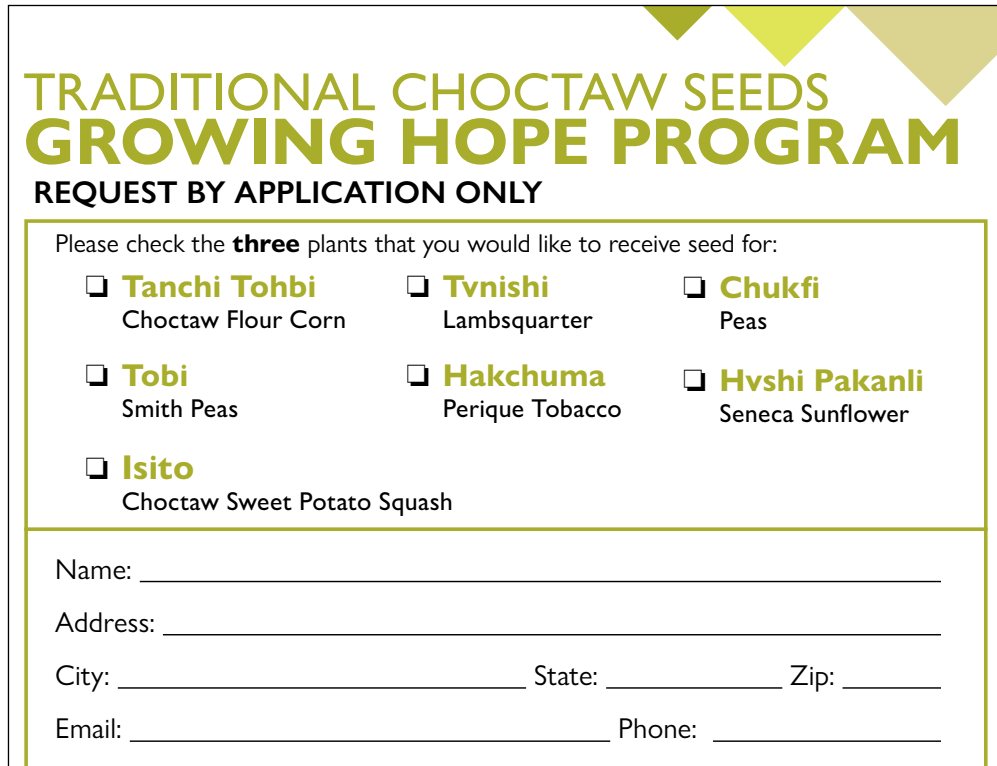
Sydney Freeland, Director



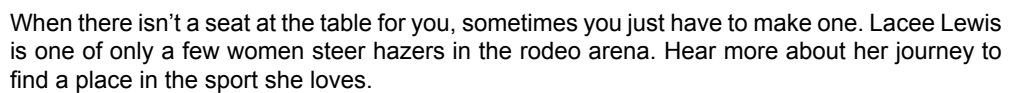
Zahn McClarnon, William Lopez

By Kellie Matherly

"That horse taught me so much. I had him until he died. He was the one horse that wasn't for sale," she said. "He took care of me." Superbowl John was 22 when he passed.



MAIL THIS FORM TO:
Growing Hope Project
163665 N 4355 RD
Tushkahoma, OK 74574



Lacey's words of wisdom to other Choctaws are simple: "Just listen, and something will guide you."



Echo red carpet event held in Hollywood.

