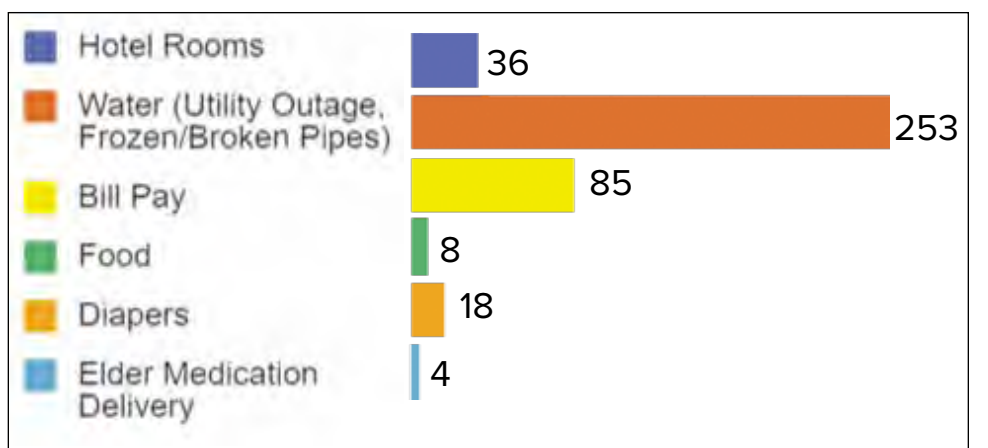




Individual assistance provided (by CNO household)



Photos by Christian Toews

April 2021 Issue

Top, Rick Cook helps to fill one of the U.S. Army Camels in Caney, Oklahoma. Bottom left, Tom Smith helps carry water to Scott Bowman's vehicle. Colbert was one of the locations where people could bring containers and have them filled using the Water Buffalo provided by the Choctaw Nation.

Choctaw Nation provides assistance during record breaking winter storm

By Christian Toews

One of the worst winter storms in recent history struck the southern U.S. in February. Frigid temperatures and winter weather battered the state of Oklahoma and the surrounding region, leaving many people in dire situations and struggling for basic needs. This storm caused many disruptions to power, water and travel across the state. Due to the frigid temperatures, water main breaks across the state left many without potable water, while others were left without water at all.

This storm quickly transitioned from the excitement of seeing actual snow to a dangerous and life-threatening situation for many people. Despite the difficulties, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) showed the Chahta Spirit in providing necessities to tribal members and surrounding communities.

"This is truly a team effort across divisions pulling resources together, collaborating, to provide life-saving necessities to our Tribal members and our communities," says CNO Executive Officer for Member Services, Stacy Shepherd.

The Choctaw Nation's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) filled trucks with nearly 40 pallets of drinking water on Feb. 18. It delivered the water to communities across southeastern Oklahoma with little to no water pressure following water main line breaks. In a collaborative effort between Choctaw Global, local cities of Caney, Stringtown and Antlers, as well as the U.S. Army, the Choctaw Nation's OEM delivered over 6,800 gallons of drinking water across the Choctaw Nation. This water was delivered using "water buffaloes" and "Camels," water transport tanks from the U.S. Army. Choctaw Global LLC manufactures these water transport tanks.

The tanks were filled in Caney, Stringtown and Antlers and transported to distribution sites across the Choctaw Nation. Locations included Colbert, McAlester, Red Oak, Quinton and Wright City. This water distribution lasted through the three days that many cities were without water pressure.

From February 13 – 25, OEM received more than 547 calls to the CNO Disaster Hotline. The assistance provided ranged from hotel rooms, frozen/broken water pipe assistance, food assistance, diapers, and even medication delivery for elders stuck at home due to the snow and ice.

OEM, CNHSA and Facilities partnered to help a tribal member who could not have otherwise made it to his dialysis appointment due to the dangerous driving conditions near his home. The collaboration of CNO services led to the tribal member receiving a ride to his appointment in a four-wheel-drive truck provided by CNO.

During the storm, CNO social workers spent time checking on elders and delivering groceries and supplies. Outreach Services team members helped relocate elders to hotels after finding them with flooding due to broken water lines or without heat. Other Outreach Service associates worked to find propane for shivering tribal members.

Travel Plaza, Country Market and Casino teams worked hard to accommodate the needs of clients and customers by staying open and finding a way to meet staffing and supply chain challenges, despite dangerous driving conditions, extreme cold and power outages in various locations throughout the CNO service area.

"We have dedicated people who have been willing to be away from home through this and be put up in the resorts and hotels to ensure we have staff to run the stores so we can continue to serve the communities," said Lena Harbour, CNO Director of Retail of Operations. "In most communities, our Travel Plazas and Country Markets are the only access utility crews and travelers have for food, fuel and restrooms."

CNO Senior Director of Casino Operations Chris Scrivner agreed, saying he is proud of how associates at casino properties met the challenges created by the storm.

"A tremendous amount of teamwork is needed to get our properties through challenges like these," Scrivner said. "Our teams fully understand what the Choctaw Nation is about and why we do the things we do; it is to provide services for our tribal members as well as our communities."

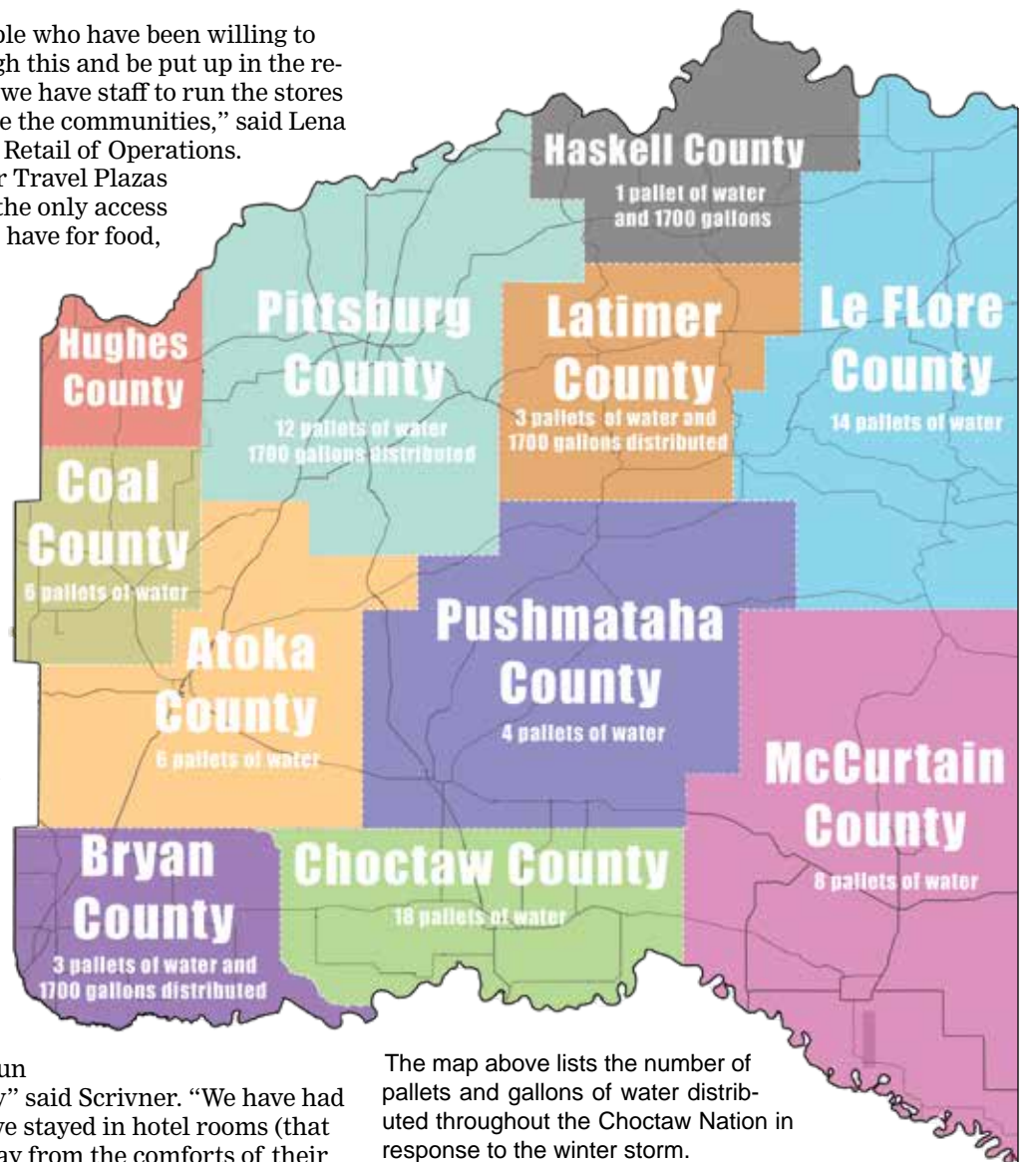
As one of many examples, Scrivner cited a Rewards Club supervisor at our casino property in McAlester.

"She came in on her day off so that we could keep the booth open and run our promotions for the day" said Scrivner. "We have had several associates who have stayed in hotel rooms (that we provided for them), away from the comforts of their own home, just to ensure we had proper coverage for their properties."

Scrivner says the cross-functional support even extends to providing meals to colleagues in other CNO businesses, proving once again that the Choctaw Nation embodies the "Together We're More" slogan.

"We have had some of our Food & Beverage venues unable to open due to staff not being able to come in (because of the snowy roads)," explained Scrivner. "We have been very reliant upon our Travel Plaza teams throughout the region to help supply food for our associates. Our Casino GM's have been in contact with the Travel Plaza GM's to coordinate food being provided for our associates. We are all very thankful for the coordination and assistance we received from the Travel Plazas. Facilities Maintenance has also been a very important partner for us as they coordinated a contractor to come out and clear all our properties' driveways and parking lots so we can keep everyone safe who visits our properties."

While extreme events like this winter storm are becoming more common, these stories show us the Choctaw Nation's incredible individuals. We can see that CNO is committed to its citizens' safety and well-being and the surrounding communities. We are reminded that the Chahta Spirit shines strongest in the dark times, and together, we are more.



The map above lists the number of pallets and gallons of water distributed throughout the Choctaw Nation in response to the winter storm.

Below, a U.S. Army Camel is pictured being filled in Caney, Oklahoma. The water was then transported to Red Oak, Oklahoma, providing drinking water for people in the area.



Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

American Rescue Plan signed into law

President Biden signed the U.S. government's second coronavirus relief package, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, into law on March 11. While some U.S. citizens might have already received direct payments from the U.S. Treasury, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and other tribal governments will have to wait.

We know the relief bill includes \$20 billion for tribal governments, but we don't know how the U.S. government will allocate those funds. My hope is that tribal citizen enrollment data will be more of a determining factor than outdated funding formulas that resulted in funding inequities in how CARES Act relief was allotted. These inequities were highlighted by an informative Harvard University study.

The U.S. Treasury Department has up to 60 days to make that determination and distribute funding to tribes, and we expect them to take the full 60 days. While we wait, the cross-functional committee that led our CARES Act efforts is fully engaged in planning and discussions about the potential of ARP funding.

Not long ago, we held a planning meeting with Tribal Council and identified key categories the Nation could fund with ARP monies. We intend to extend and re-open application periods for successful programs provided by CARES that benefit our most vulnerable tribal members (like addressing food and housing security) and initiatives that support public health. I encourage tribal members who have already received reloadable food cards to keep those cards. We also plan to renew programs that align with our mission of providing opportunities for growth and prosperity like education, child assistance, and small business support.

Right now, we only have projections to work with as we await the full details of the funding amount Choctaw Nation will receive and the federal rules and regulations that come with it. I encourage you to stay tuned to Choctaw Nation's website at www.choctawnation.com/covidrelief and our social media channels for the latest news and updates on relief funding.

Oklahoma Blood Institute Honors Choctaw Nation



Photo by Charles Clark

During the COVID-19 pandemic, donations increased, with drives particularly requesting convalescent plasma, from patients who had and recovered from the virus. Such plasma is used directly in the treatment of patients with COVID-19.

Michelle McGuire, Senior Account Manager of the Oklahoma Blood Institute's southeast region, presented awards to Chief Batton; Choctaw Nation District 9 Tribal Councilman James Dry; Carrie Barron and Brittany Lake, donation coordinators with the Choctaw Resort & Casino in Durant, and Brenda Gabbart, donation coordinator with the Choctaw Headquarters. The awards were to show appreciation of the Nation and its employees for their ongoing support, especially during this time of great need.



Thank you, Choctaw Nation, for your lifesaving partnership!

Throughout a challenging year for the blood supply, your unwavering support is appreciated.

If you've recovered from COVID-19, you may be eligible to donate convalescent plasma.

Email coviddonor@obi.org to make your lifesaving plasma appointment.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SERVICES

Our goal is to assist our students with academic information to promote education and/or career path beyond high school.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL:
800-522-6170

OR EMAIL:
HIGHSCHOOLSTUDENTSERVICES@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Celebrating easter

Last Easter was the first major holiday affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this Easter will once again be different. While social distancing and other restrictions are far from over, we are starting to see hope in a more normal future and being able to celebrate holidays together again.

After navigating a global pandemic for a full year, we have learned how to adapt and persevere through this challenging time. We have had to learn how to deal with loss and how to spend holidays without loved ones. As we celebrate Easter, we must still make the health and safety of our friends and families a top priority.

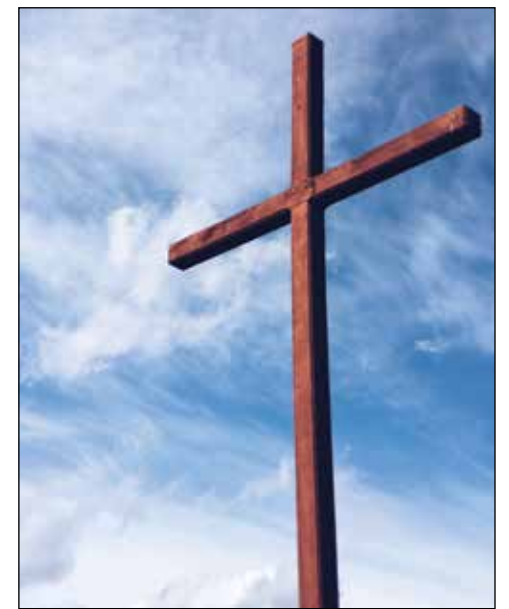
Following each holiday during the pandemic, our country has experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases. However, in lessons learned over the past year along with the vaccine rollout, we are seeing a decline in active COVID cases. By continuing to be aware of and practicing the latest safety precautions we can continue that trend.

Despite COVID's impact on the world, Easter remains a wonderful time of the year, a time to reflect on the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The story of Jesus' death and resurrection is one of sacrifice, love, restoration and hope. Many sacrifices have been made during this last year, and continue to be made, yet if we focus on the promises of God, we understand that we have hope in uncertain times.

This Easter some may choose to gather in their celebration but even with the decline of active COVID cases I encourage everyone to be diligent with the most current safety precautions.

Many churches and communities this year are again hosting virtual services and celebrations, and the Choctaw Nation is hosting a virtual Easter Celebration as well. If you would like to be a part of the virtual event, please visit the official Choctaw Nation Facebook page on April 4 to view details about the special event.

I'd like to wish everyone a Happy Easter and I hope that you are able to spend it with family or friends safely this year. God bless.



Not Forsaken

Many times in our lifetime, we encounter moments when there is so much trouble that we feel like nobody cares. We may feel like no one is concerned about our particular problems. There is somebody who is concerned. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He understands because He has experienced what we go through.

Sometimes poverty comes and threatens our lives. We face loss of jobs, no money to buy the essentials we are accustomed to, and we are displaced in our position in society. Does anybody understand? Jesus understands.

2 Corinthians 8:9 tells us, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." He was homeless.

We read in Matthew 8:20, "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

Sometimes we are betrayed and feel worthless and empty. Loved ones, friends, a spouse, or an employer may betray us and leave us in a dark and hopeless life.

Our Lord knows about betrayal. One of his own disciples betrayed him.

Luke 22:2-6, "And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money." Luke 22:47 says, "And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Sometimes, death walks in and takes away a loved one and our heart. We die within and think nobody understands. Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords understands.

John 11:32-36 shows us his love for others and how he feels what we feel in bereavement. "Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. And said Where have you laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!"

He is the Son of God, sent to die for the sins of the people, to be the sacrificial lamb so that we can have salvation through him. Yet he was born in a stable, misunderstood and mistreated. He has walked in the paths we are walking through and more. He is a friend who truly understands and can give comfort. In Hebrews 13:5, he promised us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Yes, there is somebody who understands you and loves you. Trust and pray to him today.



CASTING CALL

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE CHOCTAW PROUD TO PARTICIPATE IN UPCOMING COMMERCIALS, RADIO SPOTS AND VIDEO PROJECTS.

TO COMPLETE THE CASTING CALL FORM, VISIT WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CASTING-CALL AND UPLOAD:

HEADSHOT, RESUME, AGE, ADDRESS, CONTACT INFORMATION, PAST WORK EXPERIENCE (IF ANY), & SAMPLE OF WORK (IF ANY)

HAVE QUESTIONS? EMAIL MULTIMEDIA@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Isabella Cornell makes history twice with her designs

By Shelia Kirven

Most people do not get to see themselves make history in their own lifetime, especially not twice and by the age of 22, but that is exactly what Isabella Aiukli Cornell has done, all in the name of advocating for Indigenous women. Born and raised in Oklahoma City, this proud Choctaw woman has seen her specially designed prom dress become a permanent display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, and a ribbon skirt she designed and made was worn to the 2021 U.S. Presidential Inauguration by Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland.

Cornell is a strong advocate and activist for Indigenous women's causes. "There have been so many hardships that have been coming across our community for Indigenous women, and all these different issues like MMIW have been impacting us so much. How I see it is there is always a need in the community for something, and I think that we should really take it upon ourselves as young people, and as just relatives in the community to stand up and look out for each other, because that is how we become good relatives, by looking out for those in our community who need help. All these different issues that have come up have really been motivating me to get out and help them as much as I can."

Cornell said that her mother has had a huge influence on her, teaching her to be a strong Choctaw woman.

"She is very involved in the community. It's what I grew up around. She is always going to all these different kinds of events, whether a panel, a rally or some community event. We were always there, and we were always doing some kind of work with that," explained Cornell.

Cornell said that growing up, she participated in several different political events, even bringing it into her school through school projects she would do.

"It was such an integral part of my life and my identity as an Indigenous woman. It was something that was applicable to just about anything in my life and so I wanted to incorporate it into my everyday life as much as I could because I love my culture. I think it's just such an integral part of who I am. Just growing up around that is what influenced my involvement," said Cornell.

She also has a powerful bond and relationship with her grandparents.

"I did grow up traditionally, and I would say that it was because of my culture that was able to get me involved in things because it was impacting our people."

As a family participating in advocacy events, one of her most memorable experiences was a trip to Washington, D.C. to speak to the Secretary of Education in

2015 with a group of Native youth from all different tribal nations across the country. She and her sister attended and were able to talk about what it was like being Indigenous students, opening up about some of the hardships in the classroom and what they would like to see different in the educational system. Though it was work, it was enjoyable, and one of the fun events that came with the experience was getting to go bowling in the White House.

It was 2018 when Cornell was able to make history with her advocacy efforts. While deciding what to wear to her prom, she decided to have a dress designed especially with a cause close to her heart, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Being a close follower of Della Bighair, a Crow designer (Designs by Della) from Montana, Cornell reached out to Bighair to seek her assistance with the design. Cornell had previously modeled some of Bighair's designs in a few shows (Native Fashion in the City) in Denver, Colorado. Cornell has modeled since she was 12 and even has a billboard with her face on it in Oklahoma City. She decided it was something designed by Bighair that she wanted to wear to prom with colors and design elements that brought attention to MMIW. Bighair came up with a dress for Cornell with both Choctaw and Crow elements on the bodice, with the Choctaw designs being diamonds.

"It turned out really amazing. It's something that was really special to me" Cornell said.

She expected just to wear the dress for one night, knowing what it meant to her and her family. Over time, however, Cornell said it started getting more attention, and people started writing articles about it. Teen Vogue covered it, and Cornell said she was very surprised. It was then that she remembered that was the whole mission of the dress, to create awareness and dialogue about the issue. More news sources came forward seeking to cover the dress, and Cornell said that eventually, the Smithsonian contacted her and her mother, wanting to talk to them about donating it to their exhibit Girlhood (<https://americanhistory.si.edu/girlhood>). The dress was donated, and it will reside with the museum in their permanent collection. The exhibit will go on a national tour in 2023. Though Cornell stated it was sad to see the dress go, she was happier "knowing people will be able to educate themselves and be aware of the issue, because that's what is more important to me."

Cornell said she plans to go see the dress on exhibit, and that she and the designer are very excited.

"It was a huge honor for both of us," said Cornell.

When asked why MMIW is so close to her heart, Cornell said, "It's personal because it impacts almost every Indigenous family. The epidemic of violence has been perpetrated against Indigenous women. We go missing more than ten times the national average, and we barely get attention for it. We don't get amber alerts. We don't get as much press and coverage about these issues as we need to. That's why I think it's so important to talk about it because awareness is the first step that happens. If other people aren't going to talk about it, it's important that we do."

Cornell's mother, Sarah, and grandmother, Tami Adams, taught her beadwork and how to sew when she was growing up. She said she also learned a lot by going to events at the Choctaw Tribal Alliance in Oklahoma City.

That is how she came to begin her business, Aiukli Designs which sells beadwork and ribbon skirts. She says her business has been well received and is expanding. Cornell's business has been growing since Sec. of Interior Deb Haaland, Laguna Pueblo, was seen wearing her skirt design earlier this year at the U.S. Presidential Inauguration.

"I was super excited to see her wearing the ribbon skirt I made and gifted her a few years ago when she was in Oklahoma City. It means a lot to see her wearing my design," Cornell said.

Haaland was seen wearing the skirt in Vogue Magazine and other major news outlets. Talking about how the business has been since that, Cornell said, "Business is booming!"

She said she has gotten a lot more followers on social media since that time and more media attention.

Cornell said the ribbon skirt came traditionally from Plains tribes who traded with settlers for ribbons. Over time, the skirt was created.

Cornell said she was given permission to sell the ribbon skirts from her mentor, as she said she didn't want to take from other cultures and profit from it, and was advised that the ribbon skirt is now becoming a lot like the traditional shawl, that many Native women are seen wearing them at tribal gatherings.

"It doesn't belong to just one tribe. It's something we can all have in common and



Photo by Doug Hoke

Isabella "Bella" Aiukli Cornell models the dress she had designed for MMIW. The dress now resides in the Smithsonian.

are all able to wear because it stands for something a lot bigger than just a skirt. I see it as a representation. When you see an Indigenous woman walk into a room wearing a skirt, she is representing herself in a good way. She is representing herself, her community, her family and her nation in a good way," Cornell explained.

Cornell is attending college in Colorado, studying Psychology and Native American Studies. She plans to follow through until she has a Ph.D. Her future plans are to provide counseling services to Indigenous youth from a more Indigenous perspective. She says she is grateful for the scholarships she has received through Choctaw Nation.

Speaking to young people who may want to follow in her footsteps, Cornell said, "Don't be afraid to start stepping into positions of leadership. Don't be afraid to start using your voice. Remember, you have an obligation to your people to be a good relative and to look out for people who need help. So always remember to use your voice in a good way, represent yourself in a good way and always remember that you have the prayers and the love of all your ancestors with you all the time." She went on to say, "Just remember who you came from, these matrilineal societies that we were a part of once ago. Don't be afraid to step into these roles of leadership because we are matriarchs, and it's important that we remember that in ourselves, and always just remember your strengths."

Cornell is the daughter of Sarah (Adams) and Dustin Cornell and the older sister of Gabby Cornell.

You can follow Cornell's designs on Instagram at Aiukli Designs.

Choctaw/Hopi curator maintains over 9,000 works of Native art

By Shelia Kirven

Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer (Choctaw/Hopi) is one of those fortunate people who gets to work with art every day, but in her case, it happens to be over 9,000 pieces of contemporary Native art she is responsible for. She is the Curator of Collections for the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a museum that greets over 20,000 visitors per year.

Tatiana comes from a family of artists. Her mother graduated from IAIA in 1965 when it was still a high school and attended the San Francisco Art Institute where she met Tatiana's father, also an artist. After she graduated with her Master of Fine Arts in painting, her mother was recruited back to IAIA to teach, which she did until her retirement. IAIA was like a second home to Tatiana growing up.

Tatiana's grandparents lived in Phoenix, and she spent a lot of time with them, learning from her Choctaw grandmother and her Hopi grandfather. Both Choctaw and Hopi cultures were instilled in her growing up. Her grandmother always reminded her family of their Choctaw side, including teaching them much of the language.

Tatiana said, "I was always reminded of this side of my heritage."

She went on to pursue an education in arts administration from the University of Arizona. Following graduation and an internship with the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Tatiana worked for a non-profit organization that worked directly with artists and eventually went to work at IAIA in the museum gift shop, working her way up to Assistant Curator of

Collections and finally to Curator. She has been with IAIA for 28 years and works daily in a warehouse housing the contemporary Native American art pieces on the institute's campus.

Some of the art in the collection goes back to the 1960s. The largest part of the collection is by IAIA students, faculty, staff and alumni. It has always been an effort to collect art that was coming out of the school, especially when it was a high school. Tatiana said, "They were collecting to help promote the institute and to raise awareness, especially for funding. Eventually, students started to gift works to the school's collection, and the museum was formed in 1971. Today we continue collecting, but on a smaller scale."

The collection is housed 20 minutes from Santa Fe on the campus of IAIA, and the museum is in the heart of downtown Santa Fe. Plans are to digitize the entire collection for the public to be able to view online.

Though IAIA's student population tends to be primarily from Pueblo and Navajo local areas, Tatiana explained they are seeing more Southern tribes coming into the school. She says she enjoys working closely with students and gets to share her knowledge on art care and management. She also sponsors the Museum Club, as well as being able to go into the classrooms; speak to students about different artists and the history of the school; and work with students one-on-one for research needs.

When asked what advice she might give to someone wanting to find their future in the world of art, Tatiana said, "I would definitely pursue programs that have a reputable art program. I think a lot of institutions



Photo Provided

Tatiana Lomahaftewa-Singer is Curator of Collections for the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

have art programs, but there are some that are stronger than others." In talking about IAIA, she said, "They really try to make it affordable, knowing that most Native students are coming from communities that are low income. They provide a really good quality education." IAIA also offers a continuing education program where some of the classes and workshops are free or offered at a low fee and are available to students and non-students alike.

One of Tatiana's most rewarding efforts has been a project managing a large exhibit for her mother called The Moving Land: 60+ Years of Art by Linda Lomahaftewa. The exhibit will be on view until July 17. Half of the works came out of the collections when Linda was a student at IAIA and her donations from different periods and some from family, friends and institution work. There is a discussion about the exhibit possibly traveling.

Tatiana says she has had many great experiences while at IAIA, one being when the son of Choctaw artist Doug Crowder who had attended IAIA reached out

asking if he could come to the warehouse to see his father's work. The pieces were all pulled from separate shelving areas throughout the warehouse. She said she had seen the pieces before but never pulled together like that. The son, an artist also, came with his family. "It was a really beautiful, beautiful visit. I saw those pieces in a new way. With them all together, I really started seeing the direction his father was taking and what he was thinking about."

Tatiana is co-author of Making History: IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts and a contributor to various publications and catalogs. She lives with her husband and fifteen-year-old daughter near Santa Fe.

To learn more about IAIA and its continuing education program, visit <https://iaia.edu/> and <https://iaia.edu/outreach/continuing-education/>.

For museum news, visit iaia.edu/mocna.

For information on the exhibit of Linda Lomahaftewa, visit iaia.edu/the-moving-land-60-years-of-art-by-linda-lomahaftewa.

CHOCTAW
COUNTRY MARKET
REWARDS

THE CHOCTAW COUNTRY MARKET LOYALTY PROGRAM IS NOW AVAILABLE!

HOME FINANCE

LET US HELP MAKE YOUR
DREAM OF OWNING A
HOME A REALITY

Contact info:
bit.ly/cno-home-finance
800.235.3087
housing@choctawnation.com

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Provides More than \$2.5 Billion Impact to Oklahoma in 2019

DURANT, Okla. (Feb. 25, 2021) — The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma announced today that the Tribe had a \$2,519,532,303 economic impact on the State of Oklahoma in 2019.

The economic impact report, prepared by Dr. Kyle Dean, Economist for the Center for Native American and Urban Studies at Oklahoma City University, showed the Choctaw Nation is one of the largest contributors to southeastern Oklahoma, as well as the overall state. In 2019, the Tribe supported 18,152 Oklahoman jobs paying wages and benefits of \$839 million to Oklahoma workers.

"The Choctaw Nation is one of the best partners the state could ask for," states Dr. Kyle Dean. "Their economic impact of \$2.5 billion makes them one of the most substantial contributors to the state's economy with much of their impact being felt in poorer rural areas in southeastern Oklahoma. Their impacts extend beyond the financial and employment numbers presented in this report as they provide charitable support to local communities, healthcare and services to citizens, and bring infrastructure investment to the state that's enjoyed by all Oklahomans."

"We are a thriving force in the region that provides new opportunities, growth and prosperity to our families and communities," states Chief Gary Batton. "We continue to bring positive change to not only our Tribe but the entire state of Oklahoma and its people, both tribal and non-tribal, for years to come."



Education

The future of Oklahoma's children is extremely important to Choctaw Nation. Educational opportunities extend from early childhood programs to graduate degrees. The Choctaw Nation paid more than \$278 million in exclusivity fees to the state since 2005, including nearly \$28 million in 2019. Additionally, the Choctaw Nation funded nearly \$47 million (beyond exclusivity fees) for educational programs.

In 2019, the Choctaw Nation invested more than \$7.2 million in scholarships, grants and other forms of financial support to Choctaw students and \$3.5 million to fund the Partnership of Summer School Program that served 3,788 Oklahoma students' in 75 schools.

Housing

Homeownership is often thought to be an essential ingredient of the "American Dream." Choctaw Nation Lease-to-Purchase (LEAP) homes are creating invested homeowners and improving the quality of life for hundreds of Choctaw citizens. In 2019, the program assisted 140 Choctaws in making their dream of owning a home a reality. The Choctaw Nation also invested \$8.1 million towards housing repairs to over 1,500 households and installed 442 storm shelters.

Healthcare

The Choctaw Nation aims to provide the highest quality care to the people it serves by promoting and protecting the health of people and the communities where we live, learn, work and play. The Tribe offers state-of-the-art facilities, including nine clinics, 13 wellness centers, two inpatient facilities and one hospital in Talihina, Okla.

Combined, Choctaw Nation Wellness Centers, located throughout the Nation's territories in southeast Oklahoma experienced more than 442,000 visits in 2019. The Choctaw Nation also spent \$259 million to support healthcare, oversaw nearly one million patient encounters, administered over 20,990 flu-shots and dispensed more than 1.5 million prescriptions.

Community

The Choctaw Nation offers numerous programs and services dedicated to strengthening and enhancing the Choctaw community and the residents who call it home. The Choctaw Development Fund helped support two of the largest area community development projects in 2019 when McAlester broke ground on its streetscape enhancement project to their downtown and the Stigler sports complex that opened in July of 2019.

Additionally, the Tribe has recycled over 4.1 million pounds of material, contributed over \$1.6 million to cities and counties from the Choctaw Community Partnership Fund, and through joint projects, the Tribe provided more than \$5.9 million in assistance to resurface or construct roadways.

For more details about the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribe's Economic Impact, visit www.growchoctaw.com/doingbusiness/economic-impact.



Tribal Councilman Robert Karr received his COVID-19 vaccine at our McAlester Clinic. The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority recently announced that they will be accepting appointments for qualifying non-tribal members.

Choctaw Nation Offers COVID-19 Vaccinations to General Public

DURANT, Okla. (March 11, 2021) – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) has opened vaccination appointment times for non-tribal members. Starting March 8, 2021, educators of any level or type of institution were able to schedule their appointment. Beginning March 15, 2021, the appointments were opened to the public, providing patients meet the vaccine manufacturers' minimum age requirements.

"The goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible to begin to reach the herd immunity that is needed to protect the general public against the COVID-19 virus," says Todd Hallmark, Executive Officer of Health. As of March 10, CNHSA has given over 19,000 doses of the vaccine.

CNHSA is currently offering the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines. The minimum age for the Pfizer vaccine, given primarily at the Talihina Clinic, is 16 years old. The Moderna vaccine is given at the other Choctaw Nation clinics, with a minimum age of 18.

To schedule an appointment, call 800.349.7026 extension 6 and choose your closest clinic. To learn more about available opportunities and eligibility, please visit www.choctawnation.com/covid-19.

StrongHearts Native Helpline Launches Text Advocacy

(EAGAN, Minn., March 16, 2021) – StrongHearts Native Helpline (1-844-7NATIVE) announced today it will soon expand operations by offering text advocacy. The expanded service launches on Monday, March 22.

Text advocacy can be reached by using StrongHearts Native Helpline's number: 1-844-762-8483.

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a culturally-appropriate, anonymous, confidential and free service dedicated to serving Native victim-survivors, concerned family members and friends affected by domestic, dating and sexual violence. StrongHearts Native Helpline is a project of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Like online chat advocacy, text advocacy increases accessibility for individuals who may be hearing impaired and those who may be uncomfortable or unable to vocalize a call for support. As the pandemic continues and victim-survivors in abusive relationships are forced to shelter-in-place with their abusive partners; it becomes even more vital to offer multiple communication options so victim-survivors can decide what is a safe and appropriate option for them.

"We are eager to expand our services to reach every Native victim-survivor who needs it," said StrongHearts Director Lori Jump (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians). "StrongHearts will continue our work until all of our relatives have the resources they need and are safe from violence."

According to the National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Partner Survey, Native Americans and Alaska Natives experience some of the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence in the United States. The study found that more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women had experienced violence in their lifetime, and one in three had experienced violence within the past year. The study also examined how this violence affects tribal communities and Native survivors. For American Indian and Alaska Native people, the study found about half of women and nearly one in five men stated they needed victim services. With few options and supportive resources, Native American victims of abuse often go without assistance.

To address these inequities and better serve Native Americans and Alaska Natives, StrongHearts has been rapidly expanding. In 2020, StrongHearts launched online chat advocacy and sexual violence advocacy. In 2021, StrongHearts increased advocacy services to 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

As American Indian and Alaska Native communities continue to navigate the isolating effects of COVID-19, 24/7 expanded operations and text advocacy will allow those experiencing domestic and sexual violence to connect with a highly-trained advocate whenever they need free, anonymous and confidential support.

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a culturally-appropriate domestic, dating and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans, available by calling 1-844-762-8483 or clicking on the Chat Now icon on strongheartshelpline.org. StrongHearts Native Helpline is a collaborative effort of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

Win **\$100** worth of groceries

Sign up for emails from **CHOCTAW COUNTRY MARKET**

Sign up for your chance to win at choctawcountrymarket.com

INDEPENDENT ELDER HOUSING

1-800-235-3087 | Application available at your local Community Center

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

CHOCTAW COUNTRY MARKET

WE'VE GOT A DEAL TRIBAL MEMBERS!

Receive 5% Off & 3¢ Off per gallon

DISCOUNT AVAILABLE WHEN PRESENTING CDIB OR MEMBERSHIP CARD

TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP AND COVID-19 GUIDELINES

The Choctaw Nation is taking numerous steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Tribal Membership Department has released important guidelines that we want all members to be aware of.

The safest option for obtaining a tribal membership application is through our online application access.

Guidance can be found at choctawnation.com/contacts-applications/cdibmembership-information

All membership cards are being mailed to recipients until further notice. Unfortunately, this means same-day card attainment will not be available. Applications, supporting documentation, and photos can be emailed or mailed to us at the address listed below.

800-522-6170 EXT 4030
CDIB-MEMBERSHIP@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
 CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA | ATTN: TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP
 PO BOX 1210 | DURANT, OK 74702

Choctaw Nation Member Services

Take a Hike in Choctaw Country

CHOCTAW COUNTRY

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

CHOCTAWCOUNTRY.COM

ENVISION CENTER

FREE INCOME TAX PREPARATION BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

918-647-3665
 ENVISIONCENTER@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

FOOD for the SUMMER!

Summer EBT - Apply Now!

Receive an EBT card for the purchase of healthy food this summer. Learn more and apply today at Chickasaw.net/SummerEBT.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Summer EBT for Children is an initiative of the Chickasaw Nation.

NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

Contact the Choctaw Nation Circulation Department
580.924.8280 x4028

Read the Biskinik online at CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS

BISKINIK

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

Dara McCoy, Executive 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.

CHOCTAW COLOR GUARD
 POSITIONS AVAILABLE

APPLY TODAY!

APPLY BY CONTACTING
 (800) 522-6170 EXT. 2160
VETERANSADVOCACY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Coming Soon.

Online Ordering.

It's fast. It's easy. It's convenient. Order when you're in a hurry, over a lunch break or just whenever you think about it. We'll do the shopping and bring it out to you.

CHOCTAW COUNTRY MARKET CURBSIDE

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

March 13, 2021

- CALL TO ORDER
- OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- ROLL CALL
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - Regular Session February 13, 2021**
- WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - Veteran of the Month—Clare Harvey, District #6** - Special point was made that its Women's History Month and the Veteran of the Month is a woman who was in the service when it wasn't common for women to be in the service.
- PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - David Hill - Individual Speaker** - Importance of Sovereignty
- REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- NEW BUSINESS
 - Letter of Consideration for the Appointment of Larry Amos to the Choctaw Nation Jones Academy School Board.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Appointment passed. Councilman Karr excused himself from this vote due to being his cousin
 - Letter of Consideration for the Appointment of Dewayne Hampton to the Choctaw Nation Jones Academy School Board.** Vote Counts: YEAs-Unanimous; Vote Result: Appointment passed
 - Letter of Consideration for the Appointment of Sylvia Sigler to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Election Board.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Appointment passed
 - Letter of Consideration for the Appointment of Debra Kay Mooney to the Governing Board of the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Appointment passed
 - Approve Business Lease No. G09-1976 in Favor of the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Latimer County, Oklahoma.** Vote Counts: YEAs-Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-41-21
 - Approve Business Lease No. G09-1977 in Favor of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Latimer County, Oklahoma.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-42-21
 - Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-43-21
 - Approve Application for the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitations Purpose Area #4 - Tribal Justice System Infrastructure Program.** Vote Counts: YEAs-Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-44-21. Councilman Cox abstained
 - Approve the Uniform Fee Schedule for the Court of General Jurisdiction of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-45-21
 - Rescind CB-136-19 and Approve an Increased Funding Amount for the Expansion of the Residency and Specialty Clinic at the Talihina Health Care Center.** Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed - CB-46-21
- OTHER NEW BUSINESS
- OLD BUSINESS
- ADJOURNMENT
- CLOSING PRAYER

All Council Members present with the exception of Perry Thompson

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

April 6	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 7	Atoka	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 8	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 9	Coalgate	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 13	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 14	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 16	Crowder	By Appointment
April 20	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 21	Stigler	By Appointment
April 21	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 27	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
April 29	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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

Did You Know?

Cork-based artist Alex Pentek was commissioned to create a sculpture commemorating the donation by the Choctaw people to Ireland during the Great Famine. He created a beautiful representation of life and generosity from one Nation of people to another. Nine majestic 20-foot eagle feathers form a perfect circle, reaching to the skies above Bailic Park in Midleton. The eagle feathers are arranged in a circular shape representing a bowl filled with food and presented to those suffering hunger. According to Cork County Council Official Joe McCarthy, the circle may also represent life, the beautiful planet we inhabit, the universe and God and also reflect that the Irish Nation now responds to the needs of others as the Choctaw did when they were in need.

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan
 To Be Eligible to Apply:
 - Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
 - Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
 To Be Eligible to Apply:
 - Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
 - Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

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

Wright City Community Center
 April 16, 2021
 9:00 - 11:00

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

April Language Lesson

Common Questions and Responses

1. Mak vm ahwah tuk. Mach ahm ah-wah tohk.	That's what I thought.
2. Mako yohma chï vm ahwa tuk. Mach-on yoh-mah chin ahm ah-wah tohk.	That's what I thought would happen.
3. Mako yohma chï ahni li tuk. Mach on yohma chin ah-ni li tuk.	Same meaning as #2.
4. Nanta chim ahwah? Nahn-tah chim ah-wah?	What do you think (it is)? or What do you think (about it)?
5. Nanta ish ahni?	Same meaning as #4.
6. Nanta ish anukfli? Nahn-tah ish ah-nohk-fi-li?	What are you thinking?
7. Ak anukfilo tuk. Ahk ah-nohk-fi-loh tohk.	I didn't think about it or I had not thought about it.
8. Nan isht ak ahno tuk. Nahn isht ahk ah-noh tohk.	I didn't give it a thought.

www.choctawschool.com

Sinaklin Henry Forbit

Sinaklin Henry Forbit, 90, passed away Feb. 17, 2021.

Sinaklin was born July 3, 1930, in Golden, Okla., to Henry and Rhoda (Tonihka) Forbit.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Hazel; son Howard Ray Forbit; daughter DeAnna Karlene Forbit; grandson Jordan Blayne Forbit; second wife Wilda; and half-brother Jerry Noah Sr.

Sinaklin is survived by his children Charles Forbit and spouse Donna, Audra Forbit, James Forbit, and Kristi Martinez-Cruz; grandchildren Emily Forbit, Christopher Forbit, Amira Forbit, Aliya Forbit, Jarryn Forbit, Lillian Archer, Rebekkah Reimer, Laramie Dakota Bark, Darren Bark, and Dominic Martinez; great-grandchildren Damion Bark, Maiya Bark, Nita Bark, and one on the way; numerous relatives and many friends.

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

John Wesley Wilson

John Wesley Wilson, 55, passed away Feb. 13, 2021.

John was born April 9, 1965, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to James and Patsy Wilson.

He was preceded in death by his father.

John is survived by his wife Marie; his mother; children Justin Canady, Aaron Canady, Haylee Wilson, Jonathan Robbins, Shelby Wilson, and Lucky Wilson; stepchildren David Dewberry, Haylee Dawn Dewberry, and Jacob Dewberry; brothers Haskell Wilson and spouse Letha, David Wilson, and Victor Wilson; sisters Shirley Goodlin and spouse Donald, Karen Stills and spouse Mark, and Brenda Elder and spouse Bobby; grandson Joseph Robbins; along with a host of nieces and nephews.

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

Jennifer Elaine Bacon

Jennifer Elaine Bacon, 41, passed away Sept. 30, 2020.

Jennifer was born March 30, 1979, in Tahlequah, Okla., to Robert Joseph and Zenetta (James) Bacon.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents Joseph and Thelma (Wall) James; her parents; sister Marlana Bacon; niece Kourtney Bacon; and nephew Everett Torrez.

Jennifer is survived by sons Kyle Bacon and Ethan Bacon; brother Robbie Bacon and significant other Halie Horton; sister Andrea Torrez and spouse Bobby; nieces and nephews Kyndall Bacon, Zoe Bacon, Marlana Torrez, Valor Bacon, Nigel Torrez, Joseph Bacon, and Taylan Bacon; as well as many cousins and a host of friends and loves ones.

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

LaVonda Jaynes

LaVonda Kay Jaynes, 63, passed away Feb. 20, 2021.

LaVonda was born Dec. 18, 1957, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to William "Otto" and Lorena (Murphy) Patton.

She was preceded in death by her parents; ex-husband Bobby Jaynes; and sister Jeneane (Patton) Grimes.

LaVonda is survived by her sons Matdock Jaynes and Jesse Jaynes; grandchildren Izeck Devin Sanders, Matrix Dylan Dewberry Jaynes, Kayson Alexander Jaynes, and Jacie Lynn Johnson; brothers Terry Patton and William Kent Patton; sister Carla (Patton) Grimmer; aunt Rozella Zable; special cousin-sister Lisa Clouse; and many cousins, nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

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

Loressa Dell Torres

Loressa Dell Torres, 60, passed away Feb. 14, 2021.

Loressa was born Jan. 11, 1961, in DeQueen, Ark., to Aleck Alexander and Evalina (Fobb) Alexander.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and sister Theresa Wickson.

Loressa is survived by her husband Alfonso; daughters Amanda Ebsen and spouse Steve, Erica Rosas and spouse Alejandro, and Amy Michelle Torres; grandchildren Stevo Ebsen Jr. and companion Samantha Lee, Britney Ebsen and companion Markis Hricko, Elizabeth Torres and companion Bryson Tom, Andrea and Audrey Rocha, Dimitri Rosas, Briana Bonilla, Claudia Torres, Beatrice Marrufo, Jonathan Marrufo, and Isabel Marrufo; five great-grandchildren; and many loved family and friends.

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

Eastman Ray Jessie

Eastman "Ray" Jessie, 65, passed away Feb. 20, 2021.

Ray was born Aug. 5, 1955, in Idabel, Okla., to James and Ruby (Lewis) Jessie.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Juanita Calvillo; aunt Isabel Gibson; and uncles Emerson Lewis and David Lewis.

Ray is survived by his wife Reda; children Anthony Noah and spouse Melissa, Ronnie Tom and spouse Chrystal, Faith Jessie, Mary Coley, Gene Tom, James Jessie, Wayne Tom and spouse Zanna, Stacy Nixon and spouse James, and Jeremiah Tom and fiancée Dayla; grandchildren Trenton, Jacob, Kaylee, Tristan, Amos, Alica, Miko, Malachi, Danika, Kayedence, Kristopher, Aidan, Mica, Madison, Makynah, Traison, Rilynn, Randall, Milena, Haidyn, William, Daxton, Aaron and Preston; brother Jimmy Jessie and spouse Lynda; sisters Ann Noah, Audrey Gonzalez, Janet Hicks and spouse Dewayne; aunt Ella Going; special friend Isaac Battiest Jr.; and many other family and friends.

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

**Patricia Ruth Amos**

Patricia Ruth Amos, 74, passed away Jan. 18, 2021.

Patricia was born Feb. 28, 1946, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Jack A. West and Gladys Garrison West.

She is survived by daughters Sherry Garcia, and Rebecca Garcia and spouse Yassine Chribatou; sons Lanny Garcia and spouse Billie Presson, and Jared Garcia and spouse Checota; sister Jacqueline Amos; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

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

Emmanuel Hobbs

Emmanuel "Manny" Hobbs, 45, passed away Feb. 18, 2021.

Manny was born March 11, 1975, in Talihina, Okla., to Douglas G. Hobbs Sr. and Delilah Dianne (Johnson) Hobbs.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents Woodrow and Gladys Hobbs, and Lorean and Peter "Jameo" Johnson.

Manny is survived by his wife Debbie; his parents; children Zac Tyrel Hita Hobbs, Andrew Jemison Nita Hobbs, and Jacob Joatham Hiloha Hobbs; brother Douglas Hobbs Jr.; sisters Amanda Zaccaro and spouse Richard, H. Lynette Vaughan and spouse Keven.

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

Elfreda Willis

Elfreda Willis, 73, passed away Jan. 4, 2021.

Elfreda was born Oct. 18, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Elesten Willis Sr. and Lilliella (Samuel) Willis.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Ramona Stricklin; brother Norman Samuel; brother-in-law Larry Stricklin; niece Amanda Willis; and nephew Edgel Samuel Jr.

Elfreda is survived by her sister Alestine Thomas; brothers Vernon Willis, Elesten Willis Jr., Everett Glen Willis and special friend Lisa Perman, and Edgel Samuel and spouse Jane; 17 nieces; six nephews; many great-nieces, great-nephews and cousins; and special friends Sammye Curetone and Loretta Tadlock.

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

Maudell Meshaya

Maudell Meshaya, 72, passed away Feb. 25, 2021.

Maudell was born June 21, 1948, in Rufe, Okla., to Martin J. and Ruth (Ishcomer) Meshaya.

She was preceded in death by her parents; grandparents Rev. James N. Meshaya and Emiline Hickley Meshaya; brother Martin J. Meshaya Jr.; sister Dorothy Meshaya Willie; favorite uncle Daniel Ishcomer; along with several other aunts and uncles she cherished.

Maudell is survived by three brothers; two sisters; and a host of beloved nieces and nephews.

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

Jonathan Moses

Jonathan Dene "JonBoy" Moses, 41, passed away Jan. 16, 2021.

JonBoy was born Aug. 29, 1979, in Tahlequah, Okla., to Jonathan Joc Moses and Carolyn Sue (Barrows) Moses.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents Roland Barney Moses, and James and Annie Mae Barrows; uncle Rodney Ray Moses; aunt Mary Ann Reece; and cousin Dakota Bratcher.

JonBoy is survived by daughters Kamden Leah Moses and Natorian "Tori" Bree Steveson; grandmother BoDene Hill Moses; his parents; siblings Shawn Dixon, Austin and Marisa Moses, and Catherine Moses and Rhet Wike; nieces and nephews Skye and Coner Reed, Scout Dixon, Saige Dixon, Austin Moses, Ella and Oliver Wike; along with several aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends.

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

Marquitta Seeley

Marquitta Janet Seeley, 62, passed away Feb. 23, 2021.

Marquitta was born Nov. 7, 1958, to Madison Baker Sr. and Lavada Baker.

She was preceded in death by her husband Dan "Renegade" Seeley; her parents; and sister Lenora Baker Williams.

Marquitta is survived by her son Daniel Dewitt "Chief" Seeley II; daughters Tracy Lynn Seeley, LaVelma Kay Seeley Mizelle and spouse John, and Katelyn Danielle Seeley; sisters Avis Tugwell, Edwanna Briley, and Myrna Taylor and spouse Ricky; brothers Bo Baker and spouse Sydney, Michael Baker, Reggie Baker and spouse Katie, Jason Baker, Ivan Baker, and Rayburn Baker; and a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives.

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

Terry Newport

Terry Edward Newport, 50, passed away Feb. 15, 2021.

Terry was born Nov. 18, 1970, in McAlester, Okla., to Edward and Sharon (Jones) Newport.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Terry is survived by his wife Tana; sons Caden Newport, Garrett Sublette, and Alex Wilks; daughter Michaelanne Hensley; grandchildren Harmony, LaRiaha, Ruben, and Raine; sisters Roberta Bower, Sheryle Spear, and Reba Pogue; brother William Rogue; along with numerous nieces, nephews, other family members, and friends.

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

**Susie Louis-James**

Susie Jane Louis-James, 84, passed away Feb. 16, 2021.

Susie was born Dec. 7, 1936, in Lawton, Okla., to Laura (Louis) Wallace.

She was preceded in death by her mother; sons Ronnie Dean Aaron and Michael Dean Aaron; her first husband and father of her children Gardner Aaron; two sisters; and two brothers.

Sue is survived by her children Perry Wilson Aaron, Dwight Aaron and wife Lisa, along with their children Shaun Aaron and Whitney Aaron and fiancé Bryan Smith; great-grandchildren Afton and KayLee; and Mitchell Samuel Aaron, along with his children Megan Aaron, Amy Aaron, and Emily Aaron and fiancé Matthew Webb; three brothers; one sister; and a host of other relatives and many friends.

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

Dale Wayne Paxton

Dale Wayne Paxton, 73, passed away Dec. 22, 2020.

Dale was born April 11, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Dr. Swinney Gabe Paxton Jr. and Ada Gaynell Paxton.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and twin sister Gayle Carolyn McKay.

Dale is survived by sisters Nancy Long and Dee Paxton; brother Ron Paxton and spouse Valeria; nephews Ryan MacKay, Adam Paxton, Jessee Paxton, Scott Paxton and spouse Jill and their children Luke, Leah, Ella, Megan, and Scarlett; nephew Tanner Long and son Shayden; and niece Chelsea and spouse Aodhan McClees and their children Rainy and Fionn.

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

Silas McKinney

Silas "Sonny" John McKinney, 41, passed away Feb. 21, 2021.

Sonny was born July 23, 1979, in Talihina, Okla., to Silas and Betty Jean (Shomo) McKinney.

He was preceded in death by his sister Alison McKinney; nephews Bradley James McKinney and James Allen McKinney; maternal and paternal grandparents; and mother to his daughter Delissa Renee Hargo.

Sonny is survived by his fiancée Sylvia Geck; his parents; daughter Carli Harjo and BJ Gardner; brother John McKinney; sisters Lisa McKinney and Joey McKinney; granddaughter Briseis Gardner; many nieces, nephews, aunts, and uncles; and special friends and other relatives.

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

Jay Thomas Noble

Jay Thomas Noble, 39, passed away Feb. 24, 2021.

Jay was born Dec. 29, 1981, to Mike and Suzanne Noble.

He is survived by his wife Summer (Buncik); daughters Gracen and Brynlee; son West; his parents; sisters Jennifer Morris and spouse Gary, and Jamie Mullens and spouse Cameron; nieces and nephews Athens Clinkscale, Macey Buncik, Lucas Mullins, Asher Buncik, Laney Mullins, and Ella Morris; lifelong friend Cory Nestle; and a legion of friends.

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

Mary Price

Mary Inez "Myrt" (Fennell) Price, 80, passed away July 18, 2020.

Myrt was born Aug. 27, 1939, in Soper, Okla., to Hubert Wesley "Chunk" Fennell and Cleo Irene "Babe" (Ferguson) Fennell.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and sister Maxine "Rosebud" Fennell-Graham.

Myrt is survived by her daughter Robin Price; grandson Forrest W. Simpson and spouse Mike Mayer; sister Lajoy Thackerson; and numerous nieces, nephews, friends, and loved ones.

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

Carolyn June Jameson

Carolyn June Jameson, 79, passed away March 25, 2020.

Carolyn was born July 30, 1940, in Stuart, Okla., to Otto and Thelma Daniels.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Otto H. Daniels; and sister Betty L. Stough.

Carolyn is survived by her husband Jimmie Wayne Jameson; daughters Vicki Jameson, Trudy Simank, Kimberly Young and Pamela Silverthorn; son John Jameson and spouse Marina; stepson Dennis Jameson and spouse LaDawna; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

Debbie Jefferson

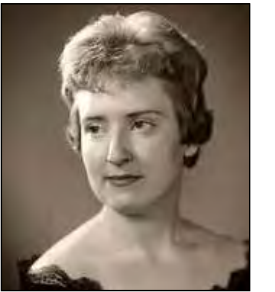
Debbie Ann Jefferson, 61, passed away Feb. 22, 2021.

Debbie was born Sept. 25, 1959, in Talihina, Okla., to Elliston and Ola Mae (Baker) Jefferson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Nicole Focks; and brother Willie Jefferson.

Debbie is survived by her daughter Victoria Focks; brother Ellis Jefferson and spouse Audrey; sister Janet Jefferson; grandchildren Isaiah, Serenity, Jasmine, Elijah, and D'Onah; nephews Christopher, Alan, Theodore, Alex, and Brent; nieces Bretta and Brittany; along with other relatives and many friends.

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



Otto Royce Cummins



Otto Royce Cummins, 67, passed away Jan. 20, 2021. Royce was born Dec. 30, 1953, in Talihina, Okla., to Otto Bill Cummins and Alma Dean (Pitner) Cummins. He was preceded in death by his parents. Royce is survived by his wife Joyce; children Shauntae Cummins and Greg Cummins; siblings Alma Louise Lemons, Otis Bill Cummins and spouse Susan, Bernadine Medler, Henry Cummins and spouse Kathy, and Robby Cummins and spouse Teresa; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

Vera Mae Eyachabbe



Vera Mae Eyachabbe, 71, passed away Jan. 3, 2021. Vera was born Jan. 21, 1949, in Wright City, Okla., to Hickman and Alzira (Columbus) Wallace. She was preceded in death by her parents; daughter Mary Alzira; brothers Mitchell Ray Wallace, Hickman "Slick" Wallace Jr., and Billy Wallace; and sister Helen Wallace. Vera is survived by son Mark Eyachabbe; brothers Ricky Wallace and Tony Wallace and spouse Sarah; sisters Louise Laney and spouse Wyley, Patricia Wallace, Sandra Wallace, Susan Wallace, and Bobbie Wallace; special cousins Phebe Harley and spouse Billy, Joyce Watkins and spouse Lee, and Barbara Wallace; many special nieces and nephews; special friend Nancy Casey; along with many other special friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

Deborah K. Osage



Deborah K. Osage, 68, passed away Oct. 13, 2020. Deborah was born June 20, 1952, in Talihina, Okla., to Pete and Rena (McKinney) Noah. She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Mary Lajeane Thorne and Gladys Wood; brothers William "Bill" Winship, and Pete Noah Jr.; nephews Teddy Navarro and Jay Bowen; niece Natalie Wood; uncle Teddy Ward; and daughter-in-law Kim Schmitz Osage. Deborah is survived by her children Daniel Cory Osage, and Angel Frazier and significant other Alberto Rodriguez Jr.; sisters Leann Roberts and Noakola Bowen; grandchildren Lauren Swink-Cobb, Danie Osage, Joshua Hernandez, Elijah Hernandez, and Julia Rodriguez; great-grandchildren Eleanor Cobb, Alexander Cobb, and Cecilia Hernandez; nieces Samantha Noah, Jerri Ng, Joe Noah Sr., Paul Navarro, Debbie Raper, Dorothy Wood-Potter, Julia Wood, Robin Taylor, and Sabrina Stephens; numerous great-nephews and great-nieces; and a host of friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Brumley Funeral Home](#).

Laurenza Lansdell



Laurenza Lansdell, 79, passed away Jan. 24, 2021. Laurenza was born Dec. 6, 1941, in Panki Bok, Okla., to Levi and Missie Ashalintubbi Jones. She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Herman, Wilton, and Jimmy and Elton Jones; sisters Lillian LeFlore and Kathern Kordi; and one great-grandchild. Laurenza is survived by her husband Curtis Dale Lansdell Sr.; children and their spouses Sharon and Ricky Hess, Curtis Jr. and Pennie Lansdell, and Sheila and Frank Klitz; sister Faye Warford; grandchildren and spouses Amber and Jimmy Duncan, Derek and Jaymee Hess, Jessica and Cody Gallagher, Landon Lansdell, and Carley Klitz; great-grandchildren Ava Hess and Wylie Hess; special friends Jennifer Gillam and Margaret Knighten; and a number of nieces, nephews, and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Wilkerson Funeral Home](#).

Quilby Ben James



Quilby Ben James, 83, passed away Sept. 20, 2020. Quilby was born Oct. 15, 1936, to Richard and Mattie (Moffatt) James. He was preceded in death by his parents; three infant brothers; brothers Hiawatha and Quanah James; sister Lahoma Beth James; nephew Jonathan Brinkley-Stephens; and niece Lisa Weekly. Quilby is survived by his wife Elaine; son Brent Roberts; daughter Suzanne Fulner and spouse Robert Jim; granddaughters Torian Whisper Roberts, Zebedee Fulner, and Francesca Fulner; brothers Tom James and spouse Charlotte, and Benny James; sisters Nacona Brinkley, and Micky James and spouse Kenneth Duncan; as well as many nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

Joe H. Blaylock



Joe H. Blaylock, 93, passed away Oct. 29, 2020. Joe was born Jan. 22, 1927, in Ardmore, Okla., to Willis H. and Pearl Lee (Rogers) Blaylock. He was preceded in death by his first wife Leanna; his parents; sister Dixie Coffey; brothers Jim and Doyle Blaylock; and grandson Daniel Blaylock. Joe is survived by his wife Verna; daughter Jo Corder and spouse Robert; sons Willis Blaylock and spouse Donna, Kenneth Blaylock and spouse Sandra, Dennis Blaylock and spouse Diane, Timothy Blaylock and spouse Mellisa, and Mark Stucky and spouse Lisa; 17 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; 12 great-great-grandchildren; brother Billy Blaylock; and numerous nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Wiggins Funeral Home](#).

Noah Shoemake



Noah Shoemake, 19, passed away Jan. 25, 2021. Noah was born Sept. 12, 2001, in Vinita, Okla., to Michael Shoemake and Bonnie Bryant Curry. He was preceded in death by his grandmother Brenda Bryant. Noah is survived by his parents Stony and Bonnie Curry, and Michael Shoemake; grandparents Joseph Bryant, Ruthie Samuel, Steven Shoemake and spouse, and Redema Curry and John Dowdy; siblings Trent and Sierra Shoemake, Keyten Moorhead, Steven and Nikki Curry, Haleigh Curry, Bodhy Curry, and Nicole Curry; nephews Campton, Aiden, Josh, and Rowdy; aunts Michelle Andrews and family, Teri McGhee and family, Stacey Crabtree and family, Kortney Taylor and spouse, Marlana Curry, and Harley Shoemake; uncle Jay Bryant and family; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts, uncles, and his soulmate Sycilia Madbull. For the full obituary, please visit [Serenity Funeral Home](#).

Thomas Maxwell McCurdy III



Thomas "Tom-Tom" Maxwell McCurdy III, 56, passed away Dec. 17, 2020. Tom-Tom was born April 5, 1964, in Purcell, Okla., to Tom and Rose (Mantooth) McCurdy. He is survived by his wife Betsy Abbott McCurdy; daughter Jade McCurdy; his parents; sisters Lisa Bajema and spouse Steve, Lynn McCurdy, and Candy McCurdy; brother John McCurdy; several nieces and nephews; and friends from all over the world. For the full obituary, please visit [Wilson-Little Funeral Home](#).

Edith Sue Ward



Edith Sue Ward, 79, passed away Jan. 30, 2021. Edith was born July 25, 1941, in Wister, Okla., to Claud and Imogene (Owens) Welch. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband Johnny; son "Big Al" John Alan Ward; sister Brenda Sweeten; and brothers-in-law Jackie Sweeten and Bill Ward. She is survived by her children Susan Cantwell and spouse James, and Anthony Ward; grandsons Michael Stephanie Cantwell and children Amara, Chloe, and Kyle, and Matthew Cantwell and children Adrianna and Emerson, and Spencer Ward and his mother, Tammy Ward; sisters Shirley Ward and Claudette Hamner; and several nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Evans & Miller Funeral Home](#).

Gilbert Anderson Baker



Gilbert Anderson Baker, 71, passed away Feb. 6, 2021. Gilbert was born Oct. 13, 1949, in Talihina, Okla., to Somis and Ida (Wesley) Baker. He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Sharon; and brothers Billy Paul Baker, Wendell Baker, and Somis Baker Jr.; sisters Ann Sims, Perlie Jefferson, and Marie Baker; and nephew Kevin Baker. Gilbert is survived by children Crystal and Dave Shepherd, Daryl and Nikki Thomas, and Jorge and Ruby Amezcua; grandchildren Jace Thomas, Thomas "TC" Allen, Jasmine Thomas, Jarod Wilburn, Jorge "Teto" Amezcua, Fernando Amezcua, Mayra Maezcua, Krystina Shepherd, and Liam Shepherd; and great-grandchild Tayan Thomas. For the full obituary, please visit [Evans & Miller Funeral Home](#).

Gene William Fowler



Gene William Fowler, 82, passed away April 26, 2020. Gene was born Nov. 27, 1937, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Sims Robert Fowler and Mary Elizabeth Putnam Fowler. He was preceded in death by his wife Patricia; his parents; sister Sue Avants; and niece Paula. Gene is survived by his children Denise Lynne Fowler Holden and spouse Bobby, Todd Fowler Ashcraft, Patricia Diana Sturges, and Eric James Sturges and spouse Holly; grandchildren Christopher (Carlee), Kyle (Rachael), Joshua and Kelsey Holden, James Lynch (Elizabeth), Sarah, Ashley and Anna Sturges; great-grandchildren Elizabeth Ellis and Avery Blake Holden; brothers Bob Fowler and spouse Sharon, Frank Fowler and spouse Ann, John Fowler and spouse Carol; sister Linda Fowler Folger; numerous nieces, nephews, and other loving relatives and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Turrentine Jackson Morrow Funeral Home](#).

Alice Fay Billy-Crow



Alice Fay Billy-Crow, 60, passed away Feb. 15, 2021. Alice was born May 29, 1960, in Talihina, Okla., to Haskell Thomas and Versa Crow. She was preceded in death by her father; grandparents Phillis Billy and Nellie Billy; stepfather Ronnie Crow; and brother Danny Dean Billy. Alice is survived by her husband Lyndon; her mother; brothers Donald Ray Billy, Ronald Crow, Timmy Thomas; children Elijah Crow and spouse Kim, Amy Bean and spouse Steven, Paul Crow and spouse Shelby, and Emily Deshiell and spouse David; grandchildren Elisha Wickson and spouse Tyler, Logan Crow and spouse Kaitlen, Eli Crow, Alli Crow, Kayden Bean, Sadie Bean, Abigail Crow, Isabel Crow, Zoey Crow, Sophie Crow, Shilo Crow, Braden Deshiell, Carmen Deshiell, and Camden Deshiell; numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, friends and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home](#).

Jerry Don Williams

Jerry Don Williams, 55, passed away Feb. 7, 2021. Jerry was born Aug. 8, 1965, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Joe Alton Williams and Cecilia Jane (Baker) Williams. He was preceded in death by his parents. Jerry is survived by his wife Josephine; children Joshua, Jaylin, Allen and spouse Nivey, James and spouse Tosha, Travis and spouse Ariel, Alfred and spouse Annie, Melissa and spouse Fernando, Martina, Bylye, and Benjamin; 22 grandchildren; brothers Joe Williams, David Williams, Jimmie Williams, and Tracey Williams; nieces Kristina Jo Martin and spouse Joe, and Cari Lynn Crose and spouse Rick; nephews James Williams, Jason Williams, and Brad Williams; along with other family and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Jones-Harkins Funeral Home](#).

Sandra Jo Lucas



Sandra Jo Lucas, 42, passed away Dec. 23, 2020. Sandra was born Jan. 2, 1978, in Spearman, TX., to Joe and Donna Southerland. She is survived by husband Shane Lucas; sons Ashton and Connor Lucas; stepdaughter Katelyn Lucas; her parents; sister Stephanie Dodson and spouse Jeremiah; nephews Dalton and Lathan Dodson; father-in-law and mother-in-law Larry and Rita Lucas; sister-in-law Kristi Thelander and spouse Mike; nieces and nephews Kourtney and Grant Sacco, Kourtney and Noah Schniederjan, Justice Thelander, Emily Thelander; and great-nephew Shepard Thelander. For the full obituary, please visit [McNeil's Funeral Service](#).

Gladys Gail West



Gladys Gail West, 72, passed away Feb. 6, 2021. Gail was born Sept. 16, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to Thomas and Lola Ida (Edge) Crowder. She was preceded in death by her parents; mother that raised her Eva Chandler; brothers Dude Crowder, Edward Crowder, and Clark Crowder; and sister Mary Sue Owen. Gail is survived by daughters Shannon Lee Gambol and Melissa E. Bell; brother Tommy Crowder and spouse Dorothy; grandchildren Apryl, Kyle, Nicholas, Joseph, Jacob, and Joshua; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller & Miller Funeral Home](#).

Christine Rebecca Durant

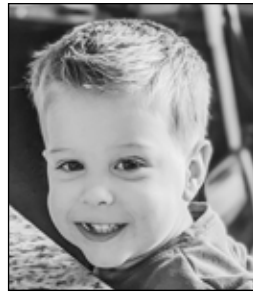
Christine Rebecca Durant, 86, passed away Jan. 24, 2021. Christine was born Oct. 26, 1934, in Boswell, Okla., to Daniel and Ella (Williams) Johnson. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Smallwood Dan Durant; son Douglas Ray Durant; and brothers E.J. Johnson and Aboat Johnson. Christine is survived by sons Richard Durant and Danny Ray Durant; daughters Beatrice Bridges and Shirley Durant; grandchildren Salena Durant, Larry Durant, Kelly Durant, James Bond, Randall Bond, Adrian Bond, Nickey Durant, Cheyanna Littlestar Durant, Angie Hankins, and Michelle Hankins; great-grandchildren Dee, Randylyn, Adrianna, Dillion, Caleb, Isaiah, Matthias, Shelby, and Kaylee; sister-in-law Erma Durant Hargo; and a host of other family, friends, and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home](#).

David Paul Airington



David "Dave" Paul Airington, 66, passed away Dec. 23, 2020. Dave was born Oct. 8, 1954, in El Reno, Okla. He is survived by his wife Debi Airington; daughter Mindy Schmidt and spouse Scott and children Bailey and Easton; son J.C. and spouse Desiree and children Adalynn and S.J.; sister Reda Mewhorter and spouse Ray; brother Ancel and spouse Linda; and numerous nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Pierson Wolf



Pierson Robert Wolf, 2, passed away Feb. 12, 2021. Pierson was born Aug. 11, 2018, to Jason and Lauren (Titsworth) Wolf. He is survived by his parents; sister Carolina Wolf; great-grandparents Carroll and Nell Farris; grandparents Bob and Robin Wolf, "Gigi" Carolyn Farris, and Grandpa Buck Titsworth; his aunts and uncles "Auntie" Katherine Roberts, Jimmy and Mollie Wolf, Josh Wolf, Stacey and Steve Skinner, and Shelley and Tracy Mashburn. For the full obituary, please visit [Bopp Chapel](#).

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

Perdue celebrates 75 years



Joyce Ann Perdue celebrated her 75th birthday on March 25. Her family wishes her the happiest birthday! Joyce is a retired nurse manager who enjoys gardening in the yard and taking care of her two pomeranians. She grew up in Sand Springs and currently resides in Tulsa with her husband Phil. Joyce loves her friends and family. Sending our love and best energy on your special day! Love, Sarah and Sean.



Kistler 2020 Jr. Miss ACRA

Myranda Kistler was born no stranger to the western lifestyle. She was two weeks old her first time on a horse, and at just a few years old was competing at various playdays and shoderos around the community.

Myranda has traveled to numerous rodeos to watch family and friends compete. From trick riding and barrel racing to team roping, her family has been in the rodeo arena for decades.

She is 15 years old from Claremore, Oklahoma. She's just getting into swinging a rope; occasionally, you may catch her throwing a loop over the dummy, but it will be after she's been hanging upside down or standing up on the back of a horse. Myranda enjoys learning and trying new tricks her grandma teaches her from back in the day. Barrel racing is one of her favorite things to do.

Pageants and Rodeo Queening have become Myranda's passion. In her fourth pageant, she became the 2019 Miss Rooster Days Rodeo Teen. As the 2020 Jr. Miss ACRA, Myranda got a jump on life's dreams because she got to live her dream! 2020 as we all know, has not been an easy year and has come with lots of disappointments and setbacks. The start of rodeo season was delayed, but as soon as Myranda got the chance, she was there to represent and teach others about the sport of rodeo and the agricultural way of life. But most importantly, it allowed her to learn more about life's lessons and how she could play an even bigger role in what was happening in the world around her. From May through October, Myranda spent almost every weekend at a rodeo. She also attended every other pageant, parade, or event she could to support her friends and offer encouragement. Even though this year has not been the best, Myranda has made the best of it and has loved every minute being 2020 Jr. Miss ACRA. In June 2021, Myranda will be competing for the title of Miss Rodeo Oklahoma Teen.



Bray graduates Magna Cum Laude

Kyle Bray of Winchester, Massachusetts, graduated Magna Cum Laude from Emerson College with a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and a Minor in Music History and Culture. Kyle, his father Jeff and his grandparents Fred and Doris are proud members of the Choctaw Nation. Kyle would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for their support during his academic career.

Taylor releases children's book



Choctaw author Lisa Taylor recently wrote and illustrated a children's story titled "Wesley the Musk Ox". Wesley is a headstrong musk ox that likes to explore. One day he went a little far and became lost. Wesley becomes courageous and finds his way home. The children's book is available for purchase on Amazon and is free for Kindle Unlimited users.

Wesley Stevens turns 13

Wesley Aaron Stevens turned 13 on March 17. He is the great-grandson of Lewain and Laura Wesley, grandson of Theresa Wesley, and son of Christina Wesley. We all love you so much and wish you a lifetime of happiness.



Denver Hayes Kelley

Denver Hayes Kelley was born at 8:45 a.m. on Dec. 15, 2020, at Paris Regional Medical Center in Paris, Texas.



He weighed 7 Pounds, 8 ounces and was 20.5 inches long.

Denver is the son of Bradley and Heather Kelley of Chicota, Texas. He is the grandson of Larry and Carol Payne of Hugo, Oklahoma and Johnny and Ginger Kelley of Chicota, Texas.

He is the maternal great-grandson of the late Elige Payne, the late Marlene Campo, the late Oscar and Mafelda Throne and the paternal great-grandson of J.C., and Barbara Kelley and Jo Cook and the late Jack Cook.

Davis celebrates 80 years



Irene (McCurtain) Davis of Hodgen, Choctaw Nation, turns 80 on April 10, 2021. She is the daughter of Floyd and Gladys McCurtain, granddaughter of Nail Perry and Maude McCurtain, great-granddaughter of Elum and Sianna McCurtain, great-great-granddaughter of John and Rhoda Perry McCurtain, and third great-granddaughter to Thomas Elum McCurtain. Thomas Elum was brother to Choctaw Chief Cornelius McCurtain

whose sons were Choctaw Chiefs Jackson Frazier, Aaron Edmund, David Cornelius and Greenwood. Irene and her husband, Edward, enjoy activities at the Poteau Choctaw Senior Center. They are retired and live in the area east of Hodgen once called "Houston" after Houston McCurtain. Irene loves the outdoors, being a mom, aunt, and cousin, and being active in the Poteau Valley genealogy group. She is beyond proud to be a member of the Choctaw Nation!



All-Native American High School Academic Team Announcement

American Indian Graduate Center is pleased to announce the 2020 All-Native American High School Academic Team, an annual cohort of 10 high school seniors who have displayed an outstanding original academic, artistic or leadership endeavor.

Jackson Caves (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) and Ryan Duncan (Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) are two of this year's honorees. Jackson will pursue his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at Oklahoma State University this fall, while Ryan is set to pursue his bachelor's degree in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma.



Jackson Caves



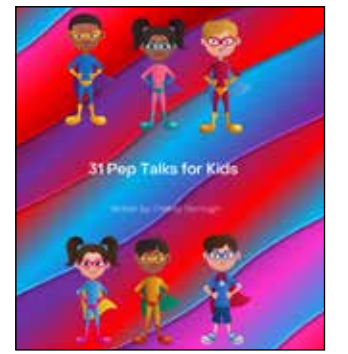
Ryan Duncan

Dorrough releases two new books



Chelsey Dorrough recently released two books, now available on Amazon. **31 Pep Talks for the Anxious** - Sometimes we just need a friend to give us a much-needed pep talk and "31 Pep Talks for the Anxious" is that friend! Don't let your anxiety hold you captive. The pep talks in this book are exactly what you didn't know you needed in order to get your day started. If you need a little extra pat on the back, this book is for you.

31 Pep Talks for Kids - This kid-friendly book is meant to be read as a daily reader either alone or with an adult. This book is for those who struggle with "fitting in", kids that lack confidence, or even those that struggle with anxiety. It is never too early to speak positivity into one's life.



Adrian Samuels turns 5



The family of Adrian Bennett Samuels want to wish him a happy birthday. Adrian turned five on Dec. 1, 2020, and had a small celebration with his family. He is the son of Joel and Corey Samuels and little brother to Braeden Samuels of Okla. City, the grandson of Norris Samuels and the late Brenda (Taylor) Samuels of Oklahoma City,

and Colby and Erica Shemayme of Oklahoma City. He is the great-grandson of the late Melba Shemayme and the late Joan Jim. Those who helped celebrate Braeden's birthday were his Aunt Lisa and Uncle Jakie Mitchell of Norman, Aunt Sara and Uncle Arturo Terrazas of Spencer, Oklahoma, Uncle Colby and Uncle Mark Shemayme of Oklahoma City, cousins Shoshana, Faith, Lyric and Milo Mitchell all of Norman, and Angel and Vincent Terrazas of Spencer.

Noah William Coffman

Noah William Coffman was born Nov. 25, 2020, at the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Tahihina. He weighed 8 lbs, and was 20 inches long.

Noah is the son of Melissa and John Coffman II of Haywood and joins sister Ava.

Noah is the grandson of Aletha and Doug Johnson of Haywood, Becky Coffman of McAlester and the late John Coffman. He is the great-grandson of the late Jim and Marie Gibson, Patricia Johnson and the late Grover Johnson, the late Joyce Dorve and the late Wayne Myers, the late Jimmy and Sadie Coffman and Elisabeth Ann Cook.



BREAK THE SILENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program wants you to know that you deserve to be safe and free from intimate partner violence in your home, relationships and communities. If someone you love is a victim of abuse or violence, reach out! Let them know they are not alone! There is help for victims through the Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program. Together we're more!

Know the signs of domestic violence, get involved. Visit choctawnation.com/domestic-violence or call 1-800-522-6170 for more information.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Clare Harvey March Veteran of the Month

Clare Harvey, Wilburton, Oklahoma, was Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month for March.

Harvey served in the United States Army from Aug. 1972 to Oct. 1975, where she achieved the rank of Specialist.

She was stationed at Ft. Lawton, Ft. Hood, and Frankfurt, Germany; and received the National Defense Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal.



CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

CHOCTAW YOUTH ARTIST REGISTRY PROGRAM

SIGN-UP TODAY!

For registration: <https://bit.ly/3mH9pw4>

For questions: artistregistry@choctawnation.com

ITI FABVSSA

A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1850-1860

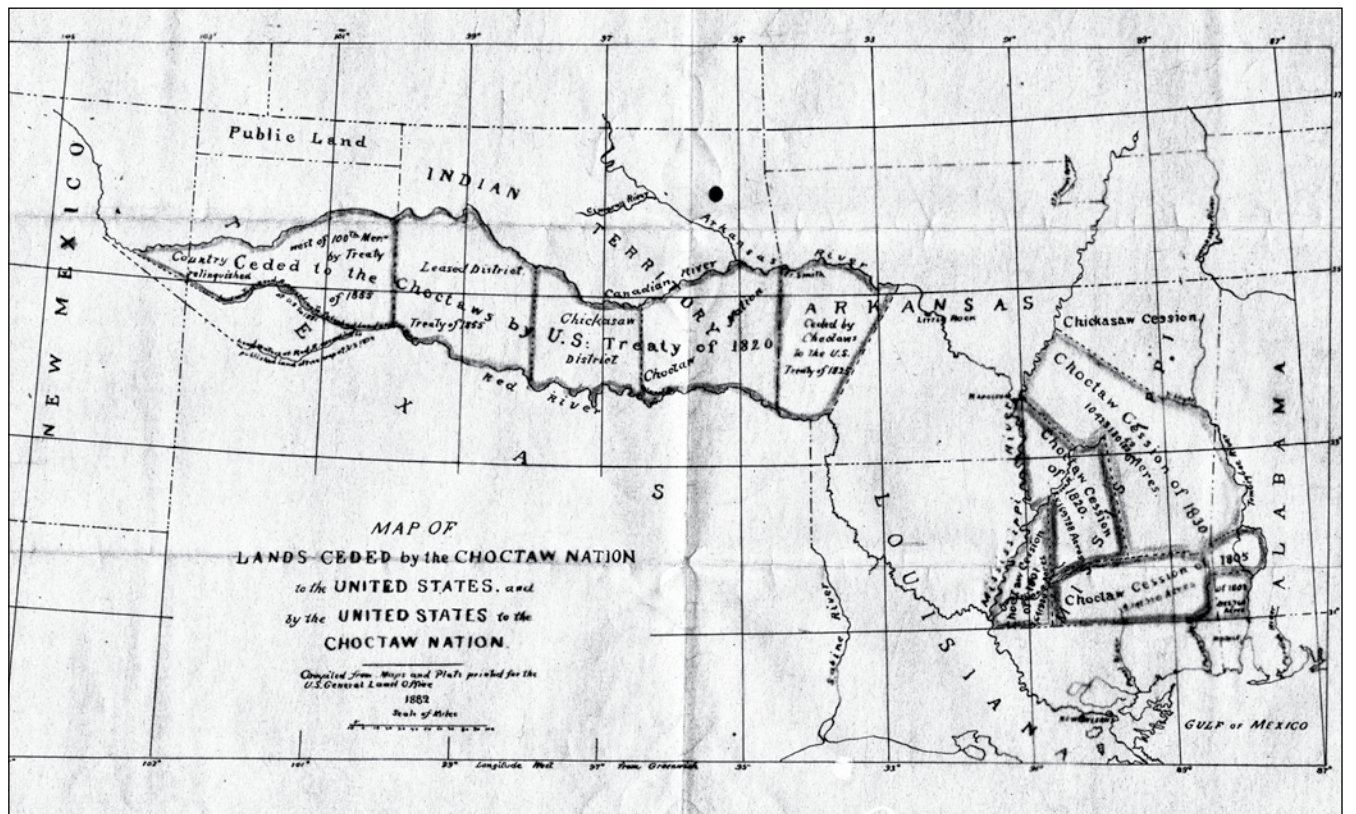
Over the next year and a half, Iti Fabvssa is running a series that covers Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands, and using Choctaw-created documents that have led us into the present. This month, we will be covering 1850-1860, a decade of dealing with the central issues for the Treaty of 1855, its fallout and the lead up to the U.S. Civil War.

The beginning of the decade was notably marked by the Constitution of 1850. One major change was the reorganization of Choctaw Nation's court system. The four districts – Apuckshunnube, Pushmataha, Moshulatubbee and Chickasaw – were divided into counties, each with their own court. This greatly increased the number of judges throughout Choctaw Nation. Each county established a “court ground” where they held elections. Having a local court ground also made travel distances for people shorter, encouraging greater participation. Judges were elected for a two-year term and handled issues regarding divorce, probate (wills), preliminary hearings for individuals charged with major crimes and minor offenses where the penalties did not exceed fifty dollars. Today, many of these county court records are available for viewing in the Choctaw National Records at the Oklahoma Historical Society. Despite the improvements brought about by this new constitution, Choctaws continued to have unresolved issues involving the U.S. and past treaties.

When Choctaw leadership signed the 1820 Treaty of Doak's Stand, Choctaws secured a massive stretch of land that included all of what is now southern Oklahoma and part of the Texas panhandle as part of the new Choctaw homeland. Today's reservation is just a small fraction of that original land cession. When the U.S. government ceded these lands to Choctaws in anticipation of removal, these were the homelands of other Indigenous nations, particularly Caddo, Quapaw, Wichita and Comanche. When the U.S. ceded these lands to Choctaws, it did not have the authority to do so. Nations like the Delaware, Shawnee, Kickapoo, Wichita and Comanche, whose land was also included, did not agree to such a cession to the Choctaws. They still saw these lands as part of their homelands which resulted in conflict between the removed Southeastern nations and some of these western nations.

Despite council meetings between Choctaw, Chickasaw and Plains nation leaders to negotiate peace between them throughout the 1830s and 1840s, agreements were not long-lasting. The land conflict with Western Indigenous nations became a constant source of problems for the Chickasaws in particular. Since Chickasaws lived in the western-most district, they experienced more raids than the three Choctaw districts. Chickasaws even called on the U.S. government to build forts in their territory so they could better protect themselves from raids. This problem only added to the grief of the Chickasaws, who found their political placement within Choctaw Nation increasingly unsatisfactory.

Despite the 1850 Constitution's organizational changes that gave Chickasaws greater representation in government, Chickasaws were still unhappy with their status as a district within the larger Choctaw Nation. Understandably, they wanted to govern their own nation as they had done for generations. But this conflicted with U.S. government policy which was working to reduce the number of Native governments and to integrate them into the U.S. political system. Chickasaws raised the issue in their letters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and called for them to separate the nations. Chickasaw desire for political separation from the Choctaw Nation became a negotiating point that the U.S. government used to its benefit in discussions regarding other issues Choctaw leaders were focused on resolving.



Map of lands ceded by the United States to the Choctaw Nation and vice versa. Originally published in 1882. Image courtesy of the Patrick Jay Hurley Collection, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

According to the 1830 Removal treaty, the U.S. government planned to sell the lands in the homeland and provide the Choctaw national government with the “net proceeds.” Since Article 14 of Dancing Rabbit Creek allowed Choctaws to choose whether to stay or move westward, some decided to stay in the homeland and accepted 640-acre allotments. All these individuals were supposed to be registered by U.S. Agent William Ward, but he sabotaged many of these records and told people to move west instead. Without a proper record of Choctaws who stayed, the U.S. government sold many Choctaws' allotments against their wishes. The money from the sale of these lands, or net proceeds, was then supposed to be provided to the Choctaw national government in Indian Territory. Along with the net proceeds, Choctaws were also supposed to be compensated for any lost livestock and improvements. But the U.S. failed to pay out in a timely manner, and its settlement became a major area of focus in Choctaw negotiations with the U.S. This became known as the Net Proceeds Case.

The issues regarding the Net Proceeds Case, Plains Indigenous nations' raids and Chickasaws' desire for political separation culminated in the Treaty of 1855. This treaty significantly divided the massive land mass the Choctaws initially gained in 1820. All of the lands between the 100th and 98th meridian became known as the Leased District. After paying the Choctaw Nation \$800,000 for their lands west of the Chickasaw district, the U.S. government could use the land to resettle Wichita and other western Plains nations. With the signing of the Treaty of 1855, the Choctaw land base shrank considerably – decreasing from over 23.7 million acres to a mere 6.688 million acres.

Since the Treaty of 1855 split the Choctaws and Chickasaw into two separate nations, Choctaws needed a new constitution. In January 1857, a small group of prominent Choctaws met at Skullyville, a town twelve to fifteen miles southwest of Fort Smith, at the Choctaw Agency. Since Choctaws received per capita payments from the U.S. government at the Choctaw Agency, as promised by treaty, it was named after the Choctaw word for money, “iskulli.” When other Choctaw citizens read the

drafted constitution, it was very unpopular. This was in part because this particular constitution was seen as representing the interests of the slave-owning Choctaw minority that wanted to keep chattel slavery as an institution. Some prominent Choctaw families, particularly mixed-blood ones, had picked up the practice of chattel slavery while in the homelands and brought slaves over on the Trail of Tears. Most Choctaw families, particularly the traditional fullblood ones, did not own slaves. Another problem was that the new Skullyville constitution eliminated the office of the district chief and replaced the three chiefs with a single governor. Some saw the usage of the title “governor” as a step towards dismantling the Choctaw Nation and making it part of the United States. The Skullyville constitution was only approved by a minority of Choctaw citizens.

In May 1858, another group of Choctaws met at Doakville to draft and approve a completely different constitution than the one proposed at Skullyville. They also elected a new set of district chiefs. With this, the Choctaw Nation had two governments involving two different factions. Civil war loomed as a possibility and this drew the attention of the U.S. government, which threatened to send in federal troops. By October 1859, the two governments worked with one another to create a government more aligned with what the majority of Choctaws actually wanted. At the close of 1859, Choctaws decided they would hold a constitutional convention in January 1860. While things began to settle in Choctaw Nation, turmoil in the U.S. increasingly impacted Choctaw Nation.

Additional reading resources on this period are available on the Choctaw Nation Cultural Service webpage (<https://choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/additional-resources.aspx>). Follow along with this Iti Fabvssa series in print and online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/history-culture/history/iti-fabvssa>. If you have questions or would like more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at meganb@choctawnation.com.

Next month, we will cover the period of 1860-1870 when Choctaws found themselves involved in the U.S. Civil War and its aftermath.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Storm Shelter Program began in 2012, and to date, 6,036 storm shelters have been installed in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri. All tribal members in these states who are 45 years of age and older are eligible to receive a \$2500 voucher for an in-ground storm shelter, regardless of income, with documentation proving they own their home. Those with ambulatory disabilities may receive a voucher for \$4,200 for the purchase of an above-ground shelter. All expenses over the voucher amount will be charged to the tribal member.

All tribal members in the five states listed above under the age of 45 who own their home are eligible for a \$1,250 voucher.

Contact our housing office for an application and return it with your tribal membership and a copy of the deed to your home. The tribal member's name must be on the deed. If all eligibility requirements are met, you will receive your voucher. Simply pick the contractor of your choice, and once they have installed the shelter to your satisfaction, present them with the voucher. The contractor will then submit the voucher to Housing for payment.

You may obtain an application by visiting the Choctaw Nation website at www.choctawnation.com or by giving us a call at (580) 326-7521 or (800) 235-3087 to have one sent to you.

Choctaw Nation
Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Housing Authority

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

EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ERAP)

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/COVIDRELIEF

Chief Batton's EASTER CELEBRATION

2021

APRIL 4 VIRTUAL EVENT

WATCH AT:
FACEBOOK.COM/CHOCTAWNATIONOFOKLAHOMA

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CONTACT: MCRESS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

STUDENT SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY FUND

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

The Student School and Activity Fund Program current funding year is November 1 to May 1. Applications can be submitted online.

APPLICATIONS OPEN NOVEMBER 1, 2020

CONTACT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/STUDENT-SCHOOL-AND-ACTIVITY-FUND-SSAF
800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463

Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

April designated World Autism Awareness month

By Chris Jennings

Living with someone who has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can affect a family in many ways. From simple things like housekeeping to more significant financial, emotional and mental health problems, living with an ASD is tough. To help bring awareness to these struggles and what living with autism is like, April has been designated World Autism Awareness month.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 1 in 54 children in the U.S. is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. ASD refers to a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication.

Amanda Johnson, Senior Director of Choctaw Nation Child Care & Head Start, said, "Early intervention is important for a child who is diagnosed with ASD. CNO Head Start can help with early detection and recognizing early signs and symptoms [of ASD]."

Founder of Bloom Consulting Brina Dutton said, "Everything we do, in everyday life, is different and more challenging than those families with neurotypical children."

When a family has a child diagnosed with ASD, they go through a lot of emotions. It can be extremely stressful trying to navigate through a child's disability. Dutton says families need support.

"Give them grace, try to understand what they're experiencing and how taxing that can be emotionally, physically, financially," she said.

"Most families need support and assistance with understanding and learning the skills needed to advocate and provide for their child in need," said Johnson.

There's not just one form of autism but many subtypes. ASD includes many different disorders that had

previously been diagnosed separately: autistic disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome disorder.

Someone identified with ASD will not always appear different, yet people with ASD may communicate or interact differently from most other people. As well as the potential to appear different, the learning and problem-solving abilities of those diagnosed with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Because of this, the assistance required in daily life can vary from a lot to nearly none.

Because there is no medical detection for ASD, doctors look at developmental and behavioral history to make a diagnosis like a blood test. Developmental screening looks at how your child is developing. A brief test or questionnaire is administered that considers a child's development, including language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions. Developmental screening can be done by a doctor or nurse and other healthcare professionals, community, or school settings.

The best person to track a child's development progress is a parent. You can do developmental monitoring at home to see how a child grows and changes over time and whether they meet the typical developmental milestones. Milestones like playing, learning, speaking, behaving and moving are all taken into consideration. Discussing these things during well visits can help with an early diagnosis.

- Some early signs of ASD can include:
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Having little interest in other children or caretakers.
- Limited display of language (for example, having fewer words than peers or difficulty with use of words for communication).
- Getting upset by minor changes in routine.

Depending on the severity of the symptoms, ASD can sometimes be detected as early as 18 months. However, "A valid diagnosis can be completed by a professional by age two," said Johnson.

Even with detection possible at a young age, the varied nature of autism means some people don't get diagnosed until they are adults. When a diagnosis is delayed, it means children with ASD might not get the early help they need.

If a child is diagnosed with ASD, the Choctaw Nation can help. "Resources are provided for these families by linking and referring them as needed for services such as physical therapy, be-



havioral therapy, psychiatry and medication management by the CNO health systems," said Johnson.

It's not just the social interactions that people who have an ASD diagnosis struggle with. Autism is commonly a whole-body disorder with many other co-morbidities such as:

- Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affects an estimated 30% to 61% of people with autism.
- Anxiety disorders affect an estimated 11% to 42% of people with autism.
- Depression affects an estimated 7% of children and 26% of adults with autism.
- Schizophrenia affects an estimated 4% to 35% of adults with autism.
- Bipolar disorder affects between 6% and 27% of people with autism.

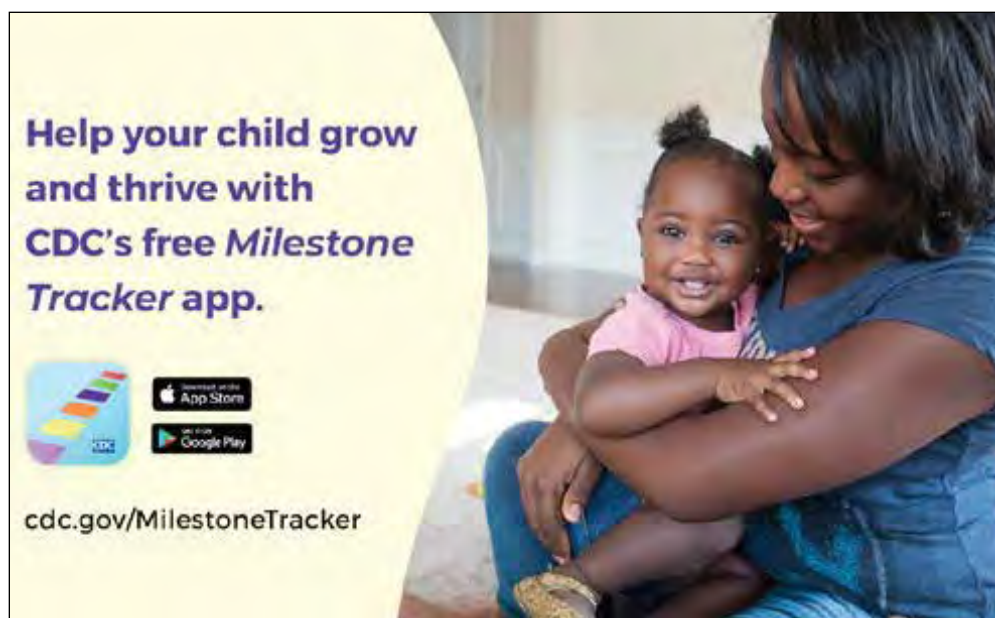
Some common services for ASD diagnoses are the Individualized Education Program, speech therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral therapy, physical therapy, developmental therapy, social skills groups, psychiatric services and medication management.

Dutton stresses that it's important not to jump to conclusions when in public when you see a child acting out.

"Make yourself familiar with signs and symptoms of children with autism so that the next time you encounter a child in public who is having a meltdown or throwing a tantrum, you might consider that child to be on the spectrum before jumping to conclusions that the child is misbehaving or place blame on the parent for not being able to control their child," Dutton explained.

Dutton is staying positive after her son Owen's ASD diagnosis.

"Owen's personality is amazing and big, and for the most part, we wouldn't change a thing about him. We are hopeful that with time, therapy and lots of faith that his speech will continue to improve and that he will develop into the beautiful young man that he was created to be," she said.



CDC's Milestone Tracker app, developed by the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program, provides an easy way for parents and caregivers to track and support their child's early development. The app can be found in the Google and Apple app stores.

CDC issues first set of guidelines on how fully vaccinated people can visit safely with others

On March 8, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued its first set of recommendations on activities that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 can safely resume.

The new guidance—which is based on the latest science—includes recommendations for how and when a fully vaccinated individual can visit with other people who are fully vaccinated and with other people who are not vaccinated. This guidance represents a first step toward returning to everyday activities in our communities. The CDC will update these recommendations as more people are vaccinated; rates of COVID-19 in the community change; and additional scientific evidence becomes available.

"We know that people want to get vaccinated so they can get back to doing the things they enjoy with the people they love," said CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH. "There are some activities that fully vaccinated people can begin to resume now in their own homes. Everyone – even those who are vaccinated – should continue with all mitigation strategies when in public settings. As the science evolves and more people get vaccinated, we will continue to provide more guidance to help fully vaccinated people safely resume more activities."

Visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or staying 6 feet apart.

Visit with unvaccinated people from one other household indoors without wearing masks or staying 6 feet apart if everyone in the other household is at low risk for severe disease.

Refrain from quarantine and testing if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19 after contact with someone who has COVID-19.

A person is considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last required dose of vaccine. Although vaccinations are accelerating, the CDC estimates that just 9.2% of the U.S. population has been fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine that the FDA has authorized for emergency use.

While the new guidance is a positive step, the vast majority of people need to be fully vaccinated before COVID-19 precautions can be lifted broadly. Until then, it is important that everyone continues to adhere to public health mitigation measures to protect the large number of people who remain unvaccinated.

The CDC recommends that fully vaccinated people continue to take these COVID-19 precautions when in

public, when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple other households, and when around unvaccinated people who are at high risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19:

- Wear a well-fitted mask.
- Stay at least 6 feet from people you do not live with.
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings.
- Get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Follow guidance issued by individual employers.
- Follow CDC and health department travel requirements and recommendations.

The CDC has released resources to help people make informed decisions when they are fully vaccinated. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html.

SHOULD I BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

The more you smoke and the longer you smoke, the higher your risk is for lung cancer.

You should consider being screened using a Low-Dose CT Scan if you have all three of these risk factors:

1. 55 to 80 years old
2. Current smoker or former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago
3. A smoking history of at least 30 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 30 years or two packs a day for 15 years, etc.)

If you are in the high risk category, talk to your physician about whether screening is beneficial for you.

For more information:
Choctaw Nation Health Services Low-Dose CT Program
 (800) 349-7026 ext. 6440

Choctaw Nation Health Services

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

Building Healthy Families Through Good Nutrition



Photo by Lauren Bishop/CDC

As the U.S. accelerates its rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released new guidance for individuals who have been fully inoculated.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

WAREHOUSES & MARKETS

Open 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
 Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

April 2021

All markets open weekdays, April 1, 5-28
Closed: April 2 and 29-30.
 Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
 Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

WIC van travel has been postponed. If you need assistance, please call 580-380-3628 or 580-380-9895 Ext. 83582.

Craft beverages draw tourists to Choctaw Country

By Christian Toews

Spring is a great time to enjoy some of Oklahoma's craft beer, wines and spirits. This industry has been steadily growing across Oklahoma, and Choctaw Country is no exception. In 2018 Oklahoma modernized its alcohol laws allowing craft beer to become more of a staple. These changes also lifted some restrictions on wineries and distilleries.

If you are thirsty for a great craft beer near Durant, you're in luck. There is a brewery just a few minutes north that is really hopping, pun intended.

Drew Harbin is the Harbinger Beer Company's owner. He and his wife Kayla had the dream of opening a brewery for years, he said. They finally made that dream a reality when they purchased a building in downtown Caddo in 2017. They completely renovated the space, adding an 1800 square foot brewery and taproom.

Harbin said he wants the brewery to help revive the downtown area.

"It's been really cool to see downtown Caddo come alive again. I'm really glad we can be a part of the revitalization," Harbin said.

According to Harbin, another goal is to tie in some of the area's history to the brewery. He said they have named several of their beers after features and history from the local area.

Drew said when you come to the brewery, you get a very personal experience.

Drew and Kayla run the brewery themselves. This allows you to hear about the process of creating specific beers and learn what goes into brewing great beer.

You can find the hours, upcoming events, and more on their website at www.harbingerbeer.com or their Facebook page.

Drew recently began a podcast called "Behind the Brewhouse." Give it a listen if you want to get to know more about Drew.

Harbin says, between bringing food trucks to the brewery and live music, there is always something going on at Harbinger Beer Company.

If you travel to the southeastern side of the Choctaw Nation, you will find tall pine trees, mountains and rivers. Nestled in this beautiful scenery is Hochatown, Oklahoma.

This town sits at the entrance to one of Oklahoma's most beautiful attractions, Beavers Bend State Park. For the past six years, Hochatown has been home to Hochatown Distilling Company, currently the only distillery in



Blue River Valley Winery is a small boutique winery located near Durant, Oklahoma, on the beautiful Blue River. This Choctaw tribal member-owned business has been serving up a wide variety of wines since 2015.

the Choctaw Nation, according to Hichell McDaniel.

McDaniel is one of four Hochatown Distilling Company owners.

McDaniel says that because bourbon can take years to age, many new distilleries will purchase bourbon from another distillery and put their label on it. This allows the distillery to begin making a profit right away. However, Hochatown Distilling Company chose to not release any product until they felt like their bourbon was ready.

McDaniel said they were fortunate enough to have other businesses to help offset the cost while they perfected their bourbon. He noted that all the bourbons they release now are about three and a half years old.

McDaniel noted the difference between a large distillery and a small distillery, saying that you can enjoy a more personal experience at a small distillery.

"We spend quite a bit of time with folks. We show them all the equipment and talk about the process. We give them an understanding of what's happening and then do a sampling toward the end. People seem to enjoy that very much. That more personalized touch just makes for a better experience," he explained.

McDaniel said that it could be challenging to get bourbon distributed in Oklahoma, but they feel that they are now getting recognized for their hard work.

"Six years in and we feel pretty good about where we are," McDaniel said. "It took us a while to while for us to get distributors to pay attention to us because we didn't have a route to sell our product."

Their bourbon is now sold in many places across Oklahoma, including the 1832 Steakhouse located inside the Choctaw Casino and Resort in Durant, Oklahoma. Hochatown Distilling Company also collaborated with Mounting Fork Brewing in Hochatown to create a barrel-aged beer, according to McDaniel.

If you would like to learn more about Hochatown Distilling Company or find tour information, visit www.hochatowndistilling.com.

Heading back over to the southwestern side of the Choctaw Nation, located on a beautiful property not far from highway 75 north of Durant sits Blue River Valley Winery. As you can tell from the name, the winery's front porch looks out over Oklahoma's Blue River valley.

Established in 2015, Blue River Valley Winery is a small establishment with a wide variety of wines. No matter what your preference, you will surely find a bottle that you love.

Hillary and Diane Dean are the winery owners and said that the winery location is exceptional.

"We have donkeys that everybody really loves and geese that are friendly. It's a very rural setting out here with a beautiful view of the Blue River. People from the Dallas area come out here and say, "This is so beautiful," said Diane.

Hillary went on to say that they pour a lot of love into the winery.

"Diane and I both had careers that we retired from before we opened the winery. The winery is not a job. It's a passion. It's something we both really enjoy doing and people pick up on that when they come to visit," he said.

The Deans said that customers come from all over the country and even worldwide, which makes the business fun and exciting.

"You just never know who is going to walk through the door. You meet so many new people," said Diane.

Hillary said that he started home brewing beer 26 years ago and that led him to handcrafted wine.

"We were visiting Diane's relatives in Georgia, and



Photos by Christian Toews



Top, Drew Harbin enjoys one of his craft beers inside Harbinger Beer Company. Drew founded the brewery with his wife Kayla in 2017. Bottom, Hochatown Distilling Company barrel ages their bourbon three to four years before the batch is ready to drink.

I had the opportunity to try some handcrafted peach wine, and that was amazing. I came back and started making wine and didn't look back," he said.

Once he began making wine, it stayed a hobby until November of 2015, when they opened the winery, Hillary explained.

Now in their sixth year of business, they have 22 varieties of wine, and the reviews on their Facebook page indicate they are well-loved by everyone who visits the winery.

If you would like more information about Blue River Valley Winery, visit www.bluerivervalleywinery.com.

Whether you are a craft beer drinker, a bourbon connoisseur, or love a glass of local wine, The Choctaw Nation has something to offer you. It's warming up outside, and now is the perfect time to spend an evening at one of Oklahoma's finest wineries, breweries or distilleries, right here in Choctaw Country.

CELEBRATE HERITAGE DAY!

JOIN US ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/HERITAGEDAY
HERITAGEDAY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

Time to prepare for spring severe weather

By Chris Jennings

The transition from winter to spring means it's time to start planning for what your family will do in the event of severe weather.

Dempsey Kraft with the Choctaw Nation Office of Emergency Management said, "Flooding is Oklahoma's most frequent and costly natural hazard. Within the Choctaw Nation alone, there have been 264 flooding events reported over the past ten years."

Severe thunderstorms and tornados are also of high concern within the Choctaw Nation. "Over the past ten years, there have been 1,104 wind events, 588 lightning events, 654 hail events, and 121 tornado events reported within the Choctaw Nation," said Kraft.

Each county within the Choctaw Nation receives an average of 16-20 thunderstorm watches annually from the National Weather Service (NWS). In that same year, each county also gets an average of 12-15 tornado watches.

The most important thing a family can do to prepare for these events is making a family emergency plan. Some things the plan should include are:

- How will my family receive emergency alerts and warnings?
- What is my shelter plan?
- What is my evacuation route?
- What is my family/household communication plan?
- Is my emergency preparedness kit up to date?

Another consideration should be your insurance policy. "Insurance policies should provide enough coverage to replace or repair anything damaged or destroyed during severe weather. Flood insurance is particularly important because most homeowner's policies do not cover flooding," said Dempsey.

The Nation prepares for severe weather by doing a quarterly review and update of the Choctaw Nation's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), as directed by the Tribal Emergency Response Committee (TERC).

The Choctaw Nation TERC is made of CNO staff from across the Nation's divisions, branches, and departments and acts as the steering committee for the Office of Emergency Management's plans and procedures.

When severe weather is forecasted, members of the

Choctaw Nation Office of Emergency Management coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies to monitor and report real-time, ground-level conditions via trained storm spotters.

There are several safety tips Kraft recommends for severe weather.

For foods, learn and practice your family's evacuation routes and shelter-in-place plans. Gather your supplies. Have enough on hand for three days. Keep your important documents in a waterproof container and consider creating password-protected digital copies. Finally, protect your property by moving valuables to higher locations as well as cleaning out drains, gutters, and ditches. If you need to evacuate, never walk, swim, or drive through floodwaters and do not drive around barricades.

When thunderstorms are in the area, the best thing to do is go inside a sturdy building until the storm has passed. Unplug appliances and other electrical devices to protect them from electrical surges caused by lightning.

For tornados, if you can safely get to a sturdy building, then do so immediately. Go to a safe room, basement or storm cellar. If you are in a building with no basement, get to a small interior room on the lowest level. Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls. If you are driving when a tornado warning is issued, attempt to find and get inside a sturdy building. Do not get out of your vehicle, and seek shelter under an overpass or bridge.

The Nation can also help with assistance after a severe weather event. "The individual assistance that the Nation provides changes from disaster to disaster based on Choctaw Nation tribal citizens' needs," said Dempsey.

When a disaster impacts a CNO tribal member, the best way for them to receive disaster assistance from the Nation is to call the CNO Disaster Hotline at (844) 709-6301.

Kraft concluded by saying, "Emergency preparedness is not a one-time task. It is an ongoing, reoccurring process. We believe having a strong and resilient Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma that can bounce back after a disaster is at the heart of the Chahta Spirit. That resiliency begins with the individual and households of the Choctaw Nation. If each family is more prepared, then the entire Choctaw Nation will be more prepared and resilient to disasters."

PRAY ABOUT IT!

WE NEED FOSTER PARENTS

MUST BE AN OKLAHOMA RESIDENT TO QUALIFY.

800-522-6170 EXT 4514
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/FOSTERCARE

Choctaw Nation Children & Family Services

Earth Day 2021: Restoring Our Earth

By Chris Jennings

Every year, beginning in 1970, people across the country have celebrated Earth Day in April. That first Earth Day, primarily geared towards college students, set the stage for what has now become a worldwide event. Over a billion people in 192 countries participate in Earth Day, making it the world's most widely observed civic event.

For the 2021 Earth Day, the theme is Restore Our Earth. The campaign is a call to conserve and restore our environment using natural solutions, technology, education, and civic action.

In a press release Kathleen Rogers, President of earthday.org, said, "To activate the promise of this unique moment in time, we're asking everyone to join us,"

Some things you can do to help restore the earth are:

- Pick up trash while enjoying your outdoor activities. It is a great way to save that plastic bottle cap from the landfill while you are on your morning walk.
- Change your diet to fight climate change. Try participating in meatless Mondays.
- Use reusable shopping bags.
- Change your paper bills to online billing. You'll be saving trees and the fuel it takes to deliver your bills by truck.
- Buy organic food to keep your body and the environment free of toxic pesticides.
- Save electricity and turn off lights when you leave the room.

The Nation leads the way

In his 1984 State of the Union address, President Ronald Reagan said, "Preservation of our environment is not a liberal or conservative challenge; it's common sense."

The Choctaw Nation has always used that common sense with a long history of living with and caring for the land. That tradition continues today with the Choctaw Nation Recycling Program. As of March 1, 2021, the Nation has recycled over 28 million pounds of material.

"I can remember comparing our weights to buffaloes, whales and elephants. It's so hard to believe we can compare them to 1,140 school buses, 26 Airbus planes, or 24 steam locomotives," said Tracy Horst, environmental compliance director for the Choctaw Nation.

The Choctaw Nation has one of the largest workforces in Oklahoma. That workforce has a significant impact on the environment. Ensuring employees know how they can improve the environment, especially when it comes to recycling, is important.

Horst explains one way the Nation educates its employees: "Currently, we have a 12-month recycling education program in place to increase participation and awareness to help employees reduce their costs with waste at home and within tribal facilities," she said.

Horst also says that as an overall environmental department, they are constantly reaching out to Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) staff to review their facilities to ensure they follow regulations and are more environmentally conscious.

"CNO Staff has been doing a great job, and we have very much appreciated their interest and participation to assure the Choctaw Nation is compliant with regulations," said Horst.

Some of the items you can drop off at either of the Choctaw Nation recycling centers are:

- Plastics 1, 2 and 5 (as well as shrink film and plastic bags)
- Cardboard
- Paper, including any kind that does not have a wax coating or is laminated
- Aluminum cans



Photo by Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation has many bins located throughout its boundaries where anyone can drop off recyclables. For a full list of locations, visit choctawnation.com/recycling.

- Tin or steel cans
- Printer and toner cartridges
- Styrofoam

The CNO recycling program is one example of where the Nation has come together to work with surrounding communities regardless of tribal affiliation. Because of this, you do not need to be a tribal citizen to drop off at any of the Choctaw Nation collection sites.

"We hope that more individuals, groups, or communities will reach out and want to partner on creating recycling programs for their businesses, schools, and communities," said Horst.

With the increase in online ordering during the pandemic, Horst says it's crucial to recycle those Amazon boxes and other packing materials.

Horst says you can take these items to any roll-off collection bins across the entire Choctaw Nation. A listing of recycling roll-off locations can be found at choctawnation.com/recycling. If you have specific questions, you can contact the Recycling Program staff at Recycling-Center@choctawnation.com or call the Durant Center at 580-920-0488 or the Poteau Center at 918-649-0343 for locations and additional information or questions.

Future generations

In his remarks at the Conference on Conservation of Natural Resources in 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt said, "It is time for us now as a nation to exercise the same reasonable foresight in dealing with our great natural resources that would be shown by any prudent man in conserving and widely using the property which contains the assurance of well-being for himself and his children."

When it comes to those assurances for future generations and the care of the planet, a considerable amount of time is often spent correcting past generations' mistakes.

The Nation is helping to correct some of those mistakes by developing an open dumpsite program. An open dump is a site at which solid wastes are disposed of in a way that can be harmful to the environment. They are often susceptible to open burning and are exposed to the elements.

"The program will include an inventory and monitoring of open dumpsites throughout the reservation and long-term education and increased awareness of the impact of these sites and cleanup of sites," said Horst.

The simple act of recycling can be tied to many of the Choctaw core values, such as culture, accountability, and responsibility. By taking steps to protect and restore the environment, the Choctaw Nation ensures future generations will have a better future.



CHOCTAW

— TRAIL OF TEARS —

2021 TRAIL OF TEARS WALK COMING SOON


JOIN US IN OUR TRAIL OF TEARS WALK
AND HONORING OUR ANCESTORS

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM FOR UPDATES

BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦



COVID-19 VACCINE NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Appointments for vaccines are now available to the public for ages 18 and older at any CNHSA clinic. Patients ages 16 and older can receive the Pfizer vaccine at the Talihina location. Other locations will primarily be giving the Moderna vaccine.

800-349-7026, EXT. 6
USE YOUR MYCNHSA APP, OR VISIT MY.CNHSA.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

April 2021

In This Issue

- 2 Faith Family Culture
- 3 Native designs
- 4 News of the Nation
- 5 Notes to the Nation
- 6 Obituaries
- 7 Obituaries
- 8 PYK
- 9 Iti Fabvssa



Page 1:

Winter storm response



Page 10:

World Autism Awareness



Page 11:

Craft beverages in Choctaw Country

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

Stay Connected to the Nation

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

PRESORT STD
AUTO
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CHOCTAW NATION

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

P.O. BOX 1210
DURANT OK 74702-1210