



October 2020 Issue



## Chief Gary Batton delivers virtual 2020 State of the Nation Address

### Unique Labor Day

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's leaders made the tough but necessary decision to cancel this year's Labor Day Festival.

Even though an in-person gathering wasn't possible, that didn't stop the Choctaw Nation from celebrating.

In place of an in-person State of the Nation Address, Chief Gary Batton delivered his annual speech via video message.

The virtual State of the Nation not only highlighted the success of the Choctaw Nation, it also showcased several inspiring Choctaw tribal members and businesses. In addition, the video highlighted the Choctaw Nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the servant leadership displayed by its associates during these uncertain times.

The Choctaw Nation Video Production Department filmed the virtual address at multiple locations on the capital grounds.

To watch the virtual State of the Nation Address, visit [choctaw-nation.com/state-of-the-nation](http://choctaw-nation.com/state-of-the-nation).

To the right is Chief Batton's message, featured in the video.

The lack of a Labor Day festival also means the regular photo spread featuring scenes from the festival has been replaced with a look back at Labor Day over the years.

Photos from the mid-1970's to 2019 will bring back memories for many who have attended over the years. See pages 10 and 11 for the photos.

Halito,

In the time since our last Labor Day Festival, the world—for now—has certainly become a much different place, as you can clearly see.

Rather than celebrating together as we always have, to keep everyone as safe as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic, a gathering this year is simply not an option.

But the Choctaw people are no strangers to adversity. We have persevered through difficult times before because our faith, family and culture ground us. I am so proud to see how our generosity and courage are also carrying us through this difficult time.

While we are not physically together this year, we are certainly connected in spirit.

I call that the Chahta spirit, and in that spirit, I am honored to present to you the progress of our Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

When I first took the oath of office in 2014, I said as long as we stand together united, there is nothing that will hold us back. Six years later, I still believe that.

Our ancestors knew how important it was to stick together, and that's what helped them survive the Trail of Tears and prosper here in their new home.

There's no doubt this year has been challenging. We've seen our sovereignty attacked by the governor over our gaming rights; we've mourned the loss of our family and friends due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But every time we've faced a difficult situation, we've worked together to do what's right for Choctaws and our communities.

I'm so proud of the relationships we've built and continued over this past year.

Choctaw Nation Associates donated over 18,000 units of blood for the Oklahoma Blood Institute, potentially saving tens of thousands of lives right here in southeastern Oklahoma.

Our Emergency Management team traveled all over the ten-and-a-half counties to help local communities with storm recovery, search and rescue missions and emergency preparedness.

And we've worked with city officials all over the Choctaw Nation to strengthen infrastructure and small businesses.

We're also making responsible financial decisions. We have become less dependent on federal dollars. Most of the money the tribe takes in is returned to the Choctaw people through programs and services like healthcare, education, and housing.

Education has always been very important to the Choctaw people. In fact, Choctaws built the first schools in Indian Territory. Sadly, there is a noticeable achievement gap between Native American students and their counterparts. Because we understand how important it is to get a good education, and we want to narrow that achievement gap, we have developed several successful programs to support our students' educational goals.

Choctaw sovereignty is having the ability to choose what is best for our people and our resources. That's why we've worked so hard to protect our gaming compact as well as our hunting and fishing compacts with the State.

Thanks to the hard work of our Tribal Council, the Choctaw Nation also made huge strides toward our Housing goals this year. We built almost 300 LEAP homes and over 200 independent elderly housing units. We also saw great success in our affordable rental program.

Another way we exercise our sovereignty is through our judicial system. Our tribal courts work closely together to make sure Choctaw tribal members are treated with respect, and their voices are heard.

Making sure our culture, language, and traditions are preserved and shared is crucial to the survival of our tribe. On the first Monday of each month, we hold Heritage Day at headquarters, highlighting our culture through food, fellowship, and faith.



We are also working hard to increase the number of Choctaw language speakers through our Anumpa Aikkhvna school.

Using the resources and culture keepers we have within the tribe, the Choctaw Nation has built a state-of-the-art Cultural Center in Durant to highlight our Choctaw history, traditions, and ways of life. I can't wait for everyone to see it. It will truly be an amazing experience.

Just like our ancestors over a century ago, we've found ourselves in unfamiliar territory once again. The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred us to create new and inventive ways to meet the needs of our people.

Throughout the global pandemic, I'm proud to say that we experienced no gaps in services to our tribal members. The Choctaw Nation was able to continue operations without laying off or furloughing associates.

I'm also proud to say that our workforce continues to grow, despite the current economic downturn. Our recruiting and workforce development teams are putting people to work every day in the Choctaw Nation, and with the casino expansion coming soon, we'll open even more positions.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities. Although the entire country is struggling with a recession right now, small business owners all over the Choctaw Nation are showing that resilient "Tvshka Spirit."

In last year's State of the Nation address, I said the strength of our Nation is measured by the strength of our people. We've faced some difficult challenges this year, but each time we've faced a tough situation, we've shown that our Chahta Spirit is even tougher. Our resilience comes from generations of Choctaws before us who persevered in the face of so many obstacles.

I'd like to close with a line from one of my favorite poems: "We are clay people; We are a people of miracles."

Yakoke and God bless,

Gary Batton  
Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## Faith, Family, Culture



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

### Domestic Violence Awareness

October is set aside to recognize Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Alarming statistics report that approximately 24 people per minute are physically abused by a partner in the U.S., according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

Studies show Native women and men in the U.S. experience domestic violence at alarmingly high rates. More than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women and men have experienced violence in their lifetime. According to a study by the National Institute of Justice, more than one in three experienced violence in the past year. The NIJ also says that 84% of Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime. In addition, domestic and intimate partner violence have been linked to many Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women cases.

Domestic violence awareness and prevention is a crucial issue for us at the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. These statistics have driven us to seek change through offering numerous programs and services to help our tribal members remove themselves from domestic violence situations. The programs we offer include Project SERV, Family Violence Prevention, Choctaw Nation Victim Assistance and Project EMPOWER.

Project EMPOWER provides rental and utility assistance, gas vouchers, home visits, healing circles, court advocacy, safety planning and goal setting. Having been recently awarded \$825,643 from the Department of Justice, Project EMPOWER will be able to provide services to at least 125 Native American victims per year, bringing them from victims to survivors.

The Family Violence Prevention Program has also been awarded over \$1.93 million from the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) this fiscal year. These grant funds are not a tribal specific but can be used to assist victims and families of any nationality or race, who reside within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation.

The Family Violence Prevention Program provides face-to-face and in-home educational services to our Choctaw families that have experienced intimate partner violence and have involvement by either the state Child Welfare Department or our internal Indian Child Welfare offices.

The COVID-19 virus put a damper on those in-home and face-to-face contacts with clients since March. However, the Choctaw Nation has continued these services by utilizing Zoom, Facetime, Google Duo, and other virtual platforms to stay connected to clients in these programs. Services, including legal advocacy, have continued but are now delivered much differently from before. In-home, face-to-face services resumed in September, but our employees will revert back to virtual options should the need arise for the safety of our workers and tribal members.

The Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention Program also has received over \$500,000 in FVPSA CARES Act funds to prevent, prepare and respond to the pandemic. These funds are being used to enhance the health and safety measures already in place for associates of the Family Violence Prevention Program and provide information from the CDC to our communities and families.

Yakoke to the dedicated employees who provide the services to our tribal members who have experienced or are currently experiencing Domestic Violence. Their kind, compassionate, and caring hearts for our people truly reflect the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture.

If you are in a domestic abuse situation and do not know how to seek help, contact a Family Violence Prevention Social Worker today at 800-522-6170. If you live outside the 10.5 counties and need help, you may also contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233. Deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired individuals may use their TTY line at 800-787-3224. The Native specific hotline, StrongHearts, also offers culturally appropriate support and advocacy from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The hotline can be reached at 844-762-8483.



## WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

Despite the global pandemic, you don't need to feel isolated. We are here for you. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to domestic violence and needs assistance during this time, please contact:

Contact us at: **800-522-6170**, or visit:  
**choctawnation.com/domestic-violence**

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

→ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ←



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**DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS**  
Thanksgiving: October 23 | 4:30 PM

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS**  
Christmas: November 30 | 4:30 PM

Please fill out the Chahta Achvffa online application and attach a copy of income verification for all of household members and a utility bill (only accepting water, natural gas and electric bill. Propane will not be accepted) Must live within the 10 ½-county service area.

Vouchers will be mailed: Thanksgiving - Wednesday, November 6 | Christmas - Wednesday, December 4  
Be respectful when redeeming vouchers. Services can be denied for inappropriate behavior.

**877-285-6893 | 580-326-8304**

**CHOCTAWNATION.COM**

**Choctaw Nation** Outreach Services



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

### The Fool: Who is He?

There is an old saying that implies we are often most blind to our own foolishness. "A fool can no more see his own folly than he can see his ears."

The Book of Proverbs in the Bible warns again and again about the results of foolish living. Throughout the Book of Proverbs, the man of wisdom (obedient and God-fearing) is contrasted with the fool (disobedient and godless). The wise man is identified as the righteous man, so is the fool referred to as the wicked man. He is wicked because he is foolish, and he is foolish because he is wicked. God's definition of a fool helps us see our own foolishness and avoid a lot of errors in life choices.

Jesus teaches the antithesis of the life of wisdom is the life of the fool in Matthew 7:24 – 27. "Therefore whoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

The contrast between the wise man and the fool in scripture is so consistent that we may rightly conclude that everything the wise man is, the fool is not. When we read that the wise man is the one who fears the Lord, we may imply that dishonoring and disobeying God is foolish. Who is the fool?

We find the answer in Psalms 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt. They have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." This passage is cited again in Romans 3:10-12. This emphasizes the universality of sin. All are foolish and stand in need of the forgiveness and pardon of God. This can only be obtained by appropriating the merit of Christ's work on the cross. Come, let us reason together, sayeth the Lord.

### Flu shots available throughout Choctaw Nation

With flu season right around the corner, immunization is more important than ever this year because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) has set up dates and locations across Southeastern Oklahoma to provide vaccines at no cost to the public.

"With both flu and COVID at the same time, trying to avoid the one we can vaccinate against is very important," says Community Health Nurse Director Kelly Adams.

Due to the challenges presented by COVID-19, the CNHSA team is offering a combination of appointment sites, walk-up events, and drive-thru locations available to everyone. A list with over 90 opportunities to get the flu vaccine is available on the Choctaw Nation website at [www.choctawnation.com/2020FluShot](http://www.choctawnation.com/2020FluShot).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that this fall and winter, it is likely that the viruses that cause both the flu and COVID-19 will spread at the same time. Their recommended way to prevent seasonal flu is to get a flu vaccine annually and practice these necessary everyday preventive habits to protect yourself and others from flu and help stop the spread of germs.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.
- If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Flu and other serious respiratory illnesses, like respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough, and COVID-19, are spread by cough, sneezing, or unclean hands.
- Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

For more information on the flu, visit [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu).

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**Choctaw Nation** High School Student Services

# Samantha Crain releases new album A Small Death, resurrecting her music career

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Choctaw singer-songwriter Samantha Crain recently released her newest album, *A Small Death*, July 17.

Crain has toured with artists like Brandi Carlile, The Avett Brothers, Neutral Milk Hotel and The Mountain Goats. She won two NAMMY's (Native American Music Awards) and an Indigenous Music Award for Best Rock Album. Her music has been featured in television shows like *90210*, HBO's *Hung* and the new film *The Dark Divide*. Crain also represented the Choctaw Nation as a featured artist at the Choctaw Nation Arts and Music Festival at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in 2016.

Crain has been working her way up the ranks of the folk/Americana scene for years, and everything seemed to be going well until three years ago.

After releasing her album, *You Had Me at Goodbye* in 2017, Crain was in a series of car accidents that intensified the carpal tunnel and tinnitus that she was already struggling with. This incident left her in pain and unable to feel her hands.

"It was just bad luck. I was hit all three times, so it wasn't like I'm just an awful driver or anything like that," explained Crain. "But the first wreck was really physically and financially pretty debilitating. It kind of exacerbated the issues I was already having with my hands, to the point where I just couldn't do anything with my hands."

According to Crain, the situation took a toll on her mental health as well.

"That led to this sort of mentally stressful breakdown because I couldn't do my job or my art anymore. I was sort of shutting down mentally as well. So, basically, I just had this year where I couldn't do much," said Crain. "I was sort of mourning and grieving. It was a lot of trauma all at once, and my body couldn't bear it. I was shutting down. I really didn't know where I was going to go from there."

Crain's career was left in the balance, but she sought help to mend her physical and emotional injuries.

"Eventually, through a lot of different therapies, I started recovering slowly. What I sort of had on the tail end of that was not really thinking I would make another record or be able to do that anymore, but what I ended up with, as I started healing, was just a lot of stuff that I had been processing during that time that just all came pouring out. It turned into this record, really," Crain said.

The self-produced *A Small Death* is a deeply personal record with heartfelt

subject matter.

"This is the first time I've produced one of my own records. I've done a few different songs and projects of my own, but never a full record. I've produced records for other people, but I think there has to be a certain sense of aerial view or detachment when it comes to producing records because you have to be able to see the whole picture. Sometimes when you're the artist or the person who made the songs, you can get a little bit lost in it. So, that's why I had never produced one of my records before," explained Crain. With this record, it was just so important to me that I just couldn't really see anybody really being able to fully execute it in the way I wanted to, without something being lost in translation. So, I just worked really hard on trying to get everything from an organizational standpoint together, so I could be both the artist and the producer."

Crain explained that she had a clear vision of how she wanted the album to sound and feels like she accomplished that goal.

"I feel like I'm really lucky that it turned out as I wanted it to because it was sort of a risky move playing all hats on this project. Not only was I the artist and the songwriter, I was the producer, and I also directed the music videos. That's a lot of hats to wear, and sometimes it can really burn you out. I think because of the material in the record was so important to me, I just had the extra wherewithal to do all of that on this particular project," said Crain.

Being Choctaw and having a connection to her culture is an essential part of Crain's life and means many things.

"It means survival. I think something really important to realize, when people talk about activism within Native communities, is every Native American is an activist because it's like a miracle that the erasure wasn't completed. For me, it's about resilience. It's about remembering the communities you come from and being grounded within those. It's about being able to exist where life puts you. Our tribe has in so many ways been able to pivot and be resilient no matter what lot they have been dealt, and not just survive, but thrive as well. That's something that's important to me and my personal philosophy for my life, and I think it's really strongly grounded within me."

The song "When We Remain" is written and sung in Choctaw. This is Crain's second song to feature the Choctaw language.

According to Crain, writing in the Choctaw language and understanding



Photo courtesy of Dylan Johnson

Choctaw artist Samantha Crain released her first album in three years. *A Small Death*, Crain's sixth studio album, gives listeners a look into her struggles with physical and mental health, and how she found her way back to music.

her tribe's history is important to her.

"I think writing songs in the language is a tool, for me anyway, of being able to create new traditions. To move further into the future. Maybe I don't have full access to being able to learn everything about the way my ancestors lived, but I can still be a part of that narrative, and I can create new things to build upon from here on out."

As an Indigenous artist, Crain has noticed a familiar feeling shared by many younger members of Indigenous communities.

"The more I talk with other Indigenous artists and people that are my age, something that I find that keeps coming up is this worry about not being Indian enough, or feeling like there is some sort of chasm between where they are and what they have access to, and the traditions of their ancestors," Crain explained. "I think that's a real feeling that a lot of people have and worry about. The thing is, it's not their fault. They didn't put that canyon there. That canyon was put there by years and years of genocide and land removal. I think it's just really important for people to realize, especially artists within the Indigenous communities, if you make a painting, write a poem, write a song or make a meal, that is Choctaw because you are Choctaw. It doesn't have to meet some stereotypical standard of what somebody thinks Native American art has to look like."

It's no secret that 2020 has been a rough year for the music industry. The COVID-19 pandemic forced artists to cancel tours and venues to close their doors. Crain, like all musicians, had to adapt and be creative during this unusual time.

"It's definitely been different. I haven't been able to tour, which is where a large part of my income as a musician comes from. It's like that for most people who are musicians," said Crain. "The majority of people don't really buy records anymore, so the majority of their ability to survive is based on touring. Because that part of the industry is pretty much shut down right now, I've had to just be creative with other things in order to make a paycheck."

According to Crain, there have also been new ways to share music that have emerged from COVID-19 and quarantine.

"A lot of people are starting podcasts, so I've been able to make a little bit of extra money doing music for podcasts. Everybody's sort of putting together special online events and stuff like that, and I've been able to hop on stuff like that," explained Crain.

No matter what happens in the future, Crain is going to continue to create. She, like her Choctaw ancestors, has shown how resilient she can be.

For more information on Samantha Crain or to purchase her music, please visit [www.samanthacrain.com](http://www.samanthacrain.com).

# Choctaw Nation promotes food stability

By Shelia Kirven

October 16 is recognized as World Food Day, an annual day of awareness and call to action sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations. It is a time to recognize and recommit to doing our part in helping make food systems stronger and to help defeat world hunger.

Founded in 1945, World Food Day reminds us to choose fresh and healthy foods for ourselves and our families to improve health, making it an everyday lifestyle objective. By doing so, we also ensure the demand for nutritious foods helps sustain local growers. We all have a role in ensuring that our food systems thrive and are sustained for future generations.

Choctaws, being an agricultural people, have always had a relationship with the land around them. It's part of our heritage. Producing and sustaining food systems is something the Choctaw people have always valued. Many Choctaws still grow their own food and are accomplished farmers and ranchers, some large-scale and others participate in smaller backyard opportunities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, these practices seem to be more important than ever.

Choctaw Nation concentrates heavily on the importance of food sustainability, resiliency and protecting our resources while assisting our members. Food Distribution, WIC, Senior Nutrition and Senior Farmers Market are examples of programs available for eligible members.

There are also grassroots efforts to teach food sustainability, such as the backyard demonstration centers located in Lehigh and Hugo, Oklahoma.

Donna Loper, Executive Director of the Land Title and Natural Resources Division, said, "We have some great projects going on to assist tribal members. At Lehigh, they have several gardening demonstrations. They have begun a backyard initiative to teach projects including chicken tractors, making your own potting soil mixture, water catchment and raised bed gardening."

The program is in its third year of growing in Lehigh and the first year in Hugo. So far, the program has produced almost 10,000 pounds of fresh vegetables that were donated to Choctaw senior citizens. Program staff work with OSU extension centers to determine the varieties of vegetables to grow in the area and coordinate with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to sponsor workshops ranging from subjects such as beekeeping to canning your own food. Areas of expertise also include soil health, vegetable gardening, utilizing hoop houses, aquaponics, and pollinator food habitats.

Emmie Bragg, the program's agronomist, stated that "in a normal year we put on classes/workshops throughout the year for hands-on learning, but with this year being a bit different, we are trying to go with virtual learning. At each demonstration center, we have a variety of gardens and community gardens. We have started a backyard initiative where we hope to demonstrate what can be done in your own personal backyard."

Jeffrey Roebuck, a project technician, said, "You see how important it is to get back to our roots, to be as self-sufficient as possible, and what I mean by that, is to grow your own food and to be able to preserve your own food. Many young and older people have never gardened. With this pandemic, a lot of people have jumped into gardening. What we teach is that there are many different types of ways to garden. We show that you don't need five acres to grow a garden. You don't need a tractor or equipment. There are several

ways it can be done." He went on to say, "Gardening has a lot of benefits. The vegetables you produce are fresh with no chemicals that the store-bought vegetables have. It gives you an activity to exercise and a way to ease your mind off things."

Staff members say they enjoy helping their participants learn to be backyard gardeners and encourage others to know that there is no spot too small to enjoy gardening and that anyone who is interested can learn.

"The Land Management Program is committed to the conservation management and preservation of the natural resources of the Choctaw Nation. Land Management goals and responsibilities are to protect, enhance and preserve all tribal trust/fee and individually owned lands and to use the tools of research, demonstration, protection, and provide outreach programs to assist in these goals for the enhancement and productivity of these resources," said Bragg. "The COVID-19 global health crisis has been a time to reflect on things we truly cherish and our most basic needs. These uncertain times have made many of us rekindle our appreciation for a thing that some take for granted and many go without – food. Food is the essence of life and the bedrock of our cultures and communities. Preserving access to safe and nutritious food is and will continue to be an essential part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for poor and vulnerable communities, who are hit hardest by the pandemic and resulting economic shocks. In a moment like this, it is more important than ever to recognize the need to support our food heroes- farmers and workers throughout the food system- who are making sure that food makes its way from farm to fork even amid disruptions as unprecedented as the current COVID-19 crisis."

To talk with staff about the backyard demonstration centers, or any questions about home food projects, call 580-326-3201 ext. 6018 or 4276, or 580-380-3450. For more information about World Food Day, visit [www.fao.org/world-food-day/ho](http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/ho).

**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

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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

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Choctaw Nation | 1421 Cultural Center Building, Choctaw, Oklahoma 74325

## Choctaw Forestry Department helps fight California fires

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Record-breaking wildfires have been raging in California, Oregon and Washington since August. These fires have killed over 30 people as of Sept. 13, destroyed thousands of homes and buildings, and left a thick layer of smoke over most of the western half of the U.S.

According to the National Interagency Fire Center, 75 large fires have burned more than 3.7 million acres in 11 states. More than 30,000 wildland firefighters and support personnel are assigned to wildfires across the country. Evacuation orders remain in place for residents near 23 large fires in the west as of Sept. 22.

Incident Management Teams (IMT) are called in to assist in the management of and response to local, state and national emergencies and natural disasters. These teams are made up of members of local, state, tribal and territorial entities trained to assist in these situations. Incidents are categorized as Type 5 through 1. Type 1 is the highest level of severity.

There are 16 Type 1 IMT's in the U.S. Five members of the Choctaw Nation Forestry Department are a part of the Southern Area Type 1 Blue Team. Tom Lowery, Mark Morales, Scott Hamlet and Kendall Carpenter were dispatched to California to assist with controlling the wildfires.

When it comes to wildfires, it isn't just firefighters on the ground. There are IMT members behind the scenes dealing with the overall operations, logistics, finances, planning, communications and safety. Fighting wildfires is a complex situation that takes an entire team to conduct. Morales, Lowery, Hamlet and Carpenter played key rolls in this operation, and are ready 24-7 to respond to incidents across the nation.

"We got the call on Aug. 19 to go to Sacramento, California, and assemble there. We all get up the next morning, we keep our bags packed year-round, and we take off for the airport and get on an airplane, which was probably the scariest thing we did the whole time," said Tom Lowery, Director of Forestry.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, things were a little different than usual. The team flew out to California on a commercial flight, surrounded by others, potentially exposed to the virus.

"Everybody came through it fine. We had 1,100 people assigned to our incident. We only had one COVID case that popped up

after that person had left the fire and got home. We didn't have any active COVID cases on the entire incident."

COVID-19 not only affected travel to and from the incident, but how the incident was handled as a whole.

According to Lowery, a lot of things were done virtually or remotely this time. Some team members were even able to assist from their home states of West Virginia and South Carolina.

Lowery explained how those working in California could work efficiently but still adhere to social distancing guidelines.

Some worked from their hotel rooms; those who were on the ground tried to stay in small groups and distance from each other when possible; and others worked in a veterans building in Willows, California. About 20 people worked in a large auditorium in Willows and were scattered out to maintain social distance.

Masks were worn, hand sanitizer was readily available, temperature checks were administered and distance was kept.

"We did as many of the functions of managing the fire remotely as we could. All of our meetings were virtual meetings through Microsoft Teams. It was kind of strange," explained Lowery. "You were in this big auditorium in a virtual meeting with 10 people, and five of them were in this auditorium with you. I could look across the way 50 feet, and there's a guy I'm in the meeting with, but we're sitting there looking at a computer screen. It was a big learning curve. That's not the way we normally do things."

Everything that could be done digitally was, according to Lowery.

"We did a lot of things this year digitally, that we would normally do on paper. It would have been faster to do it on paper, but we know that digital is the way it's going to be, whether we like it or not. So, we encouraged everyone to do as much digital as possible. As you can imagine, an incident like that can produce a literal mountain of paperwork. But in three weeks, I signed three pieces of paper with an ink pen."

According to Lowery, the IMT spent four days in staging and 21 days attached to the largest fire in California history, the August Complex in the Mendocino National Forest.

"Each of us played different roles, of course," said Lowery. "Kendall Carpenter, Director of Forestry, he was on the ground out on the fire. He was in his section of the fire and stayed up there for the duration. He was up there for 20 days. There were



Photo provided by T. Call

The August Complex originated as 37 different fires on the Mendocino National Forest. Many fires were contained early, while others merged to form larger wildfires. Four members of the Choctaw Nation Forestry Department flew out to California to help fight the historic fire.

very little amenities provided. Basically, for hygiene, he had a thing called a shower in a bag, which is a giant wet wipe. That's how he stayed clean. He luckily had 17 changes of clothing. So, he could change out clothes almost every day."

According to Lowery, it took four hours to get from base camp to Carpenter's location.

"Logistics were very difficult. Even sending hot meals – they weren't hot by the time they got there," explained Lowery. "Half the time, they would try to get them, and the fires would block off the road. It was very difficult to keep them supplied."

Though Carpenter faced the grueling conditions on a mountain surrounded by fire, he will tell you it was "nothing out of the normal," as he is used to being in situations that sound terrifying to others.

Mark Morales, served as the Incident Manager. The incident manager is in charge of everything on that team. Scott Hamlet served as the situation unit leader, who keeps up with statistics.

Along with being the planning section chief, Lowery also led the strategic operations group on this fire.

"That's where we do the fire modeling and fire behavior," said Lowery. "We can take a forecasted set of weather conditions

and the fuels on the ground, and we can predict where the fire is most likely to breach our control parameter."

Lowery admits that this experience was unique from any other incident he has worked on.

When it was time to come home, the Choctaw Nation employees on this assignment had a welcomed surprise.

"To cap it off, Chief Batton and Brad Mallet sent the tribal jet to pick us up in Sacramento. That was awesome! Instead of spending a day and a half riding in packed airplanes and sitting in airports with layovers and all of that stuff, we drove our rental cars up to the local airport, threw our bags on the jet, and 3 1/2 hours later, we were in Fort Smith. It was super and so unexpected. I realize there were a lot of factors that came into play. I just hope they realize how appreciative we were that they did that for us. Of course, we're spoiled now and wish we could do that every time," Lowery said with a smile. "I've been doing this since 1989, and that's the first time they've sent the jet for us. It was great and totally unexpected."

The Choctaw Nation Forestry team is back home for now, and hopefully getting the rest they deserve.

## Emergency Management Disaster Hotline

Choctaw Nation tribal members in need of emergency assistance due to wildfires, storms, hurricanes, flooding or other natural disasters may contact the Choctaw Nation Office of Emergency Management (CNOEM) Disaster Hotline at 844-709-6301.

For more information on the CNOEM, please visit [www.choctawnation.com/cnoem](http://www.choctawnation.com/cnoem).



## The District donates school supplies to local schools

DURANT, Okla. (September 2, 2020) – The District at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant donated over 200 drawstring backpacks filled with necessary school supplies including, colored pencils, notebooks, folders and more to the Johnson-O'Malley Program (JOM).

The JOM Program provides supplemental funding to contracted public schools within the Choctaw Nation's 10.5 county service area. Eligible students are Native Americans from age 3 to grade 12. The JOM Program has approximately 75 participating schools, serving more than 13,000 students.

Once backpacks were received, JOM reached out to the schools and determined which of them could make the greatest use of the supplies.

"We had 74 JOM students that needed school supplies for the upcoming school year," states Harvey Brumley, Superintendent at Holly Creek Public Schools in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. "Our kids were so excited to receive their packages and we appreciate all the support from both the Choctaw Nation and Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant!"

On Aug. 8, the District at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant hosted a back-to-school event, Aloha School, where backpacks filled with school supplies were given away to students. The leftover backpacks from the event were donated to the JOM Program.

Backpacks were also donated to Albion, Lufketa, Pocola and Cameron public schools.

For more information on the JOM Program, visit [www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/education/johnson-omalley-program](http://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/education/johnson-omalley-program).

The District at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant is located at 4216 S. Highway 69/75, Durant, OK 74701. The District is a premier destination for family fun and entertainment complex with 20 bowling lanes, a 40-game arcade, a state-of-the-art movie theater and Tailgater's Lounge.



Photo Provided

Holly Creek students in Broken Bow, Oklahoma excited to receive their school supplies from The District at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant.

## THE GREAT AMERICAN SHAKEOUT



**DROP! COVER! HOLD ON!**

**OCTOBER 15 | 10:15 AM**

The Choctaw Nation will participate in the Great American Shake Out, the nation's largest earthquake drill

[VISIT SHAKEOUT.ORG](http://VISIT SHAKEOUT.ORG)

Choctaw Nation Emergency Management

## CHOCTAW HUNTING & FISHING LICENSE

APPLY TODAY TO RECEIVE YOUR 2020 OKLAHOMA HUNTING & FISHING LICENSE

The Choctaw Nation Hunting & Fishing Compact helps the state of Oklahoma wildlife funding.

The savings for the annual combination license for each tribal member is \$272.

### HOW TO APPLY:

- To apply for a new license go to [chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com](http://chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com)

### TO PRINT YOUR RENEWAL:

- Auto renewal for 2020 at [goutdoorsoklahoma.com](http://goutdoorsoklahoma.com) (download app and website license)

Applications close October 15 for 2020 licenses.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



## 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](http://choctawnation.com/contacts-applications/cdibmembership-information)

All membership cards are being mailed to recipients until further notice. Unfortunately, this means same-day card obtainment 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](mailto:CDIB-MEMBERSHIP@CHOCTAWNATION.COM)  
CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA | ATTN: TRIBAL MEMBERSHIP  
PO BOX 1210 | DURANT, OK 74702

Choctaw Nation Member Services

## NOTES AND EVENTS

### Noel and Roxie (Loman) Baker Family Reunion

October 24, 2020 (previously scheduled for June 27)  
 Choctaw Nation Community Center  
 2746 Big Lots Parkway, Durant, Okla.  
 Potluck lunch begins at 11 a.m.  
 For questions, check the family facebook or contact Lillie Dusenberry at 580-320-1039.

### OK Choctaw Tribal Alliance

5320 S. Youngs Blvd  
 Oklahoma City Okla. 73119  
 405-681-0869  
[www.facebook.com/OKChoctawTribalAlliance](http://www.facebook.com/OKChoctawTribalAlliance)  
**Choctaw Language Classes** ♦ **Indian Taco Sales**  
**Monthly Senior Activities** ♦ **Cultural Events and Presentations** ♦ **Volunteer Activities** ♦ **Craft Classes**  
 Veterans meeting first Saturday of every month at 10 a.m.  
 Scholarship Opportunities 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization

### Send us your stories!

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

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

### NEED TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS?

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

Read the Biskinik online at  
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/NEWS)



### Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above.  
 Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.  
 News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.  
 We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.  
 All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.  
**Mail to: Biskinik**  
**P.O. Box 1210**  
**Durant, OK 74702**  
**or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)**

Gary Batton  
 Chief

Jack Austin Jr.  
 Assistant Chief

The Official  
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 of the  
 Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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

### Child and Adult Care Food Program announcement

The Choctaw Nation Child Care & Development, Head Start & Early Head Start Programs announces its participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). All participants in attendance are served meals at no extra charge to the parents. In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
 Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### Tribal Council holds September session

#### CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

September 12, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a. Regular Session August 8, 2020
5. WELCOME GUESTS
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
  - a. Esterlyn Meashintubby, District #7 – Transparency and Sovereignty
7. ELECTION OF SPEAKER, SECRETARY, CHAPLAIN, AND SPEAKER PRO-TEMPORE OF TRIBAL COUNCIL
8. APPOINTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARIAN, SERGEANT-AT-ARMS, AND RECORDING SECRETARY
9. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES
10. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
11. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Approve the FY/2021 Annual Tribal Budget of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - b. Approve a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in Favor of Starbuck Corporation Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - c. Rescind CB-91-20 and to Approve the Application for Head Start Continuation Funds for FY 2020-2021 Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - d. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in LeFlore County in Trust Status with the United States of America Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - e. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in McCurtain County in Trust Status with the United States of America Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - f. Amend CB-139-16, as Amended in CB-33-18, a Council Bill to Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Pittsburg County in Trust Status with the United States of America as Amended Vote Counts: YEAs- Unanimous; Vote Result: Bill passed
  - g. Amend the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Code of Ethics Tabled for further discussion. The vote to table it was unanimous.

12. OTHER BUSINESS  
 Council reappointed the chairpersons of its committees, so Mr. Thompson will continue as chairman of Committee 1 and Mr. Frazier will continue as chairman of Committee 2.

Council officers were elected, with the incumbents returning to their posts. Mr. Williston son is Speaker, Mr. Perry is Secretary, Ms. Wood is Chaplain and Mr. Dry is Speaker Pro-Tempore. In addition, the Parliamentarian, Sergeant-at-Arms, and Recording Secretary were reappointed to their positions.

Public comments were received from Esterlyn Meashintubby of District 7, regarding transparency and sovereignty.

13. OLD BUSINESS
14. ADJOURNMENT
15. CLOSING PRAYER

### Thank You

The family of Larry Tyson would like to express our sincere gratitude for the heartfelt prayers and acts of kindness that have been extended.

We would like to especially thank the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Angela Dancer, for her outreach, support, and assistance. A special thank you to the Miller and Miller Funeral Home for their love, patience, and assistance in making arrangements and organizing the details of the service.

When tragedy strikes, our small town always comes together to spread kindness and lend a helping hand. We truly appreciate the love that has been felt by our family from extended family, friends, church family, rodeo family, and the community.

On behalf of the Hampton family, I would like to thank Choctaw Nation for all the help received during Covid 19. The monetary services helped ease the loss of income during these trying times. Prayers for our Chief, Assistant Chief and Council members.

Respectfully  
 Twilah Hampton, LPN

### Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

October 2	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 5	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
October 6	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 7	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 7	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 8	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
October 9	Crowder	By Appointment
October 12	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 13	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 14	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
October 14	Coalgate	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 16	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.
October 20	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
October 21	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
October 21	Stigler	By Appointment
October 23	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 27	Atoka	11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 28	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
October 29	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an appointment

### Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

October Language Lesson

#### Verbs

1. **pichiffi** – v. to squeeze  
 Pronounced: pe-che-feh  
 Ketchup vhlto ish pichiffa hinla. \*  
 You can squeeze the ketchup packet.
2. **chiniffi** – t. to pinch with the fingers  
 Pronounced: che-neh-feh  
 Svshki vt sv chiniffi tuk.  
 My mother pinched me.
3. **paioffi** -v. bent up or bent over  
 Pronounced: pah-yohf-feh  
 Kvta hosh Nicholas i kaa paioffi tuk?  
 Who bent up Nicholas' car?
4. **koloffi** – v. to cut off; to sever  
 Pronounced: koh-lohf-feh  
 Im anumpa koloffi tuk.  
 He cut off her words/speech.
5. **hlitoffi** – v. to untie, to unloose  
 Pronounced: thle-tohf-feh  
 Issuba talakchi ish hlitoffa chike.\*  
 Be sure to untie the horse's reins.
6. **shibvffi** – v. to splinter  
 Pronounced: she-bahf-feh  
 Tiak ma shibvffi cha ish hokma hinla.  
 You can splinter and burn the pine.
7. **lobvffi** – v. to pluck up by the roots  
 Pronounced: loh-bahf-feh  
 Haiyukpulo moma ka lobvffi la chi.  
 I will pluck all the weeds.
8. **takvffi** - v. to dip up; to dip out  
 Pronounced: tahk-ahf-feh  
 Ofi ya oka ish i takvffi cha ima.  
 Dip out some water and give it to the dog.

\*The verbs all end in the vowel 'i', to show future tense the 'i' is transformed to an 'a' for 'achi-will', 'hinla-can', and 'chike-future time' as in sentences #1 and #7.

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

## CANCELLATION NOTICE

VETERANS DAY CEREMONY  
 NOVEMBER 11, 2020 | TVSHKA HOMMA

Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency  
 the Veterans Ceremony has been canceled.

Information about gifts for veterans will follow soon.



Choctaw Nation



ITI FABVSSA

# Supreme Court’s McGirt decision affirms tribal treaty rights

In July 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on a case called *McGirt v. Oklahoma* and found that the Muscogee (Creek) reservation still exists under U.S. law. This decision countered what the State of Oklahoma thought for many years. The ruling – widely celebrated across Indian Country – was an important affirmation of treaty rights, which the Supreme Court failed to uphold in previous cases for many years. This case has major implications for Choctaw Nation because it has a similar legal history as the Creeks. This month’s *Iti Fabvssa* provides some of the relevant history on Choctaw Nation and establishment of the State of Oklahoma to help understand what this history and landmark legal decision mean for Choctaw Nation and our local communities.

The Chickasaw, Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), and Seminole Nations are Native American nations whose ancestral homelands are in the southeastern United States. For thousands of years, our ancestors enjoyed sovereignty, the power to govern ourselves. After Europeans arrived in what is now the United States, they referred to these nations as the “Five Civilized Tribes” because they adapted to the Euro-American market-oriented form of agriculture.

In the 1830s, the U.S. government strong-armed each of the Five Tribes to sign removal treaties that forced them from their homelands to Indian Territory, what is currently Oklahoma. These treaties stated that the Five Tribes would never become part of the United States or any of the states within it. Each tribal government would continue to have sovereignty over their lands, peoples, and borders. Such tribal lands are legally considered a reservation. If non-Choctaw people respected Choctaw laws, they could visit the Choctaw Nation, work there, or even become Choctaw citizens – much like we do today when we visit foreign countries like Canada or Mexico. The Choctaw government did everything within its power to ensure that our way of life continued in our new lands. But things drastically changed with the U.S. Civil War.

As war broke out between the Union and the Confederacy, Union troops and federal agents retreated from the forts built to uphold treaty terms of protecting Indian Territory. The Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations had little choice but to side with the Confederate States of America in the conflict. After the U.S. defeated the Confederacy, the Five Tribes all signed new treaties with the United States in 1866. Because the Tribes had sided with the Confederacy, the U.S. forced them to accept concessions that included land loss and some of our control over our lands. The most significant requirement was the allowance of railroads to be built through Indian Territory.

The Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway, completed in 1872, was the first railroad to cross the Choctaw Nation. A rapid influx of American settlers accompanied the railroads into Indian Territory. This changed the population dynamics of Choctaw Nation since there were many non-Choctaw citizens now within its boundaries. Choctaw-U.S. treaties stated that Choctaw Nation could not arrest U.S. citizens, so Choctaw government had to rely on U.S. federal agents to take care of lawbreakers in their own lands. As U.S. agents became less reliable about removing lawbreakers from Indian Territory, this created new problems with crime.

At the same time, American settlers were pushing to acquire lands explicitly set aside by the U.S. government for Indians. By 1889, land runs were beginning to be held west of Indian Territory. Congress was also making plans to divide up Indian lands to gain access to natural resources, profit from selling land, and assimilate Native American peoples.

In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, which divided tribal lands into individual parcels known as “allotments.” Before then, most tribal nations had owned



Image Courtesy of the Phillips Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma.

The U.S. government created citizenship rolls so it could begin the allotment process, one of the first steps for disestablishing the Five Tribes’ governments. Here, Choctaws are gathered so the Dawes Commission could place them on citizenship rolls.

their lands in common, which meant no single individual Indian had exclusive rights to land. This ensured that every tribal member had a place to live and grow food for themselves and their families. The U.S.-imposed allotment system changed tribal communities into groups of private landowners in order to assimilate them into American society. The Five Tribes were originally exempt from allotment. But after Congress passed the Curtis Act in 1898, Choctaws were forced to accept allotment and move towards the disintegration of their tribal governments.

As part of the process of allotment, Congress created the Dawes Commission to organize rolls of tribal citizens. Tribal land would then be allocated to each citizen on the rolls. Once all Indians received their allotments, the U.S. would sell the remaining lands to American settlers who wanted land in Indian Territory. But this commission did not always negotiate in good faith. The commissioners were secretly authorized to take whatever steps necessary to destroy

tribal governments, so that allotment could proceed, resources could be acquired, and land could be sold.

In 1905, representatives from the Five Tribes met at Muskogee, Indian Territory to organize against total political assimilation. The result of their organizing was a constitution convention for a singular government with Native representatives called the State of Sequoyah. Ratified by citizens of the Five Tribes, non-citizens of the Five Tribes, and U.S. citizens living in Indian Territory, the State of Sequoyah would have brought together a cross section of nations and peoples. Congress passed and submitted the Sequoyah constitution to President Roosevelt, but he preferred that Oklahoma Territory (to the west) and Indian Territory join as one state.

Although Oklahoma and Indian Territories were to be merged into a single entity, Congress planned to leave small tribal administrations in place to help close out each of the Five Tribes’ unfinished business. The idea was this would occur soon after statehood, and the tribal governments would then go out of existence. But tribal governments were never completely dismantled.

On the eve of Oklahoma statehood, Congress passed the Five Tribes Act to extend the governments of the Five Tribes. In stating “the tribal existence and present tribal governments of the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole tribes or nations are hereby continued in full force and effect for all purposes authorized by law,” this law ensured that the Five Tribes’ governments did not terminate when Oklahoma became a state. Furthermore, provisions within the 1906 Oklahoma Enabling Act ensured that the rights of Indian persons and property had to be respected.

Choctaw tribal government was never disestablished by Congress, but the State of Oklahoma and even some tribal officials thought it had been. Before any of the Five Tribes could be disestablished, their government affairs had to be settled. The Choctaws and Chickasaws owned almost a half-million acres of immensely valuable coal, asphalt, and timber lands that had to be sold before they could be officially disestablished. These lands and financial interests around them proved tricky to settle, in part due to poor administration and recordkeeping by the federal government.

Throughout the 1900s, Choctaw Nation remained a government, although it operated at a much smaller scale. Rather than being elected by Choctaw people, the Chief was appointed by the U.S. President. In the 1970s, Choctaw citizens prevented their government from being terminated. In the 1980s, they drafted a new constitution that made it possible for Choctaws to elect their own leadership. Since then, the Choctaw Nation, like the other tribes, has experienced a renaissance as a tribal government and become a powerful partner with the State of Oklahoma.

## RENTAL ASSISTANCE

The Rental Assistance Program gives very low income applicants the opportunity to live in affordable, safe, decent, and sanitary housing.

- **Rental Assistance**  
Rental Assistance provides eligible low income tribal members the opportunity to live in affordable, safe, decent, and sanitary housing.
- **Independent Elder Supportive Voucher**  
Tenants who have not yet received a rental assistance certificate to subsidize their rent may receive this service to complete their rental agreement until rental assistance is available.
- **Homeless Emergency Services**  
Provides assistance to low income tribal members in the form of rent or utilities to prevent homelessness.
- **Veteran Affairs Service for Housing**  
Assists veterans who are homeless or near homeless receive housing services.

**1-800-235-3087**  
Or visit the nearest Choctaw Nation Field Office to receive an application.

**Choctaw Nation** Housing Authority

## Housing Headlines

By **Tabatha Jackson**

The Homeowners Substantial Rehabilitation Program helps provide assistance to low-income homeowners for home repairs and 504 ADA accessibility items to single family homes. Homeowners must meet the eligible priority score of at least 60 points. Scores are based on income, age and family size. Additional points are given for documented disabilities and veterans.

The objective for substantial rehabilitation is to help bring the condition of homes to a decent, safe and sanitary standard through repairs to electrical, plumbing, roofing, HVAC, foundation or ADA accessibility components. Eligible repairs are based on a home inspection conducted by the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation. Adding additional rooms to the home is not an eligible repair. If the home is determined to not be cost effective alternative housing options will be recommended. We strive to assist our Choctaw tribal members with the most effective and efficient services allowed with our resources.

Completed application with supporting documents including a proof of residence, warranty deed and proof of homeowner insurance are required. The deed must have been filed for a minimum of one year.

This program is available within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation and does require a lien to be filed on your property. The lien is forgivable and will only be recouped if the property is sold.

**Choctaw Nation** Stay Connected  
HOCTAWNATION.COM

Housing Authority

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Choctaw Nation Head Start

## 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 funding year is **July 1 - May 1** of the following year. Applications can be submitted online.

CONTACT

HOCTAWNATION.COM/STUDENT-SCHOOL-AND-ACTIVITY-FUND-SSAF

800-522-6170 EXT 2175 OR 2463

Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

### Amber Sells turns 21

Amber Sells of Taylor, Texas, turned 21 Sept. 8. She is the daughter of Richard and Nanette Sells and sister to Tray, Chad and Cody.



### Cody Sells turns 18

Cody Sells of Taylor, Texas turned 18 June 3. He is the son of Richard and Nanette Sells, and the brother to Amber, Tray and Chad.



### Clapp earns Master's

MacKenzi Fae Clapp, of Durant, Oklahoma, earned her Master's Degree in Sports Administration with an emphasis in Business from Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

She is the daughter of Neal and Rebecca Hawkins and sister of Scooter Hawkins.

She is the granddaughter of the late Charles W. Lester III and Leola (Wesley) Lester of McAlester, Oklahoma, the late Lonnie Hawkins and Betty Hawkins of Shawnee, Oklahoma.

She is the great-granddaughter of William Taft Wesley and Becky (Pickens) Wesley of Kiowa, Oklahoma.

### Khrimsyn Riley Rae

Khrimsyn Riley Rae McKinney was born at 11:42 a.m. June 5, 2020, at the Choctaw Nation Hospital. She was 7 pounds, 9.6 ounces and 19 inches long.

Khrimsyn is the daughter of Kyle and Amber McKinney. She was welcomed by big brothers Jaxon and Isaiah. She is the granddaughter of Lynn and Richard Williston, Dalton Ward and the late Allison McKinney.



### Mitchell turns 1

Milo Jase Ryan Mitchell turned one year old on June 3.

He celebrated his first Birthday with a Mickey Mouse theme at his grandparents' home.

He is the son of Shoshana Mitchell of Norman, Oklahoma, the grandson of Jackie and Lisa (Taylor) Mitchell of Norman, Oklahoma, the great-grandson of Norris and the late Brenda (Taylor) Samuels of Oklahoma City, Johnny and Teri Mitchell of Hartshorne, Oklahoma and J. Keith Qualls of Columbia, Tennessee.

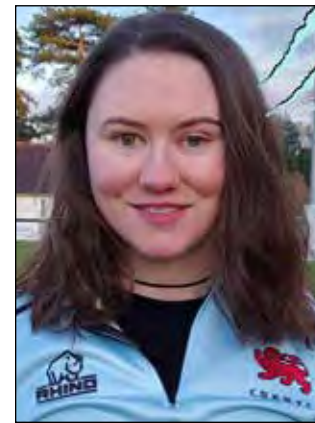


### Broome graduates from Cambridge University

Madelyn Broome of Tucson, Arizona, has earned a Masters of Advanced Studies in astrophysics from Cambridge University. While in England, Madelyn studied, traveled, rowed crew for Cambridge's Churchill College, played rugby, including in the varsity match against Oxford with the second team and earned a mark of Distinction for her master's thesis in exoplanets.

She is headed to UC Santa Cruz to continue her work toward a Ph.D. in astrophysics with the goal of pursuing a professorship and engaging in science outreach and communications to ignite interest in STEM among youth, particularly girls, in underserved populations.

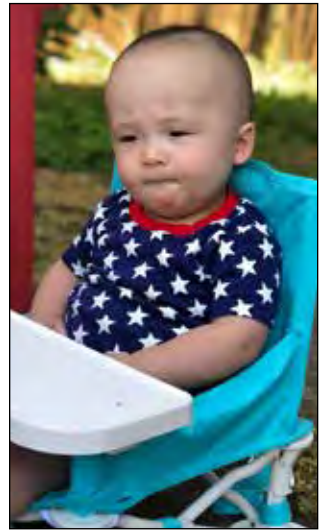
Broome wishes to thank the Choctaw Nation for its very generous support during her years at Princeton and Cambridge.



### 90 years for Edna Swarb

Edna Swarb celebrated her 90th birthday Sept. 9 with her husband Joe and her sister Joy Lee, who turned 87 Sept. 10.

Edna is the mother of David, Reta and Fred. She is also the grandmother of Adrian, Noel, Caitlyn, Joseph and Emily. She is the great-grandmother of Alex, DeLanie, Erin, Kristen and Ryan.



### Molina turns 1

Theodore Francis Charles Molina turned one year old on July 31

His parents are Jae and Kelly Molina of Portland, Oregon. Theodore's grandfather and step-grandmother, are Bill Wietelman and Jean (Kemp) Wietelman of Guthrie, Oklahoma. His grandmother is Laura Drexler of Portland, Oregon. His great-grandmother is Nwana (Crowder) Ferrall of Betheny, Oklahoma.



### Albright completes Ph. D

Tony Albright completed his Ph. D. in rhetoric, writing, and culture at North Dakota State University. He thanks the tribe for its support of his educational endeavors, without which he wouldn't have been able to finish his terminal degree. Albright focused on sociolinguistics, with particular interest in veteran dialect.

Since graduating, he has been working in Blaine, Minnesota at Infinite Campus as a software trainer.

### Ward crowned Oklahoma Little Miss United States Agriculture



Jerra Ward, 7, has been crowned Little Miss United States Agriculture. Over the next year, Jerra has the privilege to advocate for agriculture. Jerra's platform includes teaching others to care for and respect animals. Jerra wants to show people what all animals can provide and just how amazing they are. A few of Jerra's favorite things include showing swine, riding horses and loving Jesus.

Jerra Ward, 7, has been crowned Little Miss United States Agriculture. Over the next year, Jerra has the privilege to advocate for agriculture. Jerra's platform includes teaching others to care for and respect animals. Jerra wants to show people what all animals can provide and just how amazing they are. A few of Jerra's favorite things include showing swine, riding horses and loving Jesus.

### Patton to OSU DVM school

Titus Patton of Calera, Oklahoma joins Oklahoma State University's College of Veterinary Medicine class of 2024.

Patton has a BS degree in Animal Science/Pre-Veterinary from Oklahoma State University.

He is married to Claire Patton of Stillwater and is the son of Jason Patton of Calera.



### Mize 50th Wedding Anniversary

Leon and Marilyn (Cox) Mize were married July 24, 1970, in Poteau, Oklahoma.

They celebrated the occasion with their children Darren Mize, and Joanie Sunde and husband Kenney; grandchildren Travis Mize and wife Krissy, Coby Johnson and friend Hali, Jessica Jackson and husband Greg; and great-grandchildren, Jet and Josiah Jackson; Kalea Mendez and great-grandchildren, Brooks and Holyn Mendez.



### Curbside Thanksgiving Dinners

All Thanksgiving meals will be served curbside at the corresponding community center in accordance with social distancing protocols. Contact your local Choctaw community center for more information.

<b>Nov. 4</b>	
Atoka Community Lunch	11 a.m.
Battiest Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Coalgate Senior Lunch	12 p.m.
Stigler Community/Senior	11 a.m.
<b>Nov. 5</b>	
Tuskahoma Community Dinner	5:30 p.m.
<b>Nov. 9</b>	
Battiest Community Dinner	4 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
<b>Nov. 10</b>	
Antlers Senior Lunch	12 p.m.
<b>Nov. 16</b>	
Broken Bow Community Dinner	4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m.
<b>Nov. 18</b>	
Crowder Community Lunch	11:30 a.m.
Hugo Community Lunch	11 a.m.
Spiro Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Wilburton Community Lunch	12 p.m.
Wright City Community/Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Durant Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Idabel Senior Lunch	12 p.m.
McAlester Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Smithville Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Broken Bow Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
Poteau Senior Lunch	11 a.m.
<b>Nov. 19</b>	
Talihina Community Lunch	11 a.m.

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**Choctaw Nation** Housing Authority

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APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE ON: [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/ADULT-EDUCATION](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/ADULT-EDUCATION)

The Choctaw Nation offers High School Equivalency Diploma classes online for all Choctaw members across the United States. Traditional classes, with an instructor, are also offered within the Choctaw Nation area for all federally recognized tribes.

Most students finish within 12 weeks of study. A \$250 incentive is available to students enrolled in the program upon completion. All books, supplies and testing fees are provided.

**TRADITIONAL CLASSES:**

<b>Durant (night)</b>   Start: 8/03/20 Mon & Wed   5pm-8pm Choctaw Nation HQ	<b>McAlester (day)</b>   Start: 8/11/20 Tues & Thurs   9am-12pm Eastern Oklahoma State College
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**CONTACT:**

800-522-6170 EXT 2122 | [ADULTED@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:ADULTED@CHOCTAWNATION.COM)

**Choctaw Nation** Adult Education





# Nation battles opioid epidemic on multiple fronts

By Chris Jennings

When Ben White was 14, he broke his collarbone playing football. His doctor prescribed hydrocodone for the pain. Two years later, at 16, White was still taking opioids, but buying them illegally off the street. Soon after that, he would start injecting heroin.

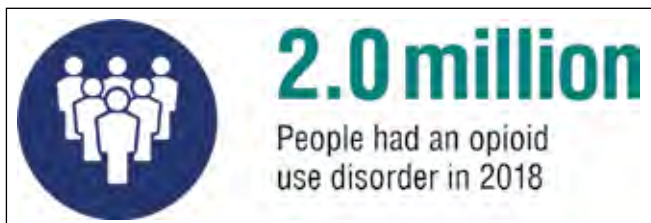
Opioids are a class of painkillers that include morphine, codeine, methadone, oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl, hydromorphone and buprenorphine. Heroin is also an opioid.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 750,000 people have died since 1999 from a drug overdose. In 2018, overdoses involving opioids killed nearly 47,000 people, with 32% of those deaths involving prescription opioids.

American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are disproportionately represented in these statistics with the second-highest overdose rates from all opioids.

The opioid epidemic was sparked by what was found to be misleading marketing from drug manufacturers. One of those was Johnson & Johnson.

In a decision in the 2019 lawsuit against Johnson & Johnson and its subsidiaries, Cleveland County District Judge Thad Balkman said, “Defendants promoted their specific opioids using misleading marketing. Among other things, they sent sales representatives into Oklahoma doctors’ offices to deliver misleading messages, they disseminated misleading pamphlets, coupons, and other printed materials for patients and doctors, and they misleadingly advertised their drugs over the internet.”



Statistics from 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

It was this messaging and how well opioids actually worked that contributed doctors to be so quick to prescribe them for any type of pain. With that deceptive marketing, though, there came a slew of problems that lead to the current opioid epidemic.

“There can be no question that this nuisance affects entire communities, neighborhoods, or a considerable number of persons. This nuisance has negatively impacted the entire State,” explained Judge Balkman.

## Prevention and awareness

The first step in attempting to douse the wildfire-like spread of the opioid epidemic is prevention.

There are many techniques aimed at prevention. One that has been successful for the Choctaw Nation, is educating students with life skills training. This training is given to local middle school teachers and counselors to address opioid prevention in sixth through eighth grades.

Deputy Director of Behavioral Health for Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority Nathan Billy M.Ed., LPC said, “We were able to pay for a curriculum that they could take back to their local schools and educate their students on the dangers of opioid misuse and what to be aware of.”

The training was so successful that the teachers and counselors have asked for another round.

In many cases, getting the information out there that prescription opioids are highly addictive and making kids aware of potential downfalls can stop a problem before it becomes one.

Another prevention technique is Good Health TV. If you’re sitting in a Choctaw Nation clinic, you’re likely to see Good Health TV, which plays Native specific programming that addresses overall health care and subjects related to opioids.

“We just finished filming some local programming that’s going to be released fairly soon, where our own Choctaw Nation associates address opioid prevention, opioid use during pregnancy, and what happens to children who are born with a dependence to opioids,” said Billy.

By being ahead of the curve in prescribing opioids, the Choctaw Nation has also been able to mitigate some of the addiction problems.

Choctaw Nation Pharmacist, Morgan Drew Greutman, Pharm.D., BCPS said, “CNHSA pharmacies are unique because we have access to more patient information than a typical retail pharmacy. We are able to look at provider notes, lab values and extensive medication history. We are also able to communicate with other health care team members in a quick and effective manner to provide the highest level of care to our patients.”

“I’m really proud of the Nation because it has been proactive in reducing both the amount of opioids available and also pursuing alternatives to narcotics, non-narcotic medication, whenever possible,” said Billy.

Greutman added, “If someone is interested in learning more about this [opioid alternatives] they should start by discussing it with their provider as each patient is unique.”

**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.

**October 2020**  
All markets open weekdays, October 1-28  
**Closed:** October 29 and 30.  
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation  
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. “O” ST., 580-298-6443  
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 13, 10:00 - 1:00

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 19, 10:00 - 1:00

**DURANT** 2352 Big Loto Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 6, 10:00 - 1:00

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716  
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 16, 10:00 - 1:00

**POTEAU** 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431  
Nutrition Ed. & Food Demo October 8, 10:00 - 1:00

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## Treatment

The Choctaw Nation is still there for those who do become dependent, offering residential treatment centers for both men and women in Talihiina.

It was the Choctaw Nation Recovery Center that helped Ben White. White says he had a good home life. He didn’t come from a broken home and didn’t suffer the kind of abuse you often hear about in addiction cases starting at an early age. Yet he still fell down that path. White describes the feeling during his 10-year addiction as “a hole inside of me the entire time while I was using.”

Living in Corpus Christi, Texas at the time, he credits his aunt who lived in Antlers, with telling his mother about the Recovery Center. It still wasn’t easy for him or his family.

White said, “I truly did not want to go. But after going through the Recovery Center and speaking to everybody and seeing other people’s struggles and the things that they went through in their life, you know, they just made me realize that everybody’s life is important, including mine.”

Both the women’s Chi Hullo Li and the men’s Recovery Center are available to any CDIB cardholder, regardless of tribal affiliation.

Billy says, “For a Choctaw tribal member, it doesn’t matter where they live. They can be from anywhere in the world, and their treatment is covered at those centers. If it’s a non-tribal member, but they are a CDIB cardholder, they’re also eligible for free services as long as they live within our 10.5 county service area.”

If someone isn’t comfortable with residential treatment, outpatient counseling is available at all of the Choctaw Nation’s clinics to assist with substance abuse disorders.

White says that it was a sense of welcoming he got from the other clients at the Recovery Center that ultimately steered him down the path to recovery.

“All the guys in there, all the clients whenever I got there, they were so welcoming. It just made me have the feeling that everything’s gonna be alright,” said White.

One large part of helping to pay for recovery aids has been the Tribal Opioid Response Grant, funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The TOR grant for the Choctaw Nation was just renewed for another two years.

In an effort to continue to help members, a new service that will be available soon through the Choctaw Nation is a peer recovery support program. Peer recovery is an evidence-based program that connects people who have struggled with addiction and are in recovery to be able to come together as a support group.

“We’re really looking forward to having that in addition to the outpatient counseling,” said Billy.

When applying for the continuation of the TOR grant, it was stressed to SAMHSA that opioid use is commonly found to involve the use of other drugs to counteract the dimming effect of the opioids.

Billy said, “frequently when you find opioid misuse, it’s being used with other things, and particularly for our Choctaw Nation service area, that tends to be methamphetamines.”

The renewed TOR grant will be able to help the Choctaw Nation address the multiple drug use issues when it involves opioids.

When it goes too far, and there’s been an unintentional or intentional overdose, the Choctaw Nation is still there to help by supplying Naloxone or Narcan to first responders.

Naloxone in the form of Narcan is an opioid overdose reversal medication. It has no side effects or adverse reactions, regardless of who uses it or if there is an overdose or not.

One funding source for Narcan is the Addressing Opioid Overdose Deaths (AOOD) program that began in late 2017. The grant was a result of the Choctaw Nation being awarded SAMHSA’s First Responders – Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act grant.

“Since the grant has started, we have trained over 1,400 first responders, and there have been 15 documented lives saved as a result of receiving our training and utilizing their Naloxone kit,” said Samantha McGee, the project coordinator for the AOOD program.

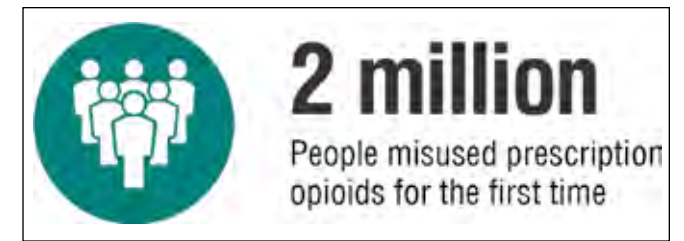


In another push to help save lives and realizing that it’s not just first responders and police who may need to administer Narcan, the Choctaw Nation has recently begun holding drive-thru events that provide Narcan to community members. The drive-thru events are a direct response to COVID-19 and not being able to hold in-person events.

Along with the Narcan, medication lock boxes and charcoal deactivation bags are also provided. The first drive-thru event was held at Stigler, Oklahoma, in September with 42 kits distributed.

## Legal assistance

One circumstance that often accompanies drug use is legal trouble. The Choctaw Nation has three case managers throughout the service area that can help people with



an opioid misuse problem who have found themselves in trouble with the legal system.

One of those case managers is Licensed Professional Counselor Jessie Roberts. Roberts serves as a liaison for anyone who has misused opioids and has found themselves in legal trouble.

“I go to our tribal court setting, and if someone comes through and they’re addicted or misusing opioids, and they disclose that to me, then I can help them,” said Roberts.

The program provides as many resources as they can to those who need supportive therapy or supportive resources.

It’s the downward spiral where the drug use causes legal problems; the legal issues contribute to more drug use, which causes even more legal issues.

“They get caught in that cycle of punishment, where it’s either they’re possessing it, they’re using it, or they’ve been punished for it. We’re not trying to say that people should not be held accountable for their actions, but we are saying that many times those actions come from a place of dependence or addiction where treatment is really what’s needed,” explained Billy.

Billy continued, saying that it’s often the treatment needed to stop the vicious legal cycle, treatment that can help address the core of the problem.

Having a court system that understands this vicious legal cycle is vital in helping tribal members get out of the hole.

Roberts emphasized this by saying, “The court system has been such a strength and a good partner in our judges. I can’t say enough about them and our behavioral health system, how much they care about our tribal members, in watching them succeed and giving them the tools that they need to be able to succeed.”

After seeing these initial successes, clients aren’t just through the door and forgotten.

Roberts says she’s still in contact with about 80% of the people she’s helped in the past, serving as a linkage between their needs and what Choctaw Nation provides.

“There’s not many things the Choctaw Nation does not offer,” stated Roberts.

The follow-up and core values of faith, family and culture make the Choctaw Nation’s response to the opioid epidemic so all-encompassing.

“We want to assure people that in the Choctaw Nation we really mean what we say when we talk about faith, family and culture, that the Choctaw Nation not only respects family but we are a family,” said Billy.

“One of the things that we always try to make clear and help our patients with is to understand that you are a whole person. We have spiritual needs; we have physical needs, and we have mental needs. They all work together.”

Billy encourages those struggling with opioid dependence or with opioid misuse, or family members to contact Behavioral Health in Talihiina at 918-567-3065 during business hours (8:00-4:30 M-F) or the Choctaw Nation Health Care Center at 918-567-7000.

As of press time, there will be two more drive-thru events. In Durant on October 10, at The Medicine Store from 11:00 – 1:00, and in Poteau on October 28, at the Don Reynolds Community Center from 11:00 – 1:00.

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**

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

**Corn Fritters**

- 3 cups oil for frying
- 1 cup sifted all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon white sugar
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tablespoon shortening, melted
- 1 (12 ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained

**Preparation**

1. Heat oil in a heavy pot or deep fryer to 365 degrees F (185 degrees C).\*
2. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Beat together egg, milk, and melted shortening; stir into flour mixture. Mix in the corn kernels.
3. Drop fritter batter by spoonfuls into the hot oil, and fry until golden. Drain on paper towels.

\*use an air fryer for a healthier option.

# Labor Day Memories

This year would have been the 73rd Annual Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival. Just because we can't celebrate in person doesn't mean we can't celebrate at all.

Here are some highlights from past Labor Day Festivals and some of your favorite memories sent to us by using #ChahtaLaborDay.



An estimated 25,000 people attended the concert at the 1994 Labor Day festival. The performers included Shenandoah, Radney Foster, Eddie Raven and the Geezinslaws. A sound system was set up so people who could not see the performance could still enjoy the concert. Another big draw to the festival that year was the new animal acts, The Lions of the Serengeti, the pig races and the Great Little Bear Show.



Buster Ned, member of the Council's special Labor Day weekend committee, takes time out from a busy schedule to collect a trophy he won for placing second in the 1980 festival's horseshoe tournament



Gwen (James) Takeshorse being pinned Choctaw Princess by Chief Harry "Jimmy" Belvin. Gwen held the title for two years, 1971 - 73. The festival was held in Antlers for one year due to the restoration of the Choctaw Council House. At that time there was only one princess, no Junior Miss or Little Miss.



Kids wave to the crowds at the 1984 parade.



Buster Ned provides accompaniment for Choctaw dancers at the 1979 festival.



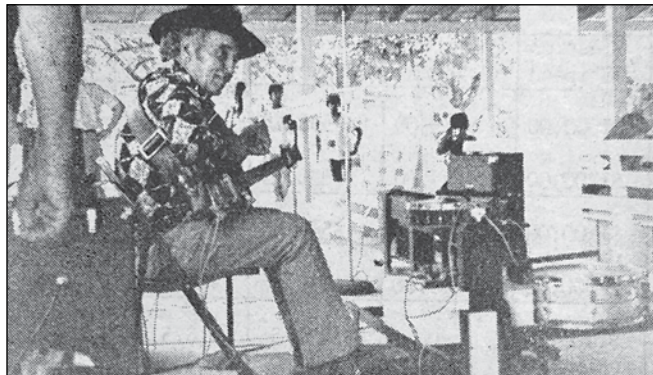
Tenaya Torres, best known locally as television's Mazola girl, and who served as a beauty contest judge, gets behind the camera for a change during Labor Day weekend activities in 1980.



Choctaw princess for 1978 -79 chosen during the annual Labor Day festivities was Dianna Walley.



1980 Miss Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Teresa Blaine and Frank Watson.



Joe Barrick and his One Man Five Piece band played a return engagement at the 1980 festival..



Sharon (James) Schmidt, Choctaw, was Miss Indian Oklahoma 1982-83. She is pictured here with Ernest Hooser.



South McCurtain County Tribal Councilman Ryman Battiest led the parade participants at the 1986 Labor Day festival.



Monica Tom. Miss Choctaw Nation, 1990-91.



Original enrollee, Eli Potts, age 96, was photographed with his councilman from Latimer County Randle Durant. Councilman Durant helped Mr. Potts find a comfortable seat to hear the State of the Nation address at the 1989 festival..



(Left) kids and the young at heart enjoy a hay ride at the 1990 Labor Day festival. (Right) checkers tournament at the 1988 festival.



The view from the ferris wheel at the 1987 carnival shows the festival's midway. The new camping area can be seen in the background.



Council members Lu Bauer, Bertram Bobb and Elias J. Johnson at the 1989 Labor Day festival.



Betty Ketcheshawno makes banaha in the village in 2005.



V. DiNardo took part in Grand Entry, decked out in his traditional Choctaw regalia in 2017.



Then Assistant Chief Gary Batton and Chief Greg Pyle are pictured with Evelyn Ornellas of Bakersfield, California, by the refurbished Wheelock bell at the 2008 festival. Evelyn attended both Wheelock and Goodland.



Olin Williams performs a traditional Choctaw wedding for Sheila Thomas and Jarvis Johnson at the 2006 festival.



Tvshka Homma's Bobby Baker Jr. flies over a member of the Mississippi Warriors team at the 2012 stickball tournament.



Suzanne Heard talks to Ashton Rachele DiNardo, 2009 -2010 Miss Choctaw Nation. Heard was the first Miss Choctaw Nation in 1957.



Bertram Bobb, center, enjoys Mississippi Choctaw guitar and fiddle players at the 2009 festival.

### Facebook Memories

Not enough space to share all my memories here! We are Muscogee Creek/Seminole and Cherokee in our household and from experience this festival is hands down the best! I've been attending for at least 20 plus years. Every single time we attend improvements have been made. Favorite memories are the softball games and believe it or not ICE COLD showers at the campgrounds. If you can survive that you can survive anything.

- Rhea D BearBow

One of my favorite memories was taking my mom back for what would end up being her last trip before passing away. She had her picture taken with then Chief Pyle, saw her uncle's name on the WWI Memorial, enjoyed the concert (Neal McCoy just "tickled" her), claims she didn't take a nap in medical (the doctors and nurses disagreed with her - and our many thanks went to them for allowing her to be able to rest there), and the dancing - she just loved watching the dancing. So happy that I was able to share these things with her.

- Valerie Frahm

My favorite memory was finding a local potter who made me horse hair pottery with the tail hair of my horse that had just passed. I also love seeing the Choctaw Ponies.

- Deanna Young Duerson

Mine was always going with my grandmother and then my twin daughters. My favorite story was my daughter tapped me on the shoulder and told me a man dropped his twenty dollar bill and she got it and gave it back to him. Well the guy came to the table and gave her 10 bucks. She was super happy and shy at the same time.

- Robbie Anderson

My daughter lost her purse there and someone found it. Turned it in with everything in it. Blessed with all the people there.

- Kathy Dutton

Fifty-six years ago I enjoyed the festival as a child with my family and have only missed 12 years since then. It has been fun watching my uncles win horse-shoe games and attending most events. I met my husband when he came by my craft booth where I sold earrings and he pitched fast pitch softball. Since our marriage in 2006 we have camped out every year three nights.

- Patsy Eyachabbe



This photo is from the 2019 Labor Day Festival, but the carnival has long been a hit with visitors during the Labor Day Festival.



Carnival rides at the 2010 festival brought smiles to the faces of young and old alike.



Elephant rides were enjoyed at the 2006 festival.



Taydem Harden tries her hardest during the box jump portion of the Chief's Physical Fitness Challenge in 2017.



The Labor Day festival is a good opportunity for kids to pick up stickball skills. Left is Ellanora Wilson at the 2019 festival and right Jackson Tulley at the 2009 festival.



(Left) Chief Greg Pyle and then Assistant Chief Gary Batton at the pow wow grand entry at the 2012 festival.



(Right) The Labor Day pow wow filled the Capitol lawn at the 2012 festival.

# Explore Oklahoma history at local museums



Photos by Christian Toews

Jeremy Gauna inspects one of the many unique artifacts at the Museum of the Red River.

By Christian Toews

Museums give us a valuable glimpse into the past. They ensure the understanding and appreciation of various groups and cultures. With the invention of online catalogs and photo galleries, museums might seem like an outdated institution. But museums offer something that you cannot get from reading about or looking at an ancient artifact online. Seeing something in person is quite different from seeing it in the pages of a book or a computer screen.

Museums across Southeastern Oklahoma offer a wide variety of displays that everyone will enjoy. One of these museums is the Museum of the Red River in Idabel, Oklahoma. The 58,000 square-foot museum showcases southeastern Oklahoma's rich and diverse history. Its artifacts show us that this land has been home to many different and interesting people for generations.

The Museum of the Red River has acquired a wide variety of materials and artifacts. According to the museum's director, Henry Moy, the museum initially focused on preserving material culture from local Native American groups. However, that focus quickly grew beyond southeast Oklahoma. While they still focus heavily on the area and indigenous groups, the museum's collection has grown to include art from around the world.

Moy said the museum was founded in 1974 by the Herron family. When the development of the area began to escalate, many archeological projects uncovered ancient objects. Those artifacts were being sent to larger cities because there was no place for them to be stored and viewed in southeastern Oklahoma. That is when the Herron family, along with a very large advisory committee, stepped in to preserve the history and culture that was being discovered, Moy said.

Quintus Herron, who founded the museum was a Choctaw tribal member. His son Donald Herron now operates the Herron foundation that supports the museum. Donald said the museum's mission is to provide a place where Native artifacts can be taken care of and viewed.

One of the museum's most popular attractions is the *Acrocantiosaurus atokensis*, said Moy.

According to the museum's website, this was one of North America's largest predators and looked very similar to a *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

What makes this exhibit so unique is that the complete skeleton of the *Acrocantiosaurus atokensis* was unearthed less than twenty miles from the museum by amateur paleontologists Cephis Hall and Sid Love in 1983. The nearly 40 foot long cast of the original bones is a must-see.

Other exhibits in the museum include a large collection of Native American baskets, hundreds of stone tools and points, and pottery from the earliest people in the area.

According to Donald Herron, the museum also offers workshops on traditional basket making and other programs to inspire a love of art and natural science. More on these programs and exhibits can be found online at [www.museumoftheredriver.org](http://www.museumoftheredriver.org).

Admission to the museum remains completely free. Donald Herron said that they are able to keep admission free due to the Herron Foundation and private donors. The museum also offers memberships and other support opportunities. You can find out more about how to contribute to the museum on their website.

The Museum of the Red River is located a short drive from Beavers Bend State Park. Inside the park is a museum called The Forest Heritage Center. This is another place to learn more about the history of southeastern Oklahoma.

If you want to experience even more southeastern Oklahoma history, several museums are in the surrounding area.

The Fort Towson Historical Museum is filled with local and historical memorabilia donated by residents of the area. In Durant, Oklahoma, you will find the Three Valley Museum. It houses a collection of artifacts regarding the history of Bryan County.

Museums offer us the unique experience of stepping back in time to preserved history. Sure, you can read about the history of the area, but there is nothing quite like seeing and learning from actual pieces of history. The next time you are planning a visit to southeast Oklahoma, don't forget to make a stop at one of these local museums and learn what shaped this part of Oklahoma.



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The full-size cast of the *Acrocantiosaurus atokensis* that was unearthed just miles from the museum is a permanent exhibit at the Museum of the Red River.

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