

July 2024 Issue

## CNO hosts grand opening celebration for Choctaw Landing in Hochatown

**HOCHATOWN, Okla.** – Choctaw Landing, the Choctaw Nation’s newest 100-room luxury resort and casino, located in Hochatown, Oklahoma, held its grand opening on Thursday morning. The luxury resort opened its doors April 3 ahead of the official grand opening on May 23.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton presided over the ribbon cutting and celebration, which included around 300 attendees. “Any time you can bring our culture and our history together, along with economic development for our tribal members and the citizens of this area, it’s a great day,” Batton said. “We broke ground down here two years ago, and to see our grand opening today and all the things we’re going to be able to bring to McCurtain County, it’s exciting. I love that we’re seeing our culture and history displayed here and that it’s an economic boost to this area. Hopefully people will learn about Choctaw Nation here more than ever before.”

In honor of the special occasion, Choctaw dancers and singers performed, and attendees participated in traditional Choctaw activities like flintknapping, weaponry and pottery.

Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnell was one of many state officials in attendance Thursday morning. His speech highlighted the impact Oklahoma’s sovereign nations, such as the Choctaw Nation, have had on the tourism industry in Oklahoma.

“You are leading the way in economic development,” Pinnell said of the Choctaw Nation. “Oklahoma is Oklahoma because of our 39 sovereign nations. This is Native America. In Oklahoma, our tourism industry is the third largest industry in the state because of our sovereign nations.”

The opening of the \$238 million Choctaw Landing resort was a major boost to the local economy, creating more than 400 jobs in southeast Oklahoma. It will have an estimated \$95 million economic impact on the region.

The resort includes:

- 100 guest rooms with 15 suites
- Three conference rooms and more than 4,300 square feet of meeting space
- One hotel restaurant and three outdoor dining/bar options
- Resort fitness center
- Pool area with nine cabanas, two hot tubs and three fire pits
- Outdoor amphitheater with seating for 125
- Casino with 600 slot machines and eight table games including roulette and blackjack
- Mercantile with gifts, groceries, a deli, a Starbucks and a 24-pump fuel station

Incorporating the Choctaw culture throughout, Choctaw Landing has partnered with more than 20 Choctaw artists from around the country to create original artwork for the resort. There are 40 pieces of artwork in public spaces, two large exterior sculptures, including an interactive steel sculpture showcasing Choctaw dancers, will be installed during the summer and 600 pieces of artwork located throughout guest rooms.

To celebrate these artists, Choctaw Landing has developed an Art Hike to provide guests with a fun, interactive and educational look at the Choctaw art featured throughout the resort. **Check out more about the artists featured in Choctaw Landing on page 13 of this month’s issue of the Biskinik.**

Using advanced AI technology, a digital twin of Choctaw Chief Gary Batton will guide visitors as they learn about the culture, art and history of the Choctaw Nation.

“From the planning stages years ago, we knew that we wanted to bring something to this community that brought culture first and foremost,” said Heidi Grant, senior executive officer over commerce. “Culture was prevalent in the design and development stages. We were very considerate about the nature and community aspects and how we could fit and complement this area.”

To learn more about the resort, please check out [choctawlanding.com](http://choctawlanding.com).



Photos by Christian Toews  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton presided over the ribbon cutting and celebration, which included around 300 attendees.





# Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

## 100 years of Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 Hattak Vpi Homma Ibafoka Akaniohmi

On June 2, 1924, U.S. President Calvin Coolidge signed into law the “Indian Citizenship Act of 1924,” which gave full birthright citizenship to Native Americans.

This new law, gave Native Americans certain rights and privileges as U.S. Citizens, but it would take many years until all rights, such as the right to vote in 1965, were bestowed upon the tribes. This Act was a steppingstone to the many rights our Choctaw ancestors fought for. Over the last 100 years, U.S. tribes have fought the good fight to achieve all the sovereignty rights that we enjoy today as Native Americans. We owe a great deal to our ancestors that went before us, stood before the U.S. Congress, and demanded every right we enjoy today.

Imagine this, without these rights tribes would not be allowed to govern their own sovereign nation and tribal members would not be allowed to vote in the upcoming November

elections. Before the Civil War, citizenship was often limited to Native Americans of one-half or less Indian blood.

According to the U.S. Library of Congress, in the Reconstruction period, progressive Republicans in Congress sought to accelerate the granting of citizenship to friendly tribes, though state support for these measures was often limited. In 1888, most Native American women married to U.S. citizens were conferred with citizenship, and in 1919, Native American veterans of World War I were offered citizenship. In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act, an all-inclusive act, was passed by Congress. The privileges of citizenship, however, were largely governed by state law, and the right to vote was often denied to Native Americans in the early 20th century.

The 1924 act read that “all noncitizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: Provided that the granting of such citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.”

It is difficult to imagine today the hardships our Choctaw ancestors had to endure by not being counted as U.S. citizens. Our ancestors were not given equal footing in legislative matters that governed their well-being and rights as U.S. Citizens. Our ancestors paved the way for the Choctaw Nation to achieve a self-empowered, sovereign state that enjoys the rights and freedoms as U.S. citizens and sovereign tribal members.

All Native Americans in the U.S. stand on the shoulders of our ancestors who paved the way for our future. There would be no Choctaw Nation without the battles of our ancestors who were unflinching under the tremendous, and often unfair tactics. We are here today because of the bravery, strength, and steadfastness of those that came before us. That is why the battles we fight today to maintain our strength and sovereignty are so important.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

## Summer is Here and the Choctaw Nation is the Place to Be

Summer is here and what better place to vacation, play and let off steam than right here in the Choctaw Nation!

Our reservation has some of the most beautiful places to visit in the country and all right here close to home.

From summer camps to vacation destinations to fun and patriotic events celebrating the birth of the USA and the Fourth of July, there is a lot to do and see throughout the Choctaw Nation this summer.

I invite you and your family to take advantage of all we have to offer across our reservation in the Summer of 2024!

### Fourth of July Celebrations

#### Wednesday, July 3

- Choctaw Landing Casino and Resort - July 3 at 9 p.m.: Fireworks. From 9:30 p.m.-12 a.m.: Justus Denied performs (free)
- Durant Casino - July 3 at 8 p.m.: The Doobie Brothers with the Robert Cray Band
- Grant - July 3 at dusk: Fireworks
- Pocola - July 3 at 8 p.m.: Moonshine Bandits perform
- Stringtown - July 3 at 6 p.m.: Outdoor food vendors and seating opens; 7 p.m.: Live entertainment begins; 9:30 p.m.: Fireworks

#### Thursday, July 4

- July 4 at 9:30 p.m.: Durant Casino Fireworks

#### Friday, July 5

- Boom In The Valley at the Tuskahoma Capitol Grounds, July 5 at 6:30 p.m. Guests will be able to drive in and sit outside their cars to enjoy a spectacular fireworks show. Gates will open at 6:30 p.m., fireworks will start at dusk. There will be food truck vendors and the carnival area and stickball field will be available for people to sit in. Bring your lawn chairs! The fireworks show will be in unison with music on KDOE 102.3. FM.
- Broken Bow Casino - July 5 at 8 p.m.: Brett Young with Nikko Moon
- Idabel - July 5 at 9 p.m.: Seth Reid and the Coyotes perform (free)

#### Saturday, July 6

- Broken Bow Casino - July 6 at 9 p.m.: Seth Reid and the Coyotes perform (free)
- Durant Casino - July 6 at 8 p.m.: A Day to Remember with The Story So Far performs
- Grant Casino - July 6 at 8 p.m.: Grand Funk Railroad performs

#### Summer Camps

The location of all camps is the Tuskahoma Capitol Grounds except for the basketball camps where the locations are listed below. All camps take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and are open to Choctaw tribal members and Choctaw Nation employee's children. Participants are between the ages of 8-18 for all camps except for the wildlife camps, those activities require a minimum age of 10 years old (10-18). The application is on [chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com](http://chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com) and the application for summer camps opens on February 1 and closes on April 15 each year. So, apply for next year's camps!



### Wildlife Conservation

#### July 8-9

- Wildlife Conservation (South) - July 8-9

#### July 11-12

- Wildlife Conservation (North) - July 11-12

### Basketball

- Wilburton High School - July 15-16
- Broken Bow High School - July 18-19
- Panama High School - July 22-23
- Talihina High School - July 25-26
- McAlester High School - July 29-30
- Durant High School - August 1-2

### Vacation Ideas

#### Choctaw Landing in Hochatown

Lots to see and do at the newest Choctaw Casino and Resort in Hochatown. Beautiful setting, good food and drinks, nature exploration, an art walk and events galore. Check out [choctawlanding.com](http://choctawlanding.com) for more details.

#### Hochatown Cabins

The cabins in Hochatown and the surrounding areas near Beavers Bend State Park are great spots for summer fun, they include: Beavers Bend Luxury Cabin Rentals, Hidden Hills Cabins and Bear Mountain Lodging.

#### Talihina

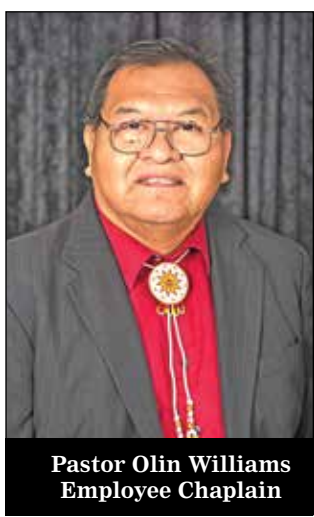
In the Kiamichi mountains, Talihina has antique stores, cafés, awesome scenery and a great getaway for family fun. The Hootie Creek Guest House is a great place to stay, and the Talimena National Scenic Byway is a must-see for great scenery.

#### Robbers Cave Lodge

The Lodge at Robbers Cave is a great place to get away and explore the outdoors. Check out the Belle Starr Lookout while you're there. The park's 26 cabins are available for you and your pets.

#### Carlton Landing

Carlton Landing is a lakeside property offering plenty of opportunities for family fun. Enjoy handcrafted cocktails by the outdoor fireplace at The Meeting House or tell stories around the fireplace in your own backyard.



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

## Three Classes of People in Church

In the church congregation today, there are the usual three classes of people who attends the services.

The first type is the one who follows the “senses” or the “natural Adamic man, who is not renewed through the new birth. The spiritual content of the scripture is absolutely hidden from him. This type of person is usually considered “lost” or “unsaved.” They have not been born again. John 3:3-5 says, “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

The second class of people is the “fleshly” or “carnal.”

They are born again or renewed believers who walk after the flesh and remains a babe in Christ. 1 Corinthians 3: 1,3, and 4 reads, “And I, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you, envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, : and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal?”

The third class of people is the “spiritual.” These are the “saved” or “born again” people who are renewed, regenerated, and are “spirit filled.” They walk in the Spirit in full communion with God. Ephesians 5:18-20 tells us, “ Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord: giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

## Wellness Center Walk-a-thon

By Candice O'Daniel

This past November, 150 elders participated in our Senior Fitness Challenge across the reservation. Upon completion of the ten-week challenge, the top six from each community are invited to compete at the Walk-A-Thon and receive a new pair of shoes. This event is full of fellowship, friendly competition, and fun! The community with the highest average score receives the traveling trophy to display at their community center. Congratulations to District 5, Stigler; they had an average of 9,062 points. Yakoke, to all the seniors for participating, and we look forward to more activities in the future.

Below is the list of participants who placed at the Walk-A-Thon.

#### Overall community Winner:

Stigler Community

#### Spirit Award Winner:

Dewayne Hicks- Broken Bow

#### Male Categories

55-64:

First Place, Gary Lawrence- Talihina

Second Place, Billy Wade- Bethel

64-75:

First Place, Donnie Harris- Stigler

Second Place, Billy Jones- Broken Bow

Third Place, Troy Pugh- Talihina

75-84:

First Place, Jerry Combrink- Durant



Photos Provided

Left: Representatives of the Stigler Community pose with their Overall Community Walk-a-thon trophy.

Right: Chase Henson, Fitness Center Director presents Dewayne Hicks with the Spirit Award.

Second Place, Robert John- Idabel

85+:

First Place, Donald Wayman- Antlers

#### Female Categories

55-64:

First Place, Cheryl Jones- Broken Bow

Second Place, Connie Staton- Hugo

Third Place, Joanna Dixon-Hugo

65-74:

First Place, Linda Walthall- Bethel

Second Place, Pearl Dry- Durant

Third Place, Sandy Denton- Broken Bow

75-84:

First Place, Linda Combrink- Durant

Second Place, Lynda Combest- Atoka

Third Place, Loyce Hardaway- Hugo

85+:

First Place, Lillie Boone- Atoka

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OUR GOAL | To assist our students with academic information to promote education and/or career path beyond high school.

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Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN UNTIL AUGUST 31

## SSAF APPLICATION NOW OPEN

Parents and students can now apply for the Student School and Activity Fund (SSAF), which provides a \$100 annual grant to purchase school supplies and clothing for eligible Choctaw students.

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Choctaw Nation Student School & Activity Fund

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An orientation camp for first-year Choctaw tribal member college students attending CASC, SOSU, or EOSC.

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CHOCTAW NATION COLLEGE FRESHMAN YEAR INITIATIVE



## Sooner spirit and Choctaw pride shine on the field at OU

By Christian Chaney

On game day in Norman, Oklahoma, tribal member Brianna Howard can be found proudly representing the Sooners and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Brianna is the 19-year-old daughter of Matt and Naki-sha Howard of Tuttle, Oklahoma.

She is the granddaughter of Sherman Ward of Talihi-na, Oklahoma, and the late Gloria Ward.

Brianna is a sophomore at the University of Oklahoma with a GPA of 3.77.

She is a member of the OU American Indian Student Association (AISA) and the Alpha Lambda Delta National Honor Society.

Brianna has recently been accepted into the Education program and plans to become a first-grade teacher after graduation.

Since the age of five, Brianna dreamed of being part of the action at the OU sporting events - leading the Schooner onto the field, helping with the ponies and being involved in the cannon firing.



Photo Provided

Brianna Howard cheering on the Sooners at a football game.

Growing up, she was a dedicated Sooner fan and always took a picture by the Schooner and with the RUF/NEKS and Lil' Sis at every game.

Now, she has made those dreams a reality.

Since its establishment in 1915, the long-standing RUF/NEK program has embodied tradition and excellence in college sports.

In 1973, the Lil' Sis program was introduced to enhance the spirit squad further.

The program's goal is to support OU athletic teams, engage with fans and generate crowd enthusiasm.

On the field, the program is in charge of the famous Sooner Schooner, shotguns and paddle celebrations after an OU touchdown.

Off the field, the RUF/NEK and Lil' Sis act as ambassadors for the university, attending various charitable, civic and alumni events.

Before the school year starts, there is a strict interview and try-out process to become a RUF/NEK or Lil' Sis.

Brianna is currently the only active member of the RUF/NEKS and Lil' Sis representing the Choctaw Nation.

Her grandfather, Sherman Ward, bought her a Choctaw Nation patch, and she was eager to wear it on her dress to showcase her heritage.

She wanted to demonstrate what it means to her and to other Native Americans, to show them that they can accomplish anything they set their minds to.

"I really wanted to show this is who I am, and where I am from. I wanted to show other Natives that they can do whatever they set their minds to."

Brianna takes great pride in wearing the Choctaw Nation's seal on her dress at every OU sporting event.

One of the most memorable experiences from her first year as a RUF/NEK Lil' Sis was running out onto the field for the first time after a touchdown.

She recalls feeling nervous at first, but once she stepped onto the field behind the Schooner, the crowd's cheers faded, and everything went silent, leaving her in awe of being a part of such a moment.

She remembers thinking, "Wow, there are so many people here supporting OU, and I get to be a part of it. This is amazing."

As she ran back into the tunnel, she couldn't wait to experience that feeling again.



Photo Provided

Brianna Howard sporting her Choctaw heritage and Sooner spirit on the sidelines of an OU basketball game.

Brianna won the First Year Member Award during the OU sports banquet.

Brianna would like to express her gratitude to the Choctaw Nation for their support in her pursuit of higher education.

She has received scholarship funds, clothing and technology allowances, which have been instrumental in helping her advance her education.

Brianna believes that without the assistance of the Choctaw Nation, she would not be the person she is today.

## Choctaw Artist Norma Howard inducted into Native American Artists Hall of Fame

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw/ Chickasaw artist Norma Howard was posthumously inducted into the Native American Artists Hall of Fame on Saturday, May 18, 2024, during the 2024 Native American Artists Hall of Fame Gala at the Semple Family Museum of Native American Art in Durant, Oklahoma.

Howard's husband, David, accepted the award. Members of Howard's family were on hand for the presentation. Cherokee artist Traci Rabbit and Chickasaw artist Mike Larsen were also honored at the gala.



Photo Provided

Norma Howard's family look at her art displayed at Choctaw Tribal Headquarters.

A resident of Stigler, Oklahoma, Howard began drawing at an early age but didn't launch her career in the art world until her mid-thirties. She was a self-taught watercolorist and painted images of personal reflection and true-to-life Native American heritage.

She was well known for her paintings, which were highly sought after and collected by art lovers nationwide. Her work has been featured across the country and won many awards.

Howard passed away on April 30, 2024, at the age of 65.

The Howard family was also honored with a reception at the Choctaw Nation Tribal Headquarters in Durant on June 7 and presented a certificate of appreciation for Howard's many contributions to the Choctaw culture through her artwork and love of Choctaw history.

The reception honored Howard and her contribution to the Choctaw Nation and its history and culture through her outstanding talent illustrating the Chahta Spirit of Faith, Family and Culture.

A special temporary exhibit of Howard's art is currently on display in the front lobby of the tribal headquarters in Durant. The exhibit is free and open to the public.



Photo Provided

Norma Howard's family pose for a photo with Chief Gary Batton during the opening of the special art exhibit at tribal headquarters, honoring the work and legacy of the late Choctaw artist.



Photos by Kendra Sikes

Participants of the Elder Appreciation Day Fashion Show pose for a photo.



Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin serve meals at Annual Elder Appreciation Day.

## Choctaw Nation elders gather for annual event

**DURANT, Okla. (June 13, 2024)** – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) brought elders from all over the reservation to the Choctaw Event Center for the annual Elder Appreciation Day event on May 22.

The Senior Nutrition team organizes the annual event, which drew over 1,200 elders, staff, and Choctaw Nation associate volunteers. The event had department resource tables, lunch, name tag contest, Choctaw hymn singing contest, and traditional regalia parade.

"We are thrilled to honor our elders every year," says Kayla Willams, director of patient relations for CNHSA. "The elders love coming together to connect and compete. The bragging rights far outweigh any plaque or trophy we could give!"

Winners for the Choctaw Hymn Singing Contest are third place Durant Community Center, second place Smithville Community Center, and first place Broken Bow/Battiest Community Centers.

Winners for the name tag contest are third place Atoka Community Center, second place Wright City Community Center, and first place Antlers Community Center.

The fashion show winners were third place Alfred Crosby from Wright City, second place June Sidles from Durant, and first place Rhoda Scott from Durant. The most traditional regalia award went to Sharon Dodson of Durant.



Over 1,200 elders, staff and CNO associate volunteers attend the Annual Elder Appreciation Day held at the Choctaw Event Center in Durant, Oklahoma on May 22, 2024.



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- Reside within the Choctaw Reservation
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- Home assessment by Healthy Aging to determine eligibility

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Choctaw Nation Johnson-O'Malley Program



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





Eddie Bohanan

## District 03

Halito!

Well, if you've been outside lately, then you already know that summer is here. It seems like I was just writing about spring arriving, and so quickly, it comes to an end.

As I prepared to write this article, I realized that we spent a lot of spring in celebration.

The school year came to an end. So we celebrated by honoring those students that have worked so hard throughout the year in academics, sports, and other extra-curricular activities. Congratulations to all their successes.

Congratulations to our 2024/25 District #3 Choctaw princesses. Senior Miss – Diamond Henry, Junior Miss – Emma Battiest, and Little Miss – Addison York. I know that they will all work hard for and will proudly represent the Choctaw Nation.

District #3 celebrated the moms and dads with a nice lunch served at each of the community centers in honor of Mother's and Father's Days.

We also took time to remember and honor our veterans. There were Memorial Day celebrations held at the community centers as well as at Tuskahoma. These celebrations are our small way to show our appreciation, as there is no way we can truly repay these men and women for the sacrifices they made and are still making for our freedoms.

Speaking of our freedoms, our Fourth of July celebration will be at Tuskahoma on July 5. We want everyone to come out and have a good time, yet not forget why we are celebrating.

Another big event that we have coming up is the Labor Day Festival. Scheduled August 30 - September 1. The music venue has already been announced and many event schedules/entry forms are available in the Biskinik and online at [laborday.choctawnation.com](http://laborday.choctawnation.com).

Everyone, please remember summer is here. The heat will be brutal. Stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed. Check your local news for heat alerts and know the symptoms of a heat illness.

I had the opportunity to meet Leroy (96) and Connie (94) Williams. For the past 65 of their 76 years of marriage, they have resided in the same house in Honobia, Oklahoma.

Seventy-six years ago, when Leroy (well-known for his fiddle playing) asked for Connie's hand, his future father-in-law asked him how they planned on getting by. Leroy replied by saying they'd make it. His father-in-law told him he would have to do better than just make it.

So, they began their marriage with \$19 between them. Leroy walked five miles every day to his job, which paid 65 cents an hour.

He and Connie had one daughter. He retired from the county, and Connie retired from Christ Forty Acres. They attend Christ Church at Little River Valley and enjoy reading.

When you look at Leroy and Connie Williams, you will see that they did much better than just making it.

Chi pisa la chike



Photo Provided  
Council Member Eddie Bohanan visits with Leroy and Connie Williams.

## Tomlinson is Veteran of the Month

Jerry Tomlinson was born in San Antonio, Texas, while his father was stationed there serving our country. The family moved to Durant, Okla., when he was very young. He attended Durant schools through freshman year, then moved with his family to Midland, Texas, where he was in the first graduating class of Robert E. Lee High School.

He joined the Marine Corps shortly after his brother joined, influenced by family traditions of military service and a desire to live closer to his future wife in California. He completed MCRD Boot Camp in San Diego followed by combat and recruit training at Camp Pendleton, where he served as a Combat Engineer, setting up operational areas for troops, and worked as a communication radio man, performing headquarters and supply duties.

Tomlinson was stationed at Coronado Island, Calif., a Naval amphibious base, providing combat engineering services in the Pacific Islands and Combat Field Radio and Communication on east and west coasts. His active duty spanned from 1964-65, followed by active reserves until he left the Marines in August 1970 as a Corporal (E4). Although staged to deploy to Vietnam, he was not deployed.

Upon returning home from service, he lived



in Odessa, Texas for a short time before moving back to Durant in 1977, where he started a business. He was elected to the Durant School Board in 1984, 1994, and 1998. He was elected to the City Council and in 2001 became Mayor, serving for the next 16 years. He served the city for 23 years.

Tomlinson and his wife, Linda, have been married for almost 59 years and have four children: Michelle, Kim, Tracey, and Tyler. They have 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Tomlinson's family military background traces back to the Civil War. He is a grandson of an original Mississippi Choctaw enrollee and a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

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

## Wickson is First Language Speaker of the Month

The School of Choctaw Language would like to congratulate Dora Wickson for being recognized as District Nine's Choctaw Language First Speaker for June.

Dora has taught the Choctaw Language to many people for many years! E chi yakoke Dora for having a passion to teach Chahta Anumpa. Achukma fehna hoke!



Jess Henry

## District 04

Halito! I hope everyone is enjoying their summer! Exciting things have been happening around District 4.

In April, we hosted the Princess Pageant, where we crowned the 2024-2025 District 4 princesses. Congratulations to Little Miss Neveah Jimenez and Junior Miss Shelby Reece! Your dedication and grace will undoubtedly make District 4 proud. Best wishes for an amazing reign.

Another highlight this season is Jordyn Rivera from Cameron signing with Connors State College on an archery scholarship. Jordyn, the daughter of Andrea Raymond and Victor Rivera, is the first archery student from Cameron to achieve this milestone. We are thrilled to watch you excel in both archery and your college journey.

Infrastructure development also saw a significant achievement with the dedication of the new bridge 2.5 miles north of Wister on Kennedy Road. This project, featuring a pre-manufactured bridge system, is a first for Choctaw Nation's partnership, showcasing innovation and progress. This will make a positive impact on our entire community.

In May, we celebrated Mr. Logan's 99th birthday at the senior lunch in Poteau. The Poteau Seniors have been active, with the next First Friday Taco Sale scheduled for August 2 and a trip to Branson planned for this month.

Both Spiro and Poteau Seniors enjoyed veterans lunches and attended the 39th Elder Appreciation Day in Durant. Additionally, Spiro Seniors had a great time at a fundraising concert featuring 2 Country 4 Nashville.

I am excited to announce that four participants in the Job For The Day (JFTD) program have secured permanent employment. It's exciting to see our tribal members obtaining positions through this initiative.

We also welcomed several new Chatapreneurs this quarter. We wish all of them the very best in their endeavors! Check out the Chatapreneur app for a list of these small businesses and let's show them our support.

I hope you are all having a happy and safe summer! Do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance to you. Yakoke and God Bless You!



Chief Batton, District 4 Council Member Jess Henry and Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. pose for a photo with the Mountain Creek Tributary plaque.



Photos Provided  
Council Member Jess Henry poses for a photo with the newly crowned District 4 Royalty.



Council Member Jess Henry and District 4 Junior Miss Shelby Reese pose for a photo with 99-year-old Bill Logan for his birthday celebration.



Council Member Jess Henry poses for a photo with Andrea and Jordyn Rivera.

## District 2 seniors have busy spring

District 2 Broken Bow – Battiest Choctaw Senior Citizen Singers won first place in the Choctaw Hymn singing contest at the 39th Annual Elder Appreciation event that was held in the May in Durant, Oklahoma.



Photos Provided

Choctaw Nation Community Center-Broken Bow staff hosted a prom for District 2 Choctaw Senior Citizens in June.

The theme for the prom was "Chahta Luau." The Chahta Luau prom King and Queen selected were Isaac and Marie Battiest.



## Assistant Chief's Faith Journey Leads Him to a Life of Service

**DURANT, Okla. (June 4, 2024)** – Choctaw Nation Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. recently graduated with a master's degree in biblical/theological studies from Southwestern Assemblies of God University. It took Austin about two years to complete the course, but he feels the time put in is worth it for his faith journey.

"Anyone that knows me, knows my faith is very important to me," Austin said. "I don't make any big decision without first getting counsel from our Creator. It is my faith that helps guide my life and the direction I need to serve God and people."

The Assistant Chief always knew that his life's calling was in service to others, and he believes that completing his master's degree further helps him along in his journey as he continually works to serve the Choctaw people. The Chahta Spirit of Faith, Family and Culture directly aligns with the elements that are most important in Assistant Chief's life. Even as a young boy, Austin would tag along with his mom or dad as they delivered services to Choctaw families within their jobs. Through the many opportunities with his parents' example of servanthood he learned the importance of serving others. His father, Jack Austin, Sr. was an elected Councilman who served into his 80's. What better example of a life of service to others.

Austin's birth mother passed away when he was only 12 and after his father married Norma Austin, she led their family to the church that he is still at today where he met his wife, Philisha.

"I always say I was blessed to have two great moms," Austin said. "I was given a foundation to learn from and I can't imagine my life without my faith."

"I remember right before I had fulfilled my service to the military and was lying in my bunk and I asked God, 'What is this big plan? What do you want me to do?'" Austin said. "In that prayer, I knew I wanted to work with my people in the Choctaw Nation. It was something that I saw that drew me to Choctaw Nation, it was a desire in my heart."

With his GI Bill intact, Austin was ready to continue his education out of the military. He knew he wanted to go to college but didn't have a plan yet as to how best to help the Choctaw people. Austin remembers going to Eastern Oklahoma State College in Wilburton at night while working during the day for the Choctaw Nation Healthcare to get his associ-



ate degree with his wife, Philisha, by his side. "We were both working toward our associate degrees, Austin said. "We joke about it now, but when we decided to start a family, my wife had to sit sideways in her chair during class when she was expecting our first child."

After receiving their associate degrees, Austin prayed for the next step in their journey. He said a few days later he and Philisha were walking down the hall and had a conversation that changed the trajectory of their lives.

"Dr. Linda Massey, a professor at East Central University, saw us and asked if we needed any help," Austin said. "She could probably see the desperation on our faces, and she asked, 'Have you ever thought about counseling?' At that point, we had not but as she explained it to us, it seemed to sit right with both of us."

At night and on weekends the Austins worked toward their graduate degree and goal of receiving certification to become counselors while working regular day jobs. During that time two more children were born for a total of three.

When Austin graduated with his counseling certification, he went about his work of helping people while working in healthcare for several years until a crossroads happened.

"I lived my life the last 40 years listening to the Lord and let him lead me wherever I go," Austin said. "After I prayed about it, I told my wife the next morning about my prayer and wherever the Lord leads us is where we are going. I turned it over to the Lord; that was on a Tuesday. That Friday, I received a call from Chief Batton regarding my next role."

Austin said he felt it in his spirit that the Lord led him to his Assistant Chief position. He said it has been a while now working for the Choctaw Nation and he still feels at peace where the Lord led him.

"I don't know what God has in store for me," Austin said. "Whatever it is I will follow. Serving others is what makes me happy, fulfilled and is what I was called to do."

# Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

On July 15, 2015, the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (HACNO) was the only tribal nation selected by the President of the United States and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to participate as one of 28 ConnectHome Pilot communities. The goal of the ConnectHome Program was to "Bridge the Digital Divide" that existed within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's service area. This program was created to offer (HACNO) tenants residing in Affordable Rental units, Independent Elder and 202 PRAC elder units access to the internet and training services. The objective is to give them the ability to better their lives by taking schooling online, applying for jobs as well as exploring all that the internet has to offer. This is all to achieve self-sufficiency, through utilizing this essential free resource.

The ConnectHome team have developed an educational program, using the following:

- Internet Safety and Security – Group Training
- Basic Digital Literacy – One on One Training
- Choctaw Nation Home site – Social Services and applications for additional services
- Facebook – Reconnecting Families
- ABC Mouse (for children)
- KANO (computer kits)
- EveryoneOn – Washington, DC (partner)
- MyCNHSA – My Choctaw Nation Health Authority-Pharmacy Refill/ Appointment Scheduling
- Choctaw Nation YAB (Youth Advisory Board)

The ConnectHome Program started with a goal of 35% connectivity in the first year, with 379 total units. HACNO now has 1346 units that the ConnectHome program is working with. ConnectHome currently has 1328 units connected to the internet. That is 99% connectivity with new sites currently under construction. The program currently has 988 children connected to the internet. Out of 1346 units, 1151 are connected with fiber. That is 86% connectivity to fiber.

Choctaw Nation

Housing Authority

Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM





NOTES & EVENTS

DATE CHANGE

The Elder Veterans Meal in Tuskahoma will now take place on Thursday, July 18, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. Please contact your local Choctaw community center for questions about the event.

Being Active in Community is Essential

I first visited the Denver Indian Center back in April as an ambassador visit as VP for ICAE, which is the Inter-Tribal Council of AT&T Employees. Our proudest achievements are our yearly NAHM Powwow in Dallas (the week after the Choctaw Powwow), Tribal Talks Podcast, Connected Learning Centers, scholarship program, and all of the individual volunteering and fundraising our members work tirelessly for, all across the US.

What I found at the Denver Indian Center was a team full of extraordinary people, serving a great purpose in our community. David Wright leads the team in initiatives such as the Fatherhood Program, the Employment Program, and gaining access to resources like medical care, food, and other essentials. We brainstormed ways for the Denver Indian Center to collaborate with ICAE on fundraising efforts, MMIW month, and their Employment Program.

Before I left, I had the chance to tour their grand hall, and all of the flags they had displayed from different tribes. One was missing – The Choctaw Flag! I knew I had to do something about that. I returned to present them with their very own Choctaw Flag to hang in their grand hall.

I believe getting involved in the community and helping others is part of being Choctaw Proud. Faith, Family, and Culture all revolve around being the change you would like to see in the world. Let's all be a force for good in all we do! Yakoke for reading!

- Elizabeth Rachel

OILS Choctaw Nation Outreach Events

OILS will be available to provide answers to legal questions and take applications for legal services. OILS cannot provide advice if you currently have an attorney. We cannot provide advice for criminal matters involving the state district courts. OILS must follow federal poverty guidelines to provide services.

Poteau Choctaw Community Center - July 10, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Smithville Choctaw Community Center – July 24, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Durant Choctaw Community Center – Aug. 14, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Talihina Choctaw Community Center – Aug. 21, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
McAlester Choctaw Community Center – Sept. 25, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
www.oilsonline.org, 405.943.6457, 800.658.1497 (In-State Only)

In search of relatives

Hello, I am in search of relatives of Bess Mae Eller and Ace Robert Sam, who were my grandparents. My mother was Mary Lahoma (Sam) Galloway. Her sibling are Maude E Sam, James Doyle Sam, Wallace E Sam. Annie Marie Sam, Frances L. Sam and Ace Junior Sam.

My name is Frank, I will be attending the Choctaw Labor Day Celebration this year (2024), while there I would like to meet up with some of my relatives if possible. Larinda, my wife will also post on the Facebook Choctaw Page.

### Chahta Anumpa Aikkhvna Chulai Language Lesson

Possessive Pronouns: im, i - his, her or its  
Possessive pronouns indicate ownership and comes before nouns.  
'im' or the 'm' form is used before nouns that begin with a vowel.  
im - pronounced 'ihm'

Im isht ishko ya koli tuk. He cracked his cup.  
Im ilimpa yvt kapvssa tuk. Her food was cold.  
Im isht tiwa vma tuk. He gave his keys to me.  
Im ibbak chush vt falaya. Her fingernails are long.

i - or the 'n' form (nasal underline), is used before nouns that begin with a consonant.  
i - pronounced 'i(n)'

I chukka ia li tuk I went to her house.  
I hattak vt Tulsa ia chi. Her husband will go to Tulsa.  
I tanampo yvt weki. His gun is heavy.  
I haksobish takohli yvt pisa achukma. Her earrings are pretty.

im, i - his, her, its	isht ishko - cup	ya- object marker
koli - crack	tuk-past tense marker	ilimpa - food
vt, yvt - subject markers	kapvssa - cold	ya- object marker
vma - gives to me	ibbak chush - fingernails	falaya - long
chukka - house	ia - go	li - I

www.choctawschool.com

## HONOR GUARD

— POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

VETERANSADVOCACY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

### LIFE IS BETTER WITH BLOOD DONORS

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

#### Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above.

Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

News from graduates of higher education only and sports submissions will be accepted as space allows.

We welcome all letters from Choctaw tribal members. However, because of the volume of mail, it isn't possible to publish all letters our readers send. Letters chosen for publication must be under 150 words. We require full contact information. Only the writer's full name and city will be published.

All events sent to the Biskinik will run the month of the event or the month prior to the event if the event falls on the first of the month.

Mail to: Biskinik  
P.O. Box 1210  
Durant, OK 74702  
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Gary Batton Chief  
Jack Austin Jr. Assistant Chief

The Official Monthly Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
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Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director  
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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.

### CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

#### REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

June 8, 2024

- CALL TO ORDER
- OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- ROLL CALL
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - Regular Session May 11, 2024
- WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
  - Veteran of the Month, District #9 – Jerry Tomlinson
  - First Language Speaker of the Month, District #9 – Dora Wickson
- PUBLIC COMMENTS – None
- REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
- NEW BUSINESS
  - Letter of Appointment for B. Preston Wheeler to Serve as a Trustee of the Choctaw Nation Home Finance Corporation
  - Letter of Appointment for B. Preston Wheeler to Serve as a Commissioner of the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
  - Letter of Re-appointment for Frederick Bobb to fulfill the Choctaw Nation Tribal Court Judiciary Position of Tribal Judge
  - Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
  - Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
  - Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY23 National Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (GRANTS 1-5)
  - Council Bill to Extend at Designated Facilities, Health Services to All Employees of the Choctaw Nation and their Covered Dependents, and to Residents of Underserved Areas within the Choctaw Nation Reservation
  - Approve the Application of FY24 Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS)
  - Approve an Application to, and Accept Funds from, the U.S. Department of Treasury's State Small Business Credit Initiative
- OTHER NEW BUSINESS
- OLD BUSINESS
- ADJOURNMENT
- CLOSING PRAYER

All votes passed unanimously

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

June 13, 2024

- CALL TO ORDER
- OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
- ROLL CALL
- NEW BUSINESS
  - Approve Additional Funding of Three Rivers Meat Processing Facility near Octavia, Oklahoma
- OTHER NEW BUSINESS 6)
- OLD BUSINESS
- ADJOURNMENT
- CLOSING PRAYER

Vote Counts: YEAS - 9, NAYS - 1; Vote Result: passed

## JUROR SUMMONS

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES

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

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

Services are available within Choctaw Nation Reservation.

Scan to learn more and to apply!

Choctaw Nation 477 Program

### Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

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

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

If you're interested in applying for a loan, a representative will be at the:  
McAlester Community Center  
July 12, 2024  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



A letter from model Cheyenne Chancellor

I grew up in Talihina, Oklahoma with a dream of being in the film/fashion industry. I didn't think it was a dream that could actually come true, so I pushed it away and made other life decisions. I became a single mom and that's when I knew I wanted to be an example for my children to continue to pursue their dreams no matter how out of reach it seems. As a Choctaw woman I learned that my superpower is being my true Choctaw self. I am a self taught beadwork artist and designer/seamstress to honor our culture and add a contemporary twist. I worked hard and was blessed to make history and walk the runway as a model in the first-ever U.S. Native Fashion Week in Santa Fe, NM with Native designers, celebrities, artists, and in front of major magazines, etc. Being able to be who I am, removing the standards of how a model should look and just following my dreams has been an incredible journey. I hope to be that role model for younger Indigenous girls who can say, "she looks like me!"

– Cheyenne Chancellor



Hawthorne graduates from UL Monroe



Abigail Renee Hawthorne graduated Magna Cum Laude on May 11 from the University of Louisiana at Monroe with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work.

Abigail plans to pursue a Master's Degree and use her degree to provide counseling for teenagers.

She was also a member of Phi Alpha, the American Honor Society for Social Work Students.

Carpenter earns Juris Doctorate from OU



Danye Carpenter was awarded the Juris Doctorate from the University of Oklahoma on May 12, 2024.

Danye has previously interned for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in the Voter Registration Group.

She will take the bar exam in late July and continue with her career path which includes a strong emphasis on Native criminal law.

Cobb graduates from UD



Goodwin K. Cobb V recently graduated with a mechanical engineering degree from the University of Delaware.

Derosia awarded ROTC Scholarship

Hayden Derosia recently earned the National ROTC Scholarship after having achieved a meritorious record in academic studies, extracurricular participation, and athletic activities and having demonstrated exceptional leadership potential, as well as an expressed desire to serve as an officer in the United States Army.

This scholarship will cover full tuition and room and board while Derosia attends Texas A&M University.

Keyes graduates from Class 36



Leadership Oklahoma, the premier organization in the state committed to cultivating and connecting leaders to create a better Oklahoma, proudly announces the graduation of Class 36.

The graduating class of 50 members from diverse backgrounds and industries completed an intense nine-month program that exposed them to critical issues facing the state, developed their leadership skills, and fostered relationships with other leaders from across Oklahoma.

Choctaw tribal member Jacob Keyes was among those who graduated from Class 36.

During the program, Class 36 participants traveled to different regions of the state to learn about various industries, cultures, and challenges facing Oklahomans. They met with top state leaders, industry experts, and community advocates to better understand the state's unique challenges and opportunities.

The graduation ceremony held on May 4, 2024, featured remarks from Leadership Oklahoma Board Chair Sammye Cravens, Leadership Oklahoma Class X and Lifetime Member, who praised the members of Class 36 for their commitment to serving their communities and their dedication to making Oklahoma a better place for all.

"Leadership Oklahoma's Class 36 is a group of strong and committed leaders who are bonded together for life because of the travel, learnings, and transformational education they experienced over the last nine months," said Chairwoman Cravens. "They are already making great contributions in their communities and are committed to continuing to inspire positive change through our great state."

Since its inception in 1986, Leadership Oklahoma has graduated over 1,800 leaders who have gone on to shape the state's future through their leadership in business, government, and community organizations.

For more information on Leadership Oklahoma and Class 36, please visit [www.leadershipoklahoma.com](http://www.leadershipoklahoma.com).

Yeager graduates from OSU



Jeffery Alexander Yeager graduated from Oklahoma State University on December 16, 2023, with a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration in Accounting.



Patton graduates from SOSU

Joash Patton was conferred a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and a minor in Computer Science from Southeastern Oklahoma State University on May 4,

2024. He graduated as a member of the Honors Program. He would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for supporting his education through the Higher Education Program.

Joash is the son of Jason and Beth Patton and the grandson of Brenda and Leon Patton of Calera, Oklahoma.

James selected for Oklahoma Ag Youth Council



Jocelyn James has been selected for the 2024-2025 Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry Ag Youth Council.

She is one of fifteen high school seniors from across the state to be selected for the council after an extensive application and interview process.

The council was created in 2019 by Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur to develop future agricultural leaders by teaching professional skills, exposing members to diverse agricultural operations, and offering short-term job experience in agriculture fields.

Polverini earns master's from SCS



Jordan Brooke Polverini graduated on May 13th, 2023 from Southern California Seminary with a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies with a concentration in New Testament Greek. This is Jordan's second master's degree.

Her thesis, entitled "An Exchange Of Grace In John 1:16: An Exegetical Analysis Of "Anti" And Its Implications For Translation," explored the translation debate regarding the Greek preposition "anti" and its theological implications, making a case for the most accurate translation: "for." Jordan's thesis earned Southern California Seminary's first Zondervan Academic Annual Student Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Study of Biblical Greek.

Jordan is now pursuing her third master's degree, a Master of Theology, at Southern California Seminary. She has been selected to present a paper two years in a row at the highly respected Evangelical Theological Society's Far West Regional Meeting. Jordan's first scholarly article was published this year in the peer-reviewed Journal of Ministry and Theology.

James earns doctorate from UTHHealth



The family of Alexander James would like to congratulate him on graduating from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Cizik School of Nursing. Alex was awarded a doctorate in nurse anesthesia.

Alex is the son of Irata James and Calvin and Angela Johnson. His grandparents are the late Jonas and Louise (Tonihka) James and the late Mary Johnson.

"We are so proud of Alex and his pursuit to serve others," said his family.



Taylor twins turn 21

Twins Julia and Caroline Taylor of Blue Ridge, Texas celebrate their 21st Birthday!

Team Asher

Asher Mendenhall, the three-year-old son of McAlester Casino Security Officer David Mendenhall, receives gifts and a send off to the Special Olympics from the employees of the casino.

In attendance was District 11 Tribal Councilman Robert Karr, General Manager of the McAlester Casino Lila Tucker, and Security Officers. Team Asher is a group of Choctaw Nation Employees who support the Special Olympics and the Choctaw youth in the true Choctaw spirit of Faith, Family, Culture.

The Special Olympics will be held in Stillwater Oklahoma on May 16, 2024.

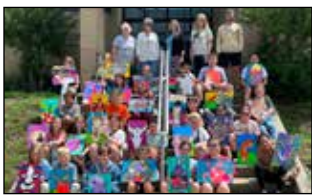


McAlester Indian Education Summer Enrichment Program

The McAlester Indian Education Summer Enrichment program, directed by Choctaw tribal member Ashley Gragg, provided students with a unique opportunity to delve into the world of art and culture over the course of two weeks. Through engaging educational activities and immersive cultural field trips, participants gained a deeper understanding of renowned artists such as John Nieto, Leland Holiday, and Harvey Pratt, while also celebrating the rich heritage of Indigenous peoples.

The curriculum was enriched with various educational activities designed to complement the exploration of art and culture. Students engaged in workshops, group discussions, and creative projects aimed at honing their artistic skills and critical thinking abilities. These activities fostered a deeper appreciation for Indigenous art while encouraging personal expression and creativity among participants.

One of the highlights of the program was the series of cultural field trips that allowed students to experience indigenous heritage firsthand. Visits to museums, galleries, and cultural centers provided students with a tangible connection to indigenous art and history. Guided tours and interactive exhibits further enhanced the learning experience, offering students a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of Indigenous artwork.



Romo graduates from UNT

Beren James Romo has received his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in History from the University of North Texas. Beren grew up in Highland Village, Texas, graduating from Marcus High School in 2020 where he completed four years in the Junior ROTC program and achieved the rank of Cadet Lt. Colonel.

Beren is currently employed as a driver for Patriot DSP in North Texas.



Kirkpatrick graduates from UW-Madison

Cayden Kirkpatrick received Bachelor of Science degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in history, astronomy-physics, and French with a certificate in American Indian and Indigenous Studies.

He graduated with comprehensive honors. Cayden was the recipient of the Dean's Prize and was chosen to carry the flag for the college of Letters and Science at the commencement ceremony.

Cayden served as the President of the University's American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) chapter during his junior and senior years and was a scholar in the Network for Development & Growth of Indigenous Scholars (NDGNS) program.



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- Choctaw Veteran biographies
- Veteran Resources
- Events and News for Veterans

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [VETERANS.CHOCTAWNATION.COM](http://VETERANS.CHOCTAWNATION.COM) OR SCAN THE QR CODE



"Freedom is never free."  
– Unknown

TO PROVIDE YOUR SERVICE INFORMATION OR THAT OF A CHOCTAW FAMILY MEMBER, VISIT: [VETERANS.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SUBMIT-A-VETERAN](http://VETERANS.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SUBMIT-A-VETERAN)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**ANNUAL HUNTING AND GRAZING LAND LEASE AUCTION**  
MONDAY AUGUST 5, 2024 | 1:00 PM  
ANTLERS COMMUNITY CENTER  
302 SW O ST  
ANTLERS, OK 74523

ONLINE BIDDING OPENS JUNE 3, 2024, AND CLOSES AUGUST 4, 2024, AT 11:59 P.M.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 580.642.8988 OR EMAIL [MMCCANN@CHOCTAWNATION.COM](mailto:MMCCANN@CHOCTAWNATION.COM)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER**  
GROUPS & TOURS



SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFO

**BRING YOUR GROUP TO THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER!**

**FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM INCREASES FOOD AMOUNTS AND OFFERS NEW SELECTIONS**

Beginning in June, Choctaw Nation Food Distribution Program participants will see an increase in the following food amounts they receive:

- Meat/Poultry/Fish (increase from five to six units)
- Vegetables (increase from 18 to 20 units)

New food items will also be available.



Scan here for information on the program and how to apply.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



# Softball & Baseball State Tournaments

In May, teams from across the state of Oklahoma gathered in Oklahoma City to compete in the OSSAA Slow Pitch Softball and Spring Baseball State Tournaments.

Within the Choctaw Nation, Broken Bow, Idabel, Silo, Pocola, Caddo, Rattan, Tushka, Rock Creek, Stuart, Kiowa, Red Oak, Caney, Whitesboro and Tupelo all made it to the Softball State Tournament and Silo, Panama, Wister, Rattan, Wright City, Tushka, Kiowa, Stuart, and Tupelo all made it to the Baseball State Tournament.

Congratulations to the amazing athletes in our community who have recently won state and national titles in spring sports. We are incredibly proud of your achievements and the way you represent our community!

Several Choctaws were among those whose teams took home the championship title. Some of those teams were repeat winners, will some made history as the first team from their towns to bring home the win. Below is the list of winners:

### Slow Pitch Champions:

- Class B: Caney Lady Cougars
- Class A: Turner Lady Falcons
- Class 2A: Cyril Lady Pirates
- Class 3A: Caddo Lady Bruins
- Class 4A: Silo Rebels
- Class 5A: Tecumseh Lady Savages
- Class 6A: Mustang Lady Broncos

### Baseball Champions:

- Class B: Fort Cobb-Broxton Mustangs
- Class A: Amber-Pocasset Panthers
- Class 2A: Oktaha Tigers
- Class 3A: Washington Warriors
- Class 4A: Marlow Outlaws
- Class 5A: Carl Albert Titans
- Class 6A: Westmoore Jaguars

## Fowler coaches team to Texas 4A Championship

On June 6, 2024, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal member Coach Zach Fowler and the Liberty-Eylau Leopard high school baseball team won the Texas 4A State Baseball championship in Austin, Texas, beating Calallen 3-1. Class 4A in the state of Texas has approximately 190 teams.

Zach has been coaching for 10 years after graduating from Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. The Baltimore Orioles Organization drafted Zach. After Zach's career ended with the Orioles, he returned to his hometown of Texarkana, Texas. He began coaching high school baseball at his alma mater, Liberty-Eylau, building his program and devoting countless hours to the baseball program and player development. Zach and his dad Rick, who retired from coaching in 2007, came out of retirement to assist Zach after coaching Zach and his teammates to a 2006 Texas state baseball championship at Liberty Eylau High School, in which Zach was chosen MVP of the 2006 state championship game.

Zach is the Son of Judy (Wall) and Rick Fowler. He is the grandson of the late Billie Wall and Brock Wall, great-grandson of Edwin Alexander Lillie Wall and great-great-grandson of original Choctaw enrollees Tandy and Phobe (Bohamon) Wall. His paternal grandparents are the late E. Fowler and Marie Fowler. Zach and his wife, April, have two children, Brooks and Blaire Fowler.

Congratulations to Zach, his coaches, players, families, and the community of Liberty Eylau on this huge accomplishment.

## Taylor earns master's from OU



Savannah Taylor recently graduated from the University of Oklahoma College of Law with a Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law. Savannah enjoys traveling with her family, reading, and trying new restaurants. She is the pastor's wife at Apostolic

Church of the Rock and works alongside her husband for the Youth Missions Department for the Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ. Along with these roles, she is the secretary for her local Johnson O'Malley program, secretary for her local Title VI, and community representative for the Choctaw Nation Head Start Policy Council. After graduating, she accepted a job from Choctaw Nation as the Business Advisor for District 6. Her future goals include attending law school to achieve her Juris Doctorate degree while simultaneously pursuing an M.B.A.

She is thankful for all the Choctaw Nation has done to help her through college. She could not have done any of this without help from the Career Development Department and the Higher Education Department. These programs have been both a financial help and support for her. She would like to encourage all Choctaw Tribal members to utilize these resources to further their education.

## Sosa receives Sportsmanship award



Maleah Sosa, a sophomore lacrosse player at Missouri Western State University and Choctaw tribal member, recently received the Great Lakes Valley Conference's James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Award for the second year in a row.

In an effort to support and promote the good sportsmanship demonstrated throughout the Great Lakes Valley Conference, the league awards the schools and student-athletes who exemplify and demonstrate fairness, graciousness, and respect toward teammates, opposing teams, coaches, and officials before, during, and after competitions. In previous years, the GLVC awarded one institution, one team from each of its 20 sports, one male athlete, and one female athlete each year with the GLVC Sportsmanship Award. As of April 2016, however, exemplary sportsmanship and ethical behavior displayed at the conference are recognized with the awarding of the James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Awards.

James R. Spalding Sportsmanship Awards are given each year to the institutions and student-athletes who actively demonstrate exemplary sportsmanship, character, and conduct during competition throughout the year. The James R. Spalding Individual Sportsmanship Award winners are selected from each institution's season-long list of nominees compiled by each sport's head coaches. Furthermore, each institution's coaches rank the top-three teams within their sport that best displayed good sportsmanship throughout the season. The team with the highest point total is then named that sport's James R. Spalding Team Sportsmanship Award winner. At the conclusion of the award year, the institution that accumulated the highest point total across all sports is awarded the James R. Spalding Overall Sportsmanship Award.

## Kaylee Taylor

The Turner Lady Falcons won Oklahoma Class A Slow Pitch Softball State Tournament against Binger-Oney 12-2.

Kaylee Taylor, center fielder, has made three appearances at State in slow pitch and won in 2022 and 2024. In fast pitch she made three appearances and was runner up in 2022. Kaylee will be a senior this year.

She is a member of the Choctaw Nation. Kaylee is the daughter of Blake and Pam Taylor of Burneyville, Oklahoma and granddaughter of Dennis and Robin Holland of Burneyville., Mark Taylor and Lisa Roberts of Eustace, Texas.



## Jessyn Hartman

The Turner Lady Falcons won Oklahoma Class A Slow Pitch Softball State Tournament against Binger-Oney 12-2.

Choctaw tribal member Jessyn Hartman was on the Turner Lady Falcons' roster for the 2024 season.

Jessyn is the daughter of Kelly and Jeanna Hartman.



## Koch graduates from WSU

Shelby Koch recently graduated from the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine at Washington State University.

Shelby will be performing her Residency in Family Medicine at the Puyallup Tribal Health Authority in Tacoma, Washington. Shelby obtained her master's degree in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma, and her Residency with the Puyallup tribe is another step toward her goal of serving the underserved in a tribal location.

The photo is of Shelby during a blanketing ceremony performed by local tribal leaders in Washington state. Pictured with Shelby are her parents, Eric and Michelle Koch, along with her brother Wyatt.



## Romo graduates from Colorado Law

Sheradyn JoAnn Romo has received her Juris Doctor degree from Colorado Law in Boulder, Colorado. Sheradyn grew up in Highland Village, Texas, graduating from Marcus High School in 2017. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Minnesota in 2019, graduating magna cum laude.

Sheradyn was a member of the Barristers Council and the Colorado Law Review. She has been accepted to a clerkship for the Colorado Court of Appeals beginning Fall 2024. She plans to sit for the bar exam this summer.



## Williams turns 16

Sierra Joelle Williams of Del City, Oklahoma, turned 16 years old on April 17, 2024. She is the daughter of Nathan Williams and Jamie Judd and granddaughter of Olin and Bernice Williams. Her siblings are Luke and Hannah.

Sierra will be a junior in high school this fall. She loves her cats, enjoys crocheting, playing video games, Harry Potter books and movies, and hanging out with her friends.

## Shoptese earns welding certificate

Bryce Lee Shoptese a 2024 Ponca City High School graduate, has received his welding certifications through Pioneer Technology Center, he plans to travel with a welding career.

His parents are Trent and Tiffany Shoptese of Ponca City, Grandparents are Mike and Michaelina Murphy of Ponca City, Great Grandmother is Morene Cummins Gooch of Ponca City.



## Howerton earns NSU Art Award

Vivian Howerton, Northeastern State University fine arts major and a Choctaw tribal member, won the First Place Best in Painting award at Northeastern State University's 22nd Annual Juried Art Competition on April 12, 2024.

The winning oil painting is a realistic rendering of two hands holding a rosary, and its dimensions are 30x40 inches.

Vivian is the daughter of Erick and Bobbi Gillham of Poteau, Oklahoma and Troy and Bree Howerton of Greenwood, Arkansas.

She is the granddaughter of Mike and Rita Pope of Poteau, Oklahoma and Bud and the late Mary Howerton of Spiro, Oklahoma.

She is completing her junior year and hopes to seek employment with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma after achieving her bachelor's degree.



## Alana Kendrick

Congratulations to Alana Kendrick for helping the Caney Lady Cougars win the Class B Slow Pitch State Championship.

She has also been nominated to play for the All-State Slow Pitch team on June 15.



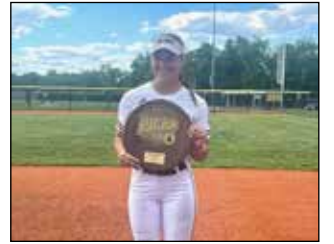
## Halle Hance

Choctaw tribal member Halle Hance and her teammates on the Fort Scott Community College Softball program recently won the first KJCCC Championship in school history.

The Lady Hounds went 4-0 during the course of the KJCCC Tournament after defeating KCKCC in the first round 3-2. In the second round, FSCC defeated the #1 seed Johnson County, 9-6 then Neosho in the semi-finals 9-6. The championship battle led back to JCCC, the Lady Hounds got up 5-1 and didn't look back after a 11-9 victory.

FSCC has currently won 39 games which is the most in school history and 16 victories during KJCCC play. In the final 18 games of the season, they were 15-3 leading the NJCAA National Tournament, a prestigious event that showcases the top college softball teams in the nation.

The team fought hard but ultimately lost the second game of Nationals and were eliminated, but still made history.



## Langford is State Runner Up

Alyssa Langford of Kingston High School recently earned the title of State Runner Up in class 3A Pole Vaulting.

She finished her Freshman track season with a PR of 11 feet in pole vaulting. She is currently tied for a #1 Ranking in pole vault for Class 3A in Oklahoma.



## Horning graduates from Georgetown

After four years of hard work, Madeline Horning is graduating from the Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service with her BSFS in International Politics.



Her plans are to work in Washington, DC as a Trade and Customs Associate at KPMG. Madeline, the great-granddaughter of Buddy Mackey, and the granddaughter of Mickie Mackey-Grimmett, appreciates the support and encouragement she has received from the Choctaw Nation.

## Gardner wins honor for studies

Sydney Gardner received a Psi Chi Regional Research Award this spring for her study titled "Native Americans, College Students, and Job Interview Self-Efficacy."

This study focused on job interview self-efficacy and the differences in levels of self-efficacy that may exist in Native American cultures versus non-Native American cultures. It researched two populations using the Multi-Dimensional Job Interview Self-Efficacy Scale (MJISE). One population consisted of undergraduate students and the other consisted of public-school teachers. The results were then compared based on the students' Native Status, gender, and classification.

"I was excited to be recognized for my achievement," said Gardner, who will graduate on Saturday, May 18, with a degree in psychology and a minor in women's ministry. "This area of research is quite new, and it is encouraging to know that the broader psychological community sees the need for this type of research."

Gardner's accomplishment continues more than 10 years of success for OBU students in the Psi Chi Southwestern region. Since 2012, OBU psychology students have received 12 Psi Chi Regional Research Awards. This is more awards than any other school in the Southwestern Region and the fifth-highest number of awards across all regional conferences in the United States.

"I am so proud of all the students who have conducted research projects here at OBU," said Dr. Bret Roark, chair for the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences. "I'm pleased and honored to learn that OBU compares so well to other schools in the region and nation. This demonstrates the quality of our program and, more importantly, the high quality of our students."

With help from OBU's "world-class behavioral and social sciences faculty," Gardner was able to conduct her research efficiently and have a strong support group to rely on. In addition, the OBU Honors Program gave her the ability to write her thesis and be advised by Roark directly.

Learn more about studying psychology at OBU.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

YEAR-AROUND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Youth Employment Services is transitioning from a traditional 5-week summer work experience to a year-round employment opportunity with Project Awatechi and Project Tokivi, allowing participants to work up to 200 hours at any time of the year.

Scan to learn more about the program.

Choctaw Nation 477 Program



# Roy Hunter, Veteran

By Kellie Matherly

Military service is a long-standing tradition in Roy Hunter's family on both his father's and his mother's sides.

His great-grandfather served in World War I, and his father and several uncles served during World War II and the Korean War. Roy and his son have continued this proud tradition in the U.S. Navy.

As a 17-year-old just out of Bixby High School, Roy wasn't sure what he wanted to do, but being raised in a military family had shown him how important serving his country could be. His relatives shared stories of their time overseas and fighting in WWII and Korea, and Roy was captivated by them. He knew joining the military would be the right decision for him.

"They were very proud of the fact that they had served our country," he said of his family's influence on his decision to join the U.S. Navy. "It was a good place for a young man to be."

It was such a good place to be that Roy stayed for the next 20 years, eventually working his way up to the rank of Master Chief Petty Officer, a rare distinction.

Achieving the Master Chief rank goes far beyond knowing how to do an assigned job. There are no tests one can take to demonstrate knowledge at that level. It's all about "walking the walk," showing competent leadership skills and integrity. The promotion then comes after a review from a board made of peers and other officers.

"I made that because I had very, very good people who worked with me, who worked for me, and that I worked for, you know?" Roy said when asked what good leadership looks like. "If you're a true leader, then you know what the people did to get you there, and you know what you have to do to make that right."

At the end of his 20-year military career, Roy was looking for his next adventure. He had always felt drawn to the education field,

and as Master Chief, he enjoyed working with young sailors in the navy. He also has a long family history of teachers and school administrators, like he does for military service, but a particular teacher in high school had the greatest impact on him.

"I had a coach who was very influential in my life. He was an excellent leader. So, actually, I learned a huge amount from him, and I kind of wanted to follow in his footsteps one day," said Roy.

He couldn't just walk into a school and start teaching, though. He would have to go back to college to get certified, something he knew would be difficult, but his wife of 50 years was an encouraging presence for him as he pursued his dream. Roy said her faith in him and her leadership at home helped him through it all.

For the next 17 years, Roy taught anatomy and physiology in his hometown of Bixby, Oklahoma.

"So many positive things came out of my teaching, personally. And hopefully for [the students] as well," said Roy.

Over the years, Roy has kept up with his students' successes and challenges. He knows of 32 nurses, 67 EMT's and at least two veterinarians who took his course and are now doing well. He remembers each of them for their unique personalities and abilities.

"We're all individuals, and as a teacher, you've got to keep that in mind. Not everybody is going to get it the same way. You have to be able to move yourself to that spot to help these individuals who need specific help," he said.

One special story Roy remembers is about an extremely bright young student who dreamed of being a doctor like her father, but a neurological disorder caused her hands to be unsteady, so she had given up on ever becoming a surgeon. Never one to allow a student to quit something that was so important to them, Roy encouraged her to study robotic surgery. She is now a junior at the University of Oklahoma and is studying medicine.



Choctaw Nation Photo

Master Chief Petty Officer Roy Hunter embodies the very definition of servant leadership. From his 20-year career in the U.S. Navy to his 17-year career as a high school science teacher, he has given his life to the service of others.

Another story happened during the COVID-19 lockdown when schools had converted to online learning. Roy didn't particularly care for the online platform. He wanted to see his students and interact with them in person, like he had for nearly two decades. But a special digital surprise organized by one of his students still makes him emotional.

The entire class agreed to keep quiet and out of view of their cameras until the leader said, "3...2...1...NOW!"

Every student flipped over a sign saying, "We love you Mr. Hunter!"

"It was something else," said Roy with tears in his eyes. "I mean, several years later, I'm still crying about it because it just touched my heart that they would do that just for me."

Roy Hunter's influence in the classroom stays with his students, too. They constantly approach him in public to shake his hand or give him a hug and just say thank you. He is always happy to see them and hear about their careers and families. Sometimes, a former student will pick up the check for his meal or buy him a cup of coffee.

After 17 years of teaching, Roy again retired from a career he loved. As is the case with many natural-born teachers, though, he didn't stay out of the classroom. His desire to serve his community is every bit as strong as his desire to serve his country, so when the school needed help, Roy heeded the call.

A math teacher was unable to return to the classroom after losing her child in a car accident. The school was unable to find someone who could be a long-term substitute in her absence, and Roy stepped up to complete the last few weeks of the fall semester.

"The one thing that keeps the classroom solid and makes it go forward is continuity," he said, emphasizing the importance of having a stable learning environment.

Although he was asked to stay on through the end of the year, Roy knew he could not give the students the kind of learning experience in math they needed to succeed. He turned down the offer only to return to the science classroom a few weeks later when a middle school teacher quit mid-year.

Ultimately, Roy's heart lies in Bixby, whether it's in the classroom or down at the local watering hole. He has deep roots in the town that go back generations, and he has seen the area grow and change over time. The one thing that doesn't change, however, is the close-knit community.

"Things change, but the community here is very good, overall. It's hard to explain, but if you're doing what you're supposed to be doing here, you have the support of these people," he said. "I do the things I do because of my family and my raising. I was taught to help."

Although Roy Hunter doesn't really see himself as a hero, he is a hero to hundreds of students who he served, cared for, educated, listened to, and guided over the years. In fact, during a campaign to make him Teacher of the Year, the students made a poster of Roy that hangs in his house to this day. It says, "So, you say you've never met a hero. You haven't met Master Chief Hunter."

"I'm one person of, what, 300 million in the United States?" said Roy. But he believes that even influencing one person to do something positive can have a far-reaching impact on the world.

"I don't care if you're the garbage man or whether you're an orthopedic surgeon," he said. "Do the job the best you can. Make it count every time that you possibly can, and we will be a better society."

For more TWM stories, please visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/together-were-more/>

## Heil, Roberts earn DAISY Award

**DURANT, Okla. (June 11, 2024)** – The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) awarded the DAISY Award to two registered nurses working at the Talihina facility. Michelle Heil, RN, inpatient unit, and Jennifer Roberts, RN, Breast Clinic were selected for the distinguished award.

Heil was nominated by a first-time parent who brought their baby to the hospital with RSV. After being admitted, the family soon met Heil who comforted them and answered all their questions. The nomination narrative stated she not only made their son's health and healing her number one priority but also was there for them, the parents. The family cannot thank Heil enough for all the care and love she gave them and, most importantly, gave their son. "She shows true compassion in her work."

Roberts works with oncology patients in the clinic and was nominated by a colleague. She strives to be helpful to all her patients and goes out of her way to make sure they are taken care of, not only clinically, but also assists in life cares such as giving her own phone charger to a patient, getting a battery for a key fob, or even jumping their car in the parking lot, the nomination noted. Roberts also sought out further education, completing her certification for oncology navigation. "She goes above and beyond daily to make sure our patients are cared for the way she would want her family to be cared for," the colleague said.

The DAISY Award was developed by the wife of Patrick Barnes, who struggled with an autoimmune disease which landed him in the hospital for eight weeks before he passed away. The care and compassion shown to him led the family to develop the award for nurses who



Choctaw Nation Photos

Michelle Heil receives the inpatient award for the second quarter in a row. Shown with her husband, Aaron Heil and Gary Lawrence, Chief Nursing Officer.



Nursing staff gather to celebrate Jennifer Roberts winning the DAISY Award. Left to right: Rachelle Allen, Wendy Brown, Gary Lawrence, Jennifer Roberts, Kelly Mings, Renee Robinson, and Kayla Price.

go above and beyond the routine care for their patients. DAISY stands for Diseases Attacking the Immune System and has grown into a worldwide tool to recognize exceptional nurses.

"The nurses are chosen by a committee blindly," says Beth Brinkley, CNHSA program co-administrator. "The committee doesn't find out who was chosen until we release the names to everyone. The fact that Michelle won two quarters in a row shows how amazing she is!"

Anyone can nominate a CNHSA nurse for the DAISY Award through an online form or printed forms located throughout the facilities. CNHSA will award a nurse from an inpatient unit and an outpatient unit each quarter.

## OKCIC raises awareness for LGBTQ+ mental health disparities

**OKLAHOMA CITY (June 13, 2024)** – As Pride Month is celebrated nationwide this June, Oklahoma City Indian Clinic (OKCIC) aims to raise awareness about the mental health disparities affecting the LGBTQ+ community. This month, dedicated to honoring and supporting LGBTQ+ individuals, also serves as a crucial time to address the unique challenges they face.

Recent studies highlight that many LGBTQ+ individuals experience significant mental health struggles. According to Mental Health America, bisexual and transgender individuals have the highest rates of mental health concerns within the LGBTQ+ population. Alarmingly, young members of the community are particularly vulnerable, with many reporting severe mental health challenges.

A majority of LGBTQ+ individuals have experienced threats or non-sexual harassment (57%), sexual harassment (51%), or violence (51%) due to their sexuality or gender identity. Furthermore, 22% of transgender individuals avoid seeking medical care out of fear of discrimination.

OKCIC acknowledges the impact these challenges have on the LGBTQ+ community and is committed to providing dedicated resources to ensure its LGBTQ+ patients feel supported and valued. The clinic has preferred pronouns written into patients' health charts and has implemented "All are welcome" signs at each of its building entrances to promote inclusivity. Additionally, OKCIC offers various support groups tailored to the needs of its LGBTQ+ patients.

The Two-Spirited LGBTQIA adult support group provides a safe space for support, encouragement, and advocacy, promoting health and wellness within the community.

Additionally, its teen support group, Empower Hour, caters to LGBTQ+ individuals aged 13-18. This group offers a judgment-free zone where teens can receive encouragement, support and learn the power of resilience.

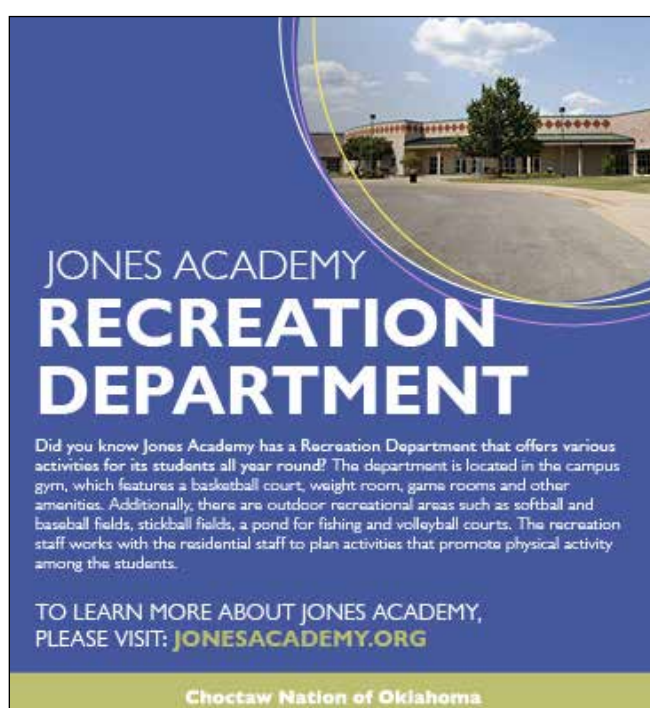
"No one should have to go through life feeling like they don't belong," said Kim Farris, OKCIC's Behavioral Health Director. "Our support groups are designed to ensure that members of the LGBTQ+ community know they are valued, supported and have a rightful place in this world."

OKCIC encourages all members of the Native community to call the clinic at (405) 948-4900 to learn more about its support groups and how to become a patient.



Choctaw Nation Photo

OKCIC raises awareness about the mental health disparities affecting LGBTQ+ community.



## WARRIOR WELLNESS CHARITY WINE RUN

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2024 10:00 AM**

Join us for the Annual WW Charity Run! Come experience hand-crafted wine while you relax and enjoy the scenic Blue River Valley Winery. Whether you want to run, walk or just enjoy the wine, this race promises to be a great time and an incredible experience.

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



**Levetta Sago**

Levetta Faye Sago, 76, passed away April 24, 2024.

Levetta was born June 19, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Jeremiah and Bernice Thompson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Marvin Sago; her parents; brothers Jeremiah Thompson Jr. and Tommy Thompson; and sister Loretta Perigo.

Levetta is survived by her children Robert (Chubba), Gary, Michael Thompson, and Vanessa Sago; sisters Janie Rice, Elsie Lena, and Sandra Thompson; brother Herman Thompson; nieces Dawn Renae Perigo and Patricia Wesley; grandchildren Brandon Marshall, Steven Sago, Miguel Parra, and Esperanza Parra; great-grandchildren Tawnee and Xandrea Thompson; and great-great-grandchildren Jesus, Yessenia, and Allyshia.

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

**Emma Jane Miller**

Emma Jane Miller, 95, passed away May 12, 2024.

Emma was born June 5, 1928, in Latimer Co., Okla., to Clyde and Martha (Ott) Watts.

She was preceded in death by her husband Dr. James Marcus Miller; sons James Miller and Johnny Miller; siblings Frances Spears, Mildred Henderson, Mose Watts, and Johnny Clyde Watts; and sister-in-law Mary Jo Samuel.

Emma is survived by daughter Jayna Santine and spouse Clem; grandchildren Kate (Miller) Turnbough and spouse Tyler, Allison Miller, Alicia Miller and Zach Sprowl, Andrew Santine and spouse Lori, Ashton Adair and spouse Clinton, and Nicholas Santine and spouse Paige; her seven great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild; daughter-in-law Carolyn (Prock) Miller; and a host of nieces, nephews, and friends.

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

**Joyce Dwain Weems**

Joyce Dwain (Thomas) Weems, 86, passed away May 20, 2024.

Joyce was born Aug. 25, 1937, in Bokoshe, Okla., to Jewel and Audrey Thomas.

She was preceded in death by her husband Johnny Weems; daughter Marla Weems; sister Linda Groebel and spouse Ted; brother Jay Thomas; brother-in-law Freehand Fields; and cousin Betty Fields.

Joyce is survived by sister Ruth Fields; sister-in-law Sherry Thomas; dear friend Betty Grenwelge; son Marlon Weems (Buddy) and spouse Trish Weems; daughter Shanna Weems; grandchildren Chase Weems and spouse Rachel, John Weems, Kelsea Garcia and spouse John, Koltan Garcia and girlfriend Shantel, Kaitlyn Fuentes, Jonna Young, Mathew Fimmel and spouse Tracee, Skylar Fintel, Shay Wade, and Andy Daniels; great-grandchildren Oliver Marlon Weems, John Maverick Esquivel, and babies Garcia and Weems coming later this year; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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

**Lonnie Sudbury**

Lonnie Sudbury, 86, passed away March 16, 2024.

Lonnie was born Jan. 9, 1938, in Pauls Valley, Okla., to Leonard and Winnie Morrow Sudbury.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Misty Turnipseed; and grandson Easton Richardson.

Lonnie is survived by his wife Charlene Sudbury; daughters Lonene Turner and spouse Hoyt, and Karen Havilk and spouse Mark; grandchildren April Howell and spouse Matthew, Nikki Perritt and spouse Blake, Alyssa McGee and spouse Shawn, Katlin Richardson, and Alayna Turner; great-grandchildren Brylee Perritt, Cadence McGee, Alexandria Howell, Logan Howell, and Harper McGee.

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

**James Loyce Bell**

James Loyce Bell, 81, passed away May 16, 2024.

James was born June 25, 1942, in Soper, Okla., to Arlie and Oleta (Walker) Bell.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Judy (Hayes) Bell; brothers David Bell and Arlie "Bud" Bell Jr.; sister Wyona Ruth Webb; and grandson Jarrett Allen Manteuffel.

James is survived by his son Charles Manteuffel and spouse Patty; granddaughter Shannon Manteuffel; numerous nieces and nephews; and a host of other family and friends.

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

**Cleta Joan Hays**

Cleta Joan Hays, 71, passed away May 17, 2024.

Joan was born Oct. 3, 1952, in Muskogee, Okla., to Jack and Joanna (Henry) Johnson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Kenneth Hays; her parents; and brother Mike Johnson.

Joan is survived by her children Lisa Kinsey and spouse D.J., Mark Hays and spouse Gwen, and Tracy Hays and spouse Leann; grandchildren Curtis Hays, Caleb Hays, Brianna Hays, Caitlin Hays, Maloree Carroll, Owen Hays, Seth Hays, Ava Kinsey, Alana Kinsey, Toby Kinsey, and Amber Baker; 11 great-grandchildren; and siblings Jackie Reese, and B. Don Johnson and spouse Joyce.

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

**Ulus Ray Coley**

Ulus Ray Coley, 68, passed away May 26, 2024.

Ulus was born Feb. 13, 1956, in Talihina, Okla., to Cecil Coley and Anna Lee (Harris) Coley.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Cecilia Garcia; brother Dallas Seeley; and uncles and aunts Wilburn Coley and spouse Rena, Dollie Scott, Pamela Jefferson, Solomon Coley, Velma Baker, Lorene Scott, Easton John Coley, and Bydia Pope.

Ulus is survived by long-time girlfriend Doyleene Carr; uncle Joe Coley and spouse Mary; brother Wayne Wolf; and numerous cousins, other family and friends.

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

**Dorothy Lee Smith**

Dorothy Lee Smith, 87, passed away May 12, 2024.

Dorothy was born June 2, 1936, in Idabel, Okla., to Benjamim and Mary Jane Maytubbie.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Charles Rogers Smith Sr.; sons Charles Rogers Smith Jr. and Robert Lynn Smith; Aunt Ida; cousins Georgia, Ester, and Virgie; and many other relations back home where she grew up.

Dorothy is survived by her daughter Ruth Ann Hargis and spouse Elsie Hargis; grandson Chad Sullivan; granddaughter Angela DelRay Smith who gave her three great-grandchildren Daxton, Lakelyn, and Xavier; grandson Jason Ray Smith; daughter-in-law Christine Smith; best friend and bingo partner Morsha; and friends Lupe Toledo and her daughter Elliana who brought joy, laughter, and many smiles at the end of her day.

For the full obituary, please visit [Dignity Memorial](#).

**Preston Shane Meshaya**

Preston Shane Meshaya, 45, passed away May 24, 2024.

Preston was born Nov. 12, 1978, in Antlers, Okla., to Preston Hamilton Meshaya and Lois Ellen (Underwood) Meshaya.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents John and Dovie Underwood, and Martin and Ruth Meshaya.

Shane is survived by his parents; brother John Spurlock; niece Morgan Spurlock; numerous other relatives; and a host of friends.

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

**Robert J. Lusk**

Robert J. Lusk, 63, passed away May 21, 2024.

Robert was born April 21, 1961, in Talihina, Okla., to Andy and Ada (Gibson) Lusk.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Stanley Lusk; and sister Judith Lusk.

Robert is survived by daughter Chrystal Lusk; son and daughter-in-law Jeremy and Milani Lusk; grandchildren Dylan, Drake, Emma, Danica, Daytona, Bristol and Milli; great-granddaughter Xxyla; sister and brother-in-law Linda and Jack Cox; aunt Callie Choate; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

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

**Presley Battiest Jr.**

Presley "Hambone" Battiest Jr., 60, passed away May 31, 2024.

Hambone was born June 28, 1963, in Long Beach, Calif., to Presley Battiest Sr. and Alberta Williams.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and paternal grandparents Mom and FoFo.

Hambone is survived by brothers Fredrick Battiest, Jonathan Battiest, and Gerald Nehka; sisters Crystal Wesley and spouse Garrett James, Carol Nehka, Angela Kaulaity, and Cathy Baker and spouse Patrick; step-mother Serena Battiest; special friends Hector and Sissy Gonzalez; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other family and friends.

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

**Eric Lee Jessie**

Eric Lee Jessie, 41, passed away June 4, 2024.

Eric was born July 24, 1982, in Talihina, Okla., to Farlin Lee Jessie and Thelma Thalia Franklin Kaniatobe.

He is survived by his parents; brothers Evan Jessie and Derek Jessie; sister Stacy Jessie; nieces and nephews Bryanna Barcus, Sidney Barcus, Kristopher Barcus, Dylan Grant, and Devyn Jessie; and a host of other family and friends.

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

**Tonie P. Wade Sr.**

Tonie P. Wade Sr., 97, passed away May 8, 2024.

Tonie was born Nov. 18, 1926, in Bray, Okla., to Thomas and Myrtle Wade.

He was preceded in death by his wife Gladys; son Tonie Wade Jr.; daughter Sandra Anthony; his parents; three brothers and four sisters.

Tonie is survived by his children Janice Branum and spouse Donald, Marjie Wade, and Gayla Bynum and spouse Bobby; nine grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren; and eight great-great-grandchildren.

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

**Leonard Dean Luna**

Leonard "Skyrnrd" Dean Luna, 62, passed away Sunday, June 2, 2024.

Leonard was born March 22, 1962, in Talihina, Okla., to Joe Luna and Ona (Brown) Luna.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Barbara McCaullif.

Leonard is survived by his brother Tim Luna and spouse Dawn; sisters Faye Holbird, Judy Holbird, Vesta Ridley, and Deborah Thomas; uncles Larry Brown and Tom Brown; aunts Wanda Brown and Bonnie Brown; and numerous nieces, nephews, and other family members.

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

**Dixie Fern Owen**

Dixie Fern Owen, 89, passed away May 4, 2024.

Dixie was born April 3, 1955, in Talihina, Okla., to Lee and Myrtle (Anderson) Stafford.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Crawford Stafford, Lester Earl Stafford, Lee Stafford Jr., and Clarence Stafford.

Dixie is survived by her husband Jack Owen; sons John Owen and Debbie, Mark

Owen and Donna, Brad Owen and Theresa Trafton, and Kevin Owen and Nichole Burgess; sister Sue Evelyn Nichols and Odean, grandchildren Scott Owen and Tassia, Jennifer Bagby and Brock, Laura Ginsberg and Sam, Kathryn Mhoon and Trenton, Phillip Owen and Julia, Tyler Owen and Gina, Cole Owen and Olivia, Jake Owen and Hannah, and Kyle Owen and Kristy; 13 great grandchildren; and numerous other relatives and loved ones.

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

**Cleland Louis Willis**

Cleland Louis Willis, 73, passed away Jan. 15, 2024.

Cleland was born July 5, 1950, in Rufe, Okla., to Dixon and Melba Willis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Emerson Willis; and brother-in-law Virgil Bohanan.

Cleland is survived by his wife Sue Willis; sons Brad Willis and spouse Amber, and Derek "Dewey" Willis; daughter Kara Caskey and spouse Chris; sisters Carolyn Bohanan, and Linda Harrison and spouse Gary; grandchildren Matthew Caskey, Aaron Caskey, Kai Caskey, Elijah Caskey, Mikaela Willis, and Quinn Willis; several nieces, nephews, and other relatives; and many friends and church family.

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

**Larry Wayne Bledsoe**

Larry Wayne Bledsoe, 84, passed away May 24, 2024.

Larry was born August 20, 1939, in Cedar Lane, TX., to Wesley and Bennie (Woods) Bledsoe.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Linda; son Chuck; great-grandson Eldon; and brother-in-law Louis.

Larry is survived by his wife Carolan; daughters Tamra Keeney and spouse Walter, and Lesa Shriver and spouse Gary; son Wes and spouse Karen; grandchildren Tawnya Woodworth and spouse John, Leslee Baker and spouse Daniel, Alan Bledsoe and spouse Nanndi, Sara Bledsoe, and Rachel Bledsoe; great-grandchildren Grant, Gavin, Garet, Deacon, Livian, Teyo, and Ira; sister Jan Lonsbury; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Sherry Gay Dollarhide**

Sherry Gay Dollarhide, 68, passed away May 25, 2024.

Sherry was born April 11, 1956, in Idabel, Okla., to Samuel Thomas and Helen Juanita Byington Whitehead.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and sister Lisa McCarrell.

Sherry is survived by her husband Danny Dollarhide; sons Jeremy Dollarhide and Nathan Dollarhide; daughters and son-in-law Jill Dollarhide, and Carrie and Stevie Bohanan; brother and sister-in-law Kelvin and Suzanne Whitehead; brother-in-law Clifford McCarrell; grandchildren Wyatt Dollarhide, Trent Dollarhide, Alyssa Dollarhide, Britten Dollarhide, Alexa Dollarhide, Kaylee Humphries, Hannah Walters and Timrynn Bohanan; six great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Obituary Policy**

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

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

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

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



## ITI FABVSSA

# Minutes from the Treaty of Fort Adams (Part 1)

In 1801, the US Secretary of War acknowledge that, "The Choctaws may be considered one of the most powerful nation of Indians within the limits of the United States; and a pacific and friendly disposition in, and towards them, should be cultivated, as well from principles of policy as of humanity." This quote was written in a letter to the Choctaw Indian Agents who were charged with entering into a treaty agreement with the Choctaw Nation. The U.S. was worried that the Spanish or British would turn southeastern tribes against them. To prevent this, Indian Agents were assigned to the southeast to promote peace and friendship. During the Treaty of Hopewell in 1786, the boundary between the U.S. and the Choctaw Nation was defined. However, the boundary was never surveyed, causing friction between Choctaws and illegal American immigrants. The U.S. also needed to secure easier access to its towns to the southwest and southeast of Choctaw Nation, known as the Natchez and Tombigbee Districts. To improve access, the U.S. decided that it needed to build a wagon road from (old) Cumberland, TN to Natchez, MS. However, they needed permission from the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations to construct this road. The U.S. sent three commissioners to meet with Choctaw leaders to seek permission to establish this wagon road and to survey the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation. These negotiations led to the signing of the 1801 Treaty of Fort Adams.

For many decades prior to the Treaty of Fort Adams, Choctaw leaders had been renting Choctaw lands to the French, British, and Spanish. Rent was paid to the Choctaw Nation in the form of gifts or presents. Each year a delegation of Choctaw leaders would travel to a predetermined place to collect the goods for their village(s). At each treaty, Choctaw leaders orally stated that the land was shared. Despite this, the British and Spanish would write into the treaties that Choctaw Nation was ceding its lands. Due to this deceit, the Choctaw Nation unknowingly lost the land that comprised the Natchez and Tombigbee Districts. When the U.S. gained land from Britian and Spain, they also gained the colonial legal rights to these stolen lands.

Over the next three months, Iti Fabvssa will look back at the 1801 Treaty of Fort Adams meeting minutes and explore the conversations between the United States and our Choctaw leaders. This month, Part 1 will follow the first section of the meeting minutes which begin with a speech by the U.S. Commissioners to the Choctaw leaders. In the following months, we will look at Part 2 which includes responses by the Choctaw chiefs, and part 3 which will include written responses by beloved men and warriors that were later submitted to the U.S. Commissioner.

The following transcript has been copied from the American State Papers Indian Affairs volumes. It begins with a copy of the 1801 Treaty of Fort Adams submitted by U.S. President to the U.S. Senate, followed by a letter from the Secretary of War to the treaty commissioners, and lastly the minutes from the treaty conversations. The transcript of the meeting minutes are italicized throughout the article.

***"Minutes of a conference between Brigadier General James Wilkinson, Benjamin Hawkins, and Andrew Pickens, Esquires, commissioners of the United States, and the principal chiefs of the Choctaw nation of Indians, held at fort Adams, on the Mississippi, the 12th day of December 1801."***

*"The conference commenced. -The interpreters being called forth, and warned to correct each other, and after having gone through the ceremonies of the pipe, General Wilkinson addressed them, and the name of the commissioners, as follows:"*

When Choctaw leaders formally met, they organized themselves by social status. Those sitting in the front of the circle had a higher status than men in the back. The chiefs sat up front, behind them would be the beloved men, then the warriors, and in the back were the young men. Before talks commenced, a tobacco pipe would be passed to each person in attendance. Once the pipe ceremony was completed, talks would begin.

*"Mingoes, Chiefs, and Principal Men, of the Choctaw nation:*

*You have all heard of the death of your father, the great Washington, and you have, no doubt, wept for the loss. Since we experienced that heavy misfortune, the people of the Sixteen Fires, assembled in their great national council house, have thought proper to select our beloved chief, Thomas Jefferson, to be the President of the United States."*

In 1801, the United States was only made up of sixteen states. To better relate to the Choctaw leaders, the U.S. refers to its states as Fires. At this time, the Choctaw Nation was made up of three districts, known as Ulthi or Council Fires. The U.S. tried to relate to the Choctaw by comparing its States to the Choctaw Districts. They use a similar analogy when referring to the Independence Hall, or the great council house, located in Philadelphia, MA where the President lived. General Wilkinson equates the President to a Chief; showing that the Choctaw Nation is an equal sovereign power to the United States.

*"BROTHERS: Open your ears, and listen well. Your new father, Jefferson, who is the friend of all the red people, and of humanity, finding himself at the head of the white people of the Sixteen Fires, immediately turned his thoughts to the condition of his red children, who stand most in need of his care, and whom he regards with the affection of a good father."*

The United States had a paternal stance when interacting with Native American Nations. In traditional Choctaw culture, the father was seen as a provider and protector, but not an authority figure. The intent of the U.S. was to elevate the President above the leaders of the Choctaw Nation so that they could more easily demonstrate their power and control over the situation; however, the American leaders' misunderstanding of Choctaw culture communicated a message to Choctaw leaders that the President would provide goods, presents, and protection.

*"BROTHERS: Your father, the President of the United States, being far removed from you, by the intervention of deep rivers, high mountains, and wide forests, finds it impossible to look upon you with his own eyes, or speak to you from his own lips. He has, therefore, appointed two of his beloved men, Colonel Hawkins, and General Pickens, with myself, to meet you and counsel, and confer with you on several subjects interesting to yourselves, and your white brethren of the Sixteen Fires. We are happy to see you. We, on his behalf, and in his name, take you by the hand, and we congratulate you on your safe arrival here."*

A Beloved Man was the second highest rank in Choctaw society. By referring to the commissioners as beloved men, General Wilkinson portrayed their status in the U.S. hierarchy as just under the President.

*"BROTHERS: The President of the United States invites you to look upon him as your friend and father; to rely in full confidence on his unvarying disposition to lead and protect you in the paths of peace and prosperity, And to reserve concord between*



Example of an Indian Peace Medal presented to the Choctaw Leaders, Courtesy of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

*you and your neighbors. In his name, we promise you, that you may at all times rely on the friendship of the United States, and that he will never abandon you or your children, while your conduct towards the citizens of the United States, and your Indian neighbors, shall be peaceful, honest, and fair."*

The U.S. at this time was worried about its stability as a country and its potential defenses against military aggression from Spain or Great Britain. A particular worry was that Spain would influence the Choctaw Nation and other tribes to take military action against the U.S. By creating peace and friendship among the southeastern Native Nations, the U.S. could better protect itself from outside invasion.

*"BROTHERS: We invite you to state to us freely, the situation of your nation, and what you wish, on the part of your father the President, to better your condition in trade, in hunting, agriculture, manufacturers, and stock-raising; that we may represent the same for his consideration. We wish you to open your minds freely to us, and to set forth all of your wishes and all of your wants, that we may learn the true state of your condition, and be able to assist you with our advice, our attentions, and our friendship."*

Early on, the United States was extremely interested in how it could improve its relationship with the Choctaw Nation as military allies and trade partners. By assessing and meeting the needs of Choctaw leaders, the U.S. could build a power alliance with the Choctaw and other southeastern Tribes to protect itself from European Nations.

*"BROTHERS: On the part of your white brethren, we have to state to you, that the path from the settlement of Natchez through your nation, towards Cumberland, is an uncomfortable one, and very inconvenient to them, in its present unimproved condition; and we are directed to stipulate with you, to make it suitable to the accommodation of those who may use it, and at the same time, beneficial to yourselves. Your brethren, the Chickasaws, have heard our requests on this subject, and they have consented that we should open a road through their lands to those of your nation, and now we ask your consent, that we may continue the same road through your lands, to the settlements of this territory. We propose, for the accommodation of travelers, and for your own interest, that houses of entertainment and ferries, should be established on the road, and that they may be rented by you to such persons as your father the President may appoint to keep them. The ground, the houses, and the money, arising from the rents, to be for the use of your nation, and subject to its disposal; And that not more than one family be suffered to live at the same place."*

Through the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations was a trade road known by Choctaw people as the Natche Hina, or the Natchez Road. This was the road that Choctaw and Chickasaw people would take to reach the Natchez Nation, a tribe who used to live near today Natchez, MS beside the Mississippi River. The U.S. wished to improve the road so it could support wagon traffic from (old) Cumberland, TN to Natchez, MS. Additionally, they wished access to a right-of-way alongside the road where U.S. citizens could build homes, trading posts, inns, and ferries. Today the National Park Service maintains and interprets the 440-mile Natchez Trace Parkway.

*"BROTHERS: Since the King of Spain has given up his district to the United States, a necessity has arisen for frequent communications between your white brethren, who live in the neighborhood of the Mississippi, and those who have settled on the Tombigby; and it follows, that people are constantly traveling across your country, from one place to the other. Under such circumstances, to prevent disagreement and mischief, we recommend to you consideration of the expediency of having but one road of communication between these settlements, to be opened and improved after the same manner, and on the same terms, as that proposed from the settlements of this territory to the Chickasaw nation."*

The U.S. also wished to have access to an east to west Choctaw trade path that went from Natchez, MS to Fort Tombecke in Alabama. Previously, the French, English, and Spanish had settled Choctaw lands along the Mississippi and Mobile/Tombigbee Rivers; these areas became known as the Nachez and Tombigbee Districts.

*"BROTHERS: We come not to ask lands from you, nor shall we even ask you for any, unless you are disposed to sell; and your father will assist and protect you in the enjoyment of those you claim; but, to prevent future misunderstandings, and to confine the settlers of this territory within the line long since run between you and them we recommend it should be traced up, and marked a new, while men can be found, who were present at the survey, and assisted in making it: for, If all those witnesses should die before this is done, then disputes may arise between you and your white brethren, respecting this boundary, and the mischiefs may ensue."*

The 1786 Treaty of Hopewell defined the boundaries between the Choctaw Nation and the United States; however, these lands were never surveyed, and already American settlers were living just passed the boundary within the Choctaw Nation without permission. Choctaw leaders put pressure on the Choctaw Indian Agent to move the settlers off Choctaw lands, however the U.S. did not know where its borders with Choctaw Nation were.

*"BROTHERS: For several years past, your father, the President of the United States, has sent you a present of goods, as a token of his friendship, which will be continued the present year. But you must recollect that you have never given any equivalent for this strong evidence of his paternal regard; and you must bear in mind, that you are indebted for it to his generosity for more than his justice. Should this bounty be continued to you in the future, you ought to be grateful for it; and should it be discontinued, you should have no cause to complain, as you have never given anything to the United States in return."*

For many decades prior to the Treaty of Fort Adams, Choctaw leaders had been renting Choctaw lands to the French, British, and Spanish. Rent was paid to the Choctaw Nation in the form of gifts or presents. Each year a delegation of Choctaw leaders would travel to a predetermined place to collect the goods for their village(s). Records from British and Spanish treaties recorded that Choctaw leaders would give oral statements that land was not given, but shared between their peoples. Despite this, the British and Spanish would write into the treaties that Choctaw Nation ceded the lands. This deceit led the Americans to believe that they owned these lands after acquiring them from Great Britain and Spain. In the colonial mindset, these lands were legally acquired from the Choctaw Nation. From a Choctaw perspective, they were still owned by the Choctaw Nation. This colonial theft of Choctaw land led to the misunderstanding the United States did not have to furnish presents. Unknown that their land had been stolen, Choctaw leaders still expected rent to be paid.

*"BROTHERS: We wish you to let this talk sink deep into your hearts; we wish you to take time, and reflect seriously on it; And when you have made up your minds, we shall listen to you with pleasure, and the hope that you may enable us to make an agreeable report to our common Father, the President of the United States, and in the meantime, we shall be happy to contribute to your accommodation, and the good of your nation. December 13th."*

It was Choctaw tradition for leaders to be given time to contemplate ideas before making important decisions. This allowed leaders to think through how their decisions would affect their communities, the Choctaw Nation, and future generations.

When we study the situations and decisions of our ancestors, we can see the future they wished for us to have. As we read their words, we can see glimpses of Choctaw culture extend through their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives. The speech read by General Wilkinson gives context to the following speeches that the Choctaw leaders made. Next month Iti Fabvssa will continue sharing the meeting minutes from the Treaty of Fort Adams (Part II). If you would like to jump ahead, we encourage you to look at the American State Papers. Class II Indian Affairs. Volume 1. Pages 658-663: <https://tinyurl.com/29rcrbz2>

## WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Luke Taylor

Summer is here and temperatures are soaring across the reservation. You may have grabbed your fishing pole and tacklebox and headed down to the pond to catch a big bass only to find it is covered with algae and vegetation, and you couldn't find a big enough hole to fish in. Well, there are certain steps that landowners can take to ensure they maintain a healthy pond, maintain a good fish population, and be able to cast a lure without reeling in a "grass bass" every time.

Algae and other aquatic vegetation may be the top concern for farm pond owners during the summer months. Whether you are utilizing your pond for fishing, swimming, irrigation, or watering livestock, there are a few options you have when it comes to keeping the vegetation in check. However, since every pond is different, and each pond owner may have a different purpose for their pond, there are a variety of things to consider before a good management plan is made. Not all ponds with aquatic vegetation need to be treated. In fact, if fish management is what you are after, 15-20 percent coverage of the pond can actually be beneficial. Aquatic vegetation can provide habitat, it can produce a variety of food sources, and it can help slow erosion from wave action.

There are three different methods you can utilize to reduce the amount of vegetation in your pond. Mechanical weed control may provide the fastest results, but it can also be the least effective. You can either pull the weeds by hand or with heavy machinery, but the remaining plant fragments, roots, and seeds can reestablish quickly. Biological control is the use of fish to feed on the vegetation. Grass carp can be an effective way to control the submerged leafy vegetation because they can consume their body weight in plants each day. But this also causes them to grow very quickly, and when they get too big, they slow down on feeding and may need to be removed from the pond because they are not being as efficient and are just taking up pond space. Chemical control can also be used by spraying herbicide to get rid of unwanted vegetation. But, before you go spraying your whole pond, it is especially important to educate yourself on the chemicals you are using, because you could harm other plants and possibly kill your fish.

If your pond has issues or you need some guidance on drawing up a management plan, please email us at [wildlife@choctawnation.com](mailto:wildlife@choctawnation.com).



# Mosquitos suck; don't let the bite get you down

## Choctaw Nation mosquito surveillance program begins in Southeastern Oklahoma

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation has begun a mosquito surveillance program with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Surveillance traps have been placed across the reservation to capture and test mosquitoes that may be carrying West Nile virus.

"We're going to be setting mosquito traps across every county within Choctaw Nation to collect mosquitoes and send them off to be analyzed to see if any of them are carrying West Nile virus," said Mason Emert, an epidemiologist with the Choctaw Nation.

According to the CDC, West Nile virus is the leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the continental United States, with nearly 47 states reporting human cases. It's most prevalent during mosquito season, which starts in the summer and continues through fall.

The West Nile virus circulates in the environment between mosquitoes and birds. A mosquito, most commonly the Culex species, must first feed on an infected bird before it can transfer the virus to humans when it bites them.

There is no documented evidence of the West Nile virus being spread from person to person or animal to person. In a very small number of cases, the virus has been spread through organ transplants, blood transfusion, and from mother to baby (pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding).

The traps will be collected and sent to the CDC for analysis.

"From there, we'll be able to notify the public of health risks, identify possible diseases like West Nile virus, and work with those communities to help come up with a mitigation plan and make people aware so they can take greater precautions, especially those who are more vulnerable to West Nile," said Emert.

Serious illness can occur in people of any age. However, people over the age of 50 and some immunocompromised persons, such

as transplant patients, are at the highest risk of getting severely ill when infected with West Nile virus.

According to Emert, while most West Nile cases will go asymptomatic, some are more at risk than others.

"They [West Nile cases] aren't necessarily diagnosed until they get into encephalitis or late stage, but individuals who are immunocompromised, younger or have underlying health conditions are certainly at higher risk."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 80% of people infected with the West Nile virus will show no symptoms. For some, it can lead to West Nile fever or severe West Nile disease.

About 20% of people who become infected with West Nile virus will develop West Nile fever. Symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness, body aches, nausea, vomiting, occasionally with a skin rash on the upper portions or trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands.

The symptoms of severe disease, such as West Nile encephalitis or meningitis, include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. About 1 in 150 persons infected with the West Nile virus will develop a more severe disease.

Rikki LaRoche, public health director with the Choctaw Nation, says they will be strategic about where the traps are placed.

"They [the traps] will be placed in low-lying areas with standing water where mosquitoes breed," LaRoche said.

She also urged people not to interfere with the surveillance program.

"If you do see one of these, just refrain from touching it," said LaRoche. "It's a testing program in place."

There are no vaccines or medicines to prevent or treat West Nile in people, so the best course of action is to reduce your risk of contracting West Nile by avoiding mosquito bites.



Things like fixing water leaks, draining standing water and cleaning bird baths are just a few of the steps you can take to protect your family from mosquitoes around your home.

The best methods to protect yourself from mosquito bites are to wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants and treat your clothing and gear. The CDC recommends using EPA-registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients:

- DEET
- Picaridin (known as KBR 3023 and icaridin outside the United States)
- IR3535
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)—A plant-derived ingredient
- Para-menthane-diol (PMD)
- 2-undecanone—A plant-derived ingredient

When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Emert recommends also inspecting your surrounding area at home to ensure you don't have any potential mosquito breeding grounds.

"Make sure areas around your home don't have spots that water can collect and mosquitoes can breed," said Emert. "Old tires, playground equipment or just things that can collect water outside, make sure they're drained and use a larvicide in areas that do require standing water."

The CDC recommends that you empty and scrub, turn over, cover or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpot saucers or trash containers.

LaRoche says there are also potential natural means of control.

"There are actually several plants that you can plant in your garden, around your porches and areas that you may sit outside that can help keep mosquitos away," LaRoche said.

LaRoche suggested oregano, peppermint, rosemary and lemongrass. Other plants often suggested to help ward off mosquitos are lavender, marigolds, basil and catmint.

Emert said if any mosquitoes trapped test positive for West Nile virus, that information will be released to the public.

You can also check the Choctaw Nation Fight the Bite page to stay updated with new developments and get tips on preventing mosquito and tick bites.



Photos Provided

Rikki LaRoche prepares one of the many mosquito surveillance traps that will be set up across the reservation.



An example of a mosquito surveillance trap being set up through a partnership with the CDC, the CNO Public Health Department and CNO Environmental Protection Service.



The CNO Public Health Department and CNO Environmental Protection Service are working closely together to set up the mosquito surveillance program.

### SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM SCHEDULE

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SERVING TIMES WILL BE FROM 10:00 AM TO 1:00 PM, AND WE WILL BE PROVIDING BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND A SNACK!

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- Stigler
- Talihina
- Wilburton

**ALL SITES WILL BE AT THE CHOCTAW NATION COMMUNITY CENTERS EXCEPT:**

- Poteau - Donald Reynolds Community Center
- McAlester - Dream City Church
- Calvin - Old Calvin Store
- Talihina - Alco Parking Lot
- Durant - Wellness Center

FOR DATES/TIMES OF AVAILABILITY PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT: [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/SUMMER-FOOD-SERVICE](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/SUMMER-FOOD-SERVICE)

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

### WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
<b>Antlers</b> 580.916.5609	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
<b>Atoka</b> 539.316.2050	Daily   Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Battiest</b> 580.241.5458	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
<b>Broken Bow</b> 539.316.3011	Daily   Monday – Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Durant</b> 539.316.3517	Daily   Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Heavener</b> 539.316.4784	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Hugo</b> 539.316.5089	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:00 pm
<b>Idabel</b> 539.316.4313	Daily   Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>McAlester</b> 539.316.2431 539.316.2430	Daily   Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Poteau</b> 539.316.4606	Daily   Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Smithville</b> 580.244.3289	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
<b>Spiro</b> 918.962.5134	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Stigler</b> 918.967.4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
<b>Talihina</b> 539.316.6792	Daily   Monday - Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
<b>Wilburton</b> 580.642.7588	Wednesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
<b>Mobile Van</b> 580.380.8193	1st Tuesday – Boswell 3rd Tuesday – Coalgate 4th Tuesday - Clayton	9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Choctaw Nation Health Services**

### CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

**MARKET HOURS**  
Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday  
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

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

**July 2024**  
All markets open weekdays, July 1-29  
**Closed:** July 4, 30 and 31  
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation  
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

**ANTLERS** 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443  
FOOD DEMO JULY 3

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
FOOD DEMO JULY 16

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
FOOD DEMO JULY 18

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
FOOD DEMO JULY 9

**POTEAU** 106 B St., 918-649-0431  
FOOD DEMO JULY 23

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

### Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

July 5	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
July 5	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
July 8	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
July 9	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
July 10	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
July 15	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
July 16	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
July 17	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
July 19	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
July 19	Coalgate	12:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
July 22	Idabel	10:00 am. - 1:00 p.m.
July 23	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
July 24	Crowder	By Appointment
July 29	Stigler	By Appointment

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



## Choctaw Trail of Tears Bike Team completes 400-mile ride

By Chris Jennings

Beginning in 1830 and lasting over 70 years, the Choctaw people were forcibly removed from their homelands. While many still don't know the history of the Trail of Tears, if you're Native, you're most likely familiar with it.

You probably know that the Choctaws were the first of the Five Tribes to make the journey—approximately 12,000 people made the trip between 1830 and 1834 alone.

You probably know that thousands of Choctaws didn't survive the trip, and many lie in unmarked graves along the way. You also probably know that the food and supplies promised were not always there.

It was particularly difficult for the Choctaws due to the U.S. government's lack of promised supplies and uncoordinated planning throughout the westward journey.

What was planned for by Choctaw leaders, though, was the future of Choctaws for generations to come. When negotiating the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the Choctaws were able to secure the new land in Oklahoma in fee simple.

Fee simple is a real estate term that means full and irrevocable ownership of land. Fee simple is the highest form of ownership — it means the land is owned outright without any limitations or restrictions.

Fee simple is what laid the groundwork for the Choctaw people to be able to live in a sovereign nation today. The negotiators knew to do this because of a heavy emphasis on the education of Choctaw and Western traditions. This training in Western law enabled them to use that knowledge to protect Choctaw sovereignty.

Despite signing the 1820 Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the Choctaws still felt immense pressure to cede more of their ancestral land. The negotiators knew this wasn't going to stop until they were all dead or their land

was taken, with survivors scattered across the country.

Even though most of this is known through stories that have been passed down over generations, the true immensity of the struggle can't really be conveyed through a story, especially as time goes on. That's why a group of bicycle riders decided to ride their bikes along the Trail of Tears from Philadelphia, Mississippi, to Durant, Oklahoma.

A big part of the trip's purpose is education. Rochelle Boykin, one of the ride organizers who's participated in the ride since 2016, said, "That was our emphasis on this ride. It's not just to get so many miles and do it within so much time; it's to incorporate teaching and learning our culture along the way."

The bike team had its fair share of struggles. Boykin says they had flats and wrecks, contending with storms, riding up mountains and facing 30-mile-an-hour headwinds. Still, these struggles paled in comparison to the struggles faced on the Trail of Tears.

Overcoming those struggles is part of the learning experience. "We know our ancestors had to persevere even more through the tragedy of the loss of loved ones and going through the unfamiliar. New riders felt that and saw that," said Boykin.

Colt James, who, at 18 years old, has been the youngest rider for the last two years, said that getting this perspective is an eye-opening experience.

"What we thought at the moment was bad, like 'this sucks, we're tired,'" said James. "They had it a whole lot worse."

Along the way, the riders stopped at various historical sites so that they could learn a little more about their ancestors and what they went through during the Trail of Tears.

Boykin feels that's an integral part of the journey that helps to teach in a more immersive environment.

"We thought it was hard at the time, but it's still much easier, much,



Photo by Kendra Germany-Wall

Above: The 2024 TOT Bike Team is welcomed home by loved ones and coworkers.

Below: Bikes are lined up at the entrance of the Skullyville Cemetery.



Photo by Kendra Germany-Wall



Photo Provided

Top: The 2024 TOT Bike Team rides past lines of fans as they make their way to the CNO Tribal Headquarters, escorted by Choctaw Lighthorse.

Bottom: TOT Bike Team members listen as Ryan Spring gives a history lesson about Chief Moshulatubbee.

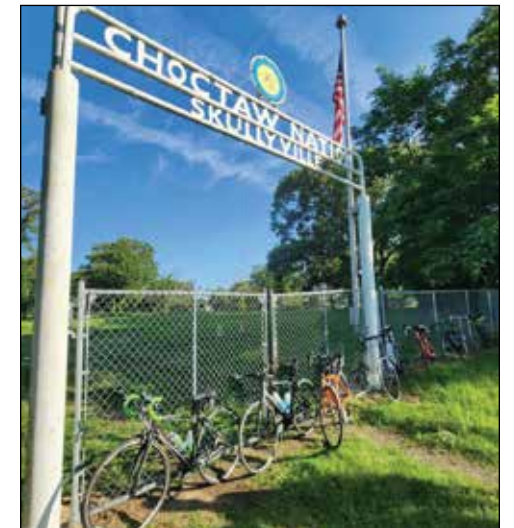


Photo Provided

as Choctaw," Boykin said.

The Choctaw ancestors who signed the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, which ultimately led to the Trail of Tears, knew the importance of the generations to come. They knew that to preserve the Choctaw Nation, they needed to take steps to guarantee a life for future generations.

"They brought the future for us," said Boykin. "They brought it when they crossed those Trail of Tears, crossed those rivers, crossed those creeks, and crossed the wooded areas to get to Oklahoma to preserve our future."

much easier than what they had to go through," said James

"Being able to see and reflect on these historical sites and take in the immensity of what took place while at the same time attempting something difficult for yourself puts the Trail of Tears into a perspective that you don't get from telling stories or reading about it in a book.

"I think it helps them to understand what our culture and heritage means to

## Outreach at the Beach 2024

By Christian Toews

Tribal members in the Pushmataha County area had fun in the sun on June 5.

Each year, the Choctaw Nation organizes an annual community event called Outreach at the Beach.

This day of fun informs tribal members about the services available to them while providing a relaxing day at the beach. The event is held at Sardis Lake on a sandy beach surrounded by the foothills of The Ouachita Mountains.

The event offered karaoke with prizes, a water slide for the kids, games, food and swimming in the beautiful lake.

Choctaw Nation program booths were set up on-site to provide information about services offered to tribal members. These vital programs provide tribal members with opportunities they would not otherwise have, including healthcare, housing assistance, support for veterans, scholarships and opportunities to learn about Choctaw culture.

Kenneth Winship is the Program Manager of the Youth Outreach with the Choctaw Nation and one of the major organizers of Outreach at the Beach.

Winship said that events like Outreach at the

Beach are vital to getting information to some difficult-to-reach areas of the reservation.

"Some people don't know about these programs or won't reach out for help, and our program really gets to be the voice for tribal members who need help," he said.

Lucy Nelson from Atoka attended the 2024 Outreach at the Beach event. She said that she learned more about many of the programs during previous years and has utilized several of the programs she has learned about.

According to Nelson, there have been winter months when she has needed help, and the Choctaw Nation has stepped in and kept her heat on.

Another Outreach at the Beach attendee, Brenda Adams, said that the programs offered by the Choctaw Nation helped keep her parents in their home as they aged.

"The Choctaw Nation has helped a lot with my mom and dad before they passed away," she said.

To stay informed about upcoming events like Outreach at the Beach, visit the events page at [choctawnation.com/events](http://choctawnation.com/events) and follow The Choctaw Nation on social media.

To learn more about the programs the Choctaw Nation offers, visit the programs and services page at [choctawnation.com/services](http://choctawnation.com/services).



Left: Blainey Smith is handed a flower necklace at one of Choctaw Nation's program booths.



Right: Conny Crites, Geraldine Isabell, and Starla Coley pick up materials and information on programs the Choctaw Nation offers.



Photos by Christian Toews

Asher Moore slides his way toward the pool of water at the end of the large waterslide during Outreach at the Beach.



Alec Hornbuckle and Ace Tom have fun in the water of Lake Sardis during the Outreach at the Beach event.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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- How-To Video: With a step-by-step video guide on how to look up your location using your address.
- Free Wi-Fi Locations: Discover free Wi-Fi spots near you. More locations will be added as they are verified.

**HELP US IMPROVE**  
We are continually gathering data and requesting carriers to submit their coverage details. This means the website will keep getting better with your help and contributions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT, [CHAHTACONNECT.COM](http://CHAHTACONNECT.COM)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**WAKAYA PROGRAM**

**ARE YOU READY TO RISE UP FOR YOUR HEALTH?**

Wakaya is a study project that seeks to promote healthy decision making and leadership through an outdoor program that encourages and educates Choctaw youth.

- Weekly/monthly group classes on Choctaw cultural arts, leadership, storytelling, environmental restoration, and traditional health practices.
- Fun cultural outdoor activities.
- 2 overnight outdoor camps with other teens (Culture Camp & Trail of Tears Camp)
- Lead a community service project & more...

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WAKAYARISINGUP.ORG](http://WAKAYARISINGUP.ORG)  
833.265.4289

A partnership with EWRI, University of Washington and Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse - R01DA414-01A1

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



# Choctaw Landing features Choctaw art

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw Nation partnered with Choctaw artists nationwide to create original artwork for the new Choctaw Landing in Hochtatown, Oklahoma.

The resort proudly displays over 40 pieces of original art throughout the location, over 600 pieces of artwork throughout guest rooms, and two large exterior sculptures to be installed this summer.

Artists whose work can be viewed at the new venue include Connie Phillips, Eveline Steels, Brenner Billy, Sarah Sense, Wani Marshall Coker, Gene Smith, Steven Paul Judd, Kristin Gentry, Timothy Nevaquaya, Gwen Coleman Lester, Gregg Standridge, Karen Clarkson, Bobby Von Martin, Dylan Cavin, Courtney Sisneros, Bob Proctor, Laura Moore, Emily Bloomquist, Presley Byington, Michael Rose, Kaleb Standridge, Aliyah Myers and Beckah Boykin.

Several artists were recently interviewed and talked about what it was like to be a Choctaw artist and how the tribe has influenced their art careers.

Kristin Gentry is a national award-winning artist in fine art, photography, curation and writing. Gentry is passionate about using her art to create different ways to preserve her culture. According to Gentry, being Choctaw has had a huge influence on her work.

"Being Choctaw has influenced me every step of the way for my art from the beginning of my artist career. It became part of a cultural reclamation for me to learn more about my culture and myself as a Choctaw person, as a Choctaw woman," said Gentry. "I've been able to use my art to do that, and I also get to use my art to teach others that as well through it."

Artist and vocational therapist Emily Bloomquist has a Sioux City, Iowa studio. She has done art since her childhood. "I never get tired of making art." Her favorite medium is working with wood, and she said that being Choctaw has always influenced her art.

Brenner Billy's family history and culture inspire his art. He makes stickball sticks and enjoys working with stone, wood and shell. Working with his hands and making functional art pieces are important to him.

According to Billy, being Choctaw greatly influences his work. "It's everything. It's everything I've ever known," said Billy. "It's part of tradition to keep moving forward."

Eveline Steele is a well-known basket weaver from McCurtain County and was born and raised there. She said basketry started with her grandmother but more likely her great-grandmother.

"It's been a part of my family as far back as I can remember. Now I'm teaching my two boys," said Steele.

Steele has been weaving baskets herself for over thirty years, working with both natural and purchased dyes.

Connie Phillips has always gifted her art to family, but only in the last ten years has she begun doing art for others. She works in oils, watercolor, and acrylics, and she has worked with leather and even created saddles for the NFR. She tries to take a realism story and turn it into an abstract style.

"I think it's more powerful to me. A photograph is realism, and I don't know that that really tells the story as much as if you can break out of that, painting something exactly like it looks in reality to something that tells what it feels like," said Phillips. "I guess that's what I do, tell more of what it feels like."

According to Phillips, being Choctaw has completely influenced her work, and she knows her piece is finished when she cries.

"When I feel the tears coming, then I'm finished with that piece, and I know that," said Phillips.

Wani Marshall Coker has been an art teacher for the past 25 years but has been making art for as long as she can remember. She teaches sculpture and 3D art.

Coker is inspired by people around her, especially children and their energy. She loves using bold colors, having learned first to paint with oils, then acrylics, and now is painting again with oils. Her great-grandfather was a Choctaw Code Talker.

According to Coker, it is a privilege to carry on the stories, and while she is sharing them, she is also learning them.

Courtney Sisneros was inspired by her great-grandfather, who lived with her family occasionally. According to Sisneros, he was always drawing and still has some of his drawings today. She enjoys working with clay, ceramics and paints.

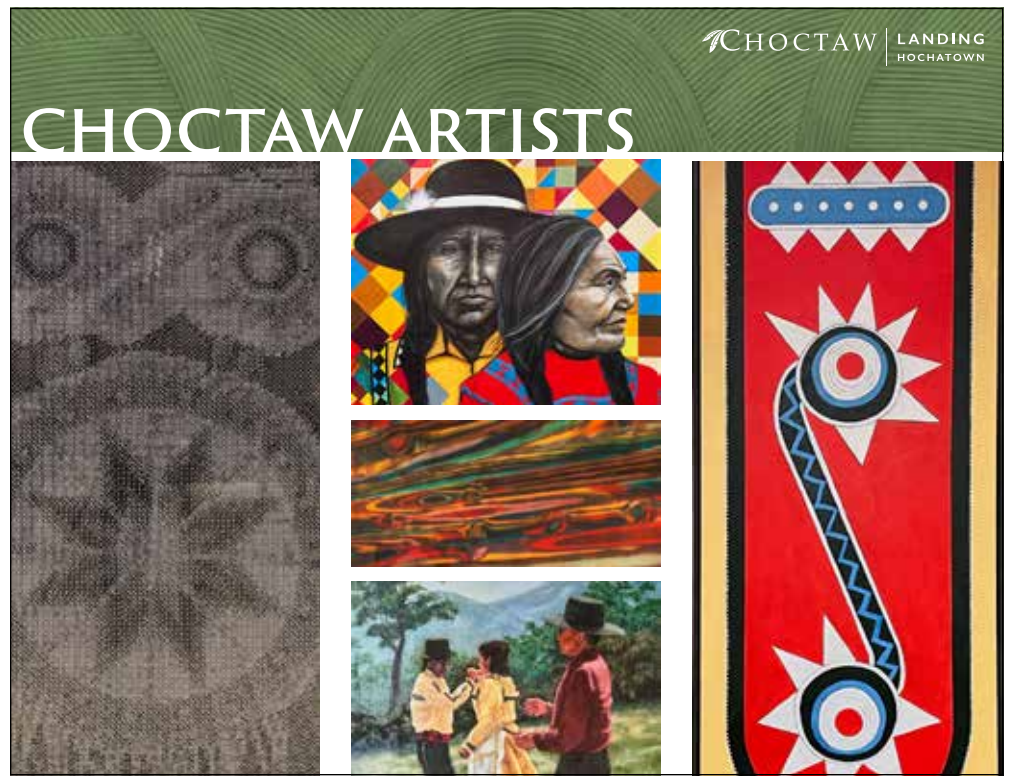
"It's natural," said Sisneros. "You can go out and dig clay from the earth, and you can mold it into anything you want to."

According to Sisneros, being Choctaw influences her work in every way, and her heritage and culture are in all her artwork.

Gregg Standridge said he must create, has been a musician for a long time, and does woodwork and art. Being Choctaw gave him the inspiration to delve into the history of the tribe and look for materials to tell stories with by the legends of the Choctaw Nation. He said his art has evolved over time. He started as a musician, has a master's degree in classical guitar, and integrates his music into all he does with visual art. He also writes.

"All of those things integrate into each other," said Standridge. "I'm always assessing and evolving and looking back. It's all really, really wired together, and I will never be done with the journey, I'm sure, but it's really fun to keep getting better at it."

For more information about Choctaw Landing and to view its Choctaw art, please visit [choctawlanding.com](https://www.choctaw-landing.com). To view a list of Choctaw artists, please visit <https://www.choctaw-nation.com/about/culture/artist-registry/>.



The artwork of Choctaw artists can be found throughout the new Choctaw Landing Hochtatown.

## Memorial Day



A crowd follows the honor guard in a march to the veterans cemetery on the Tvshka Homma capital grounds.



(Above and Below) Students from the Youth Advisory Board participated in laying wreaths on the graves at the veteran's cemetery in Tvshka Homma.



Council members placed wreaths on Choctaw Korean War monument on the capital grounds at Tvshka Homma.



A member of the Choctaw Nation Honor Guard salutes during the ceremony at the veteran's cemetery in Tvshka Homma.



Taps was played during the ceremony honoring those who have given their life in service to the United States.

# BOLUKTA:

MISSISSIPPIAN DESIGNS, MEDALLIONS,  
AND MODERN CHOCTAW ART

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- Find reusable water bottles and/or cups.
- Instead of using plastic sandwich bags, try reusable containers.
- Paper towels and napkins create a lot of waste in landfills; use cloth napkins instead.

**Most importantly, have all members of your family or group help clean up afterward and wash the reusable items so they are ready for more zero-waste adventures.**

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## SUMMER FUN IN THE SUN

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D S B T E I Q Y K P S P I M L A E J

U L O E E W C L L P L A C C I H D A

T Z A Q Z X E N P Y F R X K L N F N

A R T B E V O E I X Y A V Y S E G U

W X I J T Q M M W C Z D O T P Z S Y

T X N U T L E S A O Y E F Y X X G U

D D G I C E C R E A M N M M C E B S

G H Z V Y P Q S D Q M U E E W E P T

P Q E H M A K J Y Q V O T X O R W A

T N T A L I W B A R B E C U E X W R

G F Z E T G U L I I M A Y A K Q P S

K N N J A X R J F H R E Q L H O M A

S K W A T E R M E L O N M P W O X S

barbecue

boating

fireworks

heat

ice cream

parade

picnic

popsicles

stars

swimming

watermelon

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



## Five Graduate from Choctaw Nation Residency Program

**DURANT, Okla. (June 30, 2024)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma celebrates five graduates from the Family Medicine Residency Program this summer. Doctors Henry Gutierrez, Zachary Cruse, Shanell Gray, Patrick McIntosh, and Daniel Stacy finish their three-year residency with Choctaw Nation and four are remaining on as a physician with Choctaw Nation Health Services.

“The dedication, compassion, and resilience shown by these residents proves that they are ready to make a difference in the lives of countless patients,” says Dr. Eric Gillette, residency program director. “We are all immensely proud of their accomplishments and excited for the bright futures that lie ahead.”



**Zachary Cruse, D.O.**, grew up in Edmond, Okla. In 2012, he graduated with his Bachelor of Science in both chemistry-health sciences and forensic sciences from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Okla.

He graduated in 2021 with his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine from Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr.

Cruse has been married to his wife, Leigh Anne, for two years and recently found out they are expecting their first child in January 2025. When not working, he enjoys traveling, hunting, fishing and playing board games. Dr. Cruse plans to continue working with Choctaw Nation at the Stigler Clinic.



**Shanell Gray, D.O.**, grew up in Inola, Okla. She graduated in 2012 from Rogers State University in Claremore, Okla. with a degree in medical molecular biology. She continued her education at Oklahoma State University and in 2016 graduated with a masters in biochemistry and molecular biology. With those degrees in hand, she continued with the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine where she graduated in 2021. Growing up in rural Oklahoma, she developed a love for the underprivileged and those in need.

She’s married with two children and is active in both the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association and American Osteopathic Association. She plans to continue as the first Choctaw Nation fellow in Oklahoma State University’s Osteopathic Manipulative and Neuromuscular Medicine.



**Henry Gutierrez, D.O.**, comes from Cedarville, Arkansas. He graduated from the University of Arkansas with his Bachelor of Biology, minoring in chemistry. He completed his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Smith, Ark.

Having completed his residency requirements, he plans to stay with Choctaw Nation as a member of the core faculty with the residency program.

He and his wife have been married for two years and have a new-born daughter, Ellie, who is the first child he’s ever picked up. Dr. Gutierrez is the first member of his family to pursue a career in medicine and was chosen as this year’s Chief Resident.



**Dr. Patick McIntosh** is from the Bristow and Tulsa area. He graduated with a bachelor’s in mathematics from Concordia University in Chicago, Ill. He went on to Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, where he earned in doctorate in osteopathic medicine in 2020. He enjoys spending time outside snowboarding, kiteboarding, mountain biking and paragliding. Staying active is important to him so he can be an example of enjoying a healthy lifestyle.

Dr. McIntosh is newly engaged and his fiancée, Alexis Rule, is completing her occupational therapy training this year. He plans to continue working with the Choctaw Nation as a family medicine physician.



**Daniel Stacy, D.O.**, grew up in Poteau, Okla. He received his bachelor’s degree in biology from the University of Arkansas in Fort Smith, Ark. and continued in Fort Smith to earn his doctorate in osteopathic medicine from Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Dr. Stacy is married, to Haylee, and they have a son together, Cooper Dee. When not working, he enjoys hunting, fishing, singing and writing songs. He has a brother that is a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

Dr. Stacy plans to continue working for Choctaw Nation and looks forward to buying a house and growing his family.

The residents completed the program on June 30, 2024, and are eligible for board certification in family medicine. They gathered with family and friends for a graduation ceremony recently to celebrate.

Gillette remarked, “They’ve not only acquired the medical knowledge and skills necessary for excellence but have also shown an unwavering dedication to patient care, community health, and continuous learning. Their passion for medicine and genuine care for their patients will undoubtedly lead to transformative impacts in the communities they serve.”

The ceremony included recognition for the faculty that give their time to teach the residents throughout their three years of the program. This year’s Attending of the Year is Quinton Tieu, D.O. “It’s such an honor to work with these young doctors,” says Dr. Tieu. “Being chosen by those we guide and mentor is the highest compliment. This award reflects not just my efforts but the collaborative spirit and dedication of our entire faculty.”



### INFORMATION UPDATES

**Labor Day Festival Games and Tournaments**

- Pre-register for individual and team events for this year’s Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival. Deadline for online registrations: August 2, 2024.

For more information, visit [laborday.choctawnation.com](http://laborday.choctawnation.com).

To stay update to on all Labor Day information, text **LABORDAY** to 888777.



**Cornhole Tournament Update** - Cornhole tournament will take place on Friday, August 30, 2024. Registration starts at 8:00 a.m. and tournament starts at 9:15 a.m. Registration will take place on site only, there will be no pre-registration. This will be a two bracket tournament (beginners and advanced). Participants must have a Scoreholio account (<https://scoreholio.com/>). Participants may bring their own bags. Tournament will follow AOC rules.

**Tent Scramble** - Beginning Saturday, August 24 at 10:00 a.m., the gates at Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds will open for in-person tent campsite marking to begin. The festival begins Friday, August 30 and ends Sunday, September 1. RV gates will open at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, August 28.

**Schedule Announcement** - We hope you will join us on the Choctaw Nation Capitol Grounds at Tvshka Homma August 30 - September 1 for a weekend of family, fellowship, and traditions. The full schedule of events can be found online.

**Entertainment** - We’re thrilled to announce the official entertainment lineup for the 2024 Choctaw Labor Day Festival! Join us for live music on Saturday and Sunday evenings during the festival. Saturday: The Close at 6:00 p.m. | Joey Green Band at 6:45 p.m. | Rodney Atkins 9:00 p.m. Sunday: Gold City 6:00 p.m. | Jason Crabb 7:00 p.m. | Casting Crowns 8:30 p.m.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

BUSINESS

# CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT ♦ CHAT

Assessing Mid-Year Financials: A Crucial Step for Small Business Success

**By Brittany Rice**

As the calendar flips past the halfway mark, it’s an opportune moment for small business owners to take stock of their financial health. Conducting a thorough mid-year financial assessment can provide valuable insights, allowing you to make informed decisions for the remainder of the year. Here’s why mid-year is the perfect time for this evaluation and how to go about it effectively.

**Why Mid-Year Financial Assessment Matters**

1. **Course Correction:** By mid-year, you have enough data to see trends and patterns. This allows you to adjust strategies that aren’t working and reinforce those that are.
2. **Budget Revisions:** Mid-year review helps in realigning your budget. You can compare actual spending with the budgeted amounts and make necessary adjustments.
3. **Tax Planning:** Early tax planning can lead to significant savings. Reviewing your financials now can help you make strategic decisions that reduce your tax burden.
4. **Cash Flow Management:** Ensuring you have adequate cash flow is critical. A mid-year check can help in identifying potential cash flow issues and taking steps to mitigate them.
5. **Goal Setting:** Revisiting your business goals and financial targets at mid-year helps in setting realistic expectations for the remaining months.

**Steps for an Effective Mid-Year Financial Review**

1. **Review Income Statements:** Analyze your income statement to understand your revenue and expenses. Look at the trends and see if your revenue is growing and if your expenses are within the expected range.
2. **Balance Sheet Analysis:** Evaluate your assets, liabilities, and equity. Ensure your business is building value and not accumulating excessive debt.
3. **Cash Flow Statement:** Review your cash flow statement to track the inflow and outflow of cash. This helps in understanding your liquidity position.
4. **Compare Against Budget:** Look at your financial performance compared to your budget. Identify variances and understand the reasons behind them.
5. **Review Receivables and Payables:** Ensure your accounts receivable are being collected

timely and you’re managing your payables efficiently.

6. **Assess Profit Margins:** Check your gross and net profit margins. If they are not meeting expectations, dig into the reasons and strategize improvements.
7. **Inventory Levels:** For businesses dealing with inventory, ensure you’re not overstocking or understocking. Both situations can tie up cash unnecessarily.
8. **Debt Evaluation:** Review your debt levels and repayment plans. Ensure you’re not over-leveraged and have a clear plan for managing debt.
9. **Tax Review:** Consult with your accountant to review your tax situation. Look for opportunities for tax savings and ensure you’re compliant with all tax obligations.
10. **Financial Ratios:** Analyze key financial ratios like the current ratio, quick ratio, and debt-to-equity ratio. These ratios help in assessing the financial health of your business.

**Action Steps Post Review**

1. **Adjust Budgets and Forecasts:** Based on your findings, update your budgets and forecasts for the remainder of the year.
2. **Implement Cost Controls:** If expenses are higher than expected, implement cost control measures to avoid overspending.
3. **Strategize Revenue Growth:** Identify opportunities to increase revenue, whether through new marketing initiatives, expanding product lines, or entering new markets.
4. **Improve Collections:** Strengthen your accounts receivable processes to ensure timely collections.
5. **Plan for Taxes:** Make any necessary adjustments to your tax planning strategy to optimize tax savings.
6. **Set New Goals:** Based on your mid-year assessment, set new financial goals and create a roadmap to achieve them.

A mid-year financial assessment is a critical exercise for small businesses aiming for sustained success. It provides an opportunity to reflect on past performance, identify areas for improvement, and strategically plan for the future. By taking the time to conduct a thorough review, you can steer your business toward achieving its financial goals for the year. Remember, the key to a successful financial review is not just in the analysis, but in the actions you take based on the insights gained.

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## Chulai (July) 2024

**In This Issue**

- 2 FFC
- 4 Council Corner
- 5 NTN
- 6 PYK
- 7 PYK
- 8 PTK
- 9 Obits
- 10 Iti
- 11 Health
- 13 Choctaw Landing Art

**Page 1:**

Choctaw Landing officially opens in Hochatown.

**Page 3:**

Celebrating the life and legacy of Norma Howard.

**Page 12:**

Trail of Tears Bike Team makes 400-mile journey to honor ancestors.

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

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