

In the U.S., November is recognized as Native American Heritage Month. The month is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions and histories and acknowledge Indigenous people's essential contributions to this country. Native American Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about tribes, to raise general awareness about the unique challenges Indigenous people have faced both historically and in the present, and how tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges.

This month, the Biskinik has chosen to highlight just a few of the many Choctaw tribal members making a difference in their communities and representing the Choctaw Nation as they accomplish their goals and dreams. If you or someone you know is a Choctaw tribal member doing great things, feel free to share their story with us at <https://www.choctawnation.com/submissions>.

# Choctaw Nation celebrates Native American Heritage Month

Below is a list of events the Choctaw Nation is hosting this November.

Attending one of these events is a great opportunity to celebrate Native American Heritage Month and learn more about Choctaw Culture.

Visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/native-november> for more information, a full list of events and to register for this year's Native November events.

## November 1:

### CHAHTA FEAST OF THE DEAD

The Feast of the Dead is a time of celebration for families and the community to give remembrance to those who have passed on. Join us at the Choctaw RV Park for this traditional Choctaw burial custom to honor and remember our loved ones.

- Potluck Style Meal: 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Bring a dish to share)
- Family Heritage Crafts: 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. (Rope-braiding and family history activity)
- Memorial Reflection and Ceremony: 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (Share stories about loved ones)

### RELEASE OF FINAL ECHO CHAHTA ANUMPA DUB

Marvel Studios will release the final dubbed episode of its series Echo. Having Echo dubbed in Choctaw is an especially significant milestone for the tribe.

Teresa Billy and other language experts worked diligently with Marvel Studios to ensure the highest level of accuracy in the translation process.

The first episode of the dub was released on both Disney+ and Hulu on January 9, 2024, and the final dubbed episode will be released on November 1, 2024.

### ITTAHOBA FESTIVAL 2024

Celebrate Ittahoba Festival at the Choctaw Cultural Center. Admission is complimentary for Choctaw tribal members and Cultural Center members.

- 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Choctaw Singing
- 11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Meet the Artist- Kristin Gentry
- 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Stickball Demonstration
- 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Traditional Games
- 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Demonstration Tables
- 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Tour of Okhvta Chito Okhoatali
- 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Choctaw Language Through Storytelling
- 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Social Dancing Demonstration

## November 1-3:

### CHOCTAW NATION POWWOW

Make plans to join us as we kick off Native American month with one of the nation's largest powwows. Experience the sights and sounds of dancers from all over the country. You won't want to miss it! This event is open to the public, no tickets required.

#### Friday, November 1, 2024

- 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Vendor Booth Setup
- 2:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Gourd Dance (Choctaw Event Center)
- 5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Dancer Registration Begins
- 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Dance Specials (Adult Dancers Only)

#### Saturday, November 2, 2024

- 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. Dancer Registration (See Gwen Takes Horse)
- 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. Drum Registration
- 10:00 a.m. Doors Open to Public
- 12:00 p.m. Grand Entry
- 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Dance Specials
- 7:00 p.m. Grand Entry

#### Sunday, November 3, 2024

- 10:00 a.m. Doors Open to Public
- 10:00 a.m. Dance Specials
- 12:00 p.m. Grand Entry

Please note that the Powwow will be hosted at the Choctaw Event Center at 3702 Choctaw Road Durant OK 74701

## November 2:

### OU NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE APPRECIATION DAY

The University of Oklahoma will be hosting Native American Heritage Appreciation Day during its November 2 game versus Maine. For Discounted tickets, visit [soonersports.com/promocode](https://soonersports.com/promocode). Promo Code: NATIVE

### RUN TO HONOR VETERANS

Join us in this annual event to honor those who served our country and have some fun while doing it. The run includes a 1-mile route, 5K, 15K, or a three-person 15K relay. The routes will take you through scenic views of the area. In-person registration begins at 8:00 a.m. on race day. Race begins at 10:00 a.m.

## November 4:

### HERITAGE DAY AT HQ

This information-sharing event is designed to promote awareness of Choctaw tribal culture, heritage and history.

## November 8:

### CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER: LUKCHUK E PILA!

Please join us from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Living Village, where you will be able

to participate and learn from the Cultural Educators how our ancestors prepared the chukkas for winter. You will help with applying clay/mud mixture to the bare chukka. Lukchuk e pila! (Let's throw mud!)

## November 9:

### SE CHOCTAW NIGHT

The culture of Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) will be spotlighted when the Savage Storm Football team takes on the Arkansas Tech Golden Suns at Paul Laird Field on the campus of Southeastern Oklahoma State University at 2:00 p.m. Before the game, tailgate the CNO's College FYI in Tailgate Alley.

## November 11:

### CNO AND CCC CLOSED

Choctaw Nation facilities closed in observance of Veteran's Day.

### VETERAN'S DAY CEREMONY

Please join us November 11 in Tuskahoma at 11 a.m. as we express our gratitude and honor our Choctaw veterans who have served and sacrificed for our country during our Annual Choctaw Veterans Day Ceremony.

## November 13 – 17:

### ROCK YOUR MOCS

Wear your moccasins during Rock Your Mocs Week. Take a photo, create a video or story, add the hashtag #ROCKYOURMOCS and upload it to social media for the world to see and enjoy.

## November 15:

### MINI MOCS CLASS

Participants will use commercially-tanned leather to create a mini pucker-toe moccasin that you can use as an ornament or keyring! This event will take place at 10 a.m. Register at <https://chocta.ws/ce-virtual-workshops>.

### CINEMA AT THE CENTER: THE ADAMS FAMILY

This monthly series features a wide range of films designed around a fun, family-friendly theme. More information to come. 7:00 p.m. at the Cultural Center.

## November 16:

### CCC COOKING WORKSHOP: GRAPE DUMPLINGS

Participants will learn how to make grape dumplings from the Center's own Chef Tanya Nicholas. This workshop will take place from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Registration for this workshop is \$25.00 per person.

### VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY AT THE CCC

Join us from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. as we come together to celebrate our dedicated volunteers

at the Ibaiaya Volunteer Program's Volunteer Appreciation Day. It's a special occasion to express our gratitude for the incredible contributions of our volunteers. It's a day to recognize and thank those who have made a difference in our community through their selfless efforts.

## November 19:

### WEAR RED DAY

Wear red on November 19 to raise awareness and draw attention to missing or murdered Indigenous people.

## November 27:

### CNO AND CCC CLOSES EARLY

All Offices will close early for a tribal holiday in observance of Thanksgiving.

## November 28:

### CNO AND CCC CLOSED

All Offices will be closed for a tribal holiday in observance of Thanksgiving.

## November 29:

### CNO AND CCC CLOSED

All Offices will be closed for a tribal holiday to celebrate American Indian Heritage Day.

## Throughout the Month:

### CODE TALKER VIRTUAL WALK

Join the Healthy Lifestyle and Warrior Wellness teams for a 250-mile journey honoring the brave Choctaw men who used their native language as an unbreakable code to help defeat the Germans.

### WEAR YOUR REGALIA DAY

Every Wednesday during Native American Heritage Month will be Wear Your Regalia Day. Show your Choctaw pride in style.

### TRAVEL PLAZA SPECIAL

All CDIB card holders can receive a FREE fountain drink at any Travel Plaza location and The Mercantile during the month of November. Must present your CDIB card at checkout.

### THANKSGIVING MEALS

Throughout the Month of November, join your local Choctaw Community Center for their annual Thanksgiving Meals. Enjoy a delicious meal and plenty of fun with fellow Choctaws in your community. Check out the full schedule on page 12.

### WEBEX EVENTS

Throughout the Month of November, join us for virtual educational opportunities via WebEx. For more information, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/native-november>.

## Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

### Encouraging the Use of the Chahta Language *Chahta Anumpa Nana Kanihchi Yimintvchi*

In a previous blog post, I spoke about the importance of the Chahta language and what it means to the growth and development of the future of the Choctaw Nation. In Part 2 of our Chahta language discussion, I would like to highlight some of the steps we are taking as a tribe to ensure that our ancestral language is secure for future generations.

I want to begin by spotlighting the School of Choctaw Language, which was created to encourage and teach the use of the Chahta language so that a new generation of first-language speakers will promote our ancestral language. There are many avenues within the School of Choctaw Language where you can learn online and by hearing and seeing the language being used in conversation. You may notice that this blog you are reading right now is translated into Choctaw and has an audio component so you can see and hear how the

words sound, thanks to the efforts of the School of Choctaw Language to support and assist in turning this ongoing communication into yet another, ongoing learning opportunity for those interested in learning our Chahta language.

In addition, I would recommend that you go to the Choctaw Nation website, click on “About” and then click on “Language” and access the numerous language resources there, that can assist you in beginning your learning journey. From videos and language lessons to online teaching tools these valuable language learning resources can help get you immersed into the Chahta language. Once you have completed the website courses, I encourage you to apply to the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna (School of Choctaw Language). The Choctaw Nation Language Department has courses for every skill level, and I’m proud to say, we have extremely gifted and knowledgeable instructors who can guide you in the language of our people.

One of the challenges we created for our Choctaw Nation workforce is a program called “You Had Me at Halito.” The program encourages associates (our employees) to use terms like Yakoke (thank you), Halito (hello) and Chi Pisa La Chike (until we meet again, see you later) in your everyday conversations. Our hope is that Yakoke becomes as common as thank you to everyday people visiting the Choctaw Nation. I view it as a big win if our guests go home after visiting the Choctaw Nation and use the Chahta language off the reservation with their friends and family.

The promotion of our language not only ensures our culture remains vital, but it also announces that the Choctaw Nation is a proud, strong, sovereign nation that honors its heritage. Our language is just a part of the important culture that our ancestors have passed down to us. Our historic battles for our rights, sovereignty and language were hard fought and we should never turn our backs to the sacrifices of our ancestors.

And as another point of pride, I am proud to say that we have a record 15 new apprentices who graduated from our school of language on Sept. 20. The Assistant Chief and I were there to proudly congratulate our newest ambassadors of the Chahta language. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our School of Choctaw Language that we are graduating new Chahta language learners each year. It is a shining example of what we can do as a Chahta if we work hard, honor our history and achieve our goals.

I am excited to see where our new Chahta language speakers take us on this continuing learning journey. Our ancestors would be proud that the ideas and culture they created are being carried on by a new generation of Chahta. Yakoke students for all your hard work! And Yakoke to all tribal members, associates, and guests who help us in support of our focus on the importance of the Chahta language for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

## Patches

In the Book of Matthew chapter 9 and verse 16, we read, “No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.” The word “new” is from a Greek word meaning “unfilled, undressed, or shrinkable.” To patch an old garment with a piece of new or shrinkable clothes would not be prudent. Should the garment get wet, the new piece would shrink and pull away from the material in the garment, causing damage.

The last state of the garment would be worse than the first. There is no affinity between the old garment and the new cloth. It was imperative that old garments be patched with old cloth or that new garments be patched with new cloth.

Metaphorically, our Lord is speaking about the old garment being the old dispensation of the Mosaic Law. The old garment of ritualism, ceremonies and ordinances has come to an end. The new dispensation of the Law of Grace is the new garment.

The salvation plan of the Old Testament and the New Testament are incompatible, and if used without proper discernment, they would cause harm. If man uses natural mind without the discernment of the scriptures by the Holy Spirit to lead in church service teachings, it would be disastrous. The requirements of the law, without requirements of Grace, would provide no flexibility in operation.

Galatians 4:1-5 says, “Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage, under the elements of the world; But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoptions of sons.”

Ephesians 2:8,9 reads, “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Old Testament salvation is through works. New Testament salvation is through Grace, which is the finished work of Jesus on the Cross.

## Chess Health Connections App

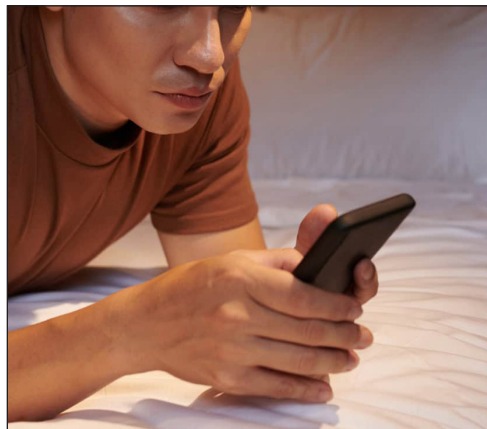


Photo Provided

CNO provides Chess Health Connections App to tribal community, at no cost.

learning and practicing recovering skills which are engaging, interactive, and proven in clinical trials to result in better outcomes.

Contingency Management: tracking the patients’ steps and rewarding them throughout their journey.

Choctaw Nation has a special website to connect patients and community members to the app. Complete the form to get started. If you have not already visited with a Choctaw Nation counselor, choose the last option, “Other/I’m Not Listed” to continue. Once that form is complete, you will receive a link to download the app to your phone. If you encounter any issues, feel free to contact any Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Clinic and ask to speak to someone who can help you with the Chess Connections App.

**DURANT, Okla.** – Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health provides the Chess Health Connections App at no cost to our community. The app is an evidence-based app that reinforces coping and recovery skills to help individuals adhere to their treatment plan and stay in recovery.

Available in English and Spanish, the app includes:

Peer Engagement Team: a discussion board available 24/7 offering lively encouragement and provides crisis support.

Virtual Support Meetings: fostering community and catering to individuals’ specific needs, meetings are tailored to specific audiences.

Digital CBT for Recovery: online learning and practicing recovering skills which are engaging, interactive, and proven in clinical trials to result in better outcomes.

Contingency Management: tracking the patients’ steps and rewarding them throughout their journey.

Choctaw Nation has a special website to connect patients and community members to the app. Complete the form to get started. If you have not already visited with a Choctaw Nation counselor, choose the last option, “Other/I’m Not Listed” to continue. Once that form is complete, you will receive a link to download the app to your phone. If you encounter any issues, feel free to contact any Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Clinic and ask to speak to someone who can help you with the Chess Connections App.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

## Time for Reflecting on What We are Thankful for

November is generally the time to reflect on the past year, the upcoming holiday season and all the blessings we should be thankful for.

The mornings are a little cooler, the leaves have changed colors and have fallen from the trees, and the winter season is creeping in.

The Choctaw Nation has a lot to be thankful for – first and foremost are all the tribal members. Chief Batton and I attend many events across the reservation and country – our Chahta family is always there with a smile and a warm embrace.

You never fail to offer great insight and inspiration to me and for that I am extremely thankful.

The tribe is the sole reason why we work so hard to ensure that all the services and programs that the Choctaw Nation provides will be there for our citizens now and well into the future.

Just this past September, the nation held another extremely successful Labor Day Festival. Our associates, executive team and tribal members came together for a great event that highlights our faith, family and culture. If you want a crash course in what the Chahta Spirit is, I suggest attending the Labor Day Festival to see what the Choctaw Nation is all about.

The Labor Day Festival also launched Chief Batton’s annual State of the Nation report and highlighted all the successes of the Choctaw Nation in 2024. Our departments reported a successful year that should be a great launch pad into more success in 2025.

If you haven’t had a chance to see the 2024 State of the Nation, go to [www.choctawnation.com](http://www.choctawnation.com), click on News, click on Videos and scroll down to find State of the Nation 2024. It is worthwhile to find out what the Choctaw Nation has accomplished in 2024 and how each department reported their successes this year.

The Choctaw Nation is growing, and we are adding more employees each year to cover all the new services and programs that we offer.

Choctaw Landing opened this year and brought more than 400 new jobs to Southeastern Oklahoma. It is a beautiful, new resort that we hope you will take advantage of.

The Hochatown area of Oklahoma is one of the most beautiful areas of the country and it is always nice to see the scenery and nature when I am there.

As we approach the holiday season, I know it is easy to get lost in the hustle and bustle. It is important that you take time to stop and remember why we celebrate Thanksgiving and all the blessings we have received this year.

There are ups and downs each year, but you are here, breathing and full of hope for what comes next. Enjoy the simple things in life and if you do that, the complex things that life throws at you will not seem so insurmountable.

Reach out to friends and family this year. Make that phone call to a relative or friend you haven’t talked to in a while. Volunteer to help people in need. Donate to a food bank. In this month of Veterans Day, thank a veteran for their service. Drop by and see a friend or neighbor who has been having a rough time this year and make their day a little brighter. Be a light to someone who is going through a dark time. Being kind has never been a waste of time or energy. And it costs nothing to be kind.

Most of all, count your blessings and be thankful for all that you have. Remember to thank the Good Lord for every new day you are given – it is a blessing, so be thankful.

## CNO partners with geolocation service for mobile initiative

**DURANT, Okla. (October 9, 2024)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has partnered with GeoComply to provide geo-verification services for the tribal nation’s upcoming Class II mobile gaming initiative. GeoComply’s PinPoint technology will be utilized to ensure that all Class II mobile gaming activity occurring at Choctaw tribal casinos is compliant with regulatory requirements.

The future roll-out of Class II mobile gaming represents an exciting new opportunity for the Choctaw Nation to offer innovative gaming experiences to their patrons. This initiative will allow customers to participate in Class II mobile gaming from within the casino and across tribal lands, marking an important step forward for tribes that are interested in exploring the broader benefits of online gaming.

“We are excited to partner with GeoComply for our Class II mobile gaming project,” said Chris Scrivner, Executive Director of Gaming and Hospitality for the Choctaw Nation.

“Their PinPoint technology is a proven on-premise geofencing solution that provides us with reliability and compliance so we can offer mobile gaming to our patrons with full confidence. This initiative opens the door for us to engage our customers in new ways.”



Choctaw Nation Photo

CNO partners with GeoComply to provide geo-verification services for the tribal nation’s upcoming Class II mobile gaming initiative.

“Class II mobile gaming will further enhance the Choctaw Nation’s position on the leading-edge of innovation in the casino industry,” said Sam Basile, VP of Business Development at GeoComply. “We are thrilled to support them with our advanced geolocation services. By providing secure, compliant and user-friendly technology, like PinPoint, we’re helping the Choctaw Nation deliver an omnichannel gaming experience to their customers while safeguarding the integrity of their operations.”

## CNO receives \$5 Million grant for Energy Improvements on their Poteau, OK Campus

**DURANT, Okla. (September 24, 2024)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) has been awarded a \$5 million grant through the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas (ERA) Program to increase energy reliability and efficiency across its Poteau campus, saving the tribe almost \$150,000 a year in energy costs.

Funding will enable CNO to implement a battery energy storage system that will replace diesel generators in the event of a power outage, increasing energy reliability and reducing carbon footprint.

Additional energy efficiency improvements will include insulation, HVAC upgrades, lighting retrofits to LED, and other building enhancements that will bring buildings into energy-saving standards campus-wide.

To implement these changes, the Energy Management Division of CNO’s Utility Department is partnering with OG&E. Trent Marlett, Energy Manager and Project Director, says, “We are constantly looking for innovative ways to make CNO campuses more energy efficient and resilient while using our resources



Choctaw Nation Photo

CNO receives grant from the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Program to increase Poteau campus energy efficiency.

appropriately. Our unique partnership with OG&E ensures vital social services, including the health clinic, child development center, and food distribution center, continue to function in the event of an outage.”

CNO’s Utility Department is charged with tracking daily utility usage and costs and coordinates with utility providers for every facility on the reservation. Since its creation almost 10 years ago, the department has saved the tribe millions of dollars in utility costs while adding 16 facilities over the past year alone.

# The Inchunwa Project: A journey to reviving Southeastern tribal tattoos

By Christian Chaney

What began as a casual online discussion among Choctaw community members has grown into a cultural rebirth, reconnecting Native communities with their ancestral roots through the Inchunwa Project.

The story of Inchunwa began in 2017 when a small group of Choctaws started researching the cultural significance of traditional tattoos.

While Lindsay Reeder-Mendoza wasn't part of the initial group, she joined in 2018 when conversations about traditional tattoos resumed in an online chat for Choctaw women and Two-Spirits.

"We talked about gathering together to walk the Trail of Tears and receive our tattoos as a way to commemorate our friendship," Reeder-Mendoza said.

These conversations laid the foundation for what would become the Inchunwa Project.

From 2018 to 2021, a small group of passionate individuals gathered on Zoom and Discord to conduct interviews, research and develop a podcast to share their findings.

This podcast would later become a key part of the Inchunwa movement, providing a platform for education and cultural preservation.

For Reeder-Mendoza, the meaning of Inchunwa goes beyond the literal translation of the Chahta word, which means "to be marked, branded, or tattooed."

For her, the project symbolizes community, friendship and belonging.

Through Inchunwa, she has not only deepened her personal connections but also helped others reconnect with their cultural heritage.

"Some people from the community have reached out and said how much this project has helped them heal emotionally."

The project wasn't without its challenges. In the early stages, the team of young Choctaw and Chickasaw community members struggled to figure out how to spread their message and fund the project.

"We were four college kids who were just inspired to research but had no clue how to do anything else," Reeder-Mendoza said.

Despite the challenges, the group persevered, and with support from the broader Native community, they built a library of interviews and first-hand accounts, advancing the visibility of cultural tattooing.

Reeder-Mendoza believes that traditional tattoos are a vital part of Southeastern tribal identity.

Historically, these tattoos weren't just decorative but served as a form of communication, representing a person's place within the community and connection to nature.

"We tattooed flora, fauna and constellations important to our people. We were tattooed for rites of passage and life markers," she explained. "These Inchunwa were so important and intertwined into so many aspects of our ancestors' lives."

She stated that Southeastern Native communities stopped tattooing not by choice but due to colonization.

As a result, Inchunwa is not merely a "revitalization" project—it's a "revivalization" project. "We want to revive our Inchunwa, breathe life into them again amongst our people, where they belong," she said.

Tattooing traditions vary among Southeastern tribes, but there are common designs, including lines and swirls.

While each tribe assigns meanings to these designs, the shared history of intertribal exchanges is evident in the similarities.

"Before colonization, Southeastern tribes traded and intermingled amongst one another, influencing each other. So, it's no surprise to me as an art historian that we all carry similar imagery on our bodies," Reeder-Mendoza explained.

Today, there's an understanding within the community that designs can be shared and interchanged among Southeastern people.

The decision to create a podcast stemmed from the desire to make this information more accessible.

The team initially considered writing a book, but they realized a podcast was a quicker and more effective way to reach their audience.

"Listening to information for a lot of people is an easier way to learn compared to reading," says Reeder-Mendoza, who also happens to be dyslexic. "We do still plan to write a book, but for now, the podcast is the best way for us to share what we've learned."

The Inchunwa podcast has resonated deeply with listeners. Episode three of the first series, which explores the intersections of Southeastern tattoo history and Native history, remains the most listened-to episode.

Reeder-Mendoza recalls her interview with long-time friend Danie Cansino in episode four, where they discussed the global history of tattooing and its relevance to Native tattoo history.

Another memorable moment was her conversation with Julie Cordero-Lamb in episode 13 of series three, in which they discussed the importance of adapting traditional practices to modern times.

The community's response to Inchunwa has been overwhelmingly positive.

At events like the Indigenous Futurisms Festival and IPX 2024, Inchunwa's panels drew large crowds eager to learn more.

"At IPX 2024 at FAM, our booth had to be staffed by six people, even though we had no retail options and were only sharing academic findings, research and temporary tattoos," Reeder-Mendoza said.

For Reeder-Mendoza, the most rewarding part of the Inchunwa project is hearing from individuals who have found healing and reconnection through the movement.

"When someone tells me my research has helped them feel more connected or healed in any way, admittedly, I cry. They're always happy tears when I hear that I've helped a fellow Native in any capacity," she said.

For Reeder-Mendoza, these moments have helped her on her own healing journey.

Another member of Inchunwa is Miss Indian Oklahoma, Faithlyn Taloa Seawright. Seawright is using her platform to preserve and celebrate southeastern tribal traditions through her involvement with the project.

Seawright has two types of tattoos, including six lines on her fingers and two lines on her face.

Her tattoos carry both cultural and personal significance.

The six lines on her fingers pay homage to southeastern traditional tattoos, and she said each one represents a personal promise to herself to be better in some way.

Of the six lines, one is red to raise awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women.

Seawright's tattoos also hold a deep personal connection to her family's experience with loss.

"My mother and my father experienced infant loss when they were trying to conceive me, and so I picked that number from a discussion I had with them," Seawright said. "As it honors these siblings that I have that did not get to, you know, walk this earth with me. And so, I carry them in their memory on my hands."

The two lines across her face represent womanhood, and that she does not have children.

"When I become like a mother, have kids, or become an older adult, I can have three lines," said Seawright. "When I become an elder or have grandkids, I can have four lines."

Seawright explained that the decision to receive a traditional tattoo should not be made lightly.

"I was taught to pray about them and wait for it to come. Wait until either you feel the time is right to add on to your tattoos or to get one. Don't just go out and get them because all images have a meaning."

Seawright believes traditional tattoos play a large part in educating non-natives and create a pathway to introduce them to Indigenous culture.

"I think it's just a visual impact to show that we are still here. You know, since I've gotten my tattoos, I started getting them in 2018; I get asked by people all over the state, all over the country, and even around the world about them. And it's just that



Photo Provided

Inchunwa is a community-rooted project seeking to use the revitalization of traditional southeastern tattoos as a catalyst for healing in southeastern tribal communities.

moment to educate for them, to just interact," said Seawright. "Because some people have never met a Native American person, they don't know that we're still here. They don't know we're still alive and showing that visually, and getting to tell them in person and answer any questions and negative stereotypes, you know, like help to knock those down and show them how we're here. We're proud of people, and we're not going away anytime soon."

Seawright also encourages people to start by learning about their culture in general.

"I always encourage starting out learning about just culture in general, going out to our cultural centers, learning, knowing your family lineage, because our tattoos can signify anything, where you come from, who you are, who your family is."

Inchunwa has big plans for the future.

The team hopes to develop a tattoo apprenticeship program for southeastern Natives who want to learn the practice of cultural tattooing.

They also hope to launch a website that will serve as an information hub for those interested in learning about traditional tattoos.

"We'll be able to take all the information we've gathered over the years from different books and resources and have them in a central location to make it easier for everyone to learn," Reeder-Mendoza said.

For those who want to support the project, Reeder-Mendoza encourages readers to tune in to the podcast, follow Inchunwa on social media and consider donating through Patreon.

With upcoming events like the Indigenous Tattoo & Music Festival in Albuquerque, where Inchunwa will lead a panel on the intersections of body sovereignty and cultural heritage in tattoo revival work, the project shows no signs of slowing down.

Reeder-Mendoza and her team are already planning for 2025, with participation in major events such as IndigiPopX and the Okla Chahta Clan Gathering in California.

As Inchunwa continues to grow, its mission remains clear: to revive and celebrate the traditional tattoos that once defined Southeastern Native identity, ensuring they remain a living part of the culture for generations to come.

For more information, visit <https://www.icollectiveinc.org/memberprojects/inchunwa>

## Choctaw students begin studies in Ireland

**DURANT, Okla. (September 13, 2024)** – Choctaw tribal members Cayden Keith Cooke Kirkpatrick and Jake Martin recently started classes at University College Cork in Ireland.

They are this year's recipients of the prestigious Choctaw-Ireland Scholarships from the Chahta Foundation. Both are working on master's-level degrees in their respective fields.

The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarships program was initiated in 2017 by the government of Ireland in recognition of Choctaw communities helping Irish people during the Great Famine, sometimes called the Potato Famine of the mid-19th century. In 2024, Ireland's gift of scholarships includes tuition and expenses for a full year of study for two Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma students each year.

Kirkpatrick, 22, graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a bachelor's degree with comprehensive honors in history, astronomy-physics and French. He also earned a certificate in American Indian and Indigenous studies. He served as president of the school's American Indian Science and Engineering Society chapter. Kirkpatrick also

received support from the Choctaw Nation Higher Education Program.

Kirkpatrick previously studied abroad for a semester at Sciences Po Aix in Aix-en-Provence, France. In Cork he is pursuing a master's degree in philosophy.

"I am extremely grateful to the Chahta Foundation, the Choctaw Nation, Cork, and the Irish government for sponsoring this program and selecting me to participate in it," Kirkpatrick said. "This is a wonderful way to strengthen the historical and enduring connection between our communities and I am excited to play a role in this relationship."

After graduating from Cork, Kirkpatrick plans to attend law school and focus on federal Indian law, then work in support of indigenous communities.

Martin, 28, a graduate of Broken Bow High, attended Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, where he received the Dr. David Parsons Scholarship. A perennial honor roll student, he graduated with distinction from the SOSU Honors Program and was an Honors Program Council member for multiple



Photos Provided

Choctaw tribal members Cayden Keith Cooke Kirkpatrick and Jake Martin, 2024 Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship recipients.

years and became a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honor Society. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in history.

"I am eternally grateful for the generosity of the Choctaw Nation and Chahta Foundation," Martin said. "I think this is an amazing opportunity to further my education, immerse myself in Irish culture, and be a spokesman and

educator on behalf of the Choctaw Nation."

Martin is looking forward to pursuing a master's degree in museum studies.

Upon graduation, Martin plans to seek a position as a curator or administrator at a "great museum or heritage center, preferably with the Choctaw Nation."

## 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 INRI, University of Washington and Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse – R01056416-01A1

## SEE AND SHARE OUR STORIES AT

TogetherWereMore.com

Choctaw Nation

SCAN CODE TO VIEW STORIES

## CHOCTAW NATION VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

November 11 | 11 AM  
Choctaw Capitol Grounds (Arts & Crafts Building)  
Council House Rd. | Tuskahoma, OK 74574

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

Please join us as we express our gratitude and honor our Choctaw Veterans that served and sacrificed for our country.

For any questions, contact Choctaw Tribal Events  
800.522.6170 | [TribalEvents@choctawnation.com](mailto:TribalEvents@choctawnation.com)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Jennifer Woods

## District 6

Halito from District 6!  
 Fall is finally here, and we're enjoying the cooler temperatures and beautiful fall colors in the trees. We have a couple of programs that we host monthly, one of which is our Choctaw Language class. The class is held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 1:00 p.m. with Steven Parrish as its teacher. Make plans to attend, and please share this information as we work to keep our language alive.  
 The second program is our Tvshka Coffee Club, which is a Warrior Wellness Veteran Support event that allows you to join other veterans for a cup of coffee and good conversation. This event is held on the third Thursday of each month at 11:00 a.m. These are both great programs that we are sure

will benefit our tribal members. With the holidays just around the corner, we have several events that we would like to make you aware of.

Our seniors will be holding a Bingo Fundraiser on November 16 at 5:00 p.m., and our Small Business Department will be hosting a Christmas bazaar on Saturday, November 23, from 10:00 to 2:00. "Christmasfest" will be a great opportunity to browse and buy some Christmas presents from our Chahtapreneurs who will be set up. The event is free admission with vendors, food and more. We ask you to please come out and support these events. We are sure that you will enjoy them.

The District 6 princesses, Sr. Miss Aiana Holman, Jr. Miss Bella Muncy and Little Miss Omba Ramsey, will be busy with all of the parades and holiday parties that are scheduled for our district.

Thanksgiving is just about on us, and we will be having Thanksgiving lunch on November 20 at 11:00 a.m. We will also have the nursing staff present that day to give out flu shots if you are in need of one.

Our children's Christmas party will be held on December 10 at 5:30 p.m., and our senior Christmas lunch will be on December 11 at 11:00 a.m. Be sure to mark your calendars and make plans to join us for these holiday parties.

If you want more information regarding the events at the center, please be sure to call the center at 918-465-2389. Our staff will be happy to help you.

I also want to remind everyone about our housing programs that are available to you. We need applications for our LEAP homes as well as the Independent Elders and Affordable Rentals in order to be able to build more. Please send your applications as soon as possible so we can get more of these beautiful, energy-efficient homes built in our communities.

We would like to congratulate our new District 6 Outstanding Seniors, Ken Baker and Mary Holman. They are both very active with the seniors, playing chair volleyball, helping with fundraisers, and being a part of their monthly meetings. They are also a part of the District 6 Choctaw singers; they attend Choctaw Language classes, attend senior trips, and so much more. We look forward to their representation for our district for the 2024-2025 year.

With the Thanksgiving season upon us, let's remember to be thankful. We are a very blessed people, and we are blessed to be a blessing to others. We have been blessed with many programs and benefits that are available to help support our people. And we are very grateful to you, our tribal members, for allowing us to serve you.

Yakoke!



Left: Castin Cooper, 8 years old, from Fort Towson plays game of checkers against Councilwoman Jennifer Woods at the Labor Day Festival.

Right: Kenneth Baker (top) and Mary Holman (bottom) were recently honored as Outstanding Choctaw Elders for District 6.

## Josephine Baker named CNO First Language Speaker of the Month

Josephine Baker was honored as the October 2024 First Language Speaker of the Month. Unfortunately, Mrs. Baker passed away a few weeks ago. Josephine's family was in attendance of the October 12 Tribal Council Meeting to accept the nomination on her behalf.



Josephine Jefferson Baker, age 82 passed away on Tuesday, September 24, 2024 at St. Francis Health in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She was born on February 4, 1942 in Bethel, Oklahoma, the daughter of Earl and Bessie Bohanan. Josephine was a cherished member of the community and a member of the Kulli Chito Presbyterian Church.

In 1984, she moved from Bethel, to Idabel, where she became an integral part of her community. Josephine's passion for her Choctaw heritage shone brightly through her singing of Choctaw Hymns and her active participation in chair volleyball with the Choctaw Nation Senior Citizens.

A lover of life's simple pleasures, Josephine enjoyed crocheting, cooking, and leisurely rides with her daughter Sharon. Above all, her family was her greatest joy. Josephine's love and devotion to her family were evident in the joy she found in spending time with them. Her warmth, spirit, and kindness will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

## Joe Jessie is Veteran of the Month

Joe Donald Jessie, District #1, is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month.

Jessie was born May 13, 1940, in Garvin, Okla., the youngest of nine children. At age five, his family relocated to Wright City where his father worked in a sawmill. In 1952, the family moved to Broken Bow, and Jessie graduated high school there in 1959.

After high school, Jessie moved to Houston, Texas to work part-time in construction and attend junior college. Dissatisfied with an instructor, he returned to Broken Bow and enlisted in the U.S. Army and was inducted on Oct. 14, 1959.

Jessie attended basic training at Fort Hood, TX and was assigned to Fort Eustis, Virg., before becoming stationed in Schleissheim, Germany, near Munich. Trained as a helicopter repair and maintenance technician, he served in the 571st Aircraft Maintenance Battalion, repairing helicopters including the Sikorsky H-34 transport helicopter, and created metal molds for repairs. He credits the Army with helping him develop a strong work ethic. Though he volunteered for service in Vietnam, his enlistment was nearing its end, and he remained in Germany. He spent most of his military career there but was discharged a few months early to return home to care for his ailing father. His only leave during his time in the service was for Christmas, shortly after his enlistment. He was honorably discharged from Fort Sill, Okla.,



in 1962, having attained the rank of E-4. After returning to civilian life, Jessie attended college in Wilburton, Okla., before moving back to Houston to work as a crane operator, traveling throughout Texas and Louisiana. He worked as a crane operator as well during the construction of the paper mill in Valliant, Okla. Jessie returned to Houston, but later moved back to Valliant as crew lead operator for Weyerhaeuser, overseeing inventory management in the Chip Yard for 18 yards. He retired after 34 years of service in 2006.

Jessie was married to Estalene for more than 50 years until her passing. He and Pat Owens have been married for the past eight years. He wishes to congratulate other veterans and thank them for their service, time and sacrifices.

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.

## CNO presented check from USDA Rural Utilities Services' Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program



**DURANT, Okla.** – On October 10, 2024, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma accepted a check on behalf of the Choctaw School of Language from the Oklahoma USDA State Director, Kenneth Corn.

Thanks to the USDA Rural Utilities Services – Distance Learning and Telemedicine program, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma received a grant of \$261,687 (DLT24) for distance learning equipment at Jones Academy and 19 southeast Oklahoma public schools teaching the Choctaw language. Each language lab will be upgraded with a video bar, a

65-inch display monitor, a mobile cart, and new Zoom Pro licenses.

The Choctaw Nation is also matching this grant with \$39,253, to ensure our students have the best resources available!

Schools receiving upgrades include: Achille, Atoka, Battiest, Buffalo Valley, Colbert, Hartshorne, Haworth, Kinta, Kiowa, McAlester, Mill Creek, Panama, Pocola, Poteau, Spiro, Stuart, Talihina, Whitesboro, Wilburton, and Jones Academy for grades 1-12.

## WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Jordan Grotts

We hope that everyone is enjoying the warm fall season we're having this year. Soon, we will be looking forward to warmer days. Until then, the cool mornings of fall signal deer, elk, bears, and other game to begin preparing for winter. Humans call this part of the year the rut, or the time of year when deer and elk shift their behavior to benefit breeding. This includes bucks sparring to settle dominance, maintaining scrapes, and searching for does. On the other hand, this time of year triggers bears in the Choctaw Nation Reservation to begin hyperphagia or a period of excessive eating, although bears do not view it as excessive. Bears must consume upwards of 20,000 calories daily in order to gain and maintain weight in preparation for scarce food sources during late fall and throughout winter.

Those who harvested bears this year can attest to how large their appetite can be; hunters in Oklahoma who choose to bait for bears on private land often use interesting methods to draw them in. We frequently hear about hunters using sweets such as peanut butter, marshmallows, and honey buns which appeal to the natural urge bears have this time of year. This is especially important for sows or female bears. If they have mated during the summer, they will give birth to cubs in their den during winter, drawing on their fat stores to sustain them in less favorable winter conditions.

Oklahoma black bear populations are continuing to grow in the face of rapid changes in the landscape and increases in hunting pressure. This year marked the first year the Five Tribe Wildlife Management Reciprocity Agreement allowed tribal members of the five tribes to obtain a black bear permit through Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation, as well as the first-year permits were available to Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation lifetime license holders at no extra cost. Our department did not see an increase in harvest at the time of this article being written and state numbers are showing the same trend. From this information, we can ask questions about the future of black bear management and determine any future studies our department may conduct.

However you choose to get out this season, we look forward to seeing everyone enjoy the outdoors in a safe and fun atmosphere. If you have any questions about hunting or fishing, please do not hesitate to contact us by email at [wildlife@choctawnation.com](mailto:wildlife@choctawnation.com).



CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL	
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA	
September 14, 2024	
1. CALL TO ORDER	e. Approve the Disposal of Capital Assets – Equipment
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE	f. Approve the FY 2025 Budgets for the Indian Child Welfare Program and the Family Preservation Program
3. ROLL CALL	g. Approve Application for the FY24 Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program (DECGP)
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES	h. Resolution Naming Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Delegates to the National Congress of American Indians
a. Regular Session September 14, 2024	i. Resolution to Approve the Choctaw Nation Forestry Department to Conduct Timber Sales on Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Owned Lands
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS	9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
b. Veteran of the Month, District #1 – Joe Jessie	10. OLD BUSINESS
c. First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #1 – Josephine Baker	11. ADJOURNMENT
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None	12. CLOSING PRAYER
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES	
8. NEW BUSINESS	All votes passed unanimously
d. Approve the Disposal of Capital Assets – Vehicles	

# Upcoming Events

**Cinema at the Center** - This monthly series features a wide range of films designed around a fun, family-friendly theme. Join us in October for a screamin' good time or put Cinema at the Center on your Christmas list! In fact, why not add us to your calendar every month? We'd love to see you for movie night. Visit, [bit.ly/ccw-workshop-events](http://bit.ly/ccw-workshop-events) for more information.

**YAB 20 Years Celebration and Conference** - November 9, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. | Tvshka Homma Join us in celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB)! Over the past 20 years, YAB has empowered students to inspire positive change through servant leadership. Hear from YAB Alumni and Choctaw Nation Leadership as we celebrate this incredible achievement.

**Run to Honor Veterans** - November 2, 2024 | 10:00 a.m. | Talihina Health Care Center, One Choctaw Way Talihina, OK 7457 | Join us in this annual event to honor those who served our country and have some fun while doing it. The run includes a 1-mile route, 5K, 15K, or a three-person 15K relay. The routes will take you through scenic views of the area. After the run, browse multiple vendor booths and take photos with backdrop and finisher medal or award. In-person registration begins at 8:00 a.m. on race day. Visit [www.choctawnation.com/events/health/veterans-run](http://www.choctawnation.com/events/health/veterans-run) for more information.

**Coat Drive & Exchange** - October 14 -November 15, 2025 | Join us in spreading warmth this season! Donate clean, gently used coats for all ages at any CNO Head Start or Child Care Center. Have an extra coat? Donate it! Need a warmer one? Exchange it! For more information contact 580.642.7205 or email [cdthompson@choctawnation.com](mailto:cdthompson@choctawnation.com).

**Head Start Canned Food Drive** - October 14 -November 15, 2025 | All non-perishable food items welcome. Donations go to local families, food banks and churches. Drop off at CNO Headquarters, Health Clinics, Travel Plazas, Country Markets, Head Starts and Child Care Centers in Atoka, Antlers, Battiest, Bennington, Broken Bow, Coalgate, Durant, Hugo, Idabel, McAlester, Poteau, Stigler, Talihina, Wilburton and Wright City. For more information contact 580.642.7205 or email [cdthompson@choctawnation.com](mailto:cdthompson@choctawnation.com).

**Wellness Center Winter Apparel Drive** - November 1 - November 22, 2024 | Choctaw Wellness Centers | The Choctaw Nation is hosting its annual Winter Apparel Drive. This is an opportunity for community members to contribute to those in need by donating new winter items, including jackets, blankets, socks, gloves, beanies and scarves. Participants will earn entries into a prize drawing for each item donated, with prizes varying by facility. One entry is awarded for each jacket or blanket donated, and an additional entry is given for every five small items (such as socks, gloves, beanies or scarves). All donations must be new and can be dropped off at any Choctaw Nation Wellness Center. For more information, please visit your local Wellness Center.

**Wellness Center Toy Drive** - November 1 - November 22, 2024 | Choctaw Wellness Centers | Donate new, in-package toys (minimum \$5 value) and earn entries into a prize drawing! Every toy donated gives you an extra chance to win. Suggested items include developmental toys, sports gear, Lego blocks, baby dolls and gift cards for older kids. Drop off at your local Wellness Center. Prizes vary by location. Help make the holidays brighter for children in need! For more information, visit your local Wellness Center.

**Fresh Start Resource Fair** - November 14, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. | Antlers Choctaw Community Center | Join us for an opportunity to connect with free legal aid services, re-entry programs, and career and educational opportunities. You will leave empowered with knowledge and kickstart your next steps in life! Open to CDIB cardholders from any federally recognized tribe. Oklahoma Indian Legal Services, Choctaw Nation Adult Education, CNO Vocational Rehabilitation, CNO Job for the Day, CNO 477 Program, CNO Career Development, Tribal Opioid Response, 988 Program, Warrior Wellness, Recovery In Progress, Community Health Nursing. Let us know you are coming! Fill out the short form so we can plan accordingly. For more information, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/events/career-fairs/fresh-start-resource-fair/>.

**Atoka Car Seat Checks and Safety Information Event** - November 21 | 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. | Atoka Choctaw Community Center | Our children are important, and we want to make sure we do all we can to protect them. Drop by this event to make sure your car seat(s) are installed correctly and are safe. Program representatives will also be on hand from Guiding Adolescent Parents, Choctaw Nation Youth Outreach, Chahta Inchukka, Choctaw Nation Housing-EnVision Program, TIPCAP, Children Matter, and other programs.

**Virtual NASA Astro Camp** - December 26- December 27, 2024 | Virtual | The first 50 Choctaw tribal members in grades 5-8 who sign up will be accepted to attend the camp. Participants must have sufficient internet connection and access to a computer/tablet with Zoom application. Email and home address for participant must be provided to receive Zoom link to join camp activities and a box of supplies (scissors, stapler, etc.) that will be mailed. Participants must wear school appropriate attire during Zoom calls. This event is sponsored by the Choctaw Nation Youth Events & Activities Program and NASA. Visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/events/youth-camps/astro-camp/> for more information.

# Programs & Services

**Jones Academy** - Did you know Jones Academy, established in 1891, has a long history of providing academic excellence? Originally founded as a school for Choctaw boys and named after Principal Chief Wilson N. Jones, the academy has been a cornerstone of Native American education for over a century. Throughout its history, Jones Academy has evolved into a tribally controlled Grant School while maintaining its commitment to serving Native American students. Today, with around 150 students, the academy continues its legacy of education and cultural preservation. To learn more about Jones Academy, visit [jonesacademy.org](http://jonesacademy.org).

**Youth Employment Services** - YES is offering exciting paid employment opportunities for youth aged 16-21 in the Choctaw Nation Reservation service area. YES is transitioning from a traditional 5-week summer work experience to a year-round employment opportunity with Project Auatvchi and Project Toksvli, allowing participants to work up to 200 hours at any time of the year. For more information, visit [choctawnation.com/services/youth-employment-services](http://choctawnation.com/services/youth-employment-services).

**Food Distribution Increases Amounts and Selections** - 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. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Public Health Survey** - Take the Choctaw Nation Community Health Survey and give your opinions on the availability and access to various services that provide for the welfare, safety and health of our communities.



**Choctaw Connect** - Make Chahta Connect your go-to resource for finding Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on the Choctaw reservation in Southeast Oklahoma. Whether you're looking to get connected or upgrade your service, Chahta Connect has you covered. For more information, visit [chahtaconnect.com](http://chahtaconnect.com).

**Food Distribution Report Household Changes** - Food Distribution participants must report household changes. Household changes may affect your eligibility. Please report any household changes immediately to your Food Distribution pickup site. Examples: Change in household size, increase in gross monthly income of more than \$100, change in residence and/or address, household no longer paying for shelter (house payment, rent, etc.), household no longer paying for utilities (electric, gas, water) or change in receipt of child support. Failure to report changes may result in ineligibility and or a claim against your household for over-issued food items. For more information, visit [choctawnation.com/food-distribution](http://choctawnation.com/food-distribution).

**Choctaw Cultural Center Membership** - Become a member of the Choctaw Cultural Center today! Your annual membership helps support the preservation of Choctaw culture. Membership benefits include: Complimentary admission to the Cultural Center, advance notice of special events and exhibits, invitations to members only events, discounts at Hvshi Gift Store and much more! Visit [choctawculturalcenter.com](http://choctawculturalcenter.com) for more information.

**Healthy Aging** - Provides wellness, social services, behavioral health services, case management and providers in geriatric-specific care to assist elders achieve a higher quality of life or maintain an optimal level of functioning and wellness. To be eligible, participants must be at least 55 years of age, verified by a tribal membership card and valid CDIB card. Case Management Services are available to non-elder high-risk patients. For more information, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/healthy-aging/>.

## NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Celebrate Recovery Native Nations Night

"Hurts, habits or hang-ups, you will leave better than you came."

Join us on November 18, 2024, at 6 p.m. (a meal will be served at 5 p.m.) at the First Baptist Church-Student Worship Center 1st Avenue and Beech Street, Durant, Oklahoma.

This free event will feature native food, music and speakers. Families are welcome.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

For more information, call 580-924-3573 or email [crdurant@fbcdurant.org](mailto:crdurant@fbcdurant.org).

### Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Mail to: Biskinik  
P.O. Box 1210  
Durant, OK 74702  
or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

Gary Batton  
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.  
Assistant Chief

The Official  
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the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Shauna Williams, Executive Director  
Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director  
Kellie Matherly, Content Development Director  
Kendra Wall, Content Development Manager  
Chris Jennings, News Reporter  
Christian Toews, News Reporter

P.O. Box 1210  
Durant, OK 74702  
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170  
[www.ChoctawNation.com](http://www.ChoctawNation.com)  
email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

The BISKINIK is printed each month as a service to Tribal members. The BISKINIK reserves the right to determine whether material submitted for publication shall be printed and reserves the right to edit submitted material which it finds inaccurate, profane, offensive or morally unacceptable. Copy may be edited for space, proper grammar and punctuation. Copy will be accepted in any readable form, but where possible, it is requested that material be typewritten and double-spaced. You must include an address and phone number where you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

If you are receiving more than one BISKINIK or your address needs to be changed, our Circulation Department would appreciate hearing from you at ext. 4028.

The BISKINIK is a nonprofit publication of the Choctaw Nation. Circulation is monthly. Deadline for articles and photographs to be submitted is the first day of each month to run in the following month.

Editor's Note: Views and opinions in reader-submitted articles are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Choctaw Nation.

**CHOCTAW VETERAN ADVOCACY PROGRAM**

Are You a Choctaw Veteran?

Let us help guide you to the benefits and services that you have earned.

580-642-8451 | [BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY](http://bit.ly/cno-veterans-advocacy)

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

**CHAHTAPRENEUR CHRISTMAS CATALOG**

VIEW THE DIGITAL CATALOG AT  
[CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM](http://CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM)

**Choctaw Nation** Small Business Development

# 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**

### Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna Nofimba Language Lesson

In English, the phrase "take my time to get there or to arrive there" implies that the speaker does not feel the need to arrive quickly, and they might be planning to stop along the way, take scenic routes, or simply drive at a comfortable speed.

The Choctaw language utilizes two words to convey the same message: Vttvt aya.

vttvt – to stay or reside      aya – a verb of motion – to go

### Singular:

Vttvt ayat ona la chi.      I will take my time getting there.  
Aht-taht an-yaht ohna la chi.

### Dual:

Ashvvt ayat il ona chi.      We (the two of us) will take our time getting there.  
Ahsh-waht an-yaht il ohna chi.

### Plural – several

Asht ittanohovvt il ona chi. Asht it-tah-noh-ho-waht il ona chi.      We (more than 2) will take our time getting there.

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

### Strong assumes Tribal Funding Programs Unit Manager role with CDSS Office of Tribal Affairs

Charlissa Strong, a member and Registered Artist of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, assumed the role of Manager for the Tribal Funding Programs Unit within the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA). This unit is responsible for administering two tribal funding programs: the Tribal Dependency Representation Program and the Tribally Approved Homes Compensation Program.

The Tribal Dependency Representation Program, is the first program of its kind in the nation and is backed by a substantial \$4.1 million allocation from the State General Funds, this funding aims to establish equity for participating Tribes by extending financial support for legal representation in Indian Child Custody proceedings within the California juvenile court system.

The Tribally Approved Homes Compensation Program is a \$5.1 million dollar program that provides financial support to Tribes for the recruitment and retention of Tribally Approved Homes.



Strong's journey is not merely a professional endeavor; it's a testament to her commitment to family and culture. A devoted wife, and mother to three young Choctaw girls, she brings a unique perspective to her role. Having grown up disconnected from tribal heritage, Strong has spent more than a decade bringing herself and her family back to their tribal culture. It is this experience that has led to Strong's understanding of the importance of nurturing a child's bond with their tribal community.

### Maxwell earns PhD from UFA

In August, Emily Maxwell completed her PhD in epidemiology from the University of Alaska Fairbanks interdisciplinary program.

She earned her BA from Dartmouth College and her MPH from the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Emily is the great-great-granddaughter of original Choctaw enrollee Austin McCann.



### Guffey says "Yakoke" for Support

"I want to thank my wife Sara, my girls Maghan and Madison, and my grandson Mason, who all pushed me to stay focused and achieve my goal of earning my Master of Business Administration Degree. And to the Choctaw Nation, I want to give a very special thank you to Billy J. Albright and the Scholarship Committee for the financial support they provided."

- John Guffey



### Battiest wins Creek Nation tournaments

Sam Battiest, a sophomore at Anadarko High School, won the 2024 Muscogee Creek Nation 180 Tennis Championship and the Men's Open championship held in June in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. He is the son of Tom Battiest and the grandson of Leslie and Mike Battiest, all of Anadarko.



### Wafford completes Doctor of Pharmacy

Chance Wafford completed his Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center in May 2024.

He is thankful for the support of Choctaw Nation and IHS during his academic years.

Wafford is currently practicing as a licensed Pharmacist and giving back to the Native culture in Oklahoma.



### Rasmussen graduates from Harvey Mudd

Clay Chandler Rasmussen of Colorado graduates with high distinction honors from Harvey Mudd College in California, earning a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He plans to pursue a career in the aerospace industry.

Clay is the son of Dirk and April Rasmussen, the grandson of Betty Ward Chandler, the great-grandson of Bud L. Ward and the great-great-grandson of Sallie LeFlore Ward, an original enrollee.

"Thank you Choctaw Nation, for your support throughout Clay's educational journey. We are forever grateful!" - The Rasmussen Family



### Anhalt appointed as Chief of Staff for the city of Greenfield, Mass.

"I am proud to serve as the first Indigenous Chief of Staff in the city of Greenfield, Massachusetts.

I am able to partner with the Nolumbeka project to help make sure ancestral remains are properly cared for and to highlight the work of Indigenous people in western Massachusetts. I am also continuing my work with Secure Families Initiative to advocate for safer moves while in the military for families of color and for our southwestern relations to be properly compensated after radioactive exposure from nuclear testing and uranium mining."

- Erin Anhalt



### Gardner and OBU win big, again

Students from OBU's Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences continued to add to their impressive success, winning another Psi Chi Regional Research Award this year.

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 graduated on Saturday, May 18, 2024, 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 ten 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 than any other school in the Southwestern Region, and it has the fifth-highest number of awards across all regional conferences in the US.

### Marsh wins Best Feature at Screen Summit 2024

Tribal member Andrew Marsh (pen name: David Smallwood) recently won Best Feature in the Screen Summit 2024 Screenplay Competition. His horror story, Sad Blue Dan, about an ancient Native legend, took first overall prize.

Andrew is the Grandson of Clyde and Virginia Smallwood.



## THE TIME HAS COME TO GATHER, CELEBRATE AND GIVE THANKS.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL THANKSGIVING MEALS FOR OUR ELDERS

November 6, 2024 - Wednesday		
Atoka Community Lunch	11:00 AM	Atoka Community Center
Battiest Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Battiest Community Center
Wright City Community Lunch	12:00 PM	Wright City Community Center

November 7, 2024 - Thursday		
Battiest Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Battiest Community Center
Smithville Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Smithville Community Center

November 13, 2024 - Wednesday		
Broken Bow Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Broken Bow Community Center
Coalgate Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Coalgate Community Center
McAlester Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	McAlester Community Center
Poteau Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Poteau Community Center
Stigler Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Stigler Community Center

November 14, 2024 - Thursday		
Broken Bow Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Broken Bow Community Center
Idabel Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Idabel Community Center
Tuskahoma Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Tuskahoma Cafeteria/Capitol Grounds

November 19, 2024 - Tuesday		
Durant Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Durant Event Center
Talihina Community Dinner	6:00 PM	Talihina Community Center

November 20, 2024 - Wednesday		
Antlers Elder Lunch	12:00 PM	Antlers Community Center
Crowder Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Crowder Community Center
Hugo Elder Lunch	11:30 AM	Hugo Community Center
Spiro Community Lunch	11:30 AM	Spiro Community Center
Wilburton Elder Lunch	11:00 AM	Wilburton Community Center

November 21, 2024 - Thursday		
McAlester Community Dinner	6:00 PM	McAlester Community Center

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

# NATIVE NOVEMBER

ALL CDIB CARD HOLDERS CAN RECEIVE A FREE FOUNTAIN DRINK AT ANY TRAVEL PLAZA LOCATION OR THE MERCANTILE DURING THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER.

MUST PRESENT YOUR CDIB CARD AT CHECKOUT.

ITI FABVSSA

The Talihina Indian Hospital (Part II)

This month's Iti Fabvssa article continues to explore the development of the Indian healthcare system in Choctaw Nation following the creation of the Carter Hospital in Talihina, a sanatorium dedicated to the treatment of tuberculosis for Choctaws and Chickasaws. The Carter Hospital opened in 1916 and continued to operate for the next two decades. In 1934, following the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act that marked a significant turning point in federal-Indian relations, the Choctaw Advisory Council was formally established to support the Choctaw people and involve community members in important Tribal issues decision-making (Iti Fabvssa, April 2022). With approval from the Choctaw Advisory Council, work began on a new Choctaw-Chickasaw Hospital using Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds in 1937. The WPA, one of many federal relief programs established to lift the country out of the Great Depression, sought to put unemployed Americans back to work while also improving the country's infrastructure. Construction of the new hospital, coupled with the enlargement of the State's facility, the Eastern Oklahoma State Sanatorium, located less than a mile to the east, triggered a housing crisis in the town of Talihina as construction workers and families of patients seeking treatment relocated to the area (Oklahoma City Times, September 29, 1937: 38). The Talihina Indian Hospital was one of four new hospitals being opened and operated by the Indian Service (later formally named the Bureau of Indian Affairs) in the United States. Designed by noted Chicago architectural firm Schmidt, Garden, and Erickson, the hospital was the largest WPA construction project undertaken by the Indian Service at the time.

The facilities, built to accommodate 150 tuberculosis beds and 75 general beds (225 beds in total), consisted of not just one building, but a cluster of related buildings including a main hospital, infirmary, ambulatory wards, and a powerhouse. The overall dimensions of the main hospital building were approximately 275 feet by 350 feet. Sloped surfaces of the roof were covered with terra cotta clay Spanish tiles, while exterior walls featured a combination of native fieldstone and red brick panels. The hospital was constructed with full electrical, sanitary, and water services. The new facilities also included a recreation hall, dining room building, and a garage. Secondary buildings built on the campus during the WPA-era included quarters for doctors and nurses. Overall, the Talihina Indian Hospital represented a significant step forward in terms of Indian healthcare services and a marked improvement over the Carter Hospital. The new Choctaw-Chickasaw Hospital opened in June 1938, a month earlier than anticipated. A formal dedication ceremony was held on October 4, 1938 (Godfrey 2017). In 1939, the road from Talihina to the hospital was improved with blacktop (Oklahoma City Times, June 10, 1939: 11).

During the early to mid-1940s, the Tali-

hina Indian Hospital ranked alongside the nation's best hospitals and was listed by the American College of Surgeons as an approved facility (Oklahoma City Times, January 28, 1946: 6, and Cushing Daily Citizen, January 30, 1946: 2). In 1944, there were 51 buildings on the campus. Facilities included a bus stop and concrete tennis courts. Hourly bus services from Talihina to the Indian Hospital and the State's sanatorium were provided until 1949 when they were suddenly suspended (Oklahoma City Times, May 3, 1949: 6).

Streptomycin, the first antibiotic to treat tuberculosis, was also developed during this time and began to be administered to critically ill patients, including infants, typically with remarkable lifesaving results. Common side effects of Streptomycin included vertigo, vomiting, numbness of the face, fever, and rash; however, use of the drug occasionally resulted in more serious side effects. Though initially effective at treating tuberculosis, Streptomycin frequently lost its power after being administered over extended periods and many patients experienced relapse. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, new and improved antibiotics for tuberculosis treatment, such as Neomycin and Viomycin, were introduced. Using combination drug therapies, doctors were able to keep most tuberculosis cases in remission (see Drumright Derrick, July 8, 1958: 3, and Sapulpa Herald, November 25, 1946: 4). The average length of stay for tuberculosis patients in Talihina fell to less than six months (Tulsa Tribune, July 21, 1956: 6).

During the mid-twentieth century, national policy promulgated by Congress shifted to a period known as termination following a series of laws aimed at dismantling tribal sovereignty (Godfrey 2017, also see Lowitt 2007). Posited as an honor conferred on the institution due to its efficiency and growth, in 1950, the Indian Service officially changed the name of the Talihina Indian Hospital to the Talihina Medical Center. At the time it was the only Indian medical center in Oklahoma, and only one of two in the United States. (Oklahoma City Times, November 10, 1950: 8). Several major cuts to the hospital's budget subsequently followed. Although some of these cuts were vigorously opposed and changed (Boswell News, September 6, 1957: 1), the hospital remained underfunded and understaffed. In 1956, the hospital was transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Public Health Service. A clinic with regular hours was established at the hospital and the number of treated patients tripled within a year (Oklahoma City Times, April 13, 1956: 2). In 1958, the hospital welcomed Dr. Raymond D. Higgins, which filled a long-standing opening for a qualified Chief Surgeon (Boswell News, March 7, 1958: 1).

By 1959, only a fourth of the Talihina Indian Hospital's beds were being used to treat tuberculosis patients (Miami Daily News-Record, August 11, 1959: 3). In 1961, the Indian tuberculosis hospital in Shawnee was closed and converted to an out-patient clinic (Oklahoma City Times,



Talihina Indian Hospital, date March 19, 1938.

Photo Credit: Oklahoma Historical Society

November 28, 1961: 3). Future Indian tuberculosis patients were to be sent to Talihina. Following further decline in the number of Tuberculosis cases, all remaining Indian tuberculosis patients were moved to state facilities for treatment in 1963.

In May 1967, health clinics were established in Tishomingo and Coalgate decreasing the distance Chickasaw tribal members had to travel for healthcare. Lack of funding, however, continued to plague the U.S. Health Department exacerbating problems in Indian health and healthcare. In 1971, Chief Harry "Jimmy" W. Belvin urged the government for additional funds to establish two new dental clinics. According to Belvin, dental services at the Talihina Indian Hospital were inadequate with only one dental officer and one dental assistant to care for 6,435 Indian people. Belvin also noted a disparity in healthcare as Indians who had moved to urban areas for better employment opportunities were essentially forced to forfeit their benefits (Oklahoma City Times, March 18, 1971: 10).

Under a new policy of self-determination, the Indian Self-Determination Act (1975) offered tribes the option to manage their own healthcare programs, and the Indian Health Care Improvements Act (amended in 1980) stated that the federal goal of Indian health care is to raise the health conditions among Indians to the same level as that of the general public (Godfrey 2017). In 1999, Choctaw Nation became the first tribe to build its own hospital with the construction of the new Choctaw Nation Health Care Center in Talihina (approximately two miles south of the old hospital). Today, the former Talihina Indian Hospital building is vacant, but other existing buildings on the campus remain in use. The Choctaw Nation Health System additionally includes several health facilities and wellness centers located throughout Southeastern Oklahoma.

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**DURANT, Okla.** - Choctaw Nation Works to Accelerate our Fiber Optic Infrastructure The Choctaw Nation's mission and strategy to achieve broadband connectivity in unserved areas of the reservation continues to be top-of-mind for the tribe's executive leadership, which is focused on meeting the strategic objective to "Achieve Digital Data, and Communication Transformation" that is one of the key goals of Chief Batton's strategic plan for FY 2020-2025.

CNO Works to Accelerate Fiber Optic Infrastructure

Tribal Broadband Coordinator, Rob Griffin says today, the tribe stands at 63% connectivity across the reservation with a goal of a minimum of 80% coverage by the end of 2027.

"We are focused on building fiber for broadband services on our reservation so that someday we can have 100% broadband coverage," Rob says.

Rob recently represented the Choctaw Nation in Nashville, Tennessee, at "Fiber Connect 2024," an event promoting the buildout of America's fiber optic infrastructure.

"With fiber, we can usher in a brighter future for communities, municipalities, economies, and, most importantly, people," Rob says. "In the future, the right connections can lead to more opportunities to learn, grow, share, and contribute. Legacy limitations will no longer hold communities and their people back so that the playing fields are level, and opportunity is the new normal."

Rob's presentation, "Faith, Family, Culture & Broadband - Preserving Language with Fiber Connectivity,"

focused on the need for the Choctaw Nation to preserve the Choctaw Language through the use of high-speed internet connectivity. Language requires online and interactive classes, and many of these can be delivered via a reliable and affordable high-speed connection throughout the reservation.

"Our focus on preserving our language is one of the Nation's key components of the need for connectivity - education," Rob says. "Healthcare and remote work also need a reliable high-speed connection, and the Choctaw Nation is working hard to ensure connectivity is available in as many places as possible across our reservation so that our tribal members can more easily benefit from the education and healthcare programs and services that our tribe provides."

Rob adds that the Choctaw Nation is near the top of 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier of Tribal Nations in delivering a Broadband Strategy as several Tribal Internet Service Providers (ISP's) have been established and are serving customers today.

**YEAR-AROUND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

COMING SOON!

Youth Employment Services is offering exciting paid employment opportunities for youth aged 16-21 in the Choctaw Nation Reservation service area starting October 1. Youth Employment Services is transitioning from a traditional 5-week summer work experience to a year-round employment opportunity with Project Asatvchi and Project Toksvli, 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

**UNDERSTANDING MEDICATION USE IN ADULT AMERICAN INDIANS**

You could be eligible to participate in a research study being done in partnership with the University of Florida.

**HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED MORE DETAILS?**  
Reach out to **Dannielle Branam** from Choctaw Nation Public Health at [debranam@cnhsa.com](mailto:debranam@cnhsa.com) or call **580.898.9239**

Scan for application.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**CHECK YOUR AQI AIR QUALITY INDEX**

Pollutants in the air significantly impact both the environment and public health. Awareness of local air quality enables communities to take proactive steps, like limiting outdoor activities during high pollution periods or advocating for cleaner energy.

0-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201-300	301-500
GOOD	AVERAGE	MODERATE	UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS	UNHEALTHY	VERY UNHEALTHY

Scan to find your AQI

Choctaw Nation Environmental Protection Service

**Marshall Dewayne McGuire**

Marshall Dewayne “Possum” McGuire, 62, passed away Aug. 12, 2024.

Possum was born Dec. 5, 1961, in Murfreesboro, Ark., to Bill McGuire and Edna McGuire.

He was preceded in death by his daughter Samantha Marcia Dianne Rhodes; father Bill McGuire; mother Edna Blackwell; paternal grandfather Jack Waters; paternal grandmother Mary Upton; maternal grandmother Dora Mae Key; maternal grandfather Lloyd Orm; brothers Billy McGuire and Donny McGuire; and paternal step granddad Dave Upton.

Possum is survived by his wife Virginia (Montgomery) McGuire; children Marshall Alan McGuire and Renae McGuire; sisters Mary DeZuani and Anna Malone; grandchild Aaron Alan McGuire; as well as a host of nieces and nephews.

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

**Ernest D. “Ernie” Baker**

Ernest “Ernie” D. Baker, 67, passed away Aug. 28, 2024.

Ernie was born July 25, 1957, in Talihina, Okla., to John Carbin Baker and Bernice (Columbus) Baker.

He was preceded in death by his parents John Baker and Bernice Colbert; infant daughter Natasha; grandmother Rhoda Jones; brother David Baker; and in-laws Darrow and Jean Billy.

Ernie is survived by his wife Gay Baker; children Michael Justin Baker, Katrina Lynne Walker, Kathia Jean Spring and spouse Ryan, Daniel Dee Baker, and John David Baker; grandchildren Amiya Dawn and Kinsley Brooke “Pooh Bear” Walker, Tyler Lane Baker, Evan Shikoba Homma, and Nova Raellee Baker; special nieces Taya and Takara Ward; brothers and sisters Arnold Baker, Susie Rose, Laura Gibson, Paula Baker, Lorena Juanico; several nieces and nephews; and special aunts and uncle Clara, Bert, and Abe.

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

**Helen Louise Pittman**

Helen Louise Pittman, 103, passed away August 20, 2024.

Helen was born Feb. 26, 1921, in Midway, Okla., to Willie Wesley and Lula Wesley Alexander.

She was preceded in death by her husband Dallas James Pittman; sons James Pittman and Clarence Lee Pittman; daughter-in-law Clela Pittman; grandsons Danny Ray Phares, Kenneth Ray Phares, and Randy Bully; granddaughter Jenny Kay Phares; great-granddaughter Dahlia Kay Sage Ussery; her parents; sister Ruth Ann Wisener; and brothers Willie Wesley and Hoot G. (Sonny) Wesley.

Helen is survived by her daughter Barbara Phares; grandsons Royce Phares, Dallas James Pittman, and Jeff Bully of Georgia; granddaughters Tracy Pittman, Lesia Moore and spouse Stephen Moore; many great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Alvin Orin Wilson**

Alvin Orin Wilson, 85, passed away Aug. 13, 2024.

Alvin was born in Santa Ana, Calif. to George Washington Wilson and Marie Shryer Miller.

He was preceded in death by his son Scott Wilson.

Alvin is survived by his wife Norma Grace Wilson; sons Dan Wilson (Atsuko Wilson), Christopher Wilson, Dino Spalding (Jacquie Spalding), and Michael Spalding; daughter Debra Johnston; brothers Jerry Moffitt, John Wilson, and Joe Wilson (Sally Wilson); sister Sharon Risley; 13 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit [Santa Cruz Sentinel](#).

**Mary Lee Garrison**

Mary Lee Garrison, 75, passed away Sept. 7, 2024.

Mary was born Sept. 4, 1949, in Talihina, Okla., to James Henry and Mary Jane (Phillips) Davidson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; siblings Charles Davidson, Jackie Davidson, and Bonnie Rupe; and daughter Shirley McCray.

Mary is survived by her husband Ruben Earl Garrison; daughters Kathy Creech, Alicia Weaver and spouse Aaron, and Janie Easley and spouse Scott; grandchildren Justin, Amanda, Celeste, Bryce, Forrest, Trenton, Jordan, Trey, Lexus, Jewell, Sierra and Haley; and great-grandchildren Oden, Mary, Cyrus and Olivia.

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

**John Melvin Kee**

John Melvin Kee, 78, passed away Aug. 29, 2024.

John was born Aug. 19, 1946, in Hugo, Okla., to Jesse and Betty (Potter) Kee.

He is survived by his wife Becky; sons Ian and spouse Val, and Brian and spouse Kari; granddaughters Sydney, Sarah and Eleanor; stepchildren Stewart, Chris and Lee; and step grandson Gene.

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

**Jerry Herbert Woods**

Jerry Herbert Woods, 81, passed away Aug. 17, 2024.

Jerry was born Dec. 12, 1942, to Herbert and Jessie Woods.

He was preceded in death by his first wife Louise; his parents; sisters LaDonna Loera, Ginger Long, and twin sister Sherry Freedle.

Jerry is survived by his wife Christine Woods; daughters Tammy (Jeff) Soper and Katrina Woods; step-children Adam (Dayna) Helderbran and Stacy (Steve) Maderious; grandchildren Alicia Soper, Cody (Rebekah) Soper, Kaitlyn Armstrong, Kassel Armstrong, Eliana Helderbran, and Ethan Maderious; brothers Terry (Marilyn) Woods and Gary (Patty) Woods; and many nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit Thomas Miller Mortuary.

**Joe Roy Urice**

Joe Roy Urice, 100, passed away Aug. 16, 2024.

Joe was born March 1, 1924, in Pauls Valley, Okla., to Chester Arthur (Bill) Urice and Yula Beryl (Dendy) Urice.

He was preceded in death by his wife Alyece Rogene Biggans Urice; sisters Wynona Jane Morrow and Billie Marion Wright Byers; and brother James Arthur Urice.

Joe is survived by his children Joe Scott Urice (Sandra), Roy Kirk Urice, and Mary Kathleen Urice; and granddaughter Alyece Dawn Daniel (Brenton).

For the full obituary, please visit Kerrville Funeral Home.

**William Douglas McAlvain**

William “Doug” Douglas McAlvain, 84, passed away Aug. 8, 2024.

Doug was born May 7, 1940, in Dixon, Calif.

He is survived by his wife Serena McAlvain; children Tony (Maureen) McAlvain, Tonyah McAlvain Lee, Tuesday (Clinton) Yaka and Torry (Kimberly) McAlvain; grandchildren Melissa (Torrey) Bollinger, Paul (Vanessa) McAlvain, Brandie (Jason) Ambroz, Carissa (Micah) Harley, Torry Jr. (Jillian) McAlvain, Shane (Hannah) Lee, Taylor McAlvain and Ayden McAlvain; and 13 great-grandchildren.

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

**Joseph Eugene McClure**

Joseph Eugene McClure, 70, passed away Sept. 20, 2024.

Joseph was born Oct. 21, 1953, in Coalgate, Okla., to Benjamin Eugene and Mary Jane (Wilson) McClure.

He was preceded in death by his parents; siblings Debbie McClure, Marie Kernell, Ferlin McClure and Gena Willis; grandmothers Lula “Mamajean” Miller and Vina Carpenter; and grandfather George McClure.

Joseph is survived by daughters Melanie Thunderbull and spouse Keith, Rachael McClure, Amanda Soto and spouse Jorge, and Ashley Knight and husband Cody; grandsons Jordan Thunderbull, Jacob Thunderbull, Izaiah Soto, Joziah Soto, and Joseph Knight; granddaughters Jailey Thunderbull, Aaliyah Soto, Kyrie Brown and Anna Knight; great-granddaughter Celeste Thunderbull; sisters Dee Dee McClure, Zoanna Stockwell, and Lisa Taylor and spouse John; brother Rueben McClure; aunt Paula Carney; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

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

**William Charles-Edward Dunagan**

William “Bill” Charles-Edward Dunagan passed away. Bill was born July 20, 1942, in Creede, Colo., to Dale Dunagan and Helen (Rozel) Dunagan.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and brother Robert Dunagan.

Bill is survived by his wife Betty (Baker) Dunagan; sons Brad Ettestad and spouse Nancy, and Shane Ettestad and spouse April; daughter Christy (Ettestad) Northon and spouse John; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and dozens of nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.

**Earl Dwain Austin**

Earl Dwain Austin, 52, passed away Sept. 25, 2024.

Earl was born March 10, 1972, in Talihina, Okla., to Dwight Austin and Diana (Baker) Austin.

He was preceded in death by his mother; grandparents Betty and Johnson Baker, and Katherine and Benjamin Tobias Austin; sister Felicia Austin; brother Benjamin Austin; uncle Dana Baker; great-aunt Odetha Billy; aunt Becky Sapulpa; uncle Custer Martinez; cousin Diamond Baker; and sister-in-law Dawn Austin.

Earl is survived by his father; siblings Lavonda Montgomery and Branden, Nate Austin, and Melissa Austin and Daniel; aunt Nancy Taylor; uncle Robbie Baker and Debbie; nieces and nephews Zach and Zoe Bolding, Arizona and Micah Jo Taylor, Dakota Taylor, Avery and Alexia Austin, Justice Austin, Zeck Austin, and Logan Austin; great-nieces and nephews Carson Bolding, Levi Bolding, Atlas Taylor, Kiamichi Jo Taylor, and Arya Austin; and cousins Jeremy Taylor, Jon Taylor, Ethan Taylor, Toni Mathis, and Nowatha Mathis.

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

**Helen Wilson Donahue**

Helen Wilson Donahue, 95, passed away Sept. 3, 2024.

Helen was born Oct. 23, 1928, in Allen, Okla., to Willie Lee Wilson and Loma May Billingsley.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Jesse Owen Donahue; brothers Vernon, Bill, and Davis Lee Wilson; sisters Betty Monigold and Patsy Smith; son Terry Donahue; and grandsons Jason Coffey and Chad Donahue.

Helen is survived by her children Connie Liptrap (Mike), Danny Donahue (Nadine), Donna Childress (Ken), Janet Donahue (Mike Ingram), and Eva Goldsmith (Gray); 12 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

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

**Michael James Cooper**

Michael James Cooper, 45, passed away Sept. 8, 2024.

Michael was born March 5, 1979, in Lawton, Okla., to Nancy Cooper.

He was preceded in death by his mother.

Michael is survived by his wife Teresa; son Gabriel Cooper; sister Amy Henry; aunts Joyce “Jo Jo” Cooper and Mary Kingfisher; James Kingfisher who he considered a brother; and Jana Kingfisher, Geneva Kingfisher, and Paula Cooper who he thought of as sisters.

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

**Lana Darlene Martin**

Lana Darlene (Hardy) Martin, 75, passed away Monday, Sept. 23, 2024.

Lana was born Dec. 23, 1948, in Hugo, Okla., to Elden and Opal (Key) Hardy.

She was preceded in death by grandparents Kennedy and Simmie (Stephens) Hardy Battiest; her parents; siblings Kathryn Allen, Robert “Bob” Hardy, Sandra Hill, and Gregory Hardy.

Lana is survived by son Jeremy Martin and spouse Julie; grandsons Tyler Martin and spouse Alee, and Cole Martin; granddaughter Neena Martin; great-granddaughter Lucia Martin; siblings Mike Hardy and spouse Barbara, and Elaine Harper and spouse Mike; several cousins; a host of nieces and nephews; and her sweet little doggie Ashton.

For the full obituary, please visit [John M. Ireland & Son Funeral Home and Chapel](#).

**Eula Mae Welch Foote**

Eula Mae (Pittman) Welch Foote, 92, passed away Sept. 18, 2024.

Eula Mae was born May 1, 1932, in Bennington, Okla., to Maggie (Pistubbee) Pittman and Frank Pittman.

She was preceded in death by her husband Donald; her parents; sisters Faye, Josephine, Mary Lou, and Clara; brothers Solomon, Earl, Fred, FM and an infant sibling; an infant son; and grandson Christopher Jay Welch.

Eula Mae is survived by her son Danny Jay and spouse Valerie Welch; grandsons Charlton “Chuck” Welch, Kyle Welch and spouse Jillian; great-grandchildren Darcie, Cody, Matthew, Krystal, Kynnady, Jaylynn, Marshal, Parker, and Blake; many nieces, nephews, and other extended family.

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

**Randy Scott Mathers**

Randy Scott Mathers, 72, passed away Sept. 30, 2024.

Randy was born July 4, 1952, in Jackson County, Missouri, to Earle Mathers and Mildred Richardson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; aunts Loretta Lasch and Linda Irvan; uncle Benny Mombi; and sister Terri Boring.

Randy is survived by his niece Jessica Saunders; nephew, Justin Boring; brother-in-law Jeff Boring; great-nieces and great-nephews Brecken, Harper and Haven Saunders; cousin Trish Leonard; 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)



# Pathway to Becoming a Board-Certified Physician: Understanding Resident Physicians and Their Role in Your Healthcare

By Dr. Hillary Patocka

When you walk into the clinic, ER, hospital and your doctor introduces themselves as a resident, what does that mean?

In this column, we will briefly explore what a resident physician is, focusing on the Family Medicine Residency at Choctaw Nation, and highlight the importance of this training for our healthcare system.

### What is a Resident Physician?

A resident physician is someone who has completed an undergraduate degree, has graduated with a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), and passed two board exams.

This is typically eight years post high school graduation. It's important to note that residents are licensed physicians, but like starting any new career, they will have backup in the form of attending physicians. During residency, these doctors work under the supervision of experienced attending physicians, providing care to patients while refining their clinical skills.

### The Residency Experience

Residency programs typically last between three to five years, depending on the specialty. For example, family medicine requires a three-year residency. Upon completion of their residency, those residents will be considered specialized physicians. Throughout this time, resident physicians gain hands-on experience in a variety of settings, learning to diagnose and treat a wide range of health issues, in their chosen areas.

### Family Medicine Residency at Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw Nation offers a Family Medicine Residency program that provides an excellent opportunity for aspiring family medicine physicians.

Each year, the program welcomes four new residents who are eager to learn and serve their communities. Residents at Choctaw Nation participate in many clinical experiences, from outpatient care at the Residency Clinic to the hospital at Choctaw Nation.

This residency program not only enhances the skills of future physicians but also plays a crucial role in addressing healthcare needs in the community.

By training residents in a culturally rich and supportive environment, the Choctaw Nation contributes to the development of compassionate, skilled physicians dedicated to serving their patients.

### The Importance of Residents in Healthcare

Resident physicians are vital to our healthcare system. They provide essential services in hospitals and clinics, often working long hours to ensure patients receive the care they need. Their fresh perspectives and commitment to learning help advance medical practice and patient care.

In summary, resident physicians are the future of healthcare, bridging the gap between medical education and independent practice.

The Family Medicine Residency at Choctaw Nation exemplifies how these programs cultivate the next generation of healthcare providers, ensuring communities have access to high-quality, comprehensive care. By supporting and understanding the role of resident physicians, we can all appreciate the dedication and hard work that goes into our healthcare system.

## Family Medicine Residency Program

The CNO Family Medicine Residency Program is an ACGME accredited program committed to training competent and compassionate family medicine physicians.

### Eligibility

- Upon successful completion of medical school with either allopathic or osteopathic recognition.
- Use NRMP match code 2171120C1 to find the Osteopathic Medical Education Consortium of Oklahoma (OMEKO/Talihina) Program.
- Osteopathic Recognition eligibility criteria for D.O. Graduates.
- Successful Graduation from a Commission on Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA)-accredited college of osteopathic medicine (COM).
- Applicant will be designated an osteopathic resident upon matriculation into the program.

### During Residency

- Complete 60 hours of OPP Continuing Medical Education, approved by OMEKO, achieved through any of the following: CME courses, didactics, elective rotations, etc. Focusing on clinical application.
- Successfully pass an OMM basic skills competency practical examination, administered by CNHSA faculty prior to PGY-2.
- Satisfactorily progress through the Osteopathic Recognition Milestones during residency.

### How to Apply

- Only applications via the Electronic Residency Application Service (ERAS) are accepted. Use NRMP Match Code #2171120C1 and ACGME ID #1203900662 OMEKO-Choctaw Nation, Talihina.

For more information visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/residency>.



Photo Provided

Dr. Hillary Patoka, a second year resident in the Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency Program, shares information on what being a part of the program entails.



Photo Provided

Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine lets Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency Program share information about the program with students.



Photo Provided

First, second, and third year residents spent the afternoon at the indoor rock climbing gym in Fort Smith.

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- ♦ AP Test Fees
- ♦ Career Tech Expenses (up to \$100)
- ♦ Post-Secondary Fees (up to \$100)
- ♦ Cap & Gown (up to \$50)

\*Until funds are depleted



To apply for reimbursement, scan the QR code

The student must be a HSSS member to apply. To become a HSSS member, fill out the Student Record Release through the Chaitra Achivita Member Portal.

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

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 Vocational Rehabilitation**

Date	Location	By Appointment
November 1	Crowder	By Appointment
November 4	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
November 5	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 7	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
November 8	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
November 8	Coalgate	12:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
November 12	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
November 15	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 18	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 19	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
November 22	Wilburton	10:30 am. - 2:00 p.m.

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

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MARKET HOURS  
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Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
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All markets open weekdays, November 1-25  
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FOOD DEMO NOVEMBER 7

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
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**MCALESTER** 3244 Afulotta Hina, 918-420-5716  
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**POTEAU** 106 B St., 918-649-0431  
FOOD DEMO NOVEMBER 19

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## Jones makes a name for himself in sports broadcasting

By Christian Chaney

Tyler Jones, sports broadcaster and NFL host, is paving his way in the sports industry with his unique perspectives and commitment to storytelling.

Jones currently hosts and analyzes for Chat Sports, covering two NFL powerhouses, the Seattle Seahawks and Kansas City Chiefs, on Seahawks Today and Chiefs Report.

He also contributes as a writer and on-air host for NDNsports.com, the largest Native American sports site in the United States.

With over a decade of sports coverage under his belt, Jones has reported on everything from NFL playoffs to other major sporting events like the Daytona 500, PGA Championship, and several Final Fours, working with major networks like ESPN and Peacock.

Jones's love for sports started at a young age, but he realized early on that playing in the NFL wasn't in the cards for him.

However, he turned that passion into a successful career behind the microphone.

"It seemed like a natural fit for me to still talk about sports and stay in the game," Jones shared.

His broadcasting journey began in his hometown of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, when he started calling games for his high school's streaming network.

"It kind of just all took off from there. I found my career and found something I was passionate about."

After high school, Jones attended Haskell Indian Nations University before attending the University of Kansas.

During his college years, his passion for broadcasting continued to grow as he hosted a full-time morning show and became involved with the Native American Basketball Invitational (NABI) in Phoenix, Arizona, where he has been a play-by-play announcer for the past four years.

Jones volunteers his free time to tell the stories of Native American athletes, a cause close to his heart.

Jones credits his Choctaw heritage for some of his success.

Attending Haskell Indian Nations University opened doors for him, both professionally and personally.

"I will always be thankful that door opened to get me to Haskell and allow me to find more about my background, where I come from, but also use that as a platform to tell other people's stories from there," he said.

The representation of Native Americans in the media is something Jones is deeply passionate about.

He believes the presence of Native voices is growing,

thanks in part to organizations like the Native American Journalists Association and individuals like his friend Eric Bailey, a sports journalist with the Tulsa World.

Jones believes the increase in Native representation in media is not only inspiring but also critical in making sure Native stories are heard.

"It's pretty inspiring, and I think that it does a lot for our people. Get that message out there, who we are, and that we're still around—we're not going anywhere."

For young Native American athletes, Jones advises finding a passion outside of sports.

Whether it's something you went to school for, or a hobby picked up along the way, he encourages chasing it wholeheartedly.

"Find that thing and go after it," Jones said.

For those aspiring to enter the world of sports broadcasting, his advice is clear: "Don't turn down any opportunity, big or small. If you got an opportunity to write, to broadcast, or whatever it may be, take advantage of every chance you get because you don't know what doors those are going to lead to... And don't be afraid of failure."

Jones also urges aspiring broadcasters to take risks and embrace challenges, advising them to learn from every experience.

"Maybe you're not that great of a broadcaster, maybe you're not that great of a writer, and that's okay. Figure out what you're good at, what you're not good at, what you enjoy doing, and make the most of it."

While Tyler Jones is known for his sports broadcasting, he hopes to leave a legacy that goes beyond his career.

His work with the Native American Basketball Invitational, where his broadcasts have connected athletes with opportunities for college scholarships, is a prime example of the difference he hopes to make.

"I want to be that guy that is a difference maker... He told my kid's story. He provided a way for us to see my kid play their game that we wouldn't see otherwise," said Jones.

At the end of the day, Tyler wants to be remembered not just as "a guy with a microphone" but as someone who made a positive impact on his community and used his platform to tell important stories.

"Who is Tyler Jones? If not, just a guy with a microphone, but what is he doing to make a positive impact in his community? That's how I want to be remembered."

You can follow Tyler Jones on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram @tylerjoneslive, or tune in to his podcast, The Jones Report, available on all major streaming platforms.



Photos Provided

Above: Choctaw sports broadcaster, Tyler Jones.  
Below: Jones interviewing 2024 NABI winner.



## Laura Warriner, More Than an Artist

By Kellie Matherly

Choctaw tribal member and artist Laura Warriner was born in Tulsa, but at age three, her family relocated to Oklahoma City, where her father worked for the state highway department, and her mother was employed at John A. Brown's department store downtown. Living in the heart of a busy downtown area, Laura fell in love with the energy of the city.

"As a child, in the 1940's and 1950's, downtown OKC was the center of all commerce—bustling like New York City with hundreds of people filling the streets. This is when I developed a deep love for the city, exposed to its shops, stores, and theaters," she said.

Laura's family may not have had much, but what they lacked in "stuff" they made up for in appreciation for the things they were fortunate to have.

"I was raised at a time when we were all very poor, and we couldn't afford to have very much. My parents taught me to be very respectful and appreciate everything that we had," said Laura.

When Laura was 11, her father was promoted and transferred to Clinton, Oklahoma. Being the new kid in a smaller town was a challenge. Laura longed for the excitement of the big city. While she was living in Clinton, she began visual exploration and journaling.

She stayed in Clinton through high school graduation, and then attended Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee. After her freshman year in 1962, Laura moved back to Oklahoma City, where she lived and worked downtown, witnessing the heartbreaking effects of urban renewal as it transformed the city she had once loved so much.

In a 2017 interview with OETA's Gallery America, Laura remembered being a young woman and watching the Oklahoma City she knew become something she barely recognized.

"I was very familiar [with the area], and I loved it, and then a little bit later on, they started with urban renewal, tearing the place down, and building by building destroying this beautiful, vibrant city," said Laura.

Amid Oklahoma City's overhaul, Laura Warriner became an artist. Although she was

accepted to juried art shows in New York City and won several awards for her realistic watercolors, she felt like something was missing. "That did not fill my soul," she said.

During her time visiting galleries and museums in New York, Laura felt drawn to the work of Ellsworth Kelly and Clyfford Still, and she began trying to understand the world of abstract art.

"I could not wrap my brain around this artist until I saw a complete one person show of his, and it changed my life," said Laura. "That's when I realized abstraction was just realism. It was just looking at it in a different way."

Learning to look at the world around her from a different perspective led her to consider the things people discard.

"Growing up in the 40s and 50s, and then in the 60s and 70s, we became this society of throwaways. Nobody made anything that was meant to last," she said. "And there were all of these changes that were going on, and we were living on top of garbage."

She began looking for ways to redefine these discarded items and give them new definitions by using them in sculptures and placing them in different environments.

Perhaps her most ambitious environment, however, was Artspace at Untitled.

Laura had been fortunate to travel the world with her husband, who was a dentist at the forefront of dental implant surgery. In her travels, she visited museums, studios, and art communities that inspired her to bring some of that collective creative spirit back home. In the mid-1990s, Oklahoma City had a budding art community, but it lacked galleries and maker spaces for an art scene to truly thrive. Laura decided to change that.

"I wanted to be a new voice in Oklahoma City when I first started this because I wanted to share what I had the privilege to experience outside," Laura said. "I wanted to bring exposure to other forms of art to the artists living here and the people that lived here."

Today, Oklahoma City's Deep Deuce neighborhood flourishes with whiskey tasting rooms, chic cocktail lounges, and live jazz and blues venues that are throwbacks to the 1920's when the area was a cultural hub for African



Photos by Christian Toews

Laura Warriner is a pioneer of the Oklahoma City art scene. Her tireless efforts have helped revitalize an entire community.

Americans living in the city. But in the 1990s, when Laura began work on Artspace at Untitled, the neighborhood was a shadow of its former self. Years of neglect had left the once vibrant district peppered with abandoned buildings and overgrown lots, which earned it an unsavory, and according to Warriner, unfair reputation.

When she happened upon the abandoned structure that would become Artspace at Untitled, Laura Warriner saw past the collapsed roof, broken windows, and peeling paint. Just like that little girl constructing make-believe worlds from her mother's magazines so many years earlier, she saw the potential for beauty lying dormant in the "throwaway" building.

But as the First Lady of Song Ella Fitzgerald once crooned, "It wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me."

So, Laura got to work realizing her vision of an inclusive art space that would welcome creators young and old to hone their crafts, collaborate with like-minded peers, and bring to life the images in their minds. A few months into the project, her husband joined her as an equal partner.

"I don't think anybody can do anything by themselves," Laura said of the partnerships with her husband and others. "It takes a village to do something like this."

This act of love for her hometown not only helped spark revitalization efforts in the Deep Deuce neighborhood, but it also paved the way for Oklahoma City's art scene as we know it today.

As a founding member of the Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition, Laura worked tirelessly with other creators and community leaders to

bring artists to Oklahoma City to jury exhibitions for local artists. She was also able to use the connections she had made over the years to bring in art collections that were worthy of galleries in L.A. and New York City.

With the success of Artspace at Untitled, Laura felt the need to do even more. She began reaching out to the youth in the community and inviting them to come to Artspace to learn and practice a wide range of creative arts, including visual art, film, printmaking, and more.

"I think I get more out of it than they do because it's fun to be around these young people that are having fun and doing what they want to do," said Laura.

She is especially proud of her partnership with the Oklahoma City public school system, through which she works with over 150 students from 14 different schools to help them learn appreciation of art and appreciation for each other.

"There's so much anger around, and it's kind of scary to me," said Laura. "You have to respect each other. And if someone is different than you, that's good because that makes you better. When you think that way, then you can collaborate. You can work. You aren't jealous. You aren't angry. You learn more from each other."

To learn more about Laura Warriner's journey, check out OETA's "Legacy of Laura" on Gallery America and Artspace at Untitled.

The Together We're More team would like to extend a special yakoke (thank you) to OETA and Imagn for their collaboration and assistance on Laura's story.

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# CNO tribal members represent Tribe at FFA Leadership Conference in D.C.

By Chris Jennings

Jocelyn James and Avery McGill recently traveled to Washington, D.C., with the Tribal Agricultural Fellows (TAF) and the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) to attend the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) Washington Leadership Conference.

During their trip, the young women represented the tribe in meetings with the Bureau of Indian Education at the Department of the Interior, the Department of State, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Tribal Relations Office.

James says she and McGill went a day before the national conference, along with several other FFA students and leaders, to speak to each department.

“Avery and I both spoke a little bit about how our background with Choctaw culture has helped us delve more into agriculture as a whole,” said James.

According to James, her long held a passion for agriculture, which started in the eighth grade.

“In the eighth grade, I gave a speech about Native American influence on agriculture,” said James.

“From there, I started getting into Native American water rights and how they impact agriculture, and it led me to do a little more research on tribal agricultural operations across the country.”



Avery McGill, right, and Jocelyn James pose at the Lincoln Monument during their FFA conference trip.

James grew up in Broken Bow and says that being in a more rural area and experiencing the Choctaw culture helped her along this path.

McGill says her love for agriculture was a little more subtle.

“I didn’t grow up in an agricultural field, but learning about my heritage through the Choctaw Nation and being able to get the seed packets and things that have been sent out over the years,” said McGill. “I was able to find this love for agriculture.”

According to McGill, it was very useful and interesting when talking about her trip.

“I learned a lot about how certain policies are put into order, who they affect the most, how funding goes out from the Department of Ag to different organizations and to different groups and how the Department of Interior helps with certain native programs for other tribes,” McGill said.

McGill was also struck by the different backgrounds of the other people attending the conference, who were from many more rural areas and reservations. “How different of a life that we have, knowing that we have great funding through Choctaws, they’re [the Choctaw Nations] is always there to support us,” McGill said.

Both young women were able to speak to these different departments on topics ranging from agriculture to language preservation.

James expressed the importance of Native American agriculture in the birth of the United States.

“I look back to the beginnings of the United States when settlers first arrived here,” James said. “I think back to the story of the first Thanksgiving; whether it’s completely accurate or not, settlers were coming from a land that looked completely different than this one. So without the knowledge that they gained from the local tribes there, I think it comes into question whether settlers would have been successful at all in the creation of the United States.”

As Natives, James and McGill think they come to agriculture with a slightly different perspective.

“Coming at this through my culture and looking at agriculture as a whole,” said James. “I see a lot in land and water conservation and how it ties back into the beliefs of the Choctaw people.”

James is passionate about making that known to the agriculture industry.

“It’s of great importance to our people, and when we tie those beliefs into the industry as a whole,” James said. “I think it could be really beneficial.”

McGill was glad to be able to share her perspective as a Choctaw Nation tribal member.

“The Choctaws have such deep roots in agriculture,” McGill said. “I feel being able to talk about that and connecting the two allowed me to share the culture and expand people’s knowledge of not only



Photos Provided

Above:Jocelyn James holds a picture of Oklahoma FFA Southeast Area Vice President, Titus Montgomery, who was unable to go on the trip.

Below: Jocelyn James and Avery McGill stand on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., showing off their FFA Officer Jackets.



the services that the Choctaws offer but also how much they’re willing to support agriculturalists and expand opportunities for the youth.”

McGill plans to attend nursing school, but she says she still wants to be involved in agriculture, growing and raising her own crops and livestock.

James plans to major in agronomy (the science and technology of using plants for agriculture to produce food, fuel, fiber, chemicals, and more with a holistic approach) at Kansas State University.

From there, she plans to go on and get her Juris Doctorate.

“I want to be able to use that to work in land and water conservation,” said James. “Specifically for tribal agriculture.”

# Living newly found Choctaw spirit in Colorado

By Chris Jennings

Serving in her community has always been something Liz Rachal has done. While growing up, her identified community was Hispanic, but her grandfather’s desire to learn more about his father revealed a Choctaw heritage as well.

“Ever since then, we’ve been really hungry for information and looking into our lineage, our past and our history,” said Rachal.

Now, Rachal is taking her ingrained sense of servitude into the world as a Choctaw tribal member.

She recently volunteered with the Haseya Advocate Program in Colorado Springs.



Liz Rachal holds the Choctaw flag with Rick Waters, the Executive Director of the Denver Indian Center. When Rachal was on a tour of the Indian Center she noticed there was no Choctaw flag among the flags of the other tribes, and returned with one for them to hang.

The Haseya Advocate Program is a Native woman-led organization that serves Indigenous survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Rachal worked to help rehab their healing garden, which had been affected by one of the worst grasshopper infestations Colorado has seen in recent history.

“Their garden had been overrun by a grasshopper plague, which a lot of the Colorado Springs area had been this summer,” said Rachal.

The team of workers spent the day pulling weeds and squishing grasshoppers, but it was building a teepee that Rachal learned the most.

“I learned that there are Native Americans that traditionally would live in teepees,” said Rachal. “And then there are some that don’t.”

To many, the fact that different tribes lived in different dwellings isn’t a new concept. However, it’s not always common knowledge.

After learning that not all tribes lived in teepees, Rachal researched what kinds of homes the Choctaw people lived in. Now, she knows about traditional Choctaw Chukkas and can pass that knowledge to her kids. Each time that happens, it’s a step in keeping the Choctaw culture alive.

Rachal says whenever she tells someone she’s Choctaw, she gets a sense that they are always looked on with high regard.

Hearing that Rachal says that’s a testament to the Choctaw core values and something for her and her kids to strive for.

“That’s the feeling I get from other people when I tell them I’m Choctaw. They know that we’re known for being peaceful and helpful and friendly, so I feel like you have to live up to those expectations,” said Rachal.



Photos Submitted

After discovering her Choctaw heritage, Liz Rachal is living out the Choctaw spirit in her daily life.

# Flowers on the Pond

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma honored victims of domestic violence during their annual Flowers on the Pond Vigil, October 10, 2024.

Speakers Chief Batton, Tia Jones and Carly Espinoza shared with the crowd their experiences with domestic violence.

Those in attendance could drop a flower in the water in memory of those who have lost their lives due to violence and read the stories of just a few of the tribal members who’s lives were cut short due to domestic violence.

If you or someone you know needs help, please contact 800-522-6170, 800-799-7233 or text 88788.



Photos by CNO and Anna Marcy



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Choctaw Nation Public Health

# From the Desk of Chief Batton: Tribal Sovereignty and the Upcoming Election

Halito,

One of my most important jobs as your Chief is to do all I can to protect our tribal sovereignty. As we all prepare to vote in the upcoming general election races, I want to make our tribal members aware of a potential threat to tribal sovereignty.

A campaign by a group called "People for Opportunity" is responsible for negative TV ads targeting three Oklahoma State Supreme Court justices who have consistently ruled in favor of tribal sovereignty. It is probably not a coincidence that these three justices are the only ones being targeted, given Governor Stitt's track record of attacking the tribes and tribal sovereignty.

Members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, a far-right think tank, are leading the efforts to oust Justices Yvonne Kauger, Noma Gurich, and James Edmondson. The group claims the three justices are "activist, liberal" judges, but that simply is not true. Justices Kauger, Gurich, and Edmondson have always based their rulings on their interpretations of the law and judicial precedent, not partisan politics.

I encourage you to consider the following important points:

- If these three justices are removed, the Oklahoma governor will appoint their successors (with the help of the Judicial Nomination Commission).
- It is no secret that the governor is not supportive of tribal sovereignty and has tried to attack it on multiple occasions, despite the undeniably positive impact the Choctaw Nation and other tribes have on the state every year.
- The current Oklahoma governor has already appointed three of the nine justices who sit on the State Supreme Court. If this campaign succeeds in ousting Kauger, Gurich, and Edmondson, he could have six hand-picked justices on the court who may reflect his disdain for tribal sovereignty.

Elections have consequences. When I cast my ballot in the upcoming election, I'll be voting to retain Justices Kauger, Gurich, and Edmondson on the Oklahoma State Supreme Court. A vote to keep these justices is a vote for tribal sovereignty.

Please remember to vote Nov. 5 (or earlier if you're voting by Absentee Ballot or participating in early voting at your county precinct in Oklahoma on Oct. 30, Oct. 31, Nov. 1, or Nov. 2). And please reach out to our Government Affairs team if you need additional information on this topic or have any other election-related questions.

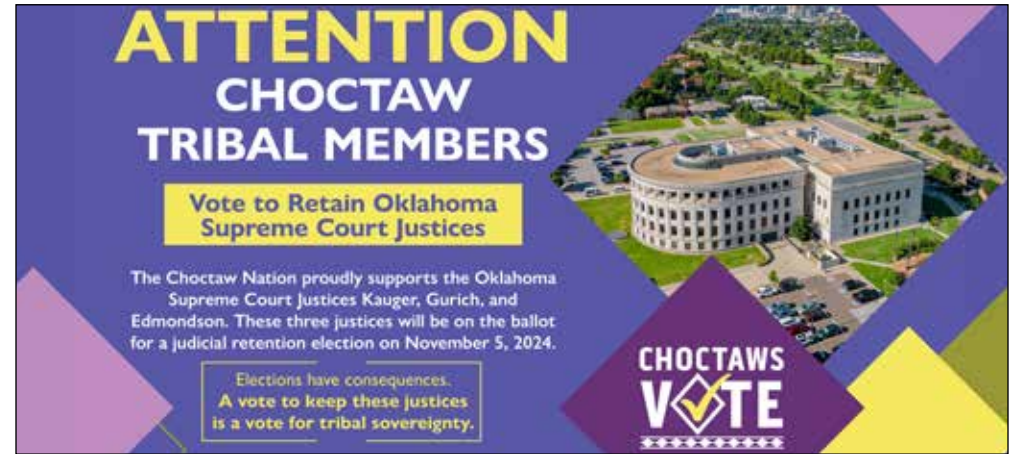
**Brian McClain:** [bmcclain@choctawnation.com](mailto:bmcclain@choctawnation.com); 918-465-6677

**Sara Jane Smallwood:** [ssmallwood@choctawnation.com](mailto:ssmallwood@choctawnation.com); 580-380-3429

**Jennifer Gray:** [jenniferg@choctawnation.com](mailto:jenniferg@choctawnation.com); 580-740-4115

Yakoke!

Chief Gary Batton,  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



## About the Oklahoma Supreme Court Justices:

**Justice Yvonne Kauger** is a fourth generation Oklahoman from Colony, Oklahoma. She graduated from Colony, Oklahoma High School as valedictorian, and from law school first in her class. Justice Ralph B. Hodges hired her in 1972 as the first woman to serve as a staff attorney for the Oklahoma Supreme Court in 1984. She founded the Gallery of the Plains Indians, Red Earth, The Sovereignty Symposium, and Movie Night at the Supreme Court. She was instrumental in establishing OSCN, NET and the adoption of uniform citations, and she chaired the Building and the Arts Committee of the Judicial Center. She has received the Governor's Arts Award twice. She is an adopted member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma and she has been inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame and the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. She is a member of the Episcopal Church.

Justice Kauger, the Senior Justice of the Court, served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from January 1997 to January of 1999. The OSCN network was established during her tenure as Chief Justice with the help of Justice Jim Watt, and Grey Satterfield. Kevin King, and a group of interns began it in the Supreme Court copyroom. During that time she was responsible for initiating neutral and parallel citations to the OSCN network of Oklahoma cases 03 Law Library Journal 331 (2011). She also initiated the Blue Ribbon Baker Commission to evaluate judicial performance. At the direction of then Chief Justice Marion Opala, Kauger and her staff developed and published the first Court brochure and continued to do so until 2017. She is the last Justice to address the Joint Session of the Legislature. The speech jump started the building of a separate Supreme Court building that she envisioned for decades, along with Marvin Emerson Executive Director OBA and Willie Paul OBA President, to convert the Wiley Post building occupied by the Oklahoma Historical Society into the Court building. The vision was accomplished on June 14, 2011, when after 30 years, and 3 bond issues, she and her staff moved into the Oklahoma Judicial Center. The art of the judicial center is designed to reflect the history of the State of Oklahoma and the Judiciary of Oklahoma.

For more on Justice Kauger, visit <https://oksc.oscn.net/justices/yvonne-kauger/>.

**Justice Noma Diane Gurich** was appointed

to the Supreme Court, District 3 by Governor Brad Henry on January 7, 2011 and took office on February 15, 2011. She is the third woman justice to serve on the Supreme Court of Oklahoma since statehood. Justice Gurich served as Chief Justice from January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2020 following serving as Vice Chief Justice from December of 2016 until December 31, 2018.

Justice Gurich has been a judge in the state of Oklahoma for more than 34 years. She has the unique distinction of having been appointed to a judicial office by four (4) Governors of Oklahoma, after being nominated by the constitutionally-created Judicial Nominating Commission. She served as a judge on the Oklahoma Workers' Compensation Court for 10 years. She also served 12 1/2 years as a district judge during which time she presided over nearly 200 jury trials. Since beginning her service on the Supreme Court, Justice Gurich has been retained in office twice. Prior to her judicial career, she practiced law in Oklahoma City for 10 years. For more on Justice Gurich, visit <https://oksc.oscn.net/justices/noma-gurich/>.

**Justice James Edmondson** served in Oklahoma's Eastern District as Acting United States Attorney (1980-1981), and as Assistant U.S. Attorney (1978-1980). He also served as Muskogee County's Assistant District Attorney (1976-1978). Edmondson received his B.A. degree from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah in 1967. He served in the United States Navy (1967-1969) before attending Georgetown University Law School where he received his law degree in 1973. In 1983, he was appointed District Judge by Governor George Nigh. For the next twenty years, he regularly held court in Wagoner, Muskogee, Cherokee, Adair, and Sequoyah counties. James Edmondson alternated annually as Chief Judge of Muskogee County with District Judges Hardy Summers, Lyle Burris, and Mike Norman. He also served as Presiding Judge of the East Central Judicial Administrative District.

In 2003, he was appointed to the Oklahoma Supreme Court by Governor Brad Henry, succeeding Justice Summers upon his retirement. Retained on the court in 2006, he served as Chief Justice in 2009 and 2010; he was retained again in 2012.

For more on Justice Edmondson, visit <https://oksc.oscn.net/justices/james-e-edmondson/>.



Justice Yvonne Kauger



Justice Noma Diane Gurich



Justice James Edmondson

### The INTER-TRIBAL COUNCIL of the FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

#### A Resolution Supporting the Retention of Justices Gurich, Kauger, and Edmondson on the Oklahoma Supreme Court

##### Resolution No. 25-



**WHEREAS**, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes (ITC) is an organization that unites the tribal governments of the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek) and Seminole Nation, representing approximately 815,000 Indian people throughout the United States; and



**WHEREAS**, tribal sovereignty is paramount to support the continued governance and strength of our Nations; and



**WHEREAS**, we are proud to be Oklahomans and citizens of our Nations and strive to partner effectively and collaboratively between our Nations and the State of Oklahoma's leadership; we also believe in electing and appointing leaders in Oklahoma's state government who are also good partners to work collaboratively with our sovereign tribal governments; and



**NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT**, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes knows the importance of the Oklahoma Supreme Court, and maintaining a fair and balance panel of justices to uphold the law for all Oklahomans..



**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes supports the retention of the three Oklahoma Supreme Court Justices on the Oklahoma ballot in 2024: Noma D. Gurich; Yvonne Kauger; and James E. Edmondson. These justices have demonstrated their commitment and diligence in following Oklahoma law and demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of tribal sovereignty in their decisions.

##### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes meeting in Durant, Oklahoma on this 11th day of October 2024, by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ against and \_\_\_\_\_ abstentions.

Bill Anoatubby, Governor  
The Chickasaw Nation

David W. Hill, Principal Chief  
Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Gary Batton, Chief  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Chuck Hoskin Jr., Principal Chief  
Cherokee Nation

Lewis J. Johnson, Chief  
Seminole Nation of Oklahoma



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

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Choctaw Nation celebrates Native American Heritage Month.



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Exploring the southeastern tribal tattoo revitalization movement.



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Choctaw youth represent tribe at FFA Convention in Washington, D.C.

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

Stay Connected to the Nation  
**CHOCTAWNATION.COM**



# SECOND CHANCE RESOURCE FAIR

November 14, 2024 | 11 AM – 1 PM

Choctaw Nation Community Center – Antlers  
302 SW O Street, Antlers, OK 74523

Open to CDIB cardholders from any federally recognized tribe, the Second Chance Resource Fair is an opportunity to connect with FREE legal aid services, re-entry programs, and career and educational opportunities. You will leave empowered with knowledge and ready to kickstart your next steps in life!

#### Vendors/Programs Include:

- Oklahoma Indian Legal Services
- Choctaw Nation Adult Education
- CN Vocational Rehabilitation
- CN Job for the Day
- CN 477 Program
- CN Career Development
- CN Reintegration
- Tribal Opioid Response
- 988 Program
- Warrior Wellness
- Recovery Is Possible
- Community Health Nursing
- CNO Housing

Hosted by:  
Choctaw Nation Adult Re-entry Program



For more information scan the QR Code

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
**HOPE SCOTT | 539-316-2154**  
**HSCOTT@CNHSA.COM**

