



Bond of friendship from one kind deed between two lands still strong after 178 years

By Shelia Kirven and Christian Toews

March may be Irish American History Month, but for many around the world, every day is a good day to celebrate the Choctaw-Irish friendship.

The Gift

Many people are familiar with the connection between the Choctaw Nation and the Irish people. They know how the Choctaws learned of the problems in Ireland and donated money in 1847 (\$170 then, \$5,000 in today's money) to the Irish people while they were enduring the potato famine that was ravaging their land.

The Choctaws were still enduring lasting hardships of forced removal from their homelands and had gone through the deadly Trail of Tears, yet they still felt compelled to meet together at Skullyville, Indian Territory, after hearing the news of the Great Famine, to combine their funds to send to Ireland to help others in their time of need.

Almost two centuries later, Ireland has not forgotten the gift. The friendship is still so strong that the Choctaw and Irish people regularly visit and coordinate activities and meetings together. The relationship has become a testimony to what people can do when they support and truly care for one another.

Irish President Mary Robinson visited the Choctaw Nation in 1995 to formally express her country's gratitude and rekindle the friendship. The historic visit was an honor and highlight for the Choctaw Nation, with a grand celebration, cultural dancing, and a gathering of tribal members who greeted their friends with joy and kindness.

Other Irish dignitaries have visited the Choctaw Nation during the years, and Choctaw dignitaries and delegates have visited Ireland as well.

This continuation is seen through Choctaw members and Irish citizens who enjoy visiting each other's countries and getting to know one another. It's a common bond that is unique and special.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the people of Ireland returned the kindness they long ago received and donated more than \$3 million to help Native American tribes who were being severely impacted in their homelands.

The friendship continues to grow, and new ways to connect the two nations are celebrated continuously through scholarships, festivals, artwork and tourism. The Choctaw and Irish people greatly respect one another through the bond formed from the original act of kindness.

To read more about The Gift and to view the Choctaw-Irish Timeline, please visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/news/born-through-a-donation-175-years-ago-the-choctaw-irish-bond-remains-strong-today/>.

Art

Irish artist Alex Pentek's "Kindred Spirits" was unveiled and dedicated in Middleton, County Cork, Ireland in 2017. A delegation from the Choctaw Nation attended the unveiling and dedication.

The sculpture reminds us of the connection between the Choctaw Nation and the Irish people. Twenty feet in height, nine eagle feathers curve up from an empty concrete bowl, symbolizing the deadly Irish famine.

During the recent 2024 Choctaw Labor Day Festival, the "Eternal Heart" sculpture was unveiled and dedicated. The sculpture is an eight-foot piece honoring the Choctaw-Irish

relationship. Irish and Oklahoma dignitaries, as well as Choctaw tribal members and leaders, gathered in an emotional dedication of the sculpture.

Funds for the project were provided by the Government of Ireland and the Chahta Foundation.

Choctaw Nation tribal artist Samuel Stitt created a Celtic trinity shape intertwined with a heart that purposefully faces the direction of Ireland, with the heart representing the Choctaw Nation. The base is edged with diamonds, a sign of respect to the diamondback snake.

Claire Green Young, Choctaw Nation Public Artist Manager and past Choctaw-Ireland scholarship recipient said that Stitt is known for his handmade regalia and art and that it was great to see his work come to life in the large-scale sculpture, which speaks to the versatility of our Choctaw artists.

"I think that the story of the connection is very provocative and interesting; it grabs your attention," Young said. "It's not something everyone knows about, as far as the broader public goes, so I think that it really has the potential to be something that draws people into Tvshka Homma, to our capital, to see our history and our museum in that way. I think that as a public arts symbol, it also covers a lot of weight."

Young went on to say it is moving to think of it being tied to another piece in the location [Ireland] where the donation was received.

According to Young, she met an elderly couple from Ireland at the unveiling at Tvshka Homma. They had come to witness the unveiling and said it was incredible to see Irish elders standing together with Choctaw elders at the event.

Recently, Stephanie Murray, an Irish-born fine art and portrait photographer based in Chicago, began a new project. Murray is creating an art exhibition to further the education and understanding of the Choctaw-Irish connection.

Murray plans to shoot black-and-white portrait photographs of Choctaw and Irish people that exemplify this powerful story.

She will showcase these images in Chicago, Ireland, and London art exhibitions. She is also working with an academic team to publish an accompanying book to raise awareness and foster further international cooperation.

She said the Choctaw Nation's compassion and generosity to the Irish people compelled her to undertake the project.

"It's a photographic project. But in essence, I feel like it's more, I'm a storyteller," said Murray.

"I wanted to kind of get the humanity across about it. I had read a lot of academic things about it, but it's about people seeing people. It's about this line of humanity that was seen," Murray continued.

The project is aptly named "Echoes of Kindness." Murray hopes to complete the production stage and begin the photo exhibition and book distribution within a year.

For past stories on these Choctaw-Irish art projects, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/search/irish-art>.

Scholarships

In 2018, the Irish government announced a new scholarship program for Choctaw Nation members to study at University College Cork in Ireland to recognize the generosity shown towards the people of Ireland and to foster and deepen ties between the two nations. The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship pays for tuition and expenses for one year of study for each scholarship recipient.

After the first two years, the Chahta Foundation began a matching donation, and two Choctaw students began receiv-

ing the scholarship each year.

Scholarship recipients include Jessica Militante, Ciarra O'Donnell, Claire Green Young, Austin West, Skylee Glass, Aurianna Joines, Emily McClaghry, Brice Mayfield, Cayden Keith Cook Kirkpatrick and Jake Martin.

"The most important thing that I learned about the Choctaw-Irish connection is the enduring nature of our relationship," said scholarship recipient Austin West. "While the Choctaw-Irish connection is often discussed regarding past actions, its effects are felt in the present. From public discussions and side street conversations to public sculptures and diplomatic visits, the Choctaw-Irish connection is alive and well."

West advises students who might want to apply for the scholarship to be thoughtful and clear-eyed about how the program intersects with their long-term career goals.

According to West, the scholarship changed his life.

"It enabled me to earn a master's degree, share our culture with others, obtain numerous job opportunities in Ireland and the United States, build my international experience, serve as the basis for additional educational attainment, and more," said West. "In short, the scholarship fundamentally changed the direction of my life, and it is something for which I will always be grateful."

Recipient Aurianna Joines spoke of her time in Ireland as a wonderful opportunity.

"There is simply an abundance of gratitude between the Choctaw and Irish people for the generosity and kindness shown to one another. The gift is not forgotten, the people are not forgotten, and the relationship between our people is growing as time goes on," said Joines. "It is our job to continue that story and foster that relationship between the Choctaw and Irish people for generations to come."

According to Joines, the scholarship changed her life in many ways.

"This scholarship changed my life in so many different ways. There is so much to learn when you move to another country, and it makes you grow quickly. You are surrounded by so many people with different backgrounds, and it is truly amazing to hear life stories that look so different from your own," Joines said. "This scholarship changed my perspective of life, raised the bar for what I thought I could accomplish, and opened up doors that I didn't know even existed. I walked away from my time in Ireland with meaningful friendships, incredible experiences, and a lifelong appreciation for the opportunity to represent the Choctaw Nation and the Choctaw-Irish relationship."

For more information on the Choctaw-Irish scholarship, please visit the <https://chahtafoundation.com/>.

Friendship Festival

The Choctaw-Irish Friendship Festival is planned for March 14-15, 2025, in Durant at the Choctaw Cultural Center. The event, which will take place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, will celebrate the special bond between the Choctaw Nation and Ireland.

Tribal members and the public are welcome to participate in activities for the entire family, including an art market and cultural demonstrations, and to see what it is like to be a part of the mutual affection and respect between the Choctaw and Irish people.

For more information on future events and art exhibits happening at Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, visit <https://choctawculturalcenter.com/>.

Faith, Family, Culture

Na Yimmi, Chukka Achvffa, Im Aivlhpesa



Chief Gary Batton

Language is a large part of a strong tribe

The Choctaw Nation must preserve, protect and promote our Native Chahta language for our tribe to remain sovereign and vital. We have made great efforts to support this focus on the language of our ancestors through language classes, language promotion and including Chahta language and traditions in all we do throughout the Nation.

Did you know there are other areas throughout the state that are aiding in the promotion of Native American language and traditions? For instance, the Sam Noble Museum and the Department of Native American Studies in the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Oklahoma have launched a new Native Language Fair Honor Fund.

The fund honored the legacies of Choctaw language speakers Brenda Samuels, Virginia Espinoza and Curtis Billy. The fund was established to honor the Choctaw speakers and

past Native speakers, ancestors, and relatives of the past, present, and future who have worked closely with the language fair.

The goal is to continue their legacy of the Choctaw and Native speakers by creating a sustainable future for the fair. This fund contributes toward an endowment for the event that will generate consistent and stable funding, enabling the museum to provide students with a venue to share their Native languages and support broader language revitalization across Oklahoma.

At least 14 elders who have been longtime supporters of the language fair have passed away in recent years.

Their loss is deeply felt both at the museum and in their communities. The goal is to carry on their legacies and their passion for the preservation of Native cultures and languages through the fair.

Visit the website to contribute to the Native Language Fair Honor Fund. To honor a specific elder, select "this is an honorary or memorial gift." Information about the specific individuals honored through the fund will be made available online and at the language fair.

Promoting our language not only ensures our culture remains vital, but it also announces that ours is a sovereign nation that is proud and strong and 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. Preserving our language connects us to our historical past while also enhancing our sovereign present and future as a tribe.

This past year the Choctaw Nation graduated a record 15 new apprentices from our School of Language, Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna. The Assistant Chief and I were there to proudly congratulate our newest ambassadors of the Chahta language. While this is a great accomplishment, my challenge for this year is to increase the number of apprenticeship graduates who will help promote the Chahta language both on and off the reservation.

The school was established to promote and preserve the language, history, and culture of the Chahta people. To apply go to the Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna website serves as a language database connection to provide information about the school and various opportunities available to learn the Chahta language and culture.

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The Choctaw language is the heart of the Choctaw people's identity. It encompasses the native spirit of our celebrated ancestors and awakens the desire in younger generations to persevere.

The language program has grown from offering one class via satellite at the University of Oklahoma in 1998, to currently employing 21 teachers and serving approximately 3,000 people per week through the website, community classes, public schools, colleges, online Internet classes, early childhood and elementary classes.

Together we can promote the Chahta language and keep the Choctaw Nation a vital, strong, sovereign nation for many generations to come. Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Job's three friends

"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him." – Acts 2:11.

True friendship is essential. It is the union of hearts in the bonds of goodness and love. However, there are many who are called friends and are enemies in disguise. Then, there are pretended friends who flutter around you when you are prosperous and leave when you face poverty. The third type of friends are those who are deficient in tenderness of feelings and gentleness of spirit and cannot administer to a wounded soul.

Job's friends seem to fall in this category. They appear to be dogmatists. A dogmatist is a person who strongly asserts their belief and opinions as if they were true and refuses to accept the views of others.

Eliphaz was a religious dogmatist whose dogmatism rests upon some mysterious experience. He says much truth, and often eloquently, but remained hard and cruel. He feels he must be heard because of his remarkable experience. Bildad is a religious dogmatist of the superficial kind. His dogmatism is based on tradition. He quotes proverbial wisdom and pious phrases. These do not shed any light on Job's problems. Zophar is a religious dogmatist who assumes to know all. He seems to know God's will in any given case and His thoughts about it. This type of dogmatism is the most irreverent and least open to reason.

Their speech was of great intelligence and religious knowledge. They had high moral excellences. However, their minds bore the idea that there must have been some extreme cause for Job's calamity. They thought that Job had some moral problem or some secret sin that he was concealing. They all reasoned as if the righteous was supposed to have uninterrupted blessings and that God's providence would preserve them from calamities. This was the error of Job's friends; and this error in judgement led to unhappy results. It injured Job and displeased God. Their purpose and mission were to mourn and comfort Job in his affliction, but it did not end that way.

John 13:1 tells us "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. He came to mourn and comfort and He did."



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

March is an active time for Choctaw Emergency Team

The weather here in Oklahoma, especially in March, is sometimes very unpredictable. It can be skin-scorching hot one day, tornado warnings the next and sleet after that. Living on the Choctaw Nation requires our Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Office of Emergency Management (OEM) team to be ready for anything thrown their way.

Just this past January, we recorded in some areas of the reservation, nearly a foot of snow. The OEM team gave instructions on what to do in the cold temperatures and how to prepare your home for a temperature drop. Our team here works tirelessly to ensure our tribal members and associates are up to date on all the latest weather patterns and dangerous conditions that could affect their wellbeing.

The Nation takes great pride in offering this service to our tribal members and associates. The Choctaw Nation provides emergency texts to its tribal members and associates in the event of severe weather or closings related to the weather. You can access that information as a tribal member through the Chahta Achvffa Portal.

We also have an up-to-date alert system on social media, and you can access that information by searching Facebook for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Emergency Management page and get weather warning updates, forecasts and tips to ensure your safety during inclement weather.

The Nation also helps its tribal members in the form of support programs that assist eligible tribal members in acquiring storm shelters and/or being a participant in wind abatement programs that can secure your home in windy and severe conditions. The Choctaw Nation provides a storm shelter grant to eligible Choctaw tribal members who live in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas. The Nation also provides a voucher for wind mitigating projects to tribal members within the Choctaw Nation service area. For more information on these services go to www.choctawnation.com and enter "storm" in the search bar.

As our emergency services team will tell you the best defense to extreme weather is to have a plan in place for your wellbeing should severe conditions hit. For instance:

- When thunder roars, go indoors! Move from outdoors into a building or car with a roof.
- Pay attention to alerts and warnings.
- Avoid using electronic devices connected to an electrical outlet.
- Avoid running water.
- Turn Around. Don't Drown! Do not drive through flooded roadways. Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

Stay Safe After Thunderstorms & Lightning

- Pay attention to authorities and weather forecasts for information on whether it is safe to go outside and instructions regarding potential flash flooding.
- Watch for fallen power lines and trees. Report them immediately.

Tornadoes

- If you are under a tornado or severe weather warning:
- Go to NOAA Weather Radio and your local news or official social media accounts for updated emergency information. Follow the instructions of state, local and tribal officials.
- Go to a safe shelter immediately, such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar or a small interior room on the lowest level of a sturdy building. Also have a plan in place for your pets when severe weather occurs.
- Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls.
- Do not go under an overpass or bridge. You're safer in a low, flat location.
- Watch out for flying debris that can cause injury or death.
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- If you can't stay at home, make plans to go to a public shelter.

While severe weather is unpredictable, by following these tips provided by our OEM team it could help save your life or the life of someone you love just by being prepared and having a good emergency plan. The Choctaw Nation is here to help you in the event of severe weather conditions. Yakoke to our OEM team for all they do to help us be prepared in the challenging weather conditions that arrive each spring on the Reservation.

Choctaw Veteran honored by Texoma Hero Program

SHERMAN, Texas – The Texoma Hero Program recognized Retired U.S. Army Master Sgt. Bruce E. Jessie in a ceremony Jan. 31 at VFW Post 2772 in Sherman, Texas. Jessie is the commander of the Choctaw Nation Honor Guard.

The Texoma Hero Program was founded by Billy Teague, a veteran and host of the ceremony, and HOT 107.3 FM radio in 2015, to recognize local veterans for their military duty and continued community service. Recognition of those selected are held on the last Friday of each month. To date 138 veterans have been honored, said Teague.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., an Army veteran previously selected a Texoma Hero in 2021, noted Jessie's 32-year-service in the military included tours of duty with Operation Iraqi Freedom, Opera-

tion Enduring Freedom and in Korea, where he earned the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, and Army Commendation Medal, among other decorations. He also was deployed to Fort Sill (near his birthplace of Frederick), Germany, and Panama.

Jessie offered a brief history of the Choctaw Honor Guard which started in 1998 with 18 original members. The group's first official appearance was at the Trail of Tears Ceremonial Walk that May. As



Choctaw Nation Photo Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. poses for a photo with Bruce E. Jessie.

commander of the Honor Guard, Jessie oversees the tribal veterans who carry flags and perform gun salutes at funerals and memorials for Choctaw veterans, support communities in parades, post and retire colors during ceremonies, and lead the grand entry of the annual Choctaw Powwow.

CHOCTAW TRAIL OF TEARS
MEMORIAL WALK

Remembering our ancestors and embracing our culture!

MAY 17, 2025

TVSHKA HOMMA
CAPITOL GROUNDS
Council House Road
Tuskahoma, OK 74574

CULTURAL DEMONSTRATIONS, LIVE VILLAGE AND VENDOR BOOTHS
OPEN AT 9:00 AM

TRAIL OF TEARS CEREMONY AND WALK
BEGINS IN THE VILLAGE AT 10:00AM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAW NATION

EASTER CELEBRATION

2025

APRIL 12, 2025 | 10:30 AM

Please join us as we celebrate the Good News of Easter and enjoy fellowship with tribal members and their families.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 800-522-6170
OR EMAIL TRIBALEVENTS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

ENVISION CENTER
VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

HOP INTO THE CULTURAL CENTER FOR EASTER

Explore the Choctaw Cultural Center and celebrate Easter at our EGGstravaganza! Bring the whole family for egg hunts, photos with the Easter Bunny and special children's activities.

April 5, 2025 | 10:30am - 4:00pm

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

Water for 2060 Excellence Awards

DURANT, Okla. – Sardis Lake Water Authority (Rayna Noah and Chris DeWeese) and LeFlore Rural Water District 17 (Deb Butler and Vicki Cernal) received the Water for 2060 Excellence Award at the annual Oklahoma Governor’s Water Conference.

The Water for 2060 Excellence Award Program was developed to recognize individuals and entities making exceptional contributions by promoting and implementing water use efficiency and conserving Oklahoma’s freshwater resources.

Winning projects have addressed a social, environmental, or financial problem by integrating innovative approaches in the promotion of water efficiency and have contributed to minimizing or eliminating the need



for new freshwater supplies in the future and benefiting the local or state economy.

Choctaw Nation Office of Water Resource Management is proud to work with both water providers through infrastructure projects and sustainability practices.

James is First Language Speaker of the Month

Wanda James, District 5, is Choctaw Nation’s First Language Speaker of the Month.

James is a full-blood Choctaw and grew up in the Lodi-Boggy community near Red Oak. Her family taught James the language and other Choctaw traditions.

She attended Cedar Indian Baptist Church, where she listened to Reverend Taylor and others preach in Choctaw and English.

James’ family attended the Feb. 8 Council meeting to watch her receive the honor.



Webster is Choctaw Veteran of the Month

Euna Jefferson Webster, District #5, is Choctaw Nation’s Veteran of the Month.

Webster was born Jan. 17, 1924, in Stigler, Okla., to Daniel Webster and Eva Perry. He attended Stigler school through 8th grade. In 1942, he completed training for Arc Welding, N.Y.A. Training School in Oklahoma.

Webster was inducted into the U.S. Army Feb. 23, 1943, and entered active service on March 2, 1943, in Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. His Military Occupational Specialty number was Rifleman 745. He earned the Combat Infantry and Expert Infantry Badges July 20, 1944, and served as a rifleman with Company G of the 124th Infantry as a scout, conducting special scouting patrols to get information regarding enemy installations. He was knowledgeable about infantry signals and procedures and operated machine guns, rifles, and other frontline infantry weapons.

He served overseas for 23 months in New Guinea, Morotai, and the Philippine Islands. He held several service medals, including a Purple Heart, Bronze Arrowhead, and Silver Service Star for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy while serving with the 31st Infantry Division during WWII. He was also presented with Bronze Star Medals, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one Bronze Service Star. His battles and campaigns included GO 33 WD45 New Guinea Southern Philippines, which specified the geographical combat zone and the time limitation for medals.

PFC Webster passed away on April 10, 1999, in Los Angeles, Calif., with his final resting place being Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California. This accommodation is posthumously presented to Mr. Webster’s family in honor of his courageous service.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma 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 Earns IEDC accreditation

DURANT, Okla. (Dec. 20, 2024) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has been recognized as one of 84 economic development organizations accredited by International Economic Development Council (IEDC) as an Accredited Economic Development Organization (AEDO).

The Choctaw Nation is the first Native American tribe to receive this accreditation.

The AEDO designation places the Choctaw Nation in the top one percent of economic development organizations in the U.S. Only three other Oklahoma communities - Ada, Ponca City and the Tulsa Chamber, have received this prestigious recognition.

The Choctaw Nation assists communities in its reservation with marketing and recruiting businesses to their area. Last year, the Choctaw Nation Economic Development team assisted with 38 site selection Request for Proposals (RFP) and seven site visits. Three businesses chose to locate manufacturing operations in the Choctaw Nation, creating 120 new jobs and \$93 million in capital investments.

“We are committed to helping our communities grow and prosper. It’s important for them to market themselves to businesses so we can invest in our future and create a sense of pride in our communities,” said Chief Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. “Our economic development efforts, help communities create an attractive environment for businesses and their employees.”

“The Choctaw Nation displays the professionalism, commitment, and technical expertise that is deserving of this honor,” said IEDC President and CEO Nathan Ohle.

The AEDO program is a comprehensive peer review process that measures economic



development organizations against commonly held standards in the profession. The program consists of two phases: a documentation review and an onsite visit. Each phase is designed to evaluate information about the structure, organization, funding, programs, and staff of the candidate economic development organization.

Earning the AEDO accreditation tells the community and prospects that the Choctaw Nation has attained a measure of excellence assuring that their trust is well-placed and their business is in good hands.

Maintenance of the AEDO status is required every three years and is accomplished through documentation submission and/or onsite visits by a team of the AEDO subcommittee.

About The IEDC
The International Economic Development Council is the largest membership association serving economic and community development professionals in the world. With over 5,000 members nationwide and abroad, IEDC offers the economic development profession one source for information and professional development, one voice for the profession and one force for advocacy. For more information, call Dana Crater at (910) 821.0245; fax (202) 223.4745; write to IEDC at 1275 K Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005; email dcrater@iedconline.org; or visit www.iedconline.org.

Haaland kicks off her New Mexico governor campaign

By Jourdan Bennett-Begaye, ICT

WASHINGTON — Deb Haaland officially launched her campaign Tuesday for governor of the Land of Enchantment two weeks after she announced her run for the office.

Leading up to the campaign launch, she teased the campaign announcement on social media in a few videos saying, “We must be fierce” and “Are you ready New Mexico?”

The Laguna Pueblo citizen emphasized in the launch video the significance of listening to communities, safety, and the cost of living.

“Lowering costs, making rent and housing affordable, strengthening our schools, and preventing crimes so that you feel safe raising a family here. The solutions are there if we are fierce enough to choose them,” she said in the video.

Haaland, a Democrat, said she will start her tour around the state to listen to New Mexicans’ struggles and solutions for their communities.

If Haaland is elected, she would be the first Native American woman to serve as governor in the country. Minnesota Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, White Earth Nation, got close to that historical mark when Gov. Tim Walz ran as former Vice President Kamala Harris’ running mate in the 2024 presidential election.

Haaland broke glass ceilings when she became one of the first two Native women to serve in Congress and the first Native American to serve in the president’s cabinet.



Photo Courtesy of Deb Haaland’s Social Media
Deb Haaland, Laguna Pueblo, announces run for Governor of New Mexico.

She highlighted her experience in Congress and at the Department of the Interior in funding water projects in rural areas, other projects to clean up New Mexico’s pollution, and jobs in clean energy.

New Mexico limits the governor to two consecutive four-year terms, but allows a governor to run again after sitting out for one term. The current governor is Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Democrat, who is now serving her second term.

The New Mexico gubernatorial election is Nov. 3, 2026.

The state is home to 23 tribes — 19 Pueblos, three Apache tribes, and the Navajo Nation — and more than 260,000 American Indian and Alaska Native people, according to the 2020 Census, with an entire Indian affairs department serving them.

About ICT

ICT is an independent, nonprofit, multimedia news enterprise. We reach audiences through our digital platform and as a broadcast carried via public television stations.

BUSINESS

CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT • CHAT

Tax Talk: Making Dollars and Cents of Your Business Strategy

By Brad Erwin

Imagine focusing on business growth instead of navigating tax complexities. By implementing smart tax strategies, you can reduce stress, maximize savings, and allocate resources efficiently. Here are key considerations to make tax season smoother:

- 1. Understand Your Business Structure**
Your business structure (LLC, corporation, sole proprietorship, etc.) affects your tax obligations. For example, C-corporations face double taxation, while other structures may offer tax advantages. Choosing the right structure based on your goals can optimize tax efficiency. Consult a tax professional if unsure.
- 2. Keep Accurate and Detailed Records**
 - Track Expenses: Maintain records of business-related expenses like office supplies, travel, and software subscriptions. Proper tracking minimizes tax liability.
 - Organize by Category: Categorizing expenses (marketing, office supplies, travel, etc.) streamlines deductions and provides financial insights.
 - Use Accounting Software: Tools like QuickBooks or Excel help manage financial records. Consult a tax professional for recommendations.
- 3. Deductible Business Expenses**
 - Home Office Deduction: If you work from home, you may qualify for this deduction. The space must be used exclusively for business.
 - Vehicle Expenses: Track business mileage, gas, and maintenance costs for potential deductions.
 - Meals & Entertainment: Business-related meals may be partially deductible with proper documentation.
- 4. Make Estimated Tax Payments**
Self-employed individuals and LLC owners should make quarterly tax payments to avoid penalties. Set aside at least 25% of income for taxes. Use IRS Form 1040-ES or corporate equivalents to calculate payments. If unsure, estimate based on last year’s return.
- 5. Pay Attention to Sales Tax**
 - Sales Tax Compliance: If your business sells products or specific services, you may be required to collect sales tax from customers. It is essential to understand the sales tax regulations in your state or country, including what is taxable and what is exempt.
- 6. Hire a Tax Professional**
 - Use Tax: If you purchase goods or services that are subject to sales tax but are not charged sales tax at the point of sale, you may be responsible for paying “use tax” on those items. Stay informed about your obligations to avoid any compliance issues.
- 7. Plan for Tax Season Year-Round**
 - Record-Keeping: Avoid waiting until tax season to organize your financials. Maintaining accurate records throughout the year helps ensure you don’t overlook valuable deductions and credits.
 - Tax Strategy: Schedule regular meetings with your tax advisor to review and refine your tax strategy. Being proactive about planning for potential tax savings will help minimize stress and streamline the tax season.
- 8. Avoid Common Mistakes**
 - Mixing Personal and Business Expenses: Maintaining separate accounts simplifies tax filing and prevents IRS issues.
 - Underestimating Taxes: Set aside enough funds to cover tax obligations and avoid financial strain.
 - Misclassifying Workers: Misclassifying employees as independent contractors can lead to tax penalties. Follow IRS guidelines to determine worker status.
 - Tax planning is an ongoing process, and staying proactive helps ensure business success.

If you have questions or topics you’d like covered, reach out via Facebook at Choctaw Small Business.

BURSTING THE BUBBLES AGAINST CHILD ABUSE COMMUNITY EVENT

APRIL 25, 2025

April 25, 2025 | 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Registration 11:45 PM | Bubble Release 2:00 PM
Cultural Activities | Games | Resources | Speakers

Choctaw Nation Community Center
1346 E Martin Luther King Dr.
Broken Bow, Oklahoma

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

SEE AND SHARE OUR STORIES AT

TogetherWereMore.com

Choctaw Nation

SCAN CODE TO VIEW STORIES

HONOR GUARD

— POSITIONS AVAILABLE —

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

YOUTH EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

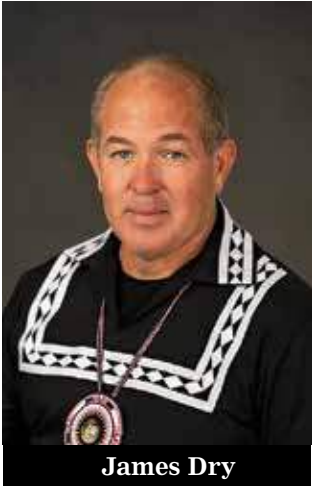
SUMMER CAMP

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN THROUGH THE CHAHTA ACHVFFA PORTAL

SIGN UP NOW THROUGH APRIL 15

Camps are available to tribal members and children of associates

Choctaw Nation Youth Events & Activities



James Dry

District 9

Halito, from District 9.

I hope everyone has enjoyed the fall and winter, but I sure am ready for spring. District 9 seniors are already getting geared up for the gardening season.

We recently handed over 25 keys to families that qualified for Choctaw Nation LEAP program and 10 keys for Affordable Rental units in Bennington. These two programs have been a huge success for District 9, as we've completed 230 LEAP homes since 2019 and 20 Affordable rental units. We currently have 204 affordable rental homes starting in Calera and housing is completing 60 independent elderly units for our seniors.

We are also excited to announce that District 9 will start construction on a new community center this spring to better serve our seniors and community. The new center will be able to seat over 400 seniors for our Wednesday lunch and add more office space to accommodate more staff. Spring is always a busy time for high school seniors, filling out college applications or trying to figure out a career path. It's always a pleasure when a student reaches out to me for a reference letter for college acceptance or scholarship opportunities. I really enjoy writing these and encouraging them about College, Career Development, or working for the Choctaw Nation. It's hard to believe it's been 35 years that I was doing the same thing.

It's a pleasure to serve District 9, and my door is always open. Have a wonderful Spring. God Bless!



ner). She says it's the good Lord that has gotten her this far!

Ms. Perkin's family would like to extend a big Thank You to Centric Home health and hospice, Whataburger and Sassafras Creek photography for giving her a day to remember.

Mary Perkins turns 99

Mary Perkins of Bennington, Oklahoma, celebrated her 99th birthday on January 17, 2025. She enjoyed every minute of it, spending time with family and friends, her Centric hospice team, Tribal Council member James Dry and Sassafras Creek Photography!

She had a Whataburger-themed party thanks to her favorite restaurant, Whataburger! Ms. Perkins would like to thank Whataburger and said, "just keep making them!"

Ms. Perkins is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She is the daughter of George Pettey and Nora Lee Pettey (Gard-

Melba Boman turns 100

Melba Marie Boman, daughter of original enrollees Roosevelt Bacon and Josephine (Woods) Bacon, turned 100 years old in December. Family and friends celebrated her at a special birthday party at Meadow Lake Ranch, in Sand Springs, Oklahoma, during which she was ceremoniously inducted into the Centenarians of Oklahoma club. Later that month, Melba was honored to be visited by Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin, and Councilman Eddie Bohanan at her home. She also was the guest of honor at a birthday party held at the Choctaw Nation Community Center, in Talihiina, Oklahoma.

Melba, born in Whitesboro, Oklahoma, has lived her entire life in Choctaw Nation and has long called Talihiina her home. In fact, she was a modified diets supervisor at the Talihiina Indian Hospital before retiring from Indian Health Service in 1973. Since retiring, Melba has enjoyed spending more time with her family, which now spans five



generations that include one daughter, three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and 11 great-great-grandchildren. A biography about Melba will be added to the Oklahoma Historical Society's collection in the near future, in which she offers this advice to young people: "God and family are the most important. Educate yourself and remember that God gave you life and is always with you. Whatever you've accomplished has been with His help. Give Him thanks and teach your children about the power of prayer."

COUNCIL MINUTES

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
TRIBAL COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

February 8, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTES
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session January 11, 2025
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. January Veteran of the Month, District #4 - Joe Jessie
 - b. January First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #4 - Wanda James
 - c. February Veteran of the Month District #5 - Euna Webster
 - d. February First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #5 - Julia Hensley
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve Recreational Lease No. 4200458331 (G09-2087) in Favor of Mr. Joe Martin and Mr. Fred Midgley on Land

Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation in Latimer County, Oklahoma

- b. Approve Agriculture Lease No. 4200460058 (G09-2094) in Favor of Mr. Fred James, Jr., on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation in Latimer County, Oklahoma
 - c. Approve Agricultural Lease No. 4200460060 (G09-2095) in Favor of Mr. Fred James, Jr., on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation in Latimer County, Oklahoma
 - d. Approve an Amendment to CB-95-24 Regarding the Purchase of Real Property at Preston Harbor in Grayson County, Texas
 - e. Approve Funding for an Additional Equity Investment in a Hotel/Resort Property Located in Texas
 - f. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets - Equipment
 - g. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets - Vehicles
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
10. OLD BUSINESS
11. ADJOURNMENT
12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All bills passed unanimously

Choctaw Lighthouse names Woodruff Chief of Police

DURANT, Okla. (Dec. 20, 2024) - DURANT, Okla. - The Choctaw Nation Lighthouse Police has named Michael D. Woodruff as chief of police. Woodruff has over 30 years of law enforcement experience, including 25 years with the Durant Police Department, most recently as the deputy chief of police. He also has served with the Johnston County Sheriff's Department and the Madill Police Department.

Woodruff holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and is a two-time Durant Kiwanis Lawmen of the Year recipient. He came to Choctaw Lighthouse from the Oklahoma's Regional Organized Crime Information Center, where he served as law enforcement coordinator. He also graduated from the FBI National Academy.

"I'm very humbled and honored to be selected as chief of police for the Choctaw Nation Lighthouse Police Department," said Woodruff. "The Choctaw Nation is committed to protecting our members and our neighbors in southeast Oklahoma. We look forward to strengthening our relationships with the more than 75 local, state and federal agencies we share



Choctaw Nation Photo

Woodruff named Chief of Police for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

cross-deputization agreements with. Cooperation is the key to enhancing public safety", Woodruff said.

"The Choctaw Nation Lighthouse Police is fortunate to have such an experienced law enforcement professional come to lead our department," said Michael Hall, executive director of public safety. "As chief, he will direct and coordinate our daily operations across the 13 counties of the Choctaw reservation."

Woodruff's wife, Nancy, is also an associate at the Choctaw Nation, and their two children are Choctaw tribal members. Their son Jake is a sergeant with the Texas Highway Patrol, and their daughter, Kortney, is training as a nurse practitioner.

Want to learn more about Choctaw history?

Check out past and future Iiti Fabvssas at <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/iti-fabvssa/>.

TRADITIONAL CHOCTAW SEEDS GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

Request by application only

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

- Please check the **three** plants that you would like to receive seed for:
- Tanchi Tohbi Choctaw Flour Corn**
 - Tobi Smith Peas**
 - Isito Choctaw Sweet Potato Squash**
 - Tvnishi Lambsquarter**
 - Hakchuma Perique Tobacco**
 - Chukfi Peas**
 - Hvshi Pakanli Seneca Sunflower**

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

Seeds from the Growing Hope Program are intended for Choctaw People and Community members. They will be given out on a first come, first served basis while supplies last, hard copy mail in application only. **YAKOKE!**

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Luke Taylor

Before long, temperatures are going to start getting warmer. Rise in temperature means rise in fish activity across the Choctaw Nation, and if you are like me, you cannot wait to get out and get a basket full of crappie. No matter what fish you may be after, springtime fishing is one of the best times of the year to get out and wet a line.

Spawning cycles for most sport fish in the reservation are starting to begin. Depending on water temperatures, this can begin as early as February with walleye and saugeye and continue through May and early June.

Walleye and saugeye spawn in water 42-50 degrees which is usually late February and early March. You can catch these fish coming into shallow water over rock or gravel and generally on a windswept shoreline using slender crankbaits, grubs, or swimbaits. These fish are very tasty, but Broken Bow Lake and Sardis are the only two lakes within Choctaw Nation that these fish are found.

Spring crappie fishing is a great way to fill your freezer with some good slabs. When water temperatures rise to 45-55 degrees, these fish will begin moving to shallower water, close to their desired spawning areas. Marabou jigs, tubes, inline spinners, and live minnows are a few options to use to target crappie, but when the bite is on, they will hit about any small jig you throw out in water less than 10 feet. Crappie are found in about every lake you can fish within the reservation and are a fun way to get kids started fishing.

White bass are another favorite springtime fish to go after. These fish will begin moving to inflowing streams and rivers to begin their spawning process. When the water reaches 50-55 degrees, they will start going upstream to spawn. Curly tail grubs, marabou jigs, lipless crank baits, and live minnows are good options when chasing these sand bass. They can also be found all over the reservation, with Sardis and McGee creek being some of the hot spots during the spring sand bass run.

Largemouth Bass may be the most exciting fish to pursue and catch for many anglers because of their aggressive bite and fight they put up. These fish will start moving to shallow water and begin their spawn when water temps are 62-65 degrees. They will be very active during this time because they are trying to protect their nest from other predators.

There are many great opportunities to enjoy catching your favorite fish in the spring, so get out and take a kid fishing.

Upcoming Events

Futures of Football Showcase - March 1 | 9 a.m. | Southeastern Oklahoma State University - Paul Laird Field | Open to competitive high school athletes grades 9-12. This is a great opportunity for Choctaw youth (grades 9-12) to be recognized by college coaches in hopes of receiving the opportunity to play at the next level.

Blood Drive – Durant Casino - March 13 & 14 | 8 a.m. & 1 p.m. | Choctaw Casino & Resort–Durant will be hosting two blood drives. The drive will start at 8 a.m. on March 13 and 1 p.m. on March 14. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments can be made at <https://www.yourbloodinstitute.org/donor/schedules/name>. Search “Choctaw” or search by city.

Choctaw Irish Fest - March 14 & 15 | 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | Join us for family fun on March 14 and 15, as we celebrate our ongoing bond during the annual Choctaw-Irish Friendship Fest.

Youth Stickball Clinic - March 20 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | Join us this Spring Break for an exciting day at our Youth Stickball Clinic! Designed for players of all skill levels, ages 8-17, this clinic offers a fun and dynamic environment to learn the fundamentals of stickball. Our experienced coaches will guide participants through essential skills, including tackling, passing, and shooting, with engaging drills and mini games. With a mix of instruction, practice, and friendly competition, players will enhance their abilities and gain confidence on the field.

Okchahli - March 21 | 11 a.m. | Join us as we celebrate the renewal of spring, with presentations and activities centered around growth, conservation, and stewardship. This event is in collaboration with Growing Hope to experience planting heirloom seeds and learning their growing phases.

Cinema at the Center - March 21 | 7 p.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | This monthly series features a wide range of films designed around a fun, family-friendly theme. This month, check out The Goonies. We'd love to see you for movie night.

Idabel Beekeeping Workshop - March 22 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Idabel Community Center 2408 E Lincoln Rd Idabel, OK 74745 | Information on history and basic bee biology will be presented. Topics to be covered will include what to expect when starting your beekeeping journey, tips on how to care for the hives during every season, pesticides bees may encounter in the environment, and pollinator plants.

Youth Stickball Clinic - March 20 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Choctaw Cultural Center | Join us this Spring Break for an exciting day at our Youth Stickball Clinic! Designed for players of all skill levels, ages 8-17, this clinic offers a fun and dynamic environment to learn the fundamentals of stickball. Our experienced coaches will guide players through essential skills with engaging drills and mini games.

Womens Stickball Clinic - March 29 | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. (Rain or Shine) | Choctaw Cultural Center | Come join us for a day of kinship and kapucha! This workshop brings women together to learn stick skills, injury prevention and care, as well as encouraging them to take care of their physical health and wellness. But perhaps most importantly, it helps them become leaders in their own communities. You are required to be a stickball player and 16 years or older. Sticks will not be provided.

Programs & Services

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 for more information.

STAR Program - The STAR application is now available. Parents and guardians can apply for their students enrolled in grades 2-12. The application window for the previous fall semester will close on April 1. Apply in the Chahta Achvfa member portal today!

High School Career Tech Assistance - Career Development helps cover expenses for high school junior and senior students who are tribal members, Oklahoma residents and are enrolled at a Career and Technology Center. Eligibility requirements apply. For more information, call 866.933.2260 or email aces@choctawnation.com. Scan QR code to apply.



Princess Pageants - Young Choctaw women, ages 8 - 22 (1/16-degree Choctaw or more), are invited to compete in their respective district pageants. District winners will compete at the Choctaw Labor Day Festival for the overall Choctaw Nation Royalty titles. Upcoming pageants include: District 1 on April 3, District 2 on April 8 and District 3 on April 15. For more details on upcoming pageants and more dates, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/princess-and-royalty/>.

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Storm season is just around the corner! Do you have your storm shelter installed? The storm shelter program began in 2012 and this year we will have installed over 8,000 in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. All tribal members in these states, regardless of income, 45 years of age and older are eligible to receive a \$3,500 voucher for an in-ground storm shelter with documentation they own their home. Those with ambulatory disabilities may receive a voucher for \$5,000 for the purchase of an above ground shelter. All expenses over the voucher amount will be charged to the tribal member.

All tribal members in the five states listed above under the age of 45 who own their home are eligible for a \$1,750 voucher. You are only eligible to receive this benefit once.

The application is available on the CHAHTA ACHVFFA portal, or you can contact our housing office for an application and return it with your tribal membership and a copy of your deed to your home (the tribal members name must be on the deed). If all eligibility requirements are met, you will receive your voucher. Simply pick the contractor of your choice and once they have installed the shelter to your satisfaction, present them with the voucher. The contractor will then submit the voucher to Housing for payment.

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

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

A tribute to the Life of Robert June Moore Lachenmyer

In loving memory of Robert June Moore Lachenmyer (1925-2024) whose grandmother was Elizabeth Harkins, a direct descendant of George Washington Harkins, the first Chief of the Choctaw tribe during Indian removal in 1830. Great-Grandma June was a beacon of love, wisdom and faith in our lives, and a testament to grace and goodness. June was full of history and shared many memories about the 1940s road trip her family took from OK to CA in a rumble seat. Grandma June's beacon of light has always been her Joey, the grandson who had always been more of a son to her. Proudly wearing her U.S. Coast Guard hat to support her veteran grandson and his family. June and her late husband William had a hay & grain business in the 1950's in California. In 1962 the Lachenmyer's built the Calexico, California truck border crossing and offices. In the 1970's, they built a shopping center and housing developments.

We love and miss our Great-Grandma June very much!

Love, Joey, Heidi, Ava, Olivia & William Lavan

NEW CHILD CARE FACILITY OPENING IN MCALESTER THIS SPRING

A new child care facility is set to open in McAlester, OK, offering care for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years, both tribal and nontribal. The program provides a nurturing environment that supports children's development through creativity and learning. Applications are now being accepted to join the waitlist. Secure your child's spot today.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT, CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/CHILD-CARE/

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

2025 JUNIOR STEAM CAMP

June 8–June 10, 2025

TO APPLY VISIT CHOCTA.WS/PEHLICHI-JUNIOR

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

2025 SENIOR STEAM CAMP

June 1–June 6, 2025

TO APPLY VISIT CHOCTA.WS/PEHLICHI-SENIOR

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

2025 CHOCTAW NATION DISTRICT PRINCESS CONTESTS APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

APPLY BY MARCH 20

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, VISIT [HTTPS://CHOCTA.WS/SERVICES-ROYALTY](https://chocta.ws/services-royalty)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Scan to apply.

JOIN US FOR THE CHOCTAW-IRISH FRIENDSHIP FEST



Scan to learn more.

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

STAY IN THE KNOW BEFORE YOUR FAMILY GETS SICK!

Check the Respiratory Health Hub to see the common respiratory virus levels in our reservation.



Scan the QR code to visit the Respiratory Health Hub

Choctaw Nation Public Health

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna Mach Language Lesson

Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna

Conjunctions: because, so, and so, – atuk o, tuk o, hatuk o,

Omba tuk o, ak iyo tuk.	I didn't go because it rained.
Tikba il impa tuk o, illimpa yvt taha tuk.	We are out of food because we ate first.
Iskvli yvt ik svm ono tuk o, isht washoha ke chompo tuk.	I didn't have enough money, so we didn't buy a toy.
Omba chiyyohmi tuk o, hina yvt lukchuk beka tuk.	The road was all muddy because it had rained a lot.
Chi tikambi hatuk o, nowvt kil ittiacho tuk.	We didn't go walking because you were tired.
Holabi shahli hatuk o, kil iyimmo tuk.	We didn't believe him because he lies a lot.
A kafi yvt lvshpa hatuk o, ak ishko tuk.	I didn't drink my coffee because it was hot.
Vla li tuk o, svpok nakni yvt na yukpa fehna.	My grandson is very happy, because I am here.
A kana chia hatuk o, chi hullo li fehna.	I love you very much because you are my friend.

www.choctawschool.com

Biskinik Announcement Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

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

you may be reached. Due to space limitations and the quantity of article submissions, we are unable to include everything we receive. Items are printed in the order received. Faxed photos will not be accepted.

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.

Durant Livestock Show

Swine Show

Overall:

Grand Champion Market Swine: Kaylee Andrews, Colbert

Reserve Grand Champion Market Swine: Case Wagoner, Madill

Bronze Market Swine: Zach Polk, Jones Academy

Senior Swine Showmanship: Gabby Marsh, Antlers

Junior Swine Showmanship: Kynna King, Rattan

Berkshires

Class I

1. Marlee Johnson, Coleman 2. Shayle McGlocklin, Tishomingo 3. Aliyah Browning, Mill Creek 4. Denver Mitchell, Atoka 5. Everleigh Barnett Tishomingo 6. Allyzandrea Dennis, Washington 7. Henslee Branch, Lindsay 8. Brooklyn Lanier, Mill Creek 9. Jayden Johnson, Idabel

Class II

1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Bryndle King, Rattan 3. Jaxi Long, Moss 4. Jace DaVault, Caddo 5. Keely Morgan, Caddo 6. Emily Storey, Rattan 7. Aaliyah Courtney, Mill Creek 8. Jamie Parsons, Valliant **Breed Champion: Marlee Johnson, Coleman** **Reserve Breed: Caden Schaffer, Battiest**

Chester

Class I

1. Breyer Campbell, Tishomingo 2. Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek 3. Raylynn Parsons, Valliant 4. Gabby Marsh, Antlers

Breed Champion: Breyer Campbell, Tishomingo

Reserve Breed: Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek

Duroc

Class I

1. Gabby Marsh, Antlers 2. Maybreigh Laxton, Vanoss 3. Ella Kinard, Durant 4. Payzlee Hamer 5. Mykah Parsons 6. Lynnix Reed, Atoka 7. Shaelynn Hokett 8. Brance Gray, Caddo 9. Carter Cellum, Tishomingo 10. Gretchen Schroeder

Class II

1. Sutton Ray, Lone Grove 2. Zoe Loggins, N/A 3. Marlee Johnson 4. Gage Bennett, Calera 5. Raylynn Parsons, Valliant 6. J.W. Harris, N/A 7. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 8. Colton Lenard, Mill Creek 9. Aliyah Browning, Idabel 10. Madeline Thompson, Coleman

1. Denver Mitchell, Atoka 2. Heidi Thompson, 3. Piper Bennett, Calera 4. Clancy Franks, Wright City 5. Henslee Branch, Lindsay 6. Makenzi Hagle, N/A

Breed Champion: Gabby Marsh, Antlers

Reserve Breed: Sutton Ray, Lone Grove

Hampshire

Class I

1. Talon Merida, Antlers 2. Maybreigh Laxton, Vanoss 3. Berkleigh Starzenski, N/A 4. Denver Mitchell, Harmony 5. Kaybreigh McReynolds, Wapanucka 6. Jersie Miller, Caney 7. Briley Nimsey, N/A 8. Jagger Underwood, Mill Creek 9. Trinity Randall, Ft Towson 10. Trevor Hughes, Mill Creek

Class II

1. Kaylee Andrews, Colbert 2. Jady Johnson, Idabel 3. Marlee Johnson, Coleman 4. Mykah Parsons 5. Zoe Loggins, N/A 6. Carli Upton, Tishomingo 7. Sutton Ray, Lone Grove 8. Shaelynn Hokett, Rattan 9. Carter Cellum, Tishomingo 10. Shayle McGlocklin, Tishomingo

Class III

1. Avery McGill, Byng 2. Allyzandrea Dennis, Washington 3. Cinsleigh Cole, Calera 4. Hannah Roebuck, Calvin 5. Albert McReynolds, Wapanucka 6. Coit Raper, N/A 7. Hannah Roebuck, Calvin 8. Traxton Armstrong, Valliant 9. Jazlyn Randal, Ft. Towson 10. Jaxton Fortner, Tupelo

Class IV

1. Case Waggoner, Madill 2. Olivia Guinn, Moss 3. Kamber Stanglin, Colbert 4. Kade Glover, Atoka 5. Marlee Johnson, Coleman 6. Kurtis Brown, Fort Towson 7. Presley Roberts, Soper 8. Carsyn Lovelis, Stonewall 9. Addisyn Keeler, Tushka 10. Kynlee Martin, Mill Creek

Class V

1. Shaylei Campbell, Tishomingo 2. Avery Tyler, Moss 3. Ryland Arnold, Madill 4. Dayla Coker, Colbert 5. Ace Wood, Byng 6. Makenzi Hagle, N/A 7. Piper Worcester, Mill Creek 8. Lynnix Reed, Atoka 9. Braylee Price, Atoka 10. Holden Dixon-Phillips, Wynnewood

Breed Champion: Kaylee Andrews, Colbert

Reserve Breed: Shaylei Campbell, Tishomingo

Hereford

Class I

1. Kynna King, Rattan 2. Trace Hoser, McAlester

Breed Champion: Kynna King, Rattan

Reserve Breed: Trace House, McAlester

Poland

Class I

1. J.W. Harris, N/A 2. Piper Worcester, Mill Creek 3. Dayla Coker, Colbert 4. Clancy Franks

Breed Champion: J.W. Harris, N/A

Reserve Breed: Piper Worcester

Spots

Class I

1. Reese Pierce, Bennington 2. Blain Clark, Idabel 3. Gretchen Schroeder N/A 4. Kati Gordon, Mill Creek 5. Avery McGill, Byng 6. Hadlee Pruet, Tushka 6.

Hadlee Pruet, Tushka 7. Payzlee Hamer, Tupelo 8. Linzy Mullens, Idabel 9. Linzy Mullens, Idabel

Class II
1. Gabby Marsh, Antlers 2. Jamie Parsons, Mill Creek 3. Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek 4. Marlee Johnson, Coleman 5. Jace Davault, Caddo 6. Rylan Arnold, Madill 7. Hensley Branch, Lindsay

Breed Champion- Reese Pierce, Bennington

Reserve Breed- Gabby Marsh, Antlers

York

Class I

1. Kaylee Andrews, Colbert 2. Raylynn Parsons, Valliant 3. Briley Nimsey, N/A 4. Mykah Parsons, Valliant 5. Marlee Johnson, Coleman 6. Ryder Loggins, N/A 7. Kade Glover, Atoka 8. Carter Cellum, Tishomingo 9. Coit Raper, N/A 10. Jace DaValt, Caddo

Class II

1. Cash Andrews, Colbert 2. Rylan Arnold, Madill 3. Annel Parker, Moss 4. Cretchen Schroeder 5. Case Waggoner, Madill 6. Heidi Thompson, Valliant 7. Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek 8. Emma Thompson, Valliant

Breed Champion: Kaylee Andrews, Colbert

Reserve Breed: Cash Andrews, Colbert

Cross

Class I

1. Brance Gray, Caddo 2. Jaxton Fortner, Tupelo 3. Briley Nimsey, N/A 4. Makenzi Hagle, Undisclosed 5. Emili Underwood, Caddo 6. Braylee Price, Atoka 7. Kennedy Mack, Rattan 8. Sadie Bishop, Wright City 9. Jasper Alvarez, Boswell

Class II

1. Shaelynn Hokett, Rattan 2. Kati Gordon, Mill Creek 3. Piper Worcester, Mill Creek 4. Cash Andrews, Colbert 5. Lynnix Reed, Atoka 6. Ryder Loggins, N/A 7. Carli Upton, Tishomingo 8. Emily Storey, Rattan 9. Coit Raper, N/A 10. Roan Roebuck, Soper

Class III

1. Kade Glover, Atoka 2. Piper Worcester, Mill Creek 3. Braylee Sapp, Lindsay 4. J.W. Harris, N/A 5. Everleigh Barnett, Tishomingo 6. Olivia Guinn, Moss 7. Avery McGill, Byng 8. Payzlee Hamer, Tupelo 9. Jaxton Fortner, Tupelo Henslee Branch, Lindsay

Class IV

1. Case Waggoner, Madill 2. Bryndle King, Rattan 3. Coit Alford, Stonewall 4. Avery Tyler, Moss 5. Allyzandrea Dennis, Washington 6. Carli Upton, Tishomingo 7. Emili Underwood, Caddo 8. Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek 9. Braylee Price, Atoka 10. Brighton Lanier, Mill Creek 11. Cinsleigh Cole, Calera

1. Kaylee Andrews, Colbert 2. Jaxi Long, Moss 3. Emilee Alvarez, Boswell 4. Zaden Hinton, Mill Creek 5. Lynnix Reed, Atoka 6. Zaden Hinton, Mill Creek 7. Jenna Roebuck, Soper 8. Kade Glover, Atoka 9. Keely Morgan, Caddo

Class VI

1. Ace Wood, Byng 2. Jersie Miller, Caney 3. Georgia Wood, Byng 4. Talon Merida, Antlers 5. Reese Pierce, Bennington 6. Kynlee Martin, Mill Creek 7. Brooklyn Lanier, Mill Creek 8. Braylee Sapp, Lindsay 9. Holden Dixon-Phillips, Wynnewood 10. Carson Lovelis, Stonewall

Class VII

1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek 3. Reese Pierce, Bennington 4. Clancy Franks, Wright City

Breed Champion: Case Wagoner, Madill

Reserve Breed: Bryndle King, Rattan

Goat Show

Overall:

Senior Goat Showmanship: Kylie Alford, Stonewall

Junior Swine Goat Showmanship: Spencer Lewis, Silo

Doe

Grand Champion Doe Goat: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow

Reserve Grand Champion Doe Goat: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow

Bronze Doe Goat: Kylie Alford, Stonewall

Division I

Class I

1. Heidi Busby, Achille 2. Josey Wilburn, Asher 3. Blairst Burgess, Achille 4. Spencer Lewis, Silo 5. Addie Fox, Savanna 6. Makala Futrell, Mill Creek 7. Braxley Hudson, Fort Towson 8. Aubree Edwards, Hugo 9. Katie Thompson, Valliant 10. Braxley Hudson, Achille

Class II

1. Allison Collins, Coleman 2. PJ Lewis, Allen 3. Josey Milburn, Asher 4. Zoey Pebsworth, Soper 5. Spencer Lewis, Silo 6. William Case Smallwood, Boswell 7. Makala Futrell, Mill Creek 8. Tenley Smallwood, Boswell 9. Alyssa Johnson, Idabel

Class III

1. Kylie Alford, Stonewall 2. Isabelle Sexton, Kiowa 3. Emma Sapp, Lindsay 4. Averi McArthur, Antlers 5. Hazely Roberts, Soper 6. Paxton Smallwood, Boswell 7. Aubree Edwards 8. Case Tucker, Antlers 9. Kati Gordon, Mill Creek 10. Taytum Campbell, Coalgate

Division I Champion: Kylie Alford, Stonewall

Reserve Division I: Jolee Jones, Boswell

Division II

Class IV

1. Yylie Cook, Moss 2. Mason, Lovelis, Stonewall 3. Jaxon Battles, Tupelo 4. Stonie Carroll, Lindsay 5. Macklenzi Hagle, N/A 6. Hannah Simpson, Snyder

Class V

1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Brinley Nemecek, Allen 3. PJ Lewis, Allen 4. Kiley Alford, Stonewall 5. Josey Milburn, Asher 6. Stonie Carroll, Lindsay 7. Allison Collins, Coleman 8. Makala Futrell, Mill Creek

Class VI

1. Brinley Nemecek, Allen 2. Diesel Cook, Moore 3. Josey Milburn, Asher 4. Jasmine Latham, Coalgate 5. Holley Hamilton, Silo 6. Addie Fox, Savanna 7. Zalkia Amix, Boswell 8. Katie Thompson, Valliant

Division II Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow

Reserve Division II: Brinley Nemecek, Allen

Division III

Class VII

1. Isabelle Sexton, Kiowa 2. Millie Burleson, Atoka 3. Jolee Jones, Boswell 4. Averi McArthur, Antlers 5. Faith Latham, Cottonwood 6. Kimberly Minyard, Bennington 7. Henley Janoe, Soper 8. Allison Collins, Coleman

Class VIII

1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Jolee Jones, Boswell 3. Hope Latham, Cottonwood 4. Mollie Burleson, Atoka 5. Grace Kerns, Atoka

Division III Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow

Reserve Division III: Allison Collins, Coleman

Wether

Grand Wether Goat: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow

Reserve Wether Goat: Bailey Beck, Lindsay

Bronze Wether Goat: Bailey Beck, Lindsay

Division I

Class I

1. Bailey Beck, Lindsay 2. Riley Rudder, Rattan 3. Taytum Campbell, Coalgate 4. Payton Burchfield, Fort Towson 5. KJ Futrell, Mill Creek 6. Wyatt Hudson, Fort Towson

Class II

1. Yylie Cook, Moss 2. Jaxon Battles, Tupelo 3. MaKannah Gilbert, Antlers 4. Jace Alford, Tishomingo 5. Zach Finch, Antlers 6. Ryder Elliot, Lane 7. Riley Rudder, Rattan

Division I Champion: Viley Cook, Moss

Reserve Division I Reserve Champion: Viley Cook, Moss

Division II

Class III

1. Bailey Beck, Lindsay 2. Hazelyn Evans, Caney 3. Spencer Lewis, Silo 4. Addie Fox, Savanna 5. Clint Simpson, Snyder 6. Jesslyn Broadrick, Fort Towson

Class IV

1. Presley Lewis, Broken Bow 2. Isabelle Sexton, Kiowa 3. Bailey Beck, Lindsay 4. Piper Worcester, Mill Creek 5. Abby Cole, Antlers 6. Daxton Lehew, N/A

Division II Champion: Presley Lewis, Broken Bow

Division II Reserve Champion: Bailey Beck, Lindsay

Division III

Class V

1. Josie Milburn, Asher 2. Spencer Lewis, Silo 3. Hazen Carroll, Lindsay 4. Jaile Miller, Caney 5. Holley Hamilton, Silo 6. Stanten Broadrick, Fort Towson

Class VI

1. Daxton Lehew, N/A 2. Jaylee Pettigrew, Atoka 3. Makala Futrell, Mill Creek 4. Josslyn Welch, N/A 5. Gunner Latham, Cottonwood 6. Cash Welch, N/A

Division II Champion: Josey Milburn, Asher

Division II Reserve Champion: Spencer Lewis, Silo

Lamb Show

Grand Market Lamb: Laney Alford, Coleman

Reserve Grand Market Lamb: Diesel Cook, Broken Bow

Bronze Grand Market Lamb: Aaliyah Courtney, Mill Creek

Senior Lamb Showmanship: Cooper Hunt, Tushka

Junior Lamb Showmanship: Tinley Maxwell, Silo

Division I

Class I

1. Raylynn Earhart, McAlester 2. Mykah Parsons, Valliant 3. Kaisann Smith, Coleman 4. Payton Burchfield, Fort Towson 5. Maddison Kelsey, Bennington 6. Hunter Smith, Bennington 7. Mesa Johnson, Tupelo 8. Elizabeth Webb, Valliant 9. Monte McReynolds, Wapanucka

Class II

1. Raylynn Parsons, Valliant 2. Tinley Maxwell, Silo 3. Mykah Parsons, Valliant 4. Mesa Johnson, Tupelo 5. Jazalyn Hester, Valliant 6. Gus McReynolds, Wapanucka

Class III

1. Aaliyah Courtney, Mill Creek 2. Asher Hunt, Tushka 3. Jett Hunt, Tushka 4. Natalie Shaw, Coalgate 5. Madalyn Sloan, Silo 6. Brantley Gray, Caddo 7. Houston Reichie, Tupelo

Division I Champion: Aaliyah Courtney, Mill Creek

Division I Reserve Champion: Asher Hunt, Tushka

Division II

Class IV

1. Cooper Hunt, Tushka 2. Jay House, McAlester 3. Jamie Parsons, Valliant 4. Tinley Maxwell, Silo 5. Kaisann Smith, Coleman 6. Kiley Kelsey, Bennington

Class V

1. Maggie Hunt, Tushka 2. Maddison Crabtree, Allen 3. Presleigh Speaks, Silo 4. Natalie Shaw, Coalgate 5. Raylynn Parsons, Coalgate 6. Jazalyn Hester, Valliant

Class VI

1. Chassen Hunt, Tushka 2. Diesel Cook, Moss 3. Aaliyah Courtney, Mill Creek 4. Tinley Maxwell, Silo 5. Conner Henderson, Bennington 6. Houston Reichle, Tupelo

Class VII

1. Laney Alford, Coleman 2. Diesel Cook, Moss 3. Tracer House, McAlester 4. Kynna King, Rattan 5. Jolie House, McAlester 6. Brantley Gray, Caddo 7. Stanten Broadrick, Fort Towson

Division II Champion: Laney Alford, Coleman

Division II Reserve Champion: Laney Alford, Coleman

Division III

Class VII

1. Lexi Courtney, Mill Creek 2. Jay House, McAlester 3. Brooklyn Lanier, Mill Creek 4. Easton Jones, Calera 5. Maddison Crabtree, Allen 6. Natalie Shaw, Coalgate 7. Jesslyn Broadrick, Fort Towson 8. Gus McReynolds, Wapanucka

Class VIII

1. Laney Alford, Coleman 2. Lexi Courtney, Mill

Creek 3. Mollie Burleson, Atoka 4. Easton Jones, Calera 5. Maddison Crabtree, Allen 6. Elizabeth Webb, Valliant

Class X

1. Laney Alford, Coleman 2. Bryndle King, Rattan 3. Jolie House, McAlester 4. Case Viss, Atoka 5. Adelyn Allen, Tishomingo 6. Mesa Johnson, Tupelo 7. Adelyn Allen, Tishomingo

Division III Champion: Laney Alford, Coleman

Division II Reserve Champion: Laney Alford, Coleman

Cattle Show

Overall:

Senior Cattle Showmanship: Jade McPeak, Checotah

Junior Lamb Showmanship: Julie Emerson, Checotah

Heifer

Overall:

Grand Champion Heifer: Brynlee Payne, Tishomingo

Reserve Grand Champion Heifer: Taos Heck, Latta

Bronze Overall Heifer: Kinley Reeves, Kingston

Class I

1. Keaton Slover, Tishomingo 2. Tyla Armstrong, Valliant

Class II

1. Cooper Hunt, Tushka 2. Liz Sliger, Tupelo 3. Kimber Collins, Tishomingo

Class III

1. Brynlee Payne, Tishomingo 2. Kruz Shores, Lone Grove 3. Bentley Teague, Calvin

Class IV

1. Clayton James, N/A 2. Spencer Lewis, Silo

Class V

1. Laynie Bowen, Silo 2. Dalayna Fortenberry, Tupelo 3. Raylynn Parsons, Valliant

Class VI

1. Legend Cooper, N/A 2. Brynlee Payne, Tishomingo

Class VII

1. Taos Heck, Latta 2. Casen Cockrell, Bells

Continental Division

Class I

1. Taos Heck, Latta 2. Regina Curtis, Kingston 3. Tatum Landeros, Kingston

Wilburton Livestock Show

Swine Show

Overall:
Grand Champion Market Swine: Briley Goldsborough, Wister
Reserve Grand Champion Market Swine: Tory Mason, Hartshorne
Bronze Market Swine: Zach Polk, Jones Academy
Senior Swine Showmanship: Mia McGowen, Wister
Junior Swine Showmanship: Kade Spears, Hartshorne

Berkshires

Class I
 1. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley 2. Jacklynn Cline, Smithville 3. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 4. Kira House, Spiro
 Class II
 1. Caden Schaffer, Battiest 2. Bronc Ward, Wister 3. Aidan Vance, Webbers Falls 4. Riot Scanlon, Hartshorne
 Class III
 1. Ridge McGowen, Fanshawe 2. Kaison Roath, Battiest 3. Kenyan McAhren, Tuskahoma
 Class IV
 1. Tripp McGowen, Fanshawe 2. Kash Janeway, Red Oak 3. Haleigh Hall, Battiest
 Class V
 1. Sadee Huddleston, Heavener 2. Kaygen Davidson, Clayton 3. Kinsley Williams, Wister
Breed Champion: Tripp McGowen, Fanshawe
Reserve Breed: Caden Schaffer, Battiest

Chester

Class I
 1. Raylee Phillips, Hartshorne 2. Allie Boles, Smithville
 Class II
 1. Tucker Roath, Battiest 2. Jimmy Trejo-Rains, Jones Academy 3. Wyatt Medders, Red Oak 4. Rhiley Hicks, Canadian
Breed Champion: Tucker Roath, Battiest
Reserve Breed: Jimmy Trejo-Rains, Jones Academy

Duroc

Class I
 1. Paityn Beason, Cameron
 Class II
 1. Spencer Henneha, Wetumka 2. Khloie Swindle, Wilburton
 Class III
 1. Ruger Cline, Smithville 2. Ayden Doyle, LeFlore 3. Kaison Roath, Battiest
 Class IV
 1. Mia McGowen, Wister 2. Tory Mason, Hartshorne 3. Rylan Williams, Fanshawe 4. Libby Pryor, Stigler 5. Haleigh Hall, Battiest 6. Rowdy Gardner, Clayton
 Class V
 1. Eva Cruikshank, Jones Academy 2. Haven Martin, Whitesboro 3. Kaygen Davidson, Clayton 4. Khloie Swindle, Wilburton
 Class VI
 1. Briley Goldsborough, Wister 2. Kashlyn Strother, Spiro
 Class VII
 1. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley
Breed Champion: Mia McGowen, Wister
Reserve Breed: Eva Cruikshank, Jones Academy

Hampshire

Class I
 1. Teegan Wittrock, Kingfisher 2. Raylee Phillips, Hartshorne
 Class II
 1. Braylee Wittrock, Kingfisher 2. Allie Boles, Smithville 3. Rustik McGee, Red Oak 4. LaShay Craig, Whitesboro
 Class III
 1. Kale Shank, Red Oak 2. Tucker Stites, Hartshorne 3. Talon Scott, Haileyville 4. Aaden Ludlow, Whitesboro
 Class IV
 1. Tryenn Scarberry, LeFlore 2. Laramie Coffey, Spiro 3. Rylan Williams, Fanshawe 4. Bryce West, Heavener
 Class V
 1. Kira House, Spiro 2. Tatum Crouch, Heavener 3. Hagen Ritter, Heavener 4. Alyssa Budzinsky, Hartshorne
 Class VI
 1. Briley Goldsborough, Wister 2. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 3. Tyler Duncan, Heavener 4. Kambrie Oliver, Heavener
 Class VII
 1. Autumn Johnson, Jones Academy 2. Tory Mason Hartshorne 3. Kaygen Davidson, Clayton
 Class VIII
 1. Talin Trejo-Rains, Jones Academy 2. Brody Laster, Eagletown
 Class IX
 Kira House, Panama 2. Isabel Lujano, Jones Academy 3. Jayden Allen, Red Oak
Breed Champion: Briley Goldsborough, Wister
Reserve Breed: Autumn Johnson, Jones Academy

Hereford

Class I
 1. Rhiley Hicks, Canadian 2. Braylee Wittrock, Kingfisher



Grand Champion - Jade McPeak, Checotah

Class III
 1. Calvin Palmer Clayton 2. Rayli Brown Cameron
Breed Champion: Calvin Palmer Clayton
Reserve Breed: Rhiley Hicks, Canadian

Poland

Class I
 1. Daycen Sloan, Stigler
 Class II
 1. Kade Spears, Hartshorne 2. Macey Lawrence, Hartshorne
 Class III
 1. Tricity Armstrong, Rattan
Breed Champion: Kade Spears, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Chase Melton, Red Oak
Breed Champion: Kade Spears, Hartshorne
Reserve Breed: Macey Lawrence, Hartshorne

Spots

Class I
 1. Brayleigh Brock, Clayton 2. Kira House, Panama 3. Rebel Hanson, Stigler 4. Lea Medders, Red Oak 5. Kayden McAhren, Clayton
 Class II
 1. Jayden Allen, Red Oak 2. Rylan Williams, Fanshawe 3. Kaden Marable, Battiest
 Class III
 1. Melody Guenther, Jones Academy 2. Kohen Balentine, Rock Creek 3. Jimmy Trejo-Rains, Jones Academy 4. Madison Johnson, Wilburton
Breed Champion: Melody Guenther, Jones Academy
Reserve Breed: Jayden Allen, Red Oak

York

Class I
 1. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley 2. Kaison Roath, Battiest
 Class II
 1. Eldon Palmer, Clayton 2. Keira Coburn, Heavener 3. Caden Schaffer, Battiest
 Class III
 1. Paisley Laster, Eagletown
Breed Champion: Paisley Laster, Eagletown
Reserve Breed: Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley

Cross

Class I
 1. Teegan Wittrock Kingfisher 2. Rebel Hanson, Stigler 3. Kayden McAhren, Tuskahoma
 Class II
 1. Easton Hernandez, Whitesboro 2. Maggie Boles, Smithville 3. Brayli Beason, Cameron 4. Macey Lawrence, Hartshorne 5. Kadence Reddin, Wister
 Class III
 1. Mazie Nagel, Clayton 2. Tucker Roath, Battiest 3. Annie Craig, Whitesboro 4. Rebel Hanson, Stigler 5. Tucker Stites, Hartshorne 6. Ruger Sennett, Wister
 Class IV
 1. Tory Mason, Hartshorne 2. Libby Pryor, Stigler 3. Allison Boles, Smithville 4. Hartlee Ashby, Wilburton 5. Sadie Craig, Whitesboro 6. Wyatt Medders, Red Oak 7. Kinsley Williams, Wister 8. Brayli Beason, Cameron 9. Jake Boles, Smithville
 Class V
 1. Elisha Crouch, Heavener 2. Eldon Palmer, Clayton 3. Mia McGowen, Wister 4. Kash Janeway, Red Oak 5. Tyler Duncan, Heavener 6. Maggie Boles, Smithville 7. Raylee Phillips, Hartshorne 8. Macey Sennett, Wister 9. Jacklynn Cline, Smithville
 Class VI
 1. Kade Spears, Hartshorne 2. Libby Pryor, Stigler 3. Raylin Woods, Jones Academy 4. Ruger Cline, Smithville 5. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 6. Bryce West, Heavener 7. Ayden Doyle, LeFlore 8. Ayden Doyle, LeFlore
 Class VII
 1. Zach Polk, Jones Academy 2. Aidan Vance, Webbers Falls 3. Daycen Sloan, Stigler 4. Aaden Ludlow, Whitesboro 5. Talon Scott, Haileyville 6. Caden Schaffer, Battiest 7. McKenzie Alford, Red Oak 8. Brayleigh Brock, Clayton
 Class VIII
 1. Kira House, Spiro 2. Ridge McGowen, Fanshawe 3. Tyler Duncan, Heavener 4. Kashlyn Strother, Spiro 5. Tripp McGowen, Fanshawe 6. Alyssa Budzinsky, Hartshorne 7. Mazie Nagel, Clayton 8. Talon Scott, Haileyville
 Class IX
 1. Tucker Coffey, Spiro 2. Alyssa Budzinsky, Hartshorne 3. Teegan Wittrock, Kingfisher 4. Kinsley Williams, Wister 5. Macey Laster, Eagletown
 Class X
 1. Sadee Huddleston, Heavener 2. Macey Laster, Eagletown

Breed Champion: Tory Mason, Hartshorne

Reserve Breed: Zach Polk, Jones Academy

Goat Show

Overall:
Senior Goat Showmanship: Quincy Pearce, Porum
Junior Swine Goat Showmanship: Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne

Doe

Grand Champion Doe Goat: Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Grand Champion Doe Goat: Ty O'Daniel, Hartshorne
Bronze Doe Goat: Harper Langston, Jones

Division I

Class I
 1. Saylor Conner, Porter 2. Rayli Ben, Tuskahoma
 Class II
 1. Miley Yochum, Porter 2. Quincy Pearce, Porum

3. Hayven Hoffman, Panama 4. Hayven Hoffman, Panama
 Class III
 1. Hadleigh Lovell, Porum 2. Sawyer Cousins, Jones 3. Zoey Powell, Wilburton 4. Jewel Hobia, Wetumka
Division I Champion: Miley Yochum, Porter
Reserve Division I: Hadleigh Lovell, Porum

Division II

Class IV
 1. Harper Langston, Jones 2. Kashen Beshear, Wister 3. Hayven Hoffman, Panama 4. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 5. Khloie Swindle, Wilburton 6. Zachary McCabe, Wilburton
 Class V
 1. Jasper Shipman, Wister 2. Ty O'Daniel, Hartshorne 3. Miley Yochum, Porter 4. Quinn Davison, Stuart 5. Sawyer Cousins, Jones
 Class VI
 1. Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Harper Langston, Jones 3. Paisley Beshear, Wister 4. Kadence Griffin, Stuart 5. Saylor Conner, Porter 6. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 7. Ava Cooley, Spiro 8. Raylee Elrod, Stringtown
Division II Champion: Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Division II: Harper Langston, Jones

Division III

Class VII
 1. Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Quincy Pearce, Porum 3. Kadence Griffin, Stuart 4. Jasper Shipman, Wister
 Class VIII
 1. Ty O'Daniel, Hartshorne 2. Paisley Beshear, Wister 3. Kaci Elrod, Stringtown
 Class IX
 1. Quincy Pearce, Porum 2. Kadence Griffin, Stuart
Division III Champion: Ty O'Daniel, Hartshorne
Reserve Division III: Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne

Wether

Grand Wether Goat: Jase Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Wether Goat: Quincy Pearce, Porum
Bronze Wether Goat: Jewel Hobia, Wetumka
Division I
 Class I
 1. Clancy Coleman, Leflore 2. Saylor Conner, Porter
 Class II
 1. Quincy Pearce, Porum 2. Dalton Weber, Porter 3. Kadence Griffin, Stuart 4. Mickeeya Gasca, Maryetta 5. Kaci Elrod Stringtown 6. Gentry Henry, Nashoba
 Class III
 1. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 2. Makaylee Chappell, Spiro 3. Kadence Griffin, Stuart 4. Dalton Weber, Porter 5. Zachary McCabe, Wilburton
Division II Champion: Quincy Pearce, Porum
Reserve Division II Reserve Champion: Makaylee Chappell, Spiro

Wether

Grand Wether Goat: Jase Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Wether Goat: Quincy Pearce, Porum
Bronze Wether Goat: Jewel Hobia, Wetumka
Division I
 Class I
 1. Clancy Coleman, Leflore 2. Saylor Conner, Porter
 Class II
 1. Quincy Pearce, Porum 2. Dalton Weber, Porter 3. Kadence Griffin, Stuart 4. Mickeeya Gasca, Maryetta 5. Kaci Elrod Stringtown 6. Gentry Henry, Nashoba
 Class III
 1. Madison Johnson, Wilburton 2. Makaylee Chappell, Spiro 3. Kadence Griffin, Stuart 4. Dalton Weber, Porter 5. Zachary McCabe, Wilburton
Division II Champion: Quincy Pearce, Porum
Reserve Division II Reserve Champion: Makaylee Chappell, Spiro

Wether Division II

Class IV
 1. Jase Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Jewel Hobia, Wetumka 3. Hadleigh Lovell, Porum 4. Nathaniel Stumpf, Bokoche 5. Ava Cooley, Spiro
 Class V
 1. Quinn Davison, Stuart 2. Quinn Davison, Stuart
 Class VI
 1. Quinn Davison, Stuart
Division II Champion: Jase Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Division II Reserve Champion: Quinn Davison, Stuart

Lamb

Grand Market Lamb: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Reserve Grand Market Lamb: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Bronze Grand Market Lamb: Harper Langston, Jones
Senior Lamb Showmanship: Saylor Conrad, Spiro
Junior Lamb Showmanship: Harper Langston, Jones
Division I
 Class I
 1. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley
 Class II
 1. Kendra Work, Whitesboro 2. Sadie Craig, Whitesboro
 Class III
 1. Saylor Conrad, Spiro 2. Kennadi Burge, Rock Creek 3. Ali Price, Wister 4. Sadie Craig, Whitesboro 5. LaShay Craig, Whitesboro 6. Tanner Kitchel, Tuskahoma
 Class IV
 1. Kaylee McDonald, Rock Creek 2. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 3. Harper Langston, Jones 4. Mazie Nagel, Clayton
Division I Champion: Saylor Conrad Spiro
Division I Reserve Champion: Kaylee McDonald, Rock Creek

Division II

Class V
 1. Javen Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Harper Langston, Jones 3. Jordyne Work, Whitesboro 4. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 5. Mazie Nagel, Clayton 6. Diesel Kennedy, Whitesboro 7. Tanner Kitchel, Tuskahoma
 Class VI
 1. Javen Sparks, Hartshorne 2. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 3. Bradley Strain, Kinta 4. Traegan Ballard, Poteau 5. Kendra Work, Whitesboro 6. Kade Cooper, Poteau 7. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro
 Class VII
 1. Maddison Wynd, Moore 2. Alyssa Kennedy, Whitesboro 3. Tory Mason, Hartshorne 4. Traegan Ballard, Poteau 5. Jordyne Work, Whitesboro
 Class VIII
 1. Traegan Ballard, Poteau
Division II Champion: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne
Division II Reserve Champion: Javen Sparks, Hartshorne

Cattle Show

Overall:
Senior Cattle Showmanship: Jade McPeak, Checotah
Junior Lamb Showmanship: Julie Emerson, Checotah

Heifer

Overall:
Grand Champion Heifer: Julie Emerson, Checotah
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer: Mylie Cato, Savanna
Bronze Overall Heifer: Julie Emerson, Checotah

English Division

Class I
 1. Autumn Hodge, N/A
 Class II
 1. Saylor Conner, Spiro
 Class III
 1. Julie Emerson, Checotah
Division Champion Heifer: Julie Emerson, Checotah
Division Reserve Champion Heifer: Autumn Hodge, N/A

Continental Division

Class I
 1. Julie Emerson, Checotah 2. Fletcher Reece, N/A
 Class II
 1. Myles McKee, Stigler 2. Fletcher Reece, N/A
 Class III
 1. Bentlee Cupps, Ada
 Class IV
 1. Kaeleigh Davis, Spiro
Division Champion: Julie Emerson, Checotah
Division Reserve Champion: Fletcher Reece, N/A

Brahman Influence Division

Class I
 1. Chalesi Southerland, Spiro 2. Kenlee Kirby, Stigler 3. Zoey Powell, Wilburton
 Class II
 1. Kenlee Kirby, Stigler
Division Champion: Chalesi Southerland, Spiro
Division Reserve Champion: Kenlee Kirby, Stigler

AOB Division

Class I
 1. Rayli Ben, Tuskahoma 2. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley 3. Brayson Sills, Stigler 4. Kaleb Highfill, Stigler
 Class II
 1. Julie Emerson, Checotah 2. Zachary McCabe, Wilburton 3. Brinlynn Highfill, Stigler 4. Saylor Conner, Spiro
 Class III
 1. Mylie Cato, Savanna 2. Kiya Briley, Warren 3. Jace Bibee, Stigler 4. Brooksie Wilson, Buffalo Valley
 Class IV
 1. Mylie Cato, Savanna 2. Dawson Whisenhunt, N/A 3. Jace Bibee, Stigler
 Class V
 1. Briley Smith, Porum 2. Kollin Coates, Tushka
 Class VI
 1. Saylor Conner, Spiro 2. Kaleb Highfill, Stigler 3. Lariat Austin, Whitesboro 4. Kaleb Highfill, Stigler
 Class VII
 1. Jace Bibee, Stigler 2. Kiya Briley, Warren
 Class VIII
 1. Jade McPeak, Checotah 2. Brayson Sills, Stigler
 Class IX
 1. Lariat Austin, Whitesboro
Division Champion: Mylie Cato, Savanna
Reserve Division II Reserve Champion: Julie Emerson, Checotah

Steer

Overall:
Grand Champion Steer: Jade McPeak, Checotah
Reserve Champion Steer: Malichi Barnes, Fairland
Bronze Champion Steer: Mylie Cato, Savanna

English Division Steer

Class I
 1. Ketch Coates, Tushka 2. Jiles Whisenhunt, N/A 3. Tehya Bradley, N/A
 Class II
 1. Hagen Hambrick, Bennington 2. Kinzie Barbre, Moss
 Class III
 1. Mylie Cato, Savanna 2. Huck Hambrick, Bennington
 Class IV
 1. Jade McPeak, Checotah
Division Champion: Jade McPeak, Checotah
Division Reserve Champion: Mylie Cato, Savanna

Continental Division Steer

Class I
 1. Ketch Coates, Tushka
 Class II
 1. Tehya Bradley, N/A 2. Tucker Kitchel, Tuskahoma
 Class III
 1. Dawson Whisenhunt, N/A
 Class IV
 1. Mylie Cato, Savanna 2. Kollin Coates, Tushka
Division Champion: Mylie Cato, Savanna
Reserve Division Champion: Kollin Coates, Tushka

AOB Division Steer

Class I
 1. Jace Bibee, Stigler
 Class II
 1. Gentry Buckner Frink, Chambers
 Class III
 1. Malichi Barnes, Fairland
Division Champion, Malichi Barnes, Fairland
Reserve Division Champ Steer: Jace Bibee, Stigler



Grand Champion - Julie Emerson, Checotah



Grand Champion - Briley Goldsborough, Wister



Grand Champion - Jailey Sparks, Hartshorne



Grand Champion - Javen Sparks, Hartshorne



Grand Champion - Jase Sparks, Hartshorne

Michael Shane Benjamin

Michael Shane Benjamin, 44, passed away Jan. 7, 2025.

Michael was born Oct. 9, 1980, in Paris, Tex., to Michael "Mickey" Benjamin and Pamela Hess.

He was preceded in death by his stepbrother John Jones.

Shane is survived by his parents; stepmother Debbie Benjamin; stepfather Howard Hess; son Brody Benjamin; daughters Shayna Benjamin and spouse Austen, and Nataly Benjamin; stepson Broc Erwin; grandchildren Daeson Brody Benjamin and Dakota Michael Benjamin; brothers Sean Benjamin and Justin Benjamin; sisters Kristi Benjamin, Tricia Compton and Bekah Langley; uncle Charles Mitchell; aunt Linda Graham; special friend Deanna Shawhart; and a host of nieces, nephews; numerous other friends, family and loved ones.

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

**Eugene Charles Phillips**

Eugene Charles Phillips, 79, was born on June 27, 1945, in Boswell, Oklahoma, the son of Custer G. Phillips and Alma (Jacob) Phillips. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, Anthony Phillips and Roger Phillips; sisters, Leona Vaughn, Marceline Lawson, Christine James and Janet Phillips.

Gene was a lifelong resident of the Boswell area and attended school at Iron Stob in Unger. He worked as a heavy equipment operator for Hugo Sash and Door until his retirement. Gene was a proud Veteran of the United States Army and served during the Vietnam War. He was also a very proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Gene loved hunting and fishing, but he especially loved his dog "Boy." He also loved watching old westerns and his favorite football team, the Dallas Cowboys. Gene will be missed by his family and friends.

Gene is survived by numerous nieces and nephews who loved their uncle beyond measure, along with a host of friends and loved ones.

For the full obituary visit [Miller and Miller](#).

**Violet Bernice Prendergast**

Violet Bernice Prendergast, 72, passed away Oct. 28, 2024.

Violet was born Jan. 28, 1952, to George Benjamin and Margie Benjamin.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings Shirley, Joesph, Walter, and William Benjamin.

Violet is survived by her husband John Prendergast; children Robert Benjamin (Sheryl), Margie Collins, Patrick Collins (Kandice), Donald Cooper (Kim), Melissa Munoz (Anthony) and Michelle Meehan (Damien); grandchildren Ashley, James, Brandon, Aubrie, Logan, Kyleigh, Jasmine, Mikey, Freddy, Max and Charlee; her great-grandchild Oliver; and her brothers Leo Benjamin "B.J." and Ken Benjamin (Rose). She is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, and extended family.

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

**Kristopher Eric Holmes**

Kristopher Eric Holmes, 47, passed away Jan. 10, 2025.

Kristopher was born April 21, 1977, to Clifton Bruce and Donna Jean Holmes.

He is survived by his parents; son Dalton Davis; sister Heather Charre; grandchildren Weston and Avery Davis; girlfriend Amanda Bacorn; and a host of other family and friends.

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

**Cadence Alexander Wickson**

Cadence Alexander Wickson, 13, passed away Feb. 8, 2025.

Cadence was born Feb. 6, 2012, in Talihina, Okla., to Bradley Wickson and Tonya Lott.

He was preceded in death by his grandfather Eugene Smith; uncle Sean Lott; great-grandparents Dave and Shirley Wickson; uncle David Wickson; and aunts Sharon Deal and Vean-na Wickson.

Cadence is survived by his parents; adoptive mother Granny Jackie Wickson-Smith; grandfather Tony Jackson; Nana Patricia Davidson; Great-Granny Barbara Gordon; Great-Great-grandmother Alice Smith; brothers Braxton Wickson, Drake Wickson, Ethan Wickson, Felix Wickson, and Milo Williston; sister Amara Wickson; aunts Rhonda Wickson and spouse Donald, Rachel Battiest, Tammy Morrison, Christiana Riley, Jocelyn Lopez, Rebecca Ruffin, Angel Smith and Billie Jo Glidden; uncles Dustin Lott, Chris Davidson, Micah Riley, Edward Wickson, Wesley Wickson, Eugene Smith, Jr., and Michael Smith; along with a host of cousins, other family members and friends.

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

**Jack Walton Buckholtz**

Jack Walton Buckholtz, 101, passed away Jan. 4, 2025.

Jack was born Jan. 23, 1923, in Madill, Okla., to Lee and Maudie Buckholtz.

He was preceded in death by his wife Pauline Emilie Buckholtz; his parents; and sisters Helen, Lois, Maye, Dorothy, and Joy.

Jack is survived by his children Ruth Lasley, Bill Buckholtz and Paul Buckholtz; seven grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; eight great-great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Floyd Dee Halderman**

Floyd Dee Halderman, 69, passed away Dec. 16, 2024.

Floyd was born Jan. 6, 1955, in Claremore, Okla., to Charles D. Halderman and Henryetta (Shem) Cheshire.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Lillian Walls.

Floyd is survived by daughters Wednesday Pettigrew and spouse Yancey, and Abigail Hooper; granddaughters Lacey, Keeley, and Penelope; sister Carmen Loftin; and numerous other aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and friends.

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

**Donald Wayne Wear**

Donald Wayne Wear, 74, passed away Jan. 19, 2025.

Donald was born Jan. 15, 1951, in Paris, Tex., to William Bailey and Gracie Molly Barnett Wear.

He was preceded in death by his son Jason Wear; his parents; and four siblings.

Donald is survived by his wife Ruth Wear; daughters Julie Johnson and spouse Brian Johnson, and Tina Burma; grandchildren Kelsey Shea Preston, Donovan Preston, William Connor Keating, Madeleine Keating, Joel Keating, Makenzie Williams, and Jayce Shelby; six great-grandchildren; brothers Billy Wear, Raymond Wear, Melvin Wear and Bobby Wear; and sister Gretta Baker.

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

**Esther Elizabeth Walker**

Esther Elizabeth "Beth" Walker, D.O., 74, passed away Feb. 4, 2025.

Beth was born July 15, 1950, in McAlester, Okla., to V.T. and Wilma Bayless.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Beth is survived by her husband James S. "Steve" Walker; sons Jonathan and spouse Sarah, and Brett and spouse Meredith; and grandchildren Cade, Carly, Jack, Maggie, Katie, JoJo, Barrett, Augie, Van, and Julie.

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

**April Rae Pike**

April Rae Pike, 84, passed away Jan. 22, 2025.

April was born Nov. 22, 1940, in Durant, Okla.

She was preceded in death by her husband Bob Pike; and son Dameron Pike.

April is survived by her children Amy Pike, Kaisa (Steve) Smith, Amanda (George) Carrera Sr., and Fred (Heidi) Harrington; grandchildren Nicki (Jake) Morrisroe, Christina (Taylor) Mottweiler, George (Christina) Carrera Jr., Ronny (Ashley) Landers, Savannah (Kyle Goldstein-Pendley) Pike, Jake Smith, Sami Smith, and Trinity Harrington; 13 great-grandchildren; and many others who will carry forward her memory and the love she so freely shared.

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

**Doris Wynell Wolfe**

Doris Wynell Wolfe, 91, passed away Jan. 23, 2025.

Doris was born Aug. 30, 1933, in Altoga, Tex., to Alora Mae and Ray Burton Treadway.

She is preceded in death by her husband James Wolfe; sons Elvin Wolfe, Ricky Wolfe, and Melvin Wolfe; grandchildren Jeremy and Destiny; son-in-law Bobby Spurgin; and brothers Glenn and Norman Treadway.

Doris is survived by her children Barbara Spurgin, Glenda Wolfe, Lesia Blassingame, Jimmy Wolfe, Ronnie Wolfe and spouse Barbara, and Bruce Wolfe; grandchildren Christopher, Bryce, Cristina, Shannon, Crimson, JayJay, Lindsey, Nikki, Cory, Kirsten, Kanyen, Hailee, Brian, and Peter.

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

**Oliver Joseph Crews**

Oliver Joseph Crews, 101, passed away Jan. 30, 2025.

Oliver was born Jan. 28, 1924, to Joseph Alfred Crews and Leta Elizabeth (Thorpe) Crews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Lois Louella (Keller) Crews; sons James Oliver Crews and Charles Crews; grandson Timothy Ryan Crews; brothers Elmer D "Dutch" Crews, Arliey Vernon "AV" Crews and Cecil Thompson; and sister Aileen McKenzie.

Oliver is survived by daughters Pamela Franklin and Gale Noneaker; grandchildren Joey Crews and spouse Lisa, Jason Crews and spouse Shari, Alicia Christian, Shawna Klis and spouse Mark, Jaime Carrasco and spouse Joseph, Amanda Franklin and Adalina Tucker; great-grandchildren Timothy J. Crews, Savana Crews, Gracie Crews, Jessica Crews, Melissa Crews, James Carrasco, Joseph Carrasco, Juliet Carrasco, John Carrasco, Caleb Tucker, Carter Klis, Christian Klis and Eric Klis; and great-great-granddaughter Laila Borner; along with a host of nieces, nephews, other family members and loved ones.

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

**Kellye Russell Hart**

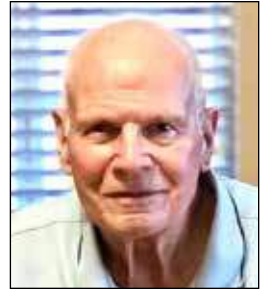
Kellye Russell Hart, 96, passed away July 1, 2024.

Kellye was born May 1, 1928, in Rush Springs, Okla., to John William and Christina (Sperling) Hart.

He was preceded in death by his parents; five sisters; and six brothers.

Kellye is survived by his wife Diana; son Gary and spouse Barb; daughter Sherri; granddaughter Leslie Lorlovick and spouse Derek; grandson Charles; and several nieces and nephews.

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

**Wyvette Anderson**

Wyvette Anderson, 82, passed away Jan. 18, 2025.

Wyvette was born Sept. 4, 1942, in Boynton, Okla., to Corinzo Benjamin Smith and Flora Mae Nunley.

She was preceded in death by her husband Walter; her parents; brothers Richard, Corinzo "Bootsie", Benjamin "Scoodie", Eddie, and Michael; sisters Beverly and Penny; and great-grandchild Caius A. McMillon.

She is survived by her children Clennis Anderson-McMillon (Anthony), Allen G. Anderson, Natalie Anderson-Shipp (Keith), Damaris Anderson-Turner (Brian), and Kassius L. Anderson (Tressy); brothers Rev. Larry H. Smith (Deloris), and Alfred Anderson; sister Lorraine Smtih; 19 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

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

**Ralph Richard Knox**

Ralph Richard Knox, 86, passed away Jan. 23, 2025.

Ralph was born Jan. 28, 1938, in Tulsa, Okla. to Sina (Homma) and George Booker Knox.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and daughter Peggy Lee Cox.

Richard is survived by children George Richard Knox, and Catherine Knox Nyman and spouse Stephen; sister Neoma Brown; as well as many extended relatives and friends.

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

**Joann Kathern Fink**

Joann Kathern Fink, 83, passed away Jan. 4, 2025.

Joann was born Aug. 18, 1941, in Talihina, Okla., to Chun Hampton and Vineria Mae (Sephus-Hampton) King.

She was preceded in death by her husband Dennis Fink; brother Vernon Hampton; sisters Dianne Tucker and Elizabeth Abel; and grandson Kevin Wayne Fink Jr.

Joann is survived by her sister Wanda Elliott; children Kevin Fink and spouse Sheila, Monica Fink, and Barbara Fink-Symanek and spouse Butch; grandchildren Jessica Padilla, Desiree Fink, Earl Dillon and spouse Chrissa, and Nicholas Hussain; great-grandchildren Fernando Padilla, Jewel Padilla, Ava Padilla, Rachel Dillon, Gavin Dillon, and Kaden Hiton.

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

**Brenda Gay Holliday**

Brenda Gay Holliday, 78, passed away Jan. 19, 2025.

Brenda was born Dec. 5, 1946, in Willits, Calif., to Critten Gardner Jr. and Eula Faye Gardner.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Brenda is survived by her children Glenda Kelley and spouse Mark, Vicki Love and Michael, Jerry Tubby, Lewis Tubby and spouse Mandy, Jerome Tubby, and Terry Lee Holiday; grandchildren Shailey Riley, Joshua Holliday, Caleb Holliday, Gabriel Holliday, Nicholas Bacon, Colby Bacon, Mason Love, J.W. Rubio, Lilly Rubio, Daisy Huffman, Harley Henry, Connie Tubby, Kostina Tubby, James Tubby, Jerome Liffick, Aubrey Holliday, Jorian Tubby, Jaxon Tubby, and Kyzen Tubby; numerous great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews; and siblings Lyman Gardner, Noel Gardner, Nathan Gardner, Rebecca Rubio, and Sandy Hickman.

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

**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

Brain Injuries, the silent epidemic

By Chris Jennings

According to the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), every nine seconds, someone in the United States sustains a brain injury. To help raise awareness of brain injuries, every March, the BIAA leads the nation in observing Brain Injury Awareness Month.

A brain injury can affect a person's thoughts, acts, and feelings. The Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) says that 32% of all traumatic brain injuries occur in adults aged 75 years and older. Males are two times more likely to be hospitalized and three times more likely to suffer a TBI-related death than females.

American Indian/Alaska Native children and adults have higher rates of TBI-related hospitalizations and deaths than other racial or ethnic groups. Factors that may contribute to this disparity include difficulties accessing appropriate healthcare as well as higher rates of motor vehicle crashes, substance abuse and suicide.

The leading causes of TBI in the United States are falls (28%), motor vehicle traffic crashes (20%), and assaults (11%). Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active-duty military personnel in war zones, with an estimated 50% or more of combat injuries being related to blast injuries.

Other common causes of brain injuries are youth sports and recreational activities such as riding a bicycle and all-terrain vehicles (ATV).

Craig Northcutt was in a side-by-side ATV doing a Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) survey with his good friend and current District 9 councilmember, James Dry, when his life changed in a matter of seconds. Northcutt says that the ATV flipped as they made a fast turn while chasing off some coyotes.

Northcutt's injuries were severe, but he was still conscious and able to walk initially. Dry called 911 and was headed to the road to meet the ambulance when Northcutt quit breathing. Dry administered CPR twice that night while friends at the deer camp called and told dispatchers that a helicopter was needed instead.

From that moment, it was a fight to save his life. "They flew me to Parkland and took off part of my skull because my brain was still bleeding and swelling," Northcutt said.

When Northcutt finally woke up and was told about his injuries, he remembers thinking, "What the heck is a TBI?" "He [the doctor] said I also had a stroke, and I would likely never walk, talk, work or drive," Northcutt said.

Northcutt was told he only had a 5% chance of living a normal life, and people who have a brain injury never fully recover.

Brain injury survivors report ongoing problems with things changes in sleeping habits, such as sleeping poorly or sleeping more than usual, loss of interest in activities or relationships, change in appetite, and increased use or misuse of substances like alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.

When checking into rehab, Northcutt was asked what his first two goals were. He told them that he wanted to be able to go to the bathroom while standing up and to walk out of the rehab center. When he reached that first goal, Northcutt said he was ecstatic.

When he reached the second goal, Northcutt says the therapist told him that he [Northcutt] would never let his TBI define him.

"That was me," said Northcutt. "I never wanted to let it [TBI] define who I am or what I can do."

It's been 10 years since the accident, and Northcutt works full-time at the Choctaw Nation despite being told by doctors that he may never work again.

Northcutt credits his faith with getting to that point. Every Sunday, his preacher would pray over him, asking God to give him the ability to walk, work and drive again. Those prayers were answered.

TBIs have a devastating impact on society, yet despite their pervasiveness, TBIs remain, for the most part, a silent epidemic. According to a recent national survey, only one in three Americans are familiar with the term "brain injury."

People rarely associate TBI's with concussions. However, William Cochran would like to change that.

Cochran is a semi-pro strongman competitor currently attending marketing school and wants to combine the two skills to increase awareness of TBIs.

Cochran worked as a officer in Frisco, Texas, near the Stars Center.

"I was leaving through the parking garage. I don't remember this, but a security officer who worked there told me three guys were vandalizing something. I told them to stop politely and then walked off," said Cochran. "I guess they didn't like that, so they came up from behind, hit me and cracked my skull open."

Cochran woke up a month later after being in a medically induced coma. "The neurologist told my parents, when he wakes up, we don't know what state he's going to be in," said Cochran. "He could be a vegetable, or he could just be a little worse for wear; it's hard to say."

Like Northcutt, Cochran is a testament to not letting a TBI define you. He began to compete at a high level after doctors told him he would probably never lift weights again.

A year and a half later, Cochran is not only lifting but competing—and doing well. The stats don't lie; Cochran can currently bench press 485 pounds, squat in the 700-pound range, and deadlift close to the same.

Cochran says one of the strange side effects of the TBI is losing his sense of smell.

"Everything smells like one thing, and I cannot tell you what that smell is," said Cochran. "Something foul smells the same as if I just cooked a delicious steak or if I just put on some cologne; they all smell the same."

There are many other side effects of TBI. A few of the most common are headaches or neck pain that don't go away, difficulty remembering, concentrating and getting lost or easily confused.

Another common side effect of TBIs that doesn't just affect the person with the injuries but their friends and family as well is depression and suicide.

While Northcutt didn't have thoughts of taking his own life, he would pray for God to take it for him, saying, "God, kill me; kill me; make me die right now."

According to Northcutt, when the sun came up, he heard an answer, plain as day, like it was being spoken next to him, "If you want to die, keep praying, and you will die because I answer prayers."

That's when it hit him: Northcutt didn't want to die. He had a daughter to take care of and a life to live.

Suicide attempts are more common in individuals who have sustained a brain injury, and nearly half of all brain injury survivors report symptoms of depression.



Photo by Christian Toews

Craig Northcutt shows his 5% tattoo he got after doctors told him he had a 5% chance of living a normal life.

Patients who have experienced a TBI are twice as likely to have suicidal thoughts, and the risk of depression after a brain injury increases whether the injury is mild, moderate or severe.

If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of depression or thoughts of suicide, it's important to get help. You can call or text 988 to talk directly with the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Northcutt and Cochran are examples of what can be achieved through great struggles.

James Dry says Northcutt inspires him.

"When I think about perseverance, I think about Craig," said Dry. "Any challenges I face are nothing compared to what Craig has faced."

The causes of brain injuries vary greatly, but you can still take steps to prevent them.

- Don't drive when you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Always wear a seat belt while in a vehicle.
- Wear a helmet while on a bicycle, motorcycle, ATV or horseback. Also, wear a helmet during contact or extreme sports like skateboarding, basketball, softball or football.
- Take precautions to avoid falls around your home.
- Keep firearms unloaded and locked away.

According to the CDC, the first few days after a mild TBI or concussion are the most important. Taking time off work and resting for one to two days are good first steps. Once you begin to feel better, relaxing activities like reading or short walks can benefit you. If your symptoms don't go away within a few weeks or worsen, you should talk to your healthcare provider.

Visit www.cdc.gov/traumatic-brain-injury/response/get-help.html for brain injury support resources.



Photo Provided

William Cochran can be seen pulling a firetruck post-TBI. Cochran has returned to high level competition despite being told by doctors that he may not be able to compete again.

Exploring snakes and their use in medicine

By Dr. Aaron Price, CNHSA

Snakes often bring to mind a feeling of dread or fear to many people. And I have heard more often than not, "The only good snake is a dead snake." Many don't know, my patients included, that before I became a physician in the Resident Clinic, I was a university professor and behavioral ecologist who studied the defensive behavior of rattlesnakes.

I feel I can combine my earlier passion for rattlesnakes and my new passion for medicine for the betterment of both snakes and my patients.

In this article, I would like to attempt to make you stop and think about your attitudes toward snakes, particularly rattlesnakes. The Choctaw word for rattlesnake is Sintullo.

According to what I have read and my limited knowledge and understanding of the Choctaw language, it is derived from two words, sinta and hullo. Sinta is the Choctaw word for snake. Hullo means "sacred, supernatural, or awe."

The Choctaw word for rattlesnake then means the "sacred snake" or "the snake to be held in awe." Many of the Indigenous peoples originating from the SE US, including the Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Muscogee, avoided killing rattlesnakes because they believed it would bring them misfortune.

It is likely the Choctaw held similar

beliefs about the "sacred snake."

Rattlesnakes, and all snakes in general, are medically important because they serve as an important check on certain pests that spread diseases that directly infect humans and because their venom contains several important chemicals that aid in the development of medications. Rattlesnakes eat primarily small mammals, mostly mice and rats. Mice and rats harbor fleas that can spread the bubonic plague directly to humans. Similarly, deer mice are the reservoir for the bacteria that causes Lyme Disease. Small mammals also serve as hosts that Rocky Mountain spotted fever and perhaps STARI (Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness). Considering one mouse produces six offspring within 28 days of birth and can have four litters a year, each mouse produces 24 babies. If a rattlesnake eats two mice a month for 6 months, this prevents the birth of 288 mice (24 x 12) each year (and that does not count the babies their babies would have). That is the elimination of a lot of mice each year that could be spreading harmful diseases to people.

Rattlesnake venom is an adaptation for capturing food and is comprised of several dozen different chemicals that affect blood cells, blood vessels, nerves, and muscle cells. Many of these components are currently being studied for their use as medicines. For example, the



Photo Provided

Dr. Aaron Price, a CNHSA resident, shares with readers his passion for medicine and history with reptiles.

drug Eprifibatide is an anti-platelet drug derived from pigmy rattlesnake venom that is used in heart attack patients and those undergoing cardiac catheterization. The venom of the South American rattlesnake is being studied for its antibacterial and antiviral properties. Copperheads are close cousins of rattlesnakes. Their venom has been used to develop the drug Alfinprase, which is in clinical trials right now to be used to dissolve blood clots in peripheral blood vessels.

I know snakes are not everyone's cup of tea. However, after reading this article, I hope you will reconsider killing the next snake you see. The Choctaw before us viewed the rattlesnake as a sacred or blessed animal. Given their potential to prevent life-threatening diseases and provide life-saving medicines, perhaps they are more sacred than many of us would have thought.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

MARKET HOURS
Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Markets will be closed the last two days of each month for inventory.

March 2025
All markets open weekdays, March 3-27
Closed: March 28 & 31
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
FOOD DEMO MARCH 6

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
FOOD DEMO MARCH 21

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
FOOD DEMO MARCH 7

MCALESTER 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716
FOOD DEMO MARCH 5

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
FOOD DEMO MARCH 25
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

March 4	Talihina	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 5	Antlers	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 7	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 11	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 12	Crowder	By Appointment
March 14	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
March 14	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 18	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 19	McAlester	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 21	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
March 25	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
March 25	Stigler	By Appointment

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

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580.916.5609	Tuesday	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Atoka 580.316.2050	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Battiest 580.241.5458	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Broken Bow 580.316.2011	Daily Monday - Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Durant 539.316.3517	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Heavener 580.316.4784	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Hugo 539.316.5089	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Idabel 580.316.4313	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
McAlester 539.316.2431 539.316.2430	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Poteau 580.316.4606	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Smithville 580.244.3289	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Spiro 918.962.5124	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Stigler 918.967.4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Tulhatch 580.316.6792	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am - 4:30 pm
Wilburton 580.642.7588	Wednesday	8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Mobile Van 580.380.8193	1st Tuesday - Bowell 3rd Tuesday - Coalgate 4th Tuesday - Clayton	9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Choctaw Nation Health Services

ITI FABVSSA

Coal in Choctaw Nation, Part III

By Megan Baker, Guest Writer

This month's Iti Fabvssa concludes the three-part series, "Coal in Choctaw Nation." This month will consider how Choctaw Nation's coal mining operations in the 19th century contributed to the Nation's continued political existence in the 20th century.

The end of the 19th century was filled with conflict with the US government, which sought to incorporate Choctaw Nation and its lands into the United States.

As mentioned in Part II, jurisdictional issues regarding Choctaw Nation's inability to prosecute US citizens within the Choctaw legal system contributed to crime in Indian Territory. US citizens who committed crimes often were able to evade prosecution in Indian Territory, giving rise to the perception that Indian Territory was a "lawless" place.

The US government, in turn, used this "lawless" reputation as a pretext for incorporating Indian Territory into the US. This political incorporation was a violation of numerous treaties signed with the Five Tribes that had agreed to removal largely on the condition that they would be left alone and never made part of the US.

Nevertheless, American settlers and the US government continued to pursue the Five Tribes' lands. Major shifts in federal Indian law increasingly enabled and sanctioned the violation of these treaties.

Although Choctaws and the other Five Tribes were exempted from the 1887 Dawes Act, the US continued to pressure them to allot their lands. Ultimately, conditions in Indian Territory forced Choctaw leaders to make difficult decisions. In 1898, Choctaw leaders ratified the Atoka Agreement which established a plan to allot Choctaw lands.

Advocates for allotment argued that the US government would eventually force them to allot their lands so it would be better if the Choctaws managed it on their own terms. While most of Choctaw lands were surveyed and allotted to individual landowners, the coal and asphalt lands were reserved from allotment. Choctaw leaders decided that these lands would be sold and the revenue from the sale would be distributed to Choctaw citizens as per capita payments.

To incorporate Choctaw Nation and the other tribal nations of Indian Territory into the new State of Oklahoma, US Congress passed numerous laws that began to dismantle the Choctaw government. The 1898 Curtis Act, which made the Atoka Agreement federal law, also included provisions regarding the dismantling of tribal courts. The process of doing this proved difficult and legally confusing.

In 1906, the US Congress passed the Five Tribes Act, which ensured that the Five Tribes' governments would continue to exist well beyond Oklahoma statehood.

Other laws transferred tribal/federal jurisdiction regarding some aspects of land allotments to the State of Oklahoma. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and State would treat the Five Tribes as though their governments had been abolished.

This was not the actual case according to both the body of Indian law as well as the specific statutory laws that applied in Oklahoma though. The federal government's early efforts to dismantle the Choctaw government were quickly complicated because of the Choctaw Nation's coal and asphalt lands. The US could not officially terminate the Choctaw Nation until these lands had been sold.

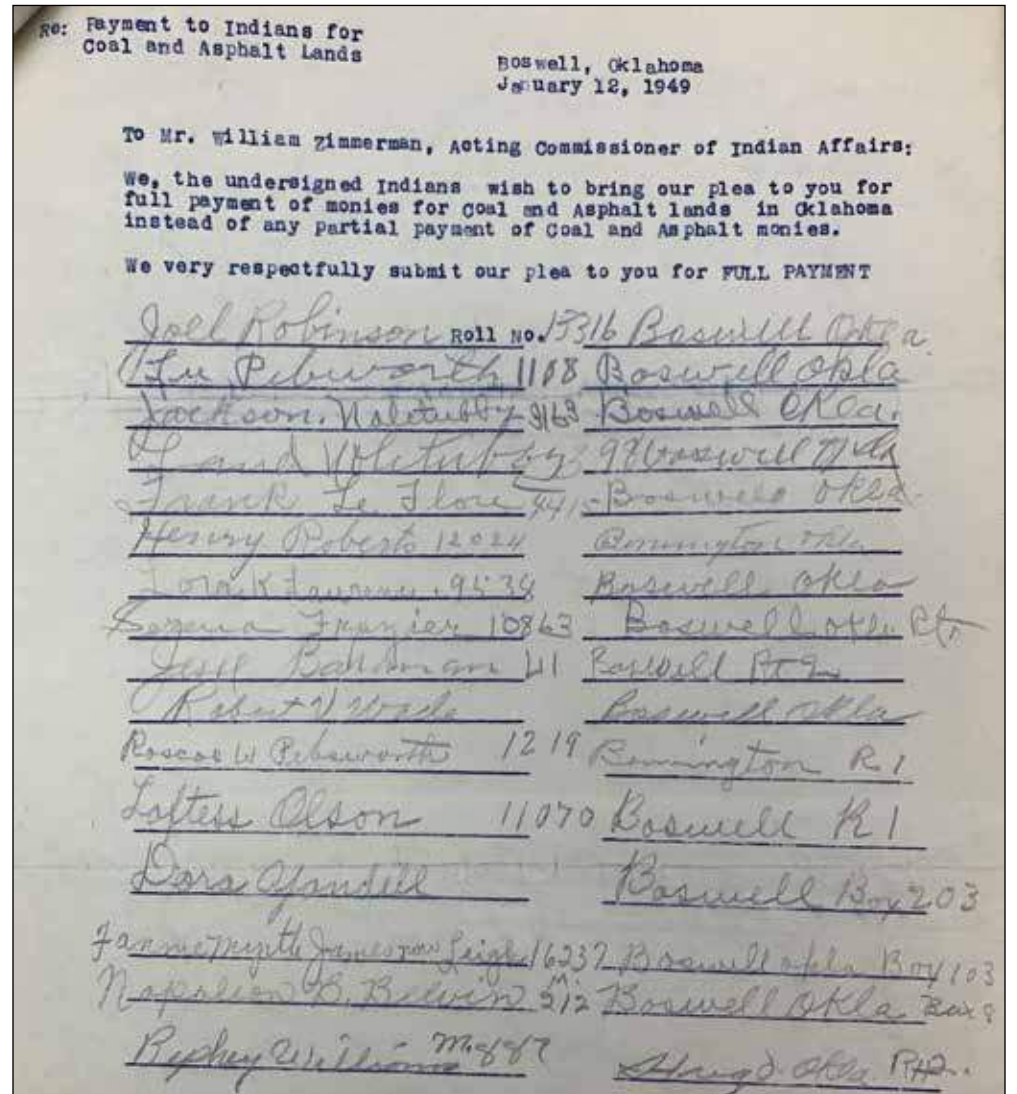
From 1906-1934, the Bureau of Indian Affairs made numerous attempts to organize the sale of the lands to private buyers but were unsuccessful. Multiple factors contributed to the initial failures to sell the Choctaw coal lands. The Great Depression began in 1929 and lasted until 1939; this severely limited the number of possible buyers for over 6 million acres of valuable coal land that had to be bought as a whole.

As industries shifted from coal to oil for their energy needs, demand for coal lessened. The decline in demand also caused the coal lands' valuation to drop, which worried tribal leaders who wanted to receive the full original valuation of the coal and asphalt lands. To speed up the sale of the coal lands so Choctaw people affected by the Great Depression could receive necessary dividends from the sale, Choctaw people pushed leaders to do more.

In June 1934, Choctaw people convened for a Delegate Convention to decide how to resolve outstanding Choctaw affairs, particularly the sale of the coal lands. This group of delegates from each Choctaw Nation counties and one at-large became known as the Choctaw Advisory Council. The council met once a year to hear and discuss legislation that would affect tribal members and coordinate with their district congressman, Carl Albert, to decide the best course for all Choctaw people.

Although Choctaw Nation did not have a formal legislative system from 1907 to 1983 due to the US laws passed around Oklahoma statehood, the Advisory Council played a critical role and functioned as an informal representative government that served the needs of the Choctaw people.

Ultimately, the federal government agreed to purchase the coal lands from



Courtesy of the Carl Albert Collection, University of Oklahoma
Petition by Choctaw community members in Boswell regarding coal and asphalt payments sent to the Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

the Choctaws. In 1948, Congress passed federal legislation authorizing the purchase of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nation's coal lands for \$8.5 million. The per capita payment came out to \$350 per individual, which would be worth approximately \$4,621 today. The process of distributing this money to the original Choctaw enrollees listed on the Dawes Rolls began in 1949, but the task proved to be difficult. A great number of original enrollees had passed away in the 43 years it took to sell the coal lands.

The BIA would have also had to handle the challenge of distributing payments to the heirs of original enrollees – which they would not have been able to complete without the help of Choctaw officials who served as intermediaries between the BIA and Choctaw community.

Again, the management of coal per capita payments ensured that the Choctaw government remained a part of Choctaw people's lives. While Congress would later pass termination legislation for the Choctaw government after the sale of the coal lands in 1959, the efforts of leaders and tribal members to coordinate the

coal land sales contributed to the growing grassroots organizing that would later fight that same Termination legislation that led President Nixon to repeal the Choctaw Termination Act in 1969. Iti Fabvssa has covered this termination history in more depth; to learn more, see July 2022's "A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1960-1970".

Coal was not only a resource that Choctaw Nation used to generate revenue for the benefit of Choctaw education, but it also ensured that the (limited) Choctaw government would remain operational at a time when federal and state officials sought to dismantle tribal governments.

As tribal property, coal and asphalt ensured that Choctaw government maintained its authority and stayed organized to make decisions that would affect all Choctaw citizens.

Given all these factors, coal has clearly played a powerful role in Oklahoma Choctaw history.

For more information on coal in Choctaw Nation, contact Megan Baker at megan.baker@northwestern.edu.

Devastated and heartbroken: Federal layoffs have Haskell, SIPI wrestling with their future

By Jourdan Bennett-Begaye and Kevin Abourezk

Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute are wrestling to offset the loss of key workers after federal layoffs and resignations gutted their staffing, officials familiar with the matter confirmed Monday to ICT.

At least two sources told ICT that complete closure of the tribal colleges were not off the table but another source was adamant that Haskell would not close and no courses would be canceled.

At SIPI, in New Mexico, approximately 20 employees were laid off Friday out of the institute's 100 employees, leaving about 80 employees to run the school of about 200 students for the current trimester, sources told ICT.

Numbers for staff members who took the additional "Fork in the Road" deferred resignation option from the Trump administration are unknown.

Pearl Yellowman, Navajo, who was vice president of operations at Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute until she was laid off Friday, said the sharp cuts are devastating for the school.

"It's detrimental because on Tuesday, our students are going to say, 'Where's my instructor?' 'What happened to my class?' 'What's going on?' 'Is my future of being a student okay here?' 'Where's my tutor?' 'What happened to this person?' 'Are my scholarships in jeopardy?' 'Is my financial aid in jeopardy?'" Yellowman told ICT Saturday.

"One of our departments was literally left with just one person," she said.

Haskell and SIPI are the only post-secondary institutions controlled by the Bureau of Indian Education through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is under the Department of the Interior.

They are also part of a land-grant university system that dates back to 1862. Federal legislation in 1994 designated more than a dozen tribal colleges and universities land-grant institutions, and most tribal colleges and universities now operate with that designation.

The cuts to both schools are part of thousands of layoffs wider federal layoffs ordered by the Trump administration through the Office of Personnel Management. The abrupt dismissal of probationary federal workers included thousands at the BIE, the BIA, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice.

Initial attempts to lay off more than 2,000 workers at the Indian Health Service were rescinded late Friday by newly confirmed Health Secretary



Photo by Jourdan Bennett-Begaye/ICT

The Trump administration forced Haskell Indian Nations University to initiate layoffs, putting the school's future in question.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in what was described as a temporary move.

The BIE lost nearly 85 employees, an increase from the losses expected on Friday, sources told ICT Sunday. Among those laid off were nearly 30 from non-school positions in the BIE agency offices, excluding kindergarten through 12th grade schools.

About half of the 40 employees laid off had worked directly with students.

The layoffs leave the school with about a 25 percent reduction in its workforce, which already was lower than in 2022, when the school had 250 fewer students. Haskell averages about 1,000 students a semester, according to the school's data online.

The tribal university could face loss of accreditation, a source told ICT. The best-case scenario would be for Haskell to cancel approximately a dozen courses, since about 15 employees dealt directly with students, sources said.

It raises questions about what would happen to their classes.

Francis Arpan, president of Haskell, released a statement Feb. 15 informing the campus about the staff changes.

"While these adjustments present challenges, our priority remains the continued success of our students, faculty, and staff. In the coming days, we will share more information on how departments will work together to ensure continuity," he wrote on Facebook.

The layoffs left students and staff in turmoil at both institutions.

For the full story, visit <https://ictnews.org/news/devastated-and-heartbroken-federal-layoffs-could-force-haskell-sipi-to-close>.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Pitchlynn releases book

Choctaw tribal member Gary S. Pitchlynn recently self-published a book, "The Usual Suspect," recounting the notorious 1977 case of the Girl Scout murders at Camp Scott in northeast Oklahoma. "The Usual Suspect" details the trial, injustices in the criminal justice system, Native American influence and the misconduct he and others have alleged among law enforcement, prosecutors and the trial judge himself.

Pitchlynn was a recent law school graduate working for a Native American nonprofit that serve the urban Indian community of Oklahoma City.

According to Pitchlynn, the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation asked him to meet with a young Cherokee man, Gene Leroy Hart, following his arrest.

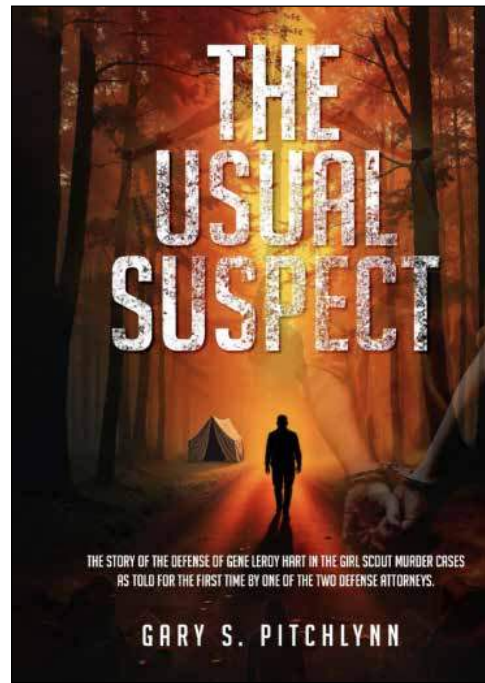
Hart was accused of committing the most notorious crime in Oklahoma history, the killing of three Girl Scouts asleep in their tent on the first night of camp.

Hart had been a fugitive and on the run for several years before the murders, but as the usual suspect in the area, this crime had raised the stakes for his capture. Expecting the assignment to be a one-day commitment, he invited his good friend from the Public Defender's Office to come along for the ride.

The meeting with Hart led the two young friends on a year-long journey that started with a chase to find their client, who had been moved from prison by authorities to delay his contact with the attorneys.

They were able to show that several key witnesses and law enforcement officers had lied under oath, casting substantial doubt on the reliability of the case against Hart.

The book is an insider look into a justice system in which defendants without resources don't have the same chance as those who can afford the best representation, expert witnesses and cutting-edge scientific testing.



Pitchlynn is a well-known and accomplished attorney, tribal judge, and law professor who has spent most of his 46 years in practice representing and advising tribes, tribal people, and Native American organizations around the country.

Although first widely known for his criminal defense work, he became a respected figure in Indian country through his aggressive advocacy in helping tribes build their gaming industry.

He continues to enjoy the practice of law and has joined forces with All Rise, PLLC, a lawyer cooperative made up of bright young lawyers who have an interest in federal Indian law.

Pitchlynn resides in Norman, Oklahoma, with his wife of 44 years, Joyce Parks Pitchlynn, who serves as his primary editor.

He plans to continue mentoring young lawyers and teaching at the University of Oklahoma School of Law.

"The Usual Suspect" can be purchased on Amazon at <https://a.co/d/1bLzHzV>

Choctaw Nation opens Ahni House in Hugo to support children and families

By Christian Chaney

The Choctaw Nation celebrated the grand opening of the Ahni House – Children's Advocacy Center in Hugo, Oklahoma, on February 5, 2025.

The Ahni House is a facility dedicated to providing a safe, supportive environment for children affected by abuse.

Sandy Hall, Program Manager and Forensic Interviewer, shared her thoughts on the importance of the center:

"Opening the Ahni House to provide services for children and their families is a dream come true for me. I became a forensic interviewer 14 years ago and saw the need for a child-friendly place for children to be interviewed and receive the resources needed for healing. Ahni House will work closely with local and tribal multidisciplinary teams to provide the utmost care to children. Not only is Ahni House creating a child-friendly safe space, but we are also empowering children to find their voice and ensuring that they are heard, believed and supported."

The Ahni House offers forensic interviews, advocacy, medical exams, mental health services and referrals, reducing the need for children to visit multiple agencies.

The facility's child-friendly atmosphere helps minimize trauma and ensures children receive compassionate care.

Utilizing a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) approach, professionals from law enforcement, child welfare, medical fields, forensic interviewing and prosecution collaborate to investigate abuse cases while prioritizing the child's well-being.

The center also provides counseling referrals in order to help families navigate the healing process.

Chief Batton shared a recent social media post expressing his excitement for the opening.

"This important project, funded through a



Choctaw Nation Photo

Choctaw Nation leadership help Ahni House staff cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the Ahni House – Children's Advocacy Center.

grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, will serve as a tribal children's advocacy center to support both tribal and non-tribal child victims across our reservation. Ahni House will provide the highest level of wraparound care, working closely with multidisciplinary teams in Pushmataha and Choctaw Counties to ensure that every child receives the care and justice they deserve. The center will be staffed with a victim advocate, forensic interviewer, and a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE nurse) to provide specialized support for those in need. This is a big step forward in protecting and supporting our most vulnerable community members. Yakoke to everyone who made this possible!"

In addition to direct services, the Ahni House focuses on abuse prevention and education, teaching caregivers how to recognize warning signs and protect children.

Suspected abuse can, and should, be reported to the Oklahoma Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-522-3511.

With the opening of Ahni House, the Choctaw Nation strengthens its commitment to protecting, empowering and advocating for children, ensuring they are heard, supported and given the resources they need to heal.

For more information, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/ahni-center/>

Hayes family visit "Kindred Spirits"

Debbie Moffitt of Texas, Don Hayes of Colorado, and David Hayes of Texas, children of DeAnne and Don Hayes of Texas, and grandchildren of the late Cecil and Vera Gibson, recently had the opportunity to visit the majestic Choctaw "Kindred Spirits Monument" near Cork, Ireland.

It was quite the honor to visit a monument to our tribe in a foreign country," said Don Hayes.



"Yakoke" from the Carpenter family

"Thanks to the generosity of the Choctaw Nation, Cade Douglas Carpenter has been able to attend Texas A&M University in College Station and intends to go on to law school. He recently became more involved on campus joining Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity while making the Dean's List at Texas A&M's prestigious Bush School of Government and Public Service. Cade also turned 21 in December. It's been an amazing year! We are proud of Cade and thankful to the Choctaw Nation for their support."

– Beth-Ann and Tyler Carpenter



Everett Greenwood Puckette

Everett Greenwood Puckette was born at 8:47 a.m. on September 24, 2024, at Stormont Vail Hospital in Topeka, Kansas.

He weighed 4 pounds, 14 ounces and was 17 inches long. Everett is the son of Michael and Kerry Puckette and the grandson of Thomas and Deborah Puckette of Poteau, Oklahoma and the late Ruth and Thomas Stone of Windsor Locks, Connecticut.

His family would like to express their appreciation and gratitude to the NICU staff at Stormont Vail and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeast Kansas.



Harts celebrate 50 years

RG and Pam (Minton) Hart will celebrate 50 years of marriage on April 5, 2025. The couple lives in Moore, Oklahoma, where they both recently retired from working 30+ years for Moore Public Schools. They now enjoy traveling to see our nation's many national parks. To celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary, they plan to visit the Hawaiian islands and check off another national park. They enjoy attending church at City Church Moore, gardening outside, and spending time with friends and family.



Engle signs with ULM

On November 19, 2024, Dall Engle, a senior at Stigler High School, signed her official letter of intent to play fastpitch softball for the University of Louisiana–Monroe.

She began playing ball when she was 3 years old and eventually became a catcher. She has been a four-year starter as a catcher for Stigler High School and has received multiple awards, including All-State Catcher.

She will begin her college career at ULM in August 2025.



Selders graduates from UNT

Brisa Gabrelle Selders graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, Cum Laude, from the University of North Texas in December 2024.

She will begin her teaching career in Texas.



Reynolds was British Museum ITP fellow

Santa Fe, N.M.– Mattie Reynolds (Choctaw National of Oklahoma) spent six weeks in London this past summer as a fellow in the British Museum's International Training Programme (ITP). Reynolds, an assistant professor and chair of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) Museum Studies program, was one of only 20 museum professionals selected from across the globe for the highly competitive program. She was the only professor or university employee in the group and—she believes—only the second Native American to participate in the ITP.

Reynolds learned about the ITP from Rose Taylor, the British Museum's curator for the Americas. The pair met last summer at a Native art symposium held at The Courtauld Institute of Art in London. IAIA colleagues Dr. Kay Holmes (Mvskoke [Creek] descendant), chair of Liberal Indigenous Studies, and Daisy Quezada Ureña (Mexican-American), chair of Studio Arts, also attended the conference. Once back in Santa Fe, Reynolds said she kept in touch with Taylor, "in the hopes of inviting her to guest lecture in some of the museum studies' programs."

A wide variety of topics were covered in the ITP—everything from textile conservation to repatriation and restitution. As part of the program, ITP fellows work with other museums in the UK. Reynolds and three others spent 10 days partnering with the Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester Museum, and Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, UK, which is about four hours from London.

Reynolds said a high point of her time in Manchester was meeting Dr. Alexandra Alberda (Jemez Pueblo), who was recently hired by the Manchester Museum as curator of indigenous perspectives. "[It's] the first position of its kind in the UK," Reynolds said. "We were able to spend an afternoon with her, talking about her work."

Reynolds, who teaches classes at IAIA on Indigenous repatriation, appreciated the staff at the British Museum for their willingness to field tough questions.

During their time in the UK, the ITP fellows also visited other museums and heritage sites. Working, learning, and networking with museum professionals from all over the world also was a highlight for Reynolds.

Now, back in the States, Reynolds is anxious to share what she's learned and put her networking to good use.

For more of this story, visit <https://iaia.edu/iaia-museum-studies-department-chair-participates-in-british-museum-international-training-programme/>



McDonald shines at IAC Annual Conference

Rock Creek High School sophomore Kaylee McDonald, a proud member of the High School Student Services (HSSS) Agriculture Learning Community, recently represented the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma as the only Choctaw tribal member youth participant at the prestigious 2024 Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) Annual Conference in Las Vegas. IAC covered all expenses for this incredible opportunity, highlighting the significance of her selection.

Kaylee was recognized as one of the Top 40 Essay Winners in the nation for her insightful response to the prompt: "What is my vision for what the USDA Tribal Advisory Committee can do for Indian Country?" Drawing from her hands-on experience with the Choctaw Nation Agriculture Department through the 477 Youth Employment Services Program, she provided im-

pactful recommendations to shape the future of agriculture in Indian Country.

This past summer, Kaylee worked alongside Macy Cartwright, a Soil Conservation Planner, gaining valuable insight into how the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma provides technical assistance and education to tribal members, agriculture producers, and communities. Through workshops, demonstrations, and hands-on agricultural education, Kaylee assisted field technicians Jeffrey Roebuck and Jeremiah Roberston in planting gardens, growing Choctaw squash, and learning about aquaponics. She contributed to demonstrations and field days at Choctaw Nation Child Care Centers and the Agriculture Demonstration Center at Lehigh, teaching about milk production. Additionally, she assisted Jody House, Livestock Show Coordinator, with preparations for

the 2025 Choctaw Nation Livestock Show.

During the conference, Kaylee engaged with youth from across Indian Country and proudly represented Oklahoma by carrying the Choctaw Nation flag during the flag procession in traditional dress. She attended workshops on native agriculture, IAC policies, food sovereignty, USDA programs, and professional development. At the American Indian Foods Luncheon, featuring a menu designed by Ho-Chunk Nation Executive Chef Elena Terry, Kaylee spoke to luncheon attendees about the Choctaw Beef and Pecan Program and the impact of Choctaw Ranches on Southeast Oklahoma.

Kaylee also connected with representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), USDA, NRCS, Native American Agriculture Fund, and IAC Technical Assistance Specialists Jeff Caskey and Quinton Inman. Reflecting on the experience, she shared: "The conference allowed me to explore and gain valuable knowledge of how IAC impacts native agriculture and continues to make strides in Indian Country and Washington D.C. Through this conference, I have made valuable connections that will support my FFA SAE project and my future goal to become a DO, connecting



agriculture to medicine in rural and native areas."

A dedicated leader, Kaylee serves as the Rock Creek FFA Chapter President, a Cadet Airman in the Civil Air Patrol, a National Society of High School Scholars Ambassador, and a Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board member. She plans to join the Air National Guard after high school, pursue a BSN to work as a nurse in the Guard, and ultimately attend medical school to obtain a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) specializing in rural healthcare.

Kaylee is the daughter of tribal member Janell McDonald, Senior Program Manager of High School Student Services, and Josh and Jennifer McDonald, of Bokchito, OK. She is the granddaughter of Jim and Sherri Sallee of Soper, OK. Jim is the Director of Transportation Roads and Bridges—the niece of Kasey Sallee, a Physical Therapist Assistant at the Choctaw Nation Durant Regional Medical Clinic.

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Choctaw Nation Division of Legal & Compliance

Rachael Youngman, Podcaster

By Kellie Matherly

Rachael Youngman is a passionate storyteller, cultural advocate, and podcast host of Native ChocTalk, a platform dedicated to amplifying Native American voices and preserving ancestral stories. As a member of the Choctaw Nation and a person of diverse heritage, Rachael's work bridges cultural gaps, fostering understanding and unity among Native and non-Native communities. Her podcast, celebrated for its heartfelt narratives and educational insights, explores tribal history, traditions, and personal stories that might otherwise be lost to time.

Born and raised in Anadarko, Oklahoma—a community rich in Native American history—Rachael grew up immersed in the stories of the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache peoples. Her father was an art teacher at Riverside Indian School, the oldest continuously operating off-reservation boarding school in the United States. He further connected her to Native culture and history. These experiences laid the foundation for her lifelong dedication to preserving and sharing Native stories.

But the inspiration for Native ChocTalk stemmed from Rachael's great-grandmother, Ella Shaffner, a resilient woman whose life story is marked by both hardship and triumph.

At the age of three, Ella was placed under the guardianship of non-Native caretakers who took control of her family's land. Despite the challenges she faced, Ella grew into a strong matriarch who nurtured her family while keeping much of her painful past private.

"My great-grandmother was like most grandmothers. Sweet, always cooking for us. She would crochet. But she was so quiet about the things that happened in her lifetime," Rachael recalled.

After Ella's passing, Rachael uncovered more of her great-grandmother's story through a paper written by her sister, who had interviewed Ella for a college project. Reading her great-grandmother's words brought Rachael to tears and ignited a deep desire to preserve not only Ella's legacy but also the untold histories of other Native families.

"I was lying in bed one night and crying, and I remembered that my sister had given me that paper. I thought, 'Oh, those are her words.' And I sat there and cried even more, just learning about her life," said Rachael. "Knowing that she was always such a positive, kind person, you would never know the things that she had gone through, which was a lot."

In 2020, Rachael launched Native ChocTalk as a means to document and celebrate these invaluable narratives. She invites guests to share their family histories, cultural practices, and personal insights, offering a platform where Native voices are the authority. For Rachael, the podcast is both a labor of love and a mis-

sion to combat historical erasure. "I'm not the expert," she often says. "The people I interview are the experts of their own stories."

Through Native ChocTalk, Rachael has preserved a wealth of knowledge about Native traditions, from ribbon skirts to frybread, as well as oral histories that rarely make it into textbooks. She has interviewed a diverse range of guests, from tribal leaders and artisans to everyday individuals whose ancestral stories reveal profound connections to history. Her episodes touch on themes of resilience, identity, and community, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that future generations have access to these treasures of cultural memory.

"I remember growing up hearing [stories]. I've got my great-grandmother's stories. I've got stories from my hometown, and I'd love to hear more of that for selfish reasons," Rachael said. "But I'd also like to preserve it with people, and especially with our Choctaw tribe. I really want to hear from other Choctaws."

Rachael's commitment extends beyond storytelling. She uses her platform to promote Native-owned businesses and artists, shining a spotlight on beadwork, paintings, and other traditional crafts. She also emphasizes the importance of recording family stories, encouraging others to capture the voices and faces of their elders before it's too late. Rachael has experienced the bittersweet pain of losing a cherished recording of her great-grandmother, a youthful mistake that only strengthened her resolve to help others preserve their legacies.

One of the podcast's most rewarding aspects for Rachael has been connecting with listeners who have rediscovered their Native roots or found empowerment in their identities. She recalls the story of a woman who, through Choctaw Nation's genealogy department, confirmed her Native ancestry and became an active advocate for adoption within Native communities. Such stories, Rachael believes, exemplify the transformative power of embracing one's heritage.

In addition to her work with Native ChocTalk, Rachael is a vocal advocate for cultural understanding. She addresses common misconceptions about Native Americans, such as stereotypical representations in media, and provides guidance on respectfully engaging with Native communities and traditions. Her warmth and openness have made her a trusted resource for listeners seeking to learn more about Native cultures.

"Over the years, I've gotten bolder and just said, 'I'm going to ask questions, and I'm going to try to find out more about how I can participate as well.' Because I do have a passion for our Native communities—all Native communities," said Rachael.

Rachael's belief in the interconnectedness of humanity extends beyond tribal and national boundaries. She often reflects on shared histo-



Choctaw Nation Photos

Choctaw tribal member and podcast host Rachael Youngman has always drawn strength and inspiration from her great-grandmother's story of sacrifice and resilience. Today, she uses her platform to tell the stories of Native ancestors across many tribal nations.

ries, like the Choctaw Nation's remarkable act of compassion during the Irish Potato Famine, when tribal members donated money to aid starving Irish families despite facing their own struggles. These stories of solidarity inspire her to build bridges across cultures, fostering a sense of unity and mutual respect.

"We have more in common than you think. We all have aunts. They tell us what to do and put us back in shape when we need it. We have a respect for elders, and we're learning to do even more of that," she said. She also pointed to things like food and clothing traditions that have crossed tribal boundaries to become part of other Native cultures.

Balancing a full-time job with her podcasting endeavors, Rachael tries her best to document as many stories as possible.

"I feel like I have a big responsibility that I put on myself. I feel a sense of urgency literally every single day," she said. "I can't do enough. I want to do even more."

She has a particular passion for honoring Native veterans and hopes to dedicate more time to preserving their histories.

For Rachael, Native ChocTalk is more

than a podcast—it is a legacy project aimed at uplifting her community and celebrating its contributions to the world.

"Our culture really does have a ripple effect. The beautiful things that we're making, our artists are making, whether it's paintings, beadwork, all the things that we're doing out there, touch other people," she said.

Through her work, Rachael embodies the Choctaw Nation's spirit of giving and togetherness. The concept of community resonates in every podcast episode, reminding listeners that collaboration and mutual support have the power to create lasting change.

"I have met so many people who have found their roots with the Choctaw Nation and people who maybe were adopted and then found they had family in the Choctaw Nation. And we are so much more when we work together," Rachael mused.

As Native ChocTalk continues to grow, Rachael remains a steadfast advocate for preserving the past, enriching the present, and inspiring the future.

Check out Youngman's podcast, Native ChocTalk, at <https://nativechoctalk.com/>.



Rachael Youngman's podcast, Native ChocTalk, is a platform dedicated to amplifying Native American voices and preserving ancestral stories.

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Mach (March) 2025

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