



# MIKSI B

July 2022 Issue

**CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER**

**NITTAK AFVMMI NA YUKPA**  
(HAPPY BIRTHDAY) TO THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER!

**JULY 23 10:00AM**

**JOIN THE CELEBRATION**

To commemorate the Choctaw Cultural Center's first year, we have a fantastic lineup of activities, including an artist market, special presentations, cupcakes and traditional Choctaw food, kite flying, discounts in the Hvshi gift store and much more!

## Cultural Center celebrates its first anniversary Choctaw style



By Kellie Matherly

On July 23, 2022, the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant, Oklahoma, will celebrate its first anniversary with a bang. The state-of-the-art facility opened in July of 2021 with the mission of sharing the Choctaw story with the world. Since then, visitors from all over have come to learn about Choctaw history and culture.

Sitting on 100 acres of native Oklahoma prairie land, the 100,000 square foot facility tells the story of the Choctaw people, beginning with their emergence from Nanih Waiya, through 14,000 years of history, to the present day and into the future of the Nation.

Planning for the Cultural Center began a decade ago, when a committee of Choctaw cultural experts was tasked with creating a place that would honor the history and traditions of the Choctaw people. At the outset, the committee set three main goals: to create a dynamic cultural destination, discover and share the Choctaw story and create a place to learn.

For three years, committee members researched what it would take to create a truly unique Choctaw experience. They visited over 20 other museums and cultural centers nationwide and gathered feedback from thousands of surveys. In addition, they personally interviewed over 100 tribal members to find out what the Choctaw people wanted to see in the cultural center because, when all is said and done, the Cultural Center would be the Choctaw Nation's gift to its people.

Tribal Council approved the design plan in 2017, and construction began in 2018.

Since its opening, the Cultural Center has welcomed visitors to the Chahta Nowat Aya, or the Choctaw Journey. Through interactive landscapes, demonstrations, art, cultural classes, food and much more, guests are fully immersed in the warmth and hospitality of the Choctaw people from start to finish.

Over the past year, thousands have flocked through the stickball-themed doors of the Choctaw Cultural Center, including Oklahoma legislators, artists and performers.

Cady Shaw, Interim Senior Director and Director of Curation for the Choctaw Cultural Center said, "For one year now, we have welcomed thousands of visitors who came to learn the Choctaw story, eat traditional foods, take in a cultural class or demonstration and to hear our language. We've created a community space for tribal members and visitors

alike. It has been an honor to welcome guests this year and share Chahta history and culture."

Most recently, the Kowi Chito Theater hosted Lil Mike and Funny Bone, or Mike Bone, as its first live performance act. On June 11, the popular Native American musicians turned actors staged a full concert as well as a meet and greet with Cultural Center guests afterward. The sold-out event was held on the same day as an art market and other cultural events, which promised to be a fun-filled day for all.

Choctaw artist Tamra Frakes said of the day, "I met lots of new people. Being surrounded by so many talented and gifted Choctaw artists was very humbling to me. It makes my heart happy to see our people enjoying a day of stickball, a concert and for us Choctaw artists at our Choctaw Cultural Center."

The concert also coincided with a stickball tournament. Robert Baker, a resident of Bokchito, Okla., and player for the Chunkvsh Balili Tikbvt stickball team hoped he would be playing late into the night. When asked what he thought of his day at the Cultural Center, he said, "There's lots of good vendors and artwork. It's happening here!"

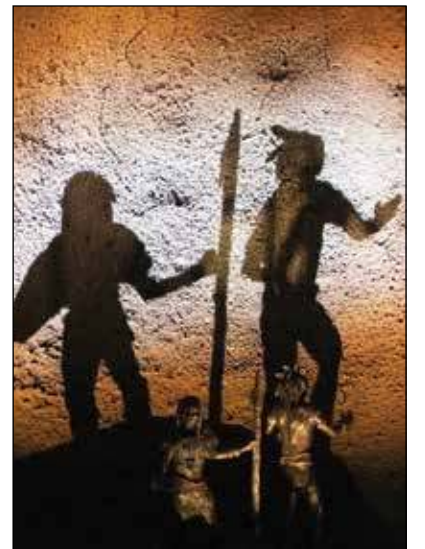
For its one-year anniversary, the Cultural Center has a huge celebration planned.

Festivities will kick off at 10:00 a.m. with opening remarks and the unveiling of Chiefs, Clans & Kin, the new temporary exhibit on display in the Changing Exhibit Gallery. This presentation focuses on the connections between tribes in the Southeast and Celtic cultures. Featured artists explore the topics of singular and blended identities, cultural norms and anomalies and shared histories of subjugation and colonization.

Throughout the day, there will be special demonstrations, including chocolate making with Ronnie Watchorn and an art market, featuring Choctaw artists and artisans. In the Luksi Activity Center, there will be birthday themed coloring pages and activities for the young (and young at heart). There will also be special discounts in the Hvshi Gift Store, so be sure to stop in for a parting souvenir.

After sampling some traditional Choctaw foods, head outside to the Living Village for kite flying, social dancing and stickball. Then, cool off in the Kowi Chito Theater for an engaging cultural film.

"I'm happy to celebrate our one-year anniversary for the Choctaw Cultural Center," stated Chief Gary Batton. "This was truly a project of love, to perpetuate our Choctaw culture and to provide others a place to learn how to live out the Chahta Spirit."





# Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

## Celebrating Father's Day

Halito,  
We celebrated Father's Day on June 19 this year. As I think about the fathers who recently lost their children in the Uvalde shooting, it makes me appreciate my role as a father even more.

A father is a motivator, an enforcer, encourager, trainer, and counselor. Oftentimes, by necessity, a father is the front-line caretaker and nurturer.

I want everyone to be reminded of the important role that your father, grandfather, or significant male role model played in your life.

Remember that being a father doesn't come with instructions. All we have is our unconditional love and strong desire for the very best for our loved ones to guide us.

Yakoke and God bless!



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

## Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

With the arrival of July, the summer heat has set in as folks are enjoying their summer break, cookouts and spending time with family. But July is also Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness of the unique mental health struggles that communities face.

According to Mental Health America, Native Americans experience serious psychological distress 2.5 times more than the general population over time. The suicide death rate for Native Americans between the ages of 15-19 is more than double that of non-Hispanic whites. Additionally, Native Americans start to use and abuse alcohol and other drugs at younger ages and

higher rates than all other ethnic groups.

The Choctaw Nation's commitment to the wellness of tribal members provides a variety of mental health services for adults, adolescents, and children at any Choctaw Nation health clinic. Additionally, the following resources are available through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

- The National Helpline for individuals and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders – (800) 662-4357;
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is – (800) 273-8255; please note that effective July 16, 2022, this will change to a 3-digit dialing code 988; and
- The text crisis line for immediate help – text INDIGENOUS to 741-741.

If you or someone you know could benefit from these services, reach out sooner rather than later to get assistance.

God bless.



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

## Doctrine of Balaam

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." - Revelation 2:14.

Balaam was a gifted and eloquent prophet. Balac was the king of Moab. Balac feared the Israelites, who were about to cross the Jordan River into the promised land.

So Balac offered a sizeable fee to Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam rejected Balac's first offer, but Balac sent messengers to Balaam with an offer of a larger fee and greater fringe benefits. This time Balaam accepted the offer.

Three times, he tried to curse Israel, but God restrained him. When Balaam concluded that he could not curse them, he proposed to corrupt them. He suggested that the Moabite girls should seduce the men of Israel by inviting them to participate in their idolatrous and immoral feasts.

He succeeded in bringing Israel down by this unholy alliance. This was Balaamism, and it was this evil principle that was allowed in the Pergamos Church.

In the letter to the church at Pergamos, Jesus showed his approval of their faithfulness in other things, but he disapproved the tolerance of Balaamism in the church. Balaam had introduced a principle of corruption which crept into the early church.

The very word "Pergamos" has in it the same meaning from which we get the English words for bigamy and polygamy. "Pergamos" signifies a mixed marriage, for it is the marriage of the church with the world.

When and how did the church and world fall in love?

Scriptures teach the church to be separated from the world. The world could not bring itself to love the church until the church had first become worldly. The church that is popular with the world today is not the spiritually strong church; rather, it is the church that mixes with the world and which welcomes the unconverted worldling into its fold.

## CNO breaks ground on Choctaw Landing

**Hochatown, Okla. (June 17, 2022)** – Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma broke ground today on Choctaw Landing, the Nation's newest entertainment and resort development in Hochatown, Oklahoma. The Nation plans to invest \$238 million on the project and will create more than 400 new jobs.

Choctaw Landing was designed to be part of the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape with a goal to keep as many of the native trees and plants intact as possible. The four-story, 200,000 square-foot entertainment destination will feature 100 hotel rooms, 600 slot machines, eight table games, several restaurants and bars, a pool, an outdoor venue with an amphitheater, beer garden and a family-friendly game zone. In addition to the new resort, a 12,000 square-foot mercantile will adjoin Choctaw Landing offering a small grocery store/market, three dining options and a fuel station with 24 pumps.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton led the groundbreaking ceremony and was joined by city officials, tribal council members, multiple gaming industry professionals, community members,

and associates.

"At the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, our goal is to continue to provide for our fellow tribal members, families and our community," said Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton. "Choctaw Landing will provide significant opportunities for local residents and the future availability and quality of this hotel will not only attract business, but tourism opportunities for Choctaw Nation Reservation in Southeast Oklahoma."

Manhattan Construction Company and JCJ Architecture are the lead partners for Choctaw Landing and have a successful track record working with the Choctaw Nation on large hospitality and gaming projects.

The name Choctaw Landing signifies that guests have arrived at a place that feels like home. It will be a special spot for visitors to touch base and recharge for their next adventure. Choctaw Landing will serve as an overlook into the natural beauty of the surrounding area and as a guide into the history of the Choctaw people.

Hochatown is the site of a historical Choctaw Village and many Choctaw still live in the area, making it the perfect location for Choctaw Landing. The design of the mercantile and the resort will reflect the tribe's culture and the property will include their history and display art created by tribal members.

Choctaw Landing will open in late 2023.



Photo by Christian Toews

On June 14, Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., break ground on Choctaw Landing. They are joined by Choctaw Nation tribal council, citizens, employees and local representatives.

## EXPLORE YOUR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TODAY!

+ 

# Project Iti (Tree)

**Choctaw Nation & General Motors** are teaming up to identify job candidates for Information Technology (IT) related positions.

Project Iti is committed to empowering Choctaw Veterans and Choctaw females who are interested in a meaningful career in the IT field.

**Training is provided tuition-free.** Additional assistance may be available.

**For More information:**

- Contact Rebecca Hawkins at 580-916-0420 or rhawkins@choctawnation.com or Bryan Martin at 918-429-3134 or bmartin@choctawnation.com
- Complete the Career Development application at <https://cdapplication.choctawnation.com>
- Place "Project Iti" on step 2 of 9 in the Career Goal/Certification Seeking Box.
- A+ Certification is a plus.

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JULY 13, 2022 | 10 AM - 2:30 PM

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877-285-6893 | CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

## UPDATE YOUR CHOCTAW NATION MAILING SUBSCRIPTION

At Choctaw Nation, we constantly try to improve our services and look for better ways to serve you, our Tribal Member.

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma • TOGETHER WE'RE MORE •



# Russell named Denver Indian Health and Family Services Clinic Board Chair

by Chris Jennings

Jenn Russell has always had a passion for health and wellness. For the last 15 years, she's taken that passion and directed it towards her community, helping improve the lives of native people across the country.

A recipient of the Chahta Foundation scholarship for graduate school, Russell now works at the Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health at the University of Colorado, Denver. She was also recently elected to chair the board of directors at the Denver Indian Health and Family Services clinic.

"I have always had a passion for community and community health and wellness. Even though I grew up outside of the Choctaw counties, I've always had a very big sense of pride in my heritage," said Russell.

Russell, who grew up in Denver, Colorado, says she saw the inequities faced by Natives in urban areas.

"Seventy-eight percent of American Indian/Alaska Natives live in urban areas, and they're severely underfunded, compared to tribal and rural or rural-based reservations," said Russell.

According to Indian Health Services (IHS), American Indians and Alaska Natives die at higher rates than other Americans in many categories, including chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, diabetes mellitus, unintentional injuries, assault/homicide, intentional self-harm/suicide and chronic lower respiratory diseases.

Having someone like Russell working to help Natives live better, healthier lives is part of the solution to this disparity.

"I wanted to put my passion and my work into making sure that American Indian and Alaska Native people [in urban areas] were getting the health care opportunities and their needs met," said Russell.

While Russell mainly works in an urban setting, she still directly works with the Choctaw Nation, giving back to her tribe.

"Right now, I'm funded by the Indian Health Service

as a contractor to provide technical assistance and services to 27 different tribal communities around the country. The Choctaw Nation is one of those," said Russell.

Russell said she's been working on Tribal Injury Prevention Cooperative Agreement Program (TIP CAP) for the last five or six years. TIP CAP is a grant process that provides funding for tribes to develop their infrastructure in injury prevention to address the disparity in injury rates throughout Native communities.

As a contractor for IHS, Russell collaborates with these communities to help make sure their programs are a success.

"We provide assistance with everything from evaluation to assist them and showing how those programs are effective at preventing injuries amongst tribal members," Russell said.

Previously Russell has worked with the Choctaw Nation's Injury Prevention Program to help teach about the dangers of distracted driving. Currently, she's working on a program with the Nation to ensure kids are safely secured in car seats.

Go to <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/ipp/> for more information on the car seat program.

Russell is also proud of her time working on the Special Diabetes Program for Indians.

"I got to work with 67 communities on that and saw the wonderful efforts and the passion of all these communities that went into it," she said.

From diabetes to distracted driving to car seats, Russell exhibits her Choctaw spirit in her everyday work, and she hopes others will do the same.

Russell said, "There is a great need, especially amongst our people, to provide these services to ensure that tribal members are receiving health care equitably...health care is something that will always be needed and is certainly needed right now."

"I am really thankful for all the efforts that the Choctaw Nation has put into being inclusive and encouraging



Photo Provided

Jenn Russell, a Choctaw tribal member, was recently elected and currently serves as chair of the board of directors at the Denver Indian Health and Family Services Clinic.

to tribal members that live outside of the 10 1/2 counties. I grew up with a sense of pride in my heritage and the Tribe and felt included even though I wasn't there," said Russell.

## Zombies take the lead in Choctaw filmmaker's recent projects

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw tribal member and Topeka, Kansas filmmaker Gary Piland has completed the third installment in his zombie movie trilogy, "Blackstone – Hand of God."

The trilogy launched with "Zombie, Kansas: Death in the Heartland" and "Zombie Beauty Pageant: Drop. Dead. Gorgeous." All three films can be streamed on Amazon Prime. The entire trilogy took Piland over five years to complete.

Piland is the founder of Roaring Rat Films, an indie horror film company. In addition to his three feature-length zombie thrillers, he has created three zombie-comedy shorts, "Zombie Laundry," "Zombie Chigger" and "Zombie Tattoo Parlor." The short films can be viewed for no cost at [www.roaringratfilms.com/movies](http://www.roaringratfilms.com/movies).

He is also the President and CEO of the web development, graphic design and video production firm Umbrella.

Piland is originally from Oklahoma and was born in Enid. He and his family moved a lot while he was growing up. He said that after high school, he became a self-teacher of his acquired skills and learned from others through on-the-job training.

Early on, Piland was drummer, songwriter and vocalist for the three-piece rock band Limousine from 1975 to 1983, playing all over the Midwest. While in the band, a lights technician had a computer and showed it to Piland, who said he instantly took to it.

"I bought a computer and taught myself to program," said Piland.

According to Piland, after the band broke up, he worked for an advertising company for about 12 years and then started his own business doing web development. During his time at the advertising agency, he taught himself how to make websites. Piland says he also does graphic design and has always been a writer, greatly influenced by his mother.

A horror movie fan his entire life, Piland says he has a movie ready for production.

"I have a movie I haven't produced yet



Photo Provided

Tribal member, Gary Piland, promotes his movie "Blackstone – Hand of God" during the Slash & Bash Film Fest in Topeka, Kansas.

that was the one I wanted to produce. And before I did it, I wanted to make sure I knew how to do movies. I didn't want to waste my magnum opus idea and I had the skills together," said Piland. "I decided what would be kind of quirky and learn how to make movies, so I decided to do some zombie movies. I made six. Turns out I made a few more than I thought I would."

Piland hopes make the movie he has been planning next year, a full-length film called "Masquerade."

He has also written a new play that he is currently submitting to a local civic theatre in hopes of production.

Piland says one reason he does what he does is to cast and showcase local talent and technical support out of Topeka, where he lives with his wife, Martha, of 30 years.

"We have a huge pool of talent here, and that's what has really helped me to make my movies. I can cast a movie and get absolute top quality from the business," said Piland. "Everything is locally produced."

Readers can keep up with Gary Piland and his projects through his website [www.roaringratfilms.com](http://www.roaringratfilms.com). More information can be found by visiting his Facebook pages, Roaring Rat Films and Gary Piland, or on Instagram @roaringratfilms.

## CNO provides meals to area children this summer

**DURANT, Okla. (June 16, 2022)** – The Choctaw Nation Child Nutrition Program is continuing to distribute meals to children across Southeastern Oklahoma this summer.

"We are pleased to offer multiple opportunities for children to get a nutritious meal this summer," says Christopher Morgan, Choctaw Nation Nutrition Program Assistant. "Through grants with the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) we are able to supply the meals to anyone, regardless of nationality and with no discrimination."

The meals are available now and will continue through the summer. Check with your site for specific dates as it varies by location.

"I am so thankful for the program. It keeps my kids fed," said Donna Simmons, a single mother of four children. "It's easy to participate. I can even help feed their friends who are over playing. It just helps everyone."

Free meals that meet federal nutrition guidelines are provided to all children ages 18 years and under at approved Summer Food Service Program sites in areas with significant concentration of low-income children. The children will be required to stay at the site while eating their meal. "Last year, the program provided over 300,000 meals," says Morgan.

Sites are located throughout Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, Coal, Latimer, Le Flore, McCurtain and Pittsburg counties.

Meals will be provided at the sites and times listed below:

# SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

FUNDED BY THE USDA

LOCATION	SERVE DAYS	SERVE TIMES
<b>ATOKA COUNTY</b>		
CHOCTAW NATION HEALTH CLINIC - ATOKA	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
<b>BRYAN COUNTY</b>		
DURANT COUNTY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
<b>CHOCTAW COUNTY</b>		
CHOCTAW NATION HEALTH CLINIC - HUGO	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
CHOCTAW COUNTY LIBRARY - HUGO	TUESDAY/FRIDAY	1PM-2PM
<b>COAL COUNTY</b>		
COAL COUNTY LIBRARY - COALGATE	WEDNESDAY	11AM-5PM
<b>LATIMER COUNTY</b>		
ALBION FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH-ALBION	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	11AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
BETHEL FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH-RED OAK	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	10AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
LATIMER PUBLIC LIBRARY-WILBURTON	TUESDAY	11AM-4PM
GOWEN COMMUNITY CENTER-WILBURTON	SATURDAY	11AM-3PM
CHOCTAW COMMUNITY CENTER-WILBURTON	MONDAY-FRIDAY	11:30AM-2:30PM
<b>LEFLORE COUNTY</b>		
CHOCTAW NATION HOSPITAL-TALIHINA	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
RUBIN WHITE MEDICAL CLINIC-POTEAU	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
SPRINGHILL BAPTIST CHURCH-HOWE	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	10AM-12PM / 5PM-6PM
GREEN COUNTRY COWBOY CHURCH-POTEAU	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	10AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
BENNINGTON COMMUNITY CHURCH-SHADY POINT	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	11AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
HOWE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	10AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH-CAMERON	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	11AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE-POTEAU	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	10AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
TALIHINA PUBLIC LIBRARY	THURSDAY	9AM-6PM
HEAVENER PUBLIC LIBRARY	THURSDAY	11:30AM-12:30PM
HEAVENER RUNESTONE PARK	SATURDAY	10AM-1PM
LEFLORE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB-POTEAU	SATURDAY/SUNDAY	11AM-12PM / 3PM-4PM
CHOCTAW NATION YOUTH CENTER-TALIHINA	MONDAY-FRIDAY	11AM-12PM / 2:30PM-3:30PM
POCOLA FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH	SUNDAY/WEDNESDAY	10AM-12PM / 5PM-7PM
<b>MCCURTAIN COUNTY</b>		
CHOCTAW NATION HEALTH CLINIC-BROKEN BOW	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
CHOCTAW NATION HEALTH CLINIC-IDABEL	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM
BROKEN BOW LIBRARY	TUESDAY	11AM-1PM
IDABEL LIBRARY	THURSDAY	11AM-2:30PM
<b>PITTSBURG COUNTY</b>		
CHOCTAW NATION HEALTH CLINIC-MCALESTER	MONDAY-FRIDAY	10AM-4PM

## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

# LABOR DAY 5K

REGISTER AT [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



# CNO Community Partner Fund awards quarterly contributions

**District 2** – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Broken Bow \$13,600, Idabel \$7,800, Garvin \$12,100 and McCurtain County \$19,600 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and the Choctaw Nation has contributed a combined total of \$480,900 to the cities of Broken Bow, Idabel, Garvin and McCurtain County.

**District 7** – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Antlers \$23,500 Clayton \$32,000 and Pushmataha County \$29,400 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and the Choctaw Nation has contributed a combined total of more than \$1 million to the city of Antlers, Clayton and Pushmataha County.

**District 8** – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of Hugo \$32,900, Boswell \$13,400 and Choctaw County \$27,800 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and The Choctaw Nation has contributed a combined total of \$799,450 to the cities of Hugo, Boswell and Choctaw County.

**District 10** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and the Choctaw Development Fund awarded the town of Wapanucka \$15,000. Funds will match a USDA Pre-development planning grant that will assist the town in hiring an engineering firm to conduct a study to measure, analyze and investigate the town's current water quality, water pressure and pipelines. The study will result in a comprehensive report that can be used to seek financing for system improvements.

**District 11** – The Choctaw Nation awarded the city of McAlester \$17,200 and Pittsburg County \$6,900 from the Choctaw Community Partner Fund to continue to help strengthen and develop the local area.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund has been an ongoing effort for the last three years and the Choctaw Nation has contributed a combined total of \$241,850 to the city of McAlester and Pittsburg County.

The Choctaw Community Partner Fund began in 2019 and has put back more than \$5 million into Southeastern Oklahoma communities.



Tony Ward

## District 2

Halito, Chim Achukma from District 2,

As we are closing the spring season and beginning summer, I would like to congratulate all the graduates and all levels. Good luck in all your endeavors! I would like to encourage all our Summer Youth workers as they begin to work this summer to work hard and do your best. Also, our Summer Youth Camps are back in full swing, and we would like to encourage our youth to participate in our excellent camps the Choctaw Nation provides.

In May, the Choctaw Nation brought back our Senior Day celebration with a record setting attendance. It was great to see everyone enjoying themselves. We are very proud of our District 2 Seniors placing first in the singing contest. It was great to see and hear all the other districts perform. They all did great singing hymns that those who came before us sang and have passed on to us to carry for many generations. They are all winners!

In June, we held our first annual Golden Prom for our senior citizens. Congratulations go to our Prom King Randell Hicks and our Prom Queen Barbara Roberts. We had a fun and fabulous night dancing, playing games and fellowship. Keep practicing those dance moves, and we will do it again next year!

In District 2, we have been very blessed to have some new and exciting projects coming soon. On June 14, we broke ground on our new resort in Hochatown, "Choctaw Landing." Choctaw Landing will consist of a hotel, gaming, mercantile shop and related amenities. Choctaw Landing will provide many career related opportunities for our area. Also, in July, we will begin construction on more LEAP homes and Affordable Rental housing.

On June 29, we will celebrate the 15-year anniversary of the Broken Bow Clinic. It's hard to believe it has been that long since we moved from the old building in downtown Broken Bow. During the celebration, we will name the building the "Ruby Choate Clinic" in honor of Ruby Choate a long-time nurse at the Broken Bow Clinic.

I would like to announce our new District 2 Princesses for 2022-2023. They are Little Miss Cambree Colbert, Junior Miss Melea Jefferson and Senior Miss Zoe Tisho. Congratulations!

Some upcoming dates you do not want to miss are the second round of the American Rescue Plan Act funds which will be open on July 1, 2022. You must visit the Chahta Achvffa member portal and update your address. Labor Day celebration will be September 2-September 4.

I hope all mothers and fathers had a Happy Mother's and Father's Day and thank a veteran! Be safe during the summer heat and may God Bless you!

Yakoke.



Jamie Denison and Kristy Lansdale, Broken Bow representatives; Amanda Williamson, Broken Bow City Clerk and Tony Ward, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 2.



Mike Taylor, Antlers City Manager and Joey Tom, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 7.



Larry Ebahotubbi, Garvin representative and Matilda Paxton, Idabel Choctaw Community Center Manager.



Cody Nail, Clayton City Councilmember and Joey Tom, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 7.



Kristy Lansdale, Broken Bow representative and Tony Ward, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 2.



Joey Tom, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 7 and Mike Brittingham, Pushmataha County Commissioner.



Robert Karr, Choctaw Nation Tribal Councilmember District 11 and Kirk Ridenour, McAlester Economic Development Project Manager.



Robert Karr, Choctaw Nation Councilmember District 11 and Kevin Smith, Pittsburg County Commissioner District 2.



John Redman, Choctaw Nation Senior Manager of Economic Development Programs; Randy Roberston, Choctaw County Commissioner District 2; Darrell Kerr, Choctaw County Commissioner.



John Redman, Choctaw Nation Senior Manager of Economic Development Programs; Randy Roberston, Choctaw County Commissioner District 2.



Leonora Burnett, Mayor of Wapanucka; Angel Rowland, Choctaw Nation Development Fund Manager and Vela Robertson and Cathy Perry, Wapanucka Representatives.



John Redman, Choctaw Nation Senior Manager of Economic Development Programs; Leah Savage, Hugo City Manager and Amy Ward, Choctaw Nation Small Business Advisor.



Eddie Bohanan

## District 3

Halito from District 3,

Since the pandemic battle of 2020 and the reality that the virus remains a part of us, medical officials lessened restrictions and mandates due to the virus being more manageable. I am so thankful we weathered the storm, and now that centers are fully operable members can interact and enjoy events again.

Our traditional dinners met with remarkable success at both community centers, Smithville, and Talihina. The events were open to the community – members and non-Choctaw, making for robust fellowship. The Elders cooked up delicious ancestral dishes, keeping Choctaw culture food alive. I was honored to have Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., and Councilman Thomas Williston at Smithville. At Talihina, Chief Gary Batton and Councilwoman Jennifer Woods joined

us. Yakoke to all the staff, Smithville YAB, Talihina Project Rise, and all the volunteers who helped to make the events possible.

It was my pleasure to participate in the annual Bakersfield, California trip along with my wife Paula, Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr. and Council. It was a wonderful community visit meeting tribal members. We shared culture and stories, made new friends, great memories and lasting connections with Oklahoma.

I am pleased to share good news happening in District 3. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has entered into a partnership with Three Rivers Meat Processing Plant located in Smithville. This investment will fill an immediate need in the community, create approximately fifteen new jobs in Smithville and have an economic impact regionally. The project opening date is tentatively early spring 2023.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is planning to hold the Labor Day Festival this year. I hope to see you there!

Yakoke,

Eddie Bohanan

## District 4

Halito from D4,

I would like to introduce you to our 2022/2023 District 4 Choctaw Princesses. Congratulations ladies!

Little Miss Choctaw Korinthia Mercer is the daughter of Daniel Mercer and Leona Ward. She enjoys reading, drawing, softball, singing, playing drums and going to cultural events.

Junior Miss Choctaw Micah Davidson is the daughter of Michael and Jennifer Davidson. Micah is a member of Howe FFA, Freshman Class President, Academic Team, Student Council, Howe Softball, Yvnnvsh Homma Stickball Team, YAB and YAHL. She is active in Choctaw language and social dancing programs.

Senior Miss Choctaw Ruthie James is the daughter of Kristele James. Ruthie is active with the Yvnnvsh Homma Youth Stickball Team. She volunteers at the

community center during events and does traditional dance and stickball demos. Congratulations to Carl Brown, Cavanal Services, for being awarded Chahtapreneur of the Year. District 4 has had several new Chahtapreneurs in the last few months. We wish you the utmost success in your new businesses.

As always, if I can be of assistance to you and your family, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yakoke,

Jess Henry



Left: Councilman Jess Henry poses for a photo with the new District 4 royalty.

Right: Carl Brown of Cavanal Services posed for a picture with District 4 Councilman Jess Henry after winning Chahtapreneur of the Year.





CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

Point your phone camera at the QR code and tap the pop up to learn more!

CHIEFS, CLANS & KIN

CHANGING EXHIBIT GALLERY OPENS JULY 23

## COLLEGE CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

APPLICATION DATES:

FALL FUNDING CYCLE: JUNE 1 - SEPTEMBER 1

SPRING FUNDING CYCLE: JANUARY 2 - APRIL 1

CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Education Services





**Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation**

July 5	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 6	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 8	Atoka	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 8	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
July 12	Idabel	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
July 13	Poteau	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
July 15	Crowder	By Appointment
July 19	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 20	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 20	Stigler	By Appointment
July 22	Atoka	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 22	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
July 26	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
July 27	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 a.m.

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

**EVENTS**

**Free Choctaw Traditional Pottery Classes**

July 14 and 28, and August 11 and 25, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
 400 S.W. "O" Street, Antlers, OK.

For more information call Mary Frazier (580) 982-3053 or Dr. Ian Thompson (580) 642-7981.

Reservations are not required. In case of extreme weather, please call one of the above phone numbers to confirm class will be held.



**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**

How are you staying active this summer?

Together, we're more.

**CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION AGENDA June 10, 2022**

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a. Regular Session May 14, 2022
  - b. Special Session May 18, 2022
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
  - a. Veteran of the Month, District #9 – Roger Scott
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
  - a. Karris Hodge, Group Speaker – MMIW Chahta
  - b. Nellie Meashintubby – Individual Speaker – Helping Each Other as Together We Are More
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. Approve the Application and Plan for FY2023 Funding through the Department of Health & Human Services for the Community Services Block Grant CB-125-22 - Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - b. Approve the Application to the United States Department of Health & Human Services for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program for FY2023 CB-126-22 - Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - c. Approve the Application to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Veterans Administration Supportive Housing Grant for FY2022. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - d. Approve an Amendment to Business Lease No. 4200274997 (G09-2014), in Favor of Choctaw Nation Talihina Boys and Girls Club, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in Latimer County, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - e. Approve Funding for the Development and Construction of a Multi-Family Housing Development in Durant, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - f. Approve Funding of the Design Fees for Construction of a Water Tower in Durant, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - g. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - h. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment (Original Cost \$646,288.31) CB-132-22 - Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - i. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment (Original Cost \$60,192.05). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - j. Approve Rescission of CB-90-22 and to Approve Funding for the Construction of a Casino and Hotel Development in Hochatown, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
  - k. Approve to Name the Broken Bow Clinic The Ruby Choate Clinic. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
10. OLD BUSINESS
11. ADJOURNMENT
12. CLOSING PRAYER

**USDA accepts Farm Service Agency County Committee Member nominations**

**Durant, Okla. (June, 2022)** – The Oklahoma Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently announced that USDA will soon begin accepting nomination forms for eligible candidates to serve on local FSA County Committees throughout Oklahoma. The nomination period is June 15 – August 1, 2022.

Almost anyone participating or associated with agricultural land and who is of legal voting age can be nominated as a candidate. Tribal members are considered landowners if their tribe has an agricultural interest in the Local Administrative Area (LAA) and they live within the LAA.

All nomination forms must be received in a County FSA Office or postmarked by August 1, 2022. Voting takes place between November 7, 2022 and December 5, 2022.

For more information about the election or to obtain an election map you can contact your local FSA office in Atoka, Holdenville, Hugo, Idabel, McAlester, Poteau or you can contact the Bryan County FSA office in Durant (924-4131 ext. 2) who serves as the local FSA contact office for the Choctaw Nation.

**Memorial Day Ceremony**

The 2022 Memorial Day Ceremony took place on Friday, May 27, on the Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds. Veterans and visitors came from all around the area to honor and remember the Choctaws who made the ultimate sacrifice.



Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Austin and members of the Choctaw Honor Guard lay a wreath at the Choctaw WWI Memorial in Tvshka Homma.



Donald John is presented with a Korean Peace Medal by Korean Ambassador Myung Soo Ahn.



The Choctaw Honor Guard honors those buried in the Choctaw Veterans Cemetery in Tvshka Homma.

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

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

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

**Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan To Be Eligible to Apply:**

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

**Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:**

- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

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

**McAlester Field Center**  
 July 15, 2022  
 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**CHOCTAW VETERAN ADVOCACY PROGRAM**

Are You a Choctaw Veteran?

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

580-642-8451 | BIT.LY/CNO-VETERANS-ADVOCACY

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

**Biskinik Announcement Guidelines**

We accept milestone birthday greetings for ages 1, 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 30, 40, 50, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80 and above. Couples may send announcements of silver wedding anniversary at 25 years of marriage, golden anniversary at 50 years, or 60+ anniversaries. We do not post wedding announcements.

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

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

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

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

*Gary Batton*  
 Chief

*Jack Austin Jr.*  
 Assistant Chief

The Official Monthly Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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

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

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

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

**Chahta Anumpa Aikkhvna July Language Lesson**

**Walmart**

In this exercise, the subject is Walmart. The sentences show the various aspects of going to Walmart. Practice repeating these forms until it is very easy for you to make a statement.

Other nouns can be substituted for Walmart. These sentences can be great conversation starters

When asked "Katimi na or Katimi ho?" – Why?

Wal-Mart ia kvf vm achukma.	I like to go to Wal-Mart.
Kanimikma Wal-Mart ia li.	Sometimes I go to Wal-Mart.
Wal-Mart ia li bilia.	I always go to Wal-Mart.
Wal-Mart ia li fehna kiyo.	I don't go to Wal-Mart often.
Wal-Mart ia li beka tuk.	I usually go to Wal-Mart.
Wal-Mart ia sv bvna kiyo.	I don't want to go Wal-Mart.

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



### Farrar celebrates 100 years

Billie June Foster Farrar turned 100 years old on June 9, 2022. She is the daughter of original enrollee John Wesley Foster, and Mabel Foster.

She resides at home in San Diego, Calif., and is looking forward to visiting with relatives for her birthday. She is much loved by her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews and their families. Happy Birthday, Billie!



### Carrols celebrate 50th anniversary

Eugene (Jr.) and Glenna Carrol celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 16, 2022.

They were married in Oklahoma City in 1972 and moved to Golden, Okla., soon after.

They have enjoyed a life that includes four children and 13 grandchildren, attending the Golden Baptist Church and now serving in the Choctaw Baptist Church in Idabel.



### Brown celebrates 96 years

Georgina Brown of Ardmore, Oklahoma turned 96 years old on April 26, 2022. Her loved ones and friends love her and hope she had a great birthday. "May her special day and the year ahead be blessed with every good thing."



### Mullins Player of the Year

Gage Mullins was recently named McAlester News-Capital Spring Baseball Player of the Year.

Mullins suffered an ACL tear during the second week of football season. He was sidelined for months but worked with his physical therapist to be able to return to the baseball diamond this spring.

During his senior year, he spent a lot more time with his father, Justin, who was named the 2021-2022 head coach of the McAlester Buffs baseball team.

Mullins finished the season with a .402 batting average, .493 on-base percentage, 45 RBIs and a state tournament appearance.

Now an alum of the Buffs, Mullins has his sights on the future, committing to play college baseball for Murray State College in Tishomingo, Oklahoma.



### Doran receives Native 40 Under 40 award

In December, Heather Doran was announced as a recipient of the 2021 Native American 40 under 40 Award.

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (The National Center) announced the 2021 class of Native American 40 Under 40 award recipients. The Native American 40 Under 40 awards represent the best and brightest emerging Indian Country leaders. Every year, 40 American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian leaders under the age of 40 are inducted in recognition of their leadership, initiative and dedication and for making significant contributions in their business and/or their community. Award winners include leaders working in numerous fields, including academia, government, non-profits, tourism, nature conservation, technology and more.

Doran is Chief of Staff/Global Director for Industry, Apps, and Data Marketing at Microsoft.

A Choctaw tribal member, Heather has used her position to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives, including being a strong voice for Native American hiring and inclusion by serving as a Native and Indigenous Employee Resource Group member.



### Carver wins Miss Lindenwood



Hailey Haloka Carver is Miss Lindenwood University 2022. She is the daughter of Timothy Alan Carver, the granddaughter of Jim and Sylvvia (Noley) Carver and the great-granddaughter of the late original enrollee Grayson B. Noley, Sr. Hailey is a senior at Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri.

### Coffman District 19 Assistant Superintendent/Central Office Administrator of the Year



The Oklahoma Association of School Administrators (OASA) is pleased to announce Linda Coffman of Valliant Public School as the 2022 OASA District #19 Assistant Superintendent/Central Office Administrator of the Year. Coffman will be recognized at the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration (CCOSA) Summer Leadership Conference on June 7-9, 2022.

"Assistant Superintendents and Central Office Administrators play vital roles in promoting best practices that lead to the highest standards of student achievement, including best practices in instructional excellence, financial and budget integrity, efficient facility and transportation operations and fostering community support", said Dr. Pam Deering, CCOSA/OASA Executive Director. "These leaders support the leadership team, the superintendent and the district as a whole. Linda Coffman is among the best of Oklahoma administrators. We are excited and proud to recognize these outstanding leaders."

OASA has 20 districts that consist of multiple counties. Eligible OASA members are nominated and selected by their peers in their OASA district.

### Nami Kishi-Jones



Nami Kishi-Jones was born on April 27, 2022, to Adam Jones and Yurkio Kishi.

Nami is the great-granddaughter of original enrollee, Rosa Lawrence Jones.

### Stanley celebrates 80 years

In July, "Rita" N.N. Payton Stanley of Oklahoma City celebrated 80 years of a healthy life. Widowed three times, she lives alone; yet maintains half an acre by gardening several hours each day. To friends, family and neighbors, she gifts bountiful flowers and vegetables. She provides a 10-foot border along the entire fence line for wildlife habitat. Choctaw reverence for nature sustains her.



### Choctaw sisters share Choctaw culture at school cultural night



Ava Malfitano, a third-grader, and Madeleine Malfitano, a kindergartener at Baker Elementary School in Prosper, Texas, participated in a cultural night, where families could choose to participate in several different events. The girls decided to create a display board that told the history of the

Choctaw people and their family's Choctaw lineage. According to their mother, Ashley, the Cultural Center was kind enough to allow them to borrow dresses and jewelry for the fashion show event.

### Choctaw trio help set Durant school and state records

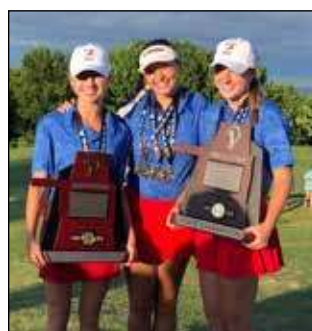
Three starters for the five-member Durant High School Lady Lions Golf Team helped to achieve not only a school record, but a state one as well.

The DHS golf team recently solidified their place in school and state history in what their coach, Tanner Dupree, described as incredibly rare. The 2022 Lady Lions finished the year with an unbeaten season. They entered 11 varsity level tournaments

and won each one. Three players, Ella Barbush, Scarlet Sturch and Chloe Henderson, all Choctaw tribal members, were instrumental in the success of the team.

Dupree said the team dominated their way to a 37-shot victory, winning the school's fourth golf state championship.

The ladies also maintained a perfect 4.0 team GPA on their way to the sixth



Left to Right: Ella Barbush, Scarlet Sturch, and Chloe Henderson.

Academic State Championship. All three of the Durant players finished in the top 40 for the tournament.

### Davis a key speaker at film viewing

Pictured from left to right are Virginia Berumen and her sister, members of the Squaxin Island Tribe of Washington State. Also pictured are the Minister of the Mud Bay Shaker Indian Church Rose Davis, Oklahoma Choctaw tribal elder, Tom E. Davis and Heather Pilder Olson, producer of the River.

Davis was one of the key speakers and spoke about "Perspective and Compassion, via Thich Nhat Hanh" to the Aberdeen, Washington City Council and others in attendance. Film producer Heather Pilder Olson of Seattle, Washington, invited Davis, Rose and Virginia to view the documentary on April 29, 2022, at the Bishop Center, located on the campus of Grays Harbor Community College, Aberdeen, Washington.

Davis presently lives within Grays Harbor County, Washington and is semi-retired. He graduated from the class of 1967 Talihina High School and holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. He recalls the Talihina Tigers winning the Oklahoma 1966 Class B State Football Champion. This honor



was shared with two of his brothers, Floyd Gene Davis and Kenny "Muggs" Davis and the Wards, McBrides, Thompsons, et al.

The River is a documentary about how communication and purpose play into the success and failures of managing the homeless encampment in Aberdeen, Washington. Director Rick Walters, a 14-year US Army veteran, will go to The River to live with and talk with the displaced inhabitants and search for meaning in their experience and catharsis for his own battles with addiction and security.

The film looks closely at the ways local government, the media, and the general population identify the problem, and how they communicate about it.

The film shows how purpose drives the City Council, the police, social services, and the wide variety of people who live at The River.

Currently, around 100-150 people live homeless at The River Camp. Grays Harbor

County has some of the highest per capita rates of homelessness, unemployment, poverty, and addiction in Washington State and faces unique challenges with a homeless population that includes many young veterans, people dealing with addiction and mental illness, as well as Native Americans. The City Council voted recently to sweep the tent community, and film producers to document the sweep, as well as the community's response.

"We plan to include the voices and stories of those living homeless, as well as commentary from city government, business owners, police, the Quinault Tribe, and the social service agencies working to help the homeless."

The River is produced by Heather Pilder Olson, Andrew Tribolini and TJ Walker. For questions or for more information, contact Heather Pilder Olson at heatherp007@gmail.com or 206-734-6975.

## JOB FOR THE DAY

JOB FOR THE DAY OFFERS TEMPORARY POSITIONS WHILE OUR TEAM WORKS WITH YOU TO FIND AND APPLY FOR PERMANENT PLACEMENT.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:**  
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/TRIBAL-SERVICES/MEMBER-SERVICES/JOB-DAY](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/TRIBAL-SERVICES/MEMBER-SERVICES/JOB-DAY)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

# QUILT SHOW

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2**  
Drop off quilt entries from 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm  
(Tribal Membership building - Tvshka Homma Council Grounds)

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4**  
Pick up quilt entries at 5:00 pm

---

Quilt judging will take place on Friday night with ribbons awarded on Saturday in three categories:

Machine-stitch, Hand-stitch | Machine-stitch | Hand-stitch combination

People's Choice award will be voted on Saturday with ribbons awarded on Sunday.

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Visit the Quilt Show during the Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival  
Friday, September 2 | 12:00 noon – 5:00 pm  
Saturday, September 3 | 9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sunday, September 4 | 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: 580-642-8011**  
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY)



Allison wins May Golden Apple Award

Caleb Allison won the May Golden Apple Award (teacher of the month).

Caleb is an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher for Ponca City High School and East Middle School.



Photo Courtesy of Ponca City Public Schools  
Pictured, from left, are Brenna Scott with United Country Shaw Real Estate, Shelley Arrott, Caleb Allison, Krystina Muralt, Matt Yearout and Ben Welch.

Tillie Sue Marquez turns one

Happy first birthday, sweet Tillie Sue Marquez! You are such a joy in our lives and we love you! Love Mommy, Daddy, Tina, Vinny and Valen.



Horinek turns 18

Happy Birthday Serena Horinek! On March 17, she turned 18. Serena Horinek, Choctaw Nation (¼) and Ponca, graduated from Frontier High School.

She served as class president and Valedictorian. She received a scholarship from ASU but decided to go to Rose State for the first two years. Her parents and grandparents are very proud of her.



Martin selected as NASA Intern

Choctaw Nation Tribal Member Jeffrey Martin, a senior at Poteau High School, has been selected to be a part of the NASA Summer Internship Program.



This internship is competitive and provides unique NASA-related research and operational experiences. This opportunity integrates interns with career professionals emphasizing mentor-directed, degree-related tasks while contributing to the operation of a NASA facility or the advancement of NASA's missions. Jeffrey will be spending 10 weeks during the summer interning for NASA.

Jeffrey will graduate high school with a 3.55 GPA and 2.5+ years of work experience in May. He has 200 total hours working with The Choctaw Nation Summer Internship Program and 496 hours of various volunteer work. He will use the knowledge and skills he acquired within this time to leverage his abilities to successfully fill the NASA Summer Internship position. His results-oriented working style is praised by peers and has proven him to be a reliable team member in achieving objectives that are set.

The project that Jeffrey will be working on is Pressure System Certification Support.

He will be gathering information on pressure system regulators used in the MSFC Materials and Processes Laboratory (EM) pressure systems. He will also gather maximum allowable working pressure (MAWP) information on tubing, pipe, hoses and equipment in EM pressure systems.

He will be proficient in the use of excel spreadsheets and have the ability to look up manufacturer information on the internet and request information on regulators, tubes, hoses and equipment either by calling or through a manufacturer's "contact us" site.

His scientific and technical skills will include general engineering. He will be gathering technical information on regulators, tubing, pipe, hoses and equipment in pressure systems.

Jeffrey will display other skills like dedication, diligence, patience, timeliness, follow-through and teamwork.

Jeffrey's preferred major is Engineering – Aerospace. He will be able to implement the knowledge and skillset he gains from the NASA Summer Internship to further his education and obtain his degree in this field.

Parsons graduates from Arizona State

Trinity Jade Parsons recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in education early childhood and early childhood special education.

Trinity will be teaching K-3 special education resource at Shaw Butte Elementary for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year.

I am beyond grateful for everyone I have crossed paths with, that has made an impact on my life. Whether short-term, long-term, past or present. You have all sculpted me into the person I am today. Your love and encouragement has propelled me to this milestone in my life.



Tarbert graduates from Smith College

Vivian Rue Tarbert graduated from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, in May, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology and government.

She is the daughter of tribal member Jesse Tarbert and his wife, Jamie Rue, of Asbury Park New Jersey.

Vivian will spend the 2022-23 academic year at the Geneva Graduate Institute in Geneva, Switzerland, where she is enrolled in a master's program in Development Studies.

She would like to say "yakoke" to the Choctaw Nation for the support she continues to receive through the Choctaw Nation Higher Education program.



Scott is June Veteran of the Month



Roger Scott, District 9, is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month. He was born and raised in Tushka, Oklahoma, graduating from Tushka High School in 1973.

In August 1976, Scott joined the U.S. Army and was a 52 Bravo who completed his basic training at Ft. Dix, NJ. He went to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, for Engineer School, and then

on to Ft. Kobbe Canal Zone in Panama. Following his assignment, Specialist 4 Scott was assigned to Ft. Carson, Colorado to finish out his contract.

Spec. Scott returned to Tushka and worked for his father doing farm work. He started back to Southeastern Oklahoma State University, majoring in physical education and met his future wife during his last year. He left SOSU, married, and moved to Wilburton in 1983, where he attended Eastern Oklahoma State College and graduated with a management marketing degree in 1987.

He moved to McAlester and started working for the Choctaw Nation Arrowhead Resort, then later went to work for the Ammunition Plan in McAlester during Desert Storm.

In 1994, Spec. Scott moved to Wichita, Kansas and began attending powwows. He became a gourd dancer and began straight dancing.

In 2010, he began working for the Choctaw Nation Language Department, then began driving the tribal transit in 2013. He retired in 2021.

He and his family are southern gospel singers. He teaches seniors to sing Choctaw songs for District 9. In 2019, he became an ordained minister along with his son Greg and nephew Mike.

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

Lee graduates from Purdue

Travis Edmund Lee of Laguna Niguel, California, graduated from Purdue University on May 15, 2022. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in computer science and will work in the cyber security industry.

"I would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for all of their help through the years. I started in Elementary school in the Star program. While I was in High School, I joined the STEM program. I was also fortunate to be chosen to participate in College Horizons in 2015. I credit that experience helping me with my essay to being accepted at Purdue. While in college, I received help from Higher Education. Thank you again for making my college dreams come true! I am the great-grandson of original enrollee Wellington Folsom Bonner," said Lee.



Garry graduates from Cornell

Susan Garry, Taylor, Texas, has graduated with a B.S. degree in Computer Science from the Ann S. Bowers College of Computing and Information Science at Cornell University. For the next year, she will be a research assistant for a professor working on developing software for genome comparisons. She thanks the Choctaw Nation for the College Clothing Allowance, Technology Allowance and Higher Education Program.

For her first two years at Cornell, she lived in Akwe:kon house, the nation's first university residence hall established to celebrate American Indian culture and heritage. Akwe:kon means "all of us" in the Mohawk language.

She is the great-great-granddaughter of Josephine Hickman Hill Terrell and the great-great-great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Lewis Hickman, original enrollees. She is the daughter of Kyle and Madeleine Garry Hensley of Taylor, Texas, and the granddaughter of Buz and Susan Ridgway Garry of Coupland, Texas. Susan Ridgway Garry was formerly of Durant.



Senior Fitness Challenge Walk-A-Thon winners

This past November, 150 elders participated in our Senior Fitness Challenge across the Choctaw Nation.

Upon completion of the ten-week challenge, the top 5 from each community are invited to compete at the Walk-A-Thon and receive a new pair of shoes. This event is full of fellowship, friendly competition and fun!

The community with the highest average score receives the traveling trophy to display at their community center. Congratulations to District 10, Atoka, who averaged 8,180 points.

Yakoke, to all the seniors for participating, and we look forward to more activities in the future – Choctaw Wellness Center Staff.

Below is the list of participants that placed at the Walk-A-Thon:

**Overall community winner**  
Atoka

**Male**

**55-64**

First Place - Ricky White- Spiro

**65-79**

First Place - Jack Hornbuckle- Poteau

Second Place - Dural Walthall - Durant

Third Place - Ernest Dry - Durant

**80+**

First Place - Dwayne Hicks- Broken Bow

Second Place - Leon Cloud- Crowder

Third Place - Duck Wayman- Antlers

**Female**

**55-64**

First Place - Jeanette Maytubbi- Idabel

Second Place - Diane McGee- Atoka

Third Place- Cassie Miller- Crowder

**65-79**



Photo Provided

Atoka Seniors, community center staff and Councilman Anthony Dillard pose with the traveling trophy after earning the title of Overall Community Winner in the Senior Fitness Challenge Walk-A-Thon.

First Place - Linda Walthall- Bethel

Second Place - Lillie Walthall- Durant

Third Place - Sandy Denton- Broken Bow

**80+**

First Place - Linda Combrick- Durant

Second Place - Lillie Boone- Atoka

Third Place - Charollette Davis- Idabel

Tucker represents Oklahoma at Nationals

In June, Wallace Tucker represented Oklahoma in the US Rowing Youth National Championship in a sweep pair boat.

He graduated from Booker T. Washington high school (Tulsa) on his 18th birthday in May.

He will attend Colorado State University in the Fall and intends to study engineering and business.



Martin graduates from LPN program

Raina Martin recently graduated as salutatorian of the Kiamichi Tech LPN program with honors.

She is married to Justin Martin, and together, they have two sons named James and Bennett.

"I would like to thank my family and also Choctaw Nation for their help and support in the pursuit of my nursing dream. I am excited to begin my nursing journey," said Martin.



Garcia graduates from Haskell

Luisa Garcia, daughter of Luis and Jill Wood Garcia, granddaughter of James and Jan Wood, just graduated with a BS in environmental science from Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.



Bledsoes celebrate 60th anniversary

Larry and Carolan Bledsoe will celebrate 60 years of marriage on July 28, 2022. They were married in Oklahoma City and live in Yukon, Oklahoma. A celebration is scheduled for July 30.



Williams O'Brien earns doctorate

Dr. Williams O'Brien, DVM, graduated from Washington State University, Veterinary Medicine. She will be a Veterinarian in Gilbert, Arizona. Her love of animals started early on, and she continues to be committed to serving their needs. Megan's family and friends are proud of the hard work, dedication and sacrifice she put in to achieve her goal. "Way to go, Megan. You're going to do great things!"



**STUDENT SCHOOL AND ACTIVITY FUND**

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

**Eligibility Requirements**

- Students must possess a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal membership card. (This is not the CDIB).
- Students must be at least 3-years-old in head start/daycare setting through 12th grade.
- If the student is between ages 19 to 21 attending high school additional school enrollment documentation will be required.

**580-634-0681**

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**APPLICATIONS OPEN JUNE 1 - AUGUST 31, 2022**

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**



**Carl Vaughn**

Carl "Skip" Vaughn, 69, passed away May 3, 2022.

Skip was born Sept. 13, 1952, in Florida, to Carl and Elizabeth (Reeder) Vaughn.

He was preceded in death by his wife Nancy; his parents; and brother Robert David Vaughn.

Skip is survived by his son Christopher Karl Vaughn; sister Sandra Hotalen and spouse Doug, and grandchildren Hollie Middleton, Matthew Stewardson, Brayden Stewardson, Victoria Morehouse, and Savanna Morehouse.

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

**Isaiah E. Labor**

Isaiah "Ike" E. Labor, 84, passed away May 30, 2022.

Ike was born July 12, 1937, in Oklahoma, to Everett and Wavedell Johnson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Everett Labor Jr.; and sisters Rema, Joyce, and Anabell.

Ike is survived by his wife Norma Labor; son Isaiah Labor Jr. (Sherry); daughters Teresa Estell (Mark) and Cynthia Naylor (Randall); seven grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

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

**Earl Wayne Goines**

Earl Wayne Goines, 77, passed away May 19, 2022.

Earl was born May 13, 1945, in Panama, Okla., to Earlene (Darneal) Goines and Edgar Goines.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and brothers Kenneth and Sherman Goines.

Earl is survived by his wife Patricia; sons Gary Goines and spouse Shellye, Eddy Goines and partner Kim, and Billy Martindale; brothers Larry and spouse Chiquita, and Robert and spouse Debbie; sister Eddy Schumann and spouse Matt; seven grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; several nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Norma Embry**

Norma Embry, 80, passed away May 16, 2022.

Norma was born Sept. 28, 1941, in Talihina, Okla., to William and Thelma (Franklin) Gibson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Teddy Joe Embry; sisters Serena Gibson, Marie Harkins, and Wynona Lawrence; brothers Sonny Gibson, Amos Gibson, and Clayton Gibson; granddaughter Christy Hawks and spouse Bobby; daughter-in-law Brenda Embry; brother-in-law David Harkins; and nieces and nephews Mary Harkins, Quida Harkins, Kenneth Norton, Charles Newsom, and Gregory Newsom.

Norma is survived by her children Michael Embry, Ricky Embry, and Debra Fuller; grandchildren Jennifer Winnett, Michael Embry Jr., Michelle Gowen, and Danny Fuller; great-grandchildren Trevor Unclebach, Sarah McBeth, Will Winnett, Chase Winnett, Dylan Hawks, Nathan Hawks, Kierra Hawks, and Logan Hawks; and great-great-grandson Carter McBeth.

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

**Freda Anne Carterby**

Freda Anne Carterby, 61, passed away May 23, 2022.

Freda was born May 9, 1961, in Fresno, Calif., to Calvin and Maureen Carterby.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Freda is survived by her daughter Stacy Blanco and spouse Jose; grandchildren Ashley Carterby and fiance' Chance Belcher, Kayla Carterby, Devin Prater, and Alexxys Blanco; great-grandchildren Elijah Carterby, Nataly Cruz Gregorio, Raelynn Wyatt, and Stacy Belcher; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Beverly Nanette Peiser**

Beverly Nanette (Payne) Peiser, 86, passed away June 7, 2022.

Beverly was born Aug. 27, 1935, in Antlers, Oklahoma to Francis and Nannie Payne.

She was preceded in death by her parents; grandparents Charles Francis Payne and Sophia Minnie Hibben Payne, and Roy Cornelius Harris and Priscilla Gertrude Taylor Harris; two siblings; and daughter Lisa Powell.

Beverly is survived by her husband Billy; son Barry Peiser and spouse Joneen; daughter Pam Seipp and spouse Wayne; Lisa's husband Rusty Powell and family; grandchildren Karin, Tess, Megan, Thorin, and Jamie; great-grandchildren Alexandra, John, Elijah, Samuel, and Raziela; siblings Phillip Payne and spouse Sally, Ross Dale Payne, Linda Robertson and spouse Robbie, Karen (Paul) Lyles, Jane Maxwell, Jan Maxwell, Becky Smith and spouse Dennis, Jill Sanneman and spouse Dudley, and Chris Payne and wife Vickie.

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

**Cecil Edwin Smith**

Cecil "Sonny" Edwin Smith, 95, passed away May 18, 2022.

Sonny was born July 30, 1926, in Comanche, Okla., to Les and Viola Smith.

He was preceded in death by his wife Pal Smith; son Cecil L. Smith; grandsons David W. Smith Jr. and Jarron Smith; his parents' brother Alton Smith; and sister Yvonne Streatly.

Sonny is survived by his wife Nita Smith; sons David W. Smith (Kelly) and Michael L. Smith (Jane Ann); sister Rita Hice; grandchildren Kellie, Elizabeth, Ryan, Ethan, Grace, and Derek; and great-grandchildren Aayna, Reyna, Holt, Fayth, and Colt.

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

**David L. Hodge**

David L. Hodge, 76, passed away Feb. 18, 2022.

David was born Sept. 5, 1945, in Torrance, Calif.

He is survived by his wife Janice "Jan"; children Stacy Hodge, and Michael (Jocelyn) Hodge; grandchildren Zach Hodge, Justeen Hodge, and Molly Guerra; and sister Cyndy Horton.

For the full obituary, please visit [McAulay and Wallace Mortuary](#).

**Edwin G. McDonald**

Edwin G. McDonald, 80, passed away May 9, 2022.

Edwin was born Oct. 27, 1941, in Foreman, Ark., to Earl Augustus and Christine Martha (Dickerson) McDonald.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Diana J. McDonald; and daughter Monica L. McDonald Fierro.

Edwin is survived by sons Edwin Gus McDonald II and Eric R. McDonald; daughters Sherri L. Murray and spouse Gene, and Christine Sloan and spouse Rick; 14 grandchildren; and 19 great-grandchildren.

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

**Cevus Wayne Battiest**

Cevus Wayne Battiest, 65, passed away May 24, 2022.

Cevus was born Dec. 10, 1956, in De Queen, Ark., to George and Hester Hardy Battiest.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Sam Battiest and Vernon Battiest; sisters Nettie Webb, Bernice Marlow, and Sue Battiest.

Cevus is survived by his brother Ricky Battiest; sister Mattie Battiest; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Randel Lee Bohanon**

Randel Lee Bohanon, 71, passed away Feb. 1, 2022.

Randel was born Jan. 2, 1951, in Ludlow, Okla., to David and Emeline Ludlow Bohanon.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Clark and Esias Bohanon; and sisters Lodie Mitchell, Corene Palmer, and Angeline Bohanon.

Randel is survived by his wife Ruthie; son Skylar Bohanon and spouse Claudine; daughters Angela Bohanon, and Randee Porter and spouse Justin; sisters Leona Samuel and spouse Richard, Ella Willis and Della Bohanon; grandchildren Damian and Abigail Bohanon, Elizabeth and Halen Bohanon, Austin Porter, and Joseph Porter; great-grandchild Jackson Bohanon; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Cecil Dale Watson**

Cecil Dale Watson, 74, passed away May 26, 2022.

Cecil was born Feb. 14, 1948, in Picksen, Okla., to David and Rosie Mae (White) Watson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother David Watson Jr.; sisters Juanita Watson and Brenda Kay; brother Waylon Watson; and grandchild Lvmhe Watson.

Cecil is survived by his children Raymond, Konowa, Stacey, and Cecil Jr., and spouse Rachelle; grandchildren Spokogee Watson, Tafv Watson, Sarah Redbird, Hannah Franks, Tenetke Watson, Nashoba Watson, Alyssa Brown, Shelby Factor, Antonio Watson, Kejo Watson, and Emilia Watson, siblings Curtis Watson, Eddie Watson and spouse Debbie, Linda Watson, Jeannie Richards and spouse Shem, Debbie Watson, and Jearl Watson; his brother from another mother Eugene Folsom; numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Brandon Taylor**

Brandon Taylor, 40, passed away May 20, 2022.

Brandon was born July 22, 1981, in Dallas, Texas, to JoAnn Jessie and Arnold Taylor.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and uncle Benny Frazier.

Brandon is survived by his brothers Arnold Charles Lee Taylor II and Chase McKinney and spouse Fatima; sisters Donya Battiest and spouse Randy, Starla Austin and spouse Edward, and Kami Taylor; nieces and nephews Marcus Salazar, Alexander Taylor, Courtney Taylor, Taylor Battiest, Joseph Battiest, Jolie Clark, Jon Taylor, Derrick Taylor, Sariya Clark, Dallas Austin, Savannah Mallard, Xavier Mallard, Jrue Mallard, Kendall McKinney, Chanelle McKinney, and Daniel Sankadota; uncle Bruce Jessie; aunts Darlene Jessie and Peggy Larney, and numerous cousins.

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

**James Craig Stark II**

James "Jim" Craig Stark II, 68, passed away May 22, 2022.

Jim was born Oct. 24, 1953, in Liberal, Kansas to James Craig Stark and Dollie Irene Rexroad Stark.

He was preceded in death by his parents; grandson James Craig Stark III; and brother-in-law Bep Felker.

Jim is survived by his wife Lesa; sons Craig Stark and Mandi Jones, and Trey Jones and fiance' Kari Suby; daughters Brittnee Hooks and spouse Milton, and Alex Mitchell and spouse Steven; grandchildren Kaylee, Wyatt, Austyn, Baydon, Amber, Alana, Claude, Jaden, Taytum, Kaytlynn, and Amilya; brother John Stark and spouse Laura; sisters Peggy Newcomb and spouse Jerry, Paula Felker, Pat Reeves, and Pam Purinton and spouse Chappy; numerous nieces and nephews; and a host of extended family.

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

**Obituary Policy**

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

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

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

Send official obituary notices to:

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

**Geraldine Charles Garrison**

Geraldine Charles Garrison, 75, passed away March 22, 2022.

Geraldine was born May 26, 1947, in Idabel, Okla., to Abraham Charles and Myrtle John Charles.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and sister Louise Parks.

Geraldine is survived by her son Sean Garrison and spouse Teresa; grandchildren Seana Garrison and Gideon Caldwell; great-grandchildren Dacelee Garrison and Pate Caldwell; brother James John and spouse Mary, and Robert John and spouse Edith; sister Bobbie Scott and spouse Donald; along with a host of other family, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Michael Samuel Blanton**

Michael Samuel Blanton, 82, passed away April 6, 2022.

Michael was born March 10, 1940, in Holdenville, Okla., to Guy and Winona (Hibdon) Blanton.

He is survived by his wife Lynn (Houser) Blanton; and daughters Amy Perry and spouse David, and Laurie Blanton.

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

**Wayne Edward Trent**

Wayne Edward Trent, 68, passed away May 21, 2022.

Wayne was born March 30, 1954, in Denison, TX., to Claud Trent and Betty Pool Shaffer.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and daughter Angelita.

Wayne is survived by his wife Eunice; daughter Lonette; sisters Carol Trent-Castrop and Beth Taylor; as well as many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

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

**Velma Catherine Kindig**

Velma Catherine (Billy) Kindig, 84, passed away June 9, 2022.

Velma was born April 27, 1938, in Lane, Okla., to Solomon and Mary Jane (Lewis) Billy.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brother Jeremiah Billy; and sisters Mel Smith and Helen Canon.

Velma is survived by her husband Richard Earl Kindig; daughter Sheila Billy; grandson Griffin Drago; niece Sharon Postoak; and numerous nieces, nephews, and dearly loved friends.

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

**Robert Mose Cooper**

Robert Mose Cooper, 50, passed away June 14, 2022.

Robert was born Oct. 20, 1971, in Talihina, Okla., to Raymond Mose and Lillie Mae (Nowabbi) Cooper.

He was preceded in death by his mother; brother-in-law Jeff Wolfe; and aunt Linda Lou Nowabbi.

Robert is survived by the mother of his children Heather Hicks; children Cylena Cooper, Terence Cooper, Bryan Cooper and spouse Miranda, Robert Triston, and Sadi Cooper; his father; 11 grandchildren; sisters Priscilla Latham and spouse Berry, and Lorena Wolfe; brothers Raymond M. Cooper Jr., and Michael Cooper; along with nieces, nephews, other relatives, and many dear friends.

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





ITI FABVSSA

# A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade, 1960-1970

Iti Fabvssa is currently running a series that covers the span of Oklahoma Choctaw history. By examining each decade since the Choctaw government arrived in our new homelands using Choctaw-created documents, we gain a better understanding of Choctaw ancestors' experiences and how they made decisions that have led us into the present. This month covers the 1960-1970 period when legislation outlining the process for Choctaw termination was developed and passed into U.S. law.

One of the major plans to improve economic conditions in Southeastern Oklahoma was to build and improve infrastructure in the region. This meant building new roads and major projects like hydroelectric dams. Throughout the 1960s, the state of Oklahoma worked with the federal government to construct these dams. Some of these dams are now popular recreation spots like Broken Bow and Sardis. And while these projects created new economic activities by creating jobs in the region, it came at a cost for many Choctaw people. Dams like Pine Creek, Broken Bow and Sardis were constructed on people's allotments and displaced communities that were established when Choctaws arrived in Indian Territory. This pushed people to move elsewhere, whether to larger cities or other nearby Choctaw communities.

The 1960s were also a period of growing awareness about American Indian issues across the United States. Native peoples from numerous tribal nations who moved to urban and suburban areas due to relocation (as discussed in last month's article) would meet and create new Native communities. In these new multi-tribal communities, Native people shared their respective cultures and struggles that their communities experienced with one another. For years, Choctaws were told that assimilation would be best for them to become a part of American society, but they started to see that this was not true. Coupled with the fact that the Trail of Tears and other factors discouraged some people from practicing Choctaw traditions, many customs have slept for years. Interacting with Native people of other Indigenous nations rekindled many Choctaw people's interest in their own culture. Choctaw scholar Michelene Pesantubbee argues that this helped spur Choctaw cultural revitalization – which we are still in the midst of today.

Choctaw people living outside of the reservation also created their own Choctaw communities in cities like Oklahoma City and Dallas. Families and church groups living elsewhere also became more involved in Choctaw politics as they learned about life outside Southeastern Oklahoma and from other Native people's experiences. What often started out as social gatherings of Choctaws quickly became something more as people shared

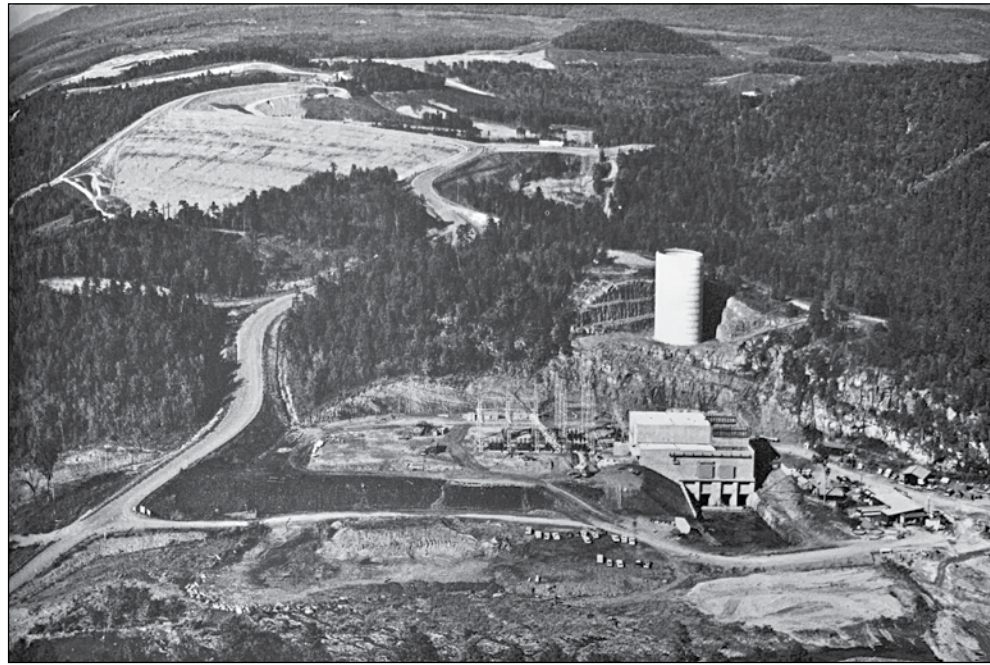


Photo Provided

Aerial view of the construction of Broken Bow dam, which was proposed for economic development in Southeastern Oklahoma, but which also came at a cost for Choctaw communities that were displaced for its construction.

their struggles which were connected to Choctaw issues like per capita payments and allotments. Throughout this period, numerous Choctaw groups were created out of the grassroots community organizing that started in order to enact changes in the Choctaw Nation and for tribal members across the country.

One particularly significant community was the Choctaws living in Oklahoma City. In 1969, after they heard about the approaching 1970 deadline for Choctaw termination, Choctaws quickly began gathering to discuss this issue and its possible negative effects with all the Choctaws they knew – near and far. As mentioned in last month's article and an article by Choctaw anthropologist Valerie Lambert, Chief Belvin advocated for the termination in order to stop the Bureau of Indian Affairs' management of Choctaw affairs and speed up economic development for Choctaws. They argued that the termination of the nation-to-nation relationship between the Choctaw Nation and the U.S. government would negatively affect the lives of many community members.

Despite Belvin's intention to help, we now know that the recognized tribal designation is key. Termination pushed some Oklahoma City Choctaws to travel back to Choctaw treaty territory to inform family and friends about termination and rally against it. Choctaw political activists would speak at community and church events and circulate petitions against termination for Choctaws to sign. They created lists of all the Choctaws across the country and sent mailers informing people of what was happening. These events revealed how Choctaw churches served as community centers that were important

sites of Choctaw political organizing and revitalization.

As more members of the Choctaw community learned about termination, Chief Belvin soon received more and more letters opposing termination and asking why he pushed for it. This led to robust and passionate exchanges back and forth between Belvin and community members. Choctaws also wrote letters of opposition to the Oklahoma congressional delegation pushing for termination, outlining the possible negative effects that termination would have on their lives. They wrote letters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs reminding federal officials of how Choctaws were forced to leave their ancestral homelands, walk the Trail of Tears and how they were supposed to have these new homelands forever. They criticized the federal government for violating the terms of treaties and demanded they stop trying to escape their duties and obligations to Native nations and peoples. These letter-writing campaigns organized by Choctaw communities were critical to the movement against termination.

Termination legislation passed in 1959 had several requirements to be completed before termination was complete. This included establishing a corporation to handle Choctaw affairs and finding the descendants of all Choctaw allottees. In the original schedule of the termination legislation, all of these requirements were supposed to be done by 1962. By 1969, Congress had to pass legislation to extend the deadline for termination three times because all the requirements had not been met. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was responsible for making sure all these conditions were completed, made little headway in accomplishing all

these things. As Choctaws increasingly organized and made their opposition to termination known, the Oklahoma congressional delegation responded accordingly. Following what the Choctaw people actually wanted, Representative Carl Albert worked with Chief Belvin on new legislation that would repeal the termination legislation. This was the legislation that President Nixon signed the day before termination was supposed to take effect.

Although the repeal legislation was signed the day before termination, Choctaws were not in any actual danger of losing their government. Because the criteria for the nation's termination had not been fulfilled, Choctaws' nation-to-nation relationship with the United States would have remained in place – even if the repeal legislation had not been signed by President Nixon before the termination deadline. Nevertheless, the termination opposition movement was critical to Choctaw nationhood today.

Despite the turmoil caused by the termination saga, it was an incredibly important moment in Choctaw history. Termination showed that Choctaws would do whatever was necessary to protect our culture, history and homelands. Pride in being Choctaw shifted from a focus on heritage and a past version of the Choctaw government to pride in being an active member of a living nation that has been maintained by hundreds of generations of Choctaw people. Organizing against termination encouraged Choctaws to become involved in tribal government and reminded tribal leaders of the importance of accountability to their people. Collectively, Choctaws also reminded the federal government of their obligations to Native people. The increased numbers of people involved in the political process helped revive and reinvigorate involvement in Choctaw tribal politics.

This campaign against termination laid the foundation for re-organizing the Choctaw government and for it to reclaim greater authority which had been diminished at the beginning of the century. Next month, we will cover 1970-1980, when the Choctaw government became reinvigorated due to greater community involvement in tribal government and organizing.

Additional reading resources on this period are available on the Choctaw Nation Cultural Service webpage (<https://choctawnationculture.com/choctaw-culture/additional-resources.aspx>).

Follow along with this Iti Fabvssa series in print and online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/biskinik/iti-fabvssa/>.

If you have questions or would like more information on the sources, please contact Megan Baker at [meganb@choctawnation.com](mailto:meganb@choctawnation.com).

## Good grades earn rewards for Choctaw STAR students

**DURANT, Okla. (June 1, 2022)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's (CNO) Success Through Academic Recognition (STAR) Program is again rewarding tribal members for academic excellence. STAR provides Choctaw students, in second through 12th grades, with gift cards at the end of each semester. A report card with straight A's will earn a \$25 gift card, and students with all A's and B's or all B's will receive a \$10 gift card. Perfect attendance can earn an additional \$25 gift card for a student.

The program serves Choctaw students anywhere in the United States, including home-schooled, and those living in foreign nations.

To be eligible for their rewards cards for the 2022 Spring semester, students must have Choctaw Nation tribal membership,



and be able to provide their report cards and attendance records. Applications must be received by the STAR office no later than Sept. 1. Previously, some schools applied on behalf of their Choctaw students, but now only the parents or the students' guardians may submit applications.

It is recommended that applications be made online at [ChahtaAchvffa.com](http://ChahtaAchvffa.com). The STAR office is located in the Choctaw Nation Headquarters, 1802 Chukka Hina, Durant, Okla. To learn more, phone 800-522-6170 or visit the STAR Program.

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[CHOCTAWNATION.COM/STAR-PROGRAM](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/STAR-PROGRAM)

Choctaw Nation STAR Program

## Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

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

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

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

The ConnectHome Program started with a goal of 35% connectivity in the first year, with 379 total units. HACNO now works with has 1002 units. ConnectHome currently has 813 units connected to the internet. That is 81% connectivity with new sites currently under construction. The program currently has 655 children connected to the internet. Out of 1002 units, 511 are connected with fiber. That is 51% connectivity to fiber.

Choctaw Nation  
Housing Authority

Stay Connected  
[CHOCTAWNATION.COM](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM)





# Beat the record breaking heat by practicing heat safety

By Chris Jennings

The beginning of summer for many marks vacations, time off from school and a time to relax at the beach. With record-high heat across many parts of the country, it's important to consider how to stay safe outdoors, especially during extreme heat conditions.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines extreme heat as summertime temperatures that are much hotter and/or humid than average. Because some places get warmer than others, this depends on what's considered average for a particular location at that time of year. Humid and muggy conditions can make it seem hotter than it really is.

An Excessive Heat Warning is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this warning is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 105° or higher for at least two days, and nighttime air temperatures will not drop below 75 degrees. However, these criteria vary across the country, especially for areas not used to extreme heat conditions. If you don't take precautions immediately when conditions are extreme, you may become seriously ill or even die.

While everybody is affected by the heat, the young and elderly need to take extra precautions. "The young and the elderly are more susceptible [to extreme heat]. The young because they don't have as much body surface to disseminate the heat. With the elderly, their body isn't nearly as effective as a young, healthy person. The elderly also have a lot of other underlying medical issues that contribute to how the heat affects them," said Gerrick Johnson with Choctaw Nation EMS.

The CDC says signs of overexposure to excessive heat conditions can begin with heat cramps. If you experience heavy sweating with muscle cramps during intense exercise, you should stop and move to a cool place, drink water or a sports drink and wait for the cramps to go away.

Signs of heat exhaustion are heavy sweating, cold, pale, clammy skin, fast, weak pulse, nausea or vomiting, muscle

cramps, tiredness or weakness, dizziness, headache and fainting. If you or someone around you are experiencing these symptoms, you should move to a cool place, loosen your clothes and put a cool, wet cloth on the body.

"Number one is to get them out of the area and getting someplace cool. You can mist them or pour water on them and if you don't see immediate improvement, make sure you call for help," said Johnson.

Signs of heat stroke are body temperature that's 103°F or higher, hot, red, dry, or damp skin, fast, strong pulse, headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and losing consciousness or passing out. If you see someone with these symptoms, you should call 911 immediately as heat stroke is a medical emergency. After that, move the person to a cooler place and help lower their temperature with a cool cloth.

"It's just like it sounds...it's a type of stroke, and it can be deadly like a stroke can be," said Johnson.

Johnson says you can take steps to prevent getting into these situations. Pre-hydrating, timing your heat exposure for earlier or later in the day and wearing sunscreen with loose-fitting clothes covering more of your body can help with heat exposure.

Sunscreen is a simple first step to preventing problems related to heat. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool down and can make you dehydrated. You can protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher. "If you can wear a hat and sunscreen, it's going to help you from burning," said Johnson.

If you're planning on attending the Labor Day celebration in September, Johnson says the Nation is taking steps to help with heat exposure. Water stations will be set up along with tents and canopies and a misting station for people to cool down.

Even when temperatures haven't reached an excessive or extreme status, it's important not to leave children or pets inside a car. Even if you leave a window open, cars can quickly heat up to dangerous temperatures. While anyone

## BE PREPARED FOR EXTREME HEAT

Extreme heat often results in the highest annual number of deaths among all weather-related disasters.

In most of the U.S., extreme heat is a long period (2 to 3 days) of high heat and humidity with temperatures above 90 degrees.

Greater risk

Can happen anywhere

Humidity increases the feeling of heat as measured by a heat index.

---

IF YOU ARE UNDER AN  
EXTREME HEAT WARNING

Find air conditioning, if possible.

Check on family members and neighbors.

Avoid strenuous activities.

Drink plenty of fluids.

Watch for heat illness.

Watch for heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Wear light clothing.

Never leave people or pets in a closed car.

left in a parked car is at risk, children are especially at risk of getting heat stroke or dying. According to the Department of Meteorology & Climate Science at San Jose State University, 910 children have died in a car due to heat stroke since 1998.

Johnson says it's important to think about heat safety. People who spend more time outside may be more accustomed to the heat, but those who don't need to be careful and cool off before it becomes an issue. "They may push it over the edge, and once you go over the edge, that slope goes downhill pretty fast," said Johnson.

# Sunscreen or sunblock

Which form of sun protection is best for my family?

By Ashton B. Clayborn, D.O

As someone who grew up within the southeast Oklahoma borders of Choctaw Nation, I learned to love nothing more in the summertime than spending hours outside enjoying nature, the lake or competitive summer sports. The heat and humidity were just part of those experiences, and unfortunately, sometimes so were the sunburns.

Now as a physician mother of four, I find myself trying to balance fun and safety, stopping the family prior to our adventures to add sun protection to reduce the damaging effects of the sun and skin cancer risk. Which form of sun protection is best? Here is some information I have found useful.

Scientific studies that were brought to light in 2017 caused concern over common ingredients in chemical sunscreens and their possible effects on the environment and the endocrine system in the body. However, there are various forms of sun protection, a few of which do not have these ingredients present at all.

Sunblock refers to sun protection that has minerals, such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, as its active ingredients. These function as a physical barrier (Think millions of molecule-sized mirrors resting on the skin), reflecting the light rays away from the skin. Chemical sunscreens are those which contain one or more of the following: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate or octinoxate, and work by capturing UV light and converting it to heat, which is then released at the skin's surface instead of allowing the ray's harmful effects within the skin. Chemical sunscreens can be more irritating to those with sensitive and acne-prone skin; however, they are also more sheer and lightweight, thus often easier to apply and wear.

Chemical Sunscreen	Mineral Sunblock
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absorbed into the skin, converts UV rays to heat.</li> <li>• Frequently less expensive.</li> <li>• Is this and ideal for everyday use.</li> <li>• Typically found in easy to apply sprays and cosmetics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sits on top of skin, reflects UVA and UVB rays.</li> <li>• Sometimes more expensive.</li> <li>• Works immediately but prone to wear off easily.</li> <li>• Can be less irritating to sensitive or acne prone skin.</li> </ul>

We frequently use the terms sunblock and sunscreen interchangeably, and the best one for you and your family is the one you will actually wear. Though thicker and more time-consuming to apply, I prefer mineral sunblock when we have time to paint our family of 6 before heading out into the sun.

When we are in a hurry to get everyone to the ballfield or onto the boat, we choose chemical sunscreens available in spray form to quickly cover everyone.

It is recommended that no matter which type of sunblock or sunscreen you choose, it should be at least 30 SPF and applied 30 minutes before sun exposure. You should reapply at least every two hours and immediately after swimming or sweating.

If you have additional questions about sun protection, sun exposure, or would like a skin check, we encourage you to visit us at the Residency Clinic in Talihina. You may make an appointment by calling (918) 567-7000, extension 6024. Please stay safe and enjoy your summer.

*This column was written by a guest contributor from the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority.*

*Dr. Clayborn is the Program Director of the Choctaw Nation Family Medicine Residency Program. Originally from Porum, she now lives in Quinton with her husband and four children and serves Choctaw Nation within the Residency Clinic in Talihina, s teaching family medicine with physicians completing the last part of their training prior to board certification.*

# Watermelon Salsa

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Salsa</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ cup pepper jelly</li> <li>• ¼ cup lime juice</li> <li>• 2 cup watermelon, seeded, diced</li> <li>• 1 can peaches, rinsed, drained, chopped</li> <li>• 1/3 cup basil, fresh, chopped</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¼ cup chives, chopped</li> <li>• 2 cup tomatoes, diced</li> </ul> <p><b>Chips</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 whole-wheat tortillas</li> <li>• 1 tbsp. water</li> <li>• ¼ cup sugar</li> <li>• 2 tbsp. cinnamon</li> </ul> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Preparation

- Salsa**
1. Wisk together pepper jelly and lime juice in a small bowl.
  2. Heat in microwave for 10-15 seconds or until softened.
  3. Stir in watermelon, peaches, basil, chives and tomatoes.

- Chips**
1. Brush tortillas lightly with water.
  2. Combine sugar and cinnamon; Sprinkle over tortillas.
  3. Cut each tortilla into 8 wedges.
  4. Place in a single layer on ungreased baking sheet.
  5. Bake at 400 for 6-8 minutes or until lightly browned.
  6. Cool and serve with salsa.



## SHOULD I BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

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

For more information:  
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Choctaw Nation Health Services

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Choctaw Nation Health Services

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Choctaw Nation Health Services

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

July 2022  
All markets open weekdays, July 1-27  
Closed: July 4.  
Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation  
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

<b>ANTLERS</b>	400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443 <i>Food demos July 6</i>
<b>BROKEN BOW</b>	109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842 <i>Food demos July 12</i>
<b>DURANT</b>	2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773 <i>Food demos July 13</i>
<b>MCALESTER</b>	3244 Afullotta Hina, 918-420-5716 <i>Food demos July 19</i>
<b>POTEAU</b>	100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431 <i>Food demos July 26</i>

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
<b>Antlers</b> 580-298-3161	Every Tuesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Atoka</b> 580-889-5825	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Battiest</b> 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Broken Bow</b> 580-584-2746	Monday - Friday (except 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Durant</b> 580-920-2100 ext 83852	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Heavener</b> 918-974-1820	Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Hugo</b> 580-326-9707	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Idabel</b> 580-286-2600 ext 4113	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>McAlester</b> 918-423-6335	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Poteau</b> 918-647-4585	Mon, Wed & Friday Tuesday & Thursday	8am - 4:30pm 8:30am - 5pm
<b>Smithville</b> 580-244-3289	2nd Thursday of the Month	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Spiro</b> 918-962-3832	Thursday & Friday (3rd, 4th & 5th Wednesdays of the month)	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Stigler</b> 918-967-4211	Monday - Tuesday (the first two Wednesdays)	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Talihina</b> 918-567-7000 ext 6792	Monday - Friday	8:00am - 4:30pm
<b>Wilburton</b> 580-642-7588	Monday and Wednesday	8:30am - 4:00pm
<b>Mobile Van</b> 580-380-5679	Dates & times vary due to weather & travel (Service in Boswell, Coalgate and Clayton)	

Choctaw Nation Health Services

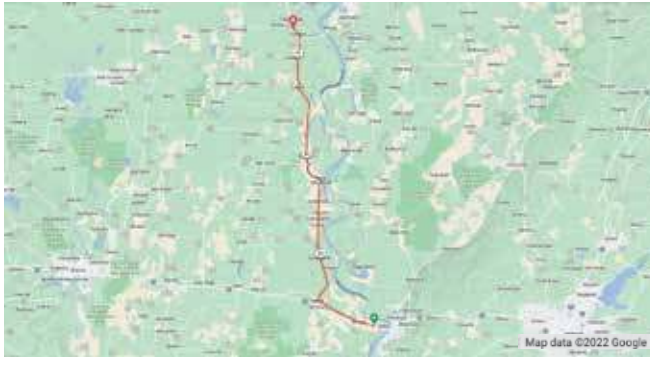




Philadelphia, MS - Clinton, MS

**Day 1:**

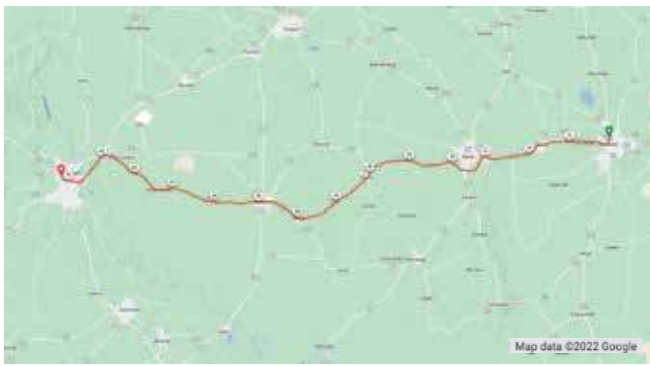
84 miles  
1476 feet  
5h 14m



Delta, LA - Lake Village, AR

**Day 2:**

94 miles  
371 feet  
6h 3m



Monticello, AR - Camden, AR

**Day 3:**

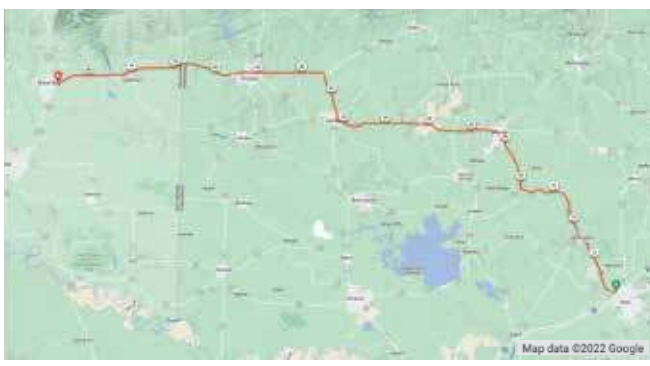
71 miles  
1339 feet  
4h 33m



Camden, AR - Hope, AR

**Day 4:**

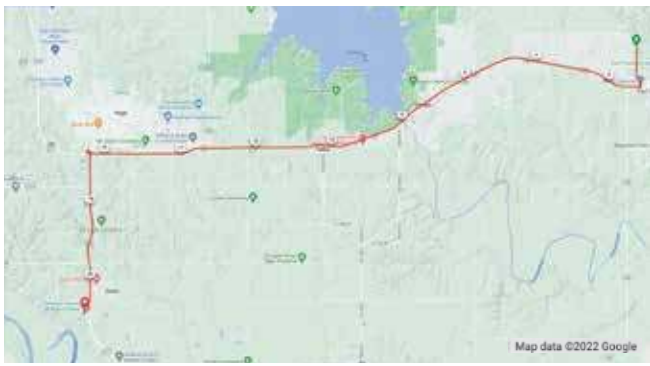
52 miles  
2123 feet  
3h 15m



Hope, AR - Broken Bow, OK

**Day 5:**

84 miles  
3094 feet  
5h 23m



Fort Towson, OK - Grant, OK

**Day 6:**

21 miles  
486 feet  
1h 34m



Grant, OK - Durant, OK

**Day 7:**

61 miles  
1991 feet  
4h 9m

# Trail of Tears bike ride



Photos by Christian Toews



Submitted Photo

7 days, 470 miles, bike riders follow the Trail of Tears to reflect on struggles faced by ancestors

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation's Trail of Tears Bike Team completed their journey from Philadelphia, Mississippi, to Durant, Oklahoma, on May 27, 2022. The seven-day bicycle ride covered about 450 miles.

The ride is an opportunity for these cyclists to travel along the same route Choctaws were forced to take when they were removed from their homeland and relocated.

Beckah Boykin completed the entire ride for the first time this year and said it was a compelling experience.

"It's a reflection but also a progression. Remembering where we came from and who traveled on that route but also remembering that we continued to rebuild and grow," she said. "We are literally walking in the footsteps of those who came before us. It's difficult because it's hot, and it's a mental game, and if you reflect on that's what our ancestors were thinking."

Boykin said the trip also focuses on the culture and history by visiting historic locations.

"At each stop, you're reflecting on what they went through. Overall, it's an immersive experience of what our ancestors went through," Boykin said.

There was a group of 12 cyclists that road the route this year. Boykin said that having a group of people helps motivate you to complete such a physically demanding journey.

She said that supporting each other drew her mind back to her ancestors and how they had to support each other along the original Trail of Tears journey.

"Within that first day, we were already creating that bond of no one is riding by themselves, which is exactly what they would have done. Choctaw people are such a community people that we try to make sure that nobody was going through what they were going through by themselves," said Boykin.

On May 27, a large group of Choctaw Nation employees, family, and friends gathered at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Durant, Oklahoma, to welcome the riders and celebrate their accomplishments. Boykin said that it was a very moving experience to see so many people gather to celebrate the ride.

"To know that you persevered and challenged yourself and learned more about your ancestors' struggle along the way and then to see everyone support that, there's nothing like that. It feels like you won a championship or something," said Boykin.

## ENROLL FOR CHOCTAW LANGUAGE CLASSES

Enrollment open for Choctaw language classes in college, high school, online and community center classes. All classes begin in August.

Visit these pages for individual dates and enrollment information:

Carl Albert State College and Southeastern Oklahoma State University  
[choctawschool.com/classes/college-classes.aspx](http://choctawschool.com/classes/college-classes.aspx)

High School  
[choctawschool.com/classes/high-school-classes.aspx](http://choctawschool.com/classes/high-school-classes.aspx)

Online Classes  
[choctawschool.com/classes/internet-classes.aspx](http://choctawschool.com/classes/internet-classes.aspx)

Community Center  
[choctawschool.com/classes/community-classes.aspx](http://choctawschool.com/classes/community-classes.aspx)

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Choctaw Nation School of Choctaw Language

## COLLEGE CLOTHING ALLOWANCE



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SPRING FUNDING CYCLE: JANUARY 2 - APRIL 1

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Choctaw Nation Education Services



# Explore nature’s wonders by visiting state parks within Choctaw Country

By Christian Toews

Southeastern Oklahoma is a paradise for outdoor adventures. Hiking, kayaking, horseback riding, rock climbing, camping and so much more. One of the best places to enjoy the great outdoors is one of Southeastern Oklahoma’s state parks. Oklahoma has many state parks, but Choctaw Country has some of the most diverse and beautiful in the state. You might be an expert at exploring the outdoors, or perhaps you are looking to plan your first excursion. Either way, these state parks will have something for you to enjoy.

Rylie Mansuetti is the Public Information Officer with Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation. According to annual data, over 93,000 people visited Oklahoma State Parks within the Choctaw Nation’s borders in 2021. Mansuetti said this is due, in part, to the large diversity in terrain across the state of Oklahoma, including the southeastern part of the state. “Oklahoma has one of the most diverse landscapes in the United States,” she said.

Mansuetti commented on the growth in popularity of State Parks since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. “Many people began to look for outdoor activities during the pandemic, and these state parks have something for everyone to enjoy,” she said.

So, what are you waiting for? Let’s look at the state parks in Choctaw Country and plan the perfect trip for you this year.

## Arrowhead State Park

This park sits on Lake Eufala, the largest man-made lake in Oklahoma. Enjoy watersports of all kinds on the lake. Stop by the park marina, where you will find a restaurant, fuel, bait and tackle and a swimming area. There are two hiking trails in the park. The Outlaw Nature Trail is a three-quarter-mile trail recommended for everyone, and the Arrowhead Hiking Trail is a hilly three-mile trail recommended for advanced hikers only. You can learn more about Arrowhead State Park at [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

## Robbers Cave State Park

The name of this park alludes to the fact that outlaws used this area because it is secluded and has natural caves and large rock formations used to hide. It was used by famous outlaws such as Jesse James and Belle Starr. Robbers

Cave State Park is a massive 8,246-acre park with 189 combined lake acres with Lake Carlton, Lake Wayne Wallace and Coon Creek. It’s a favorite park for rock climbers because of the sandstone hills and cliffs. This park boasts many activities, from horseback riding, fishing, camping and more. To find out more about Robbers Cave State Park, you can visit [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

## Talimena State Park

One of the most popular tourist attractions in Oklahoma, Talimena State Park, is the Oklahoma entrance to the Talimena National Scenic Drive. This 54-mile winding highway stretches across one of the highest mountain ranges between the Appalachians and the Rockies. The Talimena Drive is a favorite among motorcyclists and motorists alike. With breathtaking views and vistas, it is a must-see location in Oklahoma. Hiking and backpacking trails throughout the Ouachita National Forest begin at Talimena State Park and offer a wide range of scenic, wooded terrain. The park is an entrance point to the national forest lands and is a popular place for dirt bikes and ATVs. Visit [travelok.com](http://travelok.com) for more information on what this park offers.

## Lake Wister State Park

This park sits on the expansive 7,300 surface acres of Lake Wister. The park offers everything for the outdoor lover, including camping, hiking, biking, boating and water sports. The park is also equipped with a water spray park that is a fun attraction for children and adults alike. This park borders the beautiful Ouachita National Forest and offers stunning views from the lake. There are 15 cabins, RV hookups and tent sites for rent. Lake Wister State Park has everything you need to enjoy a day trip or weekend getaway. Find out more about this park by visiting [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

## Clayton Lake State Park

Located in southeastern Oklahoma’s beautiful Kiamichi Mountains, this park features 500 acres of hiking, boating, fishing and more. With 30 reservable RV sites, 60 tent sites and cabins, you can plan your getaway in whatever fashion you desire. Nearby, you can visit the Ouachita National Forest, Sardis Lake or the Choctaw National Capital Museum. To learn more about Clayton Lake State Park, visit [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

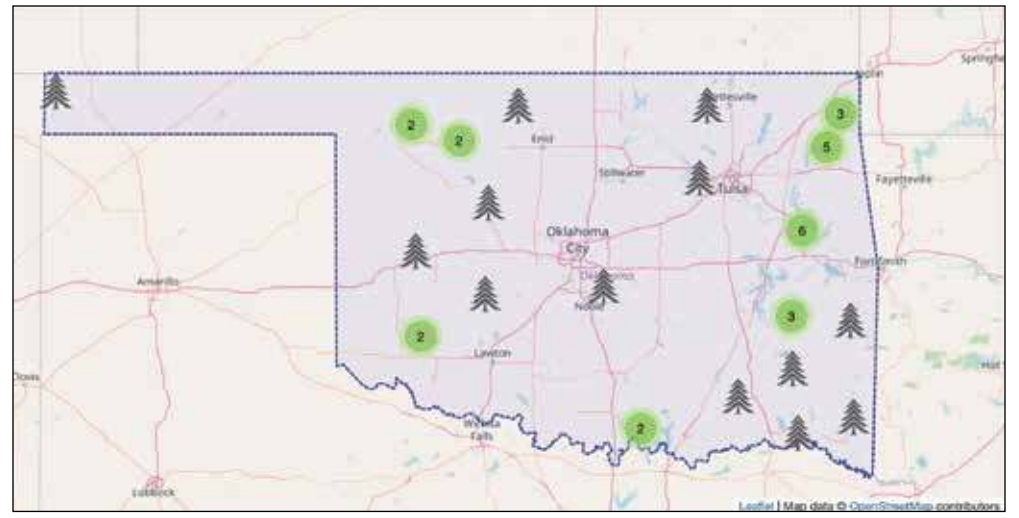


Image Courtesy of Travel Oklahoma

Oklahoma is home to 32 state parks, eight of which are within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation. This summer is the perfect time to explore the natural beauty of Choctaw Country.

## McGee Creek State Park

This park is great for anglers because of the abundance of large and small-mouth bass, channel catfish, perch, crappie and sunfish within McGee Creek Reservoir. With 64 miles of shoreline, this reservoir is an excellent destination for boating and water sports. With hiking and ATV trails nearby, you can scratch your nature itch and enjoy scenic views of the nearby Ouachita Mountain range. A little-known fact, this park is also popular among rock climbers. Several locations in the park offer large rock formations that are perfect for bouldering or rope climbing. Enjoy year-round camping at McGee Creek with all reservations being made online. To find out more, visit [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

## Raymond Gary State Park

On the shores of Lake Raymond Gary near Fort Towson, Oklahoma, this smaller state park has big things to offer. The lake offers fishing, boating and swimming. The park has 10 RV sites with full hookups, nine with water and electric hookups and approximately 100 tent sites with picnic facilities, group pavilions and showers. Six lakefront cabins are also available. Each cabin contains two twin beds, a bathroom, table, heat and air, a mini-refrigerator, microwave and a fireplace. This park has everything you need to break away from city life for a few days. Learn more at [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

## Beavers Bend State Park

Last but certainly not least, Beavers Bend State Park is the most popular in Southeast Oklahoma. With over 64,000 visitors in 2021 and more than 52,000 of those being out-of-state visitors, according to Oklahoma Tourism &

Recreation. There is a reason so many people visit this park, from watersports and swimming in Broken Bow Lake to trout fishing in the Mountain Fork River. If you love to be on the water, this park has you covered. But that’s not all. Visitors to Beavers Bend State Park will enjoy hiking, biking, nature center activities, river float trips, canoeing, horseback riding and much more. If you want to camp, there are over 50 tent sites spread over eight camping areas in this 3,482-acre park. Many people rent cabins in this area as there are almost unlimited cabins spread throughout the park and the surrounding mountainous area. Beavers Bend State Park also offers the 40-room Lakeview Lodge, situated along the shores of Broken Bow Lake.

Choctaw Landing is a new and exciting offering coming to neighboring Hochtaw, Oklahoma. Choctaw Landing was designed to be part of the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape to keep as many native trees and plants intact as possible. The four-story, 200,000 square-foot entertainment destination will feature 100 hotel rooms, 600 slot machines, eight table games, several restaurants and bars, a pool, an outdoor venue with an amphitheater, beer garden and a family-friendly game zone. In addition to the new resort, a 12,000-square-foot mercantile will adjoin Choctaw Landing offering a small grocery store/market, three dining options and a fuel station with 24 pumps. Choctaw Landing will open in late 2023. To find out more about Beavers Bend State Park, you can visit [travelok.com](http://travelok.com).

# Healing organizations founded by Ada woman

By Shelia Kirven

A Chickasaw-Choctaw woman is helping others with emotional and physical healing through two organizations she has founded, the Oklahoma Indigenous Nurses Association and the Regalia Making Relatives Organization.

Frazier is a registered nurse with the Indian Health Service clinic in Wewoka, Oklahoma and is a resident of Ada. She said that during the Covid-19 pandemic, she and another nurse from Cherokee Nation researched to find out if there were any Indigenous nursing associations in Oklahoma and were told there were not. The two nurses decided to start one, Sonya serving as the association’s first president. The association is a chapter of the Oklahoma Nurses Association.

The Regalia Making Relatives is another organization Frazier founded that gifts regalia to others. It was founded in 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic and restarted again in late 2021.

The organization, along

with Johnson O’Malley, recently gifted 14 beaded graduation caps for Byng High School graduates and other high school and college students who reached out and requested beaded caps.

In talking about the organization, Frazier said, “That is an organization I created in honor of my adopted children through foster care. That’s a kinship adoption, and my mother who’s a survivor of boarding school, and my oldest sister who was a forced adoption many years ago when she was four. Because of that historical trauma, our family has some historical issues that we have to learn from and heal from, and through all of that after listening to my daughter, my adopted daughter, and my sister, they talked about their loss of their Indigenous identity. So that’s what I wanted to help with this organization is to help our young people and our elders, basically our community to get reconnected to their spirituality, not necessarily religion, but their spirituality, of their way of our ancestors.”

“We’ve done ribbon skirt

making, ribbon vest making, different activities that we do to inspire our community to get more involved in making regalia. Creating something is a form of healing, and regalia-making is like an honoring. When we honor each other, we help heal each other as well,” Frazier said.

She explained that there is a sacredness to the program that the group educates about. She gives each regalia recipient a letter explaining the unconditional love, prayer and time that goes into the gift.

“We try to explain that it’s like a spiritual ceremony because a long time ago our people used to have coming-of-age ceremonies, recognizing ceremonies, honoring ceremonies and of course through all the historical trauma all of that was removed from our communities,” said Frazier. So, what we’re trying to do is bring that honoring system back to our young people because we want our young people to feel connected to their heritage, to their spirituality and to their community, to know that they are important to us.”



Photo Provided

Sonya Frazier founded two different healing organizations for Native Americans.

Frazier said anyone can contact the regalia making group for information.

“It’s all about spiritual healing because we’re also learning from each other,” she said.

The organization’s monthly classes have thus far been in Ada, Oklahoma, but the group is looking to expand out to other nearby communities. The group is open to all tribes.

Frazier can be contacted by messaging her on the Regalia Making Relatives Public Group page on Facebook or by calling 580-436-7883.

# Elder Appreciation Day

Choctaw Nation’s annual Elder Appreciation Day drew more than a thousand people from across the reservation to the Choctaw Event Center. Choctaw leaders welcomed the tribal elders who competed in singing, traditional fashion and design and games. Those in attendance enjoyed entertainment from cultural dancers and Choctaw princesses performing the Lord’s Prayer in sign language.



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August 4

**AUGUST 8-11**  
Family Night  
August 8

**AUGUST 15-17**  
Family Night  
August 15

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SAVE THE DATE | NOVEMBER 4-6

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NOVEMBER 5-6  
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See Associate for details.





Cole Tony Blake Cargil



Elonzo Marcel Ellison



Jose Yudis Lainez-Ortiz II



Wicaphe To Owaci Mathis



Zoey Allayna Oxendine-Hair



Nellie Diamond Yazzie



Pricilla Antoinette Trejo-Rains

# Adult Education Graduates 2022

The Adult Education Program held its annual graduation ceremony in the Magnolia Ballroom at the Durant Casino-Resort May 13.

This year, a record number of 114 graduates received diplomas.

This nationwide online academy program serves tribal members throughout the United States who

want to obtain their high school diplomas.

Any tribal member interested in obtaining their high school diploma may apply through their Chahta Achvffa portal and click on Adult Education or <https://chahtaachvffa.choctaw-nation.com/>. For more information, please call 800 522-6170.

- James Airington Durant, Okla.
- Katlyn Allen Olivehurst, Calif.
- David Anderson Hurst, Texas
- Shalyn Battiest Talihina, Okla.
- Lilliana Beller Thackerville, Okla.
- Skyler Benefield Pauls Valley, Okla.
- Tessa Blanco Ada, Okla.
- Khrissa Boley Antlers, Okla.
- Tiffany Boston Durant, Okla.
- Cory Bowen Muldrow, Okla.
- Stephen Brinlee Bridgeport, Texas
- Monica Brooks Durant, Okla.
- Colton Brown Broken Bow, Okla.
- Beau Buck Ada, Okla.
- Chasity Bullard Belton, Mo.
- Gabriel Burkhalter Bokchito, Okla.
- Raven Burkhalter Bennington, Okla.
- Morgan Carey Sherman, Texas
- Morgan Carshall McAlester, Okla.
- Isaiah Chambers Galveston, Texas
- Deborah Clipper Broken Bow Okla.
- Cortney Cook Oklahoma City, Okla.
- Angela Coward Wagoner, Okla.
- Stephanie Cox Cameron, Okla.
- Samantha Crompton Lancaster, Calif.
- Shantella Crowe Temple, Okla.
- Amber Davis Fittstown Okla.
- Tiffany Dawson McAlester, Okla.
- Stephanie Delao Bokoshe, Okla.
- Sabrina Dobbs Boynton, Okla.
- Amanda Ellis McAlester, Okla.
- Anthony Ford McAlester, Okla.
- Macy Franks Calera, Okla.
- Megan Garcia Dallas, Texas
- Nicole Gerondale Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- Tausha Going Lenoir, N.C.
- Robin Gonzalez Talihina, Okla.
- Houston Goolsby Oklahoma City, Okla.
- Ashley Griffith Decatur, Texas
- Donna Hacker Lindsay, Okla.
- Jody Hallman Antlers, Okla.
- Thomas Haney Mill Creek, Okla.
- Ahni Harris Round Rock, Texas
- Maloree Hays Stigler, Okla.
- Taylor Heifner Quinton, Okla.
- Deni Hill Doniphan, Mo.
- Aubrey Holliday Durant, Okla.
- Jachin Hooper Albuquerque, N.M.
- Cassidi Huckeye Durant, Okla.
- Christain Hudlow Fayetteville, N.C.
- Michael James Maysville, Okla.
- Tanis James Oklahoma City, Okla.
- Braedon Johnson Arkoma, Okla.
- Shelly Johnson Durant, Okla.
- Danielle Kemp Choctaw, Okla.
- Falicia Knight Wilburton, Okla.
- Kristen LanCaster Denison, Texas

- Blain Leker Rock Springs, Wyo.
- Peyton Linney McAlester, Okla.
- LaTonya Logston Lindsay Okla.
- Monica Lumley Sedan, Kan.
- Parker Martin Fernley, Nev.
- Thorin Martinez Atoka, Okla.
- Dalton Matthews Harrah, Okla.
- Taylor McCarty Calera, Okla.
- Ricky McNamar Anadarko, Okla.
- Harley Moyers Muscatine, Iowa
- Anna Muncey Red Oak, Okla.
- Shyanna Ott Krebs, Okla.
- Richard Owens Ford City, Pa.
- Shane Padilla Heavener, Okla.
- Carmen Paredes Broken Bow, Okla.
- Joshua Payne Shawnee, Okla.
- Damon Pittman Harrah, Okla.
- Stephen Pittman Atoka, Okla.
- Zarah Pruitt Sallisaw, Okla.
- Zoe Raida Stigler, Okla.
- Stormie Reed-Grand McAlester, Okla.
- Bonnie Rice Durant, Okla.
- Mya Robinson Tulsa, Okla.
- Athena Rogers Norman, Okla.
- Hunter Rose Pontotoc Okla.
- Tanner Schlosser Pocola, Okla.
- Michael Scott Heavener, Okla.
- Jesse Sena Owasso, Okla.
- Destin Shriver Lake Mary, Fla.
- Shaela Sigler Wilburton, Okla.
- Skyilar Skinner Ardmore, Okla.
- Ashley Small Broken Arrow, Okla.
- Clinton Smith Tulsa, Okla.
- Erika Smith McAlester, Okla.
- Josephine Smith Moore, Okla.
- Brittany Stickler McAlester, Okla.
- Seth Stodghill-Maytubbie Chandler, Okla.
- Anna Stoeckert Calera, Okla.
- Jerron Stoliby Stratford, Okla.
- Tyler Swanson Ponca City, Okla.
- Davin Tatum Ada, Okla.
- Miranda Taylor Talihina, Okla.
- Kelly Thornburg Wister, Okla.
- Marea Tigit Duncan, Okla.
- Isaac Todd Durant, Okla.
- Carson Toone Calera, Okla.
- Ciara Varela McAlester, Okla.
- Billie Verner Tulsa, Okla.
- Elizabeth Voeks Shawnee, Okla.
- Michelle Welch Herriman, Utah
- Triniti Welch Herriman, Utah
- Taylor Wilde Cameron, Okla.
- Ashley Williams Wilburton, Okla.
- Erica Wilson Durant, Okla.
- Arron Wolf Kingston, Okla.
- Hannah Wood Mead, Okla.
- Amber Zollars Sperry, Okla.

## 2022 Jones Academy Graduates

**Cole Tony Blake Cargil** 18, is the son of Robin Carney of Kellyville, Oklahoma, and the late Phillip Hollingshad. He is also the grandson of Bobby Cargil and Pamela Hardridge. Cole is an enrolled member of the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma. He played on the varsity basketball team at Harts-horne High School and participated in Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. Cole was also a member of the Hartshorne High School Band, where he received superior ratings in his saxophone solos at district and state competitions. Cole's post-secondary plans include attending the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology in the fall. Like his mother, he wants to pursue a career in the nursing field.

**Elonzo Marcel Ellison**, 19, is the son of LeeAnna Hernandez of Oklahoma City. Elonzo is a descendant of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma. He first enrolled at Jones Academy as a sixth-grader in 2016. Elonzo played varsity basketball and was an avid gamer interested in esports. He has registered to attend classes at Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology, where he plans to major in cyber defense. A fun fact about Elonzo is that he wants to be an entrepreneur and a captain of industry.

**Jose Yudis Lainez-Ortiz II**, 18, has been a resident of Jones Academy since the first grade. He is the son of Anita Montejo of Ada, Oklahoma, and the late Jose Yudis Lainez-Ortiz. Jose is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Jose was enrolled in Health Careers Certification classes at the Kiamichi Technology Center and received licensing as a Certified Medical Assistant. Jose was a member of the varsity football team at Hartshorne High School and participated in Family, Career and Community Leaders of

America. Jose also participated in Future Farmers of America and 4-H at Jones Academy. He is enrolling at East Central University to prepare for physical therapy school.

**Wicaphe To Owaci Mathis**, 18, is the son of Rachel Bernie of Lake Andes, South Dakota and Anthony Mathis of Talihina, Oklahoma. He is the grandson of Earlwin and Nancy Bernie, and Linda Watson. Wicaphe is an enrolled member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe and Ihanktonwan Nation. He is also a descendant of the Choctaw tribe through his father. Wicaphe participated on the high school varsity basketball team and the Jones Academy robotics Botball team. He loves the outdoors and is also an esports enthusiast. He has applied at Ihanktonwan Community College in Marty, South Dakota for the fall and is pursuing his studies in pre-med. He aspires to become a dentist.

**Zoey Allayna Oxendine-Hair**, 18, is the daughter of Terry and Chema Wise of Shawnee, Oklahoma. Zoey is a member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. She first came to Jones Academy in August 2014 as a fourth-grader. She was enrolled in HCC classes at the Kiamichi Technology Center at KTC, she was active in Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) and was named to the National Technical Honor Society. Zoey was an active member of the Hartshorne High School Choir. She performed in the High School Band Color Guard and won the praise of her director, who called Zoey "an awesome band member." Zoey participated in the Unity Youth Council at Jones Academy and the Choctaw Nation Youth Advisory Board and Family, Career and Community Leaders of America at the high school. She plans to attend Central Oklahoma College and become an esthetician.

**Pricilla Antoinette Trejo-Rains**, 18, is the daughter of Stephanie Rains and Lucio Trejo of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Priscilla is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She entered Jones Academy as a second-grader. During her years at Jones Academy, she was a member of the school's STEAM Program and the robotics Botball team. Priscilla was an officer on the Unity Youth Council and an American Indian Science and Engineering Society member. She also participated in 4-H and showed hogs. Priscilla was in the Bio-Med Program at the Kiamichi Technology Center in McAlester, Oklahoma, and was active in the Health Occupations Students of America. At Hartshorne High School, Priscilla served as the student council president, performed in the high school band, and was a long-distance runner in track and field. She was an active member of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, CNO RISE, and the CNO Youth Advisory Board. She is enrolled at Oklahoma City Community College in Oklahoma City. She aspires to be an orthodontist and do mission work. Her favorite verse is "With God, all things are possible."

**Nellie Diamond Yazzie**, 18, is the daughter of Lisa Rhodd and Lucas Frazier of Wilburton, Oklahoma. Nellie is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. She has enlisted in the Army National Guard and desires to serve her country in the armed forces. After her ten weeks of basic training in South Carolina, she will proceed to Advanced Individual Training.

*Due to space limitations, the Biskinik does not run submitted high school graduation or GED announcements. Jones Academy is owned and operated by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and the Adult Education is a CNO program; this is why these graduates are featured in the Biskinik.*

### Pate graduates from Haskell

Geoffrey Christian Pate graduated Haskell Indian Nations University with a BS in environmental sciences with honors on May 13, 2022.



### Askew graduates from Mizzou

Braden Askew graduated cum laude from the University of Missouri on May 15, 2022, with a Bachelor of Science in finance.

He is the son of Tom and Sherry Askew of Sand Springs, Oklahoma, grandson of Joe and Gimny Pope, and great-grandson of Sylvia Gibson.

Braden would like to say "yakoke" to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Higher Learning Education Program for their support throughout his college journey!



### Smith graduates from OU

Benton Walker Smith of Flower Mound, Texas, recently graduated from the University of Oklahoma with Academic Special Distinction, earning a Bachelor of Science in computer engineering.

He wishes to thank the Choctaw Nation for their support through scholarships.

Benton will pursue a master's degree in computer science at OU next year.



### McGee graduates from Auburn

Daniel Jerry McGee proudly wore his Choctaw Nation stole as he graduated from Auburn University on May 7, 2022. McGee graduated with a bachelor's in business administration and a minor in human resources management.

According to McGee, he started his academic journey in 2014, but his education was put on a slower pace when he decided to pursue a career as a Chick-fil-A franchise owner.

Flossie Crowder, mother of Bun Wooten McGee, father of Walter Calvin McGee, and father of Jerry Dan McGee would all be as proud as his serving mother Debra Lee Lynn (daughter of Jerry Dan) that Daniel graduated with a business degree and will be the owner of a Chick-fil-A in the not so distant future.



### Wood graduates from Western Colorado

On Saturday, May 7, 2022, William Wood graduated, magna cum laude, from Western Colorado University in Gunnison, Colorado with his Bachelor of Arts in accounting and business administration. He was also awarded the Colorado Society of CPAs Gold Key Award for achieving the highest GPA of the graduating accounting class at Western Colorado University. He would like to express his gratitude to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for the grants and scholarships that helped to support the pursuit of his degrees. William recently began his career as an audit consultant with Stockman Kast Ryan + Co in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



### Williston graduates from Eastern

Diana Rae Williston, daughter of the late Angus and Beatrice Williston, recently graduated with an associate degree in general studies from Eastern Oklahoma State College.

She plans to transfer to East Central University, where she will earn a bachelor's degree in social work starting this fall.

She would like to express gratitude for the inspiration, guidance, and support given by her late parents, family, friends and the Choctaw community.



### Hancock graduates from TU

Matthew Tyler Hancock graduated from the University of Tulsa in May 2022 with a Bachelor of Science in anthropology and a minor in computational science.

Matthew would like to thank the Choctaw Nation for the scholarships he received during his years at TU and is grateful for their support.

He is the son of John and Christine Hancock.



### Buxton graduates from Southern Mississippi

Katelyn Marie Buxton graduated summa cum laude from the University of Southern Mississippi on May 13, 2022, with a bachelor's degree in library and information science.





# Tons of fun at the Choctaw Cultural Center

On June 11, the Choctaw Cultural Center was buzzing with activity, as three separate events were held on the same day, bringing visitors from all over to join in on the fun. You can find more information on the June 11 festivities on page 1 of this issue of the Biskinik.



Photos by Christian Toews



Traditional Choctaw dances are demonstrated for the crowd at the Okla Chahta Gathering.



Kaili Harrison is crowned Miss Okla Chahta.



Photos by Christian Toews  
The Okla Chahta Gathering is an event for all ages. Pictured with Chief Batton are the oldest, Frankie Ervin, and youngest, Isaiah Jaramillo, members in attendance.

# Okla Chahta Annual Gathering

The Okla Chahta Clan of California, Inc. held its 25th Annual Choctaw Gathering in Bakersfield, California on May 7 and 8, 2022. The event allowed California Choctaws to learn more about their culture and fellowship with other tribal members. Chief Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin

Jr., Council Members Thomas Williston, Robert Karr, Tony Ward, Jess Henry and Eddie Bohanon and Choctaw Royalty were all in attendance. Representatives of various Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma programs were there to share information about tribal services and programs.



Chief Batton addresses the crowd at the 25th Annual Okla Chahta Gathering in Bakersfield.



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## July 2022

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#### Page 1:

Choctaw Cultural Center 1-year anniversary.



#### Page 11:

Bike team takes annual Trail of Tears ride.



#### Page 12:

State parks in Choctaw country offer many activities.

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

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