



April 2023 Issue



Scenes from around Cork, Ireland from the 2022 Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship recipient, Aurianna Palmer.

Photos by Aurianna Palmer



Photo Submitted

2020 Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship recipient, Ciara O'Donnell.

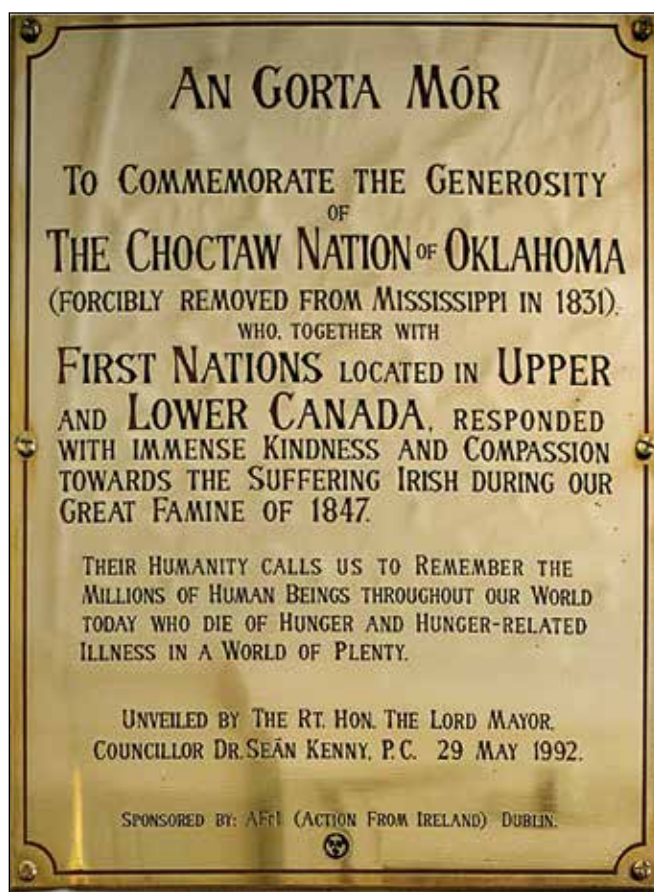


Photo by Deidre K. Elrod

Lord Mayor Brendan Carr shows Chief Batton the plaque that hangs in the Mansion House in honor of the Choctaw Nation's donation during a 2017 trip. An Gorta Mor translates to The Great Famine, referring to the Irish Potato Famine between 1845 and 1852. The \$170 gift would translate to more than \$5000 today. For comparison, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average American family with a median income spent just over \$6000 on food in 2021.

Choctaw-Irish bond continues to strengthen over time

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation and the country of Ireland have a deep connection that goes back hundreds of years—beginning with a donation that changed the course of Irish history to a now thriving partnership that exists today.

Forged through the bond of shared suffering, this seemingly unexpected connection of two people groups continues to change lives.

In 1847, The Choctaws pooled together \$170, which was sent first to the Memphis Irish Relief Committee, then to the General Irish Relief Committee of the City of New York.

The \$170 would be worth around \$5,000 in today's economy.

These funds were a donation in response to the Great Potato Famine that was devastating Ireland.

The generous hearts of the Choctaw people were moved to respond to this great suffering even though they had recently been displaced from their homeland and forced to walk the Trail of Tears.

This one act of generosity grew a thriving relationship over the years, providing opportunities and changing history for many people.

In 2020, 173 years after the original donation, both nations and the rest of the world faced the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Irish people once again honored the generosity they had been shown by giving back to Native American tribes hit the hardest by the pandemic.

Through a GoFundMe campaign, contributors raised nearly eight million dollars to help supply the Navajo Nation and the Hopi Reservation with clean water, food and health supplies.

According to the organizers, hundreds of thousands of those dollars come from Irish donors.

Many contributors cited the Choctaw-Irish connection as the motivation for their donations.

The Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship Programme is one of the most significant ways these nations continue their connection. This scholarship is one of the Chahta Foundation's most prestigious education offerings.

The Republic of Ireland provides tuition and expenses for a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma recipient to study at University College Cork.

"The scholarship program was initiated to provide a big 'Yakoke' (thank you) to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, to recognize the great act of generosity and humanitarianism shown towards the Irish people during the Great Famine. These scholarships help foster greater ties between our two nations, and I look forward to continued growth and cooperation," said Simon Harris, the Government of Ireland's Minister for Higher Education.

This scholarship program has changed the lives of its recipients.

Jessica Militante was the first recipient of this scholarship in 2019. "Being the first recipient of this scholarship was an honor that I still can't believe. With Choctaw and Irish ancestry, I grew up knowing about the connection between my two cultures and the amount of resilience and generosity that is rooted deep in our bones," said Militante. "To be a part of furthering that connection—and have the opportunity to form new ones—was the experience of a lifetime."

Militante wants to emphasize the importance of the scholarship for future recipients.

"The potential impact that this scholarship could have on a Choctaw scholar's life has been proven again and again with each new recipient. As ambassadors of our tribe, we are given the opportunity to share and learn with a nation that has such close ties to our own," said Militante.

According to Militante, she grew professionally and personally in Ireland.

"While there, I was constantly learning about others—and myself—during class and outside of it as I explored every aspect Cork had to offer. This scholarship helped me immensely with my personal and professional development, and it is so important to me that other Choctaw scholars get to experience this immersion into a new and exciting educational environment."

Ciara O'Donnell received the scholarship in 2020.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic afflicting the world, she moved to Ireland and studied remotely.

According to O'Donnell, many things were closed, but she could still experience the culture and enjoy her time in Ireland.

O'Donnell is the daughter of a single mother and said that her family would never have been able to afford for her to get her Master's degree.

"We would not have been able to afford it. I never thought I would be able to get

my Masters. It means so much. It's hard to fully put it into words," she said. "I'm just incredibly thankful for the people of Ireland, to our tribe, just everyone who put in the work because I wouldn't have been able to get my masters without it. While it was limited, I truly enjoyed it."

In 2021 the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship Programme for the first time accepted two recipients for the first time, Claire Green Young and Austin West.

The second scholarship that year was made possible by a matching donation through the Chahta Foundation to allow another student to study in Ireland.

In 2022, Skylee Glass and Aurianna Joines Palmer were announced as scholarship recipients. The second scholarship was again made possible by a matching donation through the Chahta Foundation to allow another student to study in Ireland.

With the acceptance of the 2023 recipients, the Choctaw Ireland Scholarship program will have allowed eight students access to higher education and a life-changing experience since it was founded.

For more information about the Choctaw-Ireland Scholarship and other educational opportunities The Chahta Foundation offers, visit <https://chahtafoundation.com/>.

To make or inquire about tax-deductible gifts, potential donors may contact the foundation at info@chahtafoundation.com or 800-522-6170, ext. 2993.

The bond between The Choctaw Nation and Ireland began with a generous gift, and that gift has continued to give back to both nations for generations.

For more information on the Choctaw-Irish connection, visit <https://www.choctaw-nation.com/about/history/irish-connection/>.

Choctaw-Irish timeline

1831-1833
Choctaws emigrate to the Indian Territory over the "Trail of Tears and Death."

1845
Crops begin failing in Ireland due to the infestation of *Phytophthora infestans*.

1845-1852
Over one million people die of starvation or disease caused by malnutrition; over one million more Irish emigrate to other countries.

1847
Choctaws collect a donation of \$170, over \$5,000 in today's money, to aid the Irish.

1848
A report on the Americans' aid to Ireland notes, "The largest part was contributed by the children of the forest, our red brethren of the Choctaw nation."

1990
Famine Walk
Choctaw leaders visit County Mayo, Ireland and participate in the first annual "Famine Walk," a reenactment of a walk by desperate Irish to their landlord in 1848.

1992
Trail of Tears
Irish visit the Choctaw Nation and participate in a trek from Mississippi to commemorate the original Trail of Tears.

1992
Mansion House
A plaque commemorating the Choctaws' aid is installed in Mansion House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin since 1715.

1995
Presidential Visit
President Mary Robinson visits Choctaw Nation tribal headquarters, thanking the Choctaws for their generosity toward the Irish.

2017
Kindred Spirits
The sculpture, "Kindred Spirits" by Alex Pentek, commemorating the Choctaw aid and continuing friendship, is dedicated in Baillick Park in Midleton, County Cork, Ireland.

2018
Prime Minister
Ireland's prime minister (Taoiseach), Leo Varadkar, visits Choctaw Nation headquarters, saying we have "a sacred bond, which has joined our peoples together for all time."

2019
Choctaw Ireland Scholarship
Choctaw Ireland Scholarship first recipient of the Choctaw Ireland Scholarship begins her studies in Ireland.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

CNO thrives due to sovereignty

Halito,

Recently, I had the honor of speaking at the Tribal Legislative Reception and took the opportunity to talk about the great work and success of the Choctaw Nation. The reception is a meeting where state and tribal leaders throughout Oklahoma meet, get to know each other, and share information for the betterment of the state and tribal nations.

Sometimes, you can take for granted the great work being done at the Nation, and this reception was an opportunity for me to reflect on what we have done and plan to do as we look at the road ahead.

Since 2018, we have built 765 new homes for tribal members. In 2022, we provided 60 lease-to-purchase homes, 231 independent elder units, 376 affordable rental units, 349 storm shelters and 2,120 home repairs for our tribal members. The Choctaw Nation also has an economic impact in the state of Oklahoma, which is \$2.2 billion annually.

We spend \$50 million annually on education and have 5,251 tribal members in college or career techs in Oklahoma. Our Choctaw Nation Development Department awarded \$6.6 million to nearly 6,000 students to help further their education.

The Nation spends \$300 million annually on healthcare and our clinics helped 1,074,672 people and filled 1,558,677 prescriptions in 2022 alone.

These numbers are extraordinary, and we owe all these accomplishments to the fact that we are a self-governed Nation, and we can form our own future. Without sovereignty, the help we currently give to our tribal members would be a fraction due to outside government red tape and strict requirements. We do not have Republicans or Democrats in the Choctaw Nation; we just have people who want to help our tribal members.

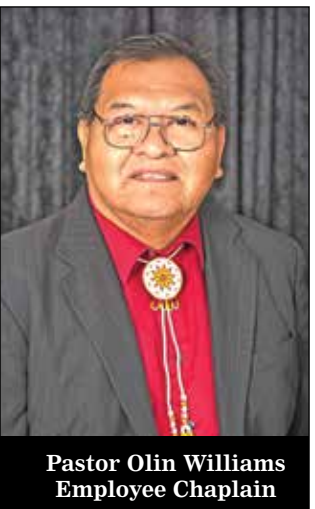
When we have an issue that comes up, we don't have to ask if it's good for this political party or that partisan slant. We just ask if it's good for the people. And if it is, we pass the bill and get it done. I am so thankful for the unity and efficiency we have within the Choctaw Nation.

The McGirt ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court found that our reservation was never disestablished, and we have jurisdiction over our people. We created our own courthouse, and we now have a Choctaw Nation judicial branch. We hold court. We have about 2,000 cases per month that we oversee. Our courts make sure we give people a hand up and rehabilitation if their crime does not require incarceration.

In late 2021 and early 2022, our right to govern ourselves and establish our own laws was highlighted when the Governor of Oklahoma chose not to renew tribal hunting and fishing compacts. As a result, we created our own Hunting and Fishing Department, which ensures our tribal members continue to have the opportunity and right to hunt and fish throughout our reservation thanks to Choctaw sovereignty.

Choctaw sovereignty is the most important aspect of maintaining a strong, resilient Nation where we can control our own destiny and forge our own path to create a place our ancestors dreamed of. While we have a great amount of success to build on, none of this would be possible without our sovereign right to govern, enforce laws, create healthcare and education plans, and move the Choctaw Nation in the right direction – our direction as a sovereign Nation.

Yakoke and God Bless



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Evidence of a Believer

There are many different types of worship and interpretation of the scriptures. However, there is one underlying evidence of a true conversion.

The mind of Christ begins to transform the mind of the believer. The Bible tells us that the natural mind is enmity against God. No matter how sincerely one worships, one in the natural state does not please God.

Romans 8: 7 and 8 read, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

In Luke 8:27, we read, "And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs."

The natural mind has a depraved nature and will go toward sinful activities. In this parable, Jesus commands the unclean spirits to come out of the man.

Then we read in verse 35, "Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid."

His mind had been changed. With our natural minds, we try to solve contemporary problems of addictions. We have mental, physical and spiritual addictions that seem to have a recurring effect on our behavior. We change policies and look to government interventions for solutions. But human behavior continues to show the fruits of a depraved mind.

In Luke 11:24-26, Jesus said, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The evil, unclean spirits tamper with the natural status of man. If he is not messing with the physical, he is messing with the spiritual. If he is not messing with the two, he is in the mental state. We try to clean one area only to find another unclean area.

Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," in John 3:7. You must not believe with just cognitive belief, but you must believe with your whole being.

Matthew 22:37, Jesus said unto them, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

When one believes with his whole being and accepts Jesus as Savior, a process called imputation occurs. The righteousness of Our Lord is transferred upon the believer; and the unrighteousness of the one believing is placed upon the Lord as the sacrifice for the sins of the believer.

2 Corinthians 5: 21 tells us, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The mind of Christ is imputed to the believer, and now he is in his right mind.

1 Corinthians 2:16 states, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that He might instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

With this new and right mind, the believer begins to understand the thoughts of God, and a process called sanctification takes place. In time, the attributes of God begin to be revealed unto the mind of the believer. The behavior now changes in the life of the believer. Although there may be a slight difference in worship and doctrine, this is one element of brotherhood that is the common thread.



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month calls attention to the fact that sexual violence is widespread across the United States and right here in the Choctaw Nation.

Every 73 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted. And every 9 minutes, that victim is a child, according to a recent government study. More than four in five Native Americans and Alaska Native men and women have experienced a form of violence in their lifetime — whether it be physical violence and/or psychological aggression from an intimate partner, sexual violence, or stalking — according to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). In addition, more than 1.5 million Native American and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime per an NIJ-funded study.

The Choctaw Nation recognizes April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month by holding several awareness programs, fellowship opportunities and events to bring awareness and support to victims. Here are a few of the upcoming events to raise awareness in the Choctaw Nation:

12th Annual Ryan's Run

The 12th Annual Ryan's Run to bring awareness against violence against children will be held April 1 in McAlester. The event will start and finish at Jackie Brannon Correction Center at 901 N. West Street in McAlester. Pre-registration fee is \$35 or \$25 for the Fun Run. The day of the event registration fee is \$40 and \$30 for the Fun Run. The event starts at 8:30 a.m. and 8:35 a.m. for the Fun Run. Medals will be awarded to the top three males and females in each 5K age group.

Kick Up Your Heels

Help the Choctaw Nation raise awareness for sexual assaults by joining the Kick Up Your Heels walk Saturday, April 15, at 10 a.m. During the event, men are encouraged to take a stand against sexual violence by taking a lap around the pond in high heels. Registration for the event begins at 9:30 a.m. The walk will start at 10 a.m.

Self-Defense Classes

- April 3, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., Whitefield School Gym
- April 11, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., Southeastern State University Student Union
- April 19, 5:30 p.m., – 7:30 p.m., Boys & Girls Club in Talihina
- April 27, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., First Assembly of God in Broken Bow

Get out and raise awareness for sexual assault awareness and prevention month. Know your surroundings and the signs of violence before it happens to you or someone you know. To identify signs of trauma in children, teens or adults, the U.S. Department of Justice has set up a website to illustrate warning signs of abuse.

Go to <https://www.nsopw.gov/en/SafetyAndEducation/HowToIdentify> to see the early warning signs of abuse and trauma.

I want to say yakoke for supporting the referenced events, educating yourself on this important topic, and helping the Choctaw Nation recognize April as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

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Choctaw Nation Education Services



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The STAR Program application is now available through Chahta Achvffa, the Choctaw Nation's official member portal. Parents and guardians can now apply for rewards for their students in 2nd - 12th grade in the Fall and Spring semesters, providing final semester grades.

NOTE: Individual schools will no longer apply for STAR rewards on the student's behalf.

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UPDATE REQUIRED FOR THOSE WITH SOONERCARE COVERAGE



The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority

is now requiring all Soonercare recipients to update their information to continue coverage.

Contact a Patient Benefit Coordinator

at your local Choctaw Nation Health Clinic to update your information and avoid termination or lapse in coverage.



A love for basketball runs deep in the Choctaw Nation

By Christian Chaney

The game of basketball is deeply embedded in indigenous culture, and its introduction occurred under less-than-ideal circumstances.

Natives were introduced to the game while confined to Indian schools in the 20th century.

The government-operated boarding schools sought to erase the identity of natives and are often remembered as a very traumatizing and dark time in history.

Teaching sports like basketball to the students at these institutions aimed to mold native boys and girls into model pupils and instill discipline in them.

However, this agenda was rejected by native athletes, and they used the sport as an outlet for the injustice they faced.

The sport of basketball was used as an escape, giving natives a taste of freedom.

Basketball spread quickly throughout the boarding schools, and the love for the game brought together Indian athletes.

James Naismith is credited as the sport's inventor and founded the University of Kansas's basketball program.

Neighboring the University of Kansas was Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence.

Naismith would often observe the men's style of play at Haskell, and it is said that his vision of basketball was captured by the fast-paced way the Indian males played.

As the sport continued to gain popularity, several Indian school teams captured high school state championships, spreading pride in native communities and further growing the game.

Indian school alums would return to their reservations to continue playing and teaching the sport. Basketball brought together Natives from different backgrounds and was a place of peace and freedom that was stolen from them.

The game helped several through extreme tribulations and meant so much to so many.

The resilience of Indigenous ancestors and their credit to the game of basketball is something to be remembered and celebrated.

Choctaw Nation associates strive to keep the basketball culture and its significance to the tribe alive.

Kevin Gwin and his wife, Tammye, and District 9 Councilman James Dry started the annual Labor Day War Hoops Tournament around 25 years ago.

Gwin said when watching the softball tournaments, they noticed many kids and adults playing pick-up basketball between games.

"Back then, there was a charge for teams to enter an event at the Labor Day Festival, so we weren't sure if it would be a success or not, but the tournament filled up on Saturday morning the first year, and it was a huge success," said Gwin.

There are currently six age divisions for the tournament: Co-ed minis, 9-11; co-ed tweens, 12-14; Co-ed teens, 15-18; Men's 19 and up; women's 18 and up, and Old Timers, 36 and up.

The tournament brings in around 70-80 teams annually, lasting from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The 2023 Oklahoma Basketball State Tournament occurred during the first two weekends of March.

Tribal member athletes and coaches were part of the competition.

Coach James Kelley and his Riverside girls' team played for the first time in the Class A State Tournament.

Riverside Indian School, the largest off-res-

ervation boarding school in the United States, is located in Anadarko, Oklahoma.

The school's website shows nearly 800 enrolled students representing over 75 Native American tribes.

James has been a coach at Riverside for 19 seasons.

He began his career coaching boys before becoming the girl's head coach.

Seven of his current players have college offers, with two having D1 offers.

In the first game of the State Tournament, Riverside faced #3 Vanoss. Coach Kelley said the team had to get used to the electric environment of playing in the Big House.

The nerves subsided, and Riverside girls won in a thrilling game 43-39.

They faced #2 Caddo in the Semifinals and were eliminated after a 49-45 loss.

Even after a heartbreaking defeat, the team celebrates its accomplishments and plans to return to State next season.

"This season's kids were exceptional. They were like-minded and believed that we could get there. They set the bar high for any other team that follows them. Moving forward next year, I am losing only two seniors. I think we can make it back and make it even further... I think some of the shortfalls we had this season will make them hungry for next season," said Kelley.

Tribal member DJ Dill, an 11th grader from Caddo, Oklahoma, led his team to a State Championship.

Dill and his #1 ranked Caddo Bruins faced #6 Seiling in the semifinals. Dill had 29 points in the 50-40 win, and the Caddo Bruins punched their ticket to the championship.

The Bruins faced #4 Okay in the championship, earning their first state title in school history after a 58-51 win.

Dill led Class A boys in scoring with 58 points and won tournament MVP. Dill currently has one offer to play at the collegiate level.

When asked how it felt to be a state champion, Dill said, "I can't explain how it feels, honestly. We have all been working for that goal since we were really young and when we won it felt amazing. We are truly blessed."

Emily Robinson, another Caddo Bruin, and her teammates are now the Class A State Runner-ups. Robinson is a senior committed to Oral Roberts University.

She has played in the state tournament three times during her high school career.

"This season was so memorable to me because we played together as a team through the ups and downs, and we never gave in. We accomplished a lot by winning every tournament we were in and ending with a silver ball."

According to Robinson, playing in the state championship is unforgettable.

"It's a game I will never forget because I had the opportunity to finish my high school career in the big house on championship Saturday!"

Robinson made her way onto the All-Time scoring list at #18, scoring 2,431 career points. She earned the Girls Class A Top Scorer with 80 points scored during the tournament.

Robinson and Dill both participate on the Oklahoma Choctaws basketball teams.

2023 Tulsa Memorial Senior Seth Pratt and his teammates faced the Del City Eagles in a tough matchup in the 5A state semifinals.

The Eagles knocked the Chargers out of the tournament at the Lloyd Noble Center, beating them 56-35.

The Chargers had an incredible season, with a 22-4 record.



Photo Courtesy of Caddo Public Schools

The small town of Caddo had a big impact on the Class A State Tournament this year. The #1 ranked Bruins won the championship against Okay, Oklahoma, in a 58-51 victory. The Lady Bruins are the 2023 State Runners-up. Both teams had several proud Choctaws on their rosters.



Photo Courtesy of Riverside Indian School

Coach James Kelley and his Riverside girls' basketball team played for the first time in the Class A State Tournament. The team reached the semi-finals, falling to the #2 ranked Caddo Lady Bruins.



Photo Provided

The Justice Warriors 7th & 8th-grade boys basketball team recently won the state tournament in their division. The team is made up of boys from the Choctaw, Kiowa and Apache tribes.

Pratt was named All 5-A State Tournament with a 19.4 ppg average, and he is committed to Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

On January 30, he scored the 1,000th point of his career and is the new record holder for most career three points made in Tulsa Memorial's school history.

"[This was] One of my best and funniest seasons in my high school career. Overall, I am very happy with the way this season turned out, even though we didn't come out with the gold ball," said Pratt.

The future of basketball is promising for the Justice Warriors.

They defeated the Kenwood Indians to become the ORES Boys Division IV State Championship.

The 7th and 8th-grade boys' team is led by Coach Byron Lyon, affiliated with the Choctaw, Kiowa and Apache tribes.

The team comprises all native students from Choctaw, Creek and Seminole nations. This win was the first State Championship for the school since 2012.

Basketball is still widely played by Native Americans from diverse regions and tribes.

Once used as an escape from injustice and inequality, the game is now played as a hobby or potential college or career path.

The sport continues to bring together families, friends and those from all walks of life. Recognizing and understanding our ancestors' contribution to the game makes it even more sacred to Native American culture.



Photo Provided

Seth Pratt, a 6'3" guard for Tulsa Memorial High School, scored the 1,000th point of his career in January 2023 and is the new record holder for most career three points made in Tulsa Memorial's school history.



Photo by Chris Jennings

The War-Hoops Tournament is a 25-year Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival tradition. The event has six divisions, from Co-ed Minis to Old Timers, and annually brings around 70 to 80 teams to the courts.

Editor's note: The individuals mentioned in this story are just a few of the many Choctaws who appeared in the State Tournament this year. The Biskinik would like to congratulate each Choctaw player who worked hard this season to help their team make it to State.

CNO tribal member is one of the youngest head strength coaches in NCAA

By Christian Toews

Jaylon Watson was named Director of Sports Performance at Jackson State University (JSU) in Jackson, Mississippi, in February 2023.

At 26 years old, Watson is one of the youngest head strength coaches in the NCAA. Watson spent the 2022 season at Texas Tech, where the Raiders won eight games and finished the season with a win against Ole Miss at the TaxAct Texas Bowl.

Watson is a Choctaw Nation tribal member who grew up in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. He said he found sports at a young age and quickly excelled in baseball and football.

In high school, baseball took a back seat to football. Watson said he had several D1 offers to play football in college and chose to play at the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

While attending and playing football, Watson said he fell in love with D1 sports. Watson played linebacker, defensive end and fullback. He was a four-year letter winner and a dean's honor roll member. He was a 2016 Mountain West Championship team member and played in three bowl games, including wins in the Idaho Potato Bowl and Arizona Bowl.

Watson began his coaching career as an intern at his alma mater Wyoming,

assisting with all aspects of the strength and conditioning program.

According to Watson, his upbringing shaped his perspective largely due to his Choctaw heritage.

His grandmother was Choctaw, and growing up around this culture was a formative experience.

"The Choctaw culture modeled good character, hard work, working for what you have, and doing your best with what you have," he said.

According to Watson, his parents modeled this work ethic to him. They both worked hard to provide for the family.

"Seeing my parents work two jobs when I was younger, They are really hard-working people. I don't know how they made it work, but they did. My mom is a very hard-working woman. She got that from her Choctaw grandmother," Watson said.

Watson said he saw how culture could influence outcomes from his upbringing, which led him to succeed and create the best culture possible as a coach.

"Culture can drive a team through the roof or plummet a team to death," said Watson.

He said he encourages everyone to learn more about the Choctaw culture that shaped much of his perspective on life.

"A lot of these kids don't understand that it's easy



Photos Provided

Jaylon Watson spent 2022 as the head strength coach for the Texas Tech Raiders football team.

to take that (the Choctaw culture) for granted. I regret not taking more Choctaw classes. A lot of people don't understand that it's almost a lost language," said Watson.

He encourages anyone with a dream to work hard toward that goal.

"Keep fighting - keep staying interested in it. Once you stop learning, you become a bad coach or bad player. The more you can soak in and take up. Just stay hungry. Learn about anything you can," he said.

Watson graduated with a Sciences in American Studies degree from Wyoming and is pursuing a Master's degree.

He has certifications with The National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS), USA Weightlifting



Watson enjoys his job, helping young athletes grow to reach their full potential.

(USAW) Level 1 Sports Performance Coach (US-AW-SPL1) and American Heart Association CPR/AED.

Watson said he hopes to continue his favorite aspect of his career, "helping young men reach their full potential and become athletes."

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CONTACT

TASHA MITCHELL
 CALL 580.642.6092 OR EMAIL TMITCHELL@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

KAREN LYONS
 CALL 580.642.8759 OR EMAIL KLYONS@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services



Eddie Bohanan

District 3

Halito,

District 3 is certainly ready to welcome spring and the warmer weather that will soon follow. As I travel between Talihina and Smithville, I see the flowers beginning to bloom, the green in the grass, the new growth on the trees, and it reminds me of how blessed we are to live within the Choctaw Nation.

The foliage is not the only new growth taking place in District 3. The construction on the 3 Rivers Meat Processing Plant in Smithville has begun. The region's economic impact and the approximate 15 available jobs is exciting new growth. The tentative opening that we all look forward to will be in September.

In Talihina, there is much excitement around the growing numbers of participants attending and participating in a new venture taking place at the Senior center.

A "Choctaw Social" is hosted on the first Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. This event aims to promote the learning and use of the Choctaw language in our daily lives. This Social has been attended by first-language speakers from the Smithville area, other surrounding districts and many speakers/instructors from the CNO Language Department located in Durant. It is very encouraging to see how many of our tribal members are interested in preserving the Choctaw language by learning from our first language speakers. We hope the Choctaw Social will continue to grow. Come join us. Everyone is welcome. For more information, contact Raymond Johnson at 918-658-8885.

In an effort to raise funds and to have the chance to use the Choctaw language themselves, the Smithville and Talihina Senior Citizens have joined forces to make and sell a CD of 20 Choctaw Hymns. More information on availability for this CD will be forthcoming.

I had the opportunity to attend the McCurtain County and LeFlore County Premium Livestock Sales. Watching the boys and girls of FFA and 4-H show their skills and display their hard work while showing their animals makes me proud to know that we have so many young Tribal members involved. Choctaw Nation understands and supports these young members as they learn discipline, patience, and responsibility while caring for their animals.

Exciting happenings are coming to Choctaw Nation—everything from building resorts and apartments to opening plants and having Easter Egg hunts. Be sure to join us for Chief Batton's Easter Celebration April 08, 10:30 a.m. at the Tvshka Homma Capital Grounds. Hope to see you there!

Remember to check your Tribal Membership ID expiration. For questions regarding your Tribal Membership ID card, please contact the Tribal Membership Department at 580-634-0654. Yakoke.

Morris is March Choctaw Veteran of the Month

Dale Morris, Fort Smith, Arkansas, is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month.

Morris was born Dec. 12, 1951, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, attended public schools there and graduated from Southside High School in 1969. He joined the U.S. Army in June of that same year. Pvt. Morris was given orders to Fort Polk, Louisiana, for basic training and then went to Fort Lee, Virginia, for advanced infantry training. He attended military occupation specialty training to become a supply specialist.

He volunteered to go to airborne school in Fort Benning, Georgia, and received orders to the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, spending six months before deployment as a volunteer to Vietnam, and nine months in theatre. He was given orders on his way back from Vietnam to spend another nine months in Germany before being given PCS orders to Fort Dix, New Jersey. He was released from active duty March 1972.

Spec. Morris joined the Reserves and was assigned to the 95th training division in Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he spent two years. Sgt. Morris transferred to HHD 2nd Battalion, 12th Special Forces in Tulsa, Oklahoma, from 1974-1986. He returned to active duty and

spent four years with the unit until 1990. In Jan. 1991, he went to the 187th Infantry Brigade in Fort Devens, Massachusetts, with numerous assignments, doing border operations in Texas and operations in Iceland. He went to Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Chaffey, Arkansas, in 1993 for training operations. He was assigned PCS to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, with two assignments. In 1995, Master Sgt. Morris was assigned to the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade and traveled to Germany and Bosnia for a three-month operation.

July 1999 through 2002, Sgt. Major Morris was assigned to the Pentagon as a Logistics NCO for the office of the Chief Army Reserve logistics division. He was then given PCS to Mountain View, California's 351st civil affairs command. In 2008, Sgt. Major Morris was given orders to the 420th engineer brigade in Bryan, Texas. He then retired from the U.S. Army.

Since retirement, Morris has worked for the U.S. Census Bureau and raised cows. He recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary with his wife, Judy. They have one son, Dale Jr., and two daughters, Diedre Holmes and Jennifer Slade. He also enjoys spending time with family and friends.



Tony Ward

District 2

Halito, Chim Achukma from District 2.

Spring is in the air! I hope you all enjoyed the winter we had. It has been a strange winter, with tornadoes, below-freezing temperatures and a whole lot of rain. We do not know what the spring weather may bring, so please pay close attention to the forecast, especially during severe weather. The Choctaw Nation has an Emergency Management hotline number that you can call if there is any damage or destruction to you or your home caused by the weather. That number is 844-709-6301.

On March 7, we broke ground on the upcoming Timber View Apartments in Broken Bow. This apartment complex will have 120 units of 1 to 2 bedrooms. Pre-leasing will be reserved for Tribal Members and Choctaw employees. We are continuing to build LEAP and Affordable Rentals homes west of Broken Bow. Those homes should be completed in the summer.

We also have a few other construction projects going on in District 2. Choctaw Landing in Hochatown is on a fast pace and looks to be completed in early 2024. It is an exciting time for our gaming and hospitality departments to be a part of the growing tourism in Hochatown. Choctaw Landing should produce around four hundred jobs and boost the economy in the area.

We are excited to expand the Ruby Choate Clinic in Broken Bow. This expansion will add additional exam rooms, labs and return our pharmacy. Patients would visit the clinic and then would have to drive to Idabel to receive their medications. After the expansion, they will be able to do all of it at one location.

On February 11, Gunner Pope was awarded the Eagle Scout award in a small ceremony held at the First United Methodist Church in Broken Bow. Chief Gary Batton and I were honored to be in attendance to witness Mr. Pope receive his award. Mr. Pope completed all the requirements for an Eagle Scout at the age of fourteen. Congratulations Gunner!!

Do not forget to register for the summer camps and summer youth work. Those applications are available on the Chahta Achvffa portal, and you can do so now. The Lawn Service applications are available. The Easter Celebration is April 8 at 10:30 a.m. Again, these are some exciting times for District 2, and there are a few other projects happening to improve our services for you all. Be safe and may God bless you!

Yakoke

Jonathan Anthony (Tony) Ward, District 2



Jess Henry

District 4

Halito from District 4!

I just want to say a warm springtime hello and wish you a happy Easter. I hope, as we celebrate the miracle of Easter, yours is happy and blessed.

The first quarter of 2023 has been busy! At the January Tribal Council meeting, we recognized Mary Kelly as a Choctaw Language Speaker. Many of her family members and friends were present to honor her. Mary is a member of the Poteau Seniors and the beading and sewing group. Mary is always the first one to volunteer. Robert "Bob" McCaslin was also recognized as the Veteran of the Month. Bob served in the US Navy. I know all of District 4 joins me in saying Yakoke for your service to our great nation.

Tribal Council spent the day at the Capitol in February, working with the legislature on issues pertaining to the Choctaw Nation. I am always interested in working together for the betterment of the Choctaw Nation.

Poteau Senior News: The seniors have an Indian Taco Sale on the first Friday of the month. It is from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (or until sold out). Yakoke to everyone who has come out to support them. They took a trip in March to Reba's. They enjoyed great food, fellowship, and a little shopping.

Yakoke to the Choctaw Nation Child Development Center in Poteau for inviting me to participate in the Read Across America Event. I enjoyed the opportunity to participate and see things through the children's eyes. The staff does an excellent job teaching and caring for our children.

Congratulations to all the youth who participated in the LeFlore County Premium Sale. To see their dedication and hard work pay off was amazing to watch. The Choctaw Nation invested in the community and our future by supporting the FFA members. It was my pleasure to be a part of the sale.

I hope you will join us in Spiro on May 12 at 10:00 a.m. for the ribbon cutting of 10 Affordable Rental Houses. I am excited to watch the families move into their homes.

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

Yakoke, Jess Henry.



Councilmember Henry reads to little ones during the Read Across America Event.



In January 2023, Robert "Bob" McCaslin was recognized as the Veteran of the Month. Mary Kelly was honored as the First Language Speaker of The month and was featured in the February issue of the Biskinik.



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma District 4 Councilmember Jess Henry congratulates all the youth who participated in the LeFlore County Premium Sale.

OKLA CHAHTA CLAN OF CALIFORNIA

25TH ANNUAL GATHERING

MAY 6 & 7, 2023

Ming Lake (Pyles Boys Camp)
13375 Lake Ming Road Bakersfield, CA

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- Storytelling
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- Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Jack Austin, Jr., Tribal Council and Tribal Membership Staff
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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

NOTES

COVID-19 Care Kit

COVID-19 care kits are available to all tribal members with a Chahta Achvffa account. These can be useful to prevent severe illnesses from diseases that spread quickly through the winter months. Care kits are available for all family members, and orders can only be placed through the Chahta Achvffa portal. One care kit can be ordered per tribal member. Order your COVID-19 Kit today by visiting <https://chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com/>.



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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

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.
Assistant Chief

The Official
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of the

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

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

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

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

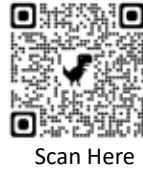
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CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

April 10, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session February 11, 2023
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #6 - Dale Morris
 - b. First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #6 - Wayne Scott, Sr.
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None - Virtual Meeting only
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve a Service Line Agreement in Favor of the Public Service Company of Oklahoma, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma
 - b. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets - Vehicles
 - c. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets - Vehicles
 - d. Approve Application for the US Department of Health and Human Services FY23 Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Grant
 - e. Approve Application for the FY23 National Park Service Tribal Heritage Grant
 - f. Disclaim all Rights, Title, and Interest in Specific Property Located in Pushmataha County
 - g. Approve a Water Line Easement (Parcel 5A) in Favor of McCurtain County Rural Water District #5, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in McCurtain County, Oklahoma
 - h. Approve a Water Line Easement (Parcel 4A) in Favor of McCurtain County Rural Water District #5, on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in McCurtain County, Oklahoma
 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All council bills passed unanimously.

EVENTS

A "FREE" Cultural Celebration Showcasing Native American Visual & Performance Artists!

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ART EXHIBITS, DISPLAYS
NATIVE COMMUNITY BOOTHS
TRADITIONAL & CONTEMPORARY
NATIVE FOODS
RAFFLE TICKET DRAWING (EST. 5PM)
"FREE" ADMISSION

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Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

April 4	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 5	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April 11	Idabel	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 12	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 14	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
April 14	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
April 18	Wright City	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
April 19	Stigler	By Appointment
April 19	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 21	Crowder	By Appointment
April 25	Broken Bow	10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
April 26	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
April 28	Atoka	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
April 28	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an Appointment

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:
Crowder Community Center
April 14, 2023
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.



Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna April Language Lesson

Foka; Fokali

foka; adj. at around (time, place, or degree)

fokali; v., at around (a time or degree of measurement)

Kvfi tuchina foka ho ishko li moma.	I still drink about 3 cups of coffee.
Tvbokoli fokak ma impvt ia la chj	I'm going to eat about noon.
Isht boli ya aiimpa biljka mak foka ho bohli li tuk.	I placed the hammer (around) near the table.
Illimpa yvt lawa kvf pak foka chj ka akahno tuk.	I didn't think there would be this much food.
Hopaki mak foka chj ka ak ikhano tuk.	I didn't know it was going to be that far.
Toffvpi fokalikma hatofalaha nukshopa yvt waya chj.	The wild onions will ripen (be ready) around Spring.
Ninak iklvna fokali ho nusi li beka tuk.	I usually go to sleep around midnight.
Iskvli ya fokali katohmi ho hvsh ikbi tuk?	About how much money did you all make?
A kvfi ya iklvna fokali ho ishko li tuk.	I drank about half of my coffee.
Hvsh ia chj fokalikma iskvli hvchi ima la chike.	I will give you all the money about the time you all are leaving.

www.choctawschool.com

Wesley turns 60

Theresa Wesley of Aurora, Colorado, will celebrate her 60th birthday on May 7. Theresa is the granddaughter of Wallace Wesley and Willie Mae Guire and is proud to be a Choctaw tribal member.



Senter Turns 50

Patrick Benjamin "Ben" Senter celebrated his 50th birthday on March 11.

A native of Lubbock, Texas, Ben is a Coronado High School and Wayland Baptist University graduate. He has been working in mental health counseling for the past 25 years.

Ben is a proud fourth-generation Choctaw. He is the son of Joanne Hartsfield, grandson of Gene and Flo Wilson and great-grandson of Noel and Starlie Wilson.



Mommer, 4-time National Champion, graduates from Grand View University

Tommy Mommer, a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal member, is a three-time All-American and four-time National Team Champion in men's wrestling.

Mommer will graduate in April 2023 from Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa, with a Bachelor of Science in Business Management.



Sweeden receives Excellence Award from the NISOD

Sean Sweeden, United States Marine Corps, a tribal member originally from McAlester, Oklahoma, was recently recognized by Collin College as a 2023 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development Excellence Award (NISOD) recipient.

The NISOD Excellence Awards have a 30+ year history of recognizing and honoring extraordinary faculty, administrators and staff whose service to their students, colleagues and community deserves special recognition. Out of 35 nominations received this year, Sweeden rose to the top as one of 12 overall winners at the college.

Held during NISOD's annual conference, Excellence Awards recipients are recognized and honored during the Excellence Awards Dinner on May 28, 2023, in Austin, Texas.

"This award really speaks to the collaboration of the team and leadership that I work with at Collin College Technical Campus and organizations like The Choctaw Nation, among others," said Sweeden. "I see this as recognition of what we all do together as a team. I cannot do what I do daily without a fantastic network of subject matter experts."

Sweeden's career at Collin College began in February 2018 as a veteran resource specialist. In 2020, he started his role as a Program Coach (Workforce) at Collin College Technical Campus in Allen, Texas.

Sweeden's present duties include developing community outreach, cultivating community-based organization partnerships, student recruitment activities, providing career counseling, maintaining up-to-date labor market information data while assisting in career placement and providing tracking student success in workforce programs.

Sweeden graduated from Savanna High School in Savanna, Oklahoma. Sweeden earned his associate degree in correctional counseling from Eastern Oklahoma State College in 1992 and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice administration from East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma, in 2003.

Sweeden actively volunteers with The Marine Corps League, Jacob D Hayes-Collin County Marine Corps League Detachment #1426, The Marine for Life Mentoring Network and with The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR/DOD). He continuously seeks opportunities to be involved in the community and support Native American families, veterans and milspouses in whatever capacity he can most effectively and contribute.



OSU-CHS professor appointed to two national health committees

STILLWATER, Okla. -Valarie Blue Bird Jernigan, professor of Rural Health and director of the Center for Indigenous Health Research and Policy at OSU Center for Health Sciences, has been appointed to two prestigious national advisory committees—one determining the country's dietary guidelines and the other looking at how health care disparities have changed in the last 20 years.

Jernigan, who is a member of the Choctaw Nation and has a doctorate in public health, will serve on a committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine examining the current state of racial and ethnic health care disparities in the U.S.

The committee will work to update the Unequal Treatment Report and examine how health care has changed since the report was first published in 2003.

"It was a huge report and a landmark study. Scientists and health professionals looked at equity in health care in the U.S.," said Jernigan, who remembers reading the report when she was studying public health. "It seems obvious to us now, but at the time the public didn't know people of color would go into their provider and be faced with bias that impacted their care. Doctors, providers, nurses, even front desk workers have unconscious bias."

Jernigan said the report impacted medical and health care curriculum across the country and launched training programs on diversity and bias in health care.

"It was quite a change in how we were learning," she said, and now

she will be part of the committee that will examine the current racial and ethnic disparities in health care to see if those changes in curriculum, training and practice have had an impact.

Jernigan was one of more than 200 people nominated for the committee, which was narrowed down to 18 members.

"I was quite excited by this nomination. My task is looking at how we've done in the last 20 years. Have we changed, have we improved," she said. "I'm a person who works and lives where those disparities are happening. We need more equity in rural and tribal health where disparities are most significant."

Jernigan will also serve on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dietary Guidelines for Americans Advisory Committee.

She is the first indigenous person to serve on the DGA committee, which reviews current nutrition science and develops an independent report with science-based advice for the USDA and HHA to consider. The report, along with public comments and agency input, will be used to develop the next set of dietary guidelines for the United States.

"I do a lot of work and research in the field of indigenous food systems and nutrition programs. Indigenous food systems have not been represented on this committee until now," she said. "In the past, some cultural viewpoints and backgrounds have been left out when developing these guidelines. This time around, a real effort was made to get people from a number of diverse backgrounds and



cultures to serve on the committee."

In addition to physicians, dietitians and nutritionists, the new 20-person DGA committee also has public health officials and social scientists serving on it.

"Diet is very confusing. Each week we hear something different about food and nutrition. We're going to study these diets and try to come up with answers," Jernigan said. "We have to look at what is actually happening in the food system and is it right. We've come a long way, but we still have a lot to do to understand Americans' diet and health."

For more information or if you would like to arrange an interview, please contact Sara Plummer at sara.plummer@okstate.edu or call 918-637-8971.

Baggett earns master's degree

This past December, Aubrey Baggett, MSN, RN, CPN, graduated with a Master of Science in Nursing with a health care leadership focus. Baggett is thankful for the ongoing support from the Choctaw Nation during her educational pursuit.

"This degree opens opportunities to follow my passion in supporting nurses and health care professionals. Thank you Choctaw Nation Higher Education Department, for answering all my questions along the way and for assisting me in finding scholarships to support my educational journey," said Baggett. "I am so proud to be a member of Choctaw Nation and thankful for all the opportunities that have become available to me through the tribe."



Perkins wins state archery competition

Kyler Perkins, a Choctaw tribal member, won the OKNASP state archery competition in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on February 23. Perkins is a fifth grader at Zaneis in Wilson, Oklahoma. He competed against 285 participants in his division. He scored 282 out of 300 possible points and had the highest elementary score in all four state competitions.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife and the National Archery in the Schools Program sponsor the state competition.

He qualified to participate in the national archery competition in Sandy, Utah, held in April.



Dean signs letter of intent with SE

Carson Dean, a Choctaw tribal member, signed her letter of intent to continue her education and athletic career (basketball) with Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Carson is a graduate of Latta High School in Latta, Oklahoma. She was on the Oklahoma Secondary Sports Athletic Association Coaches All-State Team out of high school, along with the Oklahoma Indian All-State Team and Oklahoma Girls Basketball Association All-State. While in high school, Carson attended the Choctaw Nation Futures of Basketball Showcase and competed on the Tribe's Oklahoma Choctaws basketball team.

She is currently a two-year starter at Cowley College in Arkansas, Kansas.

Carson has a 4.0 GPA and is seeking a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She will pursue a physician assistant degree after graduating from Southeastern.



Bush turns 21

Mark M. Bush, son of Mark and Jennifer (Garcia) Bush of Long Beach, Mississippi, is turning 21 years old.

Mark played football for four years in high school and attended submarine training in Connecticut. Mark thanks the Choctaw Nation for its support during his high school years.

He is proud of his Choctaw heritage. His great-grandmother, FB, Ethel M. Vann, attended Wheelock Academy in Millerton and later Haskell in Lawrence, Kansas. His great-great-great grandfather, Mitchell Bobb, an original enrollee from Fort Towson, Choctaw Nation, Territory, was one of the WWI Choctaw Code Talkers.

In November 2013, his grandmother, Anella Garcia of Kansas City, Missouri, received the silver medal in Bobb's honor at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. Happy Birthday, Mark!



COLLEGE FYI INVITES YOU TO CAMP CHAHTA

The camp is designed to orient first-year students to college life and create a close-knit community of Choctaw students.

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

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

CAROLE AYERS EXHIBIT

APRIL 11 - OCTOBER 14

KEEPING OUR HERITAGE: CHOCTAW PEOPLE, LIFE, AND ANIMAL KINSHIP

This exhibit will display many of District Nine elder and Choctaw artist Carole Ayers' watercolor paintings which highlight Choctaw heritage and celebrate our culture in its diverse forms.

Pope earns his Eagle Scout ranking

Gunner Pope of Broken Bow, Oklahoma, recently earned the honor of Eagle Scout.

Eagle Scout is the highest rank the Boy Scouts of America offers. Statistically, only 5% to 6% of Scouts earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

Pope, a member of the Broken Bow Boy Scout Troop 6338, was honored for his accomplishment during a ceremony on February 11.



Ferrises celebrate 25th anniversary

John and Laura Ferris marked 25 years of marriage on March 14.

They were married at Lakeside Baptist Church in Dallas and now live in Austin, Texas. They have two boys and love to travel. The couple will commemorate their anniversary with a trip to the US Virgin Islands.



Easily graduates from OU, currently pursuing master's

Caitlyn (Carl) Easily graduated from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (OUHSC) in May of 2022 with a Bachelor of Science in Communication Sciences and Disorders.

During her time at OUHSC, Caitlyn held positions in the College of Allied Health Student Association and was the President of the OUHSC National Student Speech Language Hearing Association chapter.

Caitlyn is now again attending the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Speech-Language Pathology. She works as a graduate research assistant in the OU Child and Family Stuttering Lab. Her future plans include working as an SLP for pediatric patients.

She would like to thank the Choctaw Nation's Higher Education and Career Development programs for the assistance she has had and continues to receive, without which she would not be where she is today. Specifically, she would like to thank her career counselor Jill Reyna, who is always a wonderful help and support.

Caitlyn is the daughter of Richard and Sandra Carl Jr, Granddaughter of the late LTC Richard Carl Sr and Betty, and Great Granddaughter of Jack Benjamin and Jewell Alexander Frye.

After graduating in May, Caitlyn married her high school sweetheart and best friend, Alex Easily. She would also like to thank Alex and her family for all their support.



Boucher turns 80

Elizabeth Ann Mitchell Boucher celebrated her 80th Birthday with a family party in Conway, Arkansas, on February 18, 2023.

The Birthday bash was attended by all three of her children, all five granddaughters, her Sister, Brothers and Sisters In-Law and many nieces and nephews. The family celebrated with a video of her life to date and her amazing presence in their lives now.

Elizabeth is a retired Accountant and a long-time resident of Conway.

She recently had the opportunity to tour the new Choctaw Cultural Center with several of her cousins and sister and even met with Chief Batton.



Wade turns 80

On February 19, Catherine Nell Wade of Oklahoma City celebrated her 80th birthday with family.

Catherine is a fluent speaker of the Chahta language and has dedicated much of her life since retirement to sharing her knowledge with others. She enjoys traveling, live music and spending time with family.



Phillips turns 16

Noah Phillips of Glenpool turned 16 on March 21. He is the oldest son of Autumn Phillips and Kevin Merideth. Noah is a sophomore at Epic Charter Schools, where he is a member of the National Honor Society.

He is also a member of Oklahoma Youth Bowling, in which he has won numerous awards. He is also active in his church. Noah plans on attending college for software development, internet technology and computer science.

"Noah, we are all so proud of you and what you've accomplished. Hope you have an amazing 16th birthday! We love you!" - Love, Mom, Dad, Bub, Sis and all your family and friends!



Jones signs with German Football League team

Cameron "Cam" Jones is a lifelong resident of Sulphur. He graduated from East Central University in Ada on December 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice while playing football for the Tigers. Cam earned several awards that include; back-to-back Defensive Skills Player of the Year, Honorable Mention All-Conference Safety and a 2022 Heritage Bowl Champion member.

In December 2022, he joined the ECU staff as a Graduate Assistant Coach. He is currently working on his Master's Degree in Sports Management. Cam isn't ready to hang up his football cleats just yet. He will continue to utilize his God-given talent.

In early February, he signed with the professional team, the Solingen Paladins of the German Football League in Germany. He is the team's second import member from the US to join the team. Cam will leave for Germany sometime in April 2023 to begin prepping for the upcoming football



season. Cam is "very excited" about this new chapter in his life.

"I chose the Paladins because I was absolutely convinced by the views and plans of Coach Cholewinski and club manager Hübner," Cam said. According to Cam, he would like to thank the Choctaw Nation's Higher Education program for the assistance he has received and continues to receive. This program has contributed tremendously to his educational success. He would also like to thank his siblings and extended family for their continued support. Cam is the son of Allen and Maria Jones of Sulphur.

"We will be cheering for you #0," said his mother Maria.

Honorees announced for Eastern's Sapphire Ball fundraiser

WILBURTON, Okla. - The honorees have been announced for Eastern Oklahoma State College's 13th annual Sapphire Ball scholarship fundraiser on Saturday, April 8. The annual black-tie event honors outstanding alumni, employees and supporters of the college while raising funds for student scholarships.

The 2023 honorees include Kelbie Kennedy of Buffalo Valley, Oklahoma (Class of 2010) and Jack Austin, Jr. of Tuskahoma, Oklahoma (Class of 1998) for the Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Eastern President Dr. Janet Wansick said the college is proud to recognize the contributions of this year's honorees while raising funds for deserving students. Wansick said 100 percent of the Sapphire Ball proceeds will benefit the Sapphire Scholarship Fund.

"The Sapphire Ball is both a scholarship fundraiser and a celebration of our remarkable Mountaineer family," Wansick said. "The generosity of our donors, alumni and supporters helps ensure Eastern students are not held back by financial constraints while pursuing a college degree. We are extremely grateful to those who invest in our students and the future of our communities."

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is presented annually to alumni who have distinguished themselves professionally and through service to the college. This year, both honorees are members of the Choctaw Nation.

A native of southeast Oklahoma and a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Kelbie Kennedy recently became the first Tribal Affairs political appointee in the history of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. President Joe Biden appointed Kennedy as the first FEMA National Tribal Affairs Advocate in October 2022 to advise the FEMA Administrator on all tribal affairs and work to ensure that FEMA lives up to its treaty responsibilities to all Tribal Nations. Kennedy has focused her career on the field of Federal Indian Law and has worked to strengthen tribal sovereignty and self-determination for future generations. Before her presidential appointment, Kennedy spent more than four years working for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) to improve federal policies that impact tribal emergency management, tribal homeland security, and violence against



Kelbie Kennedy, FEMA National Tribal Affairs Advocate

American Indian and Alaska Native women. She played a key role in reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act in 2022, which reinforced tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators in Indian country. Before working at NCAI, Kennedy served as the Assistant Attorney General for Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia, prosecuting both criminal and civil cases on behalf of the Indigenous government. A 2010 Eastern graduate, Kennedy received her J.D. and certificate in American Indian Law from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law.

Jack Austin, Jr. has served as the Assistant Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma since 2014. In this role, he implements strategies designed to increase and sustain revenue streams, while directing capital expenditures and asset redeployment activities. He communicates and negotiates in an executive role on behalf of the Choctaw Nation for governing purposes with other tribal nations and state and federal political officials. He participates in veterans advocacy programming, serves as a member of the Choctaw Nation Honor Guard and is a volunteer counselor for the Veterans Advocacy Military Support Initiative to mentor high school students interested in military careers. Austin began working for the tribe in 1991 with a position in the Choctaw Nation Health Care System after being honorably discharged from the U.S. Army after four years of service. Austin attended Eastern as a nontraditional, working adult



Jack Austin, Jr., Assistant Chief of the Choctaw nation of Oklahoma

and completed his associate degree in 1998. He also earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in education from East Central University. He is also a certified behavioral health case manager.

The Oklahoma Small Business Development Center will receive the Community Spirit Award for outstanding support and service to Eastern and the local community. OKSBDC is a statewide program that provides confidential, no-cost entrepreneurial and business management advising to help start and grow small businesses in Oklahoma. Advisors work directly with entrepreneurs and small business owners in all 77 counties with services including financial analysis, capital sources, industry research, international trade, market research, digital marketing and social media, management support, emergency preparedness, business survival planning, economic impact analysis, economic gardening, and geographic information systems. In 2016, Eastern partnered with OKSBDC to create the Four County Small Business Consortium which was the first of its kind in Oklahoma. The Consortium is made up of private and public partners in Latimer, Haskell, Pittsburg and LeFlore counties who provide the funding to support the salary of two dedicated business advisors for small businesses in the area.

In 2022, the partnership served 182 clients which included 12 new business starts, 40 new jobs created, more than \$5.7 million in loans and \$872,500 in individual investment.




**MMIW COMMUNITY EVENT
5K & 1mi AWARENESS WALK**

HONORING MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN

MAY 13, 2023 | 8:00AM
ANTLERS COMMUNITY CENTER

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



LAWN SERVICES

APPLICATION NOW OPEN

- Must be between 18 and 64 years old with an ambulatory disability or 65 and older at the time the application is submitted
- Must meet income guidelines for the household
- Must be a tribal member residing in the Choctaw Nation's reservation boundaries
- Must be a homeowner or rental tenant (must be responsible for own lawn care)
- Other restrictions may apply



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Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

Sherrill Shomo

Sherrill Shomo, 78, passed away Nov. 15, 2022. Sherrill was born Sept. 24, 1944, in Broken Bow, Okla., to Frank Claude and Francis Tushka Shomo. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers J.D. Shomo, Van Shomo, Timothy Shomo, Delbert Shomo, and Deroy Shomo; and sister Doris Shomo. Sherrill is survived by his wife Mary Shomo; sons DeWayne Shomo and Gloria Smith, Jimmy Shomo, Sherrill Shomo Jr., and Bobby Gill; daughters Valerie Holt and spouse Mike, Stephanie Shomo and spouse Robert Applegate, and Teresa Vance; 28 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Family Funeral Home](#).

Philip S. Ware

Philip S. Ware, 88, passed away Dec. 20, 2022. Philip was born March 28, 1934, in Iowa City, Iowa to Stephen C. and A. Jean Ware. He was preceded in death by his wife Shirley J. Ware. Philip is survived by son Thomas M. Ware and spouse Doris; daughters Ann E. Dreyer and spouse David, and Janet M. Clark; grandchildren Kyle R. Ware and Megan J. Ware; brother Lyle A. Ware; sister Charlotte A. Adams; and several nieces and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Reese Funeral Home](#).

Quinton Dwayne Harris

Quinton Dwayne Harris, 86, passed away Feb. 4, 2023. Quinton was born Feb. 4, 1937, in Glover, Okla., to Woodrow Harris and Ella Smith Harris. He was preceded in death by his brothers Billy and Paul Harris. Quinton is survived by his wife Margaret Harris; daughter Dana DeVoe and spouse Eric; sons Michael Harris and spouse Thelma, Aaron Harris and spouse Allison, and Jordan Harris; grandchildren Chantelle, Tyler, Ava, Cameron, Abigail, and Austin. For the full obituary, please visit [Beaty Funeral Home](#).

Alan Wayne Jefferson

Alan Wayne Jefferson, 40, passed away Feb. 20, 2023. Alan was born Dec. 17, 1982, in Talihina, Okla., to Roy Melton and Janet Lee Jefferson. He is survived by his parents; stepfather Mark Prewitt; brothers Alex Prewitt and girlfriend Tarshica Whitehead, Theodore Jefferson, Christopher Jefferson, and Brent Prewitt; sisters Brittany Prewitt and boyfriend Jon Johnson, Bretta Harley and spouse Mike, and Kim Melton; fiancée Melinda Ruppe; many nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Bowser Funeral Home](#).

Burt Eugene Stevens

Burt Eugene Stevens, 69, passed away Feb. 23, 2023. Burt was born Oct. 14, 1953, in Borger, Texas, to Garland and Wanda (Clawson) Stevens. He was preceded in death by his parents; grandparents Eulin and Jewel Stevens and Carl and Bernice Clawson; nephew Marshall J. Smith; and several cousins. Burt is survived by his brother Carl Stevens; sisters Linda Stevens Bagimillh (Craig), Beverly Zee Stevens (Layne), and Cindy Stevens-Smith (Gary); nieces Tracy Pavlinetz (Mike), Monette Smith, Bekah Hightower (Andy), Rachel Stevens, and Emily Stevens; nephew Daniel Smith; 10 great-nieces and great-nephews; many aunts, uncles, and cousins. For the full obituary, please visit [Havenbrook Funeral Home](#).

Bethany May Simmons

Bethany May Simmons was born and passed away Jan. 9, 2023. She was born to Katherine Simmons and Cadean Bacon. Bethany is survived by her parents; sister Everley Ray Ward; maternal grandmother Angela Humphus and Malina Gordan; maternal grandfather David Bryan Simmons; maternal great-grandmother Dail Allen; maternal great-grandparents Charles and Robin Simmons; aunts Elizabeth Simmons, Lillian Simmons, Joanna Simmons, and Jade Lot; uncles Joshua Gillispie, Isaiah Rodriguez, and Noah Rodrigues; cousins Iris Rule, Abigail Chandler, John Gayle; and many other family members and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home - Hugo](#).

Don C. Haynie

Don C. Haynie, 82, passed away March 7, 2023. Don was born Nov. 4, 1940, in Millerton, Okla., to Herschel and Sarah Annie (Garland) Haynie. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Clifton Haynie, John Haynie, Lowell Haynie, Burl Haynie, Phillip Haynie, Clarence Haynie; and sister Marie Jamerson. Don is survived by his wife Maureen Haynie; son John L. Haynie and spouse Michelle; grandchildren Teddy Haynie and Erin Haynie; brother Roger Haynie; sister Ross Helmer and spouse Jim; brother-in-law Ian Gilmore and partner Julie Mathews; and numerous nieces, nephews, friends, and loved ones. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller & Miller Funeral Home - Valliant](#).

Evelyn Ruby Wilkerson

Evelyn Ruby Wilkerson, 80, passed away Sept. 30, 2022. Evelyn was born March 2, 1942, in Pocola, Okla., to Elsie and Ruben Freeman. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband Kim Wilkerson; and brother Paul Freeman. Evelyn is survived by her son Steve Wilkerson and spouse Marcy; daughter Shelley Wilkerson and spouse Dan McDonald; son Jeff Wilkerson and spouse Dawn; daughter Jennifer Wilkerson; sisters Lola Crane, Retha Hudgens, and Mary Shepherd; eight grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Messinger Payson Funeral Home](#).

Troy Jay McKee

Troy Jay McKee, 82, passed away Feb. 7, 2022. Troy was born Dec. 6, 1939, in Antlers, Okla., to Willie Dan and Minnie (Pickering) McKee. He was preceded in death by his parents; and siblings Genoma Marrow, Sue Satterfield, Pearl McKee, and Baby Boy McKee. Troy is survived by his wife Pat McKee; daughter DeeAnn Brice; brother Stacey McKee; sister Virginia Hammons; grandchildren Will Brice, Jennifer Mauricio, and Les Brice and spouse Laci; great-granddaughter Lauren Brice; as well as numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews. For the full obituary, please visit [Serenity Funeral Home](#).

Sheila Yvonne Layman

Sheila Yvonne (Hopkins) Layman, 70, passed away Feb. 23, 2023. Sheila was born Aug. 17, 1952, in Okla. City, Okla., to Abel Henry Hopkins and Lorene (Fryer) Hopkins. She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Charlotte Sheffield; and brothers Donald Hopkins and Teddy Hopkins. Sheila is survived by her son Cass Johnson and fiancée Sherri Scott; daughter Alecia Scheets; sisters Betty Scarborough and spouse Don, Karon Schmitz, Peggy Harris, Sherry Richey and spouse Rod, Donna Bush and spouse Richard, and Tobi Hunt; brother Eddie Hopkins and spouse Kerri; grandchildren LeAndrea Bowling and spouse Zachary, Kassandra Johnson and Cord Aschenbeck, and Tamara Johnson and fiancée; Ethan; daughter-in-law Lenore Johnson; Abrey Scheets Madeline Hayes, and Kaitlyn Caraccio; great-grandchildren Layden Anderson, Landrey Anderson, and Aniyah Bowling; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and many good friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Brown's Funeral Home - Durant](#).

Wilma Sue Johnson

Wilma Sue Johnson, 65, passed away Feb. 27, 2023. Wilma was born April 23, 1957, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to McDonald and Naomi Scott Johnson. She was preceded in death by her parents; former husband Melvin Johnson; son Myron Johnson; and brothers Melvin Ray Johnson, Ulysses Johnson, and Donald Johnson. Wilma is survived by her husband Mitch Watan; son James Johnson; and siblings Jarvis Johnson Sr., Marvin Johnson, Samuel Johnson, Richard Johnson, and Delvagene Laguna. For the full obituary, please visit [Criswell Funeral Home](#).

Tony Jack Scoggins

Tony Jack Scoggins, 63, passed away Dec. 25, 2022. Tony was born Dec. 15, 1959, in Mangum, Okla., to Billy Don Scoggins and Jane C. Henderson-Hobbs. He was preceded in death by his father; stepfather James C. Hobbs; stepbrother Darren Ford; and his grandparents. Tony is survived by his mother; stepmother Janie Scoggins; brother Johnny Scoggins; sister Tammy Miller and spouse Edwin; stepbrothers Danny Ford and spouse Dayla, Tim Ford, Jim Hobbs and spouse Michelle, and Gordon Hobbs and spouse Leasha; stepsisters Sherry Hill, Crystal Bittie, Dana Robert, and Carrie Mullens and spouse Michael; two nieces; two nephews; special furry friend Scooter, and the Marshall and Crook families. For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

Larry Neil Smith

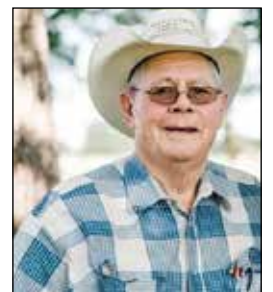
Larry Neil Smith, 84, passed away Feb. 1, 2023. Larry was born July 11, 1938, in Lawton, Okla., to William Ray Smith and Virginia Edeana Wright. He was preceded in death by his wife Vivian Sue Smith; and his parents. Larry is survived by daughter Shellie Rabroker, (Gerald Rabroker), daughter Stephanie Becknal, (Mark Becknal), granddaughter Rebecca Bawayan, (Jerel Bawayan), grandson William Becknal, (Jordan Becknal), granddaughter Sarah Hill, (Kyle Hill), grandson Brent Becknal, granddaughters Callie Lopez, Maddison Brinkman, Allison Brinkman, great-grandsons Luke and Benjamin Becknal, Remington Hill, Shepherd Hill, Cameron Barnett, great-granddaughters Lydia Becknal, Evelyn Hill, Adalynn Lopez, brother Doug Smith and sister, Lori Teniente. For the full obituary, please visit [Browns Owens Brumley Funeral Home](#).

Beverly Rossbach

Beverly "Gayle" Rossbach, 76, passed away Feb. 27, 2023. Gayle was born Jan. 2, 1947, in Seminole, Okla., to Oteka Young Maness and Burnie Ray Maness. She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Greg and Michael Maness; and uncle Bill Bandy. Gayle is survived by her husband Denny Rossbach; daughters Tracy Pineda and Vonda Helbert; stepsons Reed Rossbach and Christopher Rossbach; aunt Carol Bandy; and several grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Riverside Funeral Home](#).

Lola Nadine Votaw

Lola Nadine Votaw, 96, passed away Feb. 25, 2023. Lola was born Oct. 1, 1926, in Amber, Okla., to Henry and Robbie Votaw. She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Wanda; and brother Willard. Lola is survived by her daughter Julia; son-in-law Michael; sister Christine; three grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. For the full obituary, please visit [Biskinik](#).

Thomas Ray House

Thomas "Tommy" Ray House, 76, passed away Feb. 27, 2023. Tommy was born Sept. 28, 1946, in Alva, Okla., to Cliff and Boodie Jo (Oakes) House. He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Charles House; sister Linda (House) Allen; and brothers-in-law Don Allen and Billy Duke. Tommy is survived by his wife Linda House; sons Jody House and spouse Michelle, and Justin House and spouse Johonna; grandchildren Morgan Curtis and spouse Larime, Lane House, Jaelin Lyday, Ethan House, Emory House, and Jayden Chumley; brother Gary House and spouse Janet; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends; and the students and kids he mentored and taught throughout the years. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller & Miller Funeral Home - Hugo](#).

Sarah Bell Reynolds

Sarah Bell Reynolds, 81, passed away Feb. 25, 2023. Sarah was born May 31, 1941, in Dallas, Texas, to Henry and Mattie Annie Bell (Chance) Hankins. She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings Judy Ann Calhoun, Henry Lee Hankins, and Gerald Wayne Hankins. Sarah is survived by her son Marvin Reynolds; daughter Julie Reynolds; sister Nova Walker; grandchildren Luke Anthony Reynolds and spouse Karla, Olivia Jane Cipriano, Blaire Amanda Reynolds, and Courtney Landers; and great-grandchildren Lilah, Elena, Izabella, Jocelyn, and Rhys. For the full obituary, please visit [Holmes-Coffey-Murray Funeral Home](#).

Joe Haskell Allen

Joe Haskell Allen, 83, passed away March 4, 2023. Joe was born June 6, 1939, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to William H. and Gertrude Allen. He is survived by his wife Charlotte; daughters Melissa (Norm) Fichtorn, Michelle (Harry) Williams, and Melinda (Andy) Busch; grandchildren Joe, Matthew, Katie, Daniel, Elizabeth, Wade, and Gabriel; great-grandchildren Roman, Serenity, and Brianna; and his sweet shih tzu Honey. For the full obituary, please visit [Ferguson Funeral Home](#).

Barbara Ann Burton

Barbara Ann (Green) Burton, 76, passed away March 1, 2023. Barbara was born Dec. 27, 1946, in Hugo, Okla., to Emmett and Bealy (Oakes) Green. She was preceded in death by her parents; and brother Floyd Green. Barbara is survived by brothers Billy Green and spouse Martha; and Jimmy Green and spouse Leslie; sister Shirley Collins; special niece Terry Karr; special great-niece Brittini Ellison; great-niece Conley Ellison; along with numerous other nieces, nephews, cousins, relatives, and friends. For the full obituary, please visit [Miller and Miller Funeral Home - Hugo](#).

Obituary Policy

Obituary submissions are for Choctaw Nation tribal members only and are free of charge. The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes. Family members/individuals may submit funeral notices as long as the notice is from the funeral home or printed in their local newspaper through a funeral home service. Full-length handwritten notices will not be accepted. The Biskinik strives to serve all Choctaws. Therefore, any handwritten notices received will be searched online for official funeral home notices. If none are found, efforts will be made to contact the family and make arrangements for an official notice. Due to space limitations, there is a 150 word limit for obituaries. The online issue of the Biskinik will contain links to the full obituaries. Send official obituary notices to: Biskinik, PO Box 1210, Durant OK 74702 or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

ITI FABVSSA

Fort Tombeche and early Choctaw treaties

Near the town of Epes, Alabama, is a small winding stream known as Factory Creek, but to Choctaw people, it was known as Bok Itombi Ikbi or Box Maker Creek. Overlooking Bok Itombi Ikbi is a large white-colored bluff where the French built a small garrison and trade post known as Fort Tombeche. Throughout the 1700s, Choctaw leaders commonly interacted with foreigners to ensure a supply of trade items into their communities. Chiefs would meet and negotiate treaties with Europeans to establish trade and alliances for the Choctaw Nation. This month, Iti Fabvssa would like to take a deeper look at Choctaw diplomatic customs and the various treaties which were made between Choctaws and the French, English, Spanish, and early Americans.

Choctaw Diplomatic Customs

Long before Choctaw people had contact with Europeans, Choctaw leaders forged relationships and trade with neighboring and distant people. During the 1700s, the French and Spanish began building settlements along the gulf coast and relied on Choctaw people to teach and supply them. Choctaw people taught Europeans how to interact with our homeland; we shared with them how to plant our crops and how to live in our homeland. Choctaw leaders exchanged food, trade goods, raw materials, and information. In return, Choctaw leaders were able to provide their communities with European trade goods, weapons, and information. Relationships between our peoples were done through treaties that dictated terms on military alliances, boundaries, and trade. Choctaw leaders had a formal approach to negotiations that were deeply rooted in respect. Choctaw people of the past paid special attention to those that visited their homes and communities. Visitors would be taken care of just as a family member would through food and gifts. Diplomatic negotiations operated the same way but on a larger scale. When Choctaw leaders traveled to negotiations with Europeans, they expected to have their needs provided for. The host would be given the honor of showing their influence by giving food and gifts to all who attended. Choctaw leaders would bring these gifts home and give them out to their community. (For more information on diplomacy, please look at our Jan. 2011 issue of Iti Fabvssa on Choctaw smoking pipes and tobacco).

Choctaw society was tied very deeply to our kinship or our family relationships. Our traditional society operated on established rules, acceptable behaviors, and expectations that were to be followed by Choctaw people. Part of our traditional diplomacy was to adopt people into our families in a ceremony called the Eagle Tail Dance. This did not just honor them, but it also gave a formal structure to treaty negotiations. Because kinship is passed down through the mother, Choctaw women played a vital

role in peace negotiations and the eagle tail dance.

Treaty of Mobile, 1729 (France)

In 1729, Choctaw leaders traveled to Mobile to negotiate stronger trade relations with the French. Choctaw Chiefs signed a treaty with the French to build four trading posts in the Choctaw Nation. Three trading posts were built within the interior of the Choctaw Nation. The last trade post was built in 1736 when the French established a stockaded outpost called Fort Tombeche. The French named Fort Tombeche, based on the name that the Choctaws had for the nearby creek, Bok Itombi Ikbi. Soon after the construction of the fort, the Choctaw village of Itombi Ikbi moved upriver and onto the bluff with a musketshot from the fort. The French applied the name Bok Itombi Ikbi to the major river that ran by the fort, the Tombigbee River.

The Tombigbee River was a major trade route and provided Choctaw people with plentiful access to hunting, fishing and gathering. Early on, Choctaw people lived along the Tombigbee River and called it the Hacha Hattak, or the River People. It is possible that the name Hacha Hattak was the origin of the name we call ourselves today, the Chahta. Conflict and disease from English-allied groups to the east caused groups of Choctaw people to move from this area known today as western Alabama into east central Mississippi.

Treaty of Mobile, 1765 (England)

In 1763, France gave up control of its holdings around Choctaw country, including Fort Tombeche and the city of Mobile, to England. After the English arrived in Mobile, they sent a garrison of troops to occupy and repair Fort Tombeche. The English renamed it Fort York. Recognizing their need to formalize a relationship with the Choctaw Nation, the English invited the Choctaws and Chickasaws to Mobile for treaty negotiations. In 1765, attending Choctaw leaders and women performed the Eagle Tail Dance with the English commissioners during the treaty negotiations. Choctaw leaders asked the English to open a trading post at Fort York, requested better trade prices, and asked for annual gifts. The English agreed to these terms but asked for access to land in return. Choctaw leaders agreed to share Choctaw hunting lands west of Mobile. However, the Treaty dictated that the Choctaw would cede ownership of that land to the English. This would be the first time that Choctaws would cede land within our homelands. In 1768 the English garrison left Fort York but kept a trading post active until the Spanish took control of the region.

If you were to look at a modern map, the land taken by the British would stretch east to west from Mobile, Alabama, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Its northern border would be the Mississip-



George Catlin, Eagle Dance, Choctaw, 1835-1837, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., 1985.66.449. Scan the QR code for more information on the Treaty of Mobile, 1765.

pi/Louisiana state line, and its southern border begins in Mobile, traveling west along the gulf coast, going through Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Maurepas, and along the Amite River until it reached the Mississippi River. For more details, please scan the QR code in the photo at the top of the page.

Treaty of Mobile, 1784 (Spain)

In 1783, England ceded its land holdings in the region to Spain; this included the strip of ceded Choctaw land from Mobile to Baton Rouge. One year later, Choctaw leaders received word that the Spanish wished to meet with them in Mobile to discuss a military alliance between the two Nations. The Choctaws, being the largest of the Nations in the region, brought 185 chiefs and captains that represented 59 villages. Choctaw leaders and the women attending performed the Eagle Tail Dance with the Spanish commissioners. Choctaw leaders negotiated for the Spanish to provide them with a sufficient supply of trade goods, weapons, and tools at fair prices; in return, the Choctaws would provide Spain with military support. The Spanish believed they now held a monopoly on the Choctaw trade. However, a year later, in 1785, Choctaw leaders received word that a new Nation wished to trade with the Choctaw, the United States.

Treaty of Hopewell, 1786 (United States)

In 1785 Choctaw Chiefs were invited to travel to Hopewell, South Carolina, to attend diplomatic talks with the United States. When the sun was at the highest point of the day, the Choctaw participants began the eagle tail dance. The Choctaw dancers painted their bodies in white clay and carried with them white poles with white deer hides. After a period of singing and dancing, they set up the largest of the white poles during the ceremony and gave gifts, including a calumet pipe, to the American commission-

ers. They then laid down coals brought from their village of West Yazoo and laid them in the American fire. Coals from the American fire were then brought back to West Yazoo to be mixed in the community's fire. The eagle tail dance and the mixing of the coals was the highest honor the Choctaw could give. Talks resulted in defining the borders of the Choctaw Nation, trading with the Americans, and plans for three trading posts to be built within the Choctaw Nation.

Treaty of Natchez, 1792 (Spain) and Treaty of Boukhouca, 1793 (Spain)

In 1791 the Spanish traveled up the Mississippi River to an area known as Walnut Hills and built Fort Nogales. Choctaw leaders demanded that the fort be removed since the Spanish were trespassing on Choctaw lands. The Spanish invited the Choctaw leaders for discussions about the fort in the town of Natchez. In 1792, Choctaw chiefs met and agreed to allow the fort to remain within their hunting lands if the Spanish agreed to pay annual gifts to the Choctaw Nation.

Later that year, the Spanish asked the Choctaws for permission to occupy the remains of Fort Tombeche. The old wooden stockade was torn down, and a new earthenwork fort was built in its place. The Spanish named it Fort Confederation in honor of the relationship between the Choctaw and the Spanish.

Due to the 1795 Treaty of San Lorenzo, Spain would transfer its land holdings in the region over to the United States. By 1797, the Spanish would evacuate their garrison, and the village of Itombi Ikbi would move. The white bluff that housed Fort Tombeche, Fort York, and Fort Confederation would be uninhabited until 1815, when the United States built the Choctaw Trading House, or factory, along Bok Itombi Ikbi. Soon, the creek was renamed Factory Creek by the Americans, which retains its name today.

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Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Services

OUTREACH AT THE BEACH

JUNE 7, 2023 | 10:00 AM - 2:30 PM

SWIMMING | FREE LUNCH | BEACH VOLLEYBALL GIVEAWAYS | DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

SARDIS LAKE | 432646 EAST 1625 LANE CLAYTON, OK

877.285.6893 | CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

The Section 184 Home Loan Guarantee Program is a home mortgage product specifically designed for American Indians to provide access to mortgage financing. Congress established this program in 1992 to facilitate homeownership and increase access to capital in Native American Communities. With Section 184 financing, borrowers can get into a home with a low down payment. Section 184 loans can be used, both on and off native lands, for new construction, rehabilitation, purchase of an existing home, or refinance. Loans must be made in an area approved by HUD and deemed as an Indian Servicing area. All loans are approved by manual underwrite and not by an automated system. Fees are monitored and restricted to protect against predatory lending. Interest rates must be fixed, not adjustable, and based on the current market rate, not by credit score. By serving Native communities, Section 184 is increasing the marketability and value of the Native assets and strengthening the financial standing of Native communities. Section 184 is synonymous with home ownership in Indian Country.

Participating Tribes determine the areas where the Section 184 loans can be used. Loans must be made in an eligible/approved area. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma requested to The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Native American Programs, and Office of Loan Guarantee, and has been approved for an expansion of eight counties in Arkansas to be deemed an Indian Service Area for Section 184 loans. Little River; Sevier; Polk; Scott; Howard; Montgomery; Logan; and Yell are now Section 184-approved counties and available to Native Americans who reside there. Previously approved Arkansas counties are Benton, Crawford, Sebastian and Washington. There are now 12 approved counties in Arkansas eligible for Section 184 loans.

Down payment assistance is offered with Section 184 loans to Choctaw Tribal Members who apply with Choctaw Home Finance and use a partner lender. The down payment loan is up to 2% assistance at a fixed 5% interest rate for up to 5 years. Borrowers must make a minimum investment of 1% from their own funds. There are no set income limits to be eligible. Credit guidelines must be met. We understand unique circumstances and want to assist with all homeownership goals. Let our knowledgeable staff help you. For more information, call us at 1-800-235-3087 or visit <http://www.choctawnation.com/tribal-services/housing/home-finance>.

Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

CHOCTAW TRAIL OF TEARS

MEMORIAL WALK

MAY 20, 2023

PLEASE JOIN US AS WE HONOR THOSE WHO SACRIFICED IT ALL

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

Please join us as we remember our ancestors and their long walk from Mississippi to Indian Territory, later to become the state of Oklahoma. The Trail of Tears is a part of our tribal history that will not be forgotten. CHAHTA HVPIA!

TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS CEREMONY BEGINS AT 10:00 AM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Maximizing diabetes care plan with blood sugar control

By Kristy K. Petty, Diabetes Educator, RN, CNHSA

Good blood sugar control requires you and your provider to know a few general numbers to maximize your care plan.

The numbers refer to how much glucose is in your blood at certain times of the day and represent what the American Diabetic Association believes are the best ranges to prevent complications.

The American Diabetes Association recommends the target pre-meal blood sugar of 90-130 mg/dl and post-meal blood sugar of less than 180 mg/dl.

The goal for the provider is to personalize the treatment plan to ensure the right meds and doses are prescribed at the right time to maximize blood sugar control and minimize complications.

It is vital you take your meter or readings log with you to each provider visit.

If you are experiencing a lot of blood glucose readings of less than 70 or abnormally high blood sugar, please call your provider immediately. Please don't wait until your next scheduled appointment!

The Hemoglobin A1C is a measure of your average blood glucose control over the previous three months. Think of the A1C as a long-term blood glucose measure that changes very gradually.

It is recommended this be less than 7% to prevent complications.

Regular medical care is essential in managing diabetes, having your blood pressure checked at each follow-up appointment and scheduling yearly screening exams for eye, dental and feet.

Blood pressure is the force of blood inside your blood vessels. When your blood pressure is high, your heart must work harder than it should.

ADA blood pressure target is below 140/90 mmHg for a person with diabetes.

At least once a year, have your blood cholesterol checked. These levels tell how much fat, also called lipids in your blood.

LDL (bad) cholesterol should be less than 100mg/dl for someone without heart disease and less than 70 mg/dl

for someone with heart disease. LDL can clog your blood vessels and lead to heart disease.

HDL (good) cholesterol for men is more than 40 mg/dl, and for women is more than 50mg/dl. HDL helps protect your heart.

Triglycerides (blood fat) are recommended to be less than 150 mg/dl. Triglyceride is another kind of blood fat that can increase your heart disease risk.

Changing what you eat and how much you eat can make a big difference in your blood glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

You help reach your targets when you:

- Make smart food choices and limit saturated fat, salt and sugar.
- Lose weight or take steps to prevent weight gain.
- Exercise and are active for at least 30 min five days a week.
- Quit smoking/dipping (call 1-800-quit-now).
- Take all meds as prescribed.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Finding a healthy way to reduce stress.

Diabetes Education and Support

Learning about diabetes is an ongoing process.

People with diabetes can work closely with a diabetes educator to help them learn about living well with diabetes.

Diabetes educators can be nurses, dietitians, and pharmacists.

Diabetes educators can make diabetes management more manageable by giving you tips on healthy eating, lowering blood glucose and blood pressure, staying active, how or why you are taking medication, coping with diabetes and stress and assistance with stopping smoking.

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

5K run for MMIW awareness

ANTLERS, Okla. (March 13, 2023) – Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's (CNO) Outreach Services Program will host a run and walk to help bring awareness to the issue of violence against Native American women. The 2nd Annual Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women 5K Run and 1 Mile Run/Walk will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, May 13 at the Choctaw Community Center, 302 SW O St. in Antlers. Race day registration is available from 6:30 – 7 a.m. at the nearby CNO Wellness Center.

Tasha Mitchell, program manager for CNO Victim Services and race organizer, said advance registration is recommended. It is open to the public, and last year's event drew almost 350 runners and walkers. Entry fee is \$25 to run the 5K, and \$15 for



the 1-mile. The fee is waived for members of the PACE program. For race information and how to register, visit the event webpage or text Mitchell at 580-642-6042.

Information on MMIW

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the murder rate for women living on reservations is 10 times higher than the national average, and is the third leading cause of death for Native women.

On the Choctaw Reservation, assistance to victims and their families is provided by CNO Outreach Services and Choctaw Nation Tribal Police by calling 800-522-6170.

2023 Indian Health Service recommendations update

Rockville, MD (March 15, 2023) – Between 2019 and 2021, the Indian Health Service received recommendations from IHS-commissioned internal reviews and external entities on the design and implementation of IHS policies and processes established to protect patients and to hold employees accountable for compliance. The Indian Health Service concurred with Office of Inspector General and U.S. Government Accountability Office recommendations and submitted plans for corrective actions. In 2021, IHS developed an action plan to meet the GAO's criteria for being removed from their high-risk list, which IHS was placed on in 2017. The IHS also initiated strategies to address prior recommendations from the Presidential Task Force on Protecting Native American Children in the Indian Health Service System. In November 2021, the Director's Policy Advisory Council was charged by the acting IHS director at that time to review all recommendations related to patient protection to ensure a centralized and cohesive understanding of the agency's progress, which would help guide on-going agency actions.

In January, Indian Health Service leadership implemented the 2023 Agency Work Plan, which aims to address these recommendations. The work plan outlines critical priorities that will guide agency improvements over the next year and complements ongoing activities to improve patient safety and provide critical oversight of our programs. Through the work plan, IHS leadership is leveraging the work of the DPAC to ensure all recommendations are addressed, accountable staff are assigned and completing work on open recommendations, and actions are continuously tracked and monitored to sustain improvements. IHS will provide quarterly updates on the progress of the recommendations through the IHS Recommendations Status Report.

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

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

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Get to Know Diabetes



Facts and

WHAT IS DIABETES?

It is a chronic disease characterized by high blood sugar.



CURRENTLY DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES

37.3 million

In 2019, 37.3 million Americans, or 11.3% of the population, had diabetes.

Nearly 1.9 million Americans have type 1 diabetes, including about 244,000 children and adolescents.



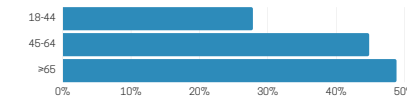
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE COMMUNITIES

14.5%

Roughly 14.5% of American Indians/Alaskan Natives adults have diabetes.



ON THE RISE



Age-adjusted prevalence of prediabetes according to various definitions of hyperglycemia among adults aged 18 years or older, United States, 2017-2020.



AM I AT RISK?

Millions of American adults have prediabetes. However, the majority of them don't even know it. The American Diabetes Association has a test you can take to determine your risk. Visit diabetes.org/diabetes/risk-test to take the quiz today.



Statistics via the American Diabetes Association
For additional information, visit <https://diabetes.org/>.

Meatloaf

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 can (about 15 ounces) low-sodium cream style corn
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, finely chopped
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons egg mix
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- Nonstick cooking spray

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. In a large pan, cook ground beef over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain fat.
3. Add corn, onions, and garlic to the pan and cook for 10 minutes.
4. Add water, cornmeal, egg mix, salt and pepper to the beef mixture. Stir well and cook for 15 minutes.
5. Use a large iron skillet or loaf pan. Spray pan with nonstick cooking spray. Form beef and cornmeal mixture into a loaf in a pan.
6. Cover the pan with an oven-safe lid (or foil) and bake for 35 to 40 minutes.



CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

MARKET HOURS

Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

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

April 2023

All markets open weekdays, April 3-26
Closed: April 7, 27, and 28.

Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
Food demo April 13

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Food demo April 11

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Food demo April 20

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
Food demo April 4

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
Food demo April 18

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

HEALTH FAIRS IN 2023

Learn about health services offered by Choctaw Nation.

A chance to learn valuable information about health services available through CNHSA from expert representatives across the various specialties provided.

You won't want to miss this opportunity to get your questions answered firsthand!



Scan the QR code, or visit chocta.ws/health-fair for dates and locations throughout the year.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Choctaw Nation Health Clinic Contact Information

Atoka	(580) 889-1981
Broken Bow	(580) 584-2740
Durant	(580) 920-2100
Hugo	(580) 326-7561
Idabel	(580) 286-2600
McAlester	(918) 423-8440
Poteau	(918) 649-1100
Stigler	(918) 967-9200
Talihina	(918) 567-7000

You may also schedule an appointment via my.cnhsa.com.

Choctaw Nation offers self-defense classes

By Chris Jennings

Every week in April, the Choctaw Nation will provide free self-defense classes to anyone, Native or non-Native.

The Nation has contracted with McAlester Tae Kwon Do to offer free classes to men and women ages 12 and over, although minors will need a guardian present.

The Nation has offered self-defense classes in one form or another for at least eight years.

First, starting with Chi Hullo Li residential treatment center in Talihina, then expanding to the community. Since then, the classes have been well received.

"We saw such success with that [The Chi Hullo Li program] with the increase in self-esteem and resiliency, we decided to offer self-defense to the community," said Malanie Carrell, a program manager with the Choctaw Nation.

In a 2016/2017 study by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 1 in 4 women (26.8% or 33.5 million) in the United States reported completed or attempted rape victimization at some point in her lifetime.

While sexual violence against women is more prevalent, men can experience the same victimization. About 1 in 26 men (3.8% or 4.5 million) in the United States reported completed or attempted rape victimization at some point in his lifetime.

Participants taking a self-defense class are taking steps toward not becoming a statistic.

There are other benefits as well.

"It raises awareness, personal awareness of surroundings. It raises the self-confidence to know the techniques and to know that it doesn't rely on strength, that anybody can do this," said Carrell.

A self-defense class encourages participants to consider their surroundings and face their fears. It enables them to feel more empowered in their life. Carrell says one of the ways they do this is with their voice.

"We practice in the classes using our voice. As silly as that may seem, a lot of people are afraid to speak up. And it just enables them empowers them to speak up and use their voice and know their boundaries," Carrell said.

According to Carrell, techniques taught can be tailored to the individual.

"The classes serve all ages and all abilities. So, the instructor is able to tailor them to fit. If someone has limited mobility, he's able to tailor the technique, so that they can defend themselves," she said.

According to the CDC, abuse, including neglect and exploitation, is experienced by about 1 in 10 people aged 60 and older.

From 2002 to 2016, more than 643,000 older adults were treated in the emergency department for nonfatal assaults, and over 19,000 homicides occurred.

The rate of nonfatal assaults increased by more than 75% among men (2002-2016) and more than 35% among women (2007-2016).

The estimated homicide rate for men increased 7% from 2010 to 2016. Compared to non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Black or African American persons, non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and Hispanic or Latino persons have higher homicide rates (2002-2016).

Kids are also at risk.

Of all female victims of completed rape, 41% reported that it first occurred before age 18.

Of all male victims of made-to-penetrate victimization, 24% reported that it occurred before age 18.

The consequences of these actions last a lifetime.

On top of the emotional trauma, significantly more women and men with a history of sexual violence or stalking reported asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, frequent headaches, chronic pain, difficulty sleeping and limitations in their activities compared to women and men without a history of these forms of violence.

Sometimes a manipulative relationship turns bad over time without the victim knowing it.

Some of the things to look out for are covered in these self-defense classes.



About **1 in 3** women and **1 in 6** men in the U.S. experienced some form of contact sexual violence during their lifetime.



1 in 6 women and **1 in 19** men in the U.S. experienced stalking at some point during their lifetime.

"We talk about the signs and symptoms of domestic violence and the resources that are available. We also talk about consent, what that is and what that is not," said Carrell.

Knowing these warning signs can enable someone to get out of an abusive relationship before it's too late.

The remaining classes are scheduled for the dates below:

- Monday, April 3, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Whitfield School Gym, Whitfield, Oklahoma
- Tuesday, April 11, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Southeastern State University Student Union Wellness Center Gym, Durant, Oklahoma
- Wednesday, April 19, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Boys & Girls Club, Talihina, Oklahoma
- Thursday, April 27, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at the Family Life Center, First Assembly of God, 1501 S. Park Dr., Broken Bow, Oklahoma.


SELF-DEFENSE CLASSES

APRIL 2023

OPEN TO EVERYONE 12 & OLDER
MINORS NEED A GUARDIAN PRESENT

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
CALL 918.302.0052
OR EMAIL MLCARRELL@CNHSA.COM

Choctaw Nation Homakbi Ribbon



BUSINESS CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT ♦ CHAT

Why is branding your business so important?



By Gary Johnson

Branding your business is much more than just having a beautiful logo with your business name on there. Having a strong brand sets the tone for what your business stands for and what consumers can expect from your business. With businesses going online it's getting harder and harder to compete for business, so your company needs to stand out more than ever. Having a good brand allows your business the opportunity to connect and often manage what customers believe about your business.

Elements of branding:

- Brand Identity – How do customers recognize your company?
- Brand Values – What are your company beliefs or principles?
- Brand Positioning – What makes your company different?
- Brand Promise – What is your company's vision, mission, and value proposition?
- Brand Voice – How does your company communicate with its customers?
- Brand Targeting – Who is your ideal customer?

Here are some reasons why it is important to have a strong brand:

- People recognize your company
- Improves advertising
- Is good for associates
- Helps build trust and customer loyalty
- Good for stakeholders
- Increase value of the company
- Gives you the ability to increase the number of consumers that frequent your business

For more information on branding, please scan the QR code.



STAY CONNECTED | CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM


Choctaw Nation Small Business Development

CHOCTAW FUTURE LEADERS



LEADERSHIP TRAINING INTERNSHIP CAMP

Scan to learn more on how to apply for the program.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 580.642.6073
OR EMAIL HWOOD@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Chahta Himmak Pila Pehlich





MEMBERSHIP

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!



SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION

Choctaw legend still remembered 80 years later for leading role in Broadway's 'Oklahoma!'

By Shelia Kirven

Most people recognize these lyrics from the Rodgers and Hammerstein award-winning Broadway musical, "OKLAHOMA!" Choctaw tribal member Ridgely "Ridge" McClure Bond became famous for his portrayal of Curly McLain. His powerful performance even persuaded state legislators to vote the title song as the official song for the State of Oklahoma.

Ridge was the only Native American and the only Choctaw from Oklahoma to appear in the original Broadway production. He performed the role over 2,000 times during his career.

OKLAHOMA! takes place at the beginning of the 20th century in Indian Territory. It is based on the play "Green Grow the Lilacs." It first opened on Broadway on March 31, 1943, and ran for almost six years. It was performed at 40 touring matinees for armed forces members. The production won a Special Pulitzer Prize, Special Tony Award and became an Academy Award-winning film in 1955.

According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, nearly five million people saw the production during its original Broadway run and over 10 million saw its national road tour from 1943 to 1954.

This year "OKLAHOMA!" celebrates its 80th anniversary.

Ridge Bond was born in McAlester, Oklahoma, on July 12, 1922, to Benjamin Franklin Bond and Jeanette Baer. Benjamin attended Jones Academy in Harts-horne, Oklahoma, and became McAlester's postmaster and a commercial real estate owner. Benjamin's grandfather, George M. Bond, was the first county judge of Jefferson County, a teacher for the Choctaws for over 15 years and was active in opening coal deposits in Choctaw country. He bought the land and laid out the towns of Hartshorne and Wilburton (okgenweb.net.) He married Narcissa McClure, a Choctaw original enrollee and sister of Isaac McClure, who was Senator of the Choctaw Nation from Bokhoma and Bok Tuklo counties (McCurtain County Historical Society.) Family members of the McClure family say they rode with Indian Territory Marshalls as Lighthorsemen.

Ridge graduated from McAlester Public Schools. He began singing as a child at the local Episcopal church, where his mother played the organ. She passed away when Ridge was seven years old, but he continued singing and playing the harmonica throughout high school.

He won a voice scholarship to the University of Tulsa (TU) School of Drama, where he attended from 1939-1943 and graduated with honors. While at TU he was cast as lead in "Green Grow the Lilacs," written by another Oklahoman, Lynn Riggs. "OKLAHOMA!" was derived from that play.

While at TU, Bond met Maxine Vincent, daughter of world champion outboard boat racer Frank Vincent, and they married in 1943. Maxine received her art degree and became a well-known museum restoration artist. They were married for 54 years. Maxine passed away in 2008.



Ridge Bond was known as "Mr. Oklahoma" and ambassador for the State of Oklahoma.

The Bonds had two children, Geoffrey "Geoff" and Pamela "Pam." Geoff is a producer, musician, sound engineer and platinum award-winner for the audio post-production of the video "This is Garth Brooks." He has worked for many musical groups, including AC/DC and Bon Jovi, and worked on remixing the original legendary Jimi Hendrix tapes from the masters into 3-D sound. He was also a contributor to the movie, "Twister." Pam is a retired teacher and author of children's books, including "The Horse with the Dragonfly on her Nose – Life lessons from Maggie the Horse." Her next book, "Big Chief's Big Day," will come out soon.

Ridge joined the U.S. Navy after he graduated from TU and was on active duty during WWII as a naval officer in the Torpedo Boat Division.

After his discharge in 1946, he and Maxine went straight to New York City, and he worked for CBS and RCA. His voice teacher encouraged Ridge to audition for "Oklahoma!" as the understudy role of Curly, since Howard Keel, the current lead, would be leaving to star in another show. Composer Richard Rodgers was said to have loved the audition and asked Ridge to meet lyricist Oscar Hammerstein the next day. In a Tulsa Daily World interview, Bond noted the first day he auditioned in cowboy boots, jeans and a red shirt. He then used all his money to buy a suit for the callback. Ridge said, "And when I walked in, Rodgers said, 'What the hell have you got that damned suit on for? Take that coat and tie off, roll up those sleeves, muss up that hair, and do that thing you did yesterday.'" He got the part, and seven months after being understudy, he stepped into the role of Curly permanently.

In 1951, the U.S. State Department sent the entire company of "OKLAHOMA!" to West Berlin to perform at the Berlin Arts Festival as a goodwill gesture. The performances were in bombed-out theaters without chairs, and the audiences sat on straw. They also performed at the Titania-Palast Theater.

“We know we belong to the land

And the land we belong to is grand!

And when we say

Yeeow! Ayipioeay!

We're only sayin'

You're doin' fine, Oklahoma! Oklahoma O.K.”

Maxine kept a diary and wrote of the experience, "The State Department told us we had a job to do and there was 100% cooperation in trying extra hard to win over an audience that did not understand first, English, and second the colloquialism of Oklahomans. But they loved it, and we played to lengthy standing ovations every night. We all felt we were putting a dent in Russia's Iron Curtain."

Ridge appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show," "The Kate Smith Show," "Show Time USA" and the national live CBS TV program "Omnibus," one of the highest-rated TV shows of the time. Pam said she remembers watching her father perform on the show as a child and was thrilled when she could see the newly discovered video again years later and could hear her father sing.

In April 1953, Oklahoma State Representative and future Oklahoma governor George Nigh introduced a bill to change the state song from the old-fashioned "Oklahoma-A Toast" to the cheerful title song of the musical "OKLAHOMA!" Having an opponent to the Bill, Rep. Nigh tabled the floor and called Ridge, his childhood friend, asking him to sing the song with the choir from the Oklahoma College for Women of Chickasha on the house floor the next day. According to the Oklahoma State Historical Society, Ridge came in full costume and burst into the session singing "Oklahoma!" Everyone stood and cheered, and House Bill 1094 passed immediately. The Senate ratified the bill eight days later. The measure passed and became effective September 5, 1953.

Ridge eventually settled the family in Tulsa where he appeared in local commercials and television shows, including the "Ridge Bond Show," becoming a television personality for ABC affiliate KTUL-TV and CBS affiliate KOTV. He worked with his friend, composer, lyricist and singer Ralph Blane ("Meet Me in St. Louis"

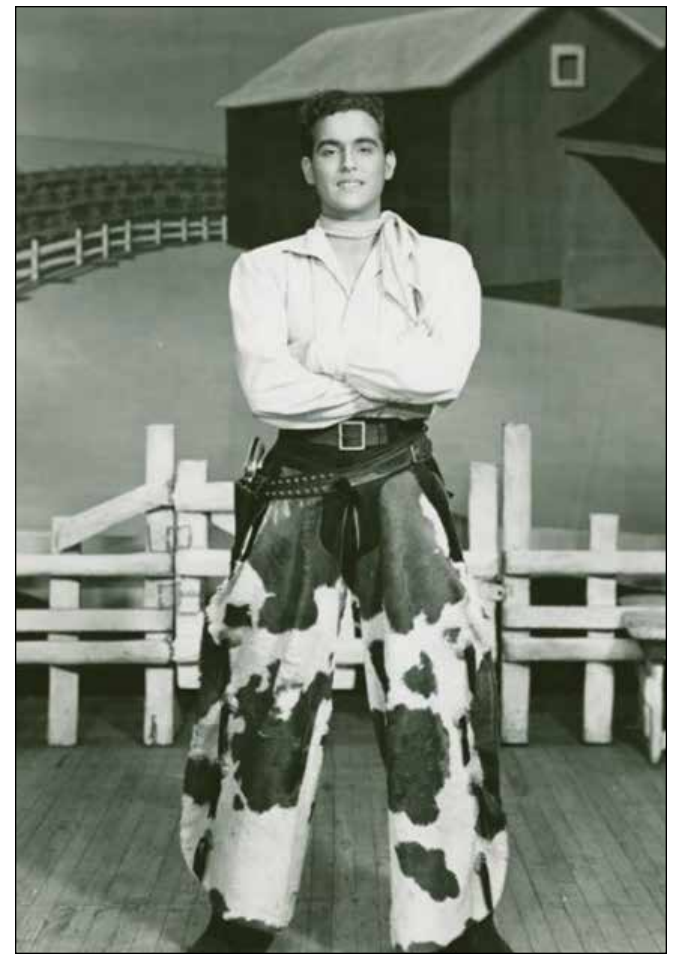


Photo Courtesy of Ridge Bond Family

Choctaw tribal member and McAlester native Ridgely "Ridge" Bond, in costume for Rodgers & Hammerstein's original Broadway production of "OKLAHOMA!"

and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas") on the Miss Oklahoma Pageant. He was a judge and helped Blane produce pageants in Broken Arrow. He also starred in the Tulsa Little Theater productions of "Kiss Me Kate," "Kismet" and "Melody Circus," performing in the United States and Canada.

He continued to sing at church where he and Geoff were active in the choir for many years. He also became an insurance executive and district coordinator for the American Family Life Insurance Company. In 1991, he was honored with the Lynn Riggs Award, presented by Rogers State University for "distinguished contributions to the arts" and named Ambassador of Goodwill for the Sooner State by the Oklahoma Heritage Association in 1993.

On March 30, 1993, the U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative postage stamp celebrating the 50th year of the Broadway opening of "OKLAHOMA!" with Ridge's likeness as Curly featured.

The same year he was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Ridge Bond died in Tulsa in 1997 at age 74. He and Maxine are buried in the Will Rogers Cemetery in Claremore, Oklahoma.

He was nominated posthumously in 2015 to the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, referred to as "Mr. Oklahoma" and ambassador. The nomination noted that when the "OKLAHOMA!" production was sent to West Berlin, the performances were broadcast on Radio Free Europe and on large-screen receivers around West Berlin. Over 750,000 Germans and U.S. military personnel saw the performances. Even residents of Russian-controlled East Berlin snuck into the performances. Nominator Roberta Scott-Hamilton wrote that his performances were "a triumph in international diplomacy" and that "every time we sing our state song, we can thank Ridge Bond."

Looking back, Pam and Geoff have very fond memories of their father and are proud of their family history. Pam said, "We were always told and felt really proud of our heritage. I have a great family history, and I am so lucky to be born in that family." She continued, "He [Ridge] was so proud to be Choctaw, and he was a pretty amazing man and a great representative for the Choctaws." Some of her fondest memories are of seeing her father perform.

Geoff said his mother was entirely behind their father, very supportive (even when Ridge was on stage as Geoff was born) and a good critic. He remembers his father saying, "Your audience is precious," and "Take the stage so your audience can relax and enjoy your performance." He also remembered him saying that show business was tough and one needed to be very self-confident and disciplined, hard-working and have some lucky breaks to succeed.

For more information on the Ridge Bond legacy and to watch clips from the 1954 television series, "Omnibus," please visit the official website at <https://www.ridgebond.net/>.

To purchase Pam Bond-Simmons' books, email her at Pam.bond007@gmail.com.

TOGETHER WE'RE MORE
Mike Mings, Pastor

TogetherWereMore.com

SPRING IS A TIME FOR REBIRTH!

RENEW YOUR SPIRIT AT THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

Choctaw Cultural Center celebrates Choctaw-Irish friendship at quarterly art market and culture event

By Shelia Kirven

The Choctaw Cultural Center held its quarterly arts market and culture event on Saturday, March 11 in Durant. Attendees spent the full day celebrating the Choctaw and Irish friendship. Guests enjoyed arrow-making, a pottery class and a special cooking class featuring shortbread cookies and Sassafras tea. Choctaw artists were on hand displaying and selling their handmade items. The Champuli Cafe included the United Kingdom's traditional Shepherd's Pie in its menu for the day.

Volunteers from the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) were also present to help with the special events.

Special activities included Irish games, dancing and a live performance by Celtic music group RUNA (runamusic.com).

RUNA is an Irish Celtic Roots musical group who fuse traditional songs with music from around the world. Their performance was energetic and high-spirited, yet emotional and moving. The packed audience enjoyed the performance immensely, and there was hardly a person not clapping their hands, tapping their toes or jumping up at the end for an enthusiastic standing ovation.

Before and after the concert, band members joined visitors in the lobby for photos and sharing of the Choctaw and Irish cultures through games and dancing.

In 2020, members of RUNA traveled to the Choctaw Nation to continue the friendship of the Choctaw and Irish people, sharing food, dancing, and travel together to historic Choctaw sites. They collaborated on music as well, and those songs were sung by the group during the Choctaw Cultural Center event.



RUNA performs for a crowded house with renditions of traditional Irish folk music interwoven with rhythms of jazz, bluegrass, flamenco and blues, as well as spirited dancing.



Ed and Sue Roeser of Skiatook, Oklahoma, traveled to Durant for the RUNA concert. The couple says they have followed the group through at least 14 states, seeing them for the first time in New York eleven years ago.



Philadelphia-based RUNA singer, Shannon Lambert-Ryan, shares the fun and versatility of the ancient toy Jacob's Ladder with Carl McKinney.



Sisters Henley and Olivia Nickles admire colorful animals made with pipe cleaners by Choctaw artists.



Visitors get a hands-on education during the traditional pottery class.

Richbourg featured in featured in New Choctaw Nation series, 'Choctaw Proud'

DURANT, Okla. (March 6, 2023) - The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's new series of the Together, We're More campaign titled 'Choctaw Proud' features different tribal members each month. This month Choctaw Nation spotlights tribal member Michaela Richbourg, a Broken Bow native and currently teaching and coaching in Allen.

Growing up in Broken Bow, Michaela remembers family hunting trips to the river and telling stories of the biggest deer they ever saw. At Thanksgiving, family elders cook Choctaw traditional foods like tanchi labona and banaha to share with everyone. In this close-knit family, Michaela found the love and support that is cherished among the Choctaw people.

While hunting and fishing hold a special place in Michaela's heart, she is most at home on the field. An elite athlete since childhood, she played several sports, including football, little-league baseball and travel league softball, and eventually her talent and hard work landed her a spot on the Oklahoma State University softball team.

Playing college sports taught Michaela how to hold herself accountable for a growing list of responsibilities. Balancing school with softball practice and a social life isn't always easy, but time management is one skill Michaela put to good use.

She is most grateful for her teammates who became a family-away-from-family.

In addition to balancing her responsibilities as a

student athlete, Michaela realized college softball wasn't like high school softball. The pace of the game is different, and the skills required to be successful required her to step up her practice habits. "They open your eyes up with more drills, and there's always more that you can learn," said Michaela, "But it helps not having to go through it on your own. On the bad days, your teammates are there to help build you up."

According to Michaela, bad days are just part of the learning process. "If you're not failing, that means you're not getting any better. If you're succeeding at everything, that means you're not growing as a person," she said. "When you see failure, there's an option to get better and grow within different opportunities."

After college, she returned to Southeastern Oklahoma to teach middle school special education in Allen. Working with special needs students has been a calling for Michaela since childhood. She recalls a classmate who was told at an early age that he would never walk again. Over time, Michaela got to watch him progress from being in a wheelchair to walking the halls with his cane. "It was the coolest thing to see, and it just kind of pulled me towards that," she said. Working one-on-one with a boy from her church who had a disability solidified Michaela's calling to teach.

Having a niece and nephew who have Down Syndrome has also taught Michaela a lot about how others see disability. Often



Choctaw Nation Photo Michaela Richbourg draws on the strength of her ancestors to be successful.

people don't look past the disability to the person behind it, which leads to misguided ideas about what that person is able to do. "Even though someone has a certain disability, they are still able to accomplish multiple things that you may not consider," Michaela said.

Michaela draws on the strength of her Choctaw ancestors for inspiration in her daily life. She knows the responsibility for things they were unable to accomplish now rests on her shoulders, an honor she is proud to bear. She also relies on her faith as a Christian to keep herself connected to the past, present and future.

Together, We're More features 18 tribal members from different careers, locations and walks of life, making a difference in Oklahoma and beyond. Each month the Choctaw Nation will release short stories of tribal members like Michaela and how they exemplify being 'Choctaw Proud.'

To watch Michaela tell her story "More Than an Athlete" visit choctawnation.com/bios/athlete/ or go to togetherweremore.com to learn more about how the Choctaw Nation is making a difference in Oklahoma and beyond.

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Devin Lindley

The days are getting longer, the trees are starting to green up, and the fish are starting to take notice of the changes as well. During this time, sportsmen are thinking about finding deer sheds and mushrooms, chasing turkeys and catching fish. When planning a spring fishing trip, anglers need to take time, temperature and location into consideration before heading out the door to maximize their success.

March - This is big bass time and the start of crappie spawning. These fish establish nesting areas and become dominant over territories while feeding heavily. Anglers should target transitional areas, a mix of rock/sand, along with woody structures or vegetation. When targeting bass or crappie, anglers should focus on shallow habitats and be observant of spawning beds. The preferred bass baits are plastic worms, crank baits and spinner baits. Crappie tackle includes small jigs and live minnows.

April - The increase in rain drives crappie into shallow water, white bass to move upstream, and wrap up the spawn of largemouth. Anglers target rocky or woody areas to catch spawning crappie and streams that are flowing water for white bass. Channel catfish prefer moving water around cover such as logs or undercut banks in creeks. Crappie and white bass baits include jigs and live minnows, while catfish baits range from worms and shad to artificial baits.

May - Warmer water temperatures have sunfish establishing their territories and catfish getting ready for the summer spawn. When setting out for sunfish, target areas that are shallow and associated with any habitat and sight fishing spawning beds can also be effective. Catfish anglers should focus on log jams, deep pools, or bends in a creek and open water and fishing in mudflats or around structures near a channel or drop. Sunfish baits range from redworms, crickets, and small jigs on slip bobbers.

Below is a list of fish and what bodies of water they can be found in within the Choctaw Nation Reservation:

- Bass- Broken Bow Lake, Lake Eufaula, McGee Creek and Sardis Lake
- Crappie- Lake Eufaula, McGee Creek, Sardis Lake and Wister Lake
- Catfish- Creeks, rivers and most lakes in Southeastern Oklahoma
- Sunfish- Creeks and smaller bodies of water
- Trout- Lower Mountain Fork River
- White Bass- Lake Eufaula and Sardis Lake
- Walleye- Broken Bow Lake
- Paddlefish, Striped Bass and Alligator Gar - Lower Red River and its tributaries

*Remember to check local and federal regulations that require permits other than a tribal fishing license.

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation



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Sign up now to register as a food vendor at the 2023 Choctaw Labor Day Festival.

The deadline for applications is May 31, 2023.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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#CHAHTALABORDAY

CNO celebrates Read Across America Day

By Chris Jennings

Chief Gary Batton, Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr., several council members and other members of tribal leadership read to kids at many of the local pre-schools and Head Start classes on March 2 as part of National Read Across America Day.

Started in 1998 by the National Education Association, Read Across America Day happens yearly, coinciding with famed children's author Dr. Seuss's birthday.

The day is set aside to highlight the importance of reading to children at a young age.

Emily Dubler, Center Manager for the Choctaw Nation, said, "Reading is important for children because it enhances vocabulary, cognitive development, and improves general knowledge and comprehension."

Even if a child can't read yet, picture books can help children learn more about their surroundings, giving them a jump start on learning.

"Though they may not be able to speak just yet, books with pictures help them identify the world around them," said Dubler.

Spending a little time reading to or reading with children gives them a jump start that becomes more important as they begin their learning journey.

"It helps them understand the world around them. No matter how young a child is, there are big benefits to reading to them," said Dubler.

Academic benchmark tests are often done in the third grade.

Up until the third grade, children are learning to read. After that, they begin to read to learn. Without the necessary proficiency, they're left behind or trying to catch up.

According to a report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a child's reading proficiency by third grade is directly related to their success in high school. In other words, if a child could not read at a proficient level by the third grade, the likelihood that they would

drop out of high school significantly increased.

The statistics for Native Americans and high school graduation are lower than average when compared to white students. In 2018-19, the graduation rates for Native Americans were 74%, compared to the U.S. average of 86%.

When Native American kids drop out of high school, they're often unable to rise out of the generational poverty they face. The first step to stopping that generational poverty is reading to them at an early age.

"When a child is able to read, it builds their confidence and independence, which leads to their future academic success," said Dubler.

The statistics show that these academic successes could be on the rise. According to the Institute of Education Sciences, the overall dropout rate for Native American students decreased from 15.4% in 2010 to 9.6% in 2019.

Education is one of the most important cornerstones of self-sufficiency and quality of life. It is also a crucial factor in addressing the long-term challenges Native Americans face.

A 2019 National Center for Education Statistics survey showed that a higher percentage of elementary school students participated in learning activities with their parents than in 2012.

These activities included things like arts and crafts (75% vs. 67%), board games or puzzles (74% vs. 64%), or were told a story (74% vs. 69%).

Participating in these learning activities encourages connections with the children.

"Reading to children can also build connections with the child that is being read to. Connection makes the child feel important and builds a positive relationship with the teacher," said Dubler.

Whether the reader is a parent, family member, elder or schoolteacher, reading to a child can leave a lasting positive impact. Plus, it's fun for everyone involved!



BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

April 2023

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A Choctaw connection to world famous Broadway play Oklahoma!


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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2023

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