



February 2022 Issue



Photos by Christian Toews

Tribes exercise their sovereignty rights

By Kendra Germany-Wall

In December 2021, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt announced he would not renew the standing hunting and fishing compacts with tribal governments after they expire at the end of 2021. These agreements with both the Choctaw and Cherokee Nations have been in place since 2016. The governor previously approved the compacts in 2019 and 2020 and praised the compacts for generating funding for the state's conservation efforts.

In a press release published through his office on December 8, 2020, Stitt stated, "I appreciate the Choctaw Nation working with my office and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation on a one-year hunting and fishing compact extension. This compact continues a partnership between the State of Oklahoma and the Choctaw Nation to capture federal funds for conservation efforts across our state while promoting hunting and fishing opportunities for citizens of the Choctaw Nation."

The landmark compacts were the first state-tribal agreements of their kind in the country and captured millions of federal dollars for wildlife management. Over their lifetime, the Choctaw compact accounted for \$6 million, while the Cherokee compact generated more than \$32 million. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation dedicated that funding for wildlife management planning and operations, law enforcement and conservation efforts, benefiting all Oklahomans, Native and non-native.

Tribes have inherent hunting and fishing rights on their reservations. These rights have been recognized by various treaties with the United States. The compacts allowed for a coordinated, intergovernmental system that provided hunting and fishing opportunities for tribal citizens while generating revenue and federal funding for wildlife management programs across the state.

On December 13, 2021, the Five Tribes released a joint press release addressing the issue.

"Under previous administrations, compacts regarding hunting and fishing licenses were a routine matter. They clearly provided great financial and cultural benefit to both the state and tribal members. Unfortunately, Gov. Stitt has once again decided to let his personal concerns outweigh what is best for the people he was elected to represent, putting conflict above cooperation," said Choctaw Nation Chief Gary Batton. "We hope he will change his stance and respect tribal sovereignty while protecting wildlife, generating revenue and improving the quality of life for Oklahomans."

"This decision is tremendously disappointing, not just for Cherokee citizens who are losing a program that Governor Stitt himself knew was a win-win, but for every Oklahoman who has benefited from these agreements and the future generations that would have benefited from federal funding to support wildlife management and conser-

vation," said Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. "Unfortunately, this is consistent with what we've seen from the governor since the Supreme Court's McGirt decision. Whenever there is an opportunity to cooperate with tribes – whether on keeping criminals off the streets or on hunting and fishing rights – the governor has instead sought to undermine collaboration and claim McGirt created chaos. I promise the citizens of the Cherokee Nation that I will continue to aggressively defend our treaty rights and sovereignty against these attacks."

"We believe in the treaty rights of tribal nations," said Muscogee Nation Principal Chief David Hill. "The state's decision to end the hunting and fishing Compacts with the Cherokee and Choctaw Nations is disappointing especially in that it only hurts the state of Oklahoma, but the true intent is to demean tribal sovereignty."

"Chickasaws have long had a close relationship with the land and a strong commitment to responsible stewardship of our natural resources," said Chickasaw Nation Governor Bill Anoatubby. "Wildlife conservation is an important aspect of our duty to protect and preserve our environment for future generations. Therefore, the Chickasaw Nation is joining the Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole Nations in a collaborative effort to protect the hunting and fishing rights of our citizens while also preserving Oklahoma's abundant wildlife for the benefit of our children and grandchildren."

"The Treaty of 1866 between the United States and Seminole Nation guaranteed the Seminole possession of their land and protection against enemies in exchange for peace," said Seminole Nation of Oklahoma Chief Lewis Johnson.

"The Seminole Nation since time immemorial has supported tribal sovereignty and remains at peace with other Indian tribes and supports our fellow tribes in calling for the methods and tactics of the Governor of the State of Oklahoma to cease the acts of hostility on tribal sovereignty," said Chief Johnson. "It's time for the governor to change his approach to tribal rights and instead focus on doing what's best for the people of Oklahoma and recognize the value of tribal partnerships. Seminoles will always stand up for tribal rights and sovereignty."

Cherokee Nation and Choctaw Nation leaders also sent letters to the governor's office.

On December 30, the Choctaw Nation Tribal Council met in a special session. During the special session, Tribal Council unanimously voted to amend the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Fish, Game and Animals Code. Tribal Council met again on January 8, 2022, for Regular Session and made further adjustments to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Fish, Game and Animals Code. As wildlife conservation is an evolving field that requires constant attention and study, Tribal Council will continue to adjust the laws of the Nation to maintain good stewardship of the Nation's resources.

For more information, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/huntingandfishing>.



Choctaw Nation Photo

On Thursday, December 30, Choctaw Tribal Council passed new Tribal hunting and fishing codes, which allow tribal members to hunt and fish within the tribe's reservation without a state license.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is eligible to hunt and fish within the Choctaw Nation Reservation?

Answer: Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal members are eligible to hunt and fish within Choctaw Nation Reservation in accordance to tribal laws. Also, nonmembers with valid state-issued licenses are eligible to hunt in the reservation in accordance with applicable laws.

2. What documentation does a Choctaw tribal member need to have to hunt/fish

Answer: You will need proof of Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal membership. Additional forms of ID might be requested to confirm identity. In addition, Hunter Safety course completion is also required by the Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code and the State of Oklahoma.

3. What if my tribal membership card has expired?

Answer: The expiration date listed on your tribal membership is for ID purposes and does not affect tribal member status. You may renew your card by contacting the Choctaw Nation Membership Department by visiting: <https://www.choctawnation.com/contacts-applications/cdibmembership-information>.

4. How does a Choctaw tribal member get a copy of my tribal membership card?

Answer: Contact the Choctaw Nation Membership Department by visiting: <https://www.choctawnation.com/contacts-applications/cdibmembership-information>.

5. Will a Choctaw tribal member be eligible to hunt and fish if my tribal membership application has not been processed?

Answer: No, only confirmed tribal members are eligible to hunt and fish.

6. Does a Choctaw tribal member have to reside in Oklahoma to hunt/fish in Choctaw Nation land?

Answer: No, all Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal members, regardless of residency, are permitted to hunt and fish within the Choctaw Nation land in accordance with Choctaw Nation code.

7. If a Choctaw tribal member has a felony, can they still hunt?

Answer: Hunters who have been convicted of a felony are prohibited from having a rifle, shotgun, or pistol in their possession or under their immediate control under the Choctaw Nation Criminal Code.

8. Where can a Choctaw tribal member hunt and fish?

Answer: You can only hunt/fish within Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma reservation boundaries in accordance with all applicable trespass laws. Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma boundary map can be found at: <https://1s-civilizedtribe.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f1ea8a042fa4fb809df80a03714416>.

9. What if a Choctaw tribal member wants to hunt/fish outside of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma boundaries?

Answer: At this time, you will need a valid State of Oklahoma hunting and fishing license and must follow applicable laws.

10. Can a Choctaw tribal member hunt/fish in other Native American tribal reservations in Oklahoma?

Answer: At this time, you will need a valid State of Oklahoma hunting and fishing license and must follow applicable laws.

11. What does a Choctaw tribal member do if they already have a valid Oklahoma Hunting/Fishing license?

Answer: No action is necessary on your part. Follow the usual process.

12. Where does a Choctaw tribal member get deer or turkey tags?

Answer: You are not required to pre-purchase tags, but are required to report your harvest via Chahta Achvffa Member Portal.

13. Where does a Choctaw tribal member get a duck stamp?

Answer: Duck stamps are federally regulated, and federal guidelines will still apply.

14. Can a Choctaw tribal member hunt year-round?

Answer: No, regulations set by the Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code apply.

15. How does a Choctaw tribal member check in their deer, turkey, etc.?

Answer: Complete a Hunter Harvest Report in the Chahta Achvffa Member Portal.

16. Can a Choctaw tribal member check-in their deer, turkey, etc. from a cell phone?

Answer: Yes, but a reliable internet connection or cell service is required for successful submission.

17. Is there a bag limit?

Answer: Yes, regulations set by the Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code apply.

18. Can a Choctaw tribal member have their deer processed and/or sent to a taxidermist?

Answer: Yes, but a tag number may be required which can be found in Chahta Achvffa Member Portal application status grid, as well as the confirmation email you receive after check-in is completed.

19. Is there a hunting and fishing age requirement?

Answer: Yes, there are age restrictions by the Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code.

20. What happens if a Choctaw tribal member receives a ticket for not having a state issued hunting and fishing license?

Answer: If you receive a ticket from an Oklahoma game warden for not having a state issued hunting/fishing license while hunting within the Choctaw Nation boundaries, e-mail the Choctaw Nation Legal Department at memberlegal@choctawnation.com.

21. What if I'm not a Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma tribal member?

Answer: Any Oklahoma resident with a valid State of Oklahoma hunting and/or fishing license can hunt within the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma reservation in accordance with applicable law.

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

New year, new successes

Halito,
Happy New Year! I pray that you all enjoyed spending quality time with your family and friends. Our 2021 annual report will be available shortly, but here's a sneak peak of the themed highlights:

Sovereignty

- First Choctaw Flag Day – our inaugural Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Flag Day took place on October 16, 2021. Our Choctaw proud were invited to celebrate by flying the flag at their homes, businesses, and on their vehicles.
- Amy Pierce Appointment – we hired our first full-time District Court Judge.
- Tribal Prosecution Department – the Choctaw Nation also added to its Tribal Prosecution Department by hiring a prosecuting attorney.

Community

- New Construction – the Choctaw Nation successfully opened a 39,000-square-foot Child Care Center in Durant, the Hugo Central Laundry Facility, and expanded the Talihiina Residency and Specialty Clinic. The Choctaw Nation also completed the building of 120 homes in fiscal year 2021.

Health & Wellness

- Chi Hullo Li (I Care For You) Residential Treatment Center – is dedicated to empowering Native American women and their families by promoting the healing of women and their children through diverse experiences that encompass cultural and spiritual identity, physical and emotional health, education, and effective parenting.

Responsibility

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Tribal leaders put elders and disabled members at the top of their priority, regardless of residency, for the ARPA fund distribution. The Choctaw Nation served 97,902 tribal members under the adult economic recovery program; 39,737 tribal members under the dependent economic recovery program; 25,234 elders under the elder food security program; and 2,638 tribal members under the disability food security program.

The Choctaw Nation also introduced its five strategic goals and strategies through the year 2025, which are as follows: support service delivery to improve quality of life; strengthen financial growth and economic stability; protect and promote Choctaw culture and exercise sovereignty; become the employer of choice; and to achieve digital transformation.

I'm excited for what 2022 holds for us and how we can continue to be a blessing to our tribal members.

Yakoke and God bless.



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Anxiety

Anxiety is reaching a high level in our society today.

With the global outbreak of viruses and political demonstrations of different views, society is facing a period of apprehension and fear. What does the word anxiety actually mean?

The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

The term, "be careful for nothing," is the closest biblical meaning to the word anxiety. The root meaning is, "to draw in different directions or distract"; that is to have distracting care or anxiety.

Apostle Paul's command to "be careful for nothing," does not suggest carelessness, but to refrain from being troubled with cares or carrying unnecessary burdens.

Jesus uses the term, "take no thought," in Matthew chapter 6. This does not mean thoughtlessness, but rather anxiousness or undue thought.

The dictionary defines anxious as "trouble in the mind respecting some uncertain matter." Apprehensive and fearful would be synonyms.

Worry means to be "uneasy in the mind; to feel anxiety about something, to fret."

The old Anglo-Saxon root idea for anxiety is to "strangle or choke," describing its destructive force.

The Apostle Paul himself personally experienced the destructive force of anxiety.

Therefore he is warning the Philippian church of this danger.

In 2 Corinthians 11:28, the Apostle Paul writes, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

He is saying besides being beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, etc. for his beliefs, he has to be concerned about the spiritual needs of the churches. Therefore he is recommending by prayer and supplication, we should make our requests be made known unto God.

Besides the task of making a living, we are facing social dilemma of extreme proportions today.

Let us heed the words of Apostle Paul and turn to prayer to God.

In 1 Peter 5:7, we read, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

American Heart Month

February is upon us, which means we'll be celebrating Valentine's Day. But while you're out purchasing items to express your love for your significant other, let's be mindful of other matters of the heart.

It's American Heart Month, which is designed to bring awareness to the many factors that surround heart disease, such as symptoms, complications, and risk factors.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States. With this knowledge, the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority (CNHSA) has prioritized identifying and treating cardiovascular health in the patients they serve.

"From early detection of heart conditions while still in the womb, thorough screening and monitoring during childhood, to ongoing care and treating into adulthood, CNHSA provides

state of the detection and treatment of heart related issues," stated Dr. Jason Hill, CNHSA Chief Medical Officer.

Dr. Hill noted that diabetes remains a major cause of developing heart disease and CNHSA encourages patients to be screened for both diabetes and heart disease, since early detection and treatment have proven to increase overall health and life span.

When it comes to improving our health, I encourage all of us to speak with our healthcare providers about necessary preventative measures that keep us healthy for ourselves and our loved one.

To contact the Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority call (800) 522-6170.

God Bless!

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SUMMER 2022 INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



The program provides opportunities for Choctaw students from area colleges to gain career fundamentals at Choctaw Nation offices throughout the CNO Reservation while also earning college credits. The program offers temporary, paid positions and is mutually beneficial for both the intern and hosting department. Students are rewarded with academic and professional experience. CNO benefits from the additional support and expertise interns provide to help meet business and operational needs.

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Choctaw Nation Human Resources

MIT classical composer releases series of Choctaw-inspired piano pieces

By Shelia Kirven

Choctaw classical composer Dr. Charles Shadle is proud to announce the release of his original series of piano pieces entitled Choctaw Animals.

Shadle worked with the Choctaw Nation to ensure that the information about the pieces was respectful to the Choctaw people. “We wanted to make sure that we had gotten that right, that it was not only respectful of Choctaw people but helped to put information out in a broad community because the news story was shared all over the world. So, people could understand that Choctaw people are still here, we’re doing really well, and we have a vast amount to contribute to our modern culture.”

Shadle was born in Ardmore, Oklahoma. His mother’s family owned a large ranch near Atoka, and his father was a pharmacist who had a drug store in Tishomingo. The family lived in Tishomingo until Shadle was five when they moved to Colorado, where he grew up. Summers and holidays were spent in Oklahoma visiting family.

He went to the University of Colorado as an undergraduate, Tulane University in New Orleans for his masters and then received his doctorate in Composition and Theory from Brandeis University. He stayed in Boston and has spent primarily his entire career at MIT, where he teaches composition, music theory and music history. He serves as a Senior Lecturer in Music and as Theory Coordinator.

“It’s very interesting to be a composer, to be a creative artist, and to also be a teacher. I find that’s a really useful combination because it’s a lot of extraordinary energy students have, and being a part of helping them unleash their own creativity, in fact, does the same thing for myself, and that always feels like an important thing to me.” He talks about his profession and his hobby being the same thing. “Composing is fun to me.”

Shadle’s works take many forms; five operas, four symphonies, numerous pieces of chamber music, many songs and choral music, both sacred and secular, make up his catalog.

When he was a child, Shadle started taking piano lessons. He would play what he was learning for the family when he came to Oklahoma.

His great-aunt, Florence Neal, gave him a music book at the age of 10 that her great-grandmother, Sophia Krebs Paffon, brought from Mississippi over the Trail of Tears.

“It would look very much like the modern Choctaw hymnal looks like with many of the same songs.”

Shadle said he knew even then it was something special. It has always been in the background of his music-making, and these days is more in the foreground.

“She probably wasn’t able to bring some other things to make room for that. It provides a model for me that the arts have been incredibly important to Choctaw people as long as there have been Choctaw people,” Shadle explained.

He still has the book he was given and says, “it’s a thing to be treasured.” Music runs deep in his blood.

One of Shadle’s aunts even played for silent movies as a teenager during the years of the first world war.

The three biggest Choctaw pieces of Shadle’s are pieces for small ensembles.

According to Shadle, they were all written for a famous ensemble in London, England, called Lontona.

“I had this sense that I have this set of three big, very complicated, admittedly, and very sophisticated pieces, pieces that only could be played by very skilled professional musicians,” explained Shadle. “I thought, ‘I want to have some pieces that actually could be heard in the Choctaw Nation where you wouldn’t have to go to a concert hall to hear them, where most people who could play the piano, even small kids, could just sit down and play these pieces. That was the idea behind the Choctaw Animals.’”

The three earlier pieces were entitled Limestone Gap, Red Cedar and The Old Place from his Oklahoma Choctaw Cycle.

“I was very pleased with these pieces, and they are very important to me, but I was just kind of sorry that they weren’t what most Choctaw people would have a chance to experience. With the Choctaw Animals, they’re much shorter, they’re much simpler, they’re much more accessible and easier and can be played at home if they own a keyboard or piano.”

Shadle also took melodic elements that were based on having done some study of traditional Choctaw social dance music.

“While I don’t use any of those actual melodies, I was extracting principles that were related to them, and so I hope in some way they feel Choctaw, not only in terms of the titles of the pieces which are in Choctaw but also that there are elements of Choctaw music-making of earlier traditions that you can hear from some extent in those pieces,” said Shadle.

According to Shadle, representing the Choctaw Nation is important to him.

“I really, very much want to sort of serve as a gateway, a



Photo Provided

Dr. Charles Shadle teaches composition, music theory, and music history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he serves as a Senior Lecturer in Music and as Theory Coordinator.

sort of conduit for young Choctaw musicians so that they realize that there is a place for them in the world of classical music, that they would be welcome, that they would find a comfortable home there where they could do their best work if that is the direction that their work takes them,” Shadle said.

He recently did a series of interviews about his work and life as a Choctaw composer of contemporary classical music for KHFM National Public Radio, New Mexico.

In his interview, he talked about how he has been taught his whole life to be proud of his Choctaw heritage. “I have gradually noticed, over time, that some of my pieces come from a specifically Choctaw place,” said Shadle. “I am Choctaw, so in some sense all my music is also Choctaw, but I do recognize that some pieces are explicitly so, while others are implicitly so.”

The MIT Symphony Orchestra, under Music Director, Adam Boyles, will give the premiere performance of Shadle’s Fourth Symphony in April of this year.

To listen to and download free sheet music for Choctaw Animals, visit <https://shass.mit.edu/news/news-2021-choctaw-animals-mit-composer-charles-shadle>.

Johnson-Jennings gives back to community

By Chris Jennings

Dr. Michelle Johnson-Jennings has always dreamed of giving back to her community. She talked about that dream in her high school journal.

“I wrote in that journal, back in high school, that my dream was to work with my community. To help revitalize our ancestors’ stories and our practices and our love; to help and give in some way,” said Johnson-Jennings.

Johnson-Jennings has completed that goal on a global scale. She’s worked with international and national Indigenous nations, organizations, and communities to prevent substance abuse, food addiction and obesity. She also co-developed health interventions using ancestral guidelines to encourage a renewed commitment to health and revitalize medicine, food and land-based practices.

From working at Saskatchewan University in Canada to completing a Fulbright Scholarship in New Zealand, her career path has taken her far from home. Regardless of where she’s located, that goal of teaching and enabling her Native community is still being accomplished.

Most recently, she’s joined the School of Social Work as professor and director of the division of environmentally-based health and land-based healing at the School’s Indigenous Wellness Research Institute in Seattle, Washington.

Johnson-Jennings teaches community health leaders techniques and practices that they can then take back to their communities. These leaders are then equipped with the knowledge necessary to improve not just their own lives but the lives of others.

One of the things Johnson-Jennings has worked on closer to home is as being part of the team to start the Yapalli project. The Yapalli project takes a group of women and prepares them to walk on the Trail of Tears. While on the walk, which takes several days, stories of ancestors from specific spots on the trail are shared with the women.

“We read the actual words of the ancestors from those locations that we visit on the trail. Every time, those ancestors talk about love,” said Johnson-Jennings.

In land-based healing, you go back to sites of trauma and reconnect with what your ancestors were going through. These stories of love, when told at sites of trauma, affect the participants in ways that can help them fix their own lives.

“As we go back to the land, what we find is that individuals are better able to think about trauma and how to fix their life, to reconnect to Mother Earth,” said Johnson-Jennings.



Photo Provided

Dr. Johnson-Jennings has worked with Indigenous nations across the globe to fight addiction.

By visiting these sites of trauma, participants are confronted with the sadness and grief that their ancestors experienced. They’re also faced with their ancestors’ love for future generations, which gave them the strength to get through the hardships. Being able to experience this instills a sense of responsibility.

“We face that sadness and grief, but we also heal through reconnecting to the land, to the sites of trauma... and focusing on our ancestors’ strength of love for the future generations,” said Johnson-Jennings.

It’s this cosmic pay-it-forward that can be the heart of healing for generations to come. The realization that your ancestors loved you before you were born, that they survived these hardships so that you could have a better life.

By accepting their gift of a better life, you’re also ensuring the possibility of a better life for generations to come. Johnson-Jennings reiterates this, asking, “What can we do right now to make a better life for future generations?”

Before joining the University of Washington, Johnson-Jennings was an associate professor in community health and epidemiology in medicine and associate professor in Indigenous studies and the scientific director of the National Indigenous HIV/AIDS Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. She held the Canadian Research Chair in Indigenous Community-Engaged Research.

She founded and directed the Research for Indigenous Community Health Center at the University of Minnesota and conducted research in New Zealand as part of a U.S. Fulbright scholarship.

Johnson-Jennings received her doctoral degree in counseling psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a master’s degree in education from Harvard University, where she specialized in human development and psychology and contemporary Native issues.

Durant casino and resort Sky Tower a “Native art lover’s dream”

Durant, Okla.— Choctaw Casino & Resort- Durant in Durant, Oklahoma opened the Sky Casino expansion in August of 2021, featuring a 21-story hotel with 1,000 additional hotel rooms, expanded slot floor and new unique experiences for guests. One of those experiences is the ‘Art Walk’.

A collection of over 6,000 breathtaking pieces of art were installed throughout the expansion. Fifty-eight of these pieces, composed by 31 Choctaw artists are part of the Art Walk that is available for guests to travel throughout the property in awe of their creations. The Art Walk tour is a self-guided digital experience that is accessible by QR codes at each piece of art.

Scanning the QR code will allow you to learn about the piece, the style used, the artist and about their Native American art.

“We were very intentional in building a space to celebrate and showcase the incredible works of acclaimed Native American Artist”, shared Heidi Grant, Executive Officer of Gaming and Hospitality. “...The Sky Tower and the artwork within is breathtaking and tells an incredibly story. We’re very honored to share it with the world”.

The Choctaw Nation is proud of its artists and displays their work in many facilities. We encourage you to visit Choctaw Casino & Resort- Durant to experience it for yourself!

For more information on the “Art Walk,” visit www.choctawartwalk.com. To stay up-to-date with what’s happening at Choctaw Casino & Resorts - Durant, visit <https://www.choctawcasinos.com/durant/>.

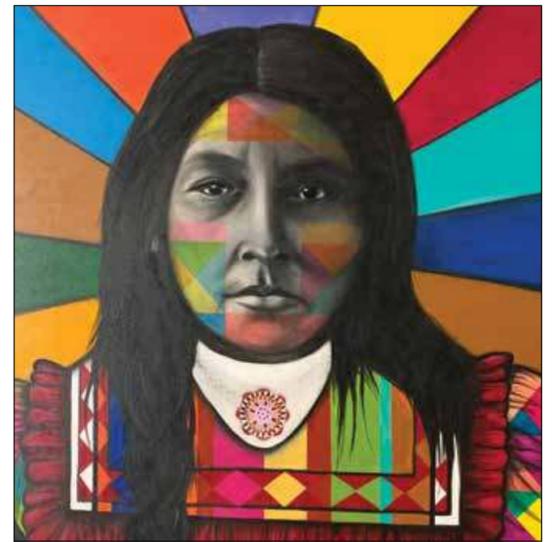


Photo by Shelia Kirven

ISHKI is one example of the beautiful pieces that can be seen while on the Sky Tower Art Walk. ISHKI was painted by Wani Marshall in 2021 and is acrylic on canvas.



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News of the Nation



Photo by Patty Hawkins

During the December 2021 Tribal Council meeting, the Choctaw Tribal Council unanimously voted to designate the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Complex located at 529 North 16th Avenue, Durant, Oklahoma, as the "Gregory E. Pyle Tribal Complex." Picture is the late Chief Pyle's family and members of the Tribal Council.

Choctaw Nation Announces New Entertainment & Resort Development in Hochatown, Okla.

Hochatown, Okla., (January 14, 2022) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma announced today that it will be opening an entertainment and resort development in Hochatown, Okla. The development is a brand-new concept with a design and experience that will reflect the rich culture of the Choctaw people.

The four-story, 202,000 square-foot development will include 100 hotel rooms, 600 slot machines, eight table games, several restaurants and bars, a pool, an outdoor venue with an amphitheater, beer garden and a family-friendly game zone.

In addition to the resort, a 12,000 square-foot mercantile will adjoin the property offering a small market, convenient food options and a fuel station with 24 pumps. Guests will experience the Choctaw culture through the design of the facility, authentic art and will be able to shop authentic Choctaw art in the Mercantile.

"This development will be an economic driver not only for southeastern Oklahoma but the entire state. The project will create more than 2,000 new construction jobs and an economic impact of more than \$211 million during the building period," said Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton. "We are proud to be a part of this project and look forward to providing more opportunities and financial success for our tribal members, our state, and all Oklahomans."

"We are thrilled to add a new entertainment venue to the region that is unlike any other in the state. From parents to children, this will offer something for everyone in the family," states Janie Dillard, Senior Executive Officer, for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. "This modern entertainment venue will encompass the rich heritage of the Choctaw people and offer elevated dining, outdoor and indoor activities, plus gaming and a beautiful new hotel. I am excited for our neighbors and friends to see all that this has to offer when it opens in 2023."

Building upon a history of successful collaboration, Manhattan Construction Company and JCJ Architecture are the lead partners for this project. Manhattan Construction Company and JCJ Architecture have worked with Choctaw Nation on several other projects including the Choctaw Cultural Center and Choctaw Wellness Center. JCJ Architecture has worked most recently on the Choctaw Casino & Resort - Durant expansion and on-going property improvements.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma anticipates breaking ground in the spring of 2022 with an expected completion date of fall of 2023. The new development will be at the corner of N. U.S. Highway 259 and OK-259A and will bring more than 400 ongoing hospitality jobs to the Hochatown area.



Above are renderings of the new Choctaw Entertainment & Resort Development in Hochatown, Oklahoma. The new four story resort will include 100 hotel rooms, 600 slot machines, eight table games, several restaurants and bars, a pool, an outdoor venue with an amphitheater, beer garden and a family-friendly game zone.



Jennifer Woods

District 6

Halito District 6 tribal members! I am excited and look forward to serving you as your District 6 Tribal Councilwoman another year. There have been so many things that we experienced this past year, and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve you. During our Tribal Council election this past September, I ran again for District 6 Tribal Council and was honored to have run uncontested and won the honor of remaining your Councilwoman. I want to thank you all so much for your confidence in my leadership for this district. Yakoke!

It always brings me much pleasure to help in our local communities and provide much-needed funds for the local community. Through the Choctaw Community Partnership Fund, in 2021, we have given a total of \$175,100 to our city and county to help with roads, bridges, and other needed projects. We also added five new tribal police officers, giving us six officers to

better serve our communities during the McGirt rulings.

I am very excited about our Job For The Day program, which has been working all year to get as many of our tribal members into jobs. This year in District 6, the total number of hires was 68, with my whole area having 95 hires in total. We also had 37 transfers for the year. I am very proud of the success of this program and look forward to more of our tribal members being hired in the upcoming year.

We are excited about our twenty new houses being built in Wilburton. The ten new Independent Elder and ten Affordable Rental homes are projected to be ready for the tenant to move in at the end of January 2022.

I am excited about the work that is being done on our new building North on Highway 2 at the old BP building. We are looking forward to moving into our new upgraded facility scheduled for May of 2022. The new building will provide us the means to provide more services to our tribal members and a 30 person call center, which will provide more jobs. Having more programs such as housing, outreach, elder advocacy, veteran's advocacy, and many more being easily available for our members means that services will be provided faster.

This past year was another year of expanding the hospital in District 6 in Talihiina. We were able to build a new intern housing building as well as expand our pharmacy. The hospital dental office and the patient room were remodeled. The women's Chi Hullo Li building was renovated, which was much needed to provide the best drug and alcohol treatment program services. Also, the Residency-Specialty Clinic at the Hospital. District 6 continues to see growth in our community and at our hospital, where the services continue to increase and meet needs.

Our seniors were excited to get to attend the grand opening of our Cultural Center in Durant this year. This was the first trip that our seniors were able to take since our closures during the Covid Pandemic. We were able to tour the beautiful new facility and enjoy a day of exploring and getting to be with other seniors throughout the Choctaw Nation.

We have been able to make several donations this past year, including providing tables and chairs to our local VFW in Wilburton. The donation was much needed by the Veterans. We also were able to donate a refrigerator, shelves, and other kitchen items to the Yanush Food Kitchen. The Kitchen was in much need of these items in order to continue to provide lunches to those who were homebound in the area. We also made donations to some of our churches as well. And of course, we cannot forget the library opening in Red Oak where we were able to match funds of over \$100,000 through our Small Business Development program that were raised for its completion as this was a dream of all our dear friend, the late Jodie White.

We also always support our children and youth by attending and buying their FFA Livestock Premium Sales, where we paid a total of \$80,750. We continue to support our local schools with the Annual School Appropriation Dollars. We have also continued our Children's Meals and Snack feeding program, which provided meals and snacks weekly throughout last year and will continue into 2022. We have also continued to feed our seniors weekly and deliver meals to homebound tribal members in Wilburton, Red Oak and Quinton and pick up commodities for those tribal members who do not have transportation. We are providing meals on Wednesdays inside the District 6 Community center and delivering to the homebound. We can also provide meals through curbside delivery if the seniors would prefer that. We are watching the COVID numbers and practicing safety measures, ensuring that masks are provided and social distancing. We will be celebrating Valentine's Day on Wednesday, February 9. We will be crowning this year's Valentine's king and queen. Make plans to attend. Lunch begins at 11:00 a.m.

In the Choctaw Nation, the Foster Care program is in need of Choctaw tribal member homes for foster care of children. If you are interested, please call Choctaw Nation Foster Care Recruiter Julie McElyea, at 580-924-8280. We need good homes to keep our children safe until they can be returned to their families.

We were all excited to be able to visit our veterans who live at the Veterans Center in Talihiina. This is the first time in a couple of years that we were able to go into the facility and give each veteran a Christmas present as well as a visit from Santa Claus. We also held our annual Christmas party at the Community Center, which allowed tribal members to drive through with their children to see Santa and get a gift. We also held Christmas parties at our Head Start in Wilburton, Day Care in Talihiina and the Independent Elders home in Talihiina. It was so good to see our lives go back to a bit of normalcy.

I am looking forward to what lies ahead in 2022. I ask for your continued prayers as I lead this district and pray for wisdom in all my efforts to serve my tribal members in District 6. I'm looking to bring more businesses to our district and continue growth. Be sure to watch for updates of some exciting news in the future. Yakoke!



Photo Provided

District 6 Councilwoman Jennifer Woods donated toys to the Choctaw Tribal Police and Indian Child Welfare Departments to be distributed when the departments are called out to homes to help the kids while they are in uncomfortable situations. Pictured: L-R: Priscilla Ward-CHR Secretary, Shi Riggsby-Tribal Police, Jeremy Green- Tribal Police, Heather Crouch-CBSW, Kneeling: David Durant-Job for the Day, Councilwoman Jennifer Woods, Lori Pugh-CHR, Jesse James- Tribal Police, Cody Donley- Tribal Police, Kendon Watkins- Tribal Police.

GRADUATION STOLES AND CORDS

Apply for Choctaw graduation stoles and cords for your upcoming graduation beginning January 2, 2022

CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Education Services

CHAHTA HOMESTEAD PROJECT: 1830-1930

Marquette University Archives, Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions Records ID: 00017

HOMESTEADS | OLD SCHOOLS | CHURCHES | FAMILY HISTORY | PHOTOGRAPHS

Our project aims to bring together the information we do know with community knowledge to stitch together a map of the Choctaw Nation's early landscape.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

What are you interested in learning from this project? Do you have information to provide?

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

CHAHTA REWARDS

SAVE MONEY THE CHAHTA WAY! CHECK OUT OUR NEW PROMOTIONS

JANUARY — MARCH 2022

BUY 2 CHEETOS® 2-50Z

SAVE \$0.60

BUY 2 7UP®, A&W OR SUNKIST 20oz

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SEE THE DETAILS AT CHOCTAWTRAVELPLAZAS.COM.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

February 2	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 4	Crowder	By Appointment
February 8	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 9	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
February 11	Atoka	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
February 11	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
February 15	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 16	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
February 16	Stigler	By Appointment
February 22	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
February 23	Wilburton	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
February 25	Atoka	8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
February 25	Coalgate	1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
February 28	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 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:

Atoka Community Center
 February 25, 2022
 9:00 – 11:00



Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna
January Language Lesson

Common Questions

Kvta-Who? / Kvta hosh- Who is it that....?

Ilvppvt kvta?	Who is this?
Yvmmvt kvta?	Who is that?
Kvta hosh vla?	Who is here? (or who has arrived?)
Kvta hosh anya?	Who is it? (nearby in motion?)
Kvta ish pisa ha?	Who did you see?
Kvta hosh ia chi?	Who will go?
Kvta hosh ia bvna?	Who wants to go?
Kvta hosh ia ikbvno?	Who doesn't want to go?
Kvta hosh ikiyo tuk?	Who didn't go?
Kvta hosh chi awant ia chi?	Who will go with you?
Kvta hosh impa ikbvno?	Who doesn't want to eat?
Kvta ish im anumpuli?	Who are you talking to?
Kvta ish im anumpuli tuk?	Who did you talk to?
Kvta hosh ofi ipeta tuk?/ chi?	Who fed the dog or ...will feed the dog?
Kvta hosh si awant ia bvna?	Who wants to go with me?
Kvta hosh illimpa achompa chi?	Who will buy lunch for me?
Kvta hosh atobba chi?	Who will pay?
Mato kvta?	Who's that?

www.choctawschool.com

YAKOKE

I would like to write a thank you to the Choctaw Nation, thanking them for all the help during my son's, Johnny Joe, illness. May God richly bless each one. Everyone has been so helpful.

Mrs. Doris Jolene Revis

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

What doors will you open this year?

Scan here to share your answer.



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

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

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

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

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
TRIBAL COUNCIL
SPECIAL SESSION AGENDA
 December 30, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Amend the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Fish, Game, and Animals Code. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-69-22
5. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
6. OLD BUSINESS
7. ADJOURNMENT
8. CLOSING PRAYER

CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA
TRIBAL COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
 January 8, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session December 11, 2021
 - b. Special Session December 30, 2021
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #4 – Larry Sockey
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
 - a. Marilyn Kay Haering – Individual Speaker – Bear Hunting
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year Six of Six for the Continuation for the Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative (Purpose Area 4). – Project Apelachi. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-70-22
 - b. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year Six of a Planned Five Years for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative – Project Strong. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-71-22
 - c. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year Six of Six for the Continuation for the Methamphetamine and Suicide Prevention Initiative (Purpose Area 2) – Project Path of Hope. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-72-22
 - d. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year 6 of 6 for the Continuation for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative – Project Homakbi Ribbon. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-73-22
 - e. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year Four of Four Continuation for the Behavioral Health Integration Initiative (BH21) – Project Integrate. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-74-22
 - f. Approve the Funds and Budget for Years One through Six (of Seven) of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians Community-Directed Grant Program (SDPI). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-75-22
 - g. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year One of Five for the 2021 Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP): Health Education in Rural Oklahoma for

- Employment Success (Choctaw Heroes). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-76-22
 - h. Approve the Funds and Budget for Years Two and Three of Five for the 2019 Oklahoma Dementia Education Enhancement Program (OK-DEEP) Subaward. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-77-22
 - i. Approve the Funds and Budget for Year Three of Three and Supplemental for the 2018 Native American Career and Technical Education Program (NACTEP). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-78-22
 - j. Approve the Funds and Budget for the FY20 Bureau of Reclamation Tribal Resilience Cooperative Agreement. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-79-22
 - k. Approve Application for the FY22 Domestic Violence Prevention Program: Forensic Health Services (DVP:FHC). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-80-22
 - l. Approve Application for the FY22 Domestic Violence Prevention Program (DVP). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-81-22
 - m. Approve Application for the FY22 Behavioral Health Integration Initiative (BH21). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-82-22
 - n. Approve Application for the FY22 Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention: Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment and Aftercare Grant (SASP SAPTA). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-83-22
 - o. Approve Application for the FY22 Zero Suicide Initiative. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-84-22
 - p. Approve Application for the FY22 Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention: Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention Grant (SASP SPIP). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-85-22
 - q. Approve the Ownership Transfer of Certain Tribal Assets. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-86-22
 - r. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets (Vehicles). Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-87-22
 - s. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-88-22
 - t. Approve Funding for the Renovation and/or Repurposing of Certain Areas within the Nation's Casino/Resort in Durant, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-89-22
 - u. Approve Funding for the Construction of a Casino and Hotel Development in Hochatown, Oklahoma. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-90-22
 - v. Amend the Choctaw Nation Children's Code. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-91-22
 - w. Amend the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Fish, Game and Animals Code. Vote Counts: YEAs - Unanimous; Vote Result: Passed - CB-92-22
9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All Council members were present

David Williams

David Williams, 63, passed away July 23, 2021.

David was born Jan. 1, 1958, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Joe Alton and Cecelia (Baker) Williams.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother Jerry Williams; and nephew Jason Williams.

David is survived by his son Bradley Williams and spouse Brenda; daughter Cari Crose and spouse Rick; grandchildren Kolbie Williams, Charity Williams, Devan Crose, and Dayton Crose; great-grandson Zayden; brothers Joe Williams Jr., Jimmie Williams and Cathy, and Tracey Williams; aunt Christine Baker; sister-in-law Josephine Williams; and numerous other family members and friends.

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

**Brixton Rome Cody**

Brixton Rome Cody was born sleeping Nov. 25, 2021.

Brixton was born to Spencer Cody and Kenzie Dillishaw of Atoka, Okla.

He was preceded in death by his aunt Nicole Cody; great-grandfather Clevo Cody; great-grandparents Billy Wayne and Debbie Johnson; great-grandmother Evelyn Faye Dillishaw; and cousin Gage Allen Ray Knight.

Brixton is survived by his parents; brother Liam Dillishaw; grandparents LaTonya Baxter, Cleyopha "Scooter" Cody, Brian Dillishaw, and Amanda Hartman; great-grandparents Tony and Pat Russell, Toni Cody, Barbara Dixon, Kenneth Stanley, and Larry and Ann Dillishaw; uncle Remington Baxter and spouse K'Lynn Wiggins; and cousins Blake' Lynn and Khyllann Baxter.

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

**Corey Lee James**

Corey Lee James, 59, passed away Nov. 21, 2021.

Corey was born Dec. 27, 1961, in Compton, Calif., to Hilda (Monroe) and Bennie James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Bunny James; aunt Buff Monroe; and grandma Annie James.

Corey is survived by his children Angela James, Katrina Prock and spouse William, and Jonathan Adams; grandchildren Hoyt, Evan, Kade, and Jaslynn; sister Janice Twist and spouse Kevin; brothers Russell James, Keith James, and Mike Monroe; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of friends.

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

**Charles Edward Lewis**

Charles Edward "Charlie" Lewis, 69, passed away Sept. 16, 2021.

Charlie was born Sept. 6, 1952, in Madill, Okla., to Edwin Lewis and Amelia (Shoemaker) Lewis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; stepfather Johnny Campos; son Chad Lewis; daughter-in-law Jaime Lewis; sisters Minnie Jean Stapleton and Linda Carroll Tahermandarjani; and brothers Joe Brown and Gary Brown.

Charlie is survived by son Coby Lewis; 17 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; sister Betty Baptiste; brother Arnold Lewis; several nieces and nephews; and a host of family and friends.

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

**Herold Elwood Nelson**

Herold Elwood Nelson, 95, passed away Nov. 25, 2021.

Elwood was born Aug. 20, 1926, in Antlers, Okla., to David R. and Tessie E. (Thomas) Nelson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wives Benny and Ruth; brothers David, Pat, and Robert; in-laws Grace Nelson, Leah Nelson, Lois and Charlie Bennett, Mary and Brick Robb, Everett Robb, Cubby Robb, Robert Raglin, Richard Walker, and Jack Beeson; nephews Tom Nelson, Bill Bingman, David Mead Bingman, and George Bennett; niece Rita Kincaid; stepdaughter Cindy Rosson; and step granddaughter Ami Standridge.

Elwood is survived by sisters June Walker and Jo Ann Beeson; sister-in-law Betty Nelson; children Peggy Nelson, Jimmie Mallette and spouse Steve, Susie Stewart and spouse Dale, Butch Nelson, and Jody Witzel; grandchildren Tim Stewart, Jymme Dawn Stewart and Curtis Moody, Lauri Pesavento and spouse Jonathan Doug Mallette, Ross Witzel, and Jennifer Lee and spouse Mat; great-grandchildren Camren Metcalf, Gracie Denney, Trent Denney, and Tyson Pesavento; step-children David Neese, Stephen Neese, Peggy Amos and spouse John, Bonnie Neese, and Tessa Brown; a host of step-grandchildren, step great-grandchildren; nieces, nephews, and friends.

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

Clara Davis

Clara "Sue" (Sampson) Davis, 76, passed away Nov. 30, 2021.

Clara was born Feb. 18, 1945, in Talihina, Okla. to Agnes Sampson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Thomas Davis; mother; and siblings Joseph "Jopey" Morris, Faye Crawley, and Timothy Jeffus.

Clara is survived by her son Hal Sampson; sister Toni Cody; grandchildren Kinsey Sampson, Ashley Sampson, Wayne Sampson and spouse Jessie, Stephen Sampson and wife Desmine, Jessica Sampson, and Daniel Asch and spouse Whitney; great-grandchildren Payton Bevers, Bryson Bevers, Tyler Sampson, Braden Sampson, Zayne Sampson, Airlynn Asch, Addisyn Sampson, Clara Sampson, and Hagen Sampson; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and extended family.

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

**Jerry Dean Moore**

Jerry Dean Moore, 77, passed away Nov. 7, 2021.

Jerry was born Dec. 27, 1943, in Wichita, Kansas, to Paul Eugene and Lena Irene Moore.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Jerica Annette Moon; brothers Jimmy P. Moon and Dennis E. Moon; and sisters Nancy S. (Moon) Patterson and Hazel L. (Moon) Seal.

Jerry is survived by his soul mate Sally Burnett; brother Terry S. Moon; sister Patricia (Moon) Collins; daughters Penny Roths, Brandy Spears, Charrise Moon and Gara Stidham; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

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

**Louella Jo Baker**

Louella Jo Baker, 65, passed away Sept. 18, 2021.

Louella was born July 11, 1956, in Talihina, Okla., to Emaline Baker and Jackson Jones.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and brother Travis and James Baker.

Louella is survived by her children Tamara Couch and spouse Lee, and Terry Waitman Jr. and spouse Angel; grandchildren Riley, Rowdy, Racer, Ryker, Reggs, Sierra and spouse Taylor, Alex and spouse Jessie, and Emily and spouse Harley; great-grandchildren Zayden and Evie; brothers Melvin Womack and spouse Marlana, and Marvin Womack and spouse Barbara; sister Joella Hicks; and numerous extended family and friends.

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

**Silas McKinney Jr.**

Silas McKinney Jr., 73, passed away Nov. 30, 2021.

Silas was born Sept. 26, 1948, in Idabel, Okla., to Silas John and Eriss McKinney.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter Allison McKinney; son Silas "Sonny" McKinney; grandsons Bradley McKinney and James McKinney; sister Suzanne Shomo; brother Cyrus McKinney; and grandmothers Georgie Brandy and Mulsey McKinney.

Silas is survived by his wife Betty; son John McKinney; daughters Joey McKinney and Lisa McKinney; brothers Gwen McKinney and spouse Ruth, and Gary Johnson; sister Gay Shomo and spouse Stan; nine grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Michael Joe Dunbar**

Michael Joe Dunbar, 57, passed away Oct. 4, 2021.

Michael was born Sept. 28, 1964, in Hot Springs, Ark., to Joe and Bea (Hoen) Dunbar.

He was preceded in death by his father, and wife Margaret "Tish" Dunbar.

Michael is survived by his mother; daughters Allyson Moore and spouse Kevin, and Emily Dunbar; granddaughter Magnolia Moore; brother Robert Dunbar and spouse Ruby; along with numerous cousins and a host of friends.

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

**Leroy Hudson**

Leroy Hudson, 90, passed away Dec. 6, 2021.

Leroy was born in Smithville, Okla., to Roosevelt E. Hudson and Levisa McClure.

He was preceded in death by parents; wife June; and son LeRoy Hudson Jr.

Leroy is survived by his son Wayne Hudson and spouse Geraldine; and grandson Daniel Hudson and spouse Emma.

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

**Rebekah Leanne Adams**

Rebekah Leanne Adams, 40, passed away Nov. 24, 2021.

Rebekah was born April 29, 1981, in Ada, Okla., to Rev. Ken and Jean Brown.

She was preceded in death by her great-grandparents Carl and Polly Jump, Anna Wood, and Lucy Brown; grandparents Bud and Joyce Craig, and Weston and Louise Brown.

Rebekah is survived by her husband Wesley; children Deanne and Alexander; her parents; brother Kenneth and spouse Nikki; brother-in-law Tim and spouse Angie; sister-in-law Melissa and spouse Claudio; 10 nieces and nephews; numerous aunts, uncles and cousins.

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

**Morris Clark Tisho**

Morris Clark Tisho, 75, passed away Nov. 27, 2021.

Morris was born March 7, 1946, to Elouise (Tisho) Tonihka.

He was preceded in death by his mother; and stepfather Joe Tonihka.

Morris is survived by his son Kristopher Tisho; daughter Kim Tims and spouse Arnold; brothers Donnie Jacobs, Samuel Tisho, and Franklin Tonihka; sisters Anita Tisho and Tammy Tonihka; grandchildren Kylar Lynch, Preston Lynch, and Makaylan Foshee and fiancée Michael Maben; great-grandchildren Oakland Lynch and Knox Mabel; and special friends Tami, Gary and the Robbins family.

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

**Lloyd Allen James**

Lloyd Allen James, 74, passed away Nov. 1, 2021.

Lloyd was born June 19, 1947, in Talihina, Okla., to Leslie James and Etta Mae Dyer James.

He was preceded in death by his parents; one sister; two brothers; and sons Larry James and Steven James.

Lloyd is survived by grandchildren Kelsey Thomas and spouse Eddie, and Cameron James and spouse Cassie; sisters Cyndi Tarpley and spouse Michael, Mona Allison and spouse Larry, and Sylvia Sigler and spouse Gary; and one great-granddaughter.

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

**May Ruth Cress**

May Ruth (Green) Cress, 85, passed away Nov. 2, 2021.

Ruth was born Jan. 4, 1936, in Whitesboro, Okla., to Gladys (Parnell) and Gordon Green.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Walter Cress; son Elvin Cress; brothers Leon Green, Barnes Green, and Lindsey Green; and sisters Edna Pugh and Rena Jennings.

Ruth is survived by her daughters Glenda Fry and spouse Terry, and Linda McKenzie; brothers Vance Green and spouse Judy, Roger Green and spouse Anita, and Ellis Green; sister Lena Jennings; grandchildren Waylon Fry and Misty Harjo, Todd Fry and spouse Michelle, Terra Veuleman and spouse Will, Stacy Fry, Hillary Mead and spouse Daniel, Sara Cress and Josh Frazier, and Josh Cress and Courtney Peters; great-grandchildren Kylar Henderson, Caiden Henderson, Rytit Mead, Brenna Fry, Shane Fry, Ashton Hanebrink, Chloey Frazier, Rebecca Fry, and Saylor Cress; and great-grandchildren Jackson Vise and Asher Robbins.

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

**Wayne Allen Davis**

Wayne Allen Davis, 52, passed away Nov. 24, 2021.

Wayne was born June 22, 1969 to Floyd Davis and Mona Morris.

He was preceded in death by his wife Paula; grandparents Buck and Ruth Montgomery, and Benny and Imogene Owens; aunt Olivia Raby Davis; and uncle Dwight Davis.

Wayne is survived by his father; his mother and spouse Gene Morris; sister Misty Morris; brothers Lyndel Morris, Brian Davis, and Timothy Davis; sons Johnathan Riley Davis, Chase Allen Davis, and Derek Austin Patillo; granddaughter Lillah Ryli Davis; and grandsons Jaxton Riley Davis and Daxton Patillo.

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

**Clyde Russell Burk**

Clyde Russell "Rusty" Burk, 78, passed away Nov. 20, 2021.

Rusty was born Nov. 18, 1943, in Duncan, Okla., to Clyde and Kathryn (Brooks) Burk.

He was preceded in death by his parents; son Scott Burk; and an infant son.

Rusty is survived by his wife Paula; children Kacie Olson and spouse Alan, and Clay Burk; grandchildren Everly Olson, Easton Olson, and Kinley Burk; sister Gayle Cleary and spouse Billy; nephew Colby Cleary and spouse Kristan; and numerous cousins and family members.

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

**J.E. Dillard**

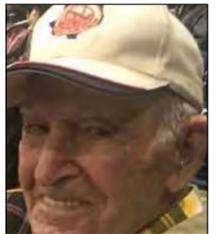
J.E. Dillard, 96, passed away Oct. 6, 2021.

J.E. was born March 29, 1925, in Alex, Okla., to Jess and Rose (Wiley) Dillard.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

J.E. is survived by his daughters Brenda Edwards and spouse Ed, and Carla Norris and spouse Randy; sons Randy Dillard, and Gary Dillard and spouse Trish; 13 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; and many other family members and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit [Brown Funeral Directors, Borger](#).

**William Robert James**

William "Bill" Robert James, 52, passed away Dec. 11, 2021.

Bill was born May 19, 1969, to Daniel and Mary Lou James.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Bill is survived by his wife Lisa (Seelig); his children Mia and Joe; brother Mark; sister-in-law Patty; and niece Rebecca.

For the full obituary, please visit [Green Hills Mortuary and Memorial Chapel](#).

**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

James Wallace Gross Sr.

James Wallace Gross Sr., 79, passed away Feb. 13, 2021.

James was born Nov. 2, 1941 to Hurlley Gross and Cora Speers.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Shirley Adair; brother William Eugene Gross; and grandmother Caroline James Speers.

James is survived by his wife Lucy; children James Gross Jr., Charlene Cosby, Billy Gross, Nadine Gross and partner Stuart, Ferdinand Dan Gross and spouse Lindsey, Stephan Gross and spouse Shauna, Loretta Caroline Dockrey and spouse Christopher, and Daniel Alexander Gross; brother Joel Gross; sisters Yvonne Arriola and Evelynia Thompson; 21 grandchildren; 9 great-grandchildren; and 16 great-great grandchildren and one on the way.

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

**Jarod Anthony Thomas McCusker**

Jarod Anthony Thomas McCusker, 32, passed away Nov. 25, 2021.

Jarod was born Feb. 19, 1989, in Wiesbaden, Germany, to Joseph John Jr. and Tamatha Jan (Turner) McCusker.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents Don Couch and Karen McCusker; and his paternal great-grandmother Nina McCusker.

Jarod is survived by his wife Melinda; children Joseph Michael McCusker, Juliana McCusker, and Jordyn McCusker; brother Josh McCusker and spouse Shonda; sisters Jessica Kanski and spouse Timothy; paternal grandparents Joseph Sr. and Rita McCusker; maternal grandmother Sylvia Couch; as well as numerous other extended family and friends.

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

**Theresa Fay Shomo**

Theresa Fay Shomo, 65, passed away Dec. 5, 2021.

Fay was born Sept. 14, 1956, in Oak Hill, Okla., to Jimmerson and Annie Mae Wilson.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Dero Shomo; daughter Leslie Shomo; sisters Sarah Salisbury, Shirley Wickson, and Betty Morales; and brothers Jimmy Willis, Charles Willis, and Michael Willis

Fay is survived by her son Franklyn Shomo and spouse Cassandra; daughters Carrol James and Frances Shomo; brothers Andrew Willis and spouse Darlene, and Nathan Willis; Minnie Jones; 10 grandchildren; numerous great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.

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

**Theresa Ann Sam**

Theresa Ann Sam, 56, passed away Sept. 22, 2021.

Theresa was born Sept. 6, 1965, in Torrance, Calif., to Cornelius and Norma (Carney) Sam.

She was preceded in death by her father; brothers Cephas Sam and Carlos Ray Sam; brother-in-law Rolando S. Querubin; nieces Nicole Marie Sam and Emily Michelle Sizemore; nephew Jeremy Dodson; uncles Louie Sam, Clifford Sam, Jimmy Sam, and Mario Sam; aunts Virginia Sam, Vivian Della Sam, Josey Mae Sam, and Geraldine James.

Theresa is survived by her daughter Rochelle Colette Tsosie; grandchildren Isaiiah Marcus Norris and Nathalia Frances Guevara; her mother; siblings Paul Sam, John Gaines and Jeanette, Merle Dee Sam, Morris Sam and Roberta, Matthew Allen Sam, Mark Albert Sam, Debra Ruth Sam, Della Mae Querubin and Mr. Paul, Rebecca Lynn Pruter and Chad, and Carla Jeane Enriquez and Daniel; sister-in-law Elaine Sam; uncles Marvin Sam and Virgil Sam; and aunts Geraldine Isabell, Julia Hood, and Connie Meftahi.

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

**Gloria Jean Perry**

Gloria Jean Perry, 71, passed away Nov. 28, 2021.

Gloria was born Aug. 12, 1950, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Edwin and Ada Perry.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and siblings Edwin Perry Jr., Walter Perry, and Robert Perry.

Gloria is survived by her daughter Rechinda Coughlin and spouse James; brother Michael Perry; and grandchildren Aiden Perry, James Coughlin IV, and Lindsey Coughlin.

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

**Clarence Eugene Anderson**

Clarence Eugene "Tobe" Anderson, 85, passed away Dec. 6, 2021.

Tobe was born July 26, 1936, on a small family farm and ranch near Yanush, Okla., to Clarence Jackman and Flossie (Sturgeon) Anderson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Euell Anderson and Duane Anderson; and sister Doris Smith.

Tobe is survived by his wife Rowletta (Carlton) Anderson; daughters Carol Dean Anderson, and Cheryl Jean Winn and spouse Shane; son Kirk Anderson and spouse Jerrie; grandchildren Curtis Shelton and spouse Stephanie, Robin Pollock, Lydia Fields and spouse Ben, and Elizabeth Gunter and spouse Shaun; great-grandchildren Sydney Shelton and fiance Hunter Mason, Colten Phillips, Heston Pollock, MaKensy Shelton, Sawyer Kimble and Atlas Gunter; sister-in-law Rowena Handleman; as well as many cousins, nieces, nephews, and extended family and friends.

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

**Gene Karr**

Gene Karr, 62, passed away Dec. 10, 2021.

Gene was born April 6, 1959, in Fontana, Calif., to Marvin Leon and Yvonne Arlene (Carter) Karr.

He was preceded in death by his father; and brother Richard Karr.

Gene is survived by his wife Linda; son John Karr and spouse Angela; daughter Rachel Fisher and spouse Thomas; grandson Murphy; brothers Robert Karr and spouse Linda, and Gary Karr and spouse Lynette; his mother; and numerous very loved nieces, nephews, and other extended family.

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

**Georgann Moncrief Wilson**

Georgann Moncrief Wilson, 82, passed away Dec. 12, 2021.

Georgann was born June 8, 1939 in McAlester, Okla., to George and Alice Moncrief.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Don Wilson; and grandson Stephen Wilson.

Georgann is survived by her son Scott and spouse Lydia; daughter Valerie; granddaughters Michelle and Annie; grandson Stuart and spouse Lindsay; great-grandchildren Natalie, James, Stephen, Oliver, and Nolan; niece Julie Loveland and spouse Brian; great-niece Kristin Loveland; and great-nephew Kenny Loveland.

For the full obituary, please visit [Stanleys Funeral & Cremation Services](#)

**Johnny Joe Revis**

Johnny Joe Revis, 67, passed away Nov. 13, 2021.

Johnny was born Oct. 2, 1954, in Holdenville, Okla., to John Monroe and D. Jolene (Veazey) Revis.

He was preceded in death by his father; grandparents Clarence and Bertha Revis, Raychel Veazey, and Joe Wheat; great-grandparents Buck and Arvie Wheat; and great-niece Jessica Lawrence.

Johnny is survived by his mother; brother James Monroe Revis Sr. and spouse Carolyn; nieces Jennifer and spouse Nathanael Lawrence, Lisa and spouse Michael Douthit; nephews James Revis Jr. and spouse Cassie, and Jeremiah Cox; great-nieces and great-nephews Jessie Lawrence, Angela Lawrence, Cody Douthit, Stormy Douthit, James Michael Revis, Colby Lee Revis, Remi LeAnn Revis, John Cox, and Miah Cox.

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

**Vera Hudson**

Vera Hudson, 77, passed away Oct. 23, 2021.

Vera was born Jan. 2, 1944, in Watson, Okla., to Jefferson G. and Lorancie (Leflore) Hicks.

She was preceded in death by her parents; son Garyl Dewayne Fobb; brother Joe Ray Hicks; and sisters Pearlene Osborn, Louella Ann Fobb, and JoElla Saenz.

Vera is survived by her husband Cordell; daughters Holly Meador and spouse Robert, and Lindsey Caldwell and spouse Michael; son Jon Fobb; brother Eddie Joel Hicks and spouse Gloria; grandchildren Julia Toloa Meador, Victoria Loran Meador, Peyton Kye Caldwell, and Monica Avery Caldwell; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

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

**Darrell Glen Tushka**

Darrell Glen Tushka, 57, passed away Nov. 30, 2021.

Darrell was born Dec. 28, 1963, in Idabel, Okla., to Barrentine and Nancy Jean McKinney Tushka.

He was preceded in death by his parents; nephews Angelo Tushka and Steven Army Stewart; and sister-in-law Fern Stafford.

Darrell is survived by his sisters Brenda Smith and spouse Steven, Gloria Bond, Peggy Jefferson, and Theresa Tushka; brothers Ray Tushka, Michael Tushka, and Melvin Tushka; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Heather Stacy Rana Minor**

Heather Stacy Rana Minor, 49, passed away Dec. 15, 2021.

Heather was born Oct. 24, 1972, in Durant, Okla., to Randel Minor and Deborah (Taylor) Coates.

She was preceded in death by her stepdad Steve Coates; grandparents Theodore and Winnie Lane, Bailey and Zazell Minor, and Gilbert Rose; cousin Joey Elliot; and best friend Johnny Rowton.

Heather is survived by her children Luke Craig Williams, Steven Lige Williams, Sean Rule Williams, Tyler Williams, and Amra Williams; companion Tony Couch; her parents; and siblings Dean Coates, Randi Minor, Joshua Minor, Jeremiah Minor, Shana Jones, and Jason Cartmil.

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

**Ronald Ray Russell**

Ronald "Ron" Ray Russell, 68, passed away Nov. 26, 2021.

Ron was born Jan. 23, 1953, in Sulphur, Okla., to Florence Ruth (Whittle) Russell and John Russell.

He was preceded in death by his parents; twin brother Ronnie Russell; and brothers Freddie Russell and Jerry Russell.

Ron is survived by his daughter Courtney Russell; granddaughters Mya Johnson, Chloe Johnson, and Jade Johnson; and brother Kenneth Russell.

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

Patty Marie Wade

Patty Marie Wade, 68, passed away Dec. 6, 2021.

Patty was born April 9, 1953, in Talihina, Okla., to Sampson Wade and Josephine Fobb-Wade.

She is survived by her children Kini Wade, Michael Wade, Marlisha Wade, and Leah Williams; brother Forrest K. Wade and Terrance Wade; sister JoAnna Coser; grandchildren Bobby Green, Kaylynn Green, Cody Green, and Krysha Green; cousins Jackie Renteria, Jeri and Jeff Payne, Joel and Janie Fobb, Jeffrey and Sandra Fobb, and Nancy Fobb; countless nieces and nephews; as well as extended family and friends, including Virginia Hammons and Amber Henslee.

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

**Cebrane Isaac Wallace**

Cebrane "Ce" Isaac Wallace, 37, passed away Dec. 13, 2021.

Ce was born July 11, 1984, to Albert Lee Wallace and Elaine Bohannon Wallace (now Richter).

He was preceded in death by his father; paternal grandparents John Lee Wallace Sr. and Minnie (Gibson) Wallace; maternal grandparents Isaac Bohanon and Lula Mae (Bond) Bohanon; five uncles; and one aunt.

Ce is survived by his wife Rebecca Wallace; daughters Krischelle Wallace and Mackenzey Wallace; his mother; stepfather Chris Richter; sister Kathie Rolan and spouse Terry Jr.; brother Vincent Wallace and spouse Nethia; aunt Claire Bohanon; cousins Randall Bohanon; Jordan Bohanon and spouse Savanna; Max Guinn and spouse Felicia, Sherie Edmonds and spouse Trey, Wendy Frazier, Glen Bohanon and spouse Krystal, and Mark Bohanon; nieces and nephews Chase and Allee Rolan, Jocelyn and Kaylee White, Maleah Guinn, and baby Eli Wallace; great-aunt Melissa Bohanon; and good friend Jesse Walton.

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

**Rebecca Mae Pena**

Rebecca Mae Pena, 73, passed away May 29, 2021.

Rebecca was born July 9, 1947, in Mena, Ark., to John Amos and Georgia Catherine Amos.

She was preceded in death by her son Tony Pena Jr.; her parents; and brother Clayson Dell Amos.

Rebecca is survived by her husband Tony; daughters Angela Nunez and spouse Albert, and Andrea Martinez and spouse Genaro; son Michael Pena; grandchildren Felicia Nunez, Nathan Nunez, Nicholas Nunez, Anthony Nunez, Joseph Tucker, Christopher Wells, Olivia Wells, Marcus Hernandez-Nunez, and Veronica Nunez; sisters Judy Espinoza, Patsy Hernandez, Ruby Torres, Jeri Dickson, and Paula Pena.

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

**Billy Sudbury Sr.**

Billy Sudbury Sr., 88, passed away Jan. 9, 2021.

Billy was born Aug. 1, 1932, in Pauls Valley, Okla., to Edwina Fox and Robert Leonard Sudbury.

He was preceded in death by his wife Mary Ann; son baby boy Sudbury; his parents; and brother R.V. Sudbury.

Billy is survived by brother Arlis Sudbury; sister Yvonne Cox; children Billy Sudbury and spouse Choyia Gale, Mary Kay Sudbury, and Robert Sudbury and spouse Bobby Kay; grandchildren Tonya Johnston, Jerrod Sudbury, Kristi Mann, Tina Lambright, Patricia Neyer, and Melissa Acosta; great-grandchildren Piper Johnston, Sadie Johnston, and Josie Johnston, Kayra Touchet, Aerith Neyer, and Jaxon Acosta.

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

**Doris Evelyn McMurrian**

Doris Evelyn (Winlock) McMurrian, 87, passed away Dec. 2, 2021.

Doris was born Jan. 13, 1934, in Talihina, Okla., to Myrtle (Blue) and Tony Winlock.

She was preceded in death by her husband Roy McMurrian; son Steve McMurrian; sisters Helen Nadine Tucker and Eunice Bruce; and brother Kenneth Winlock.

Doris is survived by her daughter Evelyn (McMurrian) Jones; grandchildren Nicholas McMurrian, and Justin Jones and spouse Kayla; great-grandchildren Tristan and Storey McMurrian, and Kane Jones; sister Carol Abeita and spouse Alfred; brother Kelly Winlock and spouse Teresa; as well as numerous friends and extended family.

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

**Pearl Renee Jones**

Pearl Renee Jones, 54, passed away Dec. 19, 2021.

Pearl was born March 30, 1967, in Talihina, Okla., to Shirley James and Columbus Byars James.

She was preceded in death by her father; stepfather Bill Woodruff; sisters Vanessa James, Leora Nell James, and Baby James; brothers Eastman James; and daughter Melissa Jones.

Pearl is survived by her mother; daughters Stephanie Jones, Rain Keopke, and Jennifer Jones; grandchildren Chipper Jones, Tracie Jones, Nahali Phillips, Stephan Phillips, Stanley Phillips, Kaylie Selig, Shane Selig, Chalin Selig, and Jordan Selig; Michael Jones, and Zoe Armstrong; great-grandchildren Lillian Willis and Braxton Jones; sister Debbie James and Robert Baker; brothers Henry James and Jessie James; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of extended family and friends.

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



Dr. Bronaugh-Crissey graduates



Dr. Amber N. Bronaugh-Crissey recently graduated from Tarleton State University with a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Amber lives in Aledo, Texas, and is originally from Springtown, Texas. She is the daughter of Richard and Beckie Bronaugh of Springtown. Amber is the wife of Jeff Crissey and mother of Jett, Crew and Kinley Bates.

Bryson Jones earns black belt



Bryson Jones is a Choctaw tribal member, and the great-great grandson of Choctaw Code Talker Ben Carteby. Bryson has been taking Taekwondo for 3 1/2 years as a form of cognitive behavioral therapy for Tourettes Syndrome.

He tested and received his black belt at Full circle martial arts in Idabel Oklahoma on Dec 8, 2021.

Bryson has competed and won first place in forms and sparring in many tournaments in Texas.

Bryson will turn 12 years old in July and when he is older Bryson plans to open his own dojo.

Bergeron graduates from OU-TU



Emily Montana (Hancock) Bergeron graduated on Dec. 3, 2021, from the OU-TU School of Community Medicine Physician Assistant Program as a Certified Physician Assistant. She successfully completed her undergraduate requirements at Oklahoma Baptist University and was accepted into the PA program at OU-TU in Tulsa. Emily is the proud granddaughter of Ruth (Tims) Hancock of Midwest City and a proud member of the Choctaw Nation. She would like to express her sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Choctaw Nation as a recipient of the Choctaw Higher Education Scholarship as well as the Choctaw Career Development Program for financial assistance in obtaining her certification. Emily will be working in the Pediatrics Emergency Center of St Francis hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Visit the Veteran's War Memorial of Texas

Col Frank Plummer turned 96 on Nov. 7, 2021.

Plummer has worked for 32 years on his passion project to turn five acres in McAllen, Texas, into a world-class veteran's memorial.

Located at 3129 Galveston Avenue, next to the new McAllen Convention Center, the Veteran's War Memorial of Texas, the memorial honors Texas veterans that lost their lives serving and protecting this country's freedom. The beautifully landscaped five-acre site features the soldiers' names etched on black granite walls.

There are granite memorials for each branch of service and a massive American Spire of Honors in the middle of the five acres, landscaping and walkways. Statues of soldiers also adorn the park.

Recent additions are collaborations with elementary school children who wrote in letters inscribed on granite about what service in the military meant to them.

For more information, visit <https://www.mcallen.net/veterans/index.html>.



Miller graduates from ECU

Taylor C. Miller of Tupelo, Oklahoma graduated East Central University (ECU) Saturday, December 11, 2021, with a biology degree teacher's certificate, and has also been accepted into the Master of Education program at ECU.

Yakoke to the Choctaw Nation for supporting educating Choctaws!



Miller says "yakoke"

My name is Breanne Elizabeth Miller and I am the great granddaughter of original enrollees Mary Elizabeth Roberts and Jesse Edward Jones. I want to thank the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for all of their financial support while getting my Bachelors of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies, so I can follow my dreams of being an elementary school teacher. With this support I was able to graduate debt free. Again, I want to thank the Choctaw Nation for all their help.

Breanne Miller



Elliot gives thanks

My name is Brianna Elliott. I received funding through the Choctaw Nation Higher Education Program throughout graduate school. I wanted to reach out to

submit a thank-you note and a photo from my big day for publication.

I graduated on December 18 with a Master of Arts in English with a focus on publishing from Southeastern Louisiana University. I maintained a 4.0 throughout the degree program. I am so grateful for the Choctaw Nation and their support in my endeavors to pursue an advanced degree. I was proud to have the opportunity to honor my heritage by wearing the tribe's stole with my regalia during graduation.

Brianna Elliott



Rice turns 60

Frankie Rice celebrated a milestone birthday, turning 60 on Dec. 8, 2021.

Rodgers graduates from NM State



Kyler M. Rodgers graduated from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico in December 2021. He credits the Choctaw Nation educational scholarships for making his graduation dreams come true. Kyler received his undergraduate degree in History with a minor

in Anthropology. He is the son of Keegan Rodgers of Carlsbad, New Mexico and Stephanie Nash of Lewiston, Idaho. Kyler is a descendant of the Roberson and Hickman Choctaw families.



80 years for Smeltzer

Hugh David Smeltzer of Seven Points, Wisconsin, will celebrate his 80th birthday on Feb. 19, 2022.



Smith celebrates 93 years

Geneva Jane Smith of Fanshawe, Oklahoma, celebrated her 93rd birthday on Dec. 24. Many attended the celebration, from children to great

great-grandchildren and other family members and friends to honor her. Jane is the daughter of Martin and Ethel Duncan. Ethel was an original enrollee of the Choctaw nation. We all love you, Mom.



January Veteran of the Month

Larry Sockeye of Pocola, Oklahoma, is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month for February 2022.

Sockeye attended college at Eastern Oklahoma State College where he received an associate

degree. He then transferred to Northeastern State University, completing a bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Education.

After graduation, he served in the U.S. Army for one year and nine months, beginning Sept. 10, 1969. After basic training at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, he transferred to Ft. Hood, Texas for the remainder of his active-duty enlistment where he oversaw the writing of itineraries for ETS and changes of station and served as departmental pay clerk. He achieved the rank of Specialist 5.

Sockeye went on to receive his master's degree from Southeastern Oklahoma State University, and began teaching and coaching in Wellston, Oklahoma. He also taught at Strother, Bokoshe, and Pocola, Okla., and became superintendent of schools.

He retired from education in 1999. After retirement, he officiated sporting events until 2016. Sockeye and his wife have been married for 51 years and are the parents of two sons who are also teachers.

His father and four uncles were also veterans, having served during WWII.

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



Huth competes for Team USA

Team USA fencer Mitchell Huth placed 7th out of 290 fencers in his first international competition in Budapest, Hungary.

Huth, a 16-year-old high school junior, is currently ranked 4th in the nation in cadet men's foil.

He has upcoming tournaments in San Jose, California and Paris, France,

and he will also compete at the Junior Olympics in Salt Lake City in February.

He is active in his church youth group and home-school co-op, takes dual-enrollment classes, and has participated in the on-line Choctaw language classes from his home in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Mitchell is the son of Brandon and Cheryl Huth and grandson of Jerry and Dianne Crane.

Cayden Steel Reed



Cadyen Steele Reed was born May 30, 2021, in Jackson, Mississippi, weighing 6 lbs and 7 oz.

Cayden's parents are Coner and Syke Reed of Birmingham, Alabama. Cayden's paternal grandparents are Coleman and Vikki Reed of Waverly, Alabama. Maternal grandparent is Shawn Dixon of

Muskogee, Oklahoma and Maternal great-grandparents are Jonathan and Carolyn Moses of Muskogee.

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Choctaw Nation STAR Program

ITI FABVSSA

In Honor of our Choctaw Firefighters

This month Iti Fabvssa is taking a brief intermission from “A New Chahta Homeland: A History by the Decade” series to honor our Choctaw firefighters. Since time immemorial, Choctaw people have had a relationship with fire through the land. Like many other Indigenous communities across North America, Choctaw people have used fire for land management to create open, biologically diverse environments that lead to better habitats for animals and edible plants. The decline in traditional fire management combined with climate change has increased the risk for dangerous fires throughout North America. Nevertheless, Choctaws have found new avenues to carry on that relationship.

In response to the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps Indian Division was established to create new employment opportunities and recruited Native people as firefighters in the 1930s. These men were trained and deployed to assist at large-scale fires. Federal and State agencies utilized these crews throughout the United States when the need arose. For example, Aaron Baker and other Choctaws from the McCurtain County area worked for the CCC’s Division of Forestry for the State of Oklahoma for 30+ years (Robert Baker, personal communication, 2021). Although this program no longer exists, Choctaws worked in firefighting through other programs.

As part of the Choctaw Nation’s revitalized sovereignty, Choctaw Nation Forestry partnered with the United States Forest Service (USFW) in 1989 to train and deploy Type 2 Fire Crews (Tom Lowry, personal communication, 2020). The Forest Service divides its Fire crews into three types, each crew having 18 to 20 members. Type 1 Crews, also known as Interagency Hotshot Crews, function as a highly trained, skilled and qualified crew. The Type 2 Initial Attack Crew could be divided into several individual squads, each with their own incident commander, to strategically attack fires. Lastly, the Type 2 Crew has one incident commander and works as a single 20-person unit. These crews are responsible for creating fire lines that help stop the spread of fires using a variety of tools and equipment.

During the 1990s, the Choctaw Nation was facing unemployment rates as high as 40%. Many Choctaw men and women did not have opportunities to work due to the lack of infrastructure in Southeastern Oklahoma. The USFW worked with Choctaw Nation Forestry to host one-week trainings at our Capitol Ground in Tvshka Homma. After the training, each Firefighter was given money to purchase a specific type of boot. Most Choctaw firefighters know this boot well. At eight pounds, this boot required a 1” Vermeer sole with a 2” heel. This was their first piece of firefighting equipment and without it, they could not go fight fires (Ernest Baker, personal communication, 2020).

Choctaw Nation Forestry would assist with up to four deployments to fight fire per year. When Choctaw Nation Forestry sent out the call, Choctaw fire crew members that were available for duty would make their way to Tali hina. Wearing their boots and red t-shirt, they checked out their equipment and loaded the bus. Flying out of Fort Smith, these brave men and women would leave their families and communities for 21 days to protect others in need (Tom Lowry, personal communication, 2020). Choctaw firefighters would commonly work alongside other Native firefighter crews. If Choctaw Nation had extra firefighters, they would be assigned to other Native Crews to meet the 18–20-person crew minimum.

The daily life of a Choctaw Firefighter was rugged. These Choctaws worked 12-to-16-hour days using shovels, rakes, chain saws and the famous Pulaski. The Pulaski is a specialized tool used by firefighters that combines both an axe and adze that would assist them in building and clearing fire lines. On average, Choctaws crews were known to cover 10 miles worth of fire line a day. At camp, they had access to all different types of foods and fruits and a commissary where they could buy items they may need. Every few days, they were able to call their families for short five minute conversations (Ernest Baker, personal communication, 2020). They slept side by side in two large canvas tents at night.

Upon returning home, they would wear their blue t-shirts. After they checked in their equipment at the Choctaw Forestry Office in Tali hina, they handed their check and returned home to their families.

According to Tom Lowery, Choctaw Nation’s Type 2 Crew became known as the Choctaw BMF or Buffalo Mountain Firefighters (Tom Lowry, personal communication, 2020). For many on the crew, this was the first job that was ever offered to these men and women. They were given purpose, direction, and a cause to fight for. The Choctaw BMF were quite efficient – they kept up and sometimes surpassed the Type 1 Crews. Through the years, the Choctaw BMF earned a reputation as being one of the best Type 2 crews that could be fielded. At the Annual Idaho Fire Chiefs Association Conference, all the wall-mounted displays honored each Type 1 Crew and one Type 2 Crew, the Choctaw Buffalo Mountain Firefighters.

Choctaw fire crews were temporary work. As the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma began to expand and create more diverse jobs within Southeastern Oklahoma, the allure of full-time work with benefits appealed to those that needed to support families. Less people took the firefighting training. By 2003 the Choctaw Nation was no longer able to field 20-person crews but continued to work with other Tribes by combining their crews together. In 2021 the USFS terminated its firefighting contract with the Choctaw Nation, partly because there were only a handful of firefighters available through the tribe but also because the future of firefighting is changing.

The history of our Choctaw Firefighters is still recent. If you have family members who served as Choctaw firefighters, we would like to encourage you to reach out to them and record their stories. If you need help getting started, a “Guide to using time at home to record oral family histories” is available online at <https://www.choctawnation.com/sites/default/files/2020-08/ITI%20FABVSSA%20June.pdf>.

If you would like to share your stories with the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department, we can store them digitally for future access for your family members. For example, Robert Baker has recorded a story about his father, Aaron Baker. To hear his story please visit, <https://www.choctawnation.com/iti-fabvssa-2022-02>.



Choctaw Firefighter uniform of Presley Byington as featured at the Choctaw Cultural Center. Photo by Ryan Spring.

CHOCTAW NATION CAPITOL MUSEUM



UPDATED PHONE NUMBER
855-569-4465
 CHOCTAWNATION.COM/TRIBAL-SERVICES/CULTURAL-SERVICES/MUSEUM
Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Halito! This month I would like to address our Lease/Purchase (LEAP) program that assists our tribal members in becoming homeowners.

The LEAP program is designed loosely on the old Mutual Help program. It is a 25 year program where the first 15 years the participant leases the home from the Choctaw Nation Housing Authority while the last 10 years, the home will be financed. The lease portion of the program helps get families ready to become homeowners while at the same time, all rent paid goes toward paying the home in full.

During the lease portion of the program, participants will receive homeowner and home buyer education classes from the Service Coordination department of the Housing Authority. Property Managers will also work hand in hand with participants to meet their needs and help guide the way to homeownership.

We make determinations of where we build on where the approved applicants state they want to live. If you want LEAP homes in your community, please apply and encourage others to apply. There are income limits, both minimum and maximum with this program based on family size and since the first 15 years are a lease, those with bad credit are not disqualified. Background checks are completed however and at least five years since any criminal charges have been filed needs to have passed.

Applications are located at each community center and can be found on the Choctaw Nation website.

YOUTH WORK OPPORTUNITIES



Experience in service learning and work environments. Including apprenticeships, internships, mentorships, job shadowing and other on the job opportunities.

Please be prepared with the following:
 CDIB/Tribal Membership card, Utility Bill (water, electric, natural gas) or copy of lease agreement to verify address, proof of income of household adults, social security card, youth aged 16-17 accompanied by parent/guardian. If you have a laptop or tablet, bring it.

APPLY ONLINE AT:
 CHOCTAWNATION.COM/EMPLOYMENT-TRAINING-SERVICES

OR AT ONE OF THE CHOCTAW COMMUNITY CENTERS ON THE DATES LISTED

Antlers	February 15 & 24	2-7 PM	McAlester	January 5, 19	2-7 PM
Atoka	February 22	2-7 PM	Poteau	January 3, 10, 24	2-7 PM
Battiest	February 3 & 17	2-6 PM	Smithville	February 8 & 21st	2-6 PM
Broken Bow	January 6, 13	2-6 PM	Spiro	January 17	2-7 PM
Coalgate	January 12 & February 9	2-7 PM	Stigler	January 11	2-7 PM
Crowder	January 31st	2-7 PM	Talihina	February 2 & 28	2-7 PM
Durant	January 7 & 25	2-7 PM	Wilburton	January 18 & February 7	2-7pm
Hugo	January 28 & February 23	2-7 PM	Wright City	February 11	2-6pm
Idabel	January 20	2-7 PM			

Applications also available every Friday in January and February Employment Training Services located in Durant Headquarters, available from 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

APPLICATION CLOSES ON APRIL 1, 2022

Cancer Prevention Month: Discussing cancer prevention and revolutionary new treatments

By Chris Jennings

February is National Cancer Prevention Month. According to the American Association for Cancer Research, 40% of all cancer diagnoses and nearly half of all deaths from cancer in the United States stem from preventable causes.

The Prevent Cancer Foundation lists several ways to make lifestyle changes to help limit the chances of getting cancer.

- Don't use tobacco. Tobacco use has been linked to lung, colorectal, breast, throat, cervical, bladder and mouth cancers. It's never too late to quit using tobacco products.
- Protect your skin from the sun. Skin cancer is the most common and most preventable cancer. Use a broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day.
- Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active. Obesity has been linked to many cancers, including liver, kidney, pancreas, colon and breast. Getting at least 30 minutes of activity five days a week can significantly affect your health and well-being.
- Know your family medical history. Sharing your family history with your health provider can help determine when cancer screenings are done. Many cancers, if detected early, are treatable.

Native Americans are at a higher risk of developing certain forms of cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 1999 and 2015, incidence rates of liver, kidney, and female breast cancers increased significantly among Native people.

However, when it comes to breast cancer, being Native just might help. The Choctaw Nation is breaking ground with treatment procedures for some types of breast cancer.

The Choctaw Nation Health Care Clinic (CNHCC) is offering what is known as Magseed and Magtrace, an innovative and less invasive option to remove breast lesions or cancer cells in the breast tissue and lymphatic system.

"The advantage of being able to do the Magseed and Magtrace here at Choctaw Nation is that we will be able to localize tumors that are not palpable, meaning you can't feel them in the breast or other soft tissues," explains Dr. Amanda Chisum-Price, breast surgeon.

In the Magseed procedure, the patient has a tiny seed implanted into the breast lesion to mark the cancer site up to 30 days before surgery. The surgeon uses a special probe that detects where the seed is located during the surgery. This method allows the surgeon to decide the best path to the lesion. Previously, a wire was inserted into the breast, making that the only option for a path to the lesion.

The wire method added a significant amount of time to the procedure and potentially more tissue loss. "It was very nice," says Princess Thompson, a patient from Greenville, Texas, who received the procedure. "They were really thorough and helpful."

"This makes the surgery drastically different than the old method," says Dr. Chisum-Price. "We are taking hours in radiology and surgery and cutting it down significantly. The recovery time for the patients has been considerably shorter as well."

"My comfort level is very good. This procedure means everything to me. I won't have to worry about the tumor growing, turning into something else. I'm happy to get it taken out," said Thompson.

The Magtrace procedure is for cancer cells that have invaded the lymphatic system.

A Magtrace lymphatic tracer is injected into the patient to seek out the sentinel nodes. The non-radioactive tracer directs the surgeon to the first draining lymph nodes most likely to contain cancer to determine if it has spread.

"This new process saves our patients from unnecessary



Choctaw Nation Photo

Mammogram Technologist Ashley Kennedy, R.T. (R)(CT)(M) B.S., shows Dr. Chisum-Price and Radiology Physician Assistant Ami Hess the Magseed on the image of the breast.

and more invasive surgery," says Dr. Chisum-Price. "We also can now perform these here at Choctaw Nation instead of sending our patients to other facilities farther away from their homes."

Speak to your primary care physician about cancer screenings and more ways to prevent cancer.

For more information on the Magseed and Magtrace procedures, you can call the Choctaw Nation Breast Care Clinic at 800-349-7026.

Choctaw Community Health Department discusses Shingles virus

By Ashley D. Hardy, RN, CNHSA

Let's talk about shingles, and I don't mean the ones on your roof. Those are for a different Choctaw Nation department. No, as a health care worker, I am talking about the virus, shingles, known formally as varicella-zoster virus. This virus is a member of the herpesvirus family. Like other members of the family, when you catch it the first time, it lingers in your body as a latent infection. If you had the dreaded chickenpox, you might be at risk of developing a shingles infection.

Here is why you don't want this. Shingles infection usually occurs unilaterally or on one side of the body. It occurs most often on the chest, abdomen, or face. It begins as a red rash and progresses to painful lesions that scab over in 7-10 days but can take two to four weeks for complete healing. A common complication of shingles is that the person can develop Postherpetic Neuralgia (PHN) even after complete recovery. This pain persists in the affected area long after lesions have resolved. The population at highest risk for developing shingles infection is those of advanced age and those with lowered immune systems due to illness, medications or natural causes. Approximately 50% of adults who live to age 85 or more will develop shingles.

So how can we prevent it? I have good news. The Shingrix vaccine is currently the only varicella-zoster vaccine licensed and available in the United States. It is administered via an

injection into the muscle. Shingrix vaccine is available for adults aged 50 and older, and it is a two-dose series, given two to six months apart. According to the CDC, effectiveness is shown to be 96.6% among ages 50-59, 97.4% among ages 60-69 and 91.3% among ages 70 and older. The most common side effects are pain at the injection site, body aches and tiredness. Nothing a little Tylenol, water and rest can't help.

Adults aged 50 and up are eligible to receive the Shingrix vaccine. Even if you have had a shingles infection, you should still receive a Shingrix vaccine. If you actively have a shingles infection, you should wait until it has healed completely before receiving the vaccine. Studies show that the vaccine's effectiveness lasts approximately five years but can last much longer. You should speak to your primary provider regarding further vaccination.

The Choctaw Nation has the Shingrix vaccine at most clinics. Ask your provider about receiving the vaccine at your next appointment or get in contact with your nearest clinic's Community Health Nurse for more information.

Until next time!
Yakoke,
Choctaw Nation Community Health Department

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

January recognized as National Birth Defects Prevention Month

OKLAHOMA CITY - Oklahoma City Indian Clinic (OKCIC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit clinic providing health and wellness services to American Indians in central Oklahoma, wants to share ways to reduce the risk of birth defects during National Birth Defects Prevention Month.

National Birth Defects Prevention Month is observed every January to bring awareness to the prevalence of birth defects and ways they can be prevented. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in every 33 babies born in the United States each year has a birth defect.

"A birth defect can occur during any stage of pregnancy and can be caused by a variety of factors, such as substance use, medical conditions or family history," said Janice Hixson, OKCIC's Chief Medical Officer. "Not all birth defects can be prevented, but there are steps the mother can take during pregnancy to reduce the risk."

Mothers can take steps to prevent birth defects before becoming pregnant. If you plan to become pregnant, take 400 mcg of folic acid every day. If possible, try to get any medical conditions under control before becoming pregnant. Some conditions, like diabetes, can increase the risk of birth defects. If you're taking any medications, talk with your provider to see if they are safe to continue during pregnancy. This includes any over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements.

Ways to reduce the risk of birth defects during pregnancy include abstaining from smoking, drinking, drug use and avoiding infections. To avoid infections, be sure your vaccinations are up-to-date and wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. You can avoid food-borne illnesses by not consuming raw or unpasteurized milk and foods made from it.

"Seeking prenatal care as soon as possible is important for preventing birth defects," Hixson said. "Your provider can make sure you and your baby are healthy."

OKCIC patients can call (405) 948-4900 ext. 546 to make an

appointment for prenatal care.

Birth defects can't always be prevented, but forming healthy habits can improve your overall health and reduce the risk for your baby.

About Oklahoma City Indian Clinic
Oklahoma City Indian Clinic was established in 1974 to provide excellent health care and wellness services to American Indians in central Oklahoma. The clinic staff cares for more than 21,000 patients from over 220 federally recognized tribes every year. American Indians can receive a range of services, including medical, dental, pediatrics, prenatal, pharmacy, optometry, physical fitness, nutrition, family programs and behavioral health services. For more information, please call (405) 948-4900 or visit www.okcic.com.

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

**Choctaw Nation Health Clinic
Contact Information**

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.

Black Bean & Butternut Squash Chili

- 1/2 cup oil
- 3 onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced or 2 table-spoons garlic powder
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped and seeded (You may substitute a green bell pepper)
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped and seeded
- 2 lbs ground bison
- 4 15-oz cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 cans undrained Rotel tomatoes (You may substitute diced tomatoes)
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons cumin
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 4 cups butternut squash, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

Preparation

1. Warm oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook onions, garlic, bell peppers until transparent. Remove from skillet and transfer to slow cooker. Add bison to skillet and cook until well done. Remove from skillet and transfer to slow cooker.
2. Stir in beans, tomatoes, squash, chili powder, cumin and oregano.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

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

February 2022
All markets open weekdays, February 1-23
Closed: February 21 & 24-28.
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 demos February 3 & 14

BROKEN BOW 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842
Food demos February 4 & 15

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Food demos February 2 & 10

MCALESTER 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716
Food demos February 9 & 17

POTEAU 100 Kerr Ave., 918-649-0431
Food demos February 8 & 16

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

SHOULD I BE SCREENED FOR LUNG CANCER?

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

You should consider being screened using a Low-Dose CT Scan if you have all three of these risk factors:

- 50 to 80 years old**
- Current smoker or former smoker who quit less than 15 years ago**
- A smoking history of at least 20 pack-years (this means one pack a day for 20 years or two packs a day for 10 years, etc.)**

If you are in the high risk category, talk to your physician about whether screening is beneficial for you.

For more information:
Choctaw Nation Health Services
Low-Dose CT Program
(800) 349-7026 ext. 6545

Famous Dave Hall of Fame inductee

By Christian Toews

Many might be familiar with Famous Dave's barbecue. With locations across the United States and worldwide, this restaurant is a favorite among barbecue lovers. However, most probably do not know that Famous Dave's started as a small restaurant owned by a Choctaw tribal member, Dave Anderson.

Anderson was recently inducted into the Native American Hall of Fame Nov. 6, 2021, where Chief Gary Batton introduced him at the ceremony.

According to the Native American Hall of Fame's website, Dave has done much more than start a successful barbecue restaurant.

He served on the Wisconsin Council on Tourism, Wisconsin's Council on Minority Business Development and the National Task Force on Reservation Gaming. He is the Co-Founder of Grand Casinos. In 2002, Oprah Winfrey recognized Anderson's LifeSkills Center for Leadership, an organization dedicated to supporting at-risk Indian youth, with her Angel Network Award. Anderson was named a Bush Leadership Fellow, Minnesota and Dakota's Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst and Young, NASDAQ and USA Today. He was named Restaurateur of the Year in 1988 by Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine. He was inducted into the National Barbecue Hall of Fame in 2017.

"This induction into the Native American hall of fame is, first of all, very humbling. I'm very honored, but I think it's a testament to what can be achieved if you never ever give up on your dreams," said Anderson on the night of his induction. "Because growing up, I thought I was the dumbest kid on the block. I thought I would never succeed, and I had somebody come into my life that said: 'Dave, you have the seeds of greatness within you. You should never

give up on your dreams, and if you work hard and work to help other people, be a blessing into the lives of other people, amazing things can happen."

Dave's father, Jimmie, was a Choctaw tribal member from Idabel, Oklahoma. According to Anderson, after serving in World War II, Jimmie moved to Chicago to find work.

His father was the person who introduced young Dave to barbecue.

The love of down south, real pit, wood-smoked barbecue ribs was passed down from father to son by visiting all the local barbecue restaurants.

Dave said his father knew every good barbecue restaurant on the south side of Chicago.

This love of delicious barbecue only grew and inspired "Famous Dave" to open his first restaurant in 1994.

He purchased a small restaurant on Big Round Lake in Hayward, Wisconsin, and his dream became a reality.

From the beginning, this first restaurant, named "Famous Dave's BBQ Shack," was a tremendous success.

According to Dave, they were serving as many as 1,000 in a night.

The other large barbecue competing brands were baking their ribs when his restaurant opened.

Dave's father, Jimmie, had taught him how to make barbecue ribs that may take a bit more work but taste better.

Anderson pioneered the first national barbecue brand to use real wood-burning pits.

This one small restaurant grew into an international brand.

Famous Dave's now has 120 locations all over the United States, Canada, and United Arab Emirates.

Dave's hard work and commitment to serving only the highest quality product has paid off in many ways.

By his own admission, Dave probably has more barbecue sauces, rubs,



Photo Provided

Dave Anderson is the owner of Famous Dave's, a popular barbecue restaurant and franchise. Famous Dave's products are also sold in stores like Target, Sam's Club, Costco, Walmart and Menards.

seasonings, marinades, spicy pickles, bloody marry mixes and cornbread mixes in grocery stores than any other man alive. These products can be purchased in retail giants across the country, including Target, Sam's Club, Costco, Walmart and Menards.

Barbecue isn't as much of a job as it is a calling for the Anderson family.

Just like his father, Dave Anderson passed his knowledge and passion for cooking barbecue on to his son, James.

James has become the third generation of award-winning Anderson family barbecue pitmasters. With his father's knowledge and expertise, he founded his own barbecue restaurant in 2011.

His first endeavor with Jimmie's Old Southern BBQ Smokehouse was to provide barbecue to the US Military serving on the front lines in Afghanistan.

From 2011 to today, Jimmie's Old Southern BBQ Smokehouse has grown to four award-winning barbecue restaurants in Wisconsin. James said that he is often asked how he first got into barbecue.

James said, "I never really got into barbecue. More than I was born into it, with my grandpa being such a big lover of all southern foods, especially his wood smoked, real pit barbecue. And then there is my dad, now affectionately

known as 'Famous Dave' America's Rib King and BBQ Hall of Famer."

The Anderson family is very proud of their Choctaw heritage, and "Famous Dave" attributes the things that his father taught him to the Choctaw people. "I think there are a lot of values that the Choctaw Nation holds that my dad passed to me—having a good work ethic and being a person of faith. My dad was very proud Choctaw, and he always wore his cowboy hat and carried a Bible," he said.

Dave Anderson said that he hopes his story can inspire others to embrace adversity and see it as an opportunity. "The biggest challenge I've ever had to face was getting me out of the way and understanding that you can achieve anything you want out of life if you help enough other people first. I would say learn how to take the problems away from other people, figure out how to work hard, and then be a blessing into the life of another person. Be obsessively devoted to the bettering of other people, and you'll never have to worry about where your next paycheck comes from," he concluded.

For more information on Famous Dave's and a full list of locations, visit <https://www.famousdaves.com>.



Photo by Christian Toews

Dave Anderson was recently inducted into the Native American Hall of Fame. Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr. and Chief Gary Batton were at the induction ceremony on November 6, 2021.

CHOCTAW NATION FOSTER CARE

800-522-6170 | CHOCTAWNATION.COM/FOSTERCARE

When Choctaw children fall victim to abuse or neglect, they are temporarily placed into foster care until it is safe and appropriate to be reunified with their parents or caregivers. In 2021 Choctaw Nation had an average 63 critical foster homes across Oklahoma. We need your help. Please call us to inquire more about how you can help.

WE HAVE SEVERAL FOSTER CARE HOME CATEGORIES:

- Emergency
Homes who provide care for a single night up to a week until family or a traditional foster home can be located.
- Respite
Homes who provide breaks for other foster families when the need arises.
- Traditional
Families who will provide care for extended periods of time.

Choctaw Nation Children & Family Services

DOWNLOAD THE MYCNHSA MOBILE APP NOW

ACCESS YOUR HEALTHCARE 24/7

The app is available to anyone who is a patient at any Choctaw Nation Health facility. Available now through the Apple App Store or Google Play.

Use your smartphone to scan the code and download the app.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

ACHIEVE YOUR DREAM OF BEING A DISTRICT PRINCESS OR TRIBAL ROYALTY

CHOCTAW PRINCESS IN TRAINING

FEBRUARY 19	MARCH 5	MARCH 26
COALGATE COMMUNITY CENTER DISTRICTS 9, 10, 11 AND 12	IDABEL COMMUNITY CENTER DISTRICTS 1, 2, 3 AND 8	WILBURTON COMMUNITY CENTER DISTRICTS 4, 5, 6 AND 7

ALL TRAININGS ARE 10 AM - 2 PM | PARTICIPANTS AGES 8 - 22
MUST BE 1/16 CHOCTAW | MEMBER OF THE CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA | LIVE WITHIN CHOCTAW RESERVATION BOUNDARIES
DATES AND TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

580-642-7961 | CHOCTAWNATION.COM/PRINCESS-PAGEANTS

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

SUMMER CAMPS

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/YOUTH-EVENTS-AND-ACTIVITIES

APPLICATIONS OPEN FEBRUARY 1 - APRIL 15

Choctaw Nation Youth Events & Activities

Cast your cares away in Choctaw Country

Fishing for trout in a mountain stream nestled in beautiful scenery is the dream of many anglers. There is magic in a running river, casting your luck on the water, hoping for a bite. Oklahoma is home to several prime locations for trout fishing, and two of the best are located within the Choctaw Nation in southeast Oklahoma.

Trout fishing is unique from other types of fishing in this part of the country. Most fishing in Oklahoma is for species of fish endemic to the local lakes and streams, while the trout are stocked in several locations across Oklahoma.

Ken Cunningham is the Assistant Chief of Fisheries at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Across the state of Oklahoma, there are only two year-round trout fisheries in Oklahoma, and one of them is right here in Choctaw Country, according to Cunningham.

According to Cunningham, trout stocked in the year-round fisheries are provided to mitigate the impact on the natural fish of the river and help maintain a sustainable ecosystem.



Choctaw Country is filled with breathtaking views and rivers and stream filled with trout during the season.

Cunningham said there are eight seasonal trout fisheries in Oklahoma, including five lakes and three rivers and streams. He said trout love cold water, so November through March is when trout are regularly stocked in these seasonal fisheries.

One of the best places to fish for trout in the winter is along the Fourche Maline River at Robbers Cave State Park. This State Park is located just a few miles north of Wilburton, Oklahoma.

Robbers Cave was given its name because it was a former hideout for infamous outlaws Belle Starr and Jesse James. Given the beautiful scenery of this area, it's no wonder that they chose this location (OK, maybe they chose it for its secluded nature, but that is still an excellent trait for a trout fishing destination).

This area is perfect for a fishing weekend with friends and family or a day trip alone.

You can pack a lunch for the day or spend the weekend taking advantage of everything the area has to offer. Some of the other things to do in and around Robbers Cave State Park include camping, hiking, horseback riding, and fishing.

Another premier trout fishing in Oklahoma is the Lower Mountain Fork River inside Beavers Bend State Park. This river has some of the best trout fishing in the country.

Trout can be stocked here all year, so you will find trout no matter what time of year you want to visit this area.

Many fly fishers come to this location because of the running water and large trout.

Chris Schatte with Beavers Bend Fly Fishing Guide Service said that he has fished all over the country, and this area has some of the best fly fishing in the country. It doesn't matter how you like to fish; this area has something for you.

Joshua Richards owns Mountain Fork Outfitters and has been guiding fishing trips inside Beavers Bend State Park for years.

Richards offers spin cast and Zebco style fishing and a fun time for everyone.

"I offer family fun and excitement. I make it simple and easy to where we catch the most amount of fish," he said.



Photos by Christian Toews

Choctaw Country is a fisherman's paradise. The Lower Mountain Fork River is one of the premier trout fishing destinations in the area, with some of the best trout fishing opportunities in the country.

Richards typically sees people catch larger fish during the colder months.

"Once it cools off, I've caught huge rainbow trout," explained Richards. "Up to nine and ten pounds. They are huge."

Part of the appeal of the area is the scenery.

According to Richards, the scenery is one of the reasons people come and fish.

"We have some of the best views. Everyone who comes to the area says that it's some of the best views they have ever seen. It's really a unique experience and unique place," said Richards.

Whether you are an angler or not, you will enjoy this area with hiking trails that lead to breathtaking vistas and beautiful ATV trails.

Only a few miles from the best fishing spots, Hochatown, Oklahoma, offers excellent restaurants, breweries and activities.

Many people come out and fish for part of the day and then enjoy some downtime exploring everything the area offers.

To fish in these locations, tribal members must follow the newly updated Choctaw Nation Fish, Game and Animals Code. Tribal members are still subject to special restrictions such as hunting/fishing in

wildlife management areas. For more information, visit <https://www.choctaw-nation.com/huntingandfishing>.

Non-tribal members will need a State of Oklahoma fishing license, and you must follow all the trout fishing guidelines. These regulations are found on the Oklahoma Wildlife Department's website at www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/trout-information.

For more information about Mountain Fork Outfitters, you can visit www.mountainforkoutfitters.com.

If you're interested in fly fishing, you can learn more and book a guided trip at www.beaversbendflyfishingguideservice.com.

Maybe you are a lifelong angler who wants to fish in a new location, or perhaps you want to try trout fishing for the first time. Either way, trout fishing can be a great family experience, a fun time with friends, or some quality alone time out in nature.

Now is a great time to fish for trout, so don't let the colder weather discourage you from getting out and enjoying the incredible fishing that southeast Oklahoma has to offer.

Ludlow shows the value of perseverance

By Christian Toews

Luke Ludlow has overcome some significant obstacles in life. His drive and determination have kept him moving forward and accomplishing his goals.

According to his mother, Jessica Ludlow, he faced a challenging hearing loss issue at only four years old.

Luke was able to recover, and Jessica said she could see that he was persistent from that early age.

Jessica says Luke was building rockets at seven years old, teaching himself Greek and Physics at nine, and taking classes online with Stanford in middle school.

She commented that Luke's persistence in learning showed that he wasn't someone who would give up easily.

The Ludlow family moved to Ireland for a time, and Luke was able to work as a model and a photographer before college.

When he started college, he had no idea that he would soon face one of the most difficult challenges of his young life.

Luke was diagnosed with a rare kidney condition called Renal Nutcracker Syndrome.

According to the National Institutes of Health, Renal Nutcracker Syndrome is a

condition that occurs when the left renal vein (the vein that carries blood purified by the left kidney) becomes compressed.

Nutcracker syndrome is rare and can affect adults or children, though the prevalence and specific causes are unknown.

For more information on the disease, visit <https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/11971/renal-nutcracker-syndrome>.

Luke's condition required a kidney transplant during his sophomore year of college.

According to Luke, that the surgery was a significant physical and mental setback.

"I really wanted to just keep going and working toward my goals, and it was difficult. It made me slow down," he said.

Luke said facing this challenge made him realize that it was alright for him to change his expectations.

"I realized that it was okay for my best to shift from attending every single class to attending what I could, from getting straight A's to allowing myself to get a B in a class. I had to slow down and realize that my body and mind needed time to recover," Luke explained.

Luke noticed how closely connected his body was to his mind during that time. Even when his mind felt like being active, he had to rest his body to continue making progress and healing.

While his college experience was interrupted drastically, Luke completed his degree in computer science from the University of Utah.

He recently accepted a job with Amazon and moved to Seattle.

According to Luke, he will be working with the Amazon Smile program, which allows people to donate to charities through Amazon.

Luke is excited to have a purpose like this behind his work.

"I absolutely love my job, I love writing code and it feels good to work for something that helps charities," he said.

Luke is very proud of his Choctaw heritage and has always been curious about his ancestors.

He said he really appreciates the scholarships that he received from the Choctaw Nation and commented that being a Choctaw tribal member helped him in many ways.

"Because of my Choctaw heritage, I was able to get more resources to help me succeed in college, and I really appreciate that," Luke said.

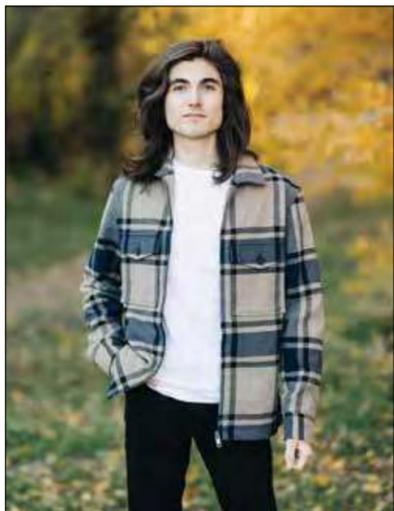


Photo Provided

Luke Ludlow is now living life to the fullest and has accepted a position with the Amazon Smile program.



Photo Provided

After being diagnosed with Renal Nutcracker Syndrome, Luke Ludlow underwent a kidney transplant to save his life.

Williams, Emmert Named 2021 Choctaw Outstanding Elders

DURANT, Okla. (January 13, 2022) – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma recognized Mr. Darryl Gene Williams of Durant for the Outstanding Male Elder and Mrs. Janie Emmert of Wilburton as the Outstanding Female Elder earlier this winter.

"Both of these elders work tirelessly to help their community," says Kayla Williams, Director of Patient Relations and Senior Nutrition. "This program provides recognition to the many elders that give so much of themselves each year. We are truly honored to host the award. These two individuals kept coming up when councilmen surveyed people about who stood out."

Mr. Williams has been very active in the Choctaw community since he was a young man. Since his retirement as pastor of San Angelo Baptist Tabernacle in 2008, Williams moved back to his Indian home in Ludlow, Oklahoma and began volunteering. Five years ago, he took up post as the chef at the Choctaw Community Center in Durant. Since then he has worked tirelessly to

provide meals even through the pandemic serving over 18,000 curbside meals in 2020. "Darryl's life is an example of living out the 'CHAHTA SPIRIT,'" says James Dry on the nomination form.

Mrs. Emmert and her husband Johnny live out the true Choctaw Nation values: Faith, Family, Culture. They especially have a calling to help those who have fallen on hard times and never expect anything in return. She always has an encouraging word for others and posts daily prayers on Facebook. The two are a strong-bonded Choctaw couple. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they helped many find comfort. "In my heart and eyes, this couple truly live up to the title Outstanding Elder. May we all live a life as they do for others," says Jennifer Woods on the nomination form.

Due to the pandemic, both Williams and Emmert were recognized at their respective Community Centers in a small ceremony with Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr.



Photo Provided

Janie Emmert was recently selected as the 2021 Female Choctaw Outstanding Elder.



Photo Provided

Darryl Williams was recently selected as the 2021 Male Choctaw Outstanding Elder.

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Marquez brothers giving back to Gold Star families through sculptures and film

By Shelia Kirven

When filmmaker Manny Marquez was studying directing and writing at the Arts Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, over 20 years ago, he had no idea one of his biggest projects would be a feature film of his younger brother's road to healing.

But that is exactly what he is working on today.

The film is not something they initially intended to do. It started when Anthony wanted to give back to fellow veteran families.

Anthony was deployed to Afghanistan in March 2011 with his unit from San Mateo, California, and from April to September, 17 fellow Marines were killed and over 200 wounded. He saw a lot of casualties and lost friends. Anthony has a memorial wall in his home with photos of the 17 lost and says he takes a knee in front of it every night and prays.

Anthony was 19 when he went into the Marines. In 2010, Anthony was trained as a military working dog handler. His dog was Allie.

Allie could detect hidden explosives. She had been blown up, shot at and had grenades thrown at her. She remained on active duty after Anthony came home from deployment and had been sent for another tour in Afghanistan.

In 2014, Anthony found out that Allie was being discharged from the Marines and he filed adoption papers the next day.

He was going to drive 19 hours to pick Allie up when he received a phone call from former championship football coach Barry Switzer who had heard about the adoption offering his jet for the trip.

In Greensboro, North Carolina, Anthony was given her discharge certificate and greeted Allie. She still remembered him.

Allie and Anthony lived together for the last seven years of her life.

At 13 ½ years old, she had to be put down. Marines surrounded her, and people on the street mourned her death. Her story lives on. Operation Allie was filmed in 2014 and can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/154631484>. Anthony has the likeness of Allie tattooed on his hand. In the film, his mother emotionally declared, "Anthony is forever changed."

After Anthony came home in 2016, he found out the mother of one of the fallen Marines had attempted suicide.

He knew in his heart he had to do something, and that was when the idea of the XVII Carvings came to show the families that they and their sons had not been forgotten.

He began carving chainsaw sculptures called "Battlestar Crosses" and has presented one to each of the 17 Gold Star Families. Anthony said the Battlefield Cross means a lot to service members and their families, signifying someone lost in battle who laid down their life.

He had no experience in carving wood but got in touch with a 30-year carver from Muskogee, who helped him complete the first carving. Anthony delivered it to the family of LCPL Robert Greniger on the fifth anniversary of his death, driving it to Minnesota. "From there, I told myself, well, I need to do them for all the families. I can't just do it for one family; I have to do it for all 17 of them."

He said the first sculpture took an entire weekend, but he can do one now in a little over four hours.

Anthony said, "I don't sign my carvings; I don't mark it with my name. My signature is 'XVII' on all my carvings."

Manny said, "It was [Anthony's] way to let them know that their sons were not to be forgotten and that their healing was something he cared about. At the same time, Anthony was working on his own healing from the trauma of war."

Switzer came back in the picture later and helped raise around \$15,000 for Anthony's mission, along with contacting a chainsaw company that sent chainsaws and supplies. He also helped raise \$13,000 to help pay for the brothers' RV for traveling during the filming. "He has been a friend of mine ever since," Anthony said.

A documentary was filmed during the delivery of the first sculpture to the family and can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/238134833>.

"It took me just under three years to do all 17 of those deliveries. I've been all over the country, stood at all 17 of the Marines' graves, presented each family with a carving."

Seventy-one sculptures have been created and given to families and several donated for veteran fundraising efforts. Three of his donations have raised over \$64,000.

In July, the brothers



Photo Provided (Photographer, Tom Harris)

Choctaw brothers Manny and Anthony Marquez have traveled nationwide since July 2021 filming their documentary, XVII Carvings.

went back on the road to revisit families, interview them about their sons and work on their full-length feature film, XII Carvings.

Anthony said, "We went to 34 states and saw all 17 families. We interviewed 23 different Marines, two Navy Corpsmen, drove over 12,000 miles in an RV, went into all the families' homes and they all have the carvings displayed at their homes."

Filming is nearing completion. The brothers hope to have the film ready to hit the film festival circuit in 2023. Manny noted, "We're not making this as a home video; this is a professional endeavor."

"I want to make a story that is universal," Manny commented. He talked about wanting the film to be one that somewhere like the Smithsonian could possibly use to see what it's like to be parents after this type of loss, to see what it's like to be a friend after this type of loss. "I don't know if anyone has ever done 50 interviews with people about a deployment. It's kind of an interesting sociological study."

"Anthony was able to do something for these families, as we were able to connect these people who may have not talked before, these 17 families," Manny said.

Anthony is also working on carvings for families of fallen Marines who were on deployment before his in 2009 and will include some of the Marines from that time in the film.

When the brothers were on the road talking to the families of the 17, they collected a piece from each of their uniforms. Once all are collected (they only lack three pieces now), they will make a complete Marine Corps Dress Blue uniform when put together.

"The white hat, the cover, belonged to one Marine. The jacket belonged to another Marine. The trousers,

the shoes, the belt. All these pieces belonged to one of 17 Marines that were killed. This year, hopefully by September or October, we're going to have a display of a carving that I do and that uniform and a bronze plaque that will go in the Marine Corp Museum in Quantico, Virginia. That will be one of the last things we will be filming," said Anthony.

"I have a lot of heart behind what I do for these families because I was in the Marine Corp with their sons and on that deployment. There's a lot of weight behind it. There's a big reason behind it. I can't fail on what I'm trying to accomplish."

Manny said, "It was really important for me to make a movie with him. There's nothing like making a film with your brother and paying respect to his time and his losses through what I do professionally, storytelling. I think that's really important."

The brothers' grandfathers are veterans, as well as their uncle who was a Marine in the 1970s. A cousin was in Desert Storm.

The brothers are proud to be Choctaw and talk of how it means a lot to them to be connected to the Tribe. Their cousin David Flores said, "These two brothers are from Oklahoma and are very proud of their Choctaw heritage. We grew up with the traditions and culture that have shaped our lives today."

Everything they have done thus far has been through private funds and funds received through fundraising efforts, but there is still much work to be done.

Follow the Marquez brothers on Instagram at @XVII.Films or on their Facebook page XVII Carvings.

Manny Marquez can be reached by writing to XVII Films, P.O. Box 640, Owasso OK 74055.



Photo Provided (Photographer, Tom Harris)

Anthony Marquez working on one of the XVII carvings.

LABOR AND DELIVERY DEPARTMENT

I was blessed with the most wonderful experience with the Choctaw Nation throughout my first pregnancy and the delivery of my baby girl. All of the staff here were very attentive, caring, and provided amazing expertise in helping me prepare for delivery. I could not have asked for a better midwife who delivered my baby. The time spent with the lactation consultant was very informative and extremely helpful to prepare me for my breastfeeding journey. Words cannot describe how appreciative I am of the Choctaw Nation and their wonderful staff. Yakoke!

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Choctaw Nation Family Violence Prevention

A year of firsts and continued growth for the Choctaw Judicial System

By Chris Jennings

The Choctaw Nation recently held its second jury trial. In the process, it racked up several firsts to continue to strengthen its position as a valid and competent court of law.

This second trial, a domestic violence case, was the first since the landmark rulings of *McGirt v. Oklahoma* and *Sizemore v. State*, which together affirmed the Choctaw Nation’s reservation boundaries.

Judge Richard Branam presided over the one-day trial. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma was represented by the Choctaw Nation Office of the Tribal Prosecutor through First Assistant Cory Ortega and Assistant Tribal Prosecutor Liz Murphy. The defendant, Micah Washington, was represented by the Choctaw Nation Public Defender’s Office.

Washington, a non-Native, was prosecuted under the Choctaw Nation’s Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (SDVCJ), which allows tribes to criminally prosecute non-Native defendants who are in specific domestic relationships with tribal members.

Tribal Prosecutor Kara Bacon said, “Not only was this our first prosecution over a non-Native in front of a jury, but this was also the first jury trial where prosecutors utilized an evidence-based prosecution.”

Evidence-based prosecution is used when victims are uncooperative or unavailable for testimony. “When the officers collect evidence at the scene, like photographs, witness statements and 911 calls, this independent evidence can sometimes allow us to prove the elements of the crime without relying on the victim’s cooperation,” said Bacon.

Often, victims are reluctant to come forward and testify in a domestic violence case. “A lot of times victims do things that are contrary to their own interest, like not cooperating or recant on statements, and people don’t understand why that happens,” said Bacon.

Because of this, the Nation has employed Shawnnay McCarrell as a domestic violence expert. “Victim behaviors can seem counterintuitive to what we believe they should act like,” said McCarrell.

This case was the first time a domestic violence expert was used. McCarrell was able to answer some frequent questions from juries, like why victims will often stay with their abusers and not report domestic violence.

After hearing the case, the six-person jury, three women and three men, deliberated for less than 30 minutes to find Washington guilty and recommended a sentence of six months imprisonment.

“This verdict was a huge step toward ending domestic violence in the Choctaw Nation Reservation, and we will continue to practice evidence-based prosecutions going forward,” said Bacon.

The Choctaw Nation’s judicial department was established in 1836; since then, it has evolved and changed according to times. With the increase in caseload brought on by the recent *McGirt* and *Sizemore* court decisions, the Nation has stepped up to the challenge.

The Washington case, the first jury trial case handled by the Nation’s in-house public defender’s office, is one example of that commitment.

Amy J. Pierce appointed as first full-time district court judge

DURANT, Okla., (January 7, 2022) – Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has appointed Amy J. Pierce as the first full-time district court judge for the tribal nation’s Judicial Branch. She was sworn in this week by Choctaw Nation Chief Justice David Burrage at the Choctaw Nation Judicial Center.

“Judge Pierce is an outstanding addition to our court system,” said Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation. “Her integrity, judgement, discernment and knowledge will continue to establish our judicial system as one of the best tribal courts in the country.”

Having experience in Native American Law, Pierce is welcomed to the Choctaw Nation as the Judicial Branch continues

to increase their case load as a result of the *McGirt v Oklahoma* decision in the US Supreme Court.

An enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation, Judge Pierce was most recently a partner at Hampton Barghols Pierce, PLLC in Oklahoma City. She also held positions at two other law firms in Oklahoma City.

Judge Pierce earned her Juris Doctorate from Oklahoma City University after receiving her Bachelor of Science from Oklahoma State University. She also completed the Harvard Negotiation Institute program through the Harvard Law School.

Judge Pierce has been voted a “Top 25 Women in Law” in the State of Oklahoma by Super Lawyers among other honors.



Photo by Christian Toews

From evidence based prosecution and the first jury trial with an in-house public defender to use of a domestic violence expert, the Choctaw Nation’s second jury trial brought several firsts to the Nation’s court system to strengthen its position as a just and fair court system.

Blayne Allsup has been working for the Choctaw Nation since May of 2021 as the director of the public defender’s office.

Before that, the Nation was using contract attorneys from the state. Allsup says that bringing the defenders in-house makes the process more efficient than a state-run system could ever be.

“I would tell you that the way things are happening in the Choctaw Nation, we are able to get our guys through a lot faster than the state was able to do,” said Allsup.

Since creating the office, they have hired two additional attorneys and are currently in the interview process for a fourth. As of January 9, 2022, they have handled 742 cases.

According to Allsup, part of the reason the process is so efficient is that everybody from the judge to the prosecutors to the defenders are all working together to take care of issues efficiently.

With cases ranging from murder to sex offenses to public intoxication and everything in between, the court system has demonstrated that it is able to handle the whole gambit of cases it has presented.

Allsup also has high praise for how the Nation handles these court cases, both before and after the fact. “The Choctaw Nation is very much in support of and is trying really hard to rehabilitate,” said Allsup.

This method of criminal justice, based on rehabilitation versus a punitive system, where the jail is the most common result, shows the Nation’s commitment to improving the lives of its citizens. Drug and alcohol counselors are on-site at the courthouse, and probation officers who are actively involved with helping, not just monitoring, are the kinds of efforts that strengthen the entire court system.

After a recent trial in Talihina, Allsup said the probation officer recently demonstrated this by springing into immediate action. “All three of us are in this room, and he’s just making phone calls, getting him into treatment. You know, that’s just absolutely amazing,” said Allsup.

While some have bought into the misconception that tribal courts aren’t legitimate, this simply is not true. By successfully trying cases involving a wide range of offenses, the Nation is showing that it is, in fact, capable of providing fair justice. This second jury trial is a prime example of that.

“It’s important to show that we’ve got judges that were state court judges; we’ve got attorneys that have been practicing a long time; we know how to do this, and we’re doing it well,” said Ortega.

By helping victims and their families and rehabilitating and reintegrating offenders, the Nation is not just building a better court system but a better sovereign nation.



Choctaw Nation Photo
Choctaw Nation Chief Justice David Burrage swears in District Court Judge Amy J. Pierce at the Choctaw Nation Judicial Center. Pierce is the Tribe’s first full-time district court judge

BISKINIK

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February 2022

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