



January 2024 Issue



A year in review: Choctaw Nation celebrates successes of 2023

By Shelia Kirven

In the February 2023 issue of the Biskinik, Chief Batton talked about the tribe's goals for improving all aspects of the tribal members' quality of life in the new year.

"From education, housing, and health to employment, data digital transformation and an increase in economic development activities across the reservation, we will be razor-sharp in our focus to deliver more opportunities to enhance the well-being of our tribal members in 2023," said Chief Batton.

He explained that to support the focus on improving the quality of life for tribal members—the tribe would continue to look for opportunities to strengthen financial growth and economic sustainability.

As a new year begins, let us look back at last year and review what the Choctaw Nation held dear, the opportunities for growth and prosperity we took advantage of, and how we lived out the Chahta spirit through faith, family, and culture.

Here are some of the highlights from our previous year.

JANUARY

- Choctaw Nation announces BIA Talihina Agency will be officed at Tribal Headquarters in Durant.

- The Warrior Wellness Program launched, designed to connect Native American veterans with culture, heritage and each other to reduce rates of death by suicide among veterans.

- A partnership was announced with Atoka Public Schools for a multi-year farm-to-school program, with Choctaw Nation producing and distributing fresh beef raised and harvested in Southeastern Oklahoma to the school's campuses.

- The Choctaw Tribal Council held its last meeting in the existing Council Chambers at Tvshka Homma, awaiting construction completion on its new facility. Members had met in the old chambers for decades.

- Choctaw Nation, the community of Atoka and country music star Reba McEntire partnered together for a grand opening of Reba's Place in downtown Atoka. Through the partnership, Choctaw Nation Ranches will sell their high-quality beef to the restaurant.

- CNO law enforcement officers Patrolmen Roy Hummel, Patrolman Brent Humphries, Sgt. Isaac James, Sgt. Doug Rinehart, Patrolman Michael Walden, Patrolman Robert Toon, and former Patrolman Nick Wallace were honored during a ceremony for their actions above and beyond the call of duty in 2022.

FEBRUARY

- Chief Batton announced the tribe had approximately 12,000 employees, the most in Choctaw Nation history.

- Choctaw Nation and NASA devel-

oped a new relationship offering students more direct insight to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education through collaboration with CNO's Education Department.

- Members of the Choctaw Tribal Council spent a day at the Oklahoma State Capitol working with legislature on issues pertaining to the Choctaw Nation.

MARCH

- The Choctaw Nation celebrated women veterans by reflecting on the history of Native American women's military service and honoring their service to our country with a reception.

- The third annual Trail of Tears Virtual Journey kicked off, taking participants over 620 miles from Nanih Waiya Mount in Mississippi to Nanih Waiya in Oklahoma via the Walker Tracker app.

- A groundbreaking was held for the new Timber View Apartments in Broken Bow, a complex of 120 units.

- Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin attended the redesignation ceremony at the newly-named Fort Barfoot in Nottoway County, Virginia. The fort was renamed in honor of Second Lieutenant Van T. Barfoot, a Choctaw descendant.

APRIL

- An Easter celebration was held at the Choctaw Cultural Center in Durant with an egg hunt, storytelling and Easter ornament making.

- Hundreds of visitors attended Chief Batton's Easter Celebration on the capitol grounds at Tvshka Homma.

- Candidates for Chief, and Tribal Council Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 11 filed for office. Candidates for elective offices of Chief, Council District 1 and 5 were qualified and unopposed.

MAY

- A Missing Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Event was held at the Choctaw Headquarters to raise awareness of National MMIW Day. President Joe Biden proclaimed May 5, 2023, as Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day.

- Tribal and community members gathered in Antlers to bring awareness and walk in honor of missing and murdered Indigenous persons.

- A Memorial Day ceremony was held by the Choctaw Nation at the Tvshka Homma Capitol Grounds.

- The McAlester Clinic held an expansion groundbreaking ceremony. GI, cardio, ENT, endocrinology, orthopedics, speech therapy and Employee Health Services will be added.

- The McAlester Wind Horse Behavioral Health center celebrated 15 years of service to the community.

- Chief Batton appears in the second season of Netflix's "Spirit Rangers," an

animated series for children.

- Choctaw Nation and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) co-host a day of assistance to veterans in the "Bringing VA Benefits to Your Hometown" event held at the Tribal Headquarters.

- Elder Appreciation Day was held in honor of elders' wisdom and contributions to the Choctaw Nation.

- The Trail of Tears Commemorative Walk was held at the capitol grounds at Tvshka Homma, with around 600 participants walking.

- Oklahoma Legislature overrides Gov. Kevin Stitt's veto of a bill that would allow students to wear Native American regalia during high school and college graduations.

JUNE

- The Poteau and Durant Wellness Centers celebrate five years of operation.

- Choctaw Nation residency students completed their program and a Choctaw Nation Family Medicine residency graduation was held.

- The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Native American children can continue to be protected under federal law from removal from their tribal communities for fostering or adoption on Thursday, June 15, 2023, affirming the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act by a 7-2 vote.

- A ribbon-cutting was held in Spiro for ten new Affordable Rental Homes.

- Chahta Achukmaka (Choctaw Wellness) Center in District 4 celebrates its fifth anniversary.

- Trail of Tears cyclists from all over the country completed a 500-mile journey over seven days, riding the Trail of Tears route from Mississippi to Oklahoma, stopping along the way to learn about the history of the Trail of Tears and see places of significance.

- Choctaw Nation's Project Pelichi WILL, Warriors in Learning and Leadership, hosted their seventh annual STEAM camp, hosting participants in grades 5-8 and 9-12.

- Choctaw Nation Human Resources department was named the winner of the HRDUS 2023 Innovative HR Team award. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma was recognized by the publication as one of the six Best Places to Work, noting that Choctaw Nation is using software and technology to create a seamless experience throughout the associate life cycle.

- The annual Chahtapreneur Awards Ceremony was held in Durant, recognizing 12 small businesses.

JULY

- Atoka Clinic celebrates 15 years of service, specializing in Family Practice, Immunization, Lab/Xray, WIC, Diabetes Education, Nutrition and Pharmacy (including a drive-thru).

- Choctaw Nation Employee Prescription

Program reaches a total of 992,120 for 2023, a 5% increase from that time the previous year.

- Choctaw Nation Healthcare system grew by 779 associates since October 2022.

- CNHSA recorded a total of 58,489 patients and patient encounters totaling 667,677, a 2% increase from that time in 2022, with Pediatrics (the highest growing department) with 8,838 patients and 20,754 encounters) that far in the year, a 27% increase in encounters since the same timeframe the previous year.

- Choctaw Nation Health Care System received new accreditations, including the Breast Care & Cancer Survivorship Clinic – Center of Excellence and the Diabetes Program – Center of Excellence.

- Results from the Choctaw Nation General Election were announced. District 2 Winner: Anthony "Tony" Ward with 544 votes (76.51%). District 3 Winner: Eddie Bohanan with 650 votes (85.41%). District 8 Winner: Perry Thompson with 836 votes (79.17%). District 11 Winner: Robert Karr with 987 votes (77.41%). The office of Chief, and Tribal Council District 1 (Thomas Williston) and District 5 (Ronald Perry) were unchallenged and duly certified as elected for a new term.

- Summer camps for youth were held with focuses on sports, culture, academia, and wildlife, etc. Camps began in May and concluded in July, with over 2,000 total registrations.

- CNO Behavioral Health partnered with McAlester Taekwondo to host the first Ninja Camp in McAlester.

- Choctaw Nation Division of Commerce teamed up with Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology (OSUIT) to offer Choctaw Casinos & Resorts food and beverage associates culinary training and college course credit.

AUGUST

- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma received the Occupational Excellence Achievement Award from the National Safety Council (the first tribe to receive this award) and the U.S. Best-in-Class Employer by Gallagher for exceptional efforts in the workplace.

- The Choctaw Housing Authority announced growth and expansion of the Section 184 Home Loan Guarantee Program.

- Over \$400,000 in scholarships were awarded to 63 Choctaw students seeking higher education at the 2023 Chahta Foundation Scholarship Banquet held at the Choctaw Cultural Center

- A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for the grand opening of the Ahni Center at the Chief Gregory E. Pyle Tribal Complex in Durant. The center is the first tribal Family Justice Center of its kind in Oklahoma's Indian Country.

Continued on page 4

Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

A look back at 2023

As 2023 ends, I can't help but take some time and reflect on what a great year it has been for the Choctaw Nation.

The planning and execution of this year's Labor Day Festival was second to none. All our associates banded together with a true Chahta spirit of volunteerism and hard work and continued our tradition of excellence for this event to again make this uniquely Choctaw event the best one yet. The crowds, the vendors, the events, and the execution of the event get better and better each year and it shows exactly what I already know about the Choctaw Nation – we are second to no one. Our executive staff, associates and tribal members work tirelessly to make sure this event runs smoothly each

year, and it shows. And that's not just my opinion. The Labor Day Festival was named the 2023 Event of the Year by the Talihiina Chamber of Commerce. Also at the same awards ceremony, the 2023 Kiamichi Valley Hall of Fame Award was awarded to Choctaw Nation Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr., among other dignitaries.

The Choctaw Nation should be proud of all the work we have accomplished in 2023, here are just a few projects and milestones we reached:

Housing

- Timber View multi-family housing in Broken Bow approved funding and started construction.
- The Haven multi-family housing Durant approved funding and started construction.
- Chahtapreneur Growth
- Overall - 6.6% (from 2,436 to 2,598); 162 new clients; 28 business start-ups; 8 business expansions
- 5% increase of Chahtapreneur's in business (from 1,510 to 1,587)
- 2.9% increase in jobs supported by Chahtapreneur's in business (from 4,333 to 4,461)

Health Statistics

- Total tribal member encounters – 1,072,454
- Total prescriptions – 1,636,558

ARPA Funds

- Economic Impact Recovery Program assisted 160,532 tribal members with \$292,023,400.
- Elder Food Security assisted 31,630 tribal members with \$203,638,000.
- Disability Food Security assisted 3,430 tribal members with \$20,664,200.
- Small Business Recovery Assistance Program assisted 787 tribal members with \$3,484,000.
- Emergency Rental Assistance Program assisted 4,268 tribal members with \$15,050,655.
- Homeowner's Assistance Fund assisted 2,158 tribal members with \$7,798,245.
- Victims Assistance Program assisted 1,349 tribal members with \$7,493,641.

Homes

- Calera LEAP Homes – February 2023, 30 Homes
- Durant LEAP Homes – February 2023, 30 Homes
- Hugo LEAP Homes – March 2023, 10 Homes
- Spiro ARH Homes – May 2023, 10 Homes
- McAlester ARH Homes – July 2023, 5 Homes
- Broken Bow LEAP and ARH Homes – August 2023, 15 LEAP | 20 ARH
- Hosted ground-breaking for Hugo Tribal Services Building – May 2023
- Stigler ARH Homes – December 2023, 10 Homes
- Stigler LEAP Homes – December 2023, 10 Homes
- Calera LEAP Homes – June 2023, 15 Homes
- Wilburton ARH Homes – October 2023, 20 Homes

Outreach

- Launched Warrior Wellness Program to support Choctaw Veterans.
- Leased housing to support families of domestic violence.
- Awarded \$4,000 (per school) to support 12 districts with the development or expansion of e-sports program.
- Participated in NASA downlink event.

The Choctaw Nation has a lot to be thankful for in 2023, and we have a lot to look forward to in 2024. We will take a look ahead in my next letter.

Be proud of our accomplishments and let's make 2024 even better. Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams
Employee Chaplain

Time: New Year's Resolutions

Another year has come and gone and the mystery of time challenges us. Job had the same question. In Job 7:6, we read, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

As one looks backward, the years seem to come by swiftly. God created time. He created measured time by dividing light into periods of day and night. The origin of measured time begins here. Genesis 1:3-5 says, "And God said, let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

Since the dawn of history, man has made an effort to measure time. Some of the earliest devices for measuring time were the sundial, the hourglass, the signs of the Zodiac, and the stars. Today, we have efficient watches and clocks that are extremely accurate. Time itself is a strange thing. It quietly tells us that time never moves backward. It cannot be recalled. We never grow younger. Also, it teaches us that time has a beginning and will have an end. Every day ends; every night ends; every week ends; every year ends; and every life ends. When we pass out of time, we enter a state of being that has no end and is not measured by time. Time will merge into eternity.

In Ephesians 5:16, the scripture says, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Translated, the word "redeem" means to "go into the market and buy up." Perhaps the New Year's resolutions should be based on this word. Most New Year's resolutions are of temporal interest and connected with time. Redeeming time would be to fill up the time we have with eternal and timeless efforts such as not only providing our children with materialism but with spiritualism as well. Becoming a friend to those who are friendless.

Jesus said in Mark 12:31, "And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Proverbs 14: 20,21 exhorts, "The poor is hated even of his own neighbor: but the rich hath many friends. He that despiseth his neighbor sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he."

We live in "temporal" but think in "eternal."



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Happy, healthy, new you for 2024

Halito, and I hope you all had an enjoyable holiday season. Each year some tribal members begin the new year vowing to change their lives through healthier choices, more exercise, and an overall change in lifestyle.

As Choctaws, we give back to others without hesitation and help those in need whenever possible. During this time of year, it is a good time to take a step back and give back to yourself to follow up on the season of giving. The new year is a fresh, new page in the 2024 chapter of your life. You are the author of this book. You can create the scenes, characters, and mood of this chapter. Create your outline for the year, plan the course and steer towards the outcome you want.

You can choose to help others in January by donating blood for National Blood Donor Month with organizations like the American Red Cross, Oklahoma Blood Institute, and America's Blood Centers. Each year, during blood donor month, there is a push to help others who may need blood due to injury, surgery, or disease; please donate if you can.

The choice to give back to yourself and start your journey to a healthier lifestyle is an admirable goal. It can have pitfalls and hills along the way, but the secret is consistency no matter what happens. According to the dieticians at Healthline.com, here are a few minor changes that can keep you on track and active in your healthy lifestyle journey. Such as:

1. Eat more whole foods

Adding more whole foods to your diet can be done slowly and consistently. For example, if you're not used to eating vegetables, start by adding one serving of your favorite veggie to your diet every day.

2. Sit less and move more

Making a resolution to sit less is an easy and attainable resolution that can be tailored to fit your lifestyle. For example, if you have a desk job that requires long periods of sitting, make a resolution to go for a 15-minute walk at lunch or to get up and walk for 5 minutes every hour.

3. Cut back on sweetened beverages

Though quitting sweetened beverages cold turkey is always an option, gradually minimizing your intake may help you kick your sugary drink habit for good.

4. Get more quality sleep

Decreasing screen time before bed, reducing light pollution in your bedroom, cutting back on caffeine, and getting to bed at a reasonable hour are some simple ways to improve sleep hygiene.

5. Find a physical activity that you enjoy

For example, taking a half-hour walk, jog, or bike ride before work, or swimming at a gym that's on your way home, are simple and sustainable exercise resolutions.

6. Take more 'me time' and practice self-care

Self-care doesn't have to be elaborate or time consuming. It can simply mean taking a bath every week, attending your favorite weekly yoga class, preparing a healthy meal for yourself, going for a walk in nature, or getting an extra hour of sleep.

7. Cook more meals at home

A study in 11,396 adults found that those who ate five or more home-cooked meals per week were 28% less likely to be overweight, compared with those who ate fewer than three home-cooked meals per week.

8. Spend more time outside

Taking a walk outside during your lunch break, hiking on weekends, going camping with friends, or simply soaking in the beauty of your backyard or local park are all ways to incorporate nature into your daily routine.

9. Limit screen time

Setting a resolution to cut back on the time you spend scrolling through social media, watching TV, or playing computer games may help boost your mood and enhance productivity.

10. Rely less on convenience foods

Many people rely on convenience foods, such as packaged chips, cookies, frozen dinners, and fast food, for a quick meal or snack. Though these items may be tasty and readily available, they can have detrimental effects on your health if eaten too often.

Whatever you choose to do in 2024, the Choctaw Nation is here to help. There is access to the Wellness Centers, tribal clinics and advice from Choctaw professionals that can help you along your journey. If you go to the Choctaw Nation website, click "About" and the click on "Health" and you'll see that it lists all the facilities and services. You can also download a MYCNHSA app to your phone that can help you along the way to a healthier you.

It is my sincere hope that 2024 is your best year yet, so get out there and start writing your new chapter!

Yakoke and God Bless!

HIGHER EDUCATION
**TECHNOLOGY
ALLOWANCE**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/TECHNOLOGY-ALLOWANCE

Chief Batton's
EASTER CELEBRATION
2024

MARCH 9, 2024 | 10:30 AM
Please join us as we celebrate the Good News of Easter and enjoy fellowship with tribal members and their families.

TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS
COUNCIL HOUSE RD.
TUSKAHOMA, OK 74574

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

CHOCTAW
CULTURAL CENTER

NEW EXHIBIT

SCAN OR GO TO:
BIT.LY/CCC-EXHIBITIONS

**BOK ABAIYA: PRACTICED HANDS AND
THE ARTS OF CHOCTAW BASKETRY**

JULY 22, 2023 - MARCH 30, 2024

Indigenous Representation in Media Series: Part 1

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Something is happening in Hollywood. In an industry where it was once acceptable for Italian Americans to be cast in Native American roles, Indigenous actors, directors and writers are now occupying spaces in the spotlight—bringing accurate representation and stories to the masses. In a study conducted by the University of Southern California, which evaluated the 1,600 top-grossing films between 2007 and 2022, <0.25% of all speaking roles went to Native American characters. In fact, the percentage of Native American roles did not exceed 1% across any of the years evaluated. Though the numbers are still low, there is a renaissance of sorts happening when it comes to Indigenous representation on the big screen. Below are a few examples of Indigenous representation in media that our readers should check out.

Reservation Dogs

For many, “Reservation Dogs” was an act of cultural reclamation and driving force for a more accurate representation of Indigenous communities in media.



The series followed four Indigenous teenagers in Okern, Oklahoma—a fictional stand-in for the city of Okmulgee.

It was the first show to feature Indigenous writers and directors exclusively, as well as a primarily Indigenous crew, and to be shot on location in the Muscogee Nation.

The cast was primarily a mix of young, up-and-coming actors and Native American acting staples like Wes Studi and Gary Farmer.

The series, which ended its three-season run in 2023, depicted Native life in an authentic and raw way.

Sterlin Harjo (Muscogee) successfully turned “Reservation Dogs” into an avenue for social representation by highlighting history and culture throughout the series.

“Reservation Dogs” can still be streamed on Hulu and Disney+.

TIME Magazine named “Reservation Dogs” the best television show of 2023 along with HBO’s “Succession.”

The series paved a future for Indigenous actors, writers and directors in the film and television industry.

Within the past three years, viewers have seen an increase in more accurate Indigenous representation in media through shows like AMC’s Dark Winds, Peacock’s Rutherford Falls and Mohawk Girls Netflix’s Spirit Rangers, among other TV shows.

Frybread Face and Me



“Frybread Face and Me,” a new Netflix family drama, is now available on the streaming service as of November 24, 2023.

The film, written, directed and produced by Billy Luther (Navajo, Hopi and Laguna Pueblo) is the director/producer of the award-winning documentaries Miss Navajo, Grab and Red Lake. In 2018, he launched his web series alter-NATIVE for PBS’ IndieLens StoryCast.

The coming-of-age story had its premiere in March 2023 at the SXSW Film Festival in Austin, Texas. It has since been featured in various film festivals across the U.S.

“Frybread Face and Me” follows two adolescent Navajo cousins from different worlds as they bond during a summer on their grandmother’s Arizona ranch. Produced by Chad Burris and executive-produced by Taika Waititi, Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato. The film stars Kier Tallman, Charley Hogan, Martin Sensmeier, Kahara Hodges and Sarah Natani.

“The inspiration, I think, came from just growing up, being the multi-tribal kid who lived off the reservation most of his life,” said Luther. “I just wanted to tell a story that was just really personal to me, and the experience that I had is an experience that many other Indigenous people had.”

Speaking about the film, Luther said Benny’s (Tallman) story of learning about rez life and bonding with his cousin Frybread (Hogan) has universal appeal in that it’s ultimately about being somewhere new and feeling alone.

“This is a film that I made with really no intention of saying, ‘this is the specific audience who needs to see it.’ I really wanted to be truthful and honest with myself and my storytelling. Especially with this film since it was so deeply personal.”

“My target audience is pretty wide. I love the fact that people can take their grandparents to see it; they can have all their kids of all ages see it. I really want people to see the love of family and look into a world they haven’t seen before,” said Luther. “That’s really kind of what I love. I’m bringing people into a world that they haven’t seen.” As previously stated, the film was released on Netflix on November 24 and is now available for streaming.

Check out the film’s official trailer below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUgwL-9B8L_s

Echo

Echo begins public streaming on Disney+ starting January 9, 2024.

Part of Marvel’s Phase 5, the series starring Alaqua Cox (Menominee and Mohican), has already begun to receive praise from critics and Marvel fans.

Cox made her debut as Maya Lopez in the “Hawkeye” series.

“Echo” focuses on Maya’s Choctaw heritage and Indigenous roots, a first in the superhero game. If you pay close attention, viewers may even see some of their fellow Choctaw tribal members featured in the series.

As a reminder to our readers, the show, Marvel’s first rated R series, isn’t for everyone. Described by some viewers as “brutal and dark,” the series delves into Marvel’s “Daredevil” world, which is the grittier side of the Marvel Universe.



Lawmen: Bass Reeves

“Yellowstone” regular Mo Brings Plenty has moved on to another Taylor Sheridan production and Paramount+ series, “Lawmen: Bass Reeves.”

The limited series tells the story of Bass Reeves, the first Black deputy U.S. marshal west of the Mississippi River.

Brings Plenty (Oglala Lakota) plays Minco Dodge, a Choctaw friend of Reeves.

The Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna (School of Choctaw Language) assisted with Choctaw language on set.

Recently, Teri Billy was showcased on David Oyelowo’s social media, where he thanked her and shared his thoughts on showcasing the language in the show.

Oyelowo, who plays Bass Reeves, said, “One of the things that is just most emotional and impactful and beautiful about what I think we’re doing with this show is the preservation of the Indigenous languages—the honor being paid.”

The actor thanked Billy for her work on set and off.

“I just want to thank you for the work you are doing to preserve the culture—the history is so beautiful both to those who are part of it and those who are around it,” said Oyelowo. “We’re just so honored to be honoring you and your people, your community and this amazing history and tradition. So, just thank you so much. Thank you so, so, so much.”

“Lawmen: Bass Reeves” can be streamed Sundays on Paramount+.



Lily Gladstone’s ‘Killers’ nomination a first for Native women

By Felix Clary
ICT + Tulsa World

Lily Gladstone, the female lead of Martin Scorsese’s “Killers of the Flower Moon,” became the first Indigenous nominee in the category of Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture, Drama, at the Golden Globes.

The winners are set to be announced on CBS on Jan. 7 at 8 p.m. Eastern Time.

The film itself received seven nominations: Best Picture (Drama), Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor and Best Original Score. The film’s competitors in the category of Best Picture (Drama) are “Oppenheimer,” “Maestro,” “Past Lives,” “The Zone of Interest” and “Anatomy of a Fall.”

Starring next to Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert De Niro, Gladstone plays Mollie Burkhart, an Osage woman in 1920s Oklahoma who suffers a series of murders of her close Osage Nation friends and family members after oil is discovered on their lands.

DiCaprio was nominated for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture, Drama, for his role as Molly’s villainous husband, Ernest Burkhart, in “Flower Moon.” And De Niro earned a nomination for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture.

The New York Film Critics Circle named “Flower Moon” the Best Film of 2023 and Gladstone, the Best Actress.

“She had a very sharp sense of her own presence before the camera and an extremely unusual trust in simplicity,” said Scorsese about Gladstone in her role as Molly. “That’s a rare thing. You can’t take your eyes off her.”

Gladstone’s nomination echoes the 1995 Golden Globe nomination of Irene Bedard (Alaska Native) for Best Actress in a Miniseries or Motion Picture Made for Television for her performance in “Lakota Woman: Siege at Wounded Knee.”

Osage Principal Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear was quoted in a social media post as saying, “We are excited to see the cast and crew of Killers of



Photo by Taylor Jewell/Invision/AP

Actress Lily Gladstone, Blackfeet, poses for a portrait to promote her latest film, “Fancy Dance,” during the Sundance Film Festival on Friday, Jan. 20, 2023, in Park City, Utah.

the Flower Moon receiving much-deserved recognition with their Golden Globe nominations. Osage Nation saw firsthand the hard work and dedication put into creating this film, and we are proud of our collaborative efforts to ensure the Osage language and culture were properly represented. At Osage Nation, we say, ᏍᏏᏏᏏ, which means ‘do your best.’ Each of these nominees did just that.”

Recently, Gladstone has been showcasing Indigenous glamor on the film’s press tour, alongside fellow “Flower Moon” Indigenous actresses Cara Jade Myers (Anna Brown), JaNae Collins (Reta Smith) and Jillian Dion (Minnie Smith).

From the Blackfeet Reservation in northwestern Montana, Gladstone comes from Kainai (Blood), Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet) and Niimiipuu (Nez Perce) tribal nations.

The competitors in her category at the 2023 Golden Globes are Annette Bening (Nyad), Sandra Hüller (Anatomy of a Fall), Greta Lee (Past Lives), Carey Mulligan (Maestro) and Cailee Spaeny (Priscilla).

Felix Clary is the Indigenous Affairs reporter for ICT and Tulsa World. He is a Chickasaw citizen based in Tulsa. Follow him on Twitter/X @felix_clary or reach him by email at felix@ictnews.org.

JP Gauna finds success in acting and modeling career

By Shelia Kirven

Jeremy “JP.” Gauna was walking to work when he heard that background actors were needed for the crime drama television series Queen of the South. He applied and was hired for a minor background part, leading to a speaking background. That job started it all.

While filming, he met actor Zahn McClarnon, who advised that if he was serious about acting as a career, he should consider acting classes.

Gauna took McClarnon’s advice and attended R.E.A.C.T. Studio with instructor Michelle Sherrill. He said things happened quickly. He is now a full-time actor and model.

Gauna was born and raised in Texas and has appeared in television’s Yellowstone’s 1883, Queen of the South, Washington’s



Photos by Tim O’Keefe

Jeremy “JP Gauna has found success in film and modeling.

Armor, Battle of Honey Springs, and the upcoming American Primeval. His movie credits include Terror on the Prairie, The Last Son, Farhaven, Birthright, Buckskin, The Harbinger and Cottonmouth.

He has also been featured in the magazine Cowboys and Indians.

He also works on the production side for the television drama, The Chosen.

Gauna said, “I have been very blessed to do what I do, and I love being able to represent my grandpa and grandma (Jimmy and Elois Barcus), as they are the reason I am Choctaw Proud. Thank you to all for the support and love shown.”

Gauna can be followed on Instagram (ChoctawNativeJp), Facebook (Native Jeremy G), TikTok (Choctawndnjp), and YouTube (Choctawndnjp).



The Texas-born actor can be found in shows like 1883 and Queen’s of the South.

CHOCTAW PRINCESS IN TRAINING

ACHIEVE YOUR DREAM OF BEING A DISTRICT PRINCESS OR TRIBAL ROYALTY

Learn what you need to know to compete in Choctaw Nation district princess pageants.

PARTICIPANTS

- Must be ages 8-22
- Reside within Choctaw Nation Reservation boundaries
- Be a Choctaw member and at least 1/16 Choctaw

JANUARY 13, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Choctaw Community Center | 19400 Aes Rd., Spiro, OK
Districts 3, 4, 5, and 6

JANUARY 20, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Choctaw Community Center | 707 Bond Street, Crowder, OK
Districts 9, 10, 11, and 12

FEBRUARY 3, 2024 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Choctaw Community Center | 5718 Rodeo Grounds Rd., Wright City, OK.
Districts 1, 2, 7, and 8

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 580.642.7961 OR VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/PRINCESS-PAGEANTS

DATES AND TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Choctaw Nation Cultural Services

HIGHER EDUCATION COLLEGE CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FROM JANUARY 2 TO MARCH 1.

This one-time payment is available to eligible Choctaw tribal members nationwide attending an accredited college or university.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/COLLEGE-CLOTHING-ALLOWANCE

Choctaw Nation Education Services

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

OHoyo HlAMPKO VHLEHA: THE INFLUENCE OF MATRIARCHS

TEMPORARY ART EXHIBIT – BRAD JOE

OCTOBER 31, 2023 – MARCH 16, 2024

Celebrating a successful year

Continued from page 1

SEPTEMBER

- The Choctaw Nation Labor Day Festival was held on the capitol grounds at Tvshka Homma September 1-3. Chief Batton delivered the 2023 State of the Nation Address virtually.
- Bear Conservation Workshops were held in eastern areas of Choctaw Nation with information including bear conservation, hunting techniques, field care and harvest check-in.
- A scholarship ceremony was held on the OSUIT campus for eight Choctaw tribal students after being selected to receive a Marathon Petroleum Vocational Scholarship from the Chahta Foundation worth \$10,000.
- Swearing-in ceremonies for Chief and six tribal councilmembers were held on the historic capitol grounds of Tvshka Homma.
- The Choctaw Tribal Council unanimously approved a \$2.5 billion comprehensive expense budget for fiscal year 2024. Revenue for fiscal year 2024 is projected to be nearly three percent higher than the prior year, driven primarily by increases in commerce and healthcare.
- Tribal membership increased to over 225,000.
- Choctaw Nation Law Enforcement renamed the police force "Lighthorse" to honor the original Choctaw Lighthorsemen who served the tribe many years ago.

OCTOBER

- The Flowers on the Pond Vigil was held at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters, and Shine the Light on Domestic Violence was held at the Hugo Wellness Center, featuring a glow run/walk and candlelight vigil. Both events were held to shine a spotlight on Domestic Violence Awareness Month's planned events.
- Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin, along with other tribal delegates, traveled to France to meet with government officials for nation building and to pay respects to five Choctaw soldiers who lost their lives in WWI during a four-day battle of St. Etienne, France. The Choctaw Nation participated in the 105th anniversary of the battle at the location where the Tvshka Chahta are buried at the American Cemetery in France.
- A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in Wilburton for the newest Affordable Rental homes.
- A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held for the new Specialty Clinic at the Choctaw Nation Hospital in Talihiina. The \$8.5 million project expanded the Residency Clinic and



remodeled the Specialty Clinic.

- Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin, along with Stacy Shepherd and Michael Burrage, are named to Oklahoma Magazine's "55 Over 55 Inspiring Oklahomans" list.
- Choctaw Nation Small Business Development (CSBD) was awarded the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Award by REI Oklahoma at its Dream Big Oklahoma Awards.

NOVEMBER

- Choctaw Nation celebrates Native American Heritage Month with a variety of activities and classes scheduled throughout the month.
- The annual Choctaw Powwow was held at the Choctaw Event Center with dancers participating from tribes all over the country.
- Tribal locations and programs throughout the reservation sponsored canned food and coat drives throughout the month.
- The annual Veterans Day ceremony was held at Tvshka Homma to honor and recognize tribal veterans.
- Choctaw seniors participated in pecan picking in Idabel on November 14, along with a cookout.
- Choctaw Nation Department of Wildlife Conservation announces its free online Hunter Education course.
- The newly adopted Choctaw Pledge was first performed at the Veterans Day Ceremony at Tvshka Homma.

DECEMBER

- Christmas parties were held throughout the reservation's districts for Choctaw children.
- CNO received over \$2.3 million in funding to support Native American victims of intimate partner violence from the Department.
- CNO presented keys to 20 families in Stigler during the ribbon cutting for 10 LEAP Homes and 10 Affordable Rental Homes on December 11.
- Choctaw Nation Children and Family Services held a special Christmas gathering, honoring their foster families.

Stay updated in 2024 by following Choctaw Nation on social media or visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/>.



Jess Henry

District 4

Halito,

District 4 has been abuzz with activity over the past few months, with events that highlight the spirit and unity of the Choctaw community.

In a tribute to our elders, September saw the honor bestowed upon Outstanding Choctaw Elders in Durant. Poteau District 4 nominees William Logan, Jr. and Susan Tyler, along with Spiro nominees Ronnie Edwards and Lola Edwards, stood out for their commitment to community centers, where they are rich in culture and always one of the first to volunteer.

Several District 4 tribal members attend Thessalonian Baptist Church near Red Oak. They celebrated a milestone, the 125th-anniversary celebration. I was honored to attend the celebration so rich in faith and Choctaw

heritage that binds the community together.

Ensuring a fun Halloween for the younger members, both Poteau and Spiro Community Centers hosted events, providing a secure space for our children to enjoy the festivities. There were lots of smiles and an abundance of candy.

The seniors of District 4 have been keeping the momentum alive. Poteau seniors embarked on a memorable trip to the Ark and Creation Museum in Kentucky, while Spiro seniors enjoyed the scenic beauty of Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Both groups also participated in the pecan harvest at the Choctaw pecan orchard in Idabel and evening trips to enjoy dinner and the Christmas lights.

The Thanksgiving season brought a visit from Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin, Jr., who attended Spiro's senior Thanksgiving lunch. It is always a pleasure when they come and share the future of the Choctaw Nation. We enjoyed the food and fellowship with them.

Both Spiro and Poteau Centers hosted Christmas toy giveaways. Yakoke to Santa, dedicated staff, princesses, and volunteers for making it a success. We saw countless smiling faces!

Looking ahead, with the holidays behind us, let's embrace the promise of a new year. As we step into 2024, District 4 anticipates a year filled with positivity, growth, and a continued spirit of community.

In closing, I extend warm wishes from my family to yours for a Happy and Prosperous New Year! Should you need assistance or wish to share your stories, feel free to reach out. Together, let's make 2024 a remarkable time in District 4.



Susan Tyler and Mr. Logan pose for a photo at the 2023 Outstanding Elders Banquet.



Ronnie and Lola Edwards smile for the camera at the 2023 Outstanding Elders Banquet.



Not everyone's a fan of Santa's appearance at the District 4 Christmas Party.



Poteau seniors pose for a photo on their trip to the Ark and Creation Museum.

Cusher is Veteran of the Month

Corneal Cusher is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month.

Cusher was born in Talihiina, Okla., and attended Smithville schools until 10th grade. He then graduated from Haskell. He went to vo-tech school at Okmulgee and studied to be a diesel mechanic.

He entered military service June 1961 and attended boot camp in San Antonio, Tx.

He completed his mechanic schooling in Amarillo and went on to serve three years in Altus, Okla., on a ground crew for KC-135 (flying gas stations), flying support to Okinawa. His favorite part was traveling for training missions for

refilling in the air. He spent several weeks in Spain during the Cuban Missile Crisis and obtained the rank of Airman Second Class. He said his favorite tour of duty was his time at Altus, Okla., performing regular mechanic duties.

He returned to Tulsa, Okla., as an aircraft mechanic for Spartin Aircraft and moved to their machine shop. He worked as a concrete finisher in Smithville, traveling to various places. He went back to school in Talihiina to learn carpentry, building houses, churches, commercial buildings and finishing concrete.

Cusher married Linda in 1963 and had three children, Bobby Eugene, Randy



Leon, and Cindy Carol. He married Darlene in 1986. She is employed at the Battiest Community Center and is a 33-year employee.

The Choctaw Nation holds our veterans in the highest esteem and appreciates their sacrifices and contributions to preserve our freedoms and the way of life we hold dear.

Bohanan is First Language Speaker of the Month

Jency Bohanan was recently honored as the December 2023 First Language Speaker of the month.

Her family was in attendance to see her be given this special award.



Aguilera named CEO of Native American Health Center

By Chris Jennings

Choctaw tribal member Natalie Aguilera, MPA, has been named the new Chief Executive Officer of the Native American Health Center (NAHC) with offices in San Francisco, California. Aguilera has worked at the NAHC for 18 years and previously served as the Chief Administrative Officer.

The NAHC was one of the first Urban Indian Health Centers in the country and has grown to be one of the largest.

Serving Native Americans and other underserved communities in the San Francisco Bay Area, NAHC offers high-quality medical, dental, behavioral health, and social services, blending health care with traditional Native culture and traditions.

In a press release from the NAHC, Martin Waukazoo said, "NAHC is in good hands with Natalie. She has shown unwavering dedication to our community and has always been willing to meet the challenges to heal our community. I am proud of the work we've accomplished together, and I know she will lead NAHC to greater heights, keeping the dreams alive for our children, grandchildren, and the generations to come. Our legacy continues, and it is bright."

Waukazoo served as NAHC's CEO for 40 years before retiring on November 1, 2023.

By working at NAHC, Aguilera continues a family tradition of servant leadership by following in her grandmother Alice Carne's footsteps. Carne was a founding member of the Intertribal Friendship House (IFH) in 1955 and had dedicated most of her life to the IFH and the Native community.

Aguilera graduated with a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley, intending to be a lawyer.

"I had graduated from Cal and thought I wanted to go to law school. I was working at a law firm for seven years, and I realized I didn't want to go to law school any longer," said Aguilera.

That's when her husband suggested coming to work at the NAHC with him. According to Aguilera, she had never thought about working at a non-profit before and told him she would try it out.

"I said, I'll come check it out for a year or two while I figure out what my next career move is. So, I started working here and I just fell in love with the mission and I fell in love with the colleagues who are all so committed to our members," Aguilera said.

The atmosphere was a big reason for her experiences, from being surrounded by older white men at a litigation firm in San Francisco to a more multicultural environment.

"You come here, and you're at a leadership table with all Natives doing work for Natives. It was just a really cool change," said Aguilera. "And it just grew on me; I love it now. I've been here for 18 years after I thought I'd be here a year."



Martan Martinez offers Natalie Aguilera a blessing to wish her success in her new role as CEO of the Native American Health Center.

Aguilera has led several significant initiatives while at the NAHC, including launching the Seven Generations Scholarship Fund, through which NAHC has expanded its commitment to the future wellness, healing and success of the Native American community.

The idea for the Seven Generations Scholarship came to Aguilera while listening to a podcast. She said they felt they should be doing more to support our Native youth who want to attain goals but may have financial barriers.

"I just started raising money, and I got a good little lump sum from one of the foundations out here," said Aguilera. "The first year, three people applied, and I was so excited that we awarded money to three people. This past year, we had 26 people awarded almost \$100,000."

Another program Aguilera is passionate about is NAHC's expansion into housing development.

NAHC will own 36 affordable housing units above their 7 Directions clinic, and the new 3050 International Boulevard building that NAHC is breaking ground on in early 2024 will feature expanded dental services, a cultural community center and an additional 76 units of affordable housing.

"Health care and housing are interconnected. We know our community can't focus on their health care if they're worried about having somewhere to live. Bringing housing to our community is a huge goal of mine," Aguilera said. "I'm excited to oversee and work through any barriers we have in prioritizing our Native community members getting into housing."

Aguilera's work and advocacy extends to the statewide and national level. She is an active leader and serves as a Board Member with the California Consortium for Urban Indian Health (CCUIH) and a leader with the National Council of Urban Indian Health Organization (NCUIH).

"When I started here 18 years ago, I never envisioned that this was where I would be. I'm grateful and excited for the opportunity to carry forward the legacy of Martin and the profound work he initiated over the past 40 years," said Aguilera.

CHOCTAW NATION
LIVESTOCK
SHOW

FEBRUARY 3-4, 2024

Scan code to learn more and enter

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

BUSINESS
CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT • CHAT

How To Grow Your Business in the New Year

By Gary Johnson

Digital Presence: Improve your online presence through a user-friendly website and active social media presence. There are several different websites at little to no cost for you to utilize. Social media can be a great tool for small businesses if utilized to the fullest potential.

Customer Engagement: Strengthen relationships with current customers through customized communication and loyalty programs.

Marketing: Invest in targeted digital marketing campaigns on social media to reach a larger audience and appeal to new customers.

Diversification: Consider implementing new products or services to expand your offerings and appeal to different customer segments.

Networking: Get involved with industry events, join local business groups, and build connections to expand

your network.

Customer Feedback: Collect customer feedback and implement changes to improve your products or services.

Efficiency: Restructure internal processes to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve business operations.

Adaptability: Stay updated on industry trends, embrace technological advancements, and adapt your business model accordingly.

Employee Development: Devote time to developing your team's skills and morale to boost efficiency and create a positive work environment.

Remember, consistency and adaptability are vital as you navigate the evolving business world.



STAY CONNECTED | [CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM](https://www.choctawsmallbusiness.com)

Choctaw Nation Small Business Development

NOTES

Indoor Air Quality Assessment
Request your free Indoor Air Quality Assessment! Public Health is partnering with Environmental Protection Services to provide a free air quality test for all tribal members living on the reservation. If you suspect issues like mold, moisture or radon in your home, contact Choctaw Nation Public Health today at 580-916-9140 ext. 83851. Any CDIB cardholder in the household makes the home eligible.

Native Test
Native Test promotes the importance of awareness, education and prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. Text "NATIVE TEST" to 55251 to get a rapid HIV and STI self-test kit mailed to you for free.

If you are concerned about your results or symptoms, please seek medical advice from a licensed professional. If you have an established primary care provider, schedule an appointment. If you don't have one, below is a list of health departments and their contact information.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Atoka County Health Department
932 W 13th Street, Atoka, OK 74525
Phone: 580-889-2116 | Leflore County Health Department
1204 Dewey Avenue, Poteau, OK 74953
Phone: 918-647-8601 |
| Bryan County Health Department
1524 W. Chuckwa, Durant, OK 74701 (behind the hospital)
Phone: 580-924-4285 | McCurtain County Health Department
1400 Lynn Lane, Idabel, OK 74745
Phone: 580-286-6628 |
| Choctaw County Health Department
103 S 4th, Hugo, OK 74743
Phone: 580-326-8821 | Pittsburg County Health Department
1400 East College Avenue, McAlester, OK, 74501
Phone: 918-423-1267 |
| Coal County Health Department
1404 S Broadway St #0365, Coalgate, OK 74538
Phone: 580-927-2367 | Pushmataha County Health Department
318 W. Main, Antlers, OK 74523
Phone: 580-298-6624 |
| Haskell County Health Department
901 NW 6th St., Stigler, OK 74462
Phone: 918-967-3304 | CNHS Facility List
Atoka Health Clinic
Durant Regional Medical Clinic
Hugo Health Clinic
Idabel Health Clinic
McAlister Health Clinic
Rubin White Health Clinic
Ruby Choate Health Clinic |
| Hughes County Health Department
200 McDougal Drive, Holdenville, OK 74848
Phone: 405-379-3313 | Talihina Healthcare Center (CNHS Hospital) |
| Latimer County Health Department
201 West Main, Wilburton, OK 74578
Phone: 918-465-5673 | |

UNCLAIMED FUNDS

The Accounting Department of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is trying to contact the individuals listed below:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Blake Eldridge | Raven Baken |
| Jordan Large | Ravi Tata |
| Kylee Petersen | Stacy Carr |
| Matthew Bradley | |

Choctaw Nation is in possession of unclaimed funds (uncashed payroll checks) that may be due to these individuals. If you are an employee or former employee of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and your name is listed, please contact:

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
Attn: Lisa Jordan, Accountant
Or Phone 580-642-7530

CHOCTAW VETERAN ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Are You a Choctaw Veteran?
Let us help guide you to the benefits and services that you have earned.

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

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
TOGETHER WE'RE MORE

**CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION AGENDA
December 9, 2023**

1. CALL TO ORDER
 2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
 3. ROLL CALL
 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Session November 11, 2023
 - b. Special Session November 17, 2023
 5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
 - a. Veteran of the Month, District #3 – Corneal Cusher
 - b. First Language Speaker of the Month, District #3 – Jency Bohanan
 6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None
 7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
 8. NEW BUSINESS
 - a. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
 - b. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles
 - c. Approve Application to the Bridge Formula Program for Construction Reimbursement
 - d. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Scott Freeny to Serve on the U.S. GAO Tribal and Indigenous Advisory Council
 - e. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Cecilia Stall-Meadows to Serve on the U.S. Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee
 - f. Approve the Purchase of 62 Lots in Durant, Oklahoma
 - g. Approval to Name the Antlers Community Center the Jack Austin, Sr. Community Center
 9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS
 10. OLD BUSINESS
 11. ADJOURNMENT
 12. CLOSING PRAYER
- All votes passed unanimously.

Chahta Anumpa Aikhvna
January Language Lesson

The Lord's Prayer

Mahlu 6:9

Piki vba ish binili ma!
Chi hohchifo hvt holitopashke.
Ish apelihchika yvt vlashke.
Nana ish ai ahni ka yakni pakna ya a yohmi kvv vba
yakni a yohmi mako chiyuhmashke.
Himak nittak ilhpak
pim ai vlhpesa kako ish pi ipetashke.
Mikmvt nana il
aheka puta ish pi kashofi kvv pishno vt nana pim aheka
puta il i kashofi chatuk a ish chiyuhmichaske.
Mikmvt anukpvlika yoka ik ia chik pim aiahno hosh,
amba nanokpulo a ish pi a hlakofihinchaske:
Apehlichika, mikmvt nanisht-ai ahli, micha isht aholitopa
aiena kvv chimmi a bilia yoke.

Amen

www.choctawschool.com

JUROR SUMMONS

Choctaw Nation tribal members, spouses of tribal members, and any Choctaw Nation associate residing within Choctaw Nation territory may be summoned to jury duty with the Choctaw Nation court system.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

GET IN THE KNOW

Stay up-to-date with what's happening in the Choctaw Nation by subscribing to our weekly email list.

SIGN UP TODAY AT
choctawnation.com/subscribe

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

HONOR GUARD
POSITIONS AVAILABLE

APPLY BY CONTACTING: 580-642-8451

VETERANSADVOCACY@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

LIFE IS BETTER WITH BLOOD DONORS

Every two seconds, someone in our community silently needs blood. This could be a child battling cancer, a trauma victim, a patient undergoing surgery, or someone with a chronic illness.

Imagine the hope, relief and second chance your donation can bring. Then, just their thanks.

By becoming a blood donor, you can become a lifeline for someone desperately in need of it.

Join the Annual Blood Drive Challenge and help save a life.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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 Monthly Publication of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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

P.O. Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702
580-924-8280 • 800-522-6170
www.ChoctawNation.com
email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

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

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

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

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

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association & Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund

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

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

Southeastern Oklahoma Indian Credit Association Loan
To Be Eligible to Apply:
- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from a federally recognized tribe

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund
To Be Eligible to Apply:
- Must live within the 10.5 counties of the Choctaw Nation
- Must possess a CDIB card from the Choctaw Nation

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

Crowder Community Center
January 12, 2024
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

ITI FABVSSA

Toh - the report of a gun

This past fall, from October 28 through November 5, many Choctaw hunters engaged in a style of hunting that dates back to over 300 years ago. Muzzleloader season is a time when Choctaw hunters had the opportunity to hunt deer, elk and black bear with black powder weapons. Last year, according to the Choctaw Nation 2022-2023 Big Game Harvest Report, Choctaw muzzleloader hunters checked 288 deer accounted—the total number of deer harvested by Choctaw hunters with all types of weapons combined was 2,444. Muzzleloaders equated to roughly 12% of the total number of deer harvested by Choctaw hunters in the reservation.

Choctaw people have been using black powder weapons continuously since the beginning of the 18th century. However, our ancestors first encountered black powder weapons as far back as the 16th century in the hands of Spanish conquistadors. Spanish colonizers like Cabeza de Vaca and Hernando de Soto brought matchlock muskets, also known as arquebus, as they invaded our homelands. In the late 17th century, Choctaw people once again encountered black powder weapons in the hands of Chickasaw and Muscogee warriors. Choctaw warriors may have acquired a few rifles from skirmishes against these neighbors. However, it wasn't until the arrival of the French in 1699 that Choctaws had limited access to flintlock muskets.

Before 1763, Choctaw Chiefs controlled the flow of European-manufactured goods, including flintlock muskets, into their villages (O'Brien 2005: 47). This practice allowed Chiefs to ensure that goods were evenly distributed amongst their community. During this period, it was common for a Choctaw village to only have five to seven muskets (Swanton 1931:50). These muskets were held by the Chief and issued to warriors and hunters when needed. Beginning sometime after the French settlement of Mobile, Choctaw leaders attended annual meetings with the French leaders in Mobile. During these meetings, the Chiefs would be granted gifts. These gifts were effectively a lease that was paid to Choctaw leaders by the French for their use of our lands along the Gulf Coast. Outside of these gifts, the French traded a very limited number of guns and ammunition to Choctaw Chiefs except when the Chiefs agreed to fight against the Chickasaw, who were enemies of the French (Swanton 1931:50).

After the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, France transferred control of its holdings to the British. British traders did not exclusively trade with Choctaw Chiefs, disrupting the distribution of goods into Choctaw communities. Choctaw men now had access to British muskets (O'Brien 2005: 48). As the autonomy of young men increased, so did overhunting within the Choctaw Nation. Some men sought war as a way to gain access to goods. Leading war parties against enemies of the British resulted in the reward of more British muskets (ibid). There is an account of an influential Choctaw Chief named Franchimastabe, who signed an agreement in 1777 with the British to allow them access to Choctaw lands along the Mississippi River in exchange for 800 guns (O'Brien 2005: 49).

The French had two types of smoothbore trade guns that were given or traded to Choctaws and other Tribal Nations in North America: the fusil de traite (trade gun) and the fusil de chasse (hunting gun) (Hamilton 1987:31). Choctaw people referred to the fusil de traite as Tanampo (gun) and the fusil de chasse as Tanampo Fabvssa (long and slender gun) (Byington 1909: 341). The fusil de traite was the cheaper version of trade gun. The fusil de chasse was a more expensive version meant for hunting and could fire both a roundball and buckshot. The flexibility to fire either type of round made it extremely popular among Southeastern Tribes for hunting small or large game and could be used in warfare (Christopher Jones, personal communication). The British had their own smoothbore trade guns and hunting guns that they traded with Choctaws. The names for these are the same as above.

The following description covers the process of loading and firing a flintlock musket. It includes terms found in the 1915 Dictionary of the Choctaw Language by Cyrus Byington. Many of these words are not commonly used by today's Choctaw speakers, and their meanings come from a time when Choctaw people interpreted the world differently than we do today. Readers will see the words that are used metaphorically to express men's role associated with hunting and warfare. The following terms can help us understand how our ancestors interacted and explained the world they lived in.

To use a flintlock musket, a Choctaw man would have to go through a series of steps to load and then fire the weapon.

1. The first step is to load **hituk** (powder) or gunpowder down the **tanampo nihi** (gun seed) or barrel of the musket. This is followed by loading the **naki lumbo** (round bullet) or roundball; this process is known as **tanamp abehli** (puts in the gun). Early on, gunpowder was poured directly from the **hituk aivlhto** (powder box) or powder flask, using your eye to measure the appropriate amount of powder. Measuring powder by eye can be extremely dangerous if too much powder is loaded, causing the musket to explode when fired. Overcharging gunpowder is known as **atablit abehli** (overload). Soon, a device called a **hituk isht vlpisa** (measures the powder) or powder measure came to be used that measured out the appropriate amount of powder needed to fire the roundball.
2. The second step is **naki a latasvlli** (flatten the bullet) or to tamp down the powder and roundball using a **tanampo isht kashokvchi** (rammer) or ramrod.
3. The third step is **cheli** (priming a gun). This is done by raising the frizzen and inserting powder onto the **tanampo haksun aionchiya** (gun priming pan) or gun priming pan. The powder used to prime the gun is a finer powder called **hituk haksun onchiya** (priming powder lying on the priming pan) which had its own powder flask. Once the pan is primed, the frizzen is placed back down over the pan to protect the priming powder.
4. The fourth step is **hilechi** (to cock a gun) or arming the gun. This is done by pulling back the **tanampo luksu fulup** (turtle upper arm of the gun) or the cock. The cock holds a piece of flint that is used to strike a piece of steel, called the frizzen, which then ignites the priming powder lying in the pan. The Byington Dictionary does not have a Choctaw word for gunflint. However, the general term in the Choctaw language for flint is **tasvnnuk**. The Byington Dictionary also does not have a word for the frizzen; however, the term for the steel used to strike fire from flint is **tvli luak** (striking fire from steel). **Hussa** (to shoot) is a general word for firing a weapon. However, **tukafa** (to fire a gun) is the specific word for discharg-

ing a gun. Someone who shoots a gun is called **takvffi** and someone shot by a gun is **ontukafa**. When the **tanampo ahalvlli** (gun trigger) is pulled, the cock snaps forward and the flint strikes the frizzen causing a spark. The noise made by the snapping of the cock is **chahlak**. The force of the cock and flint striking the frizzen causes the frizzen to spring up and allow the spark to ignite the priming powder in the pan; the ignition of the powder in the pan is called **shubbukli** or the powder flash. The spark travels through the **tanampo haksun chiluk** (hole in the gun's touch pan) or the touchhole. The spark travels through the touchhole into the barrel and ignites the powder behind the roundball. When the powder in the barrel ignites, it shoots the roundball out at a high velocity. The name for the gunshot is **ahussa achvfa** (one shot) and the sound of the gunshot is **toh**.

Opi is the word for holding the gun and **hvnaweli** is used to describe carrying a gun on your back using a sling that comes across over the chest and under one arm. A person who loads a gun is **nan apitta** (something to put in) and a gunsmith is **tanampo ikbi** (gun maker). The bullet mold used to make the roundball is **nakahakmo** or **nakaikamo** (the place where the bullet hardens).



French Fusil de Chasse. Image Courtesy of Raiders from New France: North American Forests Warfare Tactics, 17th-18th Centuries by Rene Chartrand, 2019. Illustration by Adam Hook. Osprey Publishing.

Choctaw society has changed much in some ways since the 17th and 18th centuries. Some traditions were put to sleep and some traditions continue to live on vibrantly within Choctaw communities today. The Choctaw Nation 2022-2023 Big Game Harvest Report stated that 53% of deer hunters last year were hunters aged 30 or under. While national averages show a decrease in young hunters, the Choctaw Harvest report stated, "There is fear that hunting traditions are not being passed down as they were in the past. That does not seem to be the case in the CNO. Strong youth numbers are a testament to culture ties and significance that hunting has in the CNO". Meanwhile, the Choctaw society of the past placed specific emphasis on the roles of men and women. Today, our culture has adapted to where all Choctaw people can participate in activities of their choosing. The report stated that of deer hunting in the Choctaw Nation, 34% were from female hunters. This exceeds the national average of 10 – 25% of female hunters. As in the past, Choctaw people continue to play a role in the stewardship of our lands.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
APPLICATION PERIOD

DO YOU NEED A JOB?

Applications are open from
November 30 - March 1

Scan to learn more on how to apply for the program

Choctaw Nation 477 Programs

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

GROUPS & TOURS

BRING YOUR GROUP TO THE CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER!

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFO

Housing Headlines

By Bobby Yandell

Halito! This month, I would like to address our Lease/Purchase (LEAP) program that is assisting 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, for the first 15 years, the participant leases the home from the Choctaw Nation Housing Authority, while for 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 need to have passed.

Applications are located at each community center and can be found on the Choctaw Nation website. 525 LEAP homes have been completed, with over 200 more planned or under construction. Get your application in now!

Choctaw Nation

Stay Connected

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Housing Authority

WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Matt Gamble

Winter has set in here on the Choctaw Nation, but that doesn't mean you can't cure a case of cabin fever. Deer archery season runs through January 15 and predator and furbearer seasons are in full swing. Squirrel season runs through February 28, and waterfowl seasons are often prime in the month of January. Rabbit season runs through March 15 and provides some great opportunities to hunt with dogs.

There are a couple of new regulations in Title 110 of the Choctaw Fish, Game, and Animals Code. One is that hunters pursuing furbearers must get a free furbearer permit through the Chahta Achvffa portal.

This permit will help our department monitor harvest trends, which gives biologists information that can factor into population trends. This system also allows our department to issue river otter and bobcat tags for tribal members at no cost. You can contact our department to get your animals tagged or look for places that we set up as tagging stations.

We will also be rolling out our Deer Herd Enhancement Program (DHEP). DHEP will give tribal landowners the ability to manage deer on their property with recommendations from a tribal biologist. It is similar to the state's Deer Management Assistance Program but does not require landowners to possess a state hunting license.

We will be putting out information about how to enroll and the requirements involved for landowners very soon. This is a great opportunity for tribal landowners to set management goals and objectives for the deer populations on their property and receive professional guidance on how to achieve those goals.

As we enter into the new year, remember to be safe out in cold temperatures. If you are headed into the field, be sure to let someone know where you are going and your expected time of return. Always be prepared for the unexpected.

In the winter, I always keep extra water, blankets and food in my vehicle just in case I find myself off of the road or stranded. Be especially careful when hunting around water or fishing. A slip into the water can turn into a life or death situation quickly during frigid temperatures. I do not recommend going solo on those trips when the weather is bitterly cold.

Stay safe and enjoy the Choctaw Nation outdoors with friends and family this winter.

Choctaw Nation

Wildlife Conservation



Phillips turns 30

Choctaw tribal member Amanda Phillips turned 30 on December 15, 2023. “Her family wants to wish her a happy birthday and let her know she is appreciated, loved and we are very proud of the woman she has become. Her internal beauty is only surpassed by her external beauty. Our lives are blessed by her. We love you very much.”



Underwood win state level title

Charlie Underwood is a Choctaw tribal member. She is the daughter of Zach and Amanda Underwood of Versailles, Missouri. Charlie competed in the Miss United States of Agriculture pageant. She took part in the Des Moines, Iowa pageant November 10-11, 2023,

winning the state title for the Future Little Miss age division. During this pageant, Charlie also earned first runner-up for People’s Choice, Missouri Future Little Most Photogenic and won first place in on-stage introduction and formal wear.

She will go on to compete for a National title in July in Enterprise, Alabama. “Great job Charlie,” said her family.



Taylor earns Ranger Tab

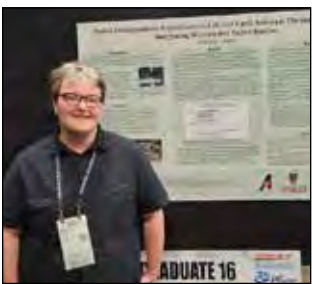
Choctaw tribal member SGT Colton Taylor, currently assigned to the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Johnson,

Louisiana, showed his warrior spirit by earning the coveted Ranger Tab from the United States Army’s Ranger School.

After completing Ranger School, he attended and graduated from the Basic Airborne Course at Fort Moore, Georgia. Colton’s awards include the Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, Ranger Tab, Airborne Wings, and Air Assault Badge. SGT Taylor is a 2020 graduate of Lathrop High School, Fairbanks, Alaska.

SGT Taylor is the son of MAJ Luc and Jennifer Taylor of Fort Moore, Georgia.

Locke represents USAO and CNO at national conference



Devon Locke recently attended the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference in Spokane, Washington. There, he provided a poster presentation on research collected during his summer internship with the Technical Education Research Center (TERC) in Boston, Massachusetts.

Devon is an undergraduate student currently attending the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (USAO), pursuing majors in Environmental and Political Science and minors in Chemistry, Philosophy, Liberal Arts and Religious Studies. The research he presented examined the educational experiences of Native undergraduate students in the life and earth sciences, specifically exploring how those in STEM classes view their educational experiences and their institutions.

Devon proudly represented USAO and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma at the conference.



Dean turns 97

Betty Goode Dean celebrated her 97th birthday on October 14, 2023 with her family in Moore, Oklahoma.

Betty’s father is an Original Enrollee of the Choctaw Nation from Boswell, Oklahoma.

Her family is so blessed to have a sweet and loving Mother for so many years.



Baker earns Ph.D. from UCLA

Megan A. Baker received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from UCLA in September 2023.

While completing her dissertation on Oklahoma Choctaw landownership, she worked as a Cultural Research Associate for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Historic

Preservation Department. While working in the department’s Community Outreach and Research program, she hosted the “Chahta Toshi Virtual Speaker” series, authored the “A New Chahta Homeland” series for the Biskinik’s Iti Fabvssa column, contributed to international and domestic exhibitions, and conducted original research to expand understanding of Choctaw history and culture.

She is currently completing a postdoctoral fellowship and will be an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Northwestern University beginning September 2024.

Megan is the daughter of Dinh and Robert Baker and granddaughter of Juanita and Aaron Baker of Battiest, Oklahoma and Vinh and To Mach of Monterey Park, California.

Stafford is only Native PTA Program Director



According to 2022 PTA Program Data released by the Commission of Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE), Shakira Stafford, PT, is the only Native American PTA Program Director in the Nation. Check out the data at <https://www.capteonline.org/about-capte/data-and-research/aggregate-program-data>.

Stafford earned an Associate of Science Degree at Eastern Oklahoma State College in 1993, a Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Central Oklahoma in 1995 and a Master of Physical Therapy Degree at Wichita State University in 1997.

Stafford served as a Commission Corp Officer from 1998-2002, earning the rank of Lieutenant—duty station Gallup Indian Medical Center (Gallup, New Mexico).

She returned to Oklahoma and worked in outpatient, home health, skilled nursing, and the school systems in central Oklahoma until she began employment in therapy education.

Stafford began employment with Gordon Cooper Technology Center and Seminole State College in 2016 to write and develop a Physical Therapist Assistant Program. She has received full accreditation by CAPTE in April of 2019 to deliver the Associate of Applied Science in Physical Therapist Assistant Degree. She has served as Program Director and Assistant Professor. Stafford recently started the 6th cohort of PTA students and now serves as Program Director and Director of Clinical Education.

She is married to Adam Stafford, Undersecretary of Finance Operations for the Chickasaw Nation and her daughter, Chiara Carpenter, is currently a freshman at the University of Oklahoma majoring in Biomedical Engineering with a Pre-Med emphasis and minoring in Music.

Her father is 90-year-old citizen Walter F. Strickland of Shawnee, Oklahoma, and her grandmother was original enrollee Rhoda Hancock.



Tribal member featured by Brambleberry

Tiffany Edwards Baker is a proud registered Choctaw artist specializing in the craft of soap

making.

Tiffany recently had the honor of being featured by Brambleberry, a prestigious craft provisions company, where they wrote an article highlighting her business for Native American Heritage Month. Check out the article at <https://tinyurl.com/BB-nahm>.

“As a registered artist, my heritage and passion for creating artisanal soaps hold great significance to me,” said Tiffany. “I believe that sharing this achievement with our Tribe’s community would be a wonderful way to celebrate our culture and showcase the talent that exists within our community.”



Rose turns 70

Choctaw tribal member Robin (Rob) Ernest Rose celebrates his 70th birthday on January 29.

Born and raised in Dallas, Texas. He has been a Rowlett, Texas (a Dallas suburb) resident for many years. His great-grandmother was Choctaw tribal member Nettie Angeline Monds. She

was married to Christopher Columbus Rose, also known as C.C.

CC was a Choctaw Lighthorseman and later a US Marshal in the Choctaw Nation. They are both buried in Atoka, Oklahoma. Rob discovered his Choctaw heritage by researching his family tree on Ancestry.com.



Beason a part of elite fashion school

Sydney Beason a student at Kent State University, studying fashion design and dance.

Sydney is also one of the two members of the Native American Student Association on campus,

sharing her native roots.

A recent 2023 graduate of Woodgrove High School, Sydney received an Advanced Diploma.

While there, she was a member of the National Honor Society, National Society of High School Scholars, Tri-M Music Honor Society, and An Advisory Board member of the school’s Student Leader club.

During her senior year, she participated in an international food night and shared with her fellow students a traditional Choctaw stew, which is the only Native American dish there.

Sydney was also a dancer at the YMCA of Frederick County for 11 years. She was also a dance teacher at the YMCA for two years.

Sydney now attends Kent State University, studying fashion design and dance. Kent State is ranked 3rd in the nation for Fashion Design. Sydney is also one of the two members of the Native American Student Association on campus, sharing her Native roots.

McCoy retires from the military

Chief Master Sergeant Brandon M. McCoy embarked on his military journey with Basic Training at Lackland AFB on February 8, 2001. Specializing in Power Production at Sheppard AFB, he swiftly became a crucial part of the 242nd Combat Communications Squadron (CBCS) at Geiger Field, Spokane International Airport.

Simultaneously committed to education, McCoy earned an AA in Business Administration from Spokane Community College and a Baccalaureate in Business Administration from Eastern Washington University, focusing on Economics, Business Management, and Finance.

Driven by a commitment to leadership, McCoy immersed himself in Air Warfare Simulator (AWSIM) training, enabling others to participate in exercises in Korea and Japan, including KEY RESOLVE (2003, 2005, 2009, 2011) and ULCHI FOCUS LENSE (2004, 2006, 2010, 2012).

Demonstrating operational commitment, McCoy led the SCX Flight during

a deployment to Jordan in support of OPERATION INHERENT RESOLVE. Following his return, he continued as the Cyber Systems Section Chief until January 2020, when he assumed the position of Chief of Operations for the 242 CBCS, ultimately retiring in 2023.

Affectionately known as Sergeant McCoy, his over two-decade tenure in the 242 Combat Communications Squadron (242 CBCS) at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, marked a legacy of excellence in cyber systems and communication.

Supported by his unwavering family—wife Joy and children Delaney and Cameron—Sergeant McCoy led a squadron of 105 members, providing vital command, control, communication, and computer (C4) systems support. Expressing deep gratitude, he acknowledges the crucial role played by family, friends, tribe, fellow service members, and the nation throughout his 22-year military journey. Reflecting on his retirement, McCoy says, “I am deeply grateful to my family, friends, tribe,



fellow service members, and our great nation for their unwavering support throughout my 22 years of military service. Your encouragement and sacrifices have been the bedrock of my journey, and I am profoundly thankful to each of you for making this chapter of my life so fulfilling and rewarding.”

As Sergeant McCoy bids farewell to active service, his retirement not only signifies the end of a distinguished chapter but also serves as a testament to the collective efforts that have defined his military career. His legacy of service and dedication stands as a beacon of inspiration for the Washington Air National Guard and beyond.

LAWN CARE SERVICES FOR TRIBAL MEMBERS

APPLICATION NOW OPEN

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHAHTAACHYFFA

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

UNITING GENERATIONS THROUGH CULTURE

CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

SAY THANK YOU TO YOUR NURSE!

Share your story of their compassionate and skillful nursing care. Scan the QR code from your smartphone camera to access the online nomination form.

FOR MORE INFORMATION WWW.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/THE-DAISY-AWARD/

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Patricia Marie Gaines

Patricia Marie (Williams) Gaines, 74, passed away Sept. 4, 2023.

Patricia was born Feb. 18, 1949, in Talihina, Okla., to Moses and Helen (Bohanan) Williams.

She was preceded in death by husband Melvin; her parents; and sister Joanne Williams Dalby.

Patricia is survived by daughters Crystallynn Rogers and spouse Harold, and Tami Steen and spouse Greg; son Aaron Gaines and spouse Wendy; sisters Wanda Frazier and June Williams; sister-in-law Adell Hopper and spouse Mike; grandchildren Erik, A.J., Jared, Courtney, Tucker, Joseph, Brooklyn, and Ashton; great-grandchildren Kona, Vergil, Caelum, and Tillian; numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, cousins, and her beloved puppy Carmela.

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

**Bydia Elfina Carney**

Bydia Elfina (Coley) Carney, 60, passed away Dec. 4, 2023.

Bydia was born Dec. 18, 1962, in Oklahoma City, Okla., to Solomon Coley and Mary (Foster) Coley.

She was preceded in death by her parents Solomon and Mary Coley; brothers Adam, Leon, and Cleo; aunts Dollie Scott, Pamela Jefferson, and Bydia Pope; uncles John Coley, Wilburn Coley, and Cecil.

Bydia is survived by her husband Larry G. Harris; brother Dondi Coley; uncle Joe Coley and spouse Mary; and numerous family and friends.

**Alice Marie Bishop**

Alice Marie (Caldwell) Bishop, 81, passed away Nov. 4, 2023.

Alice was born Oct. 11, 1942, in Oleta, Okla., to Coleman Samuel Caldwell and Eliza (Aaron) Caldwell.

She was preceded in death by her husband Richard A. Bishop; her parents; and brother Melton Ray Caldwell.

Alice is survived by daughters Lisa Kitchings and spouse Michael, and Rose Butler; son Tommy Anderson and spouse Kristina; grandchildren Milton Pledger, Elsha Pledger, Ashley McCarty, Monte Schrader, Shelby Schrader, Jordan Anderson, Seth Anderson, Savanna Layman, Ashton Abendroth, Gabriel Anderson, Keerstin Moyer-Potgieter, and Michael Moyer; 15 great-grandchildren; brothers Cecil Caldwell and Hubert Caldwell; along with numerous nieces, nephews, and friends

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

**Ronald Lee Milam**

Ronald Lee Milam, 53, passed away Nov. 6, 2023.

Ronald was born Feb. 20, 1970, in Mena, Ark., to Jimmie Lee and Rosie Jane Watson Milam.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and sister Janet Hudson.

Ronald is survived by his wife Kay Milam; brothers and sisters-in-law Boyd Williams, Raymond and Stephanie Hudson, Jimmy and Liz Worden, and Eugene Worden; sisters and brother-in-law Patricia and Terry Harrison, Rosie Lopez, and Thelma Milam; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Edwin Van Hendricks**

Edwin Van Hendricks, 82, passed away Oct. 21, 2023.

Edwin was born March 13, 1941, in Merced, Calif., to Hazel (Johnson) Hendricks and Frederick E. Hendricks.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Edwin is survived by wife Susan Hendricks; daughter Sabrina Ann Hendricks; sons Frederick E. Hendricks and Edwin V. Hendricks Jr.; sisters Earlene Kelly, Karen Holmstrom, and Susan Foster; and grandsons Hunter Hendricks, Jordan Hendricks, and Adam Hendricks.

For the full obituary, please visit [Mallory Martin Funeral Home – Spiro](#).

**Reba Lea Hill-Van**

Reba Lea Hill-Van, 73, passed away Nov. 1, 2023.

Reba was born March 28, 1950, in Okla., to Hazel L. Kendrick and James Wesley Hill.

She was preceded in death by her parents; and brother Curtis A. Hill.

Reba is survived by her sons Ryan N. Van and Leonard R. Van; and siblings Margaret Lois Hill, Audie J. Johnson, Jim Hill, Roy Kendrick, and Jesse Kendrick.

For the full obituary, please visit [Palmetto Cremation Society](#).

**Galen Ernest Fout**

Galen Ernest Fout, 75, passed away Oct. 25, 2023.

Galen was born March 4, 1948, in Okla. City, Okla., to Delbert Fout and Patricia Prince (Roberts.)

He is survived by his wife Elizabeth; daughters Kari, Shari and Tracy; sons Christopher and Travis; 16 grandchildren and one great-grandchild; sister Dee Cox; nieces and nephews; and countless military buddies and friends.

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

**Reba Faye Palmer**

Reba Faye Palmer, 77, passed away Oct. 31, 2023.

Reba was born Feb. 15, 1946, in Duncan, Okla., to Ava Ray and Gladys Faye (Sanner) Fletcher.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Reba is survived by her sons William Ray (Lisa) Palmer, and Jon Michael Palmer; granddaughters Dr. Sydney Palmer (Michael) Bocan-Collins, Reyleigh Melia Palmer, and Quincy Ilima Palmer; and great-granddaughter Izabella Elena Bocan-Collins.

For the full obituary, please visit [Distinctive Life Cremation and Funeral Services](#).

**Richard Glenn Battles**

Richard Glenn Battles, 83, passed away Nov. 8, 2023.

Richard was born Feb. 20, 1940, in Ashland, Okla., to Alice Gladys Richardson and Tollie "Dutch" Battles.

He was preceded in death by his parents; first wife Darlene Gailey; second wife Sallie Grassfield; brother Sammy Battles; sister Linda Buckley; and last sweetheart Arvella Ann.

Richard is survived by his children Deborah, Tollie, Mark, Carl, Bernadette, and Heather; sister Mary; a niece; several nephews; grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and numerous cousins.

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

**Debbie Jean Rodgers**

Debbie Jean Rodgers, 65, passed away Oct. 29, 2023.

Debbie was born April 11, 1958, in Redmond, Oregon.

She is survived by her husband Steven Rodgers; sons Larimy and spouse Amy, and Justin and spouse Marilyn; daughter Lacie; stepdaughter Kandie; grandchildren Chase, Riley, Bailey, Junior, Daniel, Alona, Alexis, Mia, and Madden; great-granddaughter Wrenley Clair; and four sisters, including twin sister Donna.

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

**Elizabeth Ann Loving**

Elizabeth Ann Loving, 62, passed away Nov. 13, 2023.

Elizabeth was born Dec. 12, 1960, in Denver, Colo., to Trellis Lee Sr. and Billie Jean Whitman.

She is preceded in death by her parents; brothers Trellis Whiteman Jr. and Henry Whiteman; and sisters Carolyn Whiteman and Debra Gregory.

Elizabeth is survived by her husband Ricky Loving; daughter Kama Stewart; grandchildren, Kamden Bowline, Kaden Stewart, and Kala Bowline; brother Richard Whiteman; sisters Janice LeFlore, Shirley Baker, and Susan Chance; several nieces and nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

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

**Arnold Keith Tims**

Arnold "Moshi" Keith Tims, 52, passed away Nov. 22, 2023.

Arnold was born April 5, 1971, in Idabel, Okla., to Silas Tims and Jeraldine (White) Tims.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Arnold is survived by his wife Kim Tims; children Kylar Lynch and Preston, MaKaylan Foshee and Michael, and his dog son, great dane King; grandchildren Oakland Lynch, Knox Maben and Madden Maben; siblings Israel Tims, Jerry Tims and Candy, Stacy Strickland and Phillip, Carol Compton and Chuck, Galen Tims and Donna, Pricilla Harris and Wayne, and Vicky Leach and B.J.; best friend Chris Shomo; and a host of nieces, nephews, other family members, friends and loved ones.

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

**Sheila Lorraine Johnson**

Sheila Lorraine (Marris), 67, passed away Nov. 20, 2023.

Sheila was born Dec. 23, 1955, to Junior Lee Marris and Glassie Ruth (Sanders) Evans.

She was preceded in death by her parents; stepfather Herman Doc Evans, brothers Larry Marris and

Herbie Marris; and stepdaughter Peaches Johnson. Sheila is survived by her husband Jarvis "J.D." Johnson; brother Rodney Evans and spouse Debbie children Brad Scott and spouse Arnita, Ranell Charpentier and spouse David, and Mike Scott and spouse Felicia; stepchildren Debbie Johnson and partner Bill, Jarvi Johnson Jr. and spouse Patsy, and Travis Johnson; 23 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; many nieces, nephews, family members, friends, and loved ones.

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

**Jeffrey Lynn Davis Sr.**

Jeffrey Lynn Davis Sr., 75, passed away Dec. 3, 2023.

Jeffrey was born July 14, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to Emma and Winston Davis.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters Norma and Teresa; brothers Winston Jr., Willis, John, Raymond, and Gerald; and his son Jeffrey Jr.

Jeffrey is survived by his son Jonathan and spouse Jeannine; grandchildren Cobi, Joel, Adam, Cade, Winston, Cathryn, Donaven, and Cameron; great-grandchildren Katie and Stella; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

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

**Julia Mae Dane**

Julia Mae Dane, 94, passed away Nov. 27, 2023.

Julia was born May 29, 1929, in Davis, Okla., to Albert "Leonard" and Ruby W. (Davis) Gilliland.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Bob Briscoe; sisters Lottie Marks and Frances Taylor; and brothers Wesley Gilliland and Bailey Gilliland.

Julia is survived by son Carl Wayne Dane and spouse Judy; daughter Barbara Joyce Swadling and spouse Jerry; grandchildren LaTisha (Dan) Marick, Shelley (Chad) Schon, Donny (Mary) Dane, and Kerri Dane; great-grandchildren Raeden, Rhamzie and Rylen Schon, Jacey (Jordan) Box, Jalyn (Bailey) Marick, Mark and Evan Mayes, and Sara Dane; one great-great-granddaughter Collins Box; and brother Johnny Gilliland.

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

**Robert Wayne Ishcomer**

Robert Wayne "Chief" Ishcomer, 59, passed away Nov. 23, 2023.

Robert was born July 19, 1964, in Talihina, Okla., to Leroy and Ethel Bell (LaFlore) Ishcomer.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sister Rita Ishcomer; special cousin Elsie Wesley; and niece Marissa Faith Ishcomer.

Robert is survived by siblings Leroy Ishcomer Jr., Linda Sue Ishcomer, Neil Ishcomer, Johnny Ishcomer, Julius Ishcomer, Lena Priddy, Mary Woody and spouse Turner, and Sarah Kuykendall and spouse Donald; great-uncle Elum Wesley; friends Larry Hayes, Raymond Cooper, and Kenny Daniel and spouse Sara; along with numerous nieces, nephews, other dearly loved relatives, and friends.

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

**Thomas Lee Fulton Sr.**

Thomas "Tommy" Lee Fulton Sr., 86, passed away Oct. 12, 2023.

Tommy was born Feb. 23, 1937, in Hugo, Okla., to Robert Fulton and Olive Marie Rankin.

He was preceded in death by his wife Bonnie; and son Danny.

Tommy is survived by his son Tommy Lee Fulton (Jane); grandchildren Tom Fulton III (Tawny and great grandchildren, Karly, Alaina, Hannah, Caleb and Emma), Jenna Smith (Travis and great grandson, Stetson) Zach Fulton, Dana Fulton, Seth Fulton and Justus Fulton.

For the full obituary, please visit [Rader Funeral Homes of Longview – Henderson](#).

**Joe Brent Shaw**

Joe Brent Shaw, 49, passed away Dec. 4, 2023.

Brent was born Dec. 13, 1973, in Antlers, Okla., to Wanie Morris and Joe Shaw.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents Raymond and Vivian Shaw, and Isom and Nancy Loman; and stepfather Joseph "Joey" Morris. Brent is survived by his wife Kelli Shaw; children Paige Shaw, Levi Killman, Reed Shaw, and Braden Shaw; grandchildren Brenlynn and Bowie; mother Wanie Morris; father Joe Shaw and spouse Pati; sisters Leslie Navarro and spouse Dondo, and Ashley Youngblood and spouse Douglas; aunt Rita Burke; father-in-law Billy Jack Wilkerson; and close family friend Bryce Martin.

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

**Dorothy Williams**

Dorothy Jean Bedford Williams, 94, passed away Dec. 3, 2023.

Dorothy was born Jan. 7, 1929, in Seminole, Okla., to Raymond Bedford and Jeffie Gabbert Bedford.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Randolph Williams; and brother Bennett L. Bedford.

Dorothy is survived by her nephew Michael Bedford; great-nephew John David Ketchum and family; great-niece Bobbye Jean Carter and family; great-niece Brandi Bedford; great-nephew Brule Bedford and Misty Strange; great-great-nephew Blade Strange; great-great-niece Catlyn Strange; several great-great-nieces and nephews; long-time caregiver Leona Burke; and best friend Charles Lewis.

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

**Obituary Policy**

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

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

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

Send official obituary notices to:

Biskinik
PO Box 1210
Durant OK 74702
or email: biskinik@choctawnation.com

Mia Reich crowned Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma

By Christian Chaney

On November 11, 2023, the Oklahoma Federation of Indian Women celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Miss Indian Oklahoma and the 40th Anniversary of the Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma Pageant at the Choctaw Nation Event Center in Calera, Oklahoma.

Mia Reich, a member of the Choctaw tribe, was crowned as the 2024 Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma.

The event featured a total of eleven contestants, six vying for the title of Miss Indian Oklahoma and five competing for Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma.

Unfortunately, one Miss contestant withdrew from the competition due to the loss of a loved one. The remaining ten contestants, representing seven different tribes, showcased their talents in various categories.

Contestants were judged based on their performance in categories such as essay, interview, tribal greeting and introduction, traditional wear, traditional talent/presentation, platform topic, business attire and impromptu questions.

The pageant provided a platform for these accomplished ladies to display their cultural pride and compete for prestigious titles within the Native American community.

Newly crowned Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma, Mia Reich is the 15-year-old daughter of Jay and Melissa Reich. Her maternal grand-

parents are Lillie Ott of Calera, Oklahoma, and the late Sequoyah Roberts. Her paternal grandparents are Brenda Reich of Wright City and the late Bill Reich.

Mia is a sophomore at Wright City High School, where she is involved in several extra-curricular activities.

She is on the varsity basketball, track, and cross-country teams. Mia is a cheerleader, a member of the Academic Team and the Treasurer of the WISDOM Club. WISDOM is the acronym for “Wise Indian Students Discovering Oklahoma’s Magnificence.”

Outside of school, Mia is an active member of the Idabel First Baptist Church and has achieved the rank of Senior Girl Scout with Troop 7121.

Mia recently submitted her Girl Scout National Gold Award Proposal, which the organization approved. Her Gold Award proposal is her co-writing with Lillie Ott, the Pledge/Salute to the Choctaw Flag. She is working with Ott and the Language Department to translate it into Choctaw. Upon completion this month, she will be awarded the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award a Girl Scout can receive.

She is also deeply involved in the world of dance, boasting 13 years of dance experience and an eight-year as a member of a competition dance team at Studio 5678 in Idabel.

In her role as Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma, Mia has chosen “Preserving Our Choctaw



Photo by Rodolphe Foucher



Photo by Kendra Germany-Wall

Mia Reich is an active member of the Choctaw Nation and her local community. The 15-year-old from Wright City was recently crowned Junior Miss Indian Oklahoma 2024.

Language” as her platform.

Inspired by her maternal grandmother, a first-language speaker and Choctaw Language instructor, Mia is committed to the preservation of this ancient language. She is enrolled as a Level II language student at her high school, and she actively engages in learning and promoting the Choctaw language.

In her advocacy efforts, Mia shares various opportunities and pathways for individuals to enroll as Choctaw language students. Mia enjoys reading to younger students and teaching them how to pronounce Choctaw words for numbers, colors, and animal names. She enjoys singing the Choctaw hymns and is

eager to learn songs new to her.

Mia extends her language preservation efforts to her fellow Choctaw Nation District Pageant contestants by encouraging them to deliver their introductions in Choctaw. She supports her fellow contestants by cultivating confidence in their public speaking, helping with pronunciation, and assuring them that it is okay to make a mistake.

Mia was also awarded the JMIO Entrepreneur Award for raising the highest praise/business ad sales for the pageant program.

Mia wishes to thank you for your continued support in her endeavors to serve as your ambassador.



Patricia Wood checks her work from inside the chukka during the mudding event.



Lilly Fincher washes her hands after working on mudding a traditional chukka.



Photos by Christian Toews
Ezekiel Fincher presses a mixture of clay, water, and hay/grass onto a traditional Choctaw home to insulate it from the coming winter weather.



Stacey Fincher loads a bucket with the pre-mixed mud to place on the walls of the chukka.

Choctaw Cultural Center hosts community mudding

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Cultural Center provided their annual opportunity to “mud” traditional winter home in November.

These homes, called chukkas, were traditionally insulated as the harsh winter months approached. Early Choctaws would gather clay, water, and hay/grass to make sticky mud that would bind between the wooden structure and insulate from the harsh winter weather.

“You have to get the mixture just right,” said Brenner Billy, Program Coordinator at the center. “If you have too much moisture, it won’t stick; if it’s not enough, it won’t bind, so we need to be the right consistency between the two...Once it dries, if it has too much water, it could crack too much and fall apart; if it’s not enough water, then it won’t bind with the hay and the sand.”

Visitors were offered the opportunity to mix the ingredients in large tubs, then take buckets of the mixture and fill the space between the logs of the chukka by hand. This process can get messy, but the kids who attended enjoyed it.

Stacey Fincher brought his family to the mudding event for the first time.

Fincher said he discovered his Choctaw heritage when he was 28 but hopes to learn more and show his children about the Choctaw culture at a younger age.

“Finally getting to be a part of something that is bigger than myself, so spreading this culture to my family is something that is going to be important to be moving forward,” said Fincher.

According to Fincher, his kids attended the powwow this year and continued practicing the dances they saw.

Fincher says it’s crucial for opportunities to experience the Choctaw culture to continue.

“If we continue to do stuff like this and show how Choctaws have really cared about their people...If we can spread that outward, hopefully, it will instill a better mentality to really care about others,” he said.

Patricia Wood also attended the event for the first time.

Wood said it means a lot to her as a Choctaw that the cultural center offers opportunities to explore her culture.

According to Wood, it helps her feel connected to the past and reminds her of what her ancestors used to do.

“I really enjoy it. It’s neat because we get to be hands-on and learn how to do this,” she said.

Many Choctaw Cultural Center visitors watched and participated in the mudding event on November 12, 2023.

“We have had an even bigger turnout than last year, and we plan to continue to add more opportunities in the coming years,” said Billy.

To learn about all the upcoming events at the Choctaw Cultural Center, visit <https://choctawculturalcenter.com>.

STAR PROGRAM
APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Choctaw Nation’s STAR Program applications are now available. Parents and guardians can apply for rewards on behalf of their students in grades 2 – 12 in the spring and fall semesters.

ALL A’S - \$50 GIFT CARD
ALL A’S AND B’S - \$25 GIFT CARD
PERFECT ATTENDANCE - \$25 GIFT CARD

APPLICATION PERIODS

FALL JAN 1 - APR 1	SPRING JUN 1 - SEP 1
--------------------	----------------------

APPLY WITH CHAHTA ACHVFFA AT
CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/STAR
800.522.6170

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

FAFSA

CURRENT AND FUTURE COLLEGE STUDENTS CAN APPLY

APPLICATIONS OPEN IN DECEMBER
STUDENTAID.GOV

Choctaw Nation College Freshman Year Initiative

ACP Affordable Connectivity Program

THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP) IS A NEW FEDERAL PROGRAM THAT HELPS LOW INCOME FAMILIES AFFORD THE COST OF HAVING INTERNET SERVICE AT HOME.

ACP PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE:

- Up to \$75/Month discount if your house is on qualifying Tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50)

WHO QUALIFIES?

THERE ARE FOUR WAYS YOUR HOUSEHOLD CAN QUALIFY FOR THE AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM (ACP):

- Based on your household income
- If you or your child or dependent participate in certain government assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, or other programs
- If you or your child or dependent already receives a Lifeline benefit
- You may also qualify for the ACP through a participating internet provider’s existing low-income program

IF YOU OR SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD PARTICIPATE IN ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS YOU ARE AUTOMATICALLY ELIGIBLE FOR ACP:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit
- Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program
- Received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year
- Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance
- Head Start (only households meeting the income qualifying standard)
- Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Tribal TANF)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Enroll Today acp.choctawnation.com

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Choctaw Christmas at the Cultural Center

By Christian Toews

The Choctaw Cultural Center hosted a Choctaw Christmas on December 9. This Christmas celebration was an all-day event with activities for everyone. Choctaw artists and artisan vendors displayed and sold their work. Guests had the opportunity to try their hand at being an artist during the Adult Beaded Ornament Workshop. Kids also had fun by participating in the Children's Gingerbread Chukka Decorating Class and

Paper Gingerbread Decorating. A long line formed to take photos with Santa, and everyone enjoyed the complimentary warm beverages and cookies in Kowi Chito. There was a Choctaw hymnal singing, free gift-wrapping, and Christmas cheer. Scott Wesley, the Senior Director at the Cultural Center, said that almost 300 people attended the festivities. To learn about upcoming events at the Cultural Center, visit <https://choctawcultural-center.com>.



Santa poses for a picture with visitors during the Choctaw Christmas event.

Photos By Christian Toews



Zamber and Zylea Ravellette decorate their Christmas chukkas.



Olivia Taylor samples some of the icing while decorating her Christmas chukka.



Janice Hayes browses the tables of art at the Cultural Center's Choctaw Christmas.



Paula Pena and Monique Jackson enjoy the Adult Beaded Ornament Workshop.

Choctaws compete at Junior World Finals

LAS VEGAS (December 16, 2023) – The 2023 NFR YETI Junior World Finals Rodeo was held December 7-16 in Las Vegas.

Savannah Toon, of Smithville, Oklahoma, won her second Junior World Finals Rodeo barrel racing championship.

The cowgirl won her second title by 1/1000 of a second.

Toon and her sister, Brantley who was also a Vegas qualifier, weren't the only Choctaws representing their tribe and the Junior World Finals.

Hazen and Ethan Sparks of Buffalo Valley, Oklahoma, competed in the Ote Berry Junior Steer Wrestling World Championship. Hazen ended up 14th overall, and Ethan ended up 11th overall. He also had the fastest time overall of 3.3 seconds and has a new saddle to show for it.



Top Left: Hazen Sparks is pictured with the saddle he won for the fastest time.



Photos Provided

Top Right: Savannah Toon and Chief Batton pose for a photo with Toon's new Championship Buckle.

Below: Councilmembers Jess Henry, Thomas Williston, Anthony Dillard and Chief Batton pose for a photo with Hazen and Ethan Sparks.



Choctaw Cultural Center launches first book

DURANT, OKLA. – The Choctaw Cultural Center celebrated the publication of the first book in the new series "Choctaw Culture Keepers" this month. "Dr. Clara Sue Kidwell, Teacher and Mentor" tells the story of a Choctaw tribal member from northeast Oklahoma who became recognized as a national leader in the field of American Indian studies.



The biography for 8-12-year-old readers is written by Choctaw tribal member Celia Stall-Meadows, illustrated by Choctaw tribal member Leslie Stall Widener, and published by the Choctaw Cultural Center. The author read an excerpt from the book and was joined by Kidwell and the illustrator in a book signing.

The book is about Kidwell, who authored many books and articles on American Indian history and culture. At a time when few Native women held doctoral degrees, Kidwell established studies programs for several universities, and served as assistant director in the Research and Cultural Resources department at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

"Dr. Clara Sue Kidwell, Teacher and Mentor" is the first of several planned biographies in the "Choctaw Culture Keepers" series. This collection of nonfiction stories for middle-grade students highlights the lives of influential tribal members, including educators, tribal leaders, social justice advocates, veterans, researchers, and missionaries.

More Than a Protector

By Kellie Matherly

Growing up in Owasso, Oklahoma, Gina South knew the comfort, love, and connection of a close family and her Native community. Her roots grew deep in Oklahoma, and years later, those roots would bring her back home to serve the Choctaw people as the Juvenile Division Chief for the Choctaw Nation's Office of Prosecution.

When she was 14, Gina's family moved from Owasso to a town in North Alabama called Florence. Leaving the community she loved was a difficult adjustment.

"We didn't have any connections or roots to people in Alabama," said Gina. "There were no other Indians there that we knew of. There were no other Native families."

Despite the distance, Gina's mother worked hard to make sure Gina and her brothers stayed connected to their Choctaw heritage. She told the children stories about their extended family—who they were and where they came from.

Gina's mother even taught classes on what it was like to be a Choctaw person.

"Kids there would ask 'Do you live in a teepee?'" Gina said with a laugh. "And of course, we didn't.

But it was important for my mom to be able to talk to our classmates and explain that we were just like any other family."

Another way young Gina stayed tethered to the Choctaw culture was through sewing. She learned how to make her own regalia, and it became something she and her mother did together. The skills she learned from her mother had been passed down from her grandmother, Ella Lynn, who learned to sew in an Indian boarding school.

Today, Gina and her mother still sew together. They make ribbon skirts and other Native crafts and clothing.

"The ribbon skirt is really important. It represents the fact that you are Native and that you're part of something greater than yourself," Gina said.

That sentiment is certainly true for those who work with Gina in the CNO Office of Prosecution. For Child Abuse Awareness Month, she taught her colleagues to make their own ribbon skirts and ribbon shirts in shades of blue to honor victims and survivors of child abuse. Helping children and their families is central to the work Gina does every day.

It seems that law school was always in the cards for Gina, too.

"I think I was good at arguing as a child," she said, "and my parents did encourage me to go to law school for that reason."

As an attorney, Gina was drawn to juvenile cases because she wanted to help vulnerable children whose voices need to be heard.

"I thought about my grandma and about her sister and about all the children and what they experienced at Indian boarding school. Those kids should have had a voice, and they should have been protected."

But the desire to take care of children who need nurturing homes didn't end at the close of the workday for Gina and her husband, Jason.

From the beginning, Gina and Jason knew they wanted to have a family and provide a safe place for children. In addition to their three children, Duncan, Crispin and Liam, they opened their home and their hearts to foster children.

Although being a foster family has plenty of challenges, Gina is thankful for the training and support available to prepare them for the children with different backgrounds, including some that may be traumatic.

"It was a natural thing for us to apply to be foster parents. And being able to be foster parents and pro-



vide a safe home for children has been a fulfillment of our family's dreams. It's been a wonderful experience," she said.

December of 2011 changed the South family's lives forever. A nine-month-old baby girl named Juliet came to stay with them. In August of the following year, Juliet became a permanent member of the South family when Gina and Jason adopted her.

"She has been a joy and a blessing. She's brought a lot of excitement into our house," said Gina.

In 2017, the South family moved to North Texas from Alabama. For a long time, Gina's dream had been to work within the Choctaw Nation where she could serve her tribe, and in 2020, that dream became a reality.

The Choctaw Nation's judicial system was preparing for the McGirt decision to come down from the U.S. Supreme Court, and expanding the existing court system was critical for handling the inevitable increase in cases, including cases that involve Indian Child Welfare.

One of the Juvenile Division's goals is to avoid separating children from their families and their culture when they can.

A major win for the tribes came when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Indian Child Welfare Act in 2023. The law protects the sovereign right of tribes to seek placement with Native foster or adoptive families for Native children who have been removed from their homes.

"In my work now, it's something that's always in the back of my mind that we have to keep children connected to their family as much as possible, and that it's important to keep children connected to their tribe," said Gina.

When her children were small, Gina made sure they all understood the importance of being Choctaw. She cooked traditional foods and taught them the importance of the ingredients and how to prepare them. They even set up a tent in the yard for "Choctaw Day," where other children in the neighborhood would come by to make miniature chukkas and learn the stories about how their ancestors lived. Sharing their culture with others became a way for them to grow closer to their own heritage and history.

"Being Choctaw means part of a family, and it's being part of a bigger family that extends beyond just your own household. And it's exactly what I want my children to grow up knowing."

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES

Do you need assistance finding a job or paying for job training?

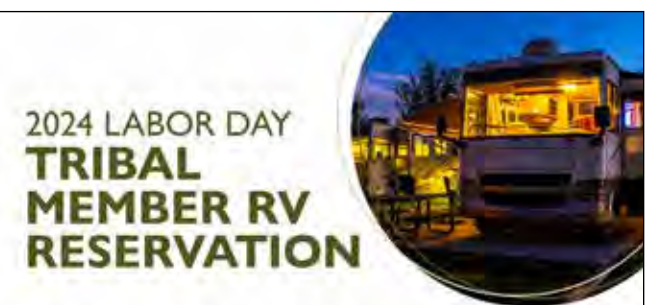
The 477 Employment Training Services aim to help people succeed in the workforce by providing opportunities for employment, education and training.

Services are available within Choctaw Nation Reservation.

Scan to learn more and to apply!



Choctaw Nation 477 Program



Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone Number:		
Email address:		
RV/Trailer description (All information must be complete for reservation consideration)		
Trailer type: <input type="checkbox"/> Bumper Pull <input type="checkbox"/> 5th wheel <input type="checkbox"/> RV	Length of Trailer:	# of slide-outs:
Additional information:		

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
ATTN: Janita Jeffreys
Labor Day RV Reservations
PO Box 1210
Durant, OK 74702

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
LABORDAY.CHOCTAWNATION.COM



NO PHONE RESERVATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR CDIB CARD ONLY. SITES WILL BE ASSIGNED BY LOTTERY. DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY AT THIS TIME. ALL APPLICANTS WILL BE NOTIFIED BY MAIL OR EMAIL IN MARCH 2024.

Scan to reserve your spot today!



#CHAHTALABORDAY
CHOCTAWNATION.COM

The Choctaw Nation offers tips to help make your New Year's 'Rezolutions' successful.

by Chris Jennings

As the new year begins, many people reflect on the last 12 months and consider what they could do better for the next 12. Setting goals for the new year goes back thousands of years; failing at those goals goes back just as far.

One of the many challenges with these resolutions is setting goals that could be more specific. Simply saying that you want to exercise more or that you want to eat better isn't enough.

Chase Ward, a registered dietician with Choctaw Nation Food Distribution, says setting smaller, more realistic goals is much better. When it comes to eating better, Ward suggests starting with realistic goals, focusing on incorporating more fruits, veggies, and whole grains. "Gradual changes, like reducing added sugars and planning meals, can make it more sustainable. Focusing on making long-term lifestyle changes rather than looking for a quick fix is the key to a change that will last," said Ward.

Reducing your soda intake is one good small goal that can lead to big changes. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), sugary drinks are a major source of health problems. Things like weight gain, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease, tooth decay and gout can all be tied to sugary drinks.



Ward recommends keeping track of what you eat as one way to stay on top of your goals. "Using mobile apps like MyFitnessPal or keeping a simple food journal can be effective. It helps raise awareness of eating habits and promotes mindful choices. If you know in your mind that you will have to track and own up to the food choices you make, you are much more likely to decide on better options," Ward said.

One of the ways Ward says people set themselves up for failure is believing in quick fixes. "Quick fixes often involve extreme restrictions, leading to rebound effects. Gradual, long-term approaches are more effective," Ward said.

Another misconception is the need for extreme food restrictions to be successful. Extreme restrictions are unsustainable and risk nutrient deficiencies. Ward says, "A balanced approach with variety in moderation is more maintainable. Sustainable changes and a balanced approach are key."

The Nation is here to help you achieve your goals in many ways. The various programs include health clinics with nutritional education, counseling, and community wellness initiatives in the Wellness Centers to support healthier lifestyles. The food distribution program, next step initiative, and WIC are also available for tribal members.

Another thing you can do to kick-start your health goals is visit one of the 16 Wellness Centers in the Choctaw Nation. Chase

Henson, fitness center director for the Choctaw Nation, says, "If they're interested in making a lifestyle change for the better, we're here to assist in their journey."

The Choctaw Nation Wellness Centers are open to all federally recognized CDIB card holders, their spouses and children up to age 26. Choctaw Nation associates, along with their spouses and children up to age 26, firefighters, law enforcement and EMT, and their spouse and children up to age 26. Both active and retired military are also eligible regardless of tribal status. The Durant and Hugo Wellness Centers also have a 55 and older program open to the public.

When committing to a lifestyle change, Henson says it's important to talk to your healthcare provider first. "Some of our members are on medications, and with drastic weight loss and change in their activity levels, some of those things can change."

Henson says they've seen members make drastic changes in themselves. They've had several people lose over 100 pounds; people whose doctors recommend surgery, but they were able to make a lifestyle change that negated that; and people who may have relied on a medication their whole life not needing it anymore because of their healthier lifestyle.

While this can all be done on your own, it's easier with the right help. "We recommend before taking that leap of faith into their fitness journey to make sure you have the right core around you that can just guide you accurately through your health journey," said Henson.

Henson also says they understand that some people don't like going to the gym. "We understand how hard that is and how much anxiety comes into just walking through the Wellness Center doors. But we're here to assist them and walk them through that journey and help them wherever we can," he said.

One of the reasons for this anxiety is people worry that they don't know what to do or that they'll hurt themselves working out. You can request a personal trainer the first time you go to a Wellness Center. Any staff member can help with the basics, but a personal trainer can help you set attainable goals and provide specific exercises to meet those goals.

Henson also recommends some small things you can do on your own that are often underrated. "I don't think people understand how important it is to get proper rest and recovery and something as simple as taking in enough water in the day. Those are two of the simplest things you can do today," Henson said.

Ward also has some suggestions for simple things you can do to kick-start your health. Start with reducing added sugars and ultra-processed foods. Eating sugary snacks leads to rapid blood sugar spikes, followed by crashes, which can contribute to cravings and overeating.

"Ultra-processed foods often contain additives, preservatives, high salt levels and unhealthy fats. These foods are typically high in calories but low in quality nutrients. Cutting down on sugary snacks and opting for whole, minimally processed options can make a significant difference," said Ward.

"Instead, snack on fresh fruits, veggies with hummus, Greek yogurt with berries, or a handful of nuts. Choosing whole,

NEW YEAR NEW ME CHALLENGE

The New Year, New Me Challenge is a 12-week fat loss challenge designed to help you achieve your weight loss goals and kick the New Year off right!

This challenge will have three male winners and three female winners.

January 8-12: Initial Measurements
January 15- April 5: 12 Week Challenge
April 8-12: Final Measurements

WINNERS WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY APRIL 19TH.

RULES:
Participants will earn

- 1 point for every pound of fat mass lost
- 1 point for every percent of body fat lost
- 1 point for every pound of weight lost
- 1 point for every pound of lean body mass gained (not skeletal muscle)

NOTE: Since we promote healthy eating habits and NO crash dieting, we will be deducting a point for every pound of lean body mass lost.

BONUS PRIZE RAFFLE

Participants who complete this challenge and accumulate 50 attendance signatures during the challenge will have their name entered into a drawing for a Choctaw Wellness Center King Kong duffel bag.

* Must be tracked, dated and signed each day by a Wellness Center staff member at the front desk. We will not look up previous attendance

Choctaw Nation Wellness Center

CHOCTAWNATION.COM

nutrient-dense options keeps you satisfied between meals," Ward added.

Many of these simple tips are overlooked because they're not drastic and don't have instant effects. Healthy lifestyle changes take time; often, it's the first simple step that can change a life.

You can take it a little farther and take a few more steps to go into a Wellness Center to sign up for their annual New Year, New Me Challenge. The 12-week fat loss challenge is designed to help you safely achieve your weight loss goals.

Participants in the challenge can earn points for every pound of fat mass loss, for every percentage of body fat loss, for every pound of weight loss and for every pound of lean muscle gained. At the end of the challenge, winners will receive fitness-related prizes.

"Remember, individual needs vary. Consulting with a registered dietitian or healthcare professional can provide personalized guidance based on specific health goals and preferences," said Ward.

Health resolutions aren't the only difference you can try to make. One good resolution for many Biskinik readers may be to learn more about the Choctaw language. There are lessons available online and community classes available across the state.

If you've always wanted to finish your education, there's no better time than now. The Choctaw Nation Adult Education Program was designed to improve educational and employment opportunities for Native Americans who have not completed high school. High school equivalency (HSE) classes are available at community centers for any CDIB cardholder who is 16 years old and not enrolled in school. Members who live outside the reservation can take advantage of online classes to get their HSE.

If one of your resolutions is to get a better job, the Career Development department can help. They can offer career guidance and assessment testing to help you find a job suited to your talents, financial assistance for quality training and employment services to help you find that job. For more information, visit choctawcareers.com.

Veterans can give back to the community by volunteering for the Choctaw Nation Color Guard.

If you have a loftier goal of giving back, the Choctaw Nation Adoption and Foster Care program is looking to recruit foster care resource homes for Choctaw children. Homes that provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment that keeps the Choctaw heritage at the forefront can greatly impact a child's life.

SODIUM

Tracking down the salt in food with Professor Saul T.

Too much sodium increases your risk for high blood pressure, and high blood pressure is the leading cause of heart attack and stroke.

By taking the right steps to reduce your sodium intake, your blood pressure can begin decreasing within weeks.

About 90% of Americans eat more sodium than is recommended for a healthy diet.

Sodium Adds Up*

6 IN 10
ADULTS SHOULD AIM FOR 1,500 mg a day; others for 2,300 mg: www.cdc.gov/salt

CDC graphic

According to the CDC, over 70% of the sodium that Americans eat comes from packaged, processed, store-bought, and restaurant foods. If lowering your blood pressure is a goal, then a simple first step is eating less processed foods. By eating foods low in saturated fats and high in fiber and increasing access to low-sodium foods, along with regular physical activity, can help prevent high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure.

CHOCTAW NATION FOOD DISTRIBUTION

MARKET HOURS

Open 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
 Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

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

January 2024

All markets open weekdays, November 1-28
Closed: January 1, 30 and 31
 Nutrition Ed & Food Programs subject to cancellation
 Participants can request a calendar at their location.

ANTLERS 400 S.W. "O" ST., 580-298-6443
Food demo January 9

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

DURANT 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773
Food demo January 12

MCALESTER 3244 Afullotha Hina, 918-420-5716
Food demo January 16

POTEAU 106 B St., 918-649-0431
Food demo January 17

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation

January 3	Antlers	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
January 5	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
January 5	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
January 9	Wright City	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
January 10	Poteau	11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
January 12	Crowder	By Appointment
January 16	Broken Bow	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
January 17	McAlester	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
January 17	Stigler	By Appointment
January 19	Atoka	8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
January 19	Coalgate	12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
January 23	Idabel	10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
January 24	Wilburton	10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
January 30	Talihina	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Durant: Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Call 580-326-8304 for an Appointment

WIC OFFICE LOCATIONS

LOCATION	DAYS	HOURS
Antlers 580-916-5609	Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Atoka 580-889-5825	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Battiest 580-241-5458	1st Tuesday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Broken Bow 580-584-2746	Daily Monday – Friday (Except the 1st Tuesday & 2nd Thursday of the Month)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Durant 580-916-2100 x83517	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Heavener 918-974-1820	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Hugo 580-326-9707	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:00 pm
Idabel 580-286-2510	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
McAlester 918-423-6335	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Poteau 918-649-1106	Daily Monday – Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Smithville 580-244-3289	1st Thursday of every month	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Spiro 918-962-5134	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Stigler 918-967-4211	Monday & Tuesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Talihina 918-567-7000 x6792	Daily Monday - Friday	8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Wilburton 580-642-7588	Wednesday	8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Mobile Van 580-380-8193	1st Tuesday – Boswell 3rd Tuesday – Coalgate 4th Tuesday – Clayton	9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Choctaw Nation Health Services

Community meals

Throughout the holiday season, community meals and parties were held at community centers throughout the Choctaw Nation.

Pictured on the following two pages of the Biskinik are photos from Thanksgiving meals in Antlers, Atoka, Battiest, Broken Bow, Coalgate, Crowder, Durant, Hugo, Idabel, McAlester, Poteau, Smithville, Spiro, Stigler, Talihina, Tvshka Homma, Wilburton and Wright City.



HUNTING LEASE AUCTION
 JANUARY 25, 2024 | 1:00 PM

JOIN US FOR CHOCTAW NATION'S SALE OF HUNTING LEASES ON RESTRICTED LAND. The sale will be held at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Big Rooms 1 and 4.

bit.ly/cno-lease-auction
 FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT
MCCANN@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
 580.642.8988

Leases are for the Restricted interest only and bidder is responsible for negotiating a lease with the Unrestricted owners.

PLACE YOUR ONLINE BID NOW!

Choctaw Nation Land & Title

ENVISION CENTER
 VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

- Free basic tax preparation for tribal members with a combined household income of \$60,000 and below
- Virtual tax preparation by appointment only

We are able to prepare the following tax forms:
 W-2, W-2G, SSA-1099, 1099-R, 1099-G, 1099-C, Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Credit

We cannot prepare the following tax forms:
 Itemized deductions, Schedule C, Schedule D, Self Employment

ENVISIONCENTER@CHOCTAWNATION.COM
 580.380.9370 OR 580.642.7727

Scan here to schedule an appointment

Choctaw Nation Housing Authority

HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM APPLICATION

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FROM
 JANUARY 2 - MARCH 1

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/HIGHER-EDUCATION

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

Community meals



MY SCREENING MAMMOGRAM SAVED MY LIFE

I get to continue baking for my family.
- Deborah

American Society of Breast Surgeons guidelines recommend women with an average risk get a mammogram annually beginning at age 40.
To schedule an appointment, call 918.567.7000 or 800.349.7026

Choctaw Nation Health Services

ACT & SCHOLARSHIP WORKSHOPS

IN-PERSON DATES

- Friday, October 20, 2023 | Durant Headquarters | 1802 Chuika Hina Drive, Durant, OK
- Thursday, Nov 30, 2023 | McAlester Kiamichi Technology Center | 301 Kiamichi Drive, McAlester, OK 74501
- Thursday, February 1, 2024 | Kibbel Kiamichi Technology Center | 3205 Lincoln Road NE, Idabel, OK 74745
- Thursday, April 4, 2024 | Hugo Kiamichi Technology Center | 107 S. 15th Street, Hugo, OK 74743

VIRTUAL DATES (ON ZOOM)

- Wednesday, October 11, 2023
- Saturday, January 20, 2024
- Tuesday, March 19, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 580.924.8280

FREE WORKSHOPS FOR HSS MEMBERS. LUNCH PROVIDED FOR IN-PERSON PARTICIPANTS.

Scan Here to Register

Choctaw Nation High School Student Services

Seeds in space: Choctaw Nation's heirloom seeds launched to ISS

By Christian Chaney

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's heirloom seeds have embarked on a unique journey to the International Space Station through a collaboration with Boeing.

Five types of seeds will be exposed to microgravity for several months before returning to Earth.

Upon return, the seeds will be grown alongside non-flown space seeds.

Native American youth at Jones Academy will then study and observe the growth of both seed groups in a CNO Growing Hope garden.

Students will develop hypotheses and perform experiments to see whether the seeds exposure to space affects their growth.

This project, funded by Boeing, combines science education, space exploration and cultural heritage. In 2018, Boeing announced its partnership with CNO with the goal of advancing STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education.

To ensure the safety and flight certification of the heirloom seeds, Boeing's Research Integration team collaborated with the local Boeing Employees Indigenous Network.

The seeds launched on SpaceX's 29th Commercial Resupply Services mission.

The heirloom seeds en route to the ISS are isito (Choctaw sweet potato squash), tobi (Choctaw Smith peas), tanchi tohbi (Choctaw flour corn), tvnishi (Choctaw lambsquarter) and chukfi (Choctaw peas).

The significance of Choctaw heirloom seeds is deeply rooted in the cultural and agricultural legacy of the Choctaw Nation.

Handed down through generations,

these seeds represent unique crop varieties with significant cultural value.

Preserving the historical agricultural heritage of the CNO relies on the cultivation of these heirloom seeds.

Over many generations, Choctaw ancestors developed distinct types of corn, beans, pumpkin and other plants.

However, the adoption of "Western" crop varieties and a decline in traditional farming practices among Choctaw families have led to the disappearance of these heirloom plants, resulting in a loss of traditional foods and nutrition within Choctaw communities.

In recent years, the CNO Historic Preservation Department has worked with community members and diverse partners to accurately document the appearance of various heirloom Choctaw plants and locate their seeds before they are lost.

The ultimate goal is to preserve these heirloom varieties and establish a seed bank for potential distribution to Choctaw tribal members interested in growing them in their gardens.

The story of the seeds' voyage in space and the outcomes of the students' experiments will be integrated into the middle school earth-sky STEM curriculum designed for the NASA Science Activation program, Native Earth | Native Sky, at OSU.

Following the completion of the seed project, the curriculum will be accessible as a no-cost open educational resource starting in early 2024.

To receive seeds and informational resources, contact CNO's Growing Hope program at 918-567-3709 ext. 1016.

Applications are available from January to April each year, and seeds are mailed on a first come, first served basis while supplies last.



Photo by NASA

Five varieties of seeds are pictured inside the ISS cupola.

CNO jury convicts McAlester resident of sexual abuse of a child within Choctaw Reservation

DURANT, OKLA. (November 22, 2023) – A Choctaw Nation jury found Jodie Wayne Walters, 29, of McAlester, Okla., guilty of three felony counts of child sexual abuse in violation of the CNO Criminal Code on October 31, 2023. In addition, the jury found Walters guilty of one count of felony child neglect.

The jury trial began on Monday, October 30, 2023, and concluded with the guilty verdicts. Based on the verdicts, the defendant is facing up to three years imprisonment on each felony charge for a maximum of nine years of imprisonment. Sentencing in tribal courts must conform with the federal Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010, which imposes such limits. Choctaw Nation District Judge Richard Branam presided over the trial.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma was represented by Assistant Tribal Prosecutors Austin Browning and D. Michael Haggerty, II. According to Browning, the guilty verdicts were the result of an interagency investigation involving Choctaw Nation Lighthorse Police and the McAlester Police Department.

"This trial shows that here on the Choctaw Nation reservation, we are working cooperatively across the public safety sector to protect our children," said Browning. "Without the hard work of our investigators and investigators at the McAlester Police Department, Mr. Walters may have escaped accountability for his crimes. This jury listened intently to the evidence and voted unanimously to hold Mr. Walters accountable for this sexual abuse."

Choctaw Casinos & Resorts donates over 23,000 towels

Donations benefit local schools, outreach programs

DURANT, Okla. (Dec. 19, 2023) – Choctaw Casinos & Resorts donated over 23,000 high quality bath towels to schools and outreach programs across Choctaw Nation.

The resorts often make donations to outreach programs, but the towel donation was a first. Choctaw Casinos & Resorts replaced bath towels, leaving over 23,000 towels in great condition available for donation.

These towels were distributed to elders, youth programs, community centers and local schools in October.

The donations will help support stu-

dents, athletic programs, FFA programs, pre-K, kindergarten, early childhood centers, cafeteria and EVS needs. They will also go to assist in tribal programs, such as the Antlers Food Distribution Center.

"We wanted to give the Nation and our communities the opportunity to benefit from Choctaw Casinos & Resorts towel program change," said Grant Hirata, corporate director of hotel operations. "What made this donation special is that all the product that went to the schools and outreach organizations is perfectly usable product in that's still in great shape."

Choctaw Casinos & Resorts also partners with Choctaw Fixed Assets and Tribal Outreach Services to make monthly donations to outreach programs throughout Choctaw Nation.



Photo by Choctaw Nation

Choctaw Casinos & Resorts donate over 23,000 towels, which were distributed to local elders, youth programs, community centers and schools.

GROWING HOPE PROGRAM

LEARN TO GROW HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL FOOD

CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/GROWING-HOPE/

Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation

BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

January 2024

In This Issue

- 2 FFC
- 4 Council Corner
- 5 NTN
- 6 Iti Fabvssa
- 7 PYK
- 8 Obits
- 9 Community mudding
- 10 Cultural Center Christmas
- 11 Health



Page 1:

A year in review.



Page 3:

Indigenous representation in the media.



Pages 12 & 13:

Community Thanksgiving meal photos.

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

Choctaw Landing is now hiring.

There's something for you here.

Visit one of our upcoming job fairs.

For more information about job fairs, open positions or to apply today, scan the QR code or visit Careers.Choctawnation.com.

Choctaw CAREERS

Stay Connected to the Nation
CHOCTAWNATION.COM



PRESORT STD AUTO U.S. POSTAGE PAID CHOCTAW NATION

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

BISKINIK P.O. BOX 1210 DURANT OK 74702-1210