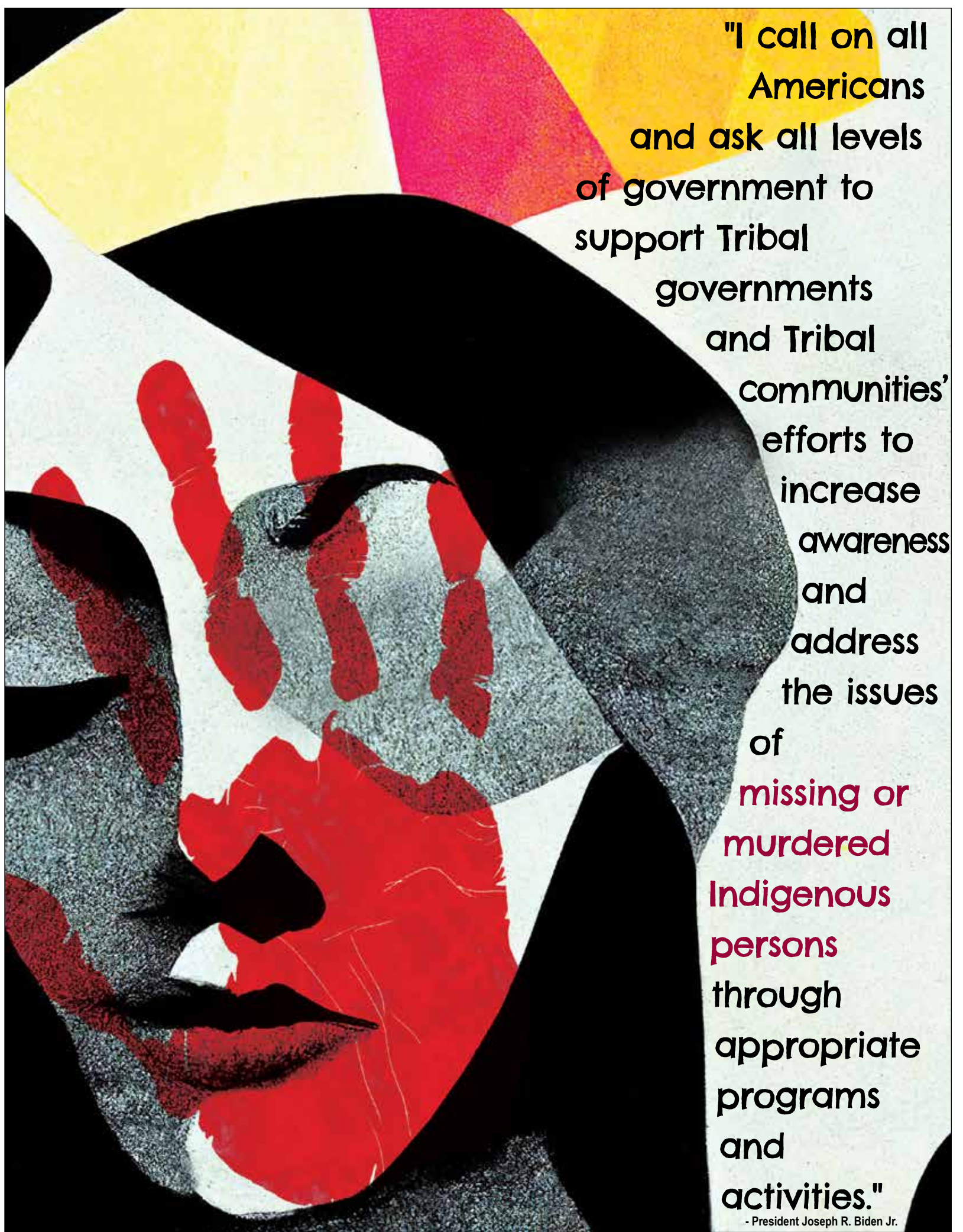




June 2023 Issue



"I call on all Americans and ask all levels of government to support Tribal governments and Tribal communities' efforts to increase awareness and address the issues of missing or murdered Indigenous persons through appropriate programs and activities."

- President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

# Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Update

By Kendra Germany-Wall and Christian Chaney

President Joe Biden proclaimed May 5, 2023, as Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day.

For the past few years, the Biskinik has updated its readers on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples Movement. Here is the update for 2023.

## National Statistics and Awareness

According to the most recent report released by the Centers for Disease Control, murder is the sixth leading cause of death for Indigenous women and girls between the ages of 1 and 44 in the U.S.

Also, a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Research Report released in 2016 found that 4 out of 5 Indigenous women have experienced violence in their lifetime and more than half have experienced sexual violence.

Women aren't the only ones in the Indigenous community who experience violence at alarming rates, as more than 1.4 million American Indian and Alaska Native men have experienced violence in their lifetime, according to the NIJ report.

While violence against Indigenous women and men is underreported, concrete statistics on violence against trans and Two-Spirit members of the Indigenous community is even harder to find.

According to research by the Transgender Law Center, since 1990, there have been at least 25 transgender and Two-Spirit Indigenous people killed or missing.

"The lack of reporting and knowledge about the plight of trans and Two-Spirit people in Native communities is one way that violence persists in such communities," states the Transgender Law Center on their website.

In recent years, the issue of MMIP has emerged from the shadows thanks to the hard work and activism of individuals and organizations demanding action on the issue.

In 2021, Secretary Deb Haaland announced the formation of a new Missing & Murdered Unit (MMU) within the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services (BIA-OJS) to provide leadership and direction for cross-departmental and interagency work involving missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.

At the time of the announcement, approximately 1,500 American Indian and Alaska Native missing persons had been entered into the National Crime Information Center throughout the U.S. and about 2,700 cases of murder and nonnegligent homicide offenses had been reported to the Federal Government's Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Investigations often remain unsolved due to a lack of investigative resources available to identify new information from witness testimony, re-examine new or retained material evidence and review fresh activities of suspects. The MMU works with Tribal, BIA and FBI Investigators on active Missing and Murdered investigations and enables the department to expand its collaborative efforts with other agencies, such as working to enhance the DOJ's National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).

In December 2021, the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced the launch of its new website dedicated to solving missing and murdered cases in Indian Country.

The site provides detailed case information and pathways to submit tips and other information that may help investigators with the detection or investigation of an

offense committed in Indian Country.

For some tips, the BIA offers rewards of up to \$5,000 for information assisting in the detection or investigation of an offense committed in Indian country or in the arrest of an offender against the United States.

Visit <https://www.bia.gov/service/mmu> for more information.

## CNO Brings Awareness to MMIP

The MMIW Chahta organization hosted an event honoring MMIP and their families on May 5 at the Choctaw Nation's Headquarters. Several individuals spoke on behalf of their loved ones.

Kimora, Elison and Sienna Buster

In November 2020, Kimora Buster (Bristol Bay Yupik), 43, was shot and killed in the basement of her Anchorage, Alaska home, along with two of her children, Elison Buster (Bristol Bay Yupik/Choctaw), 7 and Sienna Buster (Bristol Bay Yupik/Choctaw), 10.

Kimora's nephew, Cody Roehl (Bristol Bay Yupik), 18, was also murdered in another location.

A third child survived the attack.

Malachi Maxon, also Kimora's nephew, carried out the horrific killings. Maxon had been staying with the Busters following his release from prison a week earlier.

Kimora's mother-in-law, Beverly Richardson, shared her family's tragic story at the event.

"I urge all of you to cherish your loved ones and hold them close. Life is precious and fleeting and we never know when we may lose those we hold dearest. As we continue to mourn the loss of my family, I ask for prayers for me, my son and the remaining child. Together, we can honor the memory of others and bring strength to our Choctaw community."

Dawn Mechelle Nakedhead (Kirk)

Dawn Nakedhead (Kirk) went missing at 16 and was last seen on October 18, 1991, at a Phillips 66 station in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma.

Dawn went to spend the night with a friend. They planned to attend a football game and then return home. She was last seen using a payphone at the convenience store and never returned home.

Dawn (Cherokee) has black hair, brown eyes, a scar on her left elbow and a purple/black birthmark on both sides of the nape of her neck.

Her sister, Brandy Christie, spoke about her case.

"My heart aches today just as much today as it did on October 18; when my sister came up missing. I cannot describe to you the feeling of deep sadness that

overwhelmed me. Knowing that my sister could still be out there, the unknown is scary and at this point, we just pray for answers," said Christie. "I know that I will never stop fighting to find her and what a beautiful feeling it would be to wrap my arms around her the day she is found. If you or anyone you know has any information regarding the whereabouts of my sister please contact me."

Emily Morgan

On August 26, 2016, 23-year-old Emily Morgan and her friend, 24-year-old Totinika Elix, were found murdered just outside of McAlester, Oklahoma, in the small community of Bache.

Emily was a 23-year-old mother to one son. She was a competitive athlete, a part-time model and a former District 4 Choctaw Princess.

Emily's mother, Kim Merryman, shared her story with the crowd during the May 5 event, sharing details from her case and how her death has affected her entire family.

"It doesn't matter how many years it's been, she's my baby. She grew inside of me and somebody made the choice to put a gun to her head, her pretty little head. Everything she ever did was about the way she looked and they ruined that for her," said Merryman. "They took her life, they took her from me, they took her from her sister, they took her from her niece and most of all they took her from her son. My daughter didn't know the statistics then, I didn't know the statistics then. I didn't know that she was more likely to die from murder than she was in a traffic accident and she drove crazy."

Everyone who spoke during the event shared the importance of receiving justice for their loved ones.

"The only way that we are ever going to get justice is if we stand united and we stand aware," said Merryman.

President and Founder of Missing Murdered Indigenous Women-Chahta, Karissa Hodge, started the organization with the primary goal of helping families with tragedy, bringing awareness to the community and educating the public.

According to MMIW-Chahta Vice-Chair MK Wilhite, events like the one on May 5 are essential in getting the issue's importance across to the public.

"You can read about it all day long, but if you have those families sitting there telling you what happened and how it still makes them feel, it just makes it more personal, and it's good for everyone, for the families to come and speak and have their time," Wilhite said.



Photo by Kendra Germany-Wall

Families hold photos of their murdered and missing loved ones after the May 5 MMIW event at the Choctaw Nation Tribal Headquarters.

Continued on Page 4



## Faith, Family, Culture



Chief Gary Batton

### Choctaw youth camps offer strong foundation

Faith, family, and culture are important to all members of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, including the youngest generation.

Growing into a young adult has its challenges today. There are distractions and unsavory ways some children choose to spend their time. Getting outside, enjoying nature, expanding minds with worthwhile projects and learning about what it takes to become a good Christian and an engaged citizen is important for children. Enjoying all that the Lord has given us to experience in a safe and fun setting creates memories for a lifetime.

From academic-enrichment at STEAM camps and sports camps to Biblical-focused learnings at Bible camp, there are great summer camp opportunities within the Choctaw Nation for kids and teenagers to take advantage of this summer across the reservation.

A great place for our Choctaw youth to gain a faith foundation as they begin their journey on life's path is with the instruction and fun offered at Bertram Bobb Bible Camp in Ringold, Oklahoma. The camp's founder, the late Rev. Bertram E. Bobb, believed there is no better way to introduce young campers to the teachings of Jesus Christ than a structured program of Bible study, music, recreation, and fellowship. In the foothills of the Kiamichi Mountains, on the shores of the Pine Creek Lake, campers can take in all that nature has to offer while learning more about serving the Lord. Check out their camp at [bbbcamp.org](http://bbbcamp.org).

Other good camps within the Choctaw Nation include:

Camp Make a Change on Thursday, June 1 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Kids ages 8-12 living within the Choctaw Nation reservation can attend a fun day of learning about the importance of your body, mind, and culture, all while having fun.

Junior High STEAM Camp from Wednesday, June 7 to Friday, June 9.

Grades 5 through 8 students selected by an academic and recommendation process will attend this camp for free. Highlights of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) Camp include workshops, fun field trips, college trips, cultural enrichment, and more.

High School STEAM Camp from Sunday, June 11 to Friday, June 16.

Grades 9-12 students selected by an academic and recommendation process will attend this camp for free. Highlights of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) Camp include workshops, fun field trips, college trips, cultural enrichment, and more. Athletics and Conservation Camps

- Softball (South) - June 5-6; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Softball (North) - June 8-9; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Baseball (South) - June 12-13; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Baseball (North) - June 15-16; Tuskahoma
- OKCheer (All Districts) - June 19-20; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Football (All Districts) - June 21-22; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Golf (South) - June 26-27; Idabel Country Club; Idabel, Okla.
- Golf (North) - June 28-29; Arrowhead State Park Golf Course; Canadian, Okla.
- Wildlife Conservation (South) - July 6-7; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Wildlife Conservation (North) - July 10-11; Tuskahoma, Okla.
- Idabel Basketball Camp - July 13-14; Idabel High School
- Wilburton Basketball Camp - July 17-18; Wilburton High School
- McAlester Basketball Camp - July 20-21; McAlester High School
- Panama Basketball Camp - July 24-25; Panama High School
- Talihina Basketball Camp - July 27-28; Talihina High School
- Durant Basketball Camp - July 31-August 1; Durant High School

For more information check out [choctawnation.com/events](http://choctawnation.com/events) for camp requirements. I hope your kids and young teens take full advantage of what the camps within the Choctaw Nation have to offer. Grooming young minds with a strong faith foundation and useful information can help with their life's journey – it helped me.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

### CNHSA is here to help

Where do you turn in a medical emergency? What do you do if you have no medical insurance and need medical care? Or if your children need healthcare? Where would you turn when there are no answers?

We tried to answer these questions when the Choctaw Nation was creating a plan for tribal members concerning their healthcare needs. We strive as a nation to create one of the most comprehensive healthcare plans for our tribal members so that, during their time of need, the most important question is when I will get back to normal, and not how I will get back to normal.

As a Choctaw tribal member, you have access to many services that will keep you happy and healthy. There are clinics available in your area that you can visit that stand ready, willing and able to work to meet your healthcare needs. These state-of-the-art facilities are here for Choctaw tribal members. Some are even celebrating anniversaries and expansions.

For instance, in May, the McAlester Clinic held its expansion groundbreaking ceremony. The clinic needs expansion due to the many patients it serves. The clinic offers family medicine, internal, same day clinic, pediatrics, podiatry, behavioral health, lab, radiology, and a pharmacy that will all be expanded. They will be adding GI, cardio, ENT, endocrinology, orthopedics, speech therapy and Employee Health Services.

Also in May, McAlester Wind Horse Behavioral Health is celebrating 15 years of service to the community. The clinic's services include behavioral health visits with the addition of housing half of the Warrior Wellness team, which does events for Native American veterans all over the reservation. The clinic also provides outpatient counseling for individual counseling services, family counseling, marriage counseling, substance use counseling and multiple grant services.

This June, we will celebrate:

- June 6 - Poteau Wellness Center celebrates five years.
- June 20 - Durant Wellness Center celebrates five years.
- June 23 - Residency Graduation, Specialty Clinic, ribbon cutting.
- July 12 - Atoka Clinic celebrates 15 years. The clinic specializes in family practice, immunization, lab/X-ray, WIC, diabetes education, nutrition and pharmacy, including a drive-thru.

Take a moment to recognize all the great things that Choctaw Health Services provide. There is cause to celebrate our Nation's achievements and we hope that you feel the same.

Yakoke and God Bless!



Pastor Olin Williams  
Employee Chaplain

### Throwback message: What is man?

*Editors Note: This is a throwback message from Olin Williams, written for the June 2018 issue of the Biskinik. We hope that Pastor Williams will be back with a new message soon.*

We find in Psalms 8 verse 4, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (KJV)

Why is the human being so important to God? The scripture teaches us that man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

Man is a reflection of the triune God, which created him. Being a reflection of the triune God, man has three functions. He has a body, soul and spirit. The body is the material part divinely formed from the dust and the immaterial parts (spirit and soul) were formed from divine inbreathing (Genesis 2: 7).

Second, the soul is the seat of emotions. The spirit is the intellect or conscience and spiritual understanding.

Man was structured as a type of the Old Testament tabernacle which was structured in three parts: the outer court (body), the Holy place (soul) and the Holy of Holies (spirit).

Each section of the tabernacle possessed its own light. The sun shone into the outer court. In the Holy place, a candlelight illuminated it. In the Holy of Holies, God's Shekinah glory filled the place. God invested in man through Adam this glorious privilege and potential to be commissioned to reflect the character of the triune God on the earth.

This was wrecked by the sin of disobedience and caused the fall of man. Man became a sinner and wandered in search of reconciliation with God.

But the second Adam (Jesus Christ) came to redeem fallen man. It is the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit who sheds light on our darkened faculties to allow us to see our need of a Savior. This brings us to the redemption plan of God to redeem man to full salvation. Salvation is of the Lord.

Man in his lost state searches for God through religion and attempts to create salvation through his own efforts. However, being in a state of total depravity because of the fall, mankind cannot accept God unless God draws man to Himself. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44, KJV).

Jesus said in (Matthew 22:37 KJV), "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Total salvation is not merely physical religious works, not just religious emotions or mental religious understanding, but an enlightenment of all three.

**I AM CHOCTAW PROUD**

TogetherWereMore.com

SCAN CODE TO VIEW STORIES

**BOOM IN THE VALLEY CELEBRATION**

**JUNE 30, 2023**  
TVSHKA HOMMA CAPITOL GROUNDS

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**UPDATE REQUIRED FOR THOSE WITH SOONERCARE COVERAGE**

The Oklahoma Healthcare Authority is now requiring all SoonerCare recipients to update their information to continue coverage.

Contact a Patient Benefit Coordinator at your local Choctaw Nation Health Clinic to update your information and avoid termination or lapse in coverage.

Choctaw Nation Health Services

**GRAZING LEASE AUCTION**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2023 1:00 PM  
CHOCTAW HQ BIG ROOM 1 & 4

**PLACE YOUR BID ONLINE NOW!**

ONLINE BIDDING CLOSING ON  
AUGUST 7, 2023, AT 11:59 PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT  
**MELANIE MCCANN**  
580.642.8988  
MMCCANN@CHOCTAWNATION.COM

Scan to place your bid now.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



## Bench, Bradford inducted into American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame

By Christian Toews

Johnny Bench (Choctaw) and Sam Bradford (Cherokee) were inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame on April 28, 2023.

The event took place at the First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City, soon to be the permanent home of the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame (AIAHOF).

“We are excited to welcome the American Indian Athletic Hall of



Sam Bradford, former University of Oklahoma quarterback and Johnny Bench, former Cincinnati Reds catcher, were recently inducted into the American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame.

Fame to First Americans Museum,” said James Pepper Henry (Kaw), FAM Director/CEO.

According to Henry, the ceremony is the first step in a two-year process to relocate the AIAHOF from its current location at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

“Although FAM focuses on the 39 Tribal Nations in Oklahoma today, this merger helps us move to a national level to be more reflective of all tribal communities nationwide,” he said.

Johnny Bench was born in Oklahoma City on December 7, 1947, and grew up in Binger, Oklahoma. His childhood dream was to become a major league baseball player.

He was selected and signed in the 1965 amateur draft by the Cincinnati Reds. After two seasons in the minors, Bench made Cincinnati’s Major League roster for the 1968 season and began one of the most successful careers in baseball history.

He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in January 1989 with the fourth-highest percentage of total votes cast.

His honors include National League Rookie of the Year (1968), National League Most Valuable Player (1970 & 1972), World Series MVP (1976), and 14-time All-Star, with 10 Gold Gloves. In 1980, Bench

set an endurance record by catching 100 or more games for 13 consecutive seasons.

When asked about what this induction means to him as a Choctaw tribal member, Bench said, “Yakoke! I’m on top of the world here. Oh my gosh, I’m honored.”

During his acceptance speech, Bench said that he hoped everyone saw the unity that his induction represented.

“That’s what I hope this brings everybody to. Is we are all one. Thirty-nine tribes make up this great institution, and we are all one,” said Bench. “We will always remain as one.”

David Powless (Oneida), AIAHOF board president and 2008 inductee, said, “It is our hope that by sharing with the world the history of great American Indian athletes past and present, this will encourage Native youth in their journey for success whether it be through sports or other areas of achievement.”

The 2023 inductees join the ranks of prestigious Indigenous athletes, including Olympians Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota) and Jim Thorpe (Sac and Fox), Sonny Sixkiller (Cherokee), John Levi (Arapaho) and Moses Yellow Horse (Pawnee). The AIAHOF has 110 inductees.

For more information on the ceremony, visit <https://famok.org/aiahof-2023-induction-ceremony/>.



Photos by Christian Toews

Johnny Bench shows off his new Choctaw medallion the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma gifted to him. Bench began his notable career as a catcher with the Cincinnati Reds in 1968. He went on to win two World Series and received many honors and awards for his performance on the diamond.

## Being trained and prepared ahead of time helps in active attack situations

By Shelia Kirven

Active attack situations are on the rise in today’s world. Unfortunately, they are also hitting closer to home.

According to data from [www.avoiddenydefend.org](http://www.avoiddenydefend.org), active shooter events have been identified in these areas over the last decade.

- 40% businesses
- 9% schools
- 19% outdoors
- 12% other places

It is wise to stay alert to your surroundings and always be vigilant when in public places. Learning as much as one can about how to react during moments of crisis is necessary, and Choctaw Nation is helping to spread the word about how to do just that.

Choctaw Nation Department of Public Safety and Lt. Nathan Hill provide tribal departments, civilians and law enforcement agencies with active attack training through the Texas State University Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT), a program created 22 years ago after the Columbine High School massacre.

Lt. Hill said of the training, “It’s broken down into civilian and law enforcement training. Civilian training is provided to Choctaw Nation employees, from new hire basic orientation all the way up to in-service for departments and divisions.”

He explained, “For law enforcement, it is part of their new hire academy now where they do active shooter response training. For security, we also mandate they go through basic active shooter response the same as law enforcement.”

“Anybody that has the need that we’re able to deliver the training for, we try to fulfill,” he confirmed. He said there had not been a national program before ALERRT for law enforcement officers that gave them training and data to push out and get officers to learn from. The program even teaches how to apply medical treatment for those who are first on the scene until the appropriate medical professionals arrive, which is vital in crisis situations.

Lt. Hill also trains law enforcement officers and first responders nationally through Texas State University’s program, funded through sources such as the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office of the Department of Justice and the State of Texas to train law enforcement to respond to active threat situations rapidly.

The Active Attack Integrated Response training is also taken to fire departments, law enforcement and EMS.

“It teaches the integrated response, and as far as us going from stop the killing to stop the dying, and now we’re

**BE PREPARED: ACTIVE ATTACK SITUATIONS**  
SOURCE: [AVOIDDENYDEFEND.ORG](http://AVOIDDENYDEFEND.ORG)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>AVOID</b></p> <p>Avoid starts with your state of mind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay attention to your surroundings.</li> <li>• Have an exit plan.</li> <li>• Move away from the source of the threat as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• The more distance and barriers between you and the threat, the better.</li> </ul> | <p><b>DENY</b></p> <p>Deny when getting away is difficult or maybe impossible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep distance between you and the source.</li> <li>• Create barriers to prevent or slow down a threat from getting to you.</li> <li>• Turn the lights off.</li> <li>• Remain out of sight and quiet by hiding behind large objects and silencing your phone.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>ALERRT</b><br/>TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY</p>   | <p><b>DEFEND</b></p> <p>Defend because you have the right to protect yourself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you cannot Avoid or Deny, be prepared to defend yourself.</li> <li>• Be aggressive and committed to your actions.</li> <li>• Do not fight fairly. THIS IS ABOUT SURVIVAL.</li> </ul>   |

fixing that problem together,” Lt. Hill explained.

Choctaw Nation Department of Public Safety Chief of Police Jesse Petty said, “It is vitally important that CNDPS empowers our citizens with the knowledge and ability to help them survive in an active attack situation. The national average for Law Enforcement to get boots on the ground in an active attack situation is approximately three minutes. What citizens do with those three minutes matters. It is crucial that the public has rehearsed and mentally mapped their responses in high stress critical moments. The training we deliver does just that. We look forward to continued partnerships with our citizens and hardening our communities.”

Chief Petty continued, “CNDPS Command Staff would like to give thanks to Chief Batton and Assistant Chief Austin Jr. for their support and commitment to allowing our personnel to maintain a readiness to respond and ability to educate tribal members and employees.”

By remembering the easy-to-remember terminology of “Avoid, Deny and Defend,” it makes it easier to recall the tips taught through the training.

To watch the Avoid | Deny | Defend video and see an overview of how to save your life in an active attack event, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0It68YxLQQ>.

For more information on the training, please call 800-522-6170.

## Choctaw Chief stars in episode of Netflix’s ‘Spirit Rangers’

**DURANT, Okla. (May 15, 2023)** – Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Chief Gary Batton appears in the recently launched second season of Netflix’s “Spirit Rangers.”

The animated show focuses on Kodi, Summer and Eddy, three kids living and working in a national park with their family. But the siblings have a secret: They can transform into spirits and enter the Spirit Park, where they help protect the natural environment, they call home. Batton voiced a character in the fourth episode, “Chief of the Day.”

“Hollywood is learning something important – audiences love Native stories, especially when they’re told by Native people,” Batton said. “Being asked to represent the Choctaw people and help tell our story and share our culture was an incredible



Photo Courtesy of Netflix  
Chief Gary Batton, appears in the Netflix animated series “Spirit Rangers.”

honor – and a lot of fun!” Series creator Karissa Valencia said Spirit Rangers gives much-needed inspiration to Indigenous kids.

“I just remember that feeling as a little Native kid and just feeling absolutely invisible,” Valencia said. “I love my culture and I’ve just never really seen it represented on screen.”

The show features an all-Native writing staff, including Choctaw Nation member Shelley Dennis.

## CNO, VA to provide day of assistance

**DURANT, Okla. (May 12, 2023)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (CNO) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will co-host a day of helping military veterans in the area apply for new and expanded VA health benefits. “Bringing VA Benefits to Your Hometown” will take place from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 24 in the Big Conference Room at the Choctaw Nation Headquarters, 1802 Chukka Hina, in Durant.

Medical professionals will be on hand to conduct screenings and to assess certain health conditions. Repre-

sentatives will help with applications and filing on site for benefits of the PACT Act. The act was passed by the U.S. Congress in 2022 and allows greater access to aid for veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other toxic substances on a Presumptive Conditions List. Greater coverage is now available for Vietnam, Gulf-era, post-911 and other veterans.

The event is free and open to all veterans. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

For additional information, contact Harlan Wright, Choctaw Veterans Advocacy at 800-522-6170 or 580-380-6557.

**SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM**

Grab & go meals for all children ages 1-17

| LOCATION   | SERVE DAYS                    | SERVE TIMES        |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| ANTLERS COMMUNITY CENTER<br>302 SW O ST, ANTLERS, OK             | TUESDAY<br>5/23/23 - 8/07/23  | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| ATOKA COMMUNITY CENTER<br>1625 W LIBERTY RD, ATOKA, OK           | MONDAY<br>5/22/23 - 8/07/23   | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| COALGATE COMMUNITY CENTER<br>103 E CALIFORNIA AVE, COALGATE, OK  | MONDAY<br>5/15/23 - 8/07/23   | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| DURLBY COMMUNITY CENTER<br>3746 BIG LOTS PKWY, DURANT, OK        | TUESDAY<br>5/30/23 - 8/08/23  | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| HUGO COMMUNITY CENTER<br>1304 W VICTOR ST, HUGO, OK              | TUESDAY<br>5/23/23 - 8/08/23  | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| IDABEL COMMUNITY CENTER<br>2408 E LINCOLN RD, IDABEL, OK         | TUESDAY<br>5/22/23 - 8/14/23  | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| POTEAU COMMUNITY CENTER<br>208 B ST, POTEAU, OK                  | TUESDAY<br>5/23/23 - 8/08/23  | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| SMITHVILLE COMMUNITY CENTER<br>3680 N US HWY 256, SMITHVILLE, OK | THURSDAY<br>5/18/23 - 8/03/23 | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| STIGLER COMMUNITY CENTER<br>2206 E MAIN ST, STIGLER, OK          | THURSDAY<br>5/17/23 - 8/03/23 | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| TALIHINA COMMUNITY CENTER<br>100 WILKINSON ST, TALIHINA, OK      | TUESDAY<br>5/16/23 - 8/08/23  | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |
| WILBURTON COMMUNITY CENTER<br>516 CENTER POINT RD, WILBURTON, OK | THURSDAY<br>5/18/23 - 8/10/23 | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM |

Equal Opportunity Program | No CDIB required

**Choctaw Nation** Nutrition Services

**COLLEGE FYI INVITES YOU TO CAMP CHAHTA**

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

**CARI ALBERT** Eastern Oklahoma State University  
**SE** Southeastern Oklahoma State University  
**E** EASTERN Oklahoma State University

For more information on the 2023 Camp Chahta scan the QR code or visit [choctawnation.com/services/college-fyi/](http://choctawnation.com/services/college-fyi/)

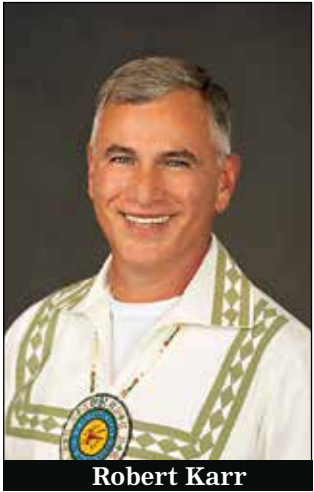
**Choctaw Nation** College Freshman Year Initiative

**2023 ELDER VETERANS MEALS**

| DATE                      | TIME     |
|---------------------------|----------|
| <b>Wednesday, May 17</b>  |          |
| Broken Bow                | 11:30 AM |
| <b>Thursday, May 18</b>   |          |
| Idabel                    | 6:00 PM  |
| <b>Wednesday, June 7</b>  |          |
| Battiest                  | 11:30 AM |
| Coalgate                  | 12:00 PM |
| Hugo                      | 11:30 AM |
| Spiro                     | 11:30 AM |
| <b>Thursday, June 8</b>   |          |
| McAlester                 | 11:30 AM |
| <b>Wednesday, June 14</b> |          |
| Antlers                   | 12:00 PM |
| Atoka                     | 11:00 AM |
| Crowder                   | 11:00 AM |
| Durant                    | 11:00 AM |
| Poteau                    | 12:00 PM |
| Smithville                | 12:00 PM |
| <b>Thursday, June 15</b>  |          |
| Talihina                  | 11:00 AM |
| <b>Wednesday, June 21</b> |          |
| Stigler                   | 11:30 AM |
| Wilburton                 | 11:00 AM |
| Wright City               | 11:30 AM |

**Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**





Robert Karr

## District 11

Halito chim achukma from District 11. Welcome to summer. I hope your family has a wonderful time together at the lake, ballgames, or on vacation for the next few months! As we enjoy the outdoors, we can brag about living in the most beautiful part of Oklahoma with many of our Choctaw people in the Choctaw Nation!

Chahta Atokoli (Choctaw Vote)! An article in the Biskinik earlier this year stated that only 28% of tribal members are registered to vote in our Choctaw elections. With tribal elections July 8 this summer, it is important that all Choctaws 18 and above fill out a voter registration form. If you have registered and have changed your address in the last four years, fill out a new form to make sure your address

is updated to receive a Mail-in Ballot. You can obtain a voter registration form at the community center or CNO Voter Registration website. Remember to encourage all your Choctaw family to register and exercise your right to vote for the candidates of your choice.

The last few months were filled with many activities in District 11. April is always a special time celebrating our Lord and Saviors' resurrection on Easter Sunday. Chief Batton's Easter celebration was a huge success with our CNO Chaplain Bro. Olin Williams shares the story of Jesus and the kids and elders having a good time with easter egg hunts. In April, also we crowned three District 11 princesses. Congratulations to Little Miss Sophia McFarland, Jr. Miss Jordyn Washington, and Sr. Miss Jenessa Dugger. These girls and the other contestants all did a great job at the pageant and will represent D-11 well this year.

We have some of the best elders in the Nation at our McAlester community center. Wednesdays during lunch they have a good time of fellowship, they also have activities and enjoy going on trips with each other. Lately the group traveled to Arkansas for a 3-hour train ride, May 10 was the Elder Appreciation Day at Durant. The annual memorial Trail of Tears walk was May 20 at Tvshka Homma, we must never forget how our tribe came to Oklahoma and what they endured.

The Armed Forces Day parade was May 5 and the Choctaw Nation was again on display with the Honor Guard in the parade along with our District 11 Princesses. May was Foster Care Awareness month, Tammy and I had the pleasure to attend the CNO Foster Care event in McAlester. We had an opportunity to visit with foster parents and kids and tell them Yakoke for their willingness to be a part in helping our children. May 12 was our Choctaw High School class of '23 luncheon, yakoke to Career Development, High School Student services and College Freshman Initiative programs for sharing valuable information with them.

It is such an honor to serve as your council member, if I can help in anyway regarding the Choctaw Nation, please let me know. Together, We're More!

Chihowa vt Achukma, Robert Karr

## Holcomb is May Veteran of the Month

Royce Holcomb of District 8 is Choctaw Nation's Veteran of the Month. Holcomb was raised in Boswell and graduated from Boswell High School in 1971. That year, he joined the U.S. Army Reserves. He completed his basic training at Ft. Dix, New Jersey

Over the next two years, Sgt. Holcomb participated in numerous trainings and received a National Defense Service Medal (one Bronze Star) and a Bronze Marksman Medal in Germany in August 1987, where he and his team competed against German soldiers using their rifles on their field. The American team took the gold, silver and bronze medals. He also participated in Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

Sgt. Holcomb retired from duty in 1995 and returned to Boswell where he worked as a floor covering technician for 20 years, then at a flooring company in Durant, managing the warehouse before his retirement. He now drives a bus for the Choctaw District 8 senior center in Hugo.

Holcomb and his wife, Kitty, have three children and five grandchildren. His family has a rich heritage of military personnel that includes his father, a WWII Veteran, and his grandfather, an original Code Talker of WWI.

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.

## Ensey recognized as May First Language Speaker of the Month

Lorelei "Bonnie" Ensey from Unger, Oklahoma, was recognized at the May 13 Choctaw Tribal Council Meeting as the First Language Speaker honoree.



## MMIP Update

Continued from Page 1

The Second Annual Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women 5k took place on May 13 in Antlers, Oklahoma.

Hannah Wood, who hosts the iLead Program partnered with Project EMPOWER, Choctaw Nation's Domestic Violence Outreach program, to host the MMIW 5k.

Wood says the event's purpose is to "raise awareness for our murdered and missing indigenous women in our area." She was thrilled by the turnout for the event. By April 20, 386 participants had pre-registered for the race.



Photos by Christian Chaney

On your mark, get set, go. Runners cross the finish line during the May 13 MMIW 5k in Antlers, Oklahoma.

### MMIP in Oklahoma

According to a 2020 study by the Sovereign Bodies Institute, Oklahoma had over 200 missing and murdered Indigenous women, with an average of 18 new cases a year and over 150 cases of missing and murdered Indigenous men.

The state could soon see an alert system for when adults go missing under unusual circumstances later this year. In 2016, Kasey Russell, a 29-year-old Cherokee man from Tahlequah, Oklahoma, was reported missing.

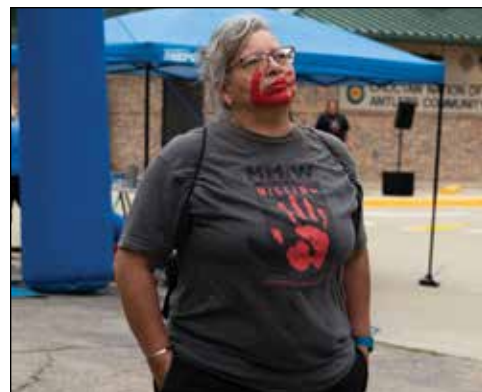
According to police records, he was last seen on June 27, 2016, leaving the Seminole Nation Casino with his girlfriend and an unknown man. The circumstances surrounding his disappearance were unusual, as Kasey was known to be very close with his family and communicate with them frequently. Annetta Russell, Kasey's mother, immediately knew something had happened to her son when she did not hear from him. In a recent interview with The Oklahoman, Annetta said she "felt like they just brushed him under the rug" after contacting police departments for help locating her son.

After six long years, federal agents from the unit in the Bureau of Indian Affairs were finally able to locate Kasey Russell's remains in a shallow grave less than a quarter of a mile from where he was last reported to have been seen. His death is still under investigation.

Annetta Russell is determined to make a change and shed light on the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous people so other families do not experience the same barriers she faced when looking for her son.

The proposed alert system, named after Kasey, is intended to create a system that applies to all adults but triggers police to share extra information when Native American adults go missing, according to The Oklahoman.

House Bill 1077 would alert the public about the person and their disappearance, including details and information on contacting tribal authorities if the person is Native American. The Senate is currently considering the proposal.



Many of the event's participants wore red handprints over their mouths, symbolizing all the missing Indigenous sisters whose voices are not heard.

At the time of publication, Oklahoma's governor Stitt hadn't decided on Kasey's bill. However, he has vetoed over 20 bills, including some that would have positively impacted Native American tribes in the state.

### Available Services

CNO offers several services to those affected by domestic violence and abuse.

Tribal Victim Services guides victims of crime and their families with counseling and group therapy. This program consists of a Victim Advocate and a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) who provide comprehensive, culturally competent, direct services to victims of crime and their families.

Project EMPOWER assists victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking by helping them stabilize housing, childcare and other day-to-day support so they can focus on reclaiming their lives.

For more information about the CNO programs mentioned above, call 877-285-6893.

Family Violence Prevention provides specialized services and resources that promote family strengths and stability and enhance the safety of victims of domestic violence, family violence or dating violence and their dependents.

Choctaw Children and Family Services is ready to help anyone experiencing domestic violence. If you or someone you know is a victim of family violence or you're living in fear of violence, call 800-522-6170.

Other useful contacts include:

- Oklahoma Safeline – 800-522-7233 (SAFE)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline – 800-799-7233 (SAFE)
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network Hotline – 800-656-4673 (HOPE)
- Communication Services for the Deaf – 800-252-1017 (TTY) / 866-845-7445 (Voice)
- Okla Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.) – 405-524-0770
- Stronghearts Helpline – 844-762-8483 (1-844-7NATIVE)
- Missing Murdered Indigenous Women-Chahta – 580-740-2351, NotInvisible@MMIWChahta.com, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter

Even though all of the progress is a step in the right direction for activists and families, there is still much left to do to address this issue correctly.

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center offers resources and ways to get involved in the MMIW movement and information on other Indigenous Women's Issues.

Visit [www.niwrc.org](http://www.niwrc.org) for more information.

## WARRIOR WELLNESS FISHING TRIPS

**Available dates:**  
May 23, June 5, or July 10

**TO SIGN UP**  
**CALL 580.634.1891**

**Choctaw Nation** Warrior Wellness

## PREVENTATIVE SCREENINGS

**DISCUSS RISK FACTORS AND SCREENING OPTIONS WITH YOUR PROVIDER TODAY**

Participating in preventative health screenings is one way to take charge of your health. These measures and tests identify diseases before symptoms are present. Some conditions show no warning signs, and these screenings can detect problems earlier when the conditions are possibly preventable or more treatable.

The first step in screening is to schedule an appointment with your primary care provider. At this appointment, you can discuss the benefits and risks of the screenings as well as develop a screening plan tailored to you and your unique health needs.

To reach your end goal of aging with grace, you should stay as healthy as possible. Participating in health screenings is an essential part of achieving this goal.

**Choctaw Nation** Health Services

## CONNECTING KIDS TO COVERAGE

**INSURANCE IS COMPLICATED, BUT WE CAN HELP!**

Health insurance protects you from expensive medical bills when emergencies happen. It is important to have health insurance coverage before the unexpected happens to you. Choctaw Nation has Community Outreach Benefit Coordinators who can assist in Medicaid/SoonerCare enrollment for those who qualify. Contact a Community Outreach Benefit Coordinator today to find out more or to apply for Medicaid/SoonerCare benefits.

For more information scan the QR code.

580-916-9140  
EXT 83731 OR 83830

CELL: 580-380-2102  
OR 580-380-7481

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE**

The Vocational Development Program can offer financial assistance and incentive for education/training programs.

**GUIDELINES:**

- At least 1/8 Native American and have a CDIB showing the degree of Native American blood
- Be a high school graduate or have completed a GED course
- Live within the Choctaw boundaries
- Be enrolled at a program-approved, college, training institute or career tech as a full-time student

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 866.933.2260**

**Choctaw Nation** Vocational Development  
CHOCTAWNATION.COM





# 2023 TRIBAL ELECTION GUIDE

Early voting: Friday, July 7 • 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
 General Election: Saturday, July 8 • 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Same-day registration available

## Candidates file for offices of Council Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 & 11

Elections are held at alternating two-year periods for the four-year terms of Chief and Tribal Council. This year, filing opened April 17 for candidates for the offices of Chief, and Tribal Council in Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 11.

All candidates for the elective offices of Chief, Council District 1 and 5 were qualified, unopposed, and will not appear on the ballot.

Elections will be held for Council Districts 2, 3, 8 and 11. The list of qualified candidates for elective office are:

### Council District 2

Tony Ward (incumbent)

Brent Minter

### Council District 3

Eddie Bohanan (incumbent)

Kay Hearing

### Council District 8

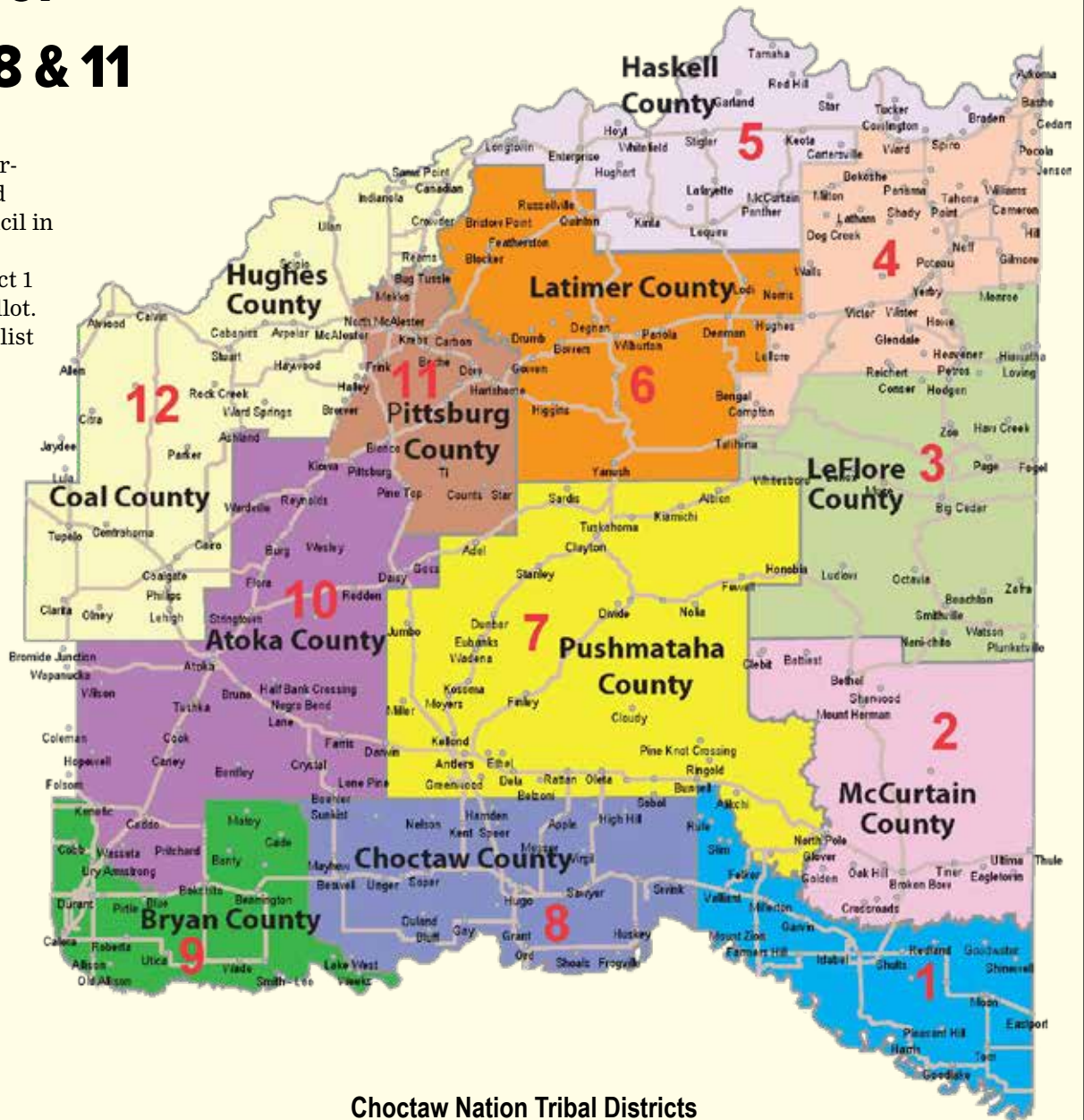
Perry Thompson (incumbent)

Larry Wade

### Council District 11

Robert Karr (incumbent)

Nellie Meashintubby



Choctaw Nation Tribal Districts

Additional candidate and voting information is listed on the following three pages. All information submitted may have been edited per guidelines of the Election Candidate Insert Policy.

## GENERAL INFORMATION FOR CHOCTAW VOTERS

Any person who has obtained Tribal Membership as defined by Article II of the Constitution and who has attained the age of eighteen (18) by the date of any election shall be eligible to register to vote in Choctaw Nation tribal elections. Every eligible tribal member must be registered with the Voter Registration Department to vote in tribal elections.

Each eligible tribal member must fill out a Voter Registration form. The information provided on the voter registration form is signed under oath.

Tribal members living inside the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma boundaries must be registered in the district in which they reside and may submit an official ballot as provided in Article XV of the Chief and Tribal Council Election Ordinance.

Non-resident voters may become affiliated with a district of their choice. Once a non-resident voter has affiliated with a district while living outside of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma boundaries, he or she must remain affiliated with their chosen district. Affiliation may change only when a voter moves back within the boundaries of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Non-resident voters may submit an official ballot as provided in the Chief and Tribal Council Election Ordinance.

Non-resident or unaffiliated voters are only eligible to vote in an election for the Chief and/or constitutional amendments.

Eligible tribal members may register to vote with the Voter Registration Department all year during regular business hours except holidays recognized by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Ballots will consist of candidates' names or names with pictures, also known as pictorial ballots. A candidate's name will appear on the ballot as he/she so designates on the Declaration of Candidacy filed with the Election Board. If a seat is uncontested, no ballots will be issued for that seat.

Each ballot, except mail-in ballots, shall be coded with a unique number in a way that can identify the voting location from which the ballot was issued.

Mail-in ballots shall be identical to the regular ballots but shall be stamped "MAIL-IN BALLOT" and the date of the issuance shown thereon. The ballots, when mailed to the voter, shall be accompanied by a plain opaque envelope marked "BALLOT", and a pre-addressed postage paid affidavit envelope for voter's convenience. The return envelope will have the mailing address for the Election Board on it.

Sample ballots are printed for every election. Sample ballots are exact duplicates of regular issue ballots except that no numbers are printed on them and "SAMPLE BALLOT" is printed across the face of the ballot. Sample ballots are posted at each voting location on every voting day and are available in the Election Board office.

Voting, whether in-person or by mail, shall be by secret ballot. Ballots shall be tabulated by electronic voting machine and/or done manually. Voting machines will be provided by the company hired to conduct the elections.

Voters may cast a ballot during hours of operation at any open voting location regardless of the district. The voter will provide the Voting Location Board with his/her name and address. The voter must present an ID issued by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (photo or non-photo) showing full name and date of birth or a photo ID issued by another government.

A Voting Location Board member determines the person's eligibility by locating his/her name on the registry and verifying that such voter has not previously cast a ballot in the impending election. Once the person's eligibility is proven, the voter is asked to sign the registry. A Voting Location Board member then issues the appropriate ballot. A Voting Location Board member provides the voter a marking pen and directs the voter to a voting booth. When the voter has finished voting, he/she must promptly leave the voting location.

A voter who is able to reach the voting location, but because of a physical disability or infirmity is unable to come inside, can be assisted outside of the election enclosure. The Voting Location Board Inspector will stop processing the voters inside the election enclosure. Voters who have already signed the registry will be permitted to complete voting first. The Voting Location Board Inspector and another Voting Location Member will approach the disabled voter outside the voting enclosure and provide whatever assistance is required. The disabled voter must subscribe to an oath, called a Request for Assistance Form (see Appendix Form E), that he/she is entitled to the assistance. The voter may mark his/her own ballot or he/she may choose to be assisted by a person of his/her choosing, provided that person is not the voter's employer or an agent of the employer. The voter may also choose to be assisted by one of the Voting Location Board members other than the Inspector. At no time should the ballot box be left unattended.

A voter who is able to enter the election enclosure but is unable to mark his/her ballot because of a physical or visual disability/infirmity or is illiterate and cannot read and/or write, is entitled to special assistance. The Voting Location Board Inspector will stop processing the voters inside the election enclosure. Voters who have already signed the registry will be permitted to complete voting first. The disabled voter must subscribe to an oath, called a Request for Assistance Form (see Appendix Form E), that he/she is entitled to the assistance. The Voter then indicates whether he/she wishes to be assisted by one of the Voting Location Board members or by a person of the voter's choosing, provided that person is not the voter's employer or an agent of the employer. Assistance in marking ballots is then provided in the voting booth. At no time should the ballot box be left unattended.

Please note that any view or opinions presented in the election insert are solely those of the candidates and do not necessarily represent those of the BISKINIK, Election Board, or Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The intent of this insert is for candidates of office to share with members of the Choctaw Nation their information and goals prior to the tribal election in which they seek office. Each candidate is provided the same space and followed the same policy for submission of information.



All voters affiliated with a Council District having an election will start receiving ballots in the mail beginning the week of June 12th. All ballots completed by voters must be mailed and processed by the United States Post Office in Durant, OK by 4:30 pm on July 7th. The Election Board will not accept hand delivered ballots.

To check on the status of your Voter Registration, contact the Voter Registration Department at [www.choctawnation.com/vote](http://www.choctawnation.com/vote) or by email at [VoterRegistration@choctawnation.com](mailto:VoterRegistration@choctawnation.com).

Early Voting will be July 7th and General Election will be July 8th.

For more information about Choctaw Nation elections, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/elections> or contact the Election Board Secretary by email at [ElectionBoard@choctawnation.com](mailto:ElectionBoard@choctawnation.com) or by phone at 580-634-0679.

### OPEN VOTING LOCATIONS

Early voting: Friday, July 7, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
 General Election: Saturday, July 8, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

#### Council District 2

Choctaw Community Center at 1346 E Martin Luther King Dr, Broken Bow, OK 74728

#### Council District 3

Choctaw Community Center at 100 Railroad St, Talihina, OK 74957

#### Council District 8

Choctaw Community Center at 1304 West Victor, Hugo, OK 74743

#### Council District 11

Choctaw Community Center at 3274 Afulota Hina, McAlester, OK 74501



# 2023 ELECTION CANDIDATES

## Chief

### Gary Batton Unopposed

Chief Batton Seeks Re-Election

“It has been an honor to serve as your Chief for the past nine years. It is a blessing to see the Chahta spirit alive and well! We have come through difficult times like Covid, but the Choctaw People have remained strong! Adversity and creativity are nothing new to us. It is times like these that we rise up and unite to do what is necessary to move our people forward.

When our sovereignty was questioned, we took action, and the courts re-affirmed what we already knew – that we are a sovereign nation. We also know that preservation of our language and culture define who we are. To preserve our culture and language we constructed a beautiful new \$74 million cultural center and developed apprentice and community-based language programs. This will help to ensure our culture and language sustain throughout our future generations.

We know that our future depends on investing in a healthy foundation for our future, so we are delivering on priorities of healthcare, housing and education. We built a new clinic in Durant and new wellness centers across the Choctaw Nation and will be doubling the size of the clinic in McAlester. We constructed almost 1,000 new affordable rental, independent elderly, and LEAP homes, and have already committed to another 600. Seven new Head Start/child development centers have been opened, and we will be constructing additional centers to assure that our young have access to a good education.

Lastly, we know that we must create jobs and opportunities for our tribal members, and remain financially stable. This is the reason we invested in numerous businesses and have created more than 6,000 new jobs.

All of this work has been in an effort to sustain our culture, preserve our language and provide more opportunities for our tribal members, yet, there is still more work to be done. I am excited about our future and stand united with you to continue this very worthwhile effort!”

Before his election to Chief, Gary Batton began working for the tribe in 1987 and held positions in purchasing, housing, and health. As Deputy Director of Housing, he constructed approximately 2,500 homes. He served as Executive Director of Health where he led construction of a tribally funded, state-of-the-art health care center and several clinics throughout the reservation. As Assistant Chief, he developed an economic development plan that led to the construction of numerous businesses. In just nine years, Chief Batton has developed programs and continued the expansion of businesses to improve the lives of tribal members across the globe and will continue his unwavering vision of living out the Chahta spirit of faith, family and culture.

Batton and his wife, Angie, reside in Clayton. They have two children and two grandchildren.



## District 2

### Tony Ward Incumbent

Halito

I would like to thank our Lord and the citizens of District 2 for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your Councilman. I am the son of the late Jonah and Kay Ward. I am happily married to my wife of 25 years, Amy. We have two children, Peyton, and Kayla. I am a lifelong active member of McGee Chapel Cumberland Presbyterian Church where I serve as an Elder.

It has been an honor and a great privilege to serve our citizens of District 2 and it is always great to hear your ideas, suggestions, and concerns. You have asked to improve our housing situation, employment, and opportunities to make District 2 a great place to live and raise our families.

During my time on council, we have started building lease to purchase homes (LEAP), Affordable Rental Homes (ARH), Independent Elderly homes and Multifamily apartments. When completed, we will have 215 living units. The most built at any one time in District 2 with more to come. We are expanding the Ruby Choate Clinic in Broken Bow to add more exam rooms and bringing back the Pharmacy! We will be expanding the Wellness Center and extending the walking track with a park.

One of the most exciting projects we are in the middle of is the Choctaw Landing Resort in Hochatown. Choctaw Landing Resort will provide our district with many opportunities. The resort will create over 400 employment positions and capture revenue in a fast-growing tourist spot.

With a focus on our culture, we have started a language nesting program to help grow and continue our Chahta language to pass on to future generations. During the Covid-19 pandemic we lost many of our elders, our first language speakers. It is important to us to take care of our elders, so we created a monthly food card to help with groceries. We have decided to continue that for the year 2023-2024.

These are a few things that we are working on to better this District and all of Choctaw Nation. As a servant leader I strive to grow also. I currently serve as Speaker Pro Tempore for the Tribal Council, Chairperson for the Commerce Committee, Secretary of the Human Resources Committee and the Finance Committee, Member of the Housing Committee and serve as Delegate for Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized of Oklahoma. I am committed to gaining more knowledge that will benefit the growth of the Choctaw Nation and its members.

We have seen much growth and progress in our District, but our work is not done. Let us continue to move forward. If re-elected I will continue to work extremely hard in our great district. We can accomplish more if we continue to work together. Again, as always, I look forward to listening to your ideas, suggestions, concerns and being your advocate. With your continued support and prayers, I will be honored to protect our sovereign nation and its great Choctaw members.

Yakoke  
Tony Ward  
580-212-7310



## District 1

### Thomas R. Williston

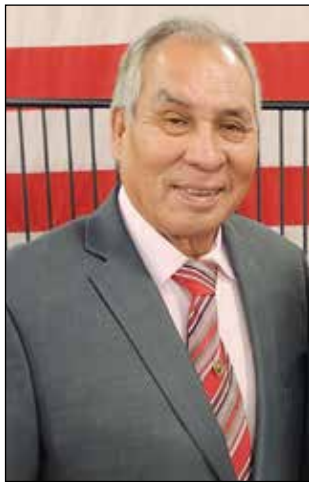
Unopposed

Halito,

I would like to take a moment of your time to say “Yakoke” to all Choctaws of district 1 and all across our reservation. It has been a humbling experience to have served as District 1 Councilman for the past 12 ½ years. I have made it my passion to serve and listen to the wants, needs, and ideas of our people. There has been so much accomplished in District 1 as well as across reservation. This all comes from listening to and cooperation with the people, other council members, and working with our Chief. As Council Person of District 1, I will continue to serve all our people with integrity and honesty. My door is always open, and I am always willing to listen.

I reflect on the Trail or Tears often and imagine the hardships our ancestors endured. I think of our Choctaw Code Talkers who with our Native language were instrumental in the freedom we all share today. Our young soldiers today are protecting that right so that our young today can live free and enjoy life to the fullest. There are so many things as Choctaw people we have been blessed with, one thing I think the most of is the sacrifices our ancestors made to help give us the strength that the Choctaw People have today. Let us not forget where we come from.

Yakoke,  
Councilman Thomas Williston  
District 1



## District 3

### Eddie Bohanan Incumbent

Eddie Bohanan was born in Talihina, but Smithville was where he called home. He grew up in Smithville, attended the Indian Baptist Mission Church and graduated from Smithville High School. While in high school he served in the role of FFA president for three years. With that experience it was evident that Mr. Bohanan's career choice would take him into a role of leadership and public service.

Bohanan left Smithville to attend the OSU Institution of Technology before attending the Oklahoma Highway Patrol Academy. He then served twenty-eight years with distinction as a member of the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, the last twelve of which he served at the rank of Lieutenant.

He was awarded the “Chief's Award” by the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety for protecting others in a dangerous tactical situation, once again demonstrating the commitment and dedication Bohanan has for public service.

Bohanan's roots are deep in the Choctaw Nation. He is proud that his family members Juanita Futrell, Maxine Umsted, Jerry and Dusty Bohanan have been recognized as Choctaw “Outstanding Elders.” He gives thanks to them and all the other elders that have contributed to him being the Choctaw that he is. He understands that “they sacrificed much to allow us to have the privileges and freedoms we have today.” He also understands how much more they have to contribute to the Choctaw future.

Upon Bohanan's retirement from the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, he felt led to serve the Choctaw people in his home district. In 2019, he asked the Choctaw Nation Members of District #3 to put their trust and confidence in him to represent them and their needs as their Tribal Councilman.

For the past four years, Bohanan has proudly served as Councilman. Within his district, he serves two Senior Wellness/Community Centers. Representing these centers gives him the opportunity to be with the Choctaw people, to hear them, and to gather information about the needs of their community.

Bohanan has been part of the Choctaw Nation growth and progress in south-east Oklahoma. In District #3, both Smithville and Talihina have had new businesses added to the communities and recently celebrated the ground breaking of the 3 Riveres Meat Processing Plant in Smithville. Recently purchased property in Talihina will be bringing a Wellness Center to the area. New businesses, new homes, new jobs all are part of the vision Bohanan shares with Chief Gary Batton and Assistant Chief Jack Austin Jr.

Never straying far from his roots, Eddie Bohanan now resides in a small community just up the road from where he grew up. He and his wife Paula have been married for 36 years. Together, they raised two daughters, Charity and Faith, who went on to marry Sean and Justin. The Bohanans have been blessed with four grandchildren. Tribal Councilman Eddie Bohanan and wife Paula have lived in Muse for the past twenty-eight years are members of the Octavia Baptist Church.

For more information visit FaceBook: Eddie Bohanan Choctaw Tribal Council District 3.

## District 3

### Kay Haering

Halito District 3 Residents. What is the most important need for our area? Jobs! With the advancement of computer technology, many jobs could be brought into our area with proper internet. Our children should not have to leave our area to find employment. We live in the most beautiful part of the State. We need to be included in the growth of our Choctaw Nation. And we need to have a seat at the table in all important considerations of jobs within the Nation. We need opportunities for our residents. It doesn't just happen. We must have someone willing to be an active voice, in order to be included. I will work for you in service to the betterment of our district. I come from a family that was honored in their communities. My Great Grandfather, Nelson Jacob was a circuit Choctaw Methodist Minister. Who rode by horseback to 2 and 3 Indian churches every week. I was raised by my grandmother who could borrow money from the bank on her word. The banker said write the check and I will make it good. I will serve District 3 with compassion, honesty and dedication. I can be reached at Kay Haering Candidate District 3 on Facebook. Look for live upcoming live event meetings on Facebook. I appreciate your vote!

Yakoke



## District 2

### Brent Minter

Halito,

I, Brent Minter, am announcing my candidacy for District 2 Choctaw Tribal Council. I am happily married to my wife Jeanna (Davis) Minter and have one Daughter Kaylie Minter (17) who is currently a senior at the Oklahoma School of the Blind. I am the son of Juanna and Joe Minter of Broken Bow and have one brother, Cephus Minter of the United States Air Force. I have been a resident of Broken Bow all my life and would be honored to give back to my tribal community.

I love the outdoors, hunting, fishing, golfing, family activities and just riding around enjoying the woods and nature. I'm a member of the Broken Bow Church of Christ. I have always tried to help people in need and jumped at the opportunity to cut trees and tarp houses during the tornadoes we have had in our area over the past couple of years. I did work on the road for 8 years doing construction as a pipeline superintendent, inspector, foreman and project manager. About 2 years ago I started a carpentry business to work with the local community and signed up to be a vendor to help the Choctaw people with the Homeowners Rehabilitation Services vouchers as I seen a great need to stay local rather than help out of state businesses. I strive to be fair, honest, and hard working in both my personal life and my business and hope to do the same for District 2 as councilman. There are numerous ideas that I have gathered from speaking with Choctaw people in my area to improve some of the great programs that the Choctaw Nation offers such as, the voucher program, the transportation program for elders and disabled tribal members, and the hunting/fishing program in hopes to preserve our culture for future generations as it had been for generations in the past. If given the opportunity to be your councilman, I promise that I will work for the Choctaw people of district 2 and listen to questions, concerns, advice, or any stories that you have to offer with an open-door policy, quick return of phone calls and by being readily available during any natural disasters or emergencies.

Yakoke,  
Brent Minter  
580-579-3478  
FaceBook page Brent Minter for district 2 tribal council  
Candidate for district 2 tribal councilman



Upon ballot approval by the Election Board, a sample ballot will be made available to Choctaw Voters to view for their affiliated Council District on the Tribal Elections webpage.

All voters affiliated with a Council District having an election will start receiving ballots in the mail beginning the week of June 12. Ballots will continue to be mailed to new and voters with address updates through Friday, June 30.

To check on the status of your Voter Registration, contact the Voter Registration Department at (580) 642-8600 or by email at [VoterRegistration@choctawnation.com](mailto:VoterRegistration@choctawnation.com).

For more information about Choctaw Nation elections, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/elections> or contact the Election Board Secretary by email at [ElectionBoard@choctawnation.com](mailto:ElectionBoard@choctawnation.com) or by phone at (580) 634-0679.



# 2023 ELECTION CANDIDATES

## District 5

### Ron Perry Unopposed

I, Ronald Clyde Perry, would like to announce my candidacy for District 5 Choctaw Council person. I am currently serving my 3rd term as Councilman for District 5, which has grown and prospered under my leadership.

I am a longtime resident of District 5, born and raised in the Choctaw Nation. My parents were both fullblood Choctaws and raised me the Choctaw way with good work ethics, morals and the Choctaw culture, and religion. I have been a member of the Bethel Indian Baptist Church since birth.

I have proved my leadership abilities and kindness towards the people of District 5 as well as all through the Nation.

I feel under my leadership along with the Chief and Assistant Chief and Council, districts can continue to grow and be great community partners within the Choctaw Nation reservation.

Please accept my sincerest appreciation for the years I have been able to serve our Nation and will continue to serve.

Yakoke,  
Ron Perry  
918-448-8755



## District 8

### Perry Thompson Incumbent

Serving as your District 8 Councilperson since 1987 has been a tremendous privilege. I would be honored to continue to work for you in that capacity. Being able to serve and help my fellow Choctaw Tribal Member for the past nine terms has been both fulfilling and uplifting.

I plan to continue to work with Choctaw staff in all programs and departments so that ALL CITIZENS of the Choctaw Nation can live healthier, more productive lives. I plan to continue to advocate for tribal members to promote growth and prosperity for District 8. Choctaw Nation has a strong history to persevere and continue to improve all aspects. I pledge to continue to uphold my duties as District 8 Councilperson and see us continue to move forward as a Nation.

The tribal programs and businesses, including the Grant Casino, Grant Travel Plaza, Travel Plaza in Hugo, Health Clinic, Social Services, Wellness Center, Housing Authority, and other programs in District 8 have flourished - growing jobs in Choctaw County area impressively. Records show there are approximately 3,819 Choctaw Tribal Members living in District 8. This number shows us how important it is to continue to provide the services we provide to those 3,819 Tribal Members.

Some of the highlights in District 8 are listed below. I am proud to see Choctaws utilizing these services to meet their needs. The beautiful new Choctaw Community Center in Hugo has served to provide dinners and events for elders and others. The remodel of the Choctaw Nation Health Clinic has made a huge improvement in the patient flow and the increase in staff. Boswell Country Market has opened, and this is a great addition to the community. The Housing Authority continues to provide LEAP homes for families. The Storm Shelter, and Lawn Care services have also been recently added and these are examples of Choctaw Nation meeting the needs of their people. The Chahtapreneur program provides the ability for Choctaws to chase their dreams of being business owners and keeps business within our tribal members. The Grant ball fields continue to remain one of the most popular improvements of the past few years! Another exciting development is the expansion of Tribal Services and Housing Authority, this change will aid in making services more accessible for our Tribal Members.

My wife, Gail, my children, grandchildren and I are proud members of the Choctaw Nation. The values of faith, family and culture have been a natural part of our lives as were raised through the generations of our family. I am grateful to see generations in my family, as well as you continue to live prosperous and hopeful in District 8.

Thank you for allowing ME TO WORK FOR You as your representative. My tribe has always stood by me and I plan to continue to stand by my tribe. I would be honored to continue to serve those in District 8.

Perry Thompson  
Choctaw Council, District 8  
2287 E 2018 Rd  
Hugo OK 74743  
(580) 317-4188



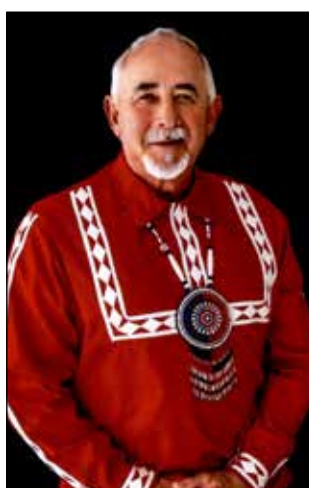
## District 8

### Larry Wade

Halito,

I am a proud member of the Choctaw Tribe and have dedicated my life to serving our community. I have an extensive background in various roles within the Choctaw Tribe. I began my career with the tribe on August 29, 1986, and have since served in a variety of positions that have allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the needs and priorities of our community. Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to serve as the Director of the Higher Education Program Grants and Scholarships, where I have worked to increase access to education for members of our tribe for 26 years. I have also served as the Facilities Management and Landscaping Manager, where I have worked to ensure that our tribal facilities are safe, clean, and well-maintained for 7 years. In addition, I have served as the Housing Improvement Program Director, where I have worked to provide safe and affordable housing for members of our community for 2 years. I have also worked as a Purchasing staff member, where I have gained valuable experience in managing budgets and finances for 1 year. One of my proudest accomplishments was my time spent as a Recruiter for the 1-year JTPA Program. During this time, I worked to identify and recruit young talent from within our community and provide them with necessary skills and resources to succeed in their careers. As a candidate for Choctaw Council District 8, I am committed to using my experience and knowledge to serve our community to the best of my ability. I will work to ensure that our community has access to quality education, affordable housing, and well-maintained facilities. I humbly ask for your support in this campaign. Together, we can build a better future for the Choctaw Tribe. Yakoke,

Larry Wade



## District 11

### Nellie Meashintubby

HALITO! Sv hohchifo yvt Nellie Meashintubby. I am currently seeking the Choctaw Nation District 11 Tribal Council Seat.

I have lived in the McAlester, OK area most of my life. Education is important to me. Three powerful words that I recall are "Educate or Perish." I hold a Masters in Behavioral Studies and a Master in Indigenous People's Law. Being educated in Federal Indian Law is vital while making legislative decisions regarding sovereignty and moving our tribe forward. Since the McGirt decision, we are in a time when our Nation is stepping up sovereignty and we are facing much adversity. Sovereignty is important that we as the Choctaw nation protect and maintain especially in the regulatory area.

I am a proven leader as I was the CEO and Clinical Director for a successful counseling agency for many years. Currently, I have opened another Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counseling agency in a rural area. My work and educational background has given me the experience and knowledge needed to hold this important position within our tribe.

COVID was a hard time for our tribal citizens. We lost many of our people. It was a blessing when the federal government approved the CARES and ARPA funds to flow through the tribes to assist them in taking care of their citizens, as well as the functions of the tribe. As your councilwoman, I would ensure that our tribal citizens continue to receive food security, housing, and economic assistance.

Our tribe has prospered in many areas. It is important that we continue to move forward and diversify our businesses. Creating and providing jobs for our tribal citizens in all areas of employment including upper management is necessary for the well-being of our tribal citizens. As the tribe prospers so should our tribal citizens and it should be reflected in the lives of our tribal citizens. Transparency and accountability are vital to a successful working government which I believe tribal citizens deserve.

Traditionally, Choctaws were a matrilineal tribe. The matriarchs were a respected component of the tribe and integral to making decisions for the tribe. Bringing balance back to the Choctaw Nation would greatly benefit our tribe and tribal citizens.

I will be a VOICE for our people as I have successfully advocated for change within our Indian Education programs both at the local and state levels.

Our elders and youth should be protected. It is essential to help our Tribal citizens that are struggling and in need. Families should prosper with dignity. When we teach our children the culture, language, and traditions then our tribe will remain strong for the next seven generations.

I am prepared to be available and work full time for ALL Choctaw citizens. It is all about the people! I humbly ask for your vote and would proudly serve as your District 11 Councilwoman.

I can be reached at 918-470-4260 or via email: nellie\_meashintubby@yahoo.com. Follow me on Facebook-Nellie Meashintubby-A Voice for Choctaw People. YAKOKE!



## District 11

### Robert Karr Incumbent

I am honored to serve on Tribal Council, meeting the needs of Choctaw tribal members across District 11 for the last four years. I am the son of the late Robert Edward Karr and the late full-blood Choctaw Betty Amos Karr, the grandson of the late Jefferson Lee Hancock, and Angeline Moore, both original enrollees of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

When I first asked for your vote in 2019, I made a promise to you: that I will never forget who I work for, that I will strive every day to make you proud and be your voice for positive change. I have held to that promise, and the last four years have been one of progress, and unified work to strengthen our cultural and community ties.

Knowing that a healthy economic future must have a foundation in the physical health of our tribal members, it is an honor to have assisted the development and approval of a nearly 70-million-dollar, 51,000 square foot expansion of our Choctaw Nation Health Clinic in McAlester - which will be completed in FY'24. With the expansion, we will deliver state of the art health care to 65% more patients and will create 56 new jobs to care for our tribal members.

Secondly, a strong future is also dependent on the right start for our tribal members early in life. We are delivering progress as promised, with construction beginning soon on a new child development center, to give our children the right start.

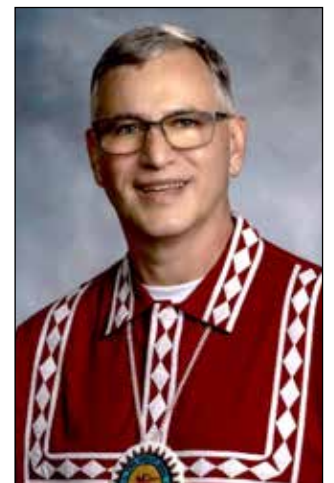
Housing is also a key priority, and over the last four years, we have 58 LEAP homes, 20 independent elderly and 7 affordable housing units for the benefit of our tribal members in District 11.

In my unique roles of serving in our region as both a Tribal Council Member and previously on McAlester City Council, I have developed and promoted partnerships and a harmonious pathway towards economic development and success. With my education at EOSC, SOSU, Kiamichi Technology, and OSU Institute of Technology and work history of 34 years at Rockwell, Boeing, and Spirit AeroSystems, I will continue to advance our next steps forward as our region continues to secure defense and arial system contracts to deliver even more economic development opportunities for the Choctaw people. I serve on the Kiamichi Technology Business & Education Committee, and the McAlester Defense Support Association.

My wife Tammy and I have been married for 38 years. We have three sons, two daughter in laws, and six wonderful grandchildren.

I've worked at Jones Academy, served on a JOM parent committee and Pittsburg County Choctaw Powwow committee. I was instrumental in organizing the District 11 youth stickball team Tvnpv Issuba and for many years have participated in the Choctaw community language classes.

I ask for your continued trust and your vote to continue service as your District 11 Tribal Council Member. For more information, please contact me: (918) 318-0959, or on Facebook: Council Robert Karr. Yakoke.



**TRIBAL VOTER REGISTRATION INFORMATION NOW ON CHAHTA ACHVFFA**

[chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com](http://chahtaachvffa.choctawnation.com)

**For assistance, call 580-642-8600**

**Choctaw Nation** Voter Registration

For more information regarding the 2023 Choctaw Election, voter registration information and voting statistics, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/vote>. Tribal Voter Registration information is also available on Chahta Achvffa. If you need assistance, please call 580-642-8600.



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

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

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

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

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

Choctaw Revolving Loan Fund To Be Eligible to Apply:

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

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

McAlester Community Center  
June 16, 2023  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.



## Obituary Policy

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

The Biskinik will only accept obituary notices from funeral homes.

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

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

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

Send official obituary notices to:

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

## Biskinik

### Announcement Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

Mail to: Biskinik

P.O. Box 1210

Durant, OK 74702

or email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto:biskinik@choctawnation.com)

Gary Batton  
Chief

Jack Austin Jr.  
Assistant Chief

The Official  
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of the

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**Kristina Humenesky, Senior Director**  
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**Kendra Wall, Content Development Manager**  
**Chris Jennings, News Reporter**  
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[www.ChoctawNation.com](http://www.ChoctawNation.com)

email: [biskinik@choctawnation.com](mailto: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.

## EVENTS

### 67th Annual Outdoor Open Mic Gospel Singing

June 17, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Matthews Presbyterian Church 367 St. Matthews Road, Broken Bow, OK. Emcee Henry Battisti, Sr. Everyone is welcome. Bring your lawn chairs. Concession stand will be available. Check out special guests Feliz Valdez, Living Stone and Polecat Family. For more information, contact Arita Battisti at 580-306-7132.

### 47th annual Livingston Buck and Angeline Mitchell-White Reunion

will be held on June 24, 2023, at the Dale Cox Community Center, in Poteau, starting at 10 a.m. Come early and visit. We will eat at noon. Bring a covered dish and/or dessert, maybe even a liter of pop, tea or lemonade. Also, bring your old pictures and your genealogy! For more information, contact Traci Cox at 918-413-3325, Kim White Robertson at 918-647-6153 or look us up on the family Facebook page, Livingston Buck & Angeline Mitchell White Family. Hope to see you at the reunion!

### Chahta Anumpa Aiikhvna - June Language Lesson

#### 'New Shoes' Dialogue

Pair with a partner and practice speaking Choctaw. Then, fold the paper so the English words are hidden, and speak Choctaw to one another.

**Speaker 1:** Halito! Chim achukma? Hello. How are you?

**Speaker 2:** Vm achukma hoke. Chishnato? I am doing good. And you?

**Speaker 1:** Vm achukma akinli. I am doing good too.

**Speaker 2:** Balili chi bvna hq? Do you want to run?

**Speaker 1:** A. Ke balili! Yes. Let's run!

**Speaker 2:** Shulush himona chompa li tuk. I bought new shoes!

**Speaker 1:** Shapha nanta? What color is it?

**Speaker 2:** Lakna hvta micha okchamali. It's orange and green.

**Speaker 1:** Chi shulush vt katohmi hq yalli tuk? How much did your shoes cost?

**Speaker 2:** Tvli holisso pokoli untuchina Eighty dollars.

**Speaker 1:** Yvmmvt achukma. Pvlhkit balili kvv ish i shahla hinla hq? That's great! Can you run faster?

**Speaker 2:** Keyu, yohmi kia svyit hotupa kiyu. No, but my feet do not hurt.

**Speaker 1:** Yvmmvt achukma. That is good.

**Speaker 2:** Shulush himona chompa chi bvna hinla mat aiena. You might want to buy new shoes.

**Speaker 1:** A shulush vt achukma moma. My shoes are still good.

**Speaker 2:** Ome! Ke balili! Alright. Let's run!

**Speaker 1:** Ome! Ome!

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

### CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA TRIBAL COUNCIL

#### REGULAR SESSION AGENDA

May 13, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. OPENING PRAYER/FLAG SALUTE
3. ROLL CALL
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
  - a. Regular Session April 8, 2023
5. WELCOME GUESTS/SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS
  - a. Veteran of the Month, District #8 – Royce Holcomb
  - b. First Choctaw Language Speaker, District #8 – Lorelie Bonnie Ensey
6. PUBLIC COMMENTS
  - a. M.K. Wilhite – Individual Speaker – Choctaw Street Signs
  - b. Isaac Sexton – Individual Speaker – Burial Program Update
7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES
  - a. Authorize the Chief to Place Property in Sebastian County, Arkansas in Trust Status with the United States of America
  - b. Approve Revocable Permit No. G09-2043 in Favor of Ralph Allred on Land Held by the USA in Trust for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma in Choctaw County, Oklahoma
  - c. Resolution Supporting the Nomination of Mason Emert to Serve on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Advisory Council for Healthcare Research and Quality
  - d. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Equipment
  - e. Approve the Disposal of Surplus Capital Assets – Vehicles Resolution Supporting the Extension of the Food Security Program Funded with Fiscal Relief Fund Monies
  - f. Approve Application for the FY23 Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program Implementation and Expansion Grant

8. NEW BUSINESS

9. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

10. OLD BUSINESS

11. ADJOURNMENT

12. CLOSING PRAYER

All council bills passed unanimously

## OBITS

### Billy Charles Sockey

Billy Charles Sockey, 83, passed away April 27, 2023.

Billy was born July 12, 1939, in Talihina, Okla., to Emmitt and Rena Mae (Page) Sockey.

He was preceded in death by his parents; stepfather Jack Cooper; son Gary Dean Sockey; brothers Homer Sockey and Preston Davis; and sisters Virginia Sockey, Leona Sockey, Joyce Sockey, and Neoma Ruth Thomason.

Billy is survived by his wife Mary; daughters Jeanette and Joe Dority, and Tina Sockey; steps Rodney Luker, Billy B. Sockey, and Charles Eugene Sockey; grandchildren Shavonne, Autumn, Tzaine, Karrigan, Ean, Nikki, and Ashton; six great-grandchildren; sisters Lavada Kitchell, Linda Livingston, Shirley Lee Reynolds, and Patricia Carshall; along with numerous nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit Brumley-Mills Funeral Home.



### Donald Wayne House

Donald Wayne House, 75, passed away Dec. 3, 2022.

Donald was born May 4, 1947, in Houston, Texas, to Cleve and Marvis (Goins) House.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Cleve House Jr., Billy House, and Bobby House; and sister Lynn Kay Schuesler.

Donald is survived by his wife Michelle; sons Bradley and Eric; granddaughter Lauren House; brother Kenneth House and spouse Sandra; sisters Becky Rushing, Susie Schelsteder and spouse Jimmy, and Janet Moren and spouse Doug; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

For the full obituary, please visit Serenity Funeral Home.



### Floyd Maytubbi

Floyd Tiny Maytubbi, 59, passed away April 14, 2023.

Floyd was born Sept. 24, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, to John Quincy and Christie Belle Lewis Maytubbi.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers John Wayne Maytubbi and Quincy Maytubbi; sisters Isabelle Ludlow, Eunice Gail Maytubbi, and Florence Ann Cameron.

Floyd is survived by his daughter Janelle Ward and spouse Gene Nelson; sister Gwendolyn Joyce Maytubbi; special friend Loretta Axton; grandchildren Mandy Garcia, Maleah Shomo, Talia Nelson, and Kris Nelson; great-grandchildren German Percaz, Kaiser Percaz, and Jasper Nelson; numerous nieces, nephews, and other relatives and many friends.

For the full obituary, please visit Biskinik.



### Jo Anna Coser

Jo Anna (Wade) Coser, 73, passed away Dec. 22, 2022.

Jo Anna was born Dec. 27, 1948, in Talihina, Okla., to Sampson and Josephine (Fobb) Wade.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sisters Sammy, Patty and Loretta; brother Sam; and son-in-law Joe Don Waters Sr.

Jo Anna is survived by her husband Pete Coser; daughters Kim and Ashleigh; son Petey; her grandchildren; brothers Forrest and Terry Wade; and many love nieces and nephews.

For the full obituary, please visit McClendon-Winters Funeral Home.



### Johnny West

Johnny "Butch" West, 76 passed away April 22, 2023.

Butch was born Feb. 12, 1947, in Commerce, Texas, to William D. West Sr. and Sue Marie Spring West.

He was preceded in death by his parents; grandparents; infant sister; brother William D. West Jr.; and fur baby Bisquit.

Butch is survived by his wife Lydia; daughters Patricia Gonzalez and Lacey West; sons Johnny Cook, Beau West, and Clayton West; numerous grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

For the full obituary, please visit Richardson-Colonial Funeral Home.



### Paul Dewayne Perry

Paul Dewayne Perry, 82, passed away April 16, 2023.

Paul was born Aug. 22, 1940, in McCurtain, Okla., to Mary Opal (King) and Campbell Phillip Perry.

He was preceded in death by his parents; and siblings Harold, Betty, Edna, Davey Jean, Belvin, and Bolin.

Paul is survived by his wife Dianna; children Joye Jones and spouse J.R. II, Richard B. Tackett, Robin Lanham and spouse Allan, Cody Tackett and spouse Denise, Joel Perry and spouse Madeleine, Michael Perry and spouse Dwanna, David Perry, and Stephen Perry and spouse Debbie; 25 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren; and brother Joe Perry and spouse Pam.

For the full obituary, please visit Mallory-Martin Funeral Home.



### Sara A. Kirby

Sarah Alyce Folsom Kirby, 77, passed away April 21, 2023.

Sarah was born Feb. 21, 1946, in Poteau, Okla., to George Folsom and Juanita Statham Folsom.

She was preceded in death by her parents; sister Georgia Vining; and brother-in-law Jack Vining.

Sarah is survived by her son Aaron Kirby and spouse Tina; grandsons Garrett Kirby and Austin Kirby; and great-grandchildren Garrett Kirby Jr., Ava Kirby, and Trustin Kirby.

For the full obituary, please visit Denton /Wood Funeral Home.





ITI FABVSSA

Architectural History of the Choctaw Nation Capitol at Tuskahoma, 1883-Present

Last month, Iti Fabvssa looked at the architectural history of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's early capitol buildings at Nvni Waiya and Armstrong Academy. This month, we would like to continue this journey and look at one of our most beloved landmarks in the Choctaw Nation, the Tvshka Homma Capitol.

In 1879, the Choctaw Tribal Council began plans to construct a more permanent Council House Capitol and allocated construction funding in 1883. An amendment to the Choctaw Constitution read, in part: "The seat of government shall be fixed at or about two and one-half miles east of old Nanih Waiya, and the first and all future sessions of the General Council shall commence on the first Monday of October, 1884, and each and every year thereafter and shall be held at 'Tuska Homma' aforesaid." Builder H. T. Jackman was hired to the new 11,404 square-foot capitol.

The capitol was set in a small prairie. The building was made from local clay that was fired in large kiln ovens to make the bricks on-site. Because the clay had a high amount of iron oxide, it fired red. The structure they created is three stories high with a mansard roof. The building was designed with ample room for the two branches of the council, executive offices, supreme courtroom, and offices of the different officials of the government and a committee, all furnished and curtained in an elegant manner. The work was all finished since the last council passed the bill moving it from the old Armstrong Academy. The total cost of the capitol building was \$25,000, which is equivalent to \$754,000 today. In the fall of 1884, editor R. M. Roberts of the Indian Journal at Muskogee wrote, "The capitol building is the finest structure in the Territory and reflects great credit on the building

they have exactly matching windows and features on either side of the central front door. The style features decorative brackets that support overhanging roof eaves and tall round-arch window and door openings with elaborate hood moldings above resembling eyebrows.

The Second Empire style, popular between 1860 and 1890, is a continuation of the Italianate style. The Second Empire style is most often characterized by a two-story projecting wall section around and above the main entrance that is also capped with a mansard roof. At the Capitol Museum, both styles are on glorious display.

The town of Tuskahoma grew around the capitol, with over 100 families and businesses residing there by 1885. Unfortunately, the much-anticipated St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad laid the tracks two miles south, and the townspeople moved their buildings to the new townsite. Remaining at the original location, the Choctaw Capitol building continued to serve the Nation well from 1884 until 1905, when the last Choctaw Council convened. The 1898 Curtis Act dissolved all but a handful of official positions within the Five Tribes, leaving Choctaw Nation with the Principal Chief, Mining Trustee, Tribal Treasurer, and Tribal Attorney who utilized the Capitol building intermittently. Photo 1 shows an image of the original capitol around 1900. In 1934, Choctaw Advisory Council was established, and among their priorities was to preserve the Choctaw Council House. Photo 2 shows the extensive renovation in 1937. The Choctaw Advisory Council shepherded the work and met annually through 1946.

Officially after 1905, the position of Principal Chief was appointed by the U.S. President. However, Choctaw elections continued. Elected by the



The photograph is in the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, National Register Database Under Tuskahoma-Choctaw Council House, nomination ID #70000537

to create a new constitution and fully restore the tribe's representative government (Milligan 2019: 54). The council met each year for a general assembly at the Choctaw Capitol building and grounds. In a Labor Day address, Chief Belvin noted his accomplishments, including the renovation of the Choctaw Council House and grounds, organizing the Choctaw Nation Historical Society, and establishment of the Choctaw Museum at the Capitol building.

In 1972, the Tribal Council allocated funding for the restoration of the Choctaw Capitol, hired the firm Day, Davies, and Poe to provide architectural services and contractor B. H. Todd Sons' Company, Inc. The total cost for the restoration of the first floor was \$32,500. That year the Museum adopted its mission statement: "To preserve and promote knowledge and understanding of tribal culture and heritage for Choctaw descendants and the general public." The Tuskahoma Capitol Museum still operates to fulfill this mission today. In 2002, an elevator was installed to provide accessibility to the second floor. Exhibits about Choctaw history, a gallery of Choctaw art, and an exhibition preparation space are located on the second floor. Access to the attic space is through a narrow staircase.

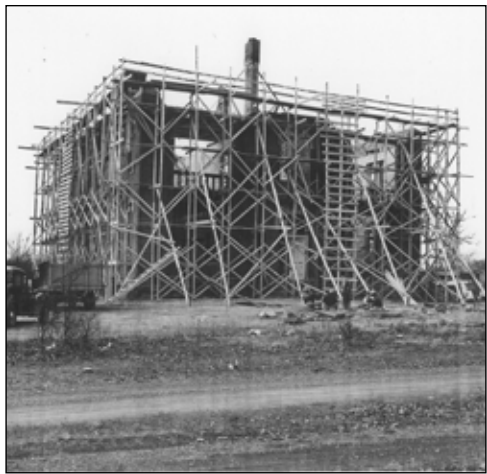
Today, the Capitol Building continues to serve the Choctaw people as the Choctaw Nation Capitol Museum and Tribal Court House. The Museum is open year-round to the public and features free admission, displays on Choctaw history before European contact, the Trail of Tears, Choctaw life in Oklahoma, the Lighthorsemen, the Choctaw Code Talkers, Choctaw basketry, a gift shop selling Choctaw-made artwork, and much more. Annual events on the ground that bring in large numbers of visitors to the Museum include the Easter Celebration, Veteran's Day, Trail of Tears Walk, and the Alabama-Tennessee Trail of Tears Corridor Motorcycle Association ride. Each year, the Tuskahoma grounds host the Labor Day Festival with the State of the Nation

address, living village demonstrations, a stickball tournament, carnival rides, food trucks, and concerts. Please use the QR code in this article to virtually visit the first floor of the Choctaw Capitol Museum and Tribal Court.

Sprinkled in the previous Iti Fabvssa articles are the architectural histories and brief descriptions of the Choctaw capitol buildings in Oklahoma. This history is gathered and archived at the Historic Preservation Department for Choctaw Nation as part of our staff's mission. Buildings that demonstrate historical significance and look original to their construction may qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register was created by Congress in 1966 and continues today, along with its sister, the National Historic Landmark program. Tens of thousands of buildings and archeological sites across the United States are listed in the National Register. The National Historic Landmark program tallies approximately 2,500 properties.

In order for a property to be listed, the owner nominates it in a format similar to a high school term paper. The Historic Preservation Department staff assists with research ideas, edits, a building description, maps, and photographs for National Register nominations, both for properties owned by Choctaw Nation and when private owners request assistance with a nomination. Ideally, the owner will present the nomination to the Professional Review Board for consideration. The final listing decision is made by the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. The Historic Preservation Department is happy to report that the Capitol Museum was listed in 1970, and the National Register nomination was used in writing this article.

For additional information about the National Register, what properties may qualify, and the implications of listing, please contact the Choctaw Historic Preservation Department Architectural Historian Rolene Schliesman at 580-642-2024.



Council House Remodel 1937, Courtesy of the Choctaw Nation Capitol Museum



Choctaw Capitol Museum circa 1900-1910, Courtesy of daddybobphotos.com

committee and Mr. H. T. Jackman, the contractor."

The two-story brick edifice was constructed in the similar architectural styles of Italianate and Second Empire. Italianate is an architectural style that draws from 16th-century Italian Renaissance architecture that was popular in the United States from 1840-1880. Italianate-style buildings are typically symmetrical, meaning

Choctaw people in 1949, Harry James Watson "Jimmy" Belvin was then appointed by President Truman and served as Principal Chief until 1975. In interviews, Belvin noted he initiated Tvshka Homma's first Labor Day festivities shortly after his inauguration in 1949. In 1971, Belvin became the first elected Principal Chief to serve without requisite presidential consent in 66 years. In 1978, the Choctaw Nation Council was formed

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Choctaw Nation Outreach Services

**CHOCTAW LABOR DAY FESTIVAL**

**QUILT SHOW APPLICATION**

Friday, September 1, 2023  
 Drop off entries 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Tribal Membership Building  
 Tvshka Homma Council Grounds

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
 CALL 580.642.8011

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

**Housing Headlines**  
 By Bobby Yandell

On June 7, 2018, the Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (HACNO) was selected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as one of 17 EnVision center Pilot communities and was the only tribal nation selected to participate. Currently, there are 100 EnVision Centers across the United States, three of which are Tribal Designated EnVision Centers.

The goal of an EnVision center is to offer families access to support services that can help them achieve self-sufficiency by making resources readily available. The EnVision Centers is premised on the notion that financial support alone is insufficient to solve the problem of poverty.

Other EnVision Centers are located in metropolitan areas where the idea is a brick and mortar "one stop shop" for services and programs. However, the HACNO concept is to create a "pop-up" or virtual EnVision Center due to the immense reservation area.

Through the EnVision Center mission, HUD identified four pillars as the focus items that will focus on fostering long-lasting self-sufficiency.

- Economic Empowerment
- Education Advancement
- Health and Wellness
- Character and Leadership

Classes will be conducted at community centers or other public areas across our region for tribal members and Choctaw National Housing Authority Program participants.

Individualized counseling for tribal members and Choctaw Nation Housing Authority Program participants is also offered. The EnVision Center has partnered with the IRS to become a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site. This tax season, the EnVision Center filed 126 returns totaling a federal amount of \$209,065 and a state refund of \$15,450 going back to the tribal members.

The EnVision Center and Service Coordination Department offer a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the participants in their housing program and other tribal members.

Housing Authority of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma  
 EnVision Center  
 511 Nanih Waiya Rd. Poteau, OK 74953  
 918-647-3668

Choctaw Nation  
 Housing Authority  
 CHOCTAWNATION.COM





### Estrada turns 1

Resse Averie Estrada, daughter to Meagan and David Estrada of Durant, Oklahoma, turns one year old. Happy Birthday to our sweet Little RAE. From Mom, Dad, Nanny (Paula Hudson), and siblings Catherine, Dallas, and Addisyn.



### Sells turns 21

Cody Sells is turning 21. He is the son of Richard and Nanette Sells. He attends Texas A&M University and will graduate with a Bachelor's in animal science in 2025. He would like to thank The Choctaw Nation for all their support throughout high school and college. His great-great-grandfather, William A. McLain, was an original enrollee.



### Davis is a dual graduate

The family of Alexis Grace Davis (Himonubbe) is proud to announce and celebrate her upcoming dual graduation. She will receive the highest honor of valedictorian from Mustang High School, a class of 840 seniors.

Alexis is also graduating from CV Tech's Biomedical program with honors. She has already received her CNA and will be receiving her Laboratory technology certification.

She will be attending Redland's nursing school in the Fall of 2023. Her future goals include receiving her advanced degree as a nurse practitioner while traveling for nursing. Alexis achieved these honors while also maintaining a family life balance that included lettering for her high school varsity golf team and also managing the family business in her off time. She will receive her nursing degree in 2025 due to completing concurrent college classes too. What a celebration.



### Merideth wins big

Azlynn Merideth, 10, of Glenpool, Oklahoma, placed second in the U10 Girls Pepsi Youth Championship Scratch division in April. She has been bowling for one year, and this is her first major win.

Azlynn also placed fifth in the handicap division and will be awarded scholarship funds for both. Congratulations!



### Wesley turns 40

Christina Lauraine Wesley turned 40 on May 15.

She is the daughter of Theresa, the granddaughter of Lewain, and the great-granddaughter of Wallace. Her family wishes her a very happy birthday. We know how proud you are to be Choctaw.



### Cotner graduates from OSU

Connor Cotner, a Choctaw tribal member, graduates from OSU with a Bachelor of Science in Geography. Connor is thankful for the support of the Choctaw Nation during the pursuit of his education. Connor resides in Broken Arrow with his wife, Hallie Cotner. He plans to pursue his career

as a Geographic Information Scientist. Connor is the son of Kevin and Crystal (Halcomb) Cotner. He is the grandson of Royce and Kitty Halcomb and Linda Cotner and the late Richard Cotner.



### Mitchell named National Honor Society Scholar

On April 4, 2023, The National Honor Society inducted another member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Jaelynn Mitchell received her token of acceptance into membership of the society that pledges high scholastic grades, untarnished character, and

becoming a leader through intelligence and courage.

These qualities of providing services to others freely helped her be recognized by other educational professionals who believe in the National Honor Society's pillars of worthiness, their commitment to learning, service, leadership, and character.

Jaelynn is now a distinguished member of this society. She is currently a sophomore at Lawton high school. She is also attending Cameron University under a scholarship program provided by the State of Oklahoma's higher education, Upward Bound program. She would like to share her excitement and thank the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for its continued support throughout her educational journey. "The Star Program, and clothing allowance helps," said Mitchell.

## CNO 2023 Adult Education Program Graduates



Photo by Christian Toews

Pictured are 40 of the 139 graduates of the 2023 Adult Education Program. Students from around the United States participated in this program, earning their GED.

Kaylee Abbott, Graham, OK  
Odessa, Allen, Oklahoma City, OK  
Rodney Badgett, Broken Bow, OK  
Layce Baker, McAlester, OK  
Kiersten Barker, Madill, OK  
Staphanie Barrera, Pauls Valley, OK  
Hannah Batchelor, Poteau, OK  
Samuel Batchelor, Poteau, OK  
Gaston Bates, Sherman, TX

Kathleen Battiest, Marlow, OK  
Jordan Beller, Thackerville, OK  
Destiny Billy, Durant, OK  
Shaylee Birge, Broken Bow, OK  
Donna Bolf, Talihina, OK  
Gene Brown, Brenham, TX  
Janae Bullins, Oklahoma City, OK  
Kyra Burnett, Bokoshe, OK  
Amanda Caldwell, Skiatook, OK



### Francis is NFF Scholar Athlete

Landen Francis, a senior in high school from Arizona, was honored as a Scholar Athlete by the National Football Foundation.

He also received the Gila River Native American Culture Award of Excellence. He is so proud to be part of the Choctaw family! These are both scholarships he earned toward his college degree at Oklahoma Baptist University.



### Long signs with OBU

Chesney Long, Haworth High School Valedictorian, recently signed a letter of intent with Oklahoma Baptist University Pom Squad.

She is planning to obtain an elementary education degree while at OBU. Chesney will also be on the OBU Gameday and Competitive Pom Squad. She is also the reigning Miss McCurtain County.



### Monroe turns 5

Atticus Monroe from Dallas, Texas turned 5 years old on May 18.

Atticus is the son of Taylor and Ying Monroe who are so proud of him.

He is a student at the Westwood School in Addison, Texas. He loves drawing, and loves reading books, especially books about sharks and dinosaurs. He would love to see a real T-Rex.



### Reverend Wilson earns doctorate

Reverend Woodrow Wesley Wilson (known as "Little Woody" to his Choctaw relatives) successfully defended his dissertation on March 31.

He graduated with his Doctorate in education in administration and leadership Ed.D on May 13, 2023, from Southern Nazarene University in Warr Acres, Oklahoma.

Woody is Choctaw, Kiowa and Apache and was raised in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Woody's parents are Wilmon and Pamela Wilson. Woody's grandparents were the late Woody Wilson (Choctaw) and Lillian "Mickey" Goombi Wilson (Kiowa/Apache). His Choctaw great-grandparents were Rev. Noah and Carrie Wilson from Smithville, Oklahoma.

Woody's Kiowa name is "Aim Daw-kya Thoen-Gya Tho," meaning "He speaks God's Word."

On his Kiowa side, his great-grandparents were the late Adolphus and Cynthia Berry Goombi and great-great grandparents the late Tennyson Berry and Anna Jones Berry.

Woody's educational background was at the following: Muskogee High School graduate, 1996; Haskell Indian Nations University B.S. in Elementary Education, 2008; The University of New Mexico master's in language literacy and sociocultural studies (LLSS) with a concentration in American Indian Education in 2013.

"We would like to thank God for giving Woody the opportunity to be a student at the highest level possible while also being the pastor at Ada First Indian Baptist Church and while also being a full-time employee with the Chickasaw Nation. Yakoke! Aho! Family and friends, and to the Choctaw Nation Higher Ed Program for your support all these years," said Woody's wife, Tashina. "Woody, Chihowa yvt chi yukpalashke, micha chi hаланlashke. I-nashuka ya chi on tohwikelichashke; micha chi kanashke. Numbers 7:24-25."

Eric Cerra, Denison, TX  
Jacob Cherry, Durant, OK  
Geneva Clark, Saltsburg, PA  
Noah Clark, Durant, OK  
Tristian Colbert, Norman, OK  
Chelsey Copeland, Krebs, OK  
Jaci Coulter, Durant, OK  
Kristen Crilly, Tulsa, OK  
Sean Curd, Stigler, OK  
Robert Davidson, Reno, TX  
Dylan Dewett, Calera, OK  
Alexis Dick, Mead, OK  
Eric Doan, Yukon, OK

Kennedy Dodds, Oklahoma City, OK  
Kaitlyn Donati, College Station, TX  
Rachel Dooley, West Tawakoni, TX  
Dion Draper, Shawnee, OK  
Tacey Duncan, McAlester, OK  
Tori Eades, Midwest City, OK  
Andrew Edmisten, Kellyville, OK  
Jerry Ensey, Wilburton, OK  
Chelsea Evans, Broken Arrow, OK  
Brittney Farrell, Angleton, TX  
Kourtney Findley, Binger, OK  
Kyle Finley, Durant, OK  
Amanda Fisher, Oklahoma City, OK  
Stasha Fossett, Oklahoma City, OK  
Erika Franklin, Oklahoma City, OK  
Jordyn Frazier, Tyler, TX  
Lindy Gentzler, Stillwater, OK  
Carla Germany, Tecumseh, OK  
Tommy Gonzales, Wilburton, OK  
Lillian Gregory, Oklahoma City, OK  
William Griffeth, Alvin, TX  
Madison Griffith, Decatur, TX  
Austin Grigsby, Oklahoma City, OK  
Adrea Guidry, Modesto, CA  
Jaidah Hammer, Broken Arrow, OK  
Julie Harley, Oklahoma City, OK  
Kandra Harrington, Edmond, OK  
Roan Harris, Round Rock, TX  
Makayla Harrod, Oklahoma City, OK  
Brandon Hays, Geronimo, OK  
Brittany Henington, Newalla, OK  
Ka'Ryssa Hensley, Eugene, OR  
Breanna Hernandez, Smithville, OK  
MisSaley Hill, Okemah, OK  
Leigh Homer, Eufaula, OK  
Destiny Hooper, Moreno Valley, CA  
Heather Horton, Lott, TX  
Corey Huffman, Bartlesville, OK  
Justus Hunter, Calera, OK  
Jamey Ivey, Durant, OK  
Brooke Johnson, Arlington, WA  
Brooklyn Johnston, Oklahoma City, OK  
Adrian Justice, Hugo, OK  
Cassie Kearns, Oklahoma City, OK  
Jessica Kindt, Wilson, OK  
Brittany Lovell, Ardmore, OK  
Heather Mackey, Allen, OK  
Eric Mann, Tulsa, OK

Jennings Martin, Durant, OK  
Miko Maxwell, Durant, OK  
Destiny McCarty, Hugo, OK  
Justin McCutcheon, Valliant, OK  
Lisa McGann, Spanaway, WA  
Tiffany McKim, Liberal, KS  
Vaden McReynolds, Gulfport, MS  
Mariah Meador, Pauls Valley, OK  
Heather Meek, Taft, CA  
Cheyenne Miller, Purcell, OK  
Heidi Miller, Santa Maria, CA  
Christyl Morgan, Poteau, OK  
Cody Nichols, Durant, OK  
Lane Nichols, Durant, OK  
Marcellus Nichols, McAlester, OK  
Laila Ochoa, Katy, TX  
Cassandra Ortiz, Balch Springs, TX  
Michaela Ott, Moore, OK  
Rachel Paddor, Durant, OK  
Denver Pass, Marietta, OK  
Alexandria Pence, Durant, OK  
Salena Pepper, Coalgate, OK  
Chelsey Pittman, Atoka, OK  
Sharon Postoak, Ada, OK  
Emily Potts, Petoskey, MI  
Manuel Reyes, Fort Worth, TX  
Mary Richards, Holdenville, OK  
Lexi Robertson, McAlester, OK  
Kace Robertson, Durant, OK  
Melanie Rogers, Rociada, NM  
Xander Rubrecht, Moore, OK  
Rachel Scheimann, Henryetta, OK  
Zachary Sena-Spurling, Owasso, OK  
Joshua Shipp, Durant, OK  
Alexis Singler, Springfield, OR  
Ricki Smallwood, Oklahoma City, OK  
Delaney Smith, Durant, OK  
Dellaina Smith, Maysville, OK  
Colton Smith, McLoud, OK  
Angela Solis, Napa, CA  
Melissa Sorrels, Enid, OK  
Jon Sutherland, McAlester, OK  
Zoeie Swift, Pryor Creek, OK  
Wanda Teague, Canyon Creek, MT  
Hallie Tennyson, Peoria, AZ  
Whitney Terry, Weatherford, TX  
Ronnie Thomas, Fort Towson, OK  
Jeanetta Thompson, Amarillo, TX  
Jeffrey Thompson, Broken Arrow, OK  
Dallas Timmons, McCurtain, OK  
Lori Tripp, Hyrum, UT  
Dylan Trolinger, McAlester, OK  
Tamara Turner, Ardmore, OK  
Sarah Watkins, Stigler, OK  
Stacy Whitesell, Tuttle, OK  
Bryanna Whitworth, Tulsa, OK  
Mark Wilkerson, Fort Worth, TX  
Christopher Wilson, Modesto, CA  
Erik Wolfe, Canby, OR  
Bryce Wright, Oklahoma City, OK

For more information on the Adult Education program, visit <https://www.choctawnation.com/services/adult-education/>

with a degree in biology. She has played on the women's soccer team at Millsaps and is a member of Tri-Delta Sorority, where she has held the position of vice-president.

In December 2022, Kayla received the Robinson Scholarship from Millsaps College to the Study Abroad Program in the Yucatan Peninsula, where she studied the Mayan culture.

She also wrote a research paper about her great-great-great grandfather, Mitchell Bobb, a WWI Choctaw Code Talker. The family received the Silver Medal in Washington, D.C., in honor of Bobb in 2013.

Kayla thanks her parents, grandparents, Anella and Phil Garcia of Kansas City, Missouri, and the Choctaw Nation, for their help and financial support during college.



### Bush graduates from Millsaps College

Kayla M. Bush, a member of the Choctaw Nation, has been accepted into the doctor of occupational therapy program at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth, Kansas. Kayla, the daughter of Jennifer and Mark Bush of Long Beach, Mississippi, graduate in May 2023 from Millsaps College in Jackson

Mississippi, where she received her doctorate in occupational therapy.

She also wrote a research paper about her great-great-great grandfather, Mitchell Bobb, a WWI Choctaw Code Talker. The family received the Silver Medal in Washington, D.C., in honor of Bobb in 2013.

Kayla thanks her parents, grandparents, Anella and Phil Garcia of Kansas City, Missouri, and the Choctaw Nation, for their help and financial support during college.



## Eternal Heart Sculpture to honor Choctaw/Irish bond to be unveiled

**DURANT, Okla. (May 4, 2023)**– A sculpture to honor the relationship between the Choctaw Nation and the people of Ireland will soon be erected on the Choctaw Capitol grounds in Tuskahoma, Oklahoma. The project is funded jointly by the Choctaw Nation and the Government of Ireland. The piece, titled “Eternal Heart” was selected after a call for submissions was initiated last year.

Samuel Stitt, Spokane Valley, WA, submitted the winning entry. Eternal Heart combines a Celtic trinity shape intertwined with a heart. “There is no beginning or end to the overall piece – thus, it is eternal,” Stitt said. The sculpture will have a very specific orientation, with the heart – representing the Choctaw Nation – facing toward Ireland.

March marked the 176th anniversary of the Choctaw people mustering a gift of \$170 to provide the suffering Irish during the potato famine. The gift was even more significant due to the Choctaws having just completed their trek on the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma.

Also included with the sculpture is a design for an informational sign and winding path.

“All the elements are symbolic and created with specific references in mind,” stated Samuel Stitt.

The concrete base for the 8-foot-tall piece is edged with diamond shapes, a Choctaw symbol of reverence to the diamondback snake. The sculpture will sit atop a mound, honoring



Rendering Provided by Samuel Stitt

the heritage of mound-building of the Choctaw ancestors as well as the ancient “hill forts” and mounds found in Ireland. Even the winding footpath represents the Trail of Tears, with the exact orientation mirroring the arduous route from the Mississippi homelands to Indiana Country.

The Kindred Spirit sculpture, unveiled in 2015 in Cork, Ireland helps symbolize the connection and appreciation of the Irish for the Choctaw people.

“I want to congratulate Samuel Stitt on being awarded the commission,” said Ireland’s Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin T.D.

“Last year, as Taoiseach, and together with Chief Gary Baton, I announced the launch of this new project, which is intended to serve as a permanent legacy in Tuskahoma of the solidarity that exists between our peoples, just like the sculpture in Bailick Park, Middleton in County Cork.”

## Velvet Taco anchors new food hall at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant

**DURANT, Okla., (May 2, 2023)**– A new food hall is coming to Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant this fall! The District Food Hall will feature five venues highlighting different cuisines, with the popular Dallas-based Velvet Taco as the anchor restaurant. The Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant location will be Velvet Taco’s first casino and resort location.

The Dallas-based restaurant, Velvet Taco, features diverse, globally inspired tacos. Its menu includes inventive taco combinations like Chimichurri Steak, Korean Fried Rice, Cuban Pig, Spicy Tikka Chicken and more. The menu at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant will also offer alcoholic beverages such as Velvet Taco’s signature Kick-Ass Margaritas, Palomas, beer and more.

“We are thrilled to announce the District Food Hall as part of Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant’s incredible dining and nightlife offerings,” says Jeff Penz, Senior Director of Gaming & Hospitality at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant.

“We are committed to continuing to elevate the experience for our guests with new food and drink options and look forward to our partnership with Velvet Taco.”

In addition to the new Velvet Taco scheduled to open this fall, Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant operates several popular franchises within the resort, including Starbucks, Smashburger, Guy Fieri’s American Kitchen + Bar, Cinnabon, Papa John’s Pizza, and Krispy Krunchy Chicken.

The District Food Hall will also include, The Pit (Barbeque), Italia Kitchen (Italian), Slush’D (frozen daiquiris) and South Hot Chicken (chicken fingers).

The District Food Hall at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant is scheduled to open in September 2023. For more information about dining options at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant, please visit Eat & Drink - Choctaw Casinos.

### About Velvet Taco

Founded in 2011, Velvet Taco, the Dallas, Texas-based concept, set out to elevate the taco through globally inspired recipes and the freshest ingredients. The acclaimed restaurant provides a broad sampling of international tastes and inventive combinations, delivering flavors that are as memorable as



Choctaw Nation Photo

Proposed rendering of the future Velvet Taco at Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant.

they are delicious. In 2016, Velvet Taco was awarded Nation’s Restaurant News’ “Hot Concept,” and in 2020 it won Nation’s Restaurant News’ MenuMasters Award in the category of Best Limited Time Offer for its Weekly Taco Feature. Velvet Taco has locations in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Fort Worth and Austin, Texas; Atlanta; Chicago; and Charlotte, North Carolina. For more information, including a complete menu, visit [velvettaco.com](http://velvettaco.com) and follow the brand on Facebook and Instagram @VelvetTaco.

### About Choctaw Casino & Resort in Durant, Okla.

Located an hour north of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, Choctaw Casino & Resort – Durant is a AAA Four Diamond casino resort, entertainment and convention destination in southeastern Oklahoma. The casino has more than 7,400 slot machines, table games, a poker room, and a large non-smoking casino. The resort offers more than 100,000 square feet of meeting and convention space and seats more than 3,000 at the Academy of Country Music (ACM) award-winning Grand Theater. The resort also includes more than 1,600 luxurious rooms and suites, 16 restaurants, 20 bars and lounges, six retail stores, two fitness centers, a spa, and two outdoor pools and a water park. The family-friendly District offers guests 20 bowling lanes, a 6-screen premier movie theater, 70 arcade games and dining options. Additionally, guests can enjoy the 30-camper KOA Choctaw RV Park located across from the casino. For more information, visit [choctawcasinos.com](http://choctawcasinos.com).

## CAROLE AYERS EXHIBIT

APRIL 11 - OCTOBER 14

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

## CHOCTAW ARTIST REGISTRY

NOW AVAILABLE ON CHAHTA ACHVFFA

Are you a Choctaw tribal member who practices creative art (beadwork, painting, pottery, traditional clothing maker, writer, musician, actor, etc.?) If so, please enroll as a Choctaw registered artist.

- Be officially identified and recognized as an official Native American artist.
- Have an avenue to share your gifts with others.
- Make extra money from your art.

**NOTE:** Current Choctaw Nation registered artists are encouraged to update their information by enrolling on Chahta Achvffa’s Choctaw Artist Registry link. Benefits include an updated Artist Registry certificate and profile on the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s new website.

TO ENROLL, VISIT [CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/ARTIST-REGISTRY/](http://CHAHTAACHVFFA.CHOCTAWNATION.COM/CHOCTAWNATION.COM/SERVICES/ARTIST-REGISTRY/)

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Choctaw Nation STAR Program

## CONGRATULATIONS

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is proud to announce the upcoming graduation of family medicine physicians

Saranah Linscott, D.O.  
Rashad Mohamed Riazuddin, M.B.B.S  
Robert Bowman, D.O.  
Ethan Linscott, D.O.

After successfully completing three years of residency training, these physicians will be eligible for board certification in family medicine on June 30, 2023.

**Choctaw Nation** Family Medicine Residency Program

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**Choctaw Nation** Food Distribution



# Healthy Aging helps elders live a better life

By Chris Jennings

According to the National Resource Center on Native American Aging (NRCNAA), 79.1% of reporting elders over the age of 55 said they had 1-4 chronic illnesses. High blood pressure was the most reported condition (58.1%), followed by arthritis (46.0%) and diabetes (35.8%).

15.2% said they had problems bathing and showering; 10.4% said getting dressed was difficult; and 28.8% said walking was difficult, all due to health or physical problems.

As people age, everyday tasks that were once easy become difficult. The Choctaw Nation Healthy Aging program aims to help those who most need it. Betty Wharton, director of the Healthy Aging program, says it started working with elders 65 and over, but it worked so well that they eventually dropped the minimum age to 55.

Healthy Aging still does what it initially set out to do, ensuring elders keep their appointments, take their medications, have food, and are safe at home. The program has expanded to cover much more than that now, providing wellness, social services, behavioral health services and case management.

Help is also available to non-elder high-risk patients. "If they are in their early 20s and have a devastating illness that keeps them at home and don't have resources, we help them out," said Wharton.

Wharton says it's hard to pinpoint exactly what areas Healthy Aging covers, citing a recent example, "Well, just to give an example, say they live in a home where the septic tank is bad, we work with the Office of Environmental Health, and we work with housing [to get that fixed]," Wharton said.

Wharton says Healthy Aging has you covered from septic tanks to grocery shopping or can get you to the appropriate service to help with your problem.

"We work with all the different programs we have in the Choctaw Nation; we help them get signed up for their Medicare, Medicaid and Sooner Care. Any of those benefits that they can get that would help them. We help with yard work; we transport them back and forth, sometimes to their medical appointments, or help them get their commodities; we help them get their groceries; go banking. We try to take care of any of their needs at that point so they can be safe at home," Wharton said.

Occasionally an elder will step in to take care of their grandchildren. According to the United States Census Bureau, approximately 2.7 million grandparents are the primary caregiver of their grandchildren. There's a program called Grandparents Raising Grandchildren available through the Healthy Aging Program to help with that. "We help [grandparents] if they need assistance because a lot of times, just all of a sudden, the grandkids are on their doorstep, and they need help with clothing and other things," said Wharton.

Help is available if you live within the Choctaw Nation and:

- Caregiver and/or child have a CDIB
- Parent of the child cannot live in the home
- Caregiver must be related to the child by blood, marriage, foster parent or adoption and live with the child
- Child must not be over the age of 18

Some of the things the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program can help with are:

- Transportation needs
- School supplies
- Cultural activities
- Beading supplies
- Gardening supplies

- Clothing
- Day trips to museums or camps
- School events
- Fishing supplies
- Legal services
- Daycare

The Healthy Aging program can also help on the opposite end of the spectrum. The program helps younger people who are taking care of their elders through the Family Caregivers program. "Say, for instance, there is an elder in the home, and the caregiver needs a little bit of time away. It can be a 24/7 job if they have Alzheimer's or dementia or are in a situation where they have to be watched very closely. They can get away for a little bit to go get their hair cut or get some get some rest," Wharton said.

The Respite program is paid for by a Title VI grant made available through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging. Respite care can be provided in the elder's home or at the respite provider's home.

To qualify for respite care, you must be an adult family member or another individual who is an unpaid, informal provider of in-home and community care to an older individual or an individual with Alzheimer's disease or a related disorder with neurological and organic brain dysfunction.

The Caregivers Program is only available to those living in the Choctaw Nation but can make referrals to other agencies. Long-Distance caregivers looking for services and agencies to assist their loved ones, relatives, or friends who live outside of the Choctaw Nation, can call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116.

Serving as a front line of sorts in getting help to those that need it, Healthy Aging gets referrals from everywhere. "We get referrals from anybody. We get referrals from the doctors, and we get people from word of mouth. 'Can you go check so and so' They're not keeping their doctor's appointments, or they need help because their house is falling down, or their fence has grown up. I mean, that any type of safety issues we get we can check and see they if need assistance," said Wharton.

If you need help with something that's not on the list, contact Healthy Aging. Wharton says they always get calls asking if they can help with something, and the answer is often yes.

"We just meet any of their needs or anything that they feel like they have issues with, we're going to help," said Wharton.

Here is a comprehensive list of services and programs offered to Choctaw Elders.

### 202 Supportive Elder Housing

One-bedroom elder units are equipped with an Energy Star refrigerator, stove and central heating and air.

### Community Health Nursing

Provides services for tribal members in our rural communities to keep them healthy.

### Community Health Representative (CHR)

Assists Native Americans to maintain the health of themselves and their families.

### Elder Advocacy

Provides community outreach, advocacy, training, preparation and other support services.

### Elder Food Security (ARPA FRF)

Provides eligible Choctaw Nation tribal members with the opportunity to receive a \$200 monthly grocery allowance beginning September 2021.

### Eyeglasses, Dentures and Hearing Aid Program

Provides eligible Choctaw tribal members with eyeglasses, dentures or partials and hearing aids.

### Healthy Aging

Provides wellness, social services, behavioral health ser-



Photo by Christian Toews

Elders are an essential part of the Choctaw community. Many programs, like Healthy Aging, are available to help tribal elders to live healthy and productive lifestyles.

Services, case management and providers in geriatric-specific care to assist elders in achieving a higher quality of life or maintaining an optimal level of functioning and wellness.

Healthy Aging also offers the Healthy Living Lending Closet program. Through this program, gently used medical equipment donations are repaired, sanitized and distributed to those in need. The Lending Closet is a way for people to donate gently used medical supplies they no longer need and provide them to people who need those items. For more information on the Lending Closet, call 580-916-9140 ext. 83849.

### Independent Elder Housing

Affordable housing is available to low-income elders who can live independently. The units are designed for one person or one person and their spouse.

### Nutrition Services

This program helps elders navigate healthy eating practices to improve overall health and help in fighting disease.

### Senior Nutrition

Provides meals, information, referral, transportation, wellness activities and arts and crafts to Native American elders.

### Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program

Eligible seniors in the Choctaw Nation service area can receive \$50 benefits for fresh fruits and vegetables from authorized area farmers.

The following services can be used by tribal members of any age but are also great resources for elders:

- Choctaw Cultural Center Classes Food Distribution Program
- Lawn Services Voucher Program
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)
- Medical Services
- Adult Education
- Choctaw Language Classes
- Healthy Lifestyles
- LEAP Homes
- Promoting Active Communities Everywhere (PACE)
- Wellness Centers

Some of these programs have eligibility guidelines. Tribal members can find out more about elder services by using the "Elders" filter on the Programs and Services webpage.

Choctaw Community Centers are also a place for local elders. Free weekly meals are served to elders at Choctaw Community Centers throughout the Choctaw Nation. Community Centers also offer various opportunities, such as volunteer services and fundraising for group trips, games, lessons, etc. Contact your local Choctaw Community Center for more information on how you can take part in community activities.

The Choctaw Nation has long promoted its goal to enhance the lives of all members through opportunities designed to develop healthy and productive lifestyles. There are programs and services available for tribal members of all ages.

For more information on services for all ages, visit [choctaw-nation.com/services/](http://choctaw-nation.com/services/).

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

| Choctaw Nation Vocational Rehabilitation |             |                        |
|--|-------------|------------------------|
| June 2                                   | Atoka       | 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.     |
| June 2                                   | Coalgate    | 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. |
| June 13                                  | Idabel      | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.       |
| June 14                                  | Poteau      | 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.    |
| June 15                                  | Talihina    | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.       |
| June 16                                  | Crowder     | By Appointment         |
| June 20                                  | Broken Bow  | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.       |
| June 21                                  | McAlester   | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.       |
| June 21                                  | Stigler     | By Appointment         |
| June 23                                  | Atoka       | 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.    |
| June 23                                  | Coalgate    | 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.    |
| June 27                                  | Wright City | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.       |
| June 28                                  | Antlers     | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.       |
| June 29                                  | Wilburton   | 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.    |

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

**DATE & LOCATIONS**

July 10 | Durant Community Center

- Understanding Lead at 10am
- Train-the-Trainer at 1pm

July 11 | McAlester Community Center

- Understanding Lead at 10am
- Train-the-Trainer at 1pm

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT, [WWW.EPA.GOV/LEAD/COMMUNITY-LEAD-AWARENESS-SESSIONS](http://WWW.EPA.GOV/LEAD/COMMUNITY-LEAD-AWARENESS-SESSIONS)

Scan the QR code, or visit [chocta.ws/health-fair](http://chocta.ws/health-fair) for dates and locations throughout the year.

## 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.*

**June 2023**

All markets open weekdays, June 1-28  
**Closed:** June 29 and 30

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 June 8*

**BROKEN BOW** 109 Chahta Rd., 580-584-2842  
*Food demo June 15*

**DURANT** 2352 Big Lots Pkwy., 580-924-7773  
*Food demo June 22*

**MCALESTER** 3244 Afullota Hina, 918-420-5716  
*Food demo June 13*

**POTEAU** 106 B St., 918-649-0431  
*Food demo June 20*

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*



## National Day of Prayer



Photos by Christian Toews

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma took part in National Day of Prayer on May 4, 2023. Visitors and associates were invited to take part in the event.



BUSINESS

# CHAHTAPRENEUR

CHIT ♦ CHAT

Want to Hire a New Employee?



By Gary Johnson

Whether you're hiring an employee for the first time or for the 101st time it is important to develop a recruiting and onboarding process for hiring new employees for your business. Business owners must be careful to follow all legal and ethical requirements when hiring new employees. Check out these 11 steps below to assist you in creating your own policies and procedures for hiring new employees:

- Step 1: Get an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Step 2: Decide if you want to hire an employee or an independent contractor.
- Step 3: Make sure hiring employee is within budget.
- Step 4: Create an employee handbook and standard operating procedures.
- Step 5: Create a job description.
- Step 6: Create a system for identifying top talent.
- Step 7: Check workers' compensation requirements.
- Step 8: Set up payroll.
- Step 9: Have the employee complete form W-4.
- Step 10: Fill out form I-9.
- Step 11: Remember important dates.



Check out the video for hiring a new employee by scanning the QR Code provided!

STAY CONNECTED | [CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM](http://CHOCTAWSMALLBUSINESS.COM)

Choctaw Nation Small Business Development

## SOSU alumna, Shanna Douglas featured in new Choctaw Nation series, 'Choctaw Proud'

**DURANT, Okla. (May 9, 2023)** – The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's new series of the Together, We're More campaign titled 'Choctaw Proud' features different tribal members each month. This month Choctaw Nation spotlights tribal member and Choctaw Nation associate Shanna Douglas.

From an early age, Douglas knew that learning was her passion, and her parents encouraged her curiosity and desire to explore new ideas.

"My parents taught me that education can't ever be taken away and that learning is important," said Douglas.

After high school, Douglas began college. But life can be unpredictable, and Douglas' plans changed when her children were born, and she put her education on hold to be a mother.

Years later, with her son in high school and her daughter eight years younger, Douglas faced challenges as a young single mother, but she never lost sight of her passion for learning. As a way to motivate her son, she promised to finish her bachelor's degree if he did all his schoolwork and got good grades.

Douglas's promise to her son was also motivating for her. "Whenever we become comfortable in our situation, we become complacent, and complacent is something I never want to be," she said.

Raising two children who are active in sports and school activities can make studying for college classes difficult for anyone. Add to that the extra challenge of caring for parents who are ill, and the stress compounds. But Douglas credits a strong support system for her success. Sometimes study time had to fall between games, but no matter how much her family depended on her, they always gave her the time she needed to do homework.

Douglas graduated with her bachelor's degree in business management in May 2011, the same month her son earned his high school diploma, and the two celebrated their accomplishments together.

She began working on her master's degree



Choctaw Nation Photo

Watch Douglas tell her inspiring story below or by visiting the "More Than a Graduate" webpage.

in 2014, but when her parents' health further declined, she once again paused her studies to be a caregiver for them.

When her parents passed away, Douglas was left with an empty house. She had always had something to take care of, but with her children grown and her parents gone, she needed something to keep her occupied and help with her grief. She decided to return to school.

Staying focused on the future helped Douglas achieve her long-time goal of finishing her MBA in management. No matter the obstacles and challenges, she never lost sight of her objective. Using resources from the Choctaw Nation's Higher Education Department and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, she was finally able to graduate with her master's degree in business from Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Douglas' advice to anyone who has a dream to finish school is to keep going.

"My challenge and someone else's challenge may be the same, but we may not get through it the same way. We may not get through it even in the same time frame. But it is something we can do if we continue to press forward."

Watch Douglas tell her inspiring story below or by visiting the "More Than a Graduate" webpage. Visit the Choctaw Nation's Higher Education Program for more information.

## WILDLIFE & OUTDOORS

By Jordan Grotts

If you've spent any time outside as the sun sets on the horizon of Oklahoma's hot summer nights, you may have noticed a dizzying sight of fast, acrobatic swings in the distance. These are the signature moves of halambishas – or bats. The Choctaw Nation Reservation is home to 16 bat species, with even more passing through as they migrate from areas where they hibernate to maternal grounds to give birth during the summer.

The species found in the reservation are insectivorous, meaning that they feed on insects. This unique feeding behavior makes them important to the landscape of Oklahoma because they help control insect populations – especially mosquitos – but also moths, cucumber beetles, June beetles and leafhoppers.

Without bats, you would see many more insects and may have even noticed an increase in recent years due to the decline of bat species worldwide. These declines are due to multiple factors, primarily the loss of habitat, increase in climate change events, wind energy and, the most detrimental of all, white-nose syndrome (WNS).

WNS is a deadly fungus that appears on the nose and extremities of cave-dwelling bats which disrupts hibernation, causing them to lose energy and die from dehydration or starvation. It's even been estimated that 90% of three species have died as a result in less than 10 years, causing the endangered listing of the Northern Long-eared Bat, the proposed listing of the Tri-colored Bat, and the review of the Little Brown Myotis by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The fungus has been identified without apparent symptoms in Leflore County, but it is paramount to prevent the spread to other areas in the reservation. This can be done by avoiding caves where bats are hibernating and decontaminating any clothes or equipment that have been used in caves.

It is crucial to maintain the biodiversity of the reservation's wildlife for future generations. We can all have a hand in conserving our bat species by installing bat houses, minimizing pesticide use, minimizing disturbances to hibernacula, and educating our friends and family about their importance.

Lastly, it is important to exclude bats from your home. If you suspect a bat has made its way inside, the easiest way to exclude them is to wait for nightfall and close the opening which they entered so that they may not enter again. Doing this will prevent any harm to your family or any bats.

Choctaw Nation Wildlife Conservation

UPDATE YOUR CHOCTAW NATION MAILING SUBSCRIPTION

At Choctaw Nation, we constantly try to improve our services and look for better ways to serve you, our Tribal Member. To choose your Circulation subscriptions, scan the QR code or visit the website above to select which of these items you wish to continue receiving through the mail.

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- Calendar

- Christmas Ornament
- Member Letter

choctawnation.com/subscribe/

Please allow time for changes to be effective. You will continue to receive your items during this process. Subscribers must be 18+ years of age, or the only member in the household.

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

LABOR DAY

# CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

SIGN UP NOW TO SECURE YOUR SPOT!

Preregister your team for Labor Day at [CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY](http://CHOCTAWNATION.COM/LABOR-DAY)

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

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Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

# CHOCTAW CULTURAL CENTER

MEMBERSHIP

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## Tribal regalia bill among 20+ pieces of legislature vetoed by Stitt

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt has rejected a bill that would have reinforced the rights of Native American students to wear tribal regalia at graduation and other school-sponsored functions.

The veto of Senate Bill 429 drew immediate criticism from education advocates and tribal leaders, who championed the bill to support students in a state where one in six residents is Native American.

Several states have similar laws. Oklahoma's proposal passed with overwhelming support. Now, though, both the Senate and the House would need to pass it again in order for it to become law.

In a message to lawmakers, Stitt stated that he believed the bill would violate the Oklahoma Constitution, specifically a provision prohibiting lawmakers from "passing special laws" regulating school districts.

According to Stitt, local officials should be allowed to decide their own dress codes for graduation.

"In other words, if schools want to allow their students to wear tribal regalia at graduation, good on them, but if schools prefer for their students to wear only traditional cap and gown, the Legislature shouldn't stand in their way," said Stitt.

The veto leaves Oklahoma, a state with over 300,000 Native American citizens according to the 2020 Census, back to square one on the issue. However, Stitt's veto doesn't mean the end for SB 429. The legislation must now be passed through the House and Senate to override the veto.

Gary Batton, Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, released a statement immediately after news of the veto broke.

This bill, which would have allowed all Native American students in Oklahoma to wear tribal regalia at school ceremonies, is not controversial," said Batton. "It allows the students to honor their Native culture and traditions. In fact, only one member of the Legislature voted against it. This is a popular, common-sense measure with no costs for the state or schools. We hope the House and the Senate will quickly override the veto to provide more freedom for Oklahoma students who want to honor their heritage."

Diana Cournoyer also released a statement expressing concern after Stitt's veto of SB 429.

"The Governor of Oklahoma has failed to uphold his duty to the over 130,000 Native students in public schools in Oklahoma. An immense amount of pride and respect is shared among students who wish to honor their heritage and communities while they are recognized for their academic achievements," said Cournoyer. "Governor Stitt's decision to veto SB 429 sends a clear sign to our Native students that state leadership does not respect the political relationship between the 30 Tribal Nations and the state of Oklahoma. NIEA calls upon the Oklahoma Senate for a veto override on this popular and bipartisan legislation which would protect the rights of our children. We must not let partisan dissension get in the way of protecting the religious and cultural rights of our students."

SB 429 is just one bill in a slew of vetoes by Stitt after threatening to veto all bills that make it to his desk until his education plan is passed.

However, not all Senate bills have been vetoed since his

threat was made. On May 2, Stitt signed SB 613, banning all forms of gender-affirming medical treatment for transgender youth and threatening providers who violate the law with a felony conviction and discipline from their professional licensing boards.

Stitt also signed Senate Bill 404, which clarifies Oklahoma law to "prevent discrimination against religious entities. SB 404 updates that law. SB 404 amends Oklahoma's Religious Freedom Act to state that it shall be deemed a substantial burden to exclude any person or entity from participation in or receipt of governmental funds, benefits, programs, or exemptions based solely on the religious character or affiliation of the person or entity.

### Chief Batton's Op-Ed for The Oklahoman

*The Choctaw Nation and thousands of its members are proud Oklahomans.*

*Like other residents of our state, we contribute to the economy, serve our communities and work for the benefit of all. We do this while honoring our ancestors and our identities, just like many other people do.*

*We are comfortable celebrating our many Tribal nations. As part of that, young people often wish to wear symbols of tribal pride, such as eagle feathers, when graduating from high school. While celebrating their accomplishments, they honor their ancestors.*

*Senate Bill 429 would have clarified students have the right to display these important markers of their heritage. The Legislature overwhelmingly agreed, with only one member voting against it.*

*But when the bill reached Gov. Kevin Stitt's desk, he vetoed the measure, returning to his first-term pattern of rejecting almost everything supported by tribes.*

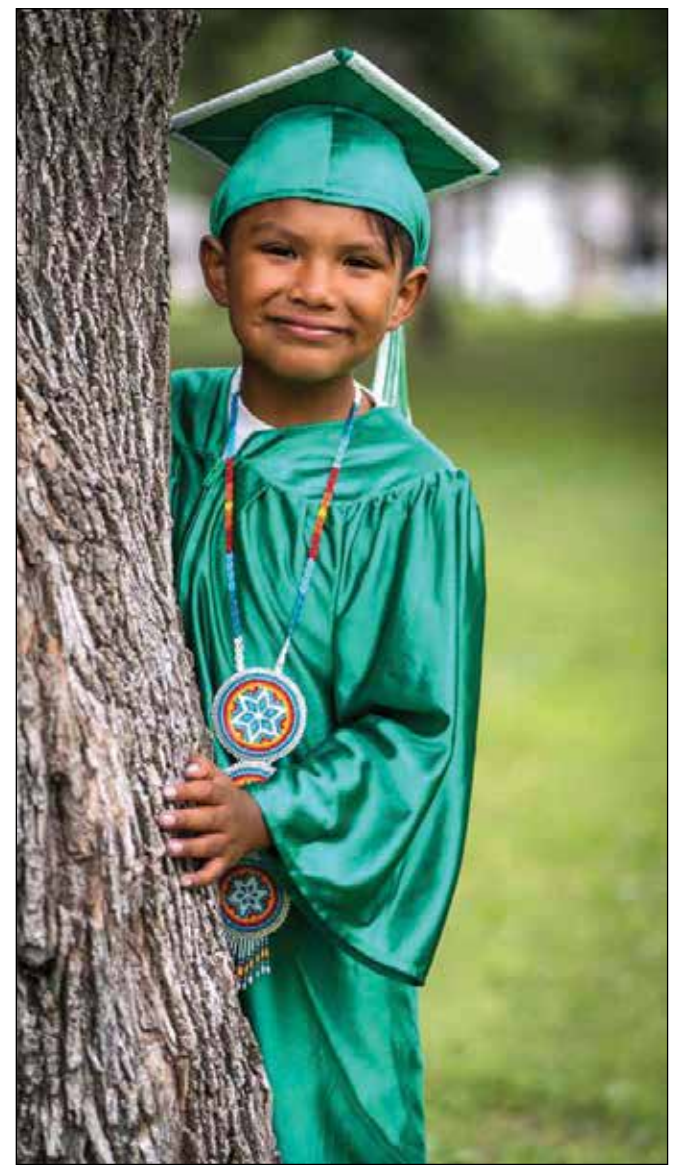
*Unfortunately, that's not the governor's only attack on Native American tribes this session. He also vetoed House Bill 2608, which would have required sex offenders living within tribal jurisdiction to register with the tribe. This would merely have brought the state in line with federal law and, more importantly, would have protected Oklahomans from convicted predators. Gov. Stitt says he "represents all 4 million Oklahomans, but this is not true when it comes to deterring sex offenders on tribal lands.*

*The Choctaw Nation will always support people who want to celebrate their heritage at significant moments, and we're glad the vast majority of school districts allow this celebration of cultural heritage. We will continue to push for statewide clarity that allows every student to express themselves freely.*

*We will also continue, as we always have, to work for laws and policies that benefit our communities, including our non-Native friends and neighbors. Despite the current administration's lack of reciprocity, we remain open to conversation and collaboration, because it's the right thing to do to keep Oklahoma moving forward.*

*Thank you to the legislators who drafted, promoted and voted for SB 429 and HB 2608. We urge you to override Gov. Stitt's vetoes, and we look forward to working with you in the future to improve the state we all love.*

– Chief Gary Batton,  
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Photos by Mark Williams

Dakota Williams (Mvskoke/Seminole/Choctaw) proudly wears his Choctaw tribal regalia for his kindergarten graduation.



## Stitt's education tax plan

By Kendra Germany-Wall

Governor Kevin Stitt recently celebrated the passage of HB 1934, the Oklahoma Parental Choice Tax Credit Act, in the House of Representatives by a vote total of 61-31.

"Today is a major victory for parents and students across the state," said Stitt.

The Oklahoma Parental Choice Tax Credit Act provides the following amount for parents who choose to send their children to a private or charter school outside of their zip code-assigned public school:

\$7,500 per student in households earning under \$75,000 annually; \$7,000 per student in households earning between \$75,000 - \$100,000 annually; \$6,500 per student in households earning between \$150,000 - \$225,000 annually; \$6,000 per student in households earning between \$225,000 - \$250,000 annually; and, \$5,000 per student in households earning over \$250,000 annually.

HB 1934 also provides \$1,000 per child for parents who choose to homeschool.

The bill now sits in the House of Representatives until it is sent to Stitt's desk.

Many government officials, educators and education advocates have expressed concerns about the school choice solution.

"But the reality is, and we cannot ignore it, is that 90% of our kids go to public schools across this state," State Rep. Meloyde Blancett of District 78 said. "We have to ask ourselves, 'Are we doing 90% of our kids justice by doing this?'"

"We know this is a gift for the rich," State Rep. Regina Goodwin of District 73 said. "The very students that are going to most benefit are going to be children that are in private schools. Not the 90% that we've been talking about."

House Speaker Charles McCall captured the bill after similar statements were made on the House floor.

McCall is holding HB 1934 from going to the governor's desk until lawmakers can agree on a public education funding plan.

"On some future legislative date, I might like to reconsider the vote," House Speaker McCall said.

Regardless of the bill's capture, Stitt called the May 2 announcement a "major victory for parents and students across the state."

"With the House's action today, we have made transformative change to improve education outcomes for Oklahoma students. I am grateful to all members of the Legislature who have stood with parents and gotten school choice across the finish line."

According to privateschoolreview.com, for the 2023 school year, there were 220 private schools serving 38,552 students in Oklahoma, while there were 1,791 public schools serving 694,253 students. Only 5% of all K-12 students in Oklahoma are educated in private schools, compared to the national average of 10%.

As of May 2022, 703,719 students were enrolled in public schools in the state, according to the Oklahoma State School Board Association.

# BISKINIK

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma ♦ TOGETHER WE'RE MORE ♦

## June 2023

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### Page 1:

Choctaw Nation helps bring awareness to MMIP issue.



### Page 3:

Sam Bradford and Johnny Bench among American Indian Athletic Hall of Fame 2023 inductees.



### Page 12:

Healthy Aging program helps Choctaw elders live healthy and productive lifestyles.

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

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CHOCTAWNATION.COM



# CHOCTAW POWWOW

2023

NOVEMBER 3 - 5

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